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THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

MAN'S QUEST FOR SALVATION

THESE ALSO BELIEVE



*

These Also Believe

A Study of

MODERN AMERICAN CULTS

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MINORITY RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

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has helped to create a world public opinion favorable to their aspirations and has helped immeasurably to hasten what has so recently been realized, the emergence of a free independent India.

Chapter Seven

The I Am Movement



In the year 1939, Mr. Guy Ballard, a mining engineer, was in the neighborhood of Mount Shasta in northern California, where, he says, he had been sent on government business. He had long known of the existence of the Brotherhood of Masters or Great Souls, made known in the West through Theosophy. In his travels in the Far East he had heard much of them. There was a rumor, indeed, that a branch of the Great White Lodge existed in this very mountain, called the Brotherhood of Mount Shasta. Deeply impressed by Mount Shasta's grandeur, each morning he would almost involuntarily salute the "Spirit of the Mountain and the Members of the Order."

He had become accustomed to taking long hikes during the days he spent at the foot of Mount Shasta, and it was on one of these long walks that the experience occurred which revealed to him the basis of the I Am teaching. That morning at daybreak he had set out without any specific destination in mind and climbed high up on the side of the mountain, enjoying the view to the south as it spread out before him. At lunch time he stopped near a mountain spring with a cup in hand. He knelt to dip up some water, when suddenly he felt as if there were an electrical current passing through his body from head to foot. Looking about quickly he saw beside him a young man who seemed, like himself, simply to be bent on a mountain walk. As he looked, the young man spoke to him, saying, "My Brother, if you will hand me your cup I will give you a much more refreshing drink than spring water." He handed him the cup which was instantly filled with a creamy liquid. Then the stranger handed it back, saying, "Drink it." He did so and was greatly astonished. The taste was delicious. There seemed to be some electrical

and vivifying effect on both mind and body that made him wonder what was happening.

The young man assured him that what he had drunk was directly from the Universal Supply—Omnipotent Life itself—which exists all about and is subject to our conscious control when we love enough, since the universe is obedient to the behest of love.¹ What- ever is desired can be manifested when commanded in love. It had been this that happened when he held out the cup. To give further evidence he held out his hand and immediately there appeared in it a golden disc. Then followed a longer discourse on the theme of the abundance of supply in the universe, available to those who are fitted to command it. Men do not know of the divine authority with which they are endowed. Because of this they are limited to time and space activities. There is an eternal law of life—that what one thinks and feels he brings into form. Hate, condemnation, lust, envy, jealousy, suspicion, generate, as a natural result, failure and disaster in mind and body and world. As a result of discordant feeling comes disintegration of the memory and body structure. Only the control of thoughts and feelings can enable one to transcend the evils in his surroundings. This requires discipline of a high order. The nature of that discipline he then continued to unfold.

The steps were, first of all, the quitting of outer activity of mind and body. Then follows a description of techniques which have been commonly used within the I Am movement from that time until now. This will be described in its proper place later on. Finishing the discourse, the young man declared that he had known Mr. Ballard for aeons of time in a former incarnation. He had been present, he said, at Ballard's birth, at his mother's death, and it was he who had brought Ballard and Lotus, his wife, together. Then, as Ballard watched, the young man's countenance changed before him, and after a minute he saw in the young man who accosted him the master, St. Germain, a majestic figure, godlike in appearance, clad in a jewelled white robe, his eyes sparkling with light and love. The time had come, the Master asserted, when humanity must be awakened to the understanding of the fact that they have again and again been reembodyed, each time in a new physical body, not by chance or accident but by a proven law. For there are no accidents, but everything has a former cause and every cause is invariably followed by an appropriate result.

¹ *Unveiled Mysteries*, St. Germain Press, Chicago, 1934, pp. 3-4.

"Come with me," he said, "and see what you were in some of your former lives." Then in an instant, Ballard reports, he was outside his physical body, seeing it clearly as it lay upon the ground. Encircled by a white flame, perhaps fifty feet in diameter, and with St. Germain's arm about him, they rose swiftly above the earth and presently looked down upon a town in southern France, where he had lived in a former incarnation, in which he became a great musician. After that he was taken to Egypt, passed rapidly over the desert, appearing finally at Luxor where he saw himself in a temple of great beauty as a ministering priest, serving alongside a high priest who was later to become his own son, Donald. A vestal virgin stood guarding the sacred fire, whom he recognized as Lotus, later to become Mrs. Ballard. As he watched, there appeared a visiting prince from afar who had designs on this same vestal virgin. The high priest, shown in vision what was to happen, was standing guard when the slaves of the visiting prince approached to seize her. Ordered to stop, the slaves still moved forward. Reaching a certain point the priest raised his right hand, pointing it directly at the slaves. As he did so a bright flash like a lightning stroke was seen and the hapless slaves fell dead upon the floor. The outraged prince strode forward, but was ordered to halt. Refusing to do so, again the fire leaped forth as the priest raised his hand, and the prince was no more.

This called for explanation from St. Germain, who pointed out that the priest had merely turned against the men their own hard selfishness and depravity. It was after this episode that St. Germain remarked that there was but one way by which the cosmic law of cause and effect, the round of reincarnation, could be avoided—namely, through the "conscious effort to comprehend the law of life."² To do this the God within must be earnestly sought and conscious contact made permanently with the "inner self," despite any condition in life. With this, Mr. Ballard was returned once again to his body and transported, without feeling any sense of motion, to his room in the lodge. Marveling that he thus should have been able to reach his room without being seen, St. Germain explained that it was possible to throw about the physical body a cloak of invisibility when moving among men. A moment later he was gone. Not long afterward, Mr. Ballard found a card of thin gold on which was written with beautiful lettering an invitation to return hence more to the mountain the next day. Responding to the summons

² *Unveiled Mysteries*, p. 27.

he returned up the mountain trail and had almost reached the meeting place when there suddenly appeared a panther, slowly approaching him. Frightened and tempted to run at first, there suddenly came to him the thought that he had within him the "Mighty presence of God," that this animal was a part of God's life also, and that consequently one part could not hurt another. With this realization his fear left him. He moved slowly toward the animal. As he did so its threatening eyes softened. The animal came slowly toward him until it rubbed its shoulder against him like a house cat. As he continued stroking the animal, St. Germain appeared and assured him that since he had conquered fear he would now be able to do for him what he could not have done otherwise. Holding out his hand there suddenly materialized in his palm delicious-looking small cakes, which, when he ate them, brought a remarkable sense of clarity of mind and vision. Then St. Germain spoke to him saying that instead of using the method of the previous day, of visiting distant places, they would use "The projected consciousness." As he said this he touched the thumb of his hand between the eyes and the fingertips on top of Mr. Ballard's head. At once he felt as if a powerful electric current had passed through his body. Through projected consciousness one is able to become observer and actor in scenes of whatever time or place. After a few moments of silence he saw the Sahara Desert at a time some 70,000 years ago, with the civilization then existing. They found themselves in a magnificent building in the presence of the king who proved to be St. Germain and his daughter, again Lotus, and beside her was a young man, none other than Donald. The splendor of the court was beyond all description and the king notable in his wisdom. His teaching, of course, was the teaching of the I Am.

When this visit was over and he was returned to his former state he felt so exalted that he wanted to remain all night on the mountain and return home the next day. No sooner had he expressed the desire than he noticed a marvelous sleeping bag lying at his feet. St. Germain once again handed him a crystal cup filled with a golden fluid. When he finished drinking it the cup disappeared from his hand. Then he lay down in the sleeping bag, the panther serving as his guard through the night. Coming back to the hotel for the evening meal, he ordered a glass of milk which, to his amazement, when he touched it, became the same liquid that St. Germain had first given him. Just before retiring, while preparing for his bath,

he held out his hand and a crystal-like substance precipitated and settled in his palm. Putting it in the bath the water seemed to come alive, and as he plunged into it he felt a thrill in every part of his body as though charged with an electric current of great power. After this he fell into a dreamless sleep. Experience after experience followed in quick succession.

Four days later a dove appeared upon his window sill. In its bill it carried a tiny card on which was written an invitation once again to meet his mentor, St. Germain. This time the journey was taken in still a different manner. His body was left behind with the panther to guard it while he and St. Germain flew over the mountains to the Royal Teton, where he was to see even greater wonders than anything thus far revealed. At a point where great boulders lay scattered on the mountain side, St. Germain put his hand on one of them. It opened up, leaving a passage, through great bronze doors weighing tons, into the mountain side. Within were marvelous rooms decorated with an unbelievable wealth of gold and precious jewels—rubies, diamonds, sapphires. In the center of one of the great rooms there was seen an enormous golden disc a dozen feet across, which was set with myriads of yellow diamonds in the shape of the seven-point star. Around this were seven discs of lesser size, some two feet across representing the planets and the seven colors of the spectrum. He was to learn later that Great Cosmic Beings pour through these discs their powerful currents of force. It is received by the Great Illumined and the unselfish ones known as the Ascended Masters of Light, who send it to humans on earth. The "radiation affects the seven ganglionic centers within every human body on our planet, as well as all animal and plant life."⁸

At another point there was an enormous eye representing the eye of the creator. In still another room there were records rolled on spindles which had hieroglyphics written on gold. To his amazement he found that he could read there a record of everything that had occurred since the beginning. This, anyone may train himself to read and understand, provided he is willing to give his attention and time to the self-discipline necessary to still the confusion in the outer activity of his everyday existence. In another room were containers of gold and jewels that were to be used for a special purpose. This gold was Spanish gold lost at sea or gotten from lost continents of

⁸ *Unveiled Mysteries*, p. 82.

ancient civilizations. He was told about a school founded in 1887 for the Ascended Host of Masters established on the Inner planes, for the purpose of instructing those who had misused wealth and showing how it should properly be used.

Later they entered a council hall where seventy Masters gathered. Before them appeared something in the nature of a cosmic screen and upon it were portrayed, successively, the life of the lost continent of Mu, long since sunk beneath the broad Pacific, and Atlantis, submerged twelve-thousand years ago beneath the Atlantic Ocean. Here had been developed in remote ages a system of air transportation by the side of which our own modern air transportation was but primitive and crude. Then the ancient civilizations of the Gobi and Sahara Deserts came before them. They saw Egypt rise and fall, as well as the Roman Empire's growth from infancy to its fall; also the appearance of Jesus, bringing light and love and an overwhelming knowledge of the perfection of God. His coming was the revelation to the world of the power of divine love, a complete dominion over all finite things, the divine blueprint for the ages.

The pictures revealed not only what had passed, but what was to come in the far future, and the future of North America was a notable one, for it was she who was to serve as guide for the rest of the world, and to be the center of the golden age yet to come. He was assured that America would stand for a very, very long time. The pictures continued for hours. He was introduced to the great Masters, one of whom invited him to return again on New Year's Eve. After further instruction from St. Germain and having heard music such as he had never heard before, they left the retreat through a small door and passed swiftly back to Mr. Shasta to reenter the body which the faithful panther had watched over for nearly twenty-four hours.

Subsequent excursions with St. Germain took him to the Yellowstone, to Milda, Mexico, which, it seems, was then a colony of the Incas; to Peru, where he, Lorus, and Donald had all been of the royal family; to the buried cities of the Amazon; to a secret valley somewhere in Arizona; and finally, his narrative comes to a climax in another visit to the Royal Teron when no less than seven personages from Venus also pay it a visit.⁴

⁴ The entire narrative as given is based upon *Unveiled Mysteries*, though no specific page references are given. Very little is quoted verbatim, only that in quotation marks, and that, usually, *passim*.

This story was published under the title *Unveiled Mysteries* and became a principal text of the I Am movement. In a scientific age, it achieved a remarkable circulation and was accepted by literally hundreds of thousands of American citizens of all classes as true. The movement, although it had hard enough times in the beginning, had within ten years swept the entire country, captured enormous numbers of people in all the great cities, and was claiming more than a million followers. The writer has heard estimates by members of the movement running as high as three million. As a matter of fact no one knows just how many did accept it, for they never kept formal statistics. They do know how many groups there are. They do have record of the "one hundred percenters," which will be later described, but beyond that all is guesswork. It is a fact, however, that in the late thirties they gathered huge crowds, filling the great auditoriums of the larger cities of America, night after night, for a week or more each. Obviously not all who attended the meetings were converts to the movement, though many became so. Many were there out of curiosity, or to investigate, as was the case with the writer, but in the Chicago crowd he could tell by the way the great majority entered into the spirit of the proceedings that most of them were followers.

The meeting in Chicago was held in the great Civic Opera House. A considerable proportion of the women present wore evening dresses, many men were dressed formally. To one watching in the foyer during an intermission and as the crowd entered, there was little to distinguish it from an opera night. The Ballards were there, all of them. The crowd was enthusiastic. The dramatic entrance of the leaders, exceedingly well prepared for in advance, sent the people into a delirium of enthusiasm. They received an ovation which reminded one, at least in the length of its continuance, of a national political convention. When the leaders spoke they were interrupted again and again by prolonged applause for which an outsider could see little or no reason. They gave their decrees, which will be explained later, with an intensity seldom seen in a religious service. Deep emotion pervaded the whole meeting. It was an impressive occasion, and many must have been attracted to the movement by it.

Out of what did such a movement come? Who were its founders? What were its main teachings, and from whence were they drawn? What gave it its appeal? How were its benefits to be won? What

has been its growth and subsequent fortune? To these questions we now turn.

The founders were Guy Ballard and his wife, Edna Ballard, and they have constantly associated their son Donald with them in it. In the *Unveiled Mysteries*, in every one of the various incarnations which Ballard was permitted to see, there were always Lottus, or Mrs. Ballard, and son Donald, in some relation or other. Unfortunately not too much is known about their past, and that little not certainly known. They were very obscure people before the movement assumed nation-wide proportions. None of the followers whom the writer has interviewed seemed to know, or indeed, to care about what they were in the past. They were the channels through which certain great truths had come. What else mattered? The fact that there has been something of a shadow over the reputation of Guy Ballard, whether rightly or wrongly so, may account for some of the reticence which followers exhibit in talking about Mr. Ballard's past. That record we shall have to deal with, as objective students of the movement, with no purpose of either discrediting or promoting it. But that must come later.

Guy W. Ballard was born on a farm not far from Newton, Kansas, July 28, 1878. Nothing is certainly known of his childhood. A devoted follower declares that once as a child he touched a sick boy and the boy was healed. There may be other legends in circulation concerning the period. At about fourteen years of age he went to live with an uncle at Mt. Vernon, Iowa. Although details of his early life are lacking, two things are asserted of him by those who knew him. He early became interested in mining, and as a young man engaged in selling stock in various western gold-mining ventures. He later came to be regarded as a mining engineer. What training he had for his calling must have come from practice in the field. The writer has found no record of any formal training for such a career. He seems early to have become much interested in fortune-telling and in mediums. Indeed, he became a medium himself, according to the testimony of friends, over thirty years before he launched the I Am movement. Apparently he practiced spiritualism in Chicago for a number of years.

In 1916 he married Edna Wheeler. Born in 1886 at Burlington, Iowa, she had been trained in music. She studied the harp in Chicago and finally became a professional, travelling for some time as a concert harpist. She was teaching the harp in Chicago when she met

Guy Ballard and married him. She, too, was interested in the occult. At various times they are said to have interested themselves in Christian Science, Unity, the Rosicrucian teaching, Theosophy, the teaching of the Swamis and other occult movements. They had close contact with William Pelley, organizer of the Silver Shirts, and at a later time absorbed a considerable part of his following. They became intimately acquainted with Baird T. Spalding, author of *Life and Teachings of the Masters of the Far East*.⁵ At one time Spalding lived with them for a while.⁶

Their only child, Donald, was born in 1918. Apparently they did not prosper. A woman wrote Dr. Bryan in 1938 that she had been invited to visit them in 1919, that she had lived with them seven months, "sharing their poverty, their sorrows, their woes, for they were as poor as the proverbial church mouse." She states that Ballard had an obsession, that of finding a gold mine. "He had dabbled a bit in mining prospecting." She financed a trip to California. They

⁵ *California Press*, San Francisco, California, copyright, 1924.

⁶ Authority for some of the above statements is found in the only extensive study thus far made of the I Am movement. It was made by Dr. Gerald B. Bryan of Los Angeles, who published a series of five brochures under the titles: *The I Am Experiences of Mr. G. W. Ballard*; *The I Am Teachings of Mr. G. W. Ballard*; *The I Am Doctrines of Mr. G. W. Ballard*; *The Source of the Ballard Writings*; and *The Ballard St. Germain*, and a full-length book, *Psychic Dictatorship in America*. These writings of Dr. Bryan are in no sense objective historical writing. They are all of the exposé type, written with the definite purpose of discrediting the movement. Dr. Bryan, a sincere student of occultism, was early attracted to the Ballards and attended their lectures with genuine interest. However, he finally became convinced that the teachings as represented were doing immense damage to thousands of people. Once he had reached this conclusion, he set about combating it with a crusader's zeal. Can such a study be used properly as a source by an objective student of the movement? The answer is, yes, at certain points. Certainly not where the author is obviously expressing his own opinion, though even this may be cited as one typical attitude toward the movement, and the recording of the various types of response to the movement is a part of its history. But where statements of fact occur, based upon letters which he has received from personal acquaintances of the Ballards, or where the author specifically states that he saw or heard certain things, these may very properly be cited. The writer knows Dr. Bryan. He is a professional man. He earns his living by the practice of his profession. He profits in no way by the publication of the material he has gotten together. Indeed, he has paid for it out of his own earnings, not at all certain whether he would ever get it back. Convinced that Dr. Bryan is a deeply sincere individual and that he serves no personal end, other than getting at what he regards as the truth, the present writer will use material from him at certain points where such material seems definitely to be in line with the testimony of other people, and in keeping with what seems to be consonant with the general picture of the movement.

went up into the mountains. He had the idea, she says, that she might lead him to a gold mine, since she was a medium and had a spirit guide. They lived in a cottage in the Sierras, near a gold mine, and every day he and she, or Mr. and Mrs. Ballard would walk out in the mountains, in search of the gold mine. "There was no money in the house," she says, "and we lived upon practically nothing." Finally she left them and saw nothing further of them until after the movement had gotten under way.⁷

Out of the next ten years come occasional stories of Guy Ballard's being involved in the sale and promotion of oil wells and gold mines which did not yield. His followers allege that these are stories told by enemies to discredit his movement. It is a fact that in 1929, March 25, the Cook County Grand Jury indicted him on the charge of "obtaining money and goods by means of the confidence game." Warrants for his arrest were drawn, but he was not apprehended. He was apparently from 1928 on, away from Chicago, in the far West. He states definitely in *Unveiled Mysteries*, in recounting certain of his experiences on Mr. Shasta and elsewhere, that he had not been with his family for two years.⁸ Bryan asserts categorically that he was living during this time in Los Angeles under the name Dick Gilbert. He says that there were a number of people in Los Angeles who knew him at that time.⁹

A former member of the movement, who has, however, withdrawn from it, told the writer that Mr. Ballard "spent long hours in the occult library in Los Angeles, many times going without meals, for he was not well provided for in those days, and all the time he was probably working on this story." Somewhere in the decade 1919-1929 must be found room for his "travels in the Far East" which he mentions on the first page of *Unveiled Mysteries*. Bryan challenges his statement that he ever travelled in that part of the world and brings not a little circumstantial evidence to support his contention. The writer has made no independent attempt to ascertain the facts, or indeed, to judge of the merits of the claims made against Ballard. While such an investigation would be necessary if it were sought to evaluate the movement, it has not seemed to him necessary in recounting its history. Here the movement is. These are the claims it makes. Such and such are the responses it evokes in

⁷ *Psychic Dictatorship in America*, pp. 129-131, *passim*.

⁸ *Unveiled Mysteries*, p. 244.

⁹ *Psychic Dictatorship in America*, p. 138.

people. Whether Guy Ballard was genuine or a charlatan, he and Edna Ballard succeeded in the short space of a decade in convincing multitudes of people that he had the truth, and built a nation-wide movement which continues to flourish, to some degree.

It ought, perhaps, to be said that of all the movements the author has studied, this seemed least willing to cooperate with him. In every case he made an attempt to get the inside story of each movement and its meaning from the founders or leaders themselves. Repeated attempts to secure an interview with Mrs. Ballard were unsuccessful. Charles Sindelar, once a very important figure in the movement, promised an interview, but failed to keep the appointment which had been duly made, having been called out of the city on business affairs. Mr. Paul Potter of Chicago did consent to an interview, which was very helpful. On the whole, however, through no choice of his own, the writer has been forced to go to the people who have been in the movement but have, for one reason or another, dropped out. Even here it was not possible to get any statement, usually, without promising not to reveal, even indirectly, the source of the information. One wrote, "I trust you will keep your word and not disclose the source of the information, as we do not wish to be subjected to the avalanche of letters and personal calls which would be our unfortunate lot." Another spoke of the fear of economic difficulties that might ensue, if it were known that he had given certain information about the cult. Such an attitude has appeared nowhere else among the cults.

After Mr. Ballard left Chicago, Edna Ballard worked in a book store known as the "Philosophers Nook," which was managed by her sister. It was chiefly occult books that were handled, and Mrs. Ballard is said to have read many of them. She published a periodical, *American Occulists*, and another, *The Diamond*. One who was very close to the Ballards at one time told the writer that in later years when they travelled about the country, they always carried a trunk full of occult books which they frequently read.

Thus the whole background of both Mr. and Mrs. Ballard is one of deep interest in the occult, a fitting background for a movement such as the I Am. Some light is thrown on the possible impulse that led Ballard to the creation of his brain child by the same correspondent who told of living with them and of bringing them to California. She says that one evening they attended a certain church. "The Priest and Priestess sat in two golden chairs with the twelve

vestal virgins as the choir. Behind them was a great illuminated cross with flashing lights. During the service the very lightly clad virgins threw flowers among the audience. . . . Afterwards came the Love Feast. A virgin held a basket of strips of bread and the audience was asked to join this holy order which was non-sectarian. Another virgin held a loving cup of wine. . . . Over one hundred and fifty people went forward and partook of that sacrilegious feast. . . .

"During this scene Guy's face was a study. He was enchanted with the show but didn't join the church. As soon as he reached the sidewalk, he could not stop talking about it . . . and from what I now hear he has fashioned his own church upon the same lines, with his illumined background."¹⁰

Dr. Robinson, founder of Psychiana, told the writer in a personal conversation in Moscow, Idaho, that Ballard had come to see him in Moscow and told him he intended starting a movement. "Go ahead," said Robinson, "just so you don't infringe on my material." "I am going to make it dramatic," said Ballard; and certainly he did just that.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF THE MOVEMENT

The first beginnings of the I Am movement are not easy to trace. Edna Ballard had started certain secret classes in 1930, in Chicago. It will be recalled that at that time Guy Ballard was in California, where, in August, September, and October, the startling experiences narrated in the *Unveiled Mysteries* occurred, as he specifically states in his foreword to the volume. It is charged that in Mrs. Ballard's teachings she used some material from William Pelley of Silver Shirt fame. Bryan quotes an unsolicited letter written him by the Pelley Publishers in 1938 as saying: "Mrs. Ballard was a student of Mr. Pelley's spiritual philosophy before she launched upon her purported mission to 'save' Christian America. All her writings and teachings are full of material which she appropriated from Mr. Pelley's writings."¹¹ The fact that the two movements were at that time rivals, and that the Pelley movement had apparently lost heavily to the

Ballards, might lead one to question the validity of such testimony. Bryan goes on, however, to draw so large a number of parallels between the two movements, that it does not seem unlikely that Pelley's materials were known and either consciously or unconsciously used by them.

Pelley had written an article in the *American Magazine*¹² in 1929 under the title *Seven Minutes in Eternity*, which told of an experience he had while living in a lonely cabin in the Sierra Madre mountains. Here one night he suddenly left his body and was carried away into eternity, from which he returned to tell of what had happened to him. Later he received messages from the Masters which he duly published in his magazine *The New Liberator*. Bryan points out that Ballard's experiences of being taken out of his body also occurred in the mountains, at Mt. Shasta, and that he, too, talked with the Masters—St. Germain chiefly, but also many others, and that he received messages from them, which he communicated to the world as their "accredited messenger." Possibly the parallelism is only accidental, but it is a fact that the Ballards succeeded in winning to their own movement a substantial number of Pelley's followers in 1934, while Pelley was in difficulty with the law in North Carolina. The treasurer of the Silver Shirts organization became the "Associate Director of the St. Germain Activities," and he was active in the promotion of the I Am movement until a serious accident a few months later incapacitated him for further service.¹³

It is true, also, that in a message from St. Germain dated August 3, 1934, reference is definitely made to "Christian Democracy," which was the name given by Pelley to his ideal political order, as upholding "splendid ideals, possible of achievement."¹⁴ Also there was reference to Pelley's "Plan of No More Hunger" which, however, it was revealed, "is not entirely correct." So it is completely certain that by 1934 at least, the Ballards were well acquainted with Pelley and his movement. Thus it becomes easier to believe that Mrs. Ballard might well have known and used his material at an earlier date.

Just when Guy Ballard returned to Chicago is not certain. One writer mentions a secret trip in 1931, at which time he told his wife of the revelation on Mt. Shasta through St. Germain. However, it

¹⁰ Quoted by Gerald B. Bryan, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

¹¹ Bryan, G. B., *Psychic Dictatorship in America*, p. 33 quoting from "an unsolicited letter from Pelley Publishers, Asheville, North Carolina, January 10, 1938."

¹² Vol. 107, March, 1929, pp. 7-9, 139-144.

¹³ *Psychic Dictatorship in America*, p. 40.

¹⁴ *Id.*, p. 31.

seems to be certain that Edna Ballard was busy laying the foundations for the later movement. With the knowledge of Ballard's Mt. Shasta experiences, communications began to come to her through St. Germain. Her husband and herself and the boy Donald became the Accredited Messengers through whom not only St. Germain, but Jesus and an increasing number of Masters, speak to the world.

The first regular ten-day class was held in the Ballard home in Chicago in 1934, with some ten persons in attendance, all pledged to secrecy.¹⁵ At this time messages from St. Germain were read. These were subsequently published. Usually the date and place of each message is given. Messages might come through either Mr. or Mrs. Ballard, for both were Accredited Messengers. Donald was also Accredited but no messages given through him have come under the writer's observation.

The year 1934, then, seems to be the year of the launching of the movement in the form in which it is now known. In that year *Unveiled Mysteries* was published under the copyright and imprint of the St. Germain Press, located then and always in Chicago. It was incorporated in the State of Illinois for the purpose of publishing and distributing literature. Of its three directors, two have always been of the Ballard family; the remaining one, some more important leader of the movement, changing from time to time.

In October, 1934, the Ballards, under the name of Mr. and Mrs. Godfré Ray King, the *nom de plume* under which Ballard published *Unbelieved Mysteries* and *The Magic Presence*, opened their first out-of-Chicago ten-day class in Philadelphia. That they had not yet begun to prosper financially is evidenced by the fact, often stated by them, that they used the rent money on their home to pay their railway fare to Philadelphia.¹⁶ It will be recalled that the treasurer of the Pelley movement had been won over to become their promoter. Undoubtedly, therefore, among the first to attend the classes were some of the followers of Pelley. There were thirty persons present on the opening night. By the end of the series a hundred and fifty were attending. The idea had begun to "take." It drew particularly two kinds of people, those who were already believers in the occult, and "patriotic" people, for, as will be seen a little later, a strong emphasis was constantly placed on the welfare and prosperity of the nation.

¹⁵ *Psychic Dictatorship*, p. 21.

¹⁶ Bryan, *Psychic Dictatorship*, p. 37.

A ten-day class was next scheduled in New York, with some success. Meanwhile the Philadelphia group desired another class, to which still larger numbers responded. Back again to New York—thence to the nation's capital for a class—they were finding a ready response wherever they went. The near fatal accident to their agent in Washington, already mentioned, was a serious blow, for he had connections that made it easy to get invitations from various cities. They did not have the same success in the South where they went in the winter of 1935. Indeed, they met not a little opposition. Of that period Mr. Ballard once wrote: "You will never know the forces we have been pitted against since we left Washington."¹⁷ In an automobile accident he suffered the fracture of some of his ribs. By now they had been able to purchase a Ford car for their travel from city to city. Prosperity was beginning to crown their efforts.

From Florida they headed west to California, and Los Angeles, which was to provide them their greatest successes, and to become their home for several years, but also to witness the most formidable attacks made upon the movement. Of this, more later. Los Angeles has long been known as the "city of cults." Probably more such organizations flourish there than in any other city in America. The preparations for their coming had been well made. The "metaphysical" devotees had heard of some of the marvels the Accredited Messengers were relating. They eagerly turned out for the classes and poured out "love gifts" upon the founders in unheard-of amounts. Real prosperity was at last achieved.

Persons who attended the earlier classes and later became prominent in the movement told the writer of the relative simplicity of the Ballards in those days. Mrs. Ballard dressed modestly and without ostentation. They were humble, friendly, kindly, and drew people to them. One informant had the impression that the Ballards could not quite believe what was happening to them. It seemed unreal. Crowds were attending their meetings which had not yet been dramatized, as they were later. Successive classes necessitated moving to larger auditoriums, until finally they took the great Shrine auditorium, seating six thousand people, for their classes in August 1935. The Ford car gave way to extravagant luxury cars, and they began to live in the most expensive hotels in the various cities they visited. At the peak of their success in 1938 their entourage included fourteen persons. Between 1935 and 1938 they visited most of the great

¹⁷ Bryan, *Psychic Dictatorship*, p. 41.

cities, holding classes in the largest auditoriums, and attracting vast numbers of people. Gradually the comparatively simple lectures with which they began gave way to highly colorful meetings, elaborately staged to center attention upon the Accredited Messengers. A complicated ritual of decrees and affirmations gave large place for audience participation.

A description of a typical meeting at that period will not be out of place, for it was characteristic of the movement as a whole as it had developed.

The enormous stage of the Chicago Civic Opera House was ablaze with light. Back center was a colossal painting of the symbol which they had adopted, and which frequently appears in their publications. It is called *The Magic Presence*. Against a deep blue background of sky, rising above mountains which are meant to represent Mt. Shasta and the Royal Tetons, is a human figure surrounded by a cylinder of violet or lavender, shading off into light yellow. About the head is a varicolored halo, and coming down directly into the top of the head is a ray of light from another figure in the sky which is surrounded by concentric haloes of white, yellow, orange, lavender, violet, purple, green, and blue. Radiating in every direction are powerful rays of light, one of which touches the top of the head of the lower figure. It is an exceedingly colorful symbol. At either side of the stage were two large portraits in color, one of St. Germain and one of Jesus, both works of Charles Sindelar, an artist who was drawn in the movement. He alleges that both Jesus and St. Germain sat for their respective portraits. He became very prominent in the movement. Both figures were strongly Nordic in features and quite alike in appearance, kindly, bearded figures, somewhat reminiscent of Thorvaldsen's Christ. Under the powerful spotlights which played upon these paintings they were decidedly impressive.

On the stage, besides the speaking desk with microphone, and a grand piano, there were chairs for the Ballards and others of their leaders, a pianist, a singer, and a Master of Ceremonies. The first part of the meeting was conducted by the Master of Ceremonies, at that time a Mr. Harry Rogers, who had been a successful business man in Los Angeles before he was drawn into the movement. The singer was Mrs. Rogers, who not only sang, but wrote many of the songs that the movement used. It was a lively, happy gathering. The Master of Ceremonies was clever and knew how to keep things moving. He spoke much of the success in other cities; read telegrams

and other letters of greeting; made frequent reference to the Accredited Messengers, referring to them always in the most affectionate terms, and building up carefully to the moment when they would appear. The crowd was all expectancy when finally they made their triumphal entrance. As they swept on to the stage the audience arose and applauded long and enthusiastically. Mr. Ballard was a rather tall slender man with gray hair, combed straight back from his forehead, a rather thin, somewhat aquiline nose, and deep-set eyes. He moved easily, with erect carriage, across the stage, bowing to the applauding audience. He was dressed in a white woolen full-dress suit, a diamond sparkling in his shirt front. Donald Ballard, garbed very much like his father, was then a very young man, with dark hair, and a small black mustache—a rather sophisticated-looking individual. He was accompanied by his wife Margery—richly clad in an evening dress of latest fashion. She was later to divorce him.

But the climax came when Edna Ballard appeared. She was at that time in her early fifties, an extremely well preserved woman, dressed elegantly in a white silk formal gown, her hair dressed in the very latest fashion. She wore jeweled rings on her fingers and a necklace which glittered in the strong spotlight which played upon her. She smiled graciously, and inclined her head in recognition of the storm of applause that swept the great audience. She was clearly the dominant figure of the four principals, not only in her appearance, but in her manner as she took over and thereafter largely directed the proceedings. Her voice was not pleasing. It approached the strident at times, but that may have been the effect of the public address system. At all events there appeared none of the sweetness and gentleness which it is said she had shown in the earlier days of the movement. Hers was now a voice of command.

She both spoke and led in the giving of the decrees which occupied a considerable portion of the time. There were no messages from the Ascended Masters that night, though they often occurred. Mr. Ballard finally took the floor and spoke for perhaps fifteen minutes. His voice was pleasing. He spoke easily, smoothly, and with little emotion until he began talking of what he called the vicious attack upon the Accredited Messengers by certain local papers. They had been giving large publicity to the revival of charges against himself of having practiced fraud in his sale of mining stocks to some women of the community. These charges he labelled as false, and the whole but an expression of the hatred of evil entities who feared

the mighty I Am and the Messengers because of their work, and sought to destroy it. Thus far, he declared, he had exercised great patience. He had not unleashed all the limitless power of the Ascended Masters. But this could not go on. If persisted in he might be compelled to loose powers of destruction that would blast forever all such evil agencies and those who allowed themselves to be deceived by them. At this point he spoke with great feeling.

The great audience, deeply stirred, applauded enthusiastically. He stood long before raising his hand to signal the applause to cease, in order that he might continue. No one among all the applauding multitude seemed for a moment to doubt that he could or would do what he had said. When he finally ended his discourse and sat down the applause continued for a long time. Obviously the Ballards had captured the great audience. The meeting had lasted for some two hours and a half, all told. No collection was taken, but those present had all been given envelopes in which they might place their "love gifts" and deposit them in the boxes, conspicuously placed at all exits. How much was given at such a meeting the public never knew, but it must have been a substantial sum. Expenses had become high at that time. Yet the income was far in excess of outlay. The Los Angeles *Times* reports that in the trial it was disclosed, through the introduction of reports by government prosecutors, that "receipts from the sale of books and love gifts during the classes conducted by the Ballards in the major cities throughout the country averaged well over \$1,000 a day." As an example they cited a seventeen-day class in Los Angeles in 1938, during which "nearly \$15,000 was realized from the sale of books and more than \$12,000 from love gift offerings."¹⁸ The movement was at that time nearing the peak of its popularity.

In the foyer was a display of their literature and other cult materials which were for sale. These included the books by Godfré Ray King—or Guy Ballard, the *I Am Discourses*, the song book—the magazine, *The I Am Voice*, pictures of St. Germain and Jesus, etc.

The author approached the man in charge of sales and suggested that his university library would be glad to have the books of the movement. "By all means," said he. "Take this set right along with you." The writer hesitated. "But, you may need these. There is no hurry. Why not just mail them to the library at your convenience?"

¹⁸ Los Angeles *Times*, December 20, 1940, Pt. I, p. 2, col. 2.

"If I need anything, I have only to decree it, and it is supplied," he replied, as he bundled up the books and delivered them into the writer's hands.

Something like this went on in all the greater American cities. The Ballards were tireless workers. They were constantly speaking, attending meetings, keeping up an extensive correspondence, writing for their magazine, making radio addresses, and granting interviews. Staff meetings were frequently held, and often directions to one or another of its members, or to the whole staff, were given as though coming from St. Germain. These were accepted for a long time without question as bona fide messages from the Ascended Masters, although they always came through Mr. or Mrs. Ballard. "It did not occur to me to question their ultimate source," one of the members of the staff told the writer. Usually, therefore, they were heeded.

In the earlier period, a staff member reported to the writer, there was a spirit of the utmost harmony within the group. Both Mr. and Mrs. Ballard seemed to be humble, sincere people. No one must criticize anyone else. Only good should be spoken of anyone. It was a wonderful experience to share the group life. The Ballards, as stated above, seemed surprised at their success. But as money came in in ever larger sums, and as their power grew, a change was wrought, particularly in Mrs. Ballard. Perhaps it was only human that they should have been so affected. Power is a dangerous acquisition. Its corrupting influence upon the best of people has often enough been observed. Gradually Mrs. Ballard became hard and domineering, imperious in her demands and in her control of the group. For it was she, according to various informants close to the heart of the movement, who was the effective and aggressive figure of the Ballard family of Accredited Messengers. Orders and suggestions usually came from St. Germain, but they came through Guy, or more often, Edna Ballard. Donald Ballard is quoted by a witness in the trial as saying, "Whatever my mother wants, that's what St. Germain says."¹⁹

Meanwhile a permanent institutional form was developing. When the Ballards moved on there had to be some follow-up, and this necessitated some form of local organization.

At Los Angeles the Ascended Master, St. Germain, named a Seven-fold Committee, always speaking, of course, as he must,

¹⁹ Reported in Los Angeles *Times*, December 20, 1940, Pt. I, p. 3, col. 1.

through one of the Accredited Messengers. He appointed one particular person as its chairman to carry on the work in the absence of the Ballards. Dissension developed, however, and the Accredited Messengers were obliged to cancel certain of their Eastern engagements and return to straighten out the difficulties in Los Angeles. The chairman of the Seven-fold Committee was summarily dismissed in a typewritten letter sent from Washington, D. C., signed only on the typewriter by St. Germain. It read in part:

"You are now dismissed from any further privilege or authority to serve the Messengers, Myself, or any of the Ascended Masters in this embodiment. To willingly try to deceive earnest students seeking their freedom in the Light is unpardonable. . . . Too late you will cry out in agony for the mistake you have made.

"Your earth span is very short. Make peace with your God and call on the Law of Forgiveness while there is yet time lest you deprive yourself of the opportunity in the next embodiment. Do not try to bluff such deception through any longer, less you do this thing again in the next two embodiments. When you put yourself under the Red Light, you cut off the White Light. . . . I am making this one last attempt to help you. *Choose*. The All-seeing Eye of God is upon you."

St. Germain.²⁰

In some of the larger cities, notably Los Angeles, there were a number of local organizations, corresponding to local churches, each under the direction of a recognized leader. Such a group was that of Rarana Hendrickson, who had had her own organization not only in Los Angeles, but in various other centers. Recognizing, or thinking to recognize, in the Ballards' teaching much that she herself was teaching, she took her group bodily into the I Am movement and became one of the most influential leaders in Los Angeles, with an enormous following. She later left it, convinced that the Accredited Messengers were not true voices of the Ascended Masters, but the mouthpieces of evil beings, representing themselves as St. Germain and Jesus. She was one of the group included in the indictment brought in the courts, but was exonerated. Such local groups carried on regular classes, financed themselves, distributed the literature and paid in a certain portion of their income to the Ballards. The leaders evidently held their positions subject

²⁰ Quoted by Bryan, *Psychic Dictatorship*, pp. 49-50.

to the will of St. Germain, expressed through the Ballards. Evidence of this fact is to be found in an exchange of letters between Guy Ballard and one of the most loyal of his followers—a member of the staff on the road, and leader of a local group. The occasion of the dismissal was the conduct of the man's wife who had become convinced that the Ballards were not Accredited Messengers of the Ascended Masters, but clever exploiters of the credulity and the genuine needs of the people. The letter forms part of the court record in the trial of the Ballards:

My dear _____:

How tragic that you should be so deceived, or knowing, try to deceive me. We have a copy of _____'s terrible vicious letter written to Mr. _____ in New York trying by her vicious lies to prevent our getting the Woman's Club there—lying that she had resigned instead of being dismissed. . . .

You have been hoping and decreeing that _____ come back into this Light and Groups. She will never come back in a thousand years. St. Germain gave her the opportunity to be silent, which she refused to do, gathering students about her at the cafeteria to try to injure us by her vicious lies. You told me she was not doing this when she sat at the table with others at various times and heard her doing it. You cannot be loyal to the Light and do this. Don't ask me to ever again believe one word of good about either _____ or _____. It is not in them. . . .

It is absolutely impossible for you to go on with your Groups with that treacherous creature in your midst. I am sure it will be much better for you to close your Groups, until such time as *you cut yourself free* from such influence if you should ever wish to do so. . . . Saint Germain has brought into our midst a fine man to take your place. . . .

You had the power in your own hands to stop all this viciousness in the beginning. What a pity you did not do it! Remember, _____, how St. Germain pled for two years to prevent this humiliation coming to you and there is no one to blame but _____ and _____.

May the Light within you reveal the full Truth of this to you. . . .

Sincerely in the Light,
G. W. BALLARD.²¹

²¹ Court record, District Court, Los Angeles, No. 14496-BH., p. 30.

The reply, beautiful in spirit, reveals the degree to which its writer had accepted and, indeed, still at the time held the I Am teaching of the Ballards—and the affection he held for them:

DEAR ONE:

This is just a brief note to let you know that when the *telegram of St. Germain* dated November 12, 1939, arrived it seemed as though the end of the world had come for me. Certainly it was the most unexpected thing that ever could have happened. It seemed incredible to me. I do know I have given my all into this activity—my very life and soul as well. I do know that the Good which the Great Presence was able to do through me will live forever. It seems to me now as I reflect, that the continuous statements of the Ascended Masters in the Dictations saying how much was needed in getting out our decrees "as never before"—for the protection of America and all mankind—I became so imbued with the ideal of trying to render a service, that that became an all-consuming desire and possibly blinded me to other things. . . .

The letter continues describing the closing out of the Group—encloses \$300 surplus funds and ends:

Thank you, dear Ones, for your willingness to carry this wonderful message of the mighty I Am Presence to the world. Thank you for the opportunity you gave me to try to serve. . . . The only thing to live for is to render service to the Light. . . . May the Infinite blessings of the Eternal Light drench you, Lotus and Donald, etc., etc. . . .
With all the love of my heart—

22

Another case of similar nature shows that this must have been a not uncommon occurrence:

January 9, 1939

Mrs. M———:

I have watched, waited and tried to bless you for many months; but since you are more and more determined to condemn the Messengers and join others to destroy This Work, it compels me to dismiss you as a Messenger of This Light.

22 Court record, District Court, Los Angeles, No. 14838-O.C., p. 31.

This means that you will no longer have the radiation of myself or any of the Ascended Beings, until such time as you correct this condition within you.

What a pity you cannot see that you are destroying yourself and all of the splendid work you have done and could do in the future. Since this is your choice I withdraw my Assistance and Association.

May the Great Light within you enable you to see your mistakes and correct them. Kindly return the letters of your Messengership to the Messengers, Mr. and Mrs. Ballard.

In the Service of Light,
SAINT GERMAIN.²³

The great public classes continued through the greater part of the year 1939. Then, following a ten-day class in Cleveland, there came a sudden change of policy. All open sessions were banned and a new system of closed classes inaugurated—and so it continued until now. "In the future," declared St. Germain through Guy Ballard, "all classes and groups will be closed to the outside world. . . . Then the howling pack of wolves on the outside can howl to their heart's content."²⁴

The occasion for this change of policy seems to have been the mounting public criticism of the movement in the press; the revival of the claims of fraud against Guy Ballard; and certain local difficulties experienced in Detroit and elsewhere. A woman attending one of the meetings refused to remove her hat. She was, she claims, forcibly ejected by white-clad ushers, or Minute Men, as they were called. Plunged to the sidewalk, she asserted that she suffered spinal injuries. As a result she brought suit against the Ballards for \$5,000. Westbrook Pegler attended the Cleveland meetings and wrote a vitriolic series of articles about them that were circulated very widely and brought them much unfavorable publicity. A camera man, seeking to photograph the Accredited Messengers, was set upon by Minute Men and sustained physical injuries. He brought suit for \$5,000 also and got court attachments on the Ballards's cars, and various stage properties.

In the first closed class at Washington the Goddess of Light, speaking through the Accredited Messenger, is reported as declaring that

²³ Letter included in Count 7 of grand jury indictment of Ballards, taken from photostat in court record, Los Angeles, September 14, 1944.

²⁴ Quoted by Bryan, *Psychic Dictatorship*, p. 232.

the Messengers (the Ballards), despite the fact that they had never so much as injured a fly, had been attacked by depraved persons in the press. But such individuals would yet come to know that they were dealing with forces too great for them.²⁵ Members were cautioned not to talk outside about what went on in the classes for there were spies about. No further information as to time or place of meeting was to be given.²⁶

This policy undoubtedly had the effect of limiting their members, for no longer could the curious come to observe or to criticize. Even so, large numbers continued to attend the classes, for admittance to which they must now have admission cards. The very fact that it was now secret gave it an added attraction to some.

Already there had appeared a distinction within the group—in the Hundred Percents—who were committed one hundred percent to following the I Am teachings. To be enrolled as one, it was necessary "for the I Am students to follow no other teachings, to abstain from meat, onion, garlic, tobacco, liquor, narcotics, playing cards, and to avoid all sex activities. The average student might indulge in sex activity in the procreation of the race, but the 'one hundred percents' were required to avoid even this experience. They were taught that it was unnecessary to carry insurance because eventually every human whose body was completely purified would ascend. . . . Only One Hundred Percents reach the stage where an ascension could be expected."²⁷

Whether this is a complete description may be doubted, but it affords some indication of the general spirit of the group.

Bryan asserts that henceforth only those who "would sign a pledge of allegiance to the Ballards and their Ascended Masters could get in to the classes."²⁸

But how could new recruits be attracted? Here the device is a preparatory class which the prospective member must faithfully attend for a period of six weeks, in which he is taught some of the basic beliefs and practices of the movement. If at the end of that time he has demonstrated his sincerity of interest to the satisfaction of the leader, then he is permitted to attend the regular classes,

²⁵ *Voice of the I Am*, February, 1940, p. 10.

²⁶ *Id.*, pp. 17-18.

²⁷ From court proceedings as reported in *Los Angeles Times*, December 11, 1940, pt. 1, p. 2.

²⁸ Bryan, *Psychic Dictatorship*, p. 233.

though there seem to be both elementary and more advanced classes beyond this stage.

Two young men known to the writer once entered the preparatory class. They reported that questions during the class session were discouraged, though the leader would sometimes answer them personally after class. Most of the time was spent in learning how to make the decrees. No student seemed free or willing to discuss what he had learned with the rest. It has been exceedingly difficult to get anyone still in the movement to talk freely about what goes on in the classes, or to discuss their beliefs and what results flow from them—a genuine handicap in any attempt really to understand a movement.

In the March 1936 number of the *Voice of the I Am* there is a section devoted to I Am Study Groups, by which is meant local groups, in distinction from the large classes conducted by the Messengers themselves. They are to be "closed," open only to "those who have decided to serve the Light and America, and, by perfecting themselves, be able to give still greater service."

Before each meeting the leader and students "should use the Violet Consuming Flame with great intensity, to purify the place in which it is held." Smoking should never be allowed and anyone smelling of alcohol should be excluded.

The principal purpose of the study groups is to help people understand the Teaching of the Ascended Masters, and through that to give the assistance which is requisite if America is to have protection from the discord across the Atlantic and from "cataclysmic disturbance."

It is "absolutely imperative" that there be no discussion of any kind; the entire time and attention, rather, is to be given to the reading of the texts of the movement, in the St. Germain series. This, it is asserted, is "Jesus' own request" because of the urgency of the hour. It is Jesus' and also St. Germain's request that no disclosure be made of what takes place during a group meeting. If one tells others of his experiences "he releases their energy into the surrounding atmosphere" and does not therefore receive the help intended for himself.

No charge must ever be made for this, for it is "a glad free gift of love from the Ascended Masters." All commercial and selfish motives must be eliminated. No discord or imperfection must enter the class, else the Energy of the Masters cannot come through.

An order is prescribed, including an invocation, the reading of a discourse, the visualizing by the students of the various activities of the Light Rays, for the protection of America and for healing, adoration of the "Mighty I Am Presence," as well as thanks and praise to It for Its great gifts to the world and the individual.

Questions during the reading must never be allowed, for they "break the Stream of Energy" which is powerful to bless.

The directions close with the declaration that Jesus has asked all students under this radiation "to put aside everything else they have ever learned," and enter into such communion with the Mighty I Am Presence that the Ascended Masters may be enabled to give the greatest possible assistance. . . . Any who do not wish to abide by such conditions should remain outside the groups.²⁸

The year 1939 was to bring the movement a still more serious crisis—the greatest of all. On December 29, Guy W. Ballard, Accredited Messenger of the Ascended Masters, died. In most movements the death of the founder, sooner or later, is expected. Not so in the I Am. He would leave them, yes, but he would not die. He would make his Ascension. We shall later return to a more detailed discussion of this cardinal belief. Enough here to say that to make the Ascension means to arrive finally at the goal of all striving. It is to be liberated forever from the physical body, and to be free to move at will throughout the universe. Mr. Ballard had spoken much about Ascension. He had announced from time to time that certain persons had made their Ascension. No one had ever seen an Ascension, though hope was held out that some day this might even occur. Some day the Accredited Messengers would make their Ascension and become Ascended Masters. It was believed that they would do so in the physical body. In a message from Jesus, through Guy Ballard, on November 30, 1938, it was asserted that, although some had entertained the idea that the Ascension might be made after the experience of death, such was not the case.²⁹

But Guy Ballard fell ill. He grew steadily worse and was in great pain. Finally, two days before his death, a surgeon was called and performed an abdominal operation, but in vain. In the early morning of the 29th of December, 1939, he died. The death certificate, of

²⁸ *Voice of the I Am*, March, 1936, pp. 26-29, *passim*.
²⁹ *I Am Voice*, January 1940, p. 6.

which the writer has a photostatic copy, indicated as the cause of his death, "arteriosclerotic heart disease," with "cardiac cirrhosis of the liver" as a probable contributing cause.

Seven days before his death a seventeen-day class had begun at the Shrine Temple, and every day Edna Ballard carried on the regular work. She told the students, according to Bryan,³¹ that because of a serious crisis in world affairs "Blessed Daddy was out with St. Germain." The very day of his passing she conducted the class as usual, giving no hint of his demise. Arrangements were made for his funeral and cremation, and she herself pronounced the funeral oration on the morning of January 1, 1940. That afternoon at the class, at about the time the story broke in the public press, Edna Ballard made the startling announcement: "Our Blessed Daddy Ballard made his Ascension last night at twelve o'clock from the Royal Teton Retreat, and is now an Ascended Master."³² There was a moment of stunned silence. Then thunderous applause broke out. But, "Our Blessed Daddy will come back," she declared, "and there will be a big temple in Los Angeles where he will some day appear in all his Ascended Master Radiance, wielding infinitely more Power of the Light Rays than before his ascension."³³ A little later the class dispersed to read in the afternoon Los Angeles papers that their Beloved Messenger had died. Many would not believe it. They were sure he had Ascended, but the first serious doubts were awakened in the minds of many others. With all the healings that he had claimed through the power of St. Germain, why should he himself have fallen victim to disease? Mrs. Ballard, at the trial, said he healed "thousands and thousands." If he had Ascended why was the body cremated? It was definitely the moment of awakened questionings for a number of leaders, according to the testimony personally given the writer by some closely tied into it. Mrs. Ballard's explanation that "The Beloved Messenger" was given his Ascension under the New Dispensation³⁴ did not satisfy them. The disintegration of the movement began, and it has suffered enormous losses since.

Edna Ballard carried on as before. Hers had always been the chief control, in the opinion of people who were deeply involved in it. As an Ascended Master, Guy Ballard could continue speaking

³¹ Bryan, *Psychic Dictatorship*, p. 245.

³² *Id.*, p. 251.

³³ *Id.*, p. 252.

³⁴ *I Am Voice*, January 1940, p. 6.

to them, dictating the Message through his widow, and he has frequently done so. Soon his picture hung in the I Am meeting rooms, and "calls" were made to him as to the other Masters. His photographs were added to the list of articles advertised for sale by the movement, and the March number of the *I AM Voice* assured prospective purchasers that the pictures had been so charged by Him that those using them in contemplation and making calls to the Ascended Master might look for immediate answers.³⁵

But a still further crisis was soon to be met. Even while Guy Ballard was dying, investigations were being made that led to an indictment by a Federal Grand Jury. On July 24, 1940, the Ballards and a score of their more prominent leaders were indicted on eighteen counts. In part, the indictment was as follows:

"The jury charges that the defendants 'did unlawfully, knowingly, and willfully devise and intend to devise a scheme and artifice to defraud, and for obtaining money and property by means of false and fraudulent representations, pretenses and promises from a large number of persons . . . and that class of persons who could or might be induced by means of any of the fraudulent or false devices, etc., to purchase books, magazines, etc., and each of them to become followers or who might be induced to accept the teachings of the . . . I Am movement and who might be induced to give, send and pay their money and give other things of value to said defendants.'" ³⁶

The trial was long drawn out and had nation-wide publicity. The hostile press made a field day of it, and the movement was badly discredited. The case was finally dismissed on September 8, 1941. The charges were renewed and a second trial, beginning December 2, 1941, continued for thirty-two days, and again national publicity was given it, particularly the more spectacular bits of testimony. A great deal of what appeared in the press was adverse, but many faithful followers testified to the value they had received and the utter confidence they had in its leaders. A Mrs. Holmes said: "Before I knew of the I Am, I was nervous, suffered from indigestion and had a slight curvature of the spine. I am now in better health as a result of the greater contact with my God. The Mighty I Am Presence to me is God in action, the power that bears my heart."³⁷

³⁵ *I Am Voice*, March 1940, pp. 41-42.

³⁶ Court record 14496, Los Angeles.

³⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, January 8, 1941, Pt. II, p. 20.

Another declared: "I now find that the severe sick headaches I used to have are a thing of the past, that I have more energy and am calm and poised."³⁸

Mrs. Schall, wife of Senator Schall of North Dakota, testified that she had spent "large amounts of money" in classes conducted by the Ballards in an unsuccessful attempt to cure her husband's blindness. "Mrs. Ballard told me to visualize a ray of light coming straight down to my husband's head and then leaving it at right angles through his eyes. I went to many, many classes, and kept putting in money, but he remained blind."

She further testified: "Mr. and Mrs. Ballard said that it was fortunate, indeed, that they had come to San Francisco when they did, because they had prevented a tidal wave and a cataclysm." Also, "All that you had to do to get precipitations from the Ascended Masters, including clothing, money, automobiles, or anything—was to visualize certain sparkles in the atmosphere—but I never succeeded in locating any sparkles."³⁹

Since the charges had to do largely with obtaining money by deceptive means, the defense attorney made every attempt to show the disinterestedness of the leaders and their concern to extend the work. He cited the fact that the St. Germain Press discounted its books as high as seventy percent to the I Am corporation, which is strictly a non-profit organization, in order that it might have funds to carry on its work. He declared that Mrs. Ballard turned over 80 to 90% of the love gifts received to the non-profit corporation. She herself, in direct testimony, declared that she kept only those love gifts specifically ear-marked for her. "I've never asked a human being for a dime," she asserted. "I want the whole world to know that."⁴⁰ The defense counsel declared, at the last, that government had not proved that Mrs. Ballard had accumulated large sums of money. He declared in his opening of the defense: "We will produce evidence that Mrs. Ballard, in her will executed prior to these charges, has left everything to the non-profit company for furtherance of the work. If that is a scheme to defraud, then I'm a Chinaman."⁴¹

Government also introduced as evidence the will of Mrs. Ballard which provides for her son Donald a life interest not to exceed \$500

³⁸ *Id.*, Pt. II, p. 20.

³⁹ *Los Angeles Examiner*, December 11, 1941, Sec. 1, p. 14, col. 1.

⁴⁰ *Los Angeles Times*, January 15, 1941, Pt. II, p. 2, col. 4.

⁴¹ *Los Angeles Times*, January 7, 1941, Pt. II, p. 12, col. 12.

per month. This, in contrast to the relative poverty of the Ballards before the movement got under way less than ten years before, obviously seemed to them evidence of the personal accumulation of funds, even if the will did provide that the remainder of her estate was to go to the non-profit corporation for the perpetuation of the I Am activity.⁴²

Much incidental information concerning the movement and the principals was included in the testimony, some of which has already been used in this chapter.

In an impassioned plea, the defense attorney dramatically asked: "Is it criminal to defraud people of frowns, disharmony, bad habits, fear of the future, and lack of a faith in a Supreme Being? If it is . . . then the jury should find them guilty of using the mails to defraud. And you will convict a new type of criminal, highwaymen who teach people to be good."⁴³

The final result of the trial was the conviction of only Mrs. Ballard and son Donald, the former on seven counts, the latter on three. Mrs. Ballard was sentenced to one year of prison on each count, to run concurrently, the execution of the sentence to be suspended, and fined \$8,000. Donald was sentenced to thirty days' imprisonment on each count, to run concurrently, sentence suspended and fined \$400. The Ballards appealed, the judgment was reversed; government again appealed and the original conviction was sustained. Use of the United States mails was denied to the Ballards and to the St. Germain Press, so that since that date all books and articles distributed by the press have had to be sent by express. Orders are received by telegrams and in indirect ways, evidently, for the press still functions.

Meanwhile the case was appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States. This court handed down a decision in late 1946, voiding the indictment against the defendants because of the illegal drawing of the grand jury panel. Whether this will lead to a new trial, or just what its effect will be, it is too early, as this is written, to determine. A letter from a United States Mail Inspector to Mr. Gerald B. Bryan, written December 26, 1947, declared that the ban on their use of the mails was still effective.⁴⁴

Mrs. Ballard was under probation for a year, subject to very rigid

⁴² Los Angeles Times, January 15, 1941, Pt. II, p. 2, col. 4.
⁴³ Los Angeles Times, January 17, 1941, Pt. II, p. 1, col. 2.

restrictions that she cease operating, directly or indirectly, the I Am Movement or any enterprise connected with it, either press or foundation; that she not conduct meetings nor make use of radio programs, that she not represent self as channel of healing, or publish literature alleging that the Ascended Masters appeared to the Ballards, nor that any person could obtain help from the Ascended Masters or other deities; that she refrain from representing, orally or in writing, that the alleged powers of the Ascended Masters had the power to save the United States from destruction; in short, that she refrain from making representations as set forth in the entire indictment, and from solicitation of gifts, either directly or indirectly, during this period.⁴⁴

The trial with its attendant publicity had wrought havoc among the members of the cult. The death of Guy Ballard—and now the indictment of Edna Ballard, was too much for great numbers of followers. The movement was rapidly falling apart.

Mrs. Ballard naturally enough desired to get away from Los Angeles. She sought permission from the court, and it was granted, to leave California. Accordingly, the Los Angeles headquarters were closed and she and son Donald left the city.

The subsequent fortunes of the movement are exceedingly difficult to follow, for almost no one seems willing to talk about it. It has become more and more secret in its operations.

Mr. Paul Potter, to whom the writer was referred by Mrs. Ballard, who herself declined a personal interview, was able to give only some very general ideas of the whole movement outside of Chicago, where he and Mrs. Potter are the leaders at the present moment. Some phases of the headquarters' activities have been moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico, and some of the publishing and literature distribution is done from there, but the real headquarters are now in Chicago. A recent issue of *The Voice of the I Am* still carries the notation: "Published monthly by St. Germain Press, Inc., Chicago, Ill.," but with the additional note: "Send all subscriptions and orders to St. Germain Press, Inc., Santa Fe, New Mexico."

Another publication called *I Am Ascended Master Youth in Action*, which was begun in 1944, is published bi-monthly by "Miracles, Inc.," Denver, Colorado, Box 2561. Here the United States mail facilities are evidently in use. The new corporation is,

⁴⁴ District Court Record, Case No. 14588, Los Angeles.

of course, not enjoined against their use. The magazine is evidently edited by Mrs. Ballard, for in a conversation reported in the November-December issue, page 30, when a question was asked about the publication of personal letters to men in the Armed Services, she replied, that any letters considered to be of interest to students should be sent in, and that she would take out anything that might not be suitable. Further discussion of the magazine will appear later. All current issues of the publications carry advertisements of the various items for sale by the St. Germain Press. Phonograph records of invocations, benedictions, and dictations from the Masters, as well as musical records of duets on harp and organ (the harp played by Edna Ballard), are sold direct from "the Santa Fe Branch of the St. Germain Press, Inc." No postal address is given for either Chicago or Santa Fé. Nor is any direction given as to how orders may be sent. Specifically it is directed that remittances must not be made by Post Office Money Orders.

Mrs. Ballard travels less than formerly and spends a good deal of time in Chicago. Once when the writer asked one of the attendants in the reading room how access to the classes could be secured, she replied that one must enter a preparatory class first for a period of six weeks. She said that Mrs. Ballard was currently conducting the classes and that such power was being released that no uninitiated person could stand it.

Mrs. Ballard does call in leaders from various centers for group conferences and discussion, and these bring her letters and information which she could not receive through the mail. She maintains a remarkable degree of physical vigor. She is said to have accompanied the young people on long hikes in Rocky Mountain National Park during their two weeks' Youth Conference in the summer of 1944. She is sole head of the movement. She alone now receives the messages from the Ascended Masters, though less frequently from her now Ascended Master, former husband, than from others, less frequently even than from a former Roman Catholic prelate, Cardinal Bonzano, who made his Ascension shortly after the great Eucharistic Congress in Chicago. In contrast to Gerald B. Bryan's charge of her dictatorship of the movement, Mr. Potter asserted quite definitely that she was in no sense dictatorial in her control. "She will, when asked to, give her opinion as to whether or not one should or should not do a certain thing, saying, 'You must make your own call and follow the direction you get.'" He finds a reasonable degree

of freedom in the movement, more, he thinks, than is present in the Christian Science Movement. Was Bryan mistaken, or have events had the effect of chastening somewhat the spirit of "Little Dynamite," as she was sometimes affectionately called?

Whether the movement had lost seriously after the trials, he could not say. He thought it likely, but since no statistics of general membership are kept it is impossible to know. He could not speak of other cities or the country generally, but in Chicago the number of One Hundred Perceters is as large as ever. They no longer have the great public meetings, but as many as fifteen hundred have been present in the central headquarters in Chicago in the various rooms. In 1948 they purchased a twelve-story downtown building, formerly a club, about two-thirds of which will be used for carrying on their many activities, including an expanding youth program, one of the more marked recent tendencies in the movement. More literature is being circulated in Chicago than ever. As to whether this is true of other centers, no information is available. Most of the larger cities have reading rooms similar to those maintained by Christian Science. Here one may read quietly, may borrow books, or purchase them.

Some measure of the extent of the Youth Movement may be gained from the fact that they hold a national conference each summer. The 1944 conference is fully reported in the Youth publication mentioned above. No statement is made as to the number in attendance, but from pictures in the periodical it was a group of considerable size. The program was something like that of other youth conferences with a definite recreational provision in the afternoons. Sessions every day were given to "decreeing" and almost every evening dictations from the Ascended Masters came through "Beloved Mama Ballard." In the evenings, frequently, some episodes taken from the *Unveiled Mysteries* or *Magic Presence* were dramatized, a different regional group being in charge each time.

Several times Mrs. Ballard conducted a question and answer period. Subjects discussed were various. Music was the center of attention in one period. Asked as to what instruments were undesirable, she listed the xylophone, accordion, cymbals, banjo, and saxophone as carrying "certain destructive vibratory action."⁴⁵ But the harp was the measure of a civilization. If many played the harp civi-

⁴⁵ *I Am Ascended Master Youth in Action*, November-December, 1944, p. 22.

lization was advancing. If only a few played it, that was a mark of its decline.⁴⁶ One evening the conversation turned on the "Beings of the Elements." Among these are Salamanders, Fairies, Undines, Elves, and Gnomes. Questions concerning them revealed that the Salamanders are involved in Fire activity, are about a foot in height and were created by Helios. Fairies have to do with flower formations and wear clothes of the color of the flower they are guarding. Undines have to do with water, and are about two-thirds the size of an average person. Elves learn their tricks from human beings. Gnomes, represented as distorted beings, were not originally so formed, but have become so by the impurity and discord among humans. Gnomes are builders, are larger in size than Fairies—two and a half to three feet tall. They also guard jewels.⁴⁷

Concerning sports she answered that bowling was not so good because it was so often linked with gambling; skating was fine; swimming should be learned by everyone, but the going in and out of the water brings sudden temperature changes which open the door to sex. Movies are often enough degrading, though some films are good. Fashion shows lead to body consciousness. Going barelegged is not acceptable except in a tennis game, or other sport where appropriate. Slacks should not be rolled up. Boys must not go around with shirt tails out. Anklets are appropriate for young girls, but from twelve to fifteen years on girls should wear stockings. Exposure and exploitation of the body lead inevitably to emphasis on sex!⁴⁸

Still another Round Table discussed the various age groups. It appears that there is a "Youthier" group, evidently of pre-adolescent age. The Youth group includes unmarried persons under thirty-three. The Young Married Peoples Group is from thirty-three to forty-five. Ordinarily these should be kept separate. The Radiation of each group is different. Only where there are too few to form separate groups should they be united in one.

The announced purpose of the Youth Magazine is that of bringing the Ascended Master Youth of America into closer touch one with another and to form an effective group whose sole aim is "to serve the Light so obediently that the 'Mighty I Am Presence,' the seven mighty Elohim, and all the Great Host of Ascended Masters

⁴⁶ *Id.*, p. 22.

⁴⁷ *Id.*, pp. 35-37.

⁴⁸ *I Am Ascended Master Youth in Action*, November-December, 1944, pp. 44-45.

can use them as a perfect channel to bring forth the New Golden Age."⁴⁹

So the movement goes on—changed somewhat and changing. What of the future? To that we shall return later. Meanwhile, what are the cardinal beliefs of the movement, and the chief practices—and whence have they come?

III. WHAT IT TEACHES

A systematic presentation of the theological ideas of the I Am instruction is an impossible task, for as one reads their literature he becomes quickly lost in a maze of what are, to the uninitiated at least, meaningless terms. Words pile up on words, often enough used in other than their generally accepted meanings, as the Ascended Masters try to convey their teaching through the Messengers. Nor is there inner consistency. The system has undergone development. For example, the writer has found no single reference to the I Am in *Unveiled Mysteries*, the original text, the first revelation made by St. Germain to Guy Ballard. Only half a dozen individual Ascended Masters appear there, out of the score or more that have since been disclosed.

In the *Unveiled Mysteries*, near the close, in what was the climactic episode related in that book of unusual episodes, Lantro, one of the Ascended Masters, is made to say that nothing is Supreme but God; that only the Christ is eternal and real; that nothing is True but The Light, and that these Three are "The One."⁵⁰ This has almost a Trinitarian ring to it. But that does not represent the developed doctrine of the movement. The I Am is God, as now taught. It comes from the story of Moses who in the conversation with the voice out of the burning bush, asked, "Who shall I say sent me?" The answer was "I am that I am." (Exodus 3:13-14). The term has been used before. Charles Fillmore of Unity used it long before the Ballards appeared. Spalding in *The Masters of the Far East* used it, and indeed, among "metaphysical" students it has been quite commonly employed.

As at present used, it more often than not seems to be quite impersonal. It is usually spoken of as *It*. Yet to It are assigned such attributes as love, wisdom, will, and purpose which are ordinarily

⁴⁹ *Id.*, p. 2.

⁵⁰ *Unveiled Mysteries*, p. 259.

the attributes of personality. Students are exhorted to love, obey, adore, and give thanks to It. It is the source of all Power, Wisdom, Knowledge. It is Perfection. In a brief summary statement Mrs. Ballard declares that the I Am is the "individual God Presence" of all living persons, usually called the Mighty I Am Presence, and that it was to this individualized focus of the supreme source of all life that reference is made in the incident of Moses and the burning bush.⁵¹ If the writer grasps her meaning rightly, there is a Supreme Source, an ultimate reality, of which the I Am, or as she usually calls it, the "Mighty I Am Presence," is an individualized expression. Yet this is not consistently maintained, for on another page in the same brochure she speaks of "the One Great Source" as the Mighty I Am Presence and asserts that the "Mighty I Am Presence" is Almighty, Limitless Intelligence.⁵²

All this suggests to a student of comparative religion a conscious or unconscious paralleling of the neuter Hindu Reality, Brahman, and the personalized masculine Brahma, coming probably, through theosophic influence, to the Ballards.

If there is but one Real, one Source, one "Mighty I Am," there are hosts of cosmic beings to whom one may turn for help, and through whom the vast resources of cosmic power may be made available to mankind. A cursory glance through four or five issues of the *Voice of the I Am* revealed the following list. How many others there are, the writer does not know. He has seen no complete list, if one exists:—Mighty I Am Presence; St. Germain; Jesus; Great Divine Director; Seven Mighty Elohim; Queen of Light; Venus; Elohim of Peace; Lord Maitreya; Hercules; Archangel Michael; Goddess of Purity; Goddess of Justice; Arcturus; God of the Swiss Alps; Angel Deva of the Jade Temple; Cyclopei; Lanto; Mighty Aries; Chanera; Oromasis; Goddess of Light; Astrea; Ray-O-Light; Nada; Mary; Meta; Quan Yin; Helios; Diana; Seven Kumaras; Seven Mighty Chohans; Cassiopeia.

Some of these are known in Theosophy. Some of them are known to Spalding. Classic mythology provides some, astronomy or astrology others, and some appear to have come out of the Bible, directly or indirectly. Ray-O-Light could reflect the influence of modern advertising upon the "Messengers." Some of

⁵¹ *Purpose of the Ascended Masters' I Am Activity*, p. 15.

⁵² *Id.*, p. 27.

these are Ascended Masters, of whom there are "Hosts" who do not appear by name. These Ascended Masters play a major role in the cult, for it was through one of them, St. Germain, that the revelation came to Mr. Ballard. Who are the Ascended Masters? Ballard himself says that they are truly God.⁵³ Yet they are tangible living beings of great wisdom, power and love who operate freely throughout the entire universe, performing naturally what is ordinarily considered to be supernatural acts.⁵⁴

An Ascended Master is a human being who has by his own effort generated within himself enough power and love to break all the bonds of human limitation.⁵⁵ He is thus independent of time or space. He is able to manifest in any or many bodies or shapes as he wills. There is no limit to his power to dissolve or to assemble an atomic body.⁵⁶

While there is a great brotherhood of Ascended Masters—the "Great White Brotherhood," two Masters stand out most prominently in the Movement—St. Germain and Jesus. It is their pictures that are most prominent in the sanctuaries, although now Guy Ballard also figures prominently along with them.

Who is St. Germain? According to an article in the *Voice of the I Am* he has appeared in many different periods. He was Samuel in the Old Testament. He appeared in the Middle Ages as St. Alban. He was last embodied as Lord Francis Bacon who, it is asserted, wrote the Shakespearean plays. Proof of this is found in the very name William Shakespeare. William is clearly only the will of the I Am, and Shakespeare could come from the fact that he shook the spear of wisdom at the ignorance and darkness of the age in which he chose to manifest himself.⁵⁷ Mrs. Ballard adds in her pamphlet that he was one who worked at the court of France before and during the French Revolution, and that the Revolution would not have occurred if they had heeded his advice.⁵⁸

There was apparently a Comte de St. Germain who lived in Europe in the eighteenth century, a man who was interested in the occult, was known as a necromancer, but who did play a significant role in the political world of his day. He has been an object of interested study among occultists. Helen P. Blavatsky referred to him

⁵³ *Unveiled Mysteries*, p. 134.

⁵⁴ *Id.*, p. 135.

⁵⁵ *Id.*, p. 136.

⁵⁷ *Voice of the I Am*, March 1936, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁶ *Id.*, p. 137.

as, "the greatest Oriental Adept Europe has seen during the last centuries" (Theosophical Glossary) and Henry Olcott, first president of the American Theosophical Society called him "a messenger and agent of the White Lodge."⁵⁹

Whatever his actual historical character, he is the central figure in the I Am teaching—more often invoked, and more often heard from through the Accredited Messengers than any other.

He is especially important to Americans. It has been his ideal for centuries that somewhere shall emerge a nation of Ascended Masters, and he has chosen America to fulfill that ideal. A very important phase of his effort is directed to the purification and protection of the American people.⁶⁰

Jesus is also an Ascended Master. He often speaks through the Accredited Masters, as indicated in the *Voice of the I Am*. For example, on December 25, 1944, he appropriately spoke. The message is reported in the April 1945 issue under the title "Beloved Master Jesus' Discourse, Chicago, Illinois, Christmas Day—Afternoon."⁶¹

Various informants, one-time members of the movement, reported to the writer that this did not occur in the earlier days. Little place was given to Jesus, though reference to Jesus is found in the earliest publication, the *Unveiled Mysteries*.⁶² There St. Germain declares that Jesus was the revealer to the outer world of the "Master Record" and that he is the living proof today that the individual may free himself from every limitation and manifest the divinity he was intended originally to express.

Bryan asserts that when they first came to Los Angeles in 1935 they "almost forgot to mention Jesus," but that "without the Christ even their most enthusiastic supporters balked at accepting their Saint (Germain)."⁶³

They do seem to be somewhat on the defensive in their discussion of St. Germain referred to above, for in one paragraph of the above quoted article concerning St. Germain, effort is made to make students understand that they are in no way attempting to substitute St. Germain for Jesus. No one could do that, and besides there is

⁵⁹ For further information see Mrs. Cooper-Oakley *The Comte de St. Germain*, and the Encyclopedias. Also Bryan, *op. cit.*, Ch. 12.

⁶⁰ *Voice of the I Am*, March 1936, p. 9.

⁶¹ *Unveiled Mysteries*, p. 138.

⁶² Bryan, p. 195.

the utmost harmony among the Ascended Masters. However, each performs a distinctive service. Indeed, St. Germain's attitude toward Jesus is one of profound love, and together they are laboring to make a reality the dream of the I Am age on the earth.⁶⁴

In a dictation, given February 15, 1939, at Oakland, California, and published in the April, 1939, *Voice of the I Am*, Jesus is reported to have said it was perfectly ridiculous for anyone to think of himself as the only authority on earth. Of course he was an authority under the love ray, as was St. Germain under the violet ray, but no one was ever to think of St. Germain as superseding himself or interfering in his work. On the contrary no greater blessing had ever come to earth than St. Germain.⁶⁵

And in still another published discourse he is represented as saying that neither he himself, St. Germain, nor any other Ascended Master were giving out the I Am teachings in the west through any other channel than the Accredited Messengers, i.e., the Ballards, including Donald, and those whom they chose to use.⁶⁶ Thus Jesus seems to be in accord with the I Am teachings. Bryan asserts that he heard the announcer declare in the great Shrine classes, "Dear ones, these blessed Messengers (the Ballards) today are occupying the place that Jesus Christ occupied 2000 years ago."⁶⁷

A distinction should be made here as so often, between Jesus and "the Christ," for the latter term is used by the Ballards, particularly in the earlier writings, very much as it is in Unity and other New Thought groups. Thus in *Unveiled Mysteries*,⁶⁸ St. Germain spoke at Mita, in old Mexico, of the devotion of the Inca to the "Great Central Sun," today called the "Christ." In another connection St. Germain speaks of the Mighty God Presence as the Pure Christ.⁶⁹

The function of the Ascended Masters is to help mankind. They are represented as having vast powers, and of being channels of Power. But they cannot, except in unusual circumstances, help man if he does not make "the call." Nothing is impossible to the power of the "Mighty I Am Presence" and the Ascended Masters, when the channels of power are opened. Everything is possible when they are.

⁶³ *Voice of the I Am*, March 1936, p. 6.

⁶⁴ *Voice of the I Am*, March 1936, p. 29.

⁶⁵ *Id.*, April 1936 issue, p. 26.

⁶⁶ Bryan, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

⁶⁷ *Unveiled Mysteries*, p. 127.

⁶⁸ *Id.*, p. 111.

Man's salvation individually and collectively depends upon opening the way for the Power to manifest itself. Salvation seems to mean Ascension, or becoming an Ascended Master. When men first came to birth on the earth they were "Perfect, Pure, God-Beings" and so remained until some two and a half million years ago. Then they almost forgot their creator and centered their thought upon things of the world. As a result they were reduced to "lower vibratory action." So they sank lower and lower; suffering and distress came upon them, and finally, so-called death. Thus began the round of rebirth which is the lot of man until he attains to the state of Ascended Master. In reality, of course, there is no such thing as death. Man cannot die even if he wishes to, for he is Life-Consciousness from the very heart of God and his Individualized Identity is Eternal.⁶⁸ The "Mighty I Am Presence," as represented in the chart, and of which much is made in the teaching, is above humanity. From it pours, through the top of the head, the Silver Cord of "Liquid White Light,"⁷⁰ and anchors in the heart. Through this ray comes intelligence, energy, life, pure and perfect. But man has free will. This is insisted upon very strongly.⁷¹ Discord and lack of harmony produce imperfection in physical form. When this discord becomes so marked that the God presence sees that nothing further constructive is possible, the sustaining Ray of Light is withdrawn, and what men call death ensues. But this is not the end. The life returns again embodied in a new physical form, and the process goes on until salvation is at last attained—which means, as indicated, until man makes his Ascension and becomes an Ascended Master.

Here in the reincarnation idea is the influence of Theosophy, or Hinduism. There are three conditions that affect the law of embodiment, according to Mrs. Ballard. Characteristics which an individual manifests draw him to a certain channel of embodiment, or he has criticized or condemned some race or group and so must incarnate as a member of it until he knows what it is to live under such conditions. Or, finally, one chooses a certain "channel" in order that he may help a given race or group toward perfection.

Thus the major good that can be sought is to make the Ascension, and it was the hope of achieving it that attracted many people to the

⁶⁸ *Purpose of the I Am Activity*, p. 17.

⁷⁰ *Unveiled Mysteries*, p. 255.

⁷¹ *Purpose of the I Am Activity*, p. 33.

movement. It was the expressed hope of the Ballards and the purpose of St. Germain that America might become a nation of Ascended Masters, and that America might be the "carrier of the Cup of Light to all the Earth."⁷² To die is to be born again. The Ascension is to be attained without death. It was the fact that Guy Ballard died, yet was said to have Ascended, that caused many to begin to doubt.

When does Ascension occur? How may it be attained—or in evangelical language, how is salvation achieved? That the Ascension may be long delayed and that reincarnation may take place over vast reaches of time is evident from the Ballard experiences. St. Germain tells him in their first meeting that mankind must be brought to understand that they have lived on earth in a physical body hundreds or thousands of times.⁷³ He took him back through numerous previous incarnations. Once he was son of a king, who was none other than St. Germain, ruling over a civilization in what later became the Sahara desert, but was then a gloriously productive land. This was some 70,000 years ago, and at the same time Lotrus, or Edna Ballard, and Donald, were likewise of the royal offspring. He reappeared in other ages as a son of an Inca ruler—likewise Lotus and Donald; in more modern times as a famous concert singer in France—a woman—and, more importantly, from the standpoint of patriotic Americans he came to birth as George Washington, Edna Ballard as Joan of Arc, and Donald, Lafayette.

As in Indian thought man is on a cosmic wheel of existence which can only be escaped by a conscious effort at comprehension of the law of life. One must seek and constantly maintain contact with the God within, regardless of external conditions.⁷⁴

In the various Ascensions reported in the Ballard experiences there was no death of the body. It simply disappeared "on a Radiant Pathway of Light" in one case.⁷⁵ In another, an aged white-haired man, David, lost all the marks of age, became youthful in appearance and disappeared in a "dazzling radiance of Light."⁷⁶ Would other persons, followers of the teaching, ascend thus? Numbers of them died, but of none was such an Ascension recorded. Mr. Ballard now and again reported ascensions as taking place from the "Royal Terons" or "The Arabian Retreat," but always, it seemed, it was from

⁷² *Purpose of the I Am Activity*, p. 9.

⁷³ *Unveiled Mysteries*, p. 17.

⁷⁴ *Id.*, pp. 26-27.

⁷⁵ *Id.*, p. 241.

⁷⁶ *Magic Presence*, p. 84.

some secret or inaccessible place. It is reported that some followers went to Mt. Shasta and to the Teton in search of the sacred retreats.

In November, 1938, as reported in the December, 1938, *Voice of the I Am*, St. Germain announced through the Messenger that under a New Dispensation it had been granted by Sanat Kumara, at the intercession of the Goddesses of Light and Liberty, that henceforth certain students would be permitted to make their Ascensions while their human forms, remained on earth.⁷⁷ That is, death of the physical body might not necessarily mean that the individual whom "so-called" death had taken, had failed of the Ascension, as before believed. There was no certainty, but one's friends or relatives could now hope at least that the desired end had been attained. As a matter of fact, in subsequent issues of the *Voice of the I Am* there appear statements by the Messengers that some have Ascended. The February issue asserts that in three different instances, those, who were thought to have died had really made the Ascension.⁷⁸

It is apparently possible for one to win the right to Ascension, but to remain on in the physical body in order to perform some unfinished task. Mr. Ballard related in 1935 that in connection with the Ascension of Daniel Rayborn, he was given the opportunity to make the Ascension but the "Mighty I Am Presence" had commanded him to return to the world and serve. From that hour, he continued, his earthly pilgrimage was finished.⁷⁹ These facts, if recalled, should have made it easier for the followers to accept Mr. Ballard's Ascension after his death, but either they did not recall them, or expected more of the leaders themselves than of the students of I Am.

One of the principal means of attaining to the goal is, of course, the help of the Ascended Masters, and this is obtained through the "decree" or "call." This may be used for personal or for social or group ends. The decree is the I Am counterpart of prayer—but its spirit is not that of prayer in its Christian sense. It is not supplication; it is demand—or command.

If there are powerful constructive forces in the universe, there are also destructive, and there seems to be a perpetual war between them. Destructive forces are attempting to destroy America as well as to do evil to the individual. Much is made of "entities" by the

⁷⁷ *Voice of the I Am*, pp. 5 ff.

⁷⁸ *Voice of the I Am*, February, p. 19.

⁷⁹ Quoted by Bryan, *op. cit.*, p. 73

movement, and it is only through the call of the faithful that these entities can be overcome and destroyed. What the origin of the evil is, is not wholly clear. In the case of the individual it is stated that he is responsible for every activity.⁸⁰ Because mankind centered its attention upon "the outer manifestations," it brought about the suffering and distress which humanity today experiences.⁸¹

At all events evil exists and is militant and must be destroyed. It is through the decrees of the faithful that this is to be accomplished. A typical decree against entities reads thus: (It is addressed to some one of the Ascended Masters or Gods or Goddesses)—

"Send legions of Thy Angel Devas of the Blue Lightning of Divine Love to seize, bind and remove from within and around me and my world all entities—carnate and discarnate—forever! If they be of human creation, annihilate them, their cause and effect this instant. If they be discarnate take them out of the atmosphere of earth."⁸²

Reports were given from time to time of the number of entities destroyed in various cities—over 400,000 discarnate entities from Philadelphia, 332,000 discarnates from the New York City area, and a million from America in twenty-three hours' time one day.⁸³

Also there seems to be a belief in black magic, for decrees were given for the destruction of black magicians, until everyone was said to have been removed from America and most of those from Europe. But the most spectacular aspect of the I Am has been its Protection of America, which has been afforded by the constant decrees of the followers. The Ballards seem to have a passion for America. They have in their public meetings called it variously: God's country, the I Am Country, the "Land of the Light of God That Never Fails." A great many of the decrees are designed to afford this protection. How threatening are the dangers of destruction were often enough told in the public and closed classes. By the decrees, a wall of protection was thrown up about North and South America during the war, and it was this that kept them inviolate from invasion. More than once destructive forces were turned back. In the trial one of the witnesses told of the "disappearance of 346 foreign spies and the dissolution of three German submarines approaching the Panama

⁸⁰ *Purpose of the Ascended Masters' I Am Activity*, p. 33.

⁸¹ *Id.*, p. 19.

⁸² Quoted by Bryan, p. 59.

⁸³ Bryan, pp. 61-62, who cites the original published sources.

Canal," as a result of the timely decrees of the students.⁸⁴ A prominent member of the movement told the writer in conversation that he believed that it was the faithful decreeing of protection by the students that prevented the submarines that were near the East coast on V.E. Day, from injuring America, and that it was this same protection that made the incendiary balloons sent over by the Japanese so little destructive. He added, however, that he did not attribute this wholly to the I Am decrees, for he supposed that other people were also praying for the same end.

The Ascended Masters, through the Messengers, spoke frequently of evils averted from some city. St. Germain said in Washington, D. C., on December 8, 1938, that had it not been for the Messengers, mankind would already have been involved in a destructive war, and that the capital itself would not then be there.⁸⁵ Important cities were warned of "Gas Belts" beneath. Lord Maitreya told New York that their city would have been destroyed a year and a half before had there not been the call to the Light. San Francisco was in great danger and must be protected by decrees.

With this emphasis on patriotism it is not surprising that the announcer in one of their public meetings declared: "This is not a religion; it is a patriotic movement."⁸⁶ Nor is it surprising that it should appeal to many people of strong national pride and patriotism, the "one hundred percent Americans!" One of the auxiliaries of the movement is the "Minute Men of St. Germain" who, it is reported, wear uniforms, march to the music of bugle corps and drums, and engage in patriotic activities. There is a parallel organization—Daughters of Light.

Facts of this nature, plus the fact that the movement took over not a few of the ideas of the Silver Shirts, and the fact that at one time there was a pronounced political emphasis in the speeches of Guy Ballard, and that at one time during a meeting of Minute Men in Washington, D. C., Ballard was saluted as "Commander-in-Chief of the United States of America," led Bryan and others to look upon it, whether rightly or wrongly, as a dangerous incipient fascist movement.

That the movement is exceedingly conservative in its social and economic views is obvious on almost every page of its publications. It

⁸⁴ Los Angeles Times, December 19, 1941, Sec. 1, P. 19, cols. 2-3.

⁸⁵ Voice of the I Am, December 1938, p. 6.

⁸⁶ Bryan, p. 15.

is violently opposed to anything like strikes, or labor agitation or communism, or anything that threatens the status quo. The writer recalls hearing the great Civic Opera crowd, led by Mrs. Ballard, in a decree to blast all strike agitators, and in particular those who were leading a strike at that moment in a large industrial concern in Chicago.

They were uncompromisingly opposed to the New Deal and had a profound distrust of Mr. Roosevelt. Bryan declares that the inner circle, in secret, even went so far as to decree his destruction, using the form "Blast, blast, blast their (Mr. and Mrs. Roosevelt) carcasses from the face of the earth forever." He does not state his authority for this declaration, and obviously he was not himself one of the group. Such a charge could easily be made the occasion of a suit for libel. Dr. Bryan asserts that no legal cognizance of it has ever been taken. All of which doesn't, of course, prove its truth. He did, however, he declares, receive numerous anonymous telephone calls telling him to "lay off" the Ballards, which he assumes came from some of the "Minute Men." His early brochures attacking the movement were purchased and burned, he reports. The reader will draw his own conclusions. The charges form a part of the story which the historian may not ignore.

But there is more to it than just giving decrees. They also make a great deal of *affirmations*. Here the teaching runs very close to New Thought, from which it may very well have come. Mrs. Ballard asserts that whatever man puts his attention upon he compels to come into his world.⁸⁷ This is true of the good as well as the bad. St. Germain, in one of his discourses⁸⁸ advises that one never say, "I am sick," "I am broke." Rather when tempted to do so he should do just the reverse, and affirm silently but intensely that he lives and has his being in the I Am who is the source of all peace, power, and plenty.⁸⁹

For there are many good things to be had aside from the ultimate goal of Ascension. Nothing is offered by New Thought or Christian Science or Psychiana in the way of health, prosperity, or happiness that may not be had through the I Am activity. Undoubtedly part of its appeal lies here, for there are many unhappy, troubled, poor, sick people who want these things desperately. It is probable that

⁸⁷ Purpose of the I Am Activity, p. 23.

⁸⁸ I Am Discourses, Vol. III.

⁸⁹ Quoted by Mrs. Ballard in Purpose of the I Am Activity, p. 25.

not a few persons were attracted from these other New Thought and kindred groups precisely because Mr. Ballard did what he told Dr. Robinson of Psychiana he was going to do—namely, dramatize the movement. Many people profess to have been healed of all sorts of diseases. Mrs. Ballard claimed that her husband had healed over 20,000 and that she herself had been instrumental in healing “thousands and thousands.” There are many decrees for health in their publications. There are also affirmations of health.

One of the notable features of the I Am teaching is that of “precipitation.” It occurred frequently in the Ballard experiences. He stretched out a cup—it was filled; St. Germain reached out his hand, a gold piece appeared in it. It was one of the charges made against the Ballards that they taught that wealth and things could be precipitated by decree. The book salesman, it will be recalled, said “If I need anything, I decree it.”

In the court trial a letter was presented as evidence in which Mrs. Ballard, writing to one of the staff concerning another who was worried about finances, said: “Tell _____ not to worry about her channel of supply. It does not depend on R.T.’s insurance. I command ten times more than he has had or seen to be given _____ right now as her own individual channel, of which no one knows but her Presence! I command this to come forth instantly and become physically manifest as I write these words. Everybody keep harmonious and happy and it will come about sooner than you think. Everybody visualize a definite amount released into _____’s pocket-book this moment. . . .”

(Written with pen, signed)

Mama and daddy.”⁸⁰

An informant reports that in a meeting in Los Angeles, members of the group waved stage money in large denominations as they decreed an abundance of substance. Many persons gave up their life insurance, preferring rather to depend upon the abundance of the resources of the Mighty I Am through decrees. Whether all these things were encouraged by the leaders is not certain. It is always possible for followers in their zeal to go beyond their leaders.

But that there is a non-material emphasis in the movement is clear. Especially in the early teachings there were personal disciplines imposed that were by no means devoid of spiritual possibilities.

⁸⁰ District Court Record, Los Angeles, No. 14496-B.H.

Thoughts and feelings must be brought under control. To accomplish this St. Germain suggested as a first step the stilling of all outer activity, both of body and mind, then the picturing and feeling the body enveloped in a “Dazzling White Light,” and feeling intensely the unity of the self with the God within. . . . One should then acknowledge his joyous acceptance of the fullness of the Mighty God Presence. The period, which should occupy up to half an hour, should be brought to a close with a series of affirmations such as “I am a child of the Light—I love the Light—I serve the Light—I am protected, illumined, supplied, sustained by the Light, and I bless the Light.”⁸¹ Other directions follow throughout the book. “The continued use of affirmation is urged. By it the student raises his outer self into the full acceptance of its Truth and generates the feeling by which it becomes a thing manifested.”⁸²

Adoration of the Mighty I Am Presence is urged by Mrs. Ballard on rising in the morning, and repeatedly throughout the day whenever one has a free moment.

The Ballards make little use of the Bible and do not exhibit great familiarity with it. Now and then they quote it. They never suggest its reading; they do not distribute it, at least it is not in their catalogue of books, etc. Jesus, when he speaks through the Messengers, does not often quote from the gospels. We have already cited a reported message from Him that students “put aside everything else they have ever studied.” Presumably this would include the Bible in many cases, for a great many of the followers have come from the churches in which the Bible is studied and used constantly.

Very little is said concerning the churches. The admonition to forget what they learned elsewhere would seem to cut students off from any divided loyalty, such as is freely allowed by others of the newer movements, such as Theosophy, Unity, Father Divine, etc. In the *Unveiled Mysteries*, Guy Ballard specifically asked St. Germain what the attitude of the Ascended Masters was toward the many channels through which partial Truth was being revealed. His reply reflected a generous attitude of tolerance. In effect he recognized that differences in understanding exist, but that after all, all men are God’s children and serving according to their ability and understanding.

⁸¹ *Unveiled Mysteries*, pp. 11-12.

⁸² *Id.*, p. 68.

⁸³ *Unveiled Mysteries*, p. 233.

The general attitude toward other similar movements seems to be that in the I Am is the fulfillment of their partial understanding. Two of the Masters prominent in Theosophical teaching spoke through the Messengers to say that they were not yet Ascended when they gave their messages to Madame Blavatsky and "could only go so far."⁹⁴ Lady Master Leto declared that Mrs. Eddy had brought another phase of Knowledge to the world, but she declared that this teaching has revealed the final knowledge.⁹⁵ But when these groups opposed the I Am movement, St. Germain declared in one of his dictations that every group which condemned or criticized it, whether Unity, or Christian Science or any other, was bound to fall utterly and find their churches empty.⁹⁶

We turn now to a consideration of the moral teaching of the movement. Mrs. Ballard once declared that their ideal for the student body was that it should be the finest, cleanest, most decent, refined, fearless and well-behaved group on earth, progressing constantly through their calls to the Mighty I Am Presence.⁹⁷ It is probable that this was never meant as a complete statement of the moral ideal, though with liberal interpretation of the terms it would stand up well. For example, what does "well behaved" mean? It could refer to one's personal individual relations or it could include a wide range of social implications. As a matter of fact, the movement largely stresses the individual rather than the social application. They are exceedingly strict in many requirements. For example, no I Am student should smoke, and he must not drink. They are extremely rigid in their control of sex relations. We have already cited Mrs. Ballard's answers to questions asked by young people at the Youth conference, in which she opposes anything in dress or sport that leads to "body consciousness," lest it lead to sex activity.

But they go even farther and condemn any sex activity, even within the marriage relationship, except for purposes of procreation. This naturally produced not a little trouble, particularly where only one member of the couple was of the faith. The result was, of course, the disruption of many families. The writer recalls a visit from a troubled mother whose daughter had become a follower of the movement. Her husband scoffed at it, and was unwilling to accept

⁹⁴ *Ascended Masters of Light*, p. 334.

⁹⁵ *Ascended Masters of Light*, p. 226.

⁹⁶ *Voice of the I Am*, March 1937, p. 10.

⁹⁷ *Purpose of the I Am Activity*, p. 46.

the sex restrictions imposed by it. The marriage, otherwise apparently happy, was about to go on the rocks. What could be done about it?

Married couples who travelled with the Ballards in the hey-day of the movement's success occupied separate rooms in the hotels. When it became a question between loyalty to the movement and to marriage, it was the movement that came first, in the Ballard's teaching. For example, when the wife of an influential member of the party became disillusioned and critical of it, a letter from Guy Ballard informed him that he could not go on in his position of leadership "until such a time as you cut yourself free from such influence, if you should ever wish to do so." (See letter quoted above, page 277). An informant formerly well up in the movement said that only one marriage among a considerable group at one time gathered about the Ballards, remained intact.

Guy Ballard is quoted as saying in a Los Angeles class, August 19, 1935, "The sex urge was only to be used for procreation. When it is used for so-called pleasure, mankind loses the dominion of his physical form When it is wasted, the body becomes decrepit and helpless Your aura becomes charged with the most vicious entities you can imagine."⁹⁸

To make the Ascension is to be preferred above family relationships and the rearing of children. The Goddess of Purity declared in a dictation reported in 1939 that sex or family relationship should not be considered by those who wished to make their Ascension and so escape human bondage. Having spent years in rearing children and in sex activity, ought they not forget it now? They need not fear for the race—enough of those who had no such high purpose could be counted on to perpetuate the species. One might not be free himself if he sought another from sex desire.⁹⁹

Thus the I Am, like Father Divine and to a lesser degree Unity, inclines toward the celibate ideal. It is interesting, if not profitable, to speculate as to why this is. Is it, as some have suggested in the case of the Ballards, a result of unhappiness in their own experience growing out of the sex relation? One informant, very intimately acquainted with the Ballards, does not believe that they loved each other despite the almost touching devotion and loyalty within the

⁹⁸ Bryan, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

⁹⁹ Quoted by Bryan, *op. cit.*, p. 178, from *Voice of the I Am*, November 1939, v, pp. 25-26.

family, recorded in their appearance together in some way or other in the various incarnations in the past, and as the three and only Accredited Messengers to this age. She cites the fact that they were separated for long periods prior to 1932 when he was in the west or, as represented in the *Magic Presence*, traveling in the Far East. This, of course, is not conclusive, for the fondest of couples are sometimes separated for long periods by the exigencies of modern existence. At all events the effects have been disastrous in many marriages and continue to be so. This is, of course, of moral concern.

The charges of fraud, sustained by a United States court, failed to convince many followers of any evil intent or moral fault. Despite the fact that the case was won by the government, many felt and still feel that intent to deceive or defraud was never effectively proven, and that the verdict really represents a religious intolerance and persecution. So present-day I Am followers have declared to the writer.

Charges have also been made that the attitude toward those who left the movement or who have criticized it has been one of vindictiveness and threat of dire consequences. One man avers that he was threatened with physical violence if he did not "lay off the Ballards." The Ballards may, of course, not have known of this zeal of their Minute Men, nor approved it.

Bryan quotes from a saying of the Ascended Master Sanat Kumara on July 3, 1939, in Los Angeles: "Do not again make the call for anyone to return to this Light. Rather call for their release from those bodies that they have chosen to desecrate by vicious falsehoods against the Messengers of Light (the Ballards)." ¹⁰⁰ This he says means calling for their death. In the trial at Los Angeles a witness who had broken with the movement declared that I Am devotees were told to "Blast the Roosevelts, Secretary Morgenthau, and Cabinet Ministers, and annihilate them from the face of the earth." ¹⁰¹ This, to be sure, came from one of the former members of the inner circle who had become disillusioned. Bias is always a possibility in such a case—but it was given under oath to the court.

If these charges are true they have to be taken into account in estimating the moral emphases of the movement.

There is frequent mention by the Masters of God as Love, and

¹⁰⁰ Bryan, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

¹⁰¹ Reported in *Los Angeles Examiner*, December 9, 1941, Sec. I, p. 19, cols. 2-3.

the admonition to act on the principle of love. There is a Law of Forgiveness upon which students are urged to call. Mrs. Ballard writes of a Law of Forgiveness upon which she urges each individual to call for forgiveness of the discord he has brought into the lives of others, past and present, and then for the forgiveness of the mistakes of all men, promising a truly remarkable relief from his own discord. ¹⁰² The writer has found no reference to repentance in any of the writings he has read.

The movement goes on. Mrs. Ballard continues to direct it. She, as "Accredited Messenger" receives and publishes regularly the Messages that continue to come from the Ascended Masters. She is vigorous and active, but in time her strength will fail and the dynamic leader will make her Ascension, as did her husband. What of the movement then? Will Donald, the remaining Messenger, take over? There is not much in the past to encourage that belief, though it is always a possibility. If not, where is the leadership that can hold it together? One prominent present leader thought it might break up into smaller groups, each going its own way under a regional leader.

Just how much vitality it has is not certain, whether enough to maintain itself no one certainly knows. But there is now an extensive literature direct from the Ascended Masters which they regard as authoritative in the same way the Bible is among the churches. Thus they have a body of scripture. It does not seem impossible that the Ascended Masters could find some channel of continuing communication with the group, though according to an important leader there is none at the present time. They have a ritual, an extensive cult paraphernalia, and in fact everything that is required as a basis for a continuing movement. That it will ever again attain the outward signs of success which attended it in the middle and late thirties, may well be doubted.

¹⁰² *Purpose of the Ascended Masters I Am Activity*, p. 32.