

The Origin of 'Oahspe'

IN view of the numerous enquiries which reach the Kosmon Press regarding the origin of OAH SPE, the following brief account of how the work came to be written and published is offered to the public.

The teachings contained in the volume were communicated from the interior planes through an American medium, J. B. Newbrough (1828-1891). From the testimony of those who knew him while on earth he appears to have been a man of exceptional moral character who possessed also the most remarkable powers the direction of inspiration and clairvoyance. The exercise of these faculties over many years culminated in 1881 in his becoming the instrument through which OAH SPE was communicated to the world. Fortunately enough in a letter addressed to *The Banner of Light*, Boston, in 1883, he himself has given a detailed account of the origin of the book so that it will be sufficient here to reproduce his original words:-

NEW YORK,

21st January, 1883.

To the Editor of

The Banner of Light,

Boston, Mass.

Dear Sir,

In compliance with your request that I furnish for publication a brief article in regard to the writing of Oahspe, the new bible, I cheerfully proceed to do so.

You have observed no doubt, that in Oahspe no mention is made of the manner in which the book was written, nor by whom. Well, was it not plain to anybody acquainted with such matters, that any statement on my part would not be believed by persons unacquainted with spiritual manifestations? And had I said that I myself wrote it, my own acquaintances would have known better. Had I said that the angels wrote it through my hands, then I would have been denounced as a pretender. Again, if a book have merit, what matter it as to who wrote it? And if it hath no merit, then certainly it does not matter whence it came. The time has been when the name of an author clothed his product with some

sort of authority. I rejoice that that day is past; that man-worship is at an end and that all books, including Bibles are perused not as authorities but as pastimes, to lead us nearer and nearer to the Everlasting Light. And if a man turn out a good book, I accord him little more credit than I would a ripe apple for being on the sunny side of the tree. But I rejoice most of all because our Heavenly Father, through his angels co-operating with our forefathers, provided us a government that protects us in publishing our highest conceptions, regardless of creeds or dogmas. Why, to-day we have Protestant preachers in their pulpits denying the inspiration of the Old and New Testaments, and only in the slightest possible degree less than Thomas Paine. They begin to judge so-called sacred books according to what they are and not by a supposed authority. This is progress, undoubtedly.

On reflecting on these things, it was concluded to publish the first edition of Oahspe without any reference to its authorship. No attempt has been made to conceal the method in which it was written, but most of the particulars have been told from time to time to inquiring friends.

Briefly, then, Oahspe was mechanically written through my hands by some other intelligence than my own. Many spiritualists are acquainted with this automatic movement of the hands, independent of one's own volition. There are thousands and thousands of persons who have this quality. It can also be educated, or rather, the susceptibility to external power can be increased. In my own case I discovered, many years ago, in sitting in circles to obtain spiritual manifestations, that my hands could not lie on the table without flying off into these "tantrums". Often they would write messages, left or right, backward or forward, nor could I control them in any other way than by withdrawing them from the table. Sometimes the power thus baffled would attack my tongue, or my eyes, or my ears and I talked and saw and heard differently from my normal state. Then I went to work in earnest to investigate spiritualism, and I investigated over two hundred mediums, travelling hundreds and hundreds of miles for this purpose. Often I took them to my own house and experimented with them to my heart's content. I found that nearly all of them were subject to this involuntary movement of the hands, or to entrancement. They told me it was angels controlling

them. In course of time, about ten or fifteen years, I began to believe in spiritualism. But I was not satisfied with the Communications; I was craving for the light of heaven. I did not desire Communications from friends or relatives, or information about earthly things; I wished to learn something about the spirit-world; what the angels did, how they travelled and the general plan of the universe. So, after a while, I took it into my head that wise and exalted angels would commune better with us if we purified ourselves physically and spiritually. Then I gave up eating flesh and fish, milk and butter and took to rising before day, bathing twice a day and occupying a small room alone, where I sat every morning half an hour before sunrise, recounting daily to my Creator my short-comings in governing myself in thought and deed. In six years' training I reduced myself from two hundred and fifty pounds down to one hundred and eighty: my rheumatism was all gone and I had no more headaches. I became limber and sprightly. A new lease of life came to me.

Then a new condition of control came upon my hands; instead of the angels holding my hands as formerly, they held their hands over my head (and they were clothed with sufficient materiality for me to see them) and a light fell upon my hands as they lay on the table. In the meantime I had attained to hear audible angel voices near me. I was directed to get a typewriter, which writes by keys, like a piano. This I did and I applied myself industriously to learn it but with only indifferent success. For two years more the angels propounded to me questions relative to heaven and earth, which no mortal could answer very intelligently. I always look back on those two years as an enigma. Perhaps it was to show me that man is but an ignoramus at best; perhaps I was waiting for constitutional growth to be good. Well, one morning the light struck both my hands on the back and they went for the typewriter, for some fifteen minutes, very vigorously. I was told not to read what was printed and I had worked myself into such a religious fear of loosing this new power that I obeyed reverently. The next morning, also before sunrise, the same power came and wrote (or printed rather) again. Again I laid the matter away very religiously, saying little about it to anybody. One morning I accidentally (seemed accidental to me) looked out of the window and beheld the line of light that

rested on my hands extending heavenward like a telegraph wire towards the sky. Over my head were three pairs of hands, fully materialised; behind me stood another angel, with her hands on my shoulders. My looking did not disturb the scène; my hands kept right on, printing . . . printing.

For fifty weeks this continued every morning half an hour or so before sunrise, and then it ceased, and I was told to read and publish the book Oahspe. The peculiar drawings in Oahspe were made with pencil in the same way. A few of the drawings I was told to copy from other books, such as Saturn, the Egyptian ceremonies, etc.

Now during all the while I have pursued my vocation (dentistry) nor has this matter nor my diet (vegetables, fruit and farinaceous food) detracted any from my health or strength, although I have continued this discipline for upwards of ten or more years. I am firmly convinced that there are numberless persons who might attain to marvellous development if they would thus train themselves.

A strict integrity to one's highest light is essential to development. Self-abnegation and purity should be the motto and discipline of everyone capable of angel communion.

Yours truly,
J. B. NEWBROUGH

Newbrough immediately printed and published the manuscript, the first edition of the work, a folio, being issued in New York and London in 1882. A second edition, a quarto, and cheaper in price, was published in Boston and London in 1891. This contained in addition, a series of reproductions of paintings of great spiritual teachers made by the author when in the trance state. They were not, however, an integral part of the original work.

Half a century later, in 1936, the Kosmon Press in California acquired a number of sheets of this imprint (including two important pages which for some reason were not included therein) and issued a new edition, which is now obtainable in America.

The first cheap edition was one which was printed privately in England in 1912 but which is now no longer in circulation. It may be identified through the fact that plates are all bound together at the end of the volume.

Almost at the same time here appeared the first English edition (also at a low price) issued by the Kosmon Press in

London. A revised edition was published in London, Sydney and Melbourne in 1926.

As to the original manuscript of OAHSPE, from which all these editions ultimately take their authority, for some time after Newbrough's death, this was kept in the basement of a house in El Pasco, Texas, until it was ultimately destroyed by a flood. Although this happening may appear to be unfortunate from the point of view of the scholar and the archeologist, it is clear also that there was thereby avoided all danger that authority should come to be vested in a historical document rather than in that interior light of the soul in which OAHSPE itself teaches man to place his trust.

It appears, however, that the destruction of the manuscript took place only when its correspondence with the printed version had already been carefully established. In the Preface to the second edition it is stated that although certain errors had crept into the first edition they had been thoroughly eliminated by comparison with the original, which was then (1891) still in existence. As Newbrough died the same year in April, it is just possible that he himself was able to undertake the task before he passed over.

With regard to the contents of this extraordinary book, it will suffice here to say that it contains detailed teachings regarding the Creator and His relation to Man and the Universe; the history of the earth and its heavens for the past 24,000 years; the principles of cosmogony and cosmology, embracing a completely revolutionary conception of physics; the nature of the angelic worlds and their relation to the earth; the origin of man and his path onwards and upwards during life and after death towards spiritual emancipation; the principles of an enlightened morality; the lost keys to all the different religious doctrines and symbols in the world; the history of the great teachers who have been sent to humanity in different cycles; the character of the civilisation which will supersede that in which we are at present living and a mass of remarkable teachings regarding metaphysics, rites and ceremonies, magic, prophecy and the like.

Like all Bibles, OAHSPE is so conceived that it can profitably be read on every level. The simple may find set forth therein that which they need to know, while the philosopher, the mystic and the stoic will never exhaust the profundity of its more recondite pages.

For further details regarding literature etc. please write to:

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