

## Book Review

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*The Esoteric Apprentice*, by Steven Chernikeeff. Outskirts Press, 2018, Parker, Colorado. Paperback: 171 pages; US\$13.95. Available at Amazon. ISBN-10: 1977202543, ISBN-13: 978-1977202543.

At this juncture in human history, when the world is experiencing strife at every turn and many wonder what the future holds and if humanity can ever make the necessary leap towards more enlightened modes of economic and social governance, the esoteric community may be left wondering what can be done to fix things drawing on the inner planes of existence.

When Theosophist Alice Bailey, in telepathic rapport with the Tibetan Djwhal Khul, produced her body of work, humanity was enduring similar crises of right relations. In 1931, at the second Summer School for Spiritual Research at Ascona, Switzerland, Djwhal Khul issued an instruction to Alice Bailey. He wanted to conduct an experiment in discipleship in the New Age. He called it the New Group of World Servers. On the outer planes of outreach, Men of Goodwill was formed, which later became World Goodwill and the Lucis Trust was charged with spreading the word and establishing Units of Service worldwide. From the moment Djwhal Khul communicated that first instruction to Alice Bailey, a sizeable portion of the teachings carried this pointed orientation towards service, goodwill and right relations. Pamphlets were composed, forming the *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*. So central to the teachings is the NGWS, that Lucis Trust continues with this work today.

On the esoteric side, Djwhal Khul envisaged ten groups of nine who would each focus on a particular aspect of the human problem including: healing, politics, education, glamour, economics, science, and an overseer group of telepathic communicators. Ninety participants were needed.

Alice Bailey and her team brought together forty-two participants who practiced in four of the groups (and an incomplete fifth) for about

ten years. When Djwhal Khul disbanded the groups, he then formed a single group of twenty-four in an experiment in group initiation.

Neither of these experiments came to fruition but they laid the foundations for future esoteric work. Triangles was formed in 1937 to help create a planetary network of light and goodwill to distribute spiritual energies.

Meditation, particularly in group formation, sits at the core of the Bailey teachings. Yet today few in the Bailey community practice this form of what can only be described as “white magic” beyond Triangles itself. One example is the Italian-based “The Planetary System” which holds advanced meditation in groups of seven.

Another example, depicted in Steven Chernikeeff’s memoir *Esoteric Apprentice*, is known simply as “Twelves.”

Founded in the 1980s, Twelves is a continuation of the Tibetan’s original groups of nine, holding advanced meditations in group formation for the purposes of funneling spiritual energy and dissipating thoughtforms. It is pure white magic. In his memoir, Chernikeeff provides insights into the motivations, purpose, methods, and reasoning behind this form of spiritually focused group work following in the Bailey tradition.

The narrative is peppered with explanations and quotations, providing the lay reader with a primer, and the esoterically minded with an example of what is achievable through dedication and a commitment to act on the inner planes beyond the usual Triangles and Full Moon meditations practiced by the Bailey community. The powerful experiences of the meditations themselves, the consequences of the stimulation of spiritual energy playing out in the lives of participants, and then the final folding of the initial experiment upon the passing of two founding members, all are portrayed with detachment and sincerity. There is no glorification of the spiritual life.

Chernikeeff documents twenty years of dedication and commitment in a very human manner. Honesty, integrity and above all humility, infuse the pages. Alice Bailey's texts were meant not only to inform and help foster inner transformation, they were given as guidance for esoteric practice in all its forms, for the use by those on the right-hand path of love, wisdom and goodwill. As a singular example of best practice, Chernikeeff and the original Twelves participants are to be commended for their efforts at applying the Bailey teachings, captured by the author in *Esoteric Apprentice*.

The first stage of Twelves was experimental. Now, a second stage has commenced with a new group of participants expanding rapidly with the hope of reaching a full twelve groups of Twelves in the years to come. To that end, *Esoteric Apprentice* is a special book that makes an important contribution to the understanding of esoteric practice when it is aimed at human and planetary betterment. In all, *Esoteric Apprentice* is a valuable resource and a must read for all esoteric practitioners who aspire to foster global change for the better.

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