

MYSTERIES OF THE UNKNOWN

Mystic Places

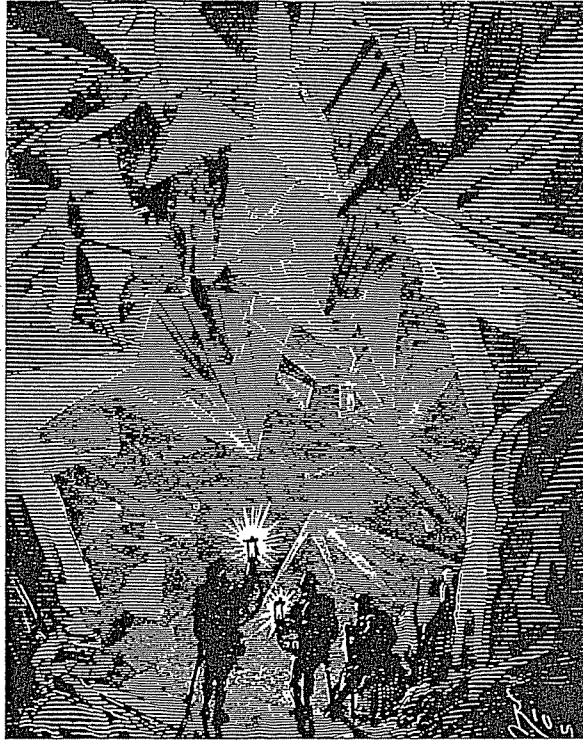


Bk-000051

By the Editors of Time-Life Books

TIME-LIFE BOOKS, ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

Explorers follow a tunnel underground in this engraving from Journey to the Centre of the Earth.



All of these blessings derive from "vril," a versatile fluid that gives these people absolute mastery over all forms of matter. It allows them to fly on artificial wings, to heal and preserve, to light their cities, and to blast away rocks for the creation of new settlements. Its destructive power is so awesome that war has been outlawed.

In this interior world is an ideal society that lives its motto: "No happiness without order, no order without authority, no authority without unity." But Lytton's narrator soon realizes that all is not well. "If you were to take a thousand of the best and most philosophical human beings you could find," he muses, "and place them as citizens in this beautified community, I believe that in less than a year they would either die of boredom or attempt some revolution." He begins dreaming of a glass of whisky and a juicy steak, with a cigar to follow.

The Vril-ya realize that this imperfect earthling is a disruptive force. But he must not be allowed to leave; the Vril-ya intend to return to the upper world, where they originated, and supplant the inferior races that now live there. They resolve to kill Lytton's narrator, but he is rescued by the Vril-ya woman who loves him, and he ascends into the mine shaft supported on her wings.

He ends his account with a chilling message: "Being frankly told by my physician that I am afflicted by a complaint which, though it gives little pain and no perceptible notice of its encroachments, may at any moment be fatal, I have thought it my duty to my fellow-men to place on record these forewarnings OF THE COMING RACE."

At about the same time that Lytton was writing his curious book—which would later become entrenched as a part of occultist lore—an American herbalist was upending the whole

idea of a hollow earth. This mysterious realm is not to be found below us, proposed Cyrus Read Teed, but above us; we are not on the globe, but in it.

Born on a New York farm in 1839, Teed served as a corporal in the Union Army during the Civil War before setting up his practice of herbal cures. He read widely and found that the scientifically accepted theories of an infinite universe were a threat and an affront to his devout sensibilities.

Teed dreamed instead of a more compact and comprehensible cosmos. When he finally conceived of his own theory, he considered it to be not only a scientific revelation but a religious one as well.

Teed expounded on his notions in a book entitled *The Cellular Cosmogony, or, the Earth a Concave Sphere*, which he wrote under the pseudonym of Koresh, the Hebrew name for Cyrus. The known world is on the concave, inner surface of a sphere, he explained, outside of which there is only a void. At the center of the sphere, the rotating sun, half dark and half light, gives an illusion of rising and setting. The moon is a reflection of the earth's surface; the stars and planets reflect from metallic planes on the earth's concave surface. The vast internal cavity is filled with a dense atmosphere that makes it impossible to see across the globe to the lands and peoples on other sides.

Odd as this vision was, it turned out that it could not be disproved mathematically. Indeed, Teed—who took Koresh as his permanent name—offered a \$10,000 reward to anyone who could confute his theory, but he found no takers. When a scientist would use geometric inversion to turn a sphere inside out and map external points in their corresponding internal position, the result would be a universe that looks like the one described by Teed, or Koresh. But Teed did not need the validation of mathematics: "To know of the earth's concavity," he

wrote, "is to know God, while to believe in the earth's convexity is to deny Him and all His works."

Captivated by his vision, Teed abandoned medicine—as well as his wife and child—and proclaimed himself the messiah of a new religion called Koreshanity. To help spread his gospel, he formed a church, established the World's College of Life in Chicago, and began publishing *The Flaming Sword*—a magazine that continued to appear until 1949. With the disciples and donations attracted by his impassioned lectures—and spurred by threats from irate husbands whose wives had abandoned them to join the Koreshans—he bought a 300-acre tract in Florida in 1894 and founded a community he called the Koreshan Unity, Inc. It was meant to be a home for 10 million converts but only 250 actually settled there. They were fiercely loyal, however, and when Teed died in 1908, they mounted a vigil, waiting for him to rise again and carry them with him to heaven, as he had prophesied. The hoped-for ascension did not come to pass; after four days, the local health officer ordered a conventional burial.

T rue to form, Teed's interment was anything but conventional. He was laid to rest in an immense mausoleum with a twenty-four-hour guard—until his tomb was washed away by a hurricane in 1921. Forty years later, his tract was turned into the Koreshan State Historic Site, and Koresh's disciples offered guided tours until the last one died in 1982.

As the twentieth century began, it might have seemed that the idea of a hollow earth would become more and more difficult to sustain. Explorers, after all, were combing the world's surface at an ever-faster clip. But the new information that they brought back did not put an end to hollow-earth speculations. Indeed, two new proponents—William Reed and Marshall B. Gardner—weighed in with major contributions to the field.

The two theorists were stimulated by some anomalous discoveries by polar explorers. For one thing, according to many accounts, water and air temperatures grew warmer with proximity to the North Pole. Fridtjof Nansen, the Norwegian explorer and statesman, reported from far inside the Arc-

tic Circle that it was almost too warm to sleep. He observed that winds from the north seemed to raise the temperature, whereas south winds lowered it.

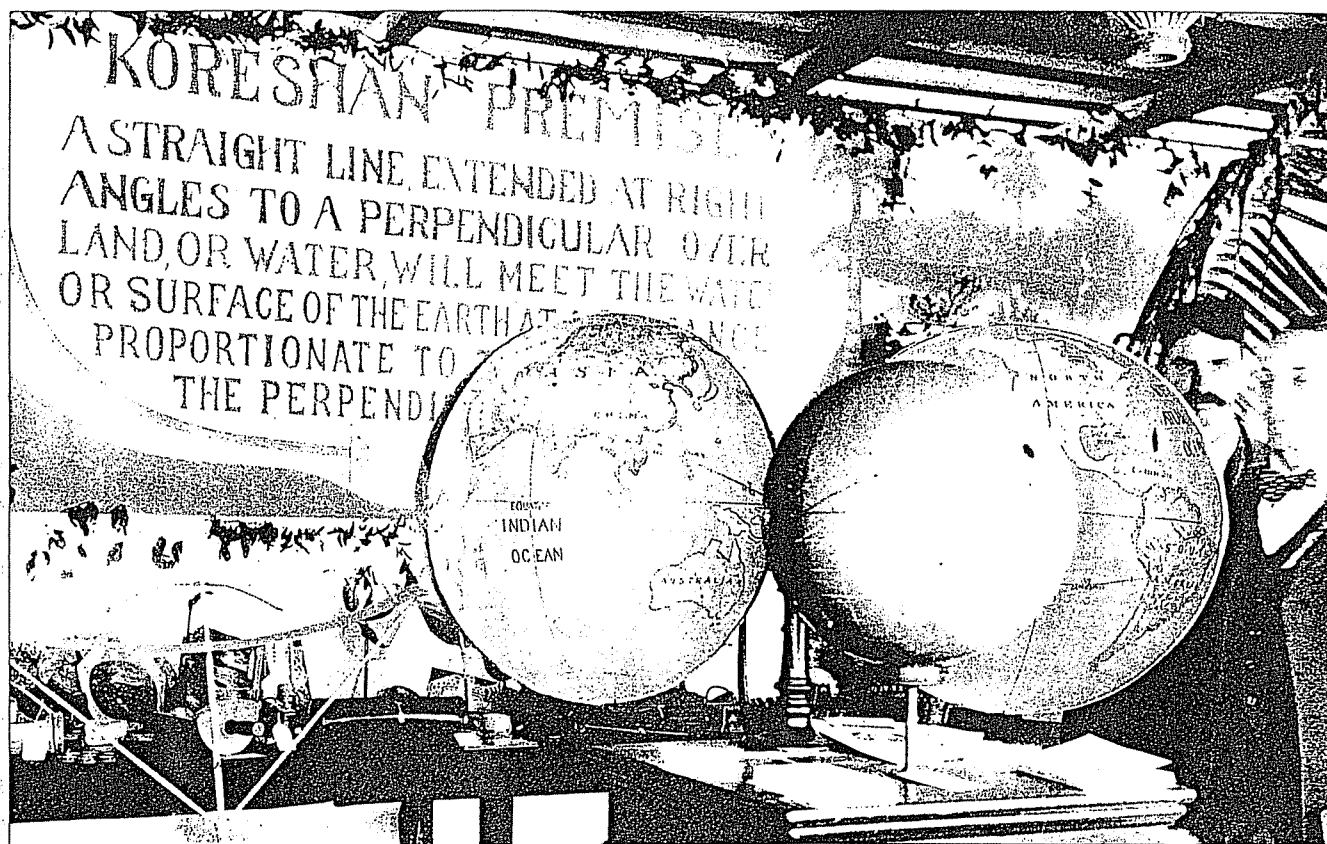
Other travelers reported similar warming trends and described seeing abundant wildlife—birds, mammals, and plagues of mosquitoes—encountered at high latitudes. Many of these creatures appeared to be migrating north, rather than south, and were seen to be returning from sojourns in what should have been barren regions looking sleek and well fed. There were accounts, too, of travelers who saw multicolored snow—red, green, yellow, and black.

An even more arresting mystery had been created in 1846 by the discovery of a long-extinct woolly mammoth frozen in the ice of Siberia. So well had the creature been preserved in the arctic cold that its stomach still contained identifiable traces of its last meal of pine cones and fir branches. Scientists wondered how the enormous animal could have been frozen quickly enough to arrest its digestive processes—which normally would continue even after death. Some theorized that the mammoth had lived near the pole when the climate was much warmer and had succumbed to a sudden freeze. Marshall Gardner, among others, claimed no climate change could have been that sudden.

In his book *A Journey to the Earth's Interior, or, Have the Poles Really Been Discovered*, published in 1913, Gardner devoted a full chapter to the mammoth mystery. The explanation, he said, was simple: Mammoths had not become extinct at all but are "wandering today in the interior of the earth. When he ventures too near the polar orifice . . . , he becomes stranded on a breaking ice floe and carried over from the interior regions, to the outer regions or perhaps falls in a crevasse in ice, which afterwards begins to move in some great glacial movement. In these ways the bodies are carried over to Siberia and left where we have seen them discovered."

Reed, in his book *The Phantom of the Poles*, had an explanation for the colored snow reported by travelers. The red, green, and yellow must be pollen, he said; the black would be soot from volcanoes. And all must have come from the earth's interior, the closest possible source. Accounting for the polar

A bisected globe demonstrates the theories of Cyrus Teed (bottom), whose calculations were intended to prove that humanity lives inside the earth, warmed by a central sun.



warming was more complex, but Gardner and Reed both attributed it to Symmes-like openings into the inner earth. Reed described the earth's crust as 800 miles thick, with gravity acting toward the deepest part of the shell. In other words, the same gravity that pulled objects on the outside of the sphere inward would thrust objects inside the globe outward. Voyagers could thus sail over the edge of the polar openings without being aware that they had left one world for another. Indeed, Reed insisted that "all, or nearly all, of the explorers have spent much of their time past the turning-point, and have had a look at the interior of the earth."

Gardner believed that the interior was lit by a central sun, possibly 600 miles in diameter, left over from the spinning nebula from which the earth was formed. Mars had been formed in similar fashion, he wrote, and its interior sun could sometimes be seen glinting through its polar openings. Reflected light from the earth's

interior sun, according to Gardner, creates the startling brilliance of the aurora borealis at the North Pole and the aurora australis at the South Pole.

On this subject, Gardner parted company with Reed, who maintained that the inner world got its light from the outer sun shining in at the poles. As for the auroras, Reed had an

ingenious explanation. The northern lights, he said, are the reflected images of interior prairie fires or volcanoes. They obviously are not caused by electricity, as orthodox scientists had proposed. This theory Reed disposed of with a scornful, rhetorical question: "Does electricity ever move through the heavens as if driven slowly along by some unseen agency?" To explain why the aurora is most brilliant during the arctic winter, Reed pointed out that the sun shines directly into the south polar opening at that time of year. The ice and snow at the rim reflect and intensify the light that emerges from



the North Pole to create the aurora. Presumably, the situation is reversed in summer.

Reed was eager to see the inner earth, with its "vast continents, oceans, mountains and rivers, vegetable and animal life," put to use. And by his reckoning, the interior "can be made accessible to mankind with one-fourth the outlay of treasure, time, and life that it cost to build the subway in New York City. The number of people that can find comfortable homes (if it be not already occupied) will be billions."

For his part, Gardner thought that at least some of the interior was already peopled by Eskimos, who must have originated there. As evidence, he cited Eskimo myths about a warm homeland to the north of the arctic. He reasoned that the Eskimos must have migrated to the ice-bound region where they now live because it was easier to hunt whales and seals there than it was in open water.

What really fired Gardner's imagination was the prospect of mining the interior, where he expected to find bountiful lodes of gold, platinum, and diamonds. "Our country has the men, the aeroplanes, the enterprise, and the capital," he declared, to appropriate these treasures. But he was not suggesting that the exploration be done out of greed; rather, it was the duty of America, Gardner believed, "with her high civilization, her free institutions, her humanity—for there may be native population to deal with—her generosity," to move quickly. "Do we want one of the autocratic countries of Europe to perpetuate in this new world all the old evils of colonial oppression and exploitation?" he asked.

While Reed and Gardner were content to theorize about the inner earth, Olaf Jansen claimed actually to have been there. Jansen was a Norwegian sailor who retired to Glendale, California, in the early 1900s. Just before he died, at the age of ninety-five, he told writer Willis George Emerson, one of his few friends, an incredible story, which Emerson published in 1908 under the title *The Smoky God, or, a Voyage to the Inner World*. Jansen had waited to reveal the truth, he explained, because when he first tried to tell his story, he was locked in an asylum for twenty-eight years.

As a teen-age boy in 1829, Jansen related, he sailed with

his father to Franz Joseph Land, a group of islands high above the Arctic Circle, in search of ivory tusks. Finding open seas and fair weather, they resolved to explore unknown waters to the north. A storm drove them through a barrier of fog and snow, nearly capsizing their frail sloop, and delivered them to a cloudless calm beyond. They sailed on in fine weather and spied a smoky, furnace-colored sun, which turned out to be a so-called Smoky God that was worshipped as a deity by the inhabitants of the inner world they had entered.

There the Jansens met with a race of good-humored giants, ten to twelve feet tall. They visited a seaport city that was surrounded by vineyards and richly ornamented with gold; they saw a forest of trees that would make the California redwoods seem like underbrush, and they ate grapes as large as oranges. They were whisked by monorail to the city of Eden, where they met the great high priest in a palace paved with gold and jewels.

After two and a half years in this paradise, the homesick father and son were allowed to leave. Carrying bags of gold nuggets, they sailed through the south polar opening. The elder Jansen was drowned when an iceberg crushed their sloop, but Olaf was rescued by a Scottish whaler.

In support of his fantastic tale, Jansen called on some of the same evidence that Reed and Gardner had used in their theorizing. He mentioned magnetic irregularities at the poles, wind-blown pollen, and mammoth bones in Siberia. And he believed that a party of Swedish polar explorers, lost in a balloon after leaving Spitsbergen in 1897, "are now in the 'within' world, and doubtless are being entertained, as my father and myself were entertained, by the kind-hearted giant race inhabiting the inner Atlantic Continent."

All of these inner-earth visionaries suffered for their beliefs. Jansen was locked up; Reed and Gardner were ridiculed. But Gardner, for one, was equally intolerant of fellow enthusiasts. He dismissed Symmes's theory as merely "supposition" and declared: "Of course it is very easy for anyone to deny all the facts of science and get up some purely private explanation of the formation of the earth. The man who does that is a crank. Unfortunately the man in the street does

not always discriminate between a crank and a scientist."

Gardner was enraged to discover that some scientists had the same difficulty and relegated his own work to the crank category. For example, the director of the Lick Observatory of Santa Cruz, California, wrote to him: "It may be a disappointment to you to learn that we are placing your book in the class which contains pamphlets which we perennially receive on such subjects as 'The Earth is Flat,' etc. It is surprising how many of these contributions there are which ignore, with apparent deliberation, the great body of modern scientific knowledge."

"Sheer misrepresentation," fulminated Gardner, who preferred to quote more favorable opinions from a Professor A. Schmidt of Stuttgart ("a very weighty physical hypothesis") and Professor H. Sjogren of Stockholm ("originality and audacity"). Gardner remained unshaken in his beliefs despite the increasing number of explorers—such as Cook, Peary, Scott, and Amundsen—who said they had been to the poles and had observed no openings into the earth. These naysayers were, said Gardner, mistaken. The future would prove him correct: "We shall see all when we explore the Arctic in earnest, as we shall easily be able to do with the aid of airships."

Before full-scale aerial surveys of the poles could shed much light on the polar regions, a kind of dark age intervened, during which exploration and scientific progress were overshadowed by war and tyranny. In 1933, Adolf Hitler proclaimed himself the leader of a Thousand Year Reich, a civilization of supermen that would rule the world. The Nazi philosophy was based on a belief in the supremacy of the Aryan race, and strenuous efforts were made to buttress this claim with evidence dredged from history, folklore, and science. In this atmosphere of myth, hollow-earth theories thrived.

Peter Bender, a German aviator who was seriously wounded in World War I, attracted favorable attention in Germany during the 1930s with his elaborations on Koreshanity. Top Nazi leaders, including Hitler, reportedly took seriously the concept of a concave world that was first proposed by Cyrus "Koresh" Teed. And it appears that these lead-

ers sometimes translated their beliefs into concrete actions.

In April 1942, for example, at the height of the war, Dr. Heinz Fischer, an expert on infrared radiation, purportedly led a group of technicians on a secret expedition to the Baltic island of Rügen. The men aimed a powerful camera loaded with infrared film into the sky at a forty-five-degree angle and left it in this position for several days. The goal, which proved elusive, was to take a picture of the British fleet across the hollow interior of the concave earth.

Other beliefs about inner worlds gained currency among Nazi enthusiasts. There was, for example, a Vril Society, also known as the Luminous Lodge, which held that Lord Lytton's book *The Coming Race* was true and that it offered a blueprint for the future. Members of this occultist body no doubt thrilled to the Vril-ya slogan—"No happiness without order, no order without authority, no authority without unity." But developing a race of supermen was difficult and took time. The Luminous Lodge wanted to make contact with any existing race of superior beings, in the hope of establishing peaceful relations and learning their secrets.

Other organizations followed similar urges. The anti-Semitic Thule Society of Bavaria, whose adherents included Nazi philosopher Alfred Rosenberg and deputy führer Rudolf Hess, sometimes claimed to represent survivors of Atlantis who lived in the Himalayas—the legendary secret chiefs of Tibet. Some of the society's more enthusiastic members believed that they could contact their master, the King of Fear, by use of tarot cards.

According to some accounts, Hitler may even have believed that he had seen a member of a superrace from the inner earth. He reportedly told Hermann Rauschning, the Nazi governor of Danzig: "The new man is living amongst us now! He is here! . . . I will tell you a secret. I have seen the new man. He is intrepid and cruel. I was afraid of him." The führer was also rumored to have dispatched expeditions to Tibet and Mongolia in search of underground wisdom. In further pursuit of such knowledge, special units are said to have scoured the mines and caverns of occupied Europe for passages leading to a

subterranean world. And then there is the recurring legend that senior Nazis took refuge in the bowels of the earth as Germany collapsed in ruins.

By then, the airborne explorations of the poles envisioned by Gardner were well under way. In 1926, United States Navy aviator Richard E. Byrd had become the first to fly over the North Pole; three years later, he made the first flight over the South Pole. He would cross the South Pole by air twice more, in 1947 and 1955.

His findings were hardly calculated to bring cheer to die-hard hollow-earthers. Byrd reported that he flew an enormous triangle around the South Pole, "surveyed nearly 10,000 square miles of the country beyond the Pole," and found nothing. "Although it is somewhat disappointing to report," he wrote, "there was no observable feature of any significance beyond the Pole. There was only the rolling white desert from horizon to horizon."

Elsewhere on the continent, the landscape appeared more varied. Byrd found jagged mountains of coal black and

brick red, where ice-covered rocks reflected the sun "in an indescribable complex of colors, blends of blues, purples, and greens such as man seldom has seen before." Greatly impressed by this natural beauty, Byrd became almost lyrical: "At the bottom of this planet lies an enchanted continent in the sky. Sinister and beautiful she lies in her frozen slumber, her billowy white robes of snow weirdly luminous with amethysts and emeralds of ice."

Byrd's discoveries did little to end speculations about a hollow earth, open at the poles; on the contrary, believers were stimulated to new heights of endeavor—and confusion over dates and places—to discredit Byrd's reports. In 1959, two years after the polar explorer's death, a writer named F. Amadeo Giannini insisted, in a book entitled *Worlds beyond the Poles*, that Byrd had in fact flown into the inner earth—1,700 miles beyond the North Pole in 1947 and 2,300 miles beyond the South Pole in 1956.

Others, including pulp magazine editor Ray Palmer and the highly imaginative author Raymond Bernard, shared a be-

Adolf Hitler is rumored to have dispatched several expeditions to search for proof of a hollow earth.

