

The Great Whore of *Revelation*: The Personal Lower Self

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Abstract

The *Revelation of St. John*, sometimes called the *Book of Revelation* or the *Apocalypse*, is the last book of the Bible. It has been a mystery ever since it first appeared about 2000 years ago, because of its obscure and extravagant visions and symbols. Chapter 17 is considered to be one of the most difficult chapters to understand in this enigmatic work, and it features a seductive prostitute described as “the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.” Many commentators interpret Chapter 17 as depicting people or events that occur in the external world at definite times. This article, however, uses an allegorical approach that takes every symbol as representing some aspect of an aspirant who is on the spiritual journey. As a result, the seductive prostitute is seen as signifying the self-seeking aspect of our being, which Alice Bailey calls the “Dweller on the Threshold” or “personal lower self,” the apostle Paul calls the “old man,” and many other authors call the “ego.”

Traditional Method of Interpretation

The *Revelation of St. John* gets its title from its first verse: “THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John.” Stephen Hunter describes the difficulty of interpreting this book:

The Revelation is the most difficult book to interpret of any in the New Testament canon. Its meaning is often involved in much obscurity, and the interpretation of eminent scholars has differed so widely in the past that we cannot always be sure, especially in the more difficult portions,

that the particular view which appears to us the more satisfactory or convincing is certainly the correct one. This divergence of opinion has had the unfortunate effect of disparaging the worth of the Apocalypse as a part of the Word of God in the mind of many earnest students, who have come to regard its meaning as so obscure, and hidden in such hopeless perplexity, that any further attempt to interpret it is entirely fruitless.¹

This article is concerned only with Chapter 17, which William Barclay characterizes as being one of the most difficult in *Revelation*:

Chapter 17 is one of the most difficult in Revelation. The best way in which to study it is first to read it as a whole; then to make certain general identifications and so to see the general line of thought in it; and finally to study it in some detail.²

How can the symbolic language in Chapter 17 of *Revelation* be understood? The traditional interpretative approach could be called “external-temporal,” because it construes the characters and episodes as representing people or events that occur in the external world at definite times. Let us review how the traditional approach has been used to interpret the “great whore,” who is featured in this chapter. Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland note, “The

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identification of the Whore with ancient Rome has come to dominate the approach to this chapter in modern historical scholarship.”³ Marion Carson reports, “the whore has been interpreted variously as corrupt Jerusalem, the papacy, Roman Catholicism, London and faulty religion in general.”⁴ Finally, John Wiertzema asserts, “Islam is the only religion that perfectly fits the symbolism of the Bible concerning the *great whore*.”⁵ Thus the traditional approach has yielded a multitude of interpretations.

Allegorical Method of Interpretation

Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891), founder of the Theosophical Society, makes a key distinction: “Every ancient religious, or rather philosophical, cult consisted of an esoteric or secret teaching, and an exoteric (outward public) worship.”⁶ Blavatsky also says, “All esoteric truths were given out to the public by the Initiates of the temples *under the guise of allegories*.”⁷ James Pryse (1859–1942), a theosophist and colleague of Blavatsky, says that *Revelation* is an esoteric doctrine of early Christianity given out under the guise of allegories:

Incomprehensible as the book may seem to the exoteric scholar, however great his intellectual attainments, keen his mental acumen, and vast his store of erudition, to the mere tyro in the sacred science the general meaning of the *Apocalypse* is perfectly clear. It is unintelligible to the conventional scholar simply because its subject-matter, veiled in symbolical language, relates to the Mysteries of the early Christian Society, the esoteric teachings which it was not lawful to reveal.⁸

If *Revelation* were an esoteric teaching given out under the guise of allegories, then deciphering the allegories would reveal the hidden teaching. Roy Zuck, in *Basic Bible Interpretation*, describes the interpretative method of allegorizing scripture:

Allegorizing is searching for a hidden or secret meaning underlying but remote from

and unrelated in reality to the more obvious meaning of a text. In other words the literal reading is a sort of code, which needs to be deciphered to determine the more significant and hidden meaning. In this approach the literal is superficial, the allegorical is the true meaning.⁹

Several commentators provide hints regarding the allegorical meaning of *Revelation*:

Blavatsky states: “The fact is ... the whole *Revelation*, is simply an allegorical narrative of the Mysteries and initiation therein of a candidate, who is John himself.”¹⁰

Edgar Cayce (1877–1945), a mystic noted for answering questions while in a trance, characterizes *Revelation* in this way: “For the visions, the experiences, the names, the churches, the places, the dragons, the cities, all are but emblems of those forces that may war within the individual in its journey through the material, or from the entering into the material manifestation to the entering into the glory, or the awakening in the spirit.”¹¹

Paramahansa Yogananda (1893–1952), founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship, writes: “Certainly in the Revelation of St. John we are led by means of metaphor into the profound insights of the yoga science in which Jesus initiated his advanced disciple John, and others, whose consciousness thereby ascended to the exalted Self-realized state of the kingdom of God within.”¹²

Let us convert these hints into corresponding principles of interpretation. First, according to Blavatsky’s quotation, *Revelation* portrays the experiences of an aspirant on the spiritual journey. Second, according to Cayce’s quotation, every object in *Revelation* symbolizes an aspect of an aspirant’s inner life. Third, according to Yogananda’s quotation, *Revelation* contains metaphors that signify the insights of yoga science, which is the science behind the yoga practices that originated in ancient India. Blavatsky, Cayce, and Yogananda, however, interpreted only a

few symbols in *Revelation*, and none of them attempted a verse-by-verse analysis of any chapter.

This article attempts to decipher the allegorical meaning of the eighteen verses of Chapter 17, denoted as Revelation 17:1-18, while adhering to the three foregoing principles of interpretation and using clues found principally in three sources:

Earlier Sacred Scriptures. Gerhard Krodel, a Bible scholar, reports that the 404 verses of *Revelation* allude 518 times to earlier sacred scriptures.¹³ These earlier scriptures include books of the New Testament, Old Testament, and Pseudepigrapha. The latter books are biblical in character but are not considered canonical.

Alice Bailey (1880–1949), a member of the Theosophical Society before leaving it to pursue her own activities, shows high regard for *Revelation*: “In the *New Testament*, John, the beloved disciple, was privileged to gain a cosmic picture and a true prophetic vision which he embodied in the *Apocalypse*.”¹⁴

A Course in Miracles (ACIM), a modern system of spiritual psychology, describes the meaning of *Revelation* in this way: “The first step toward freedom involves a sorting out of the false from the true. This is a process of separation in the constructive sense, and reflects the true meaning of the *Apocalypse*. Everyone will ultimately look upon his own creations and choose to preserve only what is good, just as God Himself looked upon what He had created and knew that it was good.”¹⁵

Revelation 17:1-18

The biblical quotations in this article come from the King James Version (KJV) unless explicitly stated otherwise.¹⁶ Revelation 17:1-18 is as follows:

1. And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

2. With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

3. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

4. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

5. And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

6. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

7. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

8. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

9. And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

10. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

11. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

12. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

13. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

14. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful.

15. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

16. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

17. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

18. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

The Vision

Verses 1 through 6 describe a vision of a prostitute and scarlet beast. Each verse is considered separately and is repeated in bold print.

1. And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

In verse 1, “one of the seven angels which had the seven vials” comes as a visitor. In Theology, an *angel* signifies “a typically benevolent celestial being,”¹⁷ and “a divine messenger from God.”¹⁸ Here, the word *celestial* indicates that an angel is at a higher level than a human being, and the word *messenger* indicates the role of an intercessor. A vial of oil was used in anointing Saul (1 Samuel 10:1) and Jehu (2 Kings 9:1-3) as kings, so a vial is a symbol of

initiation. Thus this visitor appears to be an intercessor from a higher realm with the power to initiate human beings into that realm.

Blavatsky may have been the first person to introduce to the West the concept of the Masters of the Wisdom.¹⁹ These Masters are reputed to be enlightened beings and are sometimes referred to as Adepts, Mahatmas, or Elder Brothers of the Human Race. Bailey speaks of “The Guru or Master who leads a pupil up to the door of initiation and who watches over him in all the initial and subsequent tests and processes,”²⁰ so such a Master is an intercessor with the power of initiation. Accordingly, “one of the seven angels which had the seven vials” is taken to be a Master of the Wisdom.

The first principle of interpretation, which was described earlier, regards *Revelation* as portraying the experiences of an aspirant who is on the spiritual journey. According to this principle, the pronoun *me* in verse 1 denotes such an aspirant, so the verse depicts the instruction and assistance that a Master gives to a typical aspirant.

The Master tells the aspirant to “Come hither,” but what does that mean? Bailey gives this account:

As you have frequently been told, the attention of a Master is attracted to a man by the brilliance of the indwelling light ... What is it that a Master has to do with a pupil? ... He has to accustom the pupil to raise his rate of vibration till he can continuously carry a high one, and then assist him until that high vibration becomes the stable measure of the pupil’s bodies.²¹

Thus “Come hither” seems to mean: Raise the rate of vibration of your consciousness.

What is the “great whore that sitteth upon many waters”? According to the second principle of interpretation, which was also described earlier, the whore symbolizes some aspect of an aspirant’s inner life. John Van Auken, in his book based on Cayce’s material, identifies the whore as “the selfish, self-centered, self-seeking aspect of our being.”²² Van Auken’s identification is consistent with the definition of *whore* as an intransitive verb:

“to pursue a faithless, unworthy, or idolatrous desire.”²³ We agree with Van Auken’s identification, because this article shows that it yields verse significances that are consistent across the entire chapter.

Ego is the Latin word for “I,” so it refers to the “I” or self of any person. Philosophers and psychologists sometimes distinguish between different kinds of self, perhaps saying that a human being consists of both a lower and higher self, so they may use the term *ego* in varying ways, perhaps to denote the lower self, or perhaps to denote the higher self.²⁴ Many books, such as *ACIM*, use the term *ego* to denote the self-seeking aspect of our being, which could be regarded as the lower self. In accordance with such usage, this article employs *ego* to denote the referent that the whore symbolizes.

Let us consider other terms that have been used to denote the self-seeking aspect of our being, because they may help to illuminate this aspect. The apostle Paul, in Ephesians 4:22, refers to this aspect with the phrase “old man”: “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.” Bailey writes, “The Dweller on the Threshold summarises in itself the evil tendencies, the accumulated limitations and the sum total of the selfish habits and desires which are characteristic of the material nature of the disciple,”²⁵ and “the Dweller on the Threshold ... is only another name for the personal lower self,”²⁶ so the phrases “Dweller on the Threshold” and “personal lower self” seem to be her terms for the self-seeking aspect of our being. Additional terms that have been used to denote this aspect include “false self,” “illusory self,” and “imposter self.”²⁷

In verse 1, the word “great” modifies the whore. This adjective is a translation of the Greek word (*megas*) that is sometimes used to denote people holding positions of authority (Mark 10:42). Accordingly, the ego is a controlling sense of identity.

The “waters” symbolize emotional reactions, as in Psalm 69:2: “I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing: I am come into deep

waters, where the floods overflow me.” Bailey also says, “Water is the symbol of the emotional nature.”²⁸ To *support* means, “to aid the cause, policy, or interests of.”²⁹ Verse 1 describes the whore as sitting on many waters, which suggests that the ego is supported by many emotional reactions.

ACIM observes, “You ... have spent days, hours and even years in chaining your brothers to your ego in an attempt to support it and uphold its weakness.”³⁰ In other words, you have forced your companions to interact with you in such a way that you elicit emotional reactions that support your ego. This quotation illustrates the notion that the ego is supported by emotional reactions, and it also illustrates the preceding notion that the ego is a controlling sense of identity.

In summary, verse 1 is given the following meaning: *A Master from a higher realm, who has the power to initiate human beings into that realm, comes to the aspirant and says, “Raise the rate of vibration of your consciousness, and I will show you the truth about your ego, or personal lower self, which is a controlling sense of identity supported by your many emotional reactions.”*

2. *With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.*

Wikipedia states, “Earth is one of the four classical elements in ancient Greek philosophy and science. It was commonly associated with qualities of heaviness, matter and the terrestrial world.”³¹ Bailey sometimes uses the term “matter aspect” as a synonym for the personality,³² which is the threefold lower self consisting of the mental body, emotional body, and physical body,³³ so “earth” in verse 2 appears to denote the personality.

Bailey writes, “I begin with the mental body as it is for the student of meditation the one that is the centre of his effort and the one that controls the two lower bodies.”³⁴ Accordingly, “the kings of the earth” are interpreted as thoughts, because thoughts rule the rest of the personality.

The Bible sometimes uses a reference to fornication as a metaphor for idolatry,³⁵ so the word “fornication” in verse 2 suggests that the ego is idolatrous. In fact, *ACIM* makes an even stronger statement: “The ego is idolatry.”³⁶ Here, idolatry is construed in a broad sense to mean giving power to external circumstances, including any kind of physical possession. *ACIM* provides this explanation:

The world believes in idols. No one comes unless he worshipped them, and still attempts to seek for one that yet might offer him a gift reality does not contain. Each worshipper of idols harbors hope his special deities will give him more than other men possess. It must be more. It does not really matter more of what; more beauty, more intelligence, more wealth, or even more affliction and more pain. But more of something is an idol for. And when one fails another takes its place, with hope of finding more of something else. Be not deceived by forms the “something” takes. An idol is a means for getting more.³⁷

The final sentence in the above quotation, “An idol is a means for getting more,” indicates that idolatrous thoughts are comparative in nature and assign value to accumulations of things. Given the preceding significances, the initial part of verse 2, “With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication,” has this meaning: Your thoughts have become idolatrous through being connected to your ego.

In the final part of verse 2, the “inhabitants of the earth” are taken as feelings and motives, because they are the subordinate elements of the personality. These elements are portrayed as being drunk, but what does that mean? *The New Church Messenger* gives this explanation:

The Bible frequently speaks of drunkenness to denote a state of spiritual pride. Ariel is said by the prophet Isaiah to be drunk. He says [Isaiah 29:9]: “They are drunken but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.” Again he says [Isaiah 28:3]: “The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden down.”³⁸

Sophocles (495–406 B.C.), a Greek tragic poet, also uses drunkenness as a metaphor for pride: “The tyrant is a child of Pride who drinks from his great sickening cup recklessness and vanity, until from his high crest headlong he plummets to the dust of hope.”³⁹ These quotations from the Bible and Sophocles show that the ancient world considered drunkenness to be like pride. The drunkenness in verse 2 is interpreted as pride, because that is what an idol offers.

In the final part of verse 2, “the wine of her fornication” seems to be the idolatrous thoughts mentioned in the initial part, so the entire verse appears to have this meaning: *Your thoughts have become idolatrous through being connected to your ego, and your feelings and motives have been made prideful with these thoughts.*

3. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

As before, the pronoun *he* denotes the Master, and the pronoun *me* denotes the aspirant, so the initial part of verse 3 describes the Master as carrying the aspirant into the “wilderness.” The Bible often considers the *wilderness* to be a place of refuge and communion with God, as in Hosea 2:14: “I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.” Let us assume that the “wilderness” in verse 3 satisfies the second principle of interpretation, so it symbolizes an inner place of refuge and communion.

Bailey says, “the main technique of the Hierarchy [of Masters] is that of conveying inspiration,”⁴⁰ and describes the detached state of mind that is receptive to inspiration: “only allowing the ‘apex of the mind’ (if I may use so unusual a term) to be receptive and open to transmission ... all the rest of the consciousness should be so polarised that outer interference will not be possible.”⁴¹ Accordingly, the inner “wilderness,” in verse 3, is the detached state of mind that is receptive to inspiration.

The next part of the verse mentions a woman who sits upon “a scarlet coloured beast.” Given that this woman is the whore of verse 1, the beast in verse 3 must be an emotional reaction, because verse 1 says that its rider “sitteth upon many waters” and waters represent emotional reactions. The scarlet color could be inferred as a symbol of guilt, as shown in Isaiah 1:18, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow,” so the beast could also be inferred as signifying guilt.

As an additional clue, verse 8 says that the scarlet beast “shall ascend out of the bottomless pit.” The bottomless pit, or the abyss, is mentioned in Luke 8:31 and Romans 10:7. *A Commentary on the Book of the Revelation*, which was written by a study group based on Cayce’s messages, considers the bottomless pit to be the “subconscious mind” or “area of repression.”⁴² Bailey uses a similar image to depict the subconscious realm: “The subconscious nature is like a deep pool from which a man can draw almost anything from his past experience, if he so desires, and which can be stirred up until it becomes a boiling cauldron, causing much distress.”⁴³ For these reasons, the bottomless pit is taken to be the subconscious realm, so the scarlet beast denotes an emotion that can ascend out of this realm. Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), founder of psychoanalysis, describes the emergence of “an unconscious sense of guilt” into “a conscious sense of guilt,”⁴⁴ thereby indicating that guilt can ascend out of the subconscious realm. Thus verse 8 corroborates the inference that the scarlet beast signifies guilt.

What is the significance of the word *name*, which appears often in *Revelation*? John McKenzie says, “It is a widespread cultural

phenomenon that the name is considered to be more than an artificial tag which distinguishes one person from another ... but it is thought to tell something of the kind of person he is.”⁴⁵ For example, 1 Samuel 25:25 says: “for as his name *is*, so *is* he.” The Bible uses a change in the personal name to indicate a change in the person, such as the change from Abram to Abraham (Genesis 17:5). Consistent with such usage, *A Commentary on the Book of the Revelation* interprets name as “nature.”⁴⁶

Verse 3 says that the scarlet beast is “full of names of blasphemy.” *Blasphemy* is a translation of the Greek word (*blasphemia*) that means slander or evil speaking. Although the English word denotes any utterance that insults God, the original Greek word is not necessarily concerned with

God. For example, the Greek word can be used for strong insults thrown at other people (Ephesians 4:31). Given that *name* signifies nature, “the names of blasphemy” tells us that the nature of the scarlet beast is slander and evil speaking, which provides further corroboration that this beast symbolizes guilt.

To *maintain* means, “to keep in existence.”⁴⁷ The verse describes a woman sitting on only the scarlet beast, which suggests that the ego is maintained by guilt. Given that the ego *is* disordered thought, *ACIM* makes a similar statement: “Every disordered thought is attended by guilt at its inception, and maintained by guilt in its continuance.”⁴⁸ Robert Perry, who is a commentator on *ACIM*, explicitly says, “Guilt maintains the ego’s existence.”⁴⁹

Verse 3 portrays the ego as being *maintained* by guilt, but verse 1 portrays the ego as being *supported* by many emotional reactions. In this context, what is the difference between being

... the great whore of Revelation symbolizes the ego.... The ego is the self-seeking aspect of our being. During each day of our lives—indeed, during each moment—we face the following choice: to express our true nature, or be seduced by our ego. It is our fate, as human beings, to be repeatedly seduced by our ego until, through pain and suffering we eventually learn to express continually our true nature.

maintained and being supported? *ACIM* states, “The ego tells you all is black with guilt within you, and bids you not to look. Instead, it bids you look upon your brothers, and see the guilt in them.”⁵⁰ Accordingly, your belief that you have hidden guilt maintains your ego’s existence, because it inhibits you from looking within yourself; and your many emotional reactions support your ego, because they carry out your ego’s bidding to see guilt in other people.

What is the significance of “the seven heads” that belong to the beast? Our attempt to allegorize this phrase is based on both the second principle of interpretation, according to which the seven heads symbolize seven aspects of the aspirant’s inner life, and the third principle of interpretation, according to which some metaphors signify the insights of yoga science.

In yoga science, the physical body of a human being has both dense and subtle portions. The *dense physical body* contains the muscles, bones, and glands. The *subtle physical body* is called the etheric or vital body in Theosophy;⁵¹ “golden bowl” in the Bible (Ecclesiastes 12:6);⁵² and *prana mayakosha*, a Sanskrit name, in Hinduism.⁵³

The word *chakra* means “wheel” in Sanskrit. In yoga science, a chakra refers to a subtle wheel of energy in the subtle physical body that governs a portion of the dense physical body. Yoga science describes seven principal chakras that have the following locations and Sanskrit names:

1. Head centre—sahasrara chakra
2. Centre between eyebrows—ajna chakra
3. Throat centre—vishuddha chakra
4. Heart or cardiac centre—anhata chakra
5. Solar plexus centre—manipura chakra
6. Sacral or sexual centre—svadhisthana chakra
7. Centre at base of spine—muladhara chakra.⁵⁴

The “seven heads” are taken as the seven chakras, because the numbers match and because a head has the shape of a wheel and is a center of

authority. Thus the seven heads on the beast indicate that guilt operates through the seven chakras.

What are the “ten horns” that also belong to the beast? Ten Patriarchs are mentioned before the Flood (Genesis 5), the Egyptians were visited with ten plagues (Exodus 7-12), there are Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:28), there are ten powers that cannot separate one from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39), and there are ten sins that can exclude one from the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). The *New Bible Dictionary* concludes: “The number 10, therefore, also signifies completeness.”⁵⁵ *Horns* are symbols of power and dominion, since they are the chief means of attack and defense for animals endowed with them (Deuteronomy 33:17). The verse’s horns are taken as desires for outer things, because they are the emotional forces that empower the personality to attack others and defend itself in the external world, so the ten horns on the beast indicate that guilt operates through all desires for outer things.

In summary, verse 3 is given this meaning: *The Master helps the aspirant to achieve the detached state of mind that is receptive to inspiration. Then the aspirant sees that the ego is maintained by guilt, which has the nature of slander and evil speaking, and which operates through the seven chakras and all desires for outer things.*

4. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.

In verse 4, *purple* is a symbol of royalty or high status. For example, the kings of Midian wore purple clothes (Judges 8:26), Solomon’s palanquin seat was purple (Song of Solomon 3:10), and, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man wore purple clothes (Luke 16:19). The meaning of *scarlet* seems to be different in verse 4 than in verse 3. The Biblical Studies Press, which publishes the NET (New English Translation) Bible, reports, “Clothing of *scarlet* was expensive and beyond the financial reach of most people,”⁵⁶ so *scar-*

let is a symbol of prosperity. For example, 2 Samuel 1:24 states, “Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with *other* delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.”

The initial part of the verse states, “And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls.” This part shows that the ego offers self-inflation through high status, prosperity, and valuable things. *ACIM* makes a similar point: “Self-inflation is the only offering it [the ego] can make.”⁵⁷

The final part of the verse states: “having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.” *ACIM* asks, “Does the ego really have gifts to give, being itself an illusion and offering only the illusion of gifts?”⁵⁸ In the final part, the “golden cup” signifies the illusion of favorable gifts, but the “abominations and filthiness” signifies that the actual gifts are unfavorable.

The Bible often uses the word *abominations* to denote the results of idolatry (2 Kings 23:13). Given that fornication signifies idolatry, “filthiness of her fornication” also denotes the results of idolatry. Accordingly, this repetition of meaning in the phrase “abominations and filthiness of her fornication” signifies that idolatry has *many* unfavorable results. *ACIM* lists some of these results:

No sadness and no suffering proclaim a message other than an idol found that represents a parody of life which, in its lifelessness, is really death, conceived as real and given living form. Yet each must fail and crumble and decay, because a form of death cannot be life, and what is sacrificed cannot be whole. All idols of this world were made to keep the truth within from being known to you, and to maintain allegiance to the dream that you must find what is outside yourself to be complete and happy.⁵⁹

Based on the preceding remarks, verse 4 has this meaning: *The ego offers self-inflation through high status, prosperity, and valuable things. It offers, however, only the illusion of*

favorable gifts, because its actual offerings are sadness, suffering, ignorance of inner truth, and allegiance to the false hope that completion and happiness can be found in outer things.

5. And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

In verse 5, “forehead” is a symbol of mind or consciousness, as in Jeremiah 3:3: “thou hadst a whore’s forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.” The whore has a long name consisting of four parts. As discussed previously, this name signifies the ego’s nature, so that nature consists of four characteristic qualities. Let us consider each quality in the given order.

The word “MYSTERY” is a translation of the Greek word (*mysterion*) that sometimes means “a hidden purpose or counsel; secret will,”⁶⁰ as in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work.” Yogananda states, “Though the ego in most barbaric ways conspires to enslave him, man is not a body confined to a point in space but is essentially the omnipresent soul.”⁶¹ *ACIM* states: “The ego wishes no one well. Yet its survival depends on your belief that you are exempt from its evil intentions.”⁶² These two quotations speak of the ego as though it has its own consciousness with a hidden evil purpose. Accordingly, “MYSTERY” is taken to be this hidden purpose.

The Hebrew word *Babel* signifies confusion, as shown by Genesis 11:9: “Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth.” In verse 5, “BABYLON” is the Greek word for the Hebrew word *Babel*. Consequently, Charles Fillmore (1854–1948), founder of the Unity School of Christianity, concludes, “Babylon signifies confusion.”⁶³

A harlot is associated with temptation, as shown by Proverbs 7:10–23:

And, behold, there met him a woman
With the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart ...

With her much fair speech she caused him
to yield,
With the flattering of her lips she forced
him.
He goeth after her straightway,
As an ox goeth to the slaughter,
Or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;
Till a dart strike through his liver;
As a bird hasteth to the snare,
And knoweth not that it *is* for his life.

Thus the name “THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS” signifies that the ego is the source of many kinds of temptation. *ACIM* provides related instruction: “Watch your mind for the temptations of the ego, and do not be deceived by it. It offers you nothing.”⁶⁴

As discussed earlier, abominations denote the results of idolatry, and the earth denotes the personality. Consequently, “ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” refer to the idolatrous experiences of the personality.

In summary, verse 5 is interpreted in this way: *The ego’s consciousness has the hidden purpose of enslaving the aspirant through great confusion, many kinds of temptation, and idolatrous experiences of the personality.*

6. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

The drunkenness in verse 2 is interpreted as pride. The drunkenness in verse 6 is also interpreted as pride, because that is what the ego offers in verse 4. Verse 6 refers to two kinds of blood—“the blood of the saints” and “the blood of the martyrs of Jesus”—but what do they signify? Emanuel Swedenborg (1688 – 1772), in *The Apocalypse Explained*, gives this explanation:

In the natural sense these words mean that Babylon shed the blood of the saints, and the blood of those who bore witness to the Lord; while in the spiritual sense these words mean that Babylon did violence to Divine truths, and also to testification concerning the Lord.⁶⁵

In this quotation, the “natural sense” refers to the traditional, or literal, method of interpretation; but the “spiritual sense” is comparable to the allegorical method used in this article. Thus, in Swedenborg’s application of the spiritual sense, “the blood of the saints” signifies violence done to Divine truths, and “the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” signifies violence done to testification concerning the Lord. The verse shows that the Lord is Jesus, so testification concerning the Lord is the act of giving evidence of homage to Jesus.⁶⁶ 1 Peter 2:21 tells us to give this evidence by following Jesus’ example. Accordingly, the initial part of verse 6 has this meaning: The aspirant sees that the ego takes pride in acquiring divine Truths and in following Jesus’ example.

Chögyam Trungpa (1939 – 1987), a prominent teacher of Tibetan Buddhism, defines *spiritual materialism*:

Walking the spiritual path properly is a very subtle process; it is not something to jump into naively. There are numerous sidetracks which lead to a distorted, ego-centered version of spirituality; we can deceive ourselves into thinking we are developing spiritually when instead we are strengthening our egocentricity through spiritual techniques. This fundamental distortion may be referred to as *spiritual materialism*.⁶⁷

The meaning given for the initial part of verse 6 illustrates Trungpa’s notion of spiritual materialism. In the final part of the verse, the aspirant finds the insight portrayed in the initial part to be especially astonishing. Trungpa gives this explanation:

Ego is able to convert everything to its own use, even spirituality ... Thus ego tries to examine and imitate the practice of meditation and the meditative way of life. When we have learned all the tricks and answers of the spiritual game, we automatically try to imitate spirituality, since real involvement would require the complete elimination of ego, and actually the last thing we want to do is to give up the ego completely. However, we cannot experience that which we are trying to imitate; we can only find

some area within the bounds of ego that seems to be the same thing.⁶⁸

Thus verse 6 seems to have this meaning: *The aspirant sees that the ego takes pride in acquiring divine Truths and following Jesus' example. Upon having this insight, the aspirant is amazed at how the ego can convert even spirituality to its own use.*

The Vision Explained

Verses 7 through 18 explain the earlier vision of a prostitute and scarlet beast. Each verse is considered separately and is repeated in bold print.

7. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

Bailey writes, "the task of the Master is ... to suggest or throw into the disciple's mind the type of question which warrants his thought."⁶⁹ In the initial part of verse 7, the Master asks, "Wherefore didst thou marvel?" This question has the purpose of inducing the aspirant to recognize his or her own ignorance about the ego. Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986), a member of the Theosophical Society before leaving it to pursue his own activities, explains the pedagogic value of such recognition: "To learn there must be a freshness; there must be a mind that says, 'I do not know, but I am willing to learn. Show me.'"⁷⁰

As before, "mystery" is the translation of a Greek word (*mysterion*) that has several meanings. In the final part of the verse, it means "a hidden or secret thing, not obvious to the understanding."⁷¹ 1 Corinthians 13:2 uses this word in a similar way: "And though I have *the gift of prophecy*, and understand all mysteries ... and have not charity, I am nothing."

Based on the earlier symbolic meanings, verse 7 has the following significance: *The Master says to the aspirant, "Why are you amazed? I will tell you the hidden things about the ego, including its relationship to guilt, chakras, and desires."*

8. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

As discussed in the commentary for verse 3, the "beast" signifies guilt. The initial part of verse 8 characterizes this beast as something that "was, and is not," but what does that mean? *ACIM* says, "guilt, being unreal, cannot be justified."⁷² Brent Haskell, who is a commentator on *ACIM*, makes a similar point: "Guilt is simply that which you have imagined, And as such, should not, and cannot, exist."⁷³ If "was" were an abbreviation of *was imagined*, and if "is not" were an abbreviation of *is not real*, then the initial part of verse 8 would have this meaning: The guilt that you saw in yourself was imagined by you and is not real.

The second part of verse 8 says that guilt "shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition." As also discussed in the commentary for verse 3, the "bottomless pit" signifies the subconscious realm. Although the KJV uses the word "perdition," most modern translations instead use the word "destruction,"⁷⁴ so the verse indicates that the ascension of guilt leads to its destruction. Krishnamurti provides this explanation:

All the implications of guilt, all the implications of its subtlety, where it hides, is like a flower blooming. And if you let it bloom, not act, not say, "I must do or must not do", then it begins to wither away and die. Please understand this ... If you discover it, you see that it is so, then psychologically it is an enormous factor that frees you from all the past and present struggles and effort.⁷⁵

The final part of verse 8 mentions the "book of life," but what does that signify? In the Old Testament, the *book of life* is used as the roster of people who are physically alive (Psalm 69:28), but in the New Testament it is used as the roster of Christians (Philippians 4:3). Neither of these meanings satisfies the second

principle of interpretation. Bailey, however, assigns a third meaning when she says, "There is ... the Book of Life, read and eventually mastered by initiates of all degrees."⁷⁶

Before considering a definition of the book of life that is compatible with Bailey's meaning, let us introduce some additional terminology. According to Theosophy, the planetary life consists of seven worlds that are often called "planes" and have the following names: 1) lo-
goic; 2) monadic; 3) spiritual; 4) intuitional; 5) mental; 6) emotional; and 7) physical.⁷⁷ These planes are regarded as being arranged metaphorically in an inner and outer manner. For example, the mental, emotional, and physical planes, which are spoken of as "the three worlds of human endeavor,"⁷⁸ are regarded as the three outermost planes.

Bailey says, "the concepts and the ideas which give birth to a thought-form ... exist on the archetypal plane which (for the aspirant) is the plane of the intuition."⁷⁹ An ordinary book has thought-forms. The plane of the intuition could be regarded as an archetypal book, because it has the concepts and ideas that give birth to ordinary books. Bailey also says, "no one idea belongs to anyone but, coming as ideas do, from the plane of the intuition, they are a universal gift and possession, and the property of no one mind,"⁸⁰ so various people can read the plane of the intuition in the sense of receiving its ideas.

Just as the concepts in an ordinary book are grasped progressively and sequentially, Bailey describes how the ideas from the plane of the intuition are grasped in a similar manner:

Through the intuition, progressive understanding of the ways of God in the world and on behalf of humanity are revealed; through the intuition, the transcendence and the immanence of God is sequentially grasped and man can enter into that pure knowledge, that inspired reason, which will enable him to comprehend not only the processes of nature in its fivefold divine expression but also the underlying causes of these processes.⁸¹

For these reasons, the plane of the intuition is like a book. The final part of verse 8 provides

an additional clue by saying that the "book of life" is "from the foundation of the world," but what does that mean? Bailey writes,

The basic approach for all who endeavour to grasp esotericism, or to teach esoteric students, is to lay the emphasis upon the world of energies and to recognise that behind all happenings in the world of phenomena (and by that I mean the three worlds of human evolution) exists the world of energies; these are of the greatest diversity and complexity, but all of them move and work under the Law of Cause and Effect.⁸²

The above quotation contrasts the world of phenomena, which consists of the mental, emotional, and physical planes, with the world of energies, which consists of the four innermost planes. The world of energies could be regarded as the foundation of the world of phenomena, because, in the words of the quotation, "behind all happenings in the world of phenomena ... exists the world of energies." If the book of life were the plane of the intuition, these definitions would be consistent with verse 8's phrase, "the book of life from the foundation of the world."

Moreover, if the book of life were the plane of the intuition, it would satisfy Bailey's earlier meaning for the book of life, because it would be, in her words, "read and eventually mastered by initiates of all degrees"; and it would also satisfy the second principle of interpretation, because it would symbolize an aspect of an aspirant's inner life. For these reasons, let us take the book of life to be the plane of the intuition.

As before, earth signifies the personality, so "they that dwell upon the earth" are thoughts that are identified with the personality. Name signifies nature, so the name of a person's thought signifies what Bailey calls "the nature of his thought."⁸³

The verb *wonder* appears in the final part of verse 8. To *wonder* if one's guilty emotion is true means that one asks oneself whether it is true. If one were to answer this question by using thoughts identified with one's personality, one's answer would take the form of defen-

sive reasoning that tries to prove that the emotion is not true. Consequently, guilty people generally do not allow their guilt to bloom in their awareness, but instead use defensive reasoning to defend against it.

ACIM asks, “Who would defend himself unless he thought he were attacked, that the attack were real, and that his own defense could save himself? And herein lies the folly of defense; it gives illusions full reality, and then attempts to handle them as real.”⁸⁴ In particular, defensive reasoning gives guilt full reality, and then attempts to handle it as though it were real. Consequently, as Bailey observes, no amount of defensive reasoning seems able to quiet guilt:

Ancient suffering, dire memories, haunting miseries, deep-seated in the subconscious rise to the surface frequently and cause a condition of fear and of distress which no amount of reasoning seems able to quiet.⁸⁵

The final words of verse 8 are: “the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.” As before, “the beast that was, and is not” has this meaning: guilt was imagined, and is not real. How should “and yet is” be construed? The sentence connector, *yet*, means “in spite of that,”⁸⁶ so “and yet is” must refer to an attribute of guilt that seems to contradict the preceding ones. The referenced attribute appears to be this: guilt is powerful enough to defeat any defensive reasoning used against it.

Based on the foregoing significances, verse 8 is given this meaning: *The guilt that you saw in yourself was imagined by you and is not real. If a guilty emotion were to ascend out of the subconscious realm and allowed to bloom without any defense, it would disappear. Nevertheless, thoughts identified with the personality, which are thoughts whose nature is inconsistent with the plane of the intuition, will defend against this emotion that was imagined, and is not real, and yet is powerful enough to defeat such a defense.*

9. And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

In verse 9, the Master continues to teach the aspirant. The New International Version (NIV) renders the initial part of verse 9 in a clear way: “This calls for a mind with wisdom.” Thus the Master seems to acknowledge the following: this teaching is merely a hint that can be understood only by a mind with spiritual wisdom. But why would the Master teach the aspirant in such a veiled manner? Bailey gives this answer:

It is through the medium of a hint that the Master in any particular group conveys to a disciple His desire for the disciple ... A hint is in reality and when properly considered, *the seed or germ of an intended revelation*. The Master knows well what is the next revelation which will be in order for the disciple in training; through hints He sows the seed of revelation, but it remains for the disciple to discover that which the hint is intended to produce, and to nurture the seed until it flowers forth in the beauty of revelation.⁸⁷

The final part of verse 9 mentions “seven mountains,” but what do they represent? The verse equates the seven heads, which belong to the beast, to the seven mountains. To the question, “Do the seven heads and mountains have any reference to the spiritual centers of the body, Rev. 17:9?” Cayce provides this answer: “These have reference to the spiritual centers.”⁸⁸ Thus Cayce corroborates the earlier interpretation, given for verse 3, that the seven heads symbolize the seven chakras, and indicates that the seven mountains also symbolize the seven chakras. Pryse comes to the same conclusion: “the seven mountains are the seven chakras.”⁸⁹

Why does verse 9 introduce mountains, instead of continuing with the earlier symbol of heads? Perhaps mountains have associations that are the basis of the verse’s allegorical meaning. Seven mountains are explicitly mentioned, but these mountains imply surrounding plains from which they rise. What do plains represent? *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* reports, “In Palestine, a land of geographical contrasts, a plain takes on special significance. Fertility, possibilities of trade and conquest, and ease of

travel are particular characteristics associated with broad valleys and tablelands.”⁹⁰ Thus, in the Bible, a plain has the special significance of being a place of major activity. In a related manner, Bailey writes, “I descend in thought unto the plains whereon men walk, and there I work,”⁹¹ and “Choose for your good companions those who live a life of arduous labour upon the plains of earth,”⁹² so she uses *plains* as a symbol that denotes places of major activity.

Let us consider the meaning of *plain* in Luke 6:12–17, which describes Jesus’ early ministry:

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called *unto him* his disciples ... And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases.

Here, *plain* might denote a literal level area of land; or it might be a symbol that denotes a place of major activity. Traditional scholars use the literal meaning to narrate historical events that took place in an ancient world. Bailey, however, employs the symbolic meaning of the word to show how the entire scriptural passage can be applied in a pragmatic way in the current world:

After each expansion of consciousness and each unfoldment of a deepened awareness we return, as Christ did, to the plains of every-day life, and there subject our knowledge to the test, discover its reality and truth, and find out also wherein lies for us our next point of expansion.⁹³

Bailey’s analysis is similar to our own, because we are employing the symbolic meaning of words to show how the entire Chapter 17 of *Revelation* can be applied in a pragmatic way in the current world.

The final part of verse 9 portrays the woman as sitting on the seven mountains that rise above

the plains. Given that the woman, mountains, and plains signify the ego, seven chakras, and places of major activity, respectively, the imagery indicates that the ego operates through the medium of the seven chakras to galvanize the dense physical body into activity. Bailey describes the same sequence:

Man, as you know, is the expression of energies. These energies galvanise the physical man into activity through the medium of certain force centres in the etheric body.⁹⁴

Thus the verse is given the following meaning: *This teaching is merely a hint that can be understood only by a mind with spiritual wisdom. The seven chakras are the medium through which the ego galvanizes the dense physical body into activity.*

10. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

In the initial part of verse 10, most modern translations use “they” instead of “there,”⁹⁵ making it clear that the seven mountains mentioned in verse 9 are the same as the seven kings mentioned in verse 10. The seven mountains in verse 9 symbolize the seven chakras, so the seven kings in verse 10 must have the same significance. Indeed, each chakra is like a king because it exercises dominion, as Bailey explains: “Each of the seven major centres governs or conditions ... the area of the physical body in which it is found.”⁹⁶

Verse 10 portrays practical instruction regarding the chakras. Bailey characterizes the solar plexus chakra as “the organ of self-conscious personal desire,”⁹⁷ and says, “It is from the great centre of the personality life, the solar plexus, that the life is usually ruled and government administered.”⁹⁸ Accordingly, the phrase, “five are fallen, and one is,” has this meaning: the aspirant is at the stage in which the energies of five chakras are usually ruled by the energy of the solar plexus chakra. In particular, the ego’s desires, which proceed from the solar plexus chakra, usually rule the thoughts of the throat chakra,⁹⁹ motivations of the sacral chakra,¹⁰⁰ material forces of the

chakra at base of spine,¹⁰¹ and, as shown by verse 6, even the divine Truths of the head chakra¹⁰² and spiritual practices of the ajna chakra.¹⁰³

The phrase, “the other is not yet come,” means that the remaining center, which is the heart chakra, is not yet awakened. The word *yet* suggests that the aspirant will eventually awaken this center by making further progress, as Bailey explains: “The keynote of the aspirant’s progress will be *love of humanity*; this will indicate the awakening of the heart centre.”¹⁰⁴

The phrase, “when he cometh,” refers to when the heart chakra is being energized, for which Bailey gives this description:

Then the heart awakens into activity and the life of the solar plexus centre becomes subordinated to that of the heart. This is brought about by the development of group interests, by the cultivation of inclusiveness and the steady loss of interest in the personality, and in things separative and selfish.¹⁰⁵

The final part of verse 10, “he must continue a short space,” suggests that the heart chakra must continue as the center of attention for only a relatively short amount of time. Bailey gives this explanation:

The first centre which the aspirant seeks consciously to energise and on which he concentrates during the early stages of his novitiate, is the heart centre. He has to learn to be group conscious, to be sensitive to group ideals, and to be inclusive in his plans and concepts; he has to learn to love collectively and purely, and not be actuated by personality attraction, and the motive of reward. Until there is this awakening in the heart, he cannot be trusted to wield the creative powers of the throat centre, for they would be subordinated to self-aggrandisement and ambitions of various kinds.¹⁰⁶

Thus verse 10 is interpreted in this way: *Each chakra governs a portion of the dense physical body. Your ego’s desires, which proceed from the solar plexus chakra, usually rule the energies of five other chakras: namely, the head, ajna, throat, sacral, and base chakras. The*

first center for you to seek consciously to energize is the heart chakra, and it is not yet awakened. When you are energizing the heart chakra, you must work with it until it awakens before seeking to energize another chakra.

11. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

A chakra is basically a governing center of energy. As discussed earlier, yoga science acknowledges the existence of seven principal governing centers of energy. In verse 11, as before, “the beast that was, and is not” signifies guilt, because it was imagined and is not real. According to *ACIM*, “guilt is ... the sole cause of pain in any form,”¹⁰⁷ so guilt acts like a chakra, because it governs the presence of pain in any form. Consequently, guilt can be regarded as the eighth governing center of energy, which is the meaning of verse 11’s phrase, “even he is the eighth.”

Why do we feel guilty? Perhaps we violated various religious, civil, and moral codes of conduct, and accepted the concept that being good entails adhering to those codes. For example, perhaps we made selfish decisions, and accepted the concept that being good entails considering the feelings of everyone. Or perhaps we made commitments that we broke, and accepted the concept that being good entails keeping commitments. For many such reasons, our judgments about our past behavior prevent us from seeing ourselves as being good people, so we believe that we are guilty and consequently feel guilty.

According to Bailey’s quotations in the commentary for verse 10, the awakening of the heart chakra evokes, or calls forth, “love of humanity,” which signifies the ability “to love collectively and purely.” Moreover, *ACIM* says, “There is no difference between love and joy,”¹⁰⁸ and “Joy characterizes peace,”¹⁰⁹ so the awakening of the heart chakra evokes love, joy, and peace. These qualities are not emotions in the usual sense but indicate that the heart chakra is aligned with the higher self,¹¹⁰ and they replace any lingering guilt because, in Bailey’s words, “The moment that *the hearts of men* are active, that moment sees the termi-

nation of emotional, solar plexus activity.”¹¹ Hebrews 10:22 (NIV) seems to describe this aligning and cleansing process: “let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.” Consequently, guilt can occur only when the heart chakra is not awakened or, equivalently, when it is not aligned with the higher self.

Verse 10 portrays the awakening of the heart chakra as the initial step in the correct use of the seven chakras, so these chakras could be regarded as being misused if this awakening is not present. Consequently, guilt actually arises from the misuse of the seven chakras, which is the meaning of verse 11’s phrase, “and is of the seven.” As mentioned previously, “perdition” in the KJV is rendered as “destruction” in most modern translations, so verse 11’s final phrase, “and goeth into perdition,” has this meaning: guilt will disappear through the awakening of the heart chakra.

Thus verse 11 is given this overall meaning: *Guilt, which was imagined and is not real, could be considered to be the eighth governing center of energy, because it is the sole cause of pain in any form. Nevertheless, guilt arises from the misuse of the seven chakras, and it will disappear through the awakening of the heart chakra.*

12. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

In verse 12, as before, the “ten horns” signify all desires for outer things, and the “beast” signifies guilt. These horns are portrayed as “ten kings,” because they govern outer activities. Saying that they “have received no kingdom as yet” signifies that these desires do not have any real power to bring happiness. Saying that these desires “receive power as kings one hour with the beast” indicates that these desires receive a momentary illusion of power from guilt.

Alfred Adler (1870 – 1937), founder of the school of individual psychology, provides an insight related to verse 12:

It is the feeling of inferiority, inadequacy, insecurity, which determines the goal of an individual’s existence. The tendency to push into the limelight, to compel the attention of parents, makes itself felt in the first days of life. Here are found the first indications of the awakening desire for recognition developing itself under the concomitant influence of the sense of inferiority, with its purpose the attainment of a goal in which the individual is seemingly superior to his environment.¹²

In other words, the striving for superiority, which is brought about by desire, is a compensation for the sense of inferiority, which is brought about by guilt. *ACIM* makes a similar statement:

It is not easy to realize that prayers for things, for status, for human love, for external “gifts” of any kind, are always made to set up jailers and to hide from guilt. These things are used for goals that substitute for God, and therefore distort the purpose of prayer. The desire for them *is* the prayer.¹³

In this quotation, the last sentence equates “desire” and “prayer,” so substituting “desire” for “prayers” in the first sentence yields this result: “desire” “for things, for status, for human love, for external ‘gifts’ of any kind, are always made to ... hide from guilt.”

Thus verse 12 seems to have this meaning: *The desires that you saw in yourself, which govern your outer activities, do not have any real power to bring happiness; but they have a momentary illusion of power as long as guilt seems to have power, because the attainment of a desire brings a momentary feeling of superiority that compensates for the sense of inferiority that guilt imposes.*

13. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

In verse 13, the pronoun “These” refers back to the “ten horns” in verse 12, so it denotes the

ego's desires for outer things. In verse 13, "mind" is the translation of a Greek word (*gnome*) that can be rendered in differing ways. Both the NIV and New American Standard Bible (NASB) render this word as "purpose," thereby indicating that the ego's desires have only one purpose.

Verse 5 was interpreted in part to mean, "The ego's consciousness has the hidden purpose of enslaving the aspirant," so verse 5's purpose seems to be the same as verse 13's purpose. Thus the initial part of verse 13 is construed in this way: These desires promote the hidden purpose of the ego.

The final part of verse 13, "and shall give their power and strength unto the beast," suggests that the ego's desires reinforce the power and strength of guilt. *ACIM* clarifies this suggestion:

It is not will for life but wish for death that is the motivation for this world. Its only purpose is to prove guilt real. No worldly thought or act or feeling has a motivation other than this one. These are the witnesses that are called forth to be believed, and lend conviction to the system they speak for and represent.¹¹⁴

Thus verse 13 is given this meaning: *These desires promote the hidden purpose of the ego, and they reinforce the power and strength of guilt.*

14. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

In verse 14, the pronoun "These" refers back to the "ten horns" in verse 12, so it denotes the ego's desires. In his commentary on *Revelation*, Cayce interprets "the Lamb" as "the mind, spiritual" and as "the Christ-Consciousness,"¹¹⁵ both of which appear to be

synonyms for the inner divine voice. This article uses the term *soul* to denote the inner divine voice, because that is Bailey's term for such a voice.¹¹⁶

Bailey speaks of "the process whereby the emotional nature (with its outstanding quality of desire) is brought under soul control, and the desire of the personal lower self has been transmuted into love."¹¹⁷

As mentioned earlier, the "personal lower self" is Bailey's term for what this article calls the ego. Accordingly, the preceding quotation describes the conflict between the ego's desires and the soul, so the initial phrase in verse 14, "These shall make war with the Lamb," is interpreted as having the same meaning: The ego's desires will conflict

with the soul. The quotation also describes the soul as gaining control over the ego's desires, so the second phrase in the verse, "and the Lamb shall overcome them," is interpreted as having the same meaning: The soul will eventually overcome them.

The phrase, "Lord of lords, and King of kings," is similar to several passages in the Old Testament.¹¹⁸ In verse 14, this phrase suggests that the soul is more powerful than the ego's desires. Bailey corroborates this suggestion by saying, "the soul is omnipotent."¹¹⁹

The soul, which is regarded as the higher self,¹²⁰ and the personality, which is regarded as the lower self,¹²¹ can work together in what is called the "soul-infused personality."¹²² In verse 14, "him" denotes the soul, so "they that are with him" seems to be the three-fold personality, consisting of the mental, emotional, and physical bodies. Therefore, after the soul overcomes the desires of the personality, the verse indicates that the personality remains but has become "called, and chosen, and faithful," which seems to mean receptive, consecrated, and obedient to the soul.

Bailey corroborates this account by describing the situation when the desires have been eliminated:

The personality remains; it still exists but is seen no more as of old. The light of the Angel envelops it; the burning ground has done its work and the personality is now nothing more or less than the purified shell or form through which the light, the radiance, the quality and the characteristics of the Angel can shine ... When this “occult obliteration” has taken place, what then is the destiny of the disciple? It is complete control by the soul.¹²³

Here, “Angel” is a synonym for soul.¹²⁴ Consequently, after the soul overcomes the desires of the personality, the preceding quotation says that the personality will be a “purified shell or form” that transmits the light of the soul, which seems equivalent to verse 14’s description of the mental, emotional, and physical bodies as being “called, and chosen, and faithful.”

Based on these remarks, verse 14 has the following meaning: *The ego’s desires will conflict with the soul. The soul will eventually overcome them, because the soul is more powerful. When that victory finally comes, the mental, emotional, and physical bodies will be receptive, consecrated, and obedient to the soul.*

15. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

A *figure of speech* is “a word or phrase that has a meaning other than the literal meaning.”¹²⁵ Ethelbert Bullinger, in *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, shows that the Bible contains more than 200 distinct categories of figures of speech.¹²⁶ Let us analyze verse 15 with the aid of two such categories.

A *synecdoche* is “a figure of speech in which a part is substituted for a whole or a whole for a part.”¹²⁷ Zuck, in *Basic Bible Interpretation*, shows how this category of figure of speech is used in the Bible:

Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of “all the world” (Luke 2:1). He was speaking of the whole, but he meant only the part, namely, the Roman world. Proverbs 1:16 (NIV), “their feet rush into sin,” obviously does not mean that only their feet run. Their feet, the part, represent the whole, namely, themselves.¹²⁸

Kay Arthur, in *How to Study Your Bible*, writes, “A synecdoche can also be a singular for a plural or a plural for a singular,” and gives this example: “In Jeremiah 25:29 (NASB) God says He is going to summon ‘a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth.’ The singular sword represents many swords.”¹²⁹

A *metonymy*, another figure of speech, is “the substitution of a word referring to an attribute for the thing that is meant, as for example the use of *the crown* to refer to a monarch.”¹³⁰

Zuck also shows how this category is used in the Bible:

In Paul’s words, “you cannot drink the cup of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 10:21, NIV), he was referring to the contents in the cup, not the drinking of the cup itself. When the Lord said to Hosea that “the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord” (Hosea 1:2, NIV), his reference to land means the people living on the land. The words “Jerusalem was going out to Him” (Matthew 3:5, NASB) point to the fact that the people of Jerusalem were going to Him; the place was substituted for the residents themselves.¹³¹

Verse 1 portrays the whore, who signifies the aspirant’s ego, as sitting on many waters, which signify the aspirant’s many emotional reactions. Verse 15, however, adds more information to verse 1’s portrayal by identifying the waters as “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” This identification would make sense if the four listed quantities depicted four sources of the aspirant’s emotional reactions.

In her corresponding account, Bailey uses the term *glamour* to denote an emotional reaction:

“*Glamour*, in its turn, veils and hides the truth behind the fogs and mists of feeling and emotional reaction.”¹³² She also lists four sources of a person’s glamour, using the term “astral” as a synonym for emotional:

Each human being stands in an enviroing world of glamour which is the result of:

a. His own past, with its wrong thinking, selfish desires, and misinterpretation of the purposes of life. There is, or has been, no comprehension of the intended life purpose as visioned by the soul and there cannot be until there is some definite organisation of the mental body.

b. His family “desire life,” both past and present. This becomes increasingly potent as evolution proceeds and the desire life of the family unit becomes marked and emphasised, constituting then inherited and demonstrated psychological tendencies and characteristics.

c. National glamour, which is the sum total of the desire life, plus the illusions, of any nation. These we term national characteristics and they are so persistent and marked that they are usually recognised as embodying national psychological traits.

d. An extension of the above idea into what we call racial glamour, using the word race to mean the human race. This constitutes a very ancient glamour or almost a series of glammers, of entrenched desires, potent aspirations of some kind and definitely human-made forms which—fluidic, enveloping and pulsating with dynamic life—seek to hold the consciousness of humanity upon the astral plane.¹³³

Bailey says that her four sources of glamour, “when understood, will serve to clear and lighten, and therefore straighten your way.”¹³⁴

Through the aid of the two preceding categories of figures of speech, the four quantities listed in verse 15 can be construed as symbolizing Bailey’s four sources of glamour:

1 Peter 1:14 (NIV) acknowledges that every person has had selfish desires in the past: “As obedient children, do not conform to

the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.” If “peoples” in verse 15 were viewed as a synecdoche, it could represent the aspirant (a plural for a singular), who in turn could represent his or her own past desires (a whole for a part).

Luke 14:26 describes Jesus as telling his listeners to reject their family’s values, which is their family’s desire life: “If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” Although the English word *multitude* means “a large gathering of people,”¹³⁵ the original Greek word (*ochlos*) can mean “a gathering of any size,”¹³⁶ so it could refer to a family of any size. If “multitudes” in verse 15 were viewed as a synecdoche, it could represent the aspirant’s family (a plural for a singular), which in turn could represent that family’s desire life (a whole for a part).

Haggai 2:7 mentions, “the desire of all nations.” If “nations” in verse 15 were viewed as a synecdoche, it could represent the aspirant’s nation (a plural for a singular), which in turn could represent that nation’s desire life (a whole for a part).

Proverbs 21:6 mentions, “The getting of treasures by a lying tongue,” showing that a person uses the speech of the tongue to get what he or she desires. If a tongue were viewed as a metonymy, it could represent a person’s desire life (an attribute for the thing that is meant). Accordingly, “tongues” in verse 15, when viewed as the summation over all persons, could symbolize the desire life of the human race.

The preceding symbolic analysis is corroborated by two observations:

First, each quantity in verse 15’s ordered list is construed as symbolizing the corresponding entry in Bailey’s ordered list. Thus the preceding analysis is consistent with the supposition that verse 15’s quantities are listed in a logical order, because the meanings given to these four quantities progress from the personal to the racial.

Second, verse 15's four quantities are construed as representing various kinds of desire, which share the emphasis on desire that is displayed more clearly in nearby verses, namely, verses 12, 13, 14, 16, and 17. Thus the preceding analysis is consistent with the supposition that Chapter 17 is written in a methodical manner: the meaning given to verse 15 enables verses 12 through 17 to be a cluster of verses on desire, just as verses 9 through 11 were shown to be a cluster of verses on chakras.

Based on the preceding analysis, verse 15 has this meaning: *The Master also says to the aspirant, "The emotional reactions that you saw in yourself, which support your ego, are the result of: your own past desires, the desire life of your family, the desire life of your nation, and the desire life of the human race."*

The preceding meaning has two important implications. First, one's effort to free oneself from one's own glamour is impeded by glamour belonging to one's family, one's nation, and the entire human race; and second, one's success in freeing oneself aids one's family, one's nation, and the entire human race. Consequently, one's effort to free oneself from glamour is an important service to the world.

16. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

In verse 16, as before, the "ten horns," "beast," and "whore" signify desires for outer things, guilt, and ego, respectively. The initial phrase, "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast," is construed as referring back to verse 12, so it means that the desires compensate for guilt.

In its next phrase, verse 16 says that the desires shall "hate" the ego. To *hate* something can mean to be hostile to it.¹³⁷ Bailey writes, "The cause of all human suffering is desire and personal selfishness."¹³⁸ The notion that desire is the root of all suffering is the second of the "four noble truths" of Buddhism.¹³⁹ Desires are hostile in that they cause suffering, so the statement, "the ten horns ... shall hate the

whore," seems to have this meaning: the desires shall bring suffering to the ego.

The verse then says that the desires shall make the ego "desolate." The word *desolation* signifies ruin and destruction.¹⁴⁰ 1 Timothy 6:9 (NIV) has a similar message, because it describes desires as bringing ruin and destruction: "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction."

The verse also says that the desires shall make the ego "naked," but what does nakedness signify? Exodus 32:25 uses the same symbol: "And when Moses saw that the people were naked." John Ritenbaugh provides this explanation:

Here the word "naked" does not mean that they were without clothing, but rather that their spiritual condition had been exposed. It is very similar to "naked" as it is used in Revelation 3 in reference to a Laodicean. "They're wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked."¹⁴¹

Given that nakedness signifies the exposure of an inner condition, what condition of the ego might the desires expose? *ACIM* says, "Poverty is of the ego,"¹⁴² referring to inner poverty. Krishnamurti explicates the ego's inner poverty: "Apart from its name, attributes, idiosyncrasies, possessions, what *is* the self? Is there the 'I,' the self, when its qualities are taken away? It is this fear of being nothing that drives the self into activity; but it *is* nothing, it is an emptiness."¹⁴³

How do desires for outer things expose the ego's inner poverty? Henry Makow gives this account:

Inner poverty is a spiritual vacuum at the core of our being. Its symptoms are sense of emptiness, meaninglessness and lack of direction ... One way or another, most of us are beggars, feel good junkies, addicted to the world to make us happy. As a result, we feel like beggars.¹⁴⁴

Consequently, the ego's inner poverty is exposed to us when our desires make us feel like

beggars, so the phrase, “the ten horns ... shall make her ... naked,” is construed in this way: the desires shall expose the inner poverty of the ego.

Verse 16 also says that the desires shall eat “her flesh.” Here, “her flesh” denotes the ego’s flesh, but what is that? *ACIM* give this explanation: “The body is the ego’s home by its own election.”¹⁴⁵ Accordingly, “her flesh” is the physical body, so the phrase “the ten horns ... shall eat her flesh” indicates that one’s desires shall attack the health of one’s own physical body. Bailey provides a supporting account:

As a result of this manipulation of desire, and the wild maneuvering for its satisfaction along material lines, you have such diseases as the gastric and intestinal disorders and the various stomach troubles which devastate civilised humanity—far more than the savage races. Certain brain disorders also are effects, and low vitality.¹⁴⁶

The verse’s final phrase says that the desires shall burn the ego with “fire.” Bailey says, “Fire is the symbol of the mind,”¹⁴⁷ so the “fire” in the verse must signify thoughts embodied in the desires, but what are these thoughts? Desires for outer things are desires for idols. According to *ACIM*’s quotation in the commentary for verse 2, “An idol is a means for getting more,” so one’s desires for idols are actually wishes to possess more than what other people have. Such desires embody thoughts of attacking, or degrading, other people, so that one can perceive them as being inferior to oneself. Consequently, the phrase, “the ten horns ... shall ... burn her with fire,” indicates that one’s desires shall damage one’s own ego by means of the attack thoughts that are embodied in these desires. In particular, as *ACIM* explains, one’s attack thoughts shall make the ego, which is the false image of oneself, believe that it is vulnerable to attack from others:

Because your attack thoughts will be projected, you will fear attack. And if you fear attack, you must believe that you are not invulnerable. Attack thoughts therefore make you vulnerable in your own mind,

which is where the attack thoughts are. Attack thoughts and invulnerability cannot be accepted together. They contradict each other ... If attack thoughts must entail the belief that you are vulnerable, their effect is to weaken you in your own eyes. Thus they have attacked your perception of yourself. And because you believe in them, you can no longer believe in yourself. A false image of yourself has come to take the place of what you are.¹⁴⁸

In summary, verse 16 seems to have this meaning: *Your desires for outer things, which compensate for your guilt, shall bring suffering to your ego, as well as ruin, destruction, and exposure of its inner poverty, and shall attack the health of your physical body and make your ego believe that it is vulnerable to attack from others.*

17. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

Romans 8:28 states, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” *ACIM* makes an even stronger statement: “All things work together for good. There are no exceptions except in the ego’s judgment.”¹⁴⁹ In particular, verse 17 portrays how even the ego’s desires work together for good.

In verse 17’s initial part, “heart” is the translation of the Greek word (*kardia*) that has a variety of possible meanings. In this context, *to put in the heart* means, “to put into one’s mind the design of doing a thing.”¹⁵⁰ The possessive pronoun “their,” which refers back to the “ten horns” in verse 16, shows that the “hearts” belong to the ego’s desires. Thus the initial part says that God has put into the ego’s desires the design of fulfilling God’s will.¹⁵¹

How is God’s will fulfilled? Bailey gives this answer:

There is no evading ... of the fact that we are part of a whole, and that only as Christ enters into recognition by the entire race and is expressed by humanity as a whole,

shall we achieve that for which we have been created—the fulfilling of the will of God, as Christ fulfilled it.¹⁵²

Consequently, verse 17's initial part appears to have this meaning: For God has designed the ego's desires so that humanity as a whole shall fulfill the will of God in the manner that Jesus fulfilled it, as recorded in the New Testament.

The verse's second part, "to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast," seems to refer back to verse 13, which was given this meaning: "Your desires promote the hidden purpose of your ego, and they reinforce the power and strength of your guilt."

An *intuition* is "The ability to understand something immediately, without the need for conscious reasoning."¹⁵³ Accordingly, Hebrews 4:12 appears to use the phrase "word of God" to denote an intuition: "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Bailey uses the phrase "the voice of the inner God" as a synonym for the soul,¹⁵⁴ and mentions "the intuitions which are sent to you from your soul,"¹⁵⁵ so the phrase "words of God" in verse 17 appears to denote intuitions from the soul.

As Bailey explains, suffering has a beneficent role:

A clue also to the significance of pain and of suffering will gradually emerge in the world consciousness ... Suffering is the most effective and most rapid way of evoking world understanding and of burning away the barriers which human beings have set up to the expression of the will-to-good.¹⁵⁶

Consequently, desires for outer things lead to suffering, which provides the incentive to invoke the soul's intuitions, which in turn convey illumination. Bailey says, "under the inspiration of soul intention which subordinates the mind to its purposes ... the man can then dissolve the last remaining vestiges of all desire by means of *illumination*."¹⁵⁷ In verse 17's final part, "the words of God shall be fulfilled"

when the soul's intuitions eliminate these desires, so these desires continue to provide the incentive to invoke the soul's intuitions "until the words of God shall be fulfilled."

Thus verse 17 is interpreted in this way: *For God has designed the ego's desires so that humanity as a whole shall fulfill the will of God in the manner that Jesus fulfilled it: these desires reinforce each other and reinforce guilt, thereby providing the incentive to invoke intuitions from the soul; the resulting illumination, when complete, will eliminate these desires.*

18. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

In verse 18, "sawest" is a translation of the Greek word (*eido*) that can mean to get knowledge of, or to understand, as in John 21:15 or Romans 8:28. Thus the initial phrase, "And the woman which thou sawest," has this meaning: Your ego, whose maleficent purpose and beneficent design you now understand.

As mentioned previously, the word "great" is a translation of the Greek word that is sometimes used to denote people holding positions of authority. A *city* is a center of commerce and laws for the region that surrounds it (Numbers 21:25, 35:2), so "great city" is taken as an internal center of authority that promulgates values and edicts to the surrounding personality. As before, "the kings of the earth" are thoughts, because thoughts rule the rest of the personality.

Thus verse 18, which is the final verse in Chapter 17, is given this meaning: *Your ego, whose maleficent purpose and beneficent design you now understand, is an internal center of authority that reigns over your thoughts.*

Conclusions

The *Revelation of St. John* is actually a veiled statement of an esoteric, or hidden, doctrine of early Christians. Let us use the term *ego* to represent the self-seeking aspect of our being, which is sometimes called the "Dweller on the Threshold," "personal lower self," "old man," "false self," "illusory self,"

and “imposter self.” Our commentary shows that the verses in Chapter 17 of *Revelation* can be interpreted allegorically to reveal the purpose and design of the ego:

1. A Master from a higher realm, who has the power to initiate human beings into that realm, comes to the aspirant and says, “Raise the rate of vibration of your consciousness, and I will show you the truth about your ego, or personal lower self, which is a controlling sense of identity supported by your many emotional reactions.
2. Your thoughts have become idolatrous through being connected to your ego, and your feelings and motives have been made prideful with these thoughts.”
3. The Master helps the aspirant to achieve the detached state of mind that is receptive to inspiration. Then the aspirant sees that the ego is maintained by guilt, which has the nature of slander and evil speaking, and which operates through the seven chakras and all desires for outer things.
4. The ego offers self-inflation through high status, prosperity, and valuable things. It offers, however, only the illusion of favorable gifts, because its actual offerings are sadness, suffering, ignorance of inner truth, and allegiance to the false hope that completion and happiness can be found in outer things.
5. The ego’s consciousness has the hidden purpose of enslaving the aspirant through great confusion, many kinds of temptation, and idolatrous experiences of the personality.
6. The aspirant sees that the ego takes pride in acquiring divine Truths and following Jesus’ example. Upon having this insight, the aspirant is amazed at how the ego can convert even spirituality to its own use.
7. The Master says to the aspirant, “Why are you amazed? I will tell you the hidden things about the ego, including its relationship to guilt, chakras, and desires.
8. The guilt that you saw in yourself was imagined by you and is not real. If a guilty

emotion were to ascend out of the subconscious realm and allowed to bloom without any defense, it would disappear. Nevertheless, thoughts identified with the personality, which are thoughts whose nature is inconsistent with the plane of the intuition, will defend against this emotion that was imagined, and is not real, and yet is powerful enough to defeat such a defense.

9. This teaching is merely a hint that can be understood only by a mind with spiritual wisdom. The seven chakras are the medium through which the ego galvanizes the dense physical body into activity.

10. Each chakra governs a portion of the dense physical body. Your ego’s desires, which proceed from the solar plexus chakra, usually rule the energies of five other chakras: namely, the head, ajna, throat, sacral, and base chakras. The first center for you to seek consciously to energize is the heart chakra, and it is not yet awakened. When you are energizing the heart chakra, you must work with it until it awakens before seeking to energize another chakra.

11. Guilt, which was imagined and is not real, could be considered to be the eighth governing center of energy, because it is the sole cause of pain in any form. Nevertheless, guilt arises from the misuse of the seven chakras, and it will disappear through the awakening of the heart chakra.

12. The desires that you saw in yourself, which govern your outer activities, do not have any real power to bring happiness; but they have a momentary illusion of power as long as guilt seems to have power, because the attainment of a desire brings a momentary feeling of superiority that compensates for the sense of inferiority that guilt imposes.

13. These desires promote the hidden purpose of the ego, and they reinforce the power and strength of guilt.

14. The ego’s desires will conflict with the soul. The soul will eventually overcome them, because the soul is more powerful. When that victory finally comes, the men-

tal, emotional, and physical bodies will be receptive, consecrated, and obedient to the soul.”

15. The Master also says to the aspirant, “The emotional reactions that you saw in yourself, which support your ego, are the result of: your own past desires, the desire life of your family, the desire life of your nation, and the desire life of the human race.

16. Your desires for outer things, which compensate for your guilt, shall bring suffering to your ego, as well as ruin, destruction, and exposure of its inner poverty, and shall attack the health of your physical body and make your ego believe that it is vulnerable to attack from others.

17. For God has designed the ego’s desires so that humanity as a whole shall fulfill the will of God in the manner that Jesus fulfilled it: these desires reinforce each other and reinforce guilt, thereby providing the incentive to invoke intuitions from the soul; the resulting illumination, when complete, will eliminate these desires.

18. Your ego, whose maleficent purpose and beneficent design you now understand, is an internal center of authority that reigns over your thoughts.

According to the preceding commentary, the great whore of *Revelation* symbolizes the ego. Why is such a symbol used? The ego is the self-seeking aspect of our being. During each day of our lives—indeed, during each moment—we face the following choice: to express our true nature, or be seduced by our ego. It is our fate, as human beings, to be repeatedly seduced by our ego until, through pain and suffering, we eventually learn to express continually our true nature. Thus the great whore seems to be an apt symbol for portraying the reoccurring temptation that we all encounter.

What is the purpose of Chapter 17 of *Revelation*? Krishnamurti writes, “Self-knowledge is the beginning of wisdom, and therefore the beginning of transformation or regeneration.”¹⁵⁸ Correspondingly, the purpose of

Chapter 17 is to assist its readers in gaining self-knowledge about the ego. Merely reading Chapter 17, or even this article, is not enough, however, as Krishnamurti explains:

The understanding of words which is called intellectual comprehension is utterly empty. You say, “I understand intellectually, but I cannot put it into practice,” which means, really, that you do not understand. When you understand, you understand the content; there is no intellectual understanding. Intellectual understanding is merely a verbal understanding. Hearing the words is not the understanding of their content. The word is not the thing. The word is not understanding.¹⁵⁹

How can you gain an understanding of the content of Chapter 17? Krishnamurti gives the following advice during a public talk, in which he refers to himself as the “speaker”:

Sirs, why do you listen to the speaker? Is it that in listening to the speaker you are listening to yourself? Is that what is taking place? The speaker is only pointing something out, acting as a mirror in which you see yourself, see the actuality of your own consciousness; it is not the description which the speaker is pointing out, which becomes merely an idea if you do no more than follow it. But if through the description, you yourself actually perceive your own state of mind, your own consciousness, then listening to the speaker has a certain importance.¹⁶⁰

Chapter 17 is like a mirror that portrays various relationships between the ego, guilt, chakras, and desires. If, through this portrayal, you yourself actually came to perceive these relationships by means of your own self-observation, then your study of Chapter 17 would have value, because it would lead to your transformation or regeneration.

Given elsewhere are similar allegorical analyses of other puzzling parts of *Revelation*: Chapter 9, which depicts bizarre creatures called locusts that sting people who do not have the seal of God in their foreheads;¹⁶¹ and Chapter 13, which depicts an awesome beast

that comes out of the sea and another beast that comes out of the earth.¹⁶²

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- ¹ Stephen A. Hunter, *Studies in the Book of Revelation* (Pittsburgh, PA: Pittsburgh Printing Company, 1921), 17.
- ² William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, vol. II (1954; reprint; Westminster: John Knox Press, 2004), 152.
- ³ Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland, *Revelation: Blackwell Bible Commentaries* (Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 263.
- ⁴ Marion Carson, "The Harlot, the Beast and the Sex Trafficker: Reflections on some Recent Feminist Interpretations of Revelation 17-18," *The Expository Times*, 122:5 (2011), 218-227.
- ⁵ John Wiertzema, *The Coming Judgment of Islam: An Exposition of Revelation Chapters 17 and 18* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2007), 80.
- ⁶ Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy* (1889; reprint; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1972), 8.
- ⁷ Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (1888; reprint; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1977), vol. II, 786.
- ⁸ James M. Pryse, *The Apocalypse Unsealed* (1910; reprint; Kila, MT: Kes-singer Publishing, 1997), 2-3.
- ⁹ Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2002), 29.
- ¹⁰ Helena P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, vol. II (1877; reprint; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1976), 351.
- ¹¹ John Van Auken, *Edgar Cayce on the Revelation* (Virginia Beach, VA: A.R.E. Press, 2000), 158-159.
- ¹² Paramahansa Yogananda, *The Second Coming of Christ* (Los Angeles: Self-Realization Fellowship, 2004), xxv-xxvi.
- ¹³ Gerhard A. Krodel, *Revelation* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989), 47.
- ¹⁴ Alice A. Bailey, *Glamour: A World Problem* (1950; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), 137.

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- ¹⁵ *A Course in Miracles* (third edition; Mill Valley, CA: Foundation for Inner Peace, 2007), Text, 34.
- ¹⁶ The King James Version (KJV), also known as the "Authorized Version," is still the most widely read biblical text in the English language, even though it is more than four hundred years old. The KJV provides a word-for-word translation of the original Greek text. When the KJV includes additional words that are not found in the Greek text, those additional words are italicized.
- ¹⁷ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (second edition; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2015).
- ¹⁸ *Collins English Dictionary—Complete and Unabridged* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003).
- ¹⁹ Helena P. Blavatsky, "The Theosophical Mahatmas," *Collected Writings* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Society in America, 2002), vol. VII, 241-249.
- ²⁰ Alice A. Bailey, *The Light of the Soul* (1927; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1978), 57.
- ²¹ Alice A. Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation* (1922; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1974), 274.
- ²² Van Auken, *Edgar Cayce on the Revelation*, 88.
- ²³ *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2003).
- ²⁴ Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (1925; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), 48, uses the term *ego* as a synonym for the higher self.
- ²⁵ Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (1957; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), 293.
- ²⁶ Alice A. Bailey, *From Bethlehem to Calvary* (1937; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1989), 119.
- ²⁷ Gina Lake, *In the World but Not of It* (Sedona, AZ: Endless Satsang Foundation, 2016), 81.

- 28 Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (1934; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), 250.
- 29 *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*.
- 30 Alice A. Bailey, *A Course in Miracles*, Text, 305.
- 31 Wikipedia contributors, "Earth (classical element)," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*,
[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Earth_\(classical_element\)&oldid=715648861](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Earth_(classical_element)&oldid=715648861) (accessed June 23, 2016).
- 32 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I (1936; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), 327.
- 33 Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar* (1922; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1974), xv.
- 34 Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 94.
- 35 The Old Testament sometimes uses a reference to fornication as a metaphor for idolatry. For example, Jeremiah 3:9 (International Children's Bible) states: "She was guilty of adultery. This was because she worshiped idols made of stone and wood." Jeremiah 3:1, Ezekiel 16:15, and Hosea 4:12 provide other examples.
- 36 Alice A. Bailey, *A Course in Miracles*, Workbook for Students, 467.
- 37 *A Course in Miracles*, Text, 621.
- 38 *The New Church Messenger*, vol. 103 (Chicago: Swendenborg Press, 1912), 38.
- 39 Sophocles, translated by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald, *Oedipus Rex* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949), line 872.
- 40 Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (1960; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), 230.
- 41 Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 122.
- 42 *A Commentary on the Book of the Revelation Based on a Study of Twenty-Four Psychic Discourses by Edgar Cayce* (1945; reprint; Virginia Beach, VA: A.R.E. Press, 1988), 177.
- 43 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II (1942; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1981), 440.
- 44 Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (1923). In Sigmund Freud, *Standard Edition*, vol. 19 (London: Hogarth, 1961), 12-66.
- 45 John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (1965; reprint; New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 603.
- 46 *A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 163.
- 47 *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*.
- 48 *A Course in Miracles*, Text, 85.
- 49 Robert Perry, *A Course Glossary* (West Sedona, AZ: Circle of Atonement, 1996), 31.
- 50 *A Course in Miracles*, Text, 262.
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