

Isis of Fellowship
by Olivia Robertson

Foreword

In my eighty-fifth year, I feel the time has come for me honestly to describe how my brother, his wife and myself founded the Fellowship of Isis.

This is a question I am so often asked and as often brush the query aside with a recommendation to read our Manifesto, study the Liturgy or join a centre! What I have avoided as a matter of principle is to be personal. I had encapsulated my personal experiences within a framework of ideas in my book The Call of Isis. I refused to write an autobiography. I wished to give the rest of my life to promoting the Fellowship: not on encouraging a cult of personality, bugbear of our media-crazed society.

Mystical awakening is impossible to describe to those who have not experienced it. Suffice to say that during my life, like thousands of other people, I have had a series of awakenings into "The Real World." The ever-living Now, the eternal reality that exists beneath our dreams and nightmares we call "life" is ever present, awaiting our recognition.

It is the source of our being and all that we hold to be good, noble and true. Most people have had moments of this blessed enlightenment. But everyday living smothers our true awareness, and too many bury their lovely treasures of "living time", fearing that disbelief, ridicule and suspicion will sully their hidden jewels. Like love, mystical experiences are best guarded beneath the veil. To expose is to cheapen.

When someone queried a yogi why he was breaking customary secrecy by publishing his knowledge, he replied: "When the house is on fire, you throw your valuables out of the window." This fateful era is just such a time of crisis.

In 1946 I was alone. In 1952 I was joined by my brother, an Anglican rector, who also had the Great Awakening. We were joined by his wife, who for a whole month was able to sustain the experience. We awaited spiritual guidance, wondering what we were to do. To quote a new version of the words of St. Patrick: "On earth at this fateful hour, Isis cometh in Her power." The Goddess came to us. In 1976 we were ready to begin.

Olivia Robertson
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Chapter I **Foundation. The Throne of Isis**

ORACLE OF ISIS OF TEN THOUSAND NAMES

INVOCATION:

Holy Goddess Isis of Ten Thousand Names, Mother of all beings, inspire us to create a better world, a true reflection of your starry Heaven.

ORACLE:

I am the Widow and I walk alone. My husband is lost in the dream world of Amenti. Throughout the ages I tread the human path. I seek the lost. I am the Solitary One.

Yet am I the Goddess Isis of Ten Thousand Forms. Myriads of existences are born from my starry body, each unique, each valued. In ever-evolving lives they hear my loving call to join Me in My work of creation. Through the cycles of time I seek my husband Osiris, and I water the earth with my tears. In recurring lives I raise Him from the dead as a God. And so I call each one of you.

Heaven is about you, if you will only listen to My Voice. My White Star shines within every creature, however lost. My star shines within the holy mantle of black space. It is the Star of Truth.

When I raise Osiris from the dead with the beating of my wings, reborn, He has wings like myself! As the rising Sun of Love, He becomes my son Horus. Know that this sun is within you, for I am Isis, Mother of the Sun.

A comet heralded the time for your awakening. Come forth in a new day! The ancient symbol of my power was the Throne of Earth, and I ruled the night sky. Now I come forth also by day as the Winged Isis of the New Aeon. To those with vision I shine brightly as the Midday Sun. For Horus and I are One.

Allow your radiant wings to grow, by freeing them from decayed traditions, once noble: from prejudices, once useful: from fear of the unknown, one protective. Truly am I the Many-Named One, for My secret Name is hidden within each one of you. Celebrate the Divine Wedding of Isis and Osiris within your own selves. So will the union bring forth Harmony throughout the earth.

FOUNDATION. THE THRONE OF ISIS

It is useless to attempt any spiritual work without first making sure the foundation's on earth. Otherwise one is like the misfortunate Irishman who, working on our house in Dublin, had to climb a high ladder to reach the roof. On examining the ladder, he found little wheels at one end. Associating wheels with the ground, he placed his ladder in what he thought was the correct manner. He climbed higher and higher. . . the wheels shot outwards – he fell and was instantly killed. I was reminded of Ibsen's dominating Master Builder who climbed up a church spire, holding a cross to crown the top finial. He was distracted by an adoring girl, who waved a white flag. He looked down – and fell. At the foot of the church was the girl, his wife and a housekeeper. The Fates were awaiting their victim.

When my brother inherited Clonegal Castle in 1945, he was studying for the Anglican Priesthood, having completed work in the Admiralty Research establishment in Bath. He married Pamela in 1948. I used to stay with them at his rectory in Bilney, Norfolk. We appeared an orthodox trio; a clergyman, a writer and Pamela Barclay of Quaker background. The transcendental change that overcame us may best be symbolized by a successive series of figures of Mary, which came upon us quietly. Though all of us had experienced mystical awakening, these had given us no mission, no focus, no Grael. We were waiting.

One day my brother, digging in his vegetable garden, came in, excited. "Look what I have found!" It was a minute, plastic figure of "Our Lady of Fatima." I liked her, because I had been born on Friday April 13th, 1917, and the Lady had appeared regularly on the "unlucky" thirteenth of every month from May to October. She had been accompanied by a golden disc heralding her arrival and departure when

she appeared to children in Portugal. I had been shown a rare photograph of the disc, which looked like UFO sightings.

At that time we were very Protestant in our attitude to "idols." But this tiny statuette brought back to me a story my father enjoyed recounting about Canon French, our Rector in Ireland, and the Virgin Mary. Canon French, he said, was denouncing Popish idolatry from the pulpit. "there are certain Roman Catholics who are alleged to have seen the Virgin Mary up a tree. . . in any case a very improper position for a Young Person to be found in." My father was amused at the Virgin Mary being described as a Young Person.

I give this account in some detail, because I wish to emphasize that we three had been nurtured in an anti-feminine perspective, which runs in the very blood-stream of those educated through the Bible. The Patriarchal God was The Only God and that was that. There could be argument as to the exact status of Christ. Indeed, I remember a curious conversation with the then Bishop of Derby, at lunch in the House of Lords (not my usual venue). I had been seeing Beings of crystallized Light; one with wings, some feminine, and asked him what the Anglican Church taught about Angels. He knew I was a young modern author, a "Book Society Choice", so he hastened to reassure me. I did not need to believe in angels. I gathered I did not need to believe in miracles either. As I had been on the receiving end of both such visitations – not often but on occasion – I held my peace. If I had confided in him, he would have thought me deluded. This later would lead to my being able to help hundreds of young people who had experienced the LSD awakening. I believed them, though none of us three Mystics had ever taken drugs.

When my brother decided to live at Clonegal Castle in 1957 and give up regular parish work, Pamela and he invited me to join them in work for the local community. This was in 1960. I agreed.

It was our four years running the Clonegal Local Welfare scheme that laid the foundation for our future work. My brother had discovered that a large part of our neighbours were living well below the poverty line. It was drawn to his attention through a disabled man, who proved to him that in no way could he and his dependents have enough to eat on their small income. He was a Catholic.

At that time – between 1960 and 1964 – there was an impassable barrier between the two sects, Protestants and Catholics. To me it was as archaic as war between Guelphs and Gibbeldines in mediaeval Europe. Some Protestants were horrified when we put into motion my brother's plan. This was to request donations from everyone – including English friends – and then to supply a regular income to those in need – anonymously.

We used to tour the countryside and became acquainted with every family, numbering about four hundred. Pamela had a fantastic memory of people, and wrote down the names and ages of family members when given the information. One Protestant farmer refused to help us, saying why wouldn't we contribute to our own – our church organ fund. I made matters worse by brightly suggesting he could give us his "Tinker Money", change my brother and Pamela would put aside for what is now called "the Travelling Community." The man nearly had a fit. The friendship of Lawrence and Pamela with itinerants was not viewed with approval by the respectable.

It was not only Protestants who disapproved of our eccentric behaviour. I remember Pamela and myself sitting on a hill talking to a Catholic farm labourer. He said: "I hate to see you ladies begging for them spongers. Why don't you get money for the Hound Puppy fund?" He finished by asking had we read Lady Chatterley's Lover?

One fact we learned – and continued to learn after I had gained the title of "Witch of Ireland." As my mother used to annoy me by declaring, most men and women – especially "the working class" share tastes for blood sports, football, the yellow press and gambling with "The Upper Classes." They despise Idealists. A new Irish middle-class was arising, riding the affluent Celtic Tiger, and were indulging in patios, hanging baskets of petunias and plaster gnomes. Idealists, people suffering from what Irish people term "Notions" are regarded as irrelevant. Yeats may bring tourists – Joyce, prestige – Casement, pity – but ordinary men and women go their way, and will only let go their self-interest in church and state if forced to by pedophilic clerics and sleazy politicians. Only young people keep alive the vestal flame within.

The days of the Welfare Scheme suddenly ended when the Irish Government, ever pragmatic, removed social services from local government and so abolished rates. Almost at once extreme poverty vanished and families were lifted to the subsistence level or beyond. The last service to be controlled by

central government was help for the disabled. So the man who first inspired the Scheme was the last to be lifted above dire poverty.

What would be do now? A child found a minute wooden figure of the Virgin Mary in our farmyard. A larger figure was given to us. But we took no notice. Here is a curious anomaly. I knew of the existences of the Goddesses – Beings far more advanced mentally, emotionally and spiritually than ourselves – but said nothing. I was acquiescent in status quo. I remember mentioning the need for “Priestesses.” Pamela laughed. She said my romantic idea of women in tiaras and flowing robes was not what would happen. We would have women as bulky and black and white as penguins. . . Deaconesses. Did I want that?

In the village were English spiritualists, Major Crawford and Dorothy Ryan, with their two small girls. We three began to attend seances. To Crawford’s amazement, two Goddesses “came through.” He said he had not known that there were any. One declared Herself Goddess of the earth and was connected with our old abbey ruins: the other, resplendent in beauty, I recognized as my “Gold Lady.” Later an Irish Seer, John Doran, seventh son of a seventh son, was told by Her that She was the Goddess Dana. I remember Crawford saying rather sulkily that now he would have to put on his best clothes for our gatherings.

It was Dana who for three years gave us a succession of Oracles through the mediumship of Dorothy Ryan. They only ceased when the Ryans left. Sally, her younger daughter, declared that I must not be too upset at their departure, because Dana could now come through myself. She and her mother saw this happening – an overshadowing.

In 1963 Lawrence, Pamela and myself founded the Huntington Castle Centre for Meditation and Study. During my regular winter’s stay in London, I attended a wide spectrum of societies and gatherings, and would invite their members to come and give us a seminar on their particular traditions.

These seminars altered our lives. Our first, whose members consisted of Philip Ross Nichols, Chief of a Druid Order, Josephine and Mohun Lall – and ourselves, was so fascinating that for the first time Christmas seemed less overwhelming. We preferred the seminar. It was new, vitalizing – challenging. Subsequent seminars added to this realization that we were entering a new age of thought and religion. Those who participated included Gerald Gough, an Adept of the Fraternity of the Inner Light, Tamara Bourkoun of the Order of the Sphinx and the Pyramid, and Theodore Beskine of many societies, who even remembered Sinnott of the early Theosophical Society.

Our routine took eight days. In the morning we would assemble in the library for a talk and discussion. The afternoons were occupied by a tour of some prehistoric and esoteric interest, such as the Haroldstown Dolmen, the Ring of the Ra or the Piper’s Stone. Evenings were the most remarkable as we had group meditations. These formed the basis of my latter Magical Journeys. We shared psychic experiences.

The juxtaposition of so many Heads of Orders had a very curious effect, later to be developed in our first FOI Convention in London. I remember vividly the first time we were introduced to an occult magical working. For this particular seminar, Ross Nichols had his name down for his day, Monday. He gave us a Druidic meditation centred on a candle. He was most careful to explain that Druids do not use Magic. But the next day Gerald Gough decided this was a bit boring, so he stole the show by giving us an Inner Light Working. Lawrence, Pamela and I were astonished. This was more dramatic than evensong! Gerald, a true Welsh wizard, invoked the six-pointed star and surrounding flashing pentacles. This drama resulted in Josephine being overwhelmed and she retreated, lying flat in bed. I did my best to bring her round with scant success. I complained to Gerald, who, so far from being penitent, looked rather complacent. “Yes”, he said. “My workings tend to be rather powerful.” He said that the subsequent days reminded him of a short story by Saki. This described two rival magicians at an Edwardian houseparty who – inadvertently – turned their hostess into a white hound. They could not turn her back. Loyal to Druidic reclaim, Ross stepped up his own contributions, involving planets. This was later to cause his summary excommunication from the Order of the Sphinx and the Pyramid.

How did this happen? Josephine, most foolishly but innocently, showed her notes to Tamara Bourkoun. Tamara was outraged by the behaviour of both men. How dare Gerald invoke the pentagram? But her fury was mainly directed to Ross, for his rites as she had become a Druid in OBOD, his Order.

O Tamara, how beautiful you were! Just like a Magician in a Dion Fortune novel. How excited we all were, Ross, Theodore, and Josephine, hearing you were arriving, having left New York for an unspecified but doubtless interesting reason, for Ireland. She had heard an important occult order was starting here. Was she commanding in black? Was she Old Money in tweeds? Totally veiled? She was bringing her Temple with her and one disciple. She was better than we hoped. With a beautiful Russian accent, exquisite designer clothes and occult jewels, she would descend very late every morning with the men anxiously hanging round the stairs awaiting her descent. Upstairs, she had been making animal heads to wear in Golden Dawn rituals. She was an occult Mrs. Thatcher. And, judging from her summary dismissal of Ross – who admired her immensely – as drastic. Gerald joined her Order and she contemptuously tore up his diagram of the Qabalistic Tree as having all the wrong geometric measurements. I guessed many did not know about such measurements. Even Theodore.

When the great moment came for Lawrence, Pamela and myself to launch the Fellowship of Isis, we found we were regarded as being the Outer Court of many societies and orders: “our Irish Branch.” So I must take the opportunity to explain how this happened. We three during our seminar period were enthusiastic followers of each tradition presented to us. Pamela drew in a Tree of Life – “I shall learn it, I SHALL.” We followed the Aetherius Society, the Qabalah, the Theosophical tenets. We had all their books - Steiner, Alice Bailey, - Pamela said she was sick of Lawrence’s devotion to Annie (Annie Besant) and “Alice” (Alice Bailey). We were overcome by the rich incenses of the East – Lawrence brought four children up on Yogananda’s Autobiography of a Yogi. We loved Leyland’s Aradia. Pamela alarmed her Barclay relatives by threatening to send her eldest daughter Melian to a School for Witches. Gnostic Christianity, Zen Buddhism, Sufi Islam and Positive Thinking (down-market USA) played their part. Actually, Positive Thinking was the most useful and the simplest.

It was the time of the great Hippie revolution – what one woman called “The Children’s Crusade.” In the sixties, Clonegal Castle became known as a Castle Pad. Our children had been brought up in a bizarre manner, without formal education. They were well versed in Summerland, the Yoga Lotus Position (so useful when you are older), meditation, astral projection and of course everyday clairvoyance. Curiously enough they turned out reputable members of society, riding, buying good furniture and only one – Melian – went in for environmental protests.

No, it was the English student relatives who came. They had been forbidden to come near us – so they came. They brought Chayan Singh practices from Cambridge, friends who were Hell’s Angels, and Afghan sheepskin coats from Nepal, their usual place of pilgrimage. In the seventies, they forsook India and turned to Western Tradition, helped by Tolkien, Hermann Hesse and Wilhelm Reich. We found ourselves conducting not only meditations but rituals, including the Isis Wedding Rite for my niece Melian and her Indian partner, Swadesh Poorun. This was shown on Irish national television between the Pope’s message and the Protestant Archbishop’s on Easter Day.

What had happened – is still happening – is the actual alteration of the chemical balance of the human brain, once induced in secret Occult fraternities, and Indian practices, but now open to anyone – with no safeguards. Lysergic Acid, Ecstasy and other hallucinogenics were releasing the seven secret seals that guard hidden powers in the human brain, locked there for future evolution.

So I became involved in helping those who had released the dragon of the psychic chakras within the body. I could assist victims, having first enjoyed blissful spiritual awakening, were now helpless, entrapped in “bad Trips”, which used to be called Hell. The new Humanity was being rushed into the scene, untaught, wildly experimental, out of control.

Lawrence, Pamela and myself, like most of our own generation, had never, nor would ever, take drugs. We saw the Establishment at a loss, fearful for the safety of their children, who seemed alien. Yet what had the Establishment to offer? Their Gurus were materialistic scientists who could offer no soul, no Deities, no life after death. The old religions were in decay, sapped of initial inspiration.

It was the time for us to help bridge this terrible gap and bring some harmony onto the spiritual scene. We received guidance from Isis as to our next step.