

# Opportunities and Challenges of Christian Esotericism

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## Summary

Christianity was unpopular among prominent esotericists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Even today, many esotericists either distance themselves from religion altogether or are drawn to non-western religions like Buddhism. Yet Christianity has its own esoteric dimension and a long history of interaction with external esoteric movements. The common ground between Christianity and modern esotericism offers particularly attractive opportunities to individuals and groups from both sides.

This article examines the opportunities and challenges encountered by esotericists who embrace Christianity, and Christians who are drawn to modern esotericism. The opportunities include service in the “sixth group” of disciples; support of the second and sixth-ray ashrams working to revitalize Christianity; building a New World Religion in which Christianity may play a major role; even temporary assignment to an ashram directly involved. The challenges include coping with stereotypes and criticism from fellow Christians and esotericists, and adjustment to a possibly unfamiliar ray environment.

## Introduction

For more than 1,500 years, institutional Christianity dominated western civilization. Religious influence is now greatly diminished, and younger generations are growing up in a more secular society. But a multifaceted Christian culture is still conspicuous, and most western esotericists either come from Christian backgrounds or at least have been exposed to the beliefs, practices and attitudes of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Smaller numbers have come from, or been exposed to, institutional Judaism or Islam. The present article focuses on Christianity. Other authors are encouraged to examine the oppor-

tunities and challenges associated with those sister religions.

Alice Bailey, writing for the Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul, defined religion as “the name . . . which we give to the invocative appeal of humanity which leads to the evocative response of the Spirit of God.” She continued: “This Spirit works in every human heart and in all groups. It works also through the Spiritual Hierarchy of the planet. It impels the Head of the Hierarchy, the Christ, to take action and the action which He is taking will lead to His return with His disciples.”<sup>2</sup>

Yet many esotericists shun organized religion. Some were hurt by ignorant or insensitive religious teachers early in life. Some view religion as inseparable from the evils perpetrated in its name. Some concede that religion may be relevant to the Path of Aspiration, but believe that it offers nothing to people on the Paths of Discipleship and Initiation.<sup>3</sup> Some assert that organized religion is in its death throes: a relic of Piscean culture, soon to disappear as we move into the Aquarian Age.

Other esotericists see continuing value in religion but are drawn to the religions of South Asia, the indigenous religions of other parts of the world, or nature religions. Given the trans-Himalayan teachings’ prominence in modern esotericism, Hinduism and Buddhism naturally

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## About the Author

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have special appeal. Hindu scholars and jurists, like Tallapragada Subba Row, Muthuswamy Chetty, and Raghunatha and Srinivasa Rao, contributed to the early development of the Theosophical Society. Helena Blavatsky, Henry Olcott, A. P. Sinnett, and for a while Charles Leadbeater turned to Buddhism. Gottfried de Purucker, president of the American Theosophical Society, was groomed for the Anglican priesthood but soon developed a preference for eastern religion.<sup>4</sup> Helena Roerich, amanuensis for the Agni Yoga teachings, and her artist-husband Nicholas, embraced Buddhism.

The religions of South Asia gained further appeal in the mid-twentieth century, when western society became acquainted with eastern meditative practices and the various forms of yoga. The larger New Age Movement drew much of its inspiration from eastern religions. Concepts like reincarnation, karma and avatars have become useful metaphors in modern conversation, even if their factual reality has yet to win universal acceptance.

To embrace the religion of a non-western culture can be an attractive option for western esotericists. For those still in the thrall of glamour, the embrace of an exotic religion may be a fashionable accessory to esoteric work. More generally, the embrace of a non-western religion may signal to others, and to the esotericist, a decisive break with a Christian past. It also avoids real or implied identification with the negative stereotypes Christianity carries in modern western society. By contrast, the seeker may be unaware of negative stereotypes a nonwestern religion carries in its own culture.

Esotericists who continue to practice Christianity, return to Christianity after a period of absence, or embrace Christianity for the first time, enjoy none of those benefits. Instead, they face significant challenges. Christianity's very familiarity counts against it. Nevertheless, to overcome the challenges and embrace Christianity, to whatever depth may seem appropriate, can be an attractive option. Esotericists may discover in Christianity rich opportunities for spiritual growth and service, even great joy and fulfillment. This is the path of

Christian esotericism—or esoteric Christianity, according to one's frame of reference—explored in the present article.

Christian esotericism can be defined in various ways. It can refer to Christianity's own esoteric dimension: the totality of its inner life, contrasting with the tangible features of church buildings, clergy, laity, sacred texts, hymnals, committees, and so forth. It can refer to the interface between institutional Christianity and forms of esotericism that developed, over the millennia, outside the institutional structure. Or it can refer more specifically to the overlap with modern esoteric teachings, notably the trans-Himalayan teachings disseminated since 1875. This last definition is the most relevant to our present discussion, but we should not lose sight of the term's broader meanings.

Within the area of overlap are denominations, like the Unity Church, Liberal Catholic Church, and Christian Communities, established for the very purpose of synthesis. But the majority of people populating the common ground are esotericists who become involved in traditional Christian denominations and members of traditional denominations who develop an interest in esoteric teachings.

As we look forward to the reappearance of the Christ, the externalization of the Hierarchy, and the restoration of the mysteries, we anticipate great changes in religion. In particular, we understand that a New World Religion will emerge. We do we know what form the new religion will take, any more than we know what form the Christ will assume when he reappears. But Christianity has the opportunity to be one of its major pillars and may remain a distinctive element, working with others in the pursuit of shared, overarching goals. Esotericists on the Path of Discipleship have opportunities to work in the ashram of the Master Jesus, or the Christ, to help Christianity move forward on its journey, whatever the future may hold.

Christians who venture into esoteric studies—or who simply come into contact with esotericists in their midst—also have much to gain. They too may have important roles to play in the ashrams. At the very least, modern esoteric

teachings can provide new insights into traditional Christian doctrine and religious practices. For example, they could help Christianity move beyond an emphasis on salvation—however that concept is interpreted, and we shall comment on it later—toward an emphasis on the progressive expansion of consciousness, and on individual and collective transformation. Cross-fertilization between esotericism and Christianity, with which some two billion people identify, could have far-reaching effects.

People coming from both sides face challenges. In addition to whatever personal conflicts they may experience, they must deal with negative stereotypes and criticism from other Christians and esotericists. Esotericists embracing Christianity, especially those on the Path of Discipleship, may have to cope with dissonance between their own soul or personality rays and the sixth ray of Christianity. This article explores the various opportunities and challenges, and points to ways in which the challenges can be deflected or overcome.

### Christianity: Darkness and Light

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a major “installment” of the trans-Himalayan teachings was revealed, and the richness of Hinduism and Buddhism gained new recognition. Most Theosophists and others involved in receipt and dissemination of the teachings refrained from inter-religious polemic, whatever personal choices they made. But two individuals, among the most heavily involved and wielding corresponding influence, went on record with harsh criticism of western religion, depicting it—especially Christianity—as spiritually bankrupt.

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891), co-founder of the Theosophical Society and author of the landmark *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*, presented a litany of allegations against western religion:

[A]n unspiritual, dogmatic, too often debauched clergy; a host of sects, and three warring great religions [Judaism, Christian-

ity and Islam]; discord instead of union, dogmas without proofs, sensation-loving preachers, and wealth and pleasure-seeking parishioners’ hypocrisy and bigotry, begotten by the tyrannical exigencies of respectability, the rule of the day, sincerity and real piety exceptional.<sup>5</sup>

Special censure was reserved for Roman Catholicism and the papacy: “At Rome, the self-styled seat of Christianity, the putative successor to the chair of Peter is undermining social order with his invisible but omnipresent network of bigoted agents, and incites them to revolutionize Europe for his temporal as well as spiritual supremacy.”<sup>6</sup>

Blavatsky did not criticize “the pure teachings of Jesus,” but “unsparingly denounce[d] their debasement into pernicious ecclesiastical systems that are ruinous to man’s faith in his immortality and his God, and subversive of all moral restraint.”<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere she predicted the early collapse of Christianity, brought down by its own failures and the advance of science:

From one end of Christendom to the other there prevails neither real peace, brotherhood, contentment, firm religious faith, nor a preponderating tone of morality in official or private life. The press bristles with the proofs that Christianity has no right to be considered as an active purificatory force. More may be added. The gradual liberation of thought by the progress of scientific research has undermined the very foundations of the Christian religion, and the edifice, erected during eighteen centuries with so much difficulty and at such appalling sacrifices of human life and national morality, is tottering like a tree that sways to its fall.<sup>8</sup>

Alice Anne Bailey (1880–1949) wrote the insightful *From Bethlehem to Calvary*, which presented an esoteric interpretation of events in the life of Jesus Christ.<sup>9</sup> She served for thirty years as amanuensis to the Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul, communicating a wealth of material about Christ and his work that we shall draw upon extensively in this article. In *The Externalization of the Hierarchy* we read:

I would remind you that I write as one who believes in the great spiritual realities and

who regards the unfolding spirit of man as the unshatterable evidence of the existence of “the One in Whom we live and move and have our being.” I speak as one who believes in and loves the Christ and who knows Him to be the Master of all the Masters and the Teacher alike of angels and of men. I am one who looks to Christ as the supreme expression of divinity upon Earth and Who knows the extent of His sacrificial work for humanity, the wonder of the revelation which He brought, the imminence of His return and of His coming Assumption of spiritual rule in the hearts of men everywhere.<sup>10</sup>

Bailey proclaimed in her autobiography: “I glory in the name of Christian but I now belong to the inclusive kind and not the exclusive.”<sup>11</sup> Yet she left no doubt in readers’ minds about her views on organized religion, with Christianity—presumably the “exclusive kind”—as the primary target:

The orthodox world religions are rapidly falling into the background of men’s minds even whilst we are undoubtedly approaching nearer to the central spiritual Reality. The theologies now taught by the ecclesiastical organization (both in the East and in the West) are crystallized and of relatively little use. Priests and churchmen, orthodox instructors and fundamentalists (fanatical though sincere) are seeking to perpetuate that which is old and which sufficed in the past to satisfy the enquirer, but which now fails to do so.<sup>12</sup>

Employing the pejorative term *churchianity*, Bailey echoed Blavatsky’s criticism that Christianity had deviated from Christ’s true message, laying blame on Paul of Tarsus and the clergy of later periods:

Churchianity has . . . laid itself wide open to attack, and the mass of thinking people . . . will spell the doom of the churches and endorse the spread of the true teaching of the Christ. It is not possible that He has any pleasure in the great stone temples which churchmen have built, whilst His people are left without guidance or reasonable light upon world affairs; surely, He must feel

(with an aching heart) that the simplicity which He taught and the simple way to God which He emphasized have disappeared into the fogs of theology (initiated by St. Paul) and in the discussions of churchmen throughout the centuries. Men have travelled far from the simplicity of thought and from the simple, spiritual life which the early Christians lived.<sup>13</sup>

Using the same term, Bailey stated elsewhere:

[C]ontrol by the forces of separativeness (which are ever the outstanding characteristic of the lower sixth ray activity) can be seen nowhere more potently than in religious and Church history with its hatreds and bigotry, its pomp and luxurious appeal to the outer ear and eye, and its separativeness from all other forms of faith as well as its internal dissensions, its protesting groups and its cliques and cabals. . . . Theologians have lost (if they ever possessed it) the “mind that is in Christ” and the outstanding need of the Church today is to relinquish theology, to let go all doctrine and dogma and to turn upon the world the light that is in Christ, and thus demonstrate the fact of Christ’s eternal livingness, and the beauty and the love which it can reflect from its contact with Him, the founder of Christianity but not of Churchianity.<sup>14</sup>

Blavatsky’s and Bailey’s criticisms of Christianity may seem exaggerated, and the literary tone is disturbing.<sup>15</sup> But the charges oblige us to ask three questions:

- To what extent were the criticisms justified?
- Were similar views shared by their contemporaries, or by esotericists of earlier times?
- If the charges were justified, has Christianity since changed for the better?

### ***Christianity Past and Present***

Christianity carries negative stereotypes, which, however distorted they may be, express the collective karma—the “original sin”—every Christian bears. In order to address the stereotypes we need to identify Christianity’s failures, place them in context, and try to de-

termine whether they destroyed Christianity, weakened it—or, in the long run, perhaps even strengthened it.

The religion we know as Christianity was the human response to a great thoughtform, embodying the Second Aspect of Deity, Love-Wisdom, created by Christ during his Palestinian mission 2,000 years ago. The thoughtform gave definite form to a link established for the first time between Shamballa, the Hierarchy of Masters, and humanity.<sup>16</sup> Significantly it was created early in the Piscean Age, and early in the cyclic manifestation of the sixth ray.<sup>17</sup> Christ's thoughtform was intended for the whole world. Christianity was just one response; other religions responded in their own ways.

Christ nurtured the thoughtform, throughout the two millennia of Christian history, in his role as head of the second-ray Department of Religion and Education. He was aided by the Master Jesus, head of the sixth-ray ashram of Devotion and Idealism, to whom Christianity was entrusted as a major responsibility. Their joint work was supported by other senior initiates and senior members of the deva evolution.

Human response to the thoughtform began with the apostles and continued with the work of Paul, the church fathers, and the millions of others—clergy and laity—who participated in and molded Christianity over the centuries. Not unexpectedly, tension developed between the thoughtform's lofty intent and humanity's ability and willingness to respond to it.

Christianity built upon two antecedent traditions: Jewish religious culture and Greek philosophy. The former offered a strong sacerdotal tradition and belief in a covenant between God and his people. The latter emphasized the rational quest for truth. As Christianity moved from a Jewish into a primarily Greek environment, a shift for which Paul took considerable credit, conflation of the two traditions became increasingly asymmetric. Emphasis changed from ethics—people's relationships with God and one another—to theology, a discipline that was essentially unknown in biblical Judaism. The increasing mental focus was understandable since the fifth subrace was emerging in

Europe and the Middle East. Unfortunately it took on a negative quality.

The formulation of creeds and systematized doctrine took precedence over Christ's message of love and healing, and over the church's pastoral care of its people. Creeds and dogmatic decrees are inherently dualistic: they are designed to separate believers from non-believers, orthodoxy from heresy, the saved from the damned. Excommunications, anathemas and pervasive intolerance led, before long, to the atrocities of forced conversions, witch trials, the crusades, and the Inquisition.<sup>18</sup>

Pauline Christianity and the increasing emphasis on doctrine gave rise to two other developments, initially subtle, but with profound long-term consequences. One involved the meaning of *salvation*. The English word "save" is derived, via the Latin *salvare*, from the Greek words *sozo* and *soteria*, both of which can mean "heal" or "make whole."<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, salvation could be understood—and still is in much of Eastern Orthodox Christianity—as a healing process. But in the West it came to mean "deliverance from sin and hell." In turn, *redemption* was narrowly defined as Christ's self-sacrifice on the cross to procure our deliverance from damnation. The second development was a change in the meaning of *faith*; from "trust in a loving God," it came to mean "belief," and too often "unquestioned acceptance of church teachings."

Christianity became corrupted by its own institutional success. Christ promoted a message of simplicity, sharing and sacrifice. But ambition surfaced at an early date; the apostles James and John jockeyed for position in the Kingdom: "Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory."<sup>20</sup> As the church grew, over the course of four centuries, from a handful of people to a mighty imperial force, temptation expanded exponentially. By the Middle Ages, with the coalescence of ecclesiastical and political authority, bishops, cardinals and popes wielded almost unlimited power. Too often they neglected their responsibilities to serve as Christ's anointed agents in the world, and instead used their positions to amass personal wealth and pursue lives of luxury—even de-

bauchery. Never have Lord Acton's words rung so true: "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."<sup>21</sup>

Reprehensible as those abuses were, much good was accomplished. Medieval Christianity produced saints as well as sinners. Men and women embraced lives of asceticism, took monastic vows, and/or served the poor and the sick. Countless millions led decent lives, turned their thoughts to God, and worshipped according to the practices of the time and place. The liturgy and the sacraments preserved the sense of covenant and nurtured spiritual growth. Gifted people expressed their aspirations through architecture, the visual arts, music and drama.

The Reformation sought to address problems of ecclesial corruption and materialism, but it also stripped away much of the sacredness of medieval Christianity, leaving the Protestant churches spiritually barren. The Church of Rome never lost its sense of the sacred, but the Counter-Reformation gave it a fortress mentality, where exclusivism reigned supreme. And almost every segment of western Christianity became entangled in politics. The Eastern Orthodox churches also became increasingly isolated, tools of the secular powers in their own jurisdictions. Notions of separation of church and state lay centuries in the future.

In the West, the Reformation was followed by—and, in the view of some historians, led to—the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. Traditional beliefs were threatened, the machine became the new deity, and materialism of a new kind became the driving cultural force. Liberal theology emerged in an attempt to accommodate "modernism" into Christian beliefs, but in the process it destroyed what little remained of mystery and the sacred in Protestant Christianity.

Yet even during the dark days of the post-Reformation period, seeds of new birth lay waiting to germinate. The evangelical revival of John and Charles Wesley reenergized the devotional life of the masses. The catholic revival in Anglicanism built upon elements of sacramental liturgy, which had carefully been preserved in the Church of England, moving

the denomination closer in ritual styles and beliefs to the pre-Reformation English church.<sup>22</sup> A similar movement took place in Lutheranism, building upon sacramental liturgy preserved in the Church of Sweden. Immigrants from Greece, Russia, Armenia and elsewhere brought Eastern Orthodoxy to the West, exposing westerners to the richness of Orthodox traditions. The Second Vatican Council and, most recently, the pontificate of Pope Francis changed the face of Roman Catholicism.<sup>23</sup>

Institutional Christianity is not just trying to recover former glory; it is building a new future. Mutual understanding and respect among major Christian denominations is at an all-time high. Ecumenical outreach and interdenominational worship and service projects have largely replaced the all-too-familiar sectarian polemic. Narrow Piscean ideals are quickly giving way to the expansiveness and inclusiveness of the Aquarian Age.

Christian denominations are exploring closer mutual relationships, even formal mergers. An ecumenical commission involving high-level representatives of the Anglican Communion and the Eastern Orthodox churches affirmed in 1984: "The unity of Christians with Christ in baptism is a unity of love and mutual respect which transcends all human division, of race, social status and sex. This unity in Christ is God's gift to the world by which men and women may learn to live in unity with one another, accepting one another as Christ has accepted them."<sup>24</sup> Contentious doctrinal issues, like justification by faith (between Rome and the Lutheran churches)<sup>25</sup> and devotion to Mary (Rome and the Anglican Communion)<sup>26</sup> have largely been resolved. Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople have declared their intention to work toward healing the Great Schism that divided eastern and western Christianity in 1054. They also work tirelessly for environmental justice.

Agreements to establish "full," or "partial, communion" provide for the exchange of clergy, recognition of one another's sacraments, and encouragement of joint worship—even if some doctrinal issues remain to be resolved. As early as 1951, representatives of the

Churches of England, Denmark, Iceland and Norway expressed a desire for closer cooperation.<sup>27</sup> The agreement laid the groundwork for the Porvoo Communion, negotiated in 1992, establishing full communion among fifteen Anglican and Lutheran churches in Europe. In the United States the Episcopal Church is in full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, the Moravian Church, and the Old Catholic Church. Similar relationships have been established elsewhere.

Progress has also been made on yet another front: the contemplative life. As early as the 1840s, monastic orders were revived in the Anglican churches. Since then ecumenical monasteries have been established, providing an attractive option for men and women drawn to lives of prayer and the richness of diverse traditions. As demonstrated throughout history, dogma may divide, but the inner spiritual life unites. In the 1960s, three Roman Catholic monks repackaged the contemplative practices of western monasticism for use by laypeople; the result was Centering Prayer, which has now spread to many other denominations.<sup>28</sup> It reminds people that they need not turn to South Asia as the sole source of meditative tradition. For those who do look to the East, practices like Christian Zen incorporate elements of much-older Buddhist counterparts.<sup>29</sup>

Major segments of institutional Christianity have instituted needed reforms, strengthened their spiritual life, and taken important steps toward unity and inclusiveness. The political entanglements that Blavatsky and Bailey complained of are things of the past. Sadly, as we shall see, other segments of Christianity have yet to reconnect with the pure message of Christ, and new forms of political involvement are causing concern.

### *Traditions of Christian Esotericism*

No “school of esoteric Christianity” developed, comparable with the Shingon school of Buddhism, the Sufi orders of Islam, or the Kabbalistic schools of Judaism. Rather, from the outset, Christianity developed an intrinsic esoteric dimension, expressed through prayer, mysticism, the liturgy, sacraments, and a general sense of “the sacred.” Of greatest significance were the Mass and the Eucharist, affirming that Christ was, and still is, with his church in an almost tangible way. Mystical theology emerged, albeit with more encouragement in the eastern churches than in the West, when mystical insights were allowed to contribute to the

corpus of Christian knowledge. Sacramental healing continued uninterrupted in the East, and has now been restored in western churches after 1,500 years of neglect.

The list of individuals who contributed to Christianity’s intrinsic esotericism is almost endless. It would certainly include the fifth/sixth-century Syrian Neo-Platonist known as the Pseudo-Dionysius, seventh-century mystic John Climacus, ninth-century Irish scholar John Scotus Eriugena, twelfth-century German abbess Hildegard of Bingen, and sixteenth-century Spanish abbess Teresa of Ávila. The list continues into modern times with Russian mystic Vladimir Solovyov, Russian theologian Sergei Bulgakov, French Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and American mystic Thomas Merton. Countless others could be named.

Christianity’s intrinsic esotericism—as well as its wider appeal—includes its aesthetics. Beauty transcends ordinary language to raise human consciousness in a unique way. In the words of

*Through involvement in Christianity, esotericists can gain access to rich traditions of spirituality, intrinsic esotericism, and sacred aesthetics; a rich liturgy; and experience the uniquely Christian expression of divine mystery. Importantly, they can contribute to its worldwide service mission. Those tempted to satisfy a religious impulse by participating in non-western religions should be aware that Christianity may also have a great deal to offer.*

Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, beauty “dances as an uncontained splendor around the double connection of the true and the good and their inseparable relation to one another.”<sup>30</sup> Institutional Christianity gave a high priority to church architecture and decoration, notably in the magnificent Gothic and Byzantine cathedrals.<sup>31</sup> Stained glass windows, altarpieces, paintings, and sculptures not only had aesthetic value; at a time when literacy rates were low, they instructed the masses of the people in scripture and major aspects of doctrine.

Music, according to the Mahatmas, is “the most divine and spiritual of arts.”<sup>32</sup> Settings of the Mass and the daily offices, like Vespers, are among the most celebrated compositions of the Renaissance, Baroque and Classical periods. The Mass for major feasts like Christmas and Easter expresses beauty and majesty rivaling the dramas of the ancient mysteries. When the emissaries of Vladimir I of Russia returned from Constantinople, after attending Great Liturgy (High Mass) in the basilica of Hagia Sophia, they reported: “We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth.”<sup>33</sup>

The transformation of stone into cathedrals; sounds into Masses, motets and oratorios; and words and movement into high ritual, was as significant, in its own way, as the transubstantiation of the Eucharistic elements. Their common goal was the transformation of ordinary people into saints—and the transformation of the many into that Unity referred to as the Mystical Body of Christ.

Independent esoteric movements grew up alongside or on the fringes of institutional Christianity; Gnosticism, Neo-Platonism, Hermeticism, the Christian Kabbalah, Rosicrucianism, and early Freemasonry were notable examples. A number of individuals attempted to build bridges between these movements and mainstream Christianity, including renowned theologian Clement of Alexandria (c.150–c.215), Irish scholar John Scotus Eriugena (815–877), Dominican friar Meister Eckhart (c.1260–c.1328), Greek Neo-Platonist Georgius Gemistos Pletho (c.1355–c.1452), Italian Renaissance philosopher Giovanni Pico

della Mirandola (1463–1494), and German Jesuit priest Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680).<sup>34</sup>

Others remained on the fringes, like alchemist Cornelius Agrippa (1486–1535); Dominican friar and astrologer Giordano Bruno (1548–1600); Lutheran mystics Jakob Böhme (1575–1624) and Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772); and Freemasons Jacques Martinez de Pasqually (1727?–1774), Louis Claude de Saint-Martin (1743–1803), and Karl von Eckartshausen (1752–1803).

Institutional Christianity viewed fringe esotericism, and sometimes its own, with distrust. As early as the second century, even before a well-defined orthodoxy had taken shape, church father Irenaeus wrote a five-volume treatise attacking Gnosticism.<sup>35</sup> Later, the work of renowned mystics Gregory Palamas (1296–1359), Theresa of Ávila (1515–1582), and Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774–1824) came under scrutiny by church authorities. Eckhart, Agrippa, Böhme and Swedenborg were denounced as heretics. Bruno went to the stake. Closer to our own time, stigmatics Therese Neumann (1898–1962) and Padre Pio (1887–1968) endured repeated investigations and charges of fraud.

When the church exercised political as well as religious power, it had the opportunity to suppress esoteric movements and persecute individual esotericists. The inevitable result was to drive the movements underground. Secret occult societies were formed to serve as custodians of esoteric teachings and, to the extent possible, protect members from persecution. But secrecy only heightened the fears of ecclesiastical authorities and allowed rumors—many of them exaggerated or false—to circulate and gather strength.

The Reformation had mixed effects on Christianity’s intrinsic esotericism. Its impact on sacred music was relatively small. Johann Sebastian Bach, arguably the world’s greatest composer; and George Frideric Handel, who’s “Messiah” is the most-revered sacred choral work ever written; were both Lutherans. English composers, like Thomas Tallis, William

Byrd, Orlando Gibbons, and Henry Purcell were either Anglican or worked in an Anglican environment.

Other aspects of intrinsic esotericism were damaged or destroyed. The suppression of religious orders drastically reduced opportunities for the contemplative life—though, as we have seen, monasticism has been revived in Anglicanism and elsewhere.

Some of the new liturgies seemed bent on eradicating any sense of the sacred. Sacraments were turned into mere symbols, or were eliminated altogether. Church buildings were no longer viewed as sacred spaces but were simply meeting houses. A seventeenth-century Scottish manual of worship prescribed: “When the congregation is to meet for publick worship . . . . Let all enter the assembly, not irreverently, but in a grave and seemly manner, taking their seats or places without adoration, or bowing themselves towards one place or other.”<sup>36</sup> In waves of iconoclasm, church bells were melted down, frescoes painted over, statues beheaded, and shrines desecrated.<sup>37</sup>

The Protestant churches continued to persecute esotericists, as Böhme and Swedenborg could testify. But persecution was on a smaller scale than it had been under Roman Catholicism, and Protestant Europe provided conditions in which esoteric movements could emerge, in a limited way, from the shadows. The Rosicrucian Manifestos were published in the Calvinist region of Germany—and even embraced some of John Calvin’s political and social ideals.<sup>38</sup>

As traditional bonds between institutional Christianity—Roman and Protestant—and secular authority progressively weakened, more visible expressions of esotericism appeared, even in Roman Catholic countries. Freemasonry, in its wide variety of forms, flourished in eighteenth-century Europe, except in the Papal States, where a 1738 edict prohibiting Roman Catholics from membership was rigidly enforced.<sup>39</sup>

Within the heterogeneous world of early Freemasonry were several individuals, groups and movements that emphasized Christian esotericism. For example, German mystic and phi-

losopher Karl von Eckartshausen’s influential work, *The Cloud upon the Sanctuary*, describes the “Invisible Celestial Church,” a religious tradition that preserved elements of the ancient mysteries.<sup>40</sup> Other examples were the several incarnations of Martinism, espoused in turn by Pasqually; his disciple, Saint-Martin; and Gérard Encausse (1865–1916).<sup>41</sup> Encausse also co-founded a Cathar-revival church, l’Église Gnostique de France.

Alphonse Louis Constant (1810–1875), who adopted the pseudonym “Eliphas Lévi,” initially studied for the Roman priesthood but then embarked on a lifelong mission to reinvigorate the sacraments through cross-fertilization with ceremonial magic. “Religion,” he wrote, “can no longer reject a doctrine anterior to the Bible and in perfect accord with traditional respect for the past, as well as with our most vital hopes for progress in the future.” “The crook of the priesthood,” he continued, “shall become the rod of miracles.”<sup>42</sup>

English esotericist Anna Kingsford (1846–1888) converted to Roman Catholicism, but continued to serve as a trance medium, receiving important teachings spanning Hermeticism and Christianity from the “Elder Brothers.”<sup>43</sup> In turn, Kingsford influenced Annie Besant (1847–1933), second president of the Theosophical Society, whose landmark *Esoteric Christianity, or the Lesser Mysteries* (1901) and other work will be discussed in their turn.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was founded in 1888 and flourished for about ten years. During its heyday it counted more than one hundred members, including such Victorian celebrities as Florence Farr and William Butler Yeats. And even though it drew upon pagan occult practices and Kabbalistic teachings, one of its members was Anglo-Catholic mystic Evelyn Underhill. Violet Mary Firth (1890–1946) was initiated in a Golden Dawn derivative organization, taking the name “Dion Fortune.” In addition to her substantial literary output, she founded the Fraternity of the Inner Light, which engaged in magical ritual but retained a Christian flavor.

The New Thought Movement produced both religious and secular offshoots. Mary Baker

Eddy (1821–1910) founded the Church of Christ, Scientist. Ernest Holmes' (1887–1960) Science of Mind initially sought to position itself as a secular healing ministry but eventually developed into the nonsectarian Church of Religious Science. Another product of New Thought was Unity, or “the Unity Church,” which combines esoteric teachings with evangelical styles of worship.

Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) served as head of the German Section of the Theosophical Society but leaned more toward Rosicrucianism and had links with German Freemasonry. He eventually left the Theosophical Society to form his own organization, the Anthroposophical Society, and spent much of his professional life lecturing on topics in esoteric Christianity. His *Christianity as Mystical Fact* (1902) had a different focus from Besant's book, published the previous year, but was equally influential. Lectures by Steiner were compiled into book-long commentaries on the four gospels, and what he termed the “fifth gospel.” In 1922 Steiner co-founded the Christian Communities, a new Christian denomination expressing a desire to renew Christian worship.<sup>44</sup> The Communities, with their distinctive interpretation of the sacraments, functioned as a kind of religious subsidiary of the Anthroposophical Society.

Annie Besant's exploration of esoteric Christianity eventually led to the “christianization” movement within Theosophy. Charles Leadbeater (1854–1934), who had once been an Anglican priest, returned from his excursion into Buddhism to help found the Liberal Catholic Church, a religious subsidiary of the Theosophical Society. The LCC acquired a high-church orientation, an episcopate, and a claim to the apostolic succession through the collaboration of a bishop in the Old Catholic Church. Leadbeater served as the LCC's second presiding bishop and wrote its liturgy, based on the Roman Missal and Anglican Prayer Book, with Theosophical interpretations.<sup>45</sup> Both Leadbeater and Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson (1886–1983), an ordained priest in the LCC, applied their clairvoyant gifts to the study of devic beings attracted to and participating in Christian worship.

Two individuals who were influenced by Rudolf Steiner's teachings were Valentin Tomberg and Judith von Halle. Tomberg (1900–1973) was born to Russian Lutheran parents but was drawn to Martinism and Hermeticism. He was shunned by the Anthroposophical Society and by the Russian Orthodox Church, both of which considered him too controversial. Undeterred, Tomberg went on to publish a number of works, including the insightful *Meditations on the Tarot: A Journey into Christian Hermeticism* (1984).<sup>46</sup>

Von Halle (1972–) was born to German Jewish parents but lectured on topics in esoteric Christianity at the Steinerhaus in Berlin. In 2004 she received the stigmata: permanent wounds on her body corresponding to those inflicted on Jesus at the crucifixion. At the same time she acquired the clairvoyant ability to view events during his passion, death and resurrection.<sup>47</sup> Her detailed accounts resemble those of fellow-stigmatic Anne Catherine Emmerich, written two centuries earlier. Von Halle's experiences caused great controversy in the Anthroposophical movement. Some segments supported her, but she was dismissed from the Steinerhaus and endured ongoing attacks by high-ranking members, charging that her stigmata was fraudulent and her clairvoyant activities were damaging to the Society.<sup>48</sup>

In summary, we can identify a number of individuals and groups, before and during the time Blavatsky and Bailey were writing, who experienced little if any tension between their esotericism and Christianity. But other individuals and groups, including practicing Christians and even members of religious orders, were harassed or persecuted for involvement in esotericism. Not surprisingly, persecution was particularly severe when institutional Christianity exercised coercive political power. The Church of Rome, in particular, did not hesitate to use intimidation, imprisonment, torture, and grisly execution to stamp out beliefs and practices—esoteric or otherwise—that it found threatening. We have also seen examples, like that involving Judith von Halle, when esoteric institutions harassed and persecuted individuals for becoming too “Christian,” or for participating in the “wrong” forms of esotericism.<sup>49</sup>

### *Continuing Darkness*

While major segments of institutional Christianity have sought to strengthen their spiritual life and promote inclusiveness, other elements have either hesitated to move forward, or have moved in the opposite direction. In them, the form aspect has become increasingly crystallized, stifling whatever indwelling life might once have existed. The news media tend to focus on these reactionary elements, reinforcing negative stereotypes, and encouraging a perception of Christianity as anti-science, divisive, coercive, corrupt, irrelevant to modern life, or simply ridiculous. Sadly, some problems may not even have received media attention.

Major divisive issues remain among and within denominations. Prospects for closer union between mainline Anglican and Lutheran churches, on the one hand, and Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches, on the other, are now less favorable, following the ordination of women clergy.<sup>50</sup> Denominations are divided internally, as became clear in 2016, when the Episcopal Church was excluded from full participation in the Anglican Communion for its redefinition of marriage to include same-sex unions.<sup>51</sup> Methodist and Presbyterian churches are deeply divided on the blessing of same-sex unions and ordination of gay and lesbian clergy. The Church of Rome has yet to consider ordaining female or openly gay male priests, or to bless the marriages of divorcees or same-sex couples. Moreover, it is unclear whether decades-old patterns of sexual abuse by clergy have finally been eradicated.

Fundamentalism infects large segments of Christianity. Particularly in the United States, some evangelical fundamentalists have joined forces with right-wing political extremists trying to turn the clock back on the legal and moral rights of women, gender minorities, ethnic minorities, the poor, and most recently refugees. An often-overlooked fact is that evangelical fundamentalism—which depicts itself as “conservative”—dates only from the late nineteenth century; it was a reaction against liberal theology and “modernism.”<sup>52</sup> But, in a strange irony, both fail to recognize the essential nature of spirituality. Fundamentalism and

liberal Christianity are a pair of opposites, locked in eternal conflict but sharing a denial of the sacred.<sup>53</sup>

Megachurches and television ministries offer a form of Christianity based on mass entertainment. Many of their leaders enjoy lifestyles that would be the envy of medieval cardinals and popes—paid for by the masses of ordinary people. Worse, some of those leaders promote a “prosperity gospel,” or “prosperity theology,” which promises financial blessing on those who have faith, are receptive, and donate to leaders’ ministries.<sup>54</sup> Anyone still waiting to receive God’s blessing evidently lacks in faith or has not contributed enough. Not only are the poor being bilked out of hard-earned money, the very notion of divine blessing to satisfy greed is theologically abhorrent and contrary to the message of Christ.

Such practices even extend to elements within esoteric Christianity. Charles Filmore (1854–1948), co-founder of the Unity Church, wrote of the importance of tithing, posing the question: “Should one regard one’s tithe as an investment that pays rewards?”<sup>55</sup> He supported his answer in the affirmative—leaving no doubt that material rewards were included—by citing scriptural passages like: “Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.”<sup>56</sup> Unity, and other churches of the New Thought Movement, provide opportunities for substantial numbers of people to practice esoteric Christianity with an evangelical flavor, and their healing ministries do a great deal of good. But they need to reflect on whether their prosperity teachings are not overly self-serving, and, more importantly, to determine whether related practices—occult practices—do not cross the line into sorcery.<sup>57</sup>

These practices remind us that esotericism has its own dark side. The knowledge gained from esoteric teachings and the occult practices that characterized much of the western esoteric tradition conveyed considerable power. That power was not always used for the good of humanity, and certain individuals veered onto the “left-hand path.” The Enlightenment and rise of materialism may have been promoted

by the Planetary Hierarchy to slow the development of the western esoteric tradition and avert threats from increasing popular participation in occult rituals. The threat may have been even greater than it was in Atlantis, because of humanity's higher level of mental ability.

The synthesis of eastern and western esotericism, beginning in the nineteenth century, placed modern esotericism on a more secure footing; the contemplative focus of the East balanced the West's focus on ritual. Significantly, the Hierarchy delayed the revelation of important new esoteric teachings—the primary basis of modern esotericism—until the Enlightenment had run its course and the East-West synthesis was well under way.

Esotericism's dark side is no secret to the outside world. Just like Christianity, esotericism—and especially “occultism”—carry negative stereotypes. In the popular imagination, occultism may call to mind Satanic rituals, witch covens, the conjuring of elementals, fraudulent séances, unsavory psychics, newspaper horoscopes, and the sensationalism and false promises of the New Age Movement. Even Christians who dismiss those stereotypes for what they are may feel uneasy about esotericism, fearing that it may expose them to unforeseen dangers or threaten their faith.

### **Options**

Notwithstanding Christianity's and esotericism's respective stereotypes, attractive opportunities continue for individuals and groups from the two sides to meet in the common ground of Christian esotericism. They can explore one another's teachings, traditions and practices; they can cooperate to fulfill common service ideals; and they can build a climate for spiritual growth beneficial to all. But which segments of Christianity offer the best prospects?

Tens of thousands of denominations compete for the loyalty of the roughly two billion people who identify themselves as Christian.<sup>58</sup> Five broad categories of denominations are relevant to our present discussion:

1. Churches with conservative theologies, traditional sacramental liturgies,

strong exclusivist discipline, and restrictive gender policies. Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy are the most important members of this category.

2. Churches with moderately conservative theologies, traditional sacramental liturgies, moderate discipline, and inclusive gender policies. Major segments of Anglicanism and Lutheranism belong in this category, including the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. Some Methodist churches are moving into this category.
3. Churches with liberal theologies and inclusive gender policies, but weak liturgical traditions and discipline. Some Presbyterian and Unitarian churches belong in this category. Most congregations of the United Church of Christ, an American denomination, also qualify.
4. Charismatic and Pentecostal churches (other than megachurches) with weak liturgical traditions. Gender policies are determined locally, and discipline is likely to be local.
5. Evangelical fundamentalist churches with weak liturgical traditions and restrictive gender policies. Strong discipline may be imposed locally. A majority of Baptist churches belong to this category.

Within this broad spectrum are islands of opportunity where esotericists could find a home. Important considerations are the sacredness of liturgy; attitudes to inclusiveness (gender, marital status, ethnicity, social class, orthodoxy); and opportunities to engage in meaningful service, either internally or with fellow Christians in the larger world. An issue of particular importance is whether an individual could reveal his or her involvement in esotericism. Esoteric teachings could always be incorporated into a personal understanding of doctrine, but the need to maintain secrecy might lead to serious tension. Moreover, a denomination's resistance

to new insights into its teachings would limit an individual's opportunities for service.

Categories 2 and 3 may offer the best prospects. Both offer good opportunities for service and potential receptiveness to modern esoteric teachings. They welcome married priests, irrespective of gender, and in many cases welcome openly gay or transgender persons into membership and the ministry. Category 2's liturgical tradition offers greater intrinsic esotericism. It is worth noting that esotericists adapt to sacramental ritual more readily, than do people from the larger secular world, because of their understanding of the basic concepts of occult ritual; they are also sensitive to sacred mystery. Churches in the third category have largely lost their liturgical traditions and esotericists may find them overly rationalistic.

Churches in the first category are attractive options from the standpoint of the richness of their liturgies and intrinsic esotericism. But rigid orthodoxy of beliefs makes them less likely to consider new insights or interpretations, and involvement in esotericism might have to be concealed. Moreover, restriction of the priesthood and other positions of responsibility to single, celibate, heterosexual males may offend esotericists' sense of inclusiveness.

The fourth category offers interesting possibilities because of the strong emphasis on spiritual healing. The fifth category offers a strong tradition of service, but esotericists would likely view its narrow, fundamentalist outlook and pervasive intolerance as major obstacles.

In addition to selecting a denomination, an esotericist would need to choose a particular congregation or parish. Significant differences may exist at the local level in liturgy, theological emphasis, attitudes to discipline and inclusiveness, and receptiveness to esoteric teachings. The larger cities obviously present more choices; in small towns or rural areas choices may be quite limited.

How deeply esotericists become involved in the lives of their chosen Christianity denomination and congregation is a matter of personal choice. But they must realize that superficial involvement is unlikely to build trust or open

up opportunities for meaningful influence. Esotericists who do not become involved to a significant degree also forgo the joy that can come from collective worship—particularly sacred ritual—and may forgo associated opportunities for spiritual growth. On the other hand, significant involvement does not imply an obligation to embrace every article of doctrine or observe every liturgical rubric. Some distance may be needed if the esotericist is to offer new insights into traditional Christian teachings and fresh perspectives on religious practices.

For their part, practicing Christians have unprecedented opportunities to explore esotericism. It would not take the intelligent Christian seeker long to survey the various aspects of esotericism and identify areas of potential interest—as well as pitfalls to avoid. The increasing visibility of esoteric Christianity will reassure them that they are not alone in their search, and contacts with informed esotericists who have come into their churches can provide valuable guidance.

### **Christianity, the Hierarchy, and the Rays**

The Christ oversees all world religions in his capacity as World Teacher and head of the Department of Education and Religion. He takes his place on the direct channel of the second ray of Love-Wisdom from Shamballa to humanity, and is its principal exponent below the level of the Planetary Council. Reporting directly to him is the Master Koot Hoomi, Chohan of the major second-ray ashram. Within that ashram are several subsidiary ashrams, one of which is headed by the Master Djwhal Khul, who attained the fifth initiation in 1875, or thereabout.

Christianity is the immediate responsibility of the Master Jesus, who, we understand, has a sixth-ray soul, expressing Devotion and Idealism, and a first-ray personality, expressing Will and Power.<sup>59</sup> “[T]he keynote of His Presence,” to quote Charles Leadbeater, “is an intense purity, and a fiery type of devotion that brooks no obstacles.”<sup>60</sup> According to Alice Bailey, Jesus attained the fifth initiation as Apollonius of Tyana in the first century CE.<sup>61</sup>

And soon thereafter he may have activated the sixth-ray ashram—the fourth, in historical sequence—“around the nucleus of light, started by the ray Lords much earlier.”<sup>62</sup> The Master Jesus is described as *Chohan* of the sixth-ray ashram, implying that he has now attained the sixth initiation.<sup>63</sup>

In the organization structure of the Planetary Hierarchy, Chohans of the third through seventh-ray ashrams ordinarily report to the Mahachohan, head of the Department of Civilization.<sup>64</sup> But Christ currently is supervising ashramic work for Christianity and other major religions: “The Master Jesus, the inspirer and director of the Christian Churches everywhere, . . . works at present under the Christ for the welfare of Christianity; other Masters hold similar posts in relation to the great oriental faiths.”<sup>65</sup> “At present” suggests that this may be a temporary arrangement, reflecting the importance of religion in the Hierarchy’s near-term agenda.

The Masters Jesus and Koot Hoomi, we are told, both work with the leaders of Christian denominations. Somewhat surprisingly, considering her criticism of institutional Christianity and its leaders cited earlier, Bailey stated: “Certain great prelates of the Anglican and Catholic Churches are wise agents of His [Jesus’].”<sup>66</sup> And: “The Master K.H. works also with the prelates of the great Catholic Churches—Greek, Roman and Anglican—[and] with the leaders of the Protestant communions.”<sup>67</sup>

The Master Jesus is described as an effective leader who works through the churches of the West, inspiring officials and ordinary people open to his guidance: “[He] works especially with the masses of the Christian people who inhabit the occidental countries, and who gather in the churches. He is distinctively a great leader, an organizer, and a wise general executive. . . . His connection with all true church leaders and executives is very close. He acts ceaselessly on the inner esoteric council of the churches.”<sup>68</sup> No information has been revealed on the goals, responsibilities or membership of that council.

Writing no later than 1949, Bailey revealed that the Master Jesus is “now” taking a more

direct role in the affairs of Christianity, particularly the Church of Rome:

[T]he whole field of religion will be re-inspired and re-orientated from Rome because the Master Jesus will again take hold of the Christian Church in an effort to re-spiritualize it and to re-organize it. From the chair of the Pope of Rome, the Master Jesus will attempt to swing that great branch of the religious beliefs of the world again into a position of spiritual power and away from its present authoritative and temporary political potency.<sup>69</sup>

The pontificates of Popes John XXIII (1958–1963) and Francis (2013–) would seem to confirm that the prophecy is being fulfilled.

Like Christ himself, Christianity has a second-ray soul and sixth-ray personality.<sup>70</sup> Christianity’s contrasting rays—like our own—create “esoteric conflict” productive of growth and transformation.<sup>71</sup> But Christianity is also influenced by the fourth, fifth and seventh rays. And other Masters support Christianity in areas pertaining to their ray interests and responsibilities.

For example, we are told: “The Master R. . . works largely through esoteric ritual and ceremonial, being vitally interested in the effects, hitherto unrecognized . . . of the Churches everywhere.”<sup>72</sup> Sacramental ritual, with its seventh-ray associations, played a major role in the medieval church and continues to do so in the Roman and Orthodox churches. Significantly, the restoration of high ritual in the Anglican and Lutheran churches, which began in the mid-nineteenth century, is occurring at a time when the seventh ray is coming into cyclical manifestation. Despite claims that liturgical ritual is a thing of the past, we can expect it to play an increasing role in Christianity as seventh-ray influence gains strength. Ritual, we should remind ourselves, was central to the ancient mysteries—which, we understand, are also to be restored.<sup>73</sup>

Devic beings of various orders support the Master Jesus’s work. Bailey explained: “A special group of devas work under His command. . . . [A]nd with Him the groups of violet angels cooperate.”<sup>74</sup> These latter, who work

primarily on the etheric subplanes, are likely to be more active as seventh-ray influence increases: “With the coming in of the ceremonial ray of violet, we have the amplification therefore of the violet vibration, always inherent on these levels, and the great opportunity therefore for contact between the two kingdoms.”<sup>75</sup>

Many types of transformation occur on the etheric subplanes, including healing work and transubstantiation of the Eucharistic elements. Hildegard of Bingen was one of many individuals in times past who described the appearance of angels during the Mass. More recently, Slovenian spiritual scientist Marko Pogačnik reported seeing an angel and a figure resembling Christ over the altar at a chapel in Venice.<sup>76</sup> Geoffrey Hodson noted that a distinct order of angels participates in Christian worship:

There is an order of angels attached to the Christian Church, who, being dedicated to the service of Christ, and serving as channels and conservers of His blessing and His power, attend every service held in His name. Filled with His love and compassion, they seek to bear those priceless gifts to the souls of men; at the great celebration of the mystery of the bread and wine they come, that every thirsting soul shall receive according to his need.<sup>77</sup>

Elsewhere, he described the appearance of the Gandharvas, or music devas, during performances of sacred music, like the plainchant *Agnus Dei* and Franz Schubert’s *Ave Maria*.<sup>78</sup> He also commented on devic presences at religious healing rituals like the sacrament of anointing: “[T]he Archangel Raphael is definitely attracted and he may either attend in person or manifest his power and his presence through the angels of his hierarchy who are already in attendance. This naturally increases the amount of power available.”<sup>79</sup>

Only people with clairvoyant gifts may be able to see these “Christian” angels now, but Hodson predicted that eventually they will become more visible: “Men know and see them not, and so the angel servers pass unnoticed and unknown. In the religion of the future they will emerge from their invisibility, and men will

see them face to face.”<sup>80</sup> Meanwhile, many more people sense the presence of devic beings, and religious ritual, sacred music, and sacred spaces provide unique opportunities to do so.

Also supporting the work of the Christ and the Master Jesus are initiates of various degrees, disciples and servers. Helena Blavatsky claimed that “[s]ome of the early Popes were Initiates.”<sup>81</sup> Alice Bailey referred to St Paul as “that great initiate,” stating that he attained the third initiation for his work described in the *Acts of the Apostles*.<sup>82</sup> She also identified Martin Luther as a “lesser initiate.”<sup>83</sup> It would be tempting to equate initiation with sainthood, but a more realistic correspondence would be to *theosis*, or deification, as understood in Eastern Orthodoxy.<sup>84</sup>

The initiations discussed in modern esoteric teachings customarily are related to events in the life of Christ: Nativity, Baptism, Transfiguration, Crucifixion, and Resurrection. Yet Bailey stated that “it is the seventh initiation which is the true resurrection. The correct name for the fifth initiation is the Initiation of Revelation.”<sup>85</sup> Taking a different perspective, Rudolf Steiner identified seven stages of “Christian Initiation”: The Washing of the Feet; The Scourging; The Crowning with Thorns; The Mystic Death; The Burial; the Resurrection; the Ascension.<sup>86</sup>

### ***The Sixth Ray and the Sixth Group of Disciples***

The sixth ray, the dominant influence on Christianity, has been in global manifestation “for close on two thousand years.”<sup>87</sup> Writing in the 1930s, Bailey declared that the ray “began to pass out in 1625” and is now “[p]assing rapidly out” of manifestation.<sup>88</sup> But in the same work she stated that the ray “is slowly passing out,”<sup>89</sup> and that “its potency, though greatly weakened, can still be felt.”<sup>90</sup>

When a ray passes out of cyclic manifestation, souls on that ray no longer incarnate, though we are told that “it will be about two hundred years [again from the 1930s] before all the sixth-ray egos pass out of incarnation.”<sup>91</sup> It is important to remember that individuals still incarnate with sixth-ray personalities (we un-

derstand that there are no sixth-ray monads). Moreover, sixth-ray groups, institutions, nations, and members of the Hierarchy may still play significant roles in human affairs. As we shall see shortly, sixth-ray influence will also continue in the sixth subrace of human evolution.

The Master Jesus remains the guiding hand in Christianity, and he will channel sixth-ray energy into the world until his mission is completed. We live in the end-times of the sixth-ray's period of manifestation, and, accordingly, we are more familiar with its negative qualities than its positive ones. Lest anyone imagine, however, that the Master Jesus expresses a negative ray, we should remind ourselves that one of the sixth ray's descriptors is: "Growth towards the light."<sup>92</sup>

We do not know what priorities the Master Jesus has set for the remainder of his mission. But he will probably continue to take a "more direct" role in the affairs of Christianity. Among much else, we are told that "a Master, or an initiate who has taken the third initiation" will be placed at the head of "the various great divisions of the Church."<sup>93</sup> Such a development would have far-reaching implications.

The Master Jesus can also be expected to play a prominent role in the Hierarchy's plan to create a New World Religion. The emergence of a new religion from "the Church, the Masonic Fraternity and the educational field" is one of the prophecies of the trans-Himalayan teachings.<sup>94</sup> Assisting the Hierarchy in its effort is a group of disciples, referred to as "workers in the Field of Religion."<sup>95</sup> The group, "already formed," is the sixth of several focused on different areas of human endeavor. In Bailey's words:

***Establishment of a New World Religion is a major priority of the Christ, the Master Jesus, and other members of the Planetary Hierarchy. Assisting the Hierarchy in this endeavor is the "sixth group" of disciples: "workers in the field of religion." Christianity may be one of the principle foundations on which the new world religion will be built, and esotericists on the path of discipleship are in an excellent position to lend support.***

This group is, in a pronounced sense, a channel for the activity of the second Ray of Love-Wisdom, that of the World Teacher—an office held at present by the Christ. The platform of the new world religion will be built by the many groups, working under the inspiration of the Christ and the influence of the second ray and these—in their totality—will constitute this sixth group.<sup>96</sup>

Important correspondences should be noted. The Master Jesus and Christianity express *sixth*-ray energy. The *sixth* group of disciples is charged with helping

to establish the New World Religion. The *sixth* subrace is already making its debut on the planet, and the *sixth* root race will emerge from it.<sup>97</sup> The sixth ray will be a dominant influence on the sixth subrace—presumably even though it will be out of cyclic manifestation—while the second ray will dominate the sixth root race.<sup>98</sup> These correspondences suggest that we are entering a critical phase in the evolution of Christianity and world religion in general.

Christianity may continue in recognizable form until the New World Religion is fully functioning.<sup>99</sup> When that will occur depends on the sixth group's effectiveness and responsiveness to Hierarchical guidance. Perhaps the new religion will attain the desired state of functionality in the same general timeframe as the externalization of the Hierarchy, and we are told that a date for the externalization will "in all probability . . . be set" at the next General Assembly of the Hierarchy, scheduled for 2025.<sup>100</sup> Note that no promise was made that the externalization *will begin* in 2025: merely that a date will be set.

Disciples are drawn to a particular ashram on the basis of their soul rays and sooner or later pledge themselves to the Master who heads that ashram.<sup>101</sup> Disciples with sixth-ray souls may already be pledged to the Master Jesus and may already be working in the sixth group. Since the soul and personality rays are normally different, again creating “esoteric conflict,” those disciples may experience personality-level dissonance with the group. On the other hand, abilities and skills gained during the particular lifetime will no doubt contribute to the group’s work.

Disciples with a different soul ray may already be pledged to a Master in one of the other ashrams. From time to time, however, a disciple may be reassigned to another ashram for a specific purpose. There are strong indications that certain disciples from second-ray ashrams, like the Master Djwhal Khul’s, are being reassigned to serve the Master Jesus. Presumably they are working either in the Jesus’ own sixth-ray ashram or in his “temporary office” in the department of the Christ. When disciples or Masters are reassigned to another ashram, they retain their native soul-ray characteristics and contribute related abilities to the work of the new ashram. Second-ray disciples reassigned to serve the Master Jesus will contribute their energies and experience during this critical period in the evolution of Christianity.

Precedents for temporary reassignment have been reported on more than one level. Alice Bailey, a disciple of the Master Koot Hoomi, served as amanuensis to the Master Djwhal Khul for the last thirty years of her life. She also founded the Arcane School, and it and its offshoots provide unique opportunities for qualified disciples to enter the Master Djwhal Khul’s ashram. With more profound implications, the Master Jesus, whose sixth-ray ashram would normally report to the Mahachohan, “works at present under the Christ for the welfare of Christianity.”<sup>102</sup> Also we were told in the 1920s that the Master Rakoczi, then head of the seventh-ray ashram “hold[s] office temporarily under the [first-ray] Manu” as “regent for Europe and America.”<sup>103</sup> Soon thereafter, he was promoted to Mahachohan and now heads the third-ray Department of Civilization.

### *The Sixth-Ray Environment*

For the disciple, a temporary reassignment presents an exceptional service opportunity. But the disciple could find him or herself in a startlingly unfamiliar ray environment. Consider, for example, the case where a disciple from the Master Djwhal Khul’s second-ray ashram is reassigned to the sixth-ray ashram of the Master Jesus. Some dissonance would be expected because of the disciple’s soul ray, and greater dissonance if the disciple does not have a sixth-ray personality.

Ray dissonance might be somewhat alleviated if the disciple had sixth-ray influence in the form of a “legacy ray,” carried over from a previous life.<sup>104</sup> The legacy ray influence would likely be associated with the astral body, since the physical and mental bodies normally cannot lie on the sixth ray. The eligibility of a disciple, with no other sixth-ray influence, to be reassigned to the sixth-ray ashram might even rest on the existence of a resonant legacy ray. The astral body remains intact until the fourth initiation, and eligibility would not be affected by attainment of the second initiation and mastery of the emotional nature.

The sixth ray is the ray of devotion and idealism. Its “special virtues,” according to Alice Bailey, are “devotion, single-mindedness, love, tenderness, intuition, loyalty, reverence”; and “virtues to be acquired” are: “strength, self-sacrifice, purity, truth, tolerance, serenity, balance and common sense.” By contrast, the ray’s vices are: “Selfish and jealous love, over-leaning on others, and partiality, self-deception, sectarianism, superstition, prejudice, over-rapid conclusions, and fiery anger.”<sup>105</sup> Bailey offered the following stereotype of the undeveloped sixth-ray personality:

The man who is on this ray is full of religious instincts and impulses, and of intense personal feeling; nothing is taken equably. Everything, in his eyes, is either perfect or intolerable; his friends are angels, his enemies are very much the reverse. . . . The best type of this ray makes the saint, the worst type, the bigot or fanatic, the typical martyr or the typical inquisitor. . . . The man on this ray is often of

gentle nature, but he can always flame into fury and fiery wrath. He will lay down his life for the objects of his devotion or reverence, but he will not lift a finger to help those outside of his immediate sympathies.<sup>106</sup>

The segments of Christianity to which disciples are likely to be assigned are already taking on more of the sixth ray's higher expressions. Senior members of the sixth-ray ashram would be expected to exhibit all the characteristic virtues and none of the vices. But those on the outskirts, with whom a reassigned disciple might first come into contact, might well lack some of the virtues and be still working to overcome the vices.

One of the lower expressions of the sixth ray is separativeness. A disciple coming from a second-ray ashram, in which great emphasis is placed on cooperation, might be startled to encounter separative attitudes on the fringes of the sixth-ray ashram. Harsh sectarian rhetoric may have abated in recent decades. Yet "fiery anger" can still erupt in debates, particularly intramural debates, over articles of doctrine, scriptural exegesis, or liturgical rubrics.

Nowhere is the heat of battle more intense than in academic journals devoted to religious and biblical studies, where separativeness may be reinforced by fifth-ray energies. Those on each side of an issue may passionately defend the opinions and research of their "immediate sympathies," while trying to discredit the work of opponents. Scriptural passages, texts by church fathers, decrees of church councils, writings of saints, and pronouncements of church leaders provide an arsenal of combat weapons. To outsiders, the spiteful sniping comes across as distinctly "un-Christian," but insiders accept it as the norm. Significantly, we read: "The sixth ray activity led to the formation of bands of disciples, working in groups but not in close relation, and subject to internal dissension, based on personality reactions."<sup>107</sup>

The second-ray disciple may also find the devotional aspects of Christianity challenging.<sup>108</sup> Devotion to Christ, God the Father, the Trinity—and, in some denominations, the saints,

Mary, and the Eucharistic elements—lies at the heart of Christianity's sixth-ray personality. To place potential problems in context, we should remember that devotion can be expressed through gestures, ritual, music, art and architecture, as well as through prayer; and not all of these are likely to stir negative reactions. Even in the case of prayer, any negative reactions will probably be restricted to certain types of prayer.<sup>109</sup> Much depends on the language in which they are written and the images they evoke. In the liturgy he developed for the Liberal Catholic Church, Charles Leadbeater took pains to avoid scriptural passages that "complain, grovel or curse."<sup>110</sup>

How to express devotion is only one of many issues concerning liturgical language. Some denominations have had to choose between retaining a sacred language, like Latin, Greek, or Old Church Slavonic, and using the vernacular. Other denominations had to choose between an archaic and a contemporary vernacular.<sup>111</sup> If a contemporary vernacular is used, issues concerning gender-specific pronouns must be resolved, some of which have theological implications. Mainline denominations have learned that no set of changes will please everyone.

Whatever language a particular denomination, or local congregation adopts for its public worship must be treated with respect. We should remember that tolerance, balance and common sense are among the sixth-ray virtues we must all acquire. Private devotion can draw upon a wide range of resources and can assume whatever form may suit individual taste.

Adjusting to the ray characteristics of a different ashram calls for great patience and focus on the work to be accomplished. Finding oneself in an unfamiliar ray environment is not entirely different from moving to another country. An immigrant has to learn the language and customs and adjust to new cultural norms. He or she must behave with a degree of humility, recognizing that the natives value their traditions, aspirations, symbols and rituals. The immigrant may be dismayed that certain forms of negativity are more common than they were in the old country—perhaps forgetting that other forms are less common. The

disciple reassigned to another ashram must make similar adjustments in behavior and awareness, but the end result can be a successful and rewarding contribution to the ashram's work.

## Concluding Remarks

Esoteric Christianity is not something new. Christianity always had a strong esoteric dimension of its own, albeit diminished by the Reformation, the Enlightenment, materialism, liberal theology, and most recently fundamentalism. Intrinsic esotericism remains strongest in the sacramental churches, which include Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and major segments of Anglicanism and Lutheranism. Independent esoteric movements also developed on the fringes of Christianity. Sadly, institutional Christianity perceived those movements as a threat, and when ecclesiastical and civil power coalesced to provide opportunities, the church took extreme measures to suppress the movements and persecute participants.

The present study has explored in greatest detail the area of overlap between Christianity and modern esotericism, populated by esotericists who have embraced Christianity and traditional Christians who have embraced elements of modern esoteric teachings. This population is increasing, and the cross-fertilization offers substantial benefits to both sides. Fortunately, institutionalized persecution is a thing of the past, and attitudes have become more tolerant.

Esotericists might be discouraged by the harsh criticisms of Christianity by two individuals who played prominent roles in the dissemination of the trans-Himalayan teachings. But they should be encouraged by the contribution those individuals made to our understanding of the work of the Christ and the Master Jesus. They should also be encouraged by the positive experiences of other prominent figures who fruitfully combined esotericism and Christianity. Through involvement in Christianity, esotericists can gain access to rich traditions of spirituality, intrinsic esotericism, and sacred aesthetics; a rich liturgy; and experience of the uniquely Christian expression of divine mys-

tery. Importantly, they can contribute to its worldwide service mission. Those tempted to satisfy a religious impulse by participating in non-western religions should be aware that Christianity may also have a great deal to offer.

The path of Christian esotericism is challenging. Those treading the path should recognize that Christianity has frequently fallen short of its ideals, and must contend with negative stereotypes, as well as with suspicion on the part of traditional Christians and other esotericists. But esotericists should not be discouraged by the burden of official doctrine. Rather, they should help—with diligence, sensitivity and patience—to instill new meaning in that doctrine, to give new emphasis to love, healing, service, transformation, and the elevation of consciousness.

Establishment of a New World Religion is a major priority of the Christ, the Master Jesus, and other members of the Planetary Hierarchy. Assisting the Hierarchy in this endeavor is the “sixth group” of disciples: “workers in the field of religion.” Christianity may be one of the principal foundations on which the new religion will be built, and esotericists on the path of discipleship are in an excellent position to lend support.

Disciples may be candidates for temporary reassignment from their native ashrams to work with the Master Jesus. Those who accept such assignments face additional challenges stemming from possible dissonance between their own soul and/or personality rays and the sixth ray of Christianity. Sixth-ray influence may be declining globally, but it is likely to remain significant in Christianity for decades to come. As a ray passes out of manifestation its negative characteristics tend to be most apparent, but the positive qualities of the sixth ray should serve as a guiding light. The greater light will come from Christianity's second-ray soul.

This article's focus has been on participation in Christianity by esotericists. From the other direction, practicing Christians may discover in esoteric teachings new insights into traditional doctrine and practices. “Mysteries be-

yond our comprehension” may become readily understandable, and doctrinal contradictions or paradoxes may be resolved in a larger synthesis. Traditional Christians who embrace esotericism face their own set of challenges, including criticism from fellow Christians, suspicions of heresy, or simply fears that they are trespassing on dangerous ground. They must also be able to see beyond esotericism’s negative stereotypes—even as esotericists work to dispel those stereotypes. Yet, again, if Christians accept the challenges, their interest can set them on new paths of spiritual development and service. They too can be part of the sixth group of disciples. Esotericists who have joined their churches can provide valuable help and guidance.

More than ninety years ago we were told that certain “great prelates of the Anglican and Catholic Churches are wise agents of” the Master Jesus; and in the 1950s we were told Orthodox, Roman, Anglican and Protestant leaders were working with him and the Master Koot Hoomi. Since then, those denominations have taken great strides toward humility and inclusiveness. Moreover, the sixth group of disciples, “already formed” in 1948, is now robustly active. Sadly, derisive comments about institutional Christianity and its leaders, along with the pejorative term “churchianity,” still appear in esoteric writings, even in recent publications of an esoteric school. Such practices have no place in an environment that claims to be guided by the second ray. Criticism of Christianity has been justified in times past. But now, all of us—traditional Christians, non-Christian esotericists, and Christian esotericists—might want to look into our hearts to see what prejudices lurk there and what changes need to be made.

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<sup>1</sup> Some confusion arises in use of the terms “East” and “West.” In the Christian literature the terms conventionally distinguish between the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches, taken as a group, and the Roman, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and other churches, taken as a group. In esoteric literature, the terms more commonly distinguish between the Eurocentric west-

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ern esoteric tradition and the eastern esoteric tradition that developed in South Asia. Hopefully, context will indicate the terms’ meaning where they appear in this article.

<sup>2</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, New York: Lucis, 1948, 43.

<sup>3</sup> Bailey refuted the suggestion that aspiration is purely “astral” in nature: “Students must lose sight of the foolish and erroneous idea that aspiration is really an emotional attitude. It is not. It is a scientific process, governing evolution itself.” Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology I*, New York: Lucis, 1936, 326.

<sup>4</sup> Purucker served under Katherine Tingley in the American Theosophical Society, which had broken away from the Adyar Society. He served as president from 1929 to 1942.

<sup>5</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, vol. 1, Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1877, ix.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, iv.

<sup>8</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, “The State of Christianity,” *The Theosophist* (April, 1880), 181.

<sup>9</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *From Bethlehem to Calvary*, New York: Lucis, 1937. This book was not dictated by the Tibetan Master.

<sup>10</sup> Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 403.

<sup>11</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Unfinished Autobiography*, New York: Lucis, 1951, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, 137-138. Parentheses in original.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 140-131. Parenthesis in original. Although Bailey appeared to criticize Paul in this passage, elsewhere she not only described him as an initiate but also revealed that he was a previous incarnation of the Master Hilarion. See Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, New York: Lucis, 1922, 38, 59.

<sup>14</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations*, Lucis, 1949, 39-40. Parenthesis in original. The term *churchianity* appears ten times in Alice Bailey’s books.

<sup>15</sup> Helena Blavatsky made no secret of her hostility to Christianity. In particular, she criticized the attitudes and activities of Christian missionaries in India, some of whom allegedly conspired against her. Alice Bailey’s situation is more complex. As noted she made significant contributions to Christian thought through her own books and those written for the Tibetan Master. All the available evidence suggests that she took her work as amanuensis seriously and strove to receive and transcribe

the information without distortion. But the information was filtered through her consciousness, and her vocabulary and mindset no doubt played a role in transcription. Whether the tone of her rhetoric can be attributed to personal experiences and prejudices is an open question. Bailey was raised in the Church of England, served as an evangelistic missionary, endured an abusive marriage to an Episcopal clergyman, and finally was abandoned along with their three children.

<sup>16</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, New York: Lucis, 1957, 161-162.

<sup>17</sup> We do not know when the sixth ray came into manifestation. But we were told: “The effect of the activity of this ray [Ray VI], during the past two thousand years, has been to train humanity in the art of recognizing ideals, which are the blue prints [sic] of ideas.” Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, New York: Lucis, 1942, 143-144.

<sup>18</sup> Forced conversions of Jews were widespread when Christian forces reoccupied Spain after centuries of religious harmony under Muslim rule. Most of the crusades were fought against Muslims, but the “Albigensian Crusade” targeted the Christian Cathars of southern Europe. The inquisitions were series of tribunals designed to stamp out heresy. The three main ones were the Medieval Inquisition (1184–1230), Spanish Inquisition (1480–1834), and Roman Inquisition (1542–). In 1908, the Roman Inquisition was renamed the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, and renamed again in 1965 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Of the estimated 75,000 cases judged by the Roman Inquisition in Italy alone, approximately 1,250 resulted in the death sentence. No such sentences have been handed down for more than a century.

<sup>19</sup> “Save” and “salve” both derive from these Greek words, via the Late Latin *salvare*, “to make safe, secure.”

<sup>20</sup> *Mark* 10:37. Unless stated otherwise, all biblical quotations are from the King James Bible.

<sup>21</sup> John E. E. Dalberg-Acton, letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton, April 5, 1887.

<sup>22</sup> John F. Nash, *The Sacramental Church*, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Pope Francis has demonstrated Christ-like compassion for the poor and repressed within his own flock and beyond. He has also embraced a simple lifestyle. Francis could not unilaterally sell off the Vatican’s timeless

treasures, but he lives in a small apartment separate from the opulent papal palace.

<sup>24</sup> Anglican–Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Discussions, Dublin Agreed Statement: *The Mystery of the Church*. 1984, I, 12.

<sup>25</sup> Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church, Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, Oct. 1999.

<sup>26</sup> Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission, Seattle Statement: *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> The Church of England and the Churches of Norway, Denmark and Iceland, *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury*, 1951.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Keating, *Invitation to Love: The Way of Christian Contemplation*, New York, Continuum, 2010, 90.

<sup>29</sup> William Johnston, *Christian Zen*, New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1997, 46.

<sup>30</sup> Hans U. von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1. Fort Collins, CO: Ignatius Press, 1961. i, 18.

<sup>31</sup> The investment in “great stone temples” has been criticized on the grounds that resources should have been diverted to welfare programs. But the issue of priorities was debated from the very beginning of Christianity: “The poor you will always have with you” (*Mark* 14:7, *Matthew* 26:11)—and continues today. Not incidentally, construction of the medieval cathedrals revitalized the cities, created jobs, and stimulated building technologies.

<sup>32</sup> A. T. Barker (ed.), *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, letter no. XXIVb, 85B, (8), London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1923, 188.

<sup>33</sup> Timothy Ware (Bishop Kallistos Ware), *The Orthodox Church*, 1963. London: Penguin, 1997, 264.

<sup>34</sup> Kircher also achieved fame for publishing a map of Atlantis, which he claimed was based on “Egyptian sources and Plato’s description.”

<sup>35</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* (“Against Heresies”), c.180.

<sup>36</sup> Parliament of the Kingdom of Scotland, *Act of the Parliament Approving and Establishing the Directory for Publick Worship*, Edinburgh, February 6, 1645.

<sup>37</sup> In some cases, shrines that served as popular pilgrimage destinations were destroyed for political reasons. Secular leaders feared that large gatherings of people might pose a threat to their authority.

<sup>38</sup> The two most influential manifestos were: the *Fama Fraternitatis, des Loblichen Ordens des*

*Rosenkreutzes* (“Declaration of the Worthy Order of the Rosy Cross”), published in 1614, and the *Confessio Fraternitatis R.C. ad Eruditos Europea* (“Confession of the Fraternity R.C. to the Erudite of Europe”), 1615. Both were published in Cassell (now Kassell) in northern Hesse, Germany.

<sup>39</sup> John F. Nash, “Occult Orders in Western Esotericism,” *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Spring 2014), 75-104. The edict prohibiting Roman Catholics from joining Masonic organizations was renewed by subsequent popes. Today, most Roman Catholic men accept the edict as binding. Few Masonic orders accept women.

<sup>40</sup> Arthur E. Waite, Introduction to Karl von Eckartshausen, *The Cloud Upon the Sanctuary*, 1909, x.

<sup>41</sup> Encausse wrote under the pseudonym “Papus.”

<sup>42</sup> Éliphas Lévi, *The History of Magic*, New York: Samuel Weiser, 1913, 374.

<sup>43</sup> John F. Nash, “Anna Bonus Kingsford (1846–1888),” *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Winter 2012), 76-78.

<sup>44</sup> John F. Nash, “Rudolph Steiner (1861–1925),” *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Spring 2016), 70-74.

<sup>45</sup> The liturgy was published in *The Science of the Sacraments*, London: St Alban Press, 1920. Page numbers cited herein are from the abridged 2005 Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile Press edition. The complete text can be found at [http://www.anandgholap.net/Science\\_Of\\_Sacraments-CWL.htm](http://www.anandgholap.net/Science_Of_Sacraments-CWL.htm).

<sup>46</sup> The book was published anonymously (and posthumously) in French, with an introduction by Roman Catholic theologian Hans von Balthasar. The English translation was published in 1985.

<sup>47</sup> Judith von Halle, *And if He Has not been Raised and Secrets of the Stations of the Cross and the Grail Blood*, both by Forest Row, UK: Temple Lodge 2007.

<sup>48</sup> For a discussion of the stigmata, and comments on Emmerich’s and von Halle’s work, see John F. Nash, “Stigmata and the Initiatory Path,” *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Summer 2013), 49-72.

<sup>49</sup> Esoteric institutions do, of course, have the responsibility to distance themselves from sorcery and similar abuses of occultism. In no way did Von Halle’s work fall into that category.

<sup>50</sup> While mainstream Anglican and Lutheran churches ordain women, certain breakaway sects retain an all-male clergy.

<sup>51</sup> Statement from Primates 2016, Anglican Communion News Service, Jan. 14, 2016. The Anglican Church of Canada, has taken the first step toward approving same-sex marriage, despite the threat of similar ostracism. Opposition to same-sex marriage in the Anglican Communion comes primarily from African bishops, some of whom serve countries where homosexual practice is a criminal—even capital—offense.

<sup>52</sup> At the Niagara Falls Conference of 1895, clergy from several denominations defined five “fundamental points” of doctrine: the inerrancy of scripture, the virgin birth, substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and the authenticity of his miracles. In addition to adhering to the five points, evangelical fundamentalists often exhibit attitudes of defensiveness, resistance to change, and denial of scientific discovery. It is important to note that not all evangelicals are fundamentalists; nor are all fundamentalists evangelicals.

<sup>53</sup> The Church of Rome has been guilty of its own kind of fundamentalism. Notorious was Pope Pius X’s “oath against modernism,” which all clergy and seminary professors were required to swear, from 1910 until 1967. Unlike evangelical fundamentalists, however, Roman Catholics never denied the sacred.

<sup>54</sup> Joel Scott Osteen, senior pastor of Lakewood Church, Houston, TX, the largest Protestant church in the United States, urged his readers: “Will you believe? Will you allow that seed to take root? The angel told Mary that she would conceive without knowing a man. In other words, God was saying it could happen through supernatural means. It can happen without the bank loaning you the money.” *Your Best Life Now*, Houston: Faithworks, 2015, 11.

<sup>55</sup> Charles F. F. Moore, *Prosperity*, Unity Village, MO: Unity, 1936, 132.

<sup>56</sup> *Proverbs* 3:9-10.

<sup>57</sup> A forty-day “Prosperity Prayer Program” offered by Unity Worldwide Ministries includes the following affirmations: “Large sums of money, big happy surprises and rich exciting ideas come to me now – under grace, in perfect ways for my personal use and I use them

- wisely.” “Let me learn to think of dollars as I do leaves or fruit on trees, as the natural and inevitable result of the law active within.” “I lift up my thoughts and feelings to be aware, to understand, and to know that the Divine Presence I Am is the source and substance of all my prosperity. I am conscious of the constant activity of this Divine Presence of Infinite Prosperity. Therefore my consciousness is filled with the Light of Truth.” Source: <https://www.unityworldwideministries.org/40-day-prosperity-prayer-program>. Last accessed July 17, 2016.
- <sup>58</sup> The estimate of 33,000 denominations, published in David B. Barrett, et al., *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2/e, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001, is exaggerated because “denomination” was defined as an organized Christian group within a country. However, a reliable estimate must exceed 22,000, the number of independent denominations specifically identified as having no international counterparts.
- <sup>59</sup> Michael Robbins, *Tapestry of the Gods*, vol. 3. Online: <http://esotericastrologer.org/articles/esoteric-astrology-and-the-the-seven-rays-tabulations/>. Last accessed July 31, 2016.
- <sup>60</sup> Charles W. Leadbeater, *The Masters and the Path*, Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1925, 42.
- <sup>61</sup> Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 56-57.
- <sup>62</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, New York: Lucis, 1925, 386-387.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 439.
- <sup>64</sup> An organization chart for the Planetary Hierarchy can be found in Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 49. An expanded version is provided in John F. Nash, *The Soul and Its Destiny*, Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2004, 82.
- <sup>65</sup> Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 46-47.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.
- <sup>67</sup> Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 506.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>69</sup> Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations*, 59.
- <sup>70</sup> Alice Bailey disclosed Christ’s soul and personality rays in *The Destiny of the Nations*, 38. According to Tallapragada Subba Row, one of the first scholars to write authoritatively about the seven rays: “[I]t is only the first two Rays that have ever given rise to universal religions.” See his “First Ray in Buddhism,” *Esoteric Writings*, Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1895, 527.
- <sup>71</sup> The Solar Logos is said to be unique in having the same soul and personality ray (Ray II), which “determines both His quality and His purpose.” Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology I*, 334-335.
- <sup>72</sup> Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 58-59. Since that was written the Master Rakoczi has been promoted to Mahachohan of the Department of Civilization. We have not been told whether he retains his “day-to-day” responsibilities for the seventh-ray ashram, or who else may have taken over those responsibilities.
- <sup>73</sup> Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 514.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 506.
- <sup>75</sup> Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 911.
- <sup>76</sup> Marko Pogačnik, *Christ Power and the Earth Goddess*, Forres, Scotland: Findhorn Press, 1999, 14-17. Charles Leadbeater spoke of the “Angel of the Eucharist” and “Angel of the Presence”—this latter evidently named after the Real Presence in the Eucharist. However, he explained that the Angel of the Presence is “not a member of the glorious kingdom of the Angels, but is actually a thought-form of the Christ, wearing His likeness.” *The Science of the Sacraments*, 33.
- <sup>77</sup> Geoffrey Hodson, *The Inner Side of Church Worship*, London: St Alban Press, 1930.1975, 15.
- <sup>78</sup> Geoffrey Hodson, *Clairvoyant Investigations*, Madras, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1984, 78-86, 89-92.
- <sup>79</sup> Hodson, *The Inner Side of Church Worship*, 62.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.
- <sup>81</sup> Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine I*, 311.
- <sup>82</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, New York: Lucis, 1951, 213. Interestingly, as noted earlier, Bailey blamed Paul for Christianity’s deviation from Christ’s teachings.
- <sup>83</sup> Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 38.
- <sup>84</sup> For a discussion of theosis see John F. Nash, “Theosis: a Christian Perspective on Human Destiny,” *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Spring 2011), 15-33.
- <sup>85</sup> Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, 643.
- <sup>86</sup> Rudolf Steiner, lecture, Karlsruhe, Germany, October 14, 1911. Included in *From Jesus to Christ*, Forest Row, UK: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1991, 165.
- <sup>87</sup> Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 439-440.
- <sup>88</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology I*, 26.
- <sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.

- <sup>90</sup> Ibid., 348. World events might suggest that the sixth ray's negative aspects remain relatively strong.
- <sup>91</sup> Ibid., 26. During times of cyclical pralaya, "Egos who are on that particular Ray will take form elsewhere on other globes, and in other chains, and not so much on our planet." Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 439.
- <sup>92</sup> Ibid., 242. The description pertained specifically to the vegetable kingdom, whose "four-fold perfection . . . is unparalleled in any other," but who would dispute that it holds a promise for the Master Jesus and humanity as we strive, on parallel arcs, toward new levels of perfection?
- <sup>93</sup> Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 61-62.
- <sup>94</sup> Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 511.
- <sup>95</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age I*, New York: Lucis, 1944, 38.
- <sup>96</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>97</sup> The sixth root race is predicted to emerge in 700-to-800 years' time. Annie W. Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater, *Man: Whence, How and Whither*, Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1913/1971, 361ff. The typical pattern is for new root races to be created from the corresponding *subrace* of the previous root race.
- <sup>98</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology I*, 429.
- <sup>99</sup> At that time, the seventh ray may replace the sixth as the dominant influence in western religion. We can speculate that the New World Religion may have a second-ray soul and seventh-ray personality.
- <sup>100</sup> Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 530.
- <sup>101</sup> "One of the first ways in which man is learning this truth is through the discovery of that vibration—emanating from a particular Master—which produces a reaction in himself, and which calls forth a response. Thus he is enabled to find out upon which ray his soul is found and to which ray group he should be attracted. This is of importance to the aspirant, and should be considered more carefully than has hitherto been the case, for by it the aspirant determines the nature and the quality of his soul type, and of the centre through which he (occultly speaking) goes out upon the Path. He discovers likewise the group of forms and of lives with which he is linked, to which he must render service, and by which he can be served." Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology I*, 261.
- <sup>102</sup> Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 46-47.
- <sup>103</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>104</sup> The concept of a legacy ray is discussed in Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age I*, 466. Michael Robbins invoked the concept to explain why Alice Bailey, whom he believed had a second-ray soul and first-ray personality, could have served as an evangelical Christian missionary in young adulthood. The reason, he suggested, was that her astral body was initially on the sixth ray, as a "legacy ray." Eventually, he surmised, it was transmuted onto the second ray. Source: <http://makara.us/04mdr/01writing/03tg/bios/Bailey.htm>. Last accessed July 15, 2016.
- <sup>105</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology I*, 208-209.
- <sup>106</sup> Ibid., 209.
- <sup>107</sup> Ibid., 360.
- <sup>108</sup> Christianity, Judaism and Islam all place considerable emphasis on devotion, no doubt reflecting the cyclic sixth-ray influence. In the East, Bakti Yoga is specifically aimed at devotion to deities, and devotion to one's guru is expected even by disciples on the initiatory path. Devotion also extends into the secular world, with impulses like patriotism, as well as devotion to a person or cause.
- <sup>109</sup> Devotional prayer is only one type of prayer; others are prayers of petition, intercession, penitence, praise and thanksgiving. Prayer can also be divided into *apophatic*, or silent, prayer and *kataphatic* prayer, based on words and images. All liturgical (that is, scripted) prayers and most unscripted, or spontaneous, prayers are kataphatic.
- <sup>110</sup> Leadbeater, *The Science of the Sacraments*, 61.
- <sup>111</sup> Similar issues arise in the choice of scriptural translations. For example, the King James Bible—whose language was archaic even when it was written—is widely valued for its dignity, poetic quality, and "sacredness," even though modern translations of the Hebrew and Greek may technically be more accurate.