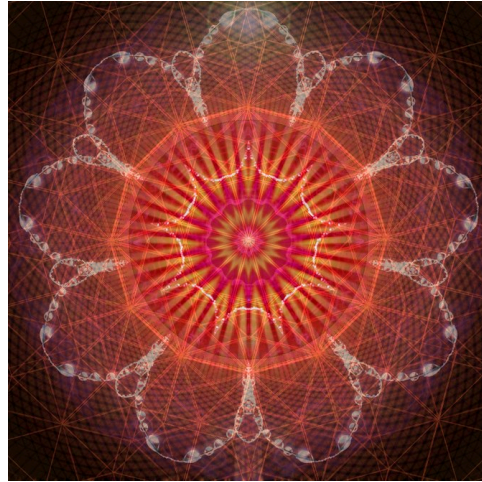


Summer 2018, Volume 14, Number 1



The Esoteric Quarterly

An independent publication dedicated to the trans-disciplinary investigation of the esoteric spiritual tradition.

**Esoteric philosophy and its applications
to individual and group service and
the expansion of human consciousness.**



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The Esoteric Quarterly

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The mission of the *Esoteric Quarterly* is to provide a forum for the exploration of esoteric philosophy and its applications. Full-length articles and student papers are solicited pertaining to both eastern and western esoteric traditions. We also encourage feedback from readers. Comments of general interest will be published as Letters to the Editor. All communications should be sent to: editor@esotericquarterly.com.

Celestial Bodies and Sacred Texts

Astronomy is a study of the properties, positions and motions of celestial bodies in space. Astrology seeks to study the effects of the properties, positions and motions of heavenly bodies on people and events on Earth. Mundane or exoteric astrology looks at the personality in every day life. Esoteric astrology provides a larger perspective and is focused on revealing the hidden relationships between man and the Cosmos. Hence, its emphasis is on recognizing the unique character of the heavenly bodies and their spiritual influence on consciousness, destiny and life purpose for the individual, humanity and the Planet.

Another means by which human beings can attain to a greater knowledge of the Self and its relationship to the greater Whole is through the esoteric investigation of the world's sacred texts. These texts not only serve as a bridge to understanding other belief systems and ways of life, sacred texts contain multi-layered levels of meaning, that can be seen to embody truths that go beyond religious identity, culture and history. As such, they are universal and eternal. Employing symbolic language, such as allegory, sonorial, numerical and graphic symbol, sacred writings can be interpreted in different ways. But in every case, as Manly P. Hall explained: the esoteric approach is based on the motive of truth or the "complete dedication to the service of the realities of existence."

This issue begins with an article examining the astrological signs of the Quarter. The article, from Maureen Richmond, is part of a series investigating the spiritual and esoteric aspects of all the astrological signs. The first article in the series explored the signs of Aries, Taurus and Gemini in relationship to Alice Bailey's triple rulership system. Richmond continues this approach with the signs of Cancer, Leo and Virgo. Like its predecessor, this article is rich in information and insights. Esoteric wisdom is combined with practical information

and distilled in a way that makes it easier to "understand and embody the grander purposes behind each of these astrological influences."

Our next offering is from Irina Kuzminsky who contributes an article on Mary Magdalene, one of the most interesting and controversial characters in the New Testament. Kuzminsky provides a learned and spirited exegesis of various texts and the diverse and contradictory ways in which the Magdalene has been represented throughout history. The article debunks the myth that the Magdalene was a repentant sinner and answers questions as to who she really was, why traditions concerning her true identity have been repressed, and why restoring her reputation is so significant. This examination of Mary Magdalene reveals her place in early Christianity and presents a powerful demonstration of Sacred Feminine spirituality as well as "a vision of what Christianity could be."

Zachary Lansdowne's analysis of Revelation Chapter 22 continues with this issue's deeper investigation of Biblical literature. This last chapter of *Revelation* or the *Apocalypse of John*, touches on two primary themes: the river of life and the tree of life—themes that have been traditionally linked to passages in Genesis and the predicted restoration of Eden for the faithful that would come to pass in some future age. Lansdowne provides an interpretation of Chapter 22 that allows us to see it as a means by which the disciple can begin to experience, in the here and now, the Earth as Eden. His verse-by-verse evaluation contrasts exoteric interpretations of John's prophesy with esoteric instructions for disciples. As such, Revelation 22 is shown to be "a veiled statement of an esoteric, or hidden, doctrine of early Christians."

Maureen Richmond contributes the final full-length feature in this issue. Her article begins by defining Draco as one of the primary sources of occult energy. Its occult and

esoteric characteristics, as the author explains, derive not only from its circumpolar position in the sky, but also from its connection to the Spiritual Hierarchy, the Serpents of Wisdom, Libra, the cosmic kundalini, the Mother Goddess of the ancient Egyptians, and the process of initiation, among other things. The article contains a wealth of relevant esoteric information about the “Dragon.”

Included in this issue is a short paper from Vijay Sirnath Kanchi dealing with the fluctuating consciousness of the waking, dreaming and deep sleep states and the allegorical story of their destruction by Shiva. The seemingly simple story from the ancient Puranas about the extinguishing of the “three mythical cities,” as the paper from Dr. Kanchi reveals, “holds a treasure trove of wisdom.”

Also included are three inspiring talks from the *School for Esoteric Studies* that were given at the Aries, Taurus and Gemini full-moon festivals.

The *Poems of the Quarter* are from international teacher, author and poet Lisa Page. As a transformational leader, Page has travelled the globe for the last twenty years, working with people from all walks of life including women refugees, stressed out CEO’s, couples in crisis, troubled teens, and those seeking to deepen their experience of spirituality and sexuality. She is the author of programs such as “Life, Love & Intimacy,” “Breathe Baby Breathe” and “Sacred Shadow Work for the Feminine.” She is the creator of a series in production called “Intimate Conversations with Great Mystics, Wise Teachers & Everyday Lovers.” The two inspired poems chosen here, published in *Diamond Cutters* (a book of visionary poems edited Jay Ramsay and Andrew Harvey), are “Dance of the Dark Goddess” and “Said She.” For more information visit: <https://lisapage.com/>.

Our *Picture of the Quarter*—“Antahkarana”—is from the professional artist and musician, Francis Donald. After decades of working as a successful representational artist, Donald turned his attention to painting esoteric subject matter. The intricately beautiful representation of the Antahkarana featured here, depicts “the

white electric light of perfect wholeness,” which connects the centers from the base of the spine, up to the Monad. In addition to his many endeavors, Donald offers an ongoing monthly webinar series on the *Secret Doctrine*. He can be reached at: oeahoo@yahoo.com.

Donna Brown
Editor-in-Chief

Publication Policies

Articles are selected for publication in the *Esoteric Quarterly* because we believe they represent a sincere search for truth, support the service mission to which we aspire, and/or contribute to the expansion of human consciousness.

Publication of an article does not necessarily imply that the Editorial Board agrees with the views expressed. Nor do we have the means to verify all facts stated in published articles.

We encourage critical thinking and analysis from a wide range of perspectives and traditions. We discourage dogmatism or any view that characterizes any tradition as having greater truth than a competing system.

Neither will we allow our journal to be used as a platform for attacks on individuals, groups, institutions, or nations. This policy applies to articles and features as well as to letters to the editor. In turn, we understand that the author of an article may not necessarily agree with the views, attitudes, or values expressed by a referenced source. Indeed, serious scholarship sometimes requires reference to work that an author finds abhorrent. We will not reject an article for publication simply on the grounds that it contains a reference to an objectionable source.

An issue of concern in all online journals is potential volatility of content. Conceivably, articles could be modified after the publication date because authors changed their minds about what had been written. Accordingly, we wish to make our policy clear: We reserve the right to correct minor typographical errors, but we will not make any substantive alteration to an article after it “goes to press.”

Poems of the Quarter

Dance of the Dark Goddess | by Lisa Page

She's calling you.
Yes you.

She's calling your home,
whispering sweet somethings in your ear.

Can you hear Her?

She's the song of Love,
the dance of Death,
the fire of Truth.

In the dark night of your Soul
when you're writhing in agony
and there's nowhere to turn
and nothing left to do,
it's time.

Time to surrender your feet to Her fire.
Time to dance in the flames of Her destruction.
Time to burn
burn
burn
in the heart of Her crucible,
and offer it all
to the pyre of Her love.

And when there's nothing left of you, save ash
She'll pause for a moment
and bow Her head in silence.
Not in mourning,
but to savour the sweetness of you,
and your death.
The death of who you thought you were.

And then slowly
She'll lift her head
with a glint in her eyes
and that wicked knowing smile.
And She'll gather her skirt
and kick up her heels
and dance wildly on your ashes.

She'll whoop and holler Her incantations of old
breathing new life into your Soul,
summoning you,
commanding you
to rise
rise
rise again.

And you do.

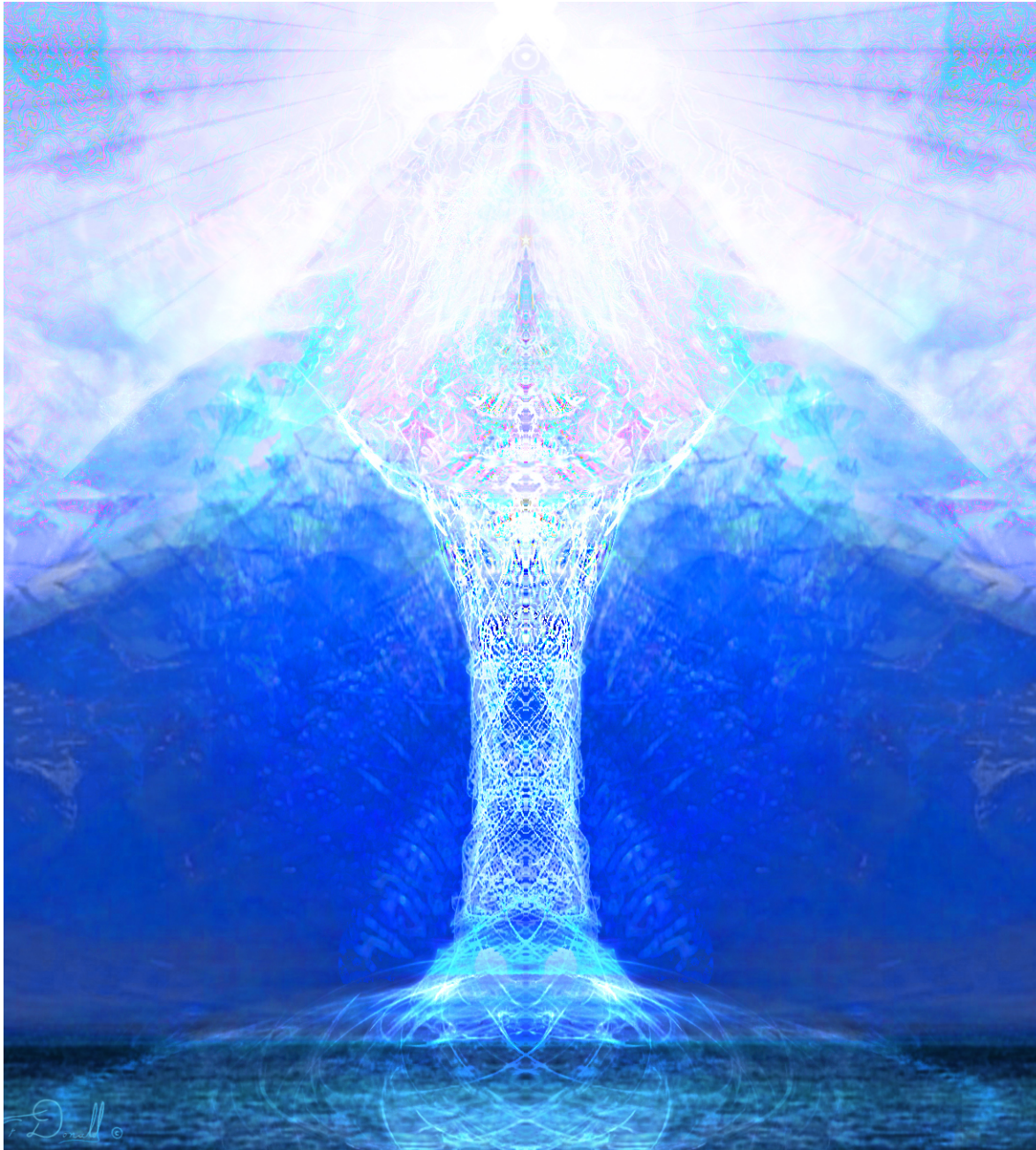
Said She | by Lisa Page

Said She,
the Mother of Darkness
and Keeper of the Light.

“When the sun sinks
into oblivion
pouring darkness
over your waking life,
fear not.

That is when I come
to set your Soul on Fire
so that you can
dance in the dark
radiantly aLight
as the Love you Are.”

Picture of the Quarter



Antahkarana | by Francis Donald | oeahoo@yahoo.com

Quotes of the Quarter

Potentized medicine, when consumed by mistake, has its impact on the body. Likewise mantrams, potentialized sounds, too, have their impact on the mind. Mantrams when uttered inappropriately have their impact on the body just as medicine when taken recklessly. The effect of the medicine is on the body. The effect of the mantra is on the mind! The impact is always positive if the mantram is uttered appropriately.

Dr. Sri K. Parvathi Kumar, *Mantrams: Their Significance & Practice* (Andhra Pradesh, IN, Aquarian Printing School, 2000), 113.

In Buddhist cosmology, the world in which Sakyamuni was the Buddha was called the world of endurance, *saha* in Sanskrit. This is considered to be an auspicious place to practice. Living in a difficult place, filled with situations of apparent suffering, cruelty, and injustice, we can develop our capacity to endure, to be patient with life, to learn how to respond appropriately and helpfully, without feeling overwhelmed or compelled to react impulsively.

Taigen Dan Leighton, *Faces of Compassion: Classic Bodhisattva Archetypes and Their Modern Expression* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), 70.

In ancient times science and the religious mystery were viewed as one and the same subject. This approach to the mysteries of life has been forgotten. Scientists and theologians have nothing to say to each other. The truth of the ancient sages, that “Matter is a dense form of spirit and spirit is a subtle state of matter,” has been forgotten. The stark division between the physical and spiritual, between religion and science, is one of the primary causes for misunderstanding the ancient esoteric teachings. It has caused some people, for example, to speculate whether the alchemy presented by the ancient sages was a physical or a spiritual practice. Manly P. Hall, ... as well

as other modern esoteric writers on the subject have stated that the methodology of physical alchemy was a blind, an allegorical veil, for instructions in spiritual alchemy. And while this may be true; the reverse is also true; that in the process of soul transformation lies hidden the secrets of physical transmutation. The few ancient authors who understood this divine science veiled both spiritual truths using chemical terminology and chemical truths using theological references, so that without the master key of synthesis and correspondence, “as above, so below,” it is difficult to know where to begin.

Dorje Jinpa, *A Synthesis of Alchemy* (Oregon: Pentarba Publications, 2016), 7.

People keep repeating that the main things are love and compassion. Certainly love and compassion are the main things, but it takes knowledge to make love and compassion fruitful. ... It takes just a second to say “love.” But to acquire knowledge for the well-being and blessing of humanity requires an eternity.

Helena Blavatsky, *Lucifer: A Theosophical Magazine* (London: George Redway, 1887).

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us “Universe,” a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. The striving to free oneself from this delusion is the one issue of true religion. Not to nourish it but to try to overcome it is the way to reach the attainable measure of peace of mind.

Albert Einstein, *The New Quotable Einstein*, by Alice Calaprice (Princeton University Press, 2005), 206.

The masters of the divine art of theurgy found a way to serve the Higher Powers by mixing those substances together that have

the same qualities of the God (they wished to evoke). These substances were mixed together because individually they were not strong enough to invoke the Gods. By mixing together different substances they were able to unify the emanations and by the creation of one substance from the many they were able to create a likeness of the (archetypal) monad, which existed before its manifestation in form. They created images and incense from these mixtures by forming them into symbols (*sunthemata*), thereby making by art that which a God embodies in essence... Thus they came to know the powers of spiritual beings that are essentially linked to the activities of nature and the physical body. By this they invoked these powers in order to communicate with them. From the Daemonic Powers they moved up towards the activity of Gods, sometimes instructed by the Gods themselves, and sometimes through their own efforts they obtained the appropriate symbols. And finally, *laying aside the physical* they obtained unity with the Divine Powers.

Proclus, *Theurgy in the Context of Proclus's Philosophy*, by Robbert M. van den Berg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), ch.11.

One easily sees how the Redemption is not only decreed from eternity, but is considered as eternally necessary—nay, that it must ever renew itself through the whole time of generation and existence... The history of all religions and philosophies teach us, that this greater truth, indispensable to man, has been handed down in different nations, in different times, in various ways, and even in strange fables and images, in accordance with their limited knowledge; enough, if it only be acknowledged that we find ourselves in the condition which, even if it seems to drag us down and oppress us, yet gives us opportunity, nay, even makes it our duty to raise ourselves up, and to fulfill the purposes of the Godhead in this manner that while we are compelled on the one hand to concentrate ourselves, we, on the other hand, do not omit to expand ourselves in regular pulsations.

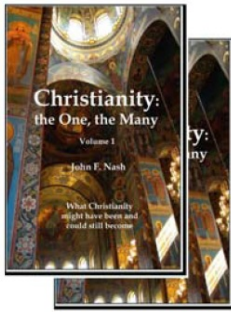
Goethe, *Goethe and the Philosopher's Stone*, by Alice Raphael (New York: Garrett Publications, 1965), 30.

Now a man who understands life only through the evidence of his senses is not a *psychological man*. He is a sensual man. His mind is based on sense... In such a case he thinks *from his feet*—and has no head. Most particularly, he thinks from what “shoes” cover his feet. This is his form of truth, different in different cases, but of the same order or level. He is far from being a *Man*. He thinks literally. He takes, say a parable, literally. But to become a Man, one must begin to think apart from the literal sense. What is significant to anyone who craves internal development is to think psychologically. Why for example, is it said so often in esoteric literature, as in the Scriptures, that a man must remove his shoes before entering a sacred place? It means that a sensual mind cannot understand a psychological truth. So he is told to remove his shoes... because the mind based on the senses and the truth formed from their evidence is not capable of comprehending a higher order or level of truth... The physical man cannot comprehend the spiritual man.

Maurice Nicoll, *The Mark* (London: Shamballa Publications, Inc., 1953), 3.

The possible truths, hazily perceived in the world of abstraction, like those inferred from observation and experiment in the world of matter, are forced upon the profane multitudes, too busy to think for themselves, under the form of Divine revelation and scientific authority. But the same question stands open from the days of Socrates and Pilate down to our own age of wholesale negation: is there such a thing as absolute truth in the hands of any one party or man? Reason answers, “there cannot be.” There is no room for absolute truth upon any subject whatsoever, in a world as finite and conditioned as man is himself. But there are relative truths, and we have to make the best we can of them.

Helena Blavatsky, *Lucifer: A Theosophical Magazine* (London: George Redway, 1888).



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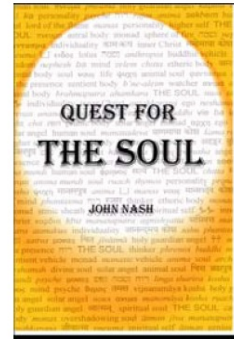
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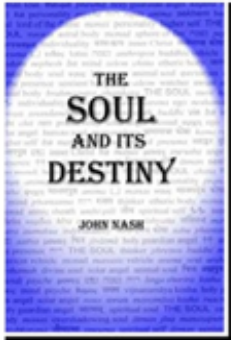
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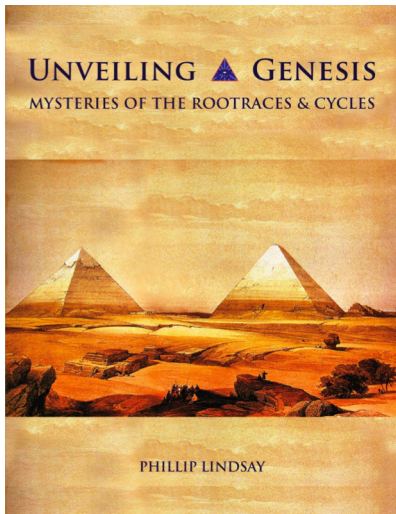
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Unveiling Genesis: Mysteries of the Roottraces and Cycles

By Phillip Lindsay



Unveiling Genesis probes the mysteries of human civilization, its origin in ancient Lemuria, and ebb and flow in the roottraces like Atlantis, through to the current Fifth Roottrace and into the future.

It is essentially the story of the human soul and the evolution of consciousness, interpreted in the light of Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*, and *The Book of Genesis*, drawing upon Eastern and Western traditions – Judaic and Hindu, Christian and Buddhist.

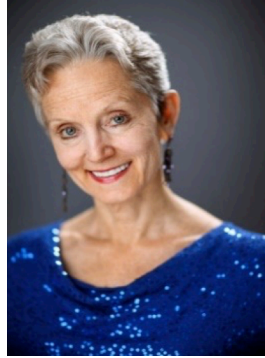
The science of cycles, the yugas, astrology and the seven rays are incorporated to illustrate the vast chronology of human evolution. These esoteric sciences are also bridged where possible to scientific disciplines such as geology, anthropology and biology – revealing their agreement, proofs and unity.

Unveiling Genesis was coincidentally released in 2017 with the *The Hidden History of Humanity* video, (2 hrs. 37') - and makes an excellent companion volume for greater depth and detail. This book is a vastly updated and re-written version of *The Hidden History of Humanity* (2005), with 143 figures, 108 tables and hundreds of illustrations to assist the reader in deciphering our complex human origins.

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The Spiritual Effects of the Zodiacal Signs: Cancer to Virgo

Maureen Temple Richmond

Abstract

This article examines the astrological signs of Cancer, Leo, and Virgo for their spiritual and esoteric implications. In a format designed to help the student readily apply the concepts of esoteric astrology to his or her astrological birth chart, the text explores each sign according to seasonal analogy, associated element and modality in traditional astrology, general themes according to the esoteric astrology of Alice Bailey, portions of human anatomy and functions ruled, the associated Labor of Hercules, and the three levels of rulership as proposed by the Tibetan Master through Alice Bailey. In the final segment of each section, the author demonstrates the progression encountered from the earliest stages of evolution to the later more advanced stages. Thus, for each sign, the triple rulership system is discussed in tandem with progress on both the Wheel of Life and the symbolic crosses of evolution for mass humanity, disciples, and initiates.

Cancer, The Crab *June 21 – July 21*

As maximum solar radiation strikes the northern half of planet Earth and the summer solstice transpires in the temperate zones above the equator, the fullness of summer makes itself known. A cardinal sign in traditional astrology, Cancer in the northern hemisphere represents the onset of true summer. Daily temperatures rise and the waters of life in streams, ponds, lakes, rivers, and seas warm and swell with life forms burgeoning into expression. At the salty seaside, the shy crab makes its appearance, flitting between its two worlds of sand and water, ready at any moment to skitter sideways to safety or to withdraw into its protective shell, the ever-

present home it conveniently carries on its back.

Emblem of the sea and its role as the medium in which all cellular life has its origin, Cancer the Crab stands for the primeval union of life forms with their generative matrix. The Crab loves the watery world, submerging itself readily and staying there for long periods of time as it feeds happily on the small aquatic organisms brought to it by the underwater currents of its mother, the ocean. In a simple bliss of existence, the Crab is one with its maternal environment, the sea, content to feed from the amniotic breast surrounding it on all sides. Not asking more than its share of daily nutrition, the Crab is happy to accept what is given and then head back to land for home-making in the sand and for reproduction with a mate of its kind.

A denizen of both the water and the land, the Crab lives at the juncture of two worlds and consequently represents connection with those two worlds—emotion on one hand and body on the other. As it is phrased in the esoteric astrological doctrine of Alice Bailey, the slow-moving Crab, who is identified with its dwelling and who carries its home on its back, lives simultaneously in the emotions as symbolized

About the Author

Maureen Temple Richmond is a lifelong astrologer and esotericist known for her scholarly study titled *Sirius*, a comprehensive examination of the teaching on that great star as revealed in the works of Alice Bailey. Author of numerous essays, poetry, and fiction, Richmond holds a Master of Arts in English and Creative Writing from Southern New Hampshire University. She is a native of Arkansas, where she currently makes her home. A counseling astrologer, Richmond advises Anglophone clients around the world. She can be reached at: star-song1208@gmail.com.

by the sea and on the physical plane as symbolized by dry land.¹ This is the challenge presented to those who incarnate under the influence of this sign. Theirs is the life path of registering the world of the emotions while incarnated in the body, a challenge which later morphs into the task of transforming the capacity to register emotion into the capacity to register the impersonal or spiritual intuition.

A water sign in traditional astrology, Cancer naturally finds its focus in the sentient response mechanism called the emotional or astral body. The astral body is in turn very much one with the substance of the plane from which it is constituted. Much like the undersea world itself, the emotional or astral plane is a world of shifting, drifting, and shimmering shapes, which exert an almost hypnotic lure on the perceiver. Thus, those who connect to and view the images of the astral plane are subject to a world of beauty but also of misleading appearances. As if called by the sirens or mermaids of yore, the viewer of the astral plane is as likely to lose self in the phenomena of the exotic astral environment, just as were the vulnerable sailors of ancient Greece given to losing themselves to seductive mythic creatures dwelling in and on the sea.

Likewise, the individual incarnating under the influence of Cancer finds that he or she must develop the ability to discriminate with respect to the attractions of the astral plane in order to keep their head above water. Otherwise, he or she becomes bewildered by the images created in response to emotional impulse by the imagination, not knowing if these images are real or conjured. In fact, they may be either; for the astral plane has a life of its own, drawn from the amount of attention it gets. Therefore, the tests under the influence of the sign of Cancer often concern the effort to shift attention from favorite emotional themes to less charged and more constructive thought streams.

The effort to think for oneself is especially trying when under the influence of the sign Cancer, for Cancer as a water sign and emblem of the sea also connotes the unindividualized mass of life expressing as primitive, instinctual awareness.² Cancer thus represents the level of

perception and reaction that comes from deeply ingrained animal responses working in the human frame, such as needs for food, shelter belonging to a group for security, and the inclination to protect the young of the species. Cancer is thus a sign concerned with biological relations such as are found in the blood kinship of the family and in the life of the family unit as expressed in its typical behavior patterns, customs, dwellings, home life, immediate community, and ancestral community traditions.³

In fact, according to the esoteric astrological doctrine, at an even deeper level the sign of Cancer connotes the life of the herd, the reaction of the mass to environing conditions, and the collective imagination.⁴ Thus, in this sign, the movements of consciousness within the great collectivity to which a unit belongs are even stronger than those originating in the unit itself. Here is a sign which deals with forces that impinge upon and affect the individual through the subconscious mind and through the activity of cellular matter, such as the forces of inherited and cultural tendencies.⁵ Cancer is hence a sign which connects the individual to his or her history through blood chemistry, race, culture, and nation. In fact, it is a sign which also connects the human unit to all of the human family and to the grand family of all life forms inhabiting planet Earth. This it does through both the channels of psyche and of body, reminding the human unit of its evolutionary history and of the common fears and struggles experienced by its fellow units. As a result, Cancer has a profoundly empathic function in the zodiac.

One of the great life experiences shared by all life forms on the planet is the process of coming into earthly existence through the creation of a suitable body for that purpose. Of this process, the sign Cancer is the emblem. According to the esoteric astrological doctrine of Alice Bailey, the sign Cancer is central to this process because it symbolizes not only matter itself, but the attraction to it, and as a result, the entire process of form-taking and form-making.⁶ This includes the process enjoined when the soul projects its intention through

progressively dense planes to finally manifest as an incarnated personality in a physical body.

In a general way, the sign of Cancer connotes the building of forms which correspond to the intention of a spiritual entity. Thus, Cancer symbolizes the process of constructing forms adequate and proper for cooperation with the Divine Plan, whether these forms are human personalities, families, organizations, homes and buildings, communities, or any other arrangement of matter.⁷ Form-building is an essential aspect of the Divine Creative Process, for without it the purposes and plans of the Divine Mind would remain disembodied in the realm of potential. Thus, it is evident that the divine role played by the sign Cancer is that it helps translate idea into form.

In the human anatomy, the sign Cancer is associated with organs which also relate to the creation of form. Cancer rules the stomach, digestive organs, breasts, ovaries, and womb—the parts of the body given to cellular nutrition and reproduction. These anatomical functions mirror and restate the themes of the sign, for Cancer is Mother Matter, the womb of all things and the source of sustenance and nurturance. In the human body of any gender, she appears in many forms—as the cellular medium, the nutrients necessary to drive cellular metabolism, the intrauterine environment for conception and gestation, and then as the mother's milk necessary for the raising of the young. Quite clearly, these bodily functions make way for the appearance of new forms, whether acting as cellular respiration and function or as support for reproduction.

Not only does Cancer stand for the process of manifesting form, it also symbolizes the very urge which drives any unit of consciousness to project itself from the abstract state to the more material state. In other words, the sign of Cancer encapsulates the whole notion of the urge to incarnate or to take on a body.⁸ Simply stated, it is the sign dramatizing the notion of successive and repeated incarnations and the impulse to seek them—in short, that of rebirth.⁹ This rebirth theme is central to the symbol of the Crab, or scarab Beetle—as conceptualized by the ancient Egyptian culture, which saw

reflected in its repetitive actions and self-regenerating habits the fact of reincarnation or recurring existences.¹⁰

According to the esoteric astrological doctrine of Alice Bailey, the sign of Cancer is itself the sign of reincarnation. So centrally involved with the incarnational process is the sign of Cancer that it is to be considered the very door or gate by which souls first enter human incarnation. Yet, here is a notion which is at least as old as the vision of eternal life and cosmic structure expressed by the Roman orator Cicero in his first century BCE *Dream of Scipio*. In the *Dream*, Cicero dramatized the afterlife experience of the soul and developed a notion of cosmic existence, including a reference to the signs of Cancer and Capricorn as the “Gates of Men” and “Gods” respectively. Cicero's conception of Cancer's crucial function was further articulated in the early fifth-century CE commentary on Cicero by the Greek and Latin scholar Macrobius.¹¹ Thus, the notion of Cancer as the gate into repeated human incarnation claims a history stretching back to the final days of the classical period. It remains a central doctrine of the esoteric astrological doctrine of Alice Bailey in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

When the soul enters the Gate of Cancer and begins either its series of earthly incarnations or any specific incarnation, it takes on a weighty burden. According to Bailey, the sign Cancer represents form as a place of symbolic imprisonment in which the previously free soul or spirit willingly agrees to temporarily encase itself. As such, the sign Cancer represents and connotes conditions of limitation and suffering willingly accepted by the soul. These conditions and limitations are entered into voluntarily by the soul, which elects to incarnate in order to assist or even redeem lives with which it has long been connected. As a result, the influence of the sign Cancer frequently entails emotional or psychological duress, conflict with the soul's chosen environment, and a growing awareness of karmic law.¹² In other words, the influence of Cancer is not a minor matter. Once within the grasp of the Crab's claws, the soul has much with which to contend, not the least of which is the right management of rela-

tionships with other souls it has met time and time again, in various lands and climes, under the Law of Rebirth.

The labor of Hercules associated with this sign brings all of the Cancerian themes to life that they may be more vividly perceived. Titled *The Capture of the Doe or Hind*, this labor features a repeated attempt by Hercules to find and overpower a small female deer, which must be ushered safely to a temple for safe-keeping. As always, a voice of higher spiritual authority calls Hercules to this work, admonishing him that in hunting for the quested doe, "...frequent must be the search..."¹³ It's a critical bit of advice, Hercules discovers, for every time he succeeds in capturing the lady hind and remanding her to the sacred temple grounds, he again glimpses her at large, thus setting him on his task all over again. In fact, the tracking and capturing of the doe persists for one entire calendar year, or a complete solar cycle.¹⁴ At length, Hercules finally delivers the doe to permanent safety by carrying her closely to his heart before depositing her in the temple.¹⁵

The theme of repetitive effort in this labor mirrors the pattern of repeated incarnations undertaken by the soul in its effort to master its lessons and move forward on the initiatory path. Again and again, Hercules was called to engage in essentially the same salvific action without becoming irritated or impatient. So it is with the incarnating soul, which must repeatedly face the same spiritual tests without giving in to bitterness or resentment. Instead, like Hercules in this labor, to be successful the incarnating soul must be willing to patiently persist in trying to live by its highest spiritual principles, no matter how many times the same karmic issue reappear in its earthly experience.

Further, this deceptively simple Cancerian labor also demonstrates a profound lesson on the path of initiation: the lesson of making right choice.¹⁶ The labor finally came to a close when Hercules, who had lovingly carried the little deer folded into his arms right over his heart, was capable of relinquishing his treasure to its higher purpose. Not scheming to keep it for himself, Hercules willingly handed over the

doe to the temple where it belonged. In other words, Hercules chose to serve the greater good, rather than to fixate on the personal attachment to the doe which inevitably arose as he bore the gentle creature long and lovingly on his chest. For the striving disciple or initiate in training, the moral of this story has direct relevance. Instead of being possessive and territorial in the fashion that the Cancerian dynamic can sometimes be, the disciple and initiate in training must opt to set personal desire aside in the quest to serve the Cosmic Will. When the individual can make this choice without terrible inner conflict, then he or she is free to use the wisdom inherent in the sign of Cancer for its higher purposes within the Divine Plan.

However, the Cancer-influenced individual following the mass direction on the wheel has not yet established that necessary detachment as an innate spiritual habit. By contrast, he or she views all things from a self-interested angle and with a markedly emotional twist, distant from the universal perspective which would relieve his or her easily offended sensitivity. Evolving on the symbolic mutable cross, such a Cancer-influenced individual is conditioned by the moody Moon as exoteric ruler of Cancer. Applicable and relevant up through the Second or Baptism Initiation, the Moon as exoteric ruler of Cancer symbolizes the instinctively selfish reactions of the emotional body and the inherent biological tendencies of the form nature to seek self-preservation and survival of the species. Instinct rules, whether physical or emotional at this level of Cancerian influence.¹⁷

As a result, the Cancer-influenced soul in the early stages of the initiatory path often expresses the lunar and crab-like characteristics of hypersensitivity, self-protectiveness, possessiveness, and territoriality.¹⁸ He or she is acutely sensitive to the issue of ownership, feeling strongly attached to possessions as well as persons, just as though both were an extension of self. As a result, petty jealousies and bitter resentments can easily arise in the less-evolved Cancer-influenced individual. Through right spiritual aspiration and study, this elementary Cancerian tendency can be sublimated from

impulses and attempts to own others into the desire to protect others and to provide necessities for the family or group. In time, this same impulse to identify with others will lead the Cancer-influenced aspirant to empathize with and care lovingly for all of humanity, indeed, for all of creation.

Yet, in the early stages of evolution, the Cancerian influence tends to demonstrate many problematic characteristics, including those of

water, the element with which this sign is associated. As a result, the less-evolved Cancer-influenced individual over-reacts on the emotional level, indulging in unnecessary emotional turbulence and frequent outright storms of temper and tears. Further, the Cancer-influenced individual, still evolving on the symbolic mutable cross, frequently imitates the spineless, shapeless water element itself, resorting

to the evasive characteristics of the crab itself, melting into a puddle or shrinking into its shell when feeling threatened.¹⁹ Ever on the alert for the slightest hint of insult or injury, the Cancer-influenced individual is controlled by the lower personality vehicles, symbolized by the Moon, the exoteric ruler of this sign. In this early stage, the comforts of the physical and emotional bodies lay great claim on the individual, perhaps becoming his or her primary focus.²⁰ Consuming excess food and indulging in whining may become primary pastimes, as the infantile stages symbolized by this maternal sign emerge from the matrix of discomforts seething in an emotional body still in its juvenile phase. Patterns of dependence upon others for basic forms of security may also emerge, as symbolized by the satellite Moon which rules the sign of Cancer in its earliest stages of evolution. Further complicating the picture is a

decided over-sensitivity to astral and lower psychic phenomena, keeping the less evolved Cancer-influenced person in a perpetual state of agitation, worry, dread, and trepidation as imagination runs rampant.

Even so, spiritual process emerges from the very beginning in Cancer, as the watery nature of this sign initiates the cleansing and purifying processes which will eventually purge the emotional body of extreme reaction and narrow focus.²¹ As a result, even the traumas, tantrums, and tearful torments of the Cancerian influence point toward

Not only does Cancer stand for the process of manifesting form, it also symbolizes the very urge which drives a unit of consciousness to project itself from the abstract state to a more material state. In other words, the sign of Cancer encapsulates the whole notion of the urge to incarnate or to take a body. Simply stated, it is the sign dramatizing the notion of successive and repeated incarnations and the impulse to seek them—in short, that of rebirth.

psychological growth, as the individual wrestles in a dramatic emotional fashion with the conflicts he or she senses. In time, and through this painful process, the retentive and gripping influence of the Crab's claws ultimately brings about the creation of a cohesive

personality structure, as the soul learns to hold on to what it has learned through the difficulties of human embodiment.²² The Alice Bailey writings refer to this stage as that of the integrated personality, a point in evolution which must be reached before more advanced spiritual states can be attained. Thus, even with its Moon-like moods and emotional storms, the influence of the sign of the Crab plays a critical role in the early stages of evolution.

This same Cancerian sensitivity, once such a stumbling block, becomes a spiritual asset. When the Cancer-influenced individual determines to establish self-control and quiet the emotional storms of the unbridled astral body, he or she begins to travel on the Wheel of Life in a direction opposite to the mass of Humanity, which generally feels entitled to unmonitored emotional venting. Once the Cancerian-influenced individual abandons that position,

he or she then evolves on the symbolic fixed cross and comes under the influence of Neptune, the esoteric ruler of Cancer. Influencing the more evolved Cancerian seeker up to the gate of the Third Initiation, Neptune, as esoteric ruler, indicates the refinement of astral response and its transmutation through mystical aspiration into a higher grade of sensitivity.²³ On the symbolic fixed cross, therefore, the Cancer-influenced individual begins to sense impressions emanating from the soul rather than exclusively from the astral level, and the sensitivity inherent in Cancer comes closer to its intended divine function as the spiritual intuition.²⁴ Impressions from the soul may come to the more evolved Cancer-influenced individual as images, words, or feeling states which convey the qualities, motivations, and intentions of the soul. These are qualitatively different from the feelings, motivations, and intentions of the separative astral body. For example, whereas the astral body registers real and imagined slights and broods upon them until they become festering resentments and angers, the refined Cancerian energy field registers the empathy, understanding, and detachment of the soul, as well as guidance on how to wisely handle its karmic tests and images embodying the soul's intended contribution to the Divine Plan. This type of sensitivity is engendered and symbolized by Neptune, a sacred planet associated with both the waters of planetary life and the infinite ocean of manifested life in cosmic realms. Thus, the Cancer-influenced individual on the fixed cross benefits from the higher clairvoyance and psychic impressions consonant with the influence of the fluidic Neptune, and the once problematic hypersensitivity of the sign falls permanently into the background.²⁵

Finally, when the Cancerian-influenced individual mounts the symbolic cardinal cross and passes through the Third Initiation, the hierarchical ruler of the sign Cancer comes into effect. Again, Neptune is the initiator of the Cancerian-influenced seeker at the level of hierarchical rulership, bringing the cosmic love associated with this sacred planet ever more fully into manifestation. At this level of evolution, the Cancer-influenced initiate does not

react to ordinary feelings, sentiments, or personality reactions.²⁶ Instead, it uses the sensing power of the fluidic powers in Cancer and in Neptune to attune to and participate in the higher life of space and to intuitively connect with the abstract planes of existence.

As a result, the Cancerian-influenced individual on the cardinal cross becomes a vessel for the unifying forces of the highest planes of manifestation, as opposed to functioning in the mode of the lower territorial Cancerian, who is often a divisive factor trading on clique-building, territorial boundaries, and mutual distrust between groups and persons. Instead, the Cancerian-influenced initiate of the Third Degree and beyond is gifted with the ability to attract large groups of persons to his or her spiritual endeavor and to beneficially retain them through the magnetic force of the Love-Wisdom Ray distributed by Neptune, planet of identification with all that is. When this is the case, group identity plays a positive role under the cloak of cohesive Cancer and idealistic Neptune, providing the initiate's students and aspirants with a definite context in which to integrate key spiritual characteristics embodied by the group leader, who serves much as a spiritual parent or mentor. Thus, the serving initiate working under the Cancerian dispensation is enabled to use the parenting and group-forming tendencies of this sign for the purposes of the Divine Plan.

At this point, the experience under the Cancerian influence reaches its highest level, far distant from its first expressions as primitive biological drives, rudimentary group consciousness, and wildly uncontrolled psychic functioning. The raw material of instinct has through the alchemy of spiritual refinement been transformed into the priceless jewel of the intuition, and the claws of the Crab now grasp and hold forth a treasure worth admiring.

Leo

July 22 – August 21

As the intensifying glare of summer heat makes itself known in the northern hemisphere and the power of the Sun scorches the Earth in a blaze of glory, Leo the Lion comes

into effect. A fire sign of the fixed modality in traditional astrology, Leo stands for and embodies the fiery power of the Sun, the steadily radiating dynamo at the center of the solar system. Constant in its provision of vitality, light, and warmth, the central star of the solar system unfailingly generates the drive which maintains our system in existence. So it is with fixed sign Leo, an influence which endows those influenced by this sign with the vitality and confidence to stand steadily at the center and share radiance with those around. That's why this sign is so often associated with magnetic personality, leadership, recognition, and organizational influence.

Yet, the influence of Leo is not that simple. According to the esoteric astrological doctrine of Alice Bailey, Leo as a fire sign represents the Fires of God, of which there are three – planetary, solar, and cosmic – all of which produce purification.²⁷ As part of this trio of fires, the function of Leo is to burn, destroy, and eradicate anything and everything that hinders divine expression.²⁸ Thus, Leo is not only a sign which often places those influenced by its rays in positions of power where much attention is directed their way, but is also a sign in which the imperfections of the personality and its creations are subjected to the blast furnace of spiritual purification. It's true that the fires of Leo warm the world and attract entranced admirers, yet at the same time they go to work to incinerate that which holds back the march of Divine Purpose. As the alchemists of old understood and encapsulated in their Latin acronym INRI (Ignis Natura Renovatur Integra), mystical fire regenerates all of existence. In the blazing sign of Leo, such could not be more true, for the fires of Leo first fan the flames of personality ambition and then metaphorically cremate that same personality, that the self may rise again like the mythic phoenix from its own ashes—much improved by the conflagration.

The process is a long and dramatic one for the individual with the Moon, Sun, Ascendant, planets, or other significant factors of the chart in the sign of Leo. According to the esoteric astrological doctrine, the sign of Leo embodies the will to illumine, the inner force which im-

pels the soul and personality to experiment with life so that knowledge may be gained.²⁹ The knowledge to be gained is of many types, but the acquisition of self-knowledge emerges as one of the most important types of knowledge with which the individual is tasked under the influence of Leo. It's just what the ancient Delphic mystery school advocated in its inscription over the entrance to the Temple of Apollo. There the Delphic initiates admonished all seekers of spiritual wisdom with the phrase *Gnothi Seauton*, Know Thyself. Often quoted in the form, *Know Thyself and Thus Know the Gods*, this aphorism implies that through right self-knowledge, the seeker not only corrects character faults but also eventually discovers the divine or god-like pattern existing in his or her psyche. Here indeed is the Leonine path summarized. As a result, the effort to rightly know the self under Leo comprises an all-inclusive journey, starting with the imperative to rightly estimate the nature of the separative personality self and eventually embracing the privilege to perceive the infinite Divine Self in all forms.³⁰

In fact, it falls to the influence of Leo to facilitate this journey by first administering to the creation of an authentic individualized self. According to the esoteric astrological doctrine, Leo in the early stages of evolution makes it possible for the individual to emerge from the mass of humanity as an independent thinker and actor, in contrast to simply being controlled by the instinctual herd responses characteristic of crowd psychology.³¹ In fact, it is under the influence of Leo that the mind is first developed, and the mental body well coordinated.³² Thus, the first true glimmerings of unique individuality are fanned by the flames of Leo. Until a seeker can withstand the surrounding group pressures of undifferentiated mass humanity, he or she fails to think independently, and no further spiritual progress can be made. The influence of Leo makes possible the creation of an autonomous self, driving the seeker to grapple with his or her beliefs, viewpoints, and interests. Consequently, Leo-influenced seekers are frequently involved in discovering and defining themselves, often through artistic or literary pursuits which allow

them to explore viewpoints and methods of self-expression.

Ultimately, the Leo influence succeeds in assembling a sense of personal style, and the individual forges ahead on the path of life relatively sure of his or her particular perspective. In time, though, even this good and necessary stage on the path generates its own spiritual problems, as the relatively isolated nature of unique selfhood ultimately invites the crystallization of a clearly defined and self-centered interest. Once this trait falls into place, the individual begins to strategize for personal influence. Not long after follow the assumption of personal superiority, a burgeoning ambition, the feverish lust for importance, position, and power, and finally, the will to dominate others. As the esoteric astrological doctrine puts it, Leo imparts to those under its influence the “will-to-rule,” to dominate, and to control groups, whether small or large.³³ Once this level of selfhood is reached, the struggle is on for right self-management under Leo, for the seeker has just discovered his or her personal power and will be tested on how to use it.

Yet, as the Leo influence settles into the seeker influenced by its power, much constructive development occurs. Under the influence of Leo, the seeker ultimately arrives at an authentic sense of individuality and right self-awareness. As Alice Bailey states, the Leo is often intensely self-aware,³⁴ for good or for ill. Without this degree of self-acknowledgement, self-discipline is impossible, for an entity unaware of its doings can hardly be expected to improve. Thus, the stage of attained self-noticing under Leo is critical if any further progress on the path is to be made. Leo makes such progress possible by shining a brilliant light on the experience of the self. Along with this enhanced sense of self as a defined entity, there simultaneously arises in the individual the need for a basis on which to establish self-worth: a well-defined purpose or objective in life and the ability to direct the self to its accomplishment. The imagination and personal power of the Lion ultimately teach the seeker just how to do this: he or she must develop and follow a definite life plan. Leo thus confers the ability to sense a worthy attainment, create a

specific program to reach it, and to live by or conform to that design.³⁵

Clearly bound up with the development of the will, Leo is a sign connected with resolve, determination, and conviction. Nothing like its fluidic and sometimes indecisive neighbor the Crab, the Lion is a sign which calls for the striking of a definite pose. In fact, it's not uncommon for the Leo-influenced individual to demonstrate a markedly proud carriage, with chest thrown out and head held high. Leo is nothing if not a sign which inculcates a certain pride in and appreciation for the self, mirrored even in the language of the body.

Not surprisingly, the parts of the human anatomy associated with this sign evidence an equally decisive function. Leo rules the heart, the central fire of vitality in the human body, as well as the entire chest region, the upper back, the spine, and the spinal column. Core functions of the circulatory and nervous systems thus fall under the rulership of Leo, itself an extension of the Sun principle as the central fire of the solar system. Protecting the physical heart as the central fire of the human body are the chest and upper back, also ruled by Leo. Closely related, the spine and spinal column serve as central functions within the nervous system, almost as important to that context as the heart is to the circulatory system. All these structures in the body carry out the will to live and thus reflect the drive and determination characteristic of the fiery Lion.

The labor of Hercules associated with this sign is titled *The Slaying of the Nemean Lion*, a direct reference to the king of beasts for which the sign of Leo is named. Much more dangerous and dramatic than the relatively tame experience had by Hercules in the labor of Cancer when he was simply charged to capture a gentle doe and deliver her to a temple, the Leo labor threatened the hero's very life. Pitting Hercules against the raw power of a full-grown lion trapped and raging for its survival, the slaying of the Nemean lion called for Hercules to save a community from the ravages of a brutal beast given to consuming humans. Hercules managed to trap the creature in a cave by using a bonfire to block an entrance. Then, Hercules

had no other choice but to face the wild animal in direct combat. Grappling desperately with the savage lion, Hercules managed to strangle the beast to death with his own bare hands.³⁶

Though the story line of the Leo labor strikes the reader as a far more dramatic encounter than does that of previous labors, this labor still conveys a relatively simple message. According to Alice Bailey, the Nemean lion stands for and represents nothing more exotic than the coordinated and dominant personality of the relatively evolved yet still self-centered individual, a personality which when driven by instinct can become aggressive and devastating to the surrounding social environment. Indeed, Bailey states that: "...the Nemean lion symbolizes the powerful personality running wild and menacing the peace of the countryside."³⁷ It is just this disruptive aspect of the self which the aspirant must subdue and even bring to its demise. In other words, the Leo-influenced individual is, at some point on his or her path, tested in such a way that he or she must locate the ferocious leonine impulses within—the urges to overwhelm others, to take charge, and to gobble up the small personalities in his or her path—and deprive these voracious impulses of their vitality. Until he or she does so, the Leo-influenced individual risks becoming a tyrant, a bully roaring savagely in an attempt to consolidate power by intimidating and shaming. The noble lion is meant for better purposes than this, but the grip of the inner beast is strong. Thus, in the hand-to-claw combat Hercules enjoined with the trapped lion, the Leo labor dramatizes the difficulty involved in bringing to a conclusion the reign of the tyrannical ego caged in the chest of the Leo-influenced individual, and the necessity of replacing it with the enlightened rule of the soul-infused disciple.

In the early stages of evolution under the Leo influence, however, this inner battle has been neither waged nor won. Leo-influenced individuals at this level are said to be evolving on the symbolic mutable cross, on which the world of form, appearance, and personality claims all the attention. Pursuing the Wheel of Life in the direction of average Humanity and therefore falling under the Sun as exoteric ruler

of Leo, the early-stage Leo has his or her eyes on self and the ways in which the self may be made, just like the Sun at the center of the solar system, more noticeable, popular, and influential. Deeply entranced with the glamor of special status, the Leo-influenced individual on the early stages of the path falls prey to the isolated attitude of the self-enamored individual. Hence the Leo influence on the earlier stages of evolution begets egocentrism and the "ambitious display of selfish power of the man who desires place and position."³⁸ Mirroring the material focus of the physical Sun as exoteric ruler of this sign, the Leo-influenced individual on the early steps of the evolutionary path often is overtaken with desire for material possessions as displays of wealth meant to impress and intimidate others.³⁹ Physical adornment, expensive possessions, association with celebrities, and shows of opulence often serve as the means used by the less-evolved Leo type to make its mark in the world.

At the same time, the Leo-influenced individual on the early stages of the evolutionary path glories in the knowledge of its own center of being, king of its own I AM and pleased to be distinguished from others.⁴⁰ The enterprise of the Leo-influenced individual at this stage is the assertion of his or her own individuality, fighting for personal dominance in whatever way seems necessary.⁴¹ In so doing, it taps into and expresses the will of the personality,⁴² the motivating drive of the separated self which exists without deference to other beings and without reference to the ultimate Being. As he or she thrashes about in his or her environment, crushing others under the weight of his or her self-appointed authority, he or she inevitably receives feedback from the disgruntled environment and thereby slowly comes to understand the consequences of selfish attitudes.⁴³

In time, the Leo-influenced individual observes how selfishness diverges from the higher laws of the universe and of the soul, and ultimately perceives the futility of unbridled self-interest.⁴⁴ Ultimately, the Leo influence leads the individual to the realization that the isolated personality with its selfish desires and abrasive demands must be conquered and,

much like the Nemean Lion vanquished by Hercules, finally driven out of the place from which it had ruled.⁴⁵ At this point, the individual departs from evolution on the symbolic mutable cross and takes up evolution on the symbolic fixed cross, the cross of self-discipline.

The Leo-influenced individual evolving on the symbolic fixed cross stands out from the prior Leo type because he or she has arrived at the realization that self-control is necessary if divine powers are to be used for the highest good. As Alice Bailey stated, the Leo type “sorely needs” self-discipline, but can only benefit from this corrective if it is self-administered, for the proud Leo type will not stand for any external attempts to shape its nature.⁴⁶ Thus, it is only by virtue of self-imposed programs of spiritual betterment that the Leo-influenced individual can reverse instinctual tendency and tread the Wheel of Life in the direction opposite to that of mass Humanity. In this way, the sign of Leo inculcates and cultivates the sense of individual responsibility in its natives.⁴⁷

Following a life program of aspiration and right management of the personality, the Leo-influenced individual significantly weakens the grip of the separative personality and renders the lower self sensitive to the will of the soul instead.⁴⁸ At the same time, the individual lifts his or her emphasis from the solar plexus as the driving power center of the selfish personality to the heart center as the organ of soul sensitivity. In this stage, the Leo-influenced individual comes under the rulership of the heart of the Sun as the esoteric ruler of Leo,⁴⁹ thus signifying a widening connection with all that exists throughout the cosmos.

Thus responsive to the greater spiritual environment, the Leo-influenced individual transcends the concerns of self and immediate blood relations to grasp the nature of life in the much greater collective. It is for this reason that the heart-centered Leo-influenced subject functions well as the magnetic center of groups large and small, a pioneering figure with all the charisma of an electric, dynamic leader.⁵⁰ In fact, it is just for this reason that souls incar-

nate under the influence of this sign, with the Sun, Moon, planets, rising sign, or even mid-heaven in Leo, for Leo as a sign imparts the ability to rule.⁵¹ It is in this sign that the spiritualized Leo learns first to rule self rightly and then to lead groups of varying size.⁵² In this way, the Leo-influenced individual evolving on the symbolic fixed cross is of use to the Divine Plan, now purged of excessive personality distortions and able to motivate and guide large numbers of persons toward right values.

Finally, the Leo-influenced individual mounts the symbolic cardinal cross and comes under the rulership of the central spiritual sun as hierarchical ruler of Leo.⁵³ Now responsive only to the will of the whole, the advanced Leo individual is distinguished by his or her freedom from any lower form of control.⁵⁴ Facing all challenges without complaint and living in the courage born of pure spiritual being,⁵⁵ the Leo-influenced initiate of the Third Degree and beyond serves as an outpost of the Hierarchical vibration. He or she has trod the path from the first stirrings of individual identity on the symbolic mutable cross, to intimations of the divine soul on the symbolic fixed cross, to the clear light of the monad on the symbolic cardinal cross. Thus, he or she has felt the full force of the blast furnace of the fires of Leo, has as a consequence left behind the needs for attention and superiority characteristic of the Leo-influenced individual on the earlier stages of the path, has become an exemplar or role model for others, and has dedicated the radiant power of the Sun king to the task of expressing right leadership with the Plan.

Virgo

August 22 – September 21

In the temperate zones of the northern hemisphere, Virgo time is perhaps one of the sweetest of seasons. Though the ferocious heat of full summer still makes itself known in the bright midday, daylight shortens and overnight temperatures begin to fall. Mornings bring a hint of cooling; the scents of the land shift from the heady floral perfume of summer to the earthy aroma of hay and grains. From the tall grasses dried by summer’s blaze and distilled to a rich palette of colors, the crickets

begin their hypnotic autumn song. Warm afternoons laze on in what seems an endless bliss, while orange and yellow butterflies converge on late-blooming flowers and crops ripen in the sun. Harvest time looms ahead, and the busy work of late summer surges forward in anticipation of the moment when the fruits of the earth will be plucked from their growing sites, gathered in safe containers, and made ready for use throughout the coming winter months.

Lady of the Harvest, Virgo is often pictured as a relaxed young woman in a modest robe-length dress, surrounded by the foods, herbs, and flowers provided by nature and cultivated by Humanity as bodily sustenance for the health and survival of the community. As this popular image makes evident, Virgo presides over the gathering of the gifts of nature at the conclusion of the growing season, and as such, she is a goddess of agriculture and of the horticultural arts. It is the work of Virgo to see that her people are provided for and instructed in the uses of nature's products for their safety, happiness, and well-being. It is no stretch to say that Virgo thus claims position as the first Earth Mother, the archetype of all other female figures in myth and religion who tend to the needs of their worshippers in both practical and spiritual ways. Good examples would be the Greek Demeter and Roman Ceres, goddesses who ministered to their human flocks through education in crop-raising and through the establishment of sacred mystery schools which inspired the soul to see great truths as embodied in nature.

Reflecting the theme of bounty derived from the soil, Virgo in traditional astrology is associated with the element of earth. Through its connection to the fields, furrowed pastures, and gardens of the world, Virgo connotes the nutrients which rise up from the rich soil

through plant life to supply humans and animals with all that they require to remain healthy and active. As a result, the sign of Virgo symbolizes common-sense natural health practices and methods of healing drawn from nature. In modern times, Virgo also stands, by extension, for the many man-made medical modalities of the present technologically oriented society.

As a sign which bridges from summer to fall, Virgo represents a transition. Neither hot summer nor cool fall, Virgo straddles the indeterminate zone between these two. One of the four mutable signs in traditional astrology, Virgo is indicative of the power to make adjustments, to change, to adapt, and to alter self

and circumstance if the need arises. As a result, Virgo-influenced seekers are often ready and willing to adapt to the environment or to the needs of others. Though this humble willingness to give ground to another is for the most part a wise practice and an admirable trait, the changeability of the mutable signs also leads Virgo-influenced individuals to engage in an endless sequence of adaptations and changes, ever attempting to accommodate others who may be more demanding or rigid than they are themselves. The Virgo-influenced individual can in this way lose his or her way, arriving at an unchosen destination in life by virtue of a million micro-adjustments meant to appease more domineering individuals.

All the same, Virgo is a deeply thoughtful and analytical participant in the drama of life. Just as the Harvest Virgin devotes herself to the loving, unhurried contemplation of each contribution to the autumn cornucopia as she gazes contentedly at the vegetables, fruits, grains, herbs, and flowers gathered at her feet, the Virgo-influenced individual evidences the power to study, sort into categories and types, and to appreciate the subtle differences in any

This gestational period symbolized by Virgo refers both to the creation of the physical body to be used by the soul and the slow process of spiritual realization which takes place within the seeker as he or she begins to understand that there lies hidden within the outer covering of the physical body an indwelling spiritual essence which is the true self.

collection of items. Virgos are often the consummate organizers, naturally attuned to the best method for sequencing and assembling vast collections of items into meaningful groups. Thus, Virgo is often the master of details, for he or she is willing to give attention to the many discrete facts which go to make up any given body of knowledge or situation. It is this trait which causes the Virgo-influenced individual to gravitate to any role in which the minutiae of life must be correctly managed, such as in daily domestic duties, secretarial tasks, information technology, and the many other activities and roles which require a sharp mind and attention to details.

According to the esoteric astrological doctrine of Alice Bailey and the Tibetan, Virgo is all these characteristics and more. As an earth sign, Virgo in the esoteric doctrine represents the negative material pole to the positive spirit. While cosmic spirit operates as dynamic, outgoing, extraverted energy, Virgo as representative of matter operates as magnetic, indrawing, introverted energy.⁵⁶ Thus, if spirit is considered active, then matter as symbolized by Virgo is receptive. Of equal value to spirit, matter is nothing but spirit at its slowest rate of vibration, and thus equally holy, a realization which comes to those evolving under Virgo influence.⁵⁷

As the material pole to the abstract spirit, Virgo symbolizes the systemic force which provides the tangible sheaths of existence for the indwelling spirit. As Alice Bailey states, Virgo is literally “the Virgin Mother, providing that which is needed for the mental, emotional, and physical expression of the hidden but ever-present divinity.”⁵⁸ Just as does the biological mother for the unborn child, Virgo gives of her substance that the spirit may have a body or form in which to experience the material planes. She is the mother of form and therefore of earthly existence, incarnated in and symbolized by all mother-goddesses throughout world myth and religion.⁵⁹ Specific examples of Virgo as the Great Mother image include Isis of ancient Egyptian religion, as well as Eve and Mary of Christianity.⁶⁰ Each of these Mother Goddesses suckles her own; yet in

so doing, begets the entirety of human evolution on planet Earth. This is the power of Virgo, celestial woman dedicated to the birthing of souls into the material plane.

Along with the act of mothering comes the process of pregnancy and gestation, the period during which the physical form of the infant is slowly built in the dark, quiet, and secret places of the mother’s body-temple as it draws sustenance from her very blood and tissue. Thus there comes into being another autonomous being, a divine soul incarnated in matter. In this symbolism of pregnancy and gestation, Alice Bailey says, there lies the entire goal of the evolutionary process, which is to shield, nurture, and finally reveal the hidden spiritual reality.⁶¹ It is Virgo which symbolizes this gestational process, or that which takes place inside the cave of matter as symbolized by the pregnant belly of the biological and mythological mother figures.⁶²

This gestational period symbolized by Virgo refers both to the creation of the physical body to be used by the soul and the slow process of spiritual realization which takes place within the seeker as he or she begins to understand that there lies hidden within the outer covering of the physical body an indwelling spiritual essence which is the true self. According to Bailey, the influence of Virgo indicates that this realization is in progress in the spiritual aspirant who has Virgo strongly marked in his or her astrological chart. Virgo is thus esoterically said to symbolize the period of the hidden germ of spiritual life.⁶³ Passage through this period constitutes an experience familiar to all spiritual seekers. It takes place when the individual fleetingly senses that he or she as a soul is much greater than simply the personal outer self, but has not yet contacted the higher spiritual vibration in a regular and sustained fashion. In this way, the Virgo spiritual phase resembles the physical gestational phase, which produces by slow and hidden methods an eventual powerful crisis ending in the drama of childbirth.⁶⁴ In the spiritual sense, the influence of Virgo produces an equally dramatic birth—the registration by the personality vehicle that it is a manifestation of the soul.

Such a revelation proceeds by slow developments. Just as progress in nature takes place inch by inch, so it does in the earth-sign of Virgo, for gradual steps characterize the work of Virgo. Her processes mature slowly, doing so in the depths, in the darkness of interior Earth, in the warmth of the body's interior, and in the interior psyche wherein secrets are guarded.⁶⁵ In this way, the Celestial Virgin conducts her alchemical transformations and simultaneously teaches her devotees one step at a time. Yet the rewards for patient investment in the process for the followers of Virgo's ways are great. Through Virgo's gentle unseen guidance, seemingly miraculous changes are brought to light, and the previously hidden, secret inner self or soul is made known. In fact, it is the work of Virgo influence to reveal not only the existence of the soul, but also to reveal the very purpose for which the soul has manifested any given incarnation.⁶⁶ As might be expected with earth-element Virgo, such a realization emerges only gradually, but when it does, it is as compelling as the appearance of a newborn child. Thus, the gifts of Virgo are great indeed for the spiritual seeker who is willing to patiently endure her works.

Reflecting the theme of gradual inner transformations, Virgo rules the digestive processes and anatomy within the human body. Just as the Autumn Lady carefully examines the individual fruits and vegetables making up the harvest, the Virgo function in the body recognizes and breaks down complex foodstuffs into their component parts, so that the resulting vitamins and minerals may be distributed throughout the body. Taking place over many hours, this process goes on unseen in the interior of the body, reflective of the hidden work of Virgo. The lower digestive tract thus reflects Virgo most directly, accomplishing the work of disassembling foodstuffs and segregating specific nutrients for use at intended sites in the body. Evidencing great chemical and cellular intelligence, the digestive function mirrors in body process the able mind of Virgo, which immediately perceives the nature of information and swiftly relegates it to the proper category. Yet another strikingly intelli-

gent process of the human body is also ruled by Virgo—the nervous system, which is designed to register individual stimuli and issue the appropriate response. In this case, the analytical, sorting function of Virgo appears yet again, accurately receiving and relaying data. The Virgo archetype thus is reflected in both the digestive and nervous systems of the body.

Perhaps most directly connected with the themes of the Divine Feminine and therefore of women's mysteries in general, the labor of Hercules associated with Virgo by the Alice Bailey tradition is titled *Seizing the Girdle of Hippolyte*. In this labor, the lusty Hercules is dispatched to win the Girdle of Venus, a decorative belt worn by the queen reigning over a race of women warriors. Primed for hand-to-hand combat although none is forthcoming, Hercules goes overboard on his assignment, engages in an unnecessary tussling match with the queen, and ends up accidentally killing her as she struggles to proffer the prized belt in a peaceable voluntary gesture. As is apparent, the rough-and-tumble masculine approach taken by Hercules in this labor proves entirely inappropriate. Gentle ways would have sufficed, which is exactly what Hercules sadly concludes. As the labor ends with Hercules remorsefully carrying the sacred waist-band to the holy city, he spies yet another goddess figure in duress and, somewhat exonerating himself, gallantly rescues her from peril.⁶⁷

This labor drives home the essential points about the work of the spiritual disciple under the influence of Virgo. As this labor demonstrates, the Virgo goddess bestows her gifts most readily when treated with deference and respect, allowed to carry out her work on her own good time, and waited on patiently. Attempting to take her by force simply spoils the work and makes the ruffian who does so look like a fool and a rube. Thus, the lesson in Virgo concerns two key spiritual characteristics—patience and humility. Crude, pushy behavior has no place here, for one is in the presence of a Lady. Standing back at a respectful distance, one may request her help and she will gladly give it, if only she is allowed the time to deliver her blessings in the way she knows best. Hers are the ways of the quiet, deep, slow-

moving catharses of the Earth Mother, who brings forth her gifts only after the gradual processes of interior gestation have done their work. Similarly, the disciple blunders when he or she attempts in a rush to force his or her way along the spiritual path. Instead, the disciple must submit to the ways of Virgo, each day investing time in spiritual practice and study, content to allow his or her spiritual momentum to mount slowly and naturally until a divine revelation appears in the time-honored way.

Patience does not come easily to all who are influenced by the Virgo archetype, however. In the early stages of evolutionary development, those who are influenced by Virgo often respond to the thoughtful influence of the celestial Virgin with irritation at the imperfections of life. Too often dissatisfied with and critical of others as well as themselves, the early-stage seeker under Virgo influence accidentally misuses the mental acuity of this sign to mercilessly zero in on the seeming faults of friends, family, and of society as a whole. Frequently given to disdain, those newly evolving under the Virgo influence even repel individuals and groups who would love them in spite of their own imperfections. In this condition, the early-stage Virgo-influenced individual follows the evolutionary direction of mass humanity, giving in to irritation, complaint, self-proclaimed misery, and not a little hypochondria. Little constructive imagination comes to his or her aid, however, and such individuals often assume that the solution to their problems is to simply become a cog in a machine and then devote themselves to routine labor. Such Virgo-influenced individuals come under the dominion of the exoteric ruler, worrisome and sometimes petty Mercury. Virgo-influenced individuals in this segment of the evolutionary path walk the path of the symbolic mutable cross and have yet to realize that their own choices, words, and inner beliefs exert considerable influence on the conditions of their lives. Thinking that all cause lies outside of themselves, they have not taken responsibility for the nature of their consciousness. Instead, their work is to slowly awaken the thinking mind under the influence of mental Mercury

and eventually arrive at the realization that attitude counts for much.

Farther along the evolutionary path are the Virgo-influenced individuals who have settled on the necessity of treading a spiritual path and who have therefore set themselves to evolve on the symbolic fixed cross. Ranging in initiatory status from the First to Second Initiations and right up to the gate of the Third Initiation, these Virgo-influenced individuals have long ago recognized the existence of the immortal soul and have embraced the regimen of subordinating the temporary form or personality to the will and wishes of that point of light within.⁶⁸ Taking responsibility for their thoughts, words, and deeds, the Virgo-influenced individuals of this segment of the evolutionary path eschew the disgruntlement of the earlier experience in Virgo and strive instead to cultivate an even temperament that meets all challenges from a level state of mind. Instead, they use their trained and prepared minds as instruments of service in the work of manifesting the Divine Plan. Drawn to the paths of scholarship, healing, information technology, and public service, seekers at this stage of the Virgo influence pursue their evolutionary momentum against the wave of general human progress on the Wheel of Life, distinguishing themselves from average humanity through their quiet humility, unassuming manners, precision, and resourceful methods. Conditioned and motivated not by detail-oriented, exoteric ruler Mercury, but rather by the Moon as esoteric ruler of Virgo, seekers at this stage respond to and are conditioned by the Moon and the planets veiled by the Moon—Vulcan, Uranus, and Neptune. From the Moon, Virgo-influenced individuals at this level garner their immediate connection with the gestational themes associated with this sign—the slow maternal processes which eventually bring to light the divine child or pure soul within the personality. From Vulcan, Uranus and Neptune, Virgo-influenced individuals evolving at this level receive and apply the Will energies flowing through Vulcan and the universal perspective flowing through Uranus and Neptune to overcome the small perspective of the separate per

sonality, as symbolized by exoteric ruler Mercury in its lesser manifestations. At this more advanced stage, the Virgo-influenced individual is driven not by personality aims but by the intention to become an efficient disciple in the work of Planetary Hierarchy, for the drive to do so emanates from this sign.⁶⁹

Virgo-influenced individuals preparing to take the Third Initiation and beyond come under the rulership of the hierarchical ruler, which both describes and conditions their efforts. According to Alice Bailey and the Tibetan Master, it is Jupiter which constitutes the final rulership level of Virgo. As a distributor of the Love-Wisdom Ray, Jupiter cultivates in this group of seekers a synthetic viewpoint that overarches the previous outlook generated by Mercury at the exoteric level and even by Vulcan at the esoteric level. In fact, Jupiter as a distributor of the Love-Wisdom Ray brings out the best in Virgo, also a distributor of the Love-Wisdom Ray. When conditioned by its own ray, Virgo becomes an agent of commonality, healing, and unity. Individuals who are Virgo-influenced and who have taken the Third Initiation or greater, fall under the hierarchical rulership and receive guidance from great Jupiter in their efforts. Concerned with outward radiation and distribution of healing goodwill force, they have long ago established a direction on the Wheel of Life which runs counter to the instinctual movement of Humanity, preoccupied as it is with personal advantage and competition. Striking out on their own toward service to planet Earth and beyond, Virgo-influenced individuals of this spiritual status evolve on the symbolic cardinal cross, and hence function as impellers of evolution. The struggles and insecurities of personality life now long behind them, they are instead concerned with contacting the Will Aspect as it streams from stellar sources into and through the Monad, to enliven all that they do, while channeling it through the blending power of the Love-Wisdom Ray. These Virgo-influenced individuals of the highest evolutionary status bring cosmic and planetary force directly into manifestation through the earth quality of Virgo, grounding and embodying otherwise abstract powers in tangible form.

Conclusion

As has been demonstrated, the zodiacal signs of Cancer, Leo, and Virgo each represent a distinctive set of experiences, abilities, and challenges.

In Cancer, the evolving soul encounters the drawing power of mother matter, learns the process of form-building, explores its connections with the environment through family and community relations, grapples with the strength of the watery or astral response mechanism, and ultimately overcomes personal sensitivity to register and express loving divine intuition. In Leo, the evolving soul emerges as an individualized and defined personality, discovers the ability to think independently, develops attractive magnetism and hence personal power, seeks to impress via possessions and influence, is subsequently tempted to dominate others, and finally steps beyond the cult of personality to embrace and serve the cosmic will. In Virgo, the eternal pilgrim comes under the influence of the analytical mind, contacts the notion of perfection, realizes the often glaring difference between the ideal and the manifested, is as a result tempted to walk the path of disgruntlement and dissatisfaction, at length realizes that patience and service deliver more spiritual value than do carping and complaint, and ultimately rises to devote the powers of mental acuity and practicality to the solving of Humanity's problems.

In each of these three signs, spiritual progress builds on these experiences, assets, and challenges while leading up the ladder of the triple rulership system, all the while ushering the seeker around the Wheel of Life and through the symbolic crosses of evolution. With the stages of spiritual refinement thus made plain for each of these signs, the spiritual seeker with the Sun, Moon, Ascendant, or planetary groupings in Cancer, Leo, and Virgo thus stands better oriented to understand and embody the grander purposes behind each of these astrological influences.

¹ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New
² Ibid., 102, 312.

3 Alice A. Bailey, *The Labors of Hercules* (New
York: Lucis Publishing, 1974), 88.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 336.
7 Ibid., 341.
8 Ibid., 312.
9 Ibid., 341.
10 Bailey, *Labors of Hercules*, 86.
11 Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma* (Washington,
D.C.: Supreme Council, Thirty Third Degree,
Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction, 1872),
293.
12 Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 342.
13 Bailey, *The Labors of Hercules*, 81.
14 Ibid., 83.
15 Ibid., 77 -79.
16 Ibid., 77.
17 Ibid., 83.
18 Ibid., 86, 87.
19 Ibid.
20 Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 340.
21 Ibid., 287.
22 Ibid., 319.
23 Ibid., 340.
24 Bailey, *The Labors of Hercules*, 88.
25 Ibid., 83.
26 Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 322.
27 Ibid., 293.
28 Ibid., 287.
29 Ibid., 289.
30 Ibid., 288.
31 Ibid., 292, 293.
32 Ibid., 289.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 285.

35 Ibid. 288.
36 Bailey, *The Labors of Hercules*, 103.
37 Ibid., 108.
38 Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 292, 293.
39 Ibid., 307.
40 Ibid., 311.
41 Bailey, *The Labors of Hercules*, 102, 104.
42 Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 294, 295.
43 Ibid., 145.
44 Ibid.
45 Bailey, *The Labors of Hercules*, 104.
46 Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 309.
47 Ibid., 102.
48 Ibid., 294, 295.
49 Ibid., 296.
50 Ibid., 292, 293, 309.
51 Ibid., 289.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., 296.
54 Ibid., 307, 310.
55 Ibid., 294.
56 Ibid., 255.
57 Bailey, *The Labors of Hercules*, 120.
58 Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 254.
59 Ibid., 253.
60 Ibid., 252, 253.
61 Ibid., 251, 252.
62 Ibid., 262.
63 Ibid., 258.
64 Bailey, *The Labors of Hercules*, 115.
65 Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 259.
66 Ibid.
67 Bailey, *The Labors of Hercules*, 112-114.
68 Ibid., 121.
69 Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 259.

Mary Magdalene: Watchtower of the Flock

Irina Kuzminsky

*Blessed Mary, you whom I shall complete with
all the mysteries on high, speak openly,
for you are one whose heart is set on heaven's kingdom
more than all your brothers.*

Pistis Sophia I, 17

*Peter stepped forward and said to Jesus,
'My master, we cannot endure this woman who gets in our way
and does not let any of us speak, though she talks all the time.'*

Pistis Sophia I, 36¹

A pearl thrown into the mud does not lose its value.

Gospel of Philip 48²

Abstract

Apostle to the apostles or whore? The “Woman who knew the All” or one who “perfumed her flesh in forbidden acts”?

In a world looking for female voices from the past, where are the female voices in the Christian story? And why has the voice of Mary Magdalene been silenced? Slandered yet never quite suppressed, what does Mary Magdalene's resurgence into consciousness signal for us today? As a female disciple and a leader central to the Jesus movement, her rehabilitation at the very least opens up new pathways for women beyond unattainable ideal (the Virgin Mary) and carrier of sexual guilt (all other women). One of the questions to be addressed in the course of this article is what does “the Magdalene” mean? Did she really come from a town called Magdala as the longstanding official version has it? Or, the tantalizing alternative, was it a title given to her by Jesus to cement her status in the early Christian movement? Much of the traditional interpretation of Mary Magdalene stems from readings of the four gospels and the 33rd Homily of Gregory the Great. Whilst important to many, these are not the only texts that discuss her role. Many others have become more widely available in

recent years. By looking at these, we gain a fuller picture of the importance of Mary Magdalene and of her role in the Christian tradition. This article sets out to explore this role and her changing face through historical texts and poetry, and open a space for reflection and encounter with the one whom Jesus named the “Watchtower of the Flock.”

Introduction: Who was Mary Magdalene and why does it matter?

Who was Mary Magdalene? Everything about her seems controversial. The closest companion of Jesus, a foremost disciple

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and leader of the community, or the “woman who perfumed her flesh in forbidden acts” (from Pope Gregory’s 33rd Homily written in 591 AD),³ to put it bluntly, a whore? The “woman who knew the All” (from *Dialogue of the Saviour*), or a reformed prostitute? Apostle to the apostles (*apostola apostolorum*), or a woman who talked too much and never let the men get a word in (this from *Pistis Sophia*)?⁴ And we can even add wife or lover to this list and founder of a dynasty (*Holy Blood Holy Grail*, source of much of Dan Brown’s spectacularly successful *The Da Vinci Code*).⁵ In fact, there are not many figures in history who have been more misused and misinterpreted than she was. Yet she refuses to go away. So many strands come together in her: women’s spiritual authority and right to teach and be equal members of their communities; the Semitic Wisdom tradition and the Hellenistic⁶ one at the basis of Western Christianity; East versus West; church hierarchy, apostolic succession and mediation versus individual enlightenment and direct vision. We would do well to remember that the roots of Christianity are Hebrew, hence Oriental, although that is something which has tended to be marginalized by the churches, as have the Christian Wisdom teachings in all their paradox, poetic imagery and use of symbols and metaphor. But Mary Magdalene, by virtue of her own marginalization and her prominence in the Wisdom texts, could play a role as the link between the Semitic and Hellenistic strands of Christianity—the church of Peter and Paul on the one hand, and the church of James, Thomas and Philip on the other. She could become the open gate between West and East.

But this should not become a question of either/or. There is room for one tradition to complement the other. Western civilization was built on the Hellenistic strand of Christianity and the good that has come of that should not be jettisoned. But now there is a crisis—in our institutions, in our religions, in our faith. It is time for Jesus’ full message and energy to come through—the message of the Wisdom Jesus who was grounded in the Eastern Oriental traditions of Wisdom teaching. And these

Wisdom texts are precisely the ones in which Mary Magdalene figures prominently.

The Penitent Sinner

She whom Luke calls the sinful woman, whom John calls Mary, we believe to be the Mary from whom seven devils were ejected according to Mark. And what did these seven devils signify, if not all the vices? ... It is clear, brothers, that the woman previously used the unguents to perfume her flesh in forbidden acts. What she therefore displayed more scandalously, she was now offering to God in a more praiseworthy manner... She had displayed her hair to set off her face, but now her hair dries her tears...⁷

Pope Gregory the Great’s Thirty-Third Homily, which he delivered in 591 AD, did much to consolidate Mary Magdalene’s image as a penitent prostitute. The Homily continues in a similar vein to the above extract, setting the stage for, amongst other things, the great Baroque paintings of the penitent and lasciviously semi-clothed Mary Magdalene. Gregory’s Homilies were very popular, even becoming incorporated into the liturgies for Holy Week and Easter, thus further fixing Mary Magdalene’s reputation as the repentant sinner in the public imagination.

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, however, this Homily, which proclaimed Mary Magdalene a whore, was not officially accepted. Mary Magdalene was revered as one of the myrrh-bearing women (*myrrhophores*) and as “*ravnoapostolnaya*,” which translates as “equal to the apostles,” because she was first to proclaim the Resurrection, and first messenger sent to the apostles themselves and therefore to the world. The following Orthodox hymn to her offers a contrast to Pope Gregory’s Homily:

Kontakion I

When God, who is transcendent in essence,
Came with flesh into the world, O
Myrrhbearer,

He received you as a true disciple, for you
turned all your love toward Him;

Henceforth you would yourself work many healings.

Now that you have passed into heaven, never cease to intercede for the world!⁸

Another point of difference between Eastern and Western churches is that the Eastern tradition states that Mary Magdalene went to Ephesus with John the Evangelist and worked together with him there, dying and being buried in Ephesus. This then results in two Mary's living — and dying — in Ephesus. The House where Mary the mother of Jesus is said to have lived out her days is now a hilltop shrine just outside Ephesus with a sacred healing spring attached to it and a steady flow of pilgrims drawn by a strong sacred presence at the House. Mary Magdalene is supposedly buried near the Cave of the Seven Sleepers, also just outside of Ephesus, although the place is currently quite overgrown and has more of the feel of a tourist destination. Whether there was confusion between the two Marys, or whether both lived in Ephesus or only one, is now impossible to tell. In either case, the strong tradition of Mary Magdalene going to Provence in France does not exist in the Eastern Church. In fact, nobody really knows where she ended up so all is speculation. Was it Ephesus, or perhaps Egypt where she figures prominently in non-canonical texts, or Provence after all, in a cave (giving rise to the fight to claim possession of her very lucrative relics)? However, and quite appropriately, a pilgrimage to the supposed cave of Mary Magdalene at Sainte-Baume inspired Petrarch (1304-1374), to a new vision of woman and of Platonic love in the Sonnets to Laura (*Il Canzoniere*). Petrarch went back to Sainte-Baume several times between the 1330s and 1353, spreading its fame and writing of Mary Magdalene as “*Dulcis amica dei*” – the “sweet friend of God,” an inscription which he is said to have left in her grotto.⁹ The Magdalene becomes Petrarch's mediatrix, a role in which she was prominent during the Middle Ages in Europe.

Orthodoxy has its own stories about her. One that is not widely known in the West is that she went to Rome and confronted Tiberius, then Caesar, at a banquet, to tell him about the Resurrection. Tiberius scoffed at her, saying it was

no more possible for the egg she was holding to turn red than for a man to rise from the dead, upon which the egg of course promptly turned red. Hence the icons of Mary Magdalene holding a red egg, and the tradition of painting — and cracking — eggs at Easter, the red color symbolizing the blood of Christ, and the cracking of the egg symbolizing the splitting open of the Tomb at the Resurrection.

However, for many Western Christians it was Pope Gregory's Homily XXXIII that held sway, and the image of Mary Magdalene as a reformed prostitute was the predominant one. Even so she became one of the best-loved saints of the Middle Ages, not only as the penitent but also as the one who illuminates and who, after her conversion of course, became both the intercessor and the beloved disciple of Christ. Intimacy and closeness between Mary Magdalene and Jesus was assumed and celebrated in texts such as St Anselm's (1033-1109) long prayer to her,¹⁰ which speaks of her ecstatic love for Christ whom she comes seeking like the Bride in the *Song of Songs*, and *The Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine, who writes that Christ “embraced her in all his life.”¹¹ Such expressions of the relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene are not that far from the Gnostic writings with the difference that in the latter she is not a repentant prostitute.

In 1517, the French theologian Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (1455-1536) wrote a tract *De Maria Magdalena et triduo Christi disceptatio* followed by *De tribus et unica Magdalena disceptatio secunda* in 1519, which held that Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany and Luke's sinner were different people, not a composite figure, which was also the position of the Eastern church.¹² Lefèvre based his work on the authority of the Gospels and the writings of early Christian theologians such as Origen, John Chrysostom, Jerome and Ambrose, essentially rejecting Pope Gregory's Homily and asserting the Gospels' authority ahead of it. That same year Luther published his grievances against the Roman church. Lefèvre's work sparked enormous controversy and persecution, culminating in a charge of heresy and excommunication in 1521, forcing

him to go into exile. The Catholic Church was not prepared to admit that it had been wrong on such a crucial figure as Mary Magdalene at such a delicate time when it was being challenged by the Protestants, so the second half of the sixteenth century saw renewed emphasis on Mary Magdalene in the image of a voluptuously sensual yet repentant and weeping sinner, hair loose and clothes in seductive disarray, as many great paintings of the Baroque attest.

The Magdalens

Magdalen penitent

Upon her knees

Red hair cascading to reveal a curve of breasts

Should it not rather be the painters

Penitent

For using her for their great sanctioned pleasure?

Yet even in such guise

Her image burned with brightness

And she lived on in furtive fantasies of pleasure

Thus unforgotten though maligned

She waited patiently

Until her time would come.¹³

The question remains though, why was there such a concerted effort made to silence Mary Magdalene and blacken her reputation? Clearly preeminent in her own time, she was later marginalized and suppressed, going from a figure who challenged the status quo to one who confirmed it. She was not completely suppressed of course, as the power of her image continued to shine through, as it does even now, challenging us to uncover the full scope of her archetypal dimension. Even in her invented role she became one of the best-loved saints of the Middle Ages and beyond. But the role she was allotted for so long fed all too well into the whole impossible virgin mother/whore dichotomy that does not leave real flesh and blood women with too many options. There is an unattainable ideal on the one hand (Mary the Virgin),¹⁴ and the “sinner you are responsible for all the ills of the world” — Eve

or Pandora — on the other, used to justify the submission of women and the silencing of their voices throughout long periods of Western history.

It actually took from 591, the date of Gregory the Great's homily, until 1969 for the Catholic Church to make the admission they had got it wrong about Mary Magdalene. In 1969, the text for her feast day, July 22, was altered under Pope Paul VI from Luke 7 (the sinner anointing Jesus) to John 20 (the poignantly beautiful meeting between Mary and the resurrected Christ in the garden). However, she was also at the time demoted to a saint from “apostle to the apostles,” so it was only a partial vindication. Also, this 1969 admission did not seem to have much impact on the popular perception of Mary Magdalene if Andrew Lloyd Webber's 1970 musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* or Martin Scorsese's 1988 film *The Last Temptation of Christ* are anything to go by. But times are changing. In 1978, the epithets describing her as *magna peccatrix* (great sinner) and *Maria poenitas* (penitent Mary) were finally removed from the Breviary. And on June 16, 2017, Pope Francis reinstated Mary Magdalene to her full apostolic status as “apostle to the apostles,” also raising her feast day to the rank of a liturgical feast.

Is it possible that the current resurgence of Mary Magdalene into consciousness, and the other hidden tradition of Christian origins that she represents are finally having an impact and may also be offering Christianity a way forward? There certainly has been a huge resurgence of Mary Magdalene into mass consciousness with popular books and movies such as the *Da Vinci Code* and *Mary Magdalene* (the recent film directed by Garth Davis), playing a role in this. In addition, many formerly obscure texts, such as the Gospels of Mary, Philip and Thomas, have become available in new and more accessible translations, while scholars such as Cynthia Bourgeault, Marvin Meyer, Margaret Starbird, Elaine Pagels and Karen L. King have also played a big part through their contributions to biblical scholarship. Some of the information being made more widely available concerns things long known to scholars though not the general

public, while some of the new stories attached to Mary Magdalene are no less suspect in their own way than some of the old ones. She is everything from a priestess of Isis, initiator into sacred hidden mysteries, wife of Jesus and founder of a bloodline, and much more besides. Yet all such interpretations, recent and not so recent, remain shallow. Their result is to limit her true spiritual stature and contain her as a woman in what ultimately becomes a limiting and limited role.

So—what if Mary Magdalene was indeed the favorite disciple of Jesus, an important leader in the apostolic community engaging in apostolic work, and Jesus' close, if not closest companion? As Marvin Meyer states in the opening sentence to his Introduction to the *Gospels of Mary* —“Of all the disciples of Jesus, none seems to have been as independent, strong, and close to Jesus as Mary Magdalene.”¹⁵ And what if Jesus did name her “the Magdalene” because she was to be in a sense his successor and the Watchtower of the Flock? This question is significant not just in historical terms but also in terms of current roles and opportunities for women in our own religious and spiritual communities. And because of the kind of Christianity Mary Magdalene represents it also has broader significance for our times in the context of the transition of Christianity from an institutionalized faith to a more individualized one, mirroring the similar transition of our society.

“Of Magdala” or “the Magdalene”

The whole question of Magdala and why Mary is called “the Magdalene” remains a vexing one. For most, the answer is simple — she came from the town of Magdala, hence Magdalene. End of story. Except it isn't.

Slandered yet never quite suppressed, what does Mary Magdalene's resurgence into consciousness signal for us today? As a female disciple and a leader central to the Jesus movement her rehabilitation at the very least opens up new pathways for women beyond unattainable ideal (the Virgin Mary) and carrier of sexual guilt (all other women).

The repentant prostitute story came about thanks to Pope Gregory the Great's Thirty-Third Homily. The Magdala connection happened in a somewhat similar manner.

In actual fact the town of Magdala was not around at the time of Jesus and Mary. Reliable early Greek sources such as the Codex Vaticanus (one of the earliest MSS of the Greek Bible, dating to c.300-325 AD), the Codex Sinaiticus (c.330-360 AD), Eusebius (c. 260/265-339/340 AD), and Jerome (347-420 AD), all mention a place called Magadan (cf Matt 15:39) (deriving from the Aramaic “precious ware” “magad”), not Magdala (which derives from the Aramaic “magdal” or Hebrew “migdal” meaning “tower”). Orthodox and Catholic bibles actually say Magadan not Magdala, unlike for instance the King James Bible. (New scholarly revisions have reverted to Magadan.) Only in the fifth century did a Byzantine copyist alter Magadan to Magdala, which opened up other opportunities, especially since the site was on the pilgrim route to Nazareth and Tiberias. Somewhat conveniently, Magadan itself, along with many other places, had been destroyed in 363 AD by a powerful earthquake in the Galilee region.¹⁶

Pilgrimage had become popular since Constantine's adoption of Christianity as the state religion and Helena's discovery (or, technically, “Invention”) of the True Cross. Many pilgrims went to the historical places of the Holy Land, writing the equivalent of postcards home. And of course everybody wanted the enhanced status that came from visiting places where Biblical characters had lived. So, when in the early sixth century (c.530 AD) a pilgrim named Theodosius came upon what had been Magadan, he naturally wanted it to be an important place and declared he had come to Magdala (which sounded like Magdalene)

“where the lady Mary was born”—“Magdala, ubi domna Maria nata est.”¹⁷ Then, in the eighth century, Hugeburc, an Anglo-Saxon nun from the Abbey of Heidenheim in Germany, wrote the biography of Willibald (*Vita S. Willibaldi*) who had been on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in 723-727 AD. In this manuscript she mentioned a pilgrim church in Magdala Willibald had visited where Mary had allegedly been freed of her demons.¹⁸ By the ninth century the house of Mary Magdalene had been “discovered” enclosed by a church built by the Empress Helena. Helena certainly had been to Jerusalem and had founded a lot of churches in the fourth century, but, just as certainly, had not been to Galilee nor founded any churches there. However, by then the story was deeply entrenched and the legend stuck, even though Magdala had not been around at the time of Mary Magdalene, while Magadan had.

Even Jerome, not known for his particularly enlightened attitudes towards women, especially in regards to female sexuality, makes no mention in a letter to Principia in 412 AD of Magdala as a place or, for that matter, of Mary Magdalene as a sinner. He does though make an interesting reference to Mary Magdalene. To quote, he writes “how Mary Magdalen — called the tower from the earnestness and glow of her faith — was privileged to see the rising Christ first of all before the very apostles.”¹⁹

Jesus often gave titles or epithets to his followers that would define their essence (see Mark 3:16-17). Thus Simon became Cephas or Peter, the “Rock,” the Zebedees were Boanerges, the “sons of Thunder,” Thomas was Didymos the “Twin” — and Mary, in line with the preceding examples, was “the Magdalene,” the Tower, as derived from “migdal” or Migdal-eder, the Watchtower of the Flock. In the Greek texts of the gospels her name even sounds like a title: she is “Mary called Magdalene” (as in Luke 8:1-3), or “the Magdalene Mary,” or in Matthew, Mark and John, “Mary the Magdalene.” Migdal in the Bible always appeared paired with another word, such as Migdal-eder (see Gen 35:21, Micah 4:8), which means the Tower of the Flock. So Mary the Magdalene is simply Mary the Tower, or Mary the Watchtower of the Flock. By extension, she was the

Beacon, the Lighthouse, the Guide. It makes sense — Jesus spoke of himself as the Good Shepherd, and shepherds of large flocks had wooden watchtowers built from which to look out over and protect their flock. In *Micah*, the Lord comes as a shepherd Messiah from Bethlehem and is then made a King who brings salvation. For anyone steeped in Biblical study and lore the Watchtower was an easy association to make, as obvious as Peter the Rock. Mary the Watchtower, lighthouse or beacon helps the Good Shepherd to protect his flock and illuminates the people as a visionary.²⁰

Micah 4:8-9, 11

And to you, o Migdal-eder,
Watchtower of the Flock,
stronghold of the daughter of Zion,
unto you shall the former dominion be restored,
the kingdom of daughter Jerusalem.
Now why do you cry? Have you no king?

...

Now many nations are assembled against you, saying, “Let her be profaned...”

These last proved to be prophetic words in relation to Mary.

Seven Demons

Despite Pope Gregory’s inferences in his Homily, the expulsion of demons in the gospels usually referred to the healing of physical and mental illnesses and infirmities, such as deafness, epilepsy, paralysis, palsy, blindness, dumbness and the like. John the Baptist was accused of having a devil because he did not drink wine or eat bread. The number seven usually referred in the Bible (also in Egypt and Babylon) to completion or wholeness (the seven days of Creation and the numerous references to 7 in *Revelation* being obvious examples), so the implication of the “seven” here is that Mary’s physical and mental healing would have been complete, making her the most aware disciple and the most open and receptive to Jesus’ message of the Kingdom. In this context it is interesting to link the seven demons to the seven chakras or psychic/spiritual centers of the body which, it could be said, Jesus chose

to purify in Mary Magdalene, making her a pure vessel for the hearing and the preaching of his Word. We could also, in our current terminology, perhaps speak here of “purifying the subconscious.”

Encountering the Mansions of my Soul

... after Teresa of Avila
 Seven demons He cast out of you –
 – They called you sinner –
 Seven mansions form the crystal castle of my soul
 Seven times the Law said that a man should be forgiven
 Seven times seventy You told us to forgive them when they fall
 Seven centres spin within us subject to defilement
 Seven sins of avarice and gluttony and lust
 Sloth, anger, jealousy, and pride
 Seven centres which He chose in you to purify.

Seven demons He cast out when you first met Him –
 – They had their pleasure in imagining how you sinned –
 Seven centres glowed so bright within you
 That you could learn the inner paths from Him
 Dwelling within you He could lead you
 Into the insubstantial realms
 Drinking in wisdom no longer distorted
 You did not fear to question Him.

Seven are the mansions of my soul’s palace
 Yours were pure crystal and dazzlingly clean
 And at the centre of those seven mansions
 In you was pure space
 And God dwelt within.²¹

The Anointing

Mary the Magdalene, Mary as Watchtower, Lighthouse, Beacon, Lightbearer and Lightbringer. What else can be inferred about her with some measure of confidence? She had considerable independent means — women were not allowed to inherit according to Jewish law but people, especially in the Jewish Hellenized elite, found a way around that by giv-

ing their sisters, daughters and other relatives “gifts,” in addition to which they could access dowries or a bride-price, so her wealth, while unusual, was not wholly exceptional. In consequence, it is most likely that she belonged to the Jewish elite, and, incidentally, Jesus himself was a rabbi who moved in elite circles. His close followers, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were members of the ruling council or Sanhedrin. She was a close follower of Jesus who travelled through the countryside with him supporting his mission and his followers, alongside other women. She had had seven demons expelled from her. She was there throughout the week of the Passion, from the entry into Jerusalem to the Crucifixion where she was one of the few who stood firm while others fled. She went to anoint Jesus’ body on the third day (incidentally, usually it was a close female relative who did that, most often a wife, as it was such an intimate thing to do).²² She was (in three accounts) first witness of the empty tomb and of the Resurrection, apostle to the apostles, charged to tell the others the good news. The picture that emerges even from these details is that she was clearly not a minor character. She is there in all the critical defining moments of Jesus’ life and ministry, at the heart of the Christian mystery. In fact, at the death, burial and resurrection, there are always two people—Jesus and Mary. (See Luke 8:1-3, Matt 27:56, Mark 15:40, John 20:1, Matt 27:61, Mark 15:47)

Interestingly, in the earliest redactions of Mark (such as the early fourth century Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus), which do not have verses 16:9-20, the empty tomb itself is witness enough for Mary Magdalene, while the Resurrection itself was portrayed in very early Christian art as the arrival of the myrrhophores at the empty tomb, with no attempt to portray the risen Jesus. The tomb is seen to be empty like the Holy of Holies of the temple — empty but filled with the presence of God.

That Mary Magdalene was most probably from the Hellenized elite is also indirectly attested to by the lists of women in the gospels where she is often placed first, even ahead of Johanna, who was the wife of Chuza, the steward of Herod Antipas, and hence of high status her-

self. Additional proof of her status is the link to Nicodemus who provides the oils for Mary Magdalene to use at the tomb, while her personal wealth is attested to by the oils she herself provides and uses in the anointing of Jesus, oils which would have cost the equivalent of a year's wages for a laborer at the time. Mary Magdalene is not only apostle to the apostles, first witness of the empty tomb and of the Resurrection, but also the anointer of the "anointed one" (Messiah), playing a leading role in this crucial episode which stands at the beginning of the whole Passion narrative in three Gospel accounts. As Jesus says:

Mark 14:8-9

... she has anointed my body beforehand for burying, and truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.

The four gospels provide four accounts of what reads essentially as the same event — the anointing of Jesus. It is clearly extremely important: priests and kings were anointed and Messiah means, "anointed one." So the anointing is important and the anointer is too. It would not be incorrect to say that the anointer imparts the Holy Spirit through her act, thereby conferring kingship or priesthood on the "anointed one" or Messiah. It is rather ironic that such an important act in the whole Christian drama, which Jesus himself said would be forever remembered and recounted in memory of her who did the anointing, should have been written up in such a confusing manner. However, in two versions, despite Jesus' clearly recorded words that this will be told "in memory of her," *she* is nameless. In John she is said to be Mary of Bethany, a dear friend and sister of Lazarus and Martha (and quite possibly the same person as Mary Magdalene), and in Luke she is the nameless sinner who only anoints Jesus' feet, not his head, and who gave rise to the prostitute story. Therefore instead of being remembered forever and honored for her act, her story is sunk in a confusing mire, with in every case the identity of the woman written out of the story—she is nameless, or there under a different name, or there

in the guise of a prostitute. Yet Mary Magdalene is the obvious choice — her presence is all over the story. It is she who comes to anoint Jesus in his tomb, so who else would be anointing him, as Jesus says, in preparation for his burial?

It is interesting that it is Luke who tries to blacken Mary Magdalene's name: his is the only account of an anointing by a prostitute (Luke 7) which he follows up by introducing Mary Magdalene in Luke 8 as the woman with seven demons having gone out of her, almost inviting the reader to draw their own associations. In the other three gospel accounts the anointing begins the Passion narrative, with only Luke placing the episode much earlier in Jesus' ministry and effectively dissociating it from the Passion story. Clearly, it was too important and well known to leave out, but Luke did manage to distort it in his account and to discredit the reputation of the woman doing the anointing. At the crucifixion all the evangelists name Mary Magdalene as a witness, apart from Luke. Luke also wrote the Acts of the Apostles which brings Paul into the story as a major player — the major player actually as two thirds of Acts is really about him, although Paul never met Jesus in his lifetime. Mary Magdalene, who did and who was there all the time, is entirely absent in Acts. For whatever reason, Luke does not want her there, and he does want to diminish or eliminate her role. One has to wonder why she was so much of a threat. Paul likewise excludes her from the list of those who saw the risen Christ in 1 Cor 15:3-8. Maybe, to anticipate, it was not just that she was a woman (though that was clearly a problem), but that there were two opposing camps in the early Christian movement: on the one side, the aspiration to direct inspiration and experience of the Divine; on the other, apostolic succession, hierarchy and priestly mediation. Mary Magdalene's direct experience subtly undermines the need for a church hierarchy and for mediation of the experience of the living Christ through the priesthood. For her the empty tomb was already enough, that and an absolute faith in the Kingdom of God. Or maybe she was just too independent and outspoken for a woman: a visionary, a seer,

and a leader in her own right and thus unacceptable to the proto-Orthodox movement.

The Garden

The last time Mary Magdalene appears in canonical texts is in the garden scene of the Resurrection (John 20:1-18) uttering her ecstatic cry, Rabbouni!

John 20:16, 17-18

Jesus said to her, "Mary."
She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" [My beloved master!]

"... but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

Mary Magdalene went and said to the disciples,

"I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

One of the Manichaean Psalms of Heracleides (187) is really an extension of this famous Resurrection scene in the garden with Mary being entrusted to find the disciples and tell them the good news:

A Song from the Manichaean Psalms of Heracleides (extracts)

Mary, Mary, know me,
but do not touch me.
Dry the tears of your eyes,
and know that I am your master,
only do not touch me,
for I have not yet seen my father's face.

...

Cast this sadness away
and perform this service.
Be my messenger to these lost orphans.
Hurry, with joy, go to the eleven ...
Use all your skill and knowledge
until you bring the sheep to the shepherd.

...

Rabbi, my master, I shall carry out your instructions
with joy in my whole heart.

I shall not let my heart rest,
I shall not let my eyes sleep,
I shall not let my feet relax
until I bring the sheep to the fold.

Glory and triumph to the soul of blessed Mary.
²³

As in the *Gospel of Mary*, Mary Magdalene is portrayed here as the chief disciple who holds the group together once Jesus is gone. Another one of these psalms (194.19) proclaims her to be "the spirit of wisdom [Sophia]," while 192.21-22 states: "Mary is one who casts a net in an effort to catch the other eleven who were lost."²⁴ As a "net-caster" Mary takes on the traditional role here of the male disciples who are told to be "fishers of men." Salome and Arsinoe are also mentioned in the psalms as disciples, as is Martha, who is called Mary's sister.

Hippolytus (c.170-c.235 AD), Bishop of Rome, is another early Christian writer who celebrates Mary Magdalene as a myrrhophore, coming to the garden to anoint the body of Jesus, and goes on to equate her with the Bride, the Shulamite, from the *Song of Songs*, who also comes out to seek her Bridegroom, thus implicitly acknowledging a special relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus.²⁵

Mary Magdalene in the Non-Canonical Texts

In addition to the canonical gospels there are the non-canonical texts which mention Mary Magdalene, all very varied but agreeing on one thing, her remarkable prominence amongst the disciples and her intimate closeness to Jesus.

Some have interpreted this closeness as a sexual or marital relationship. In fact, that is not as far fetched as it may seem, as many Jewish scholars say that Jesus would have had to have been married to be a rabbi and to be allowed to preach in a synagogue. However, Jesus defied convention and rules in many ways, so why not in this as well? But also this kind of limiting of the role of Mary Magdalene remains speculation, and still misses the point. A close companionship and relationship does not have to be sexual to be important, whereas what

remains important is to accord Mary Magdalene the fullness of her spiritual stature and her role in the early Christian movement. That, and also to rediscover the vision that she shared with Jesus. The fact that Jesus was able to have that kind of real relationship with a woman attests to his perfect humanity in which male and female, masculine and feminine, are not at war, do not fear each other, but are perfectly balanced. Surely that is the “perfect humanity,” and the wholeness he calls us to still — a vision of the Kingdom of God here on earth. And out of that wholeness a true relationship can arise like the one modeled by Mary Magdalene and Jesus — a relationship that can encompass emotional, intellectual and spiritual planes. There is a wedding, a marriage of masculine and feminine here, and a reconciliation with the feminine, which we are all called to emulate if we are to become Anthropos—truly human.

The following passages illustrate something of the flavor of such a “humanness” and of the relationship which can arise from it, with Thomas speaking of the transcendence of gender and the re/creation of the perfected human being (we have here also the subtle mystical foundation of the “born again” theology), and Philip giving an intimation of what might be meant by true companionship, a “sacred embrace.”

Gospel of Thomas 22

Jesus said to them,
“When you make the two into one,
and when you make the inner like the outer
and the outer like the inner, and the upper like
the lower,
and when you make male and female into a
single one,
so that the male will not be male, nor the fe-
male be female,
when you make eyes in place of an eye, a hand
in place of a hand,
a foot in place of a foot, an image in place of
an image,
then you will enter the kingdom.”²⁶

Gospel of Philip 77

All will be clothed in light when they enter
into the mystery of the sacred embrace.²⁷

The non-canonical texts help to recreate something of the depth and flavor of the relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus, as well as testifying to her position within the movement. The most important among them in this context are: *Gospel of Thomas*, *Gospel of Mary*, *Gospel of Philip*, *Dialogue of the Saviour*, *Pistis Sophia*, *First Apocalypse of James*, and the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*. These texts also demonstrate the diversity of early Christianity and its firm grounding in the Eastern Wisdom traditions. Summing up her 1995 study of these texts Mary Thompson concludes that Mary Magdalene “appears repeatedly with the chosen disciples; she is given the leading role in the dialogs; she is singled out as a primary disciple; she is, more than once, in direct conflict with Peter from which conflict she emerges as the stronger.”²⁸

Apart from *Pistis Sophia* and the *Gospel of Mary*, all these texts are part of the Nag Hammadi Library discovered in Egypt in 1945, with the *Gospel of Mary* also having been found in Egypt earlier, in 1896. *Pistis Sophia* first came to light in 1773, when the codex was acquired by Anthony Askew, and its survival till then remains a mystery. Most of the texts prominently feature Mary Magdalene, pointing to her possible presence in Egypt. Christianity was traditionally brought to Egypt by Mark and thrived in an inclusive eclectic environment. 1 Peter 5:13 mentions a church in “Babylon” which was apparently located in what is now southern Cairo. Mention is made of a woman who is so well known she does not get named “She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, salutes you, and so does Mark my son.” (There is no mention of a church replacing the gendered “she” in the original Greek as has crept into later editions of 1 Peter.)

In these texts Mary Magdalene appears as one of Jesus’ most intimate disciples and is often identified with Sophia as Wisdom or Light-bringer. She is the recipient of visions and revelations, praised as the “woman who knew (or understood) the all” (*Dialogue of the Saviour*), and as “inheritor of the Light” (*Pistis Sophia I*, 61). She does not always have the leading cen-

tral role but is often one of an important group of disciples (*Sophia of Jesus Christ, Dialogue of the Saviour, Pistis Sophia IV, First Apocalypse of James*). In the *Gospel of Mary* and *Pistis Sophia I-III*, she is central. Most of these texts are dialogues — revelation dialogues taking place after Jesus' death — though Thomas is a collection of Jesus' sayings and parables. The *Gospel of Philip* differs from them because here Mary Magdalene is placed in a historical role as the favorite disciple and companion of the living Jesus and is said to be the only one who truly understands his teaching and his nature while he is alive. It is she who "always walks with the Lord." Her level of spiritual maturity is reached by the other disciples only later.

It is actually not accurate to group all the so-called Gnostic texts together indiscriminately as they were quite varied. Some had a strictly dualist view rejecting the world as an evil creation, which needs to be overcome by the soul in order to escape from the clutches of matter and the world. This was actually a Hellenistic philosophy that prized celibacy and childlessness as a way of escaping from matter and ending the separation from God, and it had a big influence on Christianity. Other texts depicted gnosis as the apprehension of the kingdom of God here and now: the Kingdom is at hand, in the words of Jesus, all of us carry the divine spark within us and are sons and daughters of God. There were other groupings as well. For instance spiritual journeys were an important genre in Egypt, the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* being such a journey of the soul after death into rebirth in the afterlife. Thus, there are guides for the soul on reaching the light and avoiding temptations, dangers and darkness. Gnosis itself is a Greek word for knowledge, direct knowledge, which also came to be associated with hidden wisdom or "mysterion," and, in the end, the ultimate aim of gnosis was — and this will sound familiar in our own time — the quest for individual enlightenment. And Mary Magdalene, in her role as seer and visionary, was associated with that quest.

As intimated previously, perhaps the real problem with Mary Magdalene was that she represented vision, inspiration, and a direct path to

the divine, the very opposite of the hierarchy, dogma and rules of formal religion headed by Peter as the Rock of the Church. Implicitly, she stood against church hierarchy, the apostolic succession, and the need for priests to be mediators between Christ, God, and the people. In addition, not only was she a visionary but she also had the authority of one who had actually walked with Jesus. It seems, in view of all this, that there was a need for the established church to control Mary Magdalene who simply knew too much owing to her closeness to Jesus. Could this have been the real reason behind the push to silence and demean her? Celsus had already denounced Mary Magdalene in the 170s AD as a "hysterical female" (that old chestnut) for preaching the Resurrection,²⁹ besides which a woman's witness was not worth anything legally anyway. Her authority was inevitably shaky given the social order of the time, and her demotion was not too difficult to achieve.

In the Gnostic texts however, it is she who is shown to truly understand Jesus' message, is his foremost disciple, and, this is the controversial part, is described in the *Gospel of Philip* as his "koinonos," the Greek word for companion, which can also mean partner, one who shares, spouse, consort or wife.

Gospel of Philip

The *Gospel of Philip*, probably dating to the early 2nd century, contains the following lines, which could be interpreted that Mary Magdalene was Jesus' wife, though that is only a possibility. What she is unambiguously in the text though is the favorite disciple, the companion who walks beside him throughout his ministry, and the only one who fully understands his message and his teachings.

There were three who always walked with the Lord.

Mary, his mother and her sister;

And the Magdalene, the one who was called his companion.

For Mary is his sister and his mother and his companion.³⁰

The companion of the Saviour is Mary Magdalene. The Saviour loved her more

than all the disciples, and he kissed her often on her mouth.

The other disciples ... said to him, "Why do you love her more than all of us?"

The Saviour answered and said to them, "Why don't I love you like her?"³¹

Both of these are quite remarkable passages that clearly illustrate a special and close relationship. And of course the kiss has given rise to a lot of speculation and commentary. However, once again it does not necessarily imply a sexual relationship. The kiss was considered a holy act, an exchange of breath and energy (as in the "holy kiss" in Romans 16:16), conveying spiritual power and nourishment. So the kiss could be seen as an initiation or a transmission of spiritual knowledge and empowerment. In the passage immediately preceding the first mention of Mary Magdalene as the companion of Jesus, Philip writes:

The realized human is fertilized by a kiss, and is born through a kiss.³²

Furthermore, the *Gospel of Thomas* contains the lines:

Jesus said: "He who drinks from my mouth will become like I am, and I will become he. And the hidden things will be revealed to him."³³

Philip goes on to explain why the Savior loves Mary Magdalene more—it is because she is not blind to the Light.

Why do I not love you like her? If a blind person and one who can see are both in darkness, they are the same. When the light comes, one who can see will see the light, and the blind person will stay in darkness.³⁴

Yes, Mary Magdalene is the beloved disciple but her status comes from her own spiritual level of understanding of Jesus' message, her visionary qualities, her strength and composure in adversity, her steadfastness and courage, and faith in the goodness of God and in the Kingdom to come. The wording of Philip 59 is also interesting here: Mary was his mother, his sister, his companion.³⁵ This could just be wordplay, but could also imply that what we are seeing here is something well beyond the

role of wife as it was then understood — this is an all encompassing relationship, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual.

Gospel of Mary

This important gospel, the only one attributed to a woman, might well have been written in Mary Magdalene's name by a community which recognized her authority. This "honorary" authorship, however, was by no means exceptional at the time and in this it would have been similar to the other evangelists. In all likelihood, Mary Magdalene preached her own version of the "gospel" or "good news," maybe one more in line with the more mystical and esoteric teachings in the *Gospels of Mary* and of *John*. (It is of interest to note that in the latter text she is featured more prominently than in the synoptic gospels.)³⁶ If the tradition of her going to Ephesus to preach with John has any validity, it would reinforce this view. In the *Acts of Philip* too, the complete text of which was discovered as recently as 1974 in the Xenophontos monastery on Mount Athos by François Bovon,³⁷ Mariamne (who has all the characteristics of Mary Magdalene) is a leading figure, baptizing women, preaching, teaching and healing together with Philip and Bartholomew, being attacked by Roman officials, and travelling as far afield as Syria and Asia Minor.

Of all the texts the *Gospel of Mary* is one of the most interesting, and not just because it is the only gospel attributed to a woman. It is dated to between the late first century and some time in the 2nd, 180 AD at the latest. Unfortunately, over half of it is missing.

The manuscript starts midstream with Jesus speaking of the nature of matter or creation, the destiny of which is to be dissolved back into its root, and then of the nature of sin. Next he gives the disciples the greeting of peace, telling them "*Be careful that no one leads you astray by saying, 'Look here' or 'Look there.' The child of humanity is within you. Follow that.*"³⁸ He tells them to go out and preach the good news, adding, tellingly, not to create new rules or laws apart from those that he gave lest they be bound by their own rules.

When he departs the disciples become fearful and doubting, afraid they will suffer the same fate as he did, whereupon Mary takes charge in no uncertain manner, comforting them and giving them heart, effectively taking over Jesus' role as the Teacher.

Mary stood up, greeted them all, and said to her brothers,

“Do not weep or grieve or be in doubt, for his grace will be with you all and will protect you. Rather, let us praise his greatness, for he has prepared us and made us truly human.”

When Mary said this, she turned their hearts to the good and they began to discuss the words of the Saviour.

Peter said to Mary, “Sister, we know that the Saviour loved you more than any other woman. Tell us the words of the Saviour that you remember, which you know but we do not, because we have not heard them.”

Mary responded,

“What is hidden from you I shall reveal to you.”³⁹

Mary is presented here as the spiritually strong leader who can impart calmness and composure to the others, the comforter and instructor who has greater understanding and who, as the text says, “turns their hearts towards the good.” Her superior status is simply a result of Jesus' trust and confidence in her and of her own spiritual maturity — and her ongoing visionary relationship with Jesus.

Apostola – Bearing Testimony

They come to me with all their needs
To drink your Wisdom from my lips
Your Living Word flows through me

And I teach.

I testify to Truth
For I have seen its human Face
I testify to Love
For I have felt its divine Trace
Which traced my outline
Through your gaze

Which saw me, knew me,
Healed my depths,
Unlocked my heart
Unlocked my sight
Unlocked my hearing –

So now I testify to You
The revelation of Your life
The splendour of Your risen state
Thus

When they come with all their needs,
Your Living Word flows through me

And I teach.⁴⁰

Significantly, Peter confirms Mary Magdalene's unique closeness to Jesus in his request. Mary agrees and begins to recount her vision, which begins with Jesus praising her for not wavering when she saw him. There are two interesting points here: one concerns the mechanics of seeing visions, the other the reception of the vision. Visions seem to have been quite an acceptable way of communicating with other realms of reality. Accordingly, there are many visions in the Bible — Ezekiel, Elijah, Jacob's Ladder, Daniel, Isaiah — the list goes on. Mary questions Jesus as to how one actually sees a vision and he begins to explain to her that it is not with the soul or the spirit that one sees, but with the mind or the “eye of the heart” (the Hebrew version of “*nous*”), which is the intermediary between the two. This term is quite reminiscent of the Eastern religions in which the open third eye is an organ of deeper perception. And the text breaks off there.

The second point is Peter and Andrew's reaction at the end — we cannot believe this, she is talking nonsense, “strange ideas.” In fact the *Gospel of Mary* is one of several texts that record a clash between Mary and Peter. It is interesting to recall in this context that Paul never saw Jesus at all except in a vision, which begs the question, why is one vision acceptable and another — which happens to be a woman's — not acceptable and to be doubted? To take a quote from the *Gospel of Mary* out of context,

“why do you pass judgement on me though I have not passed judgement?”⁴¹

The vision itself describes the soul’s journey as it escapes and defeats the powers of Darkness, Desire, Ignorance, and Wrath, which has seven forms, until it comes to rest in Silence (again much is missing). While this could be the metaphorical journey of the soul after death it can also be read as the journey to enlightenment while still in this body. It is reminiscent of the “seven deadly sins,” inner demons relating to the false self which Mary overcomes to become “Single” in the words of Jesus in the *Gospel of Thomas* — inwardly still and composed and undisturbed. But the whole journey

could also be an account of Christ’s “Harrowing of Hell,” a description of the three days Jesus spends in the tomb and the hero’s journey he traditionally undertakes in that time to bring light into the furthest reaches of darkness.⁴² In that case, the loss of the manuscript is even more unfortunate. When Mary concludes conflict erupts, with Andrew doubting her word, followed by Peter who is quite incensed by the idea of giving a woman spiritual authority:

Did the Saviour, then, speak with a woman in private without our knowing about it? Are we to turn around and listen to her? Did he choose her over us?⁴³

That is the Coptic version of Peter’s outburst. The Greek version reads:

“Surely he didn’t want to show that she is more worthy than we are?”⁴⁴

Levi, crucially, replies:

“Peter, you have always been a wrathful person. Now I see you contending against

the woman like the adversaries. For if the Saviour made her worthy, who are you then for your part to reject her? Assuredly the Saviour’s knowledge of her is completely reliable. That is why he loved her more than us.

Rather, we should be ashamed. We should clothe ourselves with the perfect Human, acquire it for ourselves as he commanded us, and announce the good news, not laying down any other rule or law other than what the Saviour said.”⁴⁵

Did he really speak with a woman in private, without our knowledge? Should we all turn and listen to her? Did he prefer

her to us?

We can still hear Peter’s words reverberating down the ages. Are we supposed to listen to her, a woman?

This was of course one of the radical things about Jesus’ teaching and ministry —there is a real sense of him not treating his male or female followers differently. They are all inheritors of the Kingdom, sons and daughters of God. We see him mixing with women without fear of “pollution” and we see the twelve disciples and the circle of women (some sources say seven) all travelling together accompanying him.

However, Mary Magdalene as leader and teacher had a lot to contend with in a society that officially left women with few rights and little self-determination. The position of women was severely constricted. They were denied education, had no legal standing since they were the legal property of men, and their testimony was inadmissible in court. Women were inferior in all things and their submission

was required for their own good so that they could be directed and instructed by men. Women were thought to be disobedient of Scriptural law if they had authority over men.⁴⁶ But Mary Magdalene and the other women do not come across as submissive, they are not under male authority and they are freely traveling around the countryside following a charismatic rabbi. They are equals in his circle, not merely reduced to their gender and sexuality. This in itself tells us a lot about Jesus and his teaching. Thus Mary Magdalene was clearly a figure who challenged patriarchal assumptions. Was that also part of the reason, as stated earlier, that she was then made into a figure who confirmed them?

In all the clashes recorded in the texts between Mary and Peter, Mary is justified and defended by Jesus (*Gospel of Thomas*, *Pistis Sophia*, *Gospel of Philip*), or after his death, by another disciple. In each one of the texts Peter objects to Mary Magdalene because she is a woman, with Peter representing the proto-Orthodox position in the conflict. But each time Mary's authority as a teacher and a leader is unambiguously affirmed. However, it would also be incorrect to say that there is conflict with the male disciples in all of the texts. Even in the *Gospel of Mary* Peter begins by deferring to Mary, even if he does end by expressing frustration at this woman who does not know her place, effectively calling her a liar. Peter's outbursts invariably draw attention to the questioning of Mary's — and by extension all women's — authority, something that is an important leitmotif in these texts. Yet the question, Levi's question, remains even now: "If the Saviour made her worthy, who are you then for your part to reject her?" And it applies not just to Mary, but to all women.

A Woman's Authority

Mary Magdalene again appears as the leading character in *Pistis Sophia*, a text usually divided into four books (though some scholars say five or six) and probably put together from multiple different sources.⁴⁷ Mary is prominent in Books I-III (the bulk of the text), asking by far the most questions, giving the best answers and the most scriptural inter-

pretations, and is repeatedly praised by Jesus for her level of understanding. She is clearly the outstanding student. John "the Virgin" is the next most important disciple in the text, with Jesus saying:

But Mary Magdalene and John the Virgin will surpass all my disciples and all men who shall receive mysteries in the ineffable, they will be on my right hand and on my left. (PS 96)⁴⁸

Jesus repeatedly acknowledges Mary Magdalene as spiritually superior to the other disciples, as one "whose heart is set on heaven's kingdom more than all your brothers":

"Blessed Mary, you whom I shall complete with mysteries on high, speak openly, for you are one whose heart is set on heaven's kingdom more than all your brothers." (PS 17)

...

When Mary finished saying these things, Jesus said, "Well done, Mary. You are more blessed than all women on earth, because you will be the fullness of fullnesses and the completion of completions." (PS 19)⁴⁹

Mary is also called "beautiful in her speech" (PS 24), "thou pure of the light" or "thou pure spiritual one" (PS II, 87), "inheritor of the Light" (PS 61), "thou blessed one ... who will be blessed among all generations" (PS 34), and more besides. In the face of such fulsome praise Peter is unable to keep quiet:

Peter stepped forward and said to Jesus, "My master, we cannot endure this woman who gets in our way and does not let any of us speak, though she talks all the time."

Jesus answered and said to his disciples, "Let anyone in whom the power of the spirit has arisen, so that the person understands what I say, come forward and speak." (PS 36)⁵⁰

Mary, not surprisingly, responds a little later that though she understands she can speak when the power of the spirit arises in her, she is "afraid of Peter, because he threatens me and hates our gender." Jesus responds that anyone

filled with the spirit of light can come forward to interpret his words and that none shall be able to oppose them, once again defending Mary's right to speak:

Mary came forward and said, "My master, I understand in my mind that I can come forward at any time to interpret what Pistis Sophia has said, but I am afraid of Peter, because he threatens me and hates our gender."

[Jesus replies:]

"Any of those filled with the spirit of light will come forward to interpret what I say: no one will be able to oppose them." (PS 72)⁵¹

The *Gospel of Thomas* includes a clash in the final logion 114 between Mary Magdalene and Peter in which Peter asks Jesus to tell Mary to leave them because women/females are unworthy of life. Jesus' response is that he will make Mary "male" so that she too is a living spirit, and that every female who makes herself male will enter heaven's kingdom.

Simon Peter said to them, "Mary should leave us, for females are not worthy of life."

Jesus said, "Look, I shall guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter heaven's kingdom."⁵²

Many scholars challenge this logion as a later addition. And indeed, it does seem to emerge from the context of pure classical dualism with its characteristic sharp split between matter and body (conventionally equated with female) and spirit (equated with male). In classical dualistic religions, such as Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism, there are two deities, with the "Good God" creating spirit and soul, and the "Evil God" creating matter and the body. The human being and the world in general become the battleground of these two powers. This in itself lends credence to the theory that Thomas 114 is apocryphal, as the rest of the *Gospel of Thomas* makes no such distinction between matter and spirit. In fact, it is at pains to convince that the Kingdom of God is present all

around us could we but see it, and that the One God has created all that is. Apart from this, logion 114 demonstrates again that the clash between Mary and Peter is over her gender. It also indicates how deeply engrained Aristotelian male/female dualism was in the Hellenized world. "To become male" was to become pure, spiritual, non-material, heavenly, imperishable, "being female" meant belonging to matter, being sensual, incomplete, material, not capable of transcendence, perishable, earthly. This was a very fixed cultural dichotomy in an important current of thought in the Greek and Roman world that sought to "destroy the works of femaleness," and it became an important current in early Christian thought as well. Notwithstanding, logion 114 does give an affirmative answer to the implied question as to whether women should be allowed to be equal members of the community, the implied message being that if Jesus made them worthy who are we to dispute that.

However, there is no tension between the disciples and Mary Magdalene in the *Dialogue of the Saviour* (probably 2nd century), a dialogue between Matthew, Judas Thomas, Mary Magdalene and Jesus (interestingly, Peter is missing) in which Mary again plays the leading role and receives mystical visions. All present receive special teachings and Mary is praised by Jesus as "the woman who knows the All":

This word she spoke as a woman who knew the All.⁵³

Her own desire is unambiguous:

Mary said, "I want to understand all things, just as they are."⁵⁴

The *Sophia of Jesus Christ* features Mary alongside four other disciples (Philip, Matthew, Thomas and Bartholomew) who are all protagonists in this dialogue with the Savior and preachers of the gospel, but here again there is no conflict between them. Jesus addresses them all equally:

"I have given you authority over all things as Sons of Light."⁵⁵

Conclusion

Why is Mary Magdalene's resurgence into consciousness so significant? I venture to suggest that talking about Mary Magdalene, talking about the past and the origins of Christianity is actually talking about the future — and the vision of a Christianity that could be. But to develop this vision we need in a sense to go back if we are to go forward. Mary Magdalene is a pivotal figure at the heart of the Christian story. She holds the gate open for the risen Christ. She could also hold the gate open for the rediscovery of the Hebrew Oriental traditions of Christianity, reconciling East and West, Jews and Hellenes, the church of Peter and Paul with the church of James, Thomas and Philip. And it should not be yet another case of either/or — there is both room and need for both/and.

Many of the texts and traditions in which Mary Magdalene figures strongly show the diversity of early Christianity, especially in Egypt, and many are imbued with Oriental Wisdom traditions. As such, they could provide a much-needed balance that many in the West have recently been seeking in other (mostly Eastern) faiths and spiritual traditions. However, we do not need to lurch from one position to the other — this would only lead us to losing the balance we seek all over again, though in a different way. When it comes to the question of gender and women's authority and leadership in religious and spiritual movements, it would not be true to say, for instance, that all orthodox texts are anti-women while the Gnostics accorded women more respect and gave them leadership positions. First of all, the Gnostics were a very varied group and it is not right to indiscriminately group them all together as has been posthumously done. Both canonical and non-canonical texts show evidence of misogyny and of concern with women's position. The true radical was Jesus — he was the one who treated women as equals, accorded them full respect, included them among his disciples, and imparted important teachings and revelations to them. His successors on both sides of the divide came up short in following his example to become "truly human" — apart, maybe, from Mary Magdalene. And, just perhaps, therein lies her true significance and the reason

Jesus had selected her to be the Watchtower of the Flock.

Like it or not, there is something missing from the Christian story. It is the Sacred Feminine, which incorporates Eros, the place where masculine and feminine meet as intimate and equal partners. But it isn't really missing, for Mary Magdalene is there at the center of the Christian mystery and she has it in abundance. Her reinstatement at the heart of Christianity would go a long way toward healing the mono-gender view Christianity rapidly adopted in the process of becoming formalized into a religion and bring back the balance implicit in Jesus' own teaching. The way history, including the history of the church, has been portrayed has been almost exclusively in male terms. But the future won't be like the past. Women, and this includes many women of faith, need women's voices in their everyday and, most importantly, in their spiritual life. Mary Magdalene is one such voice.

Miriam the Magdalene

How shall I look beyond so many layers of faces

To glimpse your face

O Watchtower of the Flock

For we have made of you the sum of prejudice and aspiration

Reviled and honoured

Priestess, wife and whore

And any other image which could serve imagined needs

And justify opinions

Or fill up our lack.

All this we saw in you –

All you have been

Your outline still a beautiful seduction to our minds

Which found the content that best suited their delusions and their dreams

Yet – even so –

Maria Magdalena

Your image shines despite all slander, wish fulfilment and denials

For you were of the one we call the Saviour

Companion and Beloved

Witness and Priestess

And you've become the space
Which a real woman could inhabit
The Space of Love, of Passion,
Inner Knowing and courageous Faith.⁵⁶

¹ *Pistis Sophia* is a Gnostic text in four books (and 143 chapters) purchased by Anthony Askew in 1773. The Askew Codex was subsequently purchased by the British Museum. The full text is available in various translations. The translation here is by Marvin Meyer in Marvin Meyer with Esther A. de Boer, *The Gospels of Mary: The Secret Tradition of Mary Magdalene, The Companion of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004), 66, 68. See also *Pistis Sophia*, translated by G.R.S. Mead, (2nd ed., 1921). The pdf is online at <http://www.gnosis.org/library/pistis-sophia>; and Violet MacDermot, *The Fall of Sophia* (Herndon, VA: Lindisfarne Books, 1978; 2001).

² There are several good translations of the *Gospel of Philip* available, among them: Jean-Yves Leloup, *The Gospel of Philip* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2004). This numbering, *Philip 48*, is according to Leloup. Other translations (which use different numbering) include that by Ward J. Bauman in Lynn C. Bauman, Ward J. Bauman and Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Luminous Gospels: Thomas, Mary Magdalene, and Philip* (Telephone, TX: Praxis Publishing, 2008) in which it appears as Analogue 30; and Meyer with de Boer, *The Gospels of Mary*.

³ Pope Gregory the Great delivered his Thirty-Third Homily in 591 AD at the basilica of St Clement in Rome. The full text may be found at: Gregory the Great, *Homily XXXIII*, PL LXXVI, col.1239. Another sermon by Gregory on Mary Magdalene was his Homily XXV in which he also called her 'a sinner.'

⁴ *Dialogue of the Saviour* was one of the Gnostic texts discovered at Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945. Good recent translations of the texts are to be found in Marvin Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2007), and in Meyer and de Boer, *The Gospels of Mary*. For *Pistis Sophia* see above.

⁵ The famous, or infamous, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln (London: Jonathan Cape, 1982) was one of the sources for Dan Brown's bestseller *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

⁶ Hellenic vs Hellenistic – Hellenic refers broadly to Greeks before the time of Alexander the Great, Hellenistic to the period after his death in 323 BC. Clearly there is much overlap in terms of philosophy and worldview, which is what principally concerns us here.

⁷ Extracts from Gregory the Great's Homily XXXIII in the translation cited by Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993), 96. Haskins wrote one of the first detailed and erudite historical studies of the figure of Mary Magdalene and her work remains one of the best in the field.

⁸ Kontakion to Mary Magdalene as translated from Church Slavonic on <https://orthodoxwiki.org> (accessed February 14, 2018).

⁹ The full inscription is quoted by Susan Haskins in Haskins, *Mary Magdalen*, 192.

¹⁰ There is a translation of this lengthy prayer from the Latin in Haskins, *Mary Magdalen*, 195-196. It was written by Anselm for Adelaide, youngest daughter of William the Conqueror.

¹¹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints as Englished by William Caxton*, London 1900, Vol. IV, 75.

¹² See entry for Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples in Catholic Answers <https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia> (last accessed February 16, 2018).

¹³ First published in Irina Kuzminsky, *Artists and Lovers* (San Francisco: Tayen Lane, 2017; Melbourne: Coventry Press, 2018), 61.

¹⁴ For an excellent discussion of this point see Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, (first published 1976; new ed. Oxford University Press, 2016).

¹⁵ Meyer with de Boer, *The Gospels of Mary*, vii.

¹⁶ See Michael Haag, *The Quest for Mary Magdalene: History and Legend* (London: Profile Books, 2016), 13.

¹⁷ Theodosius, translated by J. H. Bernard, in *On the topography of the Holy Land* Vol. II 440-

- 570 AD (Palestine Pilgrims' Trust Society, 1893). Also cited in Haag, 13.
- 18 The *Vita S. Willibaldi* was written by Hugeburc some time between 767 and 778. See Hugeburc – Wikipedia <https://de.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugeburc> (accessed February 16, 2018); also Haag, 13.
- 19 St Jerome, *Epist. CXXVII ad Principiam virginem (Letter 127 to the virgin Principia)* in the translation by W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis and W.G. Martley, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol.6* (ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace; Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893). Available online edited by Kevin Knight at: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001127.htm>, (accessed February 19, 2018).
- 20 The first person to suggest that 'the Magdalene' was a title was Margaret Starbird who wrote *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar* (Rochester, VT: Bear & Company, 1993), followed by *Magdalene's Lost Legacy* (Rochester, VT: Bear & Company, 2003) and *Mary Magdalene: Bride in Exile* (Rochester, VT: Bear & Company, 2005). In *Magdalene's Lost Legacy* Starbird uses gematria, a well known literary device of the time based on the numerical equivalents of Greek letters, to prove that "the Magdalene" was a title. However, her work was wrongly criticized as New Age numerology and was not broadly accepted by Biblical scholars. The evidence for "the Magdalene" as a title though is becoming harder to refute.
- 21 From Irina Kuzminsky, *In Memory of Her: The Woman who Knew the All* (unpublished MS, 2008).
- 22 It was customary for relatives to visit the tomb of the deceased in the first three days to anoint the body, so it is interesting that Mary Magdalene came to perform that task.
- 23 Translated by Meyer, in Meyer with de Boyer, *The Gospels of Mary, 72-73*. This translation is based on the Coptic text from *A Manichaean Psalm Book: Part II* (Kohlhammer, 1938), ed. C. R. C. Allberry. Heracleides was a follower of the Persian teacher Manes (c.216-276).
- 24 See Meyer with de Boer, *The Gospels of Mary, 70-71*.
- 25 Hippolytus' commentary to the *Song of Songs*, as cited by Haskins, *Mary Magdalen, 63-67*.
- 26 This translation of the *Gospel of Thomas 22* is from Meyer with de Boyer, *The Gospels of Mary*. There are several scholarly translations of the *Gospel of Thomas* available, including Jean-Yves Leloup, *The Gospel of Thomas* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2005); Marvin Meyer with Harold Bloom, *The Gospel of Thomas* (New York: HarperOne, 1992); Marvin Meyer (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition* (New York: HarperOne, 2007); Stevan Davies and Andrew Harvey (series ed.), *The Gospel of Thomas* (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2002); Bauman, Bauman and Bourgeault, *The Luminous Gospels: Thomas, Mary Magdalene, and Philip*. Each contains an element of interpretation and reconstruction of the text but all are based on a solid study of the original.
- 27 *Gospel of Philip 77* translated by Leloup, in Leloup, *The Gospel of Philip, 109*.
- 28 Mary R. Thompson, *Mary of Magdala: Apostle and Leader* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995), 102.
- 29 From Celsus' *True Doctrine*, as quoted by Origen in his *Contra Celsus* (c. 248 AD). The translation by H. Chadwick of Origen's *Contra Celsus* (Cambridge University Press, 2nd Ed., 1965), 109, is cited by Richard Bauckham, in Bauckham, *The Women at the Tomb: The Credibility of their Story* (a Laing Lecture at London Bible College available as a pdf online at <http://www.richardbauckham.co.uk>).
- 30 *Gospel of Philip 59:6-11*; Bentley Layton and Wesley Isenberg (text and trans.), "The Gospel of Philip", in *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2-7, Vol.1* (ed. Bentley Layton) (Nag Hammadi Studies XX) (E.J. Brill, 1989), 131-217.
- 31 *Gospel of Philip 63-64*, trans. Meyer, in Meyer with de Boer, *The Gospels of Mary, 49*.
- 32 *Gospel of Philip 31*, translated by Leloup, in Leloup, *The Gospel of Philip, 63*.
- 33 *Gospel of Thomas 108*, translated by Davies, in Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas, 131*.
- 34 *Gospel of Philip 63-64*, translated by Meyer, in Meyer with de Boer, *The Gospels of Mary, 49*.
- 35 This passage has been translated differently and simplified to say that there were three women named Mary. However, as Karen King says in Karen L. King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2003),

fn.50, 204, the syntax of the Coptic text does not support this reading.

36 On the historical likelihood that Mary Magdalene preached the gospel and on the opposition she would have encountered in a culture which did not permit women to have authority over men, see Esther A. de Boer, “On the possibility of a historical reconstruction of Mary Magdalene”, published online at <http://www.womenpriests.org/deboer> (accessed February 22, 2018).

37 See *Acts of Philip* Wikipedia entry, <https://en.m.wikipedia.org> (accessed February 22, 2018).

38 *Gospel of Mary* 8, translated by Meyer, in Meyer with de Boer, *The Gospels of Mary*, 19. Other translations of the *Gospel of Mary* include Jean-Yves Leloup, *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2002); Cynthia Bourgeault (intro. and text), “The Gospel of Mary Magdalene”, in Bauman, Bauman and Bourgeault, *The Luminous Gospels*, 53-71, and Karen L. King in King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala*.

39 *Gospel of Mary* 9-10, translated by Meyer, in Meyer with de Boer, *The Gospels of Mary*, 20.

40 Kuzminsky, *In Memory of Her: The Woman who Knew the All*.

41 *Gospel of Mary* 15, translated by Meyer, in Meyer with de Boer, *The Gospels of Mary*, 21.

42 I am indebted to Cynthia Bourgeault for this insight, see Bauman, Bauman and Bourgeault, *The Luminous Gospels*, 60-62.

43 *Gospel of Mary* 10:3-4, Berlin Codex, translated by Karen L. King, in King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala*, 17.

44 *Gospel of Mary* 10.4, Papyrus Oxyrhynchus, translated by Karen L. King, in King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala*, 17.

45 *Gospel of Mary* 10:7-13, Berlin Codex. The Greek text says even more emphatically, “For he knew her completely and loved her steadfastly.” Translated by Karen L. King, in King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala*, 17-18.

46 For a further discussion of the problematic nature of Mary Magdalene’s active role and authority in the early Church, see Esther A. de Boer, “On the possibility of a historical reconstruction of Mary Magdalene.”

47 For more on *Pistis Sophia* see en.1.

48 As quoted by Jane Schaberg, in Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene: Legends, Apocrypha, and the Christian Testament* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2004), 150.

49 Translated by Meyer, in Meyer with de Boer, *The Gospels of Mary*, 66, 67.

50 Ibid., 68.

51 Ibid.

52 Translated by Meyer, in Meyer with Bloom, *The Gospel of Thomas: The Hidden Sayings of Jesus*, 63.

53 See *The Dialogue of the Saviour*, 139:13. This translation is from Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 26. Other translations have “everything” or “understood completely” instead of “knew the All.”

54 *Dialogue of the Saviour*, 141, translated by Meyer, in Meyer with de Boer, *The Gospels of Mary*, 60.

55 *The Sophia of Jesus Christ*, translated by Douglas M. Parrott, The Coptic Gnostic Library Project, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, (ed. James Robinson, 4th ed.) (Brill, 1996), published online at <https://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/sjc> (accessed February 23, 2018).

56 Kuzminsky, *In Memory of Her: The Woman who Knew the All*.

Revelation's Restoration of the Garden of Eden

Zachary F. Lansdowne

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 22 of *Revelation*, which is its final chapter, contains images from *Genesis*, which is the first book of the Bible. For example, just as Genesis 2:10 says, “a river went out of Eden to water the garden,” Revelation 22:1 depicts “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal.” Given that *Genesis* portrays the ancient loss of the Garden of Eden, commentators often interpret chapter 22 of *Revelation* as predicting the restoration of the Garden of Eden at some indefinite time yet to come. In contrast, this article uses an allegorical approach that takes every symbol in chapter 22 as representing an aspect of someone on the spiritual journey. For example, the pure river is seen as signifying the love of God. Consequently, this article construes chapter 22 as portraying how an individual living today can experience the glorious restoration of the Garden of Eden.

Approaches of Interpretation

Ed Hindson, author of *The Book of Revelation: Unlocking the Future*, summarizes the four main approaches that have been used to interpret *Revelation*:

- The *futurist* view holds that prophetic events will be fulfilled in the future at the time of the end. Christ is viewed as coming in the future to establish His kingdom.
- The *preterist* view holds that prophetic events were actually fulfilled at the time they were written and are now in the past. Christ is viewed as already having come to destroy Jerusalem (A.D. 70) and establish His kingdom.

- The *historicist* view holds that prophetic events have been continually fulfilled throughout church history. Some may still come to pass in the future. Christ is viewed as continually coming.

- The *idealist* view holds that prophetic events have no specific fulfillment in the past or the future but are being fulfilled in the present experience of the individual. Christ is viewed as coming within the individual's own experience.¹

Which of these four approaches is the most popular? Anthony Garland reports, “Futurism was undeniably the system of interpretation held by the majority in the early church.”² For example, Saint Jerome, writing around 390 A. D., refers to *Revelation* as “an Apocalypse containing boundless mysteries of the future.”³ Moreover, the futurist view is the most popular approach in today's church. For example, James Harman observes, “Today, the most popular approach to Revelation is to view the prophecies as future events at the end of the age,”⁴ and Steve Gregg similarly says,

The *futurist* approach is held by the majority of the most popular contemporary evangelical writers and Bible teachers. It has so dominated the Christian media, in fact, that many Christians and virtually all non-Christians are unaware even of the existence of other approaches.⁵

About the Author

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This article focuses on the first five verses of chapter 22 in *Revelation*, denoted as Revelation 22:1-5. Robert Mounce, as part of *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, provides the following futurist interpretation of these five verses:

John has been using the imagery of a magnificent city to describe the people of God in the glorious and eternal age to come. While the first five verses of chapter 22 continue that description, they also portray the eternal state as Eden restored, thus “book-ending” the Christian Bible. In Genesis we were introduced to the tree of life planted in the middle of the garden (Genesis 2:9). To eat of its fruit was to live forever (Genesis 3:22); as a consequence of Adam’s sin, therefore, the first couple were banished from the garden to work the ground cursed with thorns and thistles (Genesis 3:17-18). Now in Revelation we see redeemed humanity back in the garden, able to eat the bountiful fruit of the tree of life (22:1-2). The curse has been removed (cf. 22:3 with Genesis 3:14-24), and God’s people are again privileged to “see his face” (cf. 22:4 with Genesis 3:8) and serve him. No greater good or more joyous truth could be imagined than eternal fellowship with God and the Lamb! Truly, the unimaginable blessings of Eden have been restored.⁶

Accordingly, the futurist approach of interpreting Revelation 22:1-5 yields this prediction: The Garden of Eden will be restored during a posited new age that has not yet come. This prediction is so widely favored that several Bible versions assign to these five verses an explicit title that embodies it: “Eden Restored” in the New International Version; and “Paradise Restored” in the Lexham English Bible and the Evangelical Heritage Version.

Allegorical Method of Interpretation

Helena Blavatsky (1831 – 1891), a 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.”⁷ Blavatsky also says, “All esoteric truths were given out to the public by the Initiates of the temples *under the guise of allegories.*”⁸ 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.⁹

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.¹⁰

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.”¹¹

Edgar Cayce (1877 – 1945), a psychic 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.”¹²

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.”¹³

Let us convert the foregoing hints into corresponding principles of interpretation. First, according to Blavatsky’s quotation, *Revelation* portrays the experiences of a typical individual on the spiritual journey. Second, according to Cayce’s quotation, every object in *Revelation* symbolizes an aspect of such an individual. 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.

This article, which takes what was previously called the “idealist view,” attempts to decipher the allegorical meaning of Revelation 22:1-5 by 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.¹⁴ These earlier scriptures include books of the Old Testament, New 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.”¹⁵

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.”¹⁶

Revelation 22:1-5

The biblical quotations in this article come from the King James Version (KJV) unless explicitly stated otherwise.¹⁷ Revelation 22:1-5 is as follows:

1. And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.
2. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.
3. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:
4. And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads.
5. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

1. And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Each verse is considered separately and is repeated in bold print. In verse 1, the pronoun *he* designates a teacher who is providing instruction. Revelation 17:1 describes an earlier appearance of this teacher: “And there came one

of the seven angels which had the seven vials.” In Theology, an angel signifies “a typically benevolent celestial being,”¹⁸ and “a divine messenger from God.”¹⁹ Here, the word *celestial* indicates that an angel resides in a higher realm than that of a human being, and the word *messenger* indicates the role of an intercessor. A vial of oil was used to anoint both Saul (1 Samuel 10:1) and Jehu (2 Kings 9:1-3) as kings, so a vial is a symbol of initiation. Thus, the teacher in verse 1 appears to be an intercessor from a higher realm with the power to initiate human beings into that realm.

Theosophy promulgates the concept of enlightened beings called “Masters,” who are also known as Mahatmas or Elder Brothers of Humanity.²⁰ 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,”²¹ so such a Master is an intercessor with the power of initiation. Accordingly, the pronoun *he* in verse 1 is taken as designating a Master.

In this article, the term *disciple* is used to denote someone on the spiritual journey, without regard to his or her status or attainment; such usage is consistent with Bailey’s statement, “for all are disciples from the humblest aspirant up to, and beyond, the Christ Himself.”²² The first principle of interpretation, which was described earlier, regards *Revelation* as portraying the experiences of a typical disciple, so the pronoun *me* in verse 1 denotes such a person. Consequently, the first phrase, “And he shewed me,” has this meaning: The Master shows the disciple how to do something.

The next part of the verse mentions “a pure river,” which seems to be based on Genesis 2:10: “And a river went out of Eden to water the garden.” According to the second principle of interpretation, which was also described earlier, the pure river symbolizes an aspect of the disciple. St. John of the Cross (1542 – 1591), a Spanish mystic, poet, and Doctor of the Roman Catholic Church, considers the pure river to be “the inmost love of God.”²³ John Gill (1697 – 1771), the first major Baptist theological writer, provides a similar meaning: “by this river is meant the everlasting love of

God, which may be compared to a river for its largeness and abundance, its height and depth, its length and breadth.”²⁴ Consequently, let us take the pure river to be the river of God’s love.

Why is this river said to consist of “water of life”? Gill gives this answer:

it may be called a river “of water of life”, because in the present state of things it quickens such who are dead in trespasses and sins; revives the saints when dead and lifeless, supports their spirits, and is a cordial that preserves from fainting; it keeps and secures from dying the second death and is the spring and source of eternal life; and that itself will last and flow for ever, it is ever running water, it is everlasting love.²⁵

Why is this river said to be “clear as crystal”? Gill gives this answer:

it may be said to be pure and clear as crystal, it being free from all hypocrisy and dissimulation, being real, hearty, and sincere.²⁶

At this point, it is useful to make a key distinction. Blavatsky writes, “‘The Christ of esoteric science’ is the *Christos* of Spirit—an impersonal principle entirely distinct from any carnalised Christ or Jesus.”²⁷ Bailey makes the same distinction:

A clear distinction should be made between the Christ Principle as indicated above, which is a high spiritual aspect to which each member of humanity must attain, and the same term applied to a personage of exalted rank representing that Principle, whether in the historical reference to the Man of Nazareth or otherwise.²⁸

“Jesus of Nazareth” is mentioned in Mark 14:67 and elsewhere, so “the Man of Nazareth” in the above quotation designates Jesus, who represents but differs from the Christ principle. Blavatsky also writes,

Take Paul, read the little of original that is left of him in the writings attributed to this brave, honest, sincere man, and see whether anyone can find a word therein to show that Paul meant by the word Christ anything

more than the abstract ideal of the personal divinity indwelling in man.²⁹

For example, Paul, in Colossians 1:27, refers to the Christ principle as “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Verse 1’s final phrase mentions the “Lamb,” but what does it signify? John 1:36 reports an onlooker’s reaction to Jesus: “And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!” In this account, the title “Lamb of God” could be intended for either Jesus or the Christ principle that he represents. Cayce mentions “the Lamb—or the mind, spiritual,”³⁰ and the Rose Cross Order says, “the ‘Lamb’ is the Universal Christ-Principle,”³¹ so the “Lamb” in verse 1 is taken as the Christ principle.

It is useful to make another key distinction: between *invocation*, which is the act of petitioning for help or support from a higher entity; and *evocation*, which is the subsequent response of help. Bailey clarifies these two activities:

The lesser aspect is ever the invoking factor, and this constitutes an unalterable law lying behind the entire evolutionary process. It is necessarily a reciprocal process, but in time and space it might be broadly said that the lesser ever invokes the higher, and higher factors are then evoked and respond according to the measure of understanding and the dynamic tension displayed by the invoking element. This many fail to realise. You do not work at the evocative process. That word simply connotes the response of that which has been reached. The task of the lesser aspect or group is invocative, and the success of the invocative rite is called evocation.³²

Verse 1’s final phrase portrays the pure river as “proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.” *Smith’s Bible Dictionary* states, “Similarly, ‘to sit upon the throne’ implied the exercise of regal power.”³³ For example, 1 Kings 16:11 reports: “And it came to pass, when he [Zimri] began to reign, as soon as he sat on his throne, *that* he slew all the house of Baasha.” Both God and the Lamb must be ex-

ercising regal power over the flow of the river, because they are depicted as sharing the same throne out of which the river proceeds. What are their respective roles?

Bailey mentions “the evocation of Love,”³⁴ and her Great Invocation contains the passage, “From the point of Love within the Heart of God, Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.”³⁵ Consequently, the river of love comes as an evocation from God.

John Bunyan (1628 – 1688), the author of the celebrated Christian allegory *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, clarifies the role of the Lamb:

Mark you, here is again a throne; the throne of God, ... out of which, as you read, proceeds a river, a river of water of life, clear as crystal. And the joining of the Lamb also here with God is to show that it comes, I say, from God, by the Lamb; by Christ, who as a lamb or sacrifice for sin, is the procuring cause of the running of this river; it proceeded out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.³⁶

In Bunyan’s words, “the Lamb ... is the procuring cause of the running of this river.” John 1:29 mentions, “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Given that the river signifies God’s love, these two statements are equivalent, because procuring God’s love takes away the sense of sin. Both *procure* and *invoke* can have the same meaning, namely, “bring about,”³⁷ so the Lamb can be regarded as ruling through the invocative process. Given that God rules through the evocative process and the Lamb rules through the invocative process, verse 1’s final phrase, which portrays both God and the Lamb as sharing the same throne, signifies that both evocation and invocation control the flow of the river. In Bunyan’s words, “it comes, I say, from God, by the Lamb,” which means that the river comes as an evocation from God, but it is procured by an invocation based on the Christ principle.

Before considering the invocative process in detail, let us introduce some specialized terminology. According to Theosophy, the universe consists of seven worlds that are often called

“planes” and have the following names: 1) divine; 2) monadic; 3) spiritual; 4) buddhic, or intuitional; 5) mental; 6) emotional, or astral; and 7) physical.³⁸ These planes are arranged metaphorically in an upper and lower manner. For example, the mental, emotional, and physical planes, which are called “the world of phenomena,”³⁹ are the three lowest planes; and the spiritual through physical planes, which are called “the five planes of human evolution,”⁴⁰ are the five lowest planes.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 – 1882), a popular American essayist and poet, describes the general precept on which the invocative task is based: “Since everything in nature answers to a moral power, if any phenomenon remains brute and dark, it is that the corresponding faculty in the observer is not yet active.”⁴¹ Bailey clarifies the same precept:

We see what we are ourselves; we become aware of that in other forms which is developed in ourselves. We fail to see aspects of life because as yet in ourselves, those aspects are undeveloped and latent. To illustrate: we fail to see the divine in our brother because as yet the divine in ourselves is uncontacted and unknown.⁴²

Bailey makes a related statement: “Through separation he finds himself, and then—driven by the indwelling buddhic or Christ principle—transcends himself, and finds himself again in all selves.”⁴³ This statement has two important implications: first, the Christ principle exists on the buddhic plane; and second, the disciple, when driven by the indwelling Christ principle, recognizes the Christ principle in everyone, thereby illustrating Emerson’s precept. Bailey gives a related definition:

Spiritual vision or true perception. This type of vision opens up the world of the in-

tuitional or buddhic plane, and takes its possessor beyond the abstract levels of the mental plane.⁴⁴

Recognizing the Christ principle in someone entails true perception, because the Christ principle exists on the buddhic plane. In addition,

such perception is based on Emerson’s precept, because one must have an active Christ principle before being able to recognize it in another.

Bailey, however, mentions the difficulty of achieving true perception: “Men are still so ignorant of the ‘reality which shines under the envelope which envelops it’—as the *Old Commentary* calls it—that true perception is difficult and at first well-nigh impossible.”⁴⁵

Why is true perception so difficult? Bailey mentions “the release of the faculty of spiritual perception and of intuitive understanding, which involves the negation of the activity of the lower or concrete mind, of the lower personal self.”⁴⁶ Consequently, we can have true perception of a person only if we renounce the activities of our lower concrete mind, which include our memories and judgments of that person’s behavior.

How can true perception be invoked? Bailey describes the needed effort:

The task ... is in truth the planned and conscious effort to project the focussed thought of the spiritual man from the lower mental plane into areas of awareness which have been *sensed but not contacted*; it entails using the totality of the awareness already developed ... and (with deliberation) making it increasingly sensitive to the focussed activity of the world of the higher spiritual realities.⁴⁷

She also gives a shorter description of the same effort: “This involves a consequent mov-

ing of the point of individual focus out of the world of phenomena into the world of reality.”⁴⁸ Paul, in Colossians 3:2, seems to describe the same effort: “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Accordingly, through the power to choose the focus of our perception, we invoke true perception by refusing to look upon our memories and judgments of a person, so that all we seek to see is the Christ principle in that person.

Let us distinguish between *descriptive writing*, which creates images of places and people, and *instructional writing*, which teaches how to do something.⁴⁹ Verse 1, even though it is in the form of descriptive writing, depicts the instruction that the Master gives to a typical disciple, who represents the reader, namely, *you*. For clarity, this article presents the meaning of verse 1, as well as the meaning of the subsequent verses, in the form of instructional writing that addresses the recipient as *you*.

Consequently, the overall meaning of verse 1 is presented in this manner: *The Master shows you how to bring forth the river of God’s love, which takes away the sense of trespass and sin, and is free from hypocrisy and dissimulation. Your invocation of true perception is to shift the focus of your perception so that all you seek to see is the Christ principle in someone else. God’s evocative response is to transmit the river of love to you, which activates your Christ principle so that you can recognize it in someone else.*

Bailey provides a corroborating account:

The harmony (which the Principle of Conflict produces) causes an alignment, so that the love—streaming forth from the Heart of God—enters the hearts of men.⁵⁰

The last phrase, “so that the love—streaming forth from the Heart of God—enters the hearts of men,” is God’s evocative response. What about the first phrase, “The harmony (which the Principle of Conflict produces)”?

Bailey mentions “the plane of essential harmony, the buddhic plane,”⁵¹ and says, “It is the Principle of Conflict, latent in every atom of substance, which produces, first of all, conflict, then renunciation, and finally emancipation.”⁵² Thus,

the first phrase could signify the invocation of true perception, because this invocation is increased sensitivity to buddhic harmony, which the Principle of Conflict produces through the renunciation of memories and judgments.

ACIM also provides a corroborating account:

Perception has a focus. It is this that gives consistency to what you see. Change but this focus, and what you behold will change accordingly. Your vision now will shift, to give support to the intent which has replaced the one you held before. Remove your focus on your brother’s sins, and you experience the peace that comes from faith in sinlessness. This faith receives its only sure support from what you see in others past their sins. For their mistakes, if focused on, are witnesses to sins in you. And you will not transcend their sight and see the sinlessness that lies beyond.

Nor do we ask for fantasies. For what we seek to look upon is really there. And as our focus goes beyond mistakes, we will behold a wholly sinless world. When seeing this is all we want to see, when this is all we seek for in the name of true perception, are the eyes of Christ inevitably ours. And the Love He feels for us becomes our own as well. This will become the only thing we see reflected in the world and in ourselves.⁵³

The first quoted paragraph provides instruction on invoking true perception. Let us consider the elements in the second quoted paragraph: to “behold a wholly sinless world” is equivalent to recognizing the Christ principle in everyone; “when this is all we seek for in the name of true perception” is when we invoke true perception; “are the eyes of Christ inevitably ours” is equivalent to the activation of our Christ principle; “And the Love He feels for us becomes our own as well” is the evocation of the river of God’s love; and “This will become the only thing we see reflected in the world and in ourselves” shows that true perception is based on Emerson’s precept. Therefore, *ACIM* supplies detailed confirmation of the meaning given for verse 1.

2. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Before considering the overall meaning of verse 2, let us study its principal symbol: “the tree of life.” What are the characteristics of this tree? Genesis 2:9 says that God acted upon it to make it grow:

And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 3:22 says that the tree of life bestows immortality:

And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.

The tree of life also appears in extra-biblical sources. 4 Maccabees 18:16, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), associates this tree with doing God’s will: “There is a tree of life for those who do his will.” 2 Esdras 8:51–52 (NRSV) associates this tree with establishing goodness and perfecting wisdom:

⁵¹ But think of your own case, and inquire concerning the glory of those who are like yourself, ⁵² because it is for you that paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the age to come is prepared, plenty is provided, a city is built, rest is appointed, goodness is established and wisdom perfected beforehand.

2 Enoch 8:2-4 states that the tree of life has the form of fire:

² And I saw the trees in full flower. And their fruits were ripe and pleasant-smelling, with every food in yield and giving off profusely a pleasant fragrance. ³ And in the midst (of them was) the tree of life; at that place where the LORD takes a rest when he goes into paradise. And that tree is indescribable for pleasantness and fine fra-

grance, and more beautiful than any (other) created thing that exists. ⁴ And from every direction it has the appearance which is gold-looking and crimson, and with the form of fire.⁵⁴

Two classic Hindu scriptures describe the tree of life as *upside down*: the *Katha Upanishad* says, “Rooted above, with branches below, is this immemorial Tree”;⁵⁵ and the *Bhagavad Gita* likewise says, “Rooted above, downward-branching, they say, is that immemorial tree.”⁵⁶ Bailey similarly says, “It is well known that the tree of life is depicted with the roots above and the flowering leaves downwards,”⁵⁷ and gives this explanation:

Upon the Path of Initiation, the monadic will (of which the egoic will is the reflection and the individual self-will is the distortion) is gradually transmitted ... direct to the man upon the physical plane. This produces the higher correspondence of those qualities so glibly spoken of by the well-trained but dense esotericist—transmutation and transformation. The result is the assimilation of the individual will and the egoic will into the purpose of the Monad which is the purpose—undeviating and unalterable—of the One in Whom we live and move and have our being. This is the field of the true burning, for our “God is a consuming Fire.” This is the burning bush or the burning tree of life of Biblical symbolism.⁵⁸

According to the above quotation, the tree of life signifies the projection of the monadic will. This tree is upside down, because its root, which is the Monad, is on the monadic plane, which is above the five planes of human evolution, but its branches consist of the projection that extends down into the planes of human evolution.

The above quotation uses the adjective “burning” three times to characterize the monadic will, thereby emphasizing that it has “the purificatory nature of fire.”⁵⁹ 2 Enoch 8:2-4 similarly states that the tree of life has the form of fire. Bailey mentions “the love and wisdom aspect of the Monad.”⁶⁰ 2 Esdras 8:51–52 similarly associates the tree of life with establish-

ing goodness and perfecting wisdom. Bailey says, “The monad expresses the same purpose as it exists, unified in the Mind of God Himself,”⁶¹ so the monadic purpose is an expression of God’s purpose. 4 Maccabees 18:16 similarly associates the tree of life with doing God’s will. Bailey refers to the Monad as “the immortal part of man,”⁶² and Genesis 3:22 similarly says that the tree of life bestows immortality. Bailey says, “The Monad, acted upon by the Heavenly Man, intelligently forms his ring-pass-not,”⁶³ and Genesis 2:9 similarly says that God acted upon the tree of life to make it grow. Consequently, identifying the tree of life as the downward projection of the monadic will is consistent with all earlier citations of this tree.

A term in the above quotation needs to be clarified. *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. In Theosophy, the *ego* is synonymous with the higher self, real man, soul, or what the Bible calls “the angel of his presence” (Isaiah 63:9),⁶⁴ so the “egoic will” in the above quotation denotes the will of the higher self.

We are ready to consider each phrase of verse 2. The first phrase is: “In the midst of the street of it.” Revelation 21:21, which is part of the preceding chapter, mentions “the street of the city,” so the pronoun “it” in the first phrase must refer to the city. According to the second principle of interpretation, “the street of the city” symbolizes an aspect of the disciple, but what could that be? The *Dictionary of Bible Imagery* gives this meaning:

As a setting in the Bible the street first of all symbolizes open communication and widespread exposure. It is the place immediately outside the privacy and insulation of the home (Genesis 19:2; Judges 19:20; Job 31:32; cf. Proverbs 22:13). To be in the street or the city square is to be instantly accessible, visually and audibly, to the

masses. It is the location for public meetings (Ezra 10:9; Nehemiah 8:1; Job 29:7), public ministries (Luke 13:26; Acts 5:15) and public occasions of honor (Esther 6:9; cf. Matthew 6:2, 5).⁶⁵

Thus, “the street of the city” signifies the disciple’s communication and interaction with the public or people in general. The second phrase is: “and on either side of the river.” The pure river signifies the river of God’s love, as before, so portraying the pure river as flowing along the street of the city has this meaning: the disciple shares God’s love while communicating and interacting with people in general.

Verse 2’s third phrase is: “*was there* the tree of life.” Given that the tree grows in the midst of the street along the river and that the tree signifies the Monad’s projection of its will, the overall picture has this meaning: when the disciple shares God’s love while communicating and interacting with people in general, the Monad projects its will. In other words, verse 2’s invocation is to share God’s love with everyone encountered. *ACIM* illustrates this invocation by saying, “I bless you, brother, with the Love of God, which I would share with you.”⁶⁶ The corresponding evocation is the Monad’s downward projection of its will.

Bailey provides a corroborating account:

More and more people will be living as souls and therefore expressing love, and for them the nature of life and of monadic experience will constitute the normal next revelation—one that is, however, possible only to those who do attempt to live as souls, who cultivate love or the sense of non-separateness.⁶⁷

In this case, the invocation is to “attempt to live as souls, who cultivate love,” and the corresponding evocation is “the nature of life and of monadic experience.”

Let us consider the remaining symbols in verse 2, starting with the number *twelve*. There were twelve tribes of Israel (Genesis 49:28), twelve priests bearing the ark (Joshua 3:12-13), twelve administrative districts in Solomon’s government (1 Kings 4:7), twelve apostles

chosen by Jesus (Matthew 10:1), and twelve legions of angels that God could send (Matthew 26:53). Robert Johnston, in *Numbers in the Bible*, concludes:

Twelve is the numeral of manifest sovereignty. It speaks of the administration of Divine government on the earth. Because it is Divine government it is perfect government.⁶⁸

What are the “twelve *manner of fruits*” that the tree of life is said to yield? The Bible sometimes uses the word *fruit* to symbolize the effect of purification. For example, Luke 3:8 states, “Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance”; and Hebrews 12:11 states, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.” Accordingly, the fruits in verse 2 signify the purificatory effects yielded by the Monad’s projection of its will. Given that the number *twelve* signifies divine government on the earth, “twelve *manner of fruits*” signifies that the overall purificatory effect is the manifestation of divine government. The tree of life is also said to have “yielded her fruit every month,” which indicates that the purification occurs progressively as a series.

Bailey provides a corroborating account. Her earlier quotation, which explains the meaning of the tree of life, describes the overall purificatory effect as “the assimilation of the individual will and the egoic will into the purpose of the Monad.” Given her earlier statement that the monadic purpose is an expression of God’s purpose, the overall purificatory effect is the manifestation of divine government, because the manifested life is governed by an expression of God’s purpose.

What are “the leaves of the tree”? Our attempt to allegorize this phrase is based on both the second principle of interpretation, according to which these leaves symbolize aspects of the disciple, and the third principle of interpretation, according to which some metaphors signify the insights of yoga science.

Yoga science regards the physical body of a human being as having 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,⁶⁹ and *prana mayakosha*, a Sanskrit name, in yoga science.⁷⁰ The Sanskrit word *chakra* literally means wheel. Yoga science describes seven wheels of energy, called chakras, that belong to the etheric body and 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—anahata chakra
5. Solar plexus centre—manipura chakra
6. Sacral or sexual centre—svadhisthana chakra
7. Centre at base of spine—muladhara chakra.⁷¹

In verse 2, the “leaves” denote these chakras, because yoga science depicts each chakra as a lotus with a varying number of petals, or leaves,⁷² so the entire phrase, “the leaves of the tree,” depicts the Monad as projecting its will downward to act through these chakras on the physical plane. Bailey corroborates this depiction by describing the Monad’s effect on these energy centers: “In this we have the secret of the gradual vibratory quickening of the centres as the Ego first comes into control, or activity, and later (after initiation) the Monad, thus bringing about changes and increased vitality within these spheres of fire or of pure life force.”⁷³

Verse 2’s final phrase says, “the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.” Given that “the leaves of the tree” signify the vibratory quickening of the chakras, the final phrase indicates that such quickening is for healing. Bailey corroborates this indication by relating the condition of the chakras to healing:

The response of the etheric vehicle of all forms and its capacity to appropriate, to utilize, and to transmit are dependent upon the condition of the centres, of the chakras, as they are called in the East ... It is dependent also upon the quality of the etheric ve-

hicle, upon its aliveness, and also upon the interlacing network in which the centres have their place, and which in its entirety is called ‘the web’ or the ‘golden bowl’. If this is clear of impediments and of sediment, and if its channels are not clogged then the circulating rays, energies and forces can find an easy medium and can circulate unimpeded throughout the entire body. They can then utilise those centres which are responsive to their vibrations, and can be passed on and through to forms in other or the same kingdoms in nature.⁷⁴

The “golden bowl” is how Ecclesiastes 12:6 refers to the etheric body, and the “kingdoms in nature” include the mineral, vegetable, animal, and human kingdoms.⁷⁵ The “nations” in verse 2 are taken to be what the above quotation calls “other or the same kingdoms in nature,” because the word *nation* can be a synonym for *kingdom*.⁷⁶

By using the preceding significances and the form of instructional writing, the overall meaning of verse 2 can be expressed in this way: *Your next invocation is to share God’s love with everyone whom you encounter. The Monad’s evocative response is to project its will downward, which yields a series of purifications that progressively manifest divine purpose, and which quickens the vibration of your chakras so that they can heal the human and lower kingdoms in nature.*

Verses 1 and 2, however, have a more profound meaning than what has been discussed, because they are concerned with an inner bridge denoted by the Sanskrit name *antahkarana*, for which Bailey gives this definition: “Technically, and upon the Path of Discipleship, this bridge between the personality in its three aspects and the monad and its three aspects is called the antahkarana.”⁷⁷ Here, “the personality in its three aspects” refers to the mental, emotional, and physical bodies. Bailey explains how the antahkarana is built:

There must be a long period of gradual approach of the two aspects of the bridge—the higher, emanating ... in response to monadic impulse, and the lower, emanating

from the personality, aided by the soul—across the chasm of the separating mind. Finally, contact between that which the Monad projects and that which the disciple is projecting is made ... The bridge is now built.⁷⁸

“That which the disciple is projecting” denotes verse 1’s invocation, in which he or she projects the point of individual focus out of the world of phenomena into the world of reality. This projection goes upward, because the world of phenomena consists of the three lowest planes, and the world of reality consists of higher planes. “That which the Monad projects” denotes verse 2’s evocation, and it goes downward, because the tree of life is upside down. These two projections are instigated from the end points of the prospective bridge, move in opposite directions towards each other, and gradually merge to form the bridge. James 4:8 describes a similar process: “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” Thus, verses 1 and 2 portray the work of building the antahkarana.

Bailey characterizes the stage of consciousness that occurs through building the antahkarana:

The stage wherein the consciousness shifts completely out of the lower personality and becomes the true spiritual consciousness, centered in the real man, the ego or soul. This brings in the consciousness of the Christ nature which is love, peace and truth. He can say now “I have reached my goal. Nothing remains to attract me in the three worlds.” Desire for happiness is satisfied.⁷⁹

In the above quotation, the “Christ nature” is equivalent to what was called earlier the “Christ principle.” Paul, in Colossians 3:9–11, describes a related shift in consciousness:

⁹ Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; ¹⁰ And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: ¹¹ Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all.

Here, “the old man with his deeds” seems to depict consciousness polarized in the personality; “the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” seems to depict spiritual consciousness centered in the higher self; and “Christ *is* all, and in all” seems to depict the recognition of the Christ principle in everyone. Accordingly, Colossians 3:9–11 describes the inner transformation produced by the antahkarana. By means of the first phrase, “Lie not one to another,” Paul tells the Colossians that their transformation has only been temporary and needs to be stabilized.

3. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him.

Verses 1 and 2, which portray the work of building the antahkarana, depict two processes of invocation and two processes of evocation. Bailey describes the next logical step:

Stabilisation. This is brought about by long patient use of the four previous processes and followed by a conscious use of the antahkarana.⁸⁰

Let us note that verses 1 and 2 use the past tense, whereas verses 3, 4, and 5 use the future tense. Given that *Revelation* is an allegorical narrative, what is the meaning of this change in tense? Our explanation is that verses 3, 4, and 5 use the “future continuous tense,” which is “used when we talk about an activity that will continue over a period of time from now into the future.”⁸¹ The use of this tense depicts how to carry out the step of stabilization: after applying verses 1 and 2 to transform your consciousness in the present, stabilize your transformation so that it continues from the present into the future. *ACIM* describes the same method of stabilization:

From new perception of the world there comes a future very different from the past. The future now is recognized as but extension of the present. Past mistakes can cast no shadows on it, so that fear has lost its idols and its images, and being formless, it has no effects. Death will not claim the future now, for life is now its goal, and all the

needed means are happily provided. Who can grieve or suffer when the present has been freed, extending its security and peace into a quiet future filled with joy?⁸²

Consequently, this article analyzes the symbols in verses 3, 4, and 5 in the following manner: the nouns depict the transformation of the present, which is brought about by the two earlier verses; and the future continuous tense depicts the step of stabilization that occurs—in the words of the above quotation—“when the present has been freed, extending its security and peace into a quiet future filled with joy.”

Verse 3 consists of three independent clauses. The first clause, “And there shall be no more curse,” indicates that there had been a curse. The word *curse* can mean, “something that brings or causes great trouble or harm.”⁸³ Thus, Genesis 3:23–24 portrays God as cursing Adam in the sense of casting him out of the Garden of Eden:

²³ Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. ²⁴ So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Joel Goldsmith (1892 – 1964), an American spiritual author and teacher, explains the allegorical meaning of this curse:

All discord, all inharmony, and all error are experienced because of a sense of separation from God. But this sense of separation from God is not your fault personally. It is the universal belief that has come down to us from the allegorical experience of Adam and Eve being cast out of the Garden of Eden.⁸⁴

Accordingly, the curse in Genesis 3:23–24 is an allegory that signifies a sense of separation from God. *ACIM* says that this sense of separation is the only lack that really needs correction:

A sense of separation from God is the only lack you really need correct. This sense of separation would never have arisen if you

had not distorted your perception of truth, and had thus perceived yourself as lacking. The idea of order of needs arose because, having made this fundamental error, you had already fragmented yourself into levels with different needs.⁸⁵

Consequently, “there shall be no more curse” means that the disciple will not have a sense of separation from God, which in turn means that he or she will not have a sense of having lacks or needs.

The middle clause is: “but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.” As before, “the throne of God and of the Lamb” signifies the power of both invocation and evocation. Given that the pronoun “it” denotes the river of God’s love, the middle clause explains why the disciple will not feel cursed: the power of both invocation and evocation will bring forth the river of God’s love.

Verses 1 and 2 also portray the river of God’s love, so how is verse 3’s middle clause different from the previous verses? Verse 1 depicts the method of bringing forth the river of God’s love, and verse 2 depicts the invocation of sharing this river with everyone encountered. Given that verse 3’s middle clause uses the future continuous tense, it portrays the stage in which this river has become a *stable* experience.

Can God’s love remove a sense of separation from God? Paul, in Ephesians 3:19, indicates that such love can do so: “And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” The Amplified Bible clarifies this verse by explaining the meaning of being filled with the fullness of God:

[That you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that you may be filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]!⁸⁶

Verse 3’s final clause is: “and his servants shall serve him.” When considered by itself, this clause does not indicate what the servants will be doing as they serve God. Nevertheless, Martin Culy observes, “From beginning to end, Revelation is a carefully crafted message with later parts continually building on earlier parts.”⁸⁷ Accordingly, let us presume that the meaning of the final clause builds upon the meaning of the earlier proximate parts. Given that verses 1 and 2 portray the work of building the antahkarana, that verse 2’s final phrase depicts the use of chakras for healing, and that verse 3’s middle clause denotes God’s love, our presumption is that verse 3’s final clause has this meaning: the disciple will serve God through using the antahkarana, chakras for healing, and God’s love.

At this point, it is helpful to consider Bailey’s account of radiatory healing. The first portion of her account is the disciple’s application of divine alchemy:

He must study the laws of transmutation and be a student of that divine alchemy which will result in a knowledge of how to transmute the lower force into the higher, of how to transfer his consciousness into the higher vehicles, and of how to manipulate energy currents so that his own nature is transformed.⁸⁸

Accordingly, divine alchemy transfers “consciousness into the higher vehicles,” so it is equivalent to building the antahkarana, because this bridge was characterized earlier as having the same effect. The second portion of her account is the disciple’s radiation of “buddhi,” which is a synonym for “spiritual love,”⁸⁹ from heart chakra to heart chakra:

He will then become a channel for the light of the Ego, and for the illumination of buddhi to pour through for the saving of the race, and the lighting of those who stumble in dark places. He must demonstrate the laws of radioactivity in his own life on the physical plane. His life must begin to radiate, and to have a magnetic effect upon others. By this I mean he will begin to influence that which is imprisoned in others, for

he will reach—through his own powerful vibrations—the hidden centre in each one ... At this stage the man is recognised as one who can speak occultly “heart to heart.” He becomes a stimulator of the heart centre in his brother, and one who arouses men into activity for others.⁹⁰

The foregoing account of radiatory healing satisfies our earlier presumption about verse 3’s final clause, because it involves the antahkarana, chakras, and love, so it is taken as the significance of that clause.

Based on the preceding significances, the overall meaning of verse 3 can be expressed as this instruction: *By stabilizing the transformation brought about by the two earlier verses, you will not be cursed by a sense of separation from God, because the power of both invocation and evocation will bring to you the river of God’s love, which will fill you with the fullness of God; your outward radiation of God’s love from your heart chakra will reach and stimulate the heart chakra in other people, thereby inspiring and arousing them into helpful activity.*

4. And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

Verse 4’s initial word, “And,” indicates that this verse provides additional characteristics that the disciple will have by stabilizing his or her transformation. This verse consists of two independent clauses. The initial clause says, “And they shall see his face,” but what does that mean? Genesis 3:8 uses the expression “the face of Jehovah God” in Young’s Literal Translation:

And they hear the sound of Jehovah God walking up and down in the garden at the breeze of the day, and the man and his wife

hide themselves from the face of Jehovah God in the midst of the trees of the garden.

The same verse, however, uses the corresponding expression “the presence of the LORD God” in the KJV:

And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

Accordingly, seeing the face of God signifies experiencing the presence of God. Whereas Genesis 3:8 portrays Adam and Eve as hiding from the presence of God, verse 4’s first clause indicates that the disciple will experience that presence,

but what must he or she do to have such an experience?

Bailey writes: “We are learning that that Presence [of God] can be released in us only by the death of the lower nature, and this is what Christ has always proclaimed to us from His Cross.”⁹¹ Here, “the death of the lower nature” is like an earlier description of using the antahkarana: “the consciousness shifts completely out of the lower personality.” Consequently, verses 1 and 2 bring the experience of the presence of God through the work of building the antahkarana, so verse 4’s step of stabilization extends that experience into the future.

Verse 4’s final clause mentions the “name” of God. According to the second principle of interpretation, God’s name signifies an aspect of the disciple, but what could it be? John McKenzie writes, “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.”⁹² For example, 1 Samuel 25:25 says: “for as his

All discord, all inharmony, and all error are experienced because of a sense of separation from God. But this sense of separation from God is not your fault personally. It is the universal belief that has come down to us from the allegorical experience of Adam and Eve being cast out of the Garden of Eden.

name *is*, so *is* he.” Tim LaHaye observes, “In the Bible, a name reveals the nature of the person.”⁹³ For example, the Bible uses a change in the personal name to indicate a change in the person’s nature, such as the change from Jacob to Israel (Genesis 32:28). Consistent with such usage, *A Commentary on the Book of the Revelation* interprets *name* as “nature,”⁹⁴ so God’s name signifies the divine nature.

The final clause also mentions “foreheads,” but what is their significance? The Bible indicates that the human face reflects character and expresses emotions. For example, Isaiah 3:9 says, “The shew of their countenance doth witness against them”; and Daniel 5:6 says, “Then the king’s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him.”

The Bible also depicts the specific relationship between the condition of one’s forehead and one’s consciousness. For example, Jeremiah 3:3 says, “thou hadst a whore’s forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.” Here, the condition of the forehead reflects the lack of shame. As another example, “hard forehead” appears in the NRSV translation of Ezekiel 3:7, but it is rendered as “impudent” in the KJV translation. In this case, the hard condition of the forehead reflects impudence.

Verse 4’s final clause is: “and his name *shall be* in their foreheads.” Given that “his name” signifies the divine nature, and that the disciple’s forehead reflects his or her consciousness while he or she is experiencing the presence of God, the clause has this meaning: the disciple’s countenance will reflect his or her consciousness of the divine nature. Perhaps the disciple will be like Jesus when he was transfigured, as described in Matthew 17:2: “his face did shine as the sun.”

ACIM describes the effect on others from having such a countenance:

In this world you can become a spotless mirror, in which the Holiness of your Creator shines forth from you to all around you. You can reflect Heaven here ... Could you but realize for a single instant the power of healing that the reflection of God, shining in you, can bring to all the world, you could

not wait to make the mirror of your mind clean to receive the image of the holiness that heals the world. The image of holiness that shines in your mind is not obscure, and will not change. Its meaning to those who look upon it is not obscure, for everyone perceives it as the same. All bring their different problems to its healing light, and all their problems find but healing there.⁹⁵

Consequently, the overall meaning of verse 4 can be expressed as this instruction: *And you will experience the presence of God, and your countenance will reflect your consciousness of the divine nature.*

5. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Verse 5 can be divided into five phrases so that each phrase has an associated tense. The KJV translation, given above, renders some phrases with the future tense but other phrases with the present tense. In contrast, the New American Standard Bible, which scholars generally regard as the most accurate, word-for-word translation into modern English that has ever been produced,⁹⁶ renders all phrases in this verse with the future tense, so our conclusion is that the original language also renders all phrases with the future tense. As discussed earlier, we consider the future tense in verses 3, 4, and 5 to be itself a symbol that has this meaning: these verses portray the step of stabilization.

Verse 5’s initial word, “And,” indicates that this verse provides additional characteristics that the disciple will have by stabilizing his or her transformation. In the initial phrase, “And there shall be no night there,” what is the significance of “night”? The Bible often equates night and darkness, such as in Psalm 139:12, “Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; But the night shineth as the day”; or in Romans 13:12, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” William Read, in *Lectures on the Revelation*, observes:

Night is a symbol of ignorance. In the darkness, men stumble over every obstacle; they fall into every pit; they mistake friends for foes and foes for friends; they can see no difference between beauty and deformity. Therefore, night is an appropriate symbol of ignorance.⁹⁷

Thus, in the Bible, both night and darkness could signify ignorance. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 13:12, corroborates this significance by using a related word, “darkly,” to characterize our present ignorance: “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” Accordingly, the first phrase means that the disciple will be free of ignorance.

In this context, what is *ignorance*? Bailey writes, “This condition of ignorance, or the ‘state of avidya’ is characteristic of all those who as yet do not discriminate between the real and unreal, between death and immortality, and between light and darkness.”⁹⁸ Here, *avidya* is a Sanskrit word whose literal meaning is ignorance. *ACIM* indicates how to gain freedom from ignorance: “The bridge that leads to union in yourself *must* lead to knowledge.”⁹⁹ Here, the “bridge” refers to the antahkarana, and “knowledge” is the opposite of ignorance. Consequently, verses 1 and 2 bring freedom from ignorance through the work of building the antahkarana, so verse 5’s step of stabilization extends that freedom into the future.

In the second phrase, “and they need no candle,” what is the significance of “candle”? Let us consider two examples of how this word is used elsewhere in the Bible. Psalm 18:28 states: “For thou wilt light my candle: The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.” Warren Wiersbe gives this explanation:

Western poetry is often based on rhyme, but not so Eastern poetry. It is based primarily on what we call “parallelism”; that is, the relationship of the lines to each other. In *synonymous* parallelism, the second line restates the first.¹⁰⁰

Psalm 18:28 is an instance of synonymous parallelism: “light my candle” is equivalent to “enlighten my darkness,” so the unlit candle represents the abiding place of darkness. Darkness symbolizes ignorance, as before. Therefore, the candle can be inferred as signifying the intellect, because, in the words of Charles Ives, “Ignorance ... is a disease of the intellect alone.”¹⁰¹

As the second example, Proverbs 20:27 states: “The spirit of man *is* the candle of the LORD, Searching all the inward parts of the belly.” Joe Temple provides this explanation:

Let us search and try our ways with the same candles that God uses when He wants to reveal to us what we are. What is that candle? The intellect as it is illuminated by the Word of the living God ... When God uses the Word of God in connection with your human spirit, causing your intellect to respond to the truth of the Word, the search is made thorough.¹⁰²

Accordingly, “the candle of the LORD” can be inferred as signifying “the intellect as it is illuminated by the Word of the living God.” Bailey similarly mentions the stage “Wherein the intellect is illumined by the light of the soul.”¹⁰³

The candle, when lit, is a small fire. Bailey says, “Fire is the symbol of the intellect,”¹⁰⁴ which corroborates the foregoing inferences that the candle signifies the intellect. If this significance were valid for verse 5, then “they need no candle” would mean that they do not rely on the intellect. This significance appears to be valid, because it supports the overall meaning of verse 5, which Bailey describes as follows: “the super-conscious divine man then transcends his limited self-consciousness and the intuition supersedes the intellect.”¹⁰⁵

The third phrase, “neither light of the sun,” is like the prophecy in Joel 2:31: “The sun shall be turned into darkness.” According to Acts 2:14-20, the apostle Peter quoted this verse from Joel on the day of Pentecost, because he believed that the apostles’ experience during that day fulfilled Joel’s prophecy. Acts 2:4

gives this account of the apostles' experience: "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Thus, the apostles heard and followed their inner guidance, referred to as the Holy Ghost or Spirit, rather than rely on various teachers and teachings.

In the Bible, the sun and stars, which shine bright with visible light, are sometimes figures of speech that represent teachers, who shine bright with mental or spiritual illumination. For example, Daniel 12:3 (Amplified Bible) states:

And the teachers *and* those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness (to uprightness and right standing with God) [shall give forth light] like the stars forever and ever.

The sun turns into darkness when its light is blocked during a solar eclipse. Figuratively, teachers turn into darkness, which means that their influence is blocked, when their students no longer rely on them or their teachings. Consequently, the prophecy in Joel 2:31, "The sun shall be turned into darkness," was fulfilled during the day of Pentecost, because the "sun" is a metaphor for teachers and because of the apostles' lack of reliance on teachers and their teachings. Similarly, "neither light of the sun," which is the third phrase, also signifies the lack of reliance on teachers and their teachings.

Blavatsky quotes Lord Buddha as encouraging a similar lack of reliance:

Our Lord Buddha has said that we must not believe in a thing said merely because it is said; nor in traditions because they have been handed down from antiquity; nor rumors, as such; nor writings by sages, because sages wrote them; nor fancies that we may suspect to have been inspired in us by a deva (that is, in presumed spiritual inspiration); nor from inferences drawn from some haphazard assumption we may have made; nor because of what seems an analogical necessity; nor on the mere authority of our teachers or masters. But we are to believe

when the writing, doctrine, or saying is corroborated by our own reason and consciousness.¹⁰⁶

In the fourth phrase, "for the Lord God giveth them light," what is the significance of "light"? Paul, in Ephesians 1:17, says, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." Both wisdom and revelation are intuitions, so Paul's statement implies that God gives intuitions. Bailey mentions "The light of the intuition,"¹⁰⁷ so we infer that the fourth phrase, "for the Lord God giveth them light," signifies that God gives them the light of the intuition. Bailey corroborates this inference by saying, "the antahkarana ... will bridge the gap between the human consciousness and the spiritual, and make the race eventually as intuitional as it is, today, intellectual."¹⁰⁸

The fifth and final phrase is: "and they shall reign for ever and ever." Bailey provides a related passage that describes the effects of the antahkarana, or inner bridge:

The bridge is now built ... It must perforce be used, because there is now no other medium of intercourse between the initiate and the One Whom he now knows to be himself. He ascends in full consciousness into the sphere of monadic life; he is resurrected from the dark cave of the personality life into the blazing light of divinity; he is no longer only a part of humanity and a member also of the Hierarchy, but he belongs to the great company of Those Whose will is consciously divine and Who are the Custodians of the Plan.¹⁰⁹

To *reign* means "to have control or influence,"¹¹⁰ and a *custodian* is "one that has charge of something,"¹¹¹ so "they shall reign" in verse 5 could be understood as referring to what the above quotation calls "Custodians of the Plan." Here, "Plan," because it is capitalized, signifies the divine plan.

Consequently, the overall meaning of verse 5 can be expressed in this way: *Moreover, you will be free of ignorance and will not rely on your intellect or on teachers and their teach-*

ings. Instead, God will give you the light of the intuition, and you will be a custodian of the divine plan.

Conclusions

As discussed earlier, the futurist approach of interpreting Revelation 22:1-5 yields this prediction: The Garden of Eden will be restored during a posited new age that has not yet come. This prediction, however, remains unfulfilled after about 2000 years, because *Revelation* was written about 2000 years ago. According to several verses in the Old Testament, the standard by which to judge the validity of the source of a given prediction is whether that prediction is fulfilled,¹¹² so this standard casts doubt on the validity of the futurist approach.

In contrast, our view is that *Revelation* is a veiled statement of an esoteric, or hidden, doctrine of early Christians. Accordingly, our commentary shows that Revelation 22:1-5 can be interpreted allegorically in this manner:

1. The Master shows you how to bring forth the river of God's love, which takes away the sense of trespass and sin, and is free from hypocrisy and dissimulation. Your invocation of true perception is to shift the focus of your perception so that all you seek to see is the Christ principle in someone else. God's evocative response is to transmit the river of love to you, which activates your Christ principle so that you can recognize it in someone else.
2. Your next invocation is to share God's love with everyone whom you encounter. The Monad's evocative response is to project its will downward, which yields a series of purifications that progressively manifest divine purpose, and which quickens the vibration of your chakras so that they can heal the human and lower kingdoms in nature.
3. By stabilizing the transformation brought about by the two earlier verses, you will not be cursed by a sense of separation from God, because the power of both invocation and evocation will bring to you the river of

God's love, which will fill you with the fullness of God; your outward radiation of God's love from your heart chakra will reach and stimulate the heart chakra in other people, thereby inspiring and arousing them into helpful activity.

4. And you will experience the presence of God, and your countenance will reflect your consciousness of the divine nature.

5. Moreover, you will be free of ignorance and will not rely on your intellect or on teachers and their teachings. Instead, God will give you the light of the intuition, and you will be a custodian of the divine plan.

Let us conclude this study of *Revelation* by considering its initial 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." Here, *Revelation* provides this important clue: its purpose is to show to "his servants" the experiences that "must shortly come to pass." Our commentary is consistent with this clue, because it interprets Revelation 22:1-5 as portraying the instructions that, when faithfully followed by people living today, must shortly restore the meaning of the Garden of Eden to them. In contrast, the futurist approach of interpreting these verses, which yields a 2000-year-old prediction that a future generation will enjoy the restoration during a posited new age, is inconsistent with the emphasis on immediacy found in the initial verse.

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;¹¹³ chapter 13, which depicts an awesome beast that comes out of the sea and another beast that comes out of the earth;¹¹⁴ and chapter 17, which features a seductive prostitute described as "the great whore that sitteth upon many waters."¹¹⁵

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afraid of him”; 1 Kings 22:28 states, “And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me”; Ezekiel 33:33 states, “And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them”; and Jeremiah 28:9 states, “The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, *then* shall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly sent him.”
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Shiva: Slayer of the Three Cities and the Story of Consciousness

Vijay Srinath Kanchi

The entire gamut of India's scriptural teachings revolves round one central theme: the glory of consciousness as it unfolds and becomes fully blown. Several techniques were devised by the ancient seers that enable human consciousness to attain its pristine, unchanging form. "Wake up!" is the clarion call of the *Upanishads*. Our human consciousness fluctuates in the waking, dreaming and deep sleep states, losing the awareness of the Self and being swayed away by the experiences produced by karmic currents. A master yogi is one who is able to keep his consciousness constant throughout these three states. In fact the *Man-dukya Upanishad*¹ exclusively focuses on the three conscious states and implores us to realize the underlying consciousness. The nature of the prakriti² is change. Change is death — the death of the previous state and beginning of a new state. All the three states of consciousness—waking, dreaming and deep sleep being part of the prakriti, undergo continuous change. Eternal sleep, eternal dream or eternal waking state is not possible. Only the consciousness that underlies these changing states is immutable. Only that is eternal.

Change is another term for unreality. We view our dream experiences as unreal because they do not last long. But as we slip from the waking world into the dream world this world also vanishes. We discard the waking world to cling on to the dream world. From there we slip into deep sleep and leave behind the waking and dream states. At any point in time, we are firmly rooted in any of these three states and the other two are "destroyed" as we continue in a particular state. But even those "temporarily annihilated" states lay merely dormant and come to full life as the consciousness revisits that particular state.

When we ponder over these three states, we realize their ultimate unreality and transitory

nature. But mere intellectual understanding of the unreality of these states does not ground us firmly in the eternal consciousness. The unbroken realization of immutability is to be experienced in all the three states of consciousness—only then the play of maya is completely surmounted.

A yogi realizes his true Self to be the unchanging eternal consciousness that is the bedrock of all other states of experience. Any partial realization of any of these three states as unreal would only lead the practitioner to cling or shift to the other conscious states. When this clinging or shifting continues, maya ensnares the human consciousness in karmic currents of one state or the other. Only an unbroken conscious awareness permeating the three states can liberate us from the clutches of maya. This significant yogic idea is beautifully explained in the allegorical story of Shiva in the tale of "Tripurāsurasamhara" found in the *Matsya Purana*³ and *Shivapurāna*.⁴

At one point in the story, three demons or Asuras, Vidyumali, Tārakaksha and Viryavana, who were the sons of Tarakasura (that which bursts with illumination for a while and vanishes, the characteristic of the three states) worshipped Brahma for a boon to attain immortality. Since eternal waking, dreaming or deep sleep could not be granted, they wanted to ensure their immortality through a clever boon in which they asked to be given three impregnable forts (Tripura) made of gold, silver and iron (deep sleep, dreaming and waking states). These forts could not be

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destroyed unless all three of them were aligned on an axis and were pierced through by a single arrow. An alignment of the three forts is such a rarity that the destruction of all three of them at once would be next to impossible. Brahma granted them the boon, and Davana, or Daitya, called Maya, built the Asuras the forts.

The demons populated the three forts and began to flourish. The three forts were agile and moved in such a way that they would never be in a single line, save for a few moments in a thousand years. When the oppression of the Asuras (delusion) became unbearable, the gods went to Shiva, the Adi yogi⁵ for help. Shiva agreed to destroy Tripura. Viṣvakarma, the architect of the gods, made a suitable chariot, bow and arrow. The chariot was made entirely out of gold. Brahma himself became the charioteer as the gods accompanied Shiva with diverse weapons assisted by Nandi, the bull. The Earth or Prithvi became the chariot with the Sun and Moon its wheels. Mount Meru became the bow and the serpent Vasuki was the bowstring. Vishnu was the arrow, and Agni was the tip of the arrow. Vayu⁶ was inside the feathers on rear of the arrow. All the other Devas had their places and forms in the chariot. Nandi managed to destroy one fort but as he went on for the other, the “dead fort” revived.

Shiva, the master yogi, waited for the opportune moment when the three forts aligned on a single axis. Then he smiled. His very smile destroyed the three forts immediately. In another narrative, Shiva released his Pashupatastra (his most destructive weapon) burning to ashes the three forts of the Asuras. Shiva thus earned Himself the epithet Tripurāntaka—the one who ended Tripura. In Tamil, Lord Shiva has the epithet, “*SirithuPuramerithaP-*

eruman” which means, *He who burnt the cities with a mere smile.*

It is apparent that the three cities of iron, silver and gold are the three worlds of our experience: the material world, the dream world and the dreamless world of deep sleep. They are created by maya or illusion. Nandi, both in Hindu and Buddhist texts, is the subjective ego substance. It can realize the unreality of one state or the other through rational argu-

mentation, but such realization is short lived. Maya with all its glory spurts up again; the subjective ego cannot survive without taking recourse to the inevitable conscious states. Unless the illusoriness in all the three states is destroyed all at once, maya cannot be completely annihilated. The unrefined subjective ego can temporarily detach itself from the physical reality, but it is incapable of destroying the mental conceptual world (dream

world included), and the core unconscious because the subjective ego’s existence is based on its identification with those two. The three cities existed as three disconnected entities just as the three mental states of the untrained and uninitiated. Viewed independently, the states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep are just as real, and we never realize their illusoriness unless we compare them with one another. And as long as we are convinced of their reality, since reality is equal to existence, their existence cannot be effaced. At a very rare moment that might take eons to occur, a sudden “Aha” moment is experienced where we are connected with the unitary identity that runs through these three seemingly disconnected states; but such a moment of epiphany quickly vanishes. The destruction of these three transient states of consciousness and the establishment of the pristine nature is possible only when the yogi decides to take a serious

The nature of the prakriti is change. Change is death—the death of the previous state and beginning of a new state. All three states of consciousness—waking, dreaming and deep sleep being part of the prakriti, undergo continuous change. Eternal sleep, eternal waking state is not possible. Only the consciousness that underlies these changing states is immutable.

approach to align his three states of existence with a unitary awareness by employing:

- Wakeful awareness as the base (Prithvi as the chariot).
- Aminergic/cholinergic systems or perceptual/sensory and conceptual/mental experiences as the wheels (Sun and Moon).
- With the core creative energy that creates our conceptual and perceptual realities controlling the effort (Brahma holding the reins).
- The spinal cord and the brain stem, which secretes the neurotransmitters that regulate moods and most bodily functions, used as the bow (Meru).
- The mysterious but highly extolled kundalini energy as the thrusting force (bow string).
- With firm resilience (Vishnu).
- Focused attention (Agni).
- With controlled vital energies (Vāyu).

Once all this is achieved and the yogi manages to identify himself as the core essence in all the three states being aligned, the illusoriness that is at the foundation of the three realities gets destroyed. The yogi at the peak of his conscious awareness then truly experiences the unreality of the three states, a smile naturally manifests at how he had been befuddled all the while by the delusions of maya

and this very smile of realization destroys the three worlds created by maya! The complete steps and stages during this process of connecting the three states of experience through an unbroken awareness is elaborately described in another work titled “*Tripurā Rahasya*” that is considered to be deeply esoteric by Advaitins.

The ancient Indian seers were master narrators—a seemingly naïve story holds a treasure trove of wisdom.

¹ The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* is the shortest of all the Upanishads, and is assigned to Atharveda. It is listed as number 6 in the Mutika canon of 108 Upanishads.

² Prakriti is the source; material nature in its germinal state, eternal and beyond comprehension.

³ The *Matsya Purana* is one of the eighteen major *Puranas* (Mahapurana), and among the oldest and better preserved in the Puranic genre of Sanskrit literature in [Hinduism](#).

⁴ The *Shiva Purana* is one of the eighteen *Purana* genre of Sanskrit language in [Hinduism](#), and part of the [Shaivism](#) literature corpus. It primarily centers around the Hindu god Shiva and goddess [Parvati](#), but references and reveres all gods.

⁵ The Adi Yogi is the originator of Yoga, or the “first” yogi.

⁶ Vāyu is a primary lord of the winds, the father of Bhima and the spiritual father of Hanuman.

Invoking and Evoking New Beginnings

Ángela Barrera

Again, we are gathered subjectively as a group at the Higher Interlude, the three-month period in the spiritual year known as the Three Linked Festivals, beginning with the Festival of Easter. This is the Festival of Resurrection that follows the winter season when, during the Winter solstice, the seeds of life are vivified in the heart of humanity.

The Jewish Easter, mentioned in chapters XII and XIII of the Book of Exodus, describes the departure of Israelites from Egypt and the forty-year-long march through the Sinai desert toward the Promised Land. For Philo of Alexandria, and for all of the Jews, Easter commemorates the act of leaving slavery in Egypt, but it also represents “the *passage* of the Soul from the world of the senses to the world of reason.”¹

The Christian Easter has been celebrated since the second century and represents the *passage* from sin and death to grace and life through Baptism and the Eucharist. For Clement of Alexandria, Christ himself was Easter, the *passage* or the Way. Ever since, the festival of Easter focuses on Resurrection and signifies crossing or moving beyond to access a new world. If a festival is a cultural event associated with the idea of creation, as some sociologists suggest,² Christian Easter is the symbol of the re-creation of the universe par excellence.

Esoterically, the Festival of Easter is positioned at the first of the cardinal points in the annual cycle of equinoxes and solstices where we find ourselves now, ready to participate consciously in the cyclic spiral-like movement toward the center, the perennial movement of Life flowing forth, through its dawns and dusks. Life manifested is the dance between the pairs of opposites moving cyclically – the dance of Shiva; It is perfection, balance and harmony; It is the Will-to-Good taking up all

possible forms, for there is no smell, color, sound or anything that is not a part of It. Silence and sounds, ends and beginnings, conjugate in the unflagging search for the forms that can express ever more perfectly Beauty and Life; systole and diastole of the cosmic heart of the One in Whom we live, move and have our being. As H. P. Blavatsky reminds us:

Thus, there is a regular circulation of the vital fluid throughout our system, of which the Sun is the heart – the same as the circulation of the blood in the human body — during the manvantaric solar period, or life; the Sun contracting as rhythmically at every return of it, as the human heart does. Only, instead of performing the round in a second or so, it takes the solar blood ten of its years, and a whole year to pass through its *auricles* and *ventricles* before it washes the *lungs* and passes thence to the great veins and arteries of the system.³

This circulation of the vital fluid takes place within the spatial plasma, the coarsest counterpart of a more radiant electric substance usually referred to as *ether* in esoteric literature. It is the active aspect of this ether that brings about the true divine circulatory flow or bloodstream of the unknown cosmic entity. Quantum physics demonstrates that the empty space is actually a thriving “living space” that vibrates following very definite creative and destructive rhythms. This great vibrant energy “emptiness” is known as *ether* in the Tibetan’s teaching: “This word ‘ether’ is a generic term covering the ocean of energies which are all inter-related and which constitute that one synthetic energy body of our planet.”⁴ “Occultly speaking, this is the modern way of expressing ‘the waters of space’, which are the waters of desire, in which we are immersed.”⁵

Terms such as “the waters of space” and “the waters of desire” are ancient, but effec-

tive ways of describing the ether as a creative medium that becomes an active, electric fluid when impregnated by cosmic will and desire. Indeed, we read in Genesis that “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters”, and so began the story of Creation.... Desire, cosmic or mundane, is an animating force and its presence in the universal ether generates motion and results in creativity of some kind. When the will and desire of a cosmic life impregnates the ether, the downward pressure of these cosmic waves fuses specks of ether into electric charges. The cosmic idea is thus propelled into a volatile plasmic state after which it later settles down to further clothe and conceal itself in a garment of gaseous, liquid and physical matter.⁶

Truly, we live in this higher and spiritual ether; we are immersed in its fiery layers.

Cyclic Movement, Desire and the Will

We know that the endless swirling movement generated by desire results in the destruction of outdated forms and the creation of new ones, more apt to respond to the Purpose. Such an idea has been represented in many traditions with the symbol of the wheel, an image that can convey the idea of movement and multiplicity as well as the primordial motionlessness and final synthesis. It also is a symbol of expansion and concentration, of diastole and systole, of aspiration and expiration in the human being and in the universe, the microcosm and the macrocosm, because in the One Life, of which we are a part, circles, spheres, wheels and cycles coexist simultaneously, interrelating and distributing the energy within the divine circulatory flow.

Additionally, we have the symbols of verticality and horizontality. Among the symbols that represent verticality we find the tree (associat-

ed with Life and cyclical generation), the mountain and the human being. We have extracted all our knowledge and culture from a revealed symbolic pattern, the projection of vertical energy as it creates a horizontal plane (a group, a society, a civilization). In its cyclic movement this energy is reintegrated to its original being. The central, vertical axis links a chain of worlds or horizontal planes of manifestation (one of which is our own world or life) to the indefinite arrangement of worlds and lives, of cycles within cycles, thus implying the idea of movement. And it is in this vertical axis where the process of invocative appeal and response happens, the search

and the revelation, penetration and participation. All the forces get gathered in one point of tension that is so invocative that it reaches forward toward the very roots of the axis or tree, the essence. With every step forward we penetrate in a new vertical plane, a new world of being, guided by the Will to be what we already are: *I am that I am*.

“Under cyclic law there are periods of outgoing and of withdrawing, of progressing in service towards the periphery of activity and also of a conscious abstraction of the consciousness from the outer circle and its centering again at the very heart of life.”⁷ There are two powers in that cyclic pulse “that alone can effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavor: a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers.”⁸

Our next step in our endless moving forward is to approach the fifth kingdom, the Kingdom of Souls, “the incandescent surface of matter plunged in God,”⁹ to receive their influence in order to participate more fully in the creative festival so that Life pours forth and nurtures all beings. At the same time, under the Law of Balance or harmony, the outlines of our hori-

... the festival of Easter focuses on Resurrection and signifies crossing or moving beyond to access a new world. If a festival is a cultural event associated with the idea of creation, as some sociologists suggest, Christian Easter is a symbol of the re-creation of the universe par excellence.

zontal plane of manifestation will blur progressively, revealing that it is contained within a larger and more inclusive whole, thus gradually letting us realize that our human lives are part of the great organism of humanity. Humanity, acting as intermediate between the higher and the lower kingdoms, “is today an amazing receiver of impressions, owing to the myriad types of susceptible mechanisms.... Such a group can be in the position of being able to invoke the Spiritual Hierarchy with power if it so chooses.”¹⁰

We can see, therefore, that in addition to desire as the generative factor of movement and creation (for all is created by meditation and by desire¹¹), on a higher turn of the spiral, there is the Will, the fixed and conscious intention to invoke: “focused intention, concentrated meditation, visualization, directed invocation (producing evocation) and leading to responsive results, are the major processes of creation upon all levels and by all beings.”¹²

With our meditation we approach the energies of the higher worlds or planes that originate from our unknown but sensed essence. “The entire Science of Invocation and Evocation is contained in the word ‘meditation.’”¹³ Thanks to meditation, that which cries aloud for lifting awakens the fecundity of that which desires to lift; the energies of the higher worlds or planes in our ancestral and unknown source pour forth, plenty of bliss and beatitude, shedding light on ideas and relationships, bringing to life ever more beautiful forms.

The Spring equinox opens the door to other realities, more effective and less distorted by glamor and illusion. In the lower cycle of each day, as we ascend through the ladder provided by meditation, we can work with the higher powers and recreate with them a new reality if we stand in the center where the vertical merges with the horizontal in synthesis. Meditation produces the inflow of spiritual energy in the etheric centers; this is then circulated through the aura and distributed with wisdom in our environment, like a fragrance. Thus we participate in the divine circulatory flow, echoing the beating of the divine Heart, invoking and evoking. “The planetary wheel of life turns on

its lesser scale the wheel of life of the little pilgrim we call humanity; as it turns, it sweeps the life of the evolving Planetary Logos into ever new forms and experiences until the fire of Spirit burns up all lesser fires.”¹⁴

At the time of the Easter Full Moon, in this beginning of a new cycle, the group, united with massive intention, unfolding the petals of the rose of the heart to love and give, and using the Great Invocation as “a potent solar instrument designed to bring about changes and needed readjustments,”¹⁵ can invoke the energy of the Forces of Restoration that, under the direction of the Masters of Wisdom and the supervision of the Christ, will produce the necessary impetus for the spirit of humanity to resurrect from materialism and fear, and make our way toward Life more abundant. Life expresses itself in movement; It flows incessantly; It is always new. The cycles of Life are woven within a radiant tapestry in space and time. We vibrate with the cosmic heart in an invoking and evocative pulse.

Let us be ready to work as a group to welcome the Spirit of Resurrection and the Forces of Restoration as we transition the *passage* of Easter and enter into a new cycle of opportunity and service.

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¹ Orígenes et. al, *Sobre la Pascua*. *Revista Cielo y Tierra*, Vol. 11 (Barcelona: Arbor Mundi), 99.

² See for example, Waldemar Cudny, *Festivalisation of Urban Spaces* (Switzerland: Springer, 2016).

³ Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 1 (Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 2014), 541.

⁴ Alice A. Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1950), 2.

⁵ Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1934), 275.

⁶ *The Electric Bridge* (https://www.lucistrust.org/the_electric_bridge)

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- e/the_cosmic_bloodstream/the_cosmic_bloodstream_part_3).
- ⁷ Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. 2* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1955), 115.
- ⁸ Sri Aurobindo, *La Mère* (Paris: Adyar, 1950), 7.
- ⁹ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 2008), 125.
- ¹⁰ Bailey, *Telepathy*, 86.
- ¹¹ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. 2*, 213.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 224.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 197.
- ¹⁴ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1951), 682.
- ¹⁵ Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1957), 142.

The Festival of Wesak 2018

Our Responsibilities During the Festival of Wesak

Dorothy I. Riddle

The Festival of Wesak represents a unique time each year when spiritual energies are most abundantly available for the use of humanity. Together the Buddha and the Christ generate a point of tension through which those energies can flow to us if we invoke them. We are then tasked with the responsibility to distribute that energy to those who evoke it from us. Indeed, this accumulation and distribution of spiritual energies is so important that we are asked to devote five days to this Festival: “The two days of preparation are to be known as ‘days of renunciation and detachment.’ The day of the Festival is to be known as the ‘day of safe guarding’ whilst the two succeeding days are called the ‘days of distribution.’”¹

We often talk as though we as disciples are the main actors, controlling the process from beginning to end and relying on statements such as the following: “[Disciples] act primarily as agents for the transmission, for the stepping down and for the consequent safe distribution of energy to the masses.”² Our role in invoking the Wesak energies through meditation is clear; however, our active role is limited to that of invocation: “The lesser ever invokes the higher, and higher factors are then evoked and respond according to the measure of understanding and the dynamic tension displayed by the invoking element. This many fail to realize. You do not work at the evocative process. That word simply connotes the response of that which has been reached. The task of the lesser aspect or group is invocative, and the success of the invocative rite is called evocation.”³ We thus need to cultivate and stimulate a desire on the part of others to invoke or receive that energy from us. Obviously such stimulation cannot take place magically at the time of the Festival; instead it must be cultivated yearlong.

Preparing to Invoke the Wesak Energies

The political dynamics currently operating in the United States, as well as elsewhere in the world, present us with the challenge of preparing to be distortion-free vessels for the reception of spiritual energies. The accusations of “fake news” to discredit any perspective contrary to self-interest represent, in esoteric terms, the functioning of glamour and illusion. Hopefully by recognizing and naming this dynamic accurately we can then take appropriate Guénon action free from the distortions of anger, frustration, and a sense of helplessness. We are told that “alignment, contact with the Soul, and then steadfastness, are the keynotes to success.”⁴

How are we to remain steadfast in the face of the pressures to assert self-interest and focus on differences rather than commonalities? It is vital to remember that we are ourselves energetic beings operating in a vast sea of energies. We always have choices about how we relate to those energies in order to stimulate distortions or to participate in the flow of energies in a manner that minimizes distortion. “The focused thinker is always aware emotionally of the descent of the higher impression... This must, however, be recorded by a perfectly quiescent astral vehicle, and therefore you will see one of the main objectives of true meditation.”⁵

How are we to remove distortion and dissipate glamour? Always the objective of the Plan is the generation of right relations, fueled by goodwill.

Increasingly must the normal and powerful life of the emotional, astral, desire and glamorous nature be controlled and rendered quiescent by the life of the Soul, functioning through the mind. The emotions that are normally self-centered and

personal must be transmuted into the realizations of universality and impersonality; the astral body must become the organ through which the love of the Soul can pour; desire must give place to aspiration and that, in its turn, must be merged in the group life and the group good; glamour must give place to reality, and the pure light of the mind must pour into all the dark places of the lower nature. These are the results of mental polarization and are brought about by definite meditation and the cultivation of the meditative attitude.⁶

Right relations must be rooted in an active awareness that we are all interconnected, all part of the same cosmic energetic field, all part of the One Life. Our invocative focus must be crafted from that sense of relationship rather than separative self-interest.

It is therefore literally and eternally true that the same energetic Life pours through the planetary centers, into and through the three periodical vehicles of the incarnated Monad, and finally into and through the three centers in the human etheric body that correspond to the three major centers of the Planetary Logos. There is, therefore, nowhere to be found any basis for separation or any possible point of separation or of essential division.... The essential synthesis exists and the end is sure and inevitable; unity is attainable because unity exists and the sense of separateness is simply the Great Illusion.⁷

Cultivating a Receptivity to the Wesak Energies

This is a critical time in which we can help activate those individuals and groups already committed to action. We can engage them to act in line with the common good, with a commitment to treating others with respect and

dignity regardless of their gender or ethnicity or socio-economic class or age or any other attribute that we have allowed in the past to divide us. Recognizing the power of glamour, we are charged with a vital and timely service of

ridding of the world of the individual and the world of humanity as a whole of the all-enveloping glamour that holds humanity in thrall.... The proposition, therefore, which I am laying before you (who are the aspirants and the disciples of the world) is the possibility of a definite world service. Groups will eventually be formed of those who are working at the dissipation of glamour in their individual lives and who are

doing so not so much in order to achieve their own liberation but with the special objective of ridding the astral plane of its significant glammers. They will work unitedly on some major phase of world glamour by the power of their individual illumined minds.⁸

We have before us the model of the Women's Marches, which began in January 2017 to protest the election of Donald Trump as a president focused on self-interest and dismissive of the rights of women and their families. With international attention focused on shining a light on the pervasiveness of sexual harassment, the #MeToo movement began to gain momentum. By January 2018, the Women's Marches had evolved to focus on building coalitions across issue groups, registering voters (#PowerToThePolls), and urging women of all ages and backgrounds to run for political office, coupled with training events for over 26,000 new political candidates. The result has already been a wave of first-time candidates (including Latinas, Asian-Americans, and transgender persons) being elected in record numbers. This is precisely the type of focus on

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the common good that we would want to convert into an invocation of the spiritual energies that we can channel during the Festival of Wesak.

Managing the Role of the Evoked Channel

The energies available to and through us at Wesak can empower whoever evokes them, regardless of intention. This places a responsibility on us to attract the attention of the appropriate people and groups – those who are committed to right relations.

We cannot force the Wesak spiritual energies on others. They must choose to evoke those energies from us through the magnetic energy of goodwill. Goodwill, the loving determination to establish right relations, is a latent characteristic of humanity that we can ourselves evoke in others. But how do we create the point of tension that will call forth goodwill? It is through our own modelling of an attitude and atmosphere of cooperation and constructive problem-solving, the non-partisan middle path, that we create an environment in which discussion and compromise become possible. We thus become the evoked channel of spiritual energies to those longing for meaning and connection. We “become a tiny or minute correspondence of the Spiritual Hierarchy – invocative as it is to Shamballa and easily evoked by human demand. These are points warranting careful consideration. They involve a primary recognition of points of tension and their consequent expansion into magnetic auras or areas, capable of invocation and evocation.”⁹

Conclusion

The forces of divisiveness and separatism are at an all-time high in our world, and these can drown out the call for right relations. As disciples we have a crucial role to play in preparing our communities to seek out the positive and healing energies available through us at the time of Wesak. We do this not by lecturing or demanding that others behave in a certain way or by repudiating the person based on their divisive actions. Rather, we do this through demonstrating the power of inclusion, of compassion, and of hope for humanity.

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¹ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology, Vol. 2* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1942), 686-687.

² Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1960), 689.

³ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴ Alice A. Bailey, *Glamour: A World Problem* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1950), 38.

⁵ Alice A. Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1950), 105.

⁶ Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. I* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1944), 50-51.

⁷ Bailey, *Telepathy*, 137-138.

⁸ Bailey, *Glamour*, 197-198.

⁹ Bailey, *Telepathy*, 96.

Festival of Goodwill 2018

Group Service: Invocation and Evocation

Miguel Malagrega

The last of the Three Linked Festivals is the Festival of Goodwill. It is also known by other names,¹ including *World Invocation Day*. During this Festival many spiritual groups around the world unite in sounding the Great Invocation, invoking the forces of Light, Love and Purpose to illumine humanity's choices and undergird right human relations on Earth. Our group activity using the Great Invocation during this Festival draws on the Science of Invocation and Evocation and must be accompanied by right action so that the energies invoked can be anchored on Earth.

Why is the group invocative activity so important at this time? Of the three Linked Festivals, one characteristic that makes this one special is that it has only recently been brought to the attention of public consciousness. In fact, while the Festival of Goodwill has been celebrated for two thousand years on the inner or subjective planes, it has become widely known in the external world only since the second half of the twentieth century, in conjunction with the instigation of the New Group of World Servers (NGWS). During the Festival of Goodwill the esoteric community employs the Great Invocation as a powerful invocative mantra, with efforts being made to spread its use in the world. Anticipating this development, the Tibetan wrote: "When the work of the Invocation reaches a high stage of development ... it will then be wise to bring to the attention of the general public, and on a worldwide scale, the factual nature of the New Group of World Servers."²

As we consider the activity of the New Group of World Servers, one of the tasks we are charged with is the expansion of the group *idea* and the anchoring of this *idea* in human consciousness: "The *growth of the group idea* with a consequent general emphasis upon group good, group understanding, group interrelation, and group goodwill. These four are

the ideals of that subjective group, working on the physical plane, which we call the New Group of World Servers."³ The Festival of Goodwill provides an excellent context to reflect on these four ideals for group work, and apply them. Interestingly, the Tibetan tells us that the result of this work will vary "according to the measure of understanding and the dynamic tension displayed by the invoking element"⁴ which can be read as a reminder that it is our role to make the adjustments and provide the conditions for right relationships in the world.

If the attention of the higher is to be evoked by the point of tension of the lower,⁵ the focus that we achieve through our working consciously as a group is crucial. Our conscious invocative work is a heightened vibration, lifting the unconscious needs of humanity to the Spiritual Hierarchy. This, in turn, and through the Christ and the Buddha, will invoke the force of Shamballa. This force is "available for right usage but the power to express it lies in its understanding (as far as may be possible at this midway point in human evolution) and its *group use*."⁶ The spiritual energy is in fact available, but the change in world conditions will only take place as we, as members of the NGWS, step it down with a clear focus and into action, initiating or supporting active initiatives generating goodwill in our communities and immediate circles. This in turn will model the use of goodwill in humanity, similarly to what has been described in physics as the "butterfly effect." Thus the invocative process of this Festival links humanity, the New Group of World Servers and the Spiritual Hierarchy within a reciprocal invocative/evocative process. The more aware we are of the process and of the subjective reality of the invocative group, the more effective our group work shall be: "Unconscious invocation proceeds all the

time; when it becomes conscious, it becomes exceedingly powerful.”⁷

Aspects of the Invocative Process

The four ideals for the *growth of the group idea* in the world – group understanding, group interrelation, group goodwill and group good – can be related to the invocative demands in the stanzas of the Great Invocation, each of which will help dissolve different aspects of the illusion of separateness:

1. *Understanding* – We invoke Light in the first stanza of the Great Invocation. Light brings about comprehension; it is the primordial power that cleanses away the distortions and confusion on our mental plane. Without Light it would be impossible to see and difficult to comprehend the next evolutionary steps and get ready to act. “When aspirants pray in the [Great] Invocation: ‘Let Light descend on Earth’ they are invoking something that humanity will have to learn to handle; this is one of the things for which the disciples of the world must begin to prepare [humanity].”⁸ As issues that had been in the shadow emerge into the Light of consciousness, there is a chance for them to be recognized and worked on. This is never an easy process, but hopefully we can use our past experience to make new sound decisions and support any ongoing constructive work being done on behalf of humanity.

2. *Interrelation* – We invoke that *Love streams forth into human hearts*, that Love displaces the illusion of separateness that so often veils the real and distorts it with the glamor of fear (the basic astral evil) and self-centeredness. The energy of Love relates and is thus invoked to establish right and inclusive relationships. Let us be reminded that the group (and not the self) is the emanating point of right human relations.⁹ In origin, the energy of Love is not

subject to the glamor and distortions on our astral plane: “The cosmic astral plane is a reservoir of love energy, pouring into two of our planes which constitute part of the cosmic etheric body – the monadic plane and the buddhic plane.”¹⁰

3. *Goodwill* – In the third stanza we say: “From the center where the Will of God is known, Let purpose guide all little human wills.” The energy of goodwill is the lower reflection, on the physical plane, of the divine Will. This energy of goodwill focuses our little wills on the working out of constructive purposes, encourages people everywhere to overcome the obstacles encountered in the successive stages of any act

of will. It is the energy of goodwill in practice in our immediate fields of service, and is based on the free will to participate consciously in world change: “There are many people today who find an alibi for themselves in the present world situation, and a consequent release from definite action and responsibility by saying that what is today happening is simply karma or the working out of cause and effect, and that there is nothing, therefore, that they can do about it... In so doing they overlook the third aspect of this same law, to which we have given the name of *free will*... In some way they must learn participation, because the present situation has in it the seeds of release for humanity.”¹¹

4. *The Common Good* – “Let the Plan of Love and Light work out” is a call to humanity to work for the common good, to restore the Plan on our planet, as far as we can understand and participate in its unfolding today. We collaborate in the task of closing the door to evil, support humanity’s struggle to choose to move toward the future instead of yielding to the retrogressive forces.

The Great Invocation expresses the quest for freedom from the unreal that keeps humanity captive physically, emotionally or mentally. It has been the quest of all times, and the Path from the unreal to the real has been taught by all the great Souls.

The Great Invocation expresses the quest for freedom from the unreal that keeps humanity captive physically, emotionally or mentally. It has been the quest of all times, and the Path from the unreal to the real has been taught by all the great Souls. The Tibetan indicates the continuity of the teaching that extends from the Buddha's four noble truths to the teaching of the Christ. Isn't it our task to continue that work?

When the Buddha was on Earth and achieved illumination, He 'let in' a flood of light upon the world problem through His enunciation of the Four Noble Truths. His body of disciples ... – by the power of collective thought – has greatly helped in the attack upon the world illusion. Today the Christ is carrying forward the same great task... Only the intuition can dispel illusion and hence the need of training intuitives. Hence the service you can render to this general cause by offering yourselves for this training. If you can overcome glamour in your own lives and if you can, therefore, comprehend the nature of illusion you will help in:

- a. The destruction of the dweller on the threshold,
- b. The devitalizing of the general maya,
- c. The dissipation of glamour,
- d. The dispelling of illusion.

This you have to do in your own lives and in the group relation. Then your more general contribution will help in the wider human issues.¹²

The Tibetan mentions that the four aspects of the unreal must be confronted individually and in our group work, and that such work will in turn influence the world of human affairs. This reflects the reciprocal process established through the Science of Invocation and Evocation:

- Destruction of the Dweller on the Threshold – Spiritual Will
- Devitalizing of maya – Goodwill
- Dissipation of glamour – Love
- Dispelling of illusion – Light

Conclusion

During this Festival of Goodwill, the Festival of Humanity, extensive use of this solar mantra will be central to our esoteric group work. Humanity is facing the four aspects of the Dweller on the Threshold, the unreal. The invocative process calls forth great divine potencies that can help evoke in humanity the will to move forward on the Path, to conform to the divine Will and to express right relations in everyday life. But this can only happen if we get involved.

[The Festival of Goodwill] will be a day whereon the spiritual and divine nature of humanity will be recognized. On this festival, for two thousand years, the Christ has represented humanity and has stood before the Spiritual Hierarchy and in the sight of Shamballa... Each year at that time He has preached the last sermon of the Buddha before the assembled Spiritual Hierarchy. This will therefore be a festival of deep invocation and appeal, of a basic aspiration towards fellowship, of human and spiritual unity, and will represent the effect in the human consciousness of the work of the Buddha and of the Christ.¹³

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- ¹ Other names given to this Festival are: The Festival of Humanity, and The Festival of the Christ.
 - ² Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. 2* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1955), 203-204.
 - ³ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology, Vol. 2* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1942), 654.
 - ⁴ Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1960), 35.
 - ⁵ *Ibid.*, 494.
 - ⁶ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1951), 581.
 - ⁷ Alice A. Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1950), 81.
 - ⁸ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. 2*, 327.

⁹ Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. 1* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1944), 377.

¹⁰ Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, 377.

¹¹ Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1957), 252-253.

¹² Alice A. Bailey, *Glamour: A World Problem* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1950), 23-24.

¹³ Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 421.