

The Esoteric Quarterly

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**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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Path to the Future

In the Summer issue I announced my intention to retire as Editor-in-Chief of the *Esoteric Quarterly*. Since then a search has been conducted for a successor. We also took the opportunity to pose some larger questions about the *Quarterly*'s editorial structure, and the outcome has been a decision to move to collective responsibility for editing our journal. This new group effort not only makes sense from a management perspective but accords with the spirit of the Aquarian Age.

It is my great pleasure to announce that Dr. Joann S. Bakula will serve as Review Editor, Dr. Dorothy I. Riddle will serve as Technical Editor, and Donna M. Brown will be the new Editor-in-Chief. These three outstanding individuals, all of whom currently serve on the Editorial Board, bring to their respective jobs a wealth of experience in academia, business, and the arts. They are also lifelong esoteric students who have published widely, in the *Quarterly* and elsewhere. They will continue to work closely with our sponsoring organization, the School for Esoteric Studies. Our journal is truly in good hands, and we can look forward not just to continued publication but to the attainment of new levels of excellence.

Some restructuring of the Editorial Board will also be initiated to strengthen support for the three principal editors. It is my pleasure to welcome René Fugere from Quebec, Canada, to the Editorial Board. At the same time, I must also announce Nancy Seifer's retirement from the Board. We thank Ms. Seifer for her work over the last two years and wish her every success in her future endeavors.

It remains for me to express my gratitude to all the wonderful people—authors, reviewers, members of the Editorial Board, and many others—who have worked with me to make

the *Esoteric Quarterly* a success. I also want to thank the officers and board members of the School for Esoteric Studies for giving me the opportunity to launch the *Quarterly* and nurture it during this early period of growth. As health and circumstances permit I shall be available to consult with the new team and help in any way I can.

In this, my last issue, we offer articles and many other features which we hope you will find of great interest.

Our first article: Dorothy Riddle's "Learning to Work with and Respond to Shamballa Will Energy," is the latest in a series that focus on understanding the Will aspect of deity and our role in its expression. Of the three divine aspects, Will is the most difficult to understand, primarily because the necessary centers of receptivity in the human entity are only now unfolding. We are indebted to Dr. Riddle and the other dedicated esoteric scholars who are working in this challenging field.

We are fortunate to be able to publish back-to-back articles by Zachary Lansdowne. The complementary articles explore two stories from the *Acts of Thomas*—a second- or third-century text which circulated widely among Gnostic Christians. It is one of many documents—some only recently discovered—that were not selected for the New Testament canon but provide insights into the richness and diversity of the early Christian experience. The *Acts* and other texts refer to the apostle Thomas by his full name: Judas Thomas Didymus, which literally means "Judas the Twin."

The *Hymn of the Pearl* tells of a prince who sets out to recover a precious pearl but temporarily forgets his mission. The *Hymn of the Bride* consists of praises for a spiritual bride, possibly the divine personage Sophia.

Both are written in the allegorical style, typical of Gnostic writings, and are capable of multiple interpretations. Dr. Lansdowne draws upon the teachings of Alice Bailey to interpret them as allegories of the spiritual journey and the expansion of human consciousness.

The last full-length article in this issue discusses the little-known field of ecstatic Kabbalah, with emphasis on the work of the 13th-century Spanish mystic Abraham Abulafia. Abulafia built upon earlier systems of meditation that involve recitation of divine names. His “names” consisted of permutations and combinations of Hebrew letters—as well as vowels which had made their way into Hebrew texts through the Masoretic vowel points. Abulafia provided detailed instructions on how to attain intense states of consciousness, offering the possibility of visions and new revelation from God. Long denounced by Judaic authorities as dangerous or heretical, the work of Abulafia is now being studied by both Jewish and non-Jewish scholars.

In addition to the full-length articles, we also offer a student paper, “Service: an Essential Factor in Spiritual Growth,” by Miguel Malagrea. Our intention is to publish such papers on a regular basis, giving students enrolled in esoteric training programs the opportunity to share ideas with a larger audience. Student papers will not be held to the same standards as our full-length articles, but we hope to attract works of high quality which will interest our readers.

In this issue we offer a new poem and two original paintings. Following our custom, we also provide thought-provoking quotes from the esoteric literature.

The mission of the *Esoteric Quarterly* is to share insights into esoteric topics. Readers are encouraged to share their reactions to any article or feature in our journal. Please let us

know what you think. Comments of general interest will be published as “Letters to the Editor.”

John Nash
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Publication Policies

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

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

We encourage critical thinking and evaluation of ideas. However, we will not allow our journal to be used as a platform for attacks on individuals, groups, institutions or nations. This policy applies to articles and features as well as to letters to the editor.

In turn, we understand that the author of an article may not necessarily agree with the views, attitudes or values expressed by a referenced source. Indeed, serious scholarship sometimes requires reference to work that an author finds abhorrent. We will not reject an article for publication simply on the grounds that it contains a reference to an objectionable source.

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

Poem of the Quarter

The Choice of Simplicity by Linda “Tiger” Francis

The simple things of joy,
Cannot be purchased with money,
Cannot be obtained from power.
The simple things are the smiles you get each day.
Think for a moment how the clerk, the banker
or just a stranger
Can lift your spirits with a smile,
And think too,
How when you give a smile each day
It almost always comes back your way.

The simple things of delight
Like the wiggle of your dog's tail,
The purr of your kitty's affections,
The arms of your child or grandchild around
your neck,
The glow of your beloved's eyes looking into
your own,
All make life worth hurrying home to,
As the days light fades into the night.
The choice to notice,
The choice of gratitude
Is up to us!
It is a
Choice of Simplicity.
We might call it Homemade Happiness.

Dr. Francis also shared with us the painting shown on the right, adding the following comment:

When the fall winds and Jack Frost had striped the limbs bare, I noticed the limbs seem to come together to spell COS. I was not sure of the meaning, but I knew the Native American would say this was a message from the Great Spirit, and so I captured it with my brush and then, with time, the message came to me as if the leaves were reappearing on the limbs to dress the tree up with definition again.

The words of this poem express the voice of the inner silent voice I heard from Spirit. Look at the picture and see if they call to you as well. Perhaps if I had looked long enough I might have found two “H”s in the tree's branches.



Picture of the Quarter



Dr. Miguel Malagrecá (whose paper: “Service: an Essential Factor in Spiritual Growth,” is published later in this issue) contributed this picture titled “Mandala.”

Quotes of the Quarter

Groups have always existed in the world, as for instance the family group unit, but they have been predominantly third ray groups with, therefore, a dominant outer expression and control, and originating as the result of desire. Their focus has been outstandingly material, and that has been part of the intended plan. Right objectivity and expression has been the goal, and still is, of the evolutionary process. But the groups now forming are a second ray activity and are building groups—building the forms of expression in the new age. They are not the result of desire, as the term is usually understood, for they are founded basically on a mental impulse. They are subjective in fact and not objective in nature. They are distinguished by quality more than by form. That they may eventually produce potent objective effects is to be desired and such is their intent in our minds, but—at the present stage which is that of germination—they are subjective and (occultly speaking) they are “working in the dark.” At some distant date, groups will emerge which will be first ray groups, animated by the will aspect and consequently still more subjective in nature and more esoteric in origin, but with these we need not concern ourselves.

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

Now when the apostle [Thomas] was come into the cities of India with Abbanes the merchant, Abbanes went to salute the king Gundaphorus, and reported to him of the carpenter whom he had brought with him. And the king was glad, and commanded him to come in to him... And the king said: Canst thou build me a palace? And he answered: Yea, I can both build and furnish it; for to this end am I come, to build and to do the work of a carpenter.

And the king took him and went out of the city gates and began to speak with him on the way concerning the building of the courthouse, and of the foundations, how they should be laid, until they came to the place wherein he desired that the building should be; and he said: Here will I that the building should be. And the apostle said: Yea, for this place is suitable for the building. But the place was woody and there was much water there. So the king said: Begin to build... And he said: I will begin in the month Dios and finish in Xanthicus. But the king marvelled and said: Every building is builded in summer, and canst thou in this very winter build and make ready a palace? And the apostle said: Thus it must be, and no otherwise is it possible. And the king said: If, then, this seem good to thee, draw me a plan, how the work shall be, because I shall return hither after some long time. And the apostle took a reed and drew, measuring the place; and the doors he set toward the sunrising to look toward the light, and the windows toward the west to the breezes, and the bakehouse he appointed to be toward the south and the aqueduct for the service toward the north. And the king saw it and said to the apostle: Verily thou art a craftsman and it belitteth thee to be a servant of kings. And he left much money with him and departed from him.

Acts of Thomas. (Transl: M. R. James.)

Eternity is the image of God; the cosmos, of eternity; the sun, of the cosmos; and man, of the sun. People call transformation death, because the body is dissolved, but in fact life withdraws into the unmanifest...

Consider this yourself. Command your soul to go anywhere, and it will be there quicker than your command. Bid it to go to the ocean and again it is there at once, not as if it

had gone from place to place but was already there. Order it to fly up to heaven and it will need no wings, nor will anything impede it, neither the fire of the sun, nor the ether, nor the whirlwind, nor the other heavenly bodies, but cutting through them all it will soar up to the last body. And if you wish to break through all this and to contemplate what is beyond (if there is anything beyond the cosmos), it is in your power...

But if you lock up your soul in your body, abase it and say: "I understand nothing; I can do nothing; I am afraid of the sea; I cannot reach heaven; I do not know who I was nor who I shall be." What have you to do with God? For you cannot conceive of anything beautiful or good while you are attached to the body and are evil. For the greatest evil is to ignore what belongs to God.

Corpus Hermeticum. (Transl: C. Salaman et al.)
Inner Traditions, 2000.

The Greeks with their first class mathematical and scientific brains made many discoveries in mechanics and other applied sciences but they never took whole-heartedly, with all their powers, the momentous step which western man took at the beginning of the modern period of crossing the bridge between the theoretical and the practical, of going all out to apply knowledge to produce operations. Why was this? It was basically a matter of the will. Fundamentally, the Greeks did not *want* to operate. They regarded operations as base and mechanical, a degeneration from the only occupation worthy of the dignity of man, pure rational and philosophical speculation. The Middle Ages carried on this attitude in the form that theology is the crown of philosophy and the true end of man is contemplation; any wish to operate can only be inspired by the devil. Quite apart from the question of whether Renaissance magic could, or could not, lead on to genuinely scientific procedures, the real function of the Renaissance Magus in relation to the modern period... is that he

changed the will. It was now dignified and important for man to operate; it was also religious and not contrary to the will of God that man, the great miracle, should exert his powers. It was this basic psychological re-orientation towards a direction of the will which was neither Greek nor mediaeval in spirit, which made all the difference.

What were the emotional sources of the new attitude? They lie... in the religious excitement caused by the rediscovery of the *Hermetica*, and their attendant Magic; in the overwhelming emotions aroused by Cabala and its magico-religious techniques. It is magic as an aid to gnosis which begins to turn the will in the new direction.

Frances A. Yates. *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition.* Vintage Books, 1964.

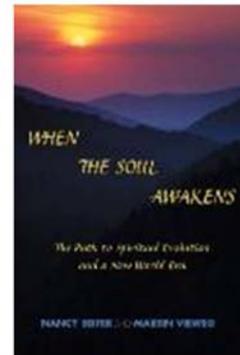
Paul Ricoeur... articulates the general problem for human discourse in general, and religious discourse in particular, from the eighteenth century until the present day. Technically stated, this problem is: Is the *Cogito* within being, or is it vice versa? In less technical and explicitly theological language, the problem may be stated thus: Is my life to be found within the reality of God, or is the reality of God derivative from me?... What Ricoeur would have us attend to is our lack of awareness of the transcendent order which is absolutely determinative for human life *as such*, that is for human experiencing, imagining, reflection and action. This transcendent order is referred to variously as the sacred, the holy, Being, God. However named, the sacred addresses us and we respond to it by means of symbols and the narratives or myths which related the symbols to one another. It is this response which constitutes and informs human life in all of its dimensions.

W. Taylor Stevenson. "Lex Orandi—
Lex Credenti." *The Study of Anglicanism.*
Fortress Press, 1998.

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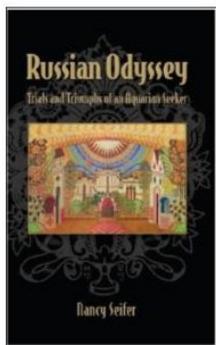
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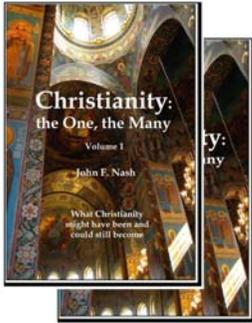
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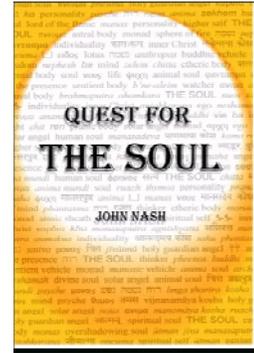
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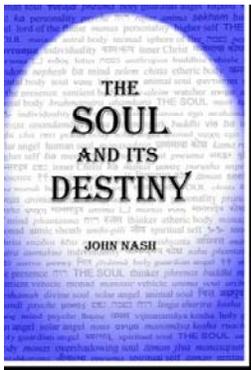
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Learning to Work with and Respond to Shamballa Will Energy

Dorothy I. Riddle

Abstract

A major component of our spiritual maturation is linked to our willingness to engage constructively with the Shamballa Will energy. Ideally this engagement is gradual and begins as soon as we become aware of the importance of Will energy in helping to implement the Plan. No matter where we are in our spiritual development, there are opportunities to practice three key skills: recognition, receptivity, and focus. Developing these skills (in conjunction with the Shamballa energies of purification, destruction, and organization) allows us to contribute optimally to the Plan for humanity.

The Context

Much has been written in the esoteric literature about the Shamballa Will energy, particularly regarding the implications of the 2000 Shamballa Impact. These discussions have tended to focus at the level of Humanity as a whole, rather than on the implications for the everyday life of disciples. However, we, the disciples, are the ones responsible for actually working with, and responding to, the Shamballa Will energy in our daily lives. We are responsible for receiving the Shamballa Will energy and then channeling it to the New Group of World Servers. We are called on to align with that Will energy so that we can sense discrepancies between the unfolding pattern of human development and the Plan, thus helping to formulate modifications to the Plan in order to keep It workable and relevant. But we may not necessarily have a clear sense of how we can participate in working with the Shamballa Will energy and may believe that it is all best left to others “more advanced” than us.

The Nature of Will Energy

Given the pervasive influence of the Ray of Love-Wisdom (Ray Two) as “the major ray of our solar system...,”¹ our spiritual focus is usually on that Love energy and how it can translate into right human relations. We may forget, or be uncomfortable with knowing, that the basic nature of our cosmos is fire (*Fohat*), which, when directed with Purpose, we know as Will energy.

We can think of the Will as the focused energy that expresses divine Purpose and brings it into manifestation “as a gradual, self-revealing evolutionary and demonstrated activity.”² The Will as “embodied and held in synthesis... is one clear note;... that Will in motion... is three abiding chords, carrying outwards into all the worlds the Purpose of the ONE Who for eons will abide; as... that Will... demonstrate[s], it is seven vibratory tones, drawing out into the reflected worlds the structure of the Plan. And thus the note, the chords, and tone produce the Plan, reveal the Purpose, and indicate God’s Will.”³

The Will is the active energy that engages us simultaneously with the particular and the universal. Our evocation of the Will is one of the

About the Author

Based in Vancouver, Canada, Dorothy I. Riddle, Ph.D., has worked globally on issues related to services and economic development. Her speaking and writing related to spiritual development have focused primarily on feminist spirituality. She is the Project Director for the development of the Spiritual Evolution Assessment Scale (SEAS), www.SEAScale.net and for the two portals: www.servicegrowth.net and ww.servicegrowth.org.

primary goals of the Plan,⁴ and it is through the Will that we are able to make the changes required to implement the Plan for Humanity and our planet. While we tend to associate Will energy with Ray One, it is actually expressed through all seven rays:⁵

- a) Ray One expresses the divine Will energy as the dynamic Will to *initiate*, including initiating the destruction of crystallized form. At the microcosmic level, it is responsible for destroying inaccurate beliefs or outmoded concepts and sweeping the way clear for change. We use this energy in esoteric life in the initiation process, eliminating old concepts and initiating new expansions of consciousness.
- b) Ray Two expresses the divine Will as the inclusive radiatory Will to *unification*, including the Will that brings fulfillment. At the microcosmic level, it is responsible for the coherence in, or dissolution of, relationships at all levels. We use this energy in esoteric life to provide us with a vision of unification that assists us in evoking goodwill.
- c) Ray Three expresses the divine Will as the magnetic Will to *evolve*, including the Will that conditions the life aspect. At the microcosmic level, it is responsible for the adaptation of substance to purpose. We use this energy in esoteric life to educate and make ideas concrete so that they may be shared and developed.
- d) Ray Four expresses the divine Will as the Will to *harmonization*, including the will to destroy limitation in order to allow for renewed purpose. At the microcosmic level, it is responsible for the creation of contrast to assist in decision-making and achieving harmony. We use this energy in esoteric life as we function at the buddhic level, developing our intuition.
- e) Ray Five expresses the divine Will as the Will to *action*, activating the inherent life of matter at the point where Spirit and matter are balanced. At the microcosmic level, it is responsible for

the ability to work intelligently. We use this energy in esoteric life to stimulate a commitment to liberation from intellectual and spiritual constraints.

- f) Ray Six expresses the divine Will as the Will to *causation*, including the motivation to work out divine purpose. At the microcosmic level, it is responsible for the creative urge or desire for betterment. We use this energy in esoteric life to stimulate idealism and devotion to the Plan.
- g) Ray Seven expresses the divine Will as the Will towards *expression*, or making the discarnate concrete on the physical plane. At the microcosmic level, it provides the principle of order and the power to bring into objective manifestation. We use this energy in esoteric life in the practice of white magic to create organization and formulate thought-forms.

Shamballa Will Energy

We are told that there is a direct relationship between Ray One and Shamballa: “The Center that is created by the Ray of Will or Power [Ray One] is called Shamballa; and Its major activity is bequeathing, distributing, and circulating the basic principle of life itself to every form that is held within the planetary ring-pass-not of the planetary Life or Logos.”⁶ The following quotes may help to clarify the relationship between the Will and Shamballa:

“Shamballa, as it constitutes the synthesis of understanding where our Earth is concerned, is also the center where the highest Will of the Solar Logos is imposed upon the Will of our Planetary Logos Who is, as you know, only a center in Its greater body of manifestation...The objective of effort in Shamballa is...the apprehension of solar Purpose, the Plan of which is working out on the highest levels of our planetary system, just as the Will, Purpose, and Plan of Shamballa work out on the three lowest levels of our planetary system.”⁷

The focused Will of God, in its immediate implications and application, constitutes the point of tension from which Shamballa

works in order to bring about the eventual fruition of the divine Purpose. There is a definite distinction between Purpose and Will... Will is active. Purpose is passive, waiting for the results of the activity of the Will.⁸

We are also told that Shamballa is a state of consciousness that represents the point of tension where the Will energy, received from extra-planetary and extra-solar sources (particularly from Venus, the Central Spiritual Sun, and the Great Bear), is held in reserve through intention and distributed to the Hierarchy and Humanity. The distribution of “Shamballa force” takes place both in response to Hierarchical invocation and as a part of the overall plan of the Planetary Logos.

The primary function of the Shamballa Will energy, as it impacts Humanity, is to stimulate the unfolding of human consciousness. It is comprised of three great energies: the energy of purification, the energy of destruction, and the energy of organization.⁹ As disciples, we have both the opportunity and the obligation to hone the skills needed to work with, and respond to, these Shamballa Will energies. Our ability to work with the Will emerges most clearly after we become able to work, via the Antahkarana, directly through the Spiritual Triad and the spiritual (or atmic) will. However, just as with any skill, we actually learn that ability over time in small steps, beginning as soon as we have acquired meditative focus. We can do this through developing three key skills: recognition, receptivity, and focus.

Three Necessary Skills

The Skill of Recognition and the Energy of Purification

The first skill that we need in order to work with Will energy is to be able to *recognize* its presence. One of the keys to recognition is a sense of familiarity and resonance. So what would make Will energy seem familiar to us? “The secret of the Will lies in the recognition of the divine nature of human beings. Only this can evoke the true expression of the Will. It has in fact to be evoked by the Soul as It dominates the human mind and controls the

personality.”¹⁰ The cosmos is a vast pulsating energy field within which we are each an energetic component. To the extent that we cultivate the ability to discriminate between the illusion of separateness and the reality of interconnection, we will be able to sense the vibrant Will that keeps us in manifestation and intertwined with each other.

A number of global initiatives have already focused on helping us to shift and expand our awareness—for example, the Alliance for a New Humanity, the Foundation for Conscious Evolution, the Good News Agency, the Universe Project, and many more. A more comprehensive listing, with links, is available in the “Global Initiatives” section of “Spirituality in Practice” on the *Supporting Spiritual Development* portal.¹¹

When we refer to the energy of purification in the context of the Shamballa Will, we are referring to “the power, innate in the manifested universe, that gradually and steadily adapts the substance aspect to the spiritual... It involves the elimination of all that hinders the nature of divinity from full expression... It is essentially the energy that substitutes good for evil.”¹² As we focus on developing recognition, we are utilizing the energy of purification in the sense of eliminating anything that interferes with our ability to remember and manifest our essential divinity as part of the One Life.

We know that the Will “is fundamentally an expression of the Law of Sacrifice”¹³—that is, a deliberate urge “to relinquish this for that, to choose one way or line of conduct and thus sacrifice another way, to lose in order to eventually to gain...”¹⁴ In fact, this dynamic, as we practice transforming self-interest into service through voluntary limitation, is often our first introduction to Will energy. One of the ways that we can recognize the Will at work is to become sensitive to the exercise of constructive constraint—for example, the constraint or principle of limitation exercised in creating a beautiful passage of music. The beauty arises from the musician selecting certain notes to be played in a specific sequence in conjunction with other notes rather than trying to select all of the notes indiscriminately. This dynamic of limitation is not the same as the constriction

that we experience when we operate from fear; rather, it is an open joyous dynamic. Part of remembering who we are is remembering that “joy is the strong basic note of our particular solar system.”¹⁵

The Skill of Receptivity and the Energy of Destruction

The second skill we need to cultivate is that of *receptivity*, or an openness to receiving and channeling Will energy without distortion. Experiencing the Will energy flowing through us requires clear alignment and the removal of any blocks to that energy flow. Meditation is the primary method that we have of developing the mental focus necessary to hold the mind “steady in the light” so as to enable “the mental body to respond to impressions and contacts emanating from the subjective and spiritual worlds.”¹⁶ “It is meditation that is responsible for transforming the desire of the ordinary human being upon our planet into the spiritual will, which is ever the agent of the Purpose. It is therefore meditation that produces individual, group, and planetary alignment...Meditation is also eliminative in its effects and...*ejects* out of the individual and out of the group that which is undesirable—from the angle of the immediate spiritual goal.”¹⁷

Here we are utilizing the Shamballa energy of destruction, which helps us clear away old habit patterns and harmful action reflexes. The energy of destruction “removes the forms that are imprisoning the inner spiritual life and hiding the inner soul light... Monadic relation, as it becomes established, lets loose the destructive aspect of the basic energy, and all hin-

drances are destroyed with expedition.”¹⁸ This destructive energy tends to be the aspect of the Shamballa Will with which many have the most difficulty as we often fail to appreciate the vital and constructive functions of destructive energy.¹⁹ Actually, the destructive use of the Will is a critical part of our evolutionary or growth process as it allows us to eliminate old patterns that hinder clear energy flow. We can see an example of this positive destructive process in operation in the working out of goodwill since its initial stage is the identification of cleavages that need to be eliminated –

i.e., those stereotypes, prejudices, and hatreds that result in the heresy of separativeness.

In current events, we see direct evidence of the power of the Shamballa Will to destroy beliefs and practices and institutions that block right human relations and to provide the possibility for gradually substituting good for evil. Each day we learn more about the atrocities that we have perpetrated or allowed to continue through inaction—whether persecution and abuse of other humans, inhumane treatment of other species, or pollution of

Each of us has our own arena for working with the Shamballa Will energy... We respond to it as we develop a meditative practice and learn to work with interludes. We experience its clarity as we achieve alignment of the physical, emotional, and mental bodies and the fusion of personality with Soul. We work more directly with it as we build the Antahkarana and consolidate our connection with the Spiritual Triad.

natural resources. Rapid, real-time communication via the Internet is accelerating that growth in awareness and helping to consolidate the intention for change into enlightened public opinion. Even in the case of armed conflict, we see a shift from aggression based on a selfish desire for possessions to aggression in order to (mistakenly) impose a particular ideology on others. This process of Shamballic destruction is parallel to the Monad’s destructive energies that purify the Initiate, felt first as the burning away of the casual body. In both instances, the energies bring into bold relief (through conflicts and contrasts) the evil to be

burnt away so that Humanity and the individual can sustain the motivation for change.

A necessary attitude to support receptivity is that of detachment. Receptivity requires an openness to possibilities that is difficult to achieve if we have strong attachments to, or vested interests in, particular outcomes. In the tradition of Religious Science, for example, this attitude is expressed as “treating for right action”—that is, focusing energy on the best possible solution, left undefined, rather than on the solution you particularly want. Similarly, the practice of goodwill helps us to remain open-hearted with others.

The Skill of Focus and the Energy of Organization

The third skill we need is that of *focus* or the ability to direct Will energy in order to achieve a particular result. This requires mental discipline and the ability to create and work from a point of tension.²⁰ Establishing a point of tension allows us to both channel and receive Will energy as well as to hold it at a particular vibrational frequency. “The esoteric significance of tension... is ‘focused immovable Will’.”²¹ Creating and managing points of tension is critical for generating the need to act in service and for imbuing our thoughtforms with the vitality to manifest. As spiritual tension increases and energy becomes more compressed, our field of focus and influence expands.

It is important for us to remember that the Shamballa Will does not force revelation on Humanity and that the Hierarchy only registers those aspects of divine Purpose in which Humanity is prepared to cooperate.²² It is “the duty and the responsibility of the disciple, working under the inspiration of the Ashram, to ‘modify, qualify, and adapt’ the proposed plan of Shamballa (for which the Ashrams are responsible)...”²³ So part of our responsibility as disciples is to help clarify present circumstances and develop new possibilities, thus making it possible for a broader sense of divine Purpose to be invoked by the Hierarchy.

Shamballa Will energy also contains within it the energy of organization, which we can use to initiate and stabilize right human relations.

The energy of organization “is the energy that set in motion the activity of the great Ray Lives and started the motivation and impulse of that which produced manifestation... The relation of Spirit and matter produced this ordered process that again...creates the manifested world as a field for Soul development and as an area wherein divine Purpose is wrought out through the medium of the Plan.”²⁴

A companion attitude for this skill of focus is that of indifference, or a “refusal to be identified with anything save the spiritual reality... It is active repudiation without any concentration upon that which is repudiated... It is concerned with the point of tension from which the observing disciple or aspirant is working... Indifference, technically understood, signifies direct descent from there to here, without deviation or distortion. The manifesting entity, the disciple, stands steady and firm at this point of tension; and the first step is, therefore, to ascertain where that is, on what plane it is found, and what is the strength of the tension upon which the disciple has to depend. The next step is to discover if that which the disciple seeks to convey... is distorted by illusion of any kind, arrested in its expression by glamour, or liable to be sidetracked by uncontrolled forces and by the maya that these produce... It is at this point that the disciple applies the technique of indifference... [and] works consequently from a point of intense concentration; the disciple refuses any ‘attachment’ to any form or plane...”²⁵

To work successfully and constructively with Will energy, we also need to have a clear intention regarding what we wish to achieve with focused Will energy. Working from a point of tension, we need to be motivated by a “harmlessness that speaks no word that can damage another person, that thinks no thought that could poison or produce misunderstanding, and that does no action that could hurt any other person...”²⁶ We are able to ensure our ethical use of the Shamballa Will energy by identifying with the needs and aspirations of others rather than holding ourselves aloof and separate. “Harmlessness is the expression of the life of persons who realize themselves to

be everywhere, who live consciously as Souls, whose nature is love, whose method is inclusiveness, and to whom all forms are alike in that they veil and hide the light and are but externalizations of the one Infinite Being... Harmlessness brings about in the life caution in judgment, reticence in speech, ability to refrain from impulsive action, and the demonstration of a non-critical spirit."²⁷

Working with the Shamballa Will Energy

Each of us has our own arena for working with the Shamballa Will energy as part of our Soul's life purpose. We respond to it as we develop a meditative practice and learn to work with interludes. We experience its clarity as we achieve alignment of the physical, emotional, and mental bodies and the fusion of personality with Soul. We work more directly with it as we build the Antahkarana and consolidate our connection with the Spiritual Triad.

We are also called to a particular collective task in order to implement the Plan: "From the center that we call the human race, let the Plan of Love and Light work out and may it seal the door where evil dwells."²⁸ We are reminded repeatedly that it is "struggling, aspiring, and suffering humanity to whom the task [to seal that door] is committed"²⁹ because the door is being "kept open by humanity through its selfish desires, its hatreds, and its separateness, by its greed and its racial and national barriers, its low personal ambitions and its love of power and cruelty."³⁰ So our first step in this collective task is to *recognize* both our responsibility and our ability to activate goodwill through service in order to reverse this pattern.

Receptivity then plays a role as we strive for a shift in consciousness from self-focus to a focus on the group or a more universal perspective. In order to become receptive, we need to consciously move away from outmoded, exclusionary, paternalistic practices that reinforce a "we versus they" mentality and towards more inclusive and empowering modes of being. We also need to recognize our responsibility not only to receive but also to give back. One way of characterizing the difficulties that we

create is to note that we as humans tend to focus on what we can get out of a spiritual practice and overlook the need for "responsive return,"³¹ or giving back in service in order to maintain the circular flow of energy.

Finally, we need to *focus* and take specific action. We can use three general techniques to address toxic thoughts.¹⁹ We can send light to the situation, which can result in diluting or changing the toxicity (in much the same way as adding chemicals to a swimming pool can shift the pH balance). With this technique, though, we need to be very careful what we are energizing with the light. Alternately, we can focus on substitution—that is, replacing fear and hatred with goodwill energy. Or we can actively dissipate the negative thought-forms through focused will-to-good exercised with compassion.

As we learn to cooperate with and direct the Shamballa Will energy, we will then be in a position to address the primary challenge posed to humanity: "A gigantic thoughtform hovers over the entire human family, built by people everywhere during the ages, energized by the insane desires and evil inclinations of all that is worst in human nature, and kept alive by the promptings of lower desires. This thoughtform has to be broken up and dissipated by humanity itself... Under the Law of Karma, it has to be dissipated by those who have created it..."³² The work involved in order to perform this service to Humanity and the Planetary Logos needs the collaboration of a group of disciples in order to create the points of tension and emergence necessary for energetic destruction. As we develop our skills of recognition, receptivity, and focus, we become able to participate constructively in all phases of the work with which we as disciples have been charged.

¹ Alice A. Bailey. *Esoteric Psychology, Vol. 1*, Lucis, 1936, p. 349.

² Alice A. Bailey. *Esoteric Astrology*, Lucis, 1951, p. 590. For a detailed exploration of the nature of the Will, see Dorothy I. Riddle, "The Will in Its various forms," *Esoteric Quarterly*, 2007, 3(2):33-36.

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- ³ Alice A. Bailey. *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, Lucis, 1957, p. 533.
- ⁴ Alice A. Bailey. *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. 1*, Lucis, p. 411.
- ⁵ Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, pp. 597-601.
- ⁶ Alice A. Bailey. *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, Lucis, 1950, p. 183.
- ⁷ Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, p. 534.
- ⁸ Alice A. Bailey. *The Rays and the Initiations*, Lucis, 1960, p. 69.
- ⁹ Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, pp. 84-85.
- ¹⁰ Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 580.
- ¹¹ See <http://www.servicegrowth.net>.
- ¹² Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 84.
- ¹³ Alice A. Bailey. *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. 2*, Lucis, 1955, p. 269.
- ¹⁴ Alice A. Bailey. *Esoteric Psychology, Vol. 2*, Lucis, 1942, p. 97.
- ¹⁵ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology, Vol. 1*, p. 49.
- ¹⁶ Alice A. Bailey. *Treatise on White Magic*, Lucis, 1934, p. 227.
- ¹⁷ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. 2*, pp. 197-198.
- ¹⁸ Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 84-85.
- ¹⁹ For a detailed exploration of this issue, see Dorothy I. Riddle, "Wise Use of Destructive Energy," *Esoteric Quarterly*, 2008, 4(1):25-30.
- ²⁰ Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 49.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.
- ²² Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. 2*, p. 371.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 278.
- ²⁴ Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 85.
- ²⁵ Alice A. Bailey. *Glamour: A World Problem*, Lucis, 1950, pp. 262-263.
- ²⁶ Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, p. 20.
- ²⁷ Bailey, *Treatise on White Magic*, p. 102-103.
- ²⁸ *The Great Invocation*, stanza four.
- ²⁹ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. 2*, p. 159.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174.
- ³¹ Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 159.
- ³² Alice A. Bailey. *Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, Lucis, 1925, p. 948.

The Hymn of the Pearl

Zachary F. Lansdowne

Summary

The *Hymn of the Pearl*, which is part of the *Acts of Thomas*, is a story about a prince who is sent to retrieve a precious pearl, forgets his mission, but eventually returns with the pearl. Due to the story's symbolic nature, modern scholars substantially disagree about its interpretation. We give a theosophical interpretation, based primarily on the works of Alice A. Bailey, and show that this story is an allegory of the spiritual journey.

Background

Saint Judas Thomas was one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus. The apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*, thought to be written during the second or third century, recounts the adventures of Thomas during his evangelistic mission to India. At one point in the *Acts*, Thomas is thrown into prison and we read, "And when he had prayed and sat down, Judas began to chant this hymn: The Hymn of Judas Thomas the Apostle in the Country of the Indians." This hymn is generally known, however, by the various names given to it by modern scholars, including the *Hymn of the Soul*, *Hymn of the Robe of Glory*, *Song of the Pearl*, and especially *Hymn of the Pearl*.

The author of the *Hymn of the Pearl* is unknown, and there is no historical information about the circumstances of its composition. The *Hymn* bears some resemblances to the Parable of the Pearl (*Matthew* 13:45-46) and the Parable of the Prodigal Son (*Luke* 15:11-32), but it also has many figures, dramatic turns, and transformations that are unusual. Owing to its symbolic nature, Bentley Layton, a professor of religious studies, says, "modern scholars have substantially disagreed on the interpretation of [the *Hymn of the Pearl*]."¹

There are six surviving manuscripts of the *Acts of Thomas* written in Syriac, an Eastern

Aramaic language, and seventy-five surviving manuscripts written in Greek. These surviving manuscripts differ, however, as to which episodes they include. It happens that only one surviving Syriac manuscript and only one surviving Greek manuscript contain the *Hymn of the Pearl*. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, a professor of early church history, writes, "Recent research is agreed that... the Syriac version should here be given the preference."² The Syriac *Hymn* is preferable, because it contains several verses that are missing from the Greek *Hymn*, and because the Greek *Hymn* can be shown to have substantial errors of copying. Moreover, historian of religion Harold Attridge provides textual evidence showing that the *Acts* was originally composed in Syriac.³

Even though its meaning is obscure, readers often find the *Hymn of the Pearl* to be an appealing story and glean various messages from it. Hans Jonas, a professor of philosophy, writes: "The immediate charm of this tale is such that it affects the reader prior to all analysis of meaning. The mystery of its message speaks with its own force, which almost seems to dispense with the need for detailed interpretation."⁴ The *Acts of Thomas* contains a second famous hymn, often called the *Hymn of the Bride*, for which we give our commentary in a companion article. These two hymns are closely related and may have been composed by the same author.

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.

In what follows, we use G. R. S. Mead's English translation of the Syriac *Hymn of the Pearl*,⁵ and give a theosophical interpretation based primarily on the works of Alice A. Bailey. We show that this story is an allegory of the spiritual journey, and that it starts with the interlude between incarnations, on the inner side of life, and then describes the subsequent incarnation.

Interlude between Incarnations

When, a quite little child, I was dwelling
In the House of my Father's Kingdom,
And in the wealth and the glories
Of my Up-bringers I was delighting,
From the East, our Home, my Parents
Forth-sent me with journey-provision.
Indeed from the wealth of our Treasure,
They bound up for me a load.
Large was it, yet was it so light
That all alone I could bear it.
Gold from the Land of Gilan,
Silver from Gazak the Great,
Chalcedonies of India,
Iris-hued [Opals?] from Kushan.
They girt me with Adamant [also]
That hath power to cut even iron.

The concept of the spiritual kingdom is the key to understanding this first passage. In addition to the familiar mineral, vegetable, animal, and human kingdoms of nature, there is said to be a fifth, or spiritual, kingdom that consists of perfected human beings and includes the saints and sages of all major religions. The spiritual kingdom is called the "Hierarchy" in theosophy and the "kingdom of heaven" in *Matthew* 11:11.⁶ According to theosophy, the spiritual kingdom has seven presiding officers called "Chohans," which is a Tibetan word that simply means "Lords." For example, Bailey writes, "The seven major centres or Ashrams within the Hierarchy are each presided over by Masters of Chohan rank."⁷ These seven Chohans may be the same as the seven officers mentioned in *Ezekiel* 9:1-2.

The *Hymn* is narrated from a first-person perspective by a Prince who has been dwelling in the House of his Father's Kingdom. Our point of view is that the Prince is a disciple on the spiritual journey; his Father is the Chohan, or

Master, responsible for him; the Father's Kingdom is the Chohan's Ashram; and the House of the Kingdom is the portion of the Ashram that resides on the inner side of life, removed from outer, or physical, manifestation.

The above passage refers to the Prince's "Parents." In addition to the Father, we take the Mother as symbolizing the soul, which is the source of divine wisdom within a human being, because the Bible speaks of divine wisdom as though it were feminine. In fact, "wisdom" in *Proverbs* 1:20, 8:1, and 9:1-5 could be regarded as a feminine deity, rather than a mere personification of the attribute of wisdom. Bailey also says that "the two Masters with whom they [disciples] are concerned" are "their own inner God and their personal Master."⁸ The above passage says that the Parents are in the "East." The east is the direction from which rising sunlight comes, so it symbolizes the direction from which inner light comes. For example, *Ezekiel* 43:2 states, "And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east."

The Prince describes himself as "a quite little child," meaning that he did not become spiritually mature during his previous incarnations, and so he is about to go on a "journey," referring to another incarnation. The Prince prepares for his journey by gathering a load, about which he says, "Large was it, yet was it so light That all alone I could bear it." We take this load to be the substance and qualities of his future bodies of manifestation: gold symbolizing the substance of his future mental body, to indicate that it will be able to register intuitions from the soul, because gold is the most malleable and ductile metal; silver symbolizing the substance of his future emotional body, to indicate that it will be able to reflect the love, peace, and joy of the soul, because Bailey speaks of "silver, a great reflector";⁹ adamant symbolizing the substance of his future physical body, to indicate that it will be able to overcome the trials of physical life, because adamant "hath power to cut even iron"; and gemstones symbolizing the wisdom that he will carry with him, to indicate that it will be able to bring nobility and refinement to

his thoughts, feelings, and activities, because the Bible speaks of wisdom as though it were a type of precious stone (*Job* 28:18-19). In this context, as defined by Bailey, “wisdom... is the interpreted result of long experience.”¹⁰

Throughout our commentary, we shall emphasize that the Prince’s experiences are not unique but depict events that everyone will encounter on their own spiritual journey. For example, Bailey indicates that everyone, before returning to physical life, goes through the process that has just been described for the Prince: “the man: Pre-

prepares for physical incarnation again. Sounds his own true note into the substance of the three worlds... Gathers together the needed substance to form his future bodies of manifestation. Colours them with the qualities and characteristics he has already achieved through life-experience... Makes a deliberate choice of those who will provide him with the needed dense physical covering, and then awaits the moment of incarnation.”¹¹

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

Which was woven to match with my stature.
And with me They [then] made a compact;
In my heart wrote it, not to forget it:
“If thou goest down into Egypt,
And thence thou bring’st the one Pearl—
[The Pearl] that lies in the Sea,
Hard by the loud-breathing Serpent,—
[Then] shalt Thou put on thy Robe
And thy Mantle that goeth upon it,
And with thy Brother, Our Second,
Shalt thou be Heir in our Kingdom.”

The key to understanding this passage is the concept of the causal body, for which Bailey gives this explanation: “The content of the causal body is the accumulation by slow and gradual process of the good in each life,” and “It is relatively permanent and lasts throughout the long cycle of incarnations.”¹² With each new incarnation the Prince gains a new personality, consisting of the mental, emotional, and physical bodies, but his causal body persists throughout the cycle of incarnations, storing the lessons, or principles of wisdom,

learned during each incarnation. The gemstones, which are part of the load that the Prince will take into his future incarnation, symbolize the lessons that he has already learned during his past incarnations. *Matthew* 6:20 states, “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,” in which we interpret “treasures” as denoting the lessons learned from physical life and “heaven” as denoting the causal body.

Bailey continues, “The specific gravity of the causal body fixes the moment of emancipation and marks the time when the work of beautifying and building is completed,”¹³ and “the

man who has no further use for experience in the three worlds [has] learnt the needed lessons in the school of life.”¹⁴ Comparing these two quotations shows that the work of building the causal body is completed only when all needed lessons have been learned. A natural pearl is created by an oyster as a response to an irritant, such as a grain of sand, so it is a symbol of something valuable that is created through suffering. In the above passage, we take the “one Pearl” as denoting the needed lessons that are still missing from the Prince’s causal body

The Prince describes himself as “a quite little child,” meaning that he did not become spiritually mature during his previous incarnations, and so he is about to go on a “journey,” referring to another incarnation. The Prince prepares for his journey by gathering a load, about which he says, “Large was it, yet was it so light That all alone I could bear it.” We take this load to be the substance and qualities of his future bodies of manifestation...

and that can be learned only through the suffering of another incarnation.

In the above passage, the causal body is symbolized by the purple Mantle, “Which was woven to match with my stature,” because the size of the causal body reflects the Prince’s spiritual stature. The soul is symbolized by the glorious Robe, “Which in their love they had wrought me,” because the spiritual qualities displayed by the soul are the ones needed by the Prince. Accordingly, the Prince wearing the Mantle symbolizes that his consciousness is polarized within the causal body, which is the definition of causal consciousness. The Prince wearing the Robe symbolizes that he is contacting the soul’s attitude and awareness, which is the definition of sharing in soul consciousness. Bailey speaks of the causal body as “the spiritual body of the soul,”¹⁵ which is consistent with the Prince wearing the Mantle over the Robe.

The Prince had been wearing both garments, showing that he had gained causal consciousness and shared in soul consciousness during the interlude between incarnations. He loses both garments, however, signifying that he loses both types of consciousness before returning to physical life. Bailey indicates that everyone, during the interlude, will go through the same experiences: “physical plane existence comes to an end and all returns within the causal consciousness”; “On the inner side, men *know* that . . . they consequently face two great experiences: 1. A moment (long or short, according to the attained point in evolution) wherein contact will be made with the soul or with the solar angel. 2. After that contact, a relatively violent reorientation to earth life takes place.”¹⁶

“Egypt,” mentioned in the above passage, is a symbol of bondage, because Egypt kept the Israelites in bondage (*Exodus* 1:13-14). One possibility is that “Egypt” represents physical embodiment. Later in the *Hymn*, however, the Prince will share in soul consciousness while in physical embodiment, showing that the physical body, by itself, is not bondage. Our point of view is that “Egypt” represents emotional bondage, for which Bailey uses the term “glamour”: “*Glamour*, in its turn, veils and

hides the truth behind the fogs and mists of feeling and emotional reaction.”¹⁷

The “Serpent” is also mentioned, but to what does it refer? *Revelation* 20:2 equates the Serpent to both “Satan” and the “Devil.” The original Hebrew word for Satan means “adversary,” which is the translation used in *Numbers* 22:22. *Luke* 4:13 speaks of the “Devil” as a tempter—not a power or person, but an impersonal source of evil offering temptation. Bailey says that our goal is “liberation from maya or illusion,”¹⁸ and “the world is full of illusions.”¹⁹ Accordingly, the Serpent symbolizes illusion, because illusion is the adversary that we face on the spiritual journey, and it is a tempter in the sense that it exists in the world around us but does not have any power over us unless we accept its false beliefs. Bailey says that “water is the symbol of the emotional nature.”²⁰ This association leads us to interpret the Serpent dwelling in the sea as meaning that illusion affects us through our emotional nature.

The Prince receives the following conditional prediction: If he goes down into Egypt and retrieves the Pearl, which is guarded by the Serpent in the sea, then he will regain his Mantle and Robe and will be an heir in his Parents’ Kingdom. In other words, if the Prince goes down into glamour and learns sufficient new lessons from the illusions in his emotional nature, then he will regain causal consciousness, share in soul consciousness, and participate as an initiate in the life of his Chohan’s Ashram.

The Prince’s “Brother” is also mentioned as part of this prediction. This Brother does not incarnate with the Prince but stays behind, and yet he will be a joint heir with the Prince. We take this Brother to be another symbol for the Prince’s causal body, because that body remains on the inner side of life and yet will be a joint heir with the Prince when it becomes integrated with him.

The Prince receives this prediction from his Parents, who symbolize his Chohan and soul. Similarly, Bailey says that everyone, just prior to their next incarnation, receives a prediction from the soul during the moment of soul contact: “he becomes immediately *aware of the*

future, for prediction is an asset of the soul consciousness and in this the man temporarily shares.”²¹ The Prince says that his Parents “In my heart wrote it, not to forget it.” This phrase echoes *Jeremiah* 31:33: “saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.” The conditional part of the Prince’s prediction provides his spiritual mission. Bailey indicates that everyone, during their incarnation, retains a memory of their spiritual mission, and that “It is for each [individual] to find out.”²²

Childhood and Adolescence

I left the East and went down
With two Couriers [with me];
For the way was hard and dangerous,
For I was young to tread it.
I traversed the borders of Maishan,
The mart of the Eastern merchants,
And I reached the Land of Babel,
And entered the walls of Sarbug.
Down further I went into Egypt;
And from me parted my escorts.

The Prince states, “I left the East and went down With two Couriers [with me].” In other words, the Prince leaves the inner side of life and is born into the physical world with the aid of his two physical parents, symbolized by the “two Couriers.” Bailey writes concerning parents: “Esoteric students would do well to remember that parents only donate the dense physical body. They contribute naught else save a body of a particular quality and nature which will provide the needed vehicle of contact with the environment demanded by the incarnating soul.”²³

The Prince continues, “the way was hard and dangerous, For I was young to tread it.” This sentence is interpreted to mean: the Prince’s early childhood is hard and dangerous, for he is polarized in his physical body. During late childhood, the Prince “traversed the borders of Maishan, The mart of the Eastern merchants.” Marishan represents the emotional body, because both merchants and feelings are concerned with the value of things. The Prince’s traversing the borders of Maishan indicates that he shifts his polarization into his emotional body. During adolescence, the Prince

“reached the Land of Babel, And entered the walls of Sarbug.” The Hebrew word Babel means confusion (*Genesis* 11:9), and so it represents the mind prior to spiritual illumination. Walls symbolize division and separation. The “walls of Sarbug” are inside the “Land of Babel”; the Prince’s entering those walls indicates that he shifts his polarization into his mental body and then mentally divides and separates himself from other people.

Bailey gives a similar description of childhood and adolescent development: “During this [first] period, the man is polarised in his physical body and is learning to be controlled by his desire body, the body of feeling or of emotion... This period parallels that of the child from one to seven years... The second period covers a point in development when the polarisation is largely in the emotional body and when lower mind desire is being developed... This period is an analogous one to that in the life of a child from seven to fourteen years... Now, on entering the third period, comes the most vital point in the development of the man, that in which mind is developing and the polarising life shifts to the mental unit... This period corresponds to that between the ages fourteen and twenty-eight.”²⁴

Next, the Prince says, “I went into Egypt.” By thinking that he is divided and separated from other people, the Prince goes into glamour, or emotional bondage, which is symbolized by Egypt. The above passage ends with the phrase, “And from me parted my escorts.” The Prince leaves his physical parents, indicating that he has reached physical maturity.

Glamour

Straightway I went to the Serpent;
Near to his lodging I settled,
To take away my Pearl
While he should sleep and should slumber.
Lone was I there, yea, all lonely;
To my fellow-lodgers a stranger.
However I saw there a noble,
From out of the Dawn-land my kinsman,
A young man fair and well favoured,
Son of Grandees; he came and he joined me.
I made him my chosen companion,
A comrade, for sharing my wares with.

He warned me against the Egyptians,
'Gainst mixing with the unclean ones.
For I had clothed me as they were,
That they might not guess I had come
From afar to take off the Pearl,
And so rouse the Serpent against me.

In the first sentence, the Prince remembers his spiritual mission: "Straightway I went to the Serpent; Near to his lodging I settled, To take away my Pearl While he should sleep and should slumber." The Serpent symbolizes illusion, and an earlier passage indicates that the Serpent's "lodging" is the sea, which in turn symbolizes the emotional nature. The notion that illusion lies within the emotional nature is consistent with Bailey's statement that "the Problem of Glamour is found when the mental illusion is intensified by desire."²⁵ Thus, the first sentence has this meaning: the Prince begins to examine his emotional nature, so that he can extract new lessons from his illusions.

The author Robert Perry defines a *special relationship* to be "a relationship based on the pursuit of specialness, in which we try to have a special or exclusive interaction with a special person so that we can feel more special."²⁶

The above passage describes a special relationship: the Prince's partner is special, because he is "a young man fair and well favoured, Son of Grandees"; the relationship is exclusive, because the Prince says, "he joined me. I made him my chosen companion, A comrade, for sharing my wares with"; and the Prince gains the feeling of being superior to, or more special than, the "unclean" Egyptians.

The Egyptians symbolize people who are immersed in glamour, because Egypt symbolizes glamour. The Prince calls certain members of his community "Egyptians," indicating that he recognizes glamour in them, but his feeling of being superior to them shows that he does not recognize glamour in himself. Bailey says, "At present, many of you do not recognise glamour when it meets you, and envelops you... It might be stated, however, that glamour can always be found where there exists... any sense of superiority or separative tendency."²⁷ Thus, the Prince's feeling of superiority also shows that he is immersed in glamour.

In the last sentence, the Prince dresses like the Egyptians so that they might not guess that he is a stranger and rouse the Serpent against him. This sentence is referring to the Prince's subconscious nature, which contains his suppressed feelings and memories, which in turn are based on illusion. Bailey says, "The subconscious nature... can be stirred up until it becomes a boiling cauldron, causing much distress."²⁸ The Prince wants to appear like other members of his community, because he is afraid that they might judge him for being strange or different, which would rouse his own suppressed feeling of inferiority against him. Moreover, his desire to feel superior is a compensation for his underlying feeling of inferiority.²⁹

But from some occasion or other
They learned I was not of their country.
With their wiles they made my acquaintance;
Yea, they gave me their victuals to eat.
I forgot that I was a King's son,
And became a slave to their king.
I forgot all concerning the Pearl
For which my Parents had sent me;
And from the weight of their victuals
I sank down into a deep sleep.

The Prince says, "But from some occasion or other They learned I was not of their country. With their wiles they made my acquaintance." In other words, the Prince feels that other people are conspiring against him with malevolent intentions. He is not aware that his mistrust is due to his seeing himself in them, as Bailey explains: "we see in others what is in us, even when it is not there at all or to the same extent."³⁰

The Prince continues, "Yea, they gave me their victuals to eat." Victuals symbolize individual glammers, or emotional reactions, because victuals can mean "that which supports human life," and glammers support egotistical life. Thus, the Prince's statement has this meaning: the surrounding community transmits their glammers to him and he internalizes them. Bailey describes this conditioning process: "It might almost be said that the astral body of a person comes into being as a part of the general world glamour; it is difficult for him to

differentiate between his own astral body and the glammers which affect and sway and submerge him.”³¹ Here, the term “astral” is a synonym for emotional.

The Prince also says, “I forgot that I was a King’s son, And became a slave to their king.” *II Corinthians* 4:4 makes a related statement: “the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.” The effect of illusion is to blind human minds, so the “god of this world” must be the same as illusion, which is also the king of the Egyptians and is symbolized by the Serpent. Thus, the Prince forgets that he is a disciple of a Chohan and becomes a slave to illusion. He must be suffering, because Bailey writes, “Wrong identification is the cause of pain and leads to suffering, distress and various effects.”³²

Due to his acquired glammers, the Prince sinks down into emotional polarization, which is symbolized by “a deep sleep.” While he remains polarized within his emotional body, he forgets his spiritual mission. Bailey makes a similar point: “as long as the polarisation is purely physical or purely emotional, no need for meditation is ever felt.”³³

The Message

All this that now was befalling,
My Parents perceived and were anxious.
It was then proclaimed in our Kingdom,
That all should speed to our Gate—
Kings and Chieftains of Parthia,
And of the East all the Princes.
And this is the counsel they came to:
I should not be left down in Egypt.
And for me they wrote out a Letter;
And to it each Noble his Name set:

Partha, which is mentioned in the above passage, was an Iranian civilization that intermittently controlled Mesopotamia between about 150 B.C. and 224 A.D. The Parthian king styled himself as “king of kings,” because, in addition to his own kingdom, he was the overlord of many vassal kings, who in turn ruled over smaller kingdoms, provinces, and city-states. The Hierarchy is said to have a similar governmental structure. Bailey writes, “*The Lord of the World*, the One Initiator, He

Who is called in the Bible ‘The Ancient of Days,’ and in the Hindu Scriptures the First Kumara, He, Sanat Kumara it is, Who from His throne . . . presides over the Lodge of Masters.”³⁴ Bailey describes the Lord of the World as the overlord of the seven Chohans and of certain other officers, including the Manu, Bodhisattva, and Mahachohan.³⁵

Consequently, Parthia is taken as symbolizing the Hierarchy, and the officials in Parthia as symbolizing the officials in Bailey’s description of the Hierarchy: “King of Kings” refers to the Lord of the World, “Kings” to the seven Chohans, “Chieftains” to the Manu, Bodhisattva, and Mahachohan, and “Princes” to the lower ranking members of the Hierarchy. The above passage describes the decision to send a message to the Prince as incorporating the united purpose, combined planning, and concentrated energy of all the “Kings and Chieftains of Parthia.” Bailey also speaks of “the united purpose, the combined planning and the concentrated energy of the Hierarchy.”³⁶

“From Us—King of Kings, thy Father,
And thy Mother, Queen of the Dawn-land,
And from Our Second, thy Brother—
To thee, Son, down in Egypt, Our Greeting!
Up and arise from thy sleep,
Give ear to the words of Our Letter!
Remember that thou art a King’s son;
See whom thou hast served in thy slavedom.
Bethink thyself of the Pearl
For which thou didst journey to Egypt.
Remember thy Glorious Robe,
Thy Splendid Mantle remember,
To put on and wear as adornment,
When thy Name may be read in the Book of
the Heroes,
And with Our Successor, thy Brother,
Thou mayest be Heir in Our Kingdom.”

The first sentence is misleading, because it appears to indicate that the Prince’s Father is the King of Kings. In the final passage of the *Hymn*, however, both the Prince and his Father are seen by the King of Kings, showing that the Father is simply a King, but not the King of Kings. The rest of the *Hymn*, including the next passage, consistently refers to the Father as a King. Thus, we consider that an ancient scribe made a copying mistake by writing

“King of Kings” instead of simply “King” in this sentence.

The above passage gives the content of the message that will be telepathically impressed upon the mind of the Prince. Much of the message is to remind the Prince of the prediction that was written in his heart during the interlude before the present incarnation. The phrase “up and arise from thy sleep” tells the Prince to shift his polarization from his emotional body to his mental body. Bailey gives similar instruction: “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.”³⁷

The above passage mentions the “Book of the Heroes,” but to what does that refer? Bailey writes, “The Masters have Their Halls of Records, with a system of tabulation incomprehensible to us owing to its magnitude and its necessary intricacies, wherein these charts are kept.”³⁸ We take the Book of the Heroes to be a table of initiates contained within the Halls of Records.

According to Bailey, every disciple of a Master can expect to receive a similar message: “Forget not that the method of work of the Hierarchy is that of *impression* upon the minds of Their disciples, of telepathic work carried on with the Master as broadcaster and the disciple as the recipient of impression and of energy. This reception of impression and energy has a dual effect: 1. It brings into activity the latent seeds of action and of habits (good or bad), thus producing revelation, purification, enrichment and usefulness. 2. It vitalises and galvanises the personality into a right relation to the soul, to the environment, and to humanity.”³⁹

My Letter was [surely] a Letter
The King had sealed up with His Right
Hand,
‘Gainst the Children of Babel, the wicked,
The tyrannical Daimons of Sarbug.
It flew in the form of the Eagle,
Of all the winged tribes the king-bird;

It flew and alighted beside me,
And turned into speech altogether.
At its voice and the sound of its winging,
I waked and arose from my deep sleep.
Unto me I took it and kissed it;
I loosed its seal and I read it.
E’en as it stood in my heart writ,
The words of my Letter were written.

The Chohan transmits the message telepathically to the Prince, as indicated by the phrase, “It flew and alighted beside me, And turned into speech altogether.” According to Bailey, three kinds of telepathy are possible: instinctual, mental, and intuitional.⁴⁰ The above passage provides two clues showing that the Chohan uses intuitional telepathy. First, the transmission is designed to avoid “the Children of Babel, the wicked, The tyrannical Daimons of Sarbug.” Earlier, Babel and Sarbug were identified with the confused and separative thinking of the mind. The transmission is able to avoid these mental distortions, so it must not be mental telepathy. Second, the transmission “flew in the form of the Eagle,” which is “the king-bird.” Intuitional telepathy uses a higher, or more spiritual, medium than do the other kinds of telepathy, so intuitional telepathy must be the kind being used.

The Chohan seals the message up “with His Right Hand.” The right hand is a symbol of power, as in *Psalms* 60:5. In other words, the Chohan uses his power to convert the earlier message into an intuition, which he then transmits. The Prince receives the intuition as a flash of inspiration. The phrase “I waked and arose from my deep sleep” means that the Prince shifts his polarization from his emotional to his mental body. The phrase “I loosed its seal and I read it” means that the Prince converts the flash of inspiration into understanding. Bailey provides this explanation: “*The understanding* may be defined as the faculty of the Thinker in Time to appropriate knowledge as the foundation for wisdom, that which enables him to adapt the things of form to the life of the spirit, and to take the flashes of inspiration that come to him... and link them to the facts.”⁴¹

The Pearl

I remembered that I was a King's son,
 And my rank did long for its nature.
 I bethought me again of the Pearl,
 For which I was sent down to Egypt.
 And I began [then] to charm him,
 The terrible loud-breathing Serpent.
 I lulled him to sleep and to slumber,
 Chanting o'er him the Name of my Father,
 The Name of our Second, [my Brother],
 And [Name] of my Mother, the East-Queen.
 And [thereon] I snatched up the Pearl,
 And turned to the House of my Father.

The Prince remembers that he is a disciple of a Chohan, and wants to express his spiritual status outwardly. He thinks again about his spiritual mission of learning new lessons—the Pearl—from his emotional reactions; and he resumes his effort to subdue the Serpent, symbolizing the illusions that control his life.

To subdue the Serpent, the Prince chants the Names of his Father, Brother, and Mother. The Bible often uses a personal name as an indication of the bearer's nature. For example, *I Samuel* 25:25 states: "for as his name is, so is he." A change in the personal name often indicates a change in the person, such as the change from Abram to Abraham (*Genesis* 17:5). In *Revelation*, "name" can be consistently interpreted as "nature."⁴² Similarly, in the above passage, the "Name" of a figure is interpreted as representing that figure's nature, or essential character. Hence, to overcome illusion, the Prince expresses the natures of his Chohan, causal body, and soul in that order.

First, he expresses the nature of his Chohan. This nature is illumination, because Bailey refers to the spiritual kingdom as the "Hierarchy of Illumined Minds."⁴³ Thus, before examining his feelings, the Prince practices meditation to illumine his mind. Bailey explains, "The patient (if I might so call him) is taught to take his eyes, and consequently his attention, away from himself, his feelings, his complexes and his fixed ideas and undesirable thoughts, and to focus them upon the soul, the divine Reality within the form... This eventually regenerates the mental or thought life, so

that the man is conditioned by right thinking under the impulse or the illumination of the soul."⁴⁴

Second, he expresses the nature of his causal body. Bailey speaks of "a lop-sided causal body... full of great gulfs and gaps where virtues should be,"⁴⁵ which implies that virtues are built into the causal body, and says that "humility and pure motives... are the outstanding hallmarks of the disciple."⁴⁶ The Prince is an advanced disciple, so his causal body is marked by the virtue of humility, which means that it contains the meta-lesson that its other lessons do not provide dependable guidance. This meta-lesson is described by *Proverbs* 3:5 as, "lean not unto thine own understanding." Thus, just before examining his feelings, the Prince realizes that overcoming an illusion requires a fresh intuition rather than relying on ideas learned in the past. Bailey also says, "It is the soul itself which dispels illusion, through the use of the faculty of the intuition."⁴⁷

Third, he expresses the nature of the soul. This nature is detachment, because Bailey speaks of "the soul, detached and undeluded."⁴⁸ Thus, to evoke a fresh intuition, the Prince examines his feelings with a detached attitude, as though he were looking at them from the high vantage point of the soul, so that there is no resistance, justifications, and excuses. Bailey also says, "the task of the disciple is to become consciously aware—like a detached onlooking Observer—of these energies and their expressing qualities as they function within himself."⁴⁹

An illusion, or false belief, has power only as long as it is believed. When an illusion is recognized to be what it is, it loses its power—it goes to sleep. By using the foregoing approach, the Prince lulls the Serpent to sleep, which means that he has intuitions that his illusions are illusions. After having these intuitions, the Prince snatches up the Pearl, which means that he learns the lessons that are in the midst of the illusions. Bailey makes a similar point: "Learn the meaning of illusion, and in its midst locate the golden thread of truth."⁵⁰

The new lessons are in the form of abstract principles of wisdom. Bailey describes two

sets of principles that eventually everyone will learn: “The first set of principles is learnt by the man through grasping, and the subsequent disaster that results from that seizure. He stole, he suffered the penalty and he stole no more. The principle was wrought into him by pain and he learnt that only that which was his by right and not by seizure could be enjoyed... The second set of principles is learnt through renunciation and service. A man looks away (having learnt first principles) from the things of the personality and in service learns the power of love in its occult significance. He spends and consequently receives; he lives the life of renunciation and the wealth of the heavens pours in on him.”⁵¹

Next, the Prince turns to “the House of my Father,” which means that he intends to raise his consciousness to that of his Chohan’s Ashram on the inner side of life. Bailey also gives the instruction of “raising your consciousness and coming as close to the Hierarchy as possible.”⁵²

Inner Purification

Their filthy and unclean garments
I stripped off and left in their country.
To the way that I came I betook me,
To the Light of our Home, to the Dawn-
land.
On the road I found [there] before me
My Letter that had aroused me—
As with its voice it had roused me,
So now with its light it did lead me—
On fabric of silk, in letters of red [?],
With shining appearance before me [?],
Encouraging me with its guidance,
With its love it was drawing me onward.
I went forth; through Sarbug I passed;
I left Babel-land on my left hand;
And I reached unto Maishan the Great,
The meeting-place of the merchants,
That lieth hard by the Sea-shore.

The Prince says, “Their filthy and unclean garments I stripped off and left in their country.” Clothing symbolizes the nature of the wearer, as shown in *Zechariah 3:4*: “Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.” An Egyptian garment symbolizes an

individual glamour, or emotional reaction, because Egypt symbolizes glamour as a whole. Multiple garments are typically stripped off one at a time, so this metaphor suggests that multiple glammers should also be stripped off one at a time. Indeed, Bailey recommends such a practice: “I would suggest that no aspirant attempt to tackle the problem of glamour as a whole or seek to dissipate all the glammers to which he is susceptible... He should choose the glamour that is the most apparent and the most hindering at any given time (and there is always one) and for its dissipation he should work conscientiously.”⁵³

The Prince also says, “To the way that I came I betook me, To the Light of our Home, to the Dawn-land.” The Prince is traveling on what is sometimes called “the path of return,” because he seeks to retrace his earlier steps back to his point of origin, while undoing his earlier mistakes. Bailey also mentions this path: “the path of return to the Centre... must parallel the path of outgoing.”⁵⁴

Next, the Prince says that he is being guided by “My Letter that had aroused me,” which is now shining “on fabric of silk, in letters of red.” In effect, the letter has become a searchlight. Bailey writes, “The searchlight of the soul reveals faults in character, limitations in expression and inadequacies in conduct. These must be intelligently corrected.”⁵⁵ Accordingly, we take this letter as the searchlight of the soul, the fabric of silk as the mental and emotional bodies, and the red letters as inner faults that need to be corrected. In particular, this searchlight highlights the Prince’s separative beliefs (Sarbug), confusion (Babel-land), and false values (Maishan the Great).

The Mantle and Robe

My Glorious Robe that I’d stripped off,
And my Mantle with which it was covered,
Down from the Heights of Hyrcania,
Thither my Parents did send me,
By the hands of their Treasure-dispensers
Who trustworthy were with it trusted.
Without my recalling its fashion,—
In the House of my Father my childhood had left it,—
At once, as soon as I saw it,

The Glory looked like my own self.
 I saw it in all of me,
 And saw me all in [all of] it,—
 That we were twain in distinction,
 And yet again one in one likeness.
 I saw, too, the Treasurers also,
 Who unto me had down-brought it,
 Were twain [and yet] of one likeness;
 For one Sign of the King was upon them—
 Who through them restored me the Glory,
 The Pledge of my Kingship [?].

Let us consider the meaning of the symbols in the first sentence of this passage. Hyrcania was an ancient kingdom located south of the Caspian Sea. The Parthian kings reportedly used a Hyrcanian town as their summer residence. As discussed earlier, the Parthian kings symbolize the Chohans, so Hyrcania symbolizes the inner side of life. The Treasure-dispensers “Were twain [and yet] of one likeness,” suggesting that they symbolize the higher and lower selves of some individual. The higher self consists of the soul operating through the causal body, and it is symbolized by the Robe covered by the Mantle. The lower self is the personality, consisting of the mental, emotional, and physical bodies. Hands symbolize ability or power, as in *Joshua 4:24*.

Next, let us consider the meaning of the first sentence: the Prince’s higher self, even though it belongs to the inner side of life, is becoming more apparent to him through his application of his Chohan’s and soul’s instructions, by the ability of another individual’s higher and lower selves that, when perceived by the Prince, can be trusted to make the Prince’s higher self more evident. The Prince must be practicing the Technique of Duality, which is the effort to perceive the higher and lower selves of some-

one else, who could be anyone. Through this technique, in Bailey’s language, “he passes from one sense of unity to a sense of duality.”⁵⁶ Here, “unity” refers to complete identification with the lower self, and “duality” to the awareness of having both higher and lower selves.

The Prince says, “The Glory looked like my own self. I saw it in all of me, And saw me all in [all of] it.” In other words, after seeing the higher self within someone else, the Prince sees it within himself, sees that it operates through his lower self, and identifies himself with it. The Prince realizes “That we were twain in distinction, And yet again one in one likeness.” In other words, he realizes that his

higher and lower selves can be distinguished from each other, yet form one whole individual.

The key to understanding this passage is to notice the following: whatever the Prince sees in someone else, he later sees in himself. The Treasure-dispenser, in whom the Prince senses the higher self, is called this name because that individual is able to give a wonderful treasure to the Prince, namely, the awareness

of the Prince’s own higher self. *A Course in Miracles (ACIM)* makes the same point: “When you meet anyone, remember it is a holy encounter. As you see him you will see yourself. As you treat him you will treat yourself. As you think of him you will think of yourself. Never forget this, for in him you will find yourself or lose yourself. Whenever two Sons of God meet, they are given another chance at salvation. Do not leave anyone without giving salvation to him and receiving it yourself.”⁵⁷

Near the end of the above passage, the Prince sees the “one Sign of the King” upon the two selves of the Treasure-dispenser. The “King”

The Prince and his Father go to the “Court of the King of Kings,” and the Prince takes with him his Pearl. In other words, the Prince and his Chohan go to what is sometimes called the “courts of Heaven,” and the Prince uses the new lessons in his causal body—symbolized by the Pearl—to demonstrate that he is ready for initiation.

represents the Chohan, so the “Sign of the King” represents the Chohan’s nature, which is illumination. Having “one” sign upon both selves suggests that the sign passes from one self to the other. Accordingly, the Prince perceives that the soul’s illumination already exists within the Treasure-dispenser’s higher self and will eventually pass to that individual’s lower self. The Prince must now be practicing the more advanced Technique of Charity, which is described by *ACIM* as follows: “Charity is a way of perceiving the perfection of another even if you cannot perceive it in yourself. . . . Charity is a way of looking at another as if he had already gone far beyond his actual accomplishments in time.”⁵⁸

The final words in the above passage are: “Who through them restored me the Glory, The Pledge of my Kingship.” By first perceiving the soul’s illumination within the Treasure-dispenser, the Prince is able to perceive it in himself, which restores his own inner perfection, or kingship, to his awareness. In contrast, an earlier passage described the Prince’s special relationship, perhaps with the same individual, which immersed him further into glamour. This difference in how the Prince relates to other people demonstrates the spiritual growth that occurred between the two passages.

The Glorious Robe all-bespangled
With sparkling splendour of colours:
With Gold and also with Beryls,
Chalcedonies, iris-hued [Opals?],
With Sardis of varying colours.
To match its grandeur [?], moreover, it had
been completed:
With adamantine jewels
All of its seams were off-fastened.
[Moreover] the King of Kings’ Image
Was depicted entirely all o’er it;
And as with Sapphires above
Was it wrought in a motley of colour.
I saw that moreover all o’er it
The motions of Gnosis abounding;
I saw it further was making
Ready as though for to speak.
I heard the sound of its Music
Which it whispered as it descended [?]:
“Behold him the active in deeds!

For whom I was reared with my Father;
I too have felt in myself
How that with his works waxed my stature.”

The Robe is described as “all-bespangled With sparkling splendour of colours.” Bailey says “that colours are the expressions of force or quality,”⁵⁹ so we may think of the colors in the Robe in a similar manner. Bailey also says that “the will of your soul... is the Will of God,”⁶⁰ and that “the divine prototypal will” has the following “seven ray aspects”: “Ray I.—The will to initiate. Ray II.—The will to unify. Ray III.—The will to evolve. Ray IV.—The will to harmonise or relate. Ray V.—The will to act. Ray VI.—The will to cause. Ray VII.—The will to express.”⁶¹ The Robe symbolizes the soul, so the various colors in the Robe are taken as the expressions by the soul of the seven ray aspects of divine will. A similar interpretation can be given for the rainbows mentioned in *Revelation* (4:3, 10:1, and 21:19-20).⁶²

Moreover, the Robe had been completed so that “With adamantine jewels All of its seams were off-fastened.” Adamantine means unbreakable or unyielding, so the Robe is invulnerable, like a suit of armor, and anyone wearing it cannot be hurt or injured. *Ephesians* 6:11 says, “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” Thus, the Robe might be the same symbol as the “whole armour of God.”

Another feature of the Robe is that “the King of Kings’ Image Was depicted entirely all o’er it.” The King of Kings refers to the Lord of the World, or Sanat Kumara, who in turn represents the Presence of Deity for our planet, as Bailey explains: “All the qualities, the love and the purpose of a supreme Entity, referred to in The New Testament as the ‘Unknown God,’ are focussed in Sanat Kumara.”⁶³ The above passage indicates that the Prince perceives the Presence of Deity within his vision of the soul, because the Robe symbolizes the soul. The Prince must now be practicing the even more advanced Technique of the Presence, which is described by Bailey as the “definite and sustained effort to sense the Presence throughout the Universe in all forms.”⁶⁴

The Prince perceives “The motions of Gnosis abounding” all over the Robe. Gnosis is the Greek word that is often translated as knowledge. Bailey explains how intuitive knowledge comes from the soul: “The intuition is in reality only the appreciation by the mind of some factor in creation, some law of manifestation and some aspect of truth, known by the soul.”⁶⁵

The Prince hears the Robe say: “Behold him the active in deeds! For whom I was reared with my Father.” In other words, the Prince’s spiritual evolution fulfills the purpose for which the soul was produced by Spirit. Bailey makes similar points: “the soul is the perceiving entity produced through the union of Father-Spirit and Mother-Matter”; “the soul is the force of evolution itself.”⁶⁶ The Prince also hears the Robe say: “I too have felt in myself How that with his works waxed my stature.” In other words, the Prince’s spiritual evolution enables the higher aspects of the soul to be expressed. Bailey makes a similar point: “The soul, though constituting one great total, is, however, limited in its expression by the nature and quality of the form in which it is found.”⁶⁷

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

The Prince says, “And [now] with its Kingly motions Was it pouring itself out towards me, And made haste in the hands of its Givers, That I might [take and] receive it.” The Prince continues to perceive the following: the higher self within the Treasure-dispenser, the soul within the higher self, and the Presence of Deity within the soul. He then says, “And me, too, my love urged forward To run for to meet it, to take it.” The Prince is moving toward the soul, because each successive perception entails a more refined use of abstract thought, and so he eventually enters causal conscious-

ness, as Bailey explains: “It is by meditation, or the reaching from the concrete to the abstract, that the causal consciousness is entered, and man—during this final period—becomes the Higher self and not the Personality.”⁶⁸

Next, the Prince says, “And I stretched myself forth to receive it.” The Prince’s effort to perceive the Presence of Deity invokes soul consciousness, as Bailey also explains: “The flickering soul light in the personal self has enabled the disciple to see the vision of the soul and in that light to reach union with the soul, even if only temporarily. Now the greater light of the soul becomes focussed like a radiant sun and it reveals in its turn a still more stupendous vision—that of the Presence.”⁶⁹

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

The Mental Plane

I clothed me therewith, and ascended
To the Gate of Greeting and Homage.
I bowed my head and did homage
To the Glory of Him who had sent it,
Whose commands I [now] had accomplished,
And who had, too, done what He’d promised.
[And there] at the Gate of His House-sons
I mingled myself with His Princes;
For He had received me with gladness,
And I was with Him in His Kingdom;
To whom the whole of His Servants
With sweet-sounding voices sing praises.

Even though the Prince is still incarnate on the physical plane, the rest of the *Hymn* is concerned with events that occur on the mental plane, which is symbolized by “the Gate of Greeting and Homage.” Bailey says, “we are considering facts which are substantial and real on the *mental plane*—the plane on which all the major initiations take place—but which are

not materialised on the physical plane, and are not physical plane phenomena. The link between the two planes exists in the continuity of consciousness which the initiate will have developed, and which will enable him to bring through to the physical brain, occurrences and happenings upon the subjective planes of life.”⁷⁰

In the first sentence, the Prince says, “I clothed me therewith, and ascended To the Gate of Greeting and Homage.” In other words, the Prince, while his physical body is asleep, ascends to the mental plane with the same consciousness and sense of awareness that he had attained on the physical plane. Bailey gives this explanation: “In his sleeping hours he [the aspirant] has developed a field of active service and of learning... But people are apt to forget that every night, in the hours of sleep, we die to the physical plane and are alive and functioning elsewhere.”⁷¹

The Prince says, “I bowed my head and did homage to the Glory of Him who had sent it.” In other words, the Prince is grateful to his Chohan for the instruction that he had received. *ACIM* describes this situation: “For the joy of teaching is in the learner, who offers it to the teacher in gratitude, and shares it with him.”⁷²

The Prince also says, “I mingled myself with His Princes; For He had received me with gladness, And I was with Him in His Kingdom.” That is, the Prince mingles with various associates of his Chohan, is received by his Chohan, and is with his Chohan in the latter’s Ashram. Bailey describes a similar situation: “Disciples are taught in groups in the Master’s ashram, or classroom, at night, if in incarnation.”⁷³

He had promised that with him to the Court
Of the King of Kings I should speed,
And taking with me my Pearl
Should with him be seen by our King.

The Prince and his Father go to the “Court of the King of Kings,” and the Prince takes with him his Pearl. In other words, the Prince and his Chohan go to what is sometimes called the “courts of Heaven,”⁷⁴ and the Prince uses the

new lessons in his causal body—symbolized by the Pearl—to demonstrate that he is ready for initiation. Indeed, according to Bailey, everyone who is to be initiated must “demonstrate eventually ‘within the courts of Heaven’ and at the place of initiation, the nature of their high calling; they will prove to all who can grasp the significance of the demonstration that they have only ‘become again in full expression what they have always been.’”⁷⁵

The final phrase of the *Hymn* says, “Should with him be seen by our King.” In other words, the Prince and Chohan plan to see their King, who is the King of Kings—namely, Sanat Kumara, the Lord of the World. The Prince is about to take at least the third initiation, because Bailey says, “the initiate does not see Him [Sanat Kumara] face to face until the third initiation.”⁷⁶ On the other hand, the earlier narration showed that the Prince’s most advanced discipline was the Technique of the Presence, through the application of which, according to Bailey, “he becomes initiate and the third initiation becomes possible as an immediate goal.”⁷⁷ Our conclusion is that the Prince is about to take the third initiation. Consequently, he has reached a significant milestone, because, as Bailey says, “the third initiation is regarded by the Hierarchy as the first major initiation, and that the first and second initiations are initiations of the Threshold.”⁷⁸

Bailey also writes: “The Lord of the World, the Ancient of Days, the ineffable Ruler Himself administers the third initiation. Why has this become possible? Because now the fully consecrated physical body can safely bear the vibrations of the two other bodies when they return to its shelter from the Presence of the KING; because now the purified astral and controlled mental can safely stand before that KING.”⁷⁹ Here, the physical body is asleep while the emotional (or astral) and mental bodies “stand” before the hierophant. According to this quotation, the Prince will be aware of a change in his emotional and mental bodies, due to his initiation, after he becomes awake again on the physical plane.

Conclusions

Although modern scholars substantially disagree about how the *Hymn of the Pearl* is to be interpreted, they generally agree on this point: Its interpretation ought to be based on ideas or philosophies—such as Hellenistic myths, Gnosticism, Manichaeism, or other works associated with St. Thomas—that existed at the time of its composition—perhaps the second or third century. On the other hand, our interpretation of the *Hymn* is based mainly on the books of Alice A. Bailey, which were written in the twentieth century. How can our approach be justified?

Bailey, like the Prince in the *Hymn*, believed that she was in contact with the spiritual kingdom, or Hierarchy, and was directly inspired by them.⁸⁰ If it is true that there is a spiritual Hierarchy, then the anonymous author of the *Hymn* might have been directly or indirectly inspired by them as well. In fact, if the *Hymn* is what it purports to be—an account of someone's experiences narrated from a first-person perspective—then its author was in contact with the Hierarchy and was directly inspired by them. Thus, one explanation as to why there is such a close compatibility between Bailey's material and the *Hymn* is that both may have been inspired by the same source.

¹ B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), p. 367.

² W. Schneemelcher (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. II (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), p. 433.

³ H. Attridge, "The Original Language of the Acts of Thomas" in H. Attridge et al., *Of Scribes and Scrolls* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990), pp. 241-250.

⁴ H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (1958; revised; Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 116.

⁵ G. R. S. Mead, *The Hymn of the Robe of Glory* (1908; reprint; San Diego: The Book Tree, 2005). Internet: http://www.gnosis.org/library/grs-mead/grsm_r_obeofglory.htm.

⁶ All biblical verses are from the King James Version.

⁷ A. A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (1957; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), p. 527.

⁸ A. A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar* (1922; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1974), p. 81.

⁹ A. A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (1925; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), p. 1221.

¹⁰ A. A. Bailey, *Glamour: A World Problem* (1950; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), p. 191.

¹¹ A. A. Bailey, *Esoteric Healing* (1953; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1978), p. 495.

¹² A. A. Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation* (1922; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1974), pp. 32, 352.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁴ A. A. Bailey, *The Light of the Soul* (1927; reprint; Lucis Publishing Company, 1978), p. 204.

¹⁵ A. A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (1934; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), p. 247.

¹⁶ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, pp. 415, 495.

¹⁷ Bailey, *Glamour*, p. 241.

¹⁸ Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, p. 398.

¹⁹ Bailey, *Glamour*, p. 184.

²⁰ Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, p. 250.

²¹ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, p. 497.

²² Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, p. 108.

²³ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, pp. 495-496.

²⁴ Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, pp. 24-26.

²⁵ Bailey, *Glamour*, p. 21.

²⁶ R. Perry, *A Course Glossary* (West Sedona, AZ: The Circle of Atonement, 1996), p. 74.

²⁷ Bailey, *Glamour*, pp. 38, 84.

²⁸ A. A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II (1942; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1981), p. 440.

²⁹ A. Adler, *Understanding Human Nature* (1927; reprint; New York: Fawcett Premier, 1954), p. 67, found "the awakening desire for recognition developing itself under the concomitant influence of the sense of inferiority, with its purpose the attainment of a goal in which the individual is seemingly superior to his environment."

³⁰ A. A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I (1944; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), p. 729.

³¹ Bailey, *Glamour*, p. 72.

³² Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, p. 347.

³³ Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, pp. 9-10.

³⁴ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 106.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

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- ³⁶ A. A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. II (1955; reprint. New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1972), p. 105.
- ³⁷ Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, p. 98.
- ³⁸ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 68.
- ³⁹ A. A. Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle* (1950; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1975), p. 40.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- ⁴¹ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 12.
- ⁴² *A Commentary on the Book of the Revelation Based on a Study of Twenty-Four Psychic Discourses by Edgar Cayce* (1945; reprint; Virginia Beach, VA: A.R.E. Press, 1969), p. 141; Z. F. Lansdowne, *The Revelation of St. John* (York Beach, ME: Red Wheel/Weiser, 2006), p. 14.
- ⁴³ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, p. 24; *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, p. 691.
- ⁴⁴ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, p. 119.
- ⁴⁵ Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, p. 134.
- ⁴⁶ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. II, p. 88.
- ⁴⁷ Bailey, *Glamour*, p. 83.
- ⁴⁸ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, p. 433.
- ⁴⁹ A. A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (1951; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), p. 414.
- ⁵⁰ Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, p. 473.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 117.
- ⁵² Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, p. 469.
- ⁵³ Bailey, *Glamour*, pp. 214-215.
- ⁵⁴ A. A. Bailey, *Education in the New Age* (1954; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1974), p. 148.
- ⁵⁵ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, p. 727.
- ⁵⁶ Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, p. 375.
- ⁵⁷ *A Course in Miracles (ACIM)* (second edition; Glen Ellen, CA: Foundation for Inner Peace, 1992), vol. I, p. 142.
- ⁵⁸ *ACIM*, vol. I, p. 27.
- ⁵⁹ Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, p. 228.
- ⁶⁰ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, p. 391.
- ⁶¹ Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 605.
- ⁶² Lansdowne, *The Revelation of St. John*, pp. 38, 85, 192.
- ⁶³ A. A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (1960; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), p. 367.
- ⁶⁴ Bailey, *Glamour*, p. 180.
- ⁶⁵ Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, p. 15.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 36.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- ⁶⁸ Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, p. 28.
- ⁶⁹ Bailey, *Glamour*, p. 180.
- ⁷⁰ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 100.
- ⁷¹ Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, pp. 301, 494.
- ⁷² *ACIM*, vol. I, p. 336.
- ⁷³ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 69.
- ⁷⁴ The “courts of Heaven” are occasionally cited in Christian literature. For example, Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy* (The Paradiso, Canto XXX), writes, “I saw Both of the Courts of Heaven made manifest.” In addition, the Catholic “Litany of Saint Scholastica” includes the exhortation: “St. Scholastica, who didst enter the courts of Heaven in the form of a dove, Pray for us.” A Methodist Hymnal includes the verse: “CHRIST is our corner-stone, On him alone we build; With his true saints alone The courts of heaven are filled.”
- ⁷⁵ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. II, p. 387.
- ⁷⁶ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 107.
- ⁷⁷ Bailey, *Glamour*, p. 171.
- ⁷⁸ Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 41.
- ⁷⁹ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 88.
- ⁸⁰ A. A. Bailey, *The Unfinished Autobiography* (1951; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1987), pp. 162-168.

The Hymn of the Bride

Zachary F. Lansdowne

Summary

The *Hymn of the Bride*, which is part of the *Acts of Thomas*, contains a sequence of laudatory descriptions of a spiritual bride. Due to the symbolic nature of this composition, modern scholars substantially disagree about its interpretation. We give a theosophical interpretation, based primarily on the works of Alice A. Bailey, and show that this bride is an allegory of the human personality when it is illumined by the inner divinity.

Background

St. Judas Thomas was one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus. The *Acts of Thomas*, thought to be written during the second or third century CE, recounts the adventures of Thomas during his ministry. The mainstream Christian tradition, however, rejected the *Acts of Thomas* as apocryphal, and the Roman Catholic Church declared this work to be heretical at the Council of Trent during the sixteenth century. On the other hand, the Manichaean Church adopted the *Acts of Thomas* as a canonical text during the third or fourth century.

Early in the *Acts*, Thomas sings and chants a hymn about a spiritual bride while he is attending a wedding feast for a king's daughter. The *Acts* does not give a name to this hymn, and so it is generally known by the names given to it by modern scholars, including the *Wedding Hymn*, *Song of the Bride*, *Hymn of the Bride of Light*, and especially *Hymn of the Bride*.

Thomas's hymn describes a spiritual or heavenly marriage that is contrasted with the fleshly or earthly marriage taking place in the *Acts*.

Miroslav Marcovich, a professor of classics, writes, "The puzzling and elusive Wedding Hymn of the Acts of Thomas 6-7—first published in 1823—has not yet found a satisfying

interpretation and assessment."¹ The *Hymn* contains a sequence of laudatory descriptions of a spiritual bride, but modern scholars substantially disagree about what she represents. For example, Kathleen E. McVey, a professor of early church history, writes, "it has been proposed, in effect, that she represents the Manichaean elect, the gnostic Sophia, the personified Wisdom of Hellenistic Judaism with echoes of female deities of the broader Semitic environment, the Shekinah, or, most persuasively, the community of the apostle."²

Surviving manuscripts of the *Acts of Thomas* are available in both Greek and Syriac languages. The extant Syriac version of the *Hymn of the Bride* is corrupted, however, due to what appears to have been a systematic effort to remove unorthodoxy from it. For example, "the maiden" in the Greek version is replaced with "the church" in the Syriac version, and the "blessed Aeons" in the Greek version is replaced with "life" in the Syriac version. Marcovich concludes, "In brief, the Syriac version must be used with extreme caution."³

Even though the meaning of the *Hymn of the Bride* is obscure, some scholars believe that this hymn plays an important role. For example, David G. Hunter, a professor of historical theology, says, "the Acts of Thomas presents ... an understanding of salvation whose key is found in the famous *Hymn of the Bride*."⁴ The *Acts of Thomas* contains a second famous hymn, often called the *Hymn of the Pearl*, for

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.

which we give our commentary in a companion article. These two hymns are closely related and may have been composed by the same author.

In what follows, we use Hunter's English translation of the Greek version of the *Hymn of the Bride*,⁵ and give a theosophical commentary based primarily on the works of Alice A. Bailey, showing that the bride is an allegory of the human personality when it is illumined by the inner divinity. Our commentary provides each English verse of the *Hymn*, with center justification, followed by our interpretation of that verse, appearing in italic, and then followed by a detailed analysis of the symbols in that verse.

The Bride

The maiden is the daughter of light,
Upon her stands and in
her rests the proud
glory of kings.

The personality, when receptive to the inner divinity and free of illusions, is filled with light, because the illumination of souls passes down through the crown chakra and into the lower chakras.

In theosophy, the term "personality" is used to denote the lower self of a human being, and it consists of the mental, emotional, and physical bodies. This commentary takes the "maiden" to be a symbol of the personality, because, as we shall show, such an approach yields a coherent treatment of this and subsequent verses. Bailey gives the following description: "the student should bear in mind the interesting significance of the fact that he, on the physical plane, is a functioning personality, with known and realised characteristics, and yet withal, that he is a subjective Life, who uses that personality as a medium of expression, and who—through the agency of

the physical, emotional, and mental bodies which comprise the threefold lower man—makes his contacts with the physical plane and thus develops."⁶

The feminine form is a symbol of receptivity. *Isaiah 54:5* states, "For thy Maker is thine husband," which indicates that the personality ought to have a feminine, or receptive, relationship to the divine.⁷ The feminine depiction in the above verse shows that the personality in this case does have the desired receptivity.

The same Greek word (*partheonos*) can be translated as either maiden or virgin. The

Apostle Paul, in *II Corinthians 11:2-3*, gives a special meaning to this word when he writes: "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Bailey speaks of "the serpent of illusion,"⁸ and so virgin, or maiden, denotes the personality when it is free of illusions. Meister Eckhart, a medieval

Much of the *Hymn* is concerned with the chakras. The phrase "upon her stands" indicates that the illumination enters the personality via the crown, or head, chakra. The phrase "in her rests" indicates that the illumination passes down into the lower chakras. Bailey describes this process: "Illumination... functions via a man's soul, utilising the head centre, and eventually flooding with light or energy all the centres."

German philosopher, gives a similar meaning: "A virgin... is a person who is free of irrelevant ideas, as free as he was before he existed."⁹

Bailey uses the following terms as synonyms: soul, super-conscious self, inner divinity, inner divine voice, voice of the inner God, and Voice of the Silence.¹⁰ Our commentary primarily uses the term "soul." The concept of soul is curious because it can be associated with any level of aggregation, so that we can refer to the soul of a personality, of a country, or of the world. Bailey says that "all souls ...

constitute—in their entirety—the One Soul,”¹¹ and provides this explanation: “it is nevertheless one Soul that is functioning, acting through vehicles of varying capacities, of differentiated refinements and of greater and lesser limitations, in just the same sense as a man is one identity, working sometimes through a physical body and sometimes through a feeling body or a mental body.”¹²

A king is a ruler. In the above verse, “king” symbolizes soul, because the latter is the inner ruler of the personality. Bailey refers to the soul in this manner, saying that we should “seek to come ever more and more under control of the inner ruler.”¹³ Bailey also speaks of “the soul, who is light itself illuminating the manifestation of the three-fold personality.”¹⁴ Accordingly, “the proud glory of kings” symbolizes the illumination of souls. The plurality of kings suggests that the personality can receive illumination from more than one soul, perhaps through healings or blessings offered by others.

The physical body has both dense and subtle portions. The dense physical body contains the muscles and bones, and it is generally what we think of when we use the term “physical body.” The subtle physical body is called the vital or etheric body in theosophy, biofield in alternative western medicine, and meridians in Chinese medicine, and it contains the seven chakras, or energy centers, of yoga philosophy.

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

The illumined personality is attractive in appearance, being a transparency that permits the inner divinity to shine forth.

Bailey describes how the personality can shine: “one by one those bodies which veil the Self are brought to a point where they are simply transparencies, permitting the full shining forth of the divine nature.”¹⁶ Here, “those bodies” refer to the bodies that constitute the personality, and the “Self” to God Immanent.

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

The mental, emotional, and vital bodies of the illumined personality are like the flowers of spring, because they emit healing radiations.

Bailey indicates that the mental, emotional, and vital bodies surround the dense physical body: “picture the mental body as an ovoid, surrounding the physical body and extending much beyond it”;¹⁷ “the astral body of a man is larger than his physical body”;¹⁸ “This [etheric] form underlies every part of the physical body and can be seen extending for a certain distance outside of the recognisable form.”¹⁹ Here, “astral” is synonymous with emotional, and “etheric” is synonymous with vital. Garments are clothes that surround the dense physical body. The “garments” of the maiden, in the above verse, are taken as the mental, emotional, and vital bodies, because they also surround the dense physical body.

The “sweet fragrance” that flows from these garments symbolizes healing radiation. Bailey explains how a healer might use such radiation for a patient: “the radiation of his mind will illumine the other mind and polarise the will of the patient; the radiation of his astral body, controlled and selfless, will impose a rhythm upon the agitation of the patient’s astral body, and so enable the patient to take right action, whilst the radiation of the vital body, working through the splenic centre, will aid in organising the patient’s force-body and so facilitate the work of healing.”²⁰

On the crown of her head the king is seated,
And he feeds with his ambrosia those who
are seated around him.

The soul acts through the crown chakra of the illumined personality, and can stimulate to activity the souls of other personalities.

The king symbolizes the soul, so the king seated “on the crown of her head” depicts the soul acting through the crown chakra. “Those who are seated around him” are the souls of surrounding personalities. The phrase “he feeds with his ambrosia” indicates that the soul that is acting through the illumined personality can affect the souls of surrounding personalities. Bailey describes this interaction: “The healer must understand also how to radiate, for the radiation of the soul will stimulate to activate the soul of the one to be healed and the healing process will be set in motion.”²¹

Truth is established upon her head,
And with her feet she radiates joy.

The illumined personality has intuitive knowledge established in the crown chakra, and is pervaded with joy.

Bailey makes a similar statement: “Joy is the quality of soul life and that quality can be imposed upon the personality, thereby superseding happiness and imparting the gift of truth.”²²

Her mouth is open and it well becomes her,
Thirty and two are the number who sing her praises.

The illumined personality communicates freely and openly, thereby gaining generous and joyful affections, and applies all 32 group laws that produce right relationships.

The Apostle Paul, in *II Corinthians* 6:11, writes: “O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.” Here, “our mouth is open” signifies speech that is free and open, and “our heart is enlarged” signifies generous and joyful affections. Charles Hodge, 19th-century American professor of theology, gives the corresponding interpretation: “The Apostle had poured out his heart to the Corinthians. He has spoken with the utmost freedom and openness and in doing so his heart was expanded towards them.”²³ A similar interpretation can be made for the first part of the above verse.

Bailey writes, “we have basic group relations, fundamental group laws which produce group inter-relations, and bring about an essential union between all the forms of life... 1. The three atomic relations. 2. The seven laws of

group work. 3. The twenty-two methods of interplay. These thirty-two phases and ideas must be applied in degree to all atoms.”²⁴ Here, the term “atom” denotes a unit of consciousness and could refer to a subhuman, human, or superhuman form of life. Appreciation from others may be expected whenever someone applies any of these group laws. If the number in the above verse refers to the number of appreciator categories, with each category consisting of those units of consciousness who appreciate the application of the same group law, then this verse indicates that the illumined personality applies all 32 of these laws.

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

The illumined personality speaks in an attractive and friendly manner, encouraging the participation of others.

Bailey says that this kind of speech is preparation for initiation: “He who guards his words, and who only speaks with altruistic purpose, in order to carry the energy of Love through the medium of the tongue, is one who is mastering rapidly the initial steps to be taken in preparation for initiation.”²⁵

Her neck lies like the steps that the first craftsman constructed,
And her two hands make signs and signals.

The bridge between the illumined personality and soul has been completed, just as it had been for Jesus, and the two hands are used in healing, blessing, and prayer.

Bailey defines the “Antahkarana” as “the path, or bridge, between higher and lower mind, serving as a medium of communication between the two.”²⁶ In the above verse, “her neck” symbolizes the Antahkarana, as Bailey explains: “Of this connecting ‘bridge,’ the neck itself is the symbol, as it relates the head—alone and isolated—to the dual torso, consisting of that which lies above the diaphragm and that which lies below—the symbol of the soul and the personality united, fused and blended into one.”²⁷ Jesus is the “first craftsman” for the Christian community, “leaving us an example, that ye should follow his

steps” (*I Peter* 2:21). Jesus is quoted as saying, “I go to my Father” (*John* 16:10), showing that he had constructed the steps in his own Antahkarana. The bridge between the illumined personality and the soul has also been completed, because “Her neck lies like the steps that the first craftsman constructed.”

The “signs and signals” of the hands has several meanings, as explained by Bailey: “Occultly understood, the ‘use of the hands’ is the utilisation of the chakras (or centres) in the palms of the hands in:—a. Healing bodily ills. b. Blessing, and thus curing emotional ills. c. Raised in prayer, or the use of the centres of the hands during meditation in the manipulation of mental matter and currents.”²⁸

They announce the dance of the blessed
Aeons,
And her fingers reveal the gates of the city.

The hands of the illumined personality can transmit the active involvement of the Hierarchy, and the fingers can reveal the condition of the chakras belonging to another personality.

Aeon is the Greek word that often means age or lifetime. In Gnosticism, Aeons are similar to Judaeo-Christian angels, including their role as servants of God, and their existence as beings of light. The theosophical notion of the Hierarchy, or spiritual kingdom, is comparable, because the members of the Hierarchy are also said to be servants of God and beings of light. Consequently, the “blessed Aeons” are taken as the Hierarchy. The phrase “They announce the dance of the blessed Aeons” means that the hands of the illumined personality can transmit the active involvement of the Hierarchy. Bailey gives this explanation: “The true healing force can only flow through those who in some degree either directly (by right of initiation or of advanced discipleship) or indirectly, as being used on the inner side by some adept or advanced healer, are linked with the hierarchy.”²⁹

A city is a community with many inhabitants. In the above verse, “city” stands for personality, because a personality is also inhabited by many thoughts, feelings, and motives. City in *Revelation* 3:12 or 11:2 can also be interpreted as personality.³⁰ The “gates of the city” repre-

sent the chakras, because the latter are centers for energies gathered from different parts of the personality. H. P. Blavatsky, co-founder of the Theosophical Society, also uses gates as a metaphor for chakras.³¹ Thus, “her fingers reveal the gates of the city” means that the fingers of the illumined personality can reveal the condition of the chakras belonging to another personality.

Bailey makes a related prediction: “this whole matter is ... so complex that it will only be truly understood when human beings regain the lost power to ‘see the light’ of the etheric body and of its seven major centres and, through a developed sense of touch in the hands and fingers, to ascertain the rate of vibration in the various centres. When these two means of knowledge are available, the entire subject of the etheric body will take on a new importance and be correctly understood.”³² The fulfillment of this prediction would establish the truth of the last part of the above verse.

The Bridal Chamber

Her chamber is full of light.
It breathes forth the fragrance of balsam and
of every spice.

The chamber between the crown and brow chakras is where the light of the soul merges with the raised energies of the personality.

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* states: “the term *mystical marriage* is employed by St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross to designate that mystical union with God which is the most exalted condition attainable...in this life. It is also called a ‘transforming union,’ ‘consummate union,’ and ‘deification.’”³³ This term is also used by Bailey: “the spiritually newborn... will be those who have brought together, consciously and within themselves, the two aspects of soul and body, and thus have consummated the ‘mystical marriage.’”³⁴ Bailey actually uses this term to denote the union of soul and personality, because she refers to “the great final drama of the mystical union between God and man, and between the soul and the personality.”³⁵

The term “mystical marriage” suggests that the natural intimacy between a man and a woman

in a physical marriage is comparable to the intimacy of a mystical relationship. These two kinds of marriage are related in other ways. *Isaiah 62:5* compares the delight that occurs in them: “as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.” As shown in what follows, the *Hymn of the Bride* uses the characteristics of a physical marriage as symbols to portray related characteristics of a mystical marriage.

For a physical marriage, the bridal chamber is where the marriage is consummated through sexual union. For a mystical marriage, the corresponding chamber lies in the head within the space between the crown and brow chakras. In the above verse, “light” symbolizes the soul’s energy that pours into the crown, or head, chakra; “balsam and... every spice” symbolize the various energies of the personality; and the “fragrance of balsam and of every spice” symbolizes the rising of the personality’s energies into the brow chakra. Hence, the verse indicates that these two types of energies merge in the space between the crown and brow chakras.

Bailey describes the mystical bridal chamber in more detail: “This head centre is the symbol of the spirit or positive masculine aspect, just as the centre between the eyebrows is the symbol of matter, of the negative feminine aspect. Connected with these force vortices are two physical plane organs, the pituitary body and the pineal gland... As the soul becomes increasingly potent in the mental and emotional life of the aspirant, it pours in with greater power into the head centre. As the man works with his personality, purifying it and bending it to the service of the spiritual will, he automatically raises the energies of the centres in the body up to the centre between the eyebrows. Eventually the influence of each of the two centres increases and becomes wider and wider, until they make a contact with each other’s vibratory or magnetic field, and instantly the light flashes out.”³⁶

It gives out the sweet scent of myrrh and leaves.

Within are strewn branches of myrtle and all kinds of sweet-smelling flowers.

This chamber gives out beneficent energies through the brow chakra. Within it are perceptions of the divine beauty behind external forms.

The “sweet scent of myrrh and leaves” symbolizes radiated energies, because myrrh is a constituent of perfumes and incense. After the energies of the soul and personality are gathered in the mystical bridal chamber, the brow chakra, which forms part of the chamber, can then be used to give out those energies. Bailey also says that “the agent for the distribution of the energies received via the head, the heart and the throat centres is the ajna centre between the eyebrows,”³⁷ where ajna is the Sanskrit name for the brow chakra.

Myrtle, mentioned in the above verse, is a sign or symbol of Aphrodite, who is the goddess of beauty in Greek mythology. For example, Aesop’s *Fables* state, “The Gods, according to an ancient legend, made choice of certain trees to be under their special protection. Jupiter [Zeus] chose the oak, Venus [Aphrodite] the myrtle, Apollo [Apollon] the laurel.”³⁸ Mythologist Fred Hageneder writes, “In Greece, the myrtle was sacred to Aphrodite and was believed to possess the power that she had of being able to create and perpetuate love.”³⁹

Just as the birth of children is the natural result of a physical marriage, the birth of the third eye is the natural result of a mystical marriage. The third eye, which manifests within the mystical bridal chamber, can have perceptions of the divine beauty behind external forms. These perceptions are symbolized by the “strewn branches of myrtle,” because myrtle is a symbol of Aphrodite, who is the goddess of beauty.

Bailey describes the third eye in this way: “The third eye manifests as a result of the vibratory interaction between the forces of the soul, working through the pineal gland, and the forces of the personality, working through the pituitary body... *It is the eye of vision.* By its means, the spiritual man sees behind the forms of all aspects of divine expression. He becomes aware of the light of the world, and contacts the soul within all forms.”⁴⁰ Moreover, Bailey associates seeing “the soul in all things”

with seeing “the inward beauty of all created forms.”⁴¹

The Attendants

Surrounding her are the groomsmen, whose number is seven.

She herself has chosen them.

The illumined personality has applied definite methods of awakening and charging to the seven major chakras.

Bailey describes the locations of the seven major chakras: “Of the seven centres, two are in the head and five in the spinal column.”⁴² “It must always be remembered that the seven centres are *not* within the dense physical body. They exist *only* in etheric matter and in the etheric so-called aura, outside the physical body.”⁴³ In particular, the five spinal chakras are outside and behind the dense physical spine, the brow chakra is just in front of the eyes and forehead, and the crown, or head, chakra, is just above the top of the head. We could say that the seven major chakras are “surrounding” the dense physical body, because they are behind, in front of, and above that body. The above verse says that the groomsmen are “surrounding” the maiden, and so we take the seven groomsmen as symbolizing the seven major chakras.

Bailey speaks of “the stage wherein the centres... can now become the subject (under

proper direction by a teacher) of definite methods of awakening and of charging.”⁴⁴ The phrase “She herself has chosen them” indicates that the illumined personality has reached the stage of subjecting the chakras to definite methods of awakening and charging.

There are eight bridesmaids,
Who form a chorus before her.

There are eight key organs in the dense physical body that indicate how well the illumined personality has applied the methods of awakening and charging to the chakras.

Bailey provides the chart shown in Table 1.⁴⁵ The third column lists the major chakras, which are seven in number, but each of the other columns has eight entries. In our view, the “eight bridesmaids” represent the eight organs in the fourth, or rightmost, column. Each of those organs is associated with a specific major chakra, except for the spleen, which is associated with the entire system of seven chakras as a whole.

Bailey writes, “Each of the seven major chakras governs or conditions ... the area of the physical body in which it is found.”⁴⁶ Thus, the condition of the eight organs in the fourth column reflects the condition of the seven major chakras, which in turn are affected by the methods of awakening and charging mentioned earlier. In a classical Greek play, a Greek chorus is a company of actors who comment on

Table 1. Organs and Chakras

1. Cell life	Blood stream	Heart centre	Thymus gland
2. Sensory life	Sympathetic nervous system	Solar plexus centre	Pancreas
3. Mental life	Cerebro-spinal system	Ajna centre	Pituitary body
4. Vital life	Seven centres		Spleen
5. Self-conscious	Upper brain	Head centre	Pineal gland
6. Self-expression	Lower brain	Throat centre	Thyroid
7. Self-perpetuation	Sex organs	Sacral centre	Reproductive organs
8. Self-assertion	Entire man	Centre at base of spine	Adrenals

the action. The eight organs are like a Greek chorus, because their condition on the dense physical level indicates how well the methods of awakening and charging have been applied to the chakras on the subtle physical level.

Most of the organs listed in the fourth column are glands, for which Bailey makes the following prediction: "Owing to the fact that disciples have a greater development of mental power than the average man, ... they will be the first to cooperate with the medical profession and to demonstrate the relation of the centres to the glands, and therefore to the body as a whole. Through concentration and right meditation, carried on in the head centre, and directed towards some one or other of the centres, disciples will demonstrate such definite changes in the ductless glands that the medical profession will be convinced of the importance and the factual existence of the centres and of their power, and also of the possibility of controlling the physical organism through the power of thought."⁴⁷ The fulfillment of this prediction would provide an empirical demonstration of the above verse's truth.

Twelve is the number of those who serve
her,
Who are her followers.

The causal body, pictured as a twelve-petalled lotus, serves as the organ of abstract thought for the illumined personality, and its content expands as the personality learns lessons from experiences.

A human being is a subjective life who operates through both a causal body and a personality. Bailey says, "the causal body is ... seen as the twelve-petalled Lotus,"⁴⁸ and theosophical writer I. K. Taimni says, "The first function of the Causal body is that it serves as the organ of abstract thought."⁴⁹ Abstract thought includes realizations and expressions of ideas. The twelve servers, in the above verse, are taken as the causal body, because the latter is depicted with twelve petals and serves the personality.

Bailey writes, "The content of the causal body is the accumulation by slow and gradual process of the good in each life."⁵⁰ Here, "the good" refers to the lessons, or principles, that

are learned, because she also writes, "I am today what many, many lives of experience and bitter lessons have made me."⁵¹ The causal body can be spoken of as following the personality, because its expansion occurs as the personality learns lessons in the school of life.

They gaze upon the Bridegroom,
So that through this vision they may be
enlightened.

The causal body is oriented to the soul, so that through this orientation it may obtain new intuitions.

The "Bridegroom" symbolizes the soul, because the latter is the personality's partner in a mystical marriage. The causal body, however, is the intermediary between the soul and personality. When the causal body is oriented to the soul, intuitions from the soul may pour down into the personality, via the causal body.

Taimni makes a similar point: "the Causal body is like a mirror which can reflect the truths present in the Universal Mind into the lower mind and he whose Causal body is sufficiently developed and in communication with the lower mental body has the means at his disposal of contacting the Universal Mind to some extent."⁵² The term "Universal Mind," according to Bailey, is a synonym for "world soul."⁵³

The Wedding Feast

Forever they will be with him in that eternal
joy,
And they will be present at that wedding
feast,
Where the great ones will gather,
And where the eternal ones will be counted
worthy to rejoice forever.

The causal body will persist throughout the long cycle of incarnations as the spiritual body of the soul and its joy. The causal body will be present at the ceremony for the third initiation, where great Masters will gather as participants, and where advanced disciples will be recognized as worthy to take that initiation because their personalities are illumined.

In the above verse, "they" refers to the twelve-petalled causal body and "him" to

the soul. Bailey speaks of the causal body as “the spiritual body of the soul,”⁵⁴ and says that “It is relatively permanent and lasts throughout the long cycle of incarnations.”⁵⁵ A human being acquires a new personality with each successive incarnation, but stores the lessons learned from each incarnation within the same causal body. Bailey also says, “joy is of the nature of the soul.”⁵⁶ Accordingly, the first part of the above verse means that the causal body will persist as the spiritual body of the soul and its joy.

We interpret the “wedding feast” as symbolizing an initiation ceremony, because, as we shall show, its attributes are consistent with those that have been described for such ceremonies. Bailey writes, “This ceremony of initiation marks a point of attainment. It does not bring about attainment, as is so often the misconception. It simply marks the recognition by the watching Teachers of the race of a definite point in evolution reached by the pupil.”⁵⁷

Bailey says that human beings eventually discover that they are eternal: “Right through the later periods of the cycle of incarnation wherein the man is juggling with the pairs of opposites, and through discrimination is becoming aware of reality and unreality, there is growing up in his mind a realisation that he himself is an immortal Existence.”⁵⁸ The causal body and personality are both vehicles of expression, neither of which is eternal. Thus, the eternal part of a human being is the subjective life operating through the vehicles of expression. The “eternal ones” in the above verse, which refer to subjective lives, are denoted by the term “disciples” in this commentary, because they must

have applied spiritual disciplines to themselves to be worthy of initiation. The plurality of “ones” suggests that multiple disciples are about to take initiation as part of the same ceremony. Bailey indicates that this circumstance occurs, because she speaks of the effort “To admit to the ceremony of initiation those who are ready in all grades.”⁵⁹

The above verse provides three clues showing that these disciples are about to take the third initiation. First, the causal body “will be present” at the ceremony. Bailey, however, speaks of “the fourth initiation with its destruction of the egoic, causal or soul body.”⁶⁰ Thus,

the presence of the causal body implies that the disciples could not be taking an initiation higher than the third.

Second, “the great ones will gather” at the ceremony. Bailey describes the participants for each initiation: “In the case of the first two initiations, two Masters stand, one on each side of the applicant, within the triangle; at the third, fourth and fifth initiations, the Mahachohan and the Bodhisattva perform the function of sponsor; at the sixth and seventh initiations two great Beings, Who must remain nameless, stand within

the esoteric triangle.”⁶¹ In this quotation, “Masters” are members of the Hierarchy, or spiritual kingdom, and the Mahachohan and Bodhisattva are exalted offices within the Hierarchy. The point is that ordinary Masters serve as sponsors for the first two initiations, but great Masters serve as sponsors for the higher initiations. If the “great ones” in the verse refer to great Masters, the disciples could not be taking an initiation lower than the third.

Third, these disciples “will be counted worthy to rejoice forever.” If we assume that the entire *Hymn* is coherent, then each disciple dem-

If we assume that the entire *Hymn* is coherent, then each disciple demonstrates worthiness by operating through a personality similar to what has been previously described. In particular, each personality is illumined by the soul and is a transparency for the soul... [T]he effects of soul infusion, described in the earlier verses, culminate in the ceremony for the third initiation.

onstrates worthiness by operating through a personality similar to what has been previously described. In particular, each personality is illumined by the soul and is a transparency for the soul. Bailey says, “The thought of soul-infusion must be held in mind—a soul-indwelling which culminates at the third initiation.”⁶² Thus, the effects of soul infusion, described in the earlier verses, culminate in the ceremony for the third initiation, described in the present and subsequent verses.

They shall put on royal robes and wear bright raiment.

In joy and exultation they both shall be,
And they shall glorify the Father of all.

During the initiation ceremony, the disciples enter causal consciousness and share in soul consciousness. Both the causal body and personality of each disciple are in joy and exultation, and the disciples recognize the parts that they will play in the great plan of evolution.

Isaiah 61:10 states: “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.” Here, “robe of righteousness” refers to a state of consciousness that is higher, or more spiritual, than what had been the usual state. In the above verse, putting on “robes” and “raiment” has a similar meaning.

Causal consciousness is defined as being polarized in the causal body. Bailey says that “the first three initiations... are undergone in the causal vehicle.”⁶³ The preceding verse indicates that the disciples are taking the third initiation, so putting on “royal robes” is interpreted as entering causal consciousness. Bailey also writes, “This ceremony of initiation... gives... an expansion of consciousness that admits the personality into the wisdom attained by the Ego.”⁶⁴ In this quotation, “Ego” is another synonym for soul,⁶⁵ so wearing “bright raiment” is interpreted as sharing in soul consciousness, which is defined as contacting the soul’s attitude and awareness.

Bailey writes, “At the time of the Initiation ceremony... the initiate... knows what he has to do and how he must do it, and peace and joy unutterable fill his heart.”⁶⁶ “Joy and exulta-

tion” in the above verse is equivalent to “peace and joy unutterable” in this quotation.

The *New Testament* often uses God and Father as synonyms, such as in *I Corinthians 8:6*: “But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him.” Bailey associates glorification of God with recognition of the plan of God: “Where there is goodwill there must be peace; there must be organised activity and a recognition of the Plan of God, for that Plan is synthesis; that Plan is fusion; that Plan is unity and at-one-ment. Then... God the Father will be glorified.”⁶⁷ Bailey also says that during the initiation ceremony “the initiate... shares consciously in the great plan of evolution.”⁶⁸ Thus, in the above verse, “they shall glorify the Father of all” means that the disciples recognize the parts that they will play in the great plan of evolution.

His proud light they have received,
Those who have been enlightened in the vision of their Master.

The disciples receive a brief period of enlightenment that is transmitted by the soul.

Bailey writes, “This ceremony of initiation... gives... a brief period of enlightenment.”⁶⁹ “Light” in the above verse is interpreted as “a brief period of enlightenment” in this quotation. Bailey also writes, “The one Master is found within; it is the soul, the inner ruler.”⁷⁰ Accordingly, “their Master” in the above verse refers to the soul.

His ambrosial food they have received,
Which will never run out.
They have drunk of his wine,
Which gives them neither thirst nor desire.

The disciples receive divine ideas, which are inexhaustible, and become immersed in divine love, which gives freedom from lack and desire.

This passage describes a spiritual form of the Eucharist, because the disciples receive both ambrosial, or divine, food and divine wine. *Jeremiah 15:16* uses a related metaphor: “Thy words were found, and I did eat them.” Here, divine words are treated as though they were food; eating those words symbolizes thinking

about them. Similarly, in the above passage, “ambrosial food” is a symbol of divine ideas.

Divine ideas are inexhaustible in the sense that there is always a deeper and more profound idea that is given as part of each subsequent initiation ceremony. For example, Bailey describes a graded series of “revelations” that are conveyed to the disciple during the ceremony for each initiation. She begins by saying, “At the first initiation he becomes aware definitely of the part, relatively inconspicuous, that he has to play in his personal life during the period ensuing between the moment of revelation and the taking of the second initiation.” Bailey then describes increasingly profound revelations for the second through sixth initiations, and then says, “At the seventh Initiation his vision penetrates beyond the solar ring-pass-not, and he sees that which he has long realised as a basic theoretical fact, that our solar Logos is involved in the plans and purposes of a still greater Existence, and that the solar system is but one of many centres of force through which a cosmic Entity vastly greater than our own solar Logos is expressing Himself.”⁷¹

In this quotation, the term “solar ring-pass-not” refers to the sun’s periphery of influence.

Psalms 104:15 says, “wine... maketh glad the heart of man.” Here, wine might be a symbol of love, because, as Bailey points out, “The heart centre becomes the agent for spiritual love.”⁷² Bailey associates love with initiation: “Through these initiations... the disciple becomes an agent of the love of God.”⁷³ Accordingly, the divine “wine,” in the above verse, symbolizes divine love.

Love gives freedom from self-centered emotions, as explained by Bailey in her instructions to a particular disciple: “Restlessness and resentment, self-pity and suspicion are your present problems. Substitute love for these and all will be well. You evoke love in many. This means that you have the gift of love. Use that power to love and break your chains in order to serve with freedom.”⁷⁴

And they have glorified and praised, with the living Spirit,
The Father of Truth, and the Mother of Wisdom.

After the initiation ceremony is completed, the disciples, having been given new spiritual gifts, serve in the great plan of evolution and are grateful to the soul.

This verse uses the phrase “the living Spirit.” The related title, “the living God,” appears often in the *Old Testament*; e.g., *Joshua* 3:10. Biblical scholar Robert H. Mounce says, “The title is appropriate wherever God is about to intervene on behalf of his people.”⁷⁵ Accordingly, “the living Spirit” means that the Spirit is about to intervene on behalf of the disciples.

The Apostle Paul, in *I Corinthians* 12:1-10, speaks of spiritual gifts: “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant... For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.” Thus, one way that the Spirit intervenes is by bestowing spiritual gifts.

In the above verse, the phrase “with the living Spirit” is interpreted to mean that the disciples are with new spiritual gifts. Bailey supports this interpretation by saying that an initiate, after the ceremony, will find that he or she has new spiritual gifts: “The initiate will find, when he returns from the ceremony, and takes up his work in the world, that the stimulation received will bring about in his bodies a period of great activity... He will find that his powers for service are enormously increased, and his nervous energy intensified, so that he can draw upon reserves of force in service hitherto unsuspected. He will find, also, that the response of the physical brain to the voice of the higher Self, and its receptivity to the higher and subtler impressions, is greatly furthered.”⁷⁶

In the above verse, “Mother of Wisdom” represents the soul, because the soul is the source of divine wisdom within a human being, and the Bible speaks of divine wisdom as though it were a feminine deity, such as in *Proverbs* 1:20, 8:1, and 9:1-5. Bailey writes, “gratitude is the hallmark of an enlightened

[individual] and a basic releasing agent from an occult and scientific angle.”⁷⁷ Accordingly, “praise” in the above verse signifies expressing gratitude.

Conclusions

In summary, we have interpreted the key elements of the *Hymn of the Bride* in the following way: the maiden, as the illumined personality; bridegroom, as the soul; blessed Aeons, as the Hierarchy; bridal chamber, as the space between the crown and brow chakras within the head; seven groomsmen, as the major chakras; eight bridesmaids, as the physical organs associated with the major chakras; twelve servers, as the causal body; and wedding feast, as the ceremony for the third initiation.

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² K. E. McVey, “Were the Earliest Madrase Songs or Recitations?” in G. J. Reinink and A. C. Klugkist (eds.), *After Bardaisan: Studies on Continuity and Change in Syriac Christianity* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 1999), p. 194.

³ Marcovich, *Studies in Graeco-Roman Religions and Gnosticism*, p. 157.

⁴ D. G. Hunter, “Acts of Thomas: Scene One” in R. Valantasis (ed.), *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 209.

⁵ From *Marriage in the Early Church* by David G. Hunter, copyright (c) 1992 Fortress Press, pp. 58-59.

⁶ A. A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar* (1922; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1974), pp. 135-136.

⁷ All biblical verses are from the King James Version.

⁸ A. A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (1934; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), p. 223.

⁹ M. Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1941), p. 207.

¹⁰ A. A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II (1942; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1981), pp. 439, 491-492; *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I (1944; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), p. 14.

¹¹ A. A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. II (1955; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1972), p. 660.

¹² A. A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I (1936; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), pp. 53-54.

¹³ A. A. Bailey, *The Consciousness of the Atom* (1922; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), p. 139.

¹⁴ Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, p. 73.

¹⁵ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, p. 233.

¹⁶ A. A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (1960; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), p. 6.

¹⁷ A. A. Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation* (1922; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1974), p. 95.

¹⁸ A. A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (1925; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), p. 1219.

¹⁹ A. A. Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle* (1950; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1975), p. 151.

²⁰ A. A. Bailey, *Esoteric Healing* (1953; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1978), pp. 7-8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²² Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, p. 557.

²³ C. Hodge, *An Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1862), pp. 164-165.

²⁴ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, p. 1215.

²⁵ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 74.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

²⁷ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, p. 153.

²⁸ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 206.

²⁹ Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, p. 578.

³⁰ Z. F. Lansdowne, *The Revelation of St. John* (York Beach, ME: Red Wheel/Weiser, 2006), pp. 33, 92.

³¹ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence* (1889; reprint; Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1968), p. 96.

³² Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, p. 88.

³³ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. IX (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910).

³⁴ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I, p. 314.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 290-291.

³⁷ Bailey, *Telepathy*, p. 193.

³⁸ Aesop, “The Trees under the Protection of the Gods,” *Fables* (trans. by G. F. Townsend; London: G. Routledge and Sons, 1867).

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- ³⁹ F. Hageneder, *The Meaning of Trees: Botany, History, Healing, Lore* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2005), p. 130.
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- ⁴¹ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, p. 461.
- ⁴² A. A. Bailey, *The Soul and Its Mechanism* (1930; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), p. 115.
- ⁴³ Bailey, *Telepathy*, p. 146.
- ⁴⁴ Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, p. 588.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 284.
- ⁴⁶ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, p. 194.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 219-220.
- ⁴⁸ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, p. 538.
- ⁴⁹ I. K. Taimni, *Self-Culture* (1945; reprint; Adyar, Madras, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1976), p. 110.
- ⁵⁰ Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, p. 32.
- ⁵¹ A. A. Bailey, *The Unfinished Autobiography* (1951; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1987), p. 91.
- ⁵² Taimni, *Self-Culture*, p. 130.
- ⁵³ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, p. 810.
- ⁵⁴ Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, p. 247.
- ⁵⁵ Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, p. 352.
- ⁵⁶ A. A. Bailey, *From Bethlehem to Calvary* (1937; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1989), p. 217.
- ⁵⁷ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 15.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 113.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 107.
- ⁶⁰ Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 437.
- ⁶¹ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 111.
- ⁶² Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 663.
- ⁶³ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, p. 696.
- ⁶⁴ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 15.
- ⁶⁵ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, p. 48.
- ⁶⁶ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 132.
- ⁶⁷ Bailey, *From Bethlehem to Calvary*, p. 71.
- ⁶⁸ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 15.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.
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- ⁷² Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, p. 159.
- ⁷³ A. A. Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ* (1948; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1978), p. 87.
- ⁷⁴ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, p. 508.
- ⁷⁵ R. H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (revised; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), p. 157.
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Abraham Abulafia and the Ecstatic Kabbalah

John F. Nash

Summary

Abraham Abulafia, whose writings were ignored or defamed for six centuries, is now recognized as the leading exponent of the important field of ecstatic, or prophetic, Kabbalah. The ecstatic Kabbalah focuses on attaining extreme states of consciousness and even receiving new revelation from God. It contrasts with more familiar branches of Kabbalah that focus on understanding the nature of the Divine and its relationship with humanity.

Abulafia developed a system of meditation whose most conspicuous feature was the invocation of “divine names” created from endless permutations and combinations of Hebrew letters. Over the last several decades the ecstatic Kabbalah has been studied in depth by leading Jewish scholars, and writings in English are now opening this field to a general readership. This article summarizes and comments on work by Gershom Scholem, Aryeh Kaplan, and Moshe Idel and presents a concise statement of Abulafia’s life and contribution to the western esoteric tradition.

Abulafia’s Life and Work

Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia was born in 1240 at Saragossa, Aragon, a kingdom in the north of Spain, but grew up in the neighboring kingdom of Navarre. Abraham was close to his father, a pious Jew, who taught him the *Torah* and *Talmud*. After the father died in 1258, Abulafia made a pilgrimage to Palestine, only to find the country devastated by the crusades.¹ He returned to Europe but was never able to settle in one location. Moving from place to place, Abulafia devoted his life to teaching—usually to small groups of students—and writing. By the time of his death, sometime after 1291, he had authored a substantial body of works, many of which survive.²

On his way back from Palestine, Abulafia spent a few years in Greece and then moved to Capua, Italy. There he studied philosophy and theoretical Kabbalah—the Kabbalah based on the ten sefiroth—probably under the famous Talmudic scholar Hillel ben Samuel of Verona. Abulafia returned to Spain when he was about 30 years old. In Barcelona he studied under Baruch Togarmi, a rabbi most likely of Turkish origin who had written a commentary on the early Kabbalistic text, the *Sefer Yetzirah*. It was probably from Togarmi that Abulafia acquired a fascination for the Hebrew alphabet and language. He also learned three methods of textual analysis which would support his work. Those methods: temurah, notarikon and gematria, will be discussed later in this article. During his stay in Barcelona Abulafia began to experience visions that gave him unique insights and also convinced him that he had a special mission in life.³

Aside from Hillel ben Samuel and Baruch Togarmi, two individuals greatly influenced Abulafia. One was Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), the preeminent Jewish philosopher of his time who, like Abulafia, hailed from Spain.⁴ The other was Eleazar ben Judah of Worms (c.1176–1238), a leading Talmudist and Kabbalist and member of the group known as the *Haside Ashkenaz* (“The Pious of German Jewry”). Maimonides influence gave Abulafia’s work a strong intellectual dimen-

About the Author

John F. Nash, Ph.D., is a long-time esoteric student, author and teacher. Two of his books, *Quest for the Soul* and *The Soul and Its Destiny*, were reviewed in the Winter 2005 issue of the *Esoteric Quarterly*. His latest book, *Christianity: the One, the Many*, is reviewed in this issue. See the advertisements on page 12 of this issue and also the website: www.uriel.com.

sion. Abulafia's own background ensured that he was conversant with Sephardic (Spanish) Kabbalism. But Eleazar's influence helped launch him onto a path that owed more to Ashkenazic than to Sephardic tradition and which alienated Abulafia from rabbinical authorities in Spain and other parts of southern Europe.

While most Sephardic Kabbalists focused on the theoretical or theosophical aspects of the field, their Ashkenazic counterparts in Germany focused on the ecstatic and magical Kabbalah. German rabbis had devised elaborate invocations of the divine names. In most cases the intent was to achieve mystical union with God, but some individuals sought to demonstrate their spiritual attainment by performing various kinds of magic. It was believed, for example, that a very holy person could bring a clay homunculus—a *golem*—to life. Eleazar of Worms explained that, in order to be successful, incantations had to be made over every limb of the golem.⁵ Golems could not speak; but reportedly they could perform menial tasks, occasionally serving as house servants.⁶

There is no evidence that Abulafia ever tried to create a golem, and in general he regarded magic as a diversion from true spiritual advancement. But the procedures he proposed for achieving ecstatic states were not unlike those used for such purposes. The Sephardic rabbis frowned upon the publication of such sensitive information. Abulafia's claim to have been given a special mission by God further alienated him from the authorities. It raised suspicions that he had messianic ambitions. Rabbi Solomon ben Adret of Barcelona, the leading Talmudic scholar of the time, emerged as Abulafia's nemesis and denounced him in a scathing diatribe. Ben Adret's standing guaranteed that other rabbis would follow suit. The study of Abulafia's writings was prohibited in Spanish Kabbalistic schools, and Abulafia eventually was expelled from Spain and Italy. For the rest of his life he searched for a haven where he could pursue his work.

Solomon ben Adret's denunciation had lasting consequences. In about 1500 CE, a certain Rabbi Judah Chayit again denounced Abulafia,

accusing him of "walking in darkness" and dismissing his work as "inventions, imaginations and falsehoods."⁷ Chayit's contemporary, Judah Albotini, chief rabbi of Jerusalem, was not critical of Abulafia's methods, as such, but warned that people had lost the purity necessary to meditate safely on the names of God.⁸ Because of Abulafia's unpopularity, none of his writings was published for 600 years. Even today, most of his books are available only in Hebrew, many are still in manuscript, and some are in private collections. Gershom Scholem and Aryeh Kaplan discuss his life and methods in considerable detail.⁹ But the translation of Moshe Idel's *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia* is the only book in English devoted exclusively to his work,¹⁰

Meanwhile, Abulafia had another close shave. As Christian Kabbalists would do two centuries later,¹¹ he entertained the dream of reconciling Judaism and Christianity. In one of his visions, while still in Barcelona, Abulafia received a message that he should meet with Pope Nicholas III. He made several overtures to the pope but each time was rebuffed. Undeterred, Abulafia set out for the papal residence at Suriano, hoping to be granted an audience. Upon receiving news that Abulafia was on his way, and angered at the Jew's persistence, Nicholas ordered that Abulafia should be burned at the stake as soon as he arrived. Abulafia's life was spared only because the pope died that very day. After being imprisoned for a month by the Franciscan Order of Friars Minor, he quickly left the Papal States. Abulafia spent some time in southern Italy and then traveled to Messina, Sicily, where he lived for about ten years. Later he moved to the island of Comino in the Mediterranean. He was last heard of in Malta in 1291 and is believed to have died there in his early fifties.

Origins of the Ecstatic Kabbalah

Some of the prophets of the Hebrew Bible may have experienced states of ecstasy, and certainly ecstasy and prophecy are closely linked. But the large-scale exploration of ecstatic states within Judaism began after the

destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE. It took two forms. One was the Merkabah movement inspired by the account of Elijah's ascent to heaven:

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.¹²

The word *Merkabah* was derived from the Hebrew word for "chariot." Merkabah mystics believed that they too could visit heaven, the "throne world," and experience ecstatic visions. The ascent re-

quired the seeker to pass through seven "palaces" or "chambers," which can be interpreted as levels of consciousness.¹³ Passage from palace to palace, which became progressively more difficult, demanded knowledge of secret passwords as well as purity of heart. Merkabah mystics approached the ascent with great caution and prepared themselves by rigorous ascetic disciplines. Literature of the period describing terrible pitfalls discouraged all but the most zealous seekers from ever trying. But success offered the rich prize of unity with the Divine.

The other expression of ecstatic mysticism, closely related to Merkabah mysticism, was the early Kabbalah. An important Kabbalistic text of uncertain date was the *Sefer Yetzirah* ("Book of Formation" or "Book of Creation"). Some legends attribute it to the patriarch Abraham, while others claim that it was written by the first-century Rabbi Akiba or his near-contemporary, Elazar ben Arakh.¹⁴ The *Sefer Yetzirah* discussed 32 paths to God. Ten of those "paths" corresponded to the sefiroth (singular: *sefirah*), a word with multiple con-

notations, including "number," "writing," "revelation," and "luminosity."¹⁵ The remaining 22, each identified by a letter in the Hebrew alphabet, referred to the connecting links among the sefiroth.

The *Sefer Yetzirah* placed considerable emphasis on the Hebrew letters, divided as they are into three "mother" letters, seven double letters, and 12 single or "elemental" letters. The divine names, along with all other words in the language, were constructed from those letters. The most important name, YHVH (Hebrew יהוה),¹⁶ was so awesome that only the high priest was permitted to speak—or perhaps

chant—it, and then only once a year in the privacy of the Holy of Holies. Otherwise it was simply alluded to as "the Name," or *Adonai* was used as a substitute.

The *Sefer Yetzirah* inspired both the theoretical Kabbalah of Sephardic Judaism and the ecstatic Kabbalah of the Ashkenazim. Some authorities interpreted the text as a description of creation. God created the universe by speaking words of enormous power, much as he had

created the *Torah* from Hebrew words. As the psalmist had written: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."¹⁷ The work's title—*Yetzirah* literally means "creation"—supported that interpretation. Others interpreted the text as a manual for the spiritual quest. Each path offered a distinctive experience or opportunity for spiritual growth. Perhaps the pathways could be compared with the ascent from one palace to the next in Merkabah mysticism. Indeed, the words "throne" and "palace" appeared in the text. Influenced by a commentary on the *Sefer Yetzirah* by Eleazar of Worms, Abulafia embraced the latter interpretation. He was particularly intrigued by the passage in the *Sefer*:

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Twenty-two letters... Engrave them, carve them, weigh them, permute them, and transform them, and with them depict the soul of all that was formed and all that will be formed in the future. [The letters] are set in a circle as 231 gates. The circle rotates back and forth... Weigh them and transform them, Alef with each one, and each one with Alef; Bet with each one, and each one with Bet. They repeat in a cycle. Therefore, everything formed and everything spoken emanates in one name. Form substance out of chaos and make nonexistence into existence. Carve great pillars out of air that cannot be grasped. This is the sign: One foresees, transposes, and makes all creation and all words with one Name.¹⁸

“Engrave” and “carve” did not necessarily refer to making indentations in stone or wood; More likely they meant “to imprint firmly on the mind.” Kaplan comments on the “circle of 231 gates.” He notes that 231 is the number of combinations of two letters that can be selected from a population of 22 letters. And he provides an evocative “mandala” formed by drawing lines between pairs of the letters arranged equidistantly around the circumference of a circle.¹⁹

Abulafia concluded that the *Sefer Yetzirah* was addressed to initiates, hinting at the possibility of gaining mystical insights or ecstatic experiences by the permutation and combination of letters. His fascination for the Hebrew letters became the subject—even the obsession—of lifelong study.

The Divine Names

Analytical Techniques

It was mentioned earlier that Abulafia learned three methods of textual analysis that had long been employed by advanced students of Kabbalah. The first was *temurah*, in which new words were formed by rearranging, or permuting, the letters in a word or phrase. For example the letters of “Tree of Life” (ETz H-ChYYM , עץ חיים) could be rearranged to form “Life of Essence” (ChYY H-TzEM, חיי העצם).²⁰ A favorite target for permutation

was the divine Name YHVH, for which 12 distinct forms could be derived:

YHVH (יהוה)	YHHV (יההו)	YVHH (יוהה)
HVHY (הוהי)	HVYH (הויה)	HHVY (ההוי)
VHYH (והיה)	VHHY (והיה)	VYHH (ויהה)
HYHV (היהי)	HYVH (היוה)	HHYV (ההיו)

These were all regarded as “god-names.”

The second method was *notarikon* in which new words were formed from letters in successive passages from a text, usually a scriptural text. One of the best-known examples, and one that Abulafia himself put to good use, was the “seventy-two name of God” derived from *Exodus* 14:19-21. The three verses are shown below in English, Hebrew (written, as is customary, from right to left), and Roman transliteration (from left to right):

19. And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them.

ויסע מלאך האלהים ההלך לפני מחנה
 ישראל וילך מאחריהם ויסע עמוד
 הענן מפניהם ויעמד מאחריהם

VYSE MLAK HALHYM HHLK LPNY MChNH
 YShRAL VYLK MACHRYHM VYSE EMVD
 HENN MPNYHM VYEMD MACHRYHM

20. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.

ויבא בין מחנה מצרים ובין מחנה
 ישראל ויהי הענן והחשך ויאר
 אתהלילה ולאקרב זה אלזה כלהלילה

VYBA BYN MChNH MTzRYM VBYN ChNH
 YShRAL VYHY HENN VHChShK VYAR
 AThHLYLH VLAQRB ZH ALZH KLHLYLH

21. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

ויט משה את־ידו על־הים ויולך
 יהוה את־הים ברוח קדים עזה
 כל־הלילה וישם את־הים לחרבה
 ויבקען המים

VYT MShH AThYDV ELHYM VYVLK
 YHVH AThHYM BRVCh QDYM EZH
 KLHLYLH VYShM AThHYM LChRBH
 VYBQEV HMYM

The first “name” VHV (והו) is formed from the first letter of verse 19 (that is, the letter to the extreme right in the Hebrew), the last letter of verse 20, and the first letter of verse 21. The second name YLY (לי) is formed from the second letter of verse 19, the next-to-last letter of verse 20, and the second letter of verse 21. The procedure is continued until 72 names are constructed.²¹

Choice of the particular scriptural passage was not arbitrary. Each verse conveniently contains 72 letters. And Moses reportedly invoked the 72 names to part the Red Sea, allowing the Israelites to escape from the pursuing Egyptian army.

The third method was *gematria*, which attaches significance to the numerical equivalents of the Hebrew letters.²² The gematric value of words or phrases is formed by summing the values of their component letters.²³ For example, the divine name YHVH has a value of 26 (Y = 10, H = 5, V = 6, H = 5). Words or phrases with the same numerical value were believed to be related in some way. It will be noted that permuting the letters of a word, as in *temurah*, leaves the word’s numerical value unchanged. Thus the 12 names created from YHVH all have a value of 26.

Abulafia noted that the word for “language” (LShVN, לשון) had the same value, 386, as “combination” (TzYRVP, צירוף), reinforcing his belief in the power of these analytical techniques.²⁴ Abulafia sometimes used *noms de plume*, such as Raziel (RZYAL, רזיאל) and Zekariyahu (ZKRYHV, זכריהו), all of which had the same numerical value as his first name, Abraham (ABRHM, אברהם = 248).

Abulafia’s Applications

Abulafia made occasional use of *notarikon* and *gematria*, but he found *temurah* to be the most useful technique. Just as an unlimited number of melodies could be created from a finite musical scale, endless series of words could be created from a finite alphabet. Indeed, references to music were more than simply metaphorical.²⁵ Abulafia encouraged seekers to chant the sacred names, claiming that the practice dated back to the temple practices of biblical times.

In addition to combining and permuting the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, all of which are consonants, Abulafia experimented with vowels, which, from the early Middle Ages onward, had been incorporated into Hebrew texts by means of “vowel points.”²⁶ The main purpose of vowel points was to assist—and possibly to help standardize—pronunciation, which had always been problematic in classical Hebrew.

In some cases Abulafia used what he called the “natural vowel,” the first vowel appearing in the expanded name of the Hebrew letter. For example, the natural vowel associated with *lamed* (לָ) was “a,” shown by the *qamets* point (ָ) under the ל. In other cases he considered all five vowels, the equivalents of our “o,” “a,” “e,” “i” and “u.”²⁷ Since the five vowels alone could be permuted in 120 different ways,²⁸ the total number of permutations of a “word” consisting of both vowels and consonants could be quite large. Abulafia was not concerned whether the composite word had linguistic meaning. He believed that each Hebrew letter was a distinct divine entity, and combinations of letters assembled with sacred intent automatically acquired spiritual value.

Abulafia may have experimented with random permutations of letters, but more generally he favored highly structured permutations. In fact deviations were considered so serious that a seeker who made a mistake was instructed to begin a whole section over again. Noting that the *Sefer Yetzirah* correlated letters with parts of the body, Abulafia warned darkly:

[O]ne has to be most careful not to move a consonant or vowel from its position, for if

he errs in reading the letter commanding a certain [bodily] member, that member may be torn away and may change its position or alter its nature immediately and may be transformed into a different shape so that in consequence the person may become a cripple.²⁹

Clearly the letters had power on physical as well as higher levels.

Two of Abulafia's structured meditation procedures call for special note. The first, described in a text entitled *Light of the Intellect*, focused on the four letters of the divine Name, YHVH. Each of these letters was combined and permuted in a prescribed order with each letter of the alphabet and also with the five vowels. Table 1 shows the sequence for the letter *alef* (A), as provided by Kaplan.³⁰ The sequence begins: AoYo, AoYa, AoYe, AoYi, AoYu; AaYo, AaYa... AaYu; and so forth.³¹ After all combinations are exhausted, producing a 5 x 5 matrix,³² the order of the consonants is reversed: YoAo, YoAa, etc., etc., producing a second 5 x 5 matrix. Two hundred "words" are formed for *alef* alone, or 4,400 for the complete alphabet.

One may ask why Abulafia felt comfortable pronouncing the sacred Name, complete with vowels, when Jews had avoided doing so, at least since the Exile. Abulafia's answer was that a new millennium had now dawned; the Jewish year 5000 began in 1240 CE—which just happened to be the year of his own birth!

The second procedure, described in *Life of the Future World*, focused on the 72 Names of God. Fortunately, from the standpoint of economy, he did not combine those names with all five vowels. Instead, he confined himself to the natural vowel associated with each consonant. Thus the first name is expanded from VHV to VaHeVa, the second from YLY to YoLaYo, and so forth.

In the final list provided by Kaplan (Table 2), "el" or "yah," alternative root words for "God," are appended to the names.³³ Kaplan does not disclose the origin of that convention, but the same appendices appear in an annotated translation of *Occult Philosophy* by the 16th-century occultist Cornelius Agrippa.³⁴

States of Ecstasy

In the methods he developed for attaining ecstatic states, Abulafia emphasized not only the words to be used but also the preparations for meditation and the procedures to be followed during the meditation session. Recitation was to be combined with controlled breathing and gestures, particularly head movements.

Whereas some other authorities insisted that ecstatic meditation only be attempted in the presence of an experienced teacher, Abulafia recommended that the seeker retire to a private location where he would not be disturbed. After bathing, the seeker was told:

Drape yourself in your prayer shawl and put *Tefillin* on your head and your arms. This will increase your respect and your thrill before the Shekinah that visits you at this time. Wear clean clothes. If possible, all your clothes should be white. This is of great help for the concentration on awe and love. If this is done at night, light many candles so your eyes are illuminated. Then take in your hand a tablet and ink. They serve you as you will observe that you are going to serve God with joy and good heart.³⁵

The seeker then began to recite the sacred names:

Begin then to interchange a number of letters. You can do this to a few or to many. Transpose them and interchange them quickly, until your heart is warmed as a result of these permutations, their movements and what follows. As a result of these permutations, your heart will become extremely hot. Through the permutations, you will gain new knowledge that you would never have learned by human traditions or intellectual analysis. When you experience it, then you are prepared to receive an Influx of Divine Light. The Influx will be conferred on you. It will come to you as many words, one after another. Prepare then your inner thoughts to reveal the Name and the highest Angels. Think of them as being in your heart, like human beings sitting or standing around you. You

are among them as an apostle to whom the kingdom and its Servants want to entrust a mission.³⁶

Instructions regarding head movements and breathing could be quite specific; for example:

When you come to the *cholem* [a vowel point corresponding to the sound “o”] with the letters *Yod* and *Qof*, turn your head to the right. Do not incline your head right or left, or down or up. Keep your head straight, as if you were facing a person of the same height as yourself. Then, while you make the sound of the letter, start moving your head upward toward to the sky. Close your eyes, open your mouth, and let the words come forth. Clear your throat so that the sound is clear and does not disturb your pronunciation. While you exhale, continue to raise the head so that you end the exhalation and the movement of the head at the same time.³⁷

Initially, the seeker wrote the names on his pad. But, as the ecstatic state heightened, the pen and tablet might fall from his hands and he would recite or chant the names. Or the seeker might simply allow them to flow through his mind. In due course, he would experience profound physiological and psychological effects:

The blood within you will begin to vibrate because of the living permutations that loosen it. Your entire body will then begin to tremble, and all your limbs will be seized with shuddering. You will experience the terror of God, and will be enveloped with fear of Him.³⁸

Elsewhere Abulafia explained:

Your whole body starts to shake until you think you are going to die. This is because your soul separates from your body as a result of the Great Joy that you experience when you perceive and acknowledge these things. In your mind, you choose death rather than life. Because death only involves the body and as a result, the soul lives forever when it is resurrected. You know when you've reached a level where you get the Divine Influx.³⁹

The experience of uncontrollable convulsions was viewed as an essential demonstration that the seeker had attained the desired state of consciousness. If the physical symptoms of the ecstatic experience call to mind epileptic seizures, we must remember that, from earliest times, epilepsy was regarded as a sign of exceptional mystical or prophetic potential. Parallels can also be drawn with the *kriyas* exhibited by certain yogis when the kundalini rises up the spine.

When the convulsions ended, the seeker was left in a state of inexorable peace:

You will then feel as if an additional spirit is within you, arousing you and strengthening you, passing through your entire body and giving you pleasure. It will seem as [if] you have been anointed with perfumed oil, from head to foot.⁴⁰

The seeker might gain a profound sense of enlightenment. One of Abulafia's students reported experiencing an all-pervading light:

I noticed that the candle was about to go out [and] rose to put it right... Then I saw that the light continued.... I noticed that it issued from myself... I walked to and fro all through the house and, behold, the light is with me; I lay on a couch and covered myself up, and behold, the light is with me all the while.⁴¹

The seeker might gain insights of revelation like that acquired by the prophets of biblical times. A common experience was for the seeker to see a figure in human form facing him and speaking words of wisdom. The figure might be recognized as a revered teacher or a *maggid*, an angelic messenger. Alternatively, the seeker might recognize the figure as himself. In the words of another of Abulafia's disciples:

When an individual completely enters the mystery of prophecy, he... becomes totally unaware of his own essence, as it were concealed from him. Then he sees his own image standing before him, speaking to him, and telling him of the future. It is regarding this mystery that our sages say, “Great is the power of the prophets, since they liken a form to its Creator.”⁴²

Seeing oneself in a vision has come to be interpreted as a confrontation with one's higher self, the Holy Guardian Angel.⁴³

Reflections

Umberto Eco's novel *Foucault's Pendulum*⁴⁴ makes numerous references to Abraham Abulafia. Its leading characters invent fictitious occult societies by permuting names in a personal computer fondly called "Abu." In Myla Goldberg's novel *Bee Season*⁴⁵—made into a movie starring Richard Gere—Saul Naumann, a professor of Judaic studies, teaches his daughter Eliza Abulafia's methods, propelling her to national fame in spelling bees. At the end of the story Eliza achieves the ecstatic state, complete with convulsions and subsequent "enlightenment," which had eluded Saul throughout his life. Why does Abulafia's work hold such fascination in the popular imagination, as well as among advanced students of the western esoteric tradition?

One reason may be a widespread fascination with perceived patterns in letters, numbers, and other entities, even—or perhaps especially—in random or chaotic patterns. From time immemorial, people gazed at flights of birds or at the stars and saw significance in what lay before them. Mathematicians frequently report similar fascination when they contemplate patterns in topology, algebra and number theory, though rarely do they experience convulsions. Another reason is an interest in exotic spiritual practices of the past, practices that might have relevance to our own times.

The early Kabbalah, represented by the *Sefer Yetzirah*, the *Bahir*, and other texts, could have

developed in any of several different ways. As it turned out, the theoretical Kabbalah soon became dominant, eclipsing the ecstatic Kabbalah of Abulafia and his disciples. Significantly, the enormously influential *Sefer ha-Zohar*, which was compiled at roughly the same time Abulafia wrote his books, does not discuss meditation.⁴⁶ It was on the *Zohar* that the Safed scholars of the 17th century built their vast edifice of Kabbalistic theosophy,

Perhaps Abulafia's work was considered too dangerous. Perhaps his own personality and prophetic ambitions soured contemporary rabbinic opinion to the point where his approach to Kabbalah was

doomed. Perhaps his ecstatic mysticism was linked too closely with the more sensational and bizarre aspects of Ashkenazic Kabbalah, even though Abulafia tried to distance himself from them. In any event, the growth of Hassidism in the 17th and 18th centuries channeled the ecstatic Kabbalistic impulse of northern Europe into popular pietism.

Modern interest in the ecstatic Kabbalah is based in large measure on the juxtaposition of intellectual and mystical

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elements that Abulafia managed to capture. The intellectual dimension of his work, which may have been stimulated by respect for the philosophy of Maimonides, is evident in Abulafia's use of the term "Active Intellect" for God.⁴⁷ It is still more evident in the structure and precision of his meditation procedures and in his interpretations of the experiences that resulted from them.⁴⁸ On the other hand, Abulafia's work makes no reference whatever to the sefirot, which feature so prominently in other branches of Kabbalah, and there is virtually no appeal to symbolism.⁴⁹

Interest in Abulafia's work is also motivated by a desire to see how the broad and popular field

of Kabbalah might have evolved under different circumstances, along with curiosity as to its continued relevance.

Ecstatic religious rites with some similarity to the methods of Abulafia date back to pre-history; and certainly they were not confined to Judaism.⁵⁰ Abulafia did not even invent the ecstatic Kabbalah. Nor was he the first or last to explore the mysticism of letters and numbers.⁵¹ However he created a distinctive system of meditation that was impressive in its scope and detail, and the ecstatic Kabbalah cannot be understood without reference to him. His “divine names” resembled mantras, but a conspicuous difference between his methods and conventional mantra meditation is the avoidance of repetition. Even during hours of meditation, every spoken, chanted or mentalized word was unique—like a melody that never repeats itself. Abulafia’s system can also be compared with the practice of glossolalia, or “speaking in tongues,” in charismatic Christianity. But glossolalia is essentially unscripted, whereas the structured permutation of letters was central to Abulafia’s ecstatic Kabbalah.

Any type of meditation can produce altered states of consciousness. Ecstatic meditation is distinguished by the intensity of the experience and its effects on the physical, emotional and mental vehicles. What special character did Abulafia’s system have that could produce such intensity? How essential to the process was the permutation of letters in divine names? How reliable were the procedures in producing the desired psychological states?

Short of running extensive trials, we can only offer tentative answers. We can surmise that the controlled breathing may have induced hyperventilation, and the repetitive gestures may also have played a role. Recitation of long lists of words, with heavy emphasis on following the precise sequence, was a powerful exercise in concentration. Perhaps the divine significance attached to the words had a bearing on the outcome.

With regard to reliability, Abulafia and his students testified that the procedures could work, but we do not know how often they tried

and failed. Nor do we know whether the procedures could be applied successfully in a modern environment.

Today, relatively few people seek to attain ecstatic states, and they have options ranging from the use of hallucinogenic drugs,⁵² to various types of yoga, to the Hesychastic practices of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, to the ecstatic experiences of Pentecostal Christianity. Even fewer people would probably be willing to commit to the kind of discipline Abulafia demanded of his followers, even though his methods were less extreme in their asceticism than were other forms of mysticism.⁵³

Whether seekers could gain insights of any validity or would experience spiritual growth from ecstatic meditation depends heavily on the purity of their lives and the intent with which they approach the work. We have seen that even in the 16th century concerns were expressed that humankind might have lost the necessary purity to meditate safely on the names of God. Whether that remains true is a question each of us can ponder, recognizing both the potential and the responsibilities involved in pursuing such a path.

¹ Saladin conquered Jerusalem in 1187, and the last crusader stronghold of Acre fell to Muslim forces in 1291.

² Reportedly Abulafia wrote 26 Kabbalistic and 22 prophetic works. See: Gershom Scholem. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. Schocken Books, 1946/1995, p. 124.

³ The auspicious date of his birth will be mentioned later.

⁴ The Christian scholastic Thomas Aquinas reportedly held Maimonides in high regard.

⁵ Moshe Idel. *Kabbalah*. Yale University Press, 1988, p. 100.

⁶ The folklore of golems goes back at least as far as the *Talmud*. However, the most famous golem story involved the 16th-century Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel of Prague. He is said to have created a golem to defend the Jewish community against anti-Semitic attacks. Unfortunately, the golem grew in power until it went on violent rampages around the city and eventually turned on its creator.

- ⁷ Aryeh Kaplan. *Meditation and Kabbalah*. Weiser, 1982, p. 60. See also: Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 124.
- ⁸ Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah*, p. 114.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 57-114. Also: Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 118-155.
- ¹⁰ Moshe Idel. *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*. (Transl: J. Chipman.) State University of New York Press, 1988.
- ¹¹ John F. Nash. "Origins of the Christian Kabbalah." *Esoteric Quarterly*, Spring 2008, pp. 43-58.
- ¹² 2 Kings 2:11 (All biblical quotations in this article are taken from the King James Version.)
- ¹³ The notion of ascending through seven levels of reality was not unique to Merkabah mysticism. In particular it can be found in Mithraism and in certain Gnostic sects. See: Adela Yarbro Collins. *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism*. Brill, 1996, p. 49.
- ¹⁴ Most modern academic historians continue to insist that it was a medieval composition, but in recent years attitudes have softened to some extent.
- ¹⁵ The roots of *Sefirah* may include: *sefer* ("text"), *sefar* ("number"), *sippur* ("telling"), and *sappir* ("sapphire," "brilliance"). The first three are mentioned in the *Sefer Yetzirah*, 1:1.
- ¹⁶ Since biblical Hebrew contained no vowels, the correct pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton (literally "name of four letters") is not known. In modern English texts it is written as *Yahweh*. The Hebrew alphabet is shown in Appendix 1, along with transliteration rules adopted in this article.
- ¹⁷ *Psalms* 33:6.
- ¹⁸ *Sefer Yetzirah* (short version), 2:2-6. (Transl: A. Kaplan.) Weiser, 1997, pp. 262-263.
- ¹⁹ Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah*, p. 111.
- ²⁰ See the discussion in: J.H. Laenen. *Jewish Mysticism: An Introduction*. Westminster Knox Press, 2001, p. 123. Laenen erroneously spells both *Chayyim* and *Chayyei* with the letter *he* (ה), instead of *cheth* (ח), but the equivalence still holds.
- ²¹ For this purpose, distinctions between the regular and the final versions of Hebrew letters are normally ignored.
- ²² Greek and English forms of gematria have also been explored extensively.
- ²³ Note that the Hebrew alphabet contains no vowels, so only consonants have numerical equivalents.
- ²⁴ Laenen, *Jewish Mysticism*, p. 123. Combinations and permutations are closely related mathematical operations. The former, typically drawn from a larger population, do not attach significance to the order of sets of objects whereas permutations do.
- ²⁵ Edel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 53-71.
- ²⁶ The Masoretic system of vowel points was developed by Jewish scholars in Tiberias, Galilee, in the 9th and 10th centuries CE. Most prominent among those scholars was Aaron ben Moses ben Asher (died c.960).
- ²⁷ At that time the precise number and order of vowels varied from one author to another. Other medieval writers considered six vowels. It may also be noted that ancient Egyptians used chants involving seven vowels "to give strong feeling of piety and humility." See the website: www.coptic.org/music/copmusic.htm. (Accessed 29 July 2008.) See also the discussion in: Clement Salaman et al. *The Way of Hermes*. Inner Traditions, 2000, p. 84.
- ²⁸ The number of permutation of *n* distinct objects is equal to "factorial *n*," customarily written *n!*
- ²⁹ Quoted in: Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 138.
- ³⁰ Kaplan, *Meditation and the Kabbalah*, pp. 90-91; *Sefer Yetzirah*, pp. 128-129.
- ³¹ For clarity's sake, vowels are shown in lower case and consonants as capitals (or diphthongs like Tz with a leading capital).
- ³² If the vowels were regarded as subscripts, the matrix would be defined by $\{A_m Y_n; m, n = o, a, e, i, u\}$.
- ³³ *El* (אֱל) appears in the Hebrew Bible by itself and also in combinations such as *El Shaddai*. *Yah* (יָה) is the root of *Yahweh*. Our word "Hallelujah" is formed from *halal* ("praise") and *yah* ("God").
- ³⁴ Cornelius Agrippa. *Occult Philosophy*, book III, ch. XXV, 1533. Donald Tyson (ed.). *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*. Llewellyn, 1993, p. 540.
- ³⁵ Abraham Abulafia. *Life of the World to Come*, §§10-18. Author's translation from a French version. See also Kaplan's translation of this text in his *Meditation and Kabbalah*, p. 96-106 *Tefillin*, usually inscribed with scriptural verses, are worn on the head or wrapped around the arm. Each branch of Judaism has rules governing who can wear tefillin and at what times.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, §§19-29.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, §§53-59.

- ³⁸ Abraham Abulafia. *Treasury of the Hidden Eden*. (Transl: A. Kaplan.) Quoted in *Meditation and Kabbalah*, p. 85).
- ³⁹ Abraham Abulafia. *Life of the World to Come*, §§38-42.
- ⁴⁰ Abulafia. *Treasury of the Hidden Eden*. (Transl: A. Kaplan.) Quoted in his *Meditation and Kabbalah*, p. 85).
- ⁴¹ Anonymous. *Gates of Righteousness*. (Transl: M. Idel.) Quoted in his *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p. 79.
- ⁴² Anonymous. *The Rose of Mysteries*. (Transl: A. Kaplan.) Quoted in his *Meditation and the Kabbalah*, p. 109. See also: Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 139-140.
- ⁴³ The Holy Guardian Angel plays a role in the western esoteric tradition similar to that of the Solar Angel of eastern theosophy. A procedure for invoking the Angel was developed by the early 15th-century Ashkenazic Rabbi Abraham of Worms. See: Georg Dehn (ed.). *The Book of Abramelin*. Ibis Press, 2006.
- ⁴⁴ Umberto Eco. *Foucault's Pendulum*. Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1989.
- ⁴⁵ Myla Goldberg. *Bee Season*. Anchor, 2001. *Bee Season* also deals with the shattering of the vessels, a Kabbalistic concept that gained momentum among the Safed scholars of the early 17th century.
- ⁴⁶ Kaplan, *Meditation and the Kabbalah*, p. 160.
- ⁴⁷ Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 13, 83, 89-90, and elsewhere.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 144-145.
- ⁴⁹ Idel, *Kabbalah*, pp. 201-202.
- ⁵⁰ We could also cite the Mithraic rite in which a candidate for initiation practiced controlled breathing while reciting a long sequence of meaningless words. See: Marvin W. Meyer. *The Ancient Mysteries*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987, pp. 214-215.
- ⁵¹ Moses Cordovero, the Safed scholar better known for his work on the theoretical Kabbalah, developed a system of meditation on the sefiroth, in which the seeker invoked the divine Name along with as many as nine distinct vowels. See: Kaplan, *Meditation and the Kabbalah*, pp. 179-186. In recent times, a vast literature has emerged to explore number symbolism. See also Note 27.
- ⁵² Use of hallucinogens is illegal in most jurisdictions, but clinical research on its therapeutic—and even its recreational—use has resumed after a generation in which such research was “off limits.” One study was conducted in 2007, (interestingly) at the prestigious Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City.
- ⁵³ Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 143-144.

Table 1. Permutations of the Divine Name with *Alef* (A) and Five Vowels

<i>Yod</i> (Y)	AoYo	AoYa	AoYe	AoYi	AoYu
	AaYo	AaYa	AaYe	AaYi	AaYu
	AeYo	AeYa	AeYe	AeYi	AeYu
	AiYo	AiYa	AiYe	AiYi	AiYu
	AuYo	AuYa	AuYe	AuYi	AuYu

	YoAo	YoAa	YoAe	YoAi	YoAu
	YaAo	YaAa	YaAe	YaAi	YaAu
	YeAo	YeAa	YeAe	YeAi	YeAu
	YiAo	YiAa	YiAe	YiAi	YiAu
	YuAo	YuAa	YuAe	YuAi	YuAu
<i>He</i> (H)	AoHo	AoHa	AoHe	AoHi	AoHu
	AaHo	AaHa	AaHe	...	
	AeHo	...			
	...				

	HoAo	HoAa	HoAe	HoAi	HoAu
	HaAo	HaAa	HaAe	...	
	HeAo	...			
	...				
<i>Vav</i> (V)	AoVo	AoVa	AoVe	AoVi	AoVu
	AaVo	AaVa	AaVe	...	
	AeVo	...			

	VoAo	VoAa	VoAe	VoAi	VoAu
	VaAo	VaAa	VaAe	...	
	VeAo	...			
	...				
<i>He</i> (H)	AoHo	AoHa	AoHe	AoHi	AoHu
	AaHo	AaHa	AaHe	...	
	AeHo	...			
	...				

	HoAo	HoAa	HoAe	HoAi	HoAu
	HaAo	HaAa	HaAe	...	
	HeAo	...			
	...				

**Table 2. The Seventy-Two Names of God
with the Natural Vowels
(after Kaplan)**

1	VaHeVa [yah]	37	AaNuYo [el]
2	YoLaYo [el]	38	CheEaMe [yah]
3	SaYoTe [el]	39	ReHeEa [el]
4	EaLaMe [yah]	40	YoYoTza [el]
5	MeHeShi [yah]	41	HeHeHe [el]
6	LaLaHe [el]	42	MeYoKa [el]
7	AaKaHe [yah]	43	VaVaLa [yah]
8	KaHeTha [el]	44	YoLaHe [yah]
9	HeTzaYo [el]	45	SaAaLa [yah]
10	AaLaDa [yah]	46	EaReYo [el]
11	LaAaVa [yah]	47	EaShiLa [yah]
12	HeHeEa [yah]	48	MeYoHe [el]
13	YoTzaLa [el]	49	VaHeVa [el]
14	MeBeHe [el]	50	DaNuYo [el]
15	HeReYo [el]	51	HeCheShi [yah]
16	HeQoMe [yah]	52	EaMeMe [yah]
17	LaAaVa [yah]	53	NuNuAa [el]
18	KaLaYo [el]	54	NuYoTha [el]
19	LaVaVa [yah]	55	MeBeHe [yah]
20	PeHeLa [yah]	56	PeVaYo [el]
21	NuLaKa [el]	57	NuMeMe [yah]
22	YoYoYo [el]	58	YoYoLa [el]
23	MeLaHe [el]	59	HeReChe [el]
24	CheHeVa [yah]	60	MeTzaRe [el]
25	NuThaHe [yah]	61	VaMeBe [el]
26	HeAaAa [yah]	62	YoHeHe [el]
27	YoReTha [el]	63	EaNuVa [el]
28	ShiAaHe [yah]	64	MeCheYo [el]
29	ReYoYo [el]	65	DaMeBe [yah]
30	AaVaMe [el]	66	MeNuQo [el]
31	LaKaBe [el]	67	AaYoEa [el]
32	VaShiRe [yah]	68	CheBeVa [yah]
33	YoCheVa [yah]	69	ReAaHe [el]
34	LaHeChe [yah]	70	YoBeMe [yah]
35	KaVaKo [yah]	71	HeYoYo [el]
36	MeNuDa [el]	72	MeVaMe [yah]

Appendix 1. Hebrew Alphabet (including rules for transliteration)

Letter*	Type	English Equivalent	Transliteration	Numerical Value
alef א	mother	a	A	1
beth ב	double	b or v	B	2
gimel ג	double	g	G	3
daleth ד	double	d	D	4
he ה	single	h	H	5
vav ו	single	v or w	V	6
zayin ז	single	z	Z	7
cheth ח	single	ch (guttural)	Ch	8
teth ט	single	t	T	9
yod י	single	i or y	Y	10
kaf כ	double	k	K	20
lamed ל	single	l	L	30
mem מ	mother	m	M	40
nun נ	single	n	N	50
samech ס	single	s	S	60
ayin ע	single	a or e	E	70
pe פ	double	f, ph or p	P	80
tzaddi צ	single	ts or tz	Tz	90
qof ק	single	q or k	Q	100
resh ר	double	r	R	200
shin ש	mother	sh	Sh	300
tav ת	double	t or th	Th	400

* Certain letters take alternative forms when they appear at the end (i.e., the far left) of a word.

Student Papers

Service: an Essential Factor in Spiritual Growth

Miguel Malagreca

The word *service* evokes different ideas in each of us. The word itself is somehow elusive, as each person understands service in relation to personal circumstances, and in relation to their development or progress on the path of discipleship. It follows that any definition we may give of the word *service* is quite personal, and influenced by our background, views and values. There is, however, a fundamental link between esoteric training and service that all disciples intuitively understand and pledge not to break. Therefore, we may say that discipleship training and service correlate, as two sides of one and the same phenomenon. We cannot serve efficiently without adequate training, and we cannot get training without putting the Teaching into service. If we further explore these two areas—service and discipleship training—we may also say that training is to service what the Soul is to the personality: training is the occult side or the vitalizing energy behind service, and service is the externalization of such energy, put into practice as we move along the path.

By suggesting that service and training go together as two sides of one phenomenon, I am in no way suggesting that there is a deep dichotomy between one and the other. Rather I am trying to explore service and training as a deep unity or a continuum. Sometimes we penetrate deeper into the training extreme of this continuum, and sometimes we penetrate deeper into the significance and importance of delivering or serving. Yet no matter what extreme we are drawn into with more depth each time, we are reminded to keep engaged in both aspects all the time. There are important reasons for this.

The most important reason is that when one starts treading the path and undergoes esoteric training, some important subjective and objective changes happen. The training I am thinking of here has little to do with formal esoteric study at a formal school—though this might be for many of us a way of finding support while treading the path. There are many servers today who may not be aware that they belong to a large family or even to a subjective ashram as this training process may happen—for some time—at the pure level of the Soul with no conscious awareness. It is first the Soul that receives instruction and is prepared to serve humanity at the feet of a Master, and it is also at the level of the Soul where we are initiated and where we must face some challenges. Initiation is something that seems to happen at a purely spiritual sphere with, in some cases, no obligatory participation of the brain or the physical mechanism—although the whole of our being is nevertheless involved and hence it experiences the consequences, whether we know it or not.

When we start treading the path of discipleship there is an increasing flow of energies circulating throughout our system; the bodies are charged and new ideas enter into our consciousness. Service to humanity is the safest and most constructive way to root and channel those energies, so that they find a way to express Light, Love and Power in order to reestablish the Plan of God on Earth. It follows that whenever we start a path of training in discipleship, serving others and serving God is

About the Author

Miguel Malagreca, Ph.D., an Argentinian-Italian living in Torino, Italy, is a psychologist, educator, writer and artist (one of his paintings was chosen as our Picture of the Quarter in this issue). He is currently a student in the School for Esoteric Studies.

a safeguard against energy overload. Just as we need to engage in physical activity to release stress from our physical body, serving may help release energy that accumulates as a result of entering into contact with higher energies.

Hence service can be seen as a purifying act that preserves our mental, psychic and spiritual strength. This is just one reason—a “protective reason”—why the Teachings demand service. There is, however, another essential reason that is more profound and significant. The path of discipleship is a path of progressive unification and synthesis with higher units. On the path we learn that we are not isolated Souls, but one Soul with the Super Soul. Just as we are not the lower physical, emotional and mental bodies that we usually identify with, we are also not separated Souls traveling back home. The traveling is done always in company, and salvation is group salvation. The Law of Reincarnation teaches that groups of lives come together to existence because we are linked together for some reason or because we need to learn together some important lesson. Service is the resulting and logical effect of this realization—that nothing on this plane of existence is separate. For this reason, there is no point in working toward *our own* enlightenment, sanctity or development. We should strive continuously for group development and evolution, as each of our brothers and sisters, each of the Souls on this planet are one. Service means understanding this truth and acting in consequence. Individual evolution is always co-dependant to Planetary evolution and vice versa.

The next reason why the Teaching emphasizes service is because service is of essence to initiation. Initiation is not given as a gift from above; rather, it is taken from below. By this I simply mean that initiation is the result of one’s own efforts to forget oneself completely and work for the benefit of the Plan—that is, for the evolution of humanity as a totality. In a way, initiation may happen once we forget about the importance of initiation. It is a consequence not a cause. It is a natural result, not a preliminary. It is no prerogative or privilege.

Just as an orchid bud blooms when the right soil and light is provided, our inner core expands and opens through adequate service. Initiation means that we are blooming and opening up our hearts.

Along these lines, the Tibetan Master suggests that service is “the urge” of the awakened Soul once the heart is open. In this light, service is “the spontaneous outflow of a loving heart and an intelligent mind.” What is this urge or spontaneous outflow that the Soul feels and synthesizes? It comes, I believe, from a deep realization of the transitory character of all forms and the eternal unity of all existence. It is an urge to express meaning, to grow and to share the gifts of the Spirit; it is an urge to give form a sense of direction, and to move in that direction—one that will take us to the Home of the Father. We serve when we follow the directives of our Soul and our heart, not our separatist mind.

The above are therefore three main reasons why service is commanded and necessary: purification, synthesis and constant work or striving toward higher values. In addition, it would be useful to consider how we serve: we can serve exoterically or we can serve esoterically.

As noted, the opposites always seem to touch somewhere. Exoteric service will be a reflection of esoteric or inner growth. Exoterically, one manifests the higher values in everyday life, in whatever field one is called to devote one’s life to. For example, as a teacher, one tries to help students find inspiration to study and to grow as human beings. Or one may teach the importance of becoming a good student, because in reality we are all students in the great classroom of Heaven. Or one may just teach that nobody is infallible; so if a teacher makes a mistake, then it should be recognized and corrected so that the students can see that the road to mastery is difficult, but that honesty is important. No matter what we do, we should try to do it as perfectly as possible, in the attempt of becoming a transmitter of the values we believe in, which will be reflected in our living. We do this at home, with our neighbors, at the office and in any kind of field.

Esoterically, we serve by praying, meditating and focalizing all of our energy into world problems, so that when we recite the Great Invocation, for instance, we are invoking the guidance of the Lord, and this brings an adequate response. We try to forget about our

personal business and we do not try to achieve enlightenment or special powers, rather we simply think about what are great causes to live for and how we can reflect something of the Plan on this planet.

Book Reviews

***Frances Yates and the Hermetic Tradition*, by Marjorie G. Jones.** Ibis Press, 2008. Paperback, 263 pages. US\$24.95.

The typical scholar of the last 100 years earns higher degrees under recognized teachers, enters the supportive world of academia, and in due course publishes articles and books that have the stamp of approval of the prevailing mindset of his or her discipline. In each generation, however, a few lone individuals manage to rise to the heights of their fields, achieving international reputations outside that comfortable establishment, or even in spite of it.

One of those individuals was Frances Yates (1899–1981), famed historian of the Renaissance period. Marjorie Jones’ biography tells the story of a remarkable Englishwoman who lived and thought “outside the box” of conventional academic scholarship. Reviewing one of her books, Oxford historian Hugh Trevor-Roper observed:

Frances Yates has a gift that transcends [those of all other living English historians]. It is the power not only to answer old questions but to discover new, not merely to fill in details, but to reveal a new dimension which alters the whole context in which those details must be seen. She does this by a technique which is very easy to state but very difficult to acquire: by re-creating the mind of the past. [p. 149]

Frances Yates and the Hermetic Tradition tells the touching story of a woman who grew up in

the stifling atmosphere of an early 20th-century middle-class family. The daughter of a domineering mother, Yates was, except for brief periods in her young life, home-schooled:

In the early 20th century—before World War I—it was socially acceptable to school a female child at home. In the face of intense family pressures, Frances’ near contemporaries Dorothy Sayers (1893–1957) and Vera Brittain (1893–1970) struggled mightily to attend university... There can be little doubt that, if she had been born male, Frances would not have been permitted by her father to be educated at home. [p. xxi]

She lived with her parents until they died—and stayed in the family home until her own death. When, in her twenties, she earned baccalaureate and master’s degrees from the University of London, it was as a commuting student. She never held a university appointment.

Yates’ career might have never gotten off the ground at all had it not been for an invitation to work at the newly founded Warburg Institute. The Institute was established in London in the 1930s by émigrés from Nazi Germany. There her multidisciplinary approach to learning—she sought to integrate studies of language, history, and the arts—was valued and nurtured. Even then, she was shunned by academia and treated with suspicion by academic publishers. In 1934, Cambridge University Press agreed to publish her first book, *John Florio, the Life of an Italian in Shakespeare’s England*, only if she paid £100 toward the costs. To put that

sum into perspective, the annual income of many English men—if they were fortunate enough to find work during the Depression—was under £40 a year; women earned even less.

Yates's most influential books appeared much later, the result of long study and reflection in which she distanced herself from contemporary historical opinion. Particularly relevant were *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964), *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (1972), and *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (1979). A theme that became a hallmark of her work was the notion that the Hermetic tradition, which began in Europe in the early 15th century when Marsilio Ficino translated the *Corpus Hermeticus*, pervaded the Renaissance mindset well into the 17th century. Bruno, who was burned at the stake in 1600; Isaac Newton; and many others conventionally regarded as pioneers of the Scientific Revolution were in fact still steeped in the Renaissance mindset that drew no distinction between magic and science.

One of Frances Yates' hallmarks was to explore not only the actual course of history but also the course it *might* have taken—or probably would have taken except for the chance fall of the historical dice. That approach is one of the reasons her writing is so fascinating. But it was not well-received by academic historians:

Frequently, Yates was criticized for writing about history that never happened. Fittingly, her last essay—... published the year she died—explored a possible meeting between Dee [English mathematician and occultist John Dee] and Bruno, or at least a relationship between the two *magi* and their missions. “Why,” she wondered, “did Dee leave England immediately after Bruno's arrival? The possibility cannot be ruled out—though there is no evidence for it—that Dee might have been avoiding Bruno.” Then, in a way, in one simple sentence, she identified the underlying theme of her entire body of works: “The burning of Bruno was a symbol of the reaction against the daring, spiritual adventures of the Renaissance.” [p. 223]

Frances Yates lectured throughout Europe and the United States well into her seventies. She received many honorary degrees and in 1977 was awarded the title of Dame Commander of the British Empire, the equivalent of a knighthood.

Yates' story is of particular interest to readers of this journal because she managed, by the end of her long professional career, to make the Hermetic tradition of the Renaissance a legitimate field of historical inquiry. But it is inspiring to students of esoteric philosophy for the very reason that their fields do not yet have their own cozy academic establishments. We are all outsiders, struggling to gain recognition for our work in the face of continuing skepticism and even scorn from academia.

Marjorie Jones approaches her subject with insight and great sensitivity, juxtaposing Yates' towering intellect with her insecurities and periods of dark introspection. *Frances Yates and the Hermetic Tradition* is a “must read,” not only for students of the western esoteric tradition and the history of ideas, also for anyone who is moved by the story of an outstanding scholar who rises to the top of her field in the face of challenges that would deter those of us with less determination to succeed. This reviewer enthusiastically recommends the book to our readers. You will not be disappointed.

Editorial staff

***Christianity: the One, the Many*, by John F. Nash.** Xlibris, 2007. Two volumes, 762 pages total. Hardcover US\$59.98, paperback US\$39.98 (the set).

It may sound like a chore to review a two-volume book on Christianity, but set that thought aside! As I became engaged with this material I found myself delighted. The material is easy to read, exciting with stories and legends interwoven, and broad in that no one perspective is defended. Dr. John Nash has created a most pleasurable study. I particularly think how exciting an adult Sunday School

class could be as it bounded through these rich remembrances and explored the vision offered in conclusion. To dance through these two volumes is certainly possible; they are inspiring.

Christianity: the One, the Many takes one on a delightful tour through the history of Christianity with spice and good food along the way. The book's subtitle is: *What Christianity Might Have Been—and Could Still Become*. Volume I leads us through the earlier years of a church planted by the disciples as it sprouts into the mustard tree it was meant to be. Volume II leads us to self-examination and a realization that we are a part of Christianity's glory as well as its dubious past. We are led to acknowledge that as Christians, we are called to make our personal contributions to the as-of-yet unwritten future. Hard questions wait to be answered, and as we traverse this material, we find the inspiration needed to carry us forward.

Since I have special interests—as we all do—I relished the respectful mention of the Gnostics. I appreciated seeing their contribution to Christianity acknowledged and was sympathetic when they chose to go their own way. I could not help but to think of the dear price many paid for doing so. They and others, unknown to most of us, suffered greatly for the pursuit of the *Holy*, called by whatever name. At last we of the Christ are acknowledging this.

I was delighted with the treatment of the divine feminine: Mother Mary in Volume I and Sophia, in Volume II. The author's references to Sophia are rich, truly bringing both her history and her modern influence to our attention. As one of "Hers," I delight in his rich references helping to make the divine feminine more understandable. It is important for Christians to know *She has always been here*, although not always appreciated.

Nash's work is sensitive to all women throughout history as it is written at this more open period of time. He includes the plight of women as the regard for women deteriorated throughout the known world. He records the contributions women have made that went unrecognized. Thus we are provided a sense of

pride that women, known and unknown, have always served in our tradition, whether it was politically correct or behind the scenes.

A rich and original segment of Nash's effort is defining *The Seven Paths of Christianity*. The Paths, which can be of assistance to all who are seeking and/or serving the Christ, are: Devotion, Ceremony, Knowledge, Service, Healing, Activism and Renunciation. Esotericists will immediately see a relationship to the seven rays of Spiritual Science, or Kabbalists to Martin Buber's "ten rungs on the ladder." However one might approach these ideas, having such definitions makes it easier to see the path one has traveled or even how a path may be unfolding as one proceeds. We are reminded of the many intimate means by which we can choose to be one with the Christ.

Throughout these chapters, we find glimpses of known persons, but with a more friendly face, a legend or a story to help us get a feeling for the weavers of the faith. We emerge from these volumes realizing the wonder of the two-thousand year history Christianity has had: its high points and its low. We are inspired by the richness of the saintly and sickened by the scandals of certain kings and popes. We are brought face to face with humanity in all its expressions, a living caravan of Christians trying to find the Christ, the Light of the World.

No review of this material would be complete without mention of the richness of the references included at the conclusion of each chapter. This book is an encyclopedia of ideas, explored briefly and written in an easy-to-read style while providing plenty of documentation to satisfy the scholar who might desire to dig deeper. Ministers and teachers have need for such a tool, one that they can recommend to others without overburdening them with materials that are difficult to read and laborious to endure. Dr. John Nash is to be saluted for producing two volumes that are both interesting and readable.

I am rereading the two volumes, this time not to review them but to linger with the wisdom they contain. I desire to take the time needed to absorb the grace these volumes have to offer. While I rebel against "Churchianity," I

love Esoteric Christianity. I realize I am a more knowledgeable individual for having experienced the findings provided in these volumes. While rereading the book, I shall savor the pages as I ponder and derive an even deeper level of inner satisfaction.

Carol E. Parrish-Harra
Sancta Sophia Seminary
Tahlequah, Oklahoma

