

# St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians: An Esoteric Commentary

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## Summary

St. Paul's *Second Epistle to the Thessalonians*, often written 2 Thessalonians, is a canonical book of the New Testament. This article focusses on only twelve verses, 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12, whose meaning has puzzled scholars for centuries. Paul said that he knew divine wisdom but was reluctant to share it with people who were not ready to receive it, so perhaps these puzzling verses have a significance that was intended to be hidden from those who were not spiritually mature. This article provides an argument in support of the following claim: when the characters and events in these twelve verses are interpreted in an allegorical way, they yield an esoteric or inner wisdom teaching concerned with the unfoldment of consciousness. Moreover, the inferred teaching is included in Alice Bailey's modern theosophical writings, which supports Helena Blavatsky's claim that the ancient esoteric doctrine can be found in modern Theosophy.

## Introduction

Helena Blavatsky (1831– 1891), founder of the Theosophical Society, makes a key distinction: "Every ancient religious, or rather philosophical cult consisted of an esoteric or secret teaching, and an exoteric (outward public) worship."<sup>1</sup> Alice Bailey (1880 – 1949), a member of the Theosophical Society before leaving it to pursue her own activities, says that contemporary Christianity has lost its esoteric teaching:

We know much of the exoteric teaching. Orthodox and theological Christianity is founded on it, as are all the orthodox formulations of the great religions. When, however, the inner wisdom teaching is forgotten and the esoteric side is ignored, then

the spirit and the living experimental experience disappear. We have been occupied with the details of the outer form of the faith, and have sadly forgotten the inner meaning which carries life and salvation to the individual and also to humanity. We have been busy fighting over the non-essentials of traditional interpretation and have omitted to teach the secret and the technique of the Christian life.<sup>2</sup>

Is it possible to restore Christianity's lost esoteric teaching? This article attempts to unveil an esoteric teaching that lies hidden in 2 Thessalonians. St. Paul, an influential exponent of early Christianity, is traditionally regarded as the author of this epistle, because it begins, "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians" (2 Thessalonians 1:1), and ends, "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write" (2 Thessalonians 3:17).<sup>3</sup>

This article focusses on only twelve verses, 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12, rather than on the epistle as a whole. Paul did not compose these twelve verses in a lucid way, however, as shown by the fact that they have puzzled scholars for centuries. For example, St. Augustine (354 – 430), one of the foremost theologians of early Christianity, wrote the following

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## About the Author

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about these verses: “I admit that the meaning of this completely escapes me.”<sup>4</sup> Professor Leon Morris gives a contemporary assessment: “This is an extraordinarily difficult passage, not made any easier by the fact that its subject matter is not dealt with elsewhere.”<sup>5</sup> Professor Beverly Gaventa provides another contemporary assessment:

Readers of the New Testament stumbling for the first time into the middle of 2 Thessalonians may be forgiven if they feel like Alice tumbling down a dark hole into Wonderland. The residents of this Wonderland are new and mysterious, their relationship to one another unclear, and the stranger responds with a sense of disorientation.<sup>6</sup>

The number of interpretations evoked by a biblical text seems to be directly proportional to its degree of obscurity. If the meaning of a text were clear, then the only interpretation evoked by it would be its obvious meaning. On the other hand, Dr. Gary Demarest notes the following: “The passage before us, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, is undoubtedly one of the most difficult in all of Paul’s writings. It has given rise to more speculative and diverse interpretations than any other section of Paul’s letters.”<sup>7</sup> If one of the available interpretations were convincing, then contemporary scholars would refrain from saying that the passage is “extraordinarily difficult.” Therefore, our conclusion is that none of the available interpretations is convincing.

When encountering 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, we have three courses of action: first, accept one of the many interpretations that have been concocted; second, consider the passage as unworthy of serious consideration, because it does not seem to speak directly to the most important issues of life; or third, study the text carefully in search of hidden wisdom. Let us reject the first course of action, because of the earlier conclusion that none of the available interpretations is convincing. Instead let us consider the second course of action and ask this question: are Paul’s instructions worthy of serious consideration?

## The Great Initiate

St. Paul (c. 5 – c. 67), known also as Paul the Apostle, taught the gospel of Christ to the first-century world. He is generally considered to be one of the most important figures in the growth of early Christianity: he founded several churches in Asia Minor and Europe, fourteen of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament have traditionally been attributed to him, and approximately half of the *Acts of the Apostles* treats his life and works.

Paul is highly regarded by writers in the theological tradition:

Blavatsky writes, “There was but one apostle of Jesus worthy of that name, and that was Paul,”<sup>8</sup> “Paul was the only one of the apostles who had understood the secret ideas underlying the teachings of Jesus, although he had never met him,”<sup>9</sup> “the cautious hints of Paul have all the true esoteric meaning,”<sup>10</sup> and “Paul was undeniably an Initiate.”<sup>11</sup>

Bailey refers to “the great initiate, St. Paul,”<sup>12</sup> and says, “I would suggest that there has never been a better description of the nature of love than that given by the initiate Paul, even though the translation of his words is faulty at times. Study those passages in the *New Testament* in which he defines love.”<sup>13</sup>

Here, the term *initiate* is used in the sense of one possessed of divine wisdom. Blavatsky also writes:

Paul declares that: “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise *master-builder*, I have laid the foundation.” [1 Corinthians 3:10] This expression, *master-builder*, used only *once* in the whole *Bible*, and by Paul, may be considered as a whole revelation ... Therefore, when Paul entitles himself a “*master-builder*,” he is using a word pre-eminently kabalistic, theurgic and masonic, and one which no other apostle uses. He thus declares himself an *adept*, having the right to *initiate* others.<sup>14</sup>

Thus Paul is thought to have possessed divine wisdom and the right to initiate others into it. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, he distinguishes between exoteric and esoteric knowledge:

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

In other words, Paul taught his new converts an exoteric teaching, which is represented by milk, rather than an esoteric teaching, which is represented by solid food. Yet Paul, in 1 Corinthians 2:6-7, says that he does convey divine wisdom to those who are spiritually mature:

Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory.

According to these quotations, Paul knew divine wisdom but was reluctant to share it with students who were not ready to receive it. Thus he may have inserted divine wisdom into his epistles in a veiled way, with the intention that it would be understood only by those who were spiritually mature.

Students may be inclined to skip over 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, because these obscure verses, which have been likened to “tumbling down a dark hole into Wonderland,” do not seem to speak directly to the most important issues of life. On the other hand, commentators on Paul mention “his usual clarity,”<sup>15</sup> so the unusual obscurity of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 may indicate the presence of Paul's veiled wisdom. Put differently, Paul may have intentionally made the passage obscure by veiling, or concealing, his wisdom. If Paul did veil his wisdom, then the unveiled version of his wisdom would be expected to speak directly to the most important issues of life. Thus let us reject the second course of action, which is to consider the passage as unworthy of serious consideration, and instead proceed with the third course of action: study Paul's text carefully in search of hidden wisdom.

## Method of Interpretation

If 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12 contained hidden wisdom that biblical translators do not understand, then the translators might incorporate their misunderstandings into their translations. Thus, when searching for a possible esoteric teaching that lies hidden in the text, it is prudent to use a literal English translation that avoids interpreting passages for the reader.

This article uses the New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is an English translation of the Bible that was updated in 1995. Many scholars regard it as the most literally translated of the available modern English Bible translations. For example, Dr. Paige Patterson, President of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, states, “The New American Standard Bible is the most accurate translation of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures available.”<sup>16</sup> Henry Neufeld, a linguist, provides an assessment using the criterion of formal equivalence, which is how close a translation is to the words and forms of the source language:

In the work I have done checking just how close to formal-equivalency each version is, the NASB has consistently been closest to a word-for-word translation. Since it is impossible to translate every word and form with a single word and form in English, this is a relative rating. I find that the readability suffers because of this excessive formality. On the other hand, it is likely that if we lost the Greek New Testament it could be reproduced by translating the NASB back into Greek.<sup>17</sup>

Professor J. Dwight Pentecost gives this definition: “The literal method of interpretation is that method that gives to each word the same exact basic meaning it would have in normal, ordinary, customary usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking.”<sup>18</sup> In 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12, the characters and events are described by words that in their literal, or customary, usage refer to external phenomena, so the literal method of interpretation assigns external identifications to these words. *Eschatology* is the part of theology concerned with what are believed to be the final events of his-

tory, sometimes called the “end times.” When commentators on 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12 use the literal method of interpretation, they regard these verses as presenting Christian eschatology, and so they devise predictions of external events that will happen to everyone during the end times.

Throughout the centuries, virtually all prominent commentators on 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12 have used the literal method of interpretation.<sup>19</sup> These commentators have concocted many speculative and diverse interpretations by assigning various external identifications to the passage’s ambiguous words. The literal method of interpretation appears to have *failed*, however, because of the earlier conclusion that it has not yielded a convincing interpretation. Consequently, let us consider another method of interpretation.

If an esoteric teaching were placed into biblical text, how would it appear? Blavatsky says, “All esoteric truths were given out to the public by the Initiates of the temples *under the guise of allegories*.”<sup>20</sup> An *allegory* is a representation of moral or ethical meanings through the actions of fictional characters that serve as symbols. Why were esoteric teachings veiled with allegories during ancient times? One explanation is that esoteric teachings were often suppressed by the orthodox religious community, so such teachings needed to be veiled in order to survive for future generations. For example, Gnosticism, which was an unorthodox variant of Christianity, was suppressed by the early bishops of the Christian church. The discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library in 1945 restored some of the suppressed writings.<sup>21</sup>

In addition, if students were not ready for an esoteric teaching, then veiling the teaching with allegories would protect them from misinterpreting or misapplying it. Bailey makes a similar point: “Much must remain esoteric and veiled. The risks of too much knowledge are far greater than the menace of too little. With knowledge comes responsibility and power—two things for which the race is not yet ready.”<sup>22</sup> Moreover, students may become ready for an esoteric teaching by studying and

interpreting the symbols in its veiled presentation, as Bailey also explains:

There are many ways in which the intuition can be drawn into activity, and one of the most useful and potent is the study and interpretation of symbols. Symbols are the outer and visible forms of the inner spiritual realities, and when facility in discovering the reality behind any specific form has been gained, that very fact will indicate the awakening of the intuition.<sup>23</sup>

If an esoteric teaching were unveiled, what would be its form and content? Bailey incorporates the adjective “esoteric” within the title of several of her books, so her instructions might serve as examples of an esoteric teaching. She tells her students, “You have reached maturity and should be ready for the next step. That step will be taken when you have transmuted knowledge and theory into wisdom, practice and expression.”<sup>24</sup> Based on this example, if an esoteric teaching were unveiled, we would expect it to consist of a series of steps that students could apply when they are ready and that bring about their inner transformation.

Consequently, if an esoteric teaching were hidden in 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12, it might be possible to unveil that teaching by applying these three principles of interpretation:

1. *The verses are symbolic in nature, and every symbol represents an inner experience.* Nothing in the verses places importance on external events.
2. *Students have the experiences depicted by the symbols as they become ready for them.* Nothing in the verses is concerned with predictions of future events that will take place at the same time for everyone.
3. *The stages outlined in the verses refer to steps of inner transformation.* These stages are treated by the literal method of interpretation as leading to the perfection of God’s creation of the world, but they actually lead to the unfolding of a student’s consciousness.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

2 Thessalonians 2:1–12, according to the NASB, is as follows:

1. Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,
2. that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.
3. Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,
4. who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.
5. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?
6. And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.
7. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way.
8. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;
9. *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,
10. and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.
11. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,
12. in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

By applying the three principles of interpretation described earlier, this section attempts to unveil an esoteric teaching that lies hidden in 2

Thessalonians 2:1–12. Each verse is considered separately, and is repeated in italics.

1. *Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him.*

In verse 1, the Greek word *parousia* is translated into English as “coming.” The *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words* gives this explanation:

The word [*parousia*] was commonly used ... to describe the visit of royalty or of some other important person. Thus, the word signaled an extraordinary “coming.” The New Testament writers used the word to describe Christ’s second coming when He would return to earth in His last and glorious visitation as the King over all.<sup>25</sup>

John MacArthur, a prolific Christian author, says that “the next phrase, ‘our gathering together,’ ... conveys the idea of all believers meeting together with the Lord Jesus, obviously referring to the rapture of the church as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.”<sup>26</sup> Thus verse 1 seems to be concerned with two external events: the second coming of Jesus and the rapture of the church.

According to the first principle of interpretation, the second coming is actually a symbol that represents an inner experience, so what is that experience? Professor Roger Shepherd reports that the Greek word *parousia* has a double meaning:

The word *Parousia* as a technical term has been developed in two directions: First, the word served as a cult experience for the coming of a hidden divinity, who makes his presence felt by a revelation of his power, or whose presence is celebrated in the cult. Second, it became the official term for a visit of a person of high rank such as kings and emperors visiting a province like Asia Minor and Thessalonica.<sup>27</sup>

The traditional interpretation of the second coming employs the second meaning of *parousia*, whereas our esoteric commentary employs its first meaning: “the coming of a hidden divinity, who makes his presence felt

by a revelation of his power.” What is that hidden divinity? Blavatsky may have been the first person to introduce to the West the concept of the Masters of the Wisdom.<sup>28</sup> These Masters are reputed to be enlightened beings and are sometimes referred to as Adepts, Mahatmas, or Elder Brothers of the Human Race. For a given student, his or her Master could be Jesus, or another Master. In the context of early Christianity, the “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” signifies the student’s experience that he or she is inwardly receiving the strength of Jesus, who remains hidden but, in Shepherd’s words, “who makes his presence felt by a revelation of his power.” For the purpose of our esoteric commentary, however, this meaning is generalized so that it is the following: the “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” signifies the student’s experience that he or she is inwardly receiving the strength of a Master like Jesus.

For example, Paul, in Philippians 4:13, is aware of this strengthening effect on himself: “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” In an example taken from the Old Testament, Isaiah 41:10 states, “I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” Bailey describes the effects of such stimulation: “As the Master works with His disciples and strengthens the life within them and evokes their soul into potency from latency, every form and every atom within their various bodies is equally energised and aided.”<sup>29</sup>

The Christian doctrine of the rapture asserts that God will take the church out of the world instantaneously. The word “rapture” comes from the Latin word (*rapio*) used in the Latin rendering of 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and is translated into English as “caught up.” Paul’s account in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is the primary

biblical source for this doctrine: “Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”

If this account of the rapture is a symbolic representation of an inner experience, what is that experience?

**“There was but one apostle of Jesus worthy of that name, and that was Paul,” “Paul was the only one of the apostles who had understood the secret ideas underlying the teachings of Jesus, although he had never met him,” “the cautious hints of Paul have all the true esoteric meaning,” and “Paul was undeniably an Initiate.”**

Our esoteric commentary is based on the theosophical notion of the seven worlds of existence. These worlds are often called “planes” and have the following names: 1) divine; 2) monadic; 3) spiritual; 4) intuitional, or buddhic; 5) mental; 6) emotional, or astral; and 7) physical.<sup>30</sup> These planes are arranged metaphorically in an upper

and lower manner, so that the divine plane is considered to be the highest plane and the physical plane to be the lowest.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 portrays the rising of people from the earth into the air to meet with the Lord. Bailey uses “earth” as a symbol of the physical plane,<sup>31</sup> which is the domain of physical sense perception, and writes, “There is a great vibratory sphere, or plane, in the solar system, called in some occult books the intuitional plane ... and its symbol is the air.”<sup>32</sup> Thus the rising of people from the earth to the air can be construed to be the shift of their sensitivity from the physical to the intuitional plane.

Our esoteric commentary is also based on the notion of the Monad, which Theosophy regards as the highest aspect of a human being. Bailey says, “The monad expresses the same purpose as it exists, unified in the Mind of God Himself,”<sup>33</sup> so the monadic will is an expression, or reflection, of the divine will. Bailey also speaks of the Monad as a “Lord”: “The Monad is Life, the sustaining force, a Lord of persevering and ceaseless devotion to the pursuit of a seen and determined objective.”<sup>34</sup> Consequently, in Paul’s account of the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, the “Lord” can be

construed to be the Monad, which resides on the second, or monadic, plane.

We consider the rapture to be an allegory that represents the building of an inner, or psychological, bridge. This bridge has the Sanskrit name *antahkarana*, for which Bailey provides the following definition: “The path, or bridge, between higher and lower mind, serving as a medium of communication between the two.”<sup>35</sup> She also says, “The understanding of the method of building the antahkarana is essential if humanity is to move forward as planned.”<sup>36</sup>

Paul’s account of the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 can be construed as depicting the three steps needed for building this inner bridge, as shown next:

*“Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds.”* Paul, in Colossians 3:2, says, “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.” Bailey describes a similar practice: “If your work has been successful, your original focus will have shifted to intuitional levels ... via the antahkarana.”<sup>37</sup> Thus “caught up” refers to shifting attention upward, and “clouds” to higher realities, so the first step could be described in this way: through shifting your attention away from the personalities of other people, set your mind on their higher realities.

*“to meet the Lord in the air.”* James 4:8 describes God’s reciprocal response to your effort: “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” Bailey gives this description: “As the disciple then creatively works, he finds that there is a reciprocal action on the part of the Presence, the Monad ... He discovers that one span of the bridge (if I might so call it) is being built or pushed forward from the other side of the gulf.”<sup>38</sup> Paul, in Romans 12:2, says, “be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is.” If being “transformed by the renewing of your mind” refers to the first step given above, then the reciprocal response is the impartation of “what the will of God is.” Bailey describes the reciprocal response in a similar manner: “the monadic will ... is

gradually transmitted, via the antahkarana, direct to the man upon the physical plane.”<sup>39</sup> Thus the second step could be described in this way: through setting your mind on higher realities, evoke the descent of the monadic will from the Monad to the intuitional plane.

*“and so we shall always be with the Lord.”* Bailey describes the completion of the antahkarana: “Finally, contact between that which the Monad projects and that which the disciple is projecting is made ... The bridge is now built.”<sup>40</sup> She also describes the outcome: “When it [the antahkarana] is completed, there is a perfect rapport between the monad and its physical plane expression.”<sup>41</sup> Paul, in Galatians 4:6, seems to describe both this completion and outcome: “Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” Here, “Spirit of His Son” is taken as the monadic will, and “Abba! Father!” as rapport with the Monad. Thus the third step could be described in this way: through merging the upward and downward projections to complete the antahkarana, be in rapport with the Monad.

The esoteric meanings of the second coming and rapture have just been considered, but what is their relationship? Professor Warren Woolsey observes that, in verse 1, both events are governed by the same preposition:

In this case, the announced topic has two aspects which are closely connected because they are governed by the same single preposition (*concerning*). The two aspects are (1) the *coming of ... Christ*; and (2) *our being gathered to him*. This close connection between the two is theologically significant because some Bible teachers have proposed prophetic schemes which separate the so-called “Rapture” (*our being gathered to him*) from His later coming in judgment ... But Paul, on the other hand, seems here to treat both the *coming of [the] Lord Jesus Christ* and *our being gathered to him* as aspects of a single complex event.<sup>42</sup>

The foregoing quotation uses the New International Version (NIV) translation of verse 1, as

shown by the one-word preposition “concerning” instead of NASB’s three-word preposition “with regard to” given earlier. According to Woolsey’s observation, both the second coming and rapture are “aspects of a single complex event,” so let us combine both referents in our esoteric commentary: the Master strengthens the student’s effort to build the antahkarana. Rule Eleven of Bailey’s fourteen “Rules for Disciples and Initiates” supports this analysis by portraying the same complex event.<sup>43</sup>

Consequently, verse 1 has the following meaning: Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the Master strengthening your effort to build the antahkarana, which involves projecting the focus of your sensitivity upward into the intuitional plane to meet the downward projection of the monadic will.

2. *that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.*

Traditional commentators regard verse 2 as instructions directed specifically to the ancient church in Thessalonica, so they infer the church’s circumstances from the verse’s content. The first phrase says, “that you not be quickly shaken from your composure.” The commentators infer from the phrase that the church members had been confused by a false teaching regarding verse 1’s traditional meaning, which is the second coming and rapture, so they interpret the phrase as Paul’s warning against believing that confusing teaching.<sup>44</sup>

Instead let us construe verse 2’s first phrase as an instruction that is directed to students of every era and that tells them to avoid confusion regarding verse 1’s esoteric meaning, which is building the antahkarana. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 14:33, says, “for God is not a God of confusion but of peace,” which suggests that anyone can avoid confusion. Confusion results from the failure to understand, so Bailey tells her students, “The work of building the antahkarana must be done with as much conscious understanding as possible.”<sup>45</sup> Thus the first phrase is interpreted to mean: that you

develop your understanding about the work of building the antahkarana.

The second phrase says, “that you not ... be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us.” Traditional commentators generally take “a spirit” to be a supposed prophecy from the unseen world, perhaps spoken by a member of the church; “a message” to be a quoted oral statement; and “a letter” to be a written communication. The commentators interpret verse 2’s second phrase, which continues verse 1’s sentence, as telling the Thessalonians to disbelieve any public announcement saying that verse 1’s event is happening.<sup>46</sup>

Instead let us construe the second phrase as an instruction directed to students of every era, so it has this implication: there can never be a valid public announcement saying that verse 1’s event is happening, which in turn implies that the event cannot be an external, prominent, collective, or widespread experience. With this construal, the second phrase alludes to the second principle of interpretation, and is given the following meaning: that you realize that each of you attains this experience through becoming inwardly ready.

The third phrase mentions the “day of the Lord,” which is a notion that appears in several places in the Old Testament.<sup>47</sup> Paul provides his own account in 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3:

For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

Professor Kendall Easley gives the traditional Christian view: “The ‘day of the Lord’ is now seen to be the time associated with Christ’s return, when he will destroy God’s enemies and bring God’s people to glory.”<sup>48</sup>

In keeping with the first principle of interpretation, the “day of the Lord” is a symbol that represents an inner experience. Before that experience can be identified, however, additional concepts need to be introduced. According to Theosophy, every human being has a *personality*, or lower self, which consists of the



mental, emotional, and physical bodies, and also a *Spiritual Triad*, or higher self, which consists of the spiritual will, the intuition or pure reason, and the abstract mind.<sup>49</sup> The term *personality consciousness* signifies that the center of consciousness is within the personality, and *triadal consciousness* signifies that the center of consciousness is within the Spiritual Triad.

Blavatsky provides this definition: “the initiated adept perceives and discerns the ultimate and actual state of things in nature by means of his spiritual perception, trammled by none of his physical senses.”<sup>50</sup> Bailey gives a similar definition: “*Spiritual vision or true perception* ... opens up the world of the intuitional or buddhic plane, and takes its possessor beyond the abstract levels of the mental plane.”<sup>51</sup>

Bailey says that the downward transmission of the monadic will yields the following effects:

It might be here affirmed that those healers who have triadal consciousness and can exercise the potency of the monadic life and will, via the Spiritual Triad, will always be successful healers; they will make no mistakes, for they will have accurate spiritual perception.<sup>52</sup>

An earlier quotation says that use of the antahkarana leads to the downward transmission of the monadic will, so these quotations imply that use of the antahkarana leads to triadal consciousness and then to spiritual perception.

Paul, in Colossians 3:9–11, provides a related statement:

Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—a *renewal* in which there is no *distinction between* Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

Using the antahkarana seems equivalent to making the shift from “the old self with its *evil* practices,” which denotes personality consciousness, to “the new self who is being re-

newed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him,” which seems to denote triadal consciousness. Blavatsky remarks, “Paul meant by the word Christ ... the abstract ideal of the personal divinity indwelling in man,”<sup>53</sup> so the perception that “Christ is all, and in all” appears to be spiritual perception. If Paul’s verses do describe the transformation produced by the antahkarana, then they corroborate the notion that such transformation leads to triadal consciousness and then to spiritual perception.

For two reasons, the activation of spiritual perception is taken as the experience symbolized by the “day of the Lord”:

*Spiritual perception is brought about by the potency of the Monad.* As mentioned previously, the “Lord” symbolizes the Monad, and the downward transmission of the monadic will activates spiritual perception. Bailey writes, “Only mental control, plus true spiritual perception, will suffice to pierce this illusory astral miasma,”<sup>54</sup> so spiritual perception is a kind of clarity. Michael Vigo, a dream analyst, says, “To dream of a sunny day, symbolizes clarity and/or pleasantness,”<sup>55</sup> so spiritual perception, which is the clarity brought about by the potency of the Monad, could be represented by the words, “day of the Lord.”

*The activation of spiritual perception conforms to Paul’s characterization of the day of the Lord.* Paul says that the day of the Lord follows a period of peace and safety, and that it brings immediate destruction. Similarly, spiritual perception follows the attainment of triadal consciousness, which is a period of peace and safety, and it brings immediate destruction to illusions.

Based on the preceding remarks, verse 2 has the following overall meaning: that you develop your understanding and realize that each of you attains this experience through becoming inwardly ready, with the effect of activating your spiritual perception.

3. *Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.*

According to the third principle of interpretation, the stages listed in verse 3 are steps of inner transformation. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 3:18, supports this principle by speaking of inner transformation as having definite steps: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” Here, “from glory to glory” means from step to step.

Verse 3’s initial clause, “Let no one in any way deceive you,” refers to deception that contradicts the steps of inner transformation listed in the rest of the verse. Perhaps this deception is the advocacy of physical disciplines, because such methods are often attempted but do not bring about inner transformation. Bailey gives this explanation:

These drastic physical disciplines are often attempted today by well-intentioned aspirants; they practice celibacy, strict vegetarianism, relaxation exercises and many kinds of physical exercises, in the hope of bringing the body under control. These forms of discipline would be very good for the undeveloped and the lowest type of human being, but they are not the methods which should be employed by the average man or the practising aspirant.<sup>56</sup>

Paul makes similar comments in Colossians 2:20-23:

why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” (which all *refer to* things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are* of no value against fleshly indulgence.

As mentioned in Paul’s quotation, “the commandments and teachings of men” may entice students into employing physical disciplines. Thus “let no one in any way deceive you” is given this meaning: let no one entice you into employing physical disciplines.

Regarding the next phrase in the verse, “for it will not come,” Dr. John Phillips gives the following clue: “The Day of the Lord is the subject of this verse (2:3) and the teaching that follows.”<sup>57</sup> Accordingly, the pronoun “it” refers to the “day of the Lord,” which symbolizes the activation of spiritual perception, so the next phrase is given this meaning: because spiritual perception will not come.

The remainder of verse 3 is interpreted as giving instructions on detached observation. The student must become, in Bailey’s words, “the investigator advanced enough to have reached the stage of a detached observer.”<sup>58</sup> She also explains what is being investigated: “the task of the disciple is to become consciously aware—like a detached onlooking Observer—of these energies and their expressing qualities as they function within himself.”<sup>59</sup>

Paul also gives instructions on detached observation in several epistles: “But a man must examine himself” (1 Corinthians 11:28); “Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!” (2 Corinthians 13:5); “But each one must examine his own work” (Galatians 6:4); “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise” (Ephesians 5:15); and “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching” (1 Timothy 4:16).

Verse 3 mentions the “apostasy.” This word is the English translation of the Greek word, *apostasia*, which is a technical term for political revolt or defection.<sup>60</sup> Acts 21:21 is the only other verse in the New Testament in which this Greek word appears, and it records the accusation that Paul taught the Jews to forsake, or defect from, Moses, because he told them to abandon circumcision and other traditional customs. Professor Edward Bicknell gives the traditional view of the apostasy: “the final catastrophic revolt against the authority of God which in apocalyptic writings is a sign of the end of the world.”<sup>61</sup>

Our esoteric commentary is based on distinctions between three forms of delusion: illusion, glamour, and maya. An *illusion* is a distortion of the truth.<sup>62</sup> Bailey writes, “*The Problem of Glamour* is found when the mental illusion is intensified by desire,”<sup>63</sup> and “*Maya* is vital in

character and is a quality of force. It is essentially the energy of the human being as it swings into activity through the subjective influence of the mental illusion or astral glamour or of both in combination.”<sup>64</sup>

According to the first principle of interpretation, “the apostasy comes first” represents an inner experience, so what is that experience? The apostasy symbolizes maya, because maya consists of irrational impulses that forsake, or defect from, proper authority. In Bailey’s words, “the forces ... under the term maya are those uncontrolled energies, those undirected impulses which ... sweep a man into wrong activity and surround him with a whirlpool of effects and of conditions in which he is entirely helpless.”<sup>65</sup> Thus “the apostasy comes first” is given this meaning: the recognition of maya comes to students as the first step in their practice of detached observation. Bailey corroborates this analysis by describing the same recognition:

One is always in the midst of forces. But maya (as a problem) only becomes so when recognised, and this recognition is not possible in the early stages of evolution. Upon the Path, one begins to watch for and to discover the effects of force; one finds oneself consciously the victim of force currents; one is swept into activity of some kind by uncontrolled forces, and the world of force becomes a consciously sensed reality to the struggling aspirant.<sup>66</sup>

Verse 3 also mentions “the man of lawlessness.” Theologians have given many possible interpretations of this figure, but Professor Karl Donfried, in *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, settles upon the following meaning:

Of the many possible interpretations given in the scholarly literature, one plausible suggestion is that the man of ‘lawlessness’ (or ‘rebellion’) is an eschatological and representational figure who is to be manifested in the future and whose arrival will signify the culmination of the past, present, and future hostile forces standing in opposition to the apostolic ministry of the church, and, thus, of God.<sup>67</sup>

If “the man of lawlessness is revealed” represents an inner experience, what is that experience? Bailey writes, “Human desire has been turned outward to the material plane, thus producing the world of glamour in which we all habitually struggle.”<sup>68</sup> Accordingly, glamour could be regarded as outward-turned desire, or covetousness, so glamour is lawless in the sense that it violates the commandment, or law, against covetousness (Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21). Bailey also writes, “The Law of Acceptance is a divine law and releases from glamour.”<sup>69</sup> The essence of glamour is a constant urging desire to change outer conditions, so glamour is also lawless in the sense that it ignores the Law of Acceptance. For these reasons, “the man of lawlessness” symbolizes glamour, so “the man of lawlessness is revealed” is given this meaning: the presence of glamour is revealed to students through their practice of detached observation. Bailey also describes this revelation:

One of the problems which confronts the aspirant is the problem of duly recognising glamour when it arises, and of being aware of the glammers which beset his path and the illusions which build a wall between him and the light. It is much that you have recognised that glamour and illusion exist. The majority of people are unaware of their presence. Many good people today see this not; they deify their glammers and regard their illusions as their prized and hard won possessions.<sup>70</sup>

In the NASB translation, the last phrase of verse 3 is “the son of destruction,” which is more clearly rendered in the New Living Translation (NLT) as “the one who brings destruction.” Thus “the son of destruction” symbolizes a destructive nature. According to verse 3, “the man of lawlessness” is revealed to be “the son of destruction.” In other words, by observing their newly revealed glamour in a detached way, students gain the subsequent revelation that it is destructive. Bailey corroborates this analysis by saying that “destruction is appalling,”<sup>71</sup> and by describing the revelation of glamour’s appalling nature:

The individual aspirant ... has begun to transmute his desire into aspiration and to seek—with all the devotion, emotion and longing of which he is capable—for realization. It is then that he becomes aware of the appalling nature of the glammers in which he automatically and normally walks.<sup>72</sup>

After the preceding remarks are brought together, verse 3 has the following overall meaning: Let no one entice you into employing physical disciplines, because spiritual perception will not come unless you undergo inner transformation that has these initial steps: recognize your maya, or irrational impulses; next recognize your glamour, or outward-turned desire, that brings about maya; and then recognize the destructiveness of your glamour.

4. *who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.*

Verse 4 provides additional details of “the man of lawlessness,” for which Professor Thomas Constable gives this traditional interpretation:

This man is further described as the adversary of God. He will seek to replace the worship of the true God and all false gods with the worship of himself, and will proclaim himself to be God ... He will set himself up on God’s throne in the inner sanctuary of God’s temple.<sup>73</sup>

Let us continue with our esoteric commentary. Bailey describes three breeders of glamour:

A deep distrust of one’s reactions to life and circumstance, when such reactions awaken and call forth *criticism, separateness* or *pride*, is of value. The qualities enumerated above are definitely breeders of glamour. They are occultly “the glamorous characteristics.” Ponder on this. If a man can free himself from these three characteristics, he is well on the way to the relinquishing and the dissipation of all glamour.<sup>74</sup>

The three traits of “the man of lawlessness” listed in verse 4 portray Bailey’s three “glamorous characteristics,” as shown next:

*“Who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship.”*

The first trait portrays separateness, which is the quality or state of causing separation, but Paul, in Philippians 2:3–4, advises against this characteristic: “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

*“so that he takes his seat in the temple of God.”* Paul, in Romans 14:10, gives this instruction: “But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.” In other words, you are not above another person as his or her judge, but we are all equally under God’s judgment. Accordingly, the “seat in the temple of God” is the seat of judgment, so the second trait depicts criticism.

*“displaying himself as being God.”* The third trait portrays pride, as shown by the definition given by the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*: “Pride is rebellion against God because it attributes to oneself the honor and glory due to God alone.”<sup>75</sup> Paul, in 1 Corinthians 4:7, argues against pride, or boasting, in a series of rhetorical questions: “For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”

Thus verse 4 has this meaning: Next observe in yourselves the three mental characteristics that breed glamour: separateness, criticism, and pride.

5. *Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?*

In verse 5, Paul mentions relevant instruction that he had told the Thessalonians in the past, but he does not explicitly say what that instruction is. It is reasonable to assume that the relevant instruction has just been given in verses 3 and 4, because the adjective “these” can be used to indicate things that are just mentioned.

If one were to use the traditional eschatological approach to interpret the preceding verses, then one would interpret verse 5 to be a reminder that the same eschatological ideas were taught earlier, as Constable illustrates:

This teaching was nothing new to the Thessalonians; Paul had taught them about the day of the Lord when he was with them in Thessalonica. He called on them to recall those lessons.<sup>76</sup>

Let us review the esoteric explanations of the earlier verses. According to verses 3 and 4, the discipline of detached self-observation progressively becomes more inward: the students start by observing maya on the physical, or outer plane; next they observe the glamour, on the inner emotional plane, that produces maya; and then they observe the three characteristics, on the more inward mental plane, that breed glamour. This progressive achievement is consistent with Bailey's statement: "Always in the process of arriving at an understanding of nature, the occultist works inwards from the external form in order to discover the sound which created it, or the aggregate of forces which produced the external shape."<sup>77</sup>

Detached observation is initially only a momentary achievement, so Bailey encourages the subsequent step of making detached observation into a habit:

The essential attitude for you to cultivate is that of the One Who looks on, that of the Beholder, the Perceiver, and the Observer.<sup>78</sup>

Work steadily at the assumption of the position of the Observer, making it a habit of your life.<sup>79</sup>

In verse 5, Paul asks the negative question, "Do you not remember?" As Dr. Ronald Ward notes in his commentary on this verse, "The form of words *expects* the *answer*, 'Yes, we do.'"<sup>80</sup> Why does Paul repeat the instructions of verses 3 and 4 when he expects that his readers would remember that he had previously told them the same things? According to the first principle of interpretation, verse 5 is symbolic in nature, so Paul's mentioning of deliberate repetition is a symbol. Bailey writes, "It must be remembered that only through much

repetition and frequent focussed effort are these results [of habit and rhythm] attained."<sup>81</sup> Thus Paul's mentioning of deliberate repetition suggests that the hidden meaning of the verse is the step of making detached observation into a habit.

According to the third principle of interpretation, verse 5 represents a step of inner transformation. This principle corroborates the suggested meaning of verse 5, because that meaning follows logically as the next step after verses 3 and 4. Thus, based on both the first and third principles, verse 5 has the following meaning: Remember to practice repeatedly these instructions on taking the position of the Observer, making it a habit of your life.

6. *And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.*

Just as traditional commentators disagree about the identity of "the man of lawlessness," they also disagree about what is restraining him. For example, the *Scofield Study Bible* considers the restrainer to be the Holy Spirit,<sup>82</sup> but Professor Charles Ryrie reports,

Most commentators identify the restrainer with the Roman Empire of Paul's day, which held back evil by its advanced system of laws, many of which are still basic to legal systems of our day. It is admitted, however, by those who hold this view that the restrainer is not merely the Roman Empire but government in general, since it is only too apparent that the Lawless One did not make his appearance at the end of the Roman Empire.<sup>83</sup>

Before considering what the restrainer might be from an esoteric perspective, let us introduce the notion of the *causal body*. According to Theosophy, the mental plane comprises seven subplanes that fall into two groups: the lowest four subplanes are the concrete, or form, levels; the highest three subplanes are the abstract, or formless, levels.<sup>84</sup> The mental body, or lower mind, which is the instrument of concrete thought, resides on the concrete levels of the mental plane; but the causal body, which is an instrument of abstract thought, resides on the abstract levels.<sup>85</sup>

The notion of the causal body seems to be incorporated into Paul's writings, as shown by the following examples:

Bailey mentions "the transference of the polarisation from the Personality ... into the causal body,"<sup>86</sup> which is consistent with Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 15:53: "For this perishable must put on the imperishable."

Bailey says, "The content of the causal body is the accumulation by slow and gradual process of the good in each life,"<sup>87</sup> which is consistent with Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 6:18-19: "Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future."

Bailey states, "When the Thinker on his own plane withdraws his attention from his little system within the three worlds and gathers within himself all his forces, then physical plane existence comes to an end and all returns within the causal consciousness."<sup>88</sup> Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:1, states: "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." If "the earthly tent" is the physical body, and "a building from God" is the causal body, then Paul's statement would be similar to Bailey's.

Verse 6's initial phrase, "And you know what restrains him now," is concerned with what restrains glamour, because "him" refers to "the man of lawlessness," which signifies glamour. The phrase claims that students already know about this restraint, perhaps because it is explained elsewhere in an esoteric teaching. For example, let us consider Paul's statement in Colossians 3:12-14:

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these

things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

Here, Paul is saying to "put on" compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love, which are all virtues. These virtues are abstract concepts, so they are put on, or into, the causal body. Bailey corroborates this analysis by mentioning "a lop-sided causal body ... full of great gulfs and gaps where virtues should be,"<sup>89</sup> which implies that virtues are put into the causal body.

The causal body potentially can direct the personality to apply the accumulated virtues, because, in Bailey's words, "The vehicle which seems of paramount importance can become and should become of secondary importance as it becomes simply the instrument of that which is higher than itself."<sup>90</sup> The application of a virtue is the practice of moral excellence or righteousness, so it restrains the unrighteous expression of glamour. Thus the causal body, after initiating this sequence, can be regarded as the restrainer of glamour.

Verse 6's final phrase, "so that in his time he will be revealed," means that glamour will eventually be revealed. In verse 3, however, glamour is revealed in the sense of being recognized, so verse 6 must be predicting a different kind of revelation. As Bailey explains, "The revelation vouchsafed is ... the revelation of that which the glamour veils and hides."<sup>91</sup> Accordingly, the final phrase predicts that the restraining of glamour will eventually lead to the revelation of that which glamour veils and hides.

Bailey says that the approach is to add virtue to virtue in a progressive way: "Start with meditation on the virtue most desired, add virtue to virtue in the building of the form of the ideal self until all the virtues have been attempted and the Ego is suddenly contacted."<sup>92</sup> In this context, the Ego is synonymous with the Spiritual Triad, because Bailey mentions, "flashes of real illumination or intuition from the spiritual Triad or the true threefold Ego itself,"<sup>93</sup> so the revelation of that which glamour veils and hides is the revelation of the Spiritual Triad.

Thus verse 6 has this meaning: Restrain glamour by progressively putting virtues into the causal body and then applying those virtues, so that you will eventually contact the Spiritual Triad.

7. *For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.*

Just as verse 7's initial phrase mentions "the mystery of lawlessness," Bailey mentions "the mystery of illusion and glamour."<sup>94</sup> Here is the mystery: an illusion is a false appearance of reality, and glamour is an effect of illusion, so neither one actually exists, and yet they somehow can captivate us. Verse 6 depicts the step in which the student uses the causal body to restrain glamour. As verse 7's initial phrase points out, the mystery of glamour is at work during that step, because the effort of restraining glamour treats glamour as though it were a real force that must be restrained.

Paul, in Galatians 3:1, refers to the same mystery: "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed *as crucified*?" Here, the Greek word *baskaino* is translated as "bewitched," but the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* states that this word could also be rendered as "captivated by the falsehood."<sup>95</sup> Accordingly, Paul was wondering about how the Galatians were captivated by a falsehood concerning Jesus.

Verse 7's final phrase predicts that the restrainer will be "taken out of the way." Just as traditional commentators disagree about the identity of "the man of lawlessness" and what

is restraining him, they also disagree about why the restrainer will be taken out of the way. For example, if they regard the Holy Spirit as the restrainer, then they try to explain why the Holy Spirit will be taken out of the way. These attempts at explanation, however, draw opposing arguments from other commentators.<sup>96</sup>

**“All esoteric truths were given out to the public by the Initiates of the temples under the guise of allegories.” An allegory is a representation of moral or ethical meanings through the actions of fictional characters that serve as symbols. Why were esoteric teachings veiled with allegories during ancient times? One explanation is that esoteric teachings were often suppressed by the orthodox religious community, so such teachings needed to be veiled in order to survive for future generations.**

What is the meaning of this event from an esoteric perspective? Our interpretation of verse 6 regards the causal body as the restrainer of glamour, so verse 7 indicates the following: the causal body "now restrains" glamour during the current step, but the causal body "is taken out of the way" during the next step. The latter circumstance is an alternative characterization of building the antahkarana, as Bailey explains:

The Master ... has to watch over the work accomplished by the pupil whilst making

the channel between higher and lower mind, whilst he builds and employs this channel (the antahkarana). This channel eventually supersedes the causal body as a means of communication between the higher and the lower.<sup>97</sup>

According to the above quotation, the antahkarana eventually "supersedes" the causal body. In keeping with the second principle of interpretation, the student experiences this internal event when he or she becomes ready to build the antahkarana. The quotation states that the Master supervises the student's effort to build the antahkarana, so it is consistent with the meaning given to verse 1: namely, the Master strengthens this effort by the student.

Let us examine verse 7's middle phrase: "only he who now restrains will do so." As in verse

6, “he who now restrains” denotes the causal body, so the middle phrase becomes “only [the causal body] will do so,” which means that only the causal body will do the restraining of glamour. Thus the causal body is more potent in verse 7 than in verse 6, because its effort in verse 6 also needs the personality’s application of virtues. Why has the causal body become more potent? Here is a clue: verse 6’s final phrase predicts that the Spiritual Triad will eventually be contacted. Accordingly, in verse 6’s initial phrase, the causal body is not yet contacting the Spiritual Triad; but in verse 7’s middle phrase, the causal body is contacting the Spiritual Triad.

Given that verse 7’s middle phrase indicates contact between the causal body and Spiritual Triad, and that verse 7’s final phrase indicates the building of the antahkarana, contact between the causal body and Spiritual Triad appears to be a prerequisite for the subsequent building of the antahkarana. The above quotation corroborates the inferred prerequisite, because it states that “this channel eventually supersedes the causal body as a means of communication between the higher and the lower,” which presupposes the prior use of the causal body as such a means of communication. Here, “the higher” denotes the higher self, which is the Spiritual Triad, and “the lower” denotes the lower self, which is the personality. Elsewhere Bailey describes the inferred prerequisite as “the attainment of that measure of mental control that will permit the wisdom of the Triad to pour down into the physical brain, via the causal.”<sup>98</sup>

Based on the preceding remarks, verse 7 has the following meaning: Realize that the mystery of glamour is at work during your restraint of glamour, because your effort treats glamour as though it were a real force that must be restrained; nevertheless restrain glamour by transmitting the wisdom of the Spiritual Triad through the causal body, until you are ready to supersede that body by building the antahkarana.

8. *Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming.*

Literal translations, such as the NASB used here, incorporate only “Lord” in the rendition of verse 8, but less literal translations may instead incorporate the name “Lord Jesus.”<sup>99</sup> Constable provides this traditional explanation of the verse:

After the removal of restraint the world will plunge headlong into lawlessness and the man of sin will be revealed. This man’s name is never given in the Bible, but he will be known by his actions. He is the same person referred to in verse 3 ... This powerful person will be destroyed by the mere *breath of the Lord Jesus*. Antichrist may control mankind, but he will be no match for Messiah ... The shining forth of Christ’s presence when He comes to earth will immobilize the Antichrist’s program.<sup>100</sup>

In the above quotation, “the man of sin” is how “the man of lawlessness” is rendered by the King James Version (KJV) back in verse 3. Constable assumes that the “Lord” denotes the Lord Jesus, and he regards “the man of sin” as being an external figure who will plunge the external world into lawlessness, but who is suddenly destroyed by the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

Let us continue with our esoteric analysis. According to our earlier commentaries on verses 1, 2, and 3, the “Lord” symbolizes the Monad, building the antahkarana leads to triadal consciousness and spiritual perception, and “that lawless one” signifies glamour. Thus verse 8 indicates that the Monad will eliminate glamour in two steps.

In the first step, the Monad “will slay with the breath of His mouth.” This phrase is related to Psalm 33:6: “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host.” Psalm 33:6 incorporates *synonymous parallelism*, which is a commonly used Hebrew rhetorical device, to show that “the word of the LORD” and “the breath of His mouth” are synonymous expressions, as are “heavens” and starry “host.”<sup>101</sup> Here, the “LORD,” written entirely with capital letters in the NASB, substitutes for the Hebrew name *YHWH*, which is the proper or personal name of Israel’s God.<sup>102</sup> Consequently, “the breath of



His mouth” is equivalent to *the word of God*. Hebrews 4:12 states, “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Based on this statement, the word of God is a symbol of spiritual perception, so verse 8’s first step is the destruction of glamour through spiritual perception.

In verse 8’s second step, the Monad will “bring to an end by the appearance of His coming.” The appearance of the Monad comes to those who have triadal consciousness, because they, in Bailey’s words, “can exercise the potency of the monadic life and will, via the Spiritual Triad.”<sup>103</sup> Thus the second step is the ending of glamour through triadal consciousness.

Bailey corroborates the foregoing analysis by describing the elimination of glamour with the same two steps and in the same order, assuming that triadal consciousness yields what is called “the experience of God”:

The way out, in this particular temptation, is dual: to recognise it for what it is, unreal, simply a glamour which has no true and lasting existence, just a delusion which assails us; and then to rest back upon the experience of God. If for one brief minute we have been in the Presence of God and known it, that is real. If the Presence of God in the human heart has at any moment, for an instant, been a reality, then let us take our stand upon that known and felt experience, refusing to deal with the detail of the glamour of doubt, of emotion, of depression or of blindness in which we may temporarily find ourselves.<sup>104</sup>

The above quotation indicates that glamour is revealed in the sense that its unreality is recognized. Two earlier verses are concerned with preliminary kinds of revelation: in verse 3, glamour is revealed in the sense that its presence is recognized; and in verse 6, glamour is revealed in the sense that what it veils and hides is recognized.

Thus verse 8 has this meaning: Then recognize the unreality of glamour, which the Monad destroys through your spiritual perception and

brings to an end through your triadal consciousness.

9. *that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders.*

What is the symbolic meaning of Satan? Revelation 12:9 mentions “the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world,” which shows that the devil and Satan are synonyms. Moreover, Bailey writes, “In these three words—maya, glamour and illusion—we have synonyms for the flesh, the world and the devil,”<sup>105</sup> so Satan is a synonym for illusion.

“The one” in verse 9 refers to “that lawless one” in verse 8, which has been interpreted as glamour. Thus the initial phrase in verse 9, “the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan,” means that the appearance of glamour is in accord with the activity of illusion. Bailey gives a similar account:

You are all working in some measure upon the plane of illusion and of glamour, and for you the world illusion exists and the astral plane is for you a fact. But this I can say: for the initiate members of the Great White Lodge the astral plane does not exist. They do not work on that level of consciousness, for the astral plane is a definite state of awareness even if (from the spiritual angle) it has no true being.<sup>106</sup>

Glamour has no true being, so the only power that it seems to have is the power attributed to it by those who believe in it. Yet the last part of verse 9 assigns “all power and signs and false wonders” to glamour. The meaning of this phrase can be inferred by considering another book of the Bible.

Constable writes, “This man [of lawlessness] is also called the ‘beast coming out of the sea’ (Revelation 13:1–10).”<sup>107</sup> Other scholars have also noted that the “man of lawlessness” appears to be equivalent to the “beast coming out of the sea” in the *Book of Revelation*.<sup>108</sup> We actually agree with this equivalence, because an earlier article argues that the “beast coming out of the sea” in Revelation 13:1-10 depicts glamour.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, the earlier article pro-

vides the following explanation of Revelation 13:1-3:

1. From a position of detachment, the aspirant studies his emotional nature and learns about glamour, which is the aggregate of his emotional reactions. Glamour controls the seven chakras and the full range of desires. It gives paramount importance to fulfilling desires, and is judgmental in nature.
2. Glamour is also treacherous, blundering, and boastful. Illusion gives glamour its power of deception, controls the personality via glamour, and makes glamour the authority for judging the worth of whatever is perceived.
3. The aspirant realizes that his solarplexus chakra, under the influence of glamour, seems wounded by the past, but can also feel redeemed by the present. The emotional body, following the lead of glamour, desires external circumstances that engender this feeling of redemption.

After taking into account the significances of “power,” “signs,” and “wonders” that are suggested by Revelation 13:1-3, verse 9 has this meaning: That is, realize that the appearance of glamour is in accord with the activity of illusion, even though it comes with the power to control your personality, the authority to judge the worth of whatever you see in the physical world, and a false feeling of redemption.

10. *and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.*

Woolsey provides a traditional explanation:

Second Thessalonians 2:10 continues the description of the work of Satan through the lawless one and his agents. He is the arch deceiver, and he succeeds among *those who are perishing*. The last phrase reminds of other passages which divide humanity into two categories of persons moving in opposite directions ... Paul does not attribute the destiny of the lost to the inscrutable will of God; verse 10b makes it clear the

persons here described have chosen the path of destruction for themselves.<sup>110</sup>

Woolsey’s commentary considers verse 10 as dividing “humanity into two categories of persons moving in opposite directions.” According to the third principle of interpretation, this verse is a step of inner transformation, so we interpret it as the step in which the student observes that his or her life is divided into two categories: periods of triadal consciousness alternating with periods of glamour. The student’s effort during this step is to understand the nature of the two categories and why they alternate with each other, as explained next.

The initial words of verse 10, “and with all,” indicate that the verse is a continuation of verse 9’s portrayal of glamour. The next words are “the deception of wickedness,” but what does that phrase mean? Psalm 10:2–3 characterizes a wicked person as being prideful: “In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted ... For the wicked boasts of his heart’s desire.” Paul, in Galatians 6:3, mentions the self-deception of false pride: “For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.” Thus “the deception of wickedness” may mean the self-deception of false pride.

“Perish” is a translation of the Greek word *apollumi*, for which the *Scofield Study Bible* gives this explanation: “In no N.T. [New Testament] instance does it signify cessation of conscious existence or of consciousness. Instead, it indicates here that state of conscious suffering which continues eternally and is the inevitable result of sin.”<sup>111</sup> Thus “perish” has the meaning of continual suffering. The preposition “for” can mean “at the cost of,” so the phrase, “the deception of wickedness for those who perish,” is given this meaning: the self-deception of false pride at the cost of continual suffering. Paul, in Romans 2:5, expresses a similar idea: “But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself.”

What does “the truth” denote? Professor James Packer, in *The New Bible Dictionary*, explains Paul’s use of the phrase “inner man”:

*Inner Man.* Paul uses this phrase (*ho esō anthrōpos*, in Romans 7:22; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 3:16) to denote the Christian's true self, as seen by God and known (partially) in consciousness. The contrast, implicit if not explicit, is with *ho exō anthrōpos*, 'the outward man' (2 Corinthians 4:16), the same individual as seen by his fellowmen, a being physically alive and active, known (so far as he is known) through his behaviour.<sup>112</sup>

Bailey has a similar conception of a human being, because she speaks about "that internal spiritual reality which is his true self."<sup>113</sup> Accordingly, in verse 10, "the truth" is what both Packer and Bailey call the "true self," which in turn is what Paul calls the "inner man" and what this article calls the "Spiritual Triad."

As part of her instructions for building the antahkarana, Bailey describes the step of "Stabilisation," and says, "This is brought about by long patient use of the ... previous processes."<sup>114</sup> In other words, the initial achievement of building the antahkarana is only momentary, so the resulting episodes of triadal consciousness and spiritual perception are also only momentary. Just as students need to stabilize their detached observation in verse 5, they also need to stabilize the antahkarana. Until they do so, they have not completed their inner transformation, because they still have periods of glamour in which they have self-deception and thereby suffer.

To stabilize the antahkarana, students need to preserve the attitude of their true self, which is the Spiritual Triad. In particular, they need to adopt that attitude as their ideal pattern and then progressively manifest their ideal pattern in their personality. Such manifestation involves the successive elimination of personality reactions that do not conform to the ideal pattern. Thus, in verse 10, "because they did not receive the love of the truth" is given this meaning: because they did not manifest, or receive in their personality, the fixed determination to express the Spiritual Triad's attitude.

Paul, in 2 Corinthians 4:11, describes a similar process: "For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our

mortal flesh." In other words, students need to die to their personality reactions, so that only the Spiritual Triad's attitude, which is the ideal pattern exemplified by the life of Jesus, may be manifested in their personality.

Verse 10 concludes with the phrase, "so as to be saved." *Salvation* can be defined as preservation or deliverance from destruction, difficulty, or harm. According to the third principle of interpretation, verse 10's salvation denotes a step of inner transformation, so what is that step? Paul, in Philippians 4:11, states, "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am." Paul's contentment indicates salvation from the discontent brought about by glamour's covetousness, destructiveness, and self-deception; and his constant contentment indicates stabilization of the antahkarana. Moreover, Paul says that he "learned" to be constantly content, showing that it is a step of inner transformation. Thus, in verse 10, "to be saved" may signify the stabilization of the antahkarana, because such stabilization is a kind of salvation, a step of inner transformation, and a step that logically follows the current step in which there is instability.

After the foregoing remarks are brought together, verse 10 is given this meaning: Next observe that you still have periods of glamour that bear the self-deception of false pride at the cost of continual suffering, because you did not manifest, or receive in your personality, the fixed determination to express the Spiritual Triad's attitude so as to stabilize the antahkarana.

11. *For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false.*

Dr. David Williams provides the following clue regarding the first phrase: "*For this reason* looks back to the previous verse."<sup>115</sup> Thus "*For this reason*" is construed to mean: For the purpose of completing your inner transformation.

Williams also comments on the rest of the verse:

- But such a statement presents us with a difficulty. Can it be true of God that he deludes? In discussing a passage like this, we

must recognize that the biblical writers were far less concerned with secondary causes than we are. Such was their belief in the sovereignty of God that they attributed to him directly, rather than to their actual source, a range of activities which, being true to his nature, he could not have done.<sup>116</sup>

Williams regards verse 11 as making an assertion with which he disagrees: God sends delusions to people so that they will believe what is false. In contrast, we regard verse 11 as making a different assertion: God sends tests to students so that they will confront the delusions that they already have. Bailey gives this explanation:

The next point to be reached, and the next bit of work to be accomplished is pointed out by the Master (either the God within or a man's Master if he is consciously aware of Him) and the reason is given. Then the Teacher stands aside and watches the aspirant achieve. As He watches, He recognises points of crisis, where the application of a test will do one of two things, focalise and disperse any remaining unconquered evil—if that term might here be used—and demonstrate to the disciple both his weakness and his strength.<sup>117</sup>

Here, the Master sends a test that focalizes the student's "remaining unconquered evil," which consists of remaining illusion, glamour, and maya. Bailey says elsewhere that "God Transcendent is working through the Christ and the Spiritual Hierarchy."<sup>118</sup> The Spiritual Hierarchy, which is called the "Kingdom of God" by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1:5 and in 1 Corinthians 15:50, consists of the Masters of the Wisdom, so Bailey's quotations are consistent with verse 11's assertion that God initiates the depicted activity.

Although the test may have the form of an external circumstance, its purpose is to focalize the student's remaining illusion, glamour, and maya, so "a deluding influence" in verse 11 is that inner experience. The last part of the verse is "so that they will believe what is false." In particular, the test is designed so that the student initially believes it to be an unfortunate

difficulty, because, as Bailey says, "It is ever a hard and bitter test, going to the very roots of his life."<sup>119</sup> This belief is false, because, in her words, "Such tests produce an inner unfoldment."<sup>120</sup>

Paul, in Romans 5:3-5, also says that tests, or tribulations, bring about beneficial outcomes:

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Let us consider a detailed example, because it may be the best way to support our claim that "a deluding influence" in verse 11 represents a test's focalization of illusion, glamour, and maya. The *Book of Job* is a canonical book of the Old Testament. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 3:19, quotes a passage from the *Book of Job* using the usual form of quoting scripture, "For it is written," which shows respect by treating that book as being inspired.

As discussed in an earlier article, the *Book of Job* portrays a test that is imposed in the following manner.<sup>121</sup> The "LORD" authorizes one of the "sons of God" to inflict Job with a horrible skin disease (2:6-7).<sup>122</sup> Here, the "LORD," written entirely with capital letters, denotes Israel's God; the "sons of God" can be understood as the Masters of the Wisdom; and the skin disease is the imposed test. Thus this account is consistent with the notion that God imposes the test by working through a Master. After receiving the disease, Job says, "Let the day perish on which I was to be born" (3: 3), which shows that he initially believes the disease to be an unfortunate difficulty. He regards the outcasts of his community as vile men, about whom he says, "I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock" (30:1); but the disease transforms him into being like the people whom he disdains, because his outward characteristics have become similar to theirs. Owing to this similarity, the test focalizes Job's remaining illusion, glamour, and maya. Professor Henry Ellison makes a related observation:

“in the poem there is far less allusion to Job’s physical sufferings than has often been assumed. Job is concerned less with his physical pain than with his treatment by his relations, his fellow-townsmen, the mob and finally his friends.”<sup>123</sup>

*Cognitive dissonance* is a state of internal conflict and discomfort that occurs when one’s existing belief is contradicted by new evidence. In Job’s case, he has a self-image of being righteous (29:14), but this self-image is contradicted by the new evidence of his skin disease (9:27-28). Leon Festinger, an American social psychologist, states the following principle: “The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance.”<sup>124</sup> Job initially engages in a lengthy internal argument to reduce his cognitive dissonance: he vigorously defends his self-image of being righteous against his dissonant cognitions, while those dissonant cognitions attack with the same judgments that he had used against the outcasts of his community (chapters 4 through 26). In other words, the judgments that he had made against unrighteous people are now turned against himself. Being unable to reduce his cognitive dissonance through his internal argument (chapter 27), he eventually becomes receptive to divine wisdom (chapters 32 through 37). Job learns that both sides in his internal argument are illusions (32:2-3), that God afflicts in order to teach (36:8-10), and that he needs to give up his judgment of unrighteous people (36:17-18). In this manner the test highlights his remaining delusions and thereby induces his inner unfoldment.

Based on the foregoing remarks, verse 11 has this meaning: For the purpose of completing your inner transformation, the Master focalizes your remaining illusion, glamour, and maya by imposing a test, which you initially believe to be an unfortunate difficulty even though it induces a beneficial outcome.

12. *in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.*

Williams provides this traditional explanation:

God does not delude. Much less does he do so, *so that they will believe the lie*. Notice the definite article, “the lie”—the denial of *the* truth. Such denial is the work of Satan who blinds “the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:4). But God is sovereign and even this serves his purpose to condemn all *who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness*.<sup>125</sup>

Verse 12 is written with a passive voice: human beings are the subject of the verse and are judged by an unnamed agent. Traditional commentators, such as Williams, assume that the unnamed agent is God and that the judgment is one of condemnation. In fact, many non-literal translations render the Greek verb as “condemned” rather than “judged.”<sup>126</sup> The interpretation obtained with this assumption, however, is inconsistent with Paul’s portrayal of God’s judgment in his other letters, such as Romans 14:10 or 2 Corinthians 5:10. Professor Lisa Withrow summarizes what Paul says in these other letters: “The statements in these letters do not indicate that those who have died after leading a life not considered faithful or righteous will be sent to eternal damnation; all Paul says is that they, along with everyone, will stand before the judgment seat.”<sup>127</sup>

Verse 12 can be interpreted in a way that is consistent with Paul’s other writings and with the esoteric explanations of the preceding verses: specifically, the unnamed judge in verse 12 is interpreted to be the students being judged, so that the verse portrays their own self-judgment. Put differently, the verse is construed as referring to the discrimination that each student must make to complete the steps of inner transformation. For example, Paul, in 2 Corinthians 4:16, discriminates between his outer and inner selves: “Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.” Bailey gives this explanation: “By learning to discriminate between the true self and the lower personal self he disentangles himself, the light which is in him is seen and he is liberated.”<sup>128</sup>

As in verse 10, “the truth” in verse 12 is interpreted as the true self, which is the Spiritual Triad. This usage is corroborated by Bailey’s preceding quotation, because it mentions “the true self” in the context of discrimination. “The deception of wickedness” in verse 10 is interpreted as the self-deception of false pride, which suggests that “the pleasure of wickedness” in verse 12 is the pleasure of false pride. Paul, in 2 Timothy 3:2–4, predicts, “For men will be ... conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,” so he also associates pride, or conceit, with the love of pleasure.

Consequently, verse 12 is given this meaning: in order that you may discriminate between your lower personal self, which takes pleasure in false pride, and the Spiritual Triad.

## Conclusions

This article has attempted to unveil an esoteric teaching that lies hidden in 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12, and its method is to apply three key principles: the verses are symbolic in nature, and every symbol represents an inner experience; students have the experiences depicted by the symbols as they become ready for them; and the stages outlined in the verses refer to steps of inner transformation. The hidden teaching inferred with these principles is summarized as follows:

1. Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the Master strengthening your effort to build the antahkarana, which involves projecting the focus of your sensitivity upward into the intuitional plane to meet the downward projection of the monadic will,
2. that you develop your understanding and realize that each of you attains this experience through becoming inwardly ready, with the effect of activating your spiritual perception.
3. Let no one entice you into employing physical disciplines, because spiritual perception will not come unless you undergo inner transformation that has these initial steps: recognize your maya, or irrational impulses; next recognize your glamour, or outward-turned desire, that brings about

maya; and then recognize the destructiveness of your glamour.

4. Next observe in yourselves the three mental characteristics that breed glamour: separateness, criticism, and pride.
5. Remember to practice repeatedly these instructions on taking the position of the Observer, making it a habit of your life.
6. Restrain glamour by progressively putting virtues into the causal body and then applying those virtues, so that you will eventually contact the Spiritual Triad.
7. Realize that the mystery of glamour is at work during your restraint of glamour, because your effort treats glamour as though it were a real force that must be restrained; nevertheless restrain glamour by transmitting the wisdom of the Spiritual Triad through the causal body, until you are ready to supersede that body by building the antahkarana.
8. Then recognize the unreality of glamour, which the Monad destroys through your spiritual perception and brings to an end through your triadal consciousness.
9. That is, realize that the appearance of glamour is in accord with the activity of illusion, even though it comes with the power to control your personality, the authority to judge the worth of whatever you see in the physical world, and a false feeling of redemption.
10. Next observe that you still have periods of glamour that bear the self-deception of false pride at the cost of continual suffering, because you did not manifest, or receive in your personality, the fixed determination to express the Spiritual Triad’s attitude so as to stabilize the antahkarana.
11. For the purpose of completing your inner transformation, the Master focalizes your remaining illusion, glamour, and maya by imposing a test, which you initially believe to be an unfortunate difficulty even though it induces a beneficial outcome,
12. in order that you may discriminate between your lower personal self, which

takes pleasure in false pride, and the Spiritual Triad.

Paul, in Philippians 3:14, says, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God.” In other words, Paul is travelling along what is sometimes called the “Upward Way.”<sup>129</sup> The inferred teaching of 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12 provides instructions for three key milestones along the Upward Way: verses 3, 4, and 5 give instructions on achieving and stabilizing detached observation of the personality; verses 6 and 7 give instructions on restraining glamour with the causal body; and verses 1, 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 give instructions on achieving and stabilizing the antahkara.

If the inferred teaching of 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12 were valid, then it might be the esoteric teaching that Paul taught to people who were spiritually mature, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 2:6–7. As our commentary has shown, most elements of the inferred teaching can be found as Paul’s own instructions scattered throughout his various epistles. It is as though Paul wanted to hide an esoteric teaching for future generations, but also wanted to provide clues so that his hidden teaching could be unveiled by those generations.

Blavatsky writes, “Theosophy is, then, the archaic *Wisdom-Religion*, the esoteric doctrine once known in every ancient country having claims to civilization.”<sup>130</sup> Thus she makes a remarkable claim: diverse ancient civilized countries, even though they existed at different places and times, had the same esoteric doctrine—the *Wisdom-Religion*—and that doctrine can be found in modern theosophical teachings. As our commentary has also shown, the inferred teaching can be found in Bailey’s modern theosophical writings, which supports Blavatsky’s claim that the ancient esoteric doctrine can be found in modern Theosophy.

<sup>1</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy* (1889; reprint; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1972), 8.

<sup>2</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *From Bethlehem to Calvary* (1937; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1989), 6.

<sup>3</sup> Unless explicitly mentioned otherwise, the biblical quotations are taken from the 1995 update of the New American Standard Bible (NASB). In a few instances, quotations are taken from the King James Version (KJV) and New Living Translation (NLT).

<sup>4</sup> Saint Augustine, *City of God* (413–426; reprint; New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 933.

<sup>5</sup> Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 217.

<sup>6</sup> Beverly R. Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1998), 107.

<sup>7</sup> Gary W. Demarest, *1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, and Titus* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), 116.

<sup>8</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled* (1877; reprint; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1976), vol. II, 241.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 574.

<sup>10</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (1888; reprint; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1977), vol. II, 515.

<sup>11</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Society in America, 2002), vol. XIV, 122.

<sup>12</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. II (1955; reprint. New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1972), 270.

<sup>13</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I (1944; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), 736.

<sup>14</sup> Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, vol. II, 90–91.

<sup>15</sup> Anthony Meredith, *Faith and Fidelity* (Leominster, England: Gracewing, 2000), 96.

<sup>16</sup> “NASB Endorsements,” [http://www.discountbible.org/NASB-Endorsements\\_ep\\_52.html](http://www.discountbible.org/NASB-Endorsements_ep_52.html) (accessed January 28, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> Henry E. Neufeld, “Bible Versions Overview,” [http://web.archive.org/web/20071208161247/http://energion.com/books/bibles/version\\_note\\_s.shtml](http://web.archive.org/web/20071208161247/http://energion.com/books/bibles/version_note_s.shtml) (accessed February 3, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1964), 9.

<sup>19</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *1 & 2 Thessalonians Through the Centuries* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. II, 786.

<sup>21</sup> James M. Robinson (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (New York: HarperCollins, 1988).

<sup>22</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar* (1922; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1974), 6.

- 23 Alice A. Bailey, *Glamour: A World Problem* (1950; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), 6.
- 24 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, 55.
- 25 Eugene E. Carpenter and Phillip W. Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 256.
- 26 John F. MacArthur, *1 & 2 Thessalonians and Titus* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 70.
- 27 Roger E. Shepherd, *Praise God, We Won* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2011), 138.
- 28 Blavatsky, "The Theosophical Mahatmas," *Collected Writings*, vol. VII, 241-249.
- 29 Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (1957; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), 692.
- 30 Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (1925; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), 117.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 82.
- 32 Alice A. Bailey, *The Consciousness of the Atom* (1922; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), 131-132.
- 33 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II (1942; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1981), 4.
- 34 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I (1936; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), 48.
- 35 Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 215.
- 36 Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (1960; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), 484.
- 37 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. II, 145.
- 38 Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, 43.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 31.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 495.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 455.
- 42 Warren Woolsey, *1 & 2 Thessalonians: A Bible commentary in the Wesleyan tradition* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 1997), 133.
- 43 Zachary F. Lansdowne, "Bailey's Rules for Disciples and Initiates: Rules Eight through Fourteen," *The Esoteric Quarterly*, Summer 2014.
- 44 Thomas L. Constable, "2 Thessalonians," in J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 717.
- 45 Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, 511.
- 46 Woolsey, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 133-134.
- 47 The "day of the Lord" is mentioned in Isaiah 13:6, Joel 1:15, Amos 5:18, Zephaniah 1:7, and Obadiah 15.
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- 49 Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, 712.
- 50 Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. VI, 156.
- 51 Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 69.
- 52 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Healing* (1953; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1978), 547.
- 53 Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, vol. II, 574.
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- 58 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. II, 575.
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- 60 I. Howard Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, and Donald J. Wiseman (eds.), *New Bible Dictionary* (3rd edition; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 57.
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- 66 *Ibid.*, 84-85.
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- 68 Bailey, *From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 119.
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- 71 Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, 87.
- 72 Bailey, *Glamour*, 202.
- 73 Constable, "2 Thessalonians," 718.



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- 77 Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 95.
- 78 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, 442.
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- 81 Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 475.
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- 84 Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 923.
- 85 Ibid., 330.
- 86 Ibid., 203.
- 87 Alice A. Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation* (1922; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1974), 32.
- 88 Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 85.
- 89 Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 134.
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- 91 Bailey, *Glamour*, 139.
- 92 Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 146.
- 93 Ibid., 4.
- 94 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, 94.
- 95 Brand, England, and Draper (eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 200.
- 96 Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 229.
- 97 Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 274-275.
- 98 Ibid., 313.
- 99 In 2 Thessalonians 2:8, the NLT and New International Version (NIV) include "Lord Jesus," but the more literal translations, such as the NASB and KJV, only mention "Lord." The New English Translation (NET) Bible, which was completed in 2005, also uses "Lord" rather than "Lord Jesus." The NET Bible is most notable for an immense number of lengthy footnotes that explain its textual translation decisions. By citing ancient manuscripts and other evidence, its footnote for this verse supports its translation decision to use only "Lord."
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- 115 David J. Williams, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 130.
- 116 Ibid., 130-131.
- 117 Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 183-184.
- 118 Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 593.
- 119 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. II, 644.
- 120 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, 545.
- 121 Zachary F. Lansdowne, "Symbolic Interpretation of the Book of Job: A Poem of Initiation," *The Esoteric Quarterly*, Spring 2013.
- 122 In the discussion on the *Book of Job*, all chapters and verses included in parentheses refer to chapters and verses of the *Book of Job*.
- 123 Henry L. Ellison, "The problem of Job," *New Bible Dictionary*, 590.
- 124 Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957), 3.
- 125 Williams, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 131.

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<sup>126</sup> In 2 Thessalonians 2:12, the NLT, NIV, and NET use “condemned” instead of “judged.” In the NET Bible, the footnote for this verse acknowledges that the literal translation is “judged,” but argues that “in this context the term clearly refers to a judgment of condemnation.” For each of these three Bible versions, the translation for this verse illustrates

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the circumstance in which an interpretation is used instead of a literal rendition.

<sup>127</sup> Lisa R. Withrow, *Immersion Bible Studies—Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011), section 6.

<sup>128</sup> Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 357.

<sup>129</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 665.

<sup>130</sup> Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. II, 89.