

ALVIN BOYD KUHN, Ph.D.
A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF
HIS LIFE AND WORK

By
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Alvin Boyd Kuhn, theosophical pioneer, was born on September 22, 1880. Kuhn himself states that this event took place "on a farm situated in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, at a point about a mile and a half from the hamlet of Upton, some three or four miles from the larger town of Greencastle." Franklin County is near Adams County and one of Dr. Kuhn's most remarkable reminiscences of his mother is that during the Civil War she "said she had heard the thunder of the guns from both the battle of Gettysburg and the earlier one at Antietam to the south." ²

With regard to his ancestry, Kuhn states that "I was in the direct line of descent from the first Kuhn brothers who had, three of them, emigrated from the Wurttemberg section of Germany and settled in this terrain in 1754. Also I was one of the last of the Kuhn family to be born on the ancestral homestead." ³

At the age of three Alvin moved to the village of Williamson and his family resided there until, at the age of seven, he went with them to live in Chambersburg, which was the county seat. Here Alvin attended school from first grade through the first year of high school. He became acquainted with William Alexander, a lawyer who gave him employment as both a janitor and an office boy when he was twelve. Later, Alexander was instrumental in helping Alvin to attend Chambersburg Academy, which prepared its students for Princeton University. Alvin enrolled as a sophomore and graduated in the centennial class of the Academy in 1897. While there, he was exposed to two years of Greek which he later came to feel was of great importance "in my life work in religion." ⁴ His graduation address at the Academy was "The Lyre of Orpheus" which focused upon Jason and the Argonauts in search of the elusive Golden Fleece. It was this address that Alvin felt was especially indicative of his later interest in the Orphics, stressing that his "life work" "is thought to have reawakened the supernal wisdom and to have recovered the secret golden fleece of archaic truth for the modern world." ⁵

After graduation at age 17, Alvin worked for Alexander for a year before the latter helped him obtain a teaching position in northern Franklin County at Garrick Furnace or Metal, approximately ten miles away from Mercersburg. Dr. Kuhn taught

elementary school classes for one year and then proceeded to enroll in Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1899. Having previously learned shorthand on his own, Dr. Kuhn was enabled, with the influence of a Dr. Schaeffer, to land a job as secretary to the President of Franklin and Marshall College. After receiving his B.A. degree in 1903, Alvin taught in several schools: the Tome School for Boys in Port Deposit, Maryland; the Chambersburg High School for ten years; and the Technical Boys High School in Harrisburg, where he taught four languages: Spanish, French, Latin and German. While at Chambersburg High School, he married Miss Mary Grace Leippe, a "daughter of a Reading manufacturer."⁶

Alvin eventually taught for twenty-five years. He was allowed to attend Columbia University summer sessions in 1926 and 1927. Resigning from his position at John Harris High School in June, 1927, he entered Columbia University the following September to study philosophy. "Securing the coveted Ph.D. degree in 1931, I returned to teaching for just one year, after which the career of writing and lecturing that had been a cherished dream for years opened up, and I have continued in that free activity since, adding publishing to the metier."⁷ Dr. Kuhn certainly did his share of lecturing: "I have given nearly 2,000 lectures all over the U.S. and Canada, and always have been asked to return."⁸ Dr. Kuhn did publish a number of his books and booklets, being the Founder of The Academy Press in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Dr. Kuhn's first book THEOSOPHY was published in New York in 1930 by Henry Holt and Co. In later years, Dr. Kuhn wrote of it as follows: "Yes, my book (351) pages on THEOSOPHY: A MODERN REVIVAL OF THE ANCIENT WISDOM was my Ph.D. thesis at Columbia University, the first and only time that any modern university in Europe or America had ever permitted any one to win the degree with a thesis on Theos. It is in a way quite a distinction."⁹ Also at this time (1962), Dr. Kuhn made reference to his second book THE LOST LIGHT (1940) in glowing terms: "This is the foundation of everything. You must not be without it any longer (he soon sent me an autographed copy - R.A.S.). The head of the Philosophy Dept. at Bowling Green (Ohio) University pronounced it the greatest book on religion 'in our language.' He had me out to lecture to his students."¹⁰

Dr. Kuhn's other published books include WHO IS THIS KING OF GLORY? (1944), SEX AS SYMBOL (1945), SHADOW OF THE THIRD CENTURY (1949), and INDIA'S TRUE VOICE (1955). In 1970, his still-selling book A REBIRTH FOR CHRISTIANITY appeared. Currently, Health Research of Mokelumne Hill, California is publishing two other books of Dr. Kuhn: HARK! MESSIAH SPEAKS and his last-completed work on NATURE entitled THE ULTIMATE CANON OF KNOWLEDGE. Health Research is also publishing two valuable studies of Dr. Kuhn to enlighten Christians: CHRIST'S THREE DAYS IN HELL and CASE OF THE MISSING MESSIAH. Perhaps other still unpublished manuscripts of his will also be available to discerning students soon, such as "Rudolph Steiner's 'Mystery of Golgotha'" and KRISHNAMURTI AND THEOSOPHY.

Since much attention may now be given to his last completed book THE ULTIMATE CANON OF KNOWLEDGE, readers may find Dr. Kuhn's early estimate of the importance of this compelling literary production of great interest:

"Now I am plunging into a work on Nature, restoring Nature to its fundamental and significant place in all knowledge. I may call it The Ultimate Canon of Knowledge, following Aristotle's deductive, Bacon's inductive, and Ouspensky's 4th dimensional Tertium Organum."¹¹

Dr. Alvin Boyd Kuhn passed away on September 14, 1963, in Morristown Memorial Hospital in New Jersey. He had just recently completed THE ULTIMATE CANON OF KNOWLEDGE and entered it in an "annual book prize contest" (his words in an undated 1963 letter to Encyclopaedia Britannica) of the Encyclopaedia Britannica in New York City. He also left behind him two unfinished books written in ink called GREAT PAN RETURNS and KRISHNAMURTI AND THEOSOPHY. This remarkably gifted language teacher, lecturer, and scholar will never be forgotten by those who still cherish his written work and his timely message for mankind.

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The writer wishes to thank his associates representing the Estate of the late Dr. Alvin Boyd Kuhn for their invaluable assistance in providing the required information necessary to complete this Biographical Sketch for Health Research.

REFERENCES

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2. IBID.
3. IBIDEM.
4. IBID., P. 14.
5. IBID., P. 15.
6. IBID., P. 20.
7. IBID., PP. 20-21.
8. LETTER OF DR. ALVIN BOYD KUHN TO RICHARD SATTELEBERG ON SEPTEMBER 5, 1962.
9. ¹IBID., P. 2.
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11. LETTER OF DR. ALVIN BOYD KUHN TO RICHARD SATTELEBERG ON OCTOBER 6, 1962.