

The Esoteric Quarterly

**Summer 2005
Volume 1
Number 4**

A publication of the School for Esoteric Studies

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



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275 S. French Broad Avenue,
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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. All correspondence should be addressed to editor@esotericstudies.net.

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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 22-page booklet, a compilation of the writings of Alice A. Bailey and Helena Roerich: *The Spiritual Hierarchy: Inner Guidance of the World*. Part one of a four-part series published by:

The School for Esoteric Studies

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Converging Esoteric Traditions

Certain periods in history have witnessed the convergence of esoteric traditions to produce a new synthesis. The beginning of the Common Era was one, the 11th-12th centuries another, and the Renaissance a third. Our modern age may turn out to be one of the most significant periods of convergence in human history. This issue of the *Esoteric Quarterly*, which includes articles representing two major esoteric traditions, affirms the ongoing process.

The first two articles draw on the so-called Trans-Himalayan teachings communicated through the work of Helena Blavatsky, Helena Roerich, Alice Bailey, and others. Bruce Lyon's article discusses the approach of the Will aspect of divinity to the human level, both in the individual, where divinity is expressed through the Monad, and in the race, where it is beginning to flow to us directly from the Planetary Council of Shamballa.

Temple Richmond's article examines the contributions of two Englishmen—Alan Leo and Sepharial—to the field of esoteric astrology. They met in the Theosophical Society during the formative years when Blavatsky was still at the helm. However, their paths soon diverged, and only Leo retained his Theosophical orientation. He anticipated many of the concepts developed more fully by the Tibetan master. The conclusion of this two-part article will appear in the Fall 2005 issue.

The third and fourth articles draw upon the rich tradition of esoteric Judaism. Jeffrey Gold's article reexamines the perplexing story in *Genesis* where Abraham prepares to sacrifice his son Isaac. The author proposes that the biblical passage reveals astrological and other symbolism that must be read allegorically. Rather than promoting a morality that we would find abhorrent, the passage provides a lesson in detachment from the fruits of our creative endeavors.

The final article explores the emergence of the Shekinah from abstract, impersonal roots in biblical times to an aspect of the Divine Feminine that expresses the glory of God and urges the expansion of human consciousness. However one chooses to interpret it (or Her), the Shekinah affirms the immanence of God and may be as relevant to all of us today as it was to the rabbis of the Middle Ages.

In place of the usual "Short Papers" section, we offer an expanded section on activities in the School for Esoteric Studies. It consists of addresses to students given at the full-moon festivals in Aries, Taurus and Gemini. We are told that a new world religion is emerging whose liturgical calendar will highlight these festivals, the first two of which correspond to Easter and the Buddhist Wesak Festival, while the third—the Festival of Goodwill—is a more recent addition. Although this year's festival period is now over, we thought our readers would like to read the talks to gain a better understanding of the festivals, their origins and their relevance to religious observance in the Aquarian Age.

John Nash
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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, 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. We encourage critical thinking and evaluation of ideas. However, we will not allow this journal to be used as a platform for attacks on individuals, 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 refer-

enced source. Indeed, serious scholarship sometimes requires reference to work that the author finds abhorrent. We will not reject an article for publication simply on the grounds that it contains a reference to an objectionable source.

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

This letter reflects upon John Nash's article "The Trinity and Its Symbolism" that appeared in the Spring 2005 issue. Included are some further thoughts on the Trinity expressed as three fundamental Theosophical laws, simplified here as the Boundless, the Periodic, and the Oversoul.

Nash divides the various trinitarian models into two basic kinds. The first he describes as a "linear sequence of emanation" numerically as the First, Second and Third Aspects. Difficulties arise as the Greeks equated number with gender. The number 2 is often considered feminine, the archetype of the Mother/ matter/form and yet is equated Theosophically with consciousness and in Christianity with the "Son." The Son/consciousness, however, is also the Third aspect as it results from the interplay of spirit (1) and matter (2).

The second model is dualistic and Qabalistic. In this model the original Godhead is androgynous, a blend of the First and Second Aspects (the male and the female) with the first emanation being the Third, as the Son. The number 3 is masculine, and hence the Son as the first emanation of Father/Mother, is both second and third. The convenience of linking first and second eliminates the sequencing of three emanations. Further, if one eliminates the prime duality of unmanifest/Father and manifest/Mother into a unified unmanifest androgyny, then we only have two aspects in effect, and the problem of what constitutes first objective emanation, either considered as second or third, is not the Mother. The Son, as this ema-

nation, would then have to take on a dual role of being both matter and consciousness. Also the problem of relating the Son to the Third aspect is satisfied in gender but not sequentially, the Son often being considered the Second aspect.

Glibly, if one eliminates the association of number with gender, then part of the problem disappears. Doing this reverberates unhappily through other aspects of number theory, however. Alternatively, one could redefine what is meant by "masculine" and "feminine." The transliteration of spirit = Father, matter = Mother, and consciousness = Son, does not resolve the problem of the interchangeability of the Second and Third Aspects of the sequential model, and in the dualistic model seemingly eliminates either Second or Third Aspects, whatever their attributes.

Nash draws the conclusion that "the two models should be regarded not as mutually exclusive but as complementary views." Upon reflection this phrase brought to mind several thoughts about the trinitarian nature of the three fundamental laws of Theosophy. One thing they have in common is the notion of "infinity," and they define and are defined by infinity in three different ways.

First, as the Boundless, infinity is the unchanging spirit. It has never been added to, taken from, divided or multiplied, no matter how many universes come and go.

Second, as the Periodic, infinity is manifestation which grades its material substance in varying degrees and multiplicities, and although any one part of these manifestations

may have beginning and end, the process itself is never-ending, nor ultimately did it ever start. The process has always been.

Third, as the Oversoul, infinity is sentiency or consciousness. It is the joiner of the first and second laws and partakes of both qualities. It is the unchanging presence, “the Watcher;” also it is constantly changing, developing, expanding and shrinking to the contents of form. Importantly there has always been Oversoul, changing with the Mother; constant with the Father.

Through embracing infinity, these three laws/Aspects become a non-sequential ever-present infinite reality that spins like a kaleidoscope of changing patterns throughout infinity, emphasising any one or multiple of themselves at any one point in time/space.

Nash also concludes that the problem of resolving this is based on the limitations of the human intellect but that the intuition and

higher aspects of consciousness can carry us further. Reading this, I reflected on my first two definitions of the infinite, well-demonstrated in the dual philosophies of Parmenides (spirit/boundless/changeless), and Heraclitus (matter/periodicity/process) and how these opposing views reflect the essential problem of human comprehension. We are, as an expression, “relaters”, dual, the Oversoul in microcosm. As a kingdom we represent the problem of consciousness in all its dualities; spirit-matter; changeless-changing; psychologically, thinking-feeling; heart-mind. Our role is to bring the three aspects into greater accord. I believe that when the three are seamlessly interrelated in a non-causal way our purpose, at least in this universe, has been achieved.

I thank Dr. Nash for his thought-provoking article.

Daryl Fell
Melbourne, Australia

Quotes of the Quarter

There are people who are unworthy and yet the Holy One, Blessed is He, has mercy upon them... “Behold they possess the merit of the fathers. I have made an oath to the Patriarchs, therefore even if they are not worthy they shall receive their reward because they are the seed of the Patriarchs... I will lead them, therefore, and direct them until they improve.”

So, too, should a man behave. Even when he meets with the wicked he should not behave cruelly towards them nor insult them but have mercy upon them saying: “Even so, they are the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. If they are not worthy their fathers were worthy and upright and he who brings disgrace upon the children brings disgrace upon the fathers...”

Moses Cordovero. *The Palm Tree of Deborah*, 1588. Sepher-Hermon Press.

In most systems of belief the believer considers that he can achieve a perfect relationship to God by renouncing the world of the senses and overcoming his own natural being. Not so the Hasid. Certainly, “cleaving” unto God is to him the highest aim of the human person, but to achieve it he is not required to abandon the external and internal reality of earthly being, but to affirm it in its true, God-oriented essence and thus to transform it that he can offer it up to God.

Martin Buber. *The Way of Man*.
Citadel Press, 1964.

What is needed is a flaming-out, on a global scale, of an unstoppable force of Divine-human love wise enough to stay in permanent humble contact with the Divine and brave

enough to call for, risk, and implement change at every level and in every arena before time runs out and we destroy ourselves. Such a love has to spring from an awakened mystical consciousness, and must be rooted in habits of fervent meditation, adoration of the Divine, and prayer, for only then will it be illuminated enough to act at all times with healing courage, and strong enough to withstand the ordeals and torments that are inevitable.

Andrew Harvey. *Teachings of the Christian Mystics*. Shambhala, 1998.

[F]or you to be here now trillions of drifting atoms had somehow to assemble in an intricate and intriguingly obliging manner to create you. It's an arrangement so specialized and particular that it has never been tried before and will only exist this once. For the next many years (we hope) these tiny particles will uncomplainingly engage in all the billions of deft, cooperative efforts necessary to keep you intact and let you experience the supremely agreeable but generally underappreciated state known as existence.

Why atoms take this trouble is a bit of a puzzle. Being you is not a gratifying experience at the atomic level.

Bill Bryson. *A Short History of Nearly Everything*. Broadway Books, 2003.

The Third Approach

Bruce Lyon

Abstract

This article explores the three approaches between spirit and matter in an individual and collective sense. An attempt is made to articulate the “third approach” which places emphasis on the will or monadic aspect which is in the process of being revealed within the human kingdom. The emphasis on the third approach is examined as part of a synthetic whole which will ultimately serve to reveal a fourth quality of deity which lies behind the three revealed or revealing qualities of will, love and intelligence.

Spiritual Psychology

The esoteric teachings outline three great approaches to or from our divine source.

The third phase approach is concerned with the first or *life* aspect in the trinity of life, love, activity or monad, soul, personality.

It is self evident that this contact can only be made *consciously* when the second or conscious principle of the soul has been developed. However the consciousness does not have to be *fully* developed before contact with the life principle is undertaken and indeed early contact, properly guided can speed up the process of soul development.

A useful analogy is the situation as it occurs between the disciplines of exoteric psychology and esoteric psychology. The leading edge of

mainstream exoteric psychology, while acknowledging the transpersonal worlds, cautions against developing transpersonal awareness until the “personality” is fully developed and integrated. There is obviously some wisdom in this approach and many will have anecdotal experiences of individuals becoming “ungrounded” or imbalanced through premature soul contact. On the other hand there is the equally valid truth that soul contact can

speed up personality integration through alignment with the wisdom and purpose of the soul. Esoteric psychologists level a legitimate claim that prolonged focus on “personal development” can be an over-emphasis on the third aspect and an unwillingness to progress the identity into the second or soul aspect. Trainings like *Psychosynthesis* attempt to bridge the gap between these two approaches.

In the future we might isolate a third approach to psychological development and integration—a *spiritual psychology*—that emphasizes our primary identity

In the worlds of time and space we develop awareness of our three levels of being sequentially (personality, soul then monad) but in terms of our essential identity the order of relative importance of these aspects is reversed – monad, soul then personality. When we attempt to place *first things first* we must therefore consider whether we are primarily anchored in the world of Being or the world of Becoming.

About the Author

Based in New Zealand, Bruce Lyon is an author and teacher with a particular interest in the founding of modern schools of initiation. His latest book *Agni, Way of Fire*, is reviewed in this issue of the *Esoteric Quarterly*. For more information see the author’s website: www.shamballaschool.org

as spirit or monad. Indeed it is indicated by the Master Djwhal Khul that the new esoteric schools will train students in contact between monad and personality through the science of occult meditation.¹ The emphasis upon the soul or second aspect is today becoming exoteric—forming part of many mainstream approaches to education and organizational development. The inherent wisdom and creativity of the individual and the collective synergy of groups aligned to purpose are increasingly being valued.

This *third approach* will have its own strengths and weaknesses but will increasingly become recognized as a distinct pathway that will attract certain types of individuals and groups. It is in reality a third approach to initiation. When the process of initiation was introduced it began with a focus upon the individual. Gradually the emphasis has shifted as we enter the Aquarian Age into a focus upon the group. This third method places the emphasis upon *the whole*. There is also a third method of individualisation which will become the normal method for the next solar system – individualisation through abstraction. In the first system individualisation occurred through the evolutionary progression of the third aspect. In the current second system the method of individualisation is via the aid of the *agnishvattas* or the conscious principle. We have help from our “higher selves” which are naturally group-conscious. Thus the development of consciousness through *education* or the “drawing forth” of the consciousness principle is the keynote of this system. In the third system the keynote will be the life principle and activity and consciousness will be developed in an accelerated way through identification with the monad, the *One*.² The core identity will, in effect, be abstracted from the lower five worlds of the personality and the triad.

Ray Influences and the Vehicles

These three forms of development can be related to the three primary rays of the monad. Indeed the different approaches will be favoured by those on different ray lines. A major distinction on the planet is between those

who individualised on the moon chain, where the third aspect was dominant, and those who have individualised on earth (earth humanity) where the second aspect is dominant. In time we might also include mercury-chain humanity – those who are showing signs of fifth-chain development and beginning to respond to the third method of development.

Of course this *third approach* will also attract (with less long-term benefit to them) those who have strong first ray at the soul and personality level. It will be most suitable to those upon any of the rays who have reached a certain level of soul/personality integration and therefore those in whom the *will* principle is becoming increasingly expressed.

In the worlds of time and space we develop awareness of our three levels of being sequentially (personality, soul then monad) but in terms of our essential identity the order of relative importance of these aspects is reversed – monad, soul then personality. When we attempt to place *first things first* we must therefore consider whether we are primarily anchored in the world of Being or the world of Becoming.

There is another reason for developing and strengthening the third approach to divinity or responsiveness to the energy of Shamballa, and this lies in a later synthesis. When the monad, the soul and personality assume their rightful balance and order of relative importance in both inner and outer worlds then the revelation of that which lies behind these three aspects becomes possible. Just as the three vehicles of the personality, when integrated, reveal the synthetic principle of the soul operating through them, so too do the three *vehicles* of the cosmic physical planes hide a synthesizing energy—a fourth quality of deity waiting to be revealed.³

The development of the will and monadic identification is not therefore an end in itself but part of a process—a process of synthesis. Those who develop the will aspect will still need to achieve full rounding out of the consciousness and activity principles in time and space. They will do this however with the aid

of the synthetic fourth principle which “*sees the three as one.*”

Within the esoteric community the emergence of this third approach will be likely to raise a divergence of opinion just as the emergence of the second approach is a challenge to the first. Just as there are those who say the acquisition of outer knowledge and skill is more important than the development of the innate wisdom of the soul, there will be those who say that the development and unfolding of consciousness is more important than the identification with the life principle. Of course everyone is “right” and merely emphasizing a partial truth in a pre-synthesised triad.

There will be those who say that an attempt to contact the monad is presumptuous when we have only just begun to know and develop the soul. There will be those who say that we have not yet understood and applied the first and second phases of the ageless wisdom that has already been given out and so why bother trying to delve into the “third phase.”

There will be those who say that the most important requirement on the planet is the building of the bridge between personality and soul not that between soul and monad.

Of course different perspectives emphasise different priorities. Different aspects of the one synthetic whole are seen as differentially important by entities within it. Synthesis however occurs after each of the three strands are balanced and not before. A synthesis of opinion in the minds of men is an even more difficult undertaking and so, as always, pioneers must demonstrate their priorities and values in the face of prevailing status quos. They do this

by testing out new pathways in the context of experimentation, allowing time and evolution to weave their work into the greater whole.

The work therefore of the *third approach* is to complete the higher antahkarana through identification with the Whole so that the synthetic operation of the three centres in man and in the planet can occur—bringing revelation of a fourth quality of deity. This revelation is essential to the Aquarian Age. We can fit ourselves to aid in this process if we, as the Tibetan Master indicates, “walk humbly with our God.”⁴

The Larger Picture

So far we have looked at this third approach with respect to the individual approach to divinity but it applies equally to our planetary life as a whole. Two Great Approaches by spirit to form have already been made with two lesser approaches embodying the Great Approaches by individual avataric members of the human family.

The first Great Approach occurred in Lemurian times and resulted in the individualisation of animal man, the birth of the fourth kingdom in nature

and the appearance of the human soul. It was literally the arrival of *Light*.⁵

The second Great Approach occurred when humanity had grown through the ages in sensitivity and intelligence. It was the approach of the Spiritual Hierarchy to Humanity and made them aware of the path to God, the path of initiation. God had hitherto been a purely transcendent and unapproachable reality but now God became immanent and the path of sacrifice could be walked by advanced humanity via the Christ or soul principle residing at the core of people’s own natures.

The third Great Approach already has its beginnings with the coming into relationship of the energy of Shamballa with humanity. In the early stages the new approach is not recognized for what it is—“the will of God in a new and potent livingness.” It has effects but these are largely unconscious. As humanity develops responsiveness to this new energy it is able to begin conscious cooperation with it through the science of invocation.

The Buddha was an embodiment or expression of the first approach and the Christ an embodiment of the second. The second Great Approach will be consummated in humanity with the Reappearance of the Christ and the Externalisation of the Hierarchy.

The third Great Approach already has its beginnings with the coming into relationship of the energy of Shamballa with humanity. In the early stages the new approach is not recognized for what it is—"the will of God in a new and potent livingness."⁶ It has effects but these are largely unconscious. As humanity develops responsiveness to this new energy it is able to begin conscious cooperation with it through the science of invocation. That invocation is beginning to occur in two ways—through the largely unconscious call to freedom from the masses of humanity and the concerted invocative appeal by the New Group of World Servers.

Just as the first two approaches have their outer representative embodiments, so too will the third approach. We await a coming avatar who will embody in Himself the principles not only of Light and Love, although developed in lesser degree to His predecessors, the Buddha and the Christ, but also the energy of Power. He will thus synthesise the three great qualities of deity and make possible the revelation of that which lies behind their expression.

Coincident with the coming of this avatar will be the founding of the Temple of Power upon the physical plane, which will make possible the restoration of the mysteries and the taking of the first initiation as a recognized outer event within the human family. Already two temples exist—a Temple of Light upon the mental plane presided over by the Buddha and a Temple of Love on the astral plane presided over by the Christ.⁷

The three approaches—of spirit to matter (and vice versa) through the threefold workings of consciousness—form part of one great whole and when they are consummated we will have the "new heaven and new earth."⁸ This is the promise that the combination of the energies of Aquarius and the seventh ray make possible.⁹ Only then we will not use the terms "heaven"

and "earth" or "spirit" and "matter" for there will no longer be experienced any sense of such a duality. Light supernal, the light of life itself will reveal the One Life pervading all levels of manifest being and humanity will take its conscious place as a divine centre. Then this planet will manifest a truth in consciousness which has ever been a timeless divine reality. *Earth has always been in heaven.*

¹ Alice A. Bailry. *The Rays and the Initiations*. Lucis, 1960, p 121.

² Alice A. Bailey. *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*. Lucis, 1925, p 349.

³ Website: www.shamballaschool.org/mercury/FourthQuality.htm.

⁴ Bailey. *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 258.

⁵ Alice A. Bailey. *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*. Lucis, 1957, p. 411.

⁶ Alice A. Bailey. *The Destiny of the Nations*. Lucis, 1949, p. 17.

⁷ Alice A. Bailey. *Esoteric Psychology*, II. Lucis, date, p. 280.

⁸ Bailey. *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, p. 537.

⁹ Alice A. Bailey. *Discipleship in the New Age*, II. Lucis, 1955, p. 425.

The Role of Alan Leo and Sepharial in the Development of Esoteric Astrology (Part I)

Temple Richmond

Abstract

The names of late 19th–early 20th century British Theosophists and astrologers Alan Leo and Sepharial are known to students of Alice Bailey for their frequent mention in Bailey’s *Esoteric Astrology*. This study explains why these two figures merit such references and demonstrates that of the two, Leo cultivated a much more intensively Theosophical focus and in so doing, may very well have paved the way for the eventual articulation of the esoteric astrological doctrine by the Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul. Specific elements of Alan Leo’s cosmology and his astrological system are compared and contrasted to that of Bailey, and Leo’s lasting mark on astrology as the infusion of Theosophical concepts and the notion of free will into astrological literature is explored.

Background

Familiar to many students of the Alice Bailey writings are the names of Alan Leo and Sepharial. Leo was mentioned seven times in Alice Bailey’s *Esoteric Astrology*,¹ in each case alongside and in contrast to an occultist who used the pen name of Sepharial. An understandable first reaction when twenty-first century readers encounter the names of Leo and Sepharial might be summed up in the question, “Who are these people and why are they mentioned here?” The answer forms the subject matter of this study and situates the works of these two British astrologers of the late 1800s and early 1900s within the context of the evolving Ageless Wisdom literature.

Readers of the Bailey material may with good reason be puzzled as to why these two particular astrologers out of all the astrologers in the world have been singled out for mention. However, a rational explanation can be offered

for the inclusion of these two astrologers and none other in the Tibetan’s discussion of esoteric astrological technique. Some historical context is needed, though, to set the stage for understanding why this is so. This historical context arises from the sequential nature with which the Ageless Wisdom is in process of being revealed.

As Djwhal Khul, the Tibetan Master, has pointed out, our Planetary Hierarchy is in process of imparting to Humanity portions of the initiatory wisdom with which it has been invested. Though it could be argued that all the religions and scientific advances of the world each and collectively constitute a release of Hierarchical wisdom into the world, more recently there have been two distinct efforts of the Hierarchy to reach Humanity with the true esoteric teaching. These two efforts were embodied, as the Tibetan has stated, in the writings of H. P. Blavatsky and Alice A. Bailey, respectively, with a third such effort slated to appear early in the twenty-first century.²

That being the case, it is apparent that the release of Hierarchical teaching is a work in progress. Consequently, it might be understood that the revelation of the Ageless Wisdom is a continuous stream looking for an appropriate course in which to run. In other words, the source is plentiful, but that fact can only be revealed when a suitable channel opens the

About the Author

M. Temple Richmond is an internationally recognized authority on esoteric astrology and author of the milestone book *Sirius*. She recently founded the StarLight Ashram, an online discussion group dedicated to the study of esoteric astrology: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/StarLightAshram>.

way for the flow of information. Nonetheless, in the background Hierarchy ever holds the thoughtform of the teaching in its consciousness, thus rendering it continuously available.

As a consequence, spiritually attuned and altruistic minds may telepathically register various parts of that thoughtform at any time.

Thus, even though there have been but two formal revelations leading to published literature, communication between Hierarchy and advanced minds takes place all the time.

Pieces of the Ageless Wisdom teaching may in this way reach suitably attuned minds. Furthermore, it is even possible that Hierarchy has tried to reach particular individuals with aspects of the teaching in hopes of bringing such ideas before the public at times other than the two highly successful efforts about which the Tibetan has spoken.

Either of these may very well have been the case in regard to British Theosophist and astrologer Alan Leo, who did in fact write and publish a work entitled *Esoteric Astrology* some twenty-six years before the Tibetan began his dictations to Alice Bailey on that very topic. Leo's volume was published in 1913,³ while Alice Bailey began her work under the Tibetan's impression in 1939.⁴ Of note is that fact that Leo's volume contained a number of general concepts as well as specific notions which are very similar to if not identical to portions of the system eventually revealed much more completely in the later volume of the same name by Alice Bailey; representative examples will be examined.

The Historical Context of Leo and Sepharial

Like Bailey, Leo was a Theosophist.⁵ In fact, Leo was a decidedly prominent British Theosophist in the post-Blavatsky era, traveling with Theosophical Society president Annie Besant in India, joining the party of dedicated Theosophists which ushered the now infamous Jiddu Krishnamurti on his first trip from India to England to be introduced as the putative "New World Teacher," and providing the motive force behind the establishment of the Astrological Lodge of the Theosophical Society

in England.⁶ In addition, Leo was also a widely known astrologer of great public appeal, much sought by consumers of astrological guidance in his day.⁷ As a result of all this, it is fair to say that the name of Alan Leo was written large in the minds of Theosophists on both sides of the Atlantic in the early part of the twentieth century.

And it was just this group, the world Theosophists of the early twentieth century, to whom the Tibetan addressed himself, especially in his earliest dictations given to Alice Bailey. Evidence that this is so abounds. Perhaps the most immediate and convincing is found in the works of Alice Bailey herself, the first ones of which may be read as nothing short of a continued discussion on themes found in Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*.⁸ Terms and concepts from Blavatsky's work were used without introduction or definition, very much as if it were assumed that anyone reading the Bailey material would of necessity have previously read the Blavatsky material.⁹ And this may well have been so in that day and age, for right at the time the Tibetan was issuing his first dictations to Alice Bailey, Bailey was involved in teaching *Secret Doctrine* classes to a large group of Theosophists in the New York area.¹⁰ Bailey herself had not long before been deeply involved in the American branch of the Theosophical Society in California.

The atmosphere in which the Tibetan found Alice Bailey was thus profoundly Theosophical, and it was into this atmosphere that the second literature of revelation initially was cast. So basic was this fact to the time and spirit of Alice Bailey's early writings that when *The Beacon* magazine was founded by Alice and Foster Bailey in 1922, it was subtitled *A Periodical Intended for Theosophists*.¹¹ B. P. Wadia of the world Theosophical headquarters in India expressed enthusiasm about the first few chapters of *Initiation, Human and Solar*, and in fact printed these in the society's international magazine, *The Theosophist*.¹² Further evidence that the Bailey work was born amidst a Theosophical atmosphere and environment can be seen in the enigmatic symbol stamped on the cover of all the Bailey books—a triangle containing the interlaced

letters L, U, X, spelling LUX, or Latin for light, a reference to the Lucifer tradition as discussed in *The Secret Doctrine*,¹³ which tradition itself forms the notion from which the name Lucis Trust was formed.

Thus, it is easy to see that the audience for the new dictations arriving through Alice Bailey was in the earliest days primarily constituted of well-read and informed Theosophists. As the Bailey writings gained acceptance and popularity over the following three decades, this situation changed substantively, but it is likely that the fact of the original Theosophical context never left the Tibetan's mind.

So, when the Tibetan engaged on the topic of esoteric astrology in the late 1930s, it was only natural that he should bear in mind and seek to address questions that could be counted on to surface in the minds of those familiar with the post-Blavatsky Theosophical milieu. And that group was keenly aware of two outspoken and highly visible British astrologers by the names of Alan Leo and Sefpharial. It was only in keeping that the Theosophically-minded

esoteric students of the world should want to know how the work of these two colorful early twentieth century Theosophists stacked up against this new esoteric astrology now appearing under the name of Alice A. Bailey. Apparently anticipating this interest, the Tibetan simply spoke directly to the issue by comparing and contrasting certain features of the new esoteric astrological dispensation with positions taken by Leo and Sefpharial on similar matters.

Some background information on Leo and Sefpharial may be relevant here. These two British astrologers were both born in the 1860s under different given names than they ulti-

mately used professionally. Leo was born in London on August 7, 1860 as William Frederick Allen; Sefpharial in Birmingham on March 20, 1864 as Walter Richard Old (later calling himself W. Gorn Old).¹⁴ In a well-established custom amongst astrologers, both changed their names to appellations linked with astrological tradition, the one to allude to angelic intelligence (Sefpharial), the other to the Sun sign under which he was born (Leo).

It was the younger man, Sefpharial, who came to Theosophy first. In fact, Sefpharial was a member of London Theosophical circles when H. P. Blavatsky was yet living, and became one of the few students privileged to be counted in her inner circle.¹⁵

Sefpharial also served as a vice-president of the Blavatsky Lodge in London and even lived at the same residence with Blavatsky from 1889 until the great occultist's death in early May of 1891.¹⁶

Sefpharial and Leo met at a London astrological gathering in 1889, and it was from that platform that Sefpharial introduced Leo to Theosophical meetings in the summer of

the same year. Leo took to the Ageless Wisdom teaching enthusiastically, formally joining the Theosophical Society in May of 1890 and remaining devoted to its philosophy for the rest of his life.¹⁷ Sefpharial, on the other hand, became disenchanted with the Theosophical Society after the death of the flamboyant and charismatic Blavatsky.¹⁸ This fundamental difference between the two men was evidenced in their subsequent astrological writings; for whereas Leo proudly proclaimed his Theosophical orientation, Sefpharial never became the spokesperson for an esoterically-slanted and Theosophically flavored astrological doctrine such as that eventually articulated by Leo.

As the Tibetan Master has pointed out, our Planetary Hierarchy is in process of imparting to Humanity portions of the initiatory wisdom with which it has been invested... [T]here have been two distinct efforts of the Hierarchy to reach Humanity with the true esoteric teaching. These two efforts were embodied... in the writings of H. P. Blavatsky and Alice A. Bailey.

Even so, Sepharial exerted considerable influence upon the astrological and occult scene of his day, authoring over forty books,¹⁹ many of which demonstrate a distinct genius for astrologically, numerologically, and kaballistically based predictive techniques for winning at games of chance and for predicting life events. As an astrologer, Sepharial was technically oriented, with a good grasp of the history of astrology, the evolution of its analytic and predictive techniques, and an interest in adducing mathematical proof that future events can be known. Among Sepharial's works are studies on transits and an eclectic treatise on various astrological topics called *The Science of Foreknowledge*. In addition, Sepharial established three astrological organizations over the period of his life, though none of these lasted very long. His influence upon English and world astrology remained strong in the late 1930s when the Tibetan began his dictations to Alice Bailey of what would be the later *Esoteric Astrology*. In fact, Sepharial's *Manual of Astrology* was a standard astrological instructional text recognized throughout the English-speaking astrological world from 1900 through approximately 1940.²⁰

Alan Leo, by contrast, was as flamingly Theosophical in some of his writings as Sepharial was determinedly worldly and pragmatic in his. Leo wrote numerous studies for the general astrological audience, but the main volume of relevance to the present discussion is his volume entitled *Esoteric Astrology*, published in 1913 as volume number seven of his *Astrology for All* series.²¹

That Leo's *Esoteric Astrology* was greatly influenced by Theosophical teachings is in no way difficult to discern. For example, in the preface Leo wrote, "There is but one material substance in the universe, primordial or root matter,"²² a Blavatskyesque formulation if ever there was one, given her famous dictum that matter is spirit at its lowest vibration, and spirit matter at its highest, plus her repeated discussions of *mulaprakriti* (or universal root substance) to be found throughout *The Secret Doctrine*. In this, Leo's Theosophical coloring was already on display.

Then, as further declamation of his Theosophical leanings, he selected excerpts from Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* as headers to introduce several chapters. These include citations from Blavatsky's work on the triplicity of spirit, soul, and matter, and the one life pervading them all;²³ eventual universal dissolution;²⁴ the gods of classical antiquity as figures representing Time and Eternity;²⁵ the relevance of the constellations and their influences on the evolution of the soul;²⁶ and the Sun, Moon and planets as connected with the mysteries of adeptship and initiation.²⁷

In addition, the text of Leo's *Esoteric Astrology* is peppered with terms and concepts originally introduced in *The Secret Doctrine*. For example, with no particular explanation as to why, Leo invoked the esoteric model of the solar system as given in Theosophical literature in his *Esoteric Astrology*, referring without preliminary definition to the seven Planetary Logoi. These Logoi he characterized as did the Theosophical tradition, as Beings each manifesting through a chain of seven globes²⁸ (rather than through a scheme of seven chains as would later be stated in the Bailey works), which is in decided contrast to the model of the solar system embraced by mainstream astrologers of Leo's time. Of course, the reason he did so was to advance the Theosophical teaching by expanding it into and integrating it with the field of astrology. In so doing, he was in no way reluctant to simply state the Theosophical position as fact, the more to firmly establish himself as a voice for a new, Theosophically inspired version of astrology.

As further proof of Leo's immersion in the Theosophical doctrine, it should be pointed out that he demonstrated obvious familiarity with and referred to the Ray Lords and hence the seven rays,²⁹ the Spirit of the Earth,³⁰ deva lives,³¹ the alternation of *pralaya* and *manvantara*,³² the position of our globe as fourth,³³ and the triune composition of Deity as Will, Wisdom, and Activity,³⁴ all Theosophical concepts in nature, and equally representative of what the Tibetan would later teach via Alice Bailey. But to continue with the recitation of Leo's telling marks as a Theosophical thinker, it should be mentioned that he even referred to

the eminent nineteenth and twentieth century Theosophist, T. Subba Row of India,³⁵ the arbiter of so many Theosophical debates. It is through Theosophical literature and contacts and only that literature and ambience that Leo could have arrived at this vocabulary.

In sum, it can be said that the atmosphere of Alan Leo's astrological thinking was rather thoroughly permeated with the esotericism of H. P. Blavatsky and the accepted doctrines of the Theosophical Society. The same could have been said of Alice A. Bailey's general worldview on the eve of her work with the Tibetan on behalf of Hierarchy. It might even be tendered that the Theosophical Society functioned as a hothouse for the cultivation of promising Hierarchical channels at that time. Alice Bailey herself stated that it was uniquely her Theosophical background which prepared her mind for telepathic linkage with the Tibetan, and which paved the way for articulation of the concepts which it was his intention to bring forward to the greater public. Alan Leo may have been in somewhat the same position, and as the nature of his astrological system might be shown to suggest, Leo just may have been the early and perhaps first recipient of at least some of the information which would eventually appear in the Tibetan's revelation of the esoteric astrological system via Alice Bailey.

A number of general concepts found in Leo's *Esoteric Astrology* seem to anticipate or at least agree remarkably with positions the Tibetan would take in Bailey's later volume of the same title. Given their importance, a detailed examination of these similarities follows. After that, a number of specific elements of Leo's system will be explored, again with reference to features held in common with the material presented by Djwhal Khul through Alice Bailey.

General Philosophy of Alan Leo's *Esoteric Astrology* and Similarities to the Esoteric Occultism of the Tibetan

Just as the Tibetan would also do publicly through Bailey some years later, Leo posited

an esoteric astrological philosophy and system which differed greatly from the then known exoteric or mainstream astrology.³⁶ Part of the difference, Leo asserted, lay in the necessary inclusion of reincarnation and karma as essential facts of existence and evolution,³⁷ the embrace of which were not yet practiced by the general astrological field of his day. In fact, so adamant was Leo on this point that he admonished the reader that no philosophy lacking the components of reincarnation and karma could fully account for the variation in life circumstances to be seen amongst members of Humanity. Leo stated boldly that his formulation of astrology plus the teachings of reincarnation and karma were "given to represent...the true Astrology for the New Era that is now dawning upon the world."³⁸ That new era being the Age of Aquarius, Leo's statement appears to have sounded very much the same note as the Tibetan's many statements to that effect regarding his presentation of the new astrology of the rays, discipleship, and initiation as given later through Alice Bailey. Both presentations proclaimed themselves as astrological dispensations for the New Age.

Yet another factor of similarity between Leo's presentation and that of Alice Bailey's is a fundamental obeisance eastward in acknowledging the source of inspiration and tutelage. Leo himself claimed to have been immersed in this new version of astrology in India. This fact immediately brings up the question in the mind of trained astrologers as to whether or not Leo had embraced siderealist Hindu astrology. As even a brief examination of Leo's *Esoteric Astrology* reveals, Leo integrated into his system only small portions of Hindu astrology, while retaining the basic framework of western tropical astrology, the zodiac for which is structured on the natural facts of the equinoxes and solstices, in contrast to the sidereal zodiac, which is based on other measurements.

Nonetheless, at the head end of his work on what he called esoteric astrology, Leo bowed eastward. In his own words, "...on my recent visit to India I was enabled to learn from unquestionable sources that these teachings [of reincarnation and karma—MTR] were part of

the ancient mysteries of astrology.”³⁹ Exactly by what or whom Leo was contacted and instructed in these matters while in India, he did not say, which informational lacuna leaves open the distinct possibility that Leo may have been instructed by any of the Masters of the Wisdom who have such ease of passage in India. At any rate, Leo claimed his esoteric astrological flame was lit in that great cradle of spiritual tradition, while Alice Bailey is known to have received her torch from Tibet. The presence of near-Himalayan esotericism is thus inasmuch claimed for both—hinted at in Leo, outright proclaimed in Bailey.

In keeping with the eastward glance, Leo named the *Pranava Vada* as one of the specific sources from which some of his ideas had arisen.⁴⁰ A classic of Hindu esoteric literature much revered by Theosophists, The *Pranava Vada* was also mentioned in Bailey’s *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*,⁴¹ a fact which obviously serves further to underscore the similarity of philosophical outlooks to be found in Leo and Bailey.

Beyond these similar bases of thought, there exists further compelling evidence that Leo may well have been on the same wavelength as the Tibetan some years before Bailey was given the official signal. This evidence takes form as general esoteric principles formulated by Leo in ways and even in language much the same as would be used in the Bailey presentation. For example, Leo firmly advised that study of astrology should proceed from the basic premise that one life pervades all forms, and that all lives find place within greater lives,⁴² a formulation very much like that which the Tibetan would eventually articulate in *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* and *Esoteric Astrology*.

Said Leo taking off from that point, “We may define Esoteric Astrology as that side of the

subject which views all stellar phenomena from the standpoint of unity: whilst Exoteric Astrology beings its study from the side of diversity and separateness....”⁴³ As can be seen, this comment of Leo’s demonstrates both his emphasis upon unity as the fundamental context for all things and his essential agreement with the Tibetan’s later critique of modern astrology, which field both Leo and the Tibetan took to task for its emphasis upon the fates and fortunes of individual persons rather than upon the greater spiritual lives in which those units find place. Leo’s position is in fact closely reminiscent of the Tibetan’s dictum that study

of things cosmological and astrological should ever proceed from the universal (the realm of unity) to particulars (the realm of multiplicity). Though his words are just a little different, the idea is strikingly the same.

Like the Tibetan, Leo held that the divine creative process requires a ternary or triplicity to get rolling,⁴⁴ which triplicity he characterized as the Rays of Divine Will, Wisdom, and Activity, with the third or Activity Ray

comprehending within itself the four minor rays of aspect,⁴⁵ precisely as the Tibetan would say in *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*.⁴⁶ Also like the Tibetan, Leo associated the three primal emanations of Deity with three types of motion, though Leo called them rotary, translatory, and vibratory,⁴⁷ differing slightly from the Tibetan’s characterization of them as rotary, orbital, and spiral cyclic.⁴⁸ Leo, good Theosophist that he was, went on to relate the three primary emanations to the three *gunas* as well, though in a slightly different application than that used later by the Tibetan. However, Leo and the Tibetan were of one mind concerning the nature of the First, Second, and

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Third Logoi or Aspects as emanations from *Parabrahm*, with Leo characterizing the Three primary Logoi respectively as unity, consciousness, and matter and its organization,⁴⁹ exactly as would the Tibetan throughout the Bailey writings.

This triplicity, Leo maintained, gives rise to the septenary,⁵⁰ just as was later elucidated by Bailey. The septenary played as important a role in Leo's cosmology as it did in that of the Tibetan's, for Leo recognized seven planes of existence, each plane subdivided into seven subdivisions or subplanes.⁵¹ Leo even denominated the subplanes in the same fashion as the Tibetan would in the Bailey writings, with the highest subplane on any given plane called the atomic, next down being the sub-atomic, then the super-etheric, the etheric, gaseous, liquid, and solid.⁵² Obviously and importantly for interpretation of astrological symbolism, Leo equated the astral plane with the water element,⁵³ as would the Tibetan in numerous passages throughout Bailey's *Esoteric Astrology*.

Leo also recognized at least a portion of what might now be called the esoteric model of the solar system, together with the primacy of the Solar Logos within it.⁵⁴ It would also appear that Leo anticipated the teaching upon the relationships of Solar Logoi one to another which was to be revealed more fully in *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* and *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, for Leo understood that our Solar Logos is in conscious union, which is to say communication, with the vaster universe beyond.⁵⁵ This vaster universe is of course constituted of orders upon orders of Solar Logoi, individually and in ever-expanding groups, as the scale of logoiic organization is ascended. So in a roundabout way, Leo implied that our Solar Logos is in telepathic relationship with others of its kind, just as the Tibetan would spell out in his later works.

Leo certainly acknowledged that there is more to the structure of the solar system than is presented by the mere physical body of the Sun and visible planets, asserting just as did the Tibetan that the Solar Logos manifests triply and that the number of planets to be seen in the solar system depends upon the point in time at

which it is viewed. However, Leo followed the Theosophical model of the solar system and held that though indeed the solar system is constituted of the Solar Logos as the central life manifesting through seven energy centers, each energy center is made of just one planetary chain (or seven globes).⁵⁶ Elsewhere Leo referred to seven individual planets as being the centers of the Solar Logos,⁵⁷ which notion falls even shorter of the Tibetan's later formulation⁵⁸ that schemes fulfill this function, but it remains consistent with the central and important contention that the Solar Being functions through seven energy centers.

Leo seems to have recognized the principle of systemic kundalini as well: that is, the force which vitalizes each of the centers in the body of the Solar Being. For he stated that the Solar Being is the source of all life currents in the system,⁵⁹ and that it supports a "...circulation of physical and other forces and of vitality...constantly going on between the seven globes...the point of greatest activity...centred sometimes upon one globe and sometimes upon another, according to the stage of evolution reached."⁶⁰ Except for the difference in the number of total globes attributed to the solar system, here in essence is the same point made repeatedly by the Tibetan concerning the ordered circulation of systemic kundalini in *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*.

Leo's point of view was like that of the Tibetan's in that he, too, specified deva life as one of the essential factors in the distribution of energies and forces in the solar system. Leo attributed to deva life the same functions as did the Tibetan; for in describing the seven cosmic planes, Leo stated that each plane is in fact the body of great Deva Lords,⁶¹ just as did the Tibetan. And he characterized deva lives in general as the builders of form,⁶² as also would the Tibetan later.⁶³

The Law of Correspondence, a key interpretive tool according to the Tibetan, was likewise in evidence in Leo's *Esoteric Astrology*, where he indicated the importance of links between the chain, globes, and rays of the same number, and even suggested that in some cases, the microcosm can be the clue to the macrocosm,⁶⁴ just as did the Tibetan later through Alice Bai-

ley.⁶⁵ Leo likewise called upon the Law of Correspondences to deduce that the three major aspects are reflected in the lowest three planes, with the mental plane expressing Active Intelligence, the astral or emotional plane mirroring Wisdom, and the physical plane expressing Will.⁶⁶ This reverse order or mirroring effect, which matched the highest with the lowest, is also a feature of the Tibetan's discussions of the planes in some passages.⁶⁷ It is an unusual application of the Law of Correspondence, and as such, the more strongly suggests that Leo was attuned to certain subtleties of the thoughtform containing the particulars of the Ageless Wisdom.

At any rate, Alan Leo certainly knew of and embraced the teaching on the seven emanations of Deity, acknowledging specifically the seven rays when he wrote, "...seven great rays...are constantly streaming through the seven planetary spheres of influence."⁶⁸ These seven rays Leo identified with what he understood by the term Planetary Spirits or Logoi,⁶⁹ though his Logoi manifested through fewer globes than did those of the later teaching.

In a way, Leo also recognized the Lords of the Rays, explaining "...[it is] not the physical planets themselves that affect mankind, but the supreme Intelligences who use the planetary bodies as their physical vehicles...."⁷⁰ These supreme Intelligences filled a specific role in Leo's esoteric model of the solar system, one that will be familiar to the mindful student of the esoteric astrological doctrine. It is the same role imputed to the Planetary Logoi by the Tibetan throughout *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*; for Leo asserted that the "planetary intelligences" carry out the will of the Solar Logos,⁷¹ just as the Tibetan repeatedly stated it is the function of the Planetary Logoi to do.

Further, it was Leo's contention that each planet is charged with mastering the evolution of one of the seven principles,⁷² which is exactly what the Tibetan said about the schemes. Thus, though in Leo's mind it was individual planets that represented the "Supreme Intelligences," the Ray Lords, or Planetary Logoi, it was the schemes which fulfilled that role in the more fully developed system ultimately revealed through Bailey.

In any case, the important point is that in both Leo and Bailey, the Seven Supreme Intelligences represent the rays, have as their duties the working out of the Will of the Solar Logos, and provide the ground for perfecting of one of the seven principles. These essential notions are found in both Leo and Bailey.

So also is the idea that each of these seven centers has a particular group of advanced beings associated with it. For Leo, it was a "great Spiritual Hierarchy" which found its home in each of the seven (for him, planets);⁷³ for the Tibetan, it was the cosmic instructors in the eight Planetary Schools, each found in a planetary scheme associated with our solar system.⁷⁴ Thus, though the details differ between the Leo presentation and that of Bailey, certain common features and key ideas nevertheless stand out in regard to advanced beings associated with the various centers of the Solar Logos, and this is the main point to be gathered here. Both presentations envisioned the force centers of the Solar Logos as homes to advanced beings capable of leading evolution forward.

Leo's thoughts on the medium through which the various bodies in space communicate and through which astrological energies flow was like that of the Tibetan's as well. Leo held that space is constituted of etheric matter and that this etheric matter is the medium of communication amongst the planets and between the planets and the Sun,⁷⁵ a favorite theme of the Tibetan's from *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* and *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*.

Matters closer to home were also conceptualized by Leo in a fashion very similar to what the Tibetan would later propose through Bailey. Importantly, Leo made a hard-and-fast distinction between the more durable portion of the self, which he called "the individuality," and the ephemeral portion of the self, which he called "the personality," with the personality constituting, as he put it, a "small ray of the Individuality."⁷⁶ Here in only very slightly different terms is the Tibetan's soul and personality model, with the personality being but a small fragmentary expression of the soul and its ray. In fact, entirely in line with what the Tibetan would later reveal in *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* concerning the creation of the

soul or causal body from the monadic essence, Leo wrote of the “individuality” (his word for soul), “Through the agency of ...[the] Seven Divine Rays man creates his causal body, colored primarily by its ‘Father in Heaven,’ (or Monad) and from which a ray is cast into the physical body at birth to be the personality.”⁷⁷

That Leo was aware not only of soul or egoic rays but also of groups of souls constituted on the basis of ray affinity is a certainty as well, for Leo penned, “...at the head of the group of individuals belonging to each ray there stands a Master....”⁷⁸ Bailey students would say that at the head of the souls on each ray stands a Master of that ray vibration, but the idea is remarkably the same, minor variations in terminology notwithstanding. Both presentations tender the idea of soul or egoic groupings established along the lines of ray vibration. As for evolution beyond the soul ray, it seems that Leo’s insight penetrated there as well. For Leo even seems to have anticipated the momentous occurrence of transfer from the egoic onto the monadic ray and the consequent dissipation of the causal body as detailed by the Tibetan.⁷⁹

Thus, Leo’s model of the esoteric human constitution accounted very neatly for the Tibetan’s standard triplicity of monad, soul, and personality. Further, the more intricate esoteric structure of all forms suffered no neglect from Leo either, for he even acknowledged the existence of the critically important “permanent atoms.” Nuclei of forces and tendencies within each of the seven principles, according to the Tibetan, the permanent atoms were referred to as such by Leo and described as “karmic seeds,” or repositories containing all the vibrations and characteristics accumulated

during past incarnations—the essential residue of the various vehicles and sheaths of manifestation and containing condensed qualities of expression, these to be re-manifested in some subsequent embodiment.⁸⁰ And precisely as the Tibetan would affirm some years later, Leo identified the permanent atoms as the key mechanism for the discharge of planetary or astrological influence into the form nature.⁸¹ As is thus apparent, Leo had the essential esoteric model of the solar system and the human being in his sights more or less as it would later be discussed more fully and methodically by the Tibetan in the Bailey material.

Leo certainly acknowledged that there is more to the structure of the solar system than is presented by the mere physical body of the Sun and visible planets... However, Leo followed the Theosophical model of the solar system and held that though indeed the solar system is constituted of the Solar Logos as the central life manifesting through seven energy centers, each energy center is made of just one planetary chain (or seven globes).

Another Tibetan-esque item caught in the crosshairs of Leo’s mental scope concerns what might be called a critique of the then-popular astrology. Leo’s central problem with the field as it was in his day sounds remarkably like the Tibetan’s main criticism of modern astrology when Bailey’s *Esoteric Astrology* was dictated nearly thirty years later.

Both Leo and the Tibetan noticed a serious collective psycho-spiritual problem in the making, caused by the intense focus upon individual fate and fortune, as undertaken by mainstream or exoteric astrology of the early twentieth century. Here is what Alan Leo had to say on the matter. “If he [a seeker] gains knowledge of Astrology and become fascinated by the wonders of his horoscope, he holds it as a fetish; it is *his* horoscope, and at once he separates himself from all the rest of humanity by hugging to himself the joys of the good aspects and planetary positions, and pitying himself for the bad ones.”⁸² Compare this to the Tibetan in Bailey’s *Esoteric Astrology*: “At present, the

position of the average believer in astrology is that he is an individual of importance..., that he is living on an important planet,...and that, through astrology, he can discover his destiny....This makes him feel himself to be a factor of isolated importance."⁸³

Leo decried separatism; the Tibetan, isolation. Thus, an attitude of separation and isolation of the individual from the greater life in which it dwells struck both Leo and the Tibetan as the main problem with the orientation of the popular astrologies of their respective moments, and in this, they are yet again on very much the same wavelength regarding important matters. Again similarly, Leo proposed as an antidote an esoteric astrology posited on cosmic unity, and the Tibetan would do much the same through Bailey, urging greater attention be given to the sources of astrological energies and less to the microcosmic lives merely receptive to them at a much lower level.

Perhaps anticipating the Tibetan's point that all astrological energies transmit the Divine Will, Leo held out the possibility of union with the Divine Will as a logical consequence of a rightly directed esoteric astrology.⁸⁴ And what is the best way to approach union with the Divine Will? According to Leo, it is through the cultivation of what he called "pure reason,"⁸⁵ a term later used by the Tibetan as an equivalent for *buddhi*, the very principle the perfection of which the Bailey teaching would pinpoint as the particular intended destiny for this planet.⁸⁶

Pure reason, Leo maintained, would cure the distortions created by viewing life and matters through the "fluidic emotional body," an obvious reference to the astral body and its legendary abilities to twist appearances according to the likes and dislikes of the viewer. Here spoke an esoteric psychologist after the Tibetan's own heart, for this is a central theme that the Tibetan himself would return to time and again in the Bailey material, ever urging the calming of the astral currents through the practice of universal love, knowledge of the Plan, and the divine discriminating conscience: all attributes of *buddhi*. Once again, it is apparent that Leo and the Tibetan were looking at the same design in their comments on the

proper nature of an esoteric astrology. That the one preceded the other suggests no shameless borrowing on the part of Alice Bailey, but rather an inspiration common to both.

[Part II of this two-part article will appear in the Fall 2005 issue.]

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- 1 Alice A. Bailey. *Esoteric Astrology*. Lucis, 1951, pp. 106, 132, 192, 251, 284, 311, 369.
 - 2 Alice A. Bailey. *The Rays and the Initiations*. Lucis, 1960, p. 255.
 - 3 Patrick Curry. *A Confusion of Prophets*. Collins and Brown, 1992, p. 145.
 - 4 James Stephenson. *Prophecy on Trial*. Trans-Himalaya, 1983, p. 23.
 - 5 James H. Holden. *A History of Horoscopic Astrology*. American Federation of Astrologers, 1996, pp. 194-195.
 - 6 Curry. *A Confusion of Prophets*, pp. 141, 151.
 - 7 *Ibid.*, particularly, pp. 137 - 138.
 - 8 Helena P. Blavatsky. *The Secret Doctrine*. Theosophical University Press, 1888/1977.
 - 9 Just one amongst many telling examples is found in Alice A. Bailey. *Letters on Occult Meditation*. Lucis, 1922 (written in 1920). On p. 223 of *Letters*, there appears the term, "Day Be With Us," without definition or further explanation. The phrase "Day-Be-With-Us" was used in *The Secret Doctrine* to signify the conclusion of a *manvantara*, or period of a solar system, as verified by Geoffrey Barborika. *The Divine Plan*. Theosophical Publishing House, 1964, p. 151. Without knowledge of prior usage, readers would have found "Day Be With Us" a relatively meaningless term.
 - 10 Alice A. Bailey. *The Unfinished Autobiography*. 1951, pp. 189 - 191.
 - 11 John Cobb. "The New Emerging from the Old." School for Esoteric Studies, p.2.
 - 12 Bailey. *The Unfinished Autobiography*, p. 167; John Sinclair. *The Alice Bailey Inheritance*. **Publisher, date**, p. 20.
 - 13 See: Blavatsky. *The Secret Doctrine*, v. 1, pp. 70 - 71.
 - 14 Curry. *A Confusion of Prophets*, pp. 123, 125, 126. Leo's birth time may have been 6:10 AM or 5:49 AM, as Curry reports on pp. 123, 180; Sepharial is reputed to have been

- born at approximately 1:30 AM, as Curry records on pp. 125, 126.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 125.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 126, 127.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 126.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 135.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 127; Holden. *A History of Horoscopic Astrology*, p. 196.
- ²⁰ Curry. *A Confusion of Prophets*, p. 127; Holden. *A History of Horoscopic Astrology*, p. 196.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 145.
- ²² Alan Leo. *Esoteric Astrology*. Destiny Books, 1913/1983, p. xvii.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 85.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 63.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 131.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 8 – 18, 125.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xvi.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.
- ³² *Ibid.*, pp. 47 – 48.
- ³³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 65.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 90.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.vii.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. vii.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. vii.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- ⁴¹ Alice A. Bailey. *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*. Lucis, 1925, p. 425.
- ⁴² Leo. *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 68.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. xiv.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 139.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- ⁴⁶ Bailey. *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, p. 336.
- ⁴⁷ Leo. *Esoteric Astrology*, p. xvii.
- ⁴⁸ The three types of motion discussed by the Tibetan are: (a) rotary motion, or the rotation of any sphere around its own axis, (b) orbital motion, such as the orbit of a planet around the Sun, or the orbit of the Sun around the galactic center, and (c) spiral motion, produced when a body *in orbit around its center* is simultaneously propelled forward in space along a line of travel perpendicular or angled to its plane of orbit. These points were developed from pp. 41, 42, 1034, of Bailey's *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*.
- ⁴⁹ Leo. *Esoteric Astrology*, pp. 11 – 12.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. xvii, 18.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 17.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 18.
- ⁵⁴ The following is a summary of Leo's view from *Esoteric Astrology*, pp. xiv, 11, 12, 16, 19.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 127.
- ⁵⁸ It should be noted that in the earliest dictations to Alice Bailey, the Tibetan himself seems to have alluded to a solar system composed of seven chains, rather than one composed of seven schemes. For example, see p. 264 of *Letters on Occult Meditation*, dictated in 1920, according to James Stephenson in *Prophecy on Trial*, p. 23. Subsequently, the esoteric model of the solar system built on seven schemes of seven chains apiece came through much more clearly in *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, though even in that work there are to be found certain passages which muddy the matter. At any rate, it seems that the decision to reveal more fully the entire esoteric model of the solar system must have been made between the dictation of *Letters* (1920) and *Cosmic Fire* (1921–1924, again according to Stephenson). This would suggest that the earliest point at which the Tibetan was fully permitted and committed to divulging the more complete information would have been late 1920 or early 1921, which would have been some seven to eight years after the completion of Leo's *Esoteric Astrology*. Thus, had Leo enjoyed the distinct privilege of telepathic contact with the thoughtform of the new esoteric astrology, he would only have been permitted to have cognized and communicated the teaching on the esoteric model of the solar system as it had been cleared for revelation in his day – with the energy centers of the Solar Logos composed of chains and not schemes.
- ⁵⁹ Leo. *Esoteric Astrology*, p.16.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. xiv, 125.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁶³ For example, see Bailey. *Letters on Occult Meditation*, p. 179.

⁶⁴ Leo. *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 16.

⁶⁵ Bailey. *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 415.

⁶⁶ Leo. *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 70.

⁶⁷ For example, see Bailey. *Letters on Occult Meditation*, p. 285.

⁶⁸ Leo. *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 122.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 13.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁷⁴ Bailey. *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, p. 1175, 1177-1179. Why there were eight and not seven Planetary Schools is a complexity related to the enumeration of the schemes. *Cosmic Fire* gives nine schemes on p. 373, naming these the Uranus, Neptune, Saturn, Jupiter, Venus, Vulcan, Mars, Mercury, and Earth schemes (which are, of course, not to be confused with the eponymous planets). But eight Planetary Schools are listed on pages 1177-1179: Uranus, Neptune, Jupiter, Venus, Vulcan, Mars, Mercury, and Earth schools. Thus, there is either no school associated with the Saturn vibration, or an omission has occurred here. And which of these eight or nine should be the essential seven is not stated.

Further, that the Planetary Schools are associated with schemes and not individual planets is difficult to discern, though arguably the case. Chief among the arguments that the Planetary Schools are found located in schemes and not planets is the following, from *Cosmic Fire*, p. 1175. "Each scheme exists in order to teach a specific aspect of consciousness, and each planetary school or Hierarchy subjects its pupils to this law, only in manners diverse. These planetary schools are necessarily governed by certain factors of which the two most important are the peculiar karma of the planetary Logos concerned, and His particular Ray." The first sentence presents the schools in the context of what the schemes do, and the second sentence states outright that the most important governing factor over each school is the Planetary Logos

with which it is associated. Though neither sentence states flatly that the Schools are found in the schemes and not just on individual planets, it makes greater sense that if the primary influencing factor for each is a Planetary Logos, then the context in which each exists is the life of that Logos, not merely the life of one forty-ninth of Its expression.

In sum, even though there seem to be oddities in trying to match up the names and number of the schemes with those of the Planetary Schools as given by the Tibetan, for the most part, there is a meaningful and comprehensible correlation.

⁷⁵ Leo. *Esoteric Astrology*, pp. xvi, 2, 17.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 64 - 65.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 35, 98.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 290.

⁸³ Bailey. *Esoteric Astrology*, pp. 5 - 6.

⁸⁴ Leo. *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 6.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁸⁶ See M. Temple Richmond. "Affirming Planetary Purpose." *The Esoteric Quarterly*, Spring 2005, pp 13-23, for full explication of this theme.

A Mystical Interpretation of the Binding of Isaac

Jeffrey Gold

Abstract

This paper reinterprets the *Akedah* or the binding of Isaac that is found in *Genesis* 22. Standard interpretations of that passage raise serious moral questions about both God and Abraham. This reinterpretation, however, presents neither God nor Abraham as morally culpable. Using the symbols of astrology to interpret the *Akedah*, Isaac represents Abraham's fifth house of children, joy, and creativity. Connections are drawn between an astrological reading of the *Akedah* and the mystical teaching of renouncing the fruits of one's (5th house) creative action. Renouncing the fruits of one's action is then linked with egolessness (slaying Aries the Ram).

Introduction

One of the most difficult passages in the Torah is the *Akedah* (Hebrew: עֶבְרִיָּה), the binding of Isaac. At *Genesis* 22, God tests Abraham's faith by asking him to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac.¹ Abraham appears to pass this test as he picks up his knife to slay his son. Theologians, rabbis, and lay people have struggled to make sense of this passage. Some feminists display outrage with a Divine parent who requires blind obedience for such a heinous act. For example, Nel Noddings states: "But for the mother, for us, this is horrendous . . . For us, then, Abraham's decision is not only ethically unjustified but it is in basest violation of the supra-ethical—of caring. The one-caring can only describe his act—'You would kill your own son!'—and refuse him forgiveness. . . I suspect no woman could have written *Genesis*."² Elizabeth Wurtzel calls the *Genesis* story an "act of atrocity alleviated by an eleventh-hour episode of Divine intervention" and "an incident of God-mandated filicide."³ These are powerful critiques. Is it not morally outrageous for a central religious text to glorify the murder of one's own innocent child?

This essay reinterprets the passage from a Kabbalistic or Jewish mystical perspective. Since my interpretation is symbolic and not literal, it presents neither God nor Abraham as morally reprehensible. By utilizing the astrological symbols present in the story, I will contend that it is not a story of filicide but a story about abandoning the fruits of our labor and egolessness. The Mezritcher Rebbe encourages us to "turn into nothing."⁴ The turning into nothing, this turn away from egocentricity, is the astrological message of the binding of Isaac.

Isaac as Abraham's Fifth House

Although many Kabbalists practice astrology,⁵ it is rare to see astrological interpretations of specific passages of Torah. It is commonplace for Kabbalists to draw a connection between the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 signs of the Zodiac,⁶ but unusual to see astrology used to interpret various stories in the Torah. I shall, however, propose an astrological interpretation of the *Akedah*, an interpretation that does not require us to see the Divine as a parent with a fragile ego who demands blind obedience in the commission of unconscionable acts.

The Torah opens: "*Bereshit bara Elohim*" (בראשית ברא אלהים). This is usually translated, "In the beginning, God created." For an entire chapter, we witness the creative acts of a Divine Being. For six days, God creates the

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heaven, the earth, the sun, the moon, vegetation, living creatures, and, on the sixth day, human beings. The one thing we know about God from the first chapter of *Genesis* is that God is a creator. On the sixth day (*Genesis* I: 27), “God created man in His own image”. Human beings are made in the image of a Divine creator. It seems reasonable to conclude that humans are also creators. The very first thing that God says to the new humans is (*Genesis* I: 28): “Be fruitful and multiply”. God is blessing these new creatures by encouraging them to create, to produce, to reproduce, and to be prolific.

In astrology, each of the 12 houses rules a specific area or segment of life. For example, the second house rules finances, the sixth house rules work, the seventh house rules marriage, etc. The fifth house rules creativity. When we engage in creative activity, when we produce, this is a manifestation of fifth house energy. The fifth house is linked with the ways in which we are creative (drama, music, art, romance) and the joy associated with those activities.⁷ The fifth house is also associated with the products or fruits of

creative activity. These fruits may include works of art, symphonies, plays, and most importantly for our purposes, the product of romance and love, namely children. In a natal chart, the fifth house represents one’s children. Hence, Isaac is Abraham’s fifth house. Isaac’s name in Hebrew is *Yitzhak* (יצחק) meaning “laughter.” Laughter is associated with joy and fun, and the fifth house is known as the house of fun or the house of joy because creating is considered joyful. From an astrological perspective, everything in the Biblical narrative points to the fact that *Yitzhak* is Abraham’s fifth house, the house of Abraham’s

creative projects and the fruits of those creative projects.

Renouncing the Fruits of One’s Labor

In *Genesis* 22, God asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering. On my astrological interpretation, God is asking Abraham to sacrifice, give up, or renounce the fruits of his creative activity. Renouncing the fruits of one’s labor is a common theme in mystical literature. For example, in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna tells Arjuna: “You have the right to work, but never to the fruit of work. You should never engage in action for the sake of reward. . . The wise unify their consciousness and abandon

attachment to the fruits of action.”⁸ The final chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* is very clear. As humans, we must perform actions. Each one of us has duties, responsibilities, or a *dharmic* path. We should not cease to perform those duties. However, we should give up selfishly clinging to the fruits of those activities. Gandhi was once asked if he thought a particular march would change the British policy towards

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India. He responded: “That is none of my business.”⁹ Despite the fact that Gandhi worked tirelessly for the independence of India, he gave up attachment to how it turned out. He performed his *dharma* by marching, but he renounced attachment to the fruits.

Rabbi Harold Kushner believes that we can find the same message in *Ecclesiastes*. The Book of *Ecclesiastes* repeatedly states that there is nothing better for a human being to do than find enjoyment in their work (their vocation or *dharma*) and to savor the moment.¹⁰ It also recommends that, whatever we do, we do it with all of our might because we don’t know

what the future holds.¹¹ In interpreting these passages, Rabbi Kushner states “If logic tells you that in the long run, nothing makes a difference, then *don’t live in the long run . . .* learn to savor the moment, even if it does not last forever.”¹² He further explains that the sages of the Talmud say that “‘One hour in this world is better than all of eternity in the World to come’ . . . I take that passage to mean that when we have truly learned how to live, we will not need to look for rewards in some other life . . . We totally misunderstand what it means to be alive when we think of our lives as time we can use in search of rewards.”¹³ Kushner concludes that the message of *Ecclesiastes* is that we will be frantic and frustrated if we search throughout our lives looking for rewards or successes.¹⁴ In the best known tractate of the Mishnah, *Pirkei Avos (Ethics of the Fathers)*, it says: “Be not like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward; instead be like servants who serve their master not for the sake of receiving a reward.”¹⁵ To create or produce in order to receive a reward is essentially future oriented. As long as we think about a reward, as long as we think about the future, we are pulled out of the present moment.

Mindfulness

Attention to the present moment or mindfulness is not only a central feature in Zen Buddhism, it is essential in Judaism. When God called to Abraham at the beginning of the *Akedah* narrative (*Genesis* 22:1), Abraham responded with a one word answer: “*Heneini*.” When God called to Moses from the burning bush (*Exodus* 3:4), Moses gave the identical one word response. “*Heneini*” (הנני) means “I am here” or “I am fully present.” The two most important figures in the Torah respond to God’s call by saying “I am fully present.” In the Jewish tradition, to do something with “*heneini* consciousness” means to do it with all your heart, all your soul and all your might. Thich Nhat Hanh defines mindfulness as “keeping one’s consciousness alive to the present reality.”¹⁶ This is the Zen parallel of doing something with all your heart, soul and might.

In Judaism, the view that grounds mindfulness is found in *Isaiah* 6:3: “*Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh, Adonai tz’vaot, M’lo chol ha-aretz k’vodo*”:

קדוש קדוש קדוש יהוה צבאות מלא כל
הארץ כבודו

Translated, it says: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord; the entire earth is filled with Divine glory.” Divine, radiant glory permeates the whole earth. There is no sacred-profane distinction. The entire earth is filled with Divine energy. When we are in *heneini* consciousness, we are aware of the holiness, the sacredness of the present moment. Martin Buber points out the the central commandment of Hasidic Judaism is the “the hallowing of the everyday.”¹⁷

The Zen teacher Cheri Huber says: “Please do not do yourself the disservice of assuming there is something to do that is more important than just being right here, right now, present.”¹⁸ This ability to be fully present can only be achieved by abandoning the fruits of one’s labor. One of the slogans of the *lojong* teachings of Tibetan Buddhism is “Abandon any hope of fruition.”¹⁹ This is the symbolic point made in the Biblical narrative when God asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (Abraham’s fifth house, the fruit of Abraham and Sarah’s creative activity). The astrological point is that Abraham is being asked to renounce the fruits of his labor. In order to be present to holiness, one must be present. One can’t be present when one clings to the future.

Killing the Ram Interpreted as Egolessness

The second noble truth of Buddhism is that suffering is caused by clinging of mind or by selfish craving, i.e., wanting things to turn out a certain way (and then being disappointed when they don’t). The third noble truth recommends that we renounce our selfish craving or clinging (to results). Because the world is impermanent and ever changing, clinging will always lead to suffering. Clinging to an ever-changing world is like trying to hold on to a rushing stream. Since we will never make the world exactly as we want it to be, clinging to the world being a certain way inevitably leads to suffering. The only solution is to give up

our clinging to results or the fruits of our actions. When we do something, we should do it with every fiber of our being; but it will turn out as it turns out. Clinging to it turning out a specific way is a recipe for disappointment and frustration. Hence, on the mystical interpretation of the *Akedah*, God is telling Abraham that in order to obtain a more elevated level of consciousness (*heneini* consciousness); he must relinquish the attachments to the fruits of his creative activity. Write books, sing songs, plant gardens, conceive children, but do not be attached to what is produced. This is symbolized perfectly by asking Abraham to sacrifice the most important symbol of the fifth house. Since Abraham and Sarah longed to have a child, *Yitzchak* is the perfect symbol of the fruits of one's creative action.

Therefore, Abraham goes to the land of Moriah to sacrifice his son. In his limited understanding of God's command, Abraham thinks that sacrificing the fruits of one's labor requires destroying or killing the product. If Abraham had written a book, he would

have understood the Divine voice to command him to burn the book. So (*Genesis* 22:10), "Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son." At this point, God intervenes in order to expand Abraham's limited comprehension. God sends a ram (neither the lamb that Isaac expects nor a bull). The ram is, of course, Aries. Aries is the first sign of the Zodiac and represents the first house. The first house is the house of the ego, the house of the self.²⁰ Abraham must kill the ram that represents the ego or the self. This is the third noble truth, eliminate selfish craving. It is what Krishna tells Arjuna (*Bhagavad Gita* 18:11) when he says "true renunciation is giving up all desire for personal (selfish) reward."

God is asking Abraham to sacrifice, give up, or renounce the fruits of his creative activity. Renouncing the fruits of one's labor is a common theme in mystical literature. For example, in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna tells Arjuna: "You have the right to work, but never to the fruit of work. You should never engage in action for the sake of reward. . . The wise unify their consciousness and abandon attachment to the fruits of action."

In terms of Jewish mysticism, the Hasidic Rabbi, Nachman of Bratzlav, insists, "You must nullify your ego completely, until you are included in God's own unity."²¹ In commenting on *Deuteronomy* 5:5, the Hasidic Rabbi Michael of Zlotov said: "What stands between you and God like a wall is your Ego. This I, this consciousness of a separate existence, is a wall between you and the Divinity."²² The Buddhists, the Hindus, and the Kabbalists are all saying similar things. Egoism and selfishness are hindrances to achieving more exalted states. The Hindus call the exalted state "*samadhi*," a state in which the selfish agitations of the mind

become so still that the meditator, act of meditation and object of meditation all become one.²³ The Buddhists call it "*nirvana*," a state of "no wind" in which selfish desires and egoistic cravings are stilled. The Kabbalists call this state *yichud* (יחוד), or unification, a state in which there is no more egoistic wall separating a person from the Divine. As long as

one clings to the fruits of one's actions, one has a selfish or egoistic desire that places a wall between oneself and the Divine. One must slay the ram, or nullify the ego in order to achieve more refined states of awareness. So, in order to renounce the fruits of his labor, Abraham need not destroy Isaac, he must slay the ram or nullify his ego. As long as we are locked into egocentric conditioning (*i.e.*, the experience of feeling oneself to be separate from life, separate from the present moment, or separate from God), we will experience "loneliness, fear, desperation, disconnection, deprivation, inadequacy, greed, hate and confusion."²⁴

Stillness

The technique taught in Jewish mysticism for destroying the ram or ego is the technique of meditation or quieting the mind.²⁵ At *Isaiah* 30:15, the prophet proclaims: “In sitting still and rest shall ye be saved. In quietness . . . shall be your strength.” There is an emphasis on inner stillness in *Psalms*. For example, at *Psalms* 4:5, it says: “Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” And most dramatically, at *Psalms* 46:11, we find: “Be still and know I am God.” Elevated consciousness is achieved by quieting or claming the mind. This is reminiscent of Patanjali’s classic definition of Yoga (union with the Divine): “*Yogas citti-vritti-nirodha*.” Translated, it says: “Yoga is the calming of the agitations of the mind.”²⁶

The connection between stillness and expanded consciousness is evident from the passage describing the ascent of Elijah to the mount of God (*I Kings* 19:11-12). At the top of the mountain, Elijah witnesses a strong wind, and earthquake and a fire. But Elijah discovers that the Lord was not in the wind; the Lord was not in the earthquake; and the Lord was not in the fire. It is only when Elijah hears the *still small voice* that he is in touch with the Divine. It is not through colossal shows of strength and power that we reach the highest state of consciousness but through stillness. Fancy fireworks displays are enjoyable, but to truly expand one’s consciousness, one must quiet down the inner agitations (desires, emotions, and thoughts). The founder of Hasidism, Israel Baal Shem Tov, states: “The world is full of wonders and miracles; but we take our hands, cover our eyes and see nothing.”²⁷ Radiance is everywhere. But we just don’t see it. The inner agitations of the mind prevent us from being fully present to the wonders that abound. Through meditation or quieting the mind, we become aware of the miraculous nature of life.

Innocence

This nullification of the ego leads us to genuine innocence. In the Zen Buddhist tradition, Shunryu Suzuki discusses the importance of *shoshin* or beginner’s mind. A beginner’s

mind is not a closed mind, but an empty and ready mind. It is the mind of innocence. An empty mind is always ready for anything and open to everything. “In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities; in the expert’s mind there are few.”²⁸ He concludes, “When we have no thought of achievement, no thought of self, we are true beginners.”²⁹ In the Zen tradition, the innocence of a beginner is associated with giving up thoughts of self and relinquishing or renouncing thoughts of achievement and accomplishment.

This Zen concept has its origins in the Taoist idea of the uncarved block. In Chapter 28 of the *Tao-te-Ching*, Lao Tzu urges us to “return to the state of infancy” and to “return to the state of simplicity (uncarved wood).”³⁰ Lao Tzu urges us to become more simple and childlike. Benjamin Hoff made this the theme of his book, *The Tao of Pooh*. Hoff states:

From the state of the Uncarved Block comes the ability to enjoy the simple and the quiet, the natural and the plain. Along with that comes the ability to do things spontaneously and have them work, odd as that may appear to others at times. As Piglet put it in *Winnie-the-Pooh*, “Pooh hasn’t much Brain, but he never comes to any harm. He does silly things and they turn out right.”³¹

The entire point of Hoff’s book is to say that the innocent, simple-minded Pooh Bear is a perfect example of a Western Taoist. I would like to propose that the Zen concept of beginner’s mind, the Taoist concept of the uncarved block, with their emphasis on simplicity and innocence, has a parallel in the Biblical idea of slaying the ram or the ego.

In the West, both Jewish and Christian sources emphasize the importance of innocence. In *Mark* and *Luke*, we find the same story:

They brought children for Jesus to touch. The disciples rebuked them, but when Jesus saw it he was indignant, and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not try to stop them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you: whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.”³²

In the Hasidic tradition, there is the often-told story of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, who hesitated for a long time before blowing the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*. After the congregation grew impatient, the Rebbe explained that there was an innocent, uneducated Jew standing in the back of the congregation. He was never taught how to pray. His knowledge of Hebrew was limited to the *aleph-bet*. So this innocent said to God: “Oh Great God, I am uneducated and ignorant. I cannot even recite the holy prayers from the book. I only know the 22 letters of the *aleph-bet*. So, I shall recite them for you: *aleph, bet, gimmel, dalet* . . . You, Lord, in your great wisdom and mercy, will weave them together into the words of a beautiful prayer.” It was for this man that Levi-Yitzchak waited.³³ This innocent man prayed with more *kavanah*, more heart-felt intensity than the more “enlightened” members of the congregation. The child-like innocence of the man in the story is similar to the innocence of Winnie the Pooh. The lack of a sophisticated ego-structure is praised in Taoism, in Zen, by Jesus, and in the Hasidic tradition. This, I submit, is the true meaning of slaying Aries the Ram.

This is also, on my interpretation, the symbolic meaning of the story of “the (alleged) fall.” In the Garden of Eden, there are two trees that are specifically mentioned. There is *Etz Chaim*, (עץ חיים), the Tree of Life; and of course there is *Etz Da-at Tov Va-Ra* (ועץ הדעת טוב ורע), the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Hebrew word *Da-at* (דעת, “knowledge”),³⁴ has the sense of an opinion, a judgment, an outlook, a belief. It is the ability to distinguish.³⁵ If it is *Da-at Tov Va-ra*, it is the ability to distinguish good from evil, right from wrong. Once we eat from the tree of knowledge of duality, knowledge of opposites, right and wrong, good and bad, us and them, we have

already left Eden, the world of unitary consciousness or *yichud*. Now, it is inevitable, that, as humans, we conceptualize, rationalize, think, compare and contrast, adjudicate, arbitrate, and judge. But, when we do that, we leave the world of unity and union, and enter the world of duality, the realm of opposites, the world of suffering.

So, how do we get back to *Etz Chaim*, the tree of Life, the world of the sacred? As sung by Joni Mitchell and also by Crosby, Stills and Nash in the song, *Woodstock*, “We’ve got to get back to the Garden.” How do we do it? How do we tune into the divine channel? By tuning into the world of duality, we cannot

possibly get to the divine channel. It’s like tuning into MTV³⁶ and hoping to find the Discovery Channel. In *Isaiah* 51:1, the prophet says: “Hearken to Me, Ye that seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which ye were hewn, the quarry from which you were digged.” In other words, look to your roots, your source. Go back to your original state of non-duality or innocence. Go back

to the state of the uncarved block or beginner’s mind.

Conclusion

Egocentricity, the view that we are separate and isolated from life, prevents us from seeing the holiness in life. In order to attain *heneini* consciousness, one must begin to dismantle the seductive ego-structure. From an astrological perspective, the binding of Isaac is not a story of the willingness of a faithful man to murder his own son. It is a symbolic tale instructing us that in order to reach God-consciousness (*yichud*), one must sacrifice the fruits of one’s labor. Just as the exodus story is understood symbolically as the movement from the land of Egypt (*Metzraim* or limited consciousness) to the Promised Land of Israel (expanded consciousness),³⁷ the *Akedah* is understood as the

**At the top of the mountain,
Elijah witnesses a strong
wind, and earthquake and a
fire. But Elijah discovers that
the Lord was not in the wind;
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earthquake; and the Lord
was not in the fire. It is only
when Elijah hears the still
small voice that he is in touch
with the Divine.**

path of the renunciation of the fruits of one's labor. How does one do that? Not by destroying the fruits, but by giving up selfish attachments to the fruits, thereby becoming more selfless and more innocent.

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- ¹ The standard interpretation of this passage is: "The purpose of the command was to apply a supreme test to Abraham's faith, thus strengthening his faith by the heroic exercise of it." *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs: Hebrew Text, English Translation and Commentary*, ed. Dr. J.H. Hertz, Late Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, 2nd ed. (London: Soncino Press, 1960), 201.
- ² Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics & Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 43.
- ³ Elizabeth Wurtzel, *Bitch: In Praise of Difficult Women* (New York: Random House, 1998), 36.
- ⁴ Jack Kornfield, *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry* (New York: Bantam, 2000), 55.
- ⁵ See Rabbi Philip Berg, *The Star Connection: The Science of Judaic Astrology* (New York: Research Centre of Kabbalah Press, 1986); Rabbi Joel Dobin, *The Astrological Secrets of the Hebrew Sages* (New York: Inner Traditions, 1977); and Matityahu Glazerson, *Above the Zodiac: Astrology in Jewish Thought* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson Inc., 1997).
- ⁶ Dobin, 39-49.
- ⁷ Debbi Kempton-Smith, *Secrets From a Stargazer's Notebook: Making Astrology Work for You* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 18.
- ⁸ *Bhagavad Gita* 2:47, 51, tr. Eknath Easwaran (Petaluma, California: Nilgiri Press, 1985), 66-67.
- ⁹ Bo Lozoff, *Bo Lozoff at Twin Rivers Corrections Center*, (Durham: Human Kindness Foundation, 1995), videocassette.
- ¹⁰ *Ecclesiastes* 2:24, 3:12, and 3:22.
- ¹¹ *Ecclesiastes* 9:10.
- ¹² Harold Kushner, *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough* (New York: Pocket Books, 1986), 141.
- ¹³ Kushner, 151-152.
- ¹⁴ Kushner, 152.
- ¹⁵ *Pirkei Avos* 1:3 (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1989), 9.
- ¹⁶ Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness!* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), 11.
- ¹⁷ Martin Buber, *Hasidism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), 72.
- ¹⁸ Cheri Huber, *The Key* (Murphys, CA: Keep It Simple Books, 1984), 1.

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- ¹⁹ Pema Chodron, *Start Where You Are* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1994), 96.
- ²⁰ Kempton-Smith, 17.
- ²¹ Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *The Light Beyond: Adventures in Hassidic Thought* (New York: Maznaim Publishing, 1981), 56.
- ²² Louis Newman, *The Hasidic Anthology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), 427.
- ²³ I learned this from my teacher Shelley Trimmer. In fact the inspiration for this article came from him.
- ²⁴ Huber, preface.
- ²⁵ Jeffrey Gold, "Spiritual Zionism," *Dialogue & Alliance* 5, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 59.
- ²⁶ Patanjali, *Yoga Sutras* I: 2.
- ²⁷ *Siddur Hadash*, ed. Rabbi Sidney Greenberg and Rabbi Jonathan D. Levine (New York: The Prayer Book Press, 2000), 80.
- ²⁸ Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* (New York: Weatherhill, 1970), 21.
- ²⁹ Shunryu Suzuki, 22.
- ³⁰ Lao Tzu, *Tao-te-Ching*, tr. Wing-tsit Chan (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), 149.
- ³¹ Benjamin Hoff, *The Tao of Pooh* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1982), 21.
- ³² *Mark* 10:13-16 and *Luke* 18:15-17.
- ³³ See Samuel Dresner, *The World of a Hasidic Master: Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev* (New York: Shapolsky Publishers, 1986), 99-100; Jacob Minkin, *The Romance of Hassidism* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1955), 166; and Elie Wiesel, *Souls on Fire* (New York: Summit Books, 1972), 109.
- ³⁴ Interestingly, *Da-at* is the mysterious *sefirah* that is the balance point between *Chochmah* and *Binah*.
- ³⁵ Mattis Kantor, *Ten Keys for Understanding Human Nature* (New York: Zichron Press, 1994), 34-37.
- ³⁶ MTV, Music Television, is a popular cable television channel in the United States.
- ³⁷ For an expanded treatment of the symbolic interpretation of the exodus story, see Jeffrey Gold, 52-65.

The Shekinah: the Indwelling Glory of God

John Nash

Summary

Over the course of two millennia the Shekinah rose from an impersonal expression of God's glory in the world almost to the status of a divine hypostasis. The Shekinah possibly had biblical roots but took definite form as a feminine aspect of God in the rabbinic period and gathered strength through the Middle Ages. The 16th-century scholars of Safed invested her with much theological and devotional importance.

According to legend the Shekinah was betrothed to the Holy One but was exiled or lost in the wilderness. Her exile mirrored the Babylonian exile and the diaspora, but it also was seen as the result of human failings. In response, pious Jews—and perhaps by implication humanity as a whole—must find her, prepare the royal wedding feast, and present the adorned Shekinah to the waiting bridegroom. Meanwhile, the Shekinah served as a divine (but personalized) mother/daughter, a source of inspiration, and even a reminder of moral behavior.

Clearly, the Shekinah was the product of a particular religious culture, but she remains vitally relevant to modern quests to understand the Divine Feminine and the immanence of God.

Origins of the Shekinah

The word Shekinah (Hebrew: שכִּינָה) was probably coined toward the end of the biblical period. It is thought to be derived from the root verb *shakan* (שָׁכַן, “to dwell or abide”).¹ “Shakan” was often used in the Hebrew scriptures to denote the abiding presence of God in sacred locations like the Ark of the Covenant, the Holy of Holies, or Mount Sinai. For example in *Exodus* we read: “[T]he glory of the LORD abode [shakan] upon mount Sinai.”² And in *Isaiah*: “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth [shakan] eternity,

whose name is Holy; I dwell [shakan] in the high and holy place.”³

The Shekinah was discussed frequently in the *Talmud*. It came to denote the immanence of God, contrasting with the transcendent Tetragrammaton (יהוה), whose name was too powerful to utter. Through the Shekinah “God fills the world as the soul fills the body.”⁴ The Shekinah was the divine presence in the world, the divine glory, or *kavod* (כבוד).

Retroactively, the Shekinah was associated with the rainbow, the expression of God's glory and symbol of his covenant with Noah, with the cloud and pillar of fire that went before the Israelites during the exodus, or more abstractly with the *Elohim* (אלהים) or the Holy Spirit, *Ruach* (רוח).⁵ The Shekinah was linked with the Canaanite goddess Asherah (אשרה), “Great Lady” or “Queen of Heaven,” or sometimes jointly with Asherah and her consort of *El Shadai* (אל שדי), the “High God.”⁶ The compassionate El Shadai watched over his people and responded to their concerns. For example, in *Genesis* we read: “El Shadai bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people;” and “[B]y El, who shall help thee; and by Shadai, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above...blessings of the breasts, and of the womb.”⁷ In turn, Asherah came to women's aid in childbirth.

By the latter part of the first century CE, the indwelling presence of God could no longer be

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found in the temple which had been destroyed by the Romans, but it could still be found in the world and particularly in people's hearts. The Shekinah was sometimes identified with the *Knesset Yisrael*, the Community of Israel. Destruction of the infrastructure of Jewish worship forced many people to turn inward, and one expression of this new introversion was *Merkabah* mysticism.⁸ Devotion to the glory that surrounds the throne of God was a concept of the highest significance in this movement. At times, the Shekinah was linked and with the Archangel Metatron who also featured in *Merkabah* mysticism.⁹

Over time, the fact that "Shekinah" was a feminine noun took on more than grammatical significance. The Shekinah began to be anthropomorphized, with a definite feminine persona. This is evident in the *Sepher ha-Bahir*, "Brilliance," a compilation of textual fragments possibly dating back to the second century CE. After quoting from *Isaiah*: "The whole earth is full of his glory"¹⁰ the author went on to speak of the divine glory thus:

This is like a royal princess who came from a far place. People did not know her origin, but they saw that she was a woman of valor, beautiful and refined in all her ways. They said, "She certainly originates from the side of light, for she illuminates the world through her deeds."¹¹

The association of the Shekinah with light and glory continued through the Middle Ages. The 11th-century Talmudic scholar, Judah ben Barzillai al-Bargeloni of Barcelona, commented:

"When the children of Israel were in exile, the Shekinah was not perfected below or above. This is because the Shekinah is in exile with them." The Zohar ... goes on to say: "the exile is considered the nakedness of supernal Israel." The exile was not just the one that followed destruction of the second temple, it was all exiles, including the one to Babylon in the sixth century BCE; for we are told that "the angels escorted the Shekinah to Babylon, sat there and wept with Israel."

When the thought arose in God of creating a world, He first created the Holy Spirit to be a sign of his divinity... And He created the image of the Throne of His Glory... which is a radiant brilliance and a great light that shines upon all His other creatures. And that great light is called the Glory of our God... And the Sages call this great light *Shekinah*.¹²

The Shekinah and Qabalah

As the personification of the Shekinah increased, she began to evolve into a female aspect of God, an

hypostatized feminine power. This was particularly noticeable among the medieval Qabalists. Interestingly, this was the same period when *Chokmah* (חכמה, "Wisdom") underwent its own transformation from a feminine to a masculine power, emerging as the archetypal *Abba* (אבא, "Father") of the Qabalah.

Large numbers of Jews fled Roman repression in first- and second-century

CE Palestine to settle in Spain and southern France. Others followed later in the wake of the Moorish invasions. Sorrow over the loss of their homeland was projected onto the Shekinah in the notion that she was banished too. However, despite this mutual exile she expressed the unbreakable link with the divine reality. Through shared suffering with her people, the Shekinah served as the guarantor of the Covenant.

The monumental Qabalistic text *Sepher ha-Zohar*, or "Book of Splendor," compiled in the 13th century, quotes the passage from *Isaiah*

mentioned earlier, adding: “and the Shekinah is revealed below in this world. When the children of Israel were in exile, the Shekinah was not perfected below or above. This is because the Shekinah is in exile with them.”¹³ The *Zohar* also refers to the Shekinah as the “Mother of Israel” and goes on to say: “the exile is considered the nakedness of supernal Israel.”¹⁴ The exile was not just the one that followed destruction of the second temple, it was all exiles, including the one to Babylon in the sixth century BCE; for we are told that “the angels escorted the Shekinah to Babylon, sat there and wept with Israel.”¹⁵

Qabalists conventionally linked the Shekinah, the divine presence in the world, with the tenth and lowest sephirah in the Tree of Life: *Malkuth*, the “Kingdom.” Indeed the Shekinah was often used as an alternative name for *Malkuth*.¹⁶ The feminine character of the lowest sephirah is not surprising when we recognize that it receives the divine force from all higher sephiroth, “receptiveness” being a primary feminine archetype. The immanent Shekinah of *Malkuth* is the “lower Shekinah,” contrasting with—yet inseparably connected with—the transcendental, “supernal Shekinah” of *Binah*.¹⁷ The “combined” Shekinah is a feminine divine expression reaching from the very highest levels to the plane of earthly existence.

Early Qabalistic scholars taught that *Malkuth* had become dissociated from the rest of the Tree of Life. And here we find a close correspondence to the notion of the Shekinah’s exile. The Shekinah-*Malkuth* reflected the light of the higher sephiroth, just as the moon receives its light from the sun. But as a result of the exile, she was cut off from the source of life and nourishment. We are told in the *Zohar* that “whatever the Shekinah has, she receives from *Zeir Anpin*.”¹⁸ *Zeir Anpin* (זַעִיר אַנְפִּין), literally “Short Face”) is one of the *partzufim* (singular *partzuf*, “face”), or divine persons, and it corresponds collectively to the six sephiroth—counting *Daath* as one—lying immediately above *Malkuth*.¹⁹ In particular, the *Zeir Anpin* can be related to the central sephirah *Tiphareth*. Both the *Zeir Anpin* and *Tiphareth* are often referred to as “the Holy One, blessed

be He.” The Holy One is the son of the Most High, and the Shekinah is the daughter—and prospective daughter-in-law. The notion that the Holy one is betrothed to his sister should not be taken as implying incest. We are dealing with symbols, and the sister-wife symbol is an ancient one; for example we find in the *Song of Solomon*: “How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse!”²⁰

Both the Talmud and the *Bahir* likened the Sabbath, or *Shabbat*, to a wedding or to the visit of a queen. The same theme was taken up in the *Zohar*:

[One] should prepare a comfortable reclining bed with many pillows and embroidered cushions from all that he has in his house, as when preparing the marriage canopy for the bride, because *Shabbat* is both a queen and a bride. Due to this, the sages of the *Mishnah* used to hasten to come out on *Shabbat* eve to welcome her on the way. And they used to say: “Come bride, come bride.”²¹

We are left in no doubt as to who the bride is: “we should to make a beautiful canopy with beautiful decorations to invite the Supernal Bride, who is the Shekinah.”²² Significantly, the Sabbath is the seventh and last day of the week, and the Shekinah-*Malkuth* is the seventh and last of the lower sephiroth. The six days leading up to the Sabbath correspond to the six sephiroth with which the *Zeir Anpin* is associated.²³

The personification of the Shekinah as the bride provided fertile ground for all kinds of symbolic correspondences. She was the betrothed who had been lost and defiled; now she must be found, re-adorned and reunited with the Holy One, the waiting bridegroom. The notion of defilement was not new; in the *Torah* God had warned: “Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell [shakan]: for I the LORD dwell [shakan] among the children of Israel.”²⁴ A marriage between the Shekinah and the Holy One clearly corresponded to traditional Qabalistic rituals to raise the consciousness from *Malkuth* to *Tiphareth*. *Malkuth*, incidentally, was rep-

resented by lead and Tiphareth by gold, so the elevation of consciousness also corresponded to an alchemical transmutation. In the Christian Qabalah *Tiphareth* became identified with Jesus Christ, and the faithful at the level of Malkuth addressed their devotions to Tiphareth. Even more significantly, the church claimed to be the “bride of Christ.”

The Shekinah’s banishment and the Jews’ exile from the Promised Land were both sources of great sadness. However, this sadness must be transformed into joy. For example, we read in the *Zohar*:

[T]he Shekinah does not dwell in a place of sorrow, but only in a place of joy. If a place has no joy, the Shekinah will not abide there. This is echoed in the verse: “But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of Hashem came upon him.” (II *Melachim* 3:15)²⁵

The 13th-century Rabbi Jacob ben Sheshet of Gerona equated prophetic powers with the presence of the Shekinah, commenting that “The Shekinah dwells only upon him that is wise.”²⁶ On the other hand, the Shekinah was not always regarded as a benevolent presence. A few passages in the *Zohar* portray her as an agent of judgment and destruction, serving forces more powerful than herself.²⁷ Perhaps, in her exile, she became hostage to evil forces, as did her sister the Pistis Sophia.²⁸

The Shekinah in Safed

The Jews’ expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula, by Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492, set in motion further migrations to Eastern Europe and even back to their homeland. Within a

few years, a group of eminent Jewish scholars had established the community of Safed in Palestine, close to the traditional burial site of the early Qabalist Simeon ben Jochai.²⁹ The Safed scholars, whose most famous members were Moses ben Jacob Cordovero (1522–1570) and Isaac ben Solomon Luria (1534–1572), studied the *Zohar* and other basic texts at length, continuing the theoretical work for which it had laid the groundwork. Others strove to transform the theoretical framework of the *Zohar* into ethical and devotional practices.

The rabbis of Safed took a strong interest in the Shekinah. They saw her exile as a metaphor for the Jew’s continued wanderings; but

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they also regarded it as a consequence of man’s continuing sinfulness. Accordingly, everybody shared in the guilt of her exile and defilement, and everyone—at least all pious Jews—shared the responsibility for restoring her to her rightful place. A custom developed in which the faithful would wander through the fields, particularly through graveyards, looking for the Shekinah.

Perhaps they were inspired by the passage in the *Song of Solomon* which reads: “Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field.”³⁰ Safed scholar Solomon ben Moshe Halevi Alkabetz (b. 1505) used to go out with his students to pray and meditate on the graves of *zaddikim* (saints), hoping—perhaps as Jacob ben Sheshet did—for mystical insights. Alkabetz was moved by the association of the Shekinah with the lost and defiled bride. “[E]very Sabbath,” he wrote, Jews “should go forth to welcome to Sabbath Queen.” And “Come, my Beloved, to meet the Bride, let us welcome the Sabbath.”³¹

Moses Cordovero suggested: “One should wander, as if exiled from place to place, purely for the sake of Heaven, and thereby make oneself a vessel for the Shekinah in exile.”³²

Through a life of asceticism the seeker “should humble his heart in exile and bind himself to the *Torah* and then the Shekinah will be with him.”³³ Indeed, the *Zohar* states that, when a man reads the *Torah*, “the Shekinah spreads Her wings over him.”³⁴

Medieval Jews, like those of other periods, insisted that the two sexes were complementary and unmarried people were incomplete. Celibacy was considered an anomaly, and rabbis were expected to marry and have children. Indeed, the belief was that the Shekinah could only flow into a man through his wife. Cordovero contended that a man develops a relationship both with his wife and with the overshadowing Shekinah. In *The Palm Tree of Deborah* we are told that man:

“stands between the two females, the physical female below who receives food, raiment and conjugal rights from him, and the Shekinah who stands above him to bless him with these which he, in turn, gives to the wife of his covenant.”³⁵

The model for this dual relationship is the one between Tiphareth; Binah, the “supernal Shekinah” or “Higher Mother;” and the conventional Shekinah, or “Lower Mother”:

This is after the pattern of Beauty [Tiphareth], which stands between the two Females: the Higher Mother [Binah], which pours out all that it requires, and the Lower Mother [Malkuth-Shekinah], which receives from it food, raiment and conjugal rights, namely lovingkindness, justice, and pity as is known. And the Shekinah cannot come to him unless he resembles the Supernal Reality.³⁶

The Shekinah is divine glory dwelling in the world; but she makes demands, not only of Tiphareth and the Jewish race, but of every pious Jew. The sins of the world had driven her into exile, and it was man’s individual and collective responsibility to bring her back: and restore the loving union between the Shekinah and the Holy One. On an individual level the

Shekinah serves, among other things, as a man’s conscience. According to Cordovero she accompanies a man when he is away from home, not only to maintain his wholeness, but also to remind him to be faithful to his wife.³⁷

Elijah de Vidas (died c. 1593), probably a student of both Moses Cordovero and Isaac Luria, urged the pious Jew to confess his sins in order that the soul could “stimulate the female waters within the Shekinah.”³⁸ Then, at midnight, he should rise to study the *Torah* and pray. By so doing he could “feel the distress of the Shekinah [and] weep and mourn over the destruction of the Sanctuary.”³⁹ Midnight is the time when “the Holy One... forgives those who return to Him.” De Vidas no doubt recalled that the *Zohar* identified midnight as the time when the Holy One and the Shekinah are joined in consortium.⁴⁰ It is also the time when she is most accessible to the people: “[A]lthough the Shekinah goes into exile with Israel, nevertheless she is to be found in the domain of her husband.”⁴¹

De Vidas was not the first to identify the Shekinah with the Moon, but he asserted that she “is exiled from time to time inasmuch as Her light has been diminished.”⁴² Both Cordovero and de Vidas saw the Shekinah as an intercessor with the Holy One, very much as the Virgin Mary is for Jesus Christ in Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

The Shekinah in Modern Times

Concepts of the Shekinah were explored by the Hassidic writers of Eastern Europe, many of whom had studied the major Qabalistic sources. Among other things they discussed the Shekinah as the glory of God, her exile, her relationship with Tiphareth, and her association with the Sabbath. For example, the famous Rabbi Isaac Baal Shem Tov (1698–1760) quoted the *Zohar* in explaining the Sabbath as “the coupling between the Holy One and the Shekinah.” He proceeded to point out “The Holy One refers to the Godly Essence that is hidden from creation. The Shekinah, on the other hand, refers to the Godly Essence that dwells in the physical world.”⁴³ That identifi-

cation with matter might in itself constitute the basis of the “exile.”

Polish Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heshel (c. 1745–1825) continued the tradition of revering the Shekinah as the revealed glory of God:

When [God] desired to reveal the glory of His kingship and power in the lower worlds, He first caused His light to bring forth the upper worlds... From there, He continued step by step... This continued until His Light reached the level that we call the Shekinah.⁴⁴

Baal Shem Tov’s great-grandson, the Ukrainian Rabbi Nachman (1772–1810), explored a similar theme, explaining that “glory” refers to Israel and adding that “God’s Shekinah dwells inside... each and every Jew.”⁴⁵

Dov Baer (1704–1772), the so-called Magid of Mezrich, echoed the sentiments of Elijah de Vidas in relating the Shekinah to prayer:

When you want to pray to God for something, think of your soul as part of the Shekinah, like a raindrop in the sea. Then pray for the needs of the Shekinah... Then, if you are properly attached to the Shekinah, this influence will also be transmitted to you.⁴⁶

Reverence for the Shekinah extended beyond Judaism. Golden Dawn initiate Arthur Edward Waite (1857–1942) made an extensive study of Zoharic references to the Shekinah. Among other things, he examined the issue of whether the Shekinah can reliably be equated with the Holy Spirit of Judaic tradition: that is with *Ruach* (רוח). Waite concluded that the weight of evidence indeed supports this equation.⁴⁷ He does leave open the possible association of

the Holy Spirit with Binah but reaffirms his conclusion by the argument that Binah is the Shekinah’s higher aspect.

Modern Qabalists still project the Shekinah back to biblical times. For example, she was said to have been the subject of musical devotion: “The ancient Levites and prophets used music so that the Shekinah would descend upon them.”⁴⁸

Twentieth-century Judaic scholar Gershom Scholem (1897–1982) gave much thought to

the issue of whether Jews of the biblical period considered the Shekinah—or her antecedents—to be a divine hypostasis or whether she was merely a literary personification or poetic metaphor. He also examined the possibility that the Shekinah was not just destined to be united in matrimony with the Holy One but that she was in fact *identical* with the Holy One.⁴⁹ Scholem acknowledged the long, rich

The story of the Shekinah can be viewed in the historical terms of a particular religious tradition, or we can seek its more general legacy and relevance to us today... The Shekinah affirms the immanence of God, expressing the divine glory in the world—albeit not without tension due to human weakness. Her role as a feminine aspect of God, distinct from the masculine but destined for eternal union with it, provides insight into gender symbolism at the highest levels.

tradition of the Shekinah, with roots in scripture and the *Talmud*; but his main conclusion was that her status as a distinct feminine aspect of God was a construct of medieval Qabalistic thought.⁵⁰ Further research will either support or refute his conclusion.

Concluding Remarks

The *Shekinah* has played a conspicuous role in esoteric Judaism for more than two millennia, expressing the notion of the revealed glory of God, the divine presence in the world. At times, “She who dwells within,” has even assumed the status of a feminine divine hypostasis distinct from or complementary to the Father God. Efforts to show that the Shekinah

was recognized as such during biblical times have generally been unsuccessful, but her qualities do seem to have been anticipated in the Hebrew Bible.

According to the Qabalists, the Shekinah is identified with *Malkuth*, “the Kingdom;” and just as Malkuth was once detached from the Tree of Life, the Shekinah was cut off from the source of life and lost in the wilderness. Significantly, in the Hebrew gematria, “Shekinah” has a value of 385, the same as *ha-raqira* (הַרְקִיטָה, “the firmament”), *mitsryma* (מִצְרַיִם, “into Egypt”), and *shemamah* (שְׁמָמָה, “desolation”).⁵¹ As the story of the Shekinah’s exile developed, there was an interesting shift of emphasis away from blaming those who had driven her—and the Jewish people—from their homeland toward the recognition that her exile might have been the result of human weakness. The Shekinah shared in the sufferings of her people; but the people must now find her, adorn her for the divine nuptials, and reunite her with the waiting bridegroom. She must be sought not just in the fields and graveyards but in each person’s heart.

Certainly the Shekinah was, to a great extent, a product of male theological speculation. She emerged in a society with rigid gender roles: one where women were not permitted to study the Torah, still less the Qabalah. Not surprisingly we can detect some degree of gender bias. The Shekinah has a lower status than the Holy One; Shekinah-Malkuth is below the Zeir Anpin-Tiphareth on the Qabalistic Tree of Life. It was she, not the Holy One, who was exiled—although we might offer the counter-argument that she deserves the greater credit for not abandoning her people.

On the other hand, we must also recognize that the rabbis accorded her the highest honors of their culture. Significantly, the Shekinah was not forced into the role of the Virgin Mary, eternally unable to fulfill her role as a woman. The persona of the Shekinah perhaps reflects the healthier life of men in the rabbinic tradition, contrasted with the celibate ideal of Catholicism or the puritanism of the reformed churches. It was a life based on the principle that men and women are incomplete without each other and that their natural, joyful state is

to be united in marriage. Cordovero’s assertion that the Shekinah can only flow to a man through his wife is another affirmation of the importance of marriage—although it could also be interpreted allegorically. Bearing in mind that, in Hebrew and most other ancient languages, “soul” was a feminine noun,⁵² the assertion might mean that we can only contact the divine presence through our souls.

The story of the Shekinah can be viewed in the historical terms of a particular religious tradition, or we can seek its more general legacy and relevance to us today. The latter seems to be the more appropriate response. The Shekinah affirms the immanence of God, expressing the divine glory in the world—albeit not without tension due to human weakness. Her role as a feminine aspect of God, distinct from the masculine but destined for eternal union with it, provides insight into gender symbolism at the highest levels. The Shekinah speaks to us as an important figure in today’s quest for the divine feminine and for greater understanding of the multi-faceted nature of God.

¹ For a discussion of the origins of “Shekinah” see: Fred P Miller. *Zechariah and Jewish Renewal: From Gloom to Glory*. Moeller Haus, 1999, ch. 8.

² *Exodus* 24:16. (Unless stated otherwise, all biblical quotations are from the King James Version.)

³ *Isaiah* 57:15.

⁴ Karen Armstrong. *A History of God*. Ballantine Books, 1994, p. 74.

⁵ “Elohim” is an irregular feminine noun with a masculine plural ending. The fact that it is plural is lost in most English versions of the Bible where it is translated as “God” or “the Lord.” “Ruach” is a regular feminine noun.

⁶ *El Shadai* is also rendered “Mighty God” or “God of the Mountain.” *El* became *Allah* in Arabic.

⁷ *Genesis* 28:3, 49:25 (KJV with substitutions).

⁸ Gershom Scholem. *The Mystical Shape of the Godhead*. Schocken Books, 1991, p. 21.

⁹ The name “Metatron” means beside or above the throne.

¹⁰ *Isaiah* 6:3.

¹¹ *The Bahir*, 132. (Transl: Aryeh Kaplan.) Weiser Books, 1998, p. 48.

- ¹² Quoted in: Scholem. *The Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, p. 155.
- ¹³ *Zohar*, 9, *Vayetze*: 27, verse 272. Kabbalah Centre International, 2003. The Shekinah is mentioned 1,065 times in the *Zohar*.
- ¹⁴ *Zohar*, 2, *Beresheet A*: 25, verse 268.
- ¹⁵ *Zohar*, 25, *Vayakhel*: 2, verse 20. This is a reference to *Psalms* 137:1-2: “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.”
- ¹⁶ The *Zohar* asserts that “Malkuth is a body to the Shekinah.” 49, *Ki Tetze*: 21, verse 102.
- ¹⁷ *Zohar*, 33, *Kedoshim*: 4, verse 36.
- ¹⁸ *Zohar*, 19, *Yitro*: 22, verse 403.
- ¹⁹ There are five partzufim: *Arikkh Anpin* (אֲרִיכְהָ אֲנָפִין, “Long Face”), which corresponds to the sephirah *Kether*; *Abba* (“Father”), which corresponds to *Chokmah*; *Imma* (“Mother”), corresponding to *Binah*; *Zeir Anpin*, corresponding to *Chesed* through *Yesod*; and *Nukvah* (“Daughter” or “Bride”), corresponding to *Malkuth*. The relationship between the Zeir Anpin, Tiphareth and neighboring sephiroth is discussed in John Nash. “The Trinity and Its Symbolism.” *Esoteric Quarterly*, Spring 2005, pp. 33-46.
- ²⁰ *Song of Solomon* 4:10.
- ²¹ *Zohar*, 47, *Ekev*: 3, verse 32.
- ²² *Zohar*, 21, *Trumah*: 80, verse 789.
- ²³ *Zohar*, 44, *Pinchas*: 123, verse 854.
- ²⁴ *Numbers* 35:34.
- ²⁵ *Zohar*, 11, *Vayeshhev*: 3, verse 29. “Melachim” is the Hebrew name of the Book of *Kings*.
- ²⁶ Joseph Dan. *The Early Kabbalah*. Paulist Press, 1986, pp. 145, 149.
- ²⁷ Scholem. *The Mystical Shape of the Godhead*., pp. 189ff.
- ²⁸ The *Pistis Sophia*, a 2nd- to 4th-century Gnostic text, relates how Sophia fell from heaven and became the hostage of the archons. She was eventually rescued by Jesus Christ.
- ²⁹ It is sometimes claimed that Simeon ben Jochai wrote the *Zohar*; however this is unlikely, given the sophistication of this work compared with, say, the *Bahir* that probably was written in the 2nd or 3rd century. Most authorities attribute the *Zohar* to the Spanish Jew Moses de Leon (1238–1305).
- ³⁰ *Song of Solomon* 7:10.
- ³¹ Solomon Alkabetz. “The Pious Customs of Moses Cordovero” and “Come, My Beloved.” Quoted in: Lawrence Fine. *Safed Spirituality*. Paulist Press, 1984, pp. 36, 40.
- ³² Moses Cordovero. *The Palm Tree of Deborah*, ch. 9. (Transl: R. J. Z. Werblowsky) Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 52. A translation by Louis Jacobs has “chariot” in place of “vessel.”
- ³³ *Ibid*.
- ³⁴ *Zohar*, 28, *Tzav*: 27, verse 182.
- ³⁵ Moses Cordovero. *The Palm Tree of Deborah*, ch. 9. (Transl: Louis Jacobs.) Sepher-Hermon Press, 1960.
- ³⁶ *Ibid*.
- ³⁷ Here, Cordovero was quoting from the *Zohar*, 3, *Beresheet B* : 51, verse 225.
- ³⁸ Elijah de Vida. *Beginning of Wisdom*, “The Gate of Holiness,” ch. 7. Quoted in: Fine. *Safed Spirituality*, p. 106.
- ³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 107.
- ⁴⁰ *Zohar*, 50, *Vayelech*: 3, verse 18.
- ⁴¹ *Zohar*, 44, *Pinchas*: 84, verse 562.
- ⁴² E. de Vida. *Beginning of Wisdom*, “The Gate of Humility,” ch. 1, p. 117.
- ⁴³ Rabbi Aaron (ed.) *Kether Shem Tov: teachings of the Baal Shem Tov*. Quoted in: Aryeh Kaplan. *The Light Beyond*, Maznaim Publishing Corporation, 1981, p. 265.
- ⁴⁴ Avraham Y. Heshel. *Ohev Yisrael*. Quoted in: Kaplan. *The Light Beyond*, p. 35.
- ⁴⁵ Rabbi Nathan (ed.). *Likutey Moharan: Teachings Rabbi Nachman*. Quoted in: Kaplan. *The Light Beyond*, p. 137.
- ⁴⁶ Rabbi Shlomo (ed.). *Magid Devarav LeYaa-kov: Teachings of the Mezricher Magid*. Quoted in: Kaplan. *The Light Beyond*, p. 218.
- ⁴⁷ Arthur E. Waite. *The Holy Kabbalah*. Citadel Press, undated, p. 368.
- ⁴⁸ Matityahu Glazerson. *Music and Kabbalah*. Jason Aronson, 1997, p. 7.
- ⁴⁹ One could of course argue that any distinction between these concepts is no more than a matter of semantics.
- ⁵⁰ Scholem. *The Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 140-160.
- ⁵¹ Matityahu Glazerson calculates the “inner numerical value” of *shirah* (שִׁירָה), “song,” to be 385. *Shirah* itself has a value of 515. See: *Music and Kabbalah*. Jason Aronson, 1997, p. 50.
- ⁵² The Hebrew words for “soul”: *nephesh* (נֶפֶשׁ), *ruach* (רוּחַ), and *neshamah* (נִשְׁמָה) are all feminine. The Greek *psyche* (ψυχή) is also feminine.

News from the School

The Three Major Festivals

Festival of Easter 2005

The Life that Conquers Death

Keyword for Disciples: *I rise, and from the plane of mind I rule.*

The Flame of the Eternal, always burning;
 The Fire that is never extinguished;
 The Light that conquers shadows;
 The Life that conquers death.

Such is the message of Easter, a time of joy and hope, because Christ, the divine Son, is reborn among us. The Festival of Easter is the Festival of Resurrection, and it contains the symbolism of Life ever present, Life that is One yet variable in its diverse forms— inexhaustible, regenerating, in synch with cosmic order.

Easter marks the beginning of a cycle of events, behind which lies the influence of the energies and forces that carry divine Purpose. These events occur simultaneously in both the occult and the manifest worlds, and in this way, in a parallel fashion, all creation witnesses the presence of the all-encompassing One. Each year, in accordance with the Law of Cycles, the Sun awakens Earth from its winter sleep at the Spring Equinox. Darkness and cold are replaced by light and warmth. Nature becomes joyful with flower buds and colors, as if it were grateful for the breath of new life. Although Spring occurs at different times in each hemisphere of Earth, for the planet as a whole it is signaled by the sign of Aries, the portal of the Zodiac, which marks the arrival of Easter, the portal of life.

Aries is an important cosmic influence, linked to the Christ and His resurrection. This constellation transmits divine Will and is the initiator that opens a new cycle of manifestation. It is the left arm of the Cardinal Cross in the heavens, the cross of transcendence, of the

risen Christ, of the Father, the manifestation of the divine. Aries is the expression of the purifying fire that destroys the lower and thereby liberates.

Aries represents the exalted place of the Sun, the Spirit, and the fall of Saturn, the Lord of Karma, in a clearly symbolical relationship to Christ's resurrection: Spirit rises, liberated from material bonds and from the laws that govern the material world. From the cosmic realm our mundane world emerges. The energy of Life flows continuously throughout, characterized by periodic impacts, provoking expansions of consciousness and producing consequent effects on the different planes of manifestation.

Aries' impact on Life is so significant that it is a great celebration—the Festival of Easter. This festival is the first in a series of twelve important dates occurring throughout the year. The first three in this series—Aries, Taurus and Gemini—are spiritual events of special importance for humanity, but all twelve offer exceptional opportunities for a clearer line of communication between the world of effects and the world of causes, between ourselves and our Creator.

During the Easter Festival the resurrected, living Christ is recognized as the Teacher of humanity and the head of the Spiritual Hierarchy. We recognize the unbreakable tie that the Creator maintains with His creation, that of the Father with His Son, and the vital importance of the Son as an expression of the only possible way to return to the Father's breast: "I and the Father are one";¹ "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."²

Beyond the poetic or mystical content of these sentences lies the meaningful essence of a teaching that will only come to those who can understand it as the "word of God," to those

whose awakened intuition can process and assimilate it on the higher planes of consciousness in order to make it come alive for them. Christ has to become a living being, reality itself, so that He becomes the path of return and the abundant life of the Self. This Life must be understood as an eternal continuity, defeating the deceptions of illusion, glamour and *maya* in any of their forms of expression. We merge with this Life as we move along the path of return in compliance with the supreme Law. Such is the message that Christ gave us twenty centuries ago when, during the course of three years and in the person of His disciple Jesus, we witnessed by His example each of the steps that lead to immortality.

Much has been written about the presence of Jesus Christ on Earth: a cosmic event of such influence that it has divided history into before and after; it has initiated profound changes in humanity's consciousness and pointed the way to never before imagined spiritual possibilities for humanity. Nevertheless, such writings—with honorable exceptions—have been limited to historical and religious narration, a predominantly mystical vision of Jesus Christ, His disciples and His work, or—according to rationalist minds—the presentation of a being who is basically human, a social agitator, a rebel commander, and who is subject to the limitations and faults of an unredeemed personality.

Only through an intuitive reading of the Holy Scriptures, especially in the light of esoteric teachings, can we come close to the true significance of the events that came to pass during those three years in which we witnessed the public life of a great spiritual Teacher, an Initiate in the cosmic mysteries whose drama was enacted in public view so as to make us participants in its meaning. Humanity at that time was not prepared for comprehending such deeds. For that reason, during the course of 2,000 years, the message has remained in the realm of the occult, mediated through interpretations limited by ignorance and Piscean attitudes. At the end of the Piscean era and the beginning of the Aquarian, we see emerging a new interest in understanding Christ's message now that we have reached a sufficient mental

development. We are urged forward by the need to discover the divine that exists at the heart of the human family.

We are now capable of a new understanding of Christ's message thanks to the spiritual Teachers who have come forward and whose teachings contain the keys to an interpretation that is adjusted to the essence and transcendence of the happenings of our time. They teach us that our spiritual search ought to be conducted by cultivating the higher qualities of the mind and the development of the intuition, and not through pure devotion. They urge each aspirant to transcend the ordinary, to understand the deeper meaning of events and things, to interpret them and arrive at knowledge. Such is the Law, and for that reason we strive to transcend our ignorance and enter this sublime world of causes.

Thus, as we look at the culminating event of those three years, the Resurrection, we are inclined to understand it as the fundamental reason for all that took place at the time, because the message that encapsulates the Christ's sojourn on Earth is the message of Life Eternal. From that point of view we see revealed the mystery of Life that negates death, the Light that emerges from darkness, the manifest that is born of the unmanifest. There we have proof of the unity of All. There the illusion of separate worlds is dispelled, the illusion of inexistence, un-beingness and nothingness as concepts of negativity and emptiness. Life emerges triumphant; the Christ-like life illuminates humanity's path, showing us the future, offering via His life an example of a potential future, a future that is realizable and inevitable.

With the Resurrection, a mission was accomplished simultaneously in both the objective and subjective worlds. Each perceptible event in the world of effects had behind it the cause, the goal, the Laws, Supreme Will. The protagonist in the objective world was a Teacher, recently arrived in the world of human beings, Who manifested in Himself a mastery of Christ consciousness that can only come from the pure spiritual realm. Divine Will is achieved on two levels: at the same time as the Master Jesus publicly undergoes the first five initiations, Christ undergoes the third through the

seventh initiations. Jesus Christ is simultaneously the one who transcended the human condition and acquired the privilege of entering the Higher World and the illuminated Being who already dwells in that world by right and divine recognition. That duality converted into Unity is a demonstration of the synthetic capacity of divine Will, and is a stimulus for us to break the rigid patterns that prevent us from comprehending the totality of the One. By presenting Himself to us as a man “born of woman,” and by living His life in our world, showing us the steps that make up the path of return, and reliving the vital crises that mark each stage, Jesus Christ not only taught us about discipleship, but He also demonstrated it as a possibility for humanity. He made us understand that that divinity expressed in Him is also our essence and can be manifested if we follow His example.

During those three years we were shown, one by one, the milestones to be completed on the path of return: the conquest of maya, glamor and illusion in order to transform the personality into the perfect vehicle for the Soul (Birth and Baptism, first and second initiations); the fusion of the Soul and personality in the Transfiguration, or third initiation; and the supreme sacrifice of the Soul, dissipated by divine Will, and the beginning of monadic rule in the fourth initiation of the Crucifixion and apparent Death.

Interpreting the message behind these events, we believe that by sharing with us His experiences Jesus is showing us the path and the stages of realization possible for humanity. He shows us the work that must be completed as incarnate Souls in order to arrive at that expansion of consciousness in which, by having built the Antahkarana—the mental bridge between

the higher and lower self, we will enter those realms of the monadic world upon the disappearance of the Soul and the causal body. Each one of these life experiences was demonstrated by the divine Envoy in full sight of humanity, who in some way participated in them from the first to the fourth initiation.

But the culminating moment, the Resurrection, took place without any human witnesses. It was an intimate act inherent to the pure spiritual Being that transcended the limitations of matter and the dual consciousness of the incar-

We are now capable of a new understanding of Christ’s message thanks to the spiritual Teachers who have come forward and whose teachings contain the keys to an interpretation that is adjusted to the essence and transcendence of the happenings of our time. They teach us that our spiritual search ought to be conducted by cultivating the higher qualities of the mind and the development of the intuition, and not through pure devotion.

nated Son. It revealed that initiation is something exceptional, something that transcends the strictly human condition and that belongs to a higher realm. Behind the teachings about the Resurrection there is a meaning that goes beyond our capacity to understand. Nevertheless, we cannot help feeling attracted by that prodigious event that crowns all the public activity of the divine Son. In the intimacy of a closed, dark cavern, an event is gestated during three days that will affect

forever our planetary life: the son of man is immortalized as the divine Son. The prototype of the human race, our paradigm, has completed His mission and declares our essential divinity.

Clearly it is not an event unrelated to humanity. Because even though it takes place in intimacy, suggesting that such a sublime event belongs to a level higher than our daily world, it happens in a place “hewn in the rock”,³ in the Earth, our habitat, in the density of matter. This important symbolism not only pertains to the human being as a planetary being, but it reminds us of the spiritual condition of matter,

a condition that will be liberated throughout a long evolutionary process.

Darkness is the guardian of the essence of the unmanifested One—the point of gestation, of proceeding forth and returning, the center of maximum balanced tension, the “divine darkness” from which light emanates. The darkness that is pure spirit, according to the Master Djwhal Khul, foments the processes of the Revelation, the fifth initiation for Jesus: “This vision concerns the Reality lying beyond any hitherto sensed or known”; and the seventh initiation for the Christ: “freedom from the hold of the phenomenal life of the seven planes of our planetary Life.”⁴

This double initiation, in which both protagonists experienced expanded consciousness simultaneously, marked the achievement of the main mission They had to bring about according to divine Will: to prove the eternal existence of Life in spite of any apparent limitation. The experience of the previous three years was condensed into these three days. Each expansion of consciousness translated into an initiatory state that created the necessary tension to refine the lower manifestations and bring them to the synthesis of the spiritual Being.

Work on the three levels, personal-Egoic-spiritual, has been accomplished. The triple personality has been harmonized with the Soul and later fused with it. The Monad has accomplished its synthetic work of destroying the causal body, the Soul, which has completed its own mission, and it remains as a nucleus of consciousness that, on reaping what has been sown, flowers in the spiritual Being.

The triple divine qualities of Will-Love-Intelligent Activity are manifested in the mystery of the subjective facts and in the objective events demonstrated to us. As the Tibetan teaches, “Christ did not rise out of a rocky sepulcher and reassume His discarded body.... Christ passed through the seventh initiation of Resurrection and returned back to His original state of Being—to remain there throughout all the eternities. This is the true and final resurrection.”⁵ Also, “The Master Jesus arose out of the tomb; the chains of death could not hold

Him.... The consciousness of the Universal Life is His.”⁶ This latter phrase describes to perfection His sublime state.

Such facts should not be separated but understood as part of a single context, because the message is: Life is One, although it manifests on different planes; Life evolves—which explains the different levels—and we, as human beings, are part of that evolution. Thus we have the emphasis on Christ’s example and the teaching we must follow, the teaching that He transmitted up till the end of His mission, opening for us the Path of Higher Evolution in accordance with divine Will.

The message of Christ and His Resurrection must be assimilated into each one’s consciousness, made one’s own, understood and lived. Otherwise our path will end in front of an empty sepulcher. Thus, even though we may not be ready to experience the sacred act of the Resurrection, we see, via one who underwent it, proof that it is indeed possible and is something that, as sons of the Father, we will also someday be able to achieve. Three times Christ clearly demonstrated to His disciples that He had conquered death and that He, Son of the Father, was the Life. He communicated this to them when “He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”⁷

Christ presents Himself to us as a Son of the Father, as our Older Brother who goes before us to show us the way. Along the way He shows us that we are an important link in the evolutionary chain and introduces us to the world of relationships, demonstrating the eternal rule of the principle of Love that He represents and that He so frequently emphasized to His disciples.

Love is continuity of Life; it contains all that exists, a global tapestry of threads of energy whose beginning and end is the Creator, the One Cause. In that Life each one of us has his or her place within an invocative-evocative system, an ascending set of steps that rise from the dense world of matter up to the divine. It is a hierarchical world where each kingdom is succeeded by a higher kingdom, where the human kingdom is an important link.

When we accept Christ as our prototype, we know that to attain such status requires reaching ever-higher levels of consciousness, and we understand the world of relationships as governed by a lifting process directed toward a Center. We also accept the existence of a Hierarchy of Masters who have transcended our kingdom and reside in the spiritual realm. The recognition of Their existence links us to Them and orients us definitively toward a higher level in the world of relationships. In this way we play our role as intermediaries between the kingdoms that we have left behind and that kingdom whose door is waiting for us to open it. Such is the assigned task of the human kingdom in the restoration of the Plan

Christ waits for us at the doors of this higher kingdom, since—according to the Tibetan—His seventh initiation still remains to be completed. This will occur at His second coming. The cycle that began 2,000 years ago in the

sign of Pisces must now end in the sign of Aquarius. The mystery must be revealed. Humanity, as a planetary center, must know how to reap what was sown during that long-ago Spring. The Christ consciousness must flower in each one of us. In that way we will always keep the flame of Life burning, and we will be able to be “the stone upon which Christ will erect His Church.”

Dr. Luisa Romero de Johnston

¹ *John*:10:30.

² *John*:14:6.

³ *Matthew* 27:60.

⁴ Alice A. Bailey. *The Rays and the Initiations*. Lucis, 1960, p. 686.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 730.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *John* 20:22.

Wesak Festival 2005

The Externalization and the Three Planetary Centers

Welcome to the Wesak Festival at which time we share, along with countless people and groups the world over, in the great planetary alignment of, and approach between, Shamballa, the Spiritual Hierarchy and Humanity, and seek to aid the work of the Christ and the Buddha in their task of implementing the Will of God on Earth.

I have been keenly aware of the relationship of these three major planetary centers, and I propose we focus on that theme and relate it to world conditions, which—while so disturbing—are, I believe, moving forward in line with the unfolding Plan. At last year’s Wesak Festival I closed my talk with the following quotation from *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*:

It might be said that for the past 700 years the chain of Hierarchy has been complete; by this I mean that the planetary rainbow

bridge uniting the three major centers has existed. The task ahead of all these three centers—Shamballa, the Hierarchy and Humanity—working in alignment through adjustment, is to strengthen and beautify, to electrify this bridge, thus producing full planetary intercommunication between the three centers and the four minor centers, so that the “weight of the Will of God, the momentum of the Purpose of Sanat Kumara and the Plan of His Representatives may progress unimpeded from point to point, from sphere to sphere and from glory to glory.”¹

Last year’s Wesak talk touched on the externalization of the Hierarchy, but was largely centered on the Hierarchy’s task with humanity, with the interplay between the lower two of the three major centers. Now let us extend that picture. The information given to us about the Hierarchy falls into three major categories, according to the Tibetan:

1. The work of the Hierarchy in relation to man and to the three worlds of human evolution.

2. The interior constitution of the Hierarchy and its internal activity.
3. Its superior relation to Shamballa and to extra-planetary livingness.

The Tibetan tells us bluntly:

A great deal that has been conveyed to you in the two final categories has been merged by you into an interested but totally impractical realization that the Hierarchy apparently has a life of its own which proceeds independently of humanity and that it also has its own goals and objectives which are no concern of yours. These deductions are dependent upon your domination by the separative mind, for in reality the work and the activity proceeding in all three centers – Shamballa, the Hierarchy and Humanity – are merged, fused and interdependent; they are mutually evocative and invocative.²

He then goes on to say that the fact that the Hierarchy is approaching closer to Humanity and will eventually make an appearance upon the physical plane is due, not only to Hierarchical intent, but also to the demand of humanity and to the strong vibration and note that humanity has set up. To that extent humanity controls some of the activities of the Hierarchy and thus precipitates action. But at the same time all that is happening can be traced to Shamballa, is inherent in divine purpose and is impelled by Shamballa energy. Also, both the Hierarchy and Humanity are brought under the influence of extra-planetary forces that make their impact upon the planet via Shamballa.

A great interdependence emerges, of which the heart, head and solar plexus centers in the individual man's etheric body are symbols; their unified relation keeps a man functioning as a coherent whole. It is essential that students endeavor to grasp this and so develop within themselves at least the rudiments of this synthetic unified grasp of living conditions, of a vital situation, and strive to develop the type of understanding that is distinctive of the Hierarchical type of mind—concerned with itself as a divine group, conscious of the pull and evocative power of the higher center, Shamballa, and responsive to the demands of humanity.

Today [written in 1946] human beings as a whole are so loudly invocative that the entire trend and plans of the life of the Hierarchy have been changed, and certain interior and purely Hierarchical determinations have been postponed so that certain plans originally slated to take place several centuries ahead are seen as likely of achievement in the short time between 1946 and 2025.³

This reminds us that sometimes the individual disciple's work on unfolding and developing himself must be temporarily set aside in order to give all he has toward meeting the demands unexpectedly arising in connection with his particular service in the world. These changed plans of the Hierarchy are, we are told, to fulfill the larger purpose of the Planetary Logos working through all three major centers. This purpose covers three great changes in all three centers:

1. The absorption by those great beings in the Council Chamber of Shamballa of certain extra-planetary energies.
2. A great expansion – numerically and in consciousness—of the Hierarchy. This means not only a great influx of initiates and disciples, but also a tremendous inflow of “angelic essence” from the deva kingdom under the direction of certain Great Devas who have affiliated during the past few hundred years with our Spiritual Hierarchy. It reminds us that the deva evolution is a vital part of the planetary life, but the Devas the Tibetan is speaking of, of course, are great Beings who are as far ahead of the lower devas in our three worlds as the Masters are ahead of the average individual. The inflow of angelic essence and action by the Great Devas had not, the Tibetan says, been expected so soon, stressing the overall acceleration of the evolving lives on our planet and of the Planetary Logos.
3. A great awakening in the human family and a major spiritual reorientation. This had not been believed possible of accomplishment until the Capricornian Age, roughly 2,000 years hence. But it has taken place and thus necessarily

brought about the adjustment of the Hierarchy's plans and a renewed emphasis on the purpose as registered by Shambhalla.

The Tibetan then states:

All this, being factual, and the time right for decision, has caused an intra-planetary ferment and great activity in the three major centers. In the last analysis (and this is a factor of supreme importance) this development—this unexpected right absorption of spiritual energy, and this seizing of spiritual opportunity—is due to humanity itself. Above everything else, it is the readiness of humanity for that which is new, and humanity's determination to create a new and better world, adapted more adequately to their "renewed" spiritual nature, that is responsible for all the activity.⁴

What we have considered so far reinforces our opening statement about the existence of the "planetary rainbow bridge" uniting the three major centers and that the as yet relatively limited interplay already established has produced a

speeding up of the destined task of the Planetary Logos and in the life of our planet Earth.

Because we are constantly beset by world problems and crises that tend to blot out the overall larger picture, I would like to look at some of the Tibetan's forecasts presented to us in 1946 when he gave us the information we have just touched on. If we look at what was said and what has since taken place, I believe we can face with new courage, new inspiration and renewed dedication, the present seemingly negative world picture, and so work with greater effectiveness in throwing all that we are and have on the side of the forces of

Light—knowing we *are* winning, that the dark negative forces *are* being pushed back, preparatory to their utter defeat and their being "sealed away," as was forecast in the Bible. We might consider the key points of the two preliminary stages of preparation for the externalization:

The first stage, which had already begun in 1946, was and *is* (for the work is still going on) the stage in which a few isolated disciples and initiates, senior members of the New Group of World Servers, were and are doing the important task of destruction, plus the enunciation of principles. This work was and is largely concerned with three major fields: religion, economics and politics. As the Tibetan said:

New values can rarely be instilled by mere exhortation, and where there is no vision, people only give up existing materialistic and selfish values through personally experiencing the unhappiness they inevitably bring. Thus when a determined group with a wider vision demands change both for themselves and others, conflict and violence often result.

The task of the disciple thus laying the foundation for the New Age methods is hard indeed. He stands for so much that is deemed visionary and impossible. He teaches truths whose first effect is necessarily destructive, because he endeavors to rid humanity of old forms of religious, economic and political doctrine; his impersonality—which recognizes faults as well as virtues—enrages many. His failures to be impressed or attentive to

old rites and ceremonies, to ancient and obsolete but precious ideas, and his constant warfare on conditioning glamors and illusions meet in these early stages with little encouragement. He works frequently alone and usually with little recognition and lacks time for his own personal hierarchical contacts; he is not necessarily connected with any so-called esoteric groups and—if he is—his task is that much harder.⁵

The second stage of preparation—which overlaps the first—had only just begun in 1946 and is carried forward by disciples and initiates who will be the real builders of the new world.

These disciples and initiates working on this second preparatory stage—and even the Masters in the later stages of the true externalization—will work as members of the human family and *not* as proclaimed members of the kingdom of God. They will appear in office of some kind or another; they will be the current politicians, businessmen, financiers, religious leaders or churchmen; they will be scientists and philosophers, college professors and educators; they will be the mayors of cities and the custodians of all public ethical movements.

The spiritual forcefulness of their lives, their clear, pure wisdom, the sanity and the modern acceptableness of their proposed measures in any department in which they choose to function will be so convincing that little impediment will be set in the way of their undertakings.⁶

They will assume leadership and take high office not because they are disciples or initiates but because they are wise and intelligent servants of the public; this will come about by the free choice of the people and by virtue of their leaders' advanced and proven merit.

According to the Tibetan, three major ashrams are concerned in this second stage of preparation: the Second-Ray ashram of the Master Kuthumi, the First-Ray ashram of the Master Morya, and a Fifth-Ray ashram. The efforts of the Second-Ray disciples are directed toward educating the general public, working primarily in the fields of education and religion. Eventually steps will be taken in these areas, over which the Christ rules, to reorganize the entire religious field in preparation for the restoration of the Mysteries. The Mysteries, when restored, will unify all faiths.

The First-Ray disciples are working in the field of right human relations to produce a synthesis of effort that will bring in a new intuitional consciousness and—consequently—a new political consciousness in which humanity will stand together for three basic values:

1. The freedom of the individual—embodied in the Four Freedoms given

by that First-Ray disciple, Franklin Roosevelt.

2. Right international interplay and the abolition of war.
3. Clean political regimes.

The immediate group work of the First-Ray disciples is to help clarify the political situation and present those ideas that will eventually lead to a fusion of those principles that govern a democracy and that also condition the Hierarchical method. The Tibetan predicts that this will produce a third political system that will not be entirely dependent on the choices of an unintelligent public or on the control that the Hierarchical technique involves.

To achieve this, First-Ray disciples will work in close cooperation with Second Ray disciples, who will educate the general public in truer values. Allied to these combined efforts, are those working in another major ashram under a Master on the Fifth Ray, the custodian, among other things, of science and that which relates and brings into expression the duality of spirit and matter. For the Tibetan predicts that it is through the scientific use of energy that the world will be rebuilt.

Once the three major ashrams have done their work, disciples from other ashrams will continue the task. Third-Ray workers will carry out a financial readjustment and build a new structure of material relations—a most difficult task owing to human selfishness. But public opinion will provide the impetus so that certain fundamental ideals will motivate business to change. The Tibetan says that the new financial relationships will be more humane, superseding big business and private enterprise, retaining those aspects of modern enterprise that draw out the individual's initiative and resourcefulness.

All that we have considered so far is part of the picture given in the book *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, in 1946. And how much has happened in the meantime! Humanity has been immersed in so many problems, crisis situations and conflicts that it is difficult to put ourselves back into the world situation and the pattern of thinking that then obtained in 1946. I believe we can gain much assurance that the

work envisioned in the first two stages of preparation for the externalization of the Hierarchy has gone forward in line with the Plan and with the Will of God. And the interplay between the three major planetary centers has increased.

Certainly we can see evidence of the work of the first group of disciples, whose task we said was at first largely destructive, aimed at old forms and glammers in the religious, political and economic fields, coupled with the enunciation of wider, more universal principles that reflect the growing recognition of the One Humanity and its needs, as distinct from purely personal, national or racial interests.

In the field of politics in particular there has been a terrific process of dissipation of glamour, as witness the healthy credibility gap. Many people are openly rejecting the hypocrisy, political chicanery and hidden political-business agendas that deny the very ideals of democracy.

In religion the authoritarian control of various churches is being challenged and weakened. We find congregations of formerly antagonistic church groups holding common services, and many clerics in various denominations acting in defiance of the ruling church powers. The growth of interest in Eastern religions and philosophical ideas points to a growing recognition of the common foundations in the various world religions. The growing identification with the One Humanity will inevitably lead to the new world religion.

In economics, industry's disdain of ecological factors and the multinational corporations' financial malfeasance are making the public question the values behind big business and causing them to ask, "Can business go its own way without considering the greater good of human society and international peace?" The sheer lunacy of our present economic system is becoming more self-evident as we observe the world's colossal productive capacity and yet real needs are still unmet. Knowledgeable people in business and economics have been sounding the note of a new economic system geared to meet real needs and not simply to produce any kind of product that will produce

a profit. More economists are telling us to consider quality of life and not just quantity. Even the average person knows that economically we are one world, as witness what happened with the OPEC countries and oil prices.

No present system of government or business has the answers, and the present crisis will probably get worse before humanity is forced to create totally new systems, such as were forecast by the Tibetan. But in all three fields—economics, politics and religion—the final solutions rest on changes in values: of self-interest yielding to the good of the whole, the acceptance of God immanent, and living spiritual experience replacing dogma and blind belief.

New values can rarely be instilled by mere exhortation, and where there is no vision, people only give up existing materialistic and selfish values through personally experiencing the unhappiness they inevitably bring. Thus when a determined group with a wider vision demands change both for themselves and others, conflict and violence often result. Think of the fighting and suffering involved in producing the Magna Carta in England, of the struggle of the French Revolution for the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, of the wars of independence in various countries, and the fight for racial equality occurring everywhere.

I believe that we, Humanity, are moving ahead farther and faster than was believed possible. As the Tibetan tells us, the Spiritual Hierarchy is doing likewise, and Shamballa. So too is that great Entity, the Planetary Logos, within Whose life "we live and move and have our being," Who, in turn, is fulfilling the purpose and loving will of the Solar Logos within that still vaster scheme of "Him about Whom naught may be said"! With all this in mind, a fitting seed thought for group meditation is:

From the highest spiritual being upon our planet, through the graded spiritual groups of enlightened and perfected individuals 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.⁷

Frank Hilton
Co-founder of the
School for Esoteric Studies⁸

¹ Alice A. Bailey. *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*. Lucis, 1957, p. 535.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 560-561.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 561-562.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 563.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 571.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 570-571.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 485.

⁸ Originally given at the Wesak Festival of 1978.

Festival of Goodwill 2005

Christ and Humanity

Two of the three full-moon festivals that make up the “Higher Interlude” have well-known antecedents in religious tradition. The Christian feast of Easter is celebrated on the Sunday following the full moon in Aries, and the Buddhist Wesak festival is observed at the full moon in Taurus. But the third festival at the full moon in Gemini is, for us at least, a new creation. Known variously as the Festival of Goodwill, Festival of the Christ, Festival of Humanity, or World Invocation Day, it was announced by the Tibetan Master, Djwhal Khul after World War II and was first celebrated in 1952. The new festival can occur anywhere from the last week of May to the third week of June; this year it falls on Monday, May 23.

Announcement of the Festival of Goodwill and its placement in relation to the other full-moon festivals came in the context of prophecies of far-reaching importance. Although no dates were given, the Tibetan prophesied that the Christ will reappear on Earth, the Hierarchy of Masters will be externalized, and a New World Religion will emerge to serve humanity’s spiritual needs in the Aquarian Age. The New World Religion, we were told, will grow out of, but eventually replace, the sectarian religions of the Piscean Age. Rather than dividing people it will embrace people of every persuasion and from every nation. The new religion will also embrace some aspects of Masonic tradition, restoring ritual to the importance it had in the ancient mystery schools.

The Festival of Goodwill is closely linked to emergence of the New World Religion. In-

deed it will be the high point of a liturgical calendar which, like those of so many ancient traditions, will be based on lunar and solar cycles. The new festival celebrates the increasing presence in the world of the Second Aspect of Deity. It celebrates not the transcendent but the immanent presence of Love-Wisdom, expressed through humanity. The Tibetan explained:

[It] will be the festival of the spirit of humanity—aspiring towards God, seeking conformity with the Will of God and dedicated to the expression of right human relation... It will be a day whereon the spiritual and divine nature of mankind will be recognised.¹

He added that the festival, while new to us, has long been observed on Hierarchical levels. It synthesizes the messages of Easter and the Wesak Festival, the messages of the historic Christ and the Buddha:

On this festival, for two thousand years, the Christ has represented humanity and has stood before the Hierarchy and in the sight of Shamballa as the God-Man, the Leader of His people and “the Eldest in a great family of brothers”... Each year at that time He has preached the last sermon of the Buddha before the assembled Hierarchy. This will therefore be a festival of deep invocation and appeal, of a basic aspiration towards fellowship, of human and spiritual unity, and will represent the effect in the human consciousness of the work of the Buddha and of the Christ.²

The New World Religion will no doubt include traditional religious activities, such as collective worship, participation in the mysteries,³

and missionary work. But, in a larger sense, it will also embrace the whole range of individual and collective activities that enhance human consciousness. These activities can pervade all areas of human endeavor, including health care, education, business, government, the military, entertainment, and sports. The essential ingredient will be the Will-to-Good: the impulse to reach out to other people, to express those soul qualities that break down barriers, motivate service, and improve the human condition. The Christ Festival will celebrate that reaching out, that new sense of joyful involvement in all things human, that commitment to building a better world.

Recently we were given a glimpse of the New World Religion in what might seem an unlikely place: the funeral of Pope John Paul II. The late pope helped free Eastern Europe from Communism; publicly apologized to the Jews for centuries of atrocities perpetrated in the name of Christ; and personally forgave the Turkish man who shot and wounded him. Throughout a life of service John Paul reached out to heads of state, religious leaders of all persuasions, people at all levels of society. He drew the masses to him by his humility, his deep humanity, and his concern for ordinary people, but also by people's conviction that he expressed something higher than the purely human.

However, it was in his death that John Paul truly drew the world to him. His final illness and death dominated the news media. Then, at the end of a week of mourning, his Requiem Mass—the time-honored ritual honoring death and resurrection—was the largest religious event of all time. Leaders of almost every nation, representatives of every world religion, and people by the millions all converged on Rome. The requiem was broadcast throughout

the world and watched by hundreds of millions more. Not everyone who participated shared the late pope's beliefs; there are even disagreements within the Catholic Church itself. What we saw was the ability of people of different traditions and different beliefs, Christian and non-Christian, to come together to share in a spiritual experience that far transcended doctrine and authority—an experience that many of the participants said they would carry with them for the rest of their lives. Something happened that day that was unique in human memory.

To set aside differences, as people did at the funeral, to experience the unifying divine pres-

ence in the world is what the New World Religion is all about. This is, in no way, to say that the new religion will grow directly or even indirectly from the present Church of Rome. Like every Christian institution, it has perverted the Christ's message;⁴ and some of its beliefs and practices have become crystallized forms. But what lies behind those forms, and be-

hind the forms of other religious (and even some secular) traditions, can provide the foundation on which the new religion is built. The new religion will give new meaning and significance to what is preserved and will offer new spiritual opportunities.

The Festival of the Christ is a time to celebrate these new opportunities. The Christ is not the property of a particular sect but the expression of the Second Aspect of Deity to all religions and all people. The Christ is not divisive but unifying, bringing into harmony all that has been separated and discordant. The sign of Gemini, in which the festival occurs, expresses the juxtaposition of pairs of opposites; but the transit of the Sun/Son through the sign expresses their resolution at a higher level. Tension between the opposites provides the crea-

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tive impulse to build what has yet to come into manifestation.

We speak of “celebrating” the Festival of Goodwill. But it would be a mistake to think of the festival as simply a new public holiday—a day when the schools close and there is no mail delivery. The fact that it has been observed at Hierarchical levels for 2,000 years should remind us that the festival is not just for souls presently in incarnation. It is a time when the Christ and the masters reach out to us, drawing together everyone in the “three worlds” and raising them to a higher consciousness. It is a sharing—a communion—in which entities on every plane of reality experience the divine presence:

Perhaps one of the major messages for all of us who read these words is this great truth and fact of the physical Presence on Earth at this time of the Christ, of His group of disciples and executives, of Their representative activities on behalf of mankind and of Their close relationship. This relationship comes out at certain of the great spiritual festivals where the relationship demonstrated includes not only the Kingdom of God but also the Father and the Father's Home.⁵

So what should we do? The day of the full moon and the two days preceding and following it are “sacred times.” During the whole five-day period we should open ourselves mentally to the master's approach, allow ourselves to receive energy and impressions flowing to us in greater abundance than at any other time of the year. Then we should work individually and in groups of every size to impress upon the collective human consciousness the qualities of acceptance, compassion, forgiveness and goodwill that can transform our world. For this very purpose we have been given the Great Invocation. Significantly, the festival is one of “deep invocation and appeal.”⁶ Moreover, we are told that the Christ himself uses the Invocation during the Higher Interlude:

There is the Festival of Easter, the Festival of the Buddha Who in physical Presence expresses the spiritual solidarity of our

planet, and the Festival in June [as it was in that year], peculiarly the Festival of the Christ, when He—as leader of the New Group of World Servers—employs the new Invocation on behalf of all men of goodwill in all lands; at the same time, He gathers up the inchoate and unexpressed demands of those masses who seek a new and better way of life. They want love in daily living, right human relations and an understanding of the underlying Plan.⁷

For those who have yet to make the Great Invocation a regular part of their esoteric work, this year's Festival of Goodwill will provide an opportunity to participate in a worldwide act of group service. For those already using the Invocation on a daily basis, the festival can be a time to enhance its effectiveness through special attention to its objectives, energy, and mantric quality. The science of invocation and evocation⁸ will become of major importance in the New World Religion. In place of conventional prayers addressed to a personalized God, we shall directly invoke needed energies, making use of universal laws that we shall come to understand and utilize.

The responsibilities are great, but the opportunities are unlimited. Let us celebrate the Festival of the Christ in a way that will honor the divinity in each one of us and in the whole human family. And may we allow that divinity to express itself through new commitment to love our neighbor and put into practice the principles that will produce a new and better way of life. Humanity is at a turning point in the evolution of consciousness. Let us not falter as we prepare to move forward. Through the collective efforts of humanity and the Hierarchy we shall restore the Plan on Earth.

Dr. John F. Nash

¹ Alice A. Bailey. *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*. Lucis, 1957, p. 421.

² *Ibid.*

³ .It is worth noting that, in the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the sacraments are referred to as “the mysteries.”

⁴ Bailey. *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, pp. 542-543.

- ⁵ Alice A. Baily. *The Reappearance of the Christ*. Lucis, 1948, p. 46. See also: *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, pp 599-600.
- ⁶ Alice A. Bailey. *Problems of Humanity*. Lucis, 1964, p. 164.

- ⁷ *The Reappearance of the Christ*. Lucis, 1948, p. 46.
- ⁸ See for example: Alice A. Bailey. *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*. Lucis, 1950, pp. 71ff.

Book Reviews

***The Gentle Art of Blessing* by Pierre Pradervand.** Published by Cygnus Books, P.O. Box 15, Llandeilo SA19 6YX, United Kingdom. Email: publications@cygnus-books.co.uk. Paperback. £15.00.

In his introduction, the author describes how a painful experience and his effort to heal his thinking and overcome a deep-seated resentment gradually gave birth to this book. Pradervand shares a simple and practical method, grounded in years of heartfelt and persistent practice, for developing an awareness that is constantly centered in the transformative and benevolent power of Love.

The “art of blessing” is based on the idea that there are “precise and effective spiritual laws” behind the “veil of material appearance.” These laws, such as the Law of Positive Expectations, along with the Laws of Attraction, Right Return, Right Thinking, Harmony and Unconditional Love, are what make the universe a place of infinite good and abundance. The author illustrates their munificent operation via a wealth of anecdotes and a varied range of quotes from the world’s spiritual literature. He shows how it is possible to attune to and activate these laws through *The Gentle Art of Blessing*.

Pradervand describes the technique of blessing as actively affirming from the deepest recesses of the heart, “unrestricted good for others and events.” He goes on to say that when “we bless from our innermost beings, each situation and all those we meet without the slightest concern for expression or appearances” we will “ex-

pand our heart from a narrow cubicle to a temple without walls.”

He shows how blessing attracts joy and goodness into our own life and into the life of others, how it opens us up to the possibility of healing, to an experience of Unity and to “an awareness of the omnipresent beauty hidden from material eyes.”

This book teaches that “everything is grist for the mill” from the most mundane activity to the most challenging circumstances; that blessing is the “ultimate form of giving,” “a way of developing a constant awareness of the divine” and a means for teaching us to live without judgment in the present. *The Gentle Art of Blessing* is a practical and potent tool for invoking and evoking greater Light, Love and Power. Since the jewels of wisdom it contains can be easily incorporated into virtually any spiritual practice it is sure to have universal appeal. This is a book we will want to use and share with others.

Donna Brown
Washington, DC

***Agni: Way of Fire* by Bruce Lyon.** Published by White Stone Publishing, New Zealand (whitestone@highden.org), 2004. 265 pages, 30+ colour diagrams and charts. Hardback \$55.00US or paperback \$22.00US.

The other day I accompanied a group of young people to Gravity Canyon just south of Taihape in New Zealand’s North Island. This is

prime bungee jumping territory. Watch out for the adrenalin rush. They secure your ankles to a thick elastic rope and you leap into thin air from an iron bridge over the Rangitikei River and fall some 80 metres. Depending on body weight and miscellaneous other factors, you either bounce about madly or glide gracefully until equilibrium is reached and you are lowered onto a waiting raft. I'm happy to say I've made the jump! During my visit this time I noted with amusement that for the comfort of jumpers and non-jumpers alike they have built a nice little café on the edge.

The Café on the Edge is a transition point between understanding our life purpose and expressing it. ... We stand on the edge and wonder whether perhaps it might not be our time to jump. We sit down for a minute just to catch our breath and summon our courage. Maybe we should have a cup of tea and consider things for a little before actually jumping...after all we are going to jump eventually. Then we might need to build a little shelter—just for the night of course, because in the morning... A week goes by and we have added a few temporary modifications to our shelter so that when the next jumper comes along we are in the position to offer him a cup of tea and even—should he require it—a warm safe place to stay the night before we both jump in the morning. Pretty soon we are running a great little Café on the Edge. (Agni, pp.226-7)

I missed my chance. I should have snuck in a copy of Bruce Lyon's *Agni: Way of Fire* and left it like a sort of Gideon's Bible for potential jumpers. Only thing is, *Agni* is really not a "coffee table" book. Actually you might say it's a practical manual for all those who are really ready to take a leap.

Agni is the Lord of Fire. Agni Yoga is the yoga of synthesis. The basic premise of Agni Yoga is this: There are no external circumstances which can defeat the human spirit. Funnily enough, the average bungee jumper might understand this better than the average esotericist.

"Knowing something and being willing to

put it to the test are two different things... It is right here that the chasm between the average esotericist and the true Agni yogi opens. Learning esoteric information is acquisition. Putting it into practice requires a stripping away." (p.191)

Agni is targeted nevertheless towards those who have some familiarity with the trans-Himalayan teachings. But the key lies in their practical application. This is the way we fuel the fire. The book has three sections: Meditation, Study and Service. The first section describes the progression of meditative work starting with that spark of inspiration when we first make soul contact. From there we learn to cooperate with the higher Will, and progress to becoming an instrument of divine causation in the world as we define and carry out our "masterpiece"—that piece of the Master's Will that is our joy and responsibility to bring into expression. Eventually as consciousness expands we move into full identification as soul through which the Will of the monad can pour into the world:

The Third Degree initiates...focus the eye [of the ashram] through their manifested work in the three worlds. When they teach, write and express the energy of Hierarchy they create a double channel for the flowing in of Hierarchical power and simultaneously a "window" through which the Masters can perceive. (p.52)

The Meditation section ends with a whole chapter of specific meditative exercises, alignments, mantrams, prayers and formulas to be used in the everyday practice of Agni Yoga.

Actually my favourite page of *Agni* is in the Study section in the middle: page 134. It's a detailed picture of Agni. A two-dimensional representation that we are to imagine in multiple dimensions. It is an inspired description of the cosmic planes and subplanes utilising coloured spheres to show the intricate interrelationships of the rays that create the energetic fabric of our solar system. The centre of each sphere is the point of synthesis of each entity, from a human being right up to a Solar Logos. A theory of astrological rulerships is also incorporated. Like any good symbol the unrav-

eling of the multiple layers of this one picture draws us closer to the mysteries of the universe. If you are curious about the mysteries of colour and number, the question of good and evil, the purpose of the sacrifice of the solar angels or the mysteries of the Creative Hierarchies, this chapter is well worth a read.

The leap of the Agni yogi is first a leap in consciousness. Agni Yoga is the yoga of the soul. But the fire of divine Will must be brought through Love into action. The Service section outlines the four stages for bringing Will into expression right now in our everyday lives. The first is alignment with Purpose. The second stage is commensuration and commitment:

“This commensuration can be likened to the tuning of a piano wire. Too much tension and the wire will snap, too little and it will not ‘sound’ its true note. The soul ‘stretches’ itself between the monad and the personality creating a living antahkarana down which the fire of spirit may flow.”
(p.202)

Then what is required is leveraged action. The soul working through the personality must make leveraged decisions on the best use of resources at its disposal. The final stage is surrender: Surrender to Life through the abstraction of identification so that the higher Will can flow directly through the instrument of the personality.

Ultimately the fire which is Agni, the fire which is ourselves, burns up the causal body which is the anchoring point of the soul in the world of human endeavour. We can take all the time in the world drinking lattes at the Café on the Edge but one day we will liberate ourselves. To jump now, a willingness is all it takes.

*You are the One you have been waiting for.
Let me break you open from the inside
And water your desert
With the flame of the ONE LIFE.* (p.251)

Barbara Maré
Palmerston North, New Zealand

