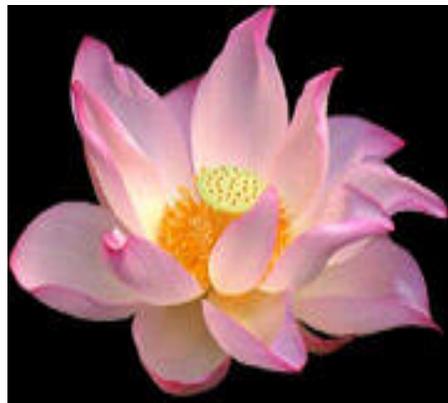


The Esoteric Quarterly

**Summer 2008
Volume 4
Number 2**

*A publication of the
School for Esoteric
Studies*

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



The School for Esoteric Studies.

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The Esoteric Quarterly

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The mission of the *Esoteric Quarterly* is to provide a forum for the exploration of esoteric philosophy and its applications. Full-length articles and student papers are solicited pertaining to both eastern and western esoteric traditions.

We also encourage feedback from readers. Comments of general interest will be published as letters to the editor.

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Passing the Baton

My work as Editor-in-Chief of the *Esoteric Quarterly*, since the journal's inception in 2004, has provided a unique opportunity to serve. It has also brought me in contact with wonderful people—authors, reviewers, officers and board members of the School for Esoteric Studies, and many others. Our editorial staff has received numerous testimonies that the *Quarterly* is the preeminent, peer-review journal in its field, and I am both proud and humbled to have played a role in its birth and early growth.

But now the time has come for me to pass the baton to someone who can take our journal to a new level. Earlier this year I informed the School for Esoteric Studies of my plans to retire at the end of 2008. A search is now underway for a new Editor-in-Chief, and applications are invited from interested persons who have applicable skills and a desire to serve the worldwide community of esoteric students. Applications and related questions should be addressed to editor@esotericstudies.net.

I will say my formal goodbyes in the next issue, but as always I want to thank the many people who have contributed to the *Quarterly* and who work, issue-by-issue, to make it happen. To them I shall always be indebted.

Meanwhile the work goes on, and we offer articles and features in this issue which we hope you will find of great interest.

Donna Brown's article on the Will aspect of Deity offers an in-depth study of her subject, drawing upon the writings of prominent Theosophists as well as the teachings of Alice Bailey and others. Brown gives particular emphasis to Fohat, whose "immense, almost unimaginable power and scope make it the universal energy of divine incentive, unity, creativity and Life."

Jan Detrich contributes an article on esoteric astrology, specifically Pluto's 16-year transit

through the sign of Capricorn. Detrich relates the planet's entrance into Capricorn with preparations for the anticipated reappearance of the Christ. She also comments that the "larger Capricorn-Pisces Pluto cycle that we are in will conclude in Pisces in 2044–2066; clearing away the final vestiges and remnants of the Piscean Age and setting the stage for a whole new cycle—the long awaited Age of Aquarius."

Zachary Lansdowne's article explores the Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris. The account of Osiris' death and Isis' quest to restore him to life, one of the great stories of classical mythology, has been interpreted in many ways. Citing the teachings of Helena Blavatsky, Alice Bailey, and others, Dr. Lansdowne suggests that it should be read as a metaphor for the spiritual journey. The eventual appointment of Horus to the throne of Egypt is seen as symbolic of the attainment of causal consciousness at the third initiation.

The final article in this issue discusses the esoteric significance of the Eucharist. Sacrificial offerings of consecrated bread and wine have deep pre-Christian roots. But in Christianity, the Eucharist became a central act of Christian worship, viewed as the embodiment of Christ's continuing presence in the world. From the Renaissance onward, it also attracted the interest of alchemists and esoteric philosophers. A number of modern writers have offered insights that seek to bridge the sometimes wide gap between esoteric teachings and religious faith.

In this issue we offer two new poems and, following our custom, provide thought-provoking quotes from the esoteric literature. We also offer an intriguing photograph that seems to capture devic activity. Images of paranormal subjects must always be treated with caution, and certainly our journal takes no position on the particular meaning of this image. Never-

theless, we feel it is appropriate to present the photograph and let readers draw their own conclusions. Feedback on this and any other feature or article in the *Esoteric Quarterly* is always welcome, and we will publish comments of interest.

John Nash
www.uriel.com

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. Nor do we have the means to verify all facts stated in published articles.

We encourage critical thinking and evaluation of ideas. However, we will not allow our jour-

nal 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 referenced 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.

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

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

I loved the article on the “Origins of the Christian Kabbalah” [Vol. 1, no. 1, Spring 2008, pp. 43-58], and look forward to more, expanding on the Tree of Life as a universal symbol complete from macrocosm to microcosm. As the article puts it, the Kabbalah appeals to both “intelligence and intuition providing a system of esoteric symbolism” with, among other things, “contemplative and psychological potential.” It’s eloquently described as a “cascading emanation of divine force in delicately balanced polarities, with corresponding polarities in the human constitution implied.” No wonder esotericists have

often written of it, rightly or wrongly, as a textbook of the ageless wisdom.

Perhaps it is because the ten sefiroth and the twenty-two pictorial tarot keys offer a whole and complete picture equaled only, perhaps, by the I Ching. What student of this popular Western symbol didn’t think of key 16, the Tower being struck by lightning, on that terrible day of September 11? It’s a perennial guidebook through the long, winding road of ups and downs from the human back to the divine.

Joann S. Bakula
Sedona, Arizona

Poems of the Quarter

Angelic Origin

by David Harrington

In the beginning of time there was only cold, dark, empty space.

Therefore God created the stars and called them the heavens, and the cold, dark, empty space was generated with warmth, light and energy.

All of space was without gravity, form or matter and the Spirit of God moved through the heavens.

Amidst the heavens God made the holy angels, and they greatly magnified the Divine Grace of God.

And the Holy Angels of Light were counted with the stars of heaven.

And God instructed the holy angels, commanding them to abide by His Will.

And they sang praise to God and worshipped His Throne continually with honor and glory, power and authority.

And God looked down upon the heavens and upon the holy angels that He had made and blessed them all.

In the midst of heaven, round about His mighty Throne, God planted a beautiful rose garden.

Now there were as many roses in the garden as there were stars in the heavens and God blessed each one.

The Deathless

by Bruce Lyon

We were always going to die
we knew that at the beginning
it was a given
we chose it
knowing it came with the territory
Why then now
the drawing back
the clutching and tearing at the precipice
Whose hands are these that
seek to delay
the inevitable?
What god in me has
lost his way
forgotten his free choice?
Perhaps it is that part
of me that has yet to know
of its divine parentage
Perhaps I have come to hold the hand
of a brother who has yet
to taste the elixir
of immortality
Yes, I am wings
come to lift this dark earth
into realization of its divinity
neither human nor deva
but a third thing
as stubborn and solid as iron
The quivering birth
of a Life
poured molten from
the kundalini furnace
A fiery breath
forged into yet another sword
for the once and future king.

Quotes of the Quarter

The two subjects which predominate in the mystical discussions of first- and second-century Talmudic rabbis are the work of creation (*maaseh breshit*) and the work of the chariot (*maaseh merkavah*)... Moses Maimonides, the great twelfth-century physician-philosopher, sums up the Talmudic rules for the teaching of these subjects with the warning that the teacher must confine his discussions to only one or two pupils at a time. Furthermore, the teacher must give his pupils only the “heads of the chapters,” for “he who understands will understand.” This last is a strong phrase often found in mystical texts, which seems to accept the paradox of a received personal experience. A teacher must be found, but even when he is found, he can only offer a hint. If this hint does not quicken understanding within the pupil—that is the student’s own inner perception—then the mystery is not for him.

In my initial concern to encourage the examination of the inner wisdom of Judaism, I have perhaps slighted a tradition suggested by the treatment recommended for would-be converts by the early rabbis: “First push him away with your left hand; then draw him near with your right hand.”

Herbert Weiner. *9 ½ Mystics: the Kabbala Today*. Collier Books, 1969.

For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. Now con-

sider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

Hebrews 7:1-10. KJV.

In *Endymion*, I leaped headlong into the Sea, and thereby have become better acquainted with the Soundings, the quicksands, & the rocks, than if I had stayed upon the green shore, and piped a silly pipe, and took tea & comfortable advice. I was never afraid of failure; for I would sooner fail than not be among the greatest.

John Keats. Letter to his publisher, Taylor & Hessey, October 1818. Oxford Univ. Press, 1935.

All spiritual development comes from within the individual, arising from discipline and self-improvement. No man can increase the spirituality of another. To attempt to do so is to disregard one of the most fundamental laws of nature--the law of Karma. Man earns wisdom by right thought and right action. The legitimate schools of the ancient wisdom, and the legitimate teachers of the doctrine offer spirituality to no one.

They merely indicate a path of action, which, if followed with consecration and intelligence over a long period of years, will result in certain improvement of character and knowledge.

Manly P. Hall. *Words to the Wise*.
Philosophical Research Society, 1966.

Hindsight shows how often yesterday's so-called truth may become today's absurdity. Real ability is to respect relative truth without damaging oneself by refusing to realize that it will be superseded. When you observe that today's controversies often reveal not relevance but the clash of the untaught with the wrongly taught, and when you can endure this knowledge without cynicism, as a lover of humankind, greater compensations will be open to you than a sense of your own importance or satisfaction in thinking about the unreliability of others.

Idries Shaw. *A Perfumed Scorpion*.
Octagon Press, 1982.

There is a road, steep and thorny, beset with perils of every kind, but yet a road, and it leads to the very heart of the Universe: I can tell you how to find those who will show you the secret gateway that opens inward only, and closes fast behind the neophyte for evermore.

There is no danger that dauntless courage cannot conquer; there is no trial that spotless purity cannot pass through; there is no difficulty that strong intellect cannot surmount. For those who win onwards there is a reward

past all telling—the power to bless and save humanity; for those who fail, there are other lives in which success may come.

H. P. Blavatsky. *Collected Works*, vol. XIII.
(Boris de Zirkoff, ed.) Theosophical
Publishing House, 1890-91.

Theosophists who are Christian, and remain within the limits of the Christian Church, have gained a vivid view of [the] real humanity of Jesus. They learn that He may be reached as truly now as when He walked near the sea of Galilee, or taught in the streets of Jerusalem, that they may know Him with as real a sense of His presence, may learn from Him as truly as any apostle or disciple in the past, that it is a living an real presence—not only, as the Roman Catholic Church says, in the sacrament of the altar, but in the experience of the Christian heart. And it has never left without a witness. Look all through the history of the Christian Church, and see how one after another has come into living touch with the Master Jesus.... [O]nly in comparatively recent days, and in parts only of the Christian Church, has that great and vivifying truth been lost sight of. The Greek Church has never lost it; the Roman Catholic Church has never lost it. The testimony of the saints in those ancient communities bears witness to the continuing connection between Christians and the Christ... It is coming back more strongly year after year, coming back with increased vitality, with more reality and strength...

Annie Besant. Lecture, June 23, 1907.
London Lectures of 1907, Manor Books, 2008.

An Evocative Photograph

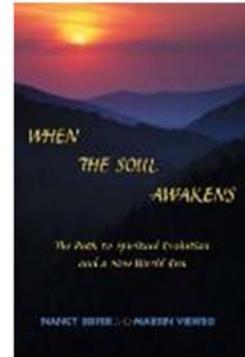
Gretchen Mosier shared with us a series of photographs taken at the Historic Orchard at Altapass, North Carolina. The images show curious diamond shapes which may be elemental or devic forms. Ms Mosier comments: “To me they are like etheric infusions for Mother Earth and give me hope. The [diamond] symbol represents ‘Medicine’ to some Native Americans. The connection of heaven and earth, or Father Sun and Mother Earth, is not lost on me.” One of the photographs is reproduced here. To see the complete set, visit www.uriel.com and click on “Devas?”



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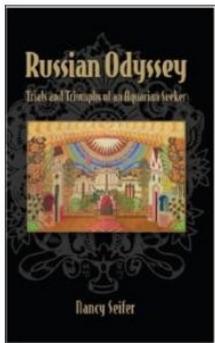
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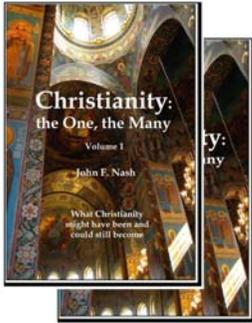
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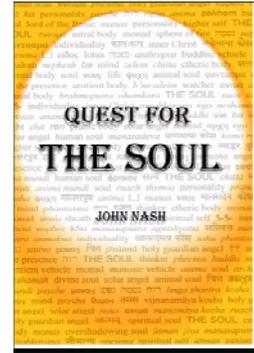
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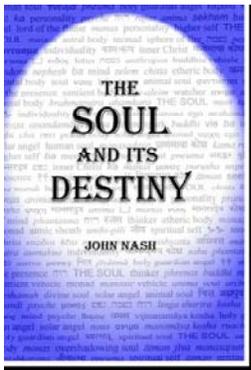
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Will in the Grand Design

Donna M. Brown

Summary

This article seeks to help the reader gain a better understanding of how the One Life, motivated by Purpose and directed by the Will, flows through the various forms, kingdoms and evolutions that manifest in the Universe. Its primary focus is the creative fire of Parabrahman and the Three Cosmic Logoi, but students will want to bear in mind that the first words from the “Emerald Tablet” of Hermes Trismegistus—*as above so below*—apply. In other words, macrocosmos is reflected in microcosmos.

The author wishes to make it clear that, due to the inscrutability of such a theme, portions of this paper must necessarily be speculative in nature. However, it is hoped that these musings along with the more widely accepted doctrine will encourage a dialogue on the mystery and vast complexity of creation and promote a greater appreciation of the tremendous power and scope of the Will as it functions as the primary current of cosmic creativity and incentive.

Introduction

For creation is but the result of the Will acting on phenomenal matter, the calling forth out of the primordial divine *Light* and eternal *Life*.¹

The Will or “resolute imagination” as Paracelsus termed it, was thought to be the “the basis or beginning of all magical operations.”² Other authors have characterized the Will as the “First Power”—the Great Breath—the “one and sole principle of abstract ceaseless Motion or its ensouling essence.”³ Still others describe the Will as pure divine incentive or everlasting ideation and link it to *Fohat*, the “electric vital guiding power by which the subjective acts upon the objective.”⁴ In one of the many passages on *Fohat*, Helena Blavatsky

describes this power or Entity as divine purpose actively functioning—the “aggregate of all the spiritual creative ideations *above*, and of all the electro-dynamic and creative forces *below*.”⁵ Creation then, is but the result of the Will acting upon the various grades of substance or matter.⁶

Eternal Reality

In Esoteric Cosmology, Parabrahman is said to represent the supreme, unconditioned, transcendent reality—the Ain Soph⁷—or vacuum of pure spirit. (Yet, in one sense, Parabrahman is one of many. It refers to all great centers of Life such as the Supreme Spirit, the Abstract Being, Darkness or Unity that pre-figures and lies behind the black hole at the center of our or other galaxies, or the Logos of a Solar System.⁸)

The Absolute One Life is depicted as an immeasurable ocean comprised of points of infinite potentiality.⁹ Everything is thought to be contained within this One Boundless, Changeless and Rootless Reality. Motion, Space and Duration, absolute and abstract, lie forever concealed within the Perfect Bliss of Equipoise¹⁰ that is *Parabrahman*.

Parabrahman is unknown and unknowable in its essence and operations. Yet, It is often conceived as positive, pure Primal Consciousness or as the personification of force underlying phenomena. Although this One Permanent Reality is beyond all speculation, there is no

About the Author

Donna M. Brown is a long-time student and teacher of esoteric philosophy. Her background includes a career in the arts and election to public office in the District of Columbia. She serves as a Board Member of the School for Esoteric Studies.

question that Transcending Will and creative Power are implied at the onset. Appellations such as the “Eternal Causeless Cause,” the “unmoved Mover” and “rootless root of all that is or shall ever be” allude to Its inherent Will and Power, albeit in its pure abstract, quiescent or unconceived state. Other designations follow suit and depict Parabrahman as the one undivided and incomprehensible *Parent* co-existing with *Mulaprakriti*—its outer veil or garment.¹¹

Mulaprakriti—the *Shekinah*¹² of the Qabbalists—is regarded as the pre-cosmic substance; a pure receptive vehicle inseparable from Parabrahman yet appearing as the limitless field of dormant Cosmic Atomic Matter. Some descriptions of Mulaprakriti are reminiscent of the Zero Point, a term used by Blavatsky a hundred years before it came into current scientific use. The Zero Point Field can be defined as “the repository of all fields and all ground energy states for the different forces in nature.”¹³

While Mulaprakriti is undifferentiated, its Primal Power “is never inert but potentially dynamic, a divine seed ever ready to expand and develop according to the divine pattern emanating from the Absolute.”¹⁴ Thus we might envision Parabrahman/Mulaprakriti as a duality in unity or as “Latency and Activity as One: the Inbreathing and Outbreathing of the Great Primordial Breath Itself—not one or the other but potentially both.”¹⁵

Three in One

Parabrahman embodies the One, a singularity, the Two, the duality in unity and the

Three or multiplicity, since it holds within Itself three great centers of force—the Three Primordial Cosmic Logoi or the threefold “Spirit of The Supreme Spirit.” (The First Logos is eternally present, the other two are there in potential, waiting to emanate.) Each Logos or Divine Hypostasis—the First, Second and Third—contains all three aspects or Will, Love and Intelligence. Consequently, the Logoi are hylozoistic. Yet in each one, one aspect dominates. Therefore we can see these Logoi in terms of the Will aspect in each. Respectively they might be: The Will-to-Be, the Will-to-Unity or Love, and the Will-to-Manifest or Evolve. In addition, the three Logoi can be said to represent Be-ness—the unmanifest Father, Becoming—the quasi-manifest Mother, and Being or manifest Universe. Together these Logoi form the *first* and *foremost* interacting and interlocking Triad of Lives.

Each of the Primordial Logoi is thought to emanate one from the other. The first great center of force, the First Logos,

exists “unborn and eternal within the bosom of the Absolute.”¹⁶ This Logos is the Cosmic Monad; the Primordial Point or “seed from which all the hierarchy—embodying all subsequent hierarchies—of the universe flows forth into manifestation.”¹⁷

At the onset of cosmic activity, the Great Breath or Motion of Parabrahman expresses Itself as pre-cosmic thought, surrounds Itself with pre-cosmic substance, and reproduces Itself in the Second Logos via the First Logos. Thus Spirit-Substance is awakened from its dreamless sleep as a conscious spiritual quality.¹⁸ (This outgoing breath or driving motion might correspond to the initial impulse *behind* the Big Bang¹⁹—which as we know, is the cur-

The First Logos... represents the emanating, positive, Father aspect; the vivifying seed or life impulse. The Second Logos, on the other hand, represents both the positive and the receptive centers allowing it to function as the womb of Space, the sustaining vehicle of manifest being. The Second Logos is “the immaculate Mother from whom proceed all the gods, or the anthropomorphized creative forces.”

rent cosmological model of how the Universe developed.)

Another way to describe this process is to say that the First Logos, in response to divine Purpose, partakes of a fragment of Mulaprakriti or primordial, pre-genetic, atomic substance, and uses the Word, the Breath—the Ray of Will—to initiate the process of creation. In this way all things visible and invisible are eventually brought into being. While the creative process has been initiated, it is important to keep in mind that manifestation happens only when the First and Second Logoi are radiated and the Third Logos begins to move upon the “Face of the Waters.”²⁰

The First Logos—Vajradhara or the Supreme, Adi Buddha—is best conceived as the initial vibration, the precursor or First Cause of manifested Life.²¹ His Motion might be described as a “driving forward through space” of dynamic cyclic Will and Purpose.²² This radiation or emanative motion causes the One to become Two and Three and then Seven.

It is this First, undifferentiated Logos—the Cosmic Ray of Will—that lies back of form and all evolutionary development. As the germ of manifestation or animating principle, it transmits the dynamic, divine Life impulse outward into the ocean of Space. This Logos provides the impelling force or Fire (its primary characteristic) of pure spirit that initiates the process of evolution. The divine incentive of Life or Spirit lying *behind all appearance* is the concern of the First Logos.

The First Logos embodies the cosmic Will-to-Exist or Will-to-Be—the immortal energy of the Absolute—or its determining energy. It also relates or corresponds to both the Will-to-Initiate²³ and the Will Which Conquers Death²⁴ since the Cosmic Ray of Will initiates or animates the creative process in its seed form *and* then brings it, over time, to its glorious consummation or fruition. After setting these causal patterns or germs in motion, the First Logos employs the Will to integrate, fuse and maintain all the various expressions of spirit in manifestation. In addition, the First Logos withdraws or abstracts all spirits and blends them back again into the Spiritual Font or

Source of Pure Being. Its unifying, creative and abstracting action is carried out under the Law of Synthesis which governs Spirit.²⁵

The Secret Doctrine links each of the Logoi with Fohat or Will, i.e., the electrical vitality of pure Spirit. It should be noted that the Tibetan term *Fohat* applies to electrical energy in manifestation. However, “beyond Fohat is Para-Fohat which is nourished by *Pan-Fohat*,”²⁶ the highest psychic energy. Therefore Fohat is the synthesis of all electrical phenomena expressing on all seven planes with links to the very highest fires of Space.

This omniscient fire is viewed as having three primary demonstrations and seven expressions. In its first demonstration and in relation to the First Logos, Fohat or perhaps more aptly Pan-Fohat, is the primordial electric Entity—the “living Symbol and Container of the Will.”²⁷ It is the transcendent and universal propelling force (and its result) that “drives the seemingly subjective into the seemingly objective.”²⁸ In its essence, Pan-Fohat is the life principle of Parabrahman expressing as the Will-to-Exist.

Unity Becomes a Duality

From the First Logos or Ray of Cosmic Will emerges or emanates a dual, quasi-manifest Second. Together, these two aspects of the One Life Ray produce the Life-Spirit or Soul of the Universe.²⁹ The First Logos, as previously mentioned, represents the emanating, positive, Father aspect; the vivifying seed or life impulse. The Second Logos, on the other hand, represents both the positive and the receptive centers allowing it to function as the womb of Space, the *sustaining vehicle* of manifest being. The Second Logos is “the immaculate Mother from whom proceed all the gods, or the anthropomorphized creative forces.”³⁰

The Gnostics concept of the Second Logos is that it contemplates the Eternal Cosmos and then duplicates Its beauties by means of various permutations and combinations.³¹ Such a depiction would seem to correspond to the Second Logos’ role as the Vishnu or Building aspect of Parabrahman—the *producing cause* which begins the progressive evolution of

“Spirit-Soul” or substance (a permutation of Mulaprakriti) from which all the Hierarchies are built.³²

There are several factors involved in the cosmic building process; the primary one being Love-Wisdom. Love or the prototypical Will-to-Love is the underlying formula of the Universe. It is interesting to note that in the Buddhist tradition the First Logos, which can not manifest, sends His diamond heart—Vajarasattva—into the world.³³ This Second Logos is the source of Love, primordial cosmic compassion and wisdom. (The Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul reminds us that “terms such as Love and Wisdom are not descriptive qualities, but the names of Lives of such potency and activity that humans can as yet know nothing.”³⁴) But what we can surmise of this second Hypostatic Abstraction—the thousand headed Serpent of Eternity,³⁵ as it is sometimes called—is that it directs, guides and inspires Vishnu or the building aspect in all its myriad transformations and through the entire length of the Mantvantara.

The Tibetan describes this process in terms of motion and in terms of the Laws governing motion at this stage. The Law of Attraction—the law presiding over interplay or action and reaction is the primary Law governing the Second Logos. In conjunction with the above, Third Logos, the Ray of Cosmic Wisdom seeks to relate spirit and matter, to impart quality, produce shape and create the ordered spiraling cycles of existence.³⁶ (Some of these esoteric descriptions are reminiscent of current scientific models which describe the first minutes after the Big Bang in terms of “nucleosynthesis”—the process that provides the heat and motion which fuses the primordial building blocks of matter to create the first elements.) It is interesting to note that one of the names given to the Second Logos is the “Lord of the Elements.”

In order to accomplish the aforementioned goals, the second Logos must necessarily employ the Will-to-Unity in order to cohere, manipulate and interrelate the atoms of divine substance. In gathering atoms together into a circular orbit and an ever-ascending spiral,³⁷ progressively refined relationships, forms and

consciousness develop. In this activity we see something of the “Will that Brings Fulfillment”³⁸ or that divine intention which lies back of consciousness itself and which serves as the basis of all processes of interrelationship in the Grand Design.

The Second Logos is also linked with Fohat, (or Para-Fohat) who gives this energy its impress. In this context the Will might be viewed as the transcendent unifying force or “heat”³⁹ that wisely guides the interplay between spirit and matter. At this stage Para-Fohat might be seen as Love-Wisdom having sprung from the mind of the First Logos and from the bosom or heart of the Second.

Manifestation

The Second Logos receives its full expression with the Third Cosmic Logos—the Ray of Intelligent Will—the first *manifest* Deity. This Logos is characterized by active intelligence and represents the Principle of Manas or Mind. Described as the “Cosmic Noumenon of Matter,” or matter as transcendent substance,⁴⁰ the Third Logos is matter in its pure unadulterated essence. It represents divine intelligence and “cosmic ideation” (as opposed to the pre-cosmic ideation of Parabraham) and the re-awakening of Universal Mind.⁴¹ Unlike the other Logoi discussed the Third Logos is not ceaseless in duration; its manifestation is cyclic or periodic.

As the first manifestation of Divine Thought, the Third Logos or Son of the Father is the “Word made flesh.” As such, this Logos via Fohat can be viewed as the prime mover of everything in creation. The Third Logos is the source of all ordered processes and intelligent evolutionary functioning in creation. All manifestation, all the planes of consciousness and the Principles of man, came into existence as a result of the creative fire and Intelligent Will of Brahma, the Third Logos.

Utilizing the Light of Intelligence this Third Logos separates, diversifies and individualizes Cosmic Force. It functions as the aggregate of all divine ideals, prototypes and plans in both the objective and subjective world.⁴² In conjunction with the First and Second Logos, it

expresses as the beginning of Space-Time, that is, periodical time and the appearance of Light, one of the first manifestations of the Will and creative activity.⁴³ (Here again we see an analogy in modern scientific thought in the idea that when matter and radiation separated or “decoupled” after the Big Bang, radiation eventually cooled to produce visible light.) So it would seem that the Third Logos is responsible for the spiritual phenomena of Light (knowledge) as well as the visible world of matter. The concept of Time would also seem to connect this Third Logos to the “will that conditions the life aspect”⁴⁴ which determines the nature, appearance, quality and endurance of all forms in our system and all the numberless other Systems.

Modification, individualization and differentiation are the result of the action of the Third Logos and the various Laws that govern motion at this stage. The Law of Economy which governs matter, the Law of Repulsion and rotation—the mode of action of this Logos—all come into play to intelligently manipulate, separate and vitalize matter so that it adequately responds to and meets the needs of Spirit.⁴⁵ Therefore, we might conceive of this Third Logos as embodying the prototype of the Will-to-Evolve⁴⁶ which carries the process of manifestation intelligently forward and makes matter subservient to the fundamental idea in the Mind of God.

Hierarchies of Celestial Beings

Stemming from the triple formless Fire of the One Life are the Seven Spirits Before the Throne, the Seven Cosmic Logoi or the Seven Radiant Inner Spirits or *Rishis*. This group can also be likened to the Cosmic or Universal *Dhyani Chohans*; the highest unknowable spiritual Entities or *Ah-hi*⁴⁷ on the ladder of Existence. So close to the One Life as to be almost indistinguishable from it in its essence, this seven-fold electric fire serves as the seven-fingered Will for Divine Purpose.⁴⁸

These Spirits, also known as the Primeval Seven, are the nearly flawless reflectors of divine will whose actions can be classified as “acts of God.”⁴⁹ They, and not Brahma, ac-

tively engage in the act of creation; not as creators *per se*, but as Powers that awaken and manifest a vast graded host of spirits and forces throughout the seven chains, dimensions and interpenetrating planes.⁵⁰ From them also stem, in ordered sequence, the numberless Universes, Stars, and Solar Systems.

These Spirits contain within themselves all the great Creative Hierarchies which differentiate and transmit the Will and Power of the transcendent One through the seven Cosmic Planes. Collectively these Hierarchies, manifesting as the Cosmic, Solar, Planetary and intermediary “Powers,” are responsible for all creation from the Invisible Stars to the smallest atoms of substance. Each of these Spirits is “capable of septenary divisions and subdivisions, so that in the lowest Cosmic Plane, where the Solar Systems manifest, the number of divisions and subdivisions is almost infinite.”⁵¹

From the Seven Sons of Light or Primordial Seven derive another major group of five, or rather seven celestial beings known as the Cosmic Dhyani Buddhas. These lofty spiritual Beings—the Primordial Flames—are the self-conscious Administrators or formless Powers. The highest of this group is known as the parentless *Anupadaka* or primordial monads from the world of incorporeal being.⁵² The Cosmic Dhyani Buddhas or Supreme Watchers have governance over each of the Rounds.⁵³ (The Silent Watchers are the informing lives of the Rounds, Globes, Root Races and Planets and their various Logoi.⁵⁴) Seated at their solitary, self-appointed post until the end of the life-cycle, they epitomize both infinite compassion and the Will-to-Sacrifice.

The Cosmic Dhyani Buddhas emanate or create from themselves, their Sons, the celestial Dhyani or Bodhisattvas, who have governance over the Globes of a Planetary Chain.⁵⁵ In turn, the Bodhisattvas of the Celestial Realms emanate the Super-Terrestrial Bodhisattvas who watch over the Root Races. Following them are the Silent Watchers for the Planets, the Buddhas of Activity, *Nirmanakaya* and other Terrestrial Dhyani including the Spiritual Hierarchy for the Planet. Each grade or class of Dhyani Chohans is occupied with working

out into manifestation the Will and Purpose of some Logos, be it Planetary, Solar or Cosmic.

Conclusion

In their totality these creative Spirits or Dhyanis Chohans—are also known as Fohat, the fire of matter or the ever present electrical energy. Through Fohat—the intelligent medium and directing power of all appearance—the ideas of Universal Mind are impressed upon matter and brought into action. Expressing itself as the Intelligent Activity of the Will, Fohat acts as “the bridge by which the Ideas existing in the “Divine Thought” are impressed on Cosmic Substance as the laws of Nature.”⁵⁶

Fohat electrifies every atom into activity from the most sublime Entity to the densest atom of substance. This mighty creative Power—the power of directed Will or the force of spirit in action— functions as the builder of vehicles for manifestation. It also lies behind the urge and impulse inherent in all form to arise and create a pathway back to its original Source. In this way, the fire of the Will—the highest known attribute of Divinity and the most potent force in creation—brings about our eventual and inevitable attainment, perfection and illumination. Its immense, almost unimaginable power and scope make it the universal energy of divine incentive, unity, creativity and Life.

¹ Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II. Theosophical University Press, 1888, p. 173.

² Paracelsus, *Interpretatio alia Totius Astronomiae, Opera Omnia*, Tom II, Geneva, 1659, p. 670a, (tr. John Hargrave.)

³ *Theosophy*, Vol. 43, No. 6, *The First Power*, April, 1955, pp. 268-274.

⁴ “Electrical Entity,” *Theosophy*, Vol. 42, No. 10, August 1954, pp. 464-469.

⁵ Helena Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, Vol. X. Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, January-March 1889.

⁶ Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p.

⁷ Ain Soph, or Eyn Soph, is the Qabbalistic conception of that which is beyond knowing, i.e., the Absolute.

⁸ The term *Parabrahman* can have Absolute, Cosmic and/or Solar connotations.

⁹ Swami Abhedananda, *The Word That Is God*, Chapter 3. www.atmajyoti.org.

¹⁰ “The Three Hypostases,” *Theosophy*, Vol. 12, No. 7, May, 1924, pp. 304-307.

¹¹ Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 487.

¹² *Shekinah* can be defined as feminine form of the Divine Presence manifesting as a cloud of fire.

¹³ Christopher P. Holmes, *Microcosm/Macrocosm*, Book II. Zero Point Publications. See also: www.zeropoint.ca.

¹⁴ Swami Nirmalananda Giri, “The Ladder of Light: Studies in Cosmology,” *Atma Jyoti Newsletter*, June 2006. www.atmajyoti.org.

¹⁵ Mayananda, *The Tarot for Today*, London: Zeus Press, 1963, p. 60.

¹⁶ “Logos,” *The Theosophical Dictionary*, *Theosophical University Press*, 1999,

¹⁷ G. de Purucker, *Fountain-Source of Occultism; Section 5*, Theosophical University Press, 1974.

¹⁸ “Pralaya,” *Theosophy*, Vol. 42, No. 11, September, 1954 pp. 511-516.

¹⁹ The Big Bang model refers to a tremendous explosion that started the expansion of the universe. At the point of this event all of the matter and energy of space was contained at one point in an extremely hot and dense state.

²⁰ From *The Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, Theosophical University Press, pp. 90-91.

²¹ Alice. A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, Lucis Trust, 1925, p. 144.

²² *Ibid.*, p.145.

²³ For further information on “the Will-that-Initiates” see: Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, Lucis Trust, 1951, pp. 580-624 by .

²⁴ The synthesis and note of triumph, as it is embodied by the First Logos, is that which persists behind the notion of Death. For additional information on “the Will that Conquers Death” see: *Esoteric Astrology*, pp. 593, 615.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 615-616.

²⁶ The Agni Yoga Society, *Agni Yoga*, p. 403. Italics added.

²⁷ Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 1, p. 111.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁹ Rudolf Steiner Archives, *Esoteric Cosmology XIII: The Logos and the Word*, elibrarian@elib.com

³⁰ *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, Vol. 1, p. 4.

³¹ G. R. S. Mead, *Commentary on Pymander*, Gnostic Society Library, www.webcom.com/gnosis/library.

³² Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 1, p. 447.

³³ *Theosophy*, Vol. 53, No. 12, *The Buddhist Doctrine*, October, 1965, pp. 368-373.

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- ³⁴ Roberto Assagioli, "Wisdom," *Sundial*, Set XI, Part 1.
- ³⁵ According to *The Theosophical Glossary*, Sehsa or Anahata is the Serpent of Eternity who carries Vishnu through the Manvantara.
- ³⁶ Alice A. Bailey, *Treatise of Cosmic Fire*, Lucis Trust, 1925, p. 145
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.143.
- ³⁸ Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 607.
- ³⁹ In this context, the term "heat" refers to the fire in every atom that causes it to rotate, radiate and seek a new center. For additional information see for example: "The Qualities of Rotary Motion," *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, pp. 157-159.
- ⁴⁰ Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, p. 17.
- ⁴¹ *Theosophy*, Vol. 51, No. 7, "Messenger of Divine Thought," May 1963.
- ⁴² Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 1, p. 15.
- ⁴³ Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge, Meeting # 6, 1889. www.theosociety.org.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 591-592
- ⁴⁵ Bailey, *Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, pp. 142-143.
- ⁴⁶ Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, p 598.
- ⁴⁷ Blavatsky describes the Ah-hi as "entities on the highest spiritual plane who reflect universal mind collectively at the first flutter of Manvantara. They begin the work of evolution of all the lower forces throughout the seven planes."
- ⁴⁸ "The Ladder of Light," *Atma Jyoti Newsletter*, June 2006,
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- ⁵¹ Max Heindel, *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception, Part II: Cosmogogenesis and Anthropogenesis*. Whitefish MT: Kessinger Publishing, Reprint 2005.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, p.572 .
- ⁵³ Geoffrey Barboraka, *The Plan*, Theosophical Publishing House, 1961, p. 67
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- ⁵⁶ Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 1, p. 16.

The Emergence of Pluto in Capricorn: 2008-2024

Jan Detrich

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore the significance of Pluto in Capricorn over the next sixteen years. It begins with an overview of the movement of Pluto through the signs from the time of its discovery in 1930, and explains the quality and dynamic of Pluto in affecting transformational change. It goes on to discuss the essential nature of the sign Capricorn and highlights the opportunities, challenges and emerging trends specific to this historic passage. The article concludes with the relevance of Pluto in Capricorn in the ongoing preparatory work for the Reappearance of the Christ and the incoming Age of Aquarius.

Overview

Capricorn, the “birthplace of the Christ,” the place of the “second birth” and the scene for the emergence of the fifth kingdom in nature when the right time comes.¹

Pluto's recent entrance into Capricorn is a consummation and a turning point; a heightened spiritual opportunity and a planetary crisis.

This is somewhat true whenever Pluto changes signs but it is particularly true whenever Pluto is positioned at the beginning of a cardinal sign since 0° of the cardinal signs corresponds to the seasonal equinox and solstice points which are the natural vertical and horizontal axes of the zodiacal wheel.

The cardinal points divide the wheel into four sub-cycles or phases within an overarching evolutionary cycle similar to the phases of the Moon. Each sub-cycle brings about an overall shift in direction related to the cardinal sign involved, while the passage from sign to sign brings about a more specific focus on the energies of each sign; each one seeding the next in the evolutionary progression.

Another consideration is that every larger cycle, sub-cycle and sign have a waxing and waning influence similar to the phases of the Moon. Hence there is constant interplay of in-breath, interlude and out-breath within the greater and lesser cycles. A waxing cycle relates to growth and expansion while a waning cycle extracts, integrates and essentializes meaning from the growth cycle.

Since its discovery in 1930 Pluto has been in its waxing cycle ascending through the signs Cancer to Sagittarius. As Pluto enters Capricorn it is positioned at the winter solstice point in the northern latitudes, characterized by death and rebirth. It is a time when the sun ‘stands still’; nature is dormant and spirit is most pronounced. It is introspective and distinguished by withdrawal from outer activity toward inner spiritual realities.

Like the last quarter Moon phase, the last quarter sub-cycle that Pluto is entering is a time of culmination—the ending of the previous cycle and birth into a new cycle. The results of the previous cycle are examined, essentialized and integrated into the larger whole.

Capricorn is ever the sign of conclusion... is, therefore, the sign of what has been called esoterically “periodic arresting.” Progress

About the Author

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becomes impossible under the existing forms, and there has to be the descent into the valley of pain, despair and death before a fresh attempt to scale the heights takes place.²

Pluto was accidentally discovered on February 18, 1930, midway in the sign of Cancer. Pluto had entered Cancer in 1913 just before the World Wars. At the time the world was in financial turmoil due to the Wall Street crash and there was extreme political unrest due to the rise of Fascism in Europe. Secretly the atomic bomb was being developed and the Nazis were gaining a foothold in Europe.

Pluto's passage through Cancer initiated a mass awakening and sensitive response to world conditions. This was the first time humanity en masse had left home and tribe to fight a world war on foreign soil. It was the very first time that humanity had banded together in reaction to a global cause.

During Pluto's passage through Cancer and early Leo, millions of individual lives were sacrificed. Humanity was later regenerated by a huge population explosion (the baby-boomer generation) while Pluto was in Leo (1938-56).

This stage of death and of birth (for the two are proceeding simultaneously) can be easily grasped by the esotericist as he studies the world war in its two distinctive periods: 1914 to 1918, and 1939 until 1942. The first stage (if you could see the situation as it truly is) was most definitely the death stage; the second stage, in which we now find ourselves, is literally the stage of birth—the birth pangs of the new order and of the new civilisation through which humanity's sense of life can express itself. The mother dies in order that the child may live; the form is sacrificed to the life. But today, the form aspect, the Mother or matter aspect, is dying consciously, and just as consciously the child, the infant civilisation, is coming into being. This is the new thing and it is in this that we are all participating. It is the death of the personality of humanity and the coming in of the soul.³

The 0° Libra cycle (1971-2008)—when Pluto was moving through the Libra to Capricorn-

quadrant of the Cardinal Cross (paralleling the full moon phase)—was a time of fullness and openness yet reorientation toward deeper understanding and meaning. This era brought an end to the Viet Nam War and inaugurated the Information Age—a new era of global exchange and bridging between the East and West. The digital and ICT revolution and the invention of the world wide web (1989) powerfully opened the door to interdependence and wider interconnection, initiating communities not bound by space or proximity, which continues through the present day.

More recently, Pluto in Sagittarius (1995–2008) highlighted religious extremes and inflationary tendencies, yet opened the door to wider multi-cultural experience, travel, diversity and exposed the truth in many areas—even ‘inconvenient truths’ such as global warming. This period also brought a widespread expansion in consciousness and an intense optimism and idealism. With Pluto now entering Capricorn there is bound to be a battle between this optimism and idealism and the need for realism.

The current 0° Capricorn sub-cycle continues through 2066. The focus during this time will be on gaining a larger-scale picture of how the world works, what our collective relationship to the universe is, and what lessons or conclusions we are able to draw upon from our experiences thus far.

...a great and new movement is proceeding and a tremendously increased interplay and interaction is taking place. This will go on until A.D. 2025. During the years intervening between now and then very great changes will be seen taking place, and at the great General Assembly of the Hierarchy—held as usual every century—in 2025 the date in all probability will be set for the first stage of the externalisation of the Hierarchy. The present cycle (from now until that date) is called technically “The Stage of the Forerunner.”⁴

This intensification of the light will continue until A.D. 2025, when there will come a cycle of relative stability and of steady shining without much augmentation.⁵

The inner structure of the World Federation of Nations will eventually be equally well organised, with its outer form taking rapid shape by 2025.⁶

Pluto

Pluto brings powerful and far-reaching change and transformation. As the most distant planet from the Sun, it is by nature obscure. Astronomers know less about this planet than any other in our system. Thus Pluto represents that which is hidden or concealed—the mysteries, life and death, inner psychological processes, and infrastructures. Its process is gradual and grand; overarching all other planetary cycles in scope and longevity.

Although Pluto is the smallest planet, and now has even been reduced to the status of a ‘dwarf planet,’⁷¹ its impact is powerful and mighty. Pluto is generational, affecting millions of people and presenting those tests and challenges that transform and rebirth whole societies and civilizations.

A key principle of Pluto is that something small can have an enormous impact disproportionate to its size. This is also a principle of the Big Bang theory, according to which everything came from nothing. It is exemplified by the micro-chip and in fact by the micro-and-nano-everything world we live in. It is the principle behind the atomic bomb about the size of a baseball which produces an explosion equal to 20,000 tons of TNT. It is also the principle behind the powerful effect one person can have on the entire world.

The glyph or symbol for Pluto ♇ is similar to the glyph for Neptune ♆ indicating the close relationship between these two planets. Their alliance is evident in the fact that Neptune and Pluto are the exoteric and esoteric rulers of Pisces, and in Greek mythology Neptune and Pluto are brothers: Poseidon, God of the Sea, and Hades, God of the Underworld. The third brother is Zeus, God of Air—Uranus.

[W]ith the activation of the Capricorn/Cancer axis with the entry of Pluto into Capricorn, the actions of ordinary people and groups can and will have a potent impact in the coming cycle. Individual and grass-root efforts will create extraordinary solutions to global problems. We will have the opportunity to make a “world of difference” in very simple, practical and profound ways; and the actions of the few will have a profound and regenerative effect upon the masses.

Astronomically, during Pluto's 248 year irregular orbit around the Sun, it intersects with Neptune for a period of 20 years, assuming a position closer to the Sun than Neptune during that time. The last time this happened was from 1979 to 1999, and the next time it will occur will be in two hundred years (2226).

Pluto's glyph (symbol) shows the circle (spirit) over the crescent (receptivity) and the cross (matter). This bears resemblance to a human being with arms outstretched toward the heavens in praise or invocation. The symbol indicates that Pluto is fueled by a higher

power although, as a non-sacred planet, its vital work is focused in the lower realms, bringing the death of personality limitations by destroying all that hinders progress and reorienting the life toward the higher. This is particularly true with Pluto in Capricorn, for Pluto represents the depths and Capricorn the heights of the material world.

Esoterically, Pluto, one of the rulers of Pisces, must work, bringing in the death of the personality influence.⁸

Two of the other non-sacred planets—Mars and Pluto—function in connection with the sacral centre (Mars) and the solar plexus (Pluto). This latter planet becomes active in the life of the man who is “becoming alive in the higher sense, his lower nature passes into the smoke and darkness of Pluto, who governs the lesser burning ground, in order that the man may live in truth in the higher land of light.”⁹

Pluto's process is metamorphic, initially involving a breaking down or dismantling phase, followed by a rest period or interlude, and then a reconstructive or re-birthing phase. Its passage through a sign causes an intense and protracted focus, examination and transformation of the issues denoted by that sign.

Pluto and Capricorn powerfully express the First Ray and both are associated with initiation. Pluto and Vulcan are known to co-rule the first initiation while Capricorn is the paramount sign of initiation. Consequently, during the current “Stage of the Forerunner”¹⁰ Pluto in Capricorn seems a potent combination to augment preparations for the first planetary initiation.

...a disciple who is upon the path is strongly influenced by Mercury and by Saturn, but when he begins his training for the first initiation he has to contend with the influences of Pluto and Vulcan...¹¹

At the first initiation, the disciple has to contend with the crystallising and destroying forces of Vulcan and Pluto. The influence of Vulcan reaches to the very depths of his nature, whilst Pluto drags to the surface and destroys all that hinders in these lower regions.¹²

Capricorn

Lost am I in Light Supernal, yet on that light I turn my back.

CAPRICORN—This is the constellation by means of which comes the conquering will which releases from form life and initiates the man into the kingdom wherein the will aspect (not the soul aspect) of divinity ex-

presses itself. You will remember that there is a close connection between the Earth and Capricorn. The reason for this is that the Earth provides ideal conditions for this particular type of achievement because it is in process of transforming from the stage of a “non-sacred planet” into that of a “sacred planet.” This is why Saturn is so powerful a ruler and transmitter to the Earth of the dynamic quality of the first ray of power. This inpouring of first ray energy will be greatly accelerated from now on.¹³

Capricorn, exoterically and esoterically ruled by Saturn, represents the three stages of humanity's unfoldment: Deep crystallization, concretization and material ambition are symbolized by the crocodile. The ascent out of matter, the surmounting of the tests and trials of earth, are symbolized by the goat. The great spiritual heights of the initiate are represented by the unicorn.

Esoterically, all world Saviours and Sun Gods are born in Capricorn but also the very worst type of man—hard, materialistic, cruel, proud, selfishly ambitious and egoistic.¹⁴

Capricorn is a sign of extremes, expressing the best and worst that humanity is capable of. Through the First Ray Capricorn is associated with power, politics, leadership and the use of will. Through the Third Ray it is linked to humanity and the planetary throat centre, the Earth, commerce, economics, and mental and physical resources. Through the Seventh Ray Capricorn is associated with the power of manifestation and with skill and agility in the affairs of the physical plane.

Both esoterically and exoterically Capricorn is ambitious, oriented toward achievement, goal-driven, focused, hardworking, responsible, practical, earthy, and frugal. Capricorn rules the knees and the back, symbolically representing pride and humility, the shouldering of burdens and responsibilities, and the process of ‘bending of the will without breaking the spirit.’

Will works downwards into form, bending form consciously to divine purpose.¹⁵

When crystallisation has reached a certain degree of density and so-called "hardness," it is easily shattered and destroyed and man, born in Capricorn, then brings about his own destruction; this is due to his fundamentally materialistic nature, plus the "blows of fate" which are the enactments of the law of karma. Again and again, a certain measure of concreteness is achieved, only again to undergo destruction, prior to the release of the life and the rebuilding of the form.¹⁶

...Capricorn is...the sign in which is inaugurated a new cycle of effort, whether this effort is in connection with the individual man or with the initiate. Effort, strain, struggle, the fight with the forces native to the underworld, or the strenuous conditions entailed by the tests of discipleship or initiation—these are distinctive of experience in Capricorn.¹⁷

(Laws of group work) Law 5: The symbol for this is the mountain with a goat standing on the summit, and again an astrological sign, that of Capricorn, can be noted. All hard places can be surmounted, and the summit reached by the "Divine Goat," symbol of the group, viewed as a unit.¹⁸

Pluto in Capricorn

Things fall apart; the center cannot hold.
(*The Second Coming* by William Butler Yeats.)

...as man translates his ideals into words and acts, he brings about transformation, transmutation and eventually translation upon the mountain top of Initiation.¹⁹

Pluto's recent entrance into Capricorn was preceded by its conjunction with the Galactic Centre which has occurred several times over the past two years. This could be called a *planetary course correction*. Past Pluto conjunctions to the Galactic Center brought far-reaching changes, the impacts of which were unknown until many years later. For example between 1510 and 1512 Pluto was conjunct the Galactic Centre at 23° Sagittarius, and during this time Copernicus discovered that the Earth revolved around the Sun. During the last conjunction between 1758 and 1760 at 24° Sagit-

tarius, the first treatise on atomic theory was published, and was considered to be one of the most important discoveries in the history of science.²⁰

With Pluto entering Capricorn "the tide has turned." There is about to be a major reality check in the affairs of planet Earth. In fact it will be a time to 'get real' like no other in recent history. Pluto faces us with the ultimate realities of life and Capricorn is a powerful earth sign, oriented to practicality and realism.

The power of Pluto in Capricorn at this time will be strengthened by the fact that First Ray impulses arise in the first quarter of each century. Also the year 2008 is a '10' year numerologically ($2 + 0 + 0 + 8 = 10$) and '10' becomes '1' ($1 + 0 = 1$). The number 1 corresponds to birth and new beginnings and Pluto in Capricorn, the tenth sign in a 10 year instigates cyclic activity and the process of becoming. This is a time when things come to pass or eventuate according to divine Plan.

Great united strength can be brought to the service of the Plan, and the occult significance of the words: "My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure" can be grasped. The perfected strength of the Ashram (symbolised by the number 10) becomes available to the disciple whose purity of heart has enabled him to penetrate into the Ashram...²¹

By means of this augmentation—during the coming Aquarian zodiacal cycle—groups on earth can avail themselves of the tide of Capricornian influences which will flow into our radius of registration every seven years.²²

Over the next seventeen years Pluto in Capricorn will cause many changes in the way we "do business." Although this will occur over time, the scope and dynamism of Pluto in relation to world affairs will be dramatic and far-reaching. A sorely needed housecleaning will occur. We recall the technique of the First Ray, "Ever destruction goes before the rule of beauty. Ruin precedes the real. The garden and the gardener must awake! The work proceeds."²³

The goal of Pluto in Capricorn will involve a rather large agenda of world reconstruction, given that so many forms have built up over such a long time since Pluto began its larger cycle in Aries in 1822. A huge laundry list of crystallized structures will need to be confronted in this emerging world period, and many changes are already underway because Pluto's net is very broad and never sudden. Signs of its entry into Capricorn have been arising substantially over the past several years, laying a rough framework for what is to come. There are numerous examples and issues related to this period, including:

- An economic shift in power from the West to the East.
- A shift away from expansion toward simplicity.
- An interest in ageing and changes in the way we inter our dead.
- Globalization.
- Global concerns; global warming.
- Shared use of world resources.
- Sustainability.
- Ecology and the Earth.
- Earth stewardship.
- Changes in the monetary system.
- Building and construction techniques.
- Corporate responsibility.
- Leadership.
- World governance.
- Conscious consumerism.
- Issues related to mega-wealth (plutocrats).
- Philanthropy.
- Career versus vocation.
- Focus on purpose and purposefully driven lives.
- Anarchy.
- Relocalization.
- Infrastructures

Certainly plenty of work needs to be done, however the rather lofty and overarching goal of this world period will be to confront existing limitations; to destroy the outworn political, governmental, business, economic, medical, religious and other institutional structures

that impede the flow of greater life—and ultimately emerge a more vibrant, living organism.

Clearly this will be a “global” period, emphasizing global issues, global responsibility, and focusing on broad-based issues such as ecology and the right use of world resources. But another striking and somewhat hidden feature of this period will be the shift from feeling to action, so characteristic of the First Ray.

This impulse to act and to initiate, coupled with Pluto's innate principle of having a huge impact disproportionate to its size, creates a dynamic potential. Cancer—the opposite sign to Capricorn—rules mass consciousness, and so with the activation of the Capricorn/Cancer axis with the entry of Pluto into Capricorn, the actions of ordinary people and groups can and will have a potent impact in the coming cycle. Individual and grass-root efforts will create extraordinary solutions to global problems. We will have the opportunity to make a “world of difference” in very simple, practical and profound ways; and the actions of the few will have a profound and regenerative effect upon the masses.

This world period will be about coming down to earth and getting back to basics—in the words of Gandhi, “Living simply so that others may simply live.” While Pluto is in Capricorn it will be a time for putting the awareness gained in Sagittarius into action and usefulness. It will be a time when individual freedoms will not be exercised at the expense of others; a time when we stop living in the future (Sagittarius) and begin to live in the “now;” a time when we will ask ourselves what really works and what is real; a time of tightening our belts with greater natural austerity. No more will life be about excess, grand plans and schemes without exacting usefulness and purpose. Increasingly there will be a tendency toward simplicity and a Zen-like approach.

The new era of simplicity must come in. The new world order will inaugurate this simpler life based on adequate food, right thought, creative activity and happiness. These essentials are only possible under a right economic rule. This simplification and

this wise distribution of the world's resources must embrace the high and the low, the rich and the poor, thus serving all men alike.²⁴

The chart of Pluto's ingress into Capricorn carries the seeds of the emerging civilization and significantly underscores efforts toward a new world order with Pluto, Venus and Jupiter in Capricorn positioned at the fourth house cusp.

Although Jupiter in Capricorn is placed in the sign of its detriment, it is exalted in the fourth house, articulating a deeper descent of spirit into matter and the uprising of spirit from deep within matter, which will undoubtedly characterize this period.

Venus in Capricorn, in its hierarchical (monadic) position, opens the door not only to greater spiritual heights but to increased fusion within the global heart and mind.

The prominent grouping of Sun, Chiron, Neptune, Mercury and North Node in Aquarius in the fifth house conveys the collective power of Humanity, altruism, brotherhood and group consciousness, which will be at the heart of this new cycle.

The unfoldment of the Christ life—as a result of the presence and activities of the second divine aspect of love—will result in the ending of economic fear, and the “house of bread” will become the “house of plenty.” Bread—as the symbol of material human need—will eventually be controlled by a vast group of initiates of the first initiation—by those whose lives are beginning to be controlled by the Christ-consciousness, which is the consciousness of responsibility and service. These initiates exist in their thousands today; they will be present in their millions by the time the year 2025 arrives. All this re-orientation and unfoldment will be the result of the activity of the seventh ray and of the impact of its radiation upon humanity.²⁵

The Libra ascendant of the ingress chart emphasizes equipoise between spirit and matter, a reorientation toward right relations, reciprocity, mutual tolerance, shared stewardship, co-

operation, and the bridging of differences in the light of commonalities; and increased desire for true peace, based on right human relations and implemented by goodwill.

This year Pluto is relatively stationary, in a holding pattern until the end of the current calendar year when Pluto progresses further into Capricorn. When Uranus enters Aries (2010-11) and Neptune enters Pisces (2012) the shattering of forms and the dismantling process will intensify. Uranus square Pluto at that time will create a point of critical mass that will spur a paradigm shift, further breakthroughs and revolutionary changes.

2012 is said to be the “end of time” in Mayan and other prophecies, and surely this year will mark the beginning of the end of the world as we have known it, and a critical point of transition onto higher ground. It is a time when we will move more deeply into the Aquarian Age and deepen our dedication to the preparatory work for the reappearance of the Christ through our actions.

The larger Capricorn-Pisces Pluto cycle that we are in will conclude in Pisces in 2044-2066; clearing away the final vestiges and remnants of the Piscean Age and setting the stage for a whole new cycle—the long awaited Age of Aquarius.

¹ Alice A. Bailey. *Esoteric Astrology*. Lucis, 1951, p. 102.

² *Ibid.*, p. 158.

³ Alice A. Bailey. *Esoteric Healing*. Lucis, 1953, p. 116.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 530.

⁵ Alice A. Bailey. *Esoteric Psychology*, I. Lucis, 1936, p. 1103.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1177.

⁷ On 24 August 2006 the General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) agreed that a “planet” is to be defined as “a celestial body that (a) is in orbit around the Sun, (b) has sufficient mass for its self-gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a hydrostatic equilibrium (nearly round) shape, and (c) has cleared the neighborhood around its orbit.” Therefore Pluto was reclassified as a

- “dwarf planet”.
<http://www.iau.org/iau0603.414.0.html>.
- ⁸ Alice A. Bailey. *The Destiny of the Nations*. Lucis, 1949, p. 73.
- ⁹ Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 78.
- ¹⁰ Alice A. Bailey. *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*. Lucis, 1957, p.530.
- ¹¹ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, I, p. 246.
- ¹² Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 70.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 620.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 169.
- ¹⁵ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, p. 344.
- ¹⁶ Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 158.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 159.
- ¹⁸ Alice A. Bailey. *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*. Lucis, 1925, p. 1221.
- ¹⁹ Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 398.
- ²⁰ In Vienna in 1758 Ruđer Bošković published *Theoria philosophiae naturalis redacta ad unicam legem virium in natura existentium* (Theory of Natural philosophy derived to the single Law of forces, which exist in Nature), containing his atomic theory and his theory of forces. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boscovich>)
- ²¹ Alice A. Bailey. *Discipleship in the New Age*, II. Lucis, 1955, p. 330
- ²² Alice A. Bailey. *Esoteric Psychology*, II. Lucis, 1942, p. 196.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p.167.
- ²⁴ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, p. 198.
- ²⁵ Alice A. Bailey. *The Rays and the Initiations*. Lucis, 1960, p. 571.

The Egyptian Myth of Isis and Osiris

Zachary F. Lansdowne

Summary

The ancient Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris appears to be a dramatic tale of betrayal and revenge: Isis is the wife of Osiris, king of Egypt; Osiris is killed by his brother Seth; Horus, who is the son of Isis and Osiris, later fights with and defeats Seth. This myth, however, has a hidden, or esoteric, meaning. We will show that its hidden meaning is a detailed description of the spiritual journey and that this description is consistent with the modern treatment of that journey given by Alice A. Bailey.

Ancient Egyptian Myths

Helena P. Blavatsky (1831–1891), co-founder of the Theosophical Society, believed that ancient myths contained concealed truths. She wrote: “Myths... are now proved to be fables, just in proportion as we *misunderstand* them; truths, in proportion as they were once *understood*.”¹ Regarding ancient Egyptian myths, Blavatsky stated: “The Egyptian priests *have forgotten much, they altered nothing*. The loss of a good deal of the primitive teaching was due to the sudden deaths of the great Hierophants, who passed away before they had time to reveal *all* to their successors; mostly, to the absence of worthy heirs to the knowledge. Yet they have preserved in their rituals and dogmas the principal teachings of the secret doctrine.”²

We will investigate the truths concealed within the ancient myth of Isis and Osiris, which is perhaps the best known story in Egyptian mythology. There are several versions of the myth.³ The version that we will consider has four main characters: Osiris, who is king of Egypt; Isis, who is the wife of Osiris; Seth, who is the brother of Osiris; and Horus, who is the son of Isis and Osiris. Each of these characters is regarded as a god or goddess.

This version has three main segments: first, after Seth seals Osiris in a chest and throws it in a river, Isis searches for and eventually recovers the chest; second, after Seth cuts up Osiris’s body into multiple parts, Isis searches for those parts and eventually finds them; and third, Horus struggles with Seth for the right to rule the kingdom and eventually defeats him. As shown by the myth, Egyptian gods and goddesses are similar to human beings, because they lived, died, gave birth, went into battle, and had human emotions.

Spiritual Journey

We will compare the ancient myth of Isis and Osiris with the modern description of the spiritual journey given by Alice A. Bailey. According to Bailey, the spiritual journey contains a series of milestones, called “initiations,” that define discrete segments of that journey. In this context, the word “initiation” denotes an entrance into the spiritual life, or into a new stage in that life. The first segment is called the “path of probation,” and it extends from the beginning of the spiritual journey to the first initiation. Bailey writes, “The Probationary Path... marks that period in the life of a man when he definitely sets himself on the side of the forces of evolution, and works at the building of his own character. He takes himself in hand, cultivates the qualities that are lacking in his disposition, and seeks with diligence to bring his personality under control.”⁴

About the Author

Zachary Lansdowne, Ph.D., who served as President of the Theosophical Society in Boston, has been a frequent contributor to the *Quarterly*. His book: *The Revelation of Saint John*, which provides a verse-by-verse analysis of the entire *Revelation*, was reviewed in the Fall 2006 issue.

The second segment of the spiritual journey extends from the first initiation to the second initiation. Bailey says, "After this [first] initiation the initiate is taught principally the facts of the astral plane; he has to stabilise his emotional vehicle and learn to work on the astral plane with the same facility and ease as he does on the physical plane."⁵ Here, "astral" is a synonym for emotional. The third segment extends from the second initiation to the third initiation. Bailey says, "After the second initiation the teaching shifts up a plane. The initiate learns to control his mental vehicle; he develops the capacity to manipulate thought matter, and learns the laws of creative thought building."⁶

To analyze the myth of Isis and Osiris, our basic approach takes every symbol as representing some aspect of the consciousness of an aspirant on the spiritual journey, and takes every event as representing a stage on that journey. We will show that each of the three segments of the myth symbolically describes the corresponding segment in Bailey's treatment of the spiritual journey.

First Initiation

The complete myth of Isis and Osiris cannot be found in any one ancient Egyptian source, perhaps because the slaying of Osiris was too awesome to be committed to writing or because the Egyptians knew the myth so well that a complete narrative was not thought to be necessary. Nevertheless, numerous allusions to the myth can be found in extant texts. Plutarch (46–120 A.D.), a Greek historian, biographer, and essayist, used oral and written sources to compose his essay *On Isis and Osiris*, which connected the various episodes of the myth into a single narrative. Plutarch's essay was responsible for making this Egyptian myth well known to the Greeks and Romans.

In the first segment of the myth, Seth seals Osiris in a chest and throws it in a river. We take this segment from Plutarch's classical account, as translated by Frederick Cole Babbitt.⁷ Only selections of Plutarch's account are included, but those selections appear in the order given by him.

Typhon, having secretly measured Osiris's body and having made ready a beautiful chest of corresponding size artistically ornamented, caused it to be brought into the room where the festivity was in progress. . . . Osiris got into it and lay down, and those who were in the plot ran to it and slammed down the lid, which they fastened by nails from the outside and also by using molten lead. Then they carried the chest to the river and sent it on its way to the sea.

Seth, whom the Greeks called Typhon, is the nefarious demon of evil in Egyptian mythology. In the above passage, Seth and his co-workers use nails and molten lead to seal Osiris in a chest that is carried out to sea. Throughout the myth, Seth symbolizes the adversary that we must overcome on the spiritual journey. Bailey says our goal is "liberation from maya or illusion."⁸ Buddhism and Hinduism also consider such liberation to be their goal and use the Sanskrit word *maya* to denote illusion. Thus, Seth symbolizes our illusions, or false beliefs. Bailey speaks of "prison houses of ideas," and says, "water is the symbol of the emotional nature."⁹ Accordingly, the nails and molten lead symbolize our imprisoning ideas, and the sea symbolizes our emotions. The sealed chest floating in the sea symbolizes our physical body after it has been affected by our ideas and emotions, which in turn have been corrupted by our illusions.

Bailey refers to the soul, or inner divinity, as the "king upon the throne of the heart."¹⁰ Osiris might symbolize the soul, because he is the king of Egypt in the myth. Blavatsky confirms this association by stating that Osiris is synonymous with the Sanskrit word *purusha*,¹¹ which denotes the soul in Hinduism. Plato says, "For some say that the body is the grave of the soul which may be thought to be buried in our present life."¹² Thus, Osiris buried within the sealed floating chest symbolizes the soul when it is buried by the activities, emotions, ideas, and illusions in our present life.

Isis, when the tidings reached her, at once cut off one of her tresses and put on a garment of mourning in a place where the city still bears the name of Kopto.

Bailey writes, “*Eve, Isis, and Mary...* are of peculiar and significant importance where our civilisation is concerned for they embody in themselves the symbology of the entire form nature, which, when integrated and functioning as a whole person, we call the personality.”¹³ Thus, Isis symbolizes the personality, consisting of the mental, emotional, and physical bodies. Because the aspirant is focused within the personality on the path of probation, Isis also represents the aspirant during this segment of the journey.

At the beginning of her journey, Isis puts on a garment of mourning in the city that bears the name Kopto, which is the Greek verb that means to lament or mourn. Likewise, at the beginning of the spiritual journey, the aspirant feels a loss of contentment and satisfaction. Bailey describes this beginning: “Yet there slowly arises in him a divine discontent; the savor of his life experience and enterprises begins to prove unsatisfactory. Another shift in consciousness takes place, and he reaches out—at first unconsciously and later consciously—to the life and significance of a dimly sensed reality.”¹⁴

Isis wandered everywhere at her wits’ end; no one whom she approached did she fail to address, and even when she met some little children she asked them about the chest. As it happened, they had seen it, and they told her the mouth of the river through which the friends of Typhon had launched the coffin into the sea.

During her quest for Osiris’s chest, Isis addresses one person after another before finding

someone who can provide useful information. Likewise, the aspirant runs from one teacher to another before finding someone who can provide genuine help, as explained by Bailey: “The first stage, therefore, in the training of such an aspirant is to relate him to a more advanced disciple who will lead him gradually onward and give him the help he needs... The aspirant at this stage runs from one teacher to another, according to inclination, opportunity and necessity. He is an example of instability

but is carefully watched by the disciple who has transcended this particular stage of volatility; his task is to see that the aspirant escapes from this ‘network of futility,’ as it is sometimes called, and that he gradually settles down to the later stage of interior investigation.”¹⁵

Wherefore the Egyptians think that little children possess the power of prophecy, and they try to divine the future from the portents which they find in children’s words, especially when children are playing about in holy places and crying out whatever chances to come into their minds.

The foregoing two passages mention the “little children,” but this symbol appears elsewhere. In the New Testament, *Luke 18:17* states: “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.”¹⁶ The Gnostic *Gospel of Truth*, composed during the second century A.D., speaks of “the little children, those who possess the knowledge of the Father.”¹⁷ *A Course in Miracles (ACIM)* explains what this symbol means: “The Bible tells you to become as little

At the beginning of her journey, Isis puts on a garment of mourning... Likewise, at the beginning of the spiritual journey, the aspirant feels a loss of contentment and satisfaction. Bailey describes this beginning: “Yet there slowly arises in him a divine discontent; the savor of his life experience and enterprises begins to prove unsatisfactory. Another shift in consciousness takes place, and he reaches out—at first unconsciously and later consciously—to the life and significance of a dimly sensed reality.”

children. Little children recognize that they do not understand what they perceive, and so they ask what it means.”¹⁸ Thus, the “little children” symbolizes people—not necessarily young—who have made spiritual progress, because they have learned to follow the guidance of the soul as though they were following their parents. In other words, the “little children” actually symbolize teachers who provide helpful guidance on the path of probation.

Thereafter Isis, as they relate, learned that the chest had been cast up by the sea near the land of Byblos and that the waves had gently set it down in the midst of a clump of heather. The heather in a short time ran up into a very beautiful and massive stock, and enfolded and embraced the chest with its growth and concealed it within its trunk. The king of the country admired the great size of the plant, and cut off the portion that enfolded the chest, which was now hidden from sight, and used it as a pillar to support the roof of his house.

Byblos, which is near the place where the chest had been cast, is the Greek name of the city in present-day Lebanon with the current Arabic name of Jbeil. It is believed that this city was founded around 5000 B.C., that it is the oldest continuously-inhabited city in the world, and that its port is the oldest in the world. According to Egyptian mythology, the Egyptian god Thoth invented writing in Byblos. The Greeks called this city *Byblos*, because it was through this city that *bublos*, which is the Greek name for Egyptian papyrus, was imported into Greece.

In yoga philosophy, the Sanskrit word *nadis* denotes subtle lines of force that underlie the physical body. Bailey says, “The *nadis* (lines or threads of force) underlie every nerve in the human body and the centres which they form at certain points of intersection or juncture are the background or motivating agency of every ganglion or plexus found in the human body.”¹⁹ Yoga philosophy speaks of seven centers, sometimes called “chakras,” that are formed by the nadis. According to Bailey, “Of the seven centres, two are in the head and five in the spinal column.”²⁰

The above passage states that Osiris’s chest is concealed within a clump of heather that is part of the column supporting the roof of the king’s house. The king’s house symbolizes the physical body, the pillar that supports the roof symbolizes the spinal column, the heather symbolizes the system of nadis, and the clump of heather that enfolds the chest symbolizes one of the chakras formed by the nadis. Because this clump is located in the pillar, we have the following clue: Osiris’s chest can be found in one of the five chakras located in the spinal column.

The English names for the five chakras located in the spinal column are throat, heart, solar plexus, sacral, and basic. In which one is Osiris’s chest concealed? Bailey speaks of “the throat centre as the creative formulator of thought.”²¹ Because Byblos is associated with writing, and because writing involves the creative formulation of thought, this city symbolizes the throat chakra. Thus, Osiris’s chest might be found in the throat chakra. The passage, however, states that the chest is “near the land of Byblos.” Thus, the chest might instead be located in the heart chakra, because the latter is the only spinal chakra that is “near,” or next to, the throat chakra.

These facts, they say, Isis ascertained by the divine inspiration of Rumor, and came to Byblos and sat down by a spring.

This passage symbolically describes the key requirements that the aspirant must achieve prior to the first initiation. Isis learned these facts through “divine inspiration,” indicating that the aspirant must also become receptive to divine inspiration. Bailey says that the effort here is “consciously developing the higher sensitivity.”²²

The sea represents our emotional nature, just as Byblos represents our mental nature. Isis’s journey by sea to Byblos symbolizes the movement that the aspirant must make from an emotional orientation to a mental orientation. Bailey says, “The aspirant makes a transition in consciousness from the astral plane to the mental and... becomes aware of glamour as something from which he must eventually free himself.”²³ In this quotation, “astral” is a

synonym for emotional, and “glamour” refers to emotional reactions that entrap us.

Bailey distinguishes between emotions associated with the solar-plexus chakra, such as “fear, hate, disgust, love, desire and many other purely astral reactions,” and emotions associated with the heart chakra, such as “high and consecrated feeling, devotion, aspiration and love.”²⁴ Two kinds of water appear in this myth: “the sea,” which has a relatively low altitude; and “a spring,” which has a higher altitude. The lower waters represent the lower, or solar plexus, emotions, as in *Psalms* 69:2: “I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.” The higher waters represent the higher, or heart, emotions, as in *Psalms* 36:8-9: “thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee *is* the fountain of life.”

Isis’s sitting by “a spring” symbolizes another key requirement that the aspirant must achieve: cultivating the higher emotions, such as devotion, aspiration, and love. Bailey says that the goal of the aspirant’s activities is to stimulate the “will-to-love,” which involves “the intense aspiration really to love.”²⁵

Then the goddess disclosed herself and asked for the pillar which served to support the roof. She removed it with the greatest ease and cut away the wood of the heather which surrounded the chest... She opened the chest and laid her face upon the face within and caressed it and wept.

The first segment of the myth ends when Isis finds Osiris’s chest within the heather. The phrase “caressed it and wept” suggests love and devotion, which are higher emotions associated with the heart chakra. Bailey speaks of “the first initiation, the birth of the Christ in the cave of the heart,”²⁶ and uses Christ as a synonym for soul.²⁷ Because Osiris symbolizes the soul, the first segment of the myth culminates in a symbolic depiction of the first initiation, in which the aspirant finds the soul within the heart chakra.

Second Initiation

In the second segment of the myth, Seth cuts up Osiris’s body into multiple parts, and then Isis searches for those parts. We take the second segment from Plutarch’s account, as translated by Babbitt. Only selections from Plutarch’s account are included, but they appear in the order given by him. At the end of this segment, however, we augment Plutarch’s account with a passage given by Robert Armour, who was a Fulbright Professor at al-Azhar and ’Aim Shams universities in Egypt.

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

This passage refers to “the light of the moon.” Bailey uses “lunar orb,” or moon, as a symbol for the solar-plexus chakra.²⁸ Accordingly, “the light of the moon” symbolizes the lower emotions, such as fear, hate, disgust, and desire, that are associated with the solar-plexus chakra.

The above passage states that Seth (or Typhon), who was hunting by the light of the moon, divided Osiris’s body into fragments. As before, Seth symbolizes illusion, and Osiris symbolizes the soul. Thus, the passage has this meaning: illusion controls our lower emotions, which in turn cause us to perceive the one soul as divided and separated into many forms. Bailey explains, “Yet all forms are differentiations of the soul, but that soul is one Soul, when viewed and considered spiritually. When studied from the form side, naught but differentiation and separation can be seen.”²⁹

Isis learned of this and sought for them [the parts of Osiris’s body] again, sailing through the swamps in a boat of papyrus.

After becoming aware that Osiris’s body was divided and scattered, Isis tries to undo that division by searching for the scattered parts. As before, Isis symbolizes the personality and represents the aspirant on the spiritual journey. Similarly, after becoming aware of his or her

emotional reactions, the aspirant tries to overcome those reactions by searching for the presence of the soul within various people. Bailey describes this effort by saying, "He will, for instance, in his daily life, work toward at-onement with all beings, seeking to penetrate to the heart of his brother; endeavoring to be at one with the life in all forms; rejecting every tendency to separative reactions."³⁰

Bailey calls the emotional plane "the battleground between the pairs of opposites."³¹ There are many pairs of opposites, such as good and evil, rich and poor, healthy and sick, young and old. Whenever we are identified with one opposite in a pair, we contend with, or feel separated from, people associated with the other opposite. Osiris's body was divided into fourteen fragments, which consists of seven pairs. The number seven has a symbolic meaning. *Genesis* 2:2-3 states: "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made." The *New Bible Dictionary* concludes, "Seven . . . is associated with completion, fulfillment and perfection."³² According to this numerical symbol, the aspirant needs to search for the presence of the soul within people associated with both opposites in *all* pairs by which he or she is emotionally affected.

Because papyrus was the paper used in ancient Egypt for writing, it symbolizes the mind. Swamps, being composed of water, symbolize the emotional nature. Isis is sailing in a boat of papyrus through the swamps, indicating that the aspirant has shifted his or her consciousness from the emotional body to the mental body. Bailey describes this process: "The aspirant upon the higher levels of the astral plane is swept by the 'fire of dedication.' This immediately focusses his will as it demonstrates on the mental plane, and this focussing in due time starts the serious undertaking of the shifting of his consciousness on to mental levels."³³

This is the reason why people sailing in such boats are not harmed by the crocodiles, since these creatures in their own way show either their fear or their reverence for the goddess.

Because crocodiles live in swamps, they symbolize emotional reactions. The above passage indicates that polarization within the mental body prevents emotional reactions from causing harm, which means that they cannot affect outer behavior. Bailey makes a similar point: "the emotional body should be controlled from the mental plane, and when the polarisation has been transferred into the mental body through forms of meditation and intensity of purpose and of will, then the emotional becomes quiescent and receptive."³⁴

The traditional result of Osiris's dismemberment is that there are many so-called tombs of Osiris in Egypt; for Isis held a funeral for each part when she found it.

Revelation 2:11 refers to the "second death." According to Bailey, the "first death" is "the death of the physical body," and the "second death" is "associated with the death of all astral control over the human being."³⁵ In the above passage, the "funeral" held by Isis symbolizes the second death—the death of the aspirant's own emotional reactions. For the aspirant to sense the soul lying behind someone's outer human appearance, his or her own emotional reactions to that appearance must die, thereby achieving what Bailey calls "divine indifference."³⁶ The many tombs of Osiris in Egypt indicate that the aspirant needs to bring about the death of his or her emotional reactions to many kinds of people.

Of the parts of Osiris's body the only one which Isis did not find was the male member, for the reason that this had been at once tossed into the river, and the lepidotus, the sea-bream, and the pike had fed upon it; and it is from these very fishes the Egyptians are most scrupulous in abstaining.

The above passage states that Isis could not find Osiris's "male member," which is the phallus, because it was eaten by various sea animals. The phallus is the organ of creation in a male body, and so it symbolizes the creative aspect of the soul, which is sometimes called the "light of the soul." Because the sea symbolizes the emotional body, the sea animals symbolize the emotional forms within us

that block the light of the soul from reaching us. In particular, using Bailey's language, the sea animals represent "the forms which desire, emotion, sensitivity to environment, developing aspiration and old ideals have taken and which prevent the light of the soul from illuminating the waking consciousness."³⁷

Bailey writes, "The only light which can dissipate the fogs of glamour and rid the life of its ill effects is that of the soul, which—like a pure dispelling beam—

possesses the curious and unique quality of revelation, of immediate dissipation, and of illumination."³⁸ Here is our problem: we need the light of the soul to dissipate our emotional reactions, or glammers, but those reactions prevent the light of the soul from illuminating us. What can we do?

But Isis made a replica of the member to take its place, and consecrated the phallus, in honor of which the Egyptians even at the present day celebrate a festival.

This passage describes a meditation exercise. The phrase "Isis made a replica of the member to take its place" symbolizes the aspirant's use of the imagination to visualize the light of the soul. The phrase "consecrated the phallus" indicates that the aspirant acts *as if* the visualized image were, in fact, the light of the soul.

The goal of this exercise is to invoke the actual light of the soul. Bailey discusses the role of visualization in achieving this goal: "In the early stages of his invocative work, the instrument used is the creative imagination. This enables him at the very beginning to act *as if*

he were capable of thus creating; then, when the *as if* imaginative consciousness is no longer useful, he becomes consciously aware of that which he has—with hope and spiritual expectancy—sought to create; he discovers this as an existent fact and knows past all controversy."³⁹

There are many ways to proceed with this visualization, for which Bailey gives the following instruction: "Some people picture the

three bodies (the three aspects of the form nature) as being linked with a radiant body of light, or they visualize three centres of vibrating energy receiving stimulation from a higher and more powerful centre; others imagine the soul as a triangle of force to which is linked the triangle of the lower nature... Still others prefer to preserve the thought of a unified personality, linked to and hiding within itself the indwelling Divinity, Christ in us, the hope of glory... Thus, through the use of the imagination and visualization, the desire body, the emotional nature, is brought into line with the soul."⁴⁰

Horus declares that he has defeated Seth in several areas. Likewise, causal consciousness realizes that it has dealt with certain areas of life more effectively than personality consciousness would have... [C]ausal consciousness enables the personality to have a channel of communication with the soul... "Guidance can come, as you well know, from a man's own soul when through meditation, discipline and service, he has established contact, and there is consequently a direct channel of communication from soul to mind, via the brain..."

The above passage completes Plutarch's account of the second segment of the myth, and so his next paragraph in his essay starts his third segment. Armour's version of the myth, however, adds more information to the second segment, as shown next.

Once it [Osiris's body] was all together, except of course the part eaten by the fish, the body was wrapped in white linen and placed in state at the Temple of Abydos.⁴¹

Much evidence supports Armour's version that Osiris's reassembled body was placed at Abydos. For example, Plutarch, in a postscript to his account of the myth, reports that "the prosperous and influential men among the Egyptians are mostly buried in Abydos, since it is the object of their ambition to be buried in the same ground with the body of Osiris."⁴² The opening hymn in an ancient papyrus affirms: "Glory be to Osiris Un-Nefer, the great god who dwelleth in Abydos."⁴³ George Hart, who was a curator at the British Museum, writes: "Other cult centres claimed to be the resting place of Osiris's body—or parts of it... but it is at Abydos that we find the fullest documentation of the next episode in the myth."⁴⁴

Abydos is one of the most ancient cities of Upper Egypt, dating back to the late prehistoric era. The name Abydos comes from the Greeks. The city originally had the Egyptian name Abdju, which meant "the hill of the symbol or reliquary." A reliquary is a container for holy relics. The sacred city of Abydos was the location of many ancient temples and is considered to be one of the most important archaeological sites of ancient Egypt.

A. E. Powell, a theosophical writer, says, "The causal body... is the receptacle of all that is enduring—i.e., *only* that which is noble and harmonious, and in accordance with the law of the spirit; for every great and noble thought, every pure and lofty emotion, is carried up, and its essence worked into the substance of the causal body."⁴⁵ Because the Egyptian name for Abydos signifies a container for holy relics, and because the causal body is the receptacle for the wisdom gained from experience, Abydos symbolizes the causal body.

Because Osiris symbolizes the soul, the reassembled body of Osiris represents the realization of omnipresence, which is the realization of the one soul that lies behind all differentiations of form. Bailey says, "The first great realization which the aspirant has to achieve is that of *omnipresence*; he has to realize his unity with all, and the oneness of his soul with all other souls. He has to find God in his own heart and in every form of life."⁴⁶

Placing Osiris's reassembled body at Abydos indicates that the realization of omnipresence occurs by entering causal consciousness. Bailey explains: "The student having withdrawn his consciousness on to the mental plane at some point within the brain... let him then raise his vibration as high as may be, and aim next at lifting it clear of the mental body into the causal."⁴⁷ Bailey refers to polarization within the causal body as "causal consciousness" or as "the full consciousness of the higher Self."⁴⁸

Isaiah 26:3 says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." When aspirants have the realization of omnipresence, they see the soul everywhere, allowing their minds to stay on the soul wherever they happen to look, which enables the soul to keep them in perfect peace. For them to have this realization, they must shift their consciousness from the emotional body to the mental body and then to the causal body. Bailey says that "the second initiation... marks the completion of the process whereby the emotional nature (with its outstanding quality of desire) is brought under soul control."⁴⁹ Thus, having the realization of omnipresence marks the attainment of the second initiation.

Third Initiation

In the third segment of the myth, Horus, who is the son of Isis and Osiris, struggles with Seth for the right to rule the kingdom. A papyrus manuscript, written about 1160 B.C., describes "The 80 Years of Contention between Horus and Seth." We take the third segment from this ancient Egyptian source, using the translation given on the Theology Website.⁵⁰ Only selections from that translation are included, but they appear in the order given.

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

After achieving the second initiation, the aspirant can reside in causal consciousness, which means that he or she can be polarized within the causal body. Powell states: “Causal consciousness thus deals with the *essence* of a thing, whilst the lower mind studies its details. With the mind, we talk round a subject, or endeavour to explain it: with the causal consciousness, we take up the essence of the idea of the subject, and move it as a whole, as one moves a piece when playing chess.”⁵¹ Falcons symbolize causal consciousness, because they can fly at high speeds, indicating that causal consciousness can quickly move ideas along, and because their wings are shaped like a scythe, indicating that causal consciousness can cut through to the essence of things. Because the above passage refers to Horus as the “Falcon-Headed One,” Horus symbolizes causal consciousness.

The aspirant can also reside in personality consciousness, which means that he or she can be polarized within the mental, emotional, or physical body. Bailey associates personality consciousness with illusion, because she says, “you will learn that things which are potent and apparent in your personality consciousness are *in fact* non-existent.”⁵² As before, Seth symbolizes illusion, but Seth also symbolizes personality consciousness in this segment of the myth.

Horus and Seth are contending with each other about who should occupy the throne of Egypt. What do these symbols mean? Causal consciousness and personality consciousness are contending with each other about which one should rule over the personality. In the above passage, Horus speaks of the cruel murder of Osiris at the hands of Seth and how Seth usurps the throne of Egypt. Again, Osiris symbolizes the soul. These symbols indicate that causal consciousness has the following realization: personality consciousness causes the aspirant to forget about the soul and governs the personality in place of the soul.

The word Ennead is derived from the Greek word that means “nine.” In Egyptian mythology, the Great Ennead refers to a panel of nine deities. In the above passage, this panel of gods begins to conduct a trial during which

they will judge the claims of each party and render a verdict. In our own struggle, however, we are our own judge. *Joshua* 24:15 tells us to “choose you this day whom ye will serve.” Thus, in this segment of the myth, the panel of gods represents the aspirant, referring to the center of consciousness that has the responsibility of choosing between the two alternative states of consciousness.

Shu, Son of the Creator, was the first to speak: “Right should rule might. Mighty Seth hath force on His side, but Young Horus hath Justice. We shalt do Justice unto Horus by proclaiming, “Yes! Ye shalt have the throne of Thy Father!”

Soon after the beginning of the trial, Shu believes that choosing between Horus and Seth is equivalent to choosing between justice and force. Because Shu is a member of the panel of gods, he represents the aspirant. Soon after taking the second initiation, the aspirant has a similar belief. Because causal consciousness thinks in wide and inclusive terms, it is associated with justice. With regard to personality consciousness, *ACIM* says, “Yet its one claim to your allegiance is that it can give power to you. Without this belief you would not listen to it at all.”⁵³ Believing that “right should rule might,” the aspirant chooses to reside in causal consciousness instead of personality consciousness.

Isis gave a great cry of Joy. She begged the North Wind to change direction Westward to whisper the news unto Osiris.

As before, Isis symbolizes the personality. The above passage indicates that causal consciousness enables the personality to be joyful and have a channel of communication with the soul. Bailey supports this analysis by saying, “Joy is the quality of soul life and that quality can be imposed upon the personality,”⁵⁴ and she also speaks of the causal body as “the spiritual body of the soul,”⁵⁵ implying that the causal body is the intermediary between soul and personality. In fact, Bailey sometimes refers to causal consciousness as “living as a soul”: “He [the aspirant] functions as the soul and has achieved a definite measure of success in living as a soul, consciously upon the physi-

cal plane. This particular technique of meditation... demands the ability to focus the consciousness in the soul form, the spiritual body.”⁵⁶

And, to this, Seth proclaimed, “It is I who slay the Enemy of Re daily. It is I Who stand in the prow of the Bark of Millions of Years, and no other God can do it. It is I who should receive the office of Osiris!”

Why would the aspirant even be attracted to personality consciousness? In the above passage, Seth is proclaiming how special he is, showing that personality consciousness offers feelings of pride and vanity. The point is that one does get pleasure from judging and looking down on other people; one does gain a sense of satisfaction by feeling more important or more advanced than others. *Ecclesiastes* 1:2 states, “All is vanity,” which implies that the aspirant has spent most of his or her life cultivating ways to feel more special than other people. Personality consciousness allows those feelings to continue.

The Gods knew the Terrors of the Serpents of Chaos. They muttered that Seth was right.

The gods remember certain terrors and then decide that Seth is right. Likewise, the aspirant, who is symbolized by the gods, is aware of his or her fears, and reenters personality consciousness to defend against them. *ACIM* asks: “Who would defend himself unless he thought he were attacked, that the attack were real, and that his own defense could save himself? Herein lies the folly of defense; it gives illusions full reality, and then attempts to handle them as real. It adds illusions to illusions, thus making correction doubly difficult. And it is this you do when you attempt to plan the future, activate the past, or organize the present as you wish.”⁵⁷

Isis became furious at the Ennead for not speaking in favor of Her Son. She complained to Them until, for the sake of peace, They promised that Justice should be given unto Horus.

While in personality consciousness, the aspirant identifies with some aspect of the person-

ality, perhaps with activities, feelings, or thoughts. Bailey says, “Wrong identification is the cause of pain and leads to suffering, distress and various effects.”⁵⁸ The above passage indicates that the personality has become discontented with its suffering, wanting joy and peace instead of pain and distress. Eventually the aspirant responds by deciding to re-enter causal consciousness.

Mighty Seth was angered. “How dare Ye cowards break Thine Oath! I shalt fetch My Great Septre and strike one of You down with it each day! I swear that I will not argue My case in any Court where Isis is present!”

The phrase “Mighty Seth was angered” indicates that personality consciousness tries to preserve itself when it feels threatened. *ACIM* uses the term “ego” to denote personality consciousness and states: “The ingeniousness of the ego to preserve itself is enormous.”⁵⁹ Seth’s threat to strike down members of the panel of gods indicates that personality consciousness, if it is abandoned, threatens to take away the aspirant’s power. Bailey speaks of “the age-long habits of suppression.”⁶⁰ Seth’s refusal to allow Isis to be present indicates that personality consciousness tries to suppress those parts of the personality that threaten it.

The foregoing passages depict a seemingly endless alternation between causal consciousness and personality consciousness, going back and forth. How can the cycle of alternating states be resolved?

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

In this passage, Re is a member of the panel of gods and so represents the aspirant. Re plans to move the trial to a place where Isis cannot reach. Likewise, the next step for the aspirant is to examine the attractiveness of personality consciousness while being detached from the personality. Bailey makes a similar point when she says, “you would find it of value to discover where your ‘extensions’ are,”⁶¹ referring to the preoccupations that militate against causal consciousness.

Isis... now appearing as a beautiful young woman... approached the Lord of Storm. "Who art Thou, my pretty?" asked Seth, "And why hast Thou come here?" Isis hid her face and wept, "O Great Lord, I am looking for a champion. I was the wife of a herdsman, and I bore for him a son. Then, my dear husband died, and the boy began to tend his father's cattle. But, lo! a stranger came and ceased our byre, and told my son that he would take our cattle and turn us out. My son wished to protest, but the stranger threatened to beat him. Great Lord, help me! Be my son's champion!" Seth heard Her words and dried Her tears. "Do not cry, my pretty. I shall be your champion and destroy this villain! How dare a stranger take the father's property whilst the son is still alive!" Great Isis shrieked with laughter... "Cry thyself, Mighty Seth! Ye hath condemned thyself! Thou hast judged Thine own case!"

Isis shows that Seth's condemnation of others leads to his own self-condemnation. This story illustrates a key principle: when we condemn others, we are actually condemning ourselves. *ACIM* explains: "If you can condemn, you can be injured. For you have believed that you can injure, and the right you have established for yourself can be now used against you, till you lay it down as valueless, unwanted and unreal."⁶² More generally, according to Bailey, "we see in others what is in us, even when it is not there at all or to the same extent."⁶³

Seth was angered unto tears of rage. The Gods demanded to know what had transpired. He told Them of how He had been tricked by the cunning Lady Isis. Re said unto the Dark God, "It is true, Seth. Thou hast judged Thyself."

Personality consciousness is attractive partly because it allows us to have feelings of pride and vanity, which are based on judgments of other people. As indicated by the above passage, the aspirant, who is represented by Re, has the insight that judging other people leads to self-judgment. Due to this insight, the aspirant is able to renounce feelings of pride and vanity.

Horus made His complaint against Seth: "It is now eighty years We are in the Court, but They do not know how to judge among Us. I have contended with Him in the Hall of the Way of Truth. I was found right against Him. I have contended with Him in the Hall of the Horned Horus. I was found right against Him. I have contended with Him in the Hall of the Field of Rushes. I was found right against Him. I have contended with Him in the Hall of the Field Pool. I was found right against Him."

Horus declares that he has defeated Seth in several areas. Likewise, causal consciousness realizes that it has dealt with certain areas of life more effectively than personality consciousness would have. As mentioned earlier, causal consciousness enables the personality to have a channel of communication with the soul. Bailey says that this channel carries divine guidance: "Guidance can come, as you well know, from a man's own soul when through meditation, discipline and service, he has established contact, and there is consequently a direct channel of communication from soul to brain, via the mind. This, when clear and direct, is true divine guidance, coming from the inner divinity."⁶⁴

In the Trial, Re-Atum asked this important question: "What shall We do about these two Gods, Who for eighty years now have been before the tribunal?" Geb, Lord of the Gods, commanded the Nine Gods gather to Him. He judged between Horus and Seth; He ended Their great quarrel. He made Seth as king of Southern Egypt... And Geb made Horus king of Egypt in the land of Northern Egypt... Thus Horus stood over one region, and Seth stood over one region.

The gods decide to compromise: Seth would rule Southern Egypt, and Horus would rule Northern Egypt. Likewise, the aspirant decides to compromise: rely on causal consciousness for some areas, including those for which it has been proven effective; but rely on personality consciousness for other areas, such as defending against his or her own fears.

ACIM states: "You must choose between total freedom and total bondage, for there are no

alternatives but these. You have tried many compromises in the attempt to avoid recognizing the one decision you must make. And yet it is the recognition of the decision, *just as it is*, that makes the decision so easy.”⁶⁵ Because the aspirant is still trying to compromise, he or she has not yet recognized the one decision that must be made.

Then Horus spake and said, “It is not good to defraud Me before the Ennead and to take the office of my Father Osiris from Me!”

Next, causal consciousness has the realization that relying on personality consciousness for some areas is not a good outcome, because it limits the guidance of the soul. *ACIM* uses the term “Holy Spirit” as a synonym for the soul and makes the same point: “It is only because you think that you can run some little part, or deal with certain aspects of your life alone, that the guidance of the Holy Spirit is limited.”⁶⁶

Shu and Thoth persuaded the Court to send a letter to Osiris. After a time, the messenger returned... Osiris demanded to know why His son had been robbed of the throne. He demanded to know if the Gods had forgotten that it was He, Osiris, Who had given the world the precious gifts of barley and wheat.

The panel of gods decides to resolve the conflict between Horus and Seth by asking for advice from Osiris. The corresponding step for the aspirant is to resolve the conflict between causal and personality consciousness by seeking guidance from the soul. *ACIM* says, “Only the Holy Spirit can resolve conflict, because only the Holy Spirit is conflict-free.”⁶⁷ The soul (or Holy Spirit) responds by telling the aspirant to examine why he or she still wants to stay in personality consciousness and reminding the aspirant that it has already proven itself by giving many gifts.

Geb’s words to the Nine Gods: “I have appointed Horus, the Firstborn, Him alone, Horus, the inheritance.”

In this final passage, the gods appoint Horus to be ruler of all Egypt. The corresponding step for the aspirant is to rely on casual consciousness for all areas of his or her life. Bailey says

that the aspirant attains the third initiation when he or she has achieved “freedom from the ancient authority of the threefold personality,” which means that he or she “must be freed from any magnetic or attractive ‘pull’ emanating from the personality.”⁶⁸ Thus, relying on causal consciousness for all areas marks the attainment of the third initiation.

Interpretations of the Myth

Because of the popularity of the myth of Isis and Osiris, there have been many previous attempts to explain its significance. According to Amour, “Most interpretations can probably be reduced to three simple themes: the transferal of the power of kingship, celebration of the cycle of nature and its annual rejuvenation, and rituals for achieving immortality.”⁶⁹

This article showed that the myth of Isis and Osiris could be interpreted as a symbolic depiction of the spiritual journey. We are not aware of any prior attempt to interpret this myth in such a way. In two quotations given earlier, Blavatsky expressed the belief that important truths are concealed within ancient myths. Our interpretation of the myth of Isis and Osiris supports her belief.

¹ H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled* (1877; reprint; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1976), vol. II, p. 431.

² H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. I (1888; reprint; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1977), p. 312.

³ E. A. Wallis Budge, *Osiris: The Egyptian Religion of Resurrection* (1911; reprint; New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1961).

⁴ A. A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar* (1922; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1974), p. 63.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁷ F. C. Babbitt, *Plutarch’s Moralia: Volume V* (1936; reprint; Whitefish, MT: Kissinger Publishing, 2005).

⁸ A. A. Bailey, *The Light of the Soul* (1927; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1978), p. 398.

- ⁹ A. A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (1934; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), pp. 250, 523.
- ¹⁰ Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, p. 47.
- ¹¹ Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. II, p. 704.
- ¹² Plato, *Cratylus*, p. 400c, in E. Hamilton and H. Cairns (eds.), *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).
- ¹³ A. A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (1951; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), p. 253.
- ¹⁴ A. A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II (1942; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1981), p. 337.
- ¹⁵ A. A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I (1944; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), pp. 715-716.
- ¹⁶ All verses from the Bible are taken from the King James Version.
- ¹⁷ R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism* (New York: Harper, 1961), p. 148.
- ¹⁸ *A Course in Miracles (ACIM)* (second edition; Glen Ellen, CA: Foundation for Inner Peace, 1992), vol. I, p. 211.
- ¹⁹ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, p. 434.
- ²⁰ A. A. Bailey, *The Soul and Its Mechanism* (1930; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), p. 115.
- ²¹ A. A. Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle* (1950; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1975), p. 19.
- ²² Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, p. 726.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 722.
- ²⁴ Bailey, *Telepathy*, pp. 9, 20.
- ²⁵ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, pp. 729, 735.
- ²⁶ A. A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (1957; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), p. 422.
- ²⁷ A. A. Bailey, *From Bethlehem to Calvary* (1937; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1989), p. 42.
- ²⁸ Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, p. 98.
- ²⁹ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I (1936; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), p. 56.
- ³⁰ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, p. 235.
- ³¹ A. A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (1960; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), p. 674.
- ³² *New Bible Dictionary* (third edition; Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996), p. 834.
- ³³ Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 682.
- ³⁴ A. A. Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation* (1922; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1974), p. 98.
- ³⁵ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing* (1953; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1978), pp. 406, 409.
- ³⁶ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, p. 661.
- ³⁷ A. A. Bailey, *Glamour: A World Problem* (1950; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), p. 220.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 139.
- ³⁹ Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, pp. 443-444.
- ⁴⁰ A. A. Bailey, *From Intellect to Intuition* (1932; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1972), p. 225.
- ⁴¹ R. A. Armour, *Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt* (1986; revised; New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2001), p. 64.
- ⁴² Babbitt, *Plutarch's Moralia: Volume V*, p. 51.
- ⁴³ E. A. Wallis Budge, *Literature of the Ancient Egyptians and Egyptian Tales and Romances* (1914; reprint; Whitefish, MT: Kissinger Publishing, 2005), p. 44.
- ⁴⁴ G. Hart, *Egyptian Myths* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990), p. 32.
- ⁴⁵ A. E. Powell, *The Causal Body and the Ego* (1928; reprint; Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1978), p. 90.
- ⁴⁶ Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, p. 358.
- ⁴⁷ Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, p. 96.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 292, 340.
- ⁴⁹ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, p. 156.
- ⁵⁰ Theology Website, <http://www.theologywebsite.com/etext/egypt/ho rus.shtml>.
- ⁵¹ Powell, *The Causal Body and the Ego*, p. 105.
- ⁵² Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, p. 182.
- ⁵³ *ACIM*, vol. I, p. 204.
- ⁵⁴ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, p. 557.
- ⁵⁵ Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, p. 247.
- ⁵⁶ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, p. 393.
- ⁵⁷ *ACIM*, vol. II, p. 252.
- ⁵⁸ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, p. 347.
- ⁵⁹ *ACIM*, vol. I, p. 123.
- ⁶⁰ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, p. 78.
- ⁶¹ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, p. 735.
- ⁶² *ACIM*, vol. II, p. 379.
- ⁶³ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, p. 729.

⁶⁴ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, pp. 491-492.

⁶⁵ *ACIM*, vol. I, p. 326.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁶⁸ Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, pp. 686, 688.

⁶⁹ Armour, *Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt*, p. 67.

Esoteric Perspectives on the Eucharist

John F. Nash

Summary

This article discusses the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist from the standpoint of pre-Christian antecedents, archetypal significance, analogies with medieval and Renaissance alchemy, and the writings of modern esoteric teachers. One conclusion is that the Eucharist belongs to a large class of ancient rituals, all of which envisioned the receipt of divine energy through the sacrificial offering and/or consumption of grain and vine products. Another is that the transformation of the eucharistic elements—and the associated transformation of recipients' consciousness—can be viewed on many levels: literal, symbolic, and metaphysical. The most important conclusion may be that the Eucharist offers opportunities for profound mystical insight, spiritual nourishment, service—and even cooperation with the deva evolution.

Background

The sacrament of the *Eucharist* (Greek: Ευχαριστία, “Thanksgiving”), also referred to as Holy Communion, or the Lord’s Supper, has played a conspicuous role in Christian worship for two millennia. Opinions differ concerning its importance and differ even more as to its meaning. For some Christians the Eucharist simply commemorates an event in Jesus’ ministry. For others, through a miraculous transmutation of the elements, the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ, and the sacrament forms “the sacrifice of the new covenant.” This article will not try to resolve such divergence of belief. Rather, its purpose is to explore the mythological, archetypal and esoteric dimensions of the Eucharist in the hope of stimulating new insights, understanding and study.

Eucharistic prototypes are found in Judaic, pagan, and other ancient cultures as well as in

medieval and Renaissance alchemy. Meanwhile, some modern esoteric writers have discussed the Eucharist, commenting on the transformation in the lives of participants as well as upon the transubstantiation of elements. The attention paid to the topic by esotericists and the insights they have shared vary substantially, possibly reflecting religious convictions. Be that as it may, study of the Eucharist from an esoteric perspective helps bridge the sometimes-wide gulf between the ageless wisdom and conventional theology, and esoteric teachings can complement traditional religious teachings in significant ways.

The Christian Eucharist

The Christian Eucharist has always been viewed as a commemoration of the Last Supper at which, we are told, Jesus shared bread and wine with his disciples. After the resurrection, Christ “took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to [the apostles],” adding that thereafter he would be known to his followers “in breaking of bread.”¹ The Eucharist became a major component of early Christian ritual, reinforcing collective identity—or “communion”—as well as expressing devotion and trust in Jesus Christ.²

The Last Supper resembled the Jewish *Seder* (Hebrew: סדר), or Passover meal.³ Also, Judaic images were incorporated into the earliest known eucharistic liturgy, believed to date from the mid-first century:

About the Author

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We thank thee, our Father, for the holy vine of David Thy servant, which You madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever... Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom; for Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.⁴

Christians came to believe in the “real presence” in the Eucharist—that in some way they received the body and blood of Christ. But that belief probably evolved only after Christianity moved beyond Palestine and distanced itself from its Judaic roots. Jews would have viewed the drinking of blood, even in symbolic terms, as abhorrent.⁵ Paul was addressing a Hellenic audience when he warned that anyone who participated unworthily “eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.”⁶ The Christian Eucharist, as eventually understood, owed more to pagan than to Judaic precedent.

The gospels are thought to have been written during the last three decades of the first century. Many of the sayings attributed to Jesus may have been composed at that time, including the famous “words of consecration” on which belief in the real presence depended:

[A]s they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.⁷

At the same time, relevant symbolism was projected back onto Jesus’ ministry. Reportedly he had said: “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger;”⁸ he described himself as “the true vine;”⁹ and his first miracle was to change water into wine.¹⁰ The *Epistle to the Hebrews*, conventionally dated to around 95 CE, described the Eucharist as the “sacrifice of the new covenant,”¹¹ linking—but also contrasting—the Eucharist with Jewish ritual sacrifice¹² which had ended with destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.

The notion that a god might inhabit sacred elements was familiar to the prevailing pagan mindset. Moreover, Christ’s incarnation convinced the early Christians that the Divine could take physical form. Writing in the 160s CE, Justin Martyr—who like many others died in the Roman amphitheater—asserted that the bread and wine “which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.”¹³ Likewise, Ambrose, fourth-century bishop of Milan, spoke of the Eucharist as the “Flesh of Christ,” adding that the “food which you receive, that living Bread which came down from heaven, furnishes the substance of eternal life; and whosoever shall eat of this Bread shall never die, and it is the Body of Christ.”¹⁴

By the fourth century, the Eucharistic ritual had evolved from a communal meal into the distinctive religious service of the Mass. Basil of Caesarea, a contemporary of Ambrose, proposed a liturgy which is still used in Eastern Orthodox churches, and his near-contemporary John Chrysostom proposed an alternative form. The Latin rite of the Mass evolved on similar lines, and by the eighth century it included most of the components known today.

Development of Eucharistic Doctrine

Belief in the real presence, understood at least in a mystical sense, may have been widespread by the fourth century; but the formulation of definitive eucharistic doctrine took much longer. In the ninth century, the French Benedictine theologian Radbertus Paschasius proposed that the elements are physically transformed into the body and blood of Christ.¹⁵ His opponents argued, as Protestant reformers would many centuries later, that the elements themselves were not transformed, but the body and blood were received by virtue of the recipient’s faith. In any event, Radbertus was ahead of his time. The Aristotelian revival, which offered the categories of *substance* and *accidents* that could be invoked to justify the proposition, still lay in the future. As a result, doctrinal debate continued. Finally, in 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council formally defined the doctrine of transubstantiation:

There is one Universal Church of the faithful... [i]n which there is the same priest and sacrifice, Jesus Christ, whose body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine; the bread being changed by divine power into the body, and the wine into the blood.¹⁶

Transubstantiation (*transsubstantiatio*, “change”) means that the “substance” of the eucharistic elements is changed, though the “accidents”—or appearance of the elements—remain the same. The Lateran Council affirmed that the Eucharist is a ritual sacrifice because of the separate consecration of the bread and wine. Christ’s sacramental body and blood are separated, as they were when he died on the cross. The Lateran decree remains the official belief of the Roman church.¹⁷

The eastern churches ignored the ninth-century controversy and had split from the Latin church by the time of the Lateran Council. The doctrine of transubstantiation was not accepted in Eastern Orthodox Christianity until the “latinization” movement of the 17th century, when Aristotelian philosophy finally made inroads into Orthodox thought. Even then, there was no firm commitment to the doctrine, and current teachings affirm the real presence, while allowing considerable freedom to speculate on the mechanism by which it is accomplished.

Transubstantiation became a primary target of the Protestant reformers. Although Martin Luther retained a belief in the real presence,¹⁸ he despised Aristotelian philosophy and was loathe to accept a doctrine that stemmed from it. Moreover, he argued, transubstantiation went beyond what could be defended by scripture. Luther and others also complained that, by defining the Eucharist in physical terms, the Roman church had removed the sense of mystery on which true devotion rested.¹⁹ Bishop Richard Hooker, 16th-century apologist for the Church of England, rejected the need for a rigorous definition:

What these elements are in themselves it skilleth not, it is enough that to me which take them they are the body and blood of Christ... [W]hy should any cognition possess the mind of a faithful communicant but this, “O my God thou art true, O my Soul thou art happy!”²⁰

Finally, the Lutheran and Anglican churches rejected any notion that the Eucharist was a sacrifice,²¹ though they continued to refer to their clergy as “priests.”

In the Reformed (Calvinist) churches, and the later Evangelical movements, belief in the real presence was dropped altogether, and the Eucharist became little more than a symbolic or commemorative ritual. “Priest” was deliberately changed to “minister” to emphasize new perceptions of the clerical role.

Changes in attitude to the Eucharist were accompanied by major changes in the liturgy, in vestments and regalia, and even in church architecture. Simplified services that stressed preaching and devotion replaced the elaborate rites of the pre-Reformation Mass. Decorated stone altars, traditionally associated with sacrifice, gave way to plain Communion tables. Pulpits became the most conspicuous feature in churches, often located in the center of the chancel where altars once stood.

Over the last 150 years, certain groups have moved closer to Roman and Orthodox tradition in their understanding of, and attitude to, the Eucharist. Anglo-Catholics, Neo-Lutherans, Evangelical Catholics, and Liberal Catholics once again celebrate the Mass with elaborate ceremony. However, they do not necessarily accept the rigid formula of transubstantiation.²² Bishop John Cosin, a prominent member of the Tractarian Movement that produced Anglo-Catholicism, insisted:

[T]his eating of Christ’s body is spiritual, and that by it the souls of the faithful, and not their stomachs, are fed...; for this none can deny, but they who being strangers to the Spirit and the divine virtue, can savour only carnal things.²³

Judaic and Pagan Eucharistic Archetypes

In support of eucharistic doctrine, Christian Apologists often cite the biblical story of Melchizedek, king of Salem and “priest of the most high God.”²⁴ Melchizedek “brought forth bread and wine,” in what retroactively was considered a prophecy of the sacrament instituted by Christ. Less often cited is the passage in *Proverbs* in which Wisdom invited the townspeople to her love-feast: “Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.”²⁵ The main meal of the Jewish Sabbath, or *Shabbat*, still involves the blessing of a glass of wine. And at the annual *Seder*, or Passover festival meal, the *matzah*, or unleavened bread is broken and a piece given to everyone present.

Eucharistic precedents extend beyond Judaic tradition. Initiates in the Eleusinian mysteries offered sheaths of grain and drank from a chalice of barley-water and mint, commemorating the refreshment requested by the corn goddess Demeter while searching for her daughter Persephone.²⁶

Worshippers recalled that Persephone was eventually released from Hades, but only to spend eight months of the year in the land of the living. She returned from the underworld each spring, whereupon the land waved “with long ears of corn, and its rich furrows... loaded with grain upon the ground, while others would already be bound in sheaves.”²⁷

Offerings of the fruits of the earth were not always held in high regard. *Genesis* records that Cain offered God the “fruit of the ground,” while Abel offered “the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof.”²⁸ Cain’s sacrifice was rejected, whereupon Cain slew his brother in anger. The story can be interpreted in many ways, but certainly we can detect tension between traditions of vegetation-related sacrifice—a category that would include the offering

of products like bread and wine—and traditions of blood sacrifice.

On the other hand, some cultures made efforts to resolve the tension by combining the two types of sacrifice. For example, the seven-day feast of Tabernacles (Hebrew: *Sukkot*, סוכות) originally involved animal sacrifice,²⁹ but by the late biblical period it had evolved into a harvest festival. Similarly, the *Toda* (תודה), a rite of thanksgiving offered by someone who had narrowly escaped death or been delivered from enemies, included both animal sacrifice and the breaking of bread.³⁰ What we know of the ancient Greek festival of Dionysus, or Bacchus, also suggests a combination of offer-

ings. Dionysian rituals were marked by offerings of bread and wine—and, from what we know, consumption of the latter on a substantial scale. They also involved animal sacrifice. In his influential book *The Golden Bough*, James Frazer describes various Dionysian rituals, including an ancient Cretan practice in

Eucharistic prototypes are found in Judaic, pagan, and other ancient cultures as well as in medieval and Renaissance alchemy. Meanwhile, some modern esoteric writers have discussed the Eucharist, commenting upon the transformation in the lives of participants as much as upon transubstantiation of the elements... [T]he study of the Eucharist from an esoteric perspective helps bridge the sometimes-wide gulf between the ageless wisdom and conventional theology, and esoteric teachings can complement traditional religious teachings in significant ways.

which men tore a live bull to pieces with their teeth and ate it.³¹

In societies that practiced either or both types of sacrifice, a common belief was that eating the consecrated elements amounted to “eating the god” they represented. Of the Cretan sacrificial rites, Frazer comments: “[W]e cannot doubt that in rending and devouring a live bull at his festival, the worshippers of Dionysus believed themselves to be killing the god, eating his flesh, and drinking his blood.”³²

In Mithraic mythology, Mithras, “the Invincible” god-man, slew a bull after a long struggle. Statuary and relief sculpture depicted wheat and grapes, the ingredients of bread and wine, emerging from the bull’s body and blood. According to legend, Mithras and his disciples celebrated his victory over the bull at a “last supper” before he ascended to heaven in a fiery chariot. In commemoration, initiates in the Mithraic mysteries participated in a communal meal which included bread and wine.³³ Mithraism and Christianity developed concurrently, early in the Common Era, and arguments arose as to which influenced the other.³⁴ Most likely, both were modeled on common antecedents. Comparable rituals have been documented, from countries stretching from pre-Christian Mexico to India, in which consecrated bread was consumed in sacramental meals. In some cases loaves of bread were baked in human form to represent the god.³⁵

The practice of “eating the god” instilled hope that participants might absorb some of the god’s characteristics: long life, fertility, courage, wisdom, or whatever quality was valued in the particular society. It also reinforced communal solidarity and loyalty to a tribal god. Drinking the god’s blood—or its sacramental equivalent—reinforced the sense that his (or in some cases her) blood flowed uniquely through the particular tribe. The Dionysian and similar wine festivals may have reflected such a belief, and Jesus’ remark about being “the vine” could be interpreted likewise. Wine and blood can have broad, overlapping meanings in a sacramental context.

Fertility of families, herds, and the land was critical to societies’ survival, and sacrifices to ensure good harvests survived to comparatively modern times. The rituals often involved the symbolic slaying of a corn deity in animal or human, form. Frazer remarks: “[O]ur European peasants have furnished unmistakable examples of the sacramental eating of animals as representatives of the corn-spirit. But further... the new corn is itself eaten sacramentally; that is, as the body of the corn-spirit.”³⁶

The Christian Eucharist may never have been considered a fertility ritual, but in its evolution it embraced many of the characteristics of ancient, and in a few instances more modern, practices involving the offering of consecrated corn and vine products. Whether or not passages in scripture and elsewhere were prophetic, it seems clear that the Eucharist drew upon archetypes whose meaning and significance were recognized in the remote past. Among those archetypes was the sacrifice of a god-man. The Eucharist preserves a strong reference to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

The Eucharist and Alchemy

During the high Middle Ages and Renaissance, correspondences were noted between the transubstantiation of eucharistic bread and wine and the alchemical transmutation of base metals into gold. Central to the alchemical process was production of the “philosopher’s stone,” which offered curative and rejuvenative powers in addition to serving as a catalyst in the transmutation of metals.

Among the roughly 100,000 surviving alchemical texts, considerable variations can be found in the sequence of steps considered necessary to produce the philosopher’s stone. But a common theme was the *conjunctio* of a pair of opposites, such as the lower and higher natures, mankind and the Divine, a king and queen, bride and bridegroom, sun and moon, or fire and water. The *conjunctio* was often portrayed as the consummation of a mystic marriage.³⁷ Significantly, a passage in the Gnostic *Gospel of Philip* tells us: “The Lord

[did] everything in a mystery... a eucharist and a redemption and a bridal chamber."³⁸ The outcome of the *conjunctio* was not always the birth of a child; in some cases it was the emergence of an androgyne symbolizing the synthesis and mutual transformation of the polarities.

The philosopher's stone was often compared with Christ—in that case the offspring of a mystic marriage between the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.³⁹ In the alchemical text *Aurora Consurgens*, often attributed to the 13th-century theologian Thomas Aquinas,⁴⁰ the author boldly suggested that the *conjunctio* involved himself and *Sapientia*, or Wisdom, who had organized the love-feast in *Proverbs*.⁴¹ Later in the same work, he took a more cautious position, acknowledging that it more likely involved heavenly partners united in Christ and that he, the alchemist, was just a guest at the feast. Nevertheless the author continued to view the Eucharist as an alchemical work, commenting: "When thou hast water from earth, air from water, fire from air, earth from fire, then shalt thou fully and perfectly process (our) art."⁴²

One of the most audacious attempts to relate the Eucharist to alchemy was made by the early 16th-century Nicholas Melchior of Hermannstadt. Melchior's instructions for the alchemical process were formatted to resemble the Latin Mass. In place of the usual *Kyrie Eleison*... ("Lord have mercy on us..."), for example, we find: *Kyrie, Ignis Divine*... ("Lord, divine fire, help our hearts, that we may be able, to your praise, to expand the sacrament of the art, have mercy").⁴³ Although no explicit reference was made to the consecration, psychologist Carl Jung judged the work to be in bad taste.⁴⁴

According to the doctrine of transubstantiation, the substance of the eucharistic elements is transformed while the accidents remain unchanged. But alchemy sought to transmute both substance and accidents. Indeed, skeptics would have ridiculed any claim that only the "substance" of the lead was transmuted into gold. Nonetheless, if alchemy commanded less faith than the Eucharist did, rare successes were all the more impressive.⁴⁵

Today, most esotericists contend that, if transmutation—substance and accidents—occurred at all, it was just the outward sign—a side-effect, as it were—of the transformation of the alchemist's consciousness. The following comment is typical:

For the alchemist, it must be remembered that power over matter and energy is only a secondary reality. The real aim of the alchemist's activities... is the transformation of the alchemist himself, his accession to a higher state of consciousness. The material results are only a pledge of the final result, which is spiritual... the transmutation of man himself... his fusion with the divine energy, the fixed center from which all material energies emanate.⁴⁶

The alchemical process has often been called "the Great Work," and esoteric teachers continue to use that phrase to refer to the expansion of consciousness, particularly in the context of the major initiations.⁴⁷

The Eucharist in Modern Esoteric Teachings

The Eucharist as Magic

Esotericists in the western tradition often speak of the sacraments as magic rituals. Golden Dawn⁴⁸ initiate Dion Fortune comments: "[T]he Mass of the Church and the ceremonies of the Freemasons are... representative types of magic, whatever their exponents may like to say to the contrary. The Mass is a perfect example of a ritual of evocation."⁴⁹ Francis King and Stephen Skinner offer a similar opinion:

Both the priest and the magician... pass on the force of the invocation. The priest invokes a god to gain power in order to affect a transformation, and "earths" the force in a Sacrament which becomes (in Christianity) the blood and flesh of God. This then is passed on to the congregation who thereby receive the virtue of the invocation... The magician does exactly the same thing...⁵⁰

The authors add that the power invoked by the magician can be applied for purposes of prophecy, benediction or healing.⁵¹ Recalling

pre-Christian antecedents, they envision a range of eucharistic forms whose elements suit the deities to be invoked: “[F]or Bacchus wine would be appropriate, for Ceres [the Roman equivalent of Demeter] a corn wafer, for Persephone a pomegranate, and possibly for Nuit [the Egyptian goddess of the night sky] the milk of the stars.”⁵² Whether many people perform such rituals, however, is unclear.

The Kabbalistic Tree of Life was often used as a system of reference in Golden Dawn teachings. Dion Fortune relates Ceres and corn to the sefirah Malkuth, and Dionysus and wine to Tifareth.⁵³ Bearing in mind that the alchemists associated Malkuth with lead and Tiphareth to gold, we find in such references yet another association between the Eucharist and alchemy.

Israel Regardie, another Golden Dawn initiate, offers a single form of eucharistic ritual: “Eucharist of the Four Elements” of air, fire, earth and water. Bread and wine represent the elements of earth and water, while air is represented by the perfume of a flower, and fire by a lamp flame. Moreover, the bread is augmented by salt, a common earth-symbol in western occultism.⁵⁴ After invoking “Archangels, Angels, Kings, Rulers and elementals,” the officiant invites them to participate: “I invite you to inhale with me the perfume of this rose... To feel with me the warmth of the lamp... To eat with me this Bread and Salt... And finally to drink with me this Wine.”⁵⁵ Interestingly, Regardie’s words of consecration associate the bread and wine with the body and blood of Osiris rather than Christ:

For Osiris On-Nophris, who is found perfect before the Gods, hath said: These are the elements of my Body... [T]he Cup of Wine is the pouring out of the Blood of my Heart, Sacrificed unto Regeneration, unto the Newer Life; And the Bread and Salt are as the foundations of my Body, which I destroy in order that they may be renewed.⁵⁶

Notwithstanding, the notion of sacrifice comes through, as it does in the Christian Eucharist.

King and Skinner’s use of the term “invocation” is important; and, correctly understood, it could help alleviate institutional Christianity’s

reluctance to acknowledge associations between the sacraments and magic. Prior to the Renaissance, ecclesiastical authorities did not regard all magic as evil. Rather, they distinguished between different types of magic, approving of “good magic” and disapproving of its bad counterpart.⁵⁷ Subsequently, attitudes hardened for a number of reasons, not least the unsavory reputation of many would-be magi and the motives underlying their work. However, some magicians are motivated by the worthiest of ideals and serve as channels for higher power. Esotericists view the mastery of magic for selfless purposes as essential to progress on the initiatory path.⁵⁸ Nobody would expect the churches to hand over responsibility for their sacraments—particularly the Eucharist—to occultists in the Golden Dawn tradition or anywhere else. But much would be gained by acknowledgement that the Eucharist belongs to a larger class of phenomena that includes both magical and religious ritual.

The Eucharist and Theosophy

Under the leadership of founders Helena Blavatsky and Henry Olcott, the Theosophical Society was not infrequently accused of anti-Christian bias. However, attitudes changed among later generations of leaders, and certain Theosophists sought to combine traditional Christian beliefs and practices with esoteric teachings. Criticism of the Society by Christians on account of its initial bias gave way to criticism by some esotericists that it had become “too Christian.”

Prominent Theosophists became deeply interested in sacramental ritual. Like occultists in the Golden Dawn, they viewed the sacraments as magical rituals; but they couched their descriptions in terms much more acceptable to conventional Christians. For example, Annie Besant describes the act of consecration in very traditional terms: “As the priest in the Roman Catholic Mass spreads out his hand over the unconsecrated wafer and makes over it the Sign of Power... the sign of the Cross... he pronounces the Word of Power: ‘This is my body.’”⁵⁹ She adds: “the great power of the Christ pours down upon His assembled worshippers through the consecrated symbol in the

sacrament, which is the means of the spiritual grace.”⁶⁰

Fellow Theosophist Charles Leadbeater became presiding bishop in the Liberal Catholic Church, which resembles Anglo-Catholicism in its forms of worship.⁶¹ His influential work *The Science of the Sacraments* discusses the Eucharist and the Mass in considerable detail. For example he describes the preparation of the elements for consecration:

The bread and wine, first employed as symbols of the offerings of the people, and then as channels of our sacrifice, are now to fill yet another and far higher rôle, and to act as outward manifestations or vehicles of the power and life of Christ Himself. So the Priest first breaks the link which he made, and then demagnetizes the elements, sweeping them clean from any earthy taint that may have mingled, while leaving in them all the purely spiritual part of our offering to be laid later on at the feet of the Christ our glorious King.⁶²

Leadbeater’s comments on *demagnetization* of the elements contrast with discussions elsewhere in the occult literature where *magnetization* of materials and tools by the hierophant is claimed to be necessary.⁶³ Clearly he regarded the consecration as a process drawing upon higher power rather than on the priest’s own will.

Using his clairvoyant abilities Leadbeater describes the participation of angels of various orders in the Mass. Most important are the “Angel of the Eucharist” and “Angel of the Presence.”⁶⁴ With the collaboration of the celebrant and congregation, the Angel of the Eucharist builds a thoughtform encompassing the sanctuary, creating a “sacred space” in which the consecration of the elements can take place.⁶⁵ The Angel of the Presence reportedly facilitates the consecration itself. We recall that archangels and other entities were invoked in Israel Regardie’s ritual described earlier.

According to Leadbeater’s description the priest consciously—or more likely unconsciously—creates a “tube” connecting the physical elements with the intuitional plane.

When the words of consecration are uttered, “the Angel of the Presence appears, and the life of that higher world flows in, providing conditions under which can take place the wonderful changes of the Consecration.”⁶⁶

Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson, some 30 years Leadbeater’s junior, was at least as clairvoyantly gifted. And, like his forebear, he was also ordained in the Liberal Catholic Church. Hodson shares his own experiences while celebrating the Mass:

This morning the Lord’s Holy Presence was wonderfully revealed. I knew that it was in very truth the “Lord Maitreya Buddha”... He appears to my limited consciousness as a golden, glorious, shining Presence of unimaginable beauty, love, spirituality, and transcendent refinement, as if there were naught lower than *Buddhi* and limitless extensions above. He is all-embracing. Of the reality of the Holy Eucharist and of the Consecration and Transubstantiation there can be no doubt. It is a glorious truth.⁶⁷

Clearly he shared Leadbeater’s strong belief in transubstantiation. Elsewhere he comments:

I saw the Christ Presence in the Host flashed out as in golden darts or rays of Himself in each one of the people and became linked thereto, awakening, arousing the Christ consciousness and power. Like sought like as if by magnetic law as the prayer was uttered.⁶⁸

Hodson regarded the Eucharist as having more than just planetary significance:

At the Holy Eucharist, [I] realized and saw correspondence between the microcosm and the Macrocosm. The Rite is solar and cosmic, with the Lord Maitreya as Mediator. A “funnel” opens out from the personality into Causal consciousness to the verge of *Buddhi*, revealing the Solar Logos and Planetary Regents as a unit, a vast sphere containing all. [I had] momentary flashes of experience of unity with the Solar Logos, to Whom the Gloria is addressed and, through Him, with Himself as the Planetary Regents.⁶⁹

A later writer in the Liberal Catholic Church echoes the sentiments of both Leadbeater and Hodson: “The Holy Eucharist literally exists

on the intersection between the Earth and the Heavens. As a column of fire and light it connects the forces of the earth and those of the sun as a channel for richly imbued spiritual energy.”⁷⁰ The “column of fire” may correspond to Leadbeater’s “tube.”

The Eucharist as Allegory

While the Theosophists became deeply interested in eucharistic ceremony and the Mass, other esoteric teachers who also traced their lineage to Blavatsky took a less conventional approach to the entire subject.

Rudolf Steiner wrote *Christianity as Mystical Fact*⁷¹ as well as commentaries on the four canonical gospels. But his interest in ritual was focused largely on Masonic-style ceremony.⁷² It was only late in life that he devoted attention to the Christian liturgy, when he collaborated with Lutheran theologian Friedrich Rittlemeyer to form the Christian Community movement.⁷³ With respect to the Eucharist Steiner did remark:

[T]hose who are able to grasp the true meaning of [the] words of Christ create for themselves thought-images that attract the body and blood of Christ into the bread and the wine, and they unite with the Christ Spirit. In this way our symbol of the Lord’s Supper becomes a reality.⁷⁴

More generally he interpreted the Eucharist allegorically, in the light of the “Mystery of Golgotha” through which the Earth became the body of Christ. Steiner’s Christ points to the earth and said “When you behold the cornfield and then eat the bread that nourishes you... [y]ou are eating My body. And when you drink of the plant sap... it is the blood of the earth—My blood.”⁷⁵

Alice Bailey also distanced herself from traditional religious beliefs and preferred to view the Eucharist in allegorical terms:

It was this sense of unity with God and His fellowmen which led [Christ] to institute the Last Supper, to originate that communion service, the symbolism of which has been so disastrously lost in theological practice. The keynote of that communion service was fellowship. “It is only thus that Jesus creates

fellowship among us. It is not as a symbol that he does it ... in so far as we with one another and with him are of one will, to place the Kingdom of God above all, and to serve in behalf of this faith and hope, so far is there fellowship between him and us and the men of all generations who lived and live in the same thought.”⁷⁶

Not everyone would agree that the symbolism of the Last Supper and communion service have been “disastrously lost.” Nevertheless, Bailey foresaw this allegorical Eucharist coming into its own in the Age of Aquarius:

[T]he sign in which the universality of the water of life will become a factor in human consciousness; then we shall indeed all sit down eventually to the communion of bread and wine. [Christ] referred indirectly to the same idea when He spoke of Himself as the “water of life,” assuaging the thirst of humanity.⁷⁷

Bailey’s reluctance to consider the Eucharist sacramentally may have reflected her Evangelical religious background. By contrast, Annie Besant, Charles Leadbeater, and Geoffrey Hodson, who attached great importance to sacramental ritual, came from the Anglican tradition at a time when increasing attention was being focused on recovering essential components of pre-Reformation ceremony.⁷⁸ Rudolf Steiner was raised a Catholic and “came... to know the ritual of the Church” while serving as an altar-boy.⁷⁹ But he reported finding little religious feeling and piety in the churches of his youth.

Reflections

The purpose of sacramental ritual is to create dynamic forms into which energy can flow from higher planes. The forms comprising the Eucharist include the sacred elements of bread and wine, the words of consecration, associated gestures like elevation of the host and chalice, and participants’ consumption of the elements. Believers in the real presence contend that the Eucharist has a quality that sets it apart from other types of religious ritual. In any event, like any ritual, repeated enactment results in a cumulative investment of en-

ergy, and participation in the Eucharist by millions of believers over a period of two millennia—even longer if we include pre-Christian antecedents—has produced a sacrament of great power.

The eucharistic formula cleverly solved the age-old tension symbolized by the biblical story of Cain and Abel. Notions of the transmutation of bread and wine into divine flesh and blood combined contrasting patterns of sacrificial ritual—the offering of the fruits of the harvest and offering of prized selections from the flock or herd. Also preserved were ancient notions of “eating the god.” Christian theology linked the descent of divine force into the eucharistic elements with the descent of the Son of God into physical incarnation.

In considering the Eucharist today, we are forced to confront doctrinal formulations that emerged in the Middle Ages as well as ritual formulas dating back to antiquity. The difficulties may be no more or no less than what we face when confronting the claims of medieval and Renaissance science. Does the priest really change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ? Did alchemists really transmuted lead into gold? The two questions may never be answered to everyone’s satisfaction; nor should we be overly concerned to try. Simplistic answers reduce issues spanning multiple planes of reality to the level of mundane chemistry. In particular, to insist that the bread and wine are changed into the physical body and blood of the Jesus born in Bethlehem is not only problematic, it may be distasteful to modern consciousness. More importantly it con-

fuses human nature—however exalted—with the Second Aspect of Deity embodied by the Christ who overshadowed the Master Jesus.

The issue of transubstantiation may be peripheral to a true understanding of the Eucharist, but esoteric teachings still provide worthwhile insights into doctrinal arguments based on the Aristotelian categories of “substance” and “accidents.” Recognition that physical matter is just the lowest manifestation of multi-level substance persuaded Charles Leadbeater and Geoffrey Hodson that the eucharistic elements could be transformed on higher planes, even

though the dense physical appearances remain unchanged. The divine force may penetrate the elements as far as the etheric plane, low enough to influence the life of the cells in participants’ physical bodies and certainly low enough to influence the subtle bodies. To put this in perspective, we recall that Sanat Kumara incarnated to the etheric level in ancient Lemuria,⁸⁰ and the consciousness of the Christ may have penetrated Jesus’ body to the etheric level.

Leadbeater also proposed that the Eucharist can be regarded as a sacrifice because the Christ de-

scends into the physical elements in a recapitulation of what must have been his painful descent into incarnation two millennia ago.⁸¹ The physical world may not be evil, as the Gnostics contended, but it is an unpleasant place for spiritual beings to visit. Leadbeater may have distanced himself from the Fourth Lateran Council’s assertion that sacrifice is implied by separate consecration of the bread and wine. But in invoking parallels with

In considering the Eucharist today, we are forced to confront doctrinal formulations that emerged in the Middle Ages as well as ritual formulas dating back to antiquity... Does the priest really change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ? Did alchemists really transmuted lead into gold? The two questions may never be answered to everyone’s satisfaction... Simplistic answers reduce issues spanning multiple planes of reality to the level of mundane chemistry.

Christ's incarnation, he followed a doctrinal tradition extending back to the second century.

Ultimately, what happens to the eucharistic elements pales in importance compared with recipients' individual and collective experience. Just as the true purpose of alchemy may have been transformation of the alchemist, the true purpose of the Eucharist is the elevation in consciousness of the priest, the congregation, and the larger group—however that group may be defined. Rudolf Steiner spoke thus of the initiate's encounter with the god in the ancient mysteries:

A divine Being approaches you? It is either everything or nothing... What the divine Being is in itself is a matter which does not affect you; the important point for you is whether it leaves you as it found you or makes another man of you. [T]his depends entirely on yourself.⁸²

Who would argue that the same is not true of the communicant?

Not every Christian esotericist should feel obliged to study, still less participate in, the Eucharist. The Path of Ceremony⁸³ is just one of several spiritual options, equally valid and commendable. Furthermore, belief plays a major role in the Eucharist's perceived relevance. For those drawn to sacramental ritual, and those who believe in the real presence—as defined by the doctrine of transubstantiation or as a mystery that transcends narrow definition—rich potential opens up for establishing new relationships with the Master of Masters and the Second Aspect of Deity. Celebration of the Mass and receipt of the sacrament can both symbolize and facilitate the awakening of the inner Christ. They can also be important service activities, helping to anchor Love-Wisdom in the world and in humanity.⁸⁴ Moreover, if clairvoyants are right about the participation of powerful angelic beings in the Mass, the Eucharist offers a way to explore fruitful cooperation with the deva evolution.⁸⁵

For “non-believers,” the Eucharist can still provide a powerful symbol of the Christ's presence in the world. Alice Bailey predicts that, even in its allegorical sense, it will bring people together in a “true communion”:

The future will see right relationships, true communion, a sharing of all things (wine, the blood, the life and bread, economic satisfaction) and goodwill; we have also a picture of the future of humanity when all nations are united in complete understanding and the diversity of languages—symbolic of differing traditions, cultures, civilisations and points of view—will provide no barrier to right human relations. At the centre of each of these pictures is to be found the Christ.⁸⁶

As we work to make that vision a reality, may we all seek the sacramental Christ and respond according to our beliefs and the paths we have chosen.

¹ *Luke* 24:30-34. (All biblical references in this article are taken from the King James Version.)

² *Acts* 2:42-46.

³ However elements of the *Seder*, like the use of bitter herbs or the cup of wine for Elijah, were not recorded in the gospel accounts of the Last Supper. Nor did they pass into eucharistic liturgy.

⁴ *Didache*, ch. 9. (Transl: A. Roberts & J. Donaldson.) Early Christian Writings. Note that the wine was offered before the bread.

⁵ James D. Tabor. *The Jesus Dynasty*. Simon & Schuster, 2006, pp. 203-205.

⁶ *1 Corinthians* 11:29.

⁷ *Mark* 14:22-24. *Mark's* description of the Last Supper probably provided the source for *Matthew* 26:20-30; *Luke* 22:14-38; and *John* 13:4ff.

⁸ *John* 6:35.

⁹ *John* 15:1, 5.

¹⁰ *John* 2:3.

¹¹ *Hebrews* 10:1-22. This epistle's author is unknown.

¹² God's command to the Jews to perform “continual” sacrifice appeared in *Exodus* 29:38-43 and *Numbers* 28:1-6.

¹³ Justin Martyr. *First Apology*, §LXVI. (Transl: A. Roberts & J. Donaldson.) Early Christian Writings.

¹⁴ Ambrose. *On the Mysteries*, ch. 8, 47. (Transl: T. Thomson.)

¹⁵ Radbertus Paschasius. *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini* (“On the Body and Blood of the Lord”), 831-844 CE.

¹⁶ Fourth Lateran Council, Canon 1. 1215. H. J. Schroeder (ed.). *Disciplinary Decrees of the*

- General Councils*. B. Herder, 1937, pp. 236-296.
- ¹⁷ Even then, debate continued within the Roman church. In the late 13th-century John Duns Scotus offered the alternative doctrine of *consubstantiation*, in which the bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ were jointly present. Further eucharistic doctrines were proposed in the 20th century. See: John F. Nash. *Christianity: the One, the Many*. Xlibris, 2007, vol. II, p. 246.
- ¹⁸ In a meeting in 1529, Luther and Ulrich Zwingli failed to resolve their differences over the Eucharist. Luther adhered to belief in the real presence, while Zwingli rejected it. In turn, John Calvin was strongly influenced by the Zwinglian position.
- ¹⁹ The closest Luther would go toward offering a eucharistic doctrine was to argue that a “sacramental union” existed between the bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ. In a famous quotation he insisted that Christ was “in, with, and under” the elements.
- ²⁰ Quoted in: J.R.H. Moorman. *A History of the Church in England*, 3/e. Moorhouse, 1963/1980, p. 216.
- ²¹ For example, to clarify the Anglican position, the second Book of Common Prayer published in 1552 omitted all reference to the “sacrifice” of the Mass, and procedures for ordaining priests no longer contained any reference to their sacrificial office.
- ²² For a discussion of these traditionalist movements see: Nash, *Christianity: the One, the Many*, vol. II, pp. 260-262.
- ²³ John Cosin. “The History of Popish Transubstantiation.” Tract 27. John H. Newman (ed.) *Tracts of the Times*, 1834, ch. 1. Project Canterbury, <http://anglicanhistory.org/tracts>. Emphasis removed.
- ²⁴ *Genesis* 14:18.
- ²⁵ *Proverbs* 9:5. *Chokmah* (Hebrew: חכמה) and *Sophia* (Greek Σοφία) both meant Wisdom, which in late-biblical Judaism took on the character of a feminine aspect of God.
- ²⁶ See the discussion by James G. Frazer. *The Golden Bough*. Macmillan, 1960, pp. 456-462..
- ²⁷ Homer. *Hymn to Demeter*, line 434ff. (Transl: H. Evelyn-White.)
- ²⁸ *Genesis* 4:3-4.
- ²⁹ *Leviticus* 23:33ff. *Sukkoth* is celebrated on the fifth day after Yom Kippur.
- ³⁰ Associations between the Toda and the Eucharist, noted by H. Gese, are discussed in: Joseph Ratzinger, *Feast of Faith*. (Transl: G. Harrison.) Ignatius Press, 1981, pp. 51-60.
- ³¹ James G. Frazer. *The Golden Bough*. Macmillan, 1960, p. 453.
- ³² *Ibid.*.
- ³³ Manfred Clauss. *The Roman Cult of Mithras*. (Transl: R. Gordon). Routledge, 200, pp. 108ff.
- ³⁴ For example, see the attack on Mithraic rites by: Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, §LXVI.
- ³⁵ Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, pp. 566-569.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 556.
- ³⁷ The term “chemical wedding” was also common. For example, one of the Rosicrucian Manifestos was *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosencreutz*, published in 1616.
- ³⁸ *Gospel of Philip*, 67:27-30. (Transl: W. Isenberg,) *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 3/e, HarperCollins, 1990, p. 150. Parenthesis in original.
- ³⁹ Carl Jung. *Psychology and Alchemy*, 2/e. (Transl: R. Hull.) Princeton Univ. Press, 1968, pp. 345ff.
- ⁴⁰ A number of works indicate that Aquinas was familiar with contemporary works on alchemy. Most likely he was first introduced to the subject by his teacher Albertus Magnus who dabbled in occultism.
- ⁴¹ Thomas Aquinas (attributed to). *Aurora Consurgens*, fifth parable. Marie-Louise von Franz (ed.). (Transl: R. Hull & A. Glover.) Inner City Books, 2000, p. 101-102. See also the commentary by Marie-Louise von Franz, p. 319.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, sixth parable, pp. 129-131, and von Franz’ commentary, pp. 358-361. Note that the Latin *Sapientia* is the direct equivalent of the Hebrew *Chokmah* and the Greek *Sophia*.
- ⁴³ Melchior of Hermannstadt. *Processus sub forma missae*, c.1525. (Transl: R. Hull.)
- ⁴⁴ Jung. *Psychology and Alchemy*, pp. 397, 406.
- ⁴⁵ Individuals reported to have achieved the transmutation of metals include: Raymond Lully (1233–1313), Nicholas Flamel (1330–1418), Basil Valentine (c. 1413), Alexander Seton (d. 1604), Eirenaeus Philalethes (b. 1612), Lascaris (c. 1700), Seheld (early 18th century), the Count of Sainte-Germain (1710–1784?), Jean Julien Fulcanelli (1877–1932), and R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz (1887–1961). Scientists who, while not alchemists themselves, reportedly observed the successful transmutation of metals include: Jakob Zwinger (16th century), Wolfgang Dienheim (late 16th century), Jean-Baptiste van Helmont (b. 1577) and Johann Friedrich Schweitzer (b. 1625). The latter two were both skeptics until they were given portions of the philosopher’s stone and them-

- selves succeeded in transforming base metals into gold. See for example: Kenneth R. Johnson. *The Fulcanelli Phenomenon*. Neville Spearman, 1980, p. 25. Also: Jacques Sadoul. *Alchemists and Gold*. Neville Spearman, 1970, pp. 59-187.
- ⁴⁶ Louis Pauwels & Jacques Bergier. *The Morning of the Magicians*. Avon, 1960, p. 118.
- ⁴⁷ See for example: Alice A. Bailey. *A Treatise on White Magic*. Lucis, 1934, p. 543. Of the 56 references to the “great work” in Bailey’s writings, that is the only instance in which she capitalizes the term.
- ⁴⁸ The Hermetic Society of the Golden Dawn was founded in 1975 by three Freemasons: William Woodman, William Westcott, and Samuel “MacGregor” Mathers. Mathers soon became the sole leader.
- ⁴⁹ Dion Fortune, *The Training and Work of an Initiate*. Aquarian Press, 1930, p. 78.
- ⁵⁰ Francis King & Stephen Skinner. *Techniques of High Magic*. Destiny Books, 1976, p. 159.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 162.
- ⁵³ Dion Fortune. *The Mystical Qabalah*. Weiser, 1935/2000, p. 90.
- ⁵⁴ Incorporation of the four elements may suggest a link with alchemical symbolism.
- ⁵⁵ Israel Regardie. *Ceremonial Magic*. Aquarian Press, 1980, p. 48.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46.
- ⁵⁷ John F. Nash. “The Power and Timelessness of Ritual.” *Esoteric Quarterly*, Fall 2007, pp. 35-53.
- ⁵⁸ See for example: Bailey. *A Treatise on White Magic*.
- ⁵⁹ Annie W. Besant. “Theosophy: the Root of All Religions.” Thirty-Seventh Annual Convention of the Theosophical Society, Adyar, India, December 27-30, 1913. *Theosophy and the Theosophical Society*. Theosophical Publishing House, p. 64.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 64.
- ⁶¹ The Liberal Catholic Church was founded in 1916 by James Ingall Wedgewood, a former Anglican ministerial student who was influenced both by Anglo-Catholicism and by Theosophy. Subsequently the LCC served as the “religious wing” of the Theosophical Society.
- ⁶² Charles W. Leadbeater. *The Science of the Sacraments*. Theosophical Publishing House, 1920, p. 159.
- ⁶³ See for example: David Conway. *Ritual Magic: an Occult Primer*. Dutton, 1972, pp. 171ff.
- ⁶⁴ The relationship between the two angels is not always clear, and they may actually be one and the same. Leadbeater also mentions “the Directing Angel,” and again it is unclear whether it is a distinct entity. Interestingly, Leadbeater comments that the souls of deceased human beings often attend Mass.
- ⁶⁵ Leadbeater, *The Science of the Sacraments*, especially pp. 23, 119. In the text the thought-form is described as resembling the basilica of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. But the book’s frontispiece shows a tall spire instead of a dome.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 179.
- ⁶⁷ Sandra Hodson (ed.). *Light of the Sanctuary*. Theosophical Publishers, 1988, p. 104.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 162.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 174.
- ⁷⁰ Frits Evelein. “Cosmic Energy and the Rainbow Bridge through the Chakras.” *The Liberal Catholic*, September 1999.
- ⁷¹ The German edition was published in 1902. The first English translation, edited by H. Collison, appeared in 1914.
- ⁷² Rudolf Steiner. *Freemasonry and Ritual Work*. Steiner Books, 1904-1924/2007. Late in life, Steiner assisted with the newly formed Christian Community movement.
- ⁷³ In Christian Communities, the Eucharist is termed the “Act of Consecration of Man.” Although its liturgy refers to “transubstantiation,” there is no clear belief that the elements are transformed.
- ⁷⁴ Quoted in: Heller Wiesberger. Introduction to the German edition of “*Freemasonry and Ritual Work*.” (Transl: J. Wood.) Steiner Books, 2007, p. 21.
- ⁷⁵ Rudolf Steiner. *The Gospel of St. John*. (Transl: M. Monges.) Anthroposophic Press, 1908/1940, pp. 113-114.
- ⁷⁶ Alice A. Bailey. *From Bethlehem to Calvary*. Lucis, 1937, p. 213.
- ⁷⁷ Alice A. Bailey. *Esoteric Astrology*. Lucis, 1951, p. 566.
- ⁷⁸ Anglo-Catholicism and the Liberal Catholic Church were both products of that focus. In Besant’s case we must note that she broke with religious tradition at an early age to become a rationalist. Only later in life did she recover a religious orientation.
- ⁷⁹ Rudolf Steiner. “Autobiographical Sketch.” *The Essential Steiner*, HarperCollins, 1984, pp. 13-22.
- ⁸⁰ Alice A. Bailey. *Initiation, Human and Solar*. Lucis, 1922, p. 28.

- ⁸¹ Leadbeater, *The Science of the Sacraments*, especially pp. 198-199.
- ⁸² Rudolf Steiner. *Christianity as Mystical Fact*. (Transl: C. Davy & A. Bittleston.) Rudolf Steiner Press, 1914, p. 24.
- ⁸³ Nash, *Christianity: the One, the Many*, especially vol. II, pp. 315-320.
- ⁸⁴ Geoffrey Hodson. *The Inner Side of Church Worship*. Theosophical Publishing House, 1930, ch. VI.
- ⁸⁵ The Liberal Catholic Church International asserts: "We teach that we are assisted from the beginning of the Eucharist by the Angel of the Mass, and later by all of the various Orders of Angels." See:
<http://www.liberalcatholic.org/teachings.html>. Accessed April 10, 2008.
- ⁸⁶ Alice A. Bailey. *The Destiny of the Nations*. Lucis 1949, pp. 151-152.

Book Reviews

Extraordinary Times, Extraordinary Beings, by **Wayne S. Peterson**. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing Company, 2003. Paperback, 178 pages. US \$16.95.

For most students of esotericism, the Reappearance of the Christ is learned about as a concept—an event of great magnitude destined to materialize in the distant future. Wayne Peterson's book raises the question: "What if that future is here? Is it possible that the World Teacher is already among us? In recounting the extraordinary events of his life, this former American diplomat tries to convince the reader that the answer is unequivocally "yes."

Two things lend credence to Peterson's hypothesis. One is his rock-solid background in the U.S. government, where he spent over three decades. The other is the strong note of destiny that has resonated throughout his life. His career was shaped by a "chance" encounter with David Rockefeller, while still in college, which led Peterson to join the Peace Corps. While serving in Brazil, another fateful incident gave him the permission he needed to initiate what became the first program, in the history of Brazil, dedicated to eradicating poverty.

From there, other fateful interventions led Peterson to begin a stint in the U.S. government that spanned 32 years—first as an officer in the Foreign Service, where he was posted to various countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and then as a director of the Fulbright Scholars Program. In this latter post, he continued travelling throughout the world while being stationed in Washington, DC.

One night at home in Washington, in 1982, he turned on the TV and flipped the dial to the Merv Griffin Show. Griffin, accompanied by historian Gore Vidal, was interviewing Benjamin Creme, a Londoner who was in the U.S. giving lectures about the reappearance of the

Maitreya. Shortly thereafter, Peterson was getting into his car in a parking lot when he overheard two women talking about Creme's forthcoming appearances in Washington. At one of these appearances, the author's first life-changing encounter with the Maitreya took place. The story takes off from there.

Some of the tales told in this book would stretch anyone's imagination, yet the facts of Peterson's diplomatic career predispose the reader to rein in the skepticism that naturally arises. The author also claims he was not the only one among Washington's elite to have had such encounters. As his journey unfolded, he met others in the inner circles of government and finance, both national and international, including associates of Pope John Paul II, all of whom had similar experiences with the Maitreya or with certain of the Masters. (For reasons not entirely clear, it is said that all of them have chosen to remain anonymous.)

Some of the tangible effects of these encounters were mentioned by Peterson in a radio interview on "Coast-to-Coast AM," on June 24, 2000. He implied that the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Soviet Empire, and the peaceful transition of South Africa after apartheid all had been influenced by higher Beings, and said that journalists who interviewed the likes of Gorbachev and Mandela would be most surprised. The general purpose of these encounters, Peterson says, is to help humanity through these times of "endless and mindless destruction," and to clear a path to a new era in consciousness.

Building on this theme, the author links his own experiences to other phenomena that have been taking place around the world in recent decades that have been observed by millions of people. These phenomena range from the "materializations" of Sai Baba in India to the apparitions of the Virgin Mary at Medjugorje. All of them, Peterson says, have the same purpose: to signal the arrival on Earth of higher

forces who are preparing the ground for a new era of peace, justice and sharing.

In the conclusion to his book, after ending his personal narrative, Peterson offers a message to his readers and asks them to take it to heart. It reads in part:

“The story of the emergence of Maitreya and the Masters of Wisdom into the daily lives of all humanity is about our need for their help and guidance at what may be the most perilous time in history. The purpose of their return is not specifically religious, nor is it confined to any one sector of human endeavor. Rather, they come now to teach us how to live together as brothers and sisters.”

Nancy Seifer
Reston, VA

The Return of the Perennial Philosophy: The Supreme Vision of Western Esotericism, by John Holman. London: Watkins Publishing, 2008. Paperback 170 pages. US\$17.95.

Esotericists are fond of speaking of the “perennial philosophy,” or “ancient wisdom,” a body of universal truths believed to have pervaded all cultures and civilizations throughout history (and prehistory). Those truths, often assumed to be encoded in symbols transcending ordinary language, are held to underlie the world’s exoteric religions as well as the mystical and occult traditions that have arisen in different places and at different times.

The outcome, according to believers, has been a fundamental cohesiveness of insights and intellectual formulations across space and time. The wells from which the world’s mystics and philosophers drank were filled from a common subterranean stream. Some authorities claim that the perennial philosophy is inherent in the human condition, while others claim that it was given to humanity in remote antiquity by higher beings concerned with the long-term mental and spiritual evolution of the race.

John Holman’s *The Return of the Perennial Philosophy* seeks to establish the continuing

reality of the perennial philosophy and to trace its impact on the western esoteric tradition. The book is written in a somewhat dense scholarly style, though its relatively short length avoids tedium. The work is exploratory, not offering or even perhaps needing firm conclusions. Perhaps wisely, Holman even refrains from a simplistic definition of his subject. Instead he suggests that the perennial philosophy has to be experienced:

[T]o know the perennial philosophy as *Divine Reality*, one has to “go there”... In the writings of many contemporary thinkers, the perennial philosophy is essentially the pre-modern worldview—a philosophical consensus of sorts, featuring a multilevelled universe from matter, through living systems, mind and soul, to spirit/God. This gives us a perennial philosophy “map” of sorts but... we are to remember that the map is not the terrain. Moreover, the map may only refer to *part* of the terrain anyway, depending on how far into the territory the majority of travellers went and/or what they were able or thought necessary to express... [p. 127]

John Holman’s brief historical review covers a broad swath of ideas from classical Gnosticism to modern psychology. To his considerable credit, the author discusses the work of individuals and groups rarely mentioned in surveys of western esotericism. He devotes a whole chapter to the 20th-century Traditionalist School, associated with French author René Guénon, German-Swiss philosopher Frithjof Schuon, and others. Two chapters are devoted to the “spiritual psychology” of Carl Jung, Roberto Assagioli, and Ken Wilbur—whose integral theory of consciousness was influenced by Traditionalism.

Traditionalism and its derivatives are important to Holman’s thesis that the perennial philosophy had to be rediscovered and defended in the face of the pervasive rationalist mindset of the times. Wilbur might add that it also needs to be defended against the superficiality of New Age movements.

On the other hand, topics which many people might regard as central to western esotericism—and which formed links in the outward

expression of the perennial philosophy—like the Kabbalah, alchemy, and the Rosicrucian movement, are relegated to a short chapter headed: “Some Other Esoteric Schools.”

Surprisingly, in view of the book’s subtitle: *The Supreme Vision of Western Esotericism*, fully one-third of the book discusses *eastern* concepts brought to the West by Helena Blavatsky and others of her lineage inside and outside the Theosophical Society.

To be sure, concepts such as the planes of nature, the subtle bodies, and the initiations have become firmly established in modern esoteric philosophy. And few people would disagree that they have added greatly to our understanding of reality and humanity’s evolutionary potential. However, this reviewer was disappointed that the author offered no evidence, or even hints, from the western tradition to support them—or even provided points of contact between eastern and western esoterica.

The perennial philosophy was preserved by initiates, and initiates are more likely than others to recognize and respond to its pervasive influence. But the author misses an opportunity to discuss initiation in a western context. Although the notion of graded initiations was less developed in the west—and sometimes was misunderstood or flawed—it was not totally unknown before *The Secret Doctrine* appeared in 1888.

John Holman clearly has done useful research, but, as it stands, the book does not do justice to his work. The lengthy account of Theosophical teachings—most of which is taken from the literature without significant commentary—should be shortened, and the discussion of western esoteric topics expanded. Both need to be integrated more successfully into the book’s overall theme. Holman has whet our appetite. We hope he writes a second edition that builds upon the strength of his ideas and remedies the weaknesses of this edition.

Editorial Staff

