

# *The Esoteric Quarterly*

**Summer 2010  
Volume 6  
Number 2**

*A publication of the  
School for Esoteric  
Studies*

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



---

**The School for Esoteric Studies.**

345 S. French Broad Avenue, Suite 300. Asheville, North Carolina 28801, USA.  
[www.esotericstudies.net/quarterly](http://www.esotericstudies.net/quarterly); e-mail: [editor@esotericstudies.net](mailto:editor@esotericstudies.net).

---

# *The Esoteric Quarterly*

*The Esoteric Quarterly* is published by the School for Esoteric Studies. It is registered as an online journal with the National Serials Data Program of the Library of Congress. International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) 1551-3874.

Further information about *The Esoteric Quarterly*, including guidelines for the submission of articles and review procedures, can be found at: [www.esotericstudies.net/quarterly](http://www.esotericstudies.net/quarterly). All correspondence should be addressed to **editor@esotericstudies.net**.

---

## **Editorial Board**

Editor-in-Chief: Donna M. Brown (United States)

Review Editor: Joann S. Bakula (United States)

Editor Emeritus: John F. Nash (United States)

Alison Deadman (Tennessee)

Barbara Maré (New Zealand)

Gail G. Jolley (United States)

Judy Jacka (Australia)

Web Master: Dorothy I. Riddle (Canada)

---

Copyright © *The Esoteric Quarterly*, 2010

All rights reserved.

Copies of the complete journal or articles contained therein may be made for personal use on condition that copyright statements are included. Commercial use without the permission of *The Esoteric Quarterly* and the School for Esoteric Studies is strictly prohibited.

# *The Esoteric Quarterly*

## Contents

### Volume 6, Number 2. Summer 2010

	Page		Page
<b>Features</b>		<b>The Seven Seals of Revelation and the Seven Classical Planets</b>	45
Editorial 6		Lloyd D. Graham	
Publication Policies	7	<b>The Use of Ancient Texts to Test Hypotheses on the Seven Rays</b>	61
Poem of the Quarter: <b>“The Universe Has Five Things To Say About Hearting”</b> by Bruce Lyon	8	Zachary F. Lansdowne	
Picture of the Quarter: <b>“Christ and Buddha in a Boat”</b> by Michael Wann	9	<b>Book Reviews</b>	
Quotes of the Quarter	10	<b>Principles of Abundance for the Cosmic Citizen</b>	83
Advertisements 12		by Dorothy I. Riddle	
<b>Articles</b>		<b>News of the School</b>	
<b>The Christian Sacraments: Significance, Relevance and Power</b>	15	Easter Festival: <b>Aries and Avatars</b>	85
John F. Nash		Wesak Festival: <b>The Inner Life of Wesak</b>	88
<b>Keys to the Aquarian Age</b>	37	Festival of Goodwill: <b>Integration, Synthesis and Unity</b>	94
Joann S. Bakula			

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@esotericstudies.net](mailto:editor@esotericstudies.net).



*Song of Shambhala by Nicholas Roerich*

## INNER GUIDANCE OF THE WORLD

The guidance and inspiration of the inner subjective government of the planet stand behind all constructive human efforts. Given different names by people in the East and West – the Spiritual Hierarchy, the Masters of Wisdom, or the Company of Illumined Minds – its members function as custodians of the divine Plan. They watch over our evolution and guide the destiny of humanity. They carry this forward by implanting ideas in the minds of thinkers and by evoking consciousness, rather than by infringing upon the free will of the human spirit through enforced control. They are governed by love and wisdom.

More on this theme is given in a compilation of the writings of Alice A. Bailey and Helena Roerich, *The Spiritual Hierarchy: Inner Guidance of the World*, available free from:

### *School for Esoteric Studies*

345 S. French Broad Ave., Dept. Q  
Asheville, NC 28801

[www.esotericstudies.net](http://www.esotericstudies.net)

## Elective Course

# The Kabbalah

# קבלה

Taught by John F. Nash, Ph.D., this is the first in a series of online elective courses that the School for Esoteric Studies plans to offer. Elective courses are open to any interested persons, as well as to students enrolled in the ongoing programs in esoteric studies. Students may register for the course at any time.

## Judaic, Hermetic, and Modern Kabbalah

Major topics include:

- Origins and Development of the Judaic Kabbalah
- The Mystical and Ecstatic Kabbalah
- The Theoretical Kabbalah
- Hermeticism and the Christian Kabbalah
- The Modern Kabbalah
- Synthesis of Esoteric Traditions

The course can be completed in six months to a year. It is divided into seven segments. Student papers following each segment will be individually critiqued. Students will also receive personal feedback throughout the course and suggestions for further esoteric work. Student-instructor dialog is encouraged.

### Tuition

Tuition fee, including all text materials: \$295

For further information see the School for Esoteric Studies website:  
[www.esotericstudies.net](http://www.esotericstudies.net), or contact the School at  
[info@esotericstudies.net](mailto:info@esotericstudies.net) or 828-225-4272

## Exploring Connections

---

A central tenet of Esoteric Philosophy is that there is One Truth woven into a diversity of spiritual forms, ritual and teachings. To word it another way, we quote Seyyed Hossein Nasr who reminds us that “One is the Spirit and Many its Human Reflections.” Despite the contours of time, culture, and language or symbol, an underlying unity of ideas exists in a wide variety of receptacles. Our task as students of the Ageless Wisdom is to seek out the unbreakable strand, the divine archetypes and obscured connections among diverse spiritual expressions.

Publishing articles that assert the oneness of truth and its numerous refractions is also part of the EQ mission. And all of the articles in this issue focus on the hidden or little known connections between traditional sacred texts and esoteric philosophy. Each article, in its own way, affirms the multiplicity of spirit and its timeless, non-spatial attributes. By exploring these connections, the incompatibilities, contradictions and exclusionary doctrines begin to dissolve revealing a transcendent continuity of wisdom at the core of perennial spiritual teachings.

Our first article, “The Christian Sacraments: Significance, Relevance and Power” by John Nash, examines the inner significance of ritual in relationship to esoteric and traditional religious teachings. The author’s primary focus is on the sacraments in the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches and draws upon the work of four little-known Christian thinkers who view the sacraments as special rites or rituals instituted by the

Christ, in which sanctifying grace and spiritual potency are uniquely active. Their intent, as the author explains, is to “raise human consciousness to higher levels and to allow the faithful to participate in divine purpose.” In placing the Christian sacraments within the context of esoteric teachings on the Seventh Ray, the devas, the restoration of the mysteries, and the New World Religion, the author sheds much light on timeless symbolism and future of ritual.

Our next article by Joann Bakula holds up compassion and synthesis as two of the “Keys to the Aquarian Age.” The article explores compassion within the context of various religious and esoteric teachings where it is viewed in terms of “universal love,” the “will to free others from suffering,” and as the means to achieve unity of self with others and with God. Bakula explores the connections between compassion and synthesis revealed via the intuition and the will-to-good. She concludes with a section on the synthetic structure of the Great Invocation and an alternative gender-neutral version of this great mantra in honor of the coming “Epoch of Women” and the “Epoch of Compassion.”

Lloyd Graham’s article explores the correlations between the seven seals in the Book of Revelation and the seven celestial bodies of the planetary week. His research reveals a color sequence in the seals that parallels the ancient Babylonian color scheme for the planets. The author considers other seals within the medieval Jewish and Islamic traditions and provides a first ever, side-by-side figure of the magical glyphs or symbols from each. A second figure maps St.

John's seven seals with the two aforementioned series of symbols. Graham also touches upon the relationship between the color sequence for the seven seals and color and phase changes that are essential to the alchemical process. The article concludes with a brief but significant section illuminating the possible Christological dimensions of the planet-seal scheme.

The last full length article, by Zachary Lansdowne, represents an attempt to reveal how scattered ancient texts correlate to the seven archetypal paths of the esoteric tradition. Based on a structural framework suggested by Helena Blavatsky and Alice A. Bailey, the author examines seven allegorical texts, all from previously published articles and all contained in modern Theosophy, to show how Bailey's Integration and Fusion Techniques might be embedded in a variety of different wisdom religions. The hypotheses he explores have important implications for the ongoing research relating ancient sacred texts to modern esoteric teachings.

In addition to the articles in this issue we offer a new poem by Bruce Lyon and a decoupage by Michael Wann depicting the Buddha and the Christ. We also offer our usual *Quotes of the Quarter* and a review for *Principles of Abundance for the Cosmic Citizen* by Dr. Dorothy Riddle.

Finally we direct our readers' attention to the *News of School*, which consists of addresses to students given at the full-moon festivals in Aries, Taurus and Gemini. This year's festival period is now over; nevertheless, we thought our readers might find it useful to reflect on some of the themes that emerged during the course of this year's spiritual high point.

Donna M. 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 or the School for Esoteric Studies 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."

Additionally, we expect authors to disclose any prior publication of an article, adapted from a book or any another source, at the time of its submission.

## Poem of the Quarter

---

### **The Universe Has Five Things To Say About Hearting**

If we can stop spinning long enough  
To find our way to the centre

1. The moon orbits the earth  
Stop pretending you are your emotions  
And find solid ground to stand on  
Unite the four directions  
And become yourself the fifth

2. The earth orbits the sun  
When creativity begins the process  
Of nuclear fusion  
Nothing can stop you bursting into flame  
Become the love oven in which  
The hot cross personality bun is baking

3. The sun orbits the black hole  
At the centre of the galaxy  
Trade your enlightenment  
For a higher form of innocence  
Enter the mystery and taste  
The dark soma wine of being

4. There are billions of galaxies  
In the universe  
Your liberation is not unique  
A sponge has many holes with which  
To drink the waters of life

5. The universe has no center  
No further need for the arrow of Self  
Nothing to look for. Nothing to find  
No bull's eye. No Sin  
Empty Empty Empty

Out of that timeless emptiness  
In time  
A fullness emerges  
And centers into a dark pool of being  
Rest in that point  
Be without knowing and watch  
100 billion suns  
Burst into flame around you  
Choose one and feel  
The lion fire of love  
Breathe into nine planetary embers  
Enter the molten iron core of earth  
And feel the longing of the mother  
For her prodigal son  
Relentlessly pulling the tides of self.  
Now, identified with the  
overflowing fullness of the universe  
Re-enter the silvery cold moon womb  
As the seed of Life itself.

by Bruce Lyon





*Christ and Buddha in a Boat*

By  
Michael Wann

## Quotes of the Quarter

---

**T**he *mysterium*... manifests itself clearly enough in the eternal priest “after the order of Melchisedec” and in the sacrifice which he offers to God “continually.” The Manifestation of an order outside of time involves the idea of a *miracle* which takes place “*vere, realiter, substantialiter*” at the moment of transubstantiation, for the substances offered are no different from natural objects, and must in fact be divine commodities whose nature is known to everybody, namely pure wheaten bread and wine. Furthermore, the officiating priest is an original human being who, although he bears the indelible mark of the priesthood upon him and is thus empowered to offer sacrifice, is nevertheless not yet in a position to be the instrument of divine self-sacrifice enacted in the Mass. Nor is the congregation standing behind him yet purged of sin, consecrated, and itself transformed into a sacrificial gift. The ritual of the Mass takes this situation and transforms it step by step until the climax is reached—the decisive words through the mouth of the priest. At that moment Christ is present in time and space. Yet his presence is not reappearance, and therefore the inner meaning of the consecration is not a repetition of an event which occurred once in history, but the revelation of something existing in eternity, a rending of the veil of temporal and spatial limitations which separated the human spirit from the sight of the eternal. This event is necessarily a mystery, because it is beyond the power of man to conceive or imagine.

C.G. Jung: Transformation Symbolism in the Mass, *The Mysteries* (Bollingen, 1955)

**T**he Great Knowledge is handed on in succession from age to age, from people to people, from race to race. The great centers of initiation in India, Assyria, Egypt,

and Greece illumine the world with a bright light. The revered names of the great initiates, the living bearers of the truth, are handed on reverently from generation to generation. Truth is fixed by means of symbolical writings and legends and is transmitted to the mass of people for preservation in the form of customs and ceremonies, in oral traditions, in memorials, in sacred art through the invisible quality in dance, music, sculpture and various rituals. It is communicated openly after a definite trial to those who seek it and is preserved by oral transmission in the chain of those who know. After a certain time has elapsed, the centers of initiation die out one after another, and the ancient knowledge departs through underground channels into the deep... From time to time separate streams break through to the surface, showing that somewhere deep down in the interior, even in our day, there flows the powerful ancient stream of the true knowledge of being.

G.I. Gurdjieff: *Views from the Real World* (Plume, 1973)

**T**he scroll is a mysterious document which has taken God aeons to write, a Bible which, when rightly read, discloses cosmic and divine mysteries. It is simply the human body, and its seals are the force-centres wherein radiates the formative force of the Logos. These seals are the same as the seven Societies and the lampstands. The expression “written inside and on the back” refers to the cerebro-spinal axis and the great sympathetic system...

The word *ekklesia*, meaning an assembly, or group of people called together for some special purpose, a society, applies neatly in allegory to the nervous plexus, or ganglion, which consists of nucleated cells acting as a

centre of nerve force to the fibers connected with it. The Seven Societies in Revelation are the seven principle ganglia; later they are metamorphosed into “the seven little lampstands,” each with a ganglion being a little brain, a minor lightgiver in the body, as the brain in the great lightgiver, or microcosmic sun; and then they are changed almost directly into “seven seals” on a scroll, the chakras being indeed sealed in the materialistic person, so far as concerns their psychic functions.

James Morgan Pryse: *The Apocalypse Unsealed* (Kessinger, 1910)

Self-Knowledge is of loving deeds the child. We have never attained or even understood the powers of the human heart. Self-sacrifice is the highest standard of Theosophy. It is not by studying Occultism for selfish ends, for the gratification of ones personal ambition, pride, or vanity, that one can ever reach the true goal—that of helping suffering humanity. Compassion is the Law of Laws—eternal harmony. To feel “Compassion” without an adequate practical result is not Altruism. The first of the Theosophical duties is to do one’s duty by all men. For every flower of love and charity you plant in your neighbor’s garden, a loathsome weed will disappear from your own. There is no happiness for one who is ever thinking of self and forgetting all other selves. The duty—let alone happiness—of every Theosophist is certainly to help others to carry their burden. A Theosophist should gain the wisdom to help others effectually, not blindly. The human heart has not yet fully uttered itself. If unable to toil for humanity, work for the few who need your help. The principle of Brotherhood is one of the eternal truths that govern the world’s progress. Step out of sunlight into shade to make more room for others.

H. P. Blavatsky: *The Voice of Silence* (The Theosophical University Press, 1989)

What is compassion? It is not simply a sense of sympathy or caring for the person suffering, not simply a warmth of heart toward the person before you, or a sharp clarity or recognition of their needs and pain, it is also a sustained and practical determination to do whatever is possible and necessary to help alleviate their suffering.


Compassion is not true compassion unless it is active. Avalokiteshvara, The Buddha of Compassion, is often represented in Tibetan iconography as having a thousand eyes that see the pain in all corners of the universe, and a thousand arms to reach out to all corners of the universe to extend his help...Compassion is the wish-fulfilling germ whose light of healing spreads in all directions.

Sogyal Rinpoche: *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1992)

O that I might become for all beings the soother of pain. O that I might be for all of them that ail the remedy, the physician, the nurse, until the disappearance of illness. O that by raining down food and drink I might soothe the pangs of hunger and thirst, and that in times of famine I might myself become drink and food. O that I might be for the poor an inexhaustible resource

This alone—one’s service to sentient beings (*sattvaraddhana*) is pleasing to Tathagatas [Enlightened or Awakened Ones]. This alone is the actual accomplishment of one’s goal. This alone removes the suffering of the world. Therefore, let this alone be my resolve.

Santiveda: From the *Bodhicaryavatara*: A guide to a Bodhisattva’s Life



**FULL MOON MEDITATION**  
MEDITATION FOR WORLD SERVICE

\*

A website rich in resources for all who share in meditation work for world service during the full moon period

\*

New papers each month from Joann S. Bakula, Michelle Pearce, Steve Nation, Malvin Artley. Archives from 2004 include Jan Nation, Glenys Lowery, and Phillip Lindsay.

\*

Hundreds of pages dedicated to full moon meditation.

[www.worldservicegroup.com](http://www.worldservicegroup.com)

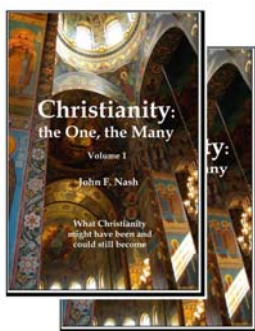


Service-Growth

[www.servicegrowth.net](http://www.servicegrowth.net)

**Supporting Spiritual Development**

A web portal linking you to groups, initiatives, and resources that support a quantum shift in human consciousness and individual spiritual growth.



## *Christianity: The One, the Many*

*What Christianity  
might have been and  
could still become*

*by John F. Nash*  
Xlibris, 2007

**The rich history of Christianity  
and a bold vision of its future.**

"Encyclopedic in its coverage."

"A masterpiece of research, insight and faith."

"A must-read for believers and nonbelievers alike."

"Now I know there's a place in Christianity for me."

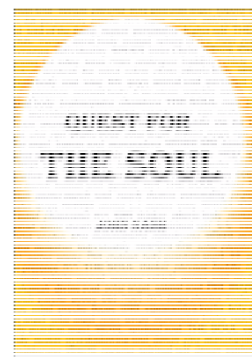
Two volume set.  
Paperback \$39.98, hardback \$59.98.

**For ordering information see:  
[www.uriel.com/bookstore](http://www.uriel.com/bookstore).**

## *Quest for the Soul*

*The Age-Old Search  
for Our Inner  
Spiritual Nature*

*by John Nash*



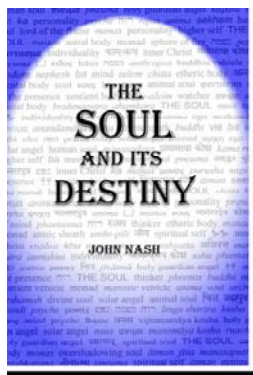
"A masterpiece that weaves together the history of the soul through past ages up to the present time... This living history of the soul creates understanding and meaning of our purpose in life. Its kaleidoscopic view makes it essential reading for all students of human evolution. The book is a classic for all seeking closer relationship with the soul."

302 pages. Price \$18.75

1stBooks Library, 2004.

ISBN: 141403251X

**For ordering information see:  
[www.uriel.com/bookstore](http://www.uriel.com/bookstore).**



## *The Soul and Its Destiny*

*by John Nash*

**The soul's sacred journey,  
from the teachings of Alice  
Bailey, the major  
Theosophists, and others.**

**"For those who aspire to grow in knowledge  
on the spiritual path, this is a great gift for the soul's  
journey onward. New insights are greater  
understanding of the unity of all, and a desire to  
serve others... A labor of love."**

320 pages. Price \$20.75

AuthorHouse, 2004.

ISBN: 1418402753

**For ordering information see:  
[www.uriel.com/bookstore](http://www.uriel.com/bookstore).**



## *Principles of Abundance for the Cosmic Citizen*

Principles of Abundance  
for the Cosmic Citizen



ENOUGH FOR US ALL

VOLUME ONE

Dorothy I. Riddle

ENOUGH FOR US ALL  
VOLUME ONE

*Dorothy I. Riddle*

*Principles of Abundance* is a thoughtful and engaging book that translates the findings of quantum physics and metaphysics into practical tools that we can use to transform ourselves, our communities, and our world view.

Lots of practical exercises help us shift  
from scarcity to abundance, from fear to joy.

The *Enough For Us All* series reflects the breadth of Dr. Riddle's awareness and her ability to integrate disparate fields into a meaningful whole with practical strategies for moving forward.

256 pages. \$14.95

AuthorHouse, 2010. ISBN: 9781449079253

For ordering information, see:

**[www.EnoughForUsAll.com](http://www.EnoughForUsAll.com)**

# The Christian Sacraments: Significance, Relevance and Power

John F. Nash

## Summary

This article examines the significance of Christian sacramental ritual in relation to the trans-Himalayan teachings and traditional religious teachings. It discusses the issue of sacramental efficacy, examining religious claims, possible effects on the etheric body, and the involvement of orders of angelic or devic beings. The article also examines the claim that the sacraments were instituted by Christ and finds alternative ways in which that may be true.

Sacramental ritual, which has deep roots in ancient cultures, has played and continues to play a major role in the Christianity liturgy. Ritual engages the senses on many levels, providing opportunities for spiritual expression through beauty and drama, as well as through underlying symbolism. As the Seventh Ray of Ceremonial Order comes into manifestation, ritual is likely to become increasingly important. Whether the sacraments we know will evolve into new forms remains to be seen.

## Introduction

Ritual, the oldest known religious practice, quickly passed into Christian use.<sup>1</sup> The apostle Paul urged: “Let all things be done decently and in order,”<sup>2</sup> and instructions for performing baptism and the Eucharist circulated in the first century CE.<sup>3</sup> By the fourth century the Eucharistic ceremony of the Mass had attained a form we recognize today. Despite efforts to “demystify” or “demythologize” Christianity, and despite continuing indifference toward the sacraments among major denominations, sacramental ritual remains the principal focus of worship for a majority of the world’s Christians. Moreover, there is no evidence that it is losing strength. In the West, liturgical movements in the 19th and 20th cen-

turies reinvigorated sacramental practices in the Roman and Anglican Churches, and the resurgence of the Russian Orthodox Church since the fall of communism has led to new vitality in the East.

The sacraments are defined as “outward signs of inward grace.”<sup>4</sup> To believers they are vehicles through which divine force descends into the physical world. Such descent could scarcely leave the form-world—especially the immediate surroundings of sacramental ritual—unchanged, and the changes perceived by participants are ones of beatitude and beautification. In order to understand the sacraments, particularly the Mass, we must pay due attention to esthetics in addition to symbolism and religious significance.

The mechanism by which divine power is transmitted to the physical plane may well be shrouded in mystery. Many people are content to leave it that way. But others are moved to speculate on that mechanism, and some religious and esoteric writers have suggested that angels or devas serve as transmitting agents. Other esoteric writers have focused on effects on the etheric levels of the physical plane. These theories will be examined in due course.

Like all rituals the sacraments are governed by the Seventh Ray. Known variously as the ray of Ceremonial Magic, Ceremonial Order, or

## About the Author

John F. Nash, Ph.D., is a long-time esoteric student, author, and teacher. Two of his books, *Quest for the Soul* and *The Soul and Its Destiny*, were reviewed in the Winter 2005 issue of the *Esoteric Quarterly*, and his latest book, *Christianity: The One, the Many*, in the Fall 2008 issue. Further information be found in the advertisements in this issue and at <http://www.uriel.com/>.

Ceremonial Ritual in the works of Alice Bailey, its “major function is to produce order, rhythm and established, sequential activity.”<sup>5</sup> The seventh ray is now coming into cyclical manifestation, replacing the sixth that held sway through much of the Age of Pisces. The promised new world religion will undoubtedly include a strong service imperative, but predictions that the new religion will absorb aspects of masonic tradition suggest that ritual will play an important role.<sup>6</sup> We understand that the Master Rakoczi, chohan of the Seventh Ray, now also holds the position of Mahachohan of the Division of Civilization,<sup>7</sup> a “promotion” that leaves little doubt concerning trends in the Aquarian Age. While ritual forms may evolve over time or new ones emerge in the decades and centuries to come, it seems inevitable that ritual will receive increasing emphasis at the expense of religious devotion.

The present article seeks to examine the sacraments from an esoteric perspective but with a traditionally Christian understanding of their role and purpose. Accordingly it draws from both the esoteric and the religious literature. The esoteric writers whose works are cited will probably be well-known to the *Quarterly*’s readers, but some of the religious writers may need introduction. Two individuals’ work is particularly important to this discussion.

The German Benedictine monk Odo Casel (1886–1946) took as the dissertation topic of his second doctorate the mystery religions of classical antiquity. In addition to his duties as chaplain to a convent in Westphalia, he served for 20 years as editor of the prestigious *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* (“Yearbook for Liturgical Science”). His work was controversial—one reviewer in a theological journal called him a liar—but he was also lauded as the father of the 20th-century liturgical movement.<sup>8</sup>

Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988), a scholar with a vast published output, was also controversial. His fortunes varied from being prohibited from teaching in Roman Catholic seminaries to being named a cardinal, only to die before receiving his red hat. Among Balthasar’s contributions were monumental works on esthetics and drama in

theology and liturgy.<sup>9</sup> An interest in esoterica was demonstrated by the afterword he wrote to Valentin Tomberg’s *Meditations on the Tarot*.<sup>10</sup>

Other religious writers whose works are cited include John Henry Hopkins, Gregory Dix, Vladimir Lossky, Michael Ramsey, and Alkiviadis Calivas. Hopkins (1792–1868) was the first bishop of Vermont and eighth presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church. His research supported the ritualist movement in Anglicanism. Significant for its time though lacking the objectivity of modern academic scholarship, the work was published as *The Law of Ritualism* (1866). Dix (1901–1952) was an Anglican Benedictine monk at Nashdom Abbey, England, and a prominent liturgical scholar. His greatest contribution was *The Shape of the Liturgy* (1945), which influenced liturgical reform in the Anglican Church and beyond. The bishop of Oxford eulogized him as “the most brilliant man in the Church of England.” Lossky (1903–1958) was an influential Russian Orthodox theologian. Forced into exile in 1922, he spent most of his life in Paris, where he wrote numerous works and helped bring Orthodox teachings to a western audience. Ramsey (1904–1988), an Anglo-Catholic, served as Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University and eventually as 100th archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>11</sup> Finally, Calivas, a Greek Orthodox priest, earned his doctorate in theology from the University of Thessaloniki and served as dean and professor of liturgical theology at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts.

## Christianity and Its Sacraments

Christianity’s fundamental claim is that it was founded by Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate in human form. Scripture testifies that Jesus pursued an active ministry for three years, after which he was crucified, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven; through his death and resurrection he secured human-kind’s redemption. What we know of Christ cannot be separated from what Christianity teaches about him. The selection, editing



and compilation of scripture, as well as the formulation of Christological doctrine, were the work of the emerging institutional church that went on to dominate Christianity throughout the Middle Ages. The Nicene Creed, formulated by the Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381), affirmed the “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church,” supporting later belief in a unified primitive church from which all later denominations, sects and traditions descended.<sup>12</sup>

On a number of key issues esoteric writers have offered perspectives on Christology that contrast with those of mainstream Christianity. Esotericists commonly distinguish Jesus from Christ, taking a position closer to Nestorianism than to orthodox Christianity—though the differences may well be reconcilable at a higher level.<sup>13</sup> Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, “father” of New Thought, asserted that “Jesus embodied... an intelligence called Christ, embracing all the attributes of man, and being a revelation of a higher wisdom than had before appeared on the earth.”<sup>14</sup> His former patient and founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, declared: “The word Christ is not properly a synonym for Jesus... Christ is not a name so much as the divine title of Jesus. Christ expresses God’s spiritual, eternal nature.”<sup>15</sup>

The trans-Himalayan writers went further to recognize Christ as a distinct entity, an avatar who manifests the essence, energy and light of the Second Aspect of Deity.<sup>16</sup> Alice Bailey referred to him as

the great Lord of Love and of Compassion... the World Teacher, the Master of the Masters, and the Instructor of the Angels. [T]o Him is committed the guidance of the spiritual destinies of men, and the development of the realization within each human being that he is a child of God and a son of the Most High.<sup>17</sup>

Christ, according to this perspective, overshadowed his disciple, Jesus, during his earthly ministry. However Jesus was no ordinary man. Theosophist Annie Besant claimed that Jesus was schooled in the ancient mysteries in previous lifetimes and possibly even the one in Palestine.<sup>18</sup> Bailey stated that Christ attained

the sixth initiation, and Jesus the fourth initiation at the crucifixion. The latter went on to attain the fifth initiation in his incarnation as Apollonius of Tyana,<sup>19</sup> whereupon we now refer to him as the Master Jesus. In any event, since Christ expressed the second ray and Jesus the sixth, Christianity combines the qualities of the two rays.

Esotericists—as well, it turns out, as Eastern Orthodox Christians—also tend to distance themselves from views of the redemption based on Old Testament notions of atonement. Instead they view “salvation” as a transformative or healing process, ameliorating humankind’s weaknesses and offering new opportunities for sanctification.<sup>20</sup> Significantly, the Greek verb *sozo* (σωζω)—usually translated as “to save” and which is the root of *soteriology*, the theory of salvation—more commonly meant “to heal.”<sup>21</sup>

Dion Fortune of the Golden Dawn tradition declared that the crucifixion and redemption were aspects of a drama that unfolded on multiple levels of reality: “The crucifixion of Our Lord at the hands of Roman authority was but the shadow thrown on the material plane by the struggle that was going on in the spiritual world. It was not the spilling of the blood of Jesus of Nazareth that redeemed mankind, but the outpouring of spiritual power from the mind of Jesus the Christ.”<sup>22</sup> The notion of cosmic drama will be important to our later discussion.

Christianity conventionally regards Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary as the central act of redemption. Theosophist Charles Leadbeater pointed to the more general sacrifice Christ made simply by assuming physical form.<sup>23</sup> And Bailey placed Christ’s incarnation in the context of Sanat Kumara’s descent into manifestation during the Lemurian era. Sanat Kumara, in her words, “is the Great Sacrifice, Who left the glory of the high places and for the sake of the evolving sons of men took upon Himself a physical form and was made in the likeness of man.”<sup>24</sup>

According to Bailey, the Master Jesus assumed responsibility for the Christian religion.<sup>25</sup> However there is little doubt that the *thought-*

form of Christianity was conceived in the mind of Christ, as Fortune seemed to suggest. That thoughtform—what apologists term the *ecclesia* or the “mystical body of Christ”—lay outside space and time, but it provided the archetype or model that guided Christian religious activity throughout history.<sup>26</sup> Religious activity, of course, covers a broad field, and elsewhere the present author has suggested that it can be divided into seven major paths: devotion, ceremony, knowledge, healing, service, activism and renunciation.<sup>27</sup> Ceremony has, with few exceptions, been an essential element of the Christian experience, and clearly sacramental ritual was one aspect of Christ’s thoughtform. Thus the claim that the sacraments were instituted by Christ is valid, whether or not they actually date from apostolic times.

### **Sacraments and the Church’s Mission**

Christianity has always advocated both private devotion and public worship. The latter has traditionally been scripted, following some form of approved liturgy. The Greek word *leitourgia* (λειτουργία), from which “liturgy” is derived, originally referred to a work of public service; for example, it could mean outfitting a ship for war. But it could also mean “sponsoring a choir for the tragedies in honor of Dionysus,”<sup>28</sup> and eventually the term acquired its modern connotation. Today, the liturgy refers to the church’s official, corporate worship, or what the 16th-century Archbishop Thomas Cranmer called “common prayer.”<sup>29</sup>

Two broad forms of Christianity will be referred to in this article, based on styles of worship and interpretations of ecclesiastical responsibility.<sup>30</sup> What we shall term “sacramental Christianity” was the norm in the medieval church, and today it includes, but is not limited to, the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Churches. It makes two interrelated claims:

- Christ instituted certain sacred rites to provide the principal vehicles by which divine grace can flow to the faithful.
- Custody of those rites was entrusted to the apostles, deemed to have been the

first bishops, and passed to successive generations of bishops via the apostolic succession: an unbroken episcopal lineage from apostolic times onward. In turn, bishops ordained clergy to perform the rites for local Christian communities.

Various rituals were performed in the early church, the most important being baptism and the Eucharist. During much of the medieval period the number of recognized sacraments varied from two to ten.<sup>31</sup> After the East-West schism in the 11th century the Church of Rome declared that seven rites (the number seven had obvious symbolic significance) had been instituted by Christ and were guaranteed vehicles of divine grace. Those “canonical sacraments”—the three initiatory rites of baptism, confirmation and holy orders, together with the Eucharist, anointing of the sick (or the dying), penance, and matrimony—took precedence over rites like the burial service and profession of monastic vows.<sup>32</sup> The Eastern Orthodox Churches eventually endorsed the same seven canonical sacraments.

Contrasting with sacramental Christianity is “evangelical Christianity,” which took early forms with the Waldensians in the 12th century and Lollards in the 14th and gathered momentum with the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century.<sup>33</sup> The German Lutheran churches rejected all but two sacraments: baptism and the Eucharist—or what they preferred to call “the Lord’s Supper.” The Calvinists, Baptists and Methodists further downplayed the sacraments, and Quakers rejected them altogether. Evangelical Christianity emphasizes Bible study, the conversion experience, and devotion.<sup>34</sup> Its future potential may be in question as the sixth ray of Devotion/Idealism passes out of manifestation.

Two major denominations straddle the sacramental-evangelical divide and in consequence have experienced inner tension between opposing factions. Whereas German Lutherans abolished the episcopate, the Church of Sweden preserved its episcopate, along with the claim of apostolic succession, and has always favored a more sacramental style of worship. Contrasting forms continued as Lutheranism

spread beyond Europe, but a shift toward the sacramental form has occurred over the last 100 years. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America has reinstated an episcopate, and high-church Lutherans have embraced much pre-Reformation-style ceremony.

The high-church party within Church of England pressed successfully for preservation of the episcopate. It also emphasized the claim of apostolic succession and the importance of the sacraments. The episcopal lineage subsequently passed to independent daughter churches of the worldwide Anglican Communion. High-church Anglicanism in England, North America, and elsewhere has gained in strength over the last 200 years, no doubt reflecting incoming seventh-ray influence, and sacramental styles of worship have now become the norm. Ultra-high-church Anglo-Catholics recognize all seven sacraments and have sought to capture the full splendor of pre-Reformation ceremony.

The denominations that emphasize the sacraments also emphasize a sacred priesthood and claim the apostolic succession. The succession—assuming that it really did span the decades between the apostles' deaths and the beginning of the second century when historians can identify a well-defined episcopate—is not absolutely necessary to support the claim of sacramental authenticity. However it suggests a tangible thread of continuity between Christ's ministry, when the sacraments are said to have been instituted, and the sacramental church of later centuries. The apostolic succession offers a testament of legitimacy for sacramental Christianity. Furthermore, belief that Jesus Christ was the Son of God adds weight to the claim that the sacraments are indeed vehicles of divine grace.

Institutional Christianity views itself as a corporate entity with authority to teach, administer the sacraments, and exercise religious discipline. But some esotericists view the church in a more subjective, though no less real, manner. For example Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson referred to it as “a magnetic center, established at a certain point on the surface of the globe, at which special conditions have been created to permit the free passage of power,

life, and consciousness from the spiritual to the material level, and from the material back to the spiritual.”<sup>35</sup> Hodson explained that four streams of power flow to “a properly consecrated church”:

These emanate firstly, from the human and superhuman Hierarchy known to us as the Great White Brotherhood of Adepts...; secondly from the angelic hierarchy, reaching right up to the Seven Spirits before the Throne and to the angelic aspects of the Logos Himself; thirdly, from the center of the earth; and fourthly, from the sun. These four streams... each contributes its own particular influence and all are used by the Lord Christ, who... makes use of them a single instrument for the particular work which He does for the world through the Christian faith.<sup>36</sup>

Hodson did not explain what constituted “proper consecration,” but as an ordained priest in the Liberal Catholic Church, which claims the apostolic succession, he probably included his own denomination. Hodson's church resembles Anglo-Catholicism in its embrace of ceremonial ritual.

### **Precedents for Sacramental Ritual**

Christianity embraced a religious mission that differed in significant ways from what preceded it. But its priestly tradition, theology, and administrative structure, all built upon precedents in biblical Judaism, Greco-Roman culture, and elsewhere. Judaism provided monotheistic theology, a codified moral law, notions of popular religion, a liturgical calendar, sacred texts, and a strong sacerdotal tradition. Greek philosophy provided concepts of the Trinity and Logos, along with Platonic dualism.<sup>37</sup> Roman administration provided an effective ecclesiastical model, and an infrastructure for the rapid expansion of Christianity over a region extending from the British Isles to India.

Primitive Christianity adopted and modified many rituals from earlier, or in a few cases contemporary, religious systems. Esoteric writers, as well as some religious writers, have viewed the sacraments as the successors of the ancient mysteries. Eastern Orthodox Churches

still refer to the sacraments as “the mysteries,” drawing upon the Greek word *mysterion* (μυστήριον, “a secret rite”). The mystery schools, which dated back to ancient Egypt and possibly Persia, still pervaded the Greco-Roman world at the dawn of the Common Era. They were the custodians of sacred rituals that sought to establish favorable relationships with deities and maintain cosmic harmony. The word “ritual” comes from the Sanskrit *rita*, which captured the sense of order; Indra, the Vedic warrior god and champion of *rita*, slew the chaos dragon Vrtra. Whether mystery schools existed in Palestine is unclear; however the frequent use of Hebrew names in later mystical and theurgic practices suggests a debt to a Judaic mystery tradition.

The notion of a sacrament came from Greco-Roman culture. In Roman law, a sacrament (from the Latin *sacer*, “holy”), was a legal contract in which a god was invoked as guarantor of honest performance. Egyptians swore “by the God Amen,”<sup>38</sup> and we find the identical oath in *Isaiah*—though “God Amen” is rendered in virtually every English translation as “God of truth!”<sup>39</sup> “Amen” passed into Christianity as an affirmation of truthfulness. The sacraments came to be understood as ritual practices or objects through which the divine presence could be invoked. Typically, there was an implied guarantee of effectiveness, within the covenant between God and his church.<sup>40</sup>

The liturgical calendar and scriptural readings of early Christian worship services were based on synagogue precedents, while some rituals developed from temple custom. Baptism may recall Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan,<sup>41</sup> and Christ reportedly charged his apostles: “Go ye

therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>42</sup> But ritual lavation was long established in the Jewish rite of *mikvah* (מִקְוָה).

**The sacraments are defined as “outward signs of inward grace.” To believers they are vehicles through which divine force descends into the physical world. Such descent could scarcely leave the form-world—especially the immediate surroundings of sacramental ritual—unchanged, and the changes perceived by participants are ones of beatitude and beautification.**

Confirmation, in which candidates are anointed with oil, recalls Judaic and other rites in which kings, prophets and high priests were anointed.<sup>43</sup> Sacramental healing has extensive coverage in the New Testament. In addition to three incidents in which people were raised from the dead,<sup>44</sup> the canonical gospels record 38 healings.<sup>45</sup> The first charge to the apostles included healing the sick.<sup>46</sup>

Rites involving bread and wine existed in both Judaism and Mithraism.

More directly the Eucharist (Greek: εὐχαριστία, “thanksgiving”) is said to commemorate—or in some sense reenact—the Last Supper.<sup>47</sup> Christ himself commanded “Do this in remembrance of me” and later said that he would be known “in breaking of bread.”<sup>48</sup> The traditional assumption—suggested by the synoptic gospels but contradicted by *John*—was that the Last Supper was a Jewish *Seder*, or Passover meal. But that assumption is now called into question. Gregory Dix identified it as a *chaburah* (Hebrew: *chaber*, חֲבֵר, “friend”), or religious gathering of friends.<sup>49</sup> Influenced by his work, a modern version of the Eucharistic prayer states: “On the night before he died he [Jesus] had supper with his friends.”<sup>50</sup> A contrasting theory is that the Last Supper had no factual Jewish precedent but was a creation of Pauline Christianity.<sup>51</sup>

Based on his research Dix concluded that eucharistic prayers varied from place to place in the primitive church, but the basic outline of the service—or what he famously called the “shape” of the liturgy—was surprisingly uniform. It consisted of the offering of bread and

wine, consecration of the elements, breaking of the bread, and distribution of communion. That fourfold shape, Dix asserted, had become customary before the epistles and gospels were written and before an intellectual understanding of the Eucharist had emerged and related doctrine formulated.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to its commemorative aspect, apologists in the sacramental churches have related the Eucharist to Jewish ritual sacrifice. According to Bishop Hopkins: "The animal sacrifices [ceased] because they were only types of the great Sacrifice which the Cross of Christ had fulfilled. And He had Himself instituted the new memorial of His precious Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the holy Eucharist."<sup>53</sup> The sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist will be discussed in more detail later.

## Significance of the Sacraments

### Sacramental Mystery

Mystery came under attack by western scholastics in the 13th century and by philosophers in the East a century later. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359), revered saint of Mount Athos, Greece, emerged as its champion. Vladimir Lossky described the assault as

a conflict between mystical theology and a religious philosophy... The God of revelation and of religious experience was confronted with the God of the philosophers, on the battleground of mysticism, and... the foolishness of God put to nought the wisdom of man.<sup>54</sup>

The battle Palamas fought was important because Eastern Orthodoxy has always taken a mystical, rather than a moral, approach to Christianity. To take just one example, while western Christianity emphasizes the crucifixion as a subject of devotion (often in isolation from the resurrection), its eastern counterpart emphasizes Christ's transfiguration.<sup>55</sup>

Within that context Eastern Orthodox Christians regard the sacraments as powerful mysteries. Alkiviadis Calivas explained that they

prepare the faithful for the future life, but they also make that life real, here and now.

We are given the vision and have the foretaste of the things to come through them. They introduce us continuously and in various ways to the transforming power of God... In them we encounter Christ, in order to be Christ. We enter upon a decisively new reality: in Christ we learn to become fully conscious of what it really means to be human.<sup>56</sup>

Odo Casel defined a mystery in terms of ineffability; it is "beyond utterance not only in the original meaning, that it might not be spoken, but further that its content cannot be exhausted by words."<sup>57</sup> Even as a western Christian he depicted the sacraments as the mysteries of the new covenant. Christianity, in his words,

is not as it were a philosophy of life with religious background music, not a moral or theological training; it is a *mysterium*... a revelation made by God to man... full of life and power..., communicating the solemn entry of the redeemed Church into the presence of the everlasting Father through sacrifice, through perfect devotion.<sup>58</sup>

Sacred mystery transcends mundane concerns and provides a route to the divine realm:

The sacred action becomes a mystery in the full sense when it is concerned not merely with strivings in this life, keeping the worshipping assembly in health and life, making nature blossom and thrive, but rather with union with the godhead which it honors and the blessed continuation of life after death as the center of religious strivings.<sup>59</sup>

The religious strivings are directed toward salvation—or, we might say, healing and transformation. Casel explained: "The mystery is a sacred ritual action in which a saving deed is made present through the rite; the congregation, by performing the rite, takes part in the saving act, and thereby win salvation."<sup>60</sup>

The mystery, *par excellence*, in sacramental Christianity is of course the Eucharist. All sacramental churches claim that communicants receive, under the appearances of bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ. Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians have always affirmed belief in an objective

real presence. Anglicans disagree over whether the real presence applies to the consecrated elements or only to the receipt of communion, but Anglo-Catholics, whose influence is increasing, affirm a localized presence on the altar. High-church Lutherans do the same.

The Church of Rome defined the dogma of transubstantiation: that the “substance” of the bread and wine is changed into the body and blood of Christ. Liberal Catholic Geoffrey Hodson agreed: “Of the reality of the Holy Eucharist and of the Consecration and Transubstantiation there can be no doubt. It is a glorious truth.”<sup>61</sup> The Anglican and Eastern Orthodox Churches reject the possibility of reducing the real presence to a doctrinal formula, thereby allowing for individual insight and interpretation. Even the Roman Catholic Balthasar acknowledged:

It is evident that the “mystery” cannot be “explained,” neither the “transubstantiation” of bread and wine into Flesh and Blood nor the other far more important happening which can analogously be called “transubstantiation” of Christ’s Flesh and Blood into the organism of the Church (and of Christians as her members). What is important is not that we know *how* God does it, but that we know *that* and *why* he does it. It is on this that the stress must fall in the formation of liturgy.<sup>62</sup>

Roman Catholicism further asserts that the Mass is a re-presentation of the sacrifice of Calvary. “The highest acts of every religion,” Casel asserted, “are prayer and sacrifice.”<sup>63</sup> Christianity is no exception: “[W]ithout this mystery, the Church would be an offerer without sacrifice, an altar with no gift, a bride cut off from her bridegroom, unconsecrated, knowing no way to the Father.”<sup>64</sup>

Anglicans are divided over whether the Eucharist should be viewed as a sacrifice, but that view has become stronger as a consequence of the catholic revival movement. In either case it is a great act of praise. To quote Michael Ramsey: “If [the Eucharist] be called a worship of sacrificial offering, it is so because it is through Christ who is high-priest... If it be called a worship of glorifying, it is so because

it is through Christ who glorifies the Father.”<sup>65</sup> And “it unites those who partake with the glory of Christ as He now is—risen [and] ascended.”<sup>66</sup> Christ’s priestly role is mentioned several times in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*; for example: “we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.”<sup>67</sup>

Jesuit priest and paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955) viewed celebration of the Eucharist as an activity of global or cosmic dimensions:

[W]hen, through the mouth of the priest, [Christ] says *Hoc est corpus meum*, these words extend beyond the morsel of bread over which they are said: they give birth to the mystical body of Christ. The effect of the priestly act extends beyond the consecrated host to the cosmos itself.<sup>68</sup>

The Eucharist, he added, is the means through which the divine presence in the world is increasing:

*Christ is not yet fully formed:* he has not yet gathered about him the last folds of his robe of flesh and of love which is made up of his faithful followers. The mystical Christ has not yet attained to his full growth; and therefore the same is true of the cosmic Christ. Both of these are simultaneously in the state of being and of becoming; and it is from the prolongation of this process of becoming that all created activity ultimately springs. Christ is the end-point of the evolution, even the *natural* evolution, of all beings.<sup>69</sup>

## Timeless Symbolism

Ritual accumulates power through successive reenactments, each of which is both the recapitulation of prior enactments in historical time and identification with a moment outside time.<sup>70</sup> The Christian liturgy exploits the power of repetition through a pattern of daily, weekly and annual cycles. In sacramental churches the Eucharist is celebrated at least once per week, and in monasteries and cathedrals it is offered every day. Monks observe the divine office, or “canonical hours,” consisting of the eight rites of Matins, Lauds, Prime,

Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline. In non-monastic settings the daily office is simplified; for example the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* offers Morning and Evening Prayer. The annual liturgical calendar, with its prescribed scriptural readings, changing colors of vestments and draperies, days of penitence and great festivals, is an important pattern too. The annual cycle explores and relives Christian sacred history. In Casel's words, "The entire holy year is an image of the eternal design of God, contains the mystery of Christ; within this circle the mystery unfolds to the Vision that cannot yet see the whole as it is in the world to come."<sup>71</sup>

Christ's incarnation—including his life, death, resurrection and ascension—spanned multiple levels of reality. On the physical plane it occurred in Roman Palestine in the first century CE. But at higher levels, like Christ's thought-form of Christianity, it lies outside space and time; in a real sense it is taking place now. Accordingly, as Casel pointed out, when the sacraments draw upon the power of the incarnation they do so with a sense of immediacy:

The promise, "I am with you all days until the end of the world," is to be fulfilled not merely by the moral or spiritual protection of grace in abstract, but in a concrete yet Spirit-filled presence and objective nature. Therefore the Lord left behind for his Church not merely faith and Spirit but his mysteries; or rather, he ordained that the life of faith and grace should find continual celebration of the mysteries. The words of Christ, "where two or three are gathered together in my name I am in the midst of them" were to be quite literally fulfilled.<sup>72</sup>

References in *Hebrews* to Christ's priestly role have already been mentioned. Casel took up the same theme, declaring that, in the timeless presentation of the mysteries, Christ is the overshadowing hierophant and the priest his earthly agent. Hodson saw Christ's role in the eucharist as part of his responsibilities as World Teacher and head of the Division of Religion, a position that allows him to access vast sources of power:

Of the three aspects of the Blessed Trinity, the Wisdom-Love of God is especially manifested through the Presence of our Lord [on the altar]. In His office as World Teacher, and as the Founder of the Christian Faith, He also manifests and releases power from the great reservoir of spiritual energy by which all the great religions of the world are inspired. One purpose of the Mass is to draw upon that reservoir, so that the waters of life... may be made manifest.<sup>73</sup>

Sacraments capture timeless mysteries in symbols, through which, to quote high-church Anglican poet John Keble, "God speaks to us of a world out of sight."<sup>74</sup> Symbols conceal as much as they reveal; only initiates can fully grasp the symbolism and penetrate the mysteries. Nevertheless symbols provide essential hints; in Balthasar's words:

A sacrament is an ecclesiastical gesture that Jesus Christ directs to man. In order to be understandable, this gesture clothes itself in a generally intelligible cosmic image (the elements) or human image (the laying on of hands, the act of man forgiving man). But the image's universally intelligible symbolic content is itself only a pointer to Christ's corporeal and spiritual gesture [and at least in part] because of Christ's unique symbolic power as God and man.<sup>75</sup>

With respect to the Eucharist Balthasar commented that it "constitutes an image which cannot in any way be affected either by the tastes of a particular time or by any kind of demythologization."<sup>76</sup>

In themselves the outer forms have no value; the baptismal water, the chrism of confirmation, the unction for anointing the sick, the bread and wine, the laying-on of hands, and gestures like the sign of the cross are nothing. Similarly, church architecture and decorations in themselves are no more significant than well-appointed living rooms. But those forms are the instruments and storehouses of power. Calivas explained: "The outward signs of the mysteries convey grace tangibly not of themselves but by the very present of the Holy Spirit in them. And the grace given is not at all ambiguous or symbolic but real and actual,

in order to truly recreate and perfect each person in the image and likeness of God.”<sup>77</sup> Hodson added:

A physical symbol corresponds to a super-physical force, just as a word corresponds to an idea. When a word is uttered the meaning behind the word is manifested, and the power behind the idea for which the word stands is then released. When a symbol is constructed and exposed for ceremonial purposes, the spiritual forces, of which it is an expression in form, manifest themselves to a certain degree; when symbols are employed consciously, as in sacramental processes, they become ensouled with living power and the great forces behind them are then released.<sup>78</sup>

Combined with devotion and sacramental intent, the liturgical words, and—believers assert—divine sanction, those external forms provide the physical-plane vessels into which, or through which, grace or divine light flows to recipients.

### **Sacred Esthetics and Drama**

Sacred pageantry stands out from the affairs of everyday life and brings the whole person into intense participation. It evokes anticipation, captures attention, demands reverence, and leaves worthy memories. It instills a sense of awe before the majesty and glory of God.

Drama and esthetics are essential ingredients of sacramental worship. Many rituals are joyous and celebratory, like the Easter service, the marriage ceremony, the consecration of a bishop, and the coronation of a monarch. However, the darker emotions are not shunned, nor depictions of violence. The office of *Tenebrae*, the Good Friday liturgy, and requiem Masses explore the devastation of loss and the struggle to overcome despair. Confession, liturgical or auricular, exposes the depths of human weakness. The Stations of the Cross focus intently on Jesus’ passion and death. The crucifix is a shocking icon, but it has inspired millions of devotees, including some of the greatest mystics.

The esthetic dimension of worship was understood in antiquity: “Give unto the Lord the

glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”<sup>79</sup> And “let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us.”<sup>80</sup> *Exodus* 28 described the priestly vestments prescribed for Moses’ brother, the first high priest:

And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty... a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a brodered coat, a mitre, and a girdle... that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office. And they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen.<sup>81</sup>

*First Kings* described the construction and dedication of Solomon’s temple.<sup>82</sup> The best architect, Hiram, was hired, and the building he constructed evidently was impressive. Elsewhere we learn that temple furnishings included “the pure candlestick,” “the altar of incense,” “the altar of burnt offering,” “the cloths of service,” and “anointing oil, and sweet incense.”<sup>83</sup>

Bishop Hopkins cited many of these passages in his research. He also described—not without some degree of imagination—elaborate rites in the Jewish temple: “we see the largest provision for the praise of God accompanied by all the instruments of music, in the Psalms given by inspiration and chanted morning and evening, every day, by trained and skillful choristers, in which the royal David sometimes bore his part.”<sup>84</sup> Seeming to anticipate Bailey’s definition of the seventh ray, Hopkins remarked that “*ritual and ceremonial order...* were of the most grand and imposing character.”<sup>85</sup>

Judaism acknowledged the glory of God in the transcendent *Kavod* (Hebrew: כבוד) and the immanent, indwelling *Shekinah* (שכינה). Christianity followed its example. At the transfiguration the apostles Peter, James and John saw Christ in his divine glory.<sup>86</sup> The fourth gospel proclaimed that “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”<sup>87</sup> “Dwelt among us” may have been an inten-



tional reference to the Shekinah.<sup>88</sup> The resurrection, Balthasar declared, “pours out its ‘sublime splendor’ (*kavod, doxa, gloria*) over the whole sphere of the Church and of the bestowal of grace.”<sup>89</sup>

Writing in the 5th- or 6th-century, the Pseudo-Dionysius, father of Christian angelology, depicted God as the source of pure beauty, bestowed upon the righteous through the mysteries:

Now the Beauty of God, being unific, good, and the Source of all perfection, is wholly free from dissimilarity, and bestows its own Light upon each according to his merit; and in the most divine Mysteries perfects them in accordance with the unchangeable fashioning of those who are being perfected harmoniously to Itself.<sup>90</sup>

The 13th-century English scholar Robert Grosseteste appealed to Greek concepts of harmony: “For beauty is a concordance and fittingness of a thing to itself and to the whole, and that whole to all things.”<sup>91</sup> Thomas Aquinas agreed, declaring: “Beauty and goodness... are identical fundamentally; for they are based upon the same thing, namely, the form... [B]eauty relates to the cognitive faculty; for beautiful things are those which please when seen. Hence beauty consists in due proportion; for the senses delight in things duly proportioned.”<sup>92</sup> What we perceive as beautiful we revere and adore.

Christians were unable to acquire large houses of worship until the fourth century, when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. From then on, and throughout the Middle Ages, vast resources were joyfully invested in the construction of churches, abbeys and cathedrals. The Gothic cathedrals that grace the landscape of Europe still inspire awe—and imitation. The great medieval cathedrals made unmistakable statements of the transcendence of God (and not incidentally the power of the church). They also provided opportunities for visual artistry, ceremonial pageantry, and sacred music.

Music has played a major role in Christian worship. Early in the second century Ignatius of Antioch urged the people of Ephesus to

form a choir, “that being harmonious in concord and taking the key note of God ye may in unison sing with one voice through Jesus Christ unto the Father.”<sup>93</sup> Ambrose, fourth-century bishop of Milan, and sixth-century Pope Gregory I both promoted sacred music and lent their names to chants that remain popular today.

Sacred music and art have not always been held in high esteem. Some early Christians linked music with paganism. Church father Origen opposed religious art, asserting that if Christ were portrayed at all he should be depicted as an ugly man.<sup>94</sup> Certain Byzantine emperors opposed the veneration of icons on the grounds that it amounted to idolatry; priceless treasures were destroyed in the waves of iconoclasm that followed. In the ninth century, the emperor Charlemagne wondered aloud whether the devotional use of art was appropriate. Three hundred years later, Bernard of Clairvaux denounced the decoration of monastic buildings because it undermined the austerity of religious life.<sup>95</sup>

The Protestant Reformation saw another revolt against sacred esthetics. Both Zwingli and Calvin opposed organ music, and the former even outlawed congregational singing at his church in Zurich. Many newly constructed church buildings were indistinguishable from meeting houses; others were simply ugly. Even in his own time Hans Balthasar lamented that beauty is “no longer loved or fostered by religion,” adding that “beauty is lifted from its face as a mask, and its absence exposes features on that face which threaten to become incomprehensible to man.”<sup>96</sup>

However, Christian worship recovered from Reformation austerity. In both Germany and England, composers of the baroque and classical periods left a heritage of music of timeless excellence, including settings of the Latin Mass. In the 19th century, the catholic revival movement spurred new interest in music in Anglican worship. During Bishop Hopkins’ own lifetime parish choirs were playing an increasing role in his church.

Sacred music, Odo Casel declared, “proceeds from the very heart of worship.” He continued:

[It] rises on the one hand from deep emotion, away from the triviality of daily life..., on the other hand it possesses a deep vision of harmony and beauty in rhythm and number. The plenitude of God’s power and the up-raising of the mind brings us into his freedom and order and lead to music, and music in pure, classical form.<sup>97</sup>

Casel, whose vows committed him to daily participation, recognized the extent to which musical settings of the monastic office created the mood of the service or liturgical season:

The choral music which is sung to the psalm, changes according to the musical tone of antiphon. One can see how simple and yet great are the means which the Church uses her; the alleluia, for example, brings an Easter note to the whole office and exalted and joyful aura.<sup>98</sup>

The psalms, he continued, contain “an immense and inexhaustible sea of teaching, prayer, poetry and wisdom for living.”<sup>99</sup> Michael Ramsey described the Psalter as “the voice of the Israel of God... [and] the prayer book of Christ Himself. In His own use of them its words of adoration, supplications and self-committal were brought to their perfect end.”<sup>100</sup> Settings of the psalms to Anglican chant are revered treasures of sacred music.

Nineteenth-century romanticism promoted efforts to recover the grandeur of pre-Reformation architecture and decoration. Gothic cathedrals and abbey churches—those that were still standing—were restored with a

sacramental focus. Gothic-revival styles became a trademark of Anglican church construction. Whether or not that was the appropriate style for the time, the objective was to make church buildings worthy settings for sacred ritual. The Episcopal rite for the dedication of a church thanks God “for the gifts of your people, and for the work of many hands, which have beautified this place and furnished

it for the celebration of your holy mysteries.”<sup>101</sup>

Beauty in sacred ritual has implications beyond this world. Balthasar described the sacraments as “an essential part of celestial esthetics.” In fact: “Not only does God’s invisible grace become visible and graspable in the Christ-form as such, but here, in the sacraments, the Christ-form itself in turn appears before us and impresses its shape upon us in a valid form which is free from all subjective ambiguities.”<sup>102</sup>

Beauty “dances as an uncontained splendor around the double connection of the true and the good and their inseparable relation to one another.”<sup>103</sup> What Balthasar called the “theory of rapture” addressed “the incarnation of God’s glory and the consequent elevation of man to participate in that glory.”<sup>104</sup>

Balthasar warned against naïve confusion between the revealed glory of God and human art.<sup>105</sup> He may have recalled a passage in the *Wisdom of Solomon*: “[I]f they being delighted took [beautiful things] to be gods; let them know how much better the Lord of them is: for the first author of beauty hath created them.”<sup>106</sup> Yet the beauty invested in ceremonial ritual is our response to the divine glory. Ramsey declared: “God has declared His glory to the end that all creation may give glory to Him... The end is a new creation, forged from out of the broken pieces of a fallen creation, filled with glory and giving glory to its maker.”<sup>107</sup> Humanity’s participation in the

**Every physical object exists at both the dense and etheric levels. The etheric component contains chemical, magnetic and electric fields, and probably fields yet unidentified by science. The sacramental “magnetization” of objects and, most importantly, transformation of the Eucharistic elements can be understood in terms of phenomena at the etheric level.**

divine glory is precisely what Eastern Orthodox theologians mean by *theosis* (θεωσις), or “deification.”<sup>108</sup>

The Eucharist, in which the very Son of God is believed to be present, would seem to merit investment of the very best of human resources. Decoration of the altar and chancel, use of incense, gold or silver chalices and ciboria, and colorful Eucharistic vestments are considered as important as genuflection and elevation of the elements at the consecration. To offer less would invite rejection, as Cain’s offering was rejected by Yahweh.<sup>109</sup>

Esotericists have placed their own emphasis on sacred esthetics. Annie Besant, whose ex-husband was an evangelical Anglican minister, but who became a member of the sacramental Liberal Catholic Church, saw special power in the Roman liturgy:

Some of the arrangements of Latin words, with the music wedded to them in Christian worship, cause the most marked effects on the supra-physical worlds, and any one who is at all sensitive will be conscious of peculiar effects caused by the chanting of some of the most sacred sentences, especially in the Mass.... [A]t the same time effects are caused in the higher worlds directly affecting the subtle bodies... and also appealing to the Intelligences in those worlds.<sup>110</sup>

Alice Bailey spoke of esthetics as a natural response to the seventh ray: “When the egoic ray is the seventh or Ray of Ceremony, Law or Magic, the method is that of the glorification and comprehension of form in approach.”<sup>111</sup> Also the seventh ray “holds hid the secret of physical color and sound.”<sup>112</sup> Theosophist Ernest Wood identified the seventh ray as the ray of beauty and the artist. Moreover, like Balthasar, he looked back with nostalgia to a time when sacred esthetics was appreciated more fully. Speaking of the ancient religious buildings of India, where he lived for 13 years, he declared:

These magnificent erections, beautiful in size, outline and proportion, as well as in detailed features of carving, remain with us as enduring monuments of former days, when men sought ecstasy and revelation

through beauty, and they are now a splendid instrument for refining, elevating and enlarging the consciousness of all who live near them.<sup>113</sup>

Noting the role esthetics plays in ceremonial worship, Wood proclaimed that “we are consecrated” by beauty.<sup>114</sup> Archbishop Ramsey would certainly agree.

## Science of the Sacraments

Divine grace is imparted by the sacraments, but precisely how is that accomplished? Hans Balthasar echoed the sentiment of the 16th-century Anglican clergyman Richard Hooker in insisting that the “how” is unimportant.<sup>115</sup> But others have felt compelled to speculate on the underlying mechanisms, whether or not they would want their explanations to be dogmatized. Annie Besant explained the effects of sacramental ritual thus: “Magnetic changes are caused in the ether of the physical substance, and the subtle counterparts are affected according to the knowledge, purity, and devotion of the celebrant who magnetizes—or, in the religious term, consecrates—it.”<sup>116</sup>

The Roman Church would take issue with her comment about the celebrant’s disposition; its doctrine of *ex opere operato* (“from the work done”) asserts that sacramental efficacy is independent of the merits or holiness of the priest. Be that as it may, Besant’s reference to “subtle counterparts” is of great importance. Trans-Himalayan teachings assert that the physical plane includes both dense physical matter—solid, liquid and gaseous—and etheric matter. Every physical object exists at both the dense and etheric levels. The etheric component contains magnetic and electric fields, and probably fields yet unidentified by science. The sacramental “magnetization” of objects and, most importantly, transformation of the Eucharistic elements can be understood in terms of phenomena at the etheric level.

In addition to the various fields, the etheric body of every living being also contains the life-force that distinguishes that being from a corpse. Another term for the etheric body is the “vital body”—what Egyptian religion

called the *ka*, and biblical Judaism the nephesh (נפש). *Ecclesiastes* referred to the “golden bowl” broken at physical death: “the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”<sup>117</sup> The life-force—or *prana*—comes from both planetary and extra-planetary sources. The etheric body, Bailey explained, is the receiver, assimilator and transmitter of *prana*;<sup>118</sup> it is a clearing-house for energy coming from different sources and going to different destinations. Sacramental healing operates at the etheric level but increases the flow of vitality to the dense physical vehicle. In sacraments such as baptism and confirmation, the intended benefit is for the soul, and the flow of energy presumably is to higher vehicles.

Our etheric bodies, we are told, are part of the etheric body of the planet.<sup>119</sup> Accordingly, sacramental effects on the etheric body are shared; they have an intrinsic group quality. Christians everywhere have insisted that the Eucharist is Holy *Communion*, with emphasis on its communal aspect. Bailey points out another fact of great significance: “It is... the etheric body which is responsive to and developed by the incoming seventh-ray influences.”<sup>120</sup>

Human participants may not be the only ones attracted to the drama, esthetics, and other aspects of sacramental ritual. The Pseudo-Dionysius depicted the divine beauty as streaming down from the godhead through a hierarchy of angels.<sup>121</sup> Hodson commented: “A special section of the angelic hierarchy is concerned almost exclusively with religion.”<sup>122</sup> Angels belong to the vast deva evolution, whose ranks extend from the tiniest nature spirits to the mightiest seraphim. Esoteric writers often speak of angels as *devas*, but the normal implication is that they mean *devas* whose level of consciousness is higher than our own.

The 12th-century mystic Hildegard of Bingen reported a vision of angels during the Mass:

[W]hen a priest clad in sacred vestments approached the altar to celebrate the divine mysteries, I saw that a great calm light was brought to it from Heaven by angels and

shone around the altar until the sacred rite was ended and the priest had withdrawn from it. And when the Gospel of peace had been recited and the offering to be consecrated had been placed on the altar, and the priest sang the praise of Almighty God, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts,” which began the mystery of the sacred rites, Heaven was suddenly opened and a fiery and inestimable brilliance descended over that offering and irradiated it completely with light, as the sun illumines anything its rays shine through. And, thus illuminating it, the brilliance bore it on high into the sacred places of Heaven and then replaced it on the altar, as a person draws in a breath and lets it out again; and thus the offering was made true flesh and true blood, although in human sight it looked like bread and wine.<sup>123</sup>

Hodson and Charles Leadbeater—the latter a bishop in the Liberal Catholic Church as well as a leading Theosophist—both reported visions of angelic participation in the Mass. Leadbeater described the participation of angels of various orders and suggested that transubstantiation is accomplished through angelic agency. Most important, in his account, are the “Angel of the Eucharist” and “Angel of the Presence.” With the collaboration of the celebrant and congregation, the Angel of the Eucharist builds a thoughtform encompassing the sanctuary, creating a “sacred space” in which the consecration of the elements can take place.<sup>124</sup> The Angel of the Presence reportedly facilitates the consecration itself. According to Leadbeater the priest creates a “tube” connecting the physical elements with the buddhic plane. When the words of consecration are uttered, “the Angel of the Presence appears, and the life of that higher world flows in, providing conditions under which can take place the wonderful changes of the Consecration.”<sup>125</sup>

Hodson observed “the presence and attention” of an order of *devas* during the *Agnus Dei* (“Lamb of God”), which occurs in the latter part of the Mass. “They are also chanting, notably at the higher mental and upper subplanes of the formal mental level [presumably the

*rupa* subplanes].” Later he identified them as belonging to the “Ghandarvas, or music angels.” “The work of this order is almost entirely devotional, having been associated with such music in ancient days.”<sup>126</sup>

Angels/devas are also reported to be involved in other forms of sacramental ritual. Besant declared that “the word and the sign of power [ritual gestures] summon to the celebration the angels specially concerned with the materials used and the nature of the act performed, and they lend their powerful aid.”<sup>127</sup> With reference to the anointing of the sick, Hodson added that “the Archangel Raphael is definitely attracted and he may either attend in person or manifest his power and his presence through the angels of his hierarchy who are already in attendance. This naturally increases the amount of power available.”<sup>128</sup> Elsewhere he described the involvement of lower angels in “operations [i.e., surgical procedures], recoveries, and the healing of wounds.”<sup>129</sup>

Bailey identified the “violet devas” of a lower than angels order as being particularly relevant to the etheric body and the transmission of prana.<sup>130</sup> Hodson made the interesting comment that angels “are themselves the embodiment of the type of energy with which they work... so that their own vivid intelligence pervades them and governs all the results which they produce.”<sup>131</sup>

## Ritual: Present and Future

### External Aspects of Religion

How important are the external aspects of public worship, and to what extent should we follow traditional practices? In his response to those questions John Henry Hopkins declared: “The *life* of religion is indeed a spiritual principle, but that is no reason why the Lord should be indifferent to its *form*... [And] the love of form and order [is] implanted by the Deity Himself, in every human bosom.”<sup>132</sup> Every Christian has made use of form and order in worship, even the puritans in their bare meeting house; the important question is: “which is the *best* system of form and order?”<sup>133</sup> The best one, Hopkins declared, was the system prescribed by the Almighty for

Jewish temple worship. The rubrics recorded in the Old Testament formed “a statute for ever unto him [Aaron] and his seed after him.”<sup>134</sup> The Jewish priests, or *kohanim*, were all descended from Aaron. Hopkins’ thesis was that the divine statute had never been revoked. Altars, candles, incense, vestments, and so forth, which had been used in temple worship, were adopted by the early Christian church, so far as their circumstances allowed, and should still be used.

Hopkins conceded that “The heart must be changed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, or outward forms can profit us nothing.”<sup>135</sup> He wrote at an early stage in the catholic revival movement, but he was insistent that externals matter and confidently predicted that “my children will behold the ‘glory and beauty’ of our public worship brought back to the first stage in the Reformation.”<sup>136</sup> That “first stage” presumably referred to the 1549 Anglican Prayer Book which preserved much traditional ritual.

A sacrament combines external activity with interior power. Could the same result be obtained without the external form? Perhaps, but to quote Odo Casel: “[T]he decisive thing is inward participation, which does not require unconditionally to be made external; but external participation does belong to the intense sharing of the experience, and to the completion of its symbolic expression.”<sup>137</sup> The precise way in which the external form and the inner power are combined cannot be explained fully by either science or metaphysics; if it could the sacraments would cease to be mysteries. The church—and Casel was not just referring to the building—“is like an ancient temple which can be only as it is; in it every stone, every pillar, every beam and every statue has its place and displays its own beauty; together all the parts form a single work of art from which no part may be removed without injury to the whole.”<sup>138</sup>

Balthasar declared that the external form

must express and reflect its interior to the world in a credible manner, and the interior must be conformed, justified, and made love-worthy in its radiant beauty through

the truth of the exterior that manifests it. When it is achieved, Christian form is the most beautiful thing that may be found in the human realm.<sup>139</sup>

He conceded that “a certain esotericism is unavoidable and where the proofs for the truth contemplated necessarily bear the character of ritual initiation.”<sup>140</sup>

Although she came from an evangelical background, Alice Bailey offered a strong defense of sacramental ritual:

The sacraments, properly understood, serve to strengthen this link and realisation, and such a one as that of Baptism (when entered upon with understanding) will draw forth oft a response from the Great Lord Himself. It is almost as if a golden strand were directed from His heart to the heart of the servant—a strand unbreakable and unfathomable and which, with each administration of any of the holy rites in the succession of lives, becomes stronger, broader and brighter. Eventually these many strands will become reabsorbed into their source when the Body of the Christ—one of the seven Heavenly Men on the second or monadic plane—is completed in full expression, for each one linked to Him becomes, in a vital sense, a cell in His Body.<sup>141</sup>

Bailey acknowledged that many people mistakenly believe that they have moved beyond ritual:

There is so much revolt at this time against ceremonial, and so many good and well-meaning people regard themselves as having outgrown and transcended ritual. They pride themselves on having attained that so-called “liberation”, forgetting that it is only the sense of individuality that permits this attitude, and that no group work is ever possible without some form of ritual. The refusal therefore to participate in uniformity of action is no sign of a liberated soul.<sup>142</sup>

She added that all service, whether performed by disciples or high entities in the hierarchy, “is governed by ritual.”<sup>143</sup> Clearly, “ritual” can take on a larger meaning than it has in common usage.

The sacraments form channels through which divine power or light can flow to the physical plane—or at least to the etheric subplanes. Those channels represent rents, or tears, in the fabric of the planes of nature. Bailey explained that precedents for such rents occurred during incidents in both the Old and New Testaments; in particular:

The second, and much the most important rent, was made by the power of the second aspect when the Christ subjected the Master Jesus to the fourth initiation and Their joint influence was triumphant over death. Then we read that the veil of the Temple was split in twain from the top to the bottom. The lawgiver assisted at the first rending as the climax to the third initiation, and there was a somewhat similar process of glorification. A similar event took place at the Transfiguration of the Christ, overshadowing or rather working through the Master Jesus. But at the triumph over death and through the Great Renunciation or Crucifixion episode, a great and major rending took place. The Law, when rightly kept and interpreted, defines man’s attitude upon the mental plane and serves to make a rent in the etheric veil, separating the etheric vehicle in its fourfold aspect from the dense physical form. The rending of the second veil at the time of the Crucifixion let in light on to the second level of the etheric plane, and a new type of illumination was spread abroad upon the earth. Law and Love could now penetrate into the consciousness of humanity in a new and direct manner.<sup>144</sup>

On a much smaller scale the chakras, which are anchored in the etheric body, are channels through which energy flows to and from the physical plane.

### **The Future of Ritual**

Christian authorities typically envision a continuation of sacramental ritual on traditional lines, enhancing it only when liturgical research recovers customs in the primitive church deemed to be superior to current practices. By contrast, esoteric writers have predicted important new developments. For ex-

ample, Bailey looked forward to a time when ritual will “reveal the true significance of water.” She explained that the new ritual, which could be viewed as a future version of baptism,

will revolutionize its uses and open to man the free passage to the astral plane. This plane is that of the emotional-desire nature, and its symbol is water. The coming Aquarian Age will reveal to man (and hence also facilitate the work of the seventh ray) that that plane is his natural home at this state of development. The masses today are entirely, but unconsciously, polarised on that plane. They must become consciously aware of their activity. Man is on the verge of becoming normally awake on the astral plane, and it will be through scientific rituals that this new development will be brought about.<sup>145</sup>

Several esoteric writers have predicted the restoration of the ancient mysteries and the enactment of planetary initiations on the physical plane. Bailey affirmed that this will take place “through the medium of the Church and the Masonic Fraternity.” And in a comment that could perhaps be related to the passages in *Hebrews*, she added that Christ will serve as “the Hierophant of the first and second initiations.”<sup>146</sup> Sanat Kumara reportedly serves as hierophant for the higher planetary initiations.

Bailey contrasted the proficiency of the Sixth- and Seventh-ray disciples, concluding that the latter will enjoy an inherent advantage in building a better world:

The Sixth ray disciple, working with the laws of nature and of the soul, will qualify his results and produce his creative forms upon the astral plane; he has consequently to learn frequently to work through a seventh ray personality for several lives... before he will be able to bring through on to the physical plane his dream and his vision. The seventh ray disciple has no such problem. By his knowledge of ritual..., by his understanding of the “Words of Power”..., and by using the potency of sound, the disciple of the future will work and build the new world with its culture and civilization.<sup>147</sup>

We have spoken of angelic participation in ceremonial ritual, but avatars also play important roles. The ritual work of the Christ during his last appearance is of course well known, and we look forward to his work as initiator after his reappearance. We understand that he will bring with him “some of the great Angels... [who will] have much to communicate anent color and sound and the effect of these two forces on the etheric bodies of men, animals and flowers.”<sup>148</sup> We also learn that a “Seventh Ray Avatar will appear” during the 21st century, “when the Seventh Ray has achieved complete manifestation and the Piscean influence is entirely removed.” Bailey explained:

His [the seventh-ray avatar’s] work will demonstrate the law, order and rhythm of the creative process as it works out on the physical plane, blending spirit and matter. And as this ray is called the Ray of Ceremonial Order or Ritual, He will be largely instrumental in producing those conditions which will permit of the reappearance upon Earth of the Mysteries of Initiation, of which the Hierarchy is the custodian. He is necessarily connected with the Great White Lodge on Sirius.<sup>149</sup>

## Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this article has been to build a synthetic understanding of sacramental ritual from religious and esoteric writings. While the Christian sacraments were products of the early Piscean Age, their characteristics give them continuing relevance at the dawn of the Aquarian Age and as the Seventh Ray comes into manifestation. New emphasis on ritual over the last several decades, in what we have termed “sacramental Christianity,” no doubt reflects that incoming ray influence.

Institutional Christianity claims that Christ gave the apostles a sacramental mandate during his ministry in Palestine and that mandate passed on through the episcopal succession. Esotericists alternatively can view the sacraments as a response to the thoughtform which Christ created to launch Christianity on its sevenfold path. In either case the sacraments are vehicles through which the divine presence can

be localized in space and time—and we recall how the Shekinah's presence was localized in the Ark of the Covenant.

The sacramental churches have faithfully preserved sacramental ritual, particularly the Eucharist, that might have been lost, either through negligence or under assault from evangelical religion and materialistic rationalism. Evangelicals charge that the external aspects of religion distract from inner spirituality. Church buildings can indeed become shrines to forgotten gods, decorations tasteless works of non-art, ritual superstitious proceduralism, vestments garish symbols of clerical ego, gestures pharisaical, and music distractive noise. For that matter, the church itself can become oppressive, bureaucratic, corrupt, materialistic and irrelevant. However those pitfalls can be, and to a great extent have been, avoided. Intelligent and careful attention to externals can enhance the religious experience and create more perfect vehicles for the receipt of divine grace.

In its disdain for the external forms of religion, evangelical Christianity has much in common with Theravada Buddhism, but its record of nourishing the inner life pales in comparison to what Buddhism has achieved. The evangelical denominations have always been suspicious of mysticism, with the result that, with very few exceptions, all the great Christian mystics came from sacramental churches.<sup>150</sup> The primary strength of evangelical Christianity lies not in its nurture of inner spirituality but in its record of service and activism. To take two outstanding examples, William Wilberforce spearheaded the abolition of slavery, and William Booth founded the Salvation Army.

Sacramental ritual expresses spirituality through symbolism, beauty and drama, all of which influence the human psyche on multiple levels. Attempts to explain the mechanisms underlying sacramental efficacy confront the basic fact that the sacraments are mysteries that transcend human understanding. Nevertheless, valuable insights are provided by theories that involve the etheric subplanes and the role of devic entities. The etheric subplanes—which deserve more detailed study by esotericists and particularly by religious philoso-

phers—provide a clearinghouse for energy flowing to and from the physical plane. One source of beneficial energy, or possibly its destination, is the buddhic plane, which we recall is the fourth cosmic ether.<sup>151</sup>

Clairvoyant studies have provided persuasive evidence that angelic or devic beings participate in sacramental ritual—whether because they are attracted by the music, color, and moving symbolism, or because they are assigned to that type of work. In either case we have opportunities to gain greater understanding of devic roles and perhaps the ability to cooperate more effectively with the deva evolution.

- 
- <sup>1</sup> See also the discussion in John F. Nash, "The Power and Timelessness of Ritual," *Esoteric Quarterly*, Fall 2007, 35-53.
  - <sup>2</sup> *1 Corinthians* 14:40. All biblical quotations are from the King James Bible.
  - <sup>3</sup> The *Didache of the Twelve Apostles*, which contains these instructions, may date from as early as 50 CE.
  - <sup>4</sup> That definition, found in the catechisms of most major denominations, was first suggested in the 4th-century by Augustine of Hippo.
  - <sup>5</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Destiny of the Nations* (New York: Lucis, 1949), 5.
  - <sup>6</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy* (New York: Lucis, 1957), 511.
  - <sup>7</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation: Human and Solar* (New York: Lucis, 1922), 58-59, and elsewhere.
  - <sup>8</sup> Hugh Gilbert, "Odo Casel: Prophet and Mystagogue," [http://www.canonlaw.info/liturgysacraments\\_casel.htm](http://www.canonlaw.info/liturgysacraments_casel.htm), (accessed April 22, 2010).
  - <sup>9</sup> Hans U. von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, 7 Vols. (Fort Collins, CO: Ignatius Press, 1961ff; *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, 5 vols., Ignatius Press, 1988ff).
  - <sup>10</sup> Tomberg's authorship of *Meditations on the Tarot: A Journey into Christian Hermeticism* is now universally acknowledged. Balthasar's afterword appeared in the original German version published in 1985. It was omitted from the first English translation (Element Books, 1993) but included in heavily edited form in a 1998 edition.
  - <sup>11</sup> Ramsey is particularly remembered for opening up ecumenical dialogue with the Roman and



- Orthodox Churches. He has a special reverence for Eastern Christianity.
- <sup>12</sup> Although modern scholarship questions the unity or homogeneity of the primitive church, the myth of a pristine “apostolic church” has inspired believers for centuries.
- <sup>13</sup> Nestorianism, questionably associated with the 5th-century John Nestorius, asserted that Jesus and Christ were distinct persons. The Council of Ephesus condemned it as heretical.
- <sup>14</sup> Phineas P. Quimby. “The Body of Jesus and the Body of Christ,” 1863. Quimby Library. [http://www.ppquimby.com/articles/body\\_of\\_jesus\\_and\\_the\\_body\\_of\\_ch.htm](http://www.ppquimby.com/articles/body_of_jesus_and_the_body_of_ch.htm), (accessed April 24, 2010).
- <sup>15</sup> Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston, MA: First Church of Christ Scientist, 1875), 333, 336.
- <sup>16</sup> Christ could rightly be described as the Logos, in the original Greek sense of an intermediary. However esotericists tend to use “logos” to signify a planetary, solar or galactic deity.
- <sup>17</sup> Bailey, *Initiation: Human and Solar*, 43-44.
- <sup>18</sup> Annie W. Besant, *Esoteric Christianity* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1914/19530), 89.
- <sup>19</sup> Bailey, *Initiation: Human and Solar*, 56-57.
- <sup>20</sup> Jesus’ healing ministry could be viewed as illustrative of that larger healing process.
- <sup>21</sup> *Sozo* appears in several scriptural passages, for example *Mark* 5:23. Note also the similarity between the words “save” and “salve.”
- <sup>22</sup> Dion Fortune, *Applied Magic* (Wellingborough, Northants., UK: Aquarian Press, 1962), 20-21.
- <sup>23</sup> Charles W. Leadbeater, *The Science of the Sacraments* (Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1920), especially 198-199.
- <sup>24</sup> Bailey, *Initiation: Human and Solar*, 28-29.
- <sup>25</sup> Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations*, 59.
- <sup>26</sup> Russian theologian and scientist Pavel Florensky (1882–1937) described the ecclesia as “the unifying, preexistent, heavenly, mystical form” of Christianity. See also John F. Nash, *Christianity: the One, the Many*, Vol. 2 (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2007), 279-285.
- <sup>27</sup> Nash, *Christianity: the One, the Many*, Vol. 2, 310-348. The paths are archetypal in nature and labels like “devotion” have larger meanings than they do in everyday usage.
- <sup>28</sup> Odo Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, ed: B. Neunheuser (New York: Crossroads, 1962/1999), 39.
- <sup>29</sup> Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury under Kings Henry VIII and Edward VI, was the principal author of the *Book of Common Prayer* of 1549 and 1552, on which all subsequent Anglican Prayer Books have been based.
- <sup>30</sup> Liberal Christianity has emerged as a third form, over the last 200 years, but it is less relevant to our present theme.
- <sup>31</sup> Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1963/1997), 275.
- <sup>32</sup> The canonical sacraments were first listed by theologian Peter Lombard and subsequently confirmed by the Councils of Florence (1439) and Trent (1545–1563).
- <sup>33</sup> The Waldensians’ origins are clouded, but they are generally associated with Peter Waldo (c.1160–1218) of Lyons, France. The Lollards were followers of English clergyman John Wycliffe (c.1325–1384).
- <sup>34</sup> Over the last 200 years evangelical Christianity has developed a strong service ministry. And spiritual healing has been revived in charismatic denominations.
- <sup>35</sup> Geoffrey Hodson, *The Inner Side of Church Worship* (London: St Alban Press, 1930/1975), 2.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.
- <sup>37</sup> That dualism also owed much to Zoroastrianism.
- <sup>38</sup> See the discussion in Leadbeater, *The Science of the Sacraments*, 41-42.
- <sup>39</sup> *Isaiah* 65:16. The Hebrew word rendered as “of truth,” אֱמֻנָה, can scarcely be transliterated other than by “Amen.”
- <sup>40</sup> Christianity claimed to be the “new covenant,” replacing the old covenant between Yahweh and the Jews.
- <sup>41</sup> For example *Mark* 1:9.
- <sup>42</sup> *Matthew* 28:19-20.
- <sup>43</sup> *1 Kings* 19:16; *1 Chronicles* 16:22; *Psalms* 105:15.
- <sup>44</sup> *Matthew* 9:18-25; *Mark* 5:22-42; *Luke* 7:11-17, 8:41-55; *John* 11:1-44.
- <sup>45</sup> See the discussion in Morton T. Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1973), 55-57. Descriptions of healings of one kind or another occupy an estimated 25 percent of the gospel.
- <sup>46</sup> *Luke* 9:1-2. The apostles’ power over “unclean spirits” appears also in *Mark* 6:7.
- <sup>47</sup> *1 Corinthians* 11:23-26; *Mark* 14:22-25; *Matthew* 26:26-29; *Luke* 22:13-20; *John* 13-17; *Acts* 2:42.
- <sup>48</sup> *Luke* 24:30-34.
- <sup>49</sup> Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (New York: Seabury, 1945/1982), 50ff.
- <sup>50</sup> “Eucharistic Prayer E,” *Common Worship*, London: Church House Publishing, 2000.

- Comparable statements appear in Prayers G and H.
- 51 Robert W. Funk and the Jesus Seminar, *The Acts of Jesus: the Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 51-161.
- 52 Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 2-6.
- 53 John H. Hopkins, *The Law of Ritualism: Examined in its Relation to the Word of God, to the Primitive Church, to the Church of England, and to the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States* (New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1866), 9.
- 54 Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, Crestwood, trans., Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius (NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1944/1976), 221.
- 55 A. Michael Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1949/2009), 135.
- 56 Alkiviadis C. Calivas, "The Sacramental Life of the Orthodox Church," Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: <http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith7106>, (accessed May 21, 2010).
- 57 Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, 7.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 53.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 54.
- 61 Sandra Hodson (ed.), *Light of the Sanctuary* (Manila, Philippines: Theosophical Publishers, 1988), 104.
- 62 Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 574. Parenthesis and italicization in original. All quotations are from volume 1 of the work.
- 63 Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, 71.
- 64 *Ibid.*, 21.
- 65 Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ*, 94-95.
- 66 *Ibid.*, 98.
- 67 *Hebrews* 4:14.
- 68 Quoted in P. Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*, trans., G. Vann (London: Collins, 1965), 13 (Introduction by N. M. Wildiers). The Latin *Hoc est corpus meum* is translated as "This is my body."
- 69 *Ibid.*, 121. Emphasis in original.
- 70 Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (Princeton NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1954), especially 34-35.
- 71 Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, 70.
- 72 *Ibid.*, 58.
- 73 Hodson, *The Inner Side of Church Worship*, 74.
- 74 Quoted in Geoffrey Rowell, *The Vision Glorious* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), 27.
- 75 Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, p. 579. Parenthesis in original.
- 76 *Ibid.*, 575.
- 77 Calivas, "The Sacramental Life of the Orthodox Church."
- 78 Hodson, *The Inner Side of Church Worship*, 79-80.
- 79 *1 Chronicles* 16:29.
- 80 *Psalms* 90:17.
- 81 *Exodus* 28:2-5. An *ephod* seems to have been an elaborate tunic.
- 82 *1 Kings*, chs. 6-8.
- 83 *Exodus* 31:8-11.
- 84 Hopkins, *The Law of Ritualism*, 7.
- 85 *Ibid.*, 8. Emphasis in original.
- 86 *Mark* 9:2-8, *Matthew* 17:1-9, *Luke* 9:28-36.
- 87 *John* 1:14.
- 88 Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ*, 58-60.
- 89 Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 38. Parenthesis in original.
- 90 Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, ch. 3, trans., unknown, <http://www.esotericarchives.com/oracle/dionys2.htm/>, (accessed May 9, 2010).
- 91 Quoted in Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2002), 48.
- 92 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, book I, 4, (transl: Fathers of the English Dominican Province.) (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947).
- 93 Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, 4:2, trans., J. Lightfoot, Early Christian Writings.
- 94 Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, 116.
- 95 Nash, *Christianity: the One, the Many*, 244.
- 96 Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 18.
- 97 Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, 78.
- 98 Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, 82.
- 99 *Ibid.*
- 100 Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ*, 97-98.
- 101 "Dedication and Consecration of a Church," *Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Episcopal Church, 1979).
- 102 Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 582.
- 103 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 104 *Ibid.*, 125.
- 105 *Ibid.*, 41.
- 106 *Wisdom of Solomon* 13:3.
- 107 Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ*, 91, 89.
- 108 See for example Michael J Christensen & Jeffery A. Wittung (eds.), *Partakers of the Divine*

- Nature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007).
- <sup>109</sup> *Genesis* 4:4-5.
- <sup>110</sup> Besant, *Esoteric Christianity*, 231.
- <sup>111</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation* (New York: Lucis, 1922), 18.
- <sup>112</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, Vol. I, 58-59.
- <sup>113</sup> Ernest Wood, *The Seven Rays* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1925/1972), 131-132. Wood seems to have acquired his knowledge of the seven rays independently of Alice Bailey.
- <sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.
- <sup>115</sup> Hooker famously declared of the Eucharistic elements: "[W]hat these elements are in themselves it skilleth not, it is enough that to me which take them they are the body and blood of Christ." Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Vol. V, ch. lxvii.12, 1597, *Works of... Hooker*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1865), 92.
- <sup>116</sup> Besant, *Esoteric Christianity*, 234.
- <sup>117</sup> *Ecclesiastes* 12:6-7.
- <sup>118</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (New York: Lucis, 1925), 97.
- <sup>119</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. 1, (New York: Lucis, 1944), 698; *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle* (New York: Lucis, 1950), 7.
- <sup>120</sup> Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations*, 118.
- <sup>121</sup> See the discussion in Matthew Fox & Rupert Sheldrake, *The Physics of Angels* (HarperSan-Francisco, 1996), 31ff.
- <sup>122</sup> Hodson, *The Inner Side of Church Worship*, 8.
- <sup>123</sup> Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, (trans., C. Hart & J. Bishop (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 237.
- <sup>124</sup> Leadbeater, *The Science of the Sacraments*, especially 23, 119, 179.
- <sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.
- <sup>126</sup> Geoffrey Hodson, *Clairvoyant Investigations* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1984), 90-92.
- <sup>127</sup> Besant, *Esoteric Christianity*, 234.
- <sup>128</sup> Hodson, *The Inner Side of Church Worship*, 62.
- <sup>129</sup> Hodson, *Clairvoyant Investigations*, 58.
- <sup>130</sup> Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 92.
- <sup>131</sup> Hodson, *The Inner Side of Church Worship*, 4.
- <sup>132</sup> Hopkins, *The Law of Ritualism*, 1-2. Emphasis in original.
- <sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 3. Emphasis in original.
- <sup>134</sup> *Exodus* 28:43.
- <sup>135</sup> Hopkins, *The Law of Ritualism*, 97.
- <sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.
- <sup>137</sup> Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, 48.
- <sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.
- <sup>139</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 28.
- <sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.
- <sup>141</sup> Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 514.
- <sup>142</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, Vol. I (New York: Lucis, 1936), 363. Parenthesis in original.
- <sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>144</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (New York: Lucis, 1960), 192-193.
- <sup>145</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, Vol. I, 364.
- <sup>146</sup> Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 514-515.
- <sup>147</sup> Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations*, 130.
- <sup>148</sup> Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 508.
- <sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 298-299.
- <sup>150</sup> Jakob Böhme and Emanuel Swedenborg were evangelical Lutherans.
- <sup>151</sup> See for example Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, Vol. 2 (New York: Lucis, 1955), 405.



# Keys to the Aquarian Age

Joann S. Bakula

---

## Introduction

This article contains an explanation of the term “Age of Aquarius” as the combination of the sidereal zodiac of astronomy and the tropical zodiac of astrology. In it are discussed compassion and synthesis, two of the characteristics and qualities signifying the emergence of the Age of Aquarius. The article concludes with a new, gender-free Aquarius version of the Great Invocation.

## Aquarian Age

As we all know by now, the Aquarian Age, or the new age, is an astronomical cycle of over 2,000 years based upon the sidereal, helio-centric zodiac, which is determined by the path through the constellations that the sun apparently circles through. Astrologers use the tropical, geocentric, Earth-centered zodiac, minus adjustment for the equinox precession, to determine the natal chart. Jungian astrologer Alice Howell<sup>1</sup> points out that it is the interaction of the tropical and sidereal zodiacs that determines these ages. The significance and interpretation of the influence of the stars is mythological, hypothetical and useful in placing Earth in the cosmos and recognizing the larger whole in which we all live. Psychologically, therefore, it represents a “mandala of totality”<sup>2</sup> or a symbol of relationship with the whole that can’t be overestimated in an age of apparent isolation of the individual and the planet. Space travel and exploration began at the beginning of the Aquarian Age and end of the Piscean Age, signifying our first steps as we enter the larger whole. Seen as great cycles of time, the ages have an interface of several hundred years due to the amount of starless space between the visible constellations.

Even though some denigrate anything called new age or Aquarian Age, the ancient Mayan predictions for 2012 only reinforce the cosmic picture of great cycles and ages beginning and ending.

Can we visualize what humanity will be like at the end of the Age of Aquarius? Alice Bailey writes, “The soul, the consciousness aspect, that universal urge in each of us that puts us in rapport with God, will have surged to the front....we will have left behind the human kingdom and... our consciousness will be focused in the fifth kingdom of nature, the spiritual kingdom. That is the prophecy, the thing that lies ahead for humanity.”<sup>3</sup> The fifth kingdom is already *in* nature, but we do not see it. Awakening Soul or consciousness will change our perception so that we can see what is all around us all the time to which we are blind. This awakening is to a better relationship to our environment, but this is only the tentative beginning. “The perception of a higher reality, in itself, is little more than an insight. Only when such an insight is vitalized by intense aspiration can it gather enough momentum to become a catalyst for transformation,” write Seifer and Vieweg in *When the Soul Awakens*.<sup>4</sup>

---

## About the Author

Joann S. Bakula, Ph.D. is a transpersonal, integral psychologist, writer, and lecturer who writes a monthly meditation letter and commentary at [www.worldservicegroup.com](http://www.worldservicegroup.com). Her publications include one book and many articles on meditation, higher states and stages, the Bardos, planetary living and many other subjects. She is the Review Editor of the Esoteric Quarterly, has taught at various universities for 30 years, and is currently on the faculty of an on-line university. Her new email address is: [joannsbakula@q.com](mailto:joannsbakula@q.com).

In *The Labours of Hercules*, the eleventh labor is associated by Alice Bailey with the eleventh month and constellation of Aquarius. Hercules is seen as the mythic World Disciple, representative of the archetypal hero or humanity itself. The labor of the ancient Greek hero in the sign of Aquarius entails cleaning up the stables, long neglected despite constant use. Hercules is said to have diverted two rivers into the stable to flush out the corruption. Bailey has called these two underlying streams of energy the rivers of “life and love.”<sup>5</sup>

Today, there is general awareness that corruption exists in many areas and needs to be cleaned up. One such area is our physical environment, which has been polluted by irresponsible practices. Who can doubt that this is indeed one task ahead of humanity as we face the tasks of Aquarius? The Hercules of today would have to deal with what past generations have left polluted, even to the point of changing the climate. Meditating on Hercules, as the archetypal World Disciple, taking responsibility for past behaviors and developing a cleaner lifestyle respectful of nature and the climate would demonstrate a more mature and holistic behavior. It would signify an intention to regulate our destructive behaviors. Visualization is one method for stimulating the energy of purpose, intention and responsibility. Through visualization, prayer and meditation as world service in an esoteric, religious or secular group, we can form a common voice enhanced by deep contemplation. Many people in these various groups are already united in their commitment to care for the Earth and stop climate change. Meditators bring the added dimension of intuition, visualization and apperception.

The “catalytic task” that Seifer and Vieweg referred to is for the united group of compassionate, intelligent and wise people of all ideologies to strengthen their vision and motivation until this intention becomes the policy of the nations. Even though there was no legally binding new green document signed at the 2009 Copenhagen climate change summit, world leaders met to talk about the prob-

lem. Progress may seem slow, but we have come very far in the last 100 years in understanding integral environmental relationships. Careful meditation precedes wise action before the calculations of the lower mind can be tasked with working out the details. “The Aquarian law is based on spiritual illumination, on intuitive perception and brotherly love, which is identification with every form in every kingdom in nature. A tremendous future lies ahead; two thousand five hundred years will have been consummated. We are on our way.”<sup>6</sup>

## Compassion

One of the most comprehensive definitions of compassion is from Tibetan Buddhist and Tibetologist Robert Thurman:

[C]ompassion... means the will to free others from suffering, based on an empathetic sensitivity to that suffering. Its opposite is hatred, which wills others to suffer. Its counterpart is love, which wills others to have happiness along with freedom from suffering. Universal compassion is considered the automatic reflex of perfect wisdom, since the realization of essential selflessness is an experience of the ultimate unity of self and other, which causes the suffering of others to become one's own, making the will to eliminate it spontaneous and immediate.<sup>7</sup>

This ultimate unity of self and other is described by Bailey as a function of the intuitive state or intuition, which, when functioning, produces a “complete loss of the sense of separateness. At its highest point, it is known as Universal Love, which has no relation to sentiment...but is, predominantly, in the nature of identification with all beings.”<sup>8</sup> Intuitive identification, in esoteric philosophy, results in an ability to see the divine essence latent in all forms and to “contact the light centre in all forms.”<sup>9</sup> Seeing light as latent in all forms is what establishes relationship with all life. When this identification is known, the “the sense of superiority and separateness recedes into the background.”<sup>10</sup> Intuitional understanding “connotes personality-soul unification, wide experience”<sup>11</sup> and under-

standing resulting from a sense of synthesis. Bailey called this “synthetic understanding,”<sup>12</sup> which is associated with the intuitional plane or buddhic plane, as it’s called in Theosophical literature. She describes “intuitional activity” as “always spontaneous” in meditation, dreams, events and other occurrences. “Where the reasoning to an understanding enters, it is not the activity of the intuition....[Intuition] is that synthetic, inclusive grasp of the life and needs of all beings... [It is] the sense of universal Oneness.”<sup>13</sup> The activity of intuition expresses, then, as spontaneous universal compassion or universal love.

Critical analysis, concentration, study, increased awareness and experience in meditation all help to prepare for the flashes and flickers of spontaneous intuition.

Compassion has been held up as the highest ideal in many fields from religion to pop culture. Karen Armstrong, author of *The Case for God*, said that traditionally in religion “Compassion was the major test of any true spirituality and the chief means by which human beings came into contact with God, Nirvana or Brahman.”<sup>14</sup> Armstrong initiated a multinational, interfaith movement that produced the Charter for Compassion, which is on the Internet and to which you, too, can add your name:

[www.charterforcompassion.org](http://www.charterforcompassion.org). Song writer and poet Leonard Cohen—whom some call the conscience of a generation—voices realistic fear for the future in the song and album named *The Future*. Despite his concerns, he shows the way through in the line, “Love is the only engine of survival” in “the order of the soul.”<sup>15</sup> Love/compassion is widely considered to be a generating engine for life.

Tibetan Buddhist Kalu Rinpoche writes that in Mahayana Buddhism, meditation on compassion is considered on three consecutive levels: “compassion with reference to beings, compassion with reference to reality, and compassion without reference.”<sup>16</sup>

1) Compassion for living things first arises when we see people, creatures and na-

ture suffering, and we are compelled to respond. A good heart is required.

2) Compassion for reality begins “when we have a genuine experience of the power of ignorance” and the suffering brought on by misperception and illusion, when “motivations and actions contradict one another.”<sup>17</sup> The power of ignorance brings on additional suffering. The knowledge of underlying reality beyond space/time requires an intuitive, compassionate, intelligent mind.

3) Compassion without reference has “no notion of subject, object or intention.”<sup>18</sup> It is the ultimate form of the bodhisattvas’ or buddhas’ meditation and depends upon the realization of emptiness, or formless, dimensionless, limitless meditation on no-thing, from no-thing.<sup>19</sup> This ultimate form of compassion might be compared to Kaivalya, the state of “Isolated Unity,” as described in the last of the four books or stages of the ancient source book on meditation called the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*.<sup>20</sup> This ultimate end state of Being is called “illumination” by Bailey,<sup>21</sup> “liberation” by Isherwood and Prabhavananda,<sup>22</sup> and “enlightenment,” among other terms, by Mishra.<sup>23</sup>

The last stage of meditation or ultimate meditation takes us back to the First Noble Truth of Buddhism, “Existence is suffering” (*dukha*). Karen Armstrong reminds us that this is “an insight that in nearly all faiths is indispensable for enlightenment.”<sup>24</sup> Realization of the impermanent nature of life, along with the awareness that life inevitably leads to the suffering of death, disease and old age—not to mention the daily hunger and thirst of millions—is the first noble truth that opens the mind to the eight-fold path of right relationship. Such a path leads to enlightenment and compassion without reference or permanent freedom from maya and illusion, described as kaivalya.

In Tibetan Buddhism, once there is the enlightened feminine (receptive) principle of space and wisdom, the enlightened masculine (dynamic) principle of compassion and skillful means can arise for both genders. Once a

principle has been accepted by the mind, a door to its energy can open and the presence of the energy behind the principle can empower the meditation, the service and the life.

This begins with an attitude of expansion, inclusiveness and possibility combined with an acceptance of the spiritual and holistic nature of life.

### Interior Synthesis

The holistic view, which embraces the interdependence and interaction of all parts of the whole, is already permeated with synthesis and is widespread among intelligent, compassionate people. But it takes time to find workable practical applications. That deep meditation precedes intelligent, loving and harmless action is a given in most esoteric philosophies. Bailey reminds us that “synthesis is an aspect of the first divine characteristic, the Will, or rather, the will-to-good”<sup>25</sup> and that when the will-to-good supersedes the will-to-dominate, then the quality of the new Aquarian Age will be apparent. “The Aquarian Age will be predominantly the age of synthesis and light,”<sup>26</sup> Bailey writes, in addition to the brotherly love and the rivers of life and love already mentioned. She also writes that the principal quality of the Aquarian Age is world service symbolized by the water carrier glyph of the astrological sign Aquarius. This glyph is depicted as a man or woman pouring water from a jug for others. Bailey goes on to say that “through symbolism of water and purification, we shall learn how to be the Soul and not the human being.”<sup>27</sup>

This gives us a profile of a Soul-infused personality compassionately serving the world with the will-to-good, pouring forth waters

for the purification of selfishness, illusions, unskillful means, distortions and maya. As a Soul, we can begin to quench humanity’s thirst for truth with the spiritual teaching of

synthesis, light and love.

**[C]ompassion... means the will to free others from suffering, based on an empathetic sensitivity to that suffering. Its opposite is hatred, which wills others to suffer. Its counterpart is love, which wills others to have happiness along with freedom from suffering. Universal compassion is considered the automatic reflex of perfect wisdom, since the realization of essential selflessness is an experience of the ultimate unity of self and other...**

The interior work of bridging between the Spiritual Triad and the Soul-infused personality is accomplished through meditation, study and service.

Eventually, if successful, “it is as if a magnetic field were then established and these two vibrating and magnetic units, or grouped energies, swung into each other’s field of influence.”<sup>28</sup>

This happens only occasionally at first. “By the time the third initiation is completed, this Way is completed, and the initiate can

‘pass to higher worlds at will, leaving the lower worlds far behind; or he can come again and pass upon the way that leads from dark to light, light to dark, and from the under lower worlds into the realms of light.’”<sup>29</sup>

This higher triad of spiritual energies must be blended and fused with the lower triad and physical livingness. “After the third initiation the ‘Way’ is carried forward with great rapidity, and the ‘bridge’ is finished which links perfectly the higher spiritual Triad and the lower material reflection. The three worlds of the Soul and the three worlds of the personality become one world wherein the initiate works and functions, seeing no distinction,”<sup>30</sup> regarding both together as forming one world of activity. “Spiritual mind, conveying illumination; the intuitive nature, conferring spiritual perception; and divine livingness,”<sup>31</sup> as Bailey says, must be blended with the lower mind, emotional/



feeling nature and in the life lived. Psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli, a student of both Freud and Jung and a longtime friend of Alice Bailey, gives techniques for achieving a synthesis of higher and lower aspects in *Psychosynthesis*, best carried out in didactic form if possible, but through auto-psychosynthesis or through self-synthesis.<sup>32</sup> The later stage of this process, to be discussed in what would become his later book, *The Act of Will*, concerns the functioning of the will, which “does not produce results by means of sheer force..., but through regulation and harmonizing of the other psychological functions, which it ‘steers’ toward the chosen goal.”<sup>33</sup>

Sri Aurobindo developed the “integral and synthetic Yoga” of union with “Life-Divine”<sup>34</sup> which “while it embraces the knowledge received from the past...seeks to organize it anew for the present and the future.... By this Yoga we not only seek the Infinite, but we call upon the Infinite to unfold...in human life.”<sup>35</sup>

Aurobindo’s integral experience involves three factors: non-temporal union (Shiva), mobilizing powers of will (atman) and the creative fellowship of Shakti.<sup>36</sup> Haridas Chaudhuri, head of the California Institute of Asian Studies, later to become the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), developed a system described in *Integral Yoga* that represents a “higher creative synthesis of the traditional ideals”<sup>37</sup> of the previous forms of yoga: hatha, bhakti, karma, jnana, raja, tantra and purna. Agni Yoga, developed by Nicholas and Helena Roerich, presents methods for achieving union (yoga) through identifying with the animating fiery life principle in all sentient beings. It is called the yoga of synthesis. The Lucille Cedercrans material describes an Aquarian Age synthesis of ashrams in the pamphlet *The Synthetic Ashram: Its Purpose, Meaning, and Work*.<sup>38</sup> It is one of the many works in which the idea of synthesis is expounded.

Psychologist Ken Wilber has developed the “Integral approach” in such books as *Integral Psychology*<sup>39</sup> and *Integral Spirituality*.<sup>40</sup> These terms might be more accurate in de-

scribing the integration of the various functions within the personality and higher aspects of cognitive development, such as the Spiritual Triad of atma-buddhi-manas of Theosophical literature. Wilber correlates the various systems of Aurobindo, Theosophy, Vedanta, Kabbalah and others using a number of charts that refer to the highest state (in his system) as non-dual. He also charts cognitive development through Piaget and others, naming many levels of post-formal development such as “logic, psychic (vision), subtle (archetypal), causal (formless) and nondual.”<sup>41</sup> His is the broadest of all the psycho-spiritual approaches and is known for the integration of all levels of development in the quadrants he has used to describe the complete human psycho-social evolution.

## Exterior Synthesis

In *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, Alice Bailey informs us that there is “relationship, interplay and mutual impression between the beings or lives who make up the sumtotal of our manifested universe...leading up to a planetary synthesis or a planetary integrity of a nature hitherto not even envisioned.”<sup>42</sup> This relationship is both extra-planetary and inter-planetary and thus creates “in time and space a living intelligent planetary Entity of systemic maturity, qualified by immense attractive and integrating energies.”<sup>43</sup> We can regard these energies as having centers similar to the familiar human ones of head, heart and throat, Bailey says:

1) The head center is the “dynamic Agent of the extra-planetary Purpose, the expression of the divine planetary Will as focused in Shamballa. This is the energy of Synthesis, the source of all planetary life; it connotes essential Being.”

2) The heart center is the “Agent of the Plan of evolution. This is the expression of divine Love or pure Reason, the Hierarchy. It is essentially the energy of Attraction, the kingdom of souls.”

3) The throat center is the “Agent of all the three Aspects in relation to the three sub-human kingdoms in nature, the expression also of the divine Intelligence, Humanity.

This is the energy of active Mind and makes humanity the macrocosm of the microcosm, the three subhuman kingdoms.”<sup>44</sup>

Here we have presented a living world with each level or holon a part of a larger whole, interrelated in both livingness and life. What remains is for us to consciously awaken to the larger world and relationships that live in us and in which we live.

## **The Great Invocation**

The extraordinary power of the prayer, or mantra, called the Great Invocation is in its linking of the individual mind, heart and will—universally the same in structure for everyone, if not in content—with the planetary centers of mind, heart and will. It reveals an interior structure of patterned synthesis. Beyond this, it begins the evolutionary chapter of the Aquarian Age with conscious cooperation in the process of integrating the three planetary centers to each other in a great triangle of subtle energy, interaction and interrelationship as it exists in the larger exterior pattern. The importance of saying the Great Invocation for world service is crucial. This prayer allows us to focus on the whole macrocosm of Earth within the solar system from the highest center of evolutionary will and purpose to all kingdoms in nature in one great synthesis of energy expressing quality and form. It is the Aquarian Age mantra *par excellence* for revealing the microcosmic/macrocosmic pattern of the planetary and systemic whole. Through the use of the Great Invocation, we can accelerate the integration of humanity as the throat center with the heart and head centers of planet Earth, producing the first effects of an evolutionary integration of the three primary centers. The cause and effect of this integrated triangle is compassionate service to all kingdoms of nature, including the spiritual.

Today, women are more aware of and sensitive to inequality than ever before, especially when bias is in the very structure of a language. Alice Bailey noted the increase in sensitivity to human and civil rights, injustice and inequality as an evolutionary trend resulting in the Universal Declaration of Hu-

man Rights, the United Nations, and other laws, courts and documents. Indeed, history could be written as the slow evolutionary growth of human and civil rights, based upon increased sensitivity and awareness. In keeping with this, an alternative version of the Great Invocation was written omitting gender and culture bias, but disrupting the rhythm of the original and changing its quality. A continuous meditation has been going on ever since to find gender-free word choices in the Great Invocation that would restore the original rhythm.

In light of this, the following alternative wording is offered: we suggest that the word “all” quite simply be substituted for the word “men” in the first three stanzas. We offer this version in honor of Helena Roerich, who wrote that the coming era will be called both the Epoch of Woman and the Epoch of Great Compassion.<sup>45</sup> This small change offers a version of the Great Invocation to those women who will use nothing but gender-free language. Gender bias keeps some women from using this powerful mantra, which is intended to sound a universal note. Increased awareness changes customs, and women and men alike are beginning to realize, with Helena Roerich, that women who are slaves give birth to men who are slaves, and that men will not be free until women are. For the numerologists,<sup>46</sup> the same mantric, rhythmic form is used with the same number of words, syllables and letters.

It is further suggested that in an Aquarian age alternate version of the Great Invocation, the word “all” instead of “men” carries with it the added quality of synthesis, a characteristic of the new age of compassionate world service, not just to humanity, but to all kingdoms. For those long-time meditators who have used the original Great Invocation for many years, it is suggested that you might even try including all sentient beings and whole kingdoms in nature, as initiates do, when you meditate using “all” instead of “men.” The qualities of unity and integration stemming from the underlying reality of synthesis can expand our meditation to include all sentient life, all kingdoms in nature and

all planes of expression. This new, expanded and inclusive view of the recipients of light, love and power from the Great Invocation stems from the sense of synthesis that is ushering in the new era of Aquarius.

In saying the fourth stanza of the Great Invocation, the Sanskrit term “manas,” meaning higher mind or higher intelligence, can be shortened to “man” as a substitute for “men,” in recognition that we can only be called intelligent when we treat each other with intelligence. Replacing the “race of men” with the “human race” is also a viable alternative from the first alternate version. The Aquarian version changes only the word “men” four times.

The issue of culture bias in the name “Christ” is more difficult. As we know, Alice Bailey transcribed the Great Invocation in 1945 in her native language, English, which was not its original language. Since then, the Great Invocation has been translated into over thirty languages. Each translation reflects its own religious term for the archetypal, historic figure or avatar who brings redemption, salvation and liberation to the world in every age, regardless of whether this figure is called the Christ, the Messiah or the World Bodhisattva.

In esoteric philosophy, “Christ” refers to a planetary office, the head of the Hierarchy or heart center of the planet, rather than to a cultural figure such as a racial avatar. In reality, the Christ is said to be the same figure no matter by what name He is known. Keeping this and our new global village in mind, Avatars are said to appear at the beginning of every new age. Two great manifestations are expected now, according to Bailey.<sup>47</sup> The first is the coming of the Avatar of Synthesis to the spiritual heart center or Hierarchy. The second is the coming of the Avatar known as the Christ, to the human center. The film *Avatar*<sup>48</sup> increases familiarity with this Sanskrit term, even though the word in the movie has quite a different meaning. Do a web search for the Vedanta Society S. CA and look under “avatar” for more on the original Sanskrit meaning. No substitution for the word Christ is offered.

It doesn't matter if you say the Great Invocation in its original form or choose an alternative version in order to reach out to women, or if you extend your invocation to all sentient beings. The important thing is to *use it*, building a strong and lasting thoughtform of integration and synthesis interiorly and exteriorly as an act of Aquarian world service. To repeat a key phrase from Alice Bailey's lecture on Aquarius, “The Aquarian law is based on spiritual illumination, on intuitive perception and brotherly love which is identification with every form in every kingdom in nature. A tremendous future lies ahead.... We are on our way.”<sup>49</sup>

### The Great Invocation

From the point of Light within the Mind of God  
Let light stream forth into the minds of men (all).  
Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God  
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men (all).  
May the Christ return to Earth.

From the center where the Will of God is known  
Let purpose guide the little wills of men (all),  
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the center which we call the race of men  
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out  
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power restore the  
Plan on Earth.

### Conclusion

Conscious cooperation with the evolution of consciousness is seen as emerging in this, the transitional era, as we enter the epoch named after the constellation Aquarius. Writings of diverse spiritual leaders emphasize the emergent qualities of world service, compassion and synthesis. The macrocosmic pattern is reflected in the microcosm and both are united in the Great Invocation, which may be used by individuals and groups in meditation for the purpose of consciously cooperating in the plan of love and light.

(This article is an adaption of an Aquarius 2010 commentary online at: [www.worldservice-group.com](http://www.worldservice-group.com), entitled *Compassion and Synthesis: Keys to the Aquarian Age*.)

- 1 Alice Howell, *The Heavens Declare* (Wheaton, IL: Quest, 2006), 143.
- 2 Ibid., 26.
- 3 Alice A. Bailey, *The Labours of Hercules* (NY: Lucis, 1992), 184.
- 4 Nancy Seifer & Martin Vieweg, *When the Soul Awakens*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Reston, VA: Gathering Wave, 2009), 52-53.
- 5 Bailey, *The Labours of Hercules*, 193.
- 6 Ibid., 189.
- 7 Robert Thurman, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (NY: Bantam, 1994), 252.
- 8 Bailey, *Glamour, A World Problem* (NY: Lucis, 1950), 3.
- 9 Ibid., 2.
- 10 Ibid., 2.
- 11 Ibid., 3.
- 12 Ibid., 4.
- 13 Ibid., 4-5.
- 14 Karen Armstrong, *The Case for God* (NY: Knopf, 2006), 324.
- 15 Leonard Cohen, "The Future" in *The Future* (Columbia Records, 1992).
- 16 Kalu Rinpoche, *Luminous Mind* (Boston: Wisdom, 1997), 131.
- 17 Ibid., 133.
- 18 Ibid., 134.
- 19 Ibid., 132.
- 20 I.K. Taimni, *The Science of Yoga* (Wheaton, IL: Quest, 1975), 433.
- 21 Bailey, *The Light of the Soul: The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* (NY: Lucis, 1972), xv.
- 22 Swami Prabhavananda & Christopher Isherwood, *How to Know God: The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali* (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1981), 202.
- 23 I.K. Mishra, *The Science of Yoga* (Wheaton, IL: Quest, 1975), 433.
- 24 Armstrong, 324.
- 25 Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (NY: Lucis, 1957), 648.
- 26 Ibid., 648.
- 27 Bailey, *The Labours of Hercules*, 184.
- 28 Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (NY: Lucis, 1968), 444.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid., 445.
- 31 Ibid., 445.
- 32 Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis* (NY: Viking, 1965), ii.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Sri Aurobindo & The Mother, *A Practical Guide to Integral Yoga* (a compilation) (Pondicherry, India: Ashram, 1955), 5.
- 35 Ibid., 314.
- 36 Ibid., 15.
- 37 Haridas Chaudhuri, *Integral Yoga* (Wheaton, IL: Quest, 1965), 16, Ch III & IV.
- 38 Lucille Cedercrans, *The Synthesis Ashram* (Whittier, CA: Wisdom Impressions, 1997).
- 39 Ken Wilber, *Integral Psychology* (Boston: Shambhala, 2000).
- 40 Wilber, *Integral Spirituality* (Boston: Integral Books, 2006).
- 41 Wilber, *Integral Psychology*, 201.
- 42 Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle* (NY: Lucis, 1980), 124.
- 43 Ibid., 124.
- 44 Ibid., 125.
- 45 Helena Roerich, *Woman* (NY: Agni Yoga Society, 1958), 7.
- 46 John Berges, *Hidden Foundations of the Great Invocation* (Northfield, NJ: Planet work Press, 2000), 13.
- 47 Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 309.
- 48 James Cameron, *Avatar*, directed by James Cameron (LA: Twentieth Century Fox, 2009).
- 49 Bailey, *The Labours of Hercules*, 184.

# The Seven Seals of Revelation and the Seven Classical Planets

Lloyd D. Graham

---

## Abstract

This paper highlights a straightforward correspondence between the seven seals in the Book of Revelation and the seven “classical planets.” Specifically, the sequence of colors associated with the first to seventh seal in the Apocalypse (respectively: white, red, black, pale, white, black, and golden) agrees well with ancient color series for the planets of the week (consensus: white, red, blue/brown/black, beige, white, black, and yellow, for Monday to Sunday, respectively). Such a relationship is consistent with John’s focus on the sky. Moreover, Revelation is rooted in the *merkabah* tradition of Ezekiel, which later flourished into a Jewish mystical movement whose journeys to the throne of God required specific seals for safe passage through seven levels. Tokens of this kind often have planetary associations, a relationship seen overtly in the “seven seals” of medieval Kabbalistic practice and Islamic magic. The proposed seal-planet correlation differs substantially from its few predecessors, and permits extrapolations in which further symbolism can be identified.

## Introduction

The final book of the New Testament, the Revelation of St. John, has captivated readers for almost two millennia with its fascinating yet cryptic imagery. Written near the end of the first century CE on the Greek<sup>1</sup> island of Patmos, the book admits a wide range of interpretations. These include the “preterist” view that it focuses upon events of its own era, the “historist” view that it describes human history over a long period of time, and the “futurist” view that it describes events yet to come. The “symbolist” view sees in Revelation an allegory of the spiritual

path and of the ongoing conflict between good and evil. Interpretations that emphasize the socio-cultural context of John’s era suggest that he may have been re-mapping the constellations and planets of the Greco-Roman sky in terms of Christian theology.<sup>2</sup> These views are of course not mutually exclusive. Esoteric devotees incline towards symbolic interpretations, and often see in Revelation both a catalogue of warnings for the human race and an allegory of the internal challenges and triumphs encountered by an individual on the path of discipleship.<sup>3</sup>

The seven seals hold closed a heavenly book or scroll (Rev 5:1), and only the “Lamb who was slain” (Jesus) is found worthy to loose the seals and read the contents. The opening of each seal (Rev 5:1, 6:1-17, 8:1-6) is accompanied by a dramatic event or episode, usually calamitous; for example, the first four seals unleash the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. Collectively, the events associated with the opening of the seals comprise the first of three seven-fold sets of disasters. The second set of catastrophes accompanies the sounding of the seven trumpets (Rev 8-14), while the third corresponds to the seven bowls (vials) of God’s final wrath (Rev 15-22).<sup>4</sup> As a category, the meaning of the seven seals is not obvious, and they have been

---

## About the Author

Lloyd D. Graham holds a BA (Hons) from Trinity College Dublin, a PhD from Cambridge University, and is an associate member of the *Societas Magica*. In addition to over 50 papers in peer-reviewed scientific journals, he has published research articles in *Modern Believing*, *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, *Jones’ Celtic Encyclopedia*, *AusAnthrop*, *Fickle Muses*, *Mythos Journal*, and *Lamhfada*.

variously understood as tokens of the “seven spirits of God” (Rev 1:4, 3:1, 4:5, 5:6) or the seven archangels (Tobit 12:15, and perhaps 1 Enoch 20:1-8), the seven stages on an individual’s spiritual path to God, a recapitulation of Jesus’s prophecy about the beginning of the end-times (Matt 24:3-31), etc. The four horsemen seem to reprise the “four sore judgments upon Jerusalem” (Ezek 14:21), while their steeds recapitulate earlier sets of four colored horses (Zech 1:8, 6:1-8).<sup>5</sup>

This paper draws attention to an apparent correspondence between the seven seals of Revelation and the seven “classical planets,” a concept that has parallels in the “seven seal” embodiments found in other Abrahamic religions. The proposed correlation is more straightforward than the few seal-planet schemes proposed previously, and accords well with both the language of the source text and modern astronomical opinion.

## Discovery of the Color Correlation

The correlation emerged during an exercise in which I tried to correlate the seven seals of Revelation with the *other* seven seals, the “seven magical symbols” of Judaism<sup>6</sup> and Islam,<sup>7</sup> also known as the seven seals of Solomon<sup>8</sup> (Figure 1).<sup>9</sup> Secrecy has long attended the Kabbalistic use of these symbols, and documentary evidence of their Jewish history reaches back only to the thirteenth century CE.<sup>10</sup> Islamic tradition holds

that the seven symbols were revealed to Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law Ali (7<sup>th</sup> century CE), although they may also be referenced in the *Dua al-Simat* (Prayer of the Signs), which is alleged to pre-date Muhammad and perhaps even Moses.<sup>11</sup> In terms of meaning and function,<sup>12</sup> there is likely to be significant overlap between the seven seals of the three Abrahamic religions. “One of the most important uses of sealing in antiquity was to give a proof of authenticity and authority to letters, royal commands, etc. It served the purposes of a modern signature.”<sup>13</sup> The seven seals on the heavenly scroll in Revelation thus equate to God’s imprimatur or signature, whereas the Kabbalistic “seven signs” of Judaism represent magical God-names<sup>14</sup> that permit entrance to the Supernal Realms,<sup>15</sup> and the Islamic “seven seals” comprise the Greatest Name of God.<sup>16</sup> Members of this last series have direct and well-known planetary correspondences that follow the days of the week,<sup>17,18</sup> so an obvious way of correlating the Christian and Judeo-Islamic seal series was to try to link them via shared planetary associations.<sup>19</sup> There were, however, no well-known planetary correspondences for the seals of Revelation (a point enlarged upon below), so it was necessary to look for a systematic way in which the seals’ attributes were differentiated by the book’s author, John of Patmos. Color, which features prominently after each seal is opened (Table 1), emerged as the most obvious candidate.

**Table 1. The Color Mentioned by John in Connection with Each Seal**

Rev	Seal	Text (King James version)
6:2	1 <sup>st</sup>	And I saw, and behold a <b>white</b> horse [...] and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.
6:4	2 <sup>nd</sup>	And there went out another horse that was <b>red</b> : and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.
6:5	3 <sup>rd</sup>	And I beheld, and lo a <b>black</b> horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.
6:8	4 <sup>th</sup>	And I looked, and behold a <b>pale</b> horse: <sup>a</sup> and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.
6:9,11	5 <sup>th</sup>	I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God,

		and for the testimony which they held [...] And <b>white</b> robes were given unto every one of them.
6:12	6 <sup>th</sup>	And, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became <b>black</b> as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood.
8:2-3	7 <sup>th</sup>	And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a <b>golden</b> censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the <b>golden</b> altar which was before the throne.

<sup>a</sup> For the fourth horse (Greek *chloros*, literally “greenish”) most translations (including the King James version) give “pale,” New American Standard reads “ashen.”

Surprisingly, the color sequence for the seals of Revelation agrees well with ancient color series for the planets, arranged according to the days of the week (Table 2). These planetary color sequences are of Babylonian origin, and their prototype(s) would have

arrived in the Greek world many centuries before John described his visions in the first century CE. To quote one authority, “though no doubt Jewish, the author [of Revelation] is also a citizen of the Greco-Roman world and knows its myths and astrology.”<sup>20</sup>

**Table 2. Planet-Seal Correspondence via Shared Color Association**

Day	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Planet	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn	Sun
Colors 1	-	Red	Yellow or Blue	White+Gray	White	Black	-
Colors 2	-	Reddish	Multiple	White	Yellow	Black or Olive	-
Colors 3	White	Red	-	Blue	Colorless (pure)	Black	Yellow
Colors 4	Blue+White	Dark Red	Azure+Darker	Dusty, White+Brown	White	Jet Black	Reddish Yellow
Colors 5	White	Red	Brown	Green	White	Black	Yellow
Colors 6	White	Red	Blue	Blue+White	Green	Black	Yellow
Colors in Rev	White	Red	Black	Pale (greenish, ashen)	White	Black	Golden
Item in Rev	Horse	Horse	Horse	Horse	Robes	Sun	Censer & altar
Seal	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>
Meaning, consequence	Conquest	War	Famine	Death and Hell	Souls of martyrs, purity	Darkness, cataclysm	Silence; 7 angels, trumpets

Information in the upper table pertains to the “classical planets,” that in the lower table relates to the seals of Revelation 6-8. *Upper table*—**Day**: the familiar planetary correspondence derives from Babylonian astrology, which reached Greece in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE; the formulation of the planetary week dates to Ptolemaic Egypt (4<sup>th</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE)<sup>21</sup> and was displacing the *nundinum* in the Roman world at the time of Augustus (63 BCE-19 CE).<sup>22</sup> The sequence in the Table (first day Monday, to final day Sunday) corresponds to the modern international standard for the days of the week.<sup>23</sup> **Planet**: the planetary assignment for each day (i.e., the planet with rulership over the first hour), for which the day is named in many European languages. **Colors 1**: ancient planetary color assignments from the “exhaustive investigation” of Boll,<sup>24</sup> as cited by Bobrovnikoff.<sup>25</sup> **Colors 2**: “Hellenistic consensus” in the *Tetrabiblos* of Ptolemy, as cited by Malina.<sup>26</sup> **Colors 3**: Jewish scheme from the *Zohar* (13<sup>th</sup> century CE), as cited by Kaplan,<sup>27</sup> supplemented with data for Venus taken directly from the *Zohar*.<sup>28</sup> **Colors 4**: planetary colors according to the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE Persian polymath al-Biruni, in his famous treatise on astrology.<sup>29</sup> **Colors 5**: planetary colors from the Babylonian scheme<sup>30</sup> or its continuation until the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE by the Sabeans of Harran, listed by ibn Shaddad (12-13<sup>th</sup> century CE).<sup>31,32</sup> See the comparative table by Guinard.<sup>33</sup> **Colors 6**: contemporary assignment for the planets linked to the Islamic seven magical seals, from Harrison and Shadrach.<sup>34</sup> *Lower table*—**Colors in Rev**: see Table 1. **Item in Rev**: the object bearing the color in the biblical account. **Seal**: the number of the seal in Revelation. **Meaning, consequence**: traditional interpretation of each seal, etc.

---

## Previous Planet-Seal Associations

Given the huge volume of astrological and apocalyptic fringe literature on the Internet, there are surprisingly few schemes linking the seven seals of Revelation to the planets.<sup>35</sup> Older printed material, however, contains a few examples. For instance, in 1907 the Russian astronomer Nikolai Alexandrovich Morozov published a complex (and highly contrived) astronomical interpretation of Revelation, in which the four horses were identified as metaphors for the planets Jupiter, Mars, Mercury and Saturn, respectively.<sup>36</sup> In 1941, major astronomical flaws in Morozov’s overall scheme were publicized by Nicholas Bobrovnikoff,<sup>37</sup> an astronomer at the Perkins Observatory in Delaware. The latter, an expert on planetary light,<sup>38</sup> also criticized Morozov’s assignments for the horsemen on linguistic and color grounds, as follows.<sup>39</sup>

We see that with the exception of Mars the apocalyptic colors [of Morozov] have little in common with the colors of the planets. Morozov tries to make μέλας [*melas*, Greek] mean inconspicuous, but [...] the meaning of the word is plain black, as black as ink [...] This same

word μέλας was used by the ancients in connection with Saturn and never with Mercury. The situation is no better with Jupiter. The horse is λευκός [*leukos*, Greek] or pure white, used to describe Venus and not Jupiter. Now, if the apocalyptic horses really were planets, we should identify them as follows: the black horse with Saturn, the red one with Mars, the white one with Venus, and the pale one with Mercury.

Bobrovnikoff’s comments largely support the correlations proposed in Table 2, except that in the Table the “pure white” of Venus is linked with the white robes (purity) of the martyrs, and the blue/brown of Mercury (which, in combination, approximate black) has been assigned to the black horse. The latter ensures that the second use of *melas* (Rev 6:12), where its intensity is stressed (“black as sackcloth”), does indeed refer to Saturn. For the five true planets, four of the color-planet correlations for Revelation in Table 2 are consistent with Bobrovnikoff’s colors,<sup>40</sup> assuming that his “white and gray” for Jupiter is considered an acceptable match for “pale” in Revelation. Bobrovnikoff did not seem to notice any overlap between plausible planetary sequences for Rev 6:2-8 and the one associated with the days of the



week, nor did he try to extend his planetary series beyond the first four seals.

We should recognize that Franz Boll, whose ancient planet-color correlations<sup>41</sup> were used by Bobrovnikoff, had his own astrological/astronomical interpretation of Revelation.<sup>42</sup> He saw in it Babylonian astral ideas that had undergone Greco-Roman refinement. Boll's interpretation was subjected to a lengthy rebuttal by Joseph Freundorfer,<sup>43</sup> who went on to become a Catholic bishop. Although neglected for the better part of a century, Boll's cosmological approach to Revelation has been revived and extended in recent times by Bruce Malina, Professor of Theology at Creighton University, Nebraska. Malina, who points out that John's milieu was one of intense interest in and fascination with the sky, views Revelation as "astral prophecy."<sup>44</sup> For Rev 6, he interprets the horses of the first four seals as comets in the four cardinal directions of the sky, their riders as members of the Zodiac, and the heavenly altar as the constellation Ara, "The Altar."<sup>45</sup> Overall, Malina advances a planetary sequence for the seven seals which consists (in order) of Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Moon and Saturn;<sup>46,47</sup> a double attribution for the sixth seal compensates for the lack of a planetary cognate for the fifth.<sup>48</sup> His assignments for the second and third seals agree with those in Table 2, providing additional support for the (easy) identification of the red horse with Mars and the (less easy) identification of the black horse, with its balance-carrying rider, as Mercury. Of the latter, Malina writes "The planet Mercury, which in the Sino-Persian tradition corresponds to the color black, is here recognizable by the commercial scale typical of Mercury in Babylonian-Greek celestial interpretation."<sup>49</sup>

### Seals in the *Hekhalot* Literature

The correlation in Table 2 is intriguing, and the correspondence of Mars with the red-horsed warrior is particularly apt, but it is difficult to know whether the overall planet-seal relationship is accidental, unconscious

on John's part, or intentional. Like 2 Enoch (probably 1<sup>st</sup> century CE) and 3 Enoch (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century CE),<sup>50</sup> the Book of Revelation is actually a distinctly Jewish apocalypse rooted in the *merkabah* tradition of Ezekiel.<sup>51,52</sup> This tradition went on to flourish in the sixth to eleventh centuries CE as a pre-Kabbalah mystical movement within Judaism. In its *hekhalot* literature, the visionary ascends through seven heavens and seven palaces to the *merkabah*,<sup>53</sup> the throne-chariot of God.<sup>54</sup> The adept must have made elaborate preparations of purification and must provide the specific seals needed to get past the fierce guards at each of the seven levels.<sup>55,56</sup> It is often claimed that the seals that permit ascent to the *merkabah* are in fact the "seven magical symbols" mentioned early in this communication,<sup>57,58,59</sup> which—as stated previously—have overt correlations with the seven classical planets. The seven seals of Revelation may reflect an early form of such thinking in a "color-coded" manner.

### The Seal-Color Correlation in a Wider Context

Colors have long been used to symbolize directions. The assignments in the Chinese astrological tradition, which were mediated to the Mediterranean world via the Persians, identified the cardinal directions (north, south, east and west) with the colors black, red, blue/green and white, respectively.<sup>60</sup> A traditional treatise in the *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum* has similar assignments for wind directions: black, red, yellow, and white.<sup>61</sup> Like Malina,<sup>62</sup> we can use these schemes to locate the four horsemen of the Apocalypse in the four quadrants of the sky; unlike that author, however, we would expect them to appear sequentially from the west (white), south (red), north (black) and east (pale/greenish). One should, of course, be mindful that the details of the color code are not universal.<sup>63</sup>

The complete color sequence for the seven seals is reminiscent of the color changes that characterize movement through the different stages in the process of alchemy. The goal of alchemy is purification, the transformation of

that which is base and common into that which is perfect and incorruptible. This process applies both to the outer and the inner worlds: improvement of the material within

the athanor is closely coupled with spiritual advancement in the operator, and *vice versa*.<sup>64</sup> To the extent that Revelation describes a sequential process by which the world is progressively purged of its corruption and purified to perfection, it can be viewed as an alchemical workbook.<sup>65</sup> Not only is much of the imagery in the Apocalypse (e.g., the crowned chimeric beasts, colored serpents and dragons, and the star-crowned woman in childbirth who is adorned with the two luminaries) similar to that in

later alchemical emblems,<sup>66</sup> but John's narrative culminates in a "chymical wedding"<sup>67</sup> of the cosmic Lamb to the heavenly new Jerusalem (Rev 21:2, 9-10). One can therefore view each seal of Revelation as the divine equivalent of the Hermetic seal on an alchemical retort, the breaking of which signifies the achievement of another stage in the transformative work.<sup>68</sup> As in terrestrial alchemy,<sup>69</sup> the process involves two white stages; the first and fifth seals may be compared with the initial temporary whitening (white swan, white eagle, skeleton) of the starting material, and with the later *albedo* or true whitening (unicorn), respectively. The redness of the second seal may be likened to the stage of *rubedo* (pelican, cockerel, salamander, stag), and the cataclysmic blackness of the sixth to the *nigredo* (crow, raven, *massa confusa*). Although the order in which the stages occur does not match that seen in earthly laboratories, the opening of the seventh and final seal nevertheless yields gold, the symbol of incorruptible perfection.

**To the extent that Revelation describes a sequential process by which the world is progressively purged of its corruption and purified to perfection, it can be viewed as an alchemical workbook... One can therefore view each seal of Revelation as the divine equivalent of the Hermetic seal on an alchemical retort, the breaking of which signifies the achievement of another stage in the transformative work.**

It is also possible to use shared color associations to relate the seals of Revelation to the *sephiroth* on the *Otz Chaim*, the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. While the dystopia of the seals

invariably places them in opposition to the life-affirming *sephiroth*, the existence of competing and/or incomplete color schemes for the Tree precludes a definitive projection.<sup>70</sup> More reliable connections can be established by way of shared planetary assignments, as described below. An antithetical situation also obtains if one tries to relate the seals to the oriental and Theosophical "seven rays,"<sup>71</sup> whether these are paired on the basis of color association, seal/ray number, or planetary assignment. The details vary according to which

teachings are consulted.

### Extending the Seal-Planet Correlation

Since many traditional and esoteric tables of correspondence include planetary assignments,<sup>72</sup> the identification of each Biblical seal with a specific planet (Table 2) opens the way to numerous further associations. On a somewhat mundane level, each planet has specific attributes (gender, personality, elemental composition, etc.), as well as rulership over particular metals, plants, perfumes, and hours of the day. Such linkages suggest practical details that might facilitate private meditation on the significance of each seal. On a more sophisticated level, and as anticipated above, it is possible to use the planetary assignments from Table 2 and the *Zohar* to relate John's seals to seven of the Kabbalistic *sephiroth*, namely the lower spheres which collectively comprise the *sephiroth tachtonot* or "seven multiples."<sup>73,74</sup> The negative consequences that attend the open-

ing of each seal read like a cruel parody or shadow of the corresponding *sephira*,<sup>75,76,77</sup> suggesting that each seal corresponds to a *qlipha* on the dark reflection of the Tree.<sup>78</sup> Thus the loving kindness of Chesed is, in the first seal, transformed into oppression and conquest; Geburah, with its severe and purifying energies, is partnered through the second seal with war; and the splendid glory of Hod is reduced via the third seal to the abject misery of famine. In the fourth seal, the triumph of death exposes the limited sovereignty of Malkhut's material world, while in the fifth, the Netzach-like faith and endurance of the martyrs still awaits the victory and eternal reward of this *sephira*. In the sixth seal, the world is shaken to its foundation (Yesod) by cataclysm. The mercy (*rokhmin*) of Tiphareth is manifest in the last-minute rescue of the hundred and forty-four thousand servants of God (Rev 7:3-4), prior to the beauty of this *sephira* being unleashed in the sense alluded to by Rainer Maria Rilke when he wrote "For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror, which we are still just able to endure."<sup>79</sup>

Caution is advised in mapping the seven seals to signs of the Zodiac. Although correspondences can be established simply on the basis of shared planetary associations, much relevant astral information resides elsewhere in the Book of Revelation. An integrated analysis of the complex Zodiacal symbolism in John's visions has been provided by Bruce Malina.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, while it is possible to project the seals of Revelation onto other arcane systems,<sup>81</sup> the relationship may not always be straightforward.<sup>82</sup>

The planetary assignments allow additional attributes from the Abrahamic religions to be associated with the seals. For example, the seven magical signs of Islam map to the seven seals of Revelation as shown in Figure 2a. While these symbols are ultimately positive emblems of divinity,<sup>83</sup> it is possible to see Apocalyptic references in their shapes, thereby allowing each to become a visual focus for meditation or prayer around the cognate Biblical seal. Thus in Figure 2a we may perceive the crown or archery equip-

ment of the first horseman (Rev 6:2) in the symbol at far right; discern a casualty of war in the next glyph, traditionally described as a "blind and maimed *mim*,"<sup>84</sup> sense the measured and costed rations of famine (Rev 6:6) in the "#", our modern pound/number symbol; and see in the four strokes a reflection of the fourth seal, with its power over a fourth part of the Earth (Rev 6:8). In the same vein, the cursive flourishes of the next character become a mnemonic for the flowing robes of the martyrs (Rev 6:11), while the symbol second from the left—which resembles an open and closed scroll in the Islamic and Jewish versions, respectively (Figure 1, far left)—reminds us of the sixth seal, in whose cataclysm "the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together" (Rev 6:14).<sup>85</sup>

The seal-symbol correspondence also enables us to name the Jinn associated with the Biblical seals.<sup>86</sup> Fittingly, all of the color-based Jinn names for which I have translations from the Arabic<sup>87</sup>—Ahmar ("the Red One"), Abiad ("the White One"), and Mudhab ("the Golden One")—agree fully with the colors for the cognate seals of Revelation (the second, fifth and seventh, respectively; Table 2). Of greater importance, perhaps, is the ability to identify the archangels who preside over the Biblical seals. From first to seventh, they are known to Islam as Gabriel, Semsamiel, Michael, Sarfiel, A'aniel, Kasfiel, and Ruqiel.<sup>88</sup> A similar sequence is presented in Rabbi Joseph Tirshom's *Shoshan Yesod Olam*, a Kabbalah compendium from the sixteenth century CE;<sup>89</sup> he lists Gabriel, Samael, Michael, Tzidkiel, Anel, Kaptziel, and Raphael.<sup>90</sup> In the Christian literature of the following century, Benjamin Camfield's *A Theological Discourse of Angels and Their Ministries* would identify the same archangels (with "Zapkiel" for Kaptziel and "Camuel" for Samael) as "the seven spirits who always stand in the presence of God,"<sup>91</sup> thereby returning us to John's "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God" (Rev 4:5). These same angels sound the seven trumpets after the opening of the seventh seal (Rev 8:2-9:14, 11:15).

## Possible Christian Symbolism

In developing the seal-color-planet correlation, my focus on the technical details of one small set of events in John's vision is not in any way intended to detract from the iconography of the Apocalypse proper, in all its glorious richness. Nor is the color-planet correlation meant to supplant traditional interpretations of the seals' import, but rather to supplement them.<sup>92</sup> For those seeking a Christological dimension to the seal-planet correspondence, I would suggest that the placement of the first day of the classical week (Sunday) at the final position in the series (Table 2) can be thought of as reflecting Jesus's prophecy that the "first shall be last, and the last shall be first" (Mt 19:30). It also echoes Rev 1:8, 21:6, and the self-disclosure of Jesus in Rev 22:13, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." The positioning of the first symbol (pentagram) at both the beginning and the end of the "seven magic signs" actually has numerous precedents, which date back to the earliest appearance of the symbol series in Islamic manuscripts<sup>93</sup> (Figure 2b);<sup>94</sup> moreover, the identification of the pentagram with Jesus accords well with its adoption as the symbol of the Christ by esoteric schools such as the Lucis Trust.<sup>95</sup> Placing the solar token at the end also ensures that the final Biblical seal corresponds with Sunday, the day of the Resurrection (Mt 28:1; Mk 16:2; Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1).<sup>96</sup> Thus the day which most modern Christians keep holy and on which they rest—just as God blessed and rested on the seventh and final day of Creation (Gen 2:2-3; Ex 20:11)—corresponds with the seventh and final seal of the Apocalypse, which ushers the present Creation to a close.

## Conclusion

The few previous schemes that relate the seven seals of Revelation to the planets have been convoluted or incomplete. This article draws attention to a straightforward color-based correspondence between the seven seals and the celestial bodies of the planetary week, a correlation which hitherto seems to have gone unremarked. A planetary

connection is hardly surprising within a vision sequence largely situated in the sky, but there are also other precedents for such a relationship. The vision-journeys of early medieval Jewish mysticism, which are rooted in the same tradition as Revelation, required specific seals for safe passage through seven heavenly palaces. These have been linked to the "seven seals" important to mid-medieval Jewish Kabbalah and Islamic magic, which have direct correlations with the seven classical planets and the cognate days of the week. The seven seals of Revelation appear to reflect similar planetary associations indirectly by way of color. The seals' color sequence evokes a sense of alchemical purification, while their planetary associations encourage extrapolation to other esoteric systems. The correspondences add to the already rich symbolism of Revelation, and show that it is still possible to discover new and compelling associations for details of the Apocalypse.

- 
- <sup>1</sup> In the political map of the time, Patmos lay off the coast of the Roman province of Asia.
  - <sup>2</sup> Bruce J. Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation: Star Visions and Sky Journeys* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 1995).
  - <sup>3</sup> Zachary Lansdowne, "The Beasts of Revelation: Glamour and Maya," *Esoteric Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (2006): 35-42; Zachary Lansdowne, "The Two Witnesses," *Esoteric Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (2009): 15-28.
  - <sup>4</sup> John Sweet, "The Book of Revelation," in *Oxford Guide to the Bible*, eds. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, 651-655 (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 652.
  - <sup>5</sup> Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation*, 118 & 124.
  - <sup>6</sup> Aryeh Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah – the Book of Creation in Theory and Practice* (San Francisco: Red Wheel/Weiser, 1997), 169-172.
  - <sup>7</sup> Hans A. Winkler, *Siegel und Charaktere in der Mohammedanischen Zauberei* (Graz, Austria: Geheimes Wissen, 2006), 76-195. This is a modern reprinting (by M. Munteanu) of the 1930 Berlin edition of Walter de Gruyter & Co. The original pagination is not preserved.
  - <sup>8</sup> Gaster, M. (1936) "Review of *Siegel und Charaktere in der Mohammedanischen*

- Zauberei by H. A. Winkler,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1, (1936): 131-133.
- <sup>9</sup> In Figure 1, the Jewish series is after Eliahu ben Moshe Loans and Joel ben Isaac Halpern, *Toldot Adam* (Lemberg/Lviv, Ukraine: Kugel and Yerleger, 1872), Section 158, while the Islamic series is after Winkler, *Siegel und Charaktere*, 151-152. Since the symbol series normally occur in the context of Hebrew and Arabic, respectively, they should both be read from right to left.
- <sup>10</sup> Gabriella Samuel, “The Seven Mystical Seals,” in *The Kabbalah Handbook* (New York/London: Tarcher/Penguin, 2007), 301.
- <sup>11</sup> Stephen Lambden, “Some Notes on Islamic Concepts of the *al-Isim al-A’zam*, the Mightiest, Greatest or Supreme Name of God: From the Islamic Solomon (fl. 10th century BCE) to Imam Ali (d. 661 CE) and beyond.” At <http://www.hurgalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/PAPERS/GREATEST%20NAME/CHAOTER%20FOUR%20%20ISLAMIC%20LITERATURES.htm> (accessed May 22, 2010). Of the *Dua al-Simat*, whose transmission can be traced back at least as far as Shia Imams of the eighth century CE, Lambden writes “It probably came to be designated the *Dua al-Simat* because of the implications of the Arabic word *sima* (pl. *simat*), which word can indicate an outward “sign,” “mark” or “characteristic,” and most likely refers to the “signs,” “tokens” or evidences of the power of the *ism al-a’zam*, God’s “Mightiest Name,” which is specifically mentioned in the opening line and is powerfully indirectly evoked throughout this weighty devotional supplication.”
- <sup>12</sup> Algis Uždavinys, “Metaphysical Symbols and Their Function in Theurgy,” *Eye of the Heart* 2 (2008): 37-59.
- <sup>13</sup> D. Miall Edwards, “Seal,” in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1915). Online at <http://www.bible-history.com/isbe/S/SEAL/> (accessed March 14, 2010).
- <sup>14</sup> Moses ben Mordecai Zacuto, *Shorshei haShemot*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Hotzaat Nezer Shraga, 1999). The author (17<sup>th</sup> century CE) is glossed as the RaMaZ.
- <sup>15</sup> Samuel, *The Kabbalah Handbook*, 301.
- <sup>16</sup> Georges C. Anawati, “Le Nom Supreme de Dieu (*Isim Allah al-Azam*),” in *Atti del Terzo Congresso di Studi Arabi e Islamici: Ravello, 1-6 Settembre 1966*, 7-58 (Naples: Instituto Universitario Orientale, 1967).
- <sup>17</sup> Tewfik Canaan, “The Decipherment of Arabic Talismans,” in *Magic and Divination in Early Islam*, ed. Emilie Savage-Smith, 125-177 (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Variorum, 2004), 169-171. Originally published in *Berytus Archaeological Studies* 4 (1937): 69-110 and 5 (1938): 141-151.
- <sup>18</sup> Frances Harrison and Nineveh Shadrach, *Magic That Works – Practical Training for the Children of Light* (Vancouver: Ishtar, 2005), 65-66.
- <sup>19</sup> This is particularly justified if (as prefigured in the Introduction) the seven seals are identified with the “seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” (Rev 4:5). The Holy Place in the Jerusalem temple contained, in addition to the table of shewbread and altar of incense, a seven-branched candelabrum. Of this the Jewish historian Josephus (1<sup>st</sup> century CE) writes “Now the seven lamps signified the seven planets; for so many there were springing out of the candlestick.” From *The Wars of the Jews* V, 5:5, in *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (London and New York: J.M. Dent and E.P. Dutton, 1915). Online at <http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/war-5.htm/> (accessed March 17, 2010).
- <sup>20</sup> Sweet, “The Book of Revelation,” 654.
- <sup>21</sup> Bonnie Blackburn and Leofranc Holford-Strevens, *The Oxford Companion to the Year: an Exploration of Calendar Customs and Time-Reckoning* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 566-568.
- <sup>22</sup> Robert L. Odom, *Sunday in Roman Paganism* (New York: TEACH Services, 2003), 20.
- <sup>23</sup> International Standards Organization, ISO 8601:2004.
- <sup>24</sup> Franz Boll, “Antike Beobachtungen Farbiger Sterne, mit Einem Beitrage von Carl Bezold,” *Abhandlung der Königlich Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu München* (Philosophisch-Philologische & Historische Klasse) 30, Abh. 1 (1916).
- <sup>25</sup> Nicholas T. Bobrovnikoff, “Pseudo-Science and Revelation,” *Popular Astronomy* (USA) 49 (1941): 251-256. Online at <http://adsabs.harvard.edu/full/1941PA.....49..251B> (accessed February 15, 2010).
- <sup>26</sup> Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation*, 127.
- <sup>27</sup> Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah*, 184.

- 28 Zohar, vol. 2, Bereshit B, 29 – The Third Chamber: Netzach.
- 29 Abu'l-Rayhan Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Biruni, *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology* [*Kitab al-Tafhim*], trans. R. Ramsay Wright (London: Luzac, 1934), 240.
- 30 Rumen K. Kolev, *Babylonian Astronomy and Astrology* (Los Angeles: Halloran Software, 2000). Excerpted at the website of the Centre Universitaire de Recherche en Astrologie. Online at <http://cura.free.fr/december/09kolev.html> (accessed February 15, 2010).
- 31 Daniel Chwolsohn, *Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus*, vol. 2. (St. Petersburg: Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1856), 382-398.
- 32 Michael Baigent, *From the Omens of Babylon: Astrology and Ancient Mesopotamia* (London: Arkana/Penguin, 1994), 186-187.
- 33 Patrice Guinard, "Planets, Colors and Metals," trans. Matyas Becvarov, version 1.2, November 2004. Online at the website of the Centre Universitaire de Recherche en Astrologie, <http://cura.free.fr/22plcome.html> (accessed February 16, 2010).
- 34 Harrison and Shadrach, *Magic That Works*, 66.
- 35 An exception is <http://revelation13.net/horsemen.html>, which assigns the four horsemen (in order) to Jupiter, Mars, Saturn, and Pluto (accessed February 16, 2010).
- 36 Nikolai A. Morozov, *Die Offenbarung Johannis – Eine Astronomisch-Historische Untersuchung* (Stuttgart: Spemann, 1912). A German translation of this author's Russian book of 1907, "Revelation Within Thunderstorm and Tempest. History of the Origin of the Apocalypse."
- 37 Bobrovnikoff, "Pseudo-Science and Revelation."
- 38 Nicholas T. Bobrovnikoff, "Spectra of the Planets," *Reviews in Modern Physics* 16 (1944): 271-285.
- 39 Bobrovnikoff, "Pseudo-Science and Revelation," 254-255.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 254.
- 41 Franz Boll, "Antike Beobachtungen Farbiger Sterne."
- 42 Franz Boll, *Aus der Offenbarung Johannis. Hellenistische Studien zum Weltbild der Apokalypse* (Leipzig/Berlin: Teubner, 1914).
- 43 Joseph Freundorfer, *Die Apokalypse des Apostels Johannes und die Hellenistische Kosmologie und Astrologie* (Freiburg: Herder, 1929).
- 44 Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation*.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 126-132.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 116-117 & 126-128.
- 47 If Malina is aware of Bobrovnikoff's commentary, he does not mention it. It is also worth noting that neither Malina's nor Morozov's sequence corresponds to the "Chaldean order" of the planets, namely Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, and Moon (Harrison and Shadrach, *Magic That Works*, 234-235).
- 48 Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation*, 117.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 117.
- 50 Matthew Black (1993) "Enoch and the Books of Enoch," in *Oxford Guide to the Bible*, eds. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 184-185.
- 51 Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 22-36.
- 52 James R. Davila, "The Book of Revelation and the Hekhalot Literature," November 2008. Online at [http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/divinity/media/revelation\\_hekhalot\\_paper\\_SBL08.pdf](http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/divinity/media/revelation_hekhalot_paper_SBL08.pdf), (accessed March 25, 2010).
- 53 Paradoxically, the journey is often referred to as a "descent" to the *merkabah*.
- 54 Samuel, *The Kabbalah Handbook*, 131 & 212.
- 55 David R. Blumenthal, *Understanding Jewish Mysticism: A Source Reader*, vol. 1, *The Merkabah Tradition and the Zoharic Tradition* (New Jersey: Ktav, 1978).
- 56 Peter Schäfer, *Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).
- 57 Georges Lahy, *Vie Mystique et Kabbale Pratique. Angéologie et Pratiques Théurgico-Magiques dans le Shiour Qomah, la Merkabah et la Kabbalah Maassith* (Roquevaire, France: Editions Lahy, 1995), 138.
- 58 Harrison and Shadrach, *Magic That Works*, 47-48.
- 59 Wahid Azal, "The True Greatest Name (*Ism-i-A'zam*) Symbol," April 29, 2009. Online at <http://www.iranian.com/main/blog/nur/true-greatest-name-ism-i-azam-symbol> (accessed May 15, 2010). Azal holds an MA in Islamic studies, medieval Arabic and Persian literature, founded the Ecclesia Gnostica Bayani



- Universalis, and leads the N.U.R.- Fatimiya Sufi Order. He writes that “a version of the [seven-glyph] symbol is known within the Jewish Hekhalot (seven palaces) or Mer-kavah (throne chariot) mystical literature of the immediate pre-Islamic era (to which it is, *inter alia*, known as Solomon's Seals and attributed to the Archangel Metatron or Yahoel, i.e. the Lesser YHWH).”
- 60 Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation*, 126.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 128.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 128.
- 63 In the Old Testament, for instance, Zech 6:6 associates black horses with the north but grisled/bay ones with the south. A much later counter-example is provided by the seven colored pavilions in the Persian poet Nezami's *Haft Peykar* (“The Seven Beauties,” 1197 CE), which are laden with astrological significance. These retain sandal/green in the east but swap the traditional colors for north and south, while allocating white to the center. See Gernot Windfuhr, “Ferdowsi's *Haft Peykar*,” 2nd Ferdowsi Conference, Tehran, Iran (Ilex Foundation and the Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia), August 21-28, 2000. Online at <http://www.ilexfoundation.org/pdf/ferdowsi2/windfuhr300.pdf> (accessed May 17, 2010).
- 64 Titus Burckhardt, *Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, trans. William Stoddart (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1997).
- 65 This idea has also been explored from the perspective of Carl Jung's alchemical model of human psychology. See Edward F. Edinger, *Archetype of the Apocalypse: A Jungian Study of the Book of Revelation*, ed. George R. Elder (Chicago: Open Court, 1999).
- 66 Adam McLean, *Foundation Study Course on Alchemical Symbolism*, CD-ROM (Glasgow: AlchemyWebsite.com, 1999).
- 67 *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz: Anno 1459*, attributed to Johann Valentin Andreae, is the third of the Rosicrucian manifestos (1616 CE). Its allegorical narrative is divided into seven days, like Genesis, and relates to the *conjunctio* or “sacred marriage” of a king and queen, a union of opposites that constitutes the goal of the alchemical process. Online at [http://www.alchemylab.com/chemical\\_wedding\\_rosenkruetz.htm](http://www.alchemylab.com/chemical_wedding_rosenkruetz.htm) (accessed May 18, 2010).
- 68 I am indebted to an anonymous member of the journal's review panel for drawing my attention to the alchemical potential of the seal-color sequence in Revelation, and especially for proposing this analogy.
- 69 Adam McLean, “Animal Symbolism in the Alchemical Tradition.” Online at <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/animal.html> (accessed May 18, 2010).
- 70 Compare, for example, the following. Alan Richardson, *The Magician's Tables – A Complete Book of Correspondences* (London: Godsfield/Octopus, 2007), 58 & 101-102. Samuel, *The Kabbalah Handbook*, 293. Tim Dedopulos, *Kabbalah – An Introduction to the Esoteric Heart of Jewish Mysticism* (Camberwell, Australia: Viking/Penguin), 63 & 72. Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah*, 184.
- 71 John Nash, “The Seven Rays: A Case Study in the Dissemination of Esoteric Knowledge,” *Esoteric Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (2007): 33-50.
- 72 Richardson, *The Magician's Tables*, 6-181.
- 73 Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah*, 184.
- 74 Samuel, *The Kabbalah Handbook*, 293 & 298-299.
- 75 Richardson, *The Magician's Tables*, 57-59.
- 76 Dedopulos, *Kabbalah*, 34-55.
- 77 Samuel, *The Kabbalah Handbook*, 288-293.
- 78 Dedopulos, *Kabbalah*, 76-77.
- 79 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1992). Online at <http://www.homestar.org/bryannan/duino.html> (accessed May 18, 2010).
- 80 Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation*.
- 81 The seven chakras, the Tarot deck, etc.
- 82 The most appropriate way to extend the seals' associations to the Tarot might be first to chose direct matches from the Major Arcana, such as Death for the fourth seal (death and hell) and Judgment for the seventh, with its trumpeting angels (as depicted on that Trump); then to add self-evident planetary counterparts, by which the first and fifth seals would correspond to The Moon and The Star, respectively; and to use traditional planetary assignments for the remainder, by which the second seal (war) would correspond with the lightning-struck Tower, and so on. For Tarot planetary assignments, see Jane Lyle, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Tarot* (London: Chancellor/Octopus, 2001), 67.

- <sup>83</sup> Not only do the symbols collectively comprise the Greatest Name of God, but tradition links each glyph to an individual appellation within the “ninety-nine beautiful names of Allah.” From Figure 2a, it follows that the seven seals of Revelation relate (in order) to *Jabbar* (the Compeller), *Shahid* (the Witness), *Thabit* (the Stable), *Zahir* (the Visible), *Khabir* (the Shrewd), *Zaki* (the Pure), and *Fard* (the Singular). Anawati, *Le Nom Supreme de Dieu*, 27.
- <sup>84</sup> Tewfik Canaan, “Arabic Magic Bowls,” *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 16, (1936): 79-127.
- <sup>85</sup> Discussion of the seventh seal will be reserved for the following section, “Possible Christian Symbolism.”
- <sup>86</sup> For the seals of Revelation, the sequence is Murrah, Ahmar, Barqan, Shamhurish, Abiad, Meimun, and Mudhab. See Anawati, *Le Nom Supreme de Dieu*, 27; Canaan, *The Decipherment of Arabic Talismans*, 171.
- <sup>87</sup> Edmond Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l’Afrique du Nord* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Geuthner, 1984), 160. This book is a facsimile reprint of the 1908 Algiers edition.
- <sup>88</sup> Canaan, *The Decipherment of Arabic Talismans*, 171. These anglicized names are from Harrison and Shadrach, *Magic That Works*, 66.
- <sup>89</sup> Jeffrey H. Chajes, *Between Worlds: Dybbuks, Exorcists, and Early Modern Judaism*, (Philadelphia: Univ. Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 65.
- <sup>90</sup> Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah*, 168.
- <sup>91</sup> Gustav Davidson, *A Dictionary of Angels, Including the Fallen Angels* (New York: Free Press/Simon & Schuster, 1967), 268.
- <sup>92</sup> “The symbol is multivalent, having a multiplicity of meanings that do not diminish but instead enrich each other.” Timothy Scott, “Understanding ‘Symbol,’” in *Sacred Web* 6, 91-106 (Vancouver: Ali Lakhani, 2000). Republished online in 2007 as “The Traditional Doctrine of Symbol,” at <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/eyeoftheheart/assets/editors/scott/Symbol.pdf> (accessed March 14, 2010).
- <sup>93</sup> Examples of the eight-symbol series can be found in copies of the thirteenth century CE work by Ahmad al-Buni, “Sharh al-Jaljalutiyya al-Kubra,” Book 4 in his *Manba’ Usul al-Hikma*. Facsimile online at [www.digitaloccultmanuscripts.com](http://www.digitaloccultmanuscripts.com) (accessed December 31, 2009).

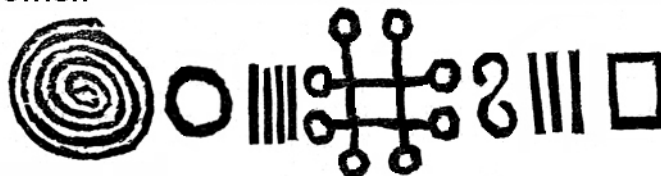
- <sup>94</sup> The eight-symbol series in Figure 2b are from the following sources in the author’s manuscript collection. Top series: copy (18<sup>th</sup> century CE) of what is believed to be a *ruhani* (white magic) work by Sheikh Abu al-Kassem al-Somsamaei, composed in Algeria. Middle series: Islamic paper amulet (20<sup>th</sup> century CE) sourced from Lebanon, which concludes with five repeats of the eight-symbol seal series. Bottom series: unidentified *ruhani* manuscript, date uncertain; here the pentagrams have become hexagrams, probably because the latter are easier to draw. Other instances of the popular eight-symbol series can be found in print, e.g. Doutté, *Magie et Religion*, 164, and online, e.g. Azal, “The True Greatest Name (*Ism-i-A’zam*) Symbol” and <http://sites.google.com/site/ruhaniya/translations> (accessed May 16, 2010). Additional examples will be presented in my forthcoming book, *The Seven Seals – Theophany and Talisman*.
- <sup>95</sup> “Superimposed upon the triangle of new age forces is the five pointed star of the Christ. This star has been his vehicle in the human family during the entire Piscean era. It has been, and is today, of marvellous potency. [...] Although we are already entering the Aquarian age, the established rhythms of the old era are still dominating humanity as a whole [...] Our symbol, therefore, blends the two eras and rightly pictures the work of the Christ today and the forces he must wield. The point in the centre is the place where the Christ stands. It is the centre of the star, the centre of the triangle, and the centre of the disc of golden light.” Foster Bailey, “A New Age Symbol.” Online at the Lucis Trust, [http://www.lucistrust.org/en/arcane\\_school/talks\\_and\\_articles/a\\_new\\_age\\_symbol](http://www.lucistrust.org/en/arcane_school/talks_and_articles/a_new_age_symbol) (accessed May 18, 2010).
- <sup>96</sup> An identification of Jesus with the seventh seal of Revelation is also consistent with passages in the *Shepherd of Hermas* (2<sup>nd</sup> century CE) where the Son of God seems to be viewed as a seventh angel, albeit much superior to the first six. See Simone Pétrement, *A Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism*, trans. Carol Harrison (San Francisco: Harper, 1990), 65-67.



# Figure 1. The Seven Magical Seals<sup>9</sup>

Both series read from right to left.

(a) Jewish



(b) Islamic



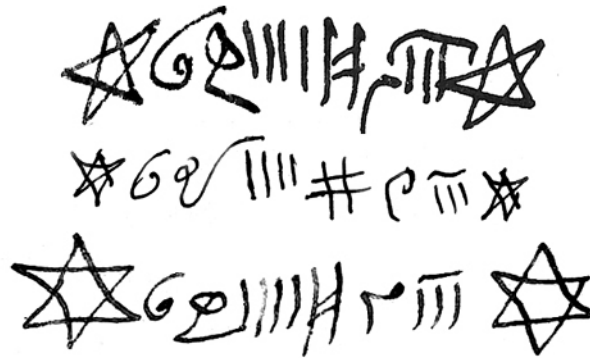
## Figure 2. Mapping John's Seals to Symbols

All series read from right to left

### (a) Seal-Symbol correspondence

Seal N° (Rev)	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Symbol (Islam)	☆	ع	ا	ل	ل	ل	ا

### (b) 8-Symbol series (Islam)<sup>94</sup>





# The Use of Ancient Texts to Test Hypotheses on the Seven Rays

Zachary F. Lansdowne

---

## Summary

Three key hypotheses are tested: seven archetypal paths exist that are aspatial and atemporal and that are associated with the seven rays; the esoteric teachings found in the ancient world are contained in modern Theosophy; and any ancient esoteric teaching is similar to one of the archetypal paths associated with the seven rays. These hypotheses are tested by comparing Alice Bailey's modern characterizations of the seven ray methods to the esoteric teachings embedded within the following seven ancient texts: *Purusha Sukta*, *Myth of Isis and Osiris*, *Tao Te Ching*, *Revelation of St. John*, *Gospel of Truth*, *Hymn of the Bride*, and *Hymn of the Pearl*. The testing of these hypotheses provides empirical support for them and illustrates Bailey's material on the seven rays.

## The Seven Rays

Teachings on the seven rays are contained in both the ancient Hindu *Rig Veda* and modern Theosophy.<sup>1</sup> Either source presents these teachings as though they were revealed from a transcendental realm, such as through inspiration or direct dictation from superhuman beings. The worldwide intellectual community, however, generally does not believe in a transcendental realm. Can the teachings on the seven rays be transformed into a science? In other words, can these teachings be tested in a scientific way so that they can be accepted on the basis of empirical evidence rather than a belief in the authority of an external source of information? Any scientific test entails formulating a hypothesis, collecting evidence, and analyzing results, although procedures vary from one field of inquiry to another. The purpose of this article is to test several hypotheses

related to the seven rays. As background for these hypotheses, let us review what prominent Theosophical writers have said about that ancient septenate.

Alice Bailey (1880-1949), founder of the Arcane School, states:

A ray is but a name for a particular force or type of energy, with the emphasis upon the quality which that force exhibits and not upon the form aspect which it creates. This is a true definition of a ray.<sup>2</sup>

Every human being is swept into manifestation on the impulse of some ray, and is coloured by that particular ray quality, which determines the form aspect, indicates the way he should go, and enables him (by the time the third initiation is reached) to have sensed and then to have cooperated with his ray purpose.<sup>3</sup>

In Theosophy, an "initiation" is said to be a milestone on the evolutionary journey. Thus, according to Bailey's account, every human being is connected to a specific ray and can receive guidance from that ray.

How does a ray provide guidance? Bailey associates rays with ideas: "It must be remembered that each ray embodies an idea

---

## About the Author

Zachary F. Lansdowne, Ph.D., who served as President of the Theosophical Society in Boston, has been a frequent contributor to *The Esoteric Quarterly*. His book *The Revelation of Saint John*, which provides a verse-by-verse analysis of the entire *Revelation*, was reviewed in the Fall 2006 issue. He can be reached at [zackl@sprynet.com](mailto:zackl@sprynet.com).

which can be sensed as an ideal.”<sup>4</sup>

An idea is revealed through intuitive perception. An ideal is a mental formulation of an idea, and so can be appreciated and applied by the mind and brain of a human being. Bailey speaks of the “seven groups of ideas and their resultant ideals,”<sup>5</sup> indicating that each of the seven rays embodies multiple ideas that are transformed into multiple ideals. Bailey also says, “Through the medium of these ever-living and ever-appearing ideas, humanity passes on to something better and greater and more appropriate to the life of the slowly manifesting divinity.”<sup>6</sup> Thus Bailey’s account indicates that each ray embodies a *sequence* of ideas, in which every idea is more evolved—or greater or more perfected—than the preceding one.

An *archetype* is an original pattern or type after which other similar things are modeled. Early in the twentieth century, the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung used the concept of an archetype to illuminate human behavior and literature. Subsequent writers developed the concept of an *archetypal path*, which is a sequential pattern that can guide the mind. For example, Richard Tarnas states, “the human mind is following the numinous archetypal path that is unfolding from within it,”<sup>7</sup> Emil Mihelich mentions “the ancient, archetypal path revealed in the great pagan mythologies,”<sup>8</sup> and Donald Sandner speaks of “the archetypal path of initiation.”<sup>9</sup>

In Bailey’s account, the sequence of intuitive ideas embodied in any ray fits the foregoing definition of an archetypal path, implying that there are seven distinct archetypal paths, one for each ray. Aspirants may, however, construct mental ideals and practice disciplines that are distorted reflections of the archetypal ideas. Bailey lists seven ways that such distortions could occur.<sup>10</sup> Thus an aspirant’s evolutionary journey would be similar to the guiding archetypal path, if such a path actually does exist, but with some distortions occurring along the way.

This distinction between an evolutionary journey and an archetypal path is related to

the distinction made in Platonic philosophy between particulars and universals.

Particulars are individual things or instances; universals are abstract qualities, characteristics, or categories. The problem of universals is their status: whether universals exist independently of their associated particulars, or if they are merely convenient ways of talking about and finding similarity among particular things that are otherwise different.

The Greek philosopher Plato had the view that universals are real entities that exist independently of particulars: the particulars exist in space and time, but the universals are aspatial (outside the world) and atemporal (outside time); the particulars are imperfect copies of the universals.<sup>11</sup>

For the remainder of this section, let us suppose that Bailey’s account of the seven rays is valid. The seven archetypal paths, which are the sequences of ideas embodied in the seven rays, are like the universals in Platonic philosophy, because they are real entities that exist independently of the particular religious forms that occur in the world. Even though religions are practiced at specific physical locations and evolve over time, the archetypal paths are aspatial and atemporal.

For the reasons already considered, the evolutionary journey of every aspirant is an imperfect copy of one of these archetypal paths. Even if an esoteric teaching of a religion was guided by an archetypal path, such a teaching would also be an imperfect copy, because words are intrinsically ambiguous with meanings that shift over time. Even if an organized religion was founded as a manifestation of an archetypal path, it would also be an imperfect copy, because its rituals and scriptures would not be completely understood by all its participants. Thus evolutionary journeys, esoteric teachings, and organized religions are like the particulars in Platonic philosophy, because they exist in space and time, and because they can be no more than imperfect copies of the archetypal paths.

## **The Wisdom Religion**

Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), co-founder of the Theosophical Society, popularizes the concept of the “Wisdom Religion,” which she defines as “the substratum and basis of all the world religions and philosophies.”<sup>12</sup> Other writers promote the same idea but use these synonyms: Ageless Wisdom, Eternal Truths, Perennial Philosophy, Science of the Initiates, and Universal Religion.

Blavatsky makes a key distinction: “Every ancient religious, or rather philosophical, cult consisted of an esoteric or secret teaching, and an exoteric (outward public) worship.”<sup>13</sup> She speaks of “the esoteric doctrine or WISDOM RELIGION,”<sup>14</sup> indicating that she regards those terms to be synonymous. Blavatsky also states, “Theosophy is, then, the archaic *Wisdom-Religion*, the esoteric doctrine once known in every ancient country having claims to civilization.”<sup>15</sup> Thus she makes a remarkable claim: different ancient religions, even though they existed at different places and times, had the same esoteric doctrine—the Wisdom Religion—and that doctrine can be found in modern theosophical teachings.

Blavatsky says that the Wisdom Religion consists of “scattered rays”:

We know of one Esoteric doctrine—“the universal secret Wisdom-Religion” of old. The latter embraces every one of the great creeds of the antiquity, while none of these can boast of having it in its entirety. Our mission is to gather all these scattered rays, bring them back to one focus, and thus help those who will come after us to unveil some day the glorious sun of Truth.<sup>16</sup>

In particular, she says that the Wisdom Religion consists of “seven main branches”:

In order to make my meaning clear I may point out here that the Logos has seven forms. In other words, there are seven kinds of Logoi in the Cosmos. Each of these has become the central figure of one of the seven main branches of the ancient Wisdom-Religion.<sup>17</sup>

Blavatsky also speaks of “the primordial seven rays, or Logoi,”<sup>18</sup> showing that she uses rays and Logoi as synonyms. “Central figure” appears equivalent to archetypal path, in which case Blavatsky’s quotation has this meaning: each ray has become the archetypal path for the corresponding main branch of the Wisdom-Religion. In other words, each main branch of the Wisdom-Religion consists of the esoteric teachings that are similar to the archetypal path associated with the corresponding ray. There are seven main branches of the Wisdom-Religion because there are seven rays.

### Seven Ancient Texts

A *hypothesis* is a tentative statement that proposes a possible explanation for some phenomenon or event. We are concerned with three testable hypotheses: (1) seven archetypal paths exist that are aspatial and atemporal and that are associated with the seven rays; (2) the esoteric teachings found in the ancient world are contained in modern Theosophy; and (3) any ancient esoteric teaching is similar to one of the archetypal paths associated with the seven rays. As shown by the preceding sections, the first hypothesis is suggested by Bailey’s account of the seven rays, and the second and third hypotheses are suggested by Blavatsky’s account of the Wisdom Religion.

This article tests these three hypotheses by considering examples of esoteric teachings from ancient times. Such teachings are difficult to grasp, however, because they have been veiled by symbols or allegories. Blavatsky also makes that observation:

The religious and esoteric history of every nation was embedded in symbols; it was never expressed in so many words. All the thoughts and emotions, all the learning and knowledge, revealed and acquired, of the early races, found their pictorial expression in allegory and parable.<sup>19</sup>

All esoteric truths were given out to the public by the Initiates of the temples *under the guise of allegories*.<sup>20</sup>

Not all ancient symbols and allegories signify esoteric truths. For example, Blavatsky says that the ancient Greek myths have been distorted:

The Greek myths are no longer the primitive symbolical language of the Initiates, the disciples of the gods-Hierophants, the divine ancient “sacrificers,” and that disfigured by the distance, and encumbered by the exuberant growth of human *profane* fancy, they now stand like distorted images of stars in running waves.<sup>21</sup>

To test our three hypotheses, we need to examine ancient texts that incorporate, without significant distortion, the esoteric teachings from their respective religions. How can appropriate ancient texts be selected for examination? This article examines seven ancient religious texts that are endorsed, either directly or indirectly, by Blavatsky herself. Let us briefly consider these texts—in their approximate chronological order—and Blavatsky’s views concerning them.

1. *Purusha Sukta*. The *Rig Veda* is often dated between 1700 BCE and 1100 BCE, and Blavatsky states, “this Scripture has been compiled by INITIATES.”<sup>22</sup> The *Purusha Sukta* is one of the many hymns in the *Rig Veda*, and it is specifically cited by Blavatsky as embodying the Wisdom-Religion: “It is those scholars only who will master the secret meaning of the *Purushasukta*, who may hope to understand how harmonious are its teachings and how corroborative of the Esoteric Doctrines.”<sup>23</sup> As mentioned earlier, “Esoteric Doctrines” is a synonym for the Wisdom Religion.
2. *Myth of Isis and Osiris*. This myth became one of the most important and powerful myths in Egypt during the New Kingdom, which often is dated between 1570 BCE and 1070 BCE. Regarding the Ancient Egyptian religion, Blavatsky states: “The Egyptian priests have forgotten much, they altered nothing ... Yet they have preserved in their rituals and dogmas the principal teachings of the secret doctrine.”<sup>24</sup> Here, “secret doctrine” is another synonym for the Wisdom-Religion.<sup>25</sup> Blavatsky refers to the *Myth of Isis and Osiris* simply as “the Egyptian myth” and says that it is “comprehensible as an allegory.”<sup>26</sup>
3. *Tao Te Ching*. According to tradition, this famous Chinese book was written around the sixth century BCE by the sage Lao Tzu (or Lao-tse). Blavatsky says that Lao Tzu was “a great sage, saint and philosopher,”<sup>27</sup> and speaks of the *Tao Te Ching* as “his great work” and “the heart of his doctrine.”<sup>28</sup> Blavatsky considers the *Tao Te Ching* to be a veiled teaching, because the earliest known commentary for it goes no further back than the year 163 BCE, but “during the four centuries and a half that preceded this earliest of the commentators there was ample time to veil the true Lao-tse doctrine from all but his initiated priests,” and “the true commentaries, as well as almost all the texts, have long since disappeared from the eyes of the profane.”<sup>29</sup>
4. *Revelation of St. John*, the last book of the Bible, sometimes called the *Book of Revelation* or the *Apocalypse*. Modern scholars generally believe that it was composed between 68 and 96 CE. This book has been a mystery ever since it first appeared because of its many puzzling symbols. Blavatsky says, “The fact is ... the whole *Revelation*, is simply an allegorical narrative of the Mysteries and initiation therein of a candidate, who is John himself.”<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, in the manner of an esoteric teaching, the *Revelation* was written by an initiate and uses allegorical and symbolic writing to disclose the mysteries of initiation.
5. *Gospel of Truth*. This gospel was discovered as part of the Gnostic treatises found in 1947 at Nag Hammadi, a city in Upper Egypt. Modern scholars generally believe that it was composed between 140 CE and 180 CE. Blavatsky was unable to comment on this gospel because it was not available to her during her lifetime. Nevertheless, she was familiar with other Gnostic material and refers to “the *Gnos-*

tics—the legitimate offspring of the Archaic Wisdom-religion.”<sup>31</sup> Although the author’s name does not appear in the two extant manuscripts, several modern scholars assert that the author of this gospel is “extremely likely” to be Valentinus,<sup>32</sup> whom Blavatsky calls the “profoundest doctor of the Gnosis.”<sup>33</sup>

6. *Hymn of the Bride*. Saint Judas Thomas was one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus. The *Acts of Thomas*, thought to be written during the second or third century CE, recounts the adventures of Thomas during his ministry, and it was published during Blavatsky’s lifetime. The *Hymn of the Bride*, which is part of the *Acts of Thomas*, is a symbolic allegory that suggests the ceremony of initiation. Blavatsky does not mention the “Hymn of the Bride” in her writings, but she does mention another allegory in the *Acts of Thomas*, as discussed next.
7. *Hymn of the Pearl*. This hymn is sometimes called the *Hymn of the Soul* and is another symbolic allegory in the *Acts of Thomas*. Blavatsky explicitly mentions this hymn and incorporates the following quotation from Smith and Wace’s *Dictionary of Christian Biography* into one of her commentaries: “In the Syriac text of the *Acts* ... we find the beautiful *Hymn of the Soul*, which has been sent down from her heavenly home to fetch the pearl guarded by the serpent, but has forgotten here below her heavenly mission till she is reminded of it by a letter from ‘the father, the mother, and the brother,’ performs her task, receives back again her glorious dress, and returns to her old home.”<sup>34</sup>

These seven ancient texts are from a variety of religious traditions: *Purusha Sukta* from Hinduism, *Myth of Isis and Osiris* from the Ancient Egyptian religion, *Tao Te Ching* from Taoism, *Revelation of St. John* from Christianity, and *Gospel of Truth* from Gnosticism. The last two texts, *Hymn of the Bride* and *Hymn of the Pearl*, are part of the *Acts of Thomas*, which is early Christian literature. Although the mainstream Christian tradition

rejected the *Acts of Thomas* as apocryphal, the Manichaean Church adopted it as a canonical scripture during the third or fourth century CE. Thus our last two texts could be regarded as coming from the Manichaean religion.

The esoteric teachings embedded within these ancient texts are veiled by symbols and allegories, but are deciphered by a series of earlier articles. When deciphered, these teachings provide guidance to aspirants on their evolutionary journey. Next we test our three hypotheses by comparing these ancient esoteric teachings to Bailey’s modern characterizations of the seven ray methods of work. The seven ancient texts are considered in the order of their associated ray number.

## Ray One

The names that have been given to the rays are anthropocentric, because they indicate associated human characteristics. The First Ray is called the “ray of will or power,” so its associated human characteristics are will, power, courage, leadership, and self-reliance. As shown next, Bailey’s “Technique of Fusion for the First Ray” is similar in meaning to a stanza in the *Purusha Sukta*.

Bailey says that the “keynote” of the “Technique of Fusion for the First Ray” is “isolated unity,” and gives this explanation:

*Isolated Unity* is that stage of consciousness which sees the whole as one and regards itself, not theoretically but as a realised fact, as identified with that whole. It is a whole which is “isolated” in the consciousness of the man, and not the man himself who regards himself as isolated. The word “isolated” refers to that complete organised organism of which the man can feel and know himself to be a part. The word “unity” expresses his relationship to the whole. It will be apparent therefore that this whole is something progressively realised.<sup>35</sup>

Hence the “Technique of Fusion for the First Ray” tells us to identify ourselves with a conceived larger whole, which entails elimi-



nating our limited ideals and forms of pride that would prevent us from working in the best interests of that whole. Moreover our conceived whole becomes more inclusive over time. For example, we might identify ourselves initially with our immediate family, then with our community and nation, and eventually with all humanity.

The *Purusha Sukta* gives an early account of our planet's history and of how the universe operates. This Vedic hymn is analyzed in two earlier articles, a portion of which is repeated here.<sup>36</sup> Its sixteenth and final stanza states:

The gods sacrificed with the sacrifice to the sacrifice. These were the first rites. These powers reached the firmament, where the ancient demi-gods and the gods are.<sup>37</sup>

In the first sentence, the "gods" are taken as the Planetary Logoi, because the Planetary Logos for a planet could be regarded as the personal god of that planet.<sup>38</sup> Blavatsky makes the following observation: "Life is built up by the sacrifice of the individual to the whole. Each cell in the living body must sacrifice itself to the perfection of the whole; when it is otherwise, disease and death enforce the lesson."<sup>39</sup>

The Planetary Logoi are part of the greater body of the Solar Logos, so the Planetary Logoi must sacrifice Themselves to the perfection of the Solar Logos, who in turn must sacrifice Himself to the perfection of a still greater composite Life. Bailey makes similar points: "The Solar Logos expands His consciousness to include the desire of the Cosmic Logos. The Planetary Logos expands His consciousness to measure up to the will and purpose of the Solar Logos."<sup>40</sup>

The second sentence, "These were the first rites," indicates that these sacrifices by the various Logoi are prototypes for human activity. Accordingly, human beings must

sacrifice themselves to the perfection of what they conceive of as their surrounding composite whole. The third sentence indicates that each of these sacrifices leads to advancement. Bailey makes a similar point: "Each step up is ever through the sacrifice of all that the heart holds dear on one plane or another, and always must this sacrifice be voluntary."<sup>41</sup>

With these interpretations, the final stanza in the *Purusha Sukta* has the following meaning:

The Planetary Logos for our planet participates in a group sacrifice with the other Planetary Logoi to carry out the will of the Solar Logos, who in turn sacrifices Himself to carry out the will of a still greater composite Life. These sacrifices are prototypes for human activity. In this way, the Logoi and human beings can reach higher levels of achievement, which have already been attained by their ancient forerunners.

Consequently, the *Purusha Sukta* culminates in what is essentially Bailey's "Technique of Fusion for the First Ray," but applied on both the macrocosmic, or universal, and microcosmic, or human, scales.

## Ray Two

The Second Ray is called the "ray of love-wisdom," and is associated with love, wisdom, and intuition. As shown next, Bailey's "key" to the Second Ray method is similar in meaning to the *Hymn of the Pearl*. The entire "key" is the following:

Let all the life be drawn to the Centre, and enter thus into the Heart of Love Divine. Then from that point of sentient Life, let the Soul realise the consciousness of God. Let the word go forth, reverberating through the silence: "Naught is but Me!"<sup>42</sup>

Bailey uses the lower-case “soul” to represent the source of individual divine guidance, and the capitalized “Soul” to represent its aggregation. For example, she speaks of “all souls who constitute—in their entirety—the One Soul.”<sup>43</sup> In this key, “Centre” is taken as the individual soul, because Bailey speaks of this soul as “a psychic centre” or “a force centre.”<sup>44</sup> The “Heart of Love Divine” is taken as the causal body, because she speaks of this body as the “heart centre of the monadic life”<sup>45</sup> and uses “monadic” as a synonym for divine.<sup>46</sup>

With these identifications, the Second Ray key tells us to practice the following steps. First, we perceive the individual soul within someone else, and thus enter into causal consciousness. Second, while maintaining causal consciousness, we share in our soul’s realization of the Presence of God. Third, we share in our soul’s realization of omnipresence, which is the realization of the one Soul.

The *Hymn of the Pearl*, which is part of the *Acts of Thomas*, is a story about a Prince who is sent to retrieve a precious pearl, forgets his mission, but eventually returns with the pearl. An earlier article explains this allegory in detail, portions of which are repeated here.<sup>47</sup>

The *Hymn* consists of the Prince’s first-person account of his experiences, and it contains two crucial symbols that represent the causal body and the individual soul: the Mantle and the Robe. The first passage that mentions these symbols is:

My Glorious Robe they took off me  
Which in their love they had wrought me,  
And my Purple Mantle [also]

Which was woven to match with my stature.<sup>48</sup>

The causal body is symbolized by the

**We know of one Esoteric doctrine—“the universal secret Wisdom-Religion” of old. The latter embraces every one of the great creeds of the antiquity, while none of these can boast of having it in its entirety. Our mission is to gather all these scattered rays, bring them back to one focus, and thus help those who will come after us to unveil some day the glorious sun of Truth.**

Mantle, “Which was woven to match with my stature,” because the size of the causal body reflects the Prince’s spiritual stature, as Bailey explains, “The content of the causal body is the accumulation by slow and gradual process of the good in each life.”<sup>49</sup> The individual soul is symbolized by the “Glorious Robe,” because the glory of this soul can cover the lower nature like a robe, as Bailey also

explains, “The glory of the soul ... blots out the darkness and irradiates the lower nature.”<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, the Prince wearing the Mantle symbolizes that his consciousness is polarized within his causal body, which is the definition of causal consciousness. The Prince wearing the Robe symbolizes that he is contacting his soul’s attitude and awareness, which is the definition of sharing in soul consciousness.

The foregoing passage depicts events that occur during the interlude between incarnations. The Prince had been wearing both garments, showing that he had gained causal consciousness and shared in soul consciousness during that interlude. He loses both garments, however, signifying that he loses both types of consciousness before returning to physical life. Bailey indicates that everyone, during the interlude, goes through the same experiences:

Physical plane existence comes to an end and all returns within the causal consciousness ... On the inner side, men *know* that ... they consequently face two great experiences: 1. A moment (long or short, according to the attained point in

evolution) wherein contact will be made with the soul or with the solar angel. 2. After that contact, a relatively violent re-orientation to earth life takes place, leading to what is called “the process of descent and calling.”<sup>51</sup>

The *Hymn* has another passage that mentions these two symbols and that illustrates the Second Ray key:

And [now] with its Kingly motions  
Was it pouring itself out towards me,  
And made haste in the hands of its Givers,  
That I might [take and] receive it.  
And me, too, my love urged forward  
To run for to meet it, to take it.  
And I stretched myself forth to receive it;  
With its beauty of colour I decked me,  
And my Mantle of sparkling colours  
I wrapped entirely all o’er me.

The above passage depicts the discipline that the Prince practices during physical incarnation. In the first sentence, “Givers” symbolize the perceptions of the higher and lower selves; “it,” referring to the Robe being brought by the Givers, symbolizes the perception of the individual soul within the higher self; and “Kingly motions” symbolize the perception of the Presence of Deity within the soul. The higher self consists of the soul operating through the causal body, and the lower self is the personality. Thus the first sentence describes the Prince as perceiving the following: the higher self within someone else, the soul within the higher self, and the Presence of Deity within the soul.

The second sentence describes the Prince as running towards the Robe so that he can take it. In other words, he is moving in consciousness toward his soul, because each successive perception entails a more refined use of abstract thought, and so he eventually enters causal consciousness, as Bailey explains:

It is by meditation, or the reaching from the concrete to the abstract, that the causal

consciousness is entered, and man—during this final period—becomes the Higher self and not the Personality.<sup>52</sup>

Next the Prince says, “And I stretched myself forth to receive it.” The Prince’s continued effort to perceive the Presence of Deity evokes soul consciousness, as Bailey also explains:

The flickering soul light in the personal self has enabled the disciple to see the vision of the soul and in that light to reach union with the soul, even if only temporarily. Now the greater light of the soul becomes focussed like a radiant sun and it reveals in its turn a still more stupendous vision—that of the Presence.<sup>53</sup>

The Prince concludes, “With its beauty of colour I decked me, And my Mantle of sparkling colours I wrapped entirely all o’er me.” The Prince shares in soul consciousness, symbolized by wearing the Robe, and has causal consciousness, symbolized by wearing the Mantle, so he regains both types of consciousness that he had during the interlude prior to his present incarnation.

In summary, both Bailey’s Second Ray key and the *Hymn of the Pearl* are written in symbols. Deciphering those symbols shows that these two texts depict similar methods for attaining causal consciousness and sharing in soul consciousness.

### Ray Three

The Third Ray is called the “ray of active intelligence” and is associated with mental power, adaptability, and creative thinking. As shown next, Bailey’s “Technique of Integration for the Third Ray” is similar to chapter 11 of the *Revelation of St. John*.

The Third Ray technique needs to be deciphered because, as Bailey herself acknowledges, it is “couched in language quite symbolic.”<sup>54</sup> This technique includes the following excerpt:

*The word goes forth from soul to form:*  
“Be still. Learn to stand silent, quiet and unafraid. I, at the centre, *Am*. Look up along the line and not along the many

lines which, in the space of aeons, you have woven. These hold thee prisoner. Be still. Rush not from point to point, nor be deluded by the outer forms and that which disappears. Behind the forms, the Weaver stands and silently he weaves.”<sup>55</sup>

In other words, the following intuitive instructions are given by the individual soul to its aspirant (“*The word goes forth from soul to form*”). First, calm your emotions (“Be still”) and then learn to align yourself (“Learn to stand”) so that your mind is silent, your feelings are quiet, and your motives are no longer based on fear (“silent, quiet and unafraid”). Second, center your consciousness in your mind (“I, at the centre, *Am*”), have a clear and single-minded awareness of what is actually happening both inside and outside during the current moment (“Look up along the line”), and then respond to those opportunities that are already present. This process is quite different from trying to make new opportunities for yourself by looking “along the many lines” of thought leading into the future. Although you might imagine that those lines of thought lead to personal glory, they actually form a veil of glamour (“which, in the space of aeons, you have woven”) that hold you prisoner (“These hold thee prisoner”).

Third, center your consciousness at the apex of your mind, which is the quiet space above your mental battleground (“Be still”); examine carefully the movement of your thoughts (“Rush not from point to point”), and overcome your false judgments about your personality (“nor be deluded by the outer forms”) and the phenomenal world (“and that which disappears”). Fourth, by focusing yourself behind your personality, which consists of your mental, emotional, and physical bodies (“Behind the forms”), become aligned with the one Soul (“The Weaver stands”) and allow the intrinsic nature of the Soul to act through you (“and silently he weaves”).

The traditional approaches for interpreting the *Revelation of St. John* could be called “external-temporal,” because they all interpret the various characters and episodes as representing people and events that occur in

the external world at definite past or future times. When using the traditional approaches, chapter 11 in the *Revelation* is considered by many scholars to be the most difficult section to understand in that obscure book. For example, Robert Mounce, a Biblical scholar, says, “In turning to the matters in 11:1-14, we come to a passage that is universally recognized as difficult to interpret.”<sup>56</sup>

A psychological interpretation, however, can be given to the entire *Revelation*, so that each symbol within an episode represents some aspect of the consciousness belonging to an aspirant who is at the corresponding stage on the evolutionary journey.<sup>57</sup> Such an analysis of chapter 11 is provided by a previous article and shows the following.<sup>58</sup> In verses 1 through 3, “the angel” tells the aspirant to observe himself while judging other people. In verses 4 through 10, the aspirant has a series of insights as to how his judgment of others is harmful to himself. In verses 11 through 13, after having those insights, he transforms himself by giving up all judgment of other people and becomes illumined by “the God of heaven.”<sup>59</sup>

Bailey, however, considers solar angel and soul to be synonymous terms.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, she considers God and Oversoul to be synonymous,<sup>61</sup> and Oversoul and Soul to be synonymous,<sup>62</sup> so that God and Soul are also synonymous. Thus, “the angel” in chapter 11 can be taken as the individual soul, and “the God of heaven” as the one Soul. Accordingly, chapter 11 of the *Revelation* can be interpreted as giving instructions similar to those provided by the foregoing excerpt from Bailey’s “Technique of Integration for the Third Ray.”

## Ray Four

The Fourth Ray, called the “ray of harmony through conflict,” is associated with harmony, synthesis, and beauty. Bailey’s “Technique of Integration for the Fourth Ray,” which is a modern symbolic formula, is closely related to *The Tao Te Ching*, which is an ancient enigmatic Chinese book.

For example, the Fourth Ray technique includes these three sentences: “Peace I demand. My mind is bent upon it. Oneness with all I seek, yet form divides.”<sup>63</sup> The *Tao Te Ching* states, “Peace is his highest value,” with the possessive pronoun “his” referring to “a decent man.”<sup>64</sup> This statement is close to the technique’s sentence, “Peace I demand.” The *Tao Te Ching* asks the question: “Can you step back from your own mind and thus understand all things?”<sup>65</sup> This question indicates that self-understanding comes through observing one’s own mind. In the technique, “my mind is bent” is taken as depicting the mind’s observation of itself.

The *Tao Te Ching* also states, “She detaches herself from all things; Therefore she is united with all things.”<sup>66</sup> This statement incorporates a conditional implication: if there is detachment from all things, then there is a feeling of unity. A conditional implication that is logically equivalent to the preceding one is the following: if there is a feeling of separateness, then there is identification with something.

In the Fourth Ray technique, the phrase “yet form divides” has a similar meaning, as Bailey explains: “As long as a man is identified with the appearance, these aspects of the mental principle produce in him the ‘great heresy of separateness.’”<sup>67</sup> Here “these aspects of the mental principle” refers to the powers to analyze, discriminate, and separate. Appearance and body are synonyms, so being “identified with the appearance” could be with the physical body and its possessions, or with the emotional body and its appetites, moods, and feelings, or with the mental body and its attributes. Consequently, when we identify ourselves with a mental, emotional, or physical trait, we become involved with a pair of opposites in which we contrast our trait with that of someone else, thereby producing a feeling of separateness, such as pride or jealousy.

An earlier article expands the foregoing analysis and demonstrates that the *Tao Te Ching* has a passage that is similar in meaning to every sentence in the Fourth Ray technique.<sup>68</sup> This demonstration clarifies both

obscure texts. The *Tao Te Ching* is clarified, because we can see how its diverse poems fit together to form a coherent technique. The Fourth Ray technique is also clarified, because we can see how its symbolic statements can be expressed in a more comprehensible way and be applied.

## Ray Five

The Fifth Ray is called the “ray of concrete knowledge or science” and is associated with such characteristics as discrimination, accuracy, and patience. As shown next, Bailey’s “Technique of Integration for the Fifth Ray” is similar in meaning to the *Myth of Isis and Osiris*.

The first passage in the Fifth Ray technique is:

Towards me I draw the garment of my God. I see and know His form. I take that garment, piece by piece. I know its shape and colour, its form and type, its parts component and its purposes and use. I stand amazed, I see naught else. I penetrate the mysteries of form, but not the Mystery.<sup>69</sup>

In other words, aspirants have been investigating material forms (“Towards me I draw the garment of my God”) based on two key assumptions: empiricism, which is the belief that sensory experience is the only valid source of knowledge (“I see and know His form”); and reductionism, which is the belief that understanding is acquired by reducing phenomena to more elementary ones (“I take that garment, piece by piece”). With these assumptions, aspirants have accumulated knowledge about material shapes and colors, structures and classifications, components, interrelations, and applications (“I know its shape and colour, its form and type, its parts component and its purposes and use”). Through this research, they have increased their alignment (“I stand”) and are “amazed” that they can now infer the existence of non-material life, even though they cannot see it (“I see naught else”). They recognize that they have penetrated the mysteries of the material world but not the mystery of life (“I

penetrate the mysteries of form, but not the *Mystery*").

The ancient Egyptian *Myth of Isis and Osiris* has four main characters: Osiris, who is king of Egypt; Isis, who is the wife of Osiris; Typhon, who is the brother of Osiris; and Horus, who is the son of Isis and Osiris. The myth appears to be a dramatic tale of betrayal and revenge, and it has three main segments: first, after Typhon seals Osiris in a chest and throws it in a river, Isis searches for and eventually recovers the chest; second, after Typhon cuts up Osiris's body into multiple parts, Isis searches for those parts and eventually finds them; and third, Horus struggles with Typhon for the right to rule the kingdom and eventually defeats him. The esoteric meaning of the myth is given in an earlier article, portions of which are repeated here.<sup>70</sup>

The second segment of the myth begins in the following way:

Typhon, who was hunting by night in the light of the moon, happened upon it [Osiris's chest]. Recognizing the body he divided it into fourteen parts and scattered them, each in a different place.<sup>71</sup>

Blavatsky speaks of the "Identity of Satan with the Egyptian Typhon."<sup>72</sup> The original Hebrew word for Satan means "adversary," which is the translation used in Numbers 22:22. Throughout the myth, Typhon symbolizes the adversary that aspirants must overcome on their evolutionary journey. Bailey says that their achievement is "liberation from maya or illusion,"<sup>73</sup> so Typhon symbolizes illusion, or false belief.

The physical body consists of the etheric, or vital, body and the dense physical body. Bailey uses "lunar orb," or moon, as a symbol for the solar plexus chakra,<sup>74</sup> which is a major force center in the etheric body. Thus "the light of the moon" symbolizes the lower emotions—such as fear, hate, disgust, and desire—that are associated with the solar plexus chakra.<sup>75</sup>

Blavatsky states that, in the myth, "Osiris ... is the indwelling spirit."<sup>76</sup> Using Bailey's terminology, Osiris is taken as the one Soul,

so the division of Osiris's body symbolizes the differentiation and separation of a unified whole. Bailey gives this explanation: "Yet all forms are differentiations of the soul, but that soul is one Soul, when viewed and considered spiritually. When studied from the form side, naught but differentiation and separation can be seen."<sup>77</sup>

With the foregoing interpretations of its symbols, the myth has this meaning: illusion controls the lower emotions, which in turn cause aspirants to perceive the one Soul as differentiated and separated into many material forms. Thus the beginning of the second segment of the myth corresponds to the beginning of the Fifth Ray technique, because both texts depict the perception of many material forms without understanding the life that lies behind those forms. The subsequent portions of both texts provide instructions on how to understand the underlying life.

The Fifth Ray technique continues:

*The Word* goes forth from soul to form:  
"Behind that form, I am. Know Me.  
Cherish and know and understand the nature of the veils of life, but know as well the One Who lives. Know Me."

In other words, the following intuitive instructions are provided by the individual soul to its aspirant ("*The Word* goes forth from soul to form"). Behind the personality there exists the spiritual self ("Behind that form, I am"), and the time has come to gain knowledge about that inner self ("Know Me"). Continue to study, know, and understand the mental, emotional, and physical worlds ("Cherish and know and understand the nature of the veils of life"), but know as well the one Soul ("but know as well the One Who lives"). Continue your exploration until you gain direct knowledge of the Soul ("Know Me").

These instructions correspond to the rest of the second segment of the myth, during which Isis searches for the pieces of Osiris and eventually brings them together, as in the following account:

Once it [Osiris's body] was all together, except of course the part eaten by the fish, the body was wrapped in white linen and placed in state at the Temple of Abydos.<sup>78</sup>

Bailey writes, "*Eve, Isis, and Mary* ... are of peculiar and significant importance where our civilisation is concerned for they embody in themselves the symbology of the entire form nature, which, when integrated and functioning as a whole person, we call the personality."<sup>79</sup> Thus, Isis symbolizes the personality.

The reassembled body of Osiris represents the realization of omnipresence, which is the realization of the one Soul that lies behind all differentiations of form. Bailey gives this explanation: "The first great realization which the aspirant has to achieve is that of *omnipresence*; he has to realize his unity with all, and the oneness of his soul with all other souls."<sup>80</sup>

Abydos is the Greek name for an ancient city in Egypt. Abydos symbolizes the causal body, because the original Egyptian name for Abydos signifies a container for holy relics, and the theosophist Arthur Powell says, "The causal body, as said, is the receptacle of all that is enduring."<sup>81</sup> Placing Osiris's reassembled body within the temple in Abydos indicates that the realization of omnipresence occurs within consciousness polarized in the causal body, which is the definition of causal consciousness. Thus, the myth has this meaning: aspirants have to search for the presence of the Soul, in themselves and other people, until they attain causal consciousness and the realization of omnipresence.

The last paragraph in the Fifth Ray technique begins with this passage:

Detach thy thought from form and find Me waiting underneath the veils, the many-sided shapes, the glammers and the

thoughtforms which hide my real Self. Be not deceived. Find Me. Know Me. Then use the forms which then will neither veil nor hide the Self, but will permit the nature of that Self to penetrate the veils of life.

**...each main branch of the Wisdom-Religion consists of the esoteric teachings that are similar to the archetypal path associated with the corresponding ray. There are seven main branches of the Wisdom-Religion because there are seven rays.**

In other words, detach yourself from any prideful form ("Detach thy thought from form"), and evoke the perspective of the onlooking Soul ("and find Me waiting underneath"). In this way, examine the attractiveness of personality consciousness: identifications with the lower self, desires for physical things, glammers that distort perceptions, and thoughtforms based on

ignorance ("the veils, the many-sided shapes, the glammers and the thoughtforms which hide my real Self"). When tempted by any of these forms of illusion, search for the underlying Soul until you achieve the realization of omnipresence ("Be not deceived. Find Me. Know Me."). Then, after regaining causal consciousness, use your personality, which no longer veils the Soul ("Then use the forms which then will neither veil nor hide the Self"), to express the nature of the Soul in the mental, emotional, and physical worlds ("but will permit the nature of that Self to penetrate the veils of life").

These instructions correspond to the third segment of the myth, in which the Great Ennead judges between Horus and Seth, starting with this passage:

Horus, the Avenger of Osiris, came before the Great Ennead. With His Mother beside Him, He spoke of the cruel murder of His Father at the hands of Seth. He spoke of the usurpation of the Throne of Egypt. The Gods were impressed by the eloquence of the Falcon-Headed One.<sup>82</sup>

Horus, "the Falcon-Headed One," represents causal consciousness for two reasons. First, each wing of a falcon is shaped like a scythe,

symbolizing that, in Powell's words, "causal consciousness thus deals with the *essence* of a thing, whilst the lower mind studies its details." Second, a falcon can fly at high speed and change direction rapidly, symbolizing that, again in Powell's words, "with the causal consciousness, we take up the essence of the idea of the subject, and move it as a whole, as one moves a piece when playing chess."<sup>83</sup>

Seth is another name for Typhon and so symbolizes illusion. Bailey associates personality consciousness with illusion, because she says, "you will learn that things which are potent and apparent in your personality consciousness are *in fact* non-existent."<sup>84</sup> Thus Seth also symbolizes personality consciousness.

The Great Ennead is a panel of nine gods. In the above passage, this panel conducts a trial during which they judge between the competing claims of Horus and Seth. In our inner struggle, however, we are our own judge. For example, Joshua 24:15 tells us to "choose you this day whom ye will serve." Thus, in this segment of the myth, the panel of gods represents an aspirant, referring to a center of consciousness that has the responsibility of choosing between causal and personality consciousness.

A later passage states:

Re proclaimed, "We shall cross the river to the Island in the Midst, and try the case thereon. I shalt further order the ferryman not to ferry Isis across."

Re is a member of the panel of gods and so represents an aspirant. Re plans to move the trial to a place where Isis cannot reach. Likewise, the next step for an aspirant is to examine the attractiveness of personality consciousness while being detached from the personality. Subsequent passages depict the insights that are gained through this inquiry.

Near the end of the myth, a passage states:

Geb's words to the Nine Gods: "I have appointed Horus, the Firstborn, Him alone, Horus, the inheritance."

In other words, the gods appoint Horus to be ruler of all Egypt. An aspirant's corresponding step is to make the decision of relying on causal consciousness for all areas of his or her life.

A concluding passage states:

Then Horus stood over the land. He is the uniter of this land.

The corresponding step is for an aspirant's causal consciousness to take control of all areas of his or her life and to unite those areas.

In summary, both Bailey's "Technique of Integration for the Fifth Ray" and the *Myth of Isis and Osiris* are written with symbols. Deciphering their symbols shows that the Fifth Ray technique has a meaning similar to that of the myth's second and third segments.

## Ray Six

The Sixth Ray is called the "ray of devotion" and is associated with devotion, idealism, and loyalty. As shown next, Bailey's "key" to the Sixth Ray method is similar to the *Gospel of Truth*. The entire "key" is the following:

Let all desire cease. Let aspiration end. The search is over. Let the Soul realise that it has reached the goal, and from that gateway to eternal Life and cosmic Peace let the word sound: "I am the seeker and the sought. I rest."<sup>85</sup>

In other words, the Sixth Ray key tells us to end our desire and aspiration, to recognize that our search is over, to share in our soul's realization of fulfillment, to realize that we are what we had sought, and to rest.

The *Gospel of Truth* is a sermon on the theme of salvation. It can be puzzling to read, because the available English versions are translations of ancient Coptic translations, and because the missing original composition, which is thought to have been written in ancient Greek, seems to have been composed in a symbolic manner. Nevertheless, the *Gospel* can be seen as illustrating all elements in the Sixth Ray key. The following examples are taken from an earlier article.<sup>86</sup>



The *Gospel* describes how to act:

Speak from (the perspective of) the superior day, in which there is no night; and from the star that does not set, since it is perfect. Speak, therefore, from the heart, for it is you who are the day that is perfect, and it is within you that there dwells the star that does not set.<sup>87</sup>

The *Gospel* includes numerous allusions to both Old and New Testament verses, sometimes combining those allusions, so its symbols often can be understood by considering related verses from the Bible.<sup>88</sup> For example, day and night symbolize knowledge and ignorance, respectively, as 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." Thus, the above passage tells us to act as if we have reached the goal of illumination, which is the "superior day," even though many illusions may still remain in us. This instruction is equivalent to what Bailey calls the "as-if" technique:

There comes a time in the disciple's life when he must assume that he knows; he must take the position that he comprehends, and must proceed to act upon the comprehended knowledge ... Govern yourself always "as if" your divine comprehension was perfected and the result in your daily life will be "as if" all concealed glammers and all hiding deceptive veils were non-existent.<sup>89</sup>

The "star that does not set" in the above passage appears equivalent to the "day star" in 2 Peter 1:19: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." The "star that does not set" and that dwells within us can be interpreted as the soul, because, in Bailey's words, "ever the soul has endeavoured to carry increasing illumination, through the mind."<sup>90</sup> Thus the passage tells us to share the perspective of our soul and that our soul is perfect, so we need to act from the standpoint of also being perfect.

The *Gospel* contains an extensive discussion on the father's name, such as in this sentence:

Who then can utter his name, the great name, except him alone to whom the name belongs, and the children of the name, on whom the father's name rests, and who themselves rest on his name?<sup>91</sup>

What does the "father's name" denote? The Bible often uses a personal name as an indication of the bearer's nature. For example, 1 Samuel 25:25 states: "for as his name is, so is he." A change in the personal name often indicates a change in the person, such as the change from Abram to Abraham (Genesis 17:5). In the *Revelation of St. John*, "name" can be consistently interpreted as "nature."<sup>92</sup> If the same approach is used to interpret "name" in the *Gospel*, the "father's name" denotes the divine nature. Thus the ability to "utter his name" signifies our ability to express the divine nature in our own lives. But for us to be "children of the name," the father's name must rest on us, and we must rest on his name. In other words, we must be aware of the divine nature within us and we must rest on that nature.

Near its conclusion, the *Gospel* characterizes people who are illumined:

They have neither envy nor moaning, nor is death in them. But they rest in him who rests, without wearying themselves or becoming involved in the search for truth. But they, indeed, are the truth, and the Father is in them, and they are in the Father, since they are perfect, inseparable from him who is truly good. They lack nothing in any way, but they are given rest and are refreshed by the Spirit.<sup>93</sup>

Accordingly, people experience illumination as a state of rest in which they realize that their search for truth is over and that they are what they had sought.

In summary, the *Gospel of Truth* tells us to act as if we have reached the goal of illumination, to share our soul's perspective of being perfect, to rest on the divine nature, and to realize that our search for truth is over

and that we are what we had sought. Thus, the *Gospel* is not only similar in meaning to Bailey's Sixth Ray key but actually uses the same language.

## Ray Seven

The Seventh Ray is called the "ray of ceremonial order or magic." This ray is associated with ceremonial ordering, which 1 Corinthians 14:40 describes as the effort to "Let all things be done decently and in order." This ray is also associated with magic, for which Blavatsky quotes Johannes Trithem's definition:

The art of divine magic consists in the ability to perceive the essence of things in the light of nature ... and by using the soul powers of the spirit to produce material things from the unseen universe.<sup>94</sup>

The *Hymn of the Bride*, which is also part of the *Acts of Thomas*, is written in a symbolic way. Its verses are interpreted in an earlier article and can be divided into two main parts.<sup>95</sup> As shown next, the interpretations of the verses in the first part are similar to how Bailey describes the Seventh Ray method of work.

The first verse of the *Hymn* states:

The maiden is the daughter of light,  
Upon her stands and in her rests the proud  
glory of kings.<sup>96</sup>

Isaiah 54:5 advises, "For thy Maker is thine husband," which indicates that the personality ought to have a feminine, or receptive, relationship to the divine. In the above verse, "maiden" symbolizes the personality when it has this receptivity; "king" symbolizes the individual soul, because the latter is the inner ruler of the personality. The plurality of "kings" suggests that the personality can receive illumination from more than one soul, perhaps through healings or blessings offered by others. Thus the verse is interpreted to mean: The personality, when receptive to the inner divinity, is filled with light, because the illumination of souls passes down through the mind and into the lower nature. In other words, the verse depicts a

meditation practice through which a higher clarity purifies the thoughts, feelings, and motives of the personality. Bailey gives emphasis to such a practice in the Seventh Ray method: "It will be obvious to you that Seventh Ray disciples wield much power and for this reason the emphasis in all teaching given is laid upon *purity of motive*."<sup>97</sup>

The *Hymn* has several verses that depict the flow of energies in the etheric body, such as this one:

Surrounding her are the groomsmen,  
whose number is seven.

She herself has chosen them.

The seven major chakras are force centers within the etheric body and exist outside the dense physical body.<sup>98</sup> These chakras could be described as "surrounding" the dense physical body, because they are behind, in front of, and above it. The above verse says that the "groomsmen" are "surrounding" the maiden and are "seven" in number, so they are taken as symbolizing the seven major chakras. Thus the verse has this meaning: the illumined personality has chosen the activity of the seven major chakras by applying definite methods of awakening and charging to them. Bailey likewise emphasizes the role of the etheric body in the Seventh Ray method: "The divine principle with which the Seventh Ray humanity will be mainly concerned is that of life as it expresses itself through the medium of the etheric body."<sup>99</sup>

The *Hymn* depicts the integration of higher and lower energies:

Her chamber is full of light.

It breathes forth the fragrance of balsam  
and of every spice.

For a physical marriage, the bridal chamber is where the marriage is consummated through sexual union. For a mystical marriage, the corresponding chamber lies in the head within the space between the crown and brow chakras.<sup>100</sup> Thus the above verse is interpreted to mean: The chamber between the crown and brow chakras is where the light of the soul merges with the raised energies of the personality. Bailey also writes, "The Sev-

enth Ray disciple will bring the energy which he is wielding right down on to the physical plane, thereby producing integration.”<sup>101</sup>

The *Hymn* depicts the glorification of the personality:

Delightful is the sight of her,  
She shines with radiant beauty.

It is taken to mean: The illumined personality is attractive in appearance, being a transparency that permits the inner divinity to shine forth. Bailey also speaks of the glorification of the personality, or form nature: “When the egoic ray is the Seventh or Ray of Ceremonial Law or Magic, the method is that of the glorification and comprehension of form in approach.”<sup>102</sup> Here, the “egoic ray” refers to the ray of the individual soul.

Radiatory healing is depicted in several verses of the *Hymn*, such as this one:

Her garments are like the flowers of  
spring,  
And from them flows a sweet fragrance.

Garments are clothes that surround the dense physical body. The “garments” of the maiden, in the above verse, are taken as the mental, emotional, and etheric bodies, because they also surround the dense physical body.<sup>103</sup> Thus the verse has this meaning: The mental, emotional, and etheric bodies of the illumined personality are like the flowers of spring, because they emit healing radiations. Bailey likewise writes, “The keynote of the Seventh Ray disciple is ‘Radiatory Activity.’”<sup>104</sup>

The *Hymn* depicts the role of sound:

Her tongue is like the curtain on the door,  
Which waves to those who enter.

Its meaning appears to be: The illumined personality speaks in an attractive and friendly manner, encouraging the participation of others. Bailey also describes the role of sound: “By using the potency of sound, the disciple of the future will work and build the new world with its culture and civilization.”<sup>105</sup> Here, “the disciple of the future” could be taken as the Seventh Ray disciple,

because Bailey says, “we can look for an increasing number of Seventh Ray egos now to appear.”<sup>106</sup>

The *Hymn* depicts the application of laws that govern form and spirit:

Her mouth is open and it well becomes  
her,

Thirty and two are the number who sing  
her praises.

It is taken to mean: The illumined personality communicates freely and openly, thereby gaining generous and joyful affections, and applies all 32 group laws that produce right relationships. Bailey makes related statements, using the term “atom” to denote a unit of consciousness:

The Seventh Ray disciple works consciously by means of certain laws, which are the laws governing form and its relation to spirit or life.<sup>107</sup>

We have basic group relations, fundamental group laws which produce group interrelations, and bring about an essential union between all the forms of life ... 1. The three atomic relations. 2. The seven laws of group work. 3. The twenty-two methods of interplay. These thirty-two phases and ideas must be applied in degree to all atoms.<sup>108</sup>

As shown by the preceding discussion, the verses in the first part of the *Hymn of the Bride* are similar in meaning to Bailey’s descriptions of the Seventh Ray method. Bailey writes, “The thought of soul-infusion must be held in mind—a soul-indwelling which culminates at the third initiation.”<sup>109</sup> Likewise, the first part of the *Hymn*, which depicts soul-indwelling, culminates in the second part, which depicts the ceremony of the third initiation. The latter emphasis on ceremony is another Seventh Ray characteristic, as Bailey explains, “The Seventh Ray disciple has ... knowledge of ritual (which is the ancient codified means whereby the attractive and expressive nature of the energies to be employed are organised and related).”<sup>110</sup> Thus the entire *Hymn* depicts Bai-

ley's characterization of the Seventh Ray method, including its emphasis on ceremony.

## Conclusions

This article considered three hypotheses: (1) seven archetypal paths exist that are aspatial and atemporal and that are associated with the seven rays; (2) the esoteric teachings found in the ancient world are contained in modern Theosophy; and (3) any ancient esoteric teaching is similar to one of the archetypal paths associated with the seven rays. These hypotheses were tested by comparing seven ancient esoteric teachings, which are veiled by symbols and allegories in seven ancient texts, to Bailey's modern characterizations of the seven ray methods of work.

The preceding sections demonstrated the following evidence: each of the seven ancient esoteric teachings is similar to one or another of Bailey's modern characterizations of the seven ray methods. This evidence has a noteworthy feature: Bailey's modern characterizations seem to be *independent* of the ancient teachings in the sense that her characterizations were not guided by or derived from them. Three justifications can be given for such an assessment. First, Bailey did not interpret any of the seven ancient texts in her own books. Second, her writings state that her characterizations are "newer truths,"<sup>11</sup> which indicates that they were not assembled from books by other writers who may have interpreted, or been influenced by, the ancient texts. And third, Bailey's characterizations were published during the twentieth century, so they are unlikely to have been derived from the ancient esoteric teachings, because those teachings were not understood, at least in the open literature, until the twenty-first century.

Our argument for the first hypothesis is based on what is called "hypothetical induction." John Norton, a professor of the philosophy of science, explains: "We require that the hypothesis H entail the evidence E, and moreover, that there is some assurance that E would not have obtained had H been false."<sup>12</sup> The basic principle of this approach

is that the ability of a hypothesis to entail the evidence is a sign of its validity. Let us consider the preliminary hypothesis: If two independent descriptions of an evolutionary journey are found at different places and times, and if those descriptions are similar, then an underlying archetypal path exists that is aspatial and atemporal and that guided them. Our evidence consists of seven pairs of independent yet similar descriptions of an evolutionary journey. The preliminary hypothesis entails the evidence: if that hypothesis is true, then the two descriptions in each pair are similar because they were guided by the same underlying archetypal path.

Another competing hypothesis might also entail the evidence, but that circumstance would be unlikely if the second condition of hypothetical induction were satisfied. Suppose that there is no underlying archetypal path that is aspatial and atemporal. In this case, each ancient teaching would be a fanciful account, because it would not reflect any underlying reality. Moreover, Bailey's modern characterizations would also be fanciful accounts for the same reason. Is it possible that two independent fanciful accounts would be similar in detail even though they appeared at vastly different places and times? Although possible, such similarity would be an astonishing coincidence. Thus the preliminary hypothesis satisfies the second condition, because there is some assurance that the evidence would not have obtained had that hypothesis been false.

Our evidence supports the preliminary hypothesis, because that hypothesis satisfies both conditions of hypothetical induction. If the preliminary hypothesis is true, then the evidence implies the existence of an archetypal path that is similar to each of Bailey's seven modern characterizations. Each of Bailey's characterizations exhibits a particular quality of force, or ray. Therefore, if the preliminary hypothesis is true, then an archetypal path exists that is similar to an exhibition of each of the seven rays. In other words, the evidence supports the preliminary hy-

pothesis, which in turn implies the first hypothesis.

Bailey's characterizations are part of modern Theosophy, so our evidence implies the following result: the seven ancient esoteric teachings are contained in modern Theosophy. The second hypothesis, however, makes a much broader assertion: any esoteric teaching in the ancient world is contained in modern Theosophy. Our argument for the second hypothesis is based on what is called "enumerative induction." This type of induction, in Norton's words, "licenses an inference from 'some As are B' to 'all As are B.'"<sup>13</sup> The basic principle of this approach is that each instance supports the generalization. Enumerative induction, however, can lead to an erroneous conclusion. To minimize this inductive risk, we selected the seven ancient esoteric teachings so that they would represent many religions, many regions of the world, and many periods of time. Any ancient esoteric teaching is expected to come from one of those religions, regions, or time periods. Our argument would admittedly be much stronger if our sample of esoteric teachings was randomly chosen from the total population of ancient esoteric teachings and if we had a much larger sample size. Thus we claim only that the evidence supports the second hypothesis, rather than that the evidence establishes its validity in a statistical sense. This empirical support is tenuous, because the second hypothesis would be disproved if there were a subsequent acknowledgement of only one counterexample.

If the preliminary hypothesis is true, then our argument for the first hypothesis shows that the evidence implies the following assertion: each of the seven ancient esoteric teachings is similar to one of the archetypal paths associated with the seven rays. Therefore, if the preliminary hypothesis is true, our argument for the second hypothesis shows that the evidence supports the following assertion: any ancient esoteric teaching is similar to one of the archetypal paths associated with the seven rays. Moreover, the evidence supports the preliminary hypothesis through

hypothetical induction, so we are able to claim that it also supports the third hypothesis.

In conclusion, our evidence supports all three hypotheses, thereby showing that some of the teachings on the seven rays can be tested and be substantiated in a scientific manner. Our expectation is that the near future will see scientific experimentation applied to many sundry claims of diverse religions, which will provide a firmer foundation for religious practice and the elimination of needless controversy. Bailey herself predicts that "the growth and the development of the *Science of the Seven Rays*" will be one of the next immediate steps in the mental development of humanity.<sup>14</sup>

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Zachary F. Lansdowne, "Vedic Teachings on the Seven Rays," *Esoteric Quarterly*, Spring 2010.
  - <sup>2</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I (1936; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), 316.
  - <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.
  - <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 391.
  - <sup>5</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Glamour: A World Problem* (1950; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), 130.
  - <sup>6</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. II (1955; reprint. New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1972), 280-281.
  - <sup>7</sup> Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind* (New York: Ballantine, 1993), 438.
  - <sup>8</sup> Emil Mihelich, *Eden and the Individual* (New York: iUniverse, 2006), 127.
  - <sup>9</sup> Donald Sandner, "The Split Shadow and the Father-Son Relationship," in Mary Ann Mattoon (ed.), *The Archetype of Shadow in a Split World* (Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Daimon Verlag, 1987), 374.
  - <sup>10</sup> Bailey, *Glamour*, 65.
  - <sup>11</sup> Plato's theory of universals is presented in several dialogues, especially *Cratylus*, *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Theaetetus*.
  - <sup>12</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Theosophical Glossary* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1892), 328.
  - <sup>13</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy* (1889; reprint; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1972), 8.

- 14 Helena P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. XIII (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Society in America, 2002), 145.
- 15 Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. II, 89.
- 16 Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. VI, 183.
- 17 Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. II (1888; reprint; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1977), 636.
- 18 Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. X, 317.
- 19 Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. I, 307.
- 20 Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. II, 786.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 450.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 451.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 606.
- 24 Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. I, 312.
- 25 Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, 369.
- 26 Blavatsky, *The Theosophical Glossary*, 346-348.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 186.
- 28 Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. I, xxv.
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 Helena P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, vol. II (1877; reprint; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1976), 351.
- 31 Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. VIII, 216.
- 32 Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 251; Jacqueline A. Williams, *Biblical Interpretation in the Gnostic Gospel of Truth from Nag Hammadi* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), 3-4.
- 33 Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, vol. II, 210.
- 34 Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. XIII, 41.
- 35 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II (1942; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1981), 391-392.
- 36 Zachary F. Lansdowne, "The Purusha Sukta: Part I," *Esoteric Quarterly*, Spring 2009; "The Purusha Sukta: Part II," *Esoteric Quarterly*, Summer 2009.
- 37 Paul Briens, et al., *Reading About the World*, Vol. I (3rd ed., Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishing, 2006), 128; [http://www.wsu.edu:8001/~wldciv/world\\_civ\\_reader/world\\_civ\\_reader\\_1/rig\\_veda.html](http://www.wsu.edu:8001/~wldciv/world_civ_reader/world_civ_reader_1/rig_veda.html) (accessed March 27, 2010).
- 38 Alice A. Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1922), 357.
- 39 Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. VIII, 14.
- 40 Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (1925; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), 1043.
- 41 Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar* (1922; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1974), 82.
- 42 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I, 417.
- 43 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. II, 660.
- 44 Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (1934; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), 12.
- 45 Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I (1944; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), 768.
- 46 Alice A. Bailey, *The Light of the Soul* (1927; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1978), 298.
- 47 Zachary F. Lansdowne, "The Hymn of the Pearl," *Esoteric Quarterly*, Fall 2008.
- 48 All verses of the *Hymn of the Pearl* are from George R. S. Mead, *The Hymn of the Robe of Glory* (1908; reprint; San Diego: The Book Tree, 2005), 15-29; <http://www.gnosis.org/library/hymnpearl.htm> (accessed March 27, 2010).
- 49 Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 32.
- 50 Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (1957; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), 412.
- 51 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Healing* (1953; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1978), 415, 495.
- 52 Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 28.
- 53 Bailey, *Glamour*, 180.
- 54 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, 378.
- 55 *Ibid.*, 360.
- 56 Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (revised; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 211.
- 57 Zachary F. Lansdowne, *The Revelation of Saint John* (York Beach, ME: Red Wheel/Weiser, 2006).
- 58 Zachary F. Lansdowne, "The Two Witnesses in the Revelation of St. John," *Esoteric Quarterly*, Fall 2009.
- 59 All biblical citations refer to the King James Version.
- 60 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 495.
- 61 Alice A. Bailey, *Education in the New Age* (1954; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1974), 22.
- 62 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, 245.
- 63 *Ibid.*, 363.
- 64 *Tao Te Ching*: 31:5; Lao Tzu and Stephen Mitchell (translator), *Tao Te Ching* (London: Frances Lincoln, 1999); <http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/core9/ph>

- alsall/texts/taote-v3.html (accessed June 16, 2009). The *Tao Te Ching* is organized into 81 brief chapters or poems. The foregoing citation indicates that the quotation is from line 5 in chapter 31.
- 65 *Tao Te Ching*: 10:7; Lao Tzu and Stephen Mitchell (translator), *Tao Te Ching*.
- 66 *Tao Te Ching*: 7:5; Lao Tzu and John H. McDonald (translator), *Tao Te Ching: Book of the Way* (West Valley City, UT: Waking Lion Press, 2008); [www.wright-house.com/religions/taoism/tao-te-ching.html](http://www.wright-house.com/religions/taoism/tao-te-ching.html) (accessed June 16, 2009).
- 67 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I, 38.
- 68 Zachary F. Lansdowne, "The *Tao Te Ching* compared to Bailey's Technique of Integration for the Fourth Ray," *Esoteric Quarterly*, Winter 2010.
- 69 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, 368.
- 70 Zachary F. Lansdowne, "The Egyptian Myth of Isis and Osiris," *Esoteric Quarterly*, Summer 2008.
- 71 Plutarch and Frank C. Babbitt (translator), *Moralia* (1936; reprint; Whitefish, MT: Kissinger Publishing, 2005), 45.
- 72 Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, vol. II, iv.
- 73 Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 398.
- 74 Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, 98.
- 75 Alice A. Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle* (1950; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1975), 20.
- 76 Blavatsky, *The Theosophical Glossary*, 346.
- 77 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I, 56.
- 78 Robert A. Armour, *Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt* (1986; revised; New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2001), 64.
- 79 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (1951; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), 253.
- 80 Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 358.
- 81 Arthur E. Powell, *The Causal Body and the Ego* (1928; reprint; Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1978), 90.
- 82 The remaining passages from the myth are taken from Theology Website, <http://www.theologywebsite.com/etext/egypt/horus.shtml> (accessed March 27, 2010).
- 83 Powell, *The Causal Body and the Ego*, 105.
- 84 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, 182.
- 85 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I, 417.
- 86 Zachary F. Lansdowne, "The Way of Salvation in the Gnostic Gospel of Truth," *Esoteric Quarterly*, Spring 2008.
- 87 *Gospel of Truth* 32:26-35; Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 260. Standard enumeration of Nag Hammadi documents is based on entire codices, according to which the *Gospel of Truth* begins on page 16, line 31 of its codex. The foregoing citation indicates that this quotation is from Layton's English translation of the Coptic text on page 32 from line 26 to line 35.
- 88 Williams, *Biblical Interpretation in the Gnostic Gospel of Truth from Nag Hammadi*, 15-173.
- 89 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. II, 554-555.
- 90 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, 665.
- 91 *Gospel of Truth* 38:25-32; Marvin Meyer, *The Gnostic Gospels of Jesus* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 110.
- 92 *A Commentary on the Book of the Revelation Based on a Study of Twenty-Four Psychic Discourses by Edgar Cayce* (1945; reprint; Virginia Beach, VA: A.R.E. Press, 1969), 141; Lansdowne, *The Revelation of Saint John*, 14.
- 93 *Gospel of Truth* 42:18-33; Wesley W. Isenberg, "The Gospel of Truth," in Robert M. Grant (ed.), *Gnosticism* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 160-161; <http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/got.html> (accessed March 27, 2010).
- 94 Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. II, 512.
- 95 Zachary F. Lansdowne, "The Hymn of the Bride," *Esoteric Quarterly*, Fall 2008.
- 96 All verses of the *Hymn of the Bride* are from David G. Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 58-59.
- 97 Alice A. Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations* (1949; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1974), 131.
- 98 Bailey, *Telepathy*, 146.
- 99 Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations*, 133.
- 100 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I, 290-291.
- 101 Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations*, 128.
- 102 Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 18.
- 103 Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 95; *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 1219; *Telepathy*, 151.
- 104 Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations*, 133.
- 105 *Ibid.*, 130.
- 106 *Ibid.*, 117.
- 107 *Ibid.*, 130.
- 108 Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 1215.

- 
- <sup>109</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1960), 663.
- <sup>110</sup> Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations*, 130.
- <sup>111</sup> Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, 251-252.
- <sup>112</sup> John D. Norton, "A Little Survey of Induc-

- 
- tion," in Peter Achinstein (ed.), *Scientific Evidence: Philosophic Theories and Applications* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 15.
- <sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.
- <sup>114</sup> Bailey, *Education in the New Age*, 69-70.





## Book Review

---

***Principles of Abundance for the Cosmic Citizen*, by Dorothy I. Riddle.** Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2010. Paperback, 234 pages.

The concept of abundance is not unfamiliar to experienced readers of metaphysical and esoteric literature. However, this book might turn out to be somewhat of a surprise to those expecting a familiar approach. The rest of the title hints at this. The fact of abundance is the primary focus, to be sure, but it is also a jumping-off point for a detailed examination of esoteric principles and scientific discoveries that support the author's truly cosmic premise. Dr. Riddle brings a thorough understanding of fields as diverse as biology, economics, physics, psychology and cosmology to the discussion of a planetary and cosmic citizenship characterized by equity, respect and abundance.

Yet this book, written as it is in a clear, well organized and entertaining style, is more than an assemblage of intersecting truths that can lead one to the brink of revelation: it has a spiritually transformative aspect as well – 64 psychological exercises scattered through its 12 chapters. These are useful for breaking up crystallized or otherwise limiting thought patterns, and are reminiscent of the spiritual exercises in some of the courses offered by the School for Esoteric Studies.

Dr. Riddle quotes Buckminster Fuller in her Preface: "For the first time in history, it is now possible to take care of everybody at a higher standard of living than any have ever known. Only ten years ago [1970], the 'more with less' technology reached the point where this could be done. All humanity now has the option to become enduringly successful." But 30 years later humanity is still driven by a fundamental belief in scarcity. This book, the first of three volumes collectively titled *Enough for Us All*, focuses on seven principles:

1. Interconnectivity: We are all interconnected energy waves.
2. Participation: We create our own reality.
3. Nonlinearity: Our experience is fundamentally nonlinear.
4. Nonduality: Our reality is complex and non-dualistic.
5. Interdependence: We are part of an interdependent community of life.
6. Adaptability: We survive because of our ability to adapt and collaborate.
7. Cooperation: We evolve through symbiosis and cooperation.

The first four principles underlie how our reality operates, and the remaining three govern our existence in the cosmos. Dr. Riddle writes, "Until we are clear about who we actually are and our intended relationship with the rest of life, we are not in a position to actualize our potential and shift from fear to joy as our basic motivation."

A discussion of these principles is the centerpiece of the book. Preceding this are three introductory chapters dealing with a) who we really are from a cosmic perspective, b) the myth of scarcity and how this concept originates in fear, and c) what abundance really means in terms of "enough" and well being. Dr. Riddle here makes the interesting point that (according to the *Random House Dictionary*) "wealth used to mean prosperity in the sense of happiness, well being and joy. That 'obsolete' definition now reflects the sense of abundance that is the objective"!

The closing section of the book is comprised of two chapters that offer us the opportunity to fulfill the implications contained in the preceding material: learning what we need to know, including identifying presuppositions, applying new concepts from science and remaining open to change; and, in the final

chapter, what it means to be a cosmic citizen, with all the attendant rights and obligations. The keynote, Dr. Riddle writes, is joy. “Joy crowds out illusion and misunderstanding and brings with it a sense of strength, of no doubts, no regrets, no fear. In fact, joy and fear are incompatible.” And, appropriately, she includes an exercise on “Experiencing Joy.”

*Principles of Abundance* can be useful at different levels. Its reader-friendly format and language enable the book to serve as an introduction to esoteric principles for beginners. It can also be a quick and easy “brush up” for advanced students, particularly those looking for practical applications of spiritual energy. And of course the book is particularly valuable to those of us who feel that it is time to reverse a lifetime of conditioning and fear,

begetting scarcity consciousness begetting scarcity, begetting scarcity consciousness begetting scarcity, begetting.... And so on.

There are two volumes to come in the *Enough for Us All* trilogy. The second one focuses on the poorly understood principle of positive harmlessness. It also includes a three-step daily practice to shift permanently away from a scarcity mentality. The third volume closely examines the myth of duality, the anchor for separateness and belief in scarcity. It explores the emerging science of nonduality and integration. We await these next installments with great anticipation.

Dr. John Cobb  
Asheville, North Carolina

## News from the School

### Full Moon Festivals

---

#### Festival of Easter 2010

#### Aries and Avatars

A very warm welcome to you on this happy occasion of the Easter Festival – the first of the three linked celebrations of 2010. The Easter Festival is the first full moon of spring – the season of nature’s resurrection, and the universal resurgence of the life stream brings to mind the continuity of existence that underlies all of life’s cyclic activity.

I would like to share some thoughts I have had concerning the energies that Aries brings us and how these energies might impinge on the concepts of resurrection, divine intervention, and the continuity of revelation.

“And the Word said: Let form again be sought.” This is the keynote for Aries from the perspective of the personality. The implication is that a beginning is being made – a new beginning, one of a series. And who is seeking this beginning? We don’t know. The Word announces it and sends out the impetus; “word” translates as Logos. So we get a picture of an exalted being overshadowing the process of incarnation.

The Aries keynote from the perspective of the Soul is “I come forth and from the plane of Mind, I rule.” Here also a beginning is being made. However, in this case there is complete autonomy. “I come forth; I rule.” Overshadowing in the early stages has led to integration and autonomy as new beginnings are made on the higher turn of the spiral. This suggests the analogy of the beginning of physical life. The identity of the infant is of paramount importance. Then, as the young adult strikes out on her own, she embodies in her consciousness of self all these past influences of mind, as it were.

Thus Aries is a sign of beginnings – the first of the three urges that characterize this sign and that take shape in the phrases “Let form be sought” and “I come forth.”

The second is the urge to create, which carries the development to the next level. It is said of many Aries personalities that they have the energy to initiate projects, but tend not to carry them through. Clearly, in these cases, the development of sustained creative drive is the next step.

The third urge in Aries is the urge to *resurrection* – to achieve freedom from form through the agency of the mind. Thus we have “physical commencement and spiritual commencement; physical creation and spiritual creation; physical emergence and spiritual liberation: these are the initial impulses sensed in Aries.”<sup>1</sup>

Humanity, it is stated, is on the path of discipleship, but there is no evidence that the majority of people “rule from the plane of mind.” To the contrary, it falls to the clearer-sighted minority to provide education, influence and inspiration in an effort to lead humanity along the path toward freedom from the astral miasma that holds millions in thrall. This responsibility carries the note of the overshadowing hinted at in the phrase “And the Word said:...” as well as aligning with the resurrecting energies of Aries.

There is a large difference between overshadowing and assisting. They are both relationships, but differ in degree of responsibility. The most dramatic and famous example of the former kind is perhaps the overshadowing of Master Jesus by the Christ. Their partnership created the Son of all sons, who could manifest the energy of the Father of all fathers; they demonstrated Love energy

compared to which the greatest love most of us can know is a pale reflection.

Perhaps it would be helpful to consider this kind of relationship for a moment. Certainly we, as dedicated members of the New Group of World Servers, have long and seemingly thankless tasks ahead of us as we try to make a difference in a highly disturbed world. We need to know that Master Jesus was not the last worker to receive divine guidance. Subjective guidance, on one level or another, is a fact of daily life. One source – the most accessible one to most people – is the kingdom of devas. For instance, certain kinds of devas function as the “guardian angels” of fable and legend.

Of great importance to esotericists and spiritual workers is the progressive externalization of the Spiritual Hierarchy, the great teachers of humanity who, in Their various ways, are intimately involved in all the issues that we care so much about. In fact, the degree of our caring has been greatly influenced by Their example and teaching. That demonstration of caring, which goes beyond a mere sense of duty, is the impetus behind the ten thousand pages of instruction, cajoling, prodding, challenging, and constructive criticism that is the body of work Master Djwhal Khul wrote with Alice Bailey. The Hierarchy’s focus on the invocative energies of the world’s serving groups at the time of each full moon, year in and year out, is a demonstration of how close humanity has come to the principal source of divine revelation. In past cycles, the human custodians of divine revelation have been occasional isolated individuals who happened to have the proper equipment or who found themselves in propitious circumstances.

**Certainly we, as dedicated members of the New Group of World Servers, have long and seemingly thankless tasks ahead of us as we try to make a difference in a highly disturbed world. We need to know that Master Jesus was not the last worker to receive divine guidance. Subjective guidance, on one level or another, is a fact of daily life.**

Times have changed, and the opportunity has never been greater. Divine revelation is now understood to exist in a continuum; its sources are understood better than before, but – most important – people working in groups

can interrelate with the Hierarchy on a continuing, rhythmic schedule. Training to work in these groups is becoming more widely available through networking and outreach via meditation organizations, consciousness-raising groups and New Age publications. The opportunity has never been greater, and the need has never been greater.

Throughout history, various disciples and initiates have responded to great need by incarnating, singly or in groups. During their lives they played conditioning roles in human history and are remembered as great leaders, philosophers, or artists in their various fields. These are referred to by the Tibetan as the “Lesser Avatars.”

In *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*<sup>2</sup> the Tibetan categorizes these avatars as follows:

1. Racial Avatars
2. Teaching Avatars
3. Ray Avatars
4. Transmitting Avatars

To elaborate further:

1. The Racial Avatars are “evoked by the genius and destiny of a race, and foreshadow the nature of the race.” As an example, the Tibetan cites Abraham Lincoln, “coming forth from the very soul of a people, and introducing and transmitting racial quality – a quality to be worked out later as the race unfolds.”
2. Teaching Avatars “sound a new note in the realm of thought and consciousness;

they reveal the next needed truth; they pronounce those words and formulate those truths that throw light upon the spiritual development of humanity.” Such avatars were Plato, Patanjali and Sankaracharya”; they emerged on the Second Ray.

3. Ray Avatars “come forth at relatively long intervals when a ray is coming into manifestation. They embody the quality and force of a particular ray.” The Seventh Ray Avatar is due to appear during the next century when the Seventh Ray has achieved complete manifestation and the Piscean influence has passed.
4. The great Transmitting Avatars are manifestations of divinity that appear at those cyclic moments when humanity needs the expression of a new truth or the expansion of an old one in order to further its evolutionary progress. The outstanding representatives are the Buddha and the Christ.

There is a class of being, centered in a place unknown to us, that exists on a level more exalted than the other four. These great Avatars – also referred to as Divine Embodiments –

appear rarely; and when They do the effectiveness and results of Their work is very great. They issue forth into manifestation via the center at Shamballa, because They are an expression of the will nature of Deity.... They can only be reached by the united voices of the Hierarchy and of humanity speaking in unison.... They never descend lower than the mental plane, and the main emphasis and attention of Their work is directed to the Hierarchy; the Hierarchy is Their transmitting agency. They occasionally reach those thinking people, focused on the mental plane, who have clear vision, potent resolve, directed will and open minds, plus essential purity of form. These Avatars express the Will of God, the energy of Shamballa, and the impulse lying behind divine purpose.

The central and greatest being on this level is called the Avatar of Synthesis, because the cosmic energy He will transmit has the quality of Synthesis. On human levels, there is no word as yet for this energy. The closest – yet inadequate – expression for it that can be found is “*the principle of directed purpose.*”

This “principle of directed purpose” involves

1. Understanding of the Plan;
2. Focused intention to a degree as yet undeveloped in humanity;
3. Capacity to direct energy toward a recognized and desired end, also to a life-strengthening degree as yet undeveloped.

The Avatar of Synthesis is in contact with the Hierarchy and, when He is evoked by the common demand of the Hierarchy and humanity, will descend as far as the mental plane. He will be accompanied by a Forerunner or Representative on the physical plane. As we are told, this may be the Christ.

For this momentous event to take place, the Hierarchy must weigh the following issues, among others:

1. The extremity of the need;
2. Humanity’s progress in its battle with the Forces of Evil;
3. The degree of purification of the vehicles.

Purification is essential because the extra-planetary energy of synthesis, expressed by the Avatar, finds planetary expression along the lines of the First Ray of Will. Even in its stepped-down state, via the First Ray Ashram of the Master Morya, the impact will be powerful.

On the physical plane, the initiates and the disciples working in the Ashram of the Master Morya are primarily occupied with the expression of synthesis in the world of politics and of government, and with offsetting wrong approaches to synthesis, seeking to preserve freedom in unity. It is a subjective synthesis for which they work – a synthesis that will express itself in an outer differentiation.

This synthesis will define the many aspects of the essential, basic unity that, working out under the stimulation of the energy of synthesis, will bring about eventual peace and understanding on Earth – a peace that will preserve individual and national cultures, but that will subordinate them to the good of the whole of humanity.<sup>3</sup>

Learning to cooperate with this vital energy of synthesis is of course a challenge to the whole New Group of World Servers at this time and to all who seek to aid the Hierarchy. Fundamentally, the salvation of the world lies in the hands of this new group, including ourselves if we wish – via our focused intent, our capacity to love, our understanding of the

Plan, our capacity to direct constructive energy, our willingness to assume responsibility and make sacrifices, and our understanding of the “principle of directed purpose.”

As we embark on the major linked festivals of 2010, let us together make a new *beginning* and work together *creatively* to *resurrect* the spirit of downtrodden humanity and to restore the Plan on Earth.

---

<sup>1</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Labours of Hercules*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> The quotations that follow are from p. 297ff.

<sup>3</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, pp. 663-664.

John Cobb, Ph.D.

## WESAK FESTIVAL 2010

### The Inner Life of Wesak

The dates of the three major festivals are determined by intersections between the solar and lunar cycles against the background of the zodiac, which represents the fixed stars. The Wesak Festival, the second of the three, occurs at the first full moon during the 30 days when the sun is in Taurus. The moon itself is, of course, in opposition to the sun, in Scorpio. Taurus and Scorpio are both fixed signs, signifying among much else stability and sustained effort. While Taurus is an earth sign, Scorpio is a water sign—the only intrusion of the water element in the Higher Interlude of the spring festivals (the sun is never in a water sign during these festivals). Indeed—a point we might usefully ponder—the Wesak Festival is the only one of the three festivals that is not defined by the polarity of fire and air signs.

This year the moon will be full once in the 30-day period: at 8° Taurus/Scorpio, at 12:18 pm GMT (8:18 am EDT, 5:18 am PDT) on April 28.<sup>1</sup> We observe the Wesak

Festival over five days: two days of expectation and preparation, the day of the full moon when we hold ourselves in the light, and two days of thanksgiving and “distribution.” Accordingly, for people in the western hemisphere the festival begins on the morning of Monday, April 26, 2010, and ends on the morning of Friday, April 30.

The five-day festival is a time of important group work in response to a major Hierarchical approach that emphasizes Light, Love and Purpose. The Wesak Festival celebrates the Eastern tradition of modern esotericism and links it with the Western tradition celebrated at the Easter Festival. It is a time when two great streams of energy, one focused through the Buddha and the other through the Christ, come together to inspire and inform their disciples and humanity at large.

Buddhists have long observed the Wesak Festival (*Vesākha-pūjā*), and several accounts have been given of its origins and significance. In 1950 the World Fellowship of Buddhists declared that the festival commemorates the birth of Prince Siddhārtha Gautama, the Buddha. More commonly the festival is considered to commemorate his enlightenment (*nirvāna*), and physical death (*parinirvāna*). Devout

Buddhists assemble in temples before dawn on the day of the full moon, bringing offerings of flowers, candles and incense—all delightful to the senses but conspicuous in their transience. Candles are also significant in Buddhist teachings, which depict the re-incarnational process as analogous to the lighting of one candle from another. Buddhists observe the festival by rededicating their lives to harmony, humility and compassion.

The most notable feature of Wesak tradition, and the most important to Western esotericists, is the annual gathering of disciples in a valley in the Himalayan Mountains. Reportedly attendees fill one end of the valley, leaving the other end clear. Prominent in the clear area is a large, flat rock resembling an altar. According to legend, exalted beings come to perform an elaborate ritual in the area surrounding the altar rock, and the Buddha himself hovers over it to bless the assembled crowd. During the 20th century, clairvoyant investigations as well as channeled teachings have confirmed important parts of the legends. Interest in the Wesak Festival has also spread far beyond Buddhism.

Central Asian tradition places the valley in the shadow of Mount Kailash, close to the Tibet-Nepal border. Mount Kailash, source of the Indus and the Brahmaputra rivers, is sacred not only to Buddhism but also to Hinduism, Jainism, and the ancient Bön faith of Tibet. In Hinduism, it is considered to be the abode of Lord Shiva and a place of eternal bliss. Local people regard it as the center of the world. Religious deference has dissuaded anyone from attempting to climb the mountain, but Lake Manasarovar, just to the south, has long been a favorite pilgrimage destination. Devotees bathe in the lake in a cleansing ritual. In few places is the juxtaposition of the earth and water elements more striking.

Based on his clairvoyant research, Charles Leadbeater located the valley about 400 miles west of Lhasa, which would place it in the vicinity of Mount Kailash. He pro-

vided a sketch of the site in *The Masters and the Path*. The valley, he said, is

roughly oblong in shape, its length being perhaps a mile and a half and its breadth rather less. The ground slopes slightly downwards from south to north, and is mostly bare and stony... A stream runs down part of the west side of the plateau, crosses its north-west corner, and escapes about the middle of the north side through a pine-clothed ravine, eventually reaching a lake which is visible at a distance of some miles. The surrounding country seems wild and uninhabited, and there are no buildings in sight except a single ruined stupa with two or three huts beside it, on the slope of one of the hills on the eastern sides of the plain. About the centre of the southern half of the plain lies a huge block of greyish-white stone, veined with some glittering substance—an altar-like block, perhaps twelve feet in length by six feet wide, and standing about three feet out of the ground.<sup>2</sup>

Leadbeater commented that no attempts are made to restrict attendance at the Wesak ceremony, though there are stories of pilgrims who have wandered for years without being able to find the spot.” His work sparked great interest among members of the Theosophical Society who were eager to attend the ceremony, either in physical form or in an altered state of consciousness. Regarding the latter possibility he explained:

There is no reason why any of our earnest Theosophical members should not be present at it in their astral bodies. Those to whom the secret has been confided usually try so to arrange matters as to put their physical bodies to sleep an hour or so before the exact moment of full moon, and to be undisturbed until about an hour after it.

How many Theosophists made the attempt and what they saw if they succeeded is unclear. Glamor and illusion could be expected to present major pitfalls. Leadbeater himself questioned whether uninitiated visitors saw the Buddha or other exalted beings, but suggested that they took their cues from initiates in their midst and prostrated themselves at the ap-



pointed times. No doubt they also experienced the energy that pervaded the valley during the ceremony.

The second edition of *The Masters and the Path* contains a detailed description of the Wesak ceremony. In addition to the Buddha, two other senior members of the planetary Hierarchy play significant roles in the ceremony: the Mahachohan, head of the Department of Civilization, and the Lord Maitreya, the Christ, head of the Department of Education and Religion:

About half an hour before the moment of the full moon, at a signal given by the Mahachohan, the members of the Brotherhood draw together in the open space in the centre of the plain to the north of the great altar of stone, and arrange themselves three deep in a large circle.

Chanting plays an important role in the ceremony. Leadbeater's account mentions that initiates in the two inner circles move in formation to create geometric figures, and examples of those figures are illustrated in his book. We are reminded of the choreographed displays at large pageants, like the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games. Leadbeater went on to describe the arrival of the Lord Maitreya, and then the Buddha:

The Lord Maitreya materializes in the centre of the circle, holding in His hands the Rod of Power... Then as He again lays down the fiery rod, at the exact moment of the full moon, the Lord Buddha appears as a gigantic figure floating in the air just above the southern hills... He appears seated cross-legged, with the hands together, dressed in the yellow robe of the Buddhist monk... One of the most striking features of this wondrous apparition is the splendid aura which surrounds the figure... The figure is en-globed in light which is somehow at the same time dazzling and yet transparent—so bright that the eye can hardly rest upon it, and yet through it the face and the colour of the robe stand out with perfect clearness... As [the ceremony]

ends, a smile of ineffable love beams forth from the face of the Lord as He raises His right hand in the attitude of benediction.

Alice Bailey, recording the teachings of the Master Djwhal Kuhl, confirmed much of Leadbeater's account but provided additional information about the Buddha's blessing:

The Lord Buddha, sanctioned by the Lord of the World, carries to the assembled humanity a dual stream of force, that emanating from the Silent Watcher, supplemented by the more focalised energy of the Lord of the World. This dual energy He pours out in blessing over the people gathered at the ceremony in the Himalayas, and from them in turn it flows out to all peoples and tongues and races.<sup>3</sup>

The Lord of the World, Sanat Kumara, is the head of the planetary Hierarchy and the representative of the Planetary Logos on the present globe. Bailey also provided additional information about the flow of energy and the manner in which it is accomplished. The Buddha, she declared,

acts as a focal point for that power, and—passing it through His Aura—pours it out over mankind by means of the channel provided by the assembled Lords, Masters, graded initiates and disciples. This channel is formed by the use of sound and rhythm simultaneously employed. By the chanting of a certain mantram by means of the slow, measured movements that accompany that chanting, the funnel is formed that reaches upwards to the desired locality. The geometrical figures formed in the matter of the plane higher than the physical (which are the result of the geometrical movement of the concourse gathered in that Himalayan centre) form themselves into wonderful avenues of approach to the centre of blessing for the inhabitants, deva or otherwise, from any particular plane. For those who can clairvoyantly view the scene, the beauty of the geometrical forms is unbelievable, and that beauty is enhanced by the radiant auras of the Great Ones Who are gathered there.

Bailey's comments regarding the geometric figures are particularly interesting. She confirmed that the assembled initiates make physical movements but placed greater emphasis on the effects produced at a higher level, presumably the etheric or sentient (astral). Moreover, she related them to the chanting of "a certain mantram." The sound evidently sweeps devic entities into action to create the channel through which the blessing flows to the participants—and perhaps through which the Buddha and others can materialize. The channel will be discussed in more detail later.

The purpose of the Wesak Festival, Bailey explained, is:

1. To substantiate the fact of Christ's physical existence among us ever since His so-called departure.
2. To prove (on the physical plane) the factual solidarity of the Eastern and Western approaches to God. Both the Christ and the Buddha are present.
3. To form a rallying point and a meeting place for those who annually—in synthesis and symbolically—link up and represent the Father's House, the Kingdom of God and Humanity.

The Buddha, she explains, is the spiritual Intermediary between the highest spiritual center, Shamballa, and the Hierarchy. He is the expression of the wisdom of God, the Embodiment of Light and the Indicator of the divine purpose. The Wesak blessing conveys the message of wisdom, light and love to humanity and is the outer evidence and guarantee of inner divine guidance and revelation in this present world cycle of 2500 years. The Heart of Deity, of course, is the source of Love-Wisdom and the center that informs the Buddha, the Christ, and the whole Hierarchy of masters. The special

**The Wesak ceremony is an enactment of sacred ritual on a grand scale, strongly affirming the Seventh Ray now coming into manifestation. Its objective, like that of all rituals, is to open up levels of reality ordinarily beyond our reach.**

benediction of Second Ray energy is made possible by a Triangle of Energy: Sanat Kumara, the Buddha, and the Christ, through

"Whose nature [of] radiant love and light... humanity can grasp in some measure the nature of divinity." The energy is focused by the massed intent of the Hierarchy and the massed demand of the world aspirants and disciples, drawn forth by the massed need of the people of all lands.

At the conclusion of the ceremony,

The Buddha's annual sacrifice for humanity (for He comes back only at great cost) is over, and He returns again to that high place where He works and waits. Year after year He comes back in blessing; year after year, He and His great brother, The Christ, work in the closest cooperation for the spiritual benefit of humanity. In these two great Sons of God have been focused two aspects of divine life, and They act together as Custodians of the highest type of spiritual force to which our humanity can respond. Through the Buddha, the wisdom of God is poured forth. Through the Christ, the love of God is manifested in humanity, and it is this wisdom and love that pour forth upon humanity each Wesak full moon.<sup>4</sup>

The Wesak experience is not limited to those who, in physical embodiment or otherwise, attend the ceremony in the Himalayas. The Buddha's benediction is offered to the whole world, and all who receive and respond to his energy can transmit it to the environments in which they live and work.

The five-day festival provides opportunities to reflect on the Buddha's earthly life as Siddhārtha Gautama, on his present exalted role at the highest levels of the planetary Hierarchy, and on the significance of the Wesak benediction on the New Group of World Servers, humanity at large, and the planet.

During his final incarnation, the Buddha anchored *wisdom* in human consciousness—laying the groundwork for the Christ to anchor *love* four centuries later—and gave us a roadmap for right living, serenity, and spiritual growth. Pāli scriptures tell the familiar story of Gautama’s enlightenment in the fifth century BCE. The prince had long practiced ascetic exercises in a quest to understand the meaning of suffering. At the age of 35, in desperation, he sat down under a bodhi tree, resolving to stay there until he discovered the truth. After 49 days in meditation he attained nirvāṇa, and from then on he was known as the Buddha, the “Enlightened One,” “Awakened One,” or sometimes “One who has arrived.” From his experience came the centerpieces of Buddhist teachings: the Four Noble Paths and Eightfold Path. Suffering, the Buddha asserted, is the product of desire. Inner peace and peace with the world can only be achieved through the release of obsessions and fixations and the development of compassion for all living things. A person who overcomes desire attains nirvāṇa and is no longer subject to human suffering. Buddhist teachings assert that from then on karma is extinguished, and incarnation is purely voluntary.

Alice Bailey commented that in Taurus desire is transmuted into aspiration, and darkness gives place to light and illumination. In Scorpio, the personality is “occultly killed and then resurrected into air and light.” Sometime after the Buddha’s enlightenment, legends recount, a stranger asked him who he was; his reply was “I am awake.” The notions of awakening and enlightenment imply that we may currently be asleep and in the dark. If, as Charles Tart asserts in *Waking Up*, we live much of our lives in a dream state, or “consensus trance,” we need to wake up, start looking around, and become responsive to what we see. Even then, we will not see much unless there is *light*. Appropriately, the keyword for the disciple in Taurus is “I see, and when the Eye is opened, all is Light.”

The Wesak ceremony is an enactment of sacred ritual on a grand scale, strongly affirming the Seventh Ray now coming into manifestation. Its objective, like that of all rituals, is to open up levels of reality ordinarily beyond our reach. The channel described by Alice Bailey is a topological anomaly in the fabric of “space”—space, that is, comprised of the planes of nature. Connecting the highest systemic planes to the “three worlds” of human experience, it extends to the lower mental, and possibly the etheric, subplanes. We can visualize the channel as a vortex, a “tornado of light,” touching the ground. The channel/vortex is constructed from elemental substance of the several planes by an order of devas working under the direction of the Raja Lords, “those great angels or entities who ensoul the seven planes.”<sup>5</sup> Those lesser devas, part of the vast evolution emanating from the Third Aspect of Deity, are the builders of forms and the agents through which energy and impressions are transmitted from plane to plane.

The interplane channel created during the Wesak ceremony is a manifestation of—or perhaps makes use of—the permanent Antahkarana, or “rainbow bridge,” that for the last 700 years has linked the planetary centers of humanity, Hierarchy and Shamballa.<sup>6</sup> Much of our esoteric work is aimed at building our own Antahkaranas to connect the mental unit, on the fourth mental subplane, with the causal body on the third and eventually the manasic permanent atom on the first subplane. Our Antahkaranas are interplane channels on a much smaller scale but similar in structure to their grand prototype. They are strengthened by activities that raise our consciousness: prayer, meditation, study, healing, sacred ritual, acts of service, and so forth. Esoteric work also awakens the chakras, which comprise another class of interplane channels—and it is not insignificant that “awakens” is used in that context. Numerous clairvoyant studies have depicted the chakras as vortices.

The initiative for creating the Wesak channel comes from above, but it comes in response to “the massed demand of the world aspirants and disciples.” The smaller-scale channels contrib-

ute to that massed demand. They are created under human impulse but require the collaboration of our Solar Angels and the involvement of the devic builders. As always, group work is more effective than individual effort, and sacramental ritual and similar group activities that combine sound and movement are particularly effective. Like the Wesak ceremony they attract angelic attention and sweep the builders into action. "Angelic cooperation," Geoffrey Hodson comments, "makes everything we try to do, in both the spiritual and material worlds, far more vital and potent than it would otherwise be."<sup>7</sup> Such activities can be important works of service, yielding benefits far beyond their immediate settings.

Becoming aware of interplane channels, and developing proficiency in creating them, open up rich opportunities for Seventh Ray esoteric work. Work of that nature encourages the kind of collaboration between the human and deva evolutions promised for the Aquarian Age. It also provides a way to extend the Wesak experience beyond the five days of the festival and to apply its power to a broad spectrum of endeavors.

The Wesak Festival is a great spiritual event and the centerpiece of the Higher Interlude, but it should also be seen in the context of the Full Moon approaches that occur throughout the year. As the Seventh Ray manifests more strongly, we can expect to become increasingly sensitive to this cyclical work and our opportunities to respond to it:

[F]rom the highest spiritual Being upon our planet, through the graded spiritual groups of enlightened and perfected men who work upon the inner side of life, on

into the outer world of daily living, where thinking, loving men and women serve, the tide of the new life sweeps. The Plan is ready for immediate application and intelligent implementing; the workers are there, and the power to work is adequate to the need. The three Full Moons which we have been considering are simply the three points in time through which the needed power is to be released.<sup>8</sup>

Let Purpose guide the little wills of men, and let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth.

---

<sup>1</sup> The precise date of the Wesak festival varies according to the calendars and ephemeris used. April 28, 2010 is the date accepted in the West. Most Buddhists in Asia will celebrate the festival on May 27.

<sup>2</sup> Charles W. Leadbeater, *The Masters and the Path*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1945, p. 303. The orientation of valley given in Leadbeater's description is inconsistent with other accounts, which place the flat rock altar at the northern end.

<sup>3</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation Human and Solar*, New York: Lucis Publishing Co., 1922, p. 105.

<sup>4</sup> *The Wesak Festival*, New York: Lucis Publishing Co., undated.

<sup>5</sup> Bailey, *Initiation Human and Solar*, p. 223.

<sup>6</sup> See for example Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, pp. 525, 535.

<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey Hodson, *The Inner Side of Church Worship*, 1930, p. 31. Available online at [http://www.global.org/Pub/GH\\_Inner\\_Side\\_of\\_Church\\_Worship.asp](http://www.global.org/Pub/GH_Inner_Side_of_Church_Worship.asp).

<sup>8</sup> Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, pp. 485-486.

John F. Nash, Ph.D.

## GOODWILL FESTIVAL 2010

### Integration, Synthesis, Unity



Every year at the June Full Moon, men and women of goodwill from all around the world gather objectively and subjectively in celebration of the essential divinity that is innate to all beings. In particular, we celebrate the divine origin of humanity, our potential to actualize everything that is good, and our resolution to tread the Path back home. For this reason, this day is known as the Festival of Humanity.

Many students and friends of the School for Esoteric Studies celebrate this monumental event with special events that bridge the gap between the objective and subjective realms, including a subjective group conference and a special meditation. Other friends are gathering in other ways and under many other denominations. This fact we shall not overlook. Some may even be unaware of their role within the New Group of World Servers, yet they definitely play an essential part in the uplifting of humanity that is taking place at this exact moment of history – a moment of great expectancy, a moment of tremendous opportunity and,

consequently, of great stress as well. The celebration we are attending to, therefore, is one that happens at a high point of tension, a celebration of Love in its purest form and, actually, in the name of ALL beings.

[Love] is that synthetic, inclusive grasp of the life and needs of all beings (I have chosen these two words with intent!) that it is the high prerogative of a divine Son of God to operate. It negates all that builds barriers, makes criticism, and produces separation. It sees no distinction, even when it appreciates *need*, and it produces in one who loves as a Soul immediate identification with that which is loved.<sup>1</sup>

This day is known by several names, including World Invocation Day, the Festival of the Christ, and the Goodwill Festival. These names remind us of the sacredness of life and of our share in restoring the Hierarchical Plan on Earth. The many meetings and events organized around this full moon can help us become better human beings, further the establishment of right human relations, and spread the magnetic energy of love to our friends and families, groups, associates, and the world. Indeed, during this full moon event, it is customary to draw our attention to a number of themes central to this celebration that are actually basic to world service all year round. Among them, the issue of relationships is prominent for subjective groups working in close relation to the Hierarchy, and in particular to those associated with the Second Ray Ashram, one of whose fundamental tasks is that of consolidating loving relations triggered by the energy of Goodwill.

The theme of right relationships might also appear particularly appealing to look at this year because the incoming energies of the Sun are intensified due to a lunar eclipse, the first to happen this year.<sup>2</sup> This will certainly cause relationships to be affected in singular ways, which we can expect to unfold at individual, group and planetary levels as the year progresses. In addition, ever since the last Festival period in 2009, a number of situations have drawn our attention to the way in which we relate at a planetary level, suggesting an increased influx of energy from Shamballa im-

pacting upon this planet. Among these, the international financial crisis, the natural catastrophes of Haiti, Italy, Chile and Portugal stand out, as well as the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Undoubtedly, these circumstances have brought about much despair and suffering, yet they may also be considered opportunities for expressing goodwill through international cooperation, global ecological awareness, and financial and political responsibility. The outstanding altruistic response from all nations to the quakes in Haiti and Chile and the ongoing endeavor to end war in the Middle East can be counted as examples of increasing consciousness.

Teachings about right relations occupy a central point within all main religions and strands of the Ageless Wisdom. In *The Secret Doctrine*, for instance, we learn that all Souls are necessarily related with each other, for there is but one Universal Over-Soul. This indicates the unity that we simply *are*. On the other hand, we are diverse. The One Soul expresses through seven great groups, each composed in turn by millions of beings that come to expression cyclically in the service of a great evolutionary blueprint. Each life is in essence a Soul that is simultaneously conscious of the group and, on the other hand, aware of its evolutionary uniqueness. It is through the resolution of this sacred tension between universality and singularity that we advance along the path. Each of us is called to resolve this tension in different ways, with the conditions given and in the exact place where we are now – at home, in our workplaces, at school, and in our hearts. The key to resolve the tension is found in the science of integration.

The goal of all development is integration.... In order to master this science of integration, whose basic goal is identity with the *One Reality*, the disciple progresses from one unification to another, making mistakes, arriving often at complete discouragement, identifying himself with that which is undesirable until, as Soul-personality, he repudiates the

earlier relationships; he pays the penalty again and again of misplaced fervor, distorted aspiration, the overpowering effect of glamor, and the many conditions of psychological and physical disarrangement that must arise while cleavages are being healed, right identification achieved and correct orientation established.<sup>3</sup>

The Agni Yoga teachings on ethical living further explore relationships in terms of active engagement within our communities: “Life will grow stronger ... through the ideas of communal life. A man who joins a settlement cannot be an enemy of all his neighbors. Good relationships must be established, and only cooperation will lead to effective good.”<sup>4</sup> It follows that for the Plan of the Hierarchy to work out, humanity needs to take a step forward, taking responsibility for relationships. It is humanity’s obligation to change the world by channeling and activating the energy of love, cooperation and goodness. World Invocation Day is celebrated in recognition of our ability to tap into the Will-to-Good and our responsibility to express this Will in everyday “goodwilled” actions. The *will* in goodwill is the prediction of a future glory for humanity, but more important, it is an affirmation of our volition to do and become better *now*. The interplay between invoking the Will energy and evoking it through human values worth living for demonstrates our interconnectedness as the fourth kingdom, our relation to the fifth kingdom, and our duty in regard to the lower kingdoms.

Essential information on relationship comes from the teachings of the Tibetan: “The goal of all endeavor upon our planet is right relations between man and man, between man and God, between all the expressions of divine life from the tiniest atom up and on into infinity.”<sup>5</sup> In observance of these teachings, during the Goodwill Festival we have an opportunity to think about (and actively work on) those factors that favor or hinder the recognition of Oneness in diversity, the fostering of right human relations, and the cooperation leading to effective good. During this full moon period we can tap into the energy of Goodwill that lies in our Soul and find creative ways to ex-



press it in our everyday living, trying to bridge the cleavages dividing humanity today.<sup>6</sup> Values worth living for at this time at a social level include the affirmation of social justice, the achievement of peace in all nations, the spread of interfaith tolerance, the establishment of fair capital distribution, the elimination of corruption from governments, equality of opportunity and remuneration to men and women, the right of access to education to all children, the abolition of subtle forms of slavery and colonization, the access to health care for all social classes, the affirmation of non-violent relations at home and at work, and the recognition that all people are essentially and potentially good. At the group level we want to eliminate criticism and idle talking, collaborate with our fellow group members, develop leadership skills, learn from each other. At a personal level we should be working on bridging the lower and the higher aspects of our personalities, attaining a higher awareness of our emotions and thoughtforms and achieving a more resolute, Soul-dominated willpower.

These are just some of the problems humanity will have to resolve. The list may look rather intimidating. How are we going to make it? How can each of us be of service in our environments and communities? The Tibetan states that, at present, Goodwill is just a negative force, and so he exhorts us to creatively and systematically imagine a future when Goodwill will become a fact.<sup>7</sup> He insists that the vision each of us has *today* of this future realization will bring about change. Yet vision must be accompanied by loving deeds. Some practical ways in which this may be brought about, he tells us, are: a) by gaining progressive decentralization from the personality's con-

cerns; b) by an effort to handle spiritual force constructively, and c) by the elimination of fear and anxiety.<sup>8</sup>

The energy we tap into during our meditation unfortunately can be delayed on its way

“down” to Earth if we remain focused on our personalities’ concerns. Fears instilled from the glamor of self-assertion, for instance, might debilitate our vehicles and be detrimental to service. Energy blockage is triggered by being too self-conscious. Egocentrism really is a waste of time and resources from extra-planetary sources. The best antidote when fears or anxiety about our duties and daily burdens occupy our mind is probably to remain

detached and observe what is happening, knowing that we are part of a large group of servers from which we can draw the force we need to continue our work. Aspirants of all ranks are not alone. They are part of groups within Groups that are located somewhere on the periphery or at the center of Ashrams that have, in turn, their own position within the Hierarchical network. In *A Treatise on White Magic*, the Tibetan suggests that the exoteric correspondence of the Soul is the circulatory system, with its Heart, the larger vessels and the capillaries, all serving the organism by transporting nutrients, defending it from attacks, and keeping the functions under constant regulation.

As the basis of correct understanding, it should be noted that the cell life to which we have above referred is coordinated, influenced and vitalized by the blood stream, that intricate system that interpenetrates every part of the body, is responsible for its welfare and demonstrates in a manner not yet truly comprehended the fact that the “blood is the life.”<sup>9</sup>

This is probably a most illustrative example of group synthesis, for a whole organism depends

**The best antidote when fears or anxiety about our duties and daily burdens occupy our mind is probably to remain detached and observe what is happening, knowing that we are part of a large group of servers from which we can draw the force we need to continue our work. Aspirants of all ranks are not alone.**

on the free, self-regulated circulation of energy from a central point toward the periphery. In this circulation each component plays a fundamental part, starting from the central Heart down to each cell and cell organelle. As we work with the incoming energies of Gemini, which affect transport and communication, it is interesting to reflect upon how far in our daily lives, as group members, we act compared to this amazing biological system.

Earlier it was mentioned that, together with the issue of group synthesis and self-forgetfulness, the Tibetan suggests working through our fears. Fears are as detrimental to our psychological wellbeing as they are unfavorable for subjective work. There are a variety of fears we will confront along the path; they range from the more instinctual ones linked to our animal heritage, to those strictly related with discipleship itself, with a vast in-between zone. This time of planetary crisis is one characterized by many fears that color the astral plane. There is much confusion and uncertainty about the future and much hopelessness circulating in the world. The School for Esoteric Studies Group Thoughtform Initiative, launched in 2009, represents a major group endeavor toward the elimination of fear at a planetary level. Each of us can serviceably act as light bearers, contributing to the cleansing of this astral fog by means of spreading the energy of Goodwill. This energy is the direct reflection of the highest Will and Love. Whenever we avoid criticizing, whenever we seek understanding, any time that compassion prevails and the inner union of all human beings is highlighted, we are working with the energy of Goodwill and we are working for the forces opposed to those that perpetuate fear. An immense service is done when a spiritual seeker irradiates luminous thoughts! These originate in a higher source within us and are born to be cultivated in the hearts of all beings. They are the rare seeds of a loving heart and mind, and will bring about a likewise loving civilization.

The sign of Gemini, through which we are passing at the moment of this festival, gives us a special opportunity to cultivate these seeds since it is the sign related to speech. During this Festival we should try to communicate from our innermost center with the immanent and with the transcendent Christ, the Soul, and with the Christ, Head of the Hierarchy. If we listen carefully in the cave of the mind, we may hear His words being communicated. These are words of love and fearless Goodwill. The Tibetan teaches us that the clue to telepathic communication is love and indeed Christ is the Heart, the Gemini-loving Energy being communicated toward the Solar System. When we adopt a loving attitude and a loving mind, fears are worked through, and group service can proceed in synthetic unity.

The author of this article was inspired by a vision of world synthesis given to him midway through the writing of this article. The painting at the opening of the article is but a humble representation of what he saw. If it could be put in words what the image meant, it would be this, the image of a beautiful sunlit mountaintop where he was standing among a group of students. A voice called forth from the edge, and he moved forward despite much fear. From the edge he could see the darkness of a lower world that was the exact replica of the upper world, except that it was subject to the dim light of a full moon. A river of fear separated the two worlds. The group came together at the center of the Sun and there they stood. And standing in the center they projected rays toward the lower world for humanity to cross the river and stand with them.

May Goodwill characterize our group endeavors.

May all fears end.

May humanity be one in love.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Glamour, a World Problem*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> On June 26 there will take place the first [lunar eclipse](#) of the year, a partial one. The second will be a total eclipse on [December 21, 2010](#).

<sup>3</sup> *Esoteric Healing*, pp. 126-127.

<sup>4</sup> *New Era Community*, paragraph 269.



<sup>5</sup>*The Rays and the Initiations*, pp. 737–738.

<sup>6</sup> See Saraydarian, *The Symphony of the Zodiac*.

<sup>7</sup> *Esoteric Psychology II*, Spanish edition, Ed. Fundación Lucis, p. 552.

<sup>8</sup> *Esoteric Psychology II*, Spanish edition, Ed. Fundación Lucis, p. 507, 508.

<sup>9</sup> *A Treatise on White Magic*, Lucis Trust, p. 131.

A student