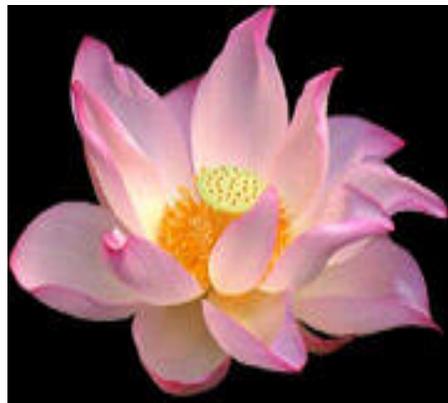


# *The Esoteric Quarterly*

**Summer 2009  
Volume 5  
Number 2**

*A publication of the  
School for Esoteric  
Studies*

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



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**The School for Esoteric Studies.**

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# *The Esoteric Quarterly*

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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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## Reconstructive Energies

---

We find ourselves near the close of the season known as the Higher Interlude and at the last of the three spiritual festivals—the Festival of the Goodwill or the Festival of Humanity—which completes the threefold energy pouring into our planet. Although the actual festival date has passed, the prevalent energies and forces—the *Forces of Reconstruction*—are still quite active.

Evolution is propelled by those who are sensitive to the higher spiritual energies and to the forces of restoration, enlightenment and reconstruction that are being distributed now. These spiritually potent forces serve to inspire individuals and nations to repair the cleavages and imbalances that have erupted in us and on the planet. Ushering in periods of marked creative activity, re-creation, and healing, the forces of reconstruction can lead to the rebuilding and renovation of physical plane forms.

As we look around us we see that these progressive energies and forces are expressed in countless and oftentimes subtle ways. In this issue, we see the theme of reconstruction revealed in virtually every article: in the ancient sacred texts that provide us with a structure to renew ourselves and the world, in the dissolution of old outworn systems, and in the resultant emergence of new systems of healing, morality, values and trends.

The first article to touch upon the energies of healing and reconstruction is Jan Detrich's astrological commentary dealing with a number of rare and intriguing celestial events that carry the seeds of a great paradigm shift for our planet. In previous issues of the *Esoteric Quarterly*, the author examined Pluto's final ingress into Capricorn in late

fall 2008, as well as the current Saturn-Uranus opposition. In this article, she examines the conjunction of Jupiter, Chiron and Neptune—an unparalleled configuration charged with remedial energy. Detrich discusses how this dynamic conjunction of energies in Aquarius holds the potential "to ignite collective spiritual aspiration, heart, healing and the brotherhood of mankind in extraordinary ways, offsetting the hard edges of the current global crises with greater inclusivity, compassion and true altruism, while bestowing much needed grace and beauty."

John Nash's article, focusing on the foundations and development of the Theoretical Kabbalah, also relates to the general theme. The article begins by exploring the origins of the *Sefer Zohar*—the major text upon which the classical Kabbalah is based—and discusses the all-important contributions of the Safed Scholars who popularized the Kabbalah and brought its previously hidden knowledge into the public domain. After touching upon the essential Kabbalistic texts, the author provides us with an initial sampling of the primary mystical forms such as the Tree of Life, the structure of the spiritual worlds and the creation of the *sefirot* or divine emanations. His article also deals with the fragmentation of the sefirot and the all-important concept of *Tikkun*—the repairing and reconstruction of ourselves and the world.

Our next offering is the conclusion to Zachary Lansdowne's two-part article on one of the earliest known Vedic mantras—*The Purusha Sukta*. Part I of this article, appearing in the Spring 2009 issue, covered the first ten verses of this invocative Vedic hymn. Part II covers the remaining six verses

dealing with the various stages of human evolution that were born out of the sacrifice of Purusha or the Planetary Logos. The author explores the four stages or classes (castes) of human society in terms of stages of spiritual refinement and degrees of conscious polarization. He concludes his analysis by pointing out that the qualities and powers of the Planetary Logos are within the reach of human beings once they grasp their essential divinity and reconstruct their lives on the sacrificial pattern of the Planetary Logos.

The final article by Joann Bakula, *Using Money as an Instrument of Service*, describes a revolution in consciousness that is allowing some people to shift from an egocentric point of view to a more systemic viewpoint. Bakula describes this group as a “Group of Responsible People” who link money with morality and ethics and view money as a spiritual tool that can be used to construct a more equitable, sustainable future. The author discusses the concept of seed money—money dedicated to specific areas of human need, along with the need to live simply. She outlines a series of 12 steps that each of us can employ to re-engage with money in a more conscious, creative and spiritually responsible way. The article concludes with a set of principles or recognitions that will allow humanity to integrate humanistic values into all their financial and business dealings.

In addition to these articles, we include a short paper, “The Sixth Initiation,” contributed by a student in the School for Esoteric Studies. We offer two new poems, our usual Quotes of the Quarter, and a luminously beautiful work of art entitled “Sefirot” by Brandi November Lyons. “Sefirot” is the product of Ms. Lyons’ studies and meditations on the Kabbalah with the Bnei Baruch Kabbalah Educational and Research Center. Visit her gallery at: <http://berakhiah.deviantart.com> and her main web page at: <http://www.ravenslore.com/index2.html>.

This issue also contains an intriguing book review on the legendary yet enigmatic Dion Fortune written by Gareth Knight, one of her inner-circle pupils. Another review, *Creating a World Without Poverty*, by Muhammad Yunus, explores the powerful reconstructive energies inherent in the “social business movement.”

Finally, we conclude this issue by reproducing three articles concerning the three linked spiritual festivals, the last of which, The Festival of Goodwill, brings the theme of reconstruction full circle.

Donna M. Brown  
Editor In Chief

## Publication Policies

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

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

We encourage critical thinking and 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."

## Poems of the Quarter

---

### That which Endures by Bruce Lyon

There are times  
on the inner journey  
when the winds of samsara blow  
the veils of maya and  
curtain the horizon  
the path ahead shrinks  
down to three visible steps  
then one  
which must be taken nonetheless  
...and the next  
until the soul's foot  
will no longer lift

to the command of spirit  
What remains  
is the will to stand  
a persistent drum, anchored in  
the central chamber of the heart  
a lion roaring in a blizzard,  
a tawny flame  
that will not be put out  
a stubborn stone  
of waiting...  
demanding  
Life.

### FLASHBACK by David Harrington

The mystic meditates lazily beneath a shady fruit tree and envisions spiritual enlightenment, his key to achieving inner peace.

Through a kaleidoscope of colors which spin before his eyes, he sees the seven riders of the rainbow in their horse-drawn chariots blaze a trail of fire across the spiritual sky. And closing his eyes, he traces their path with his finger.

Ever so gently he reaches up and plucks a virtuous fruit, careful not to disturb the serpent that lies basking in the midday sun. But Cherubim watch over the garden with

their flaming swords and guide the seer on his mystical journey through the land of shadows and spiritual darkness, where evil lurks behind every hidden doorway.

So taking a bite, the mystic's eyes open wide and he finds himself strolling down a winding road through a lush rain forest covered in moss and evergreen, where primeval giants tower high above.

Onward through the meadows he wanders, past fountains and streams where nymphs and gnomes frolic on frosted fields and hummingbirds are busy collecting sweet nectar from a honeysuckle bush.

Where the first morning dew clings softly to silk-spun webs and fuzzy caterpillars hatch into beautiful living butterflies. It's evening now and the long tall shadows of the late afternoon slowly disappear into the fading light.

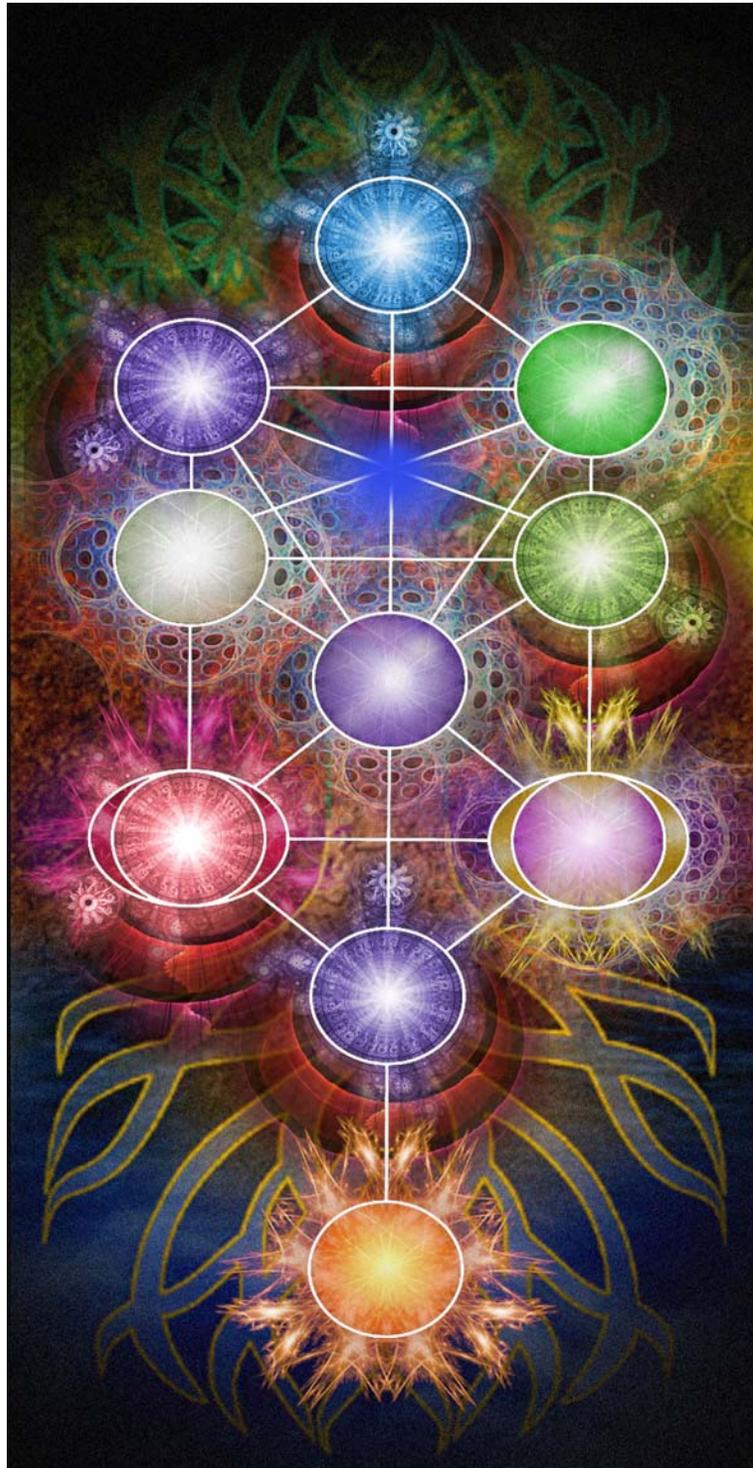
The mystic rests his tired feet on an old hollow log and listens to the nightbird call. A nightowl screeches somewhere off in the distance, wolves and coyotes bay at the full moon and the wild wind howls down the canyon:

The dragon has awakened like some

legendary mythical creature in a lost and forgotten story of old. The dragon's breath closes in on the seer now, surrounding him in a shroud of mist.

But through the haze he sees the golden hawk with its great wings of fire descending through the twelve solar gates. And it perches upon his outstretched hand.

So he plucks a feather from each of its wings: Now he has the magic power of Almighty God at his fingertips and he soars majestically off into the spiritual sky and up to the stars.



## **Sefirot**

**By Brandi November Lyons**

<http://berakhiah.deviantart.com>

<http://www.ravenslore.com/index2.html>

## Quotes of the Quarter

---

Scientists believe that Chiron is a temporary visitor, a maverick, who came from outside our solar system, and will eventually leave. Its astronomy points to Chiron's link between the inner planets of the personal self, and the outer planets of the collective and transpersonal self. Chiron is our bridge from the known to the unknown, from the old to the new, from the Age of Pisces to the Age of Aquarius.

Chiron is symbolic not only of the Rainbow Bridge or the Antahkarana of Eastern religious traditions, of the bridge from the lower to the higher self, from the personality to the soul. It also represents the bridge of reconciliation, between black and white, man and woman, the East and the West. We heal the wounds of the past, both personal and collective, through a process of internal and external reconciliation. This process takes place within ourselves, and also between ourselves and others, between individuals, between nations. Chiron therefore, is the key, not only to personal healing, but to global healing.

Candy Hillenbrand, *Healing Pathway to Personal and Global Reconciliation*

Prior to the Creation, there was only one God... Since God is everywhere, there was no "room" for the Creation to come into being, no place which could accommodate His Infinite Light. God thus restricted His Light away from a "center point", as it were, to create the Vacated Space. In this space would be created all the supernal Universes, and also the material world... God contracted His Light, as it were, concealing Himself from man, making it seem to man's limited vision as if there is a vacuum, a place devoid of Godliness. This is the mystery of the Tzimsum (Self-constriction).

Chaim Krammer, *Anatomy of the Soul*  
(Breslov Research Inst., 1998, p. 207)

The heart must make of itself a hollow space wherein Godliness can be revealed in stages. Psalms 109:22, "My heart is hollow within me." Thus the heart (binah) corresponds to the hollow of Creation, the Vacated Space. Within the Vacated Space is placed Godliness, but gradually, in stages. This is the meaning of (Exodus 31:6), "In the hearts of the wise, I have placed wisdom." For Godly Chokhmah is concealed within Binah, which corresponds to the heart. Thus, even in the Vacated Space, Godliness exists in concealed form. Binah, then, is conceptually the Vacated Space wherein the formation of all the Universe takes place."

Chaim Krammer, *Anatomy of the Soul*  
(Breslov Research Inst., 1998)

The Shining Flame of the Divine Fire, the Kether of the Body, is the Real Self of the Incarnation. Yet but few sons of men know it or feel its presence. Still less do they believe in or comprehend those Higher Potencies—Angelic, Archangelic or Divine, of which the manifestation directly touching Yechidah is the Higher Genius... This Yechidah is only part of the man which can truly say—EHEIEH, I am. This is then but the Kether of the Assiah of the Microcosm, that is, it is the highest part of Man... This Yechidah is at the same time the Higher Human Self and the Lower Genius, the God of the Man, the Atziluth of his Assiah, even as Chiah and Neshamah form his Briah, and Ruach his Yetzirah. This is the Higher Will and the Divine Consciousness, as Daath is the Spiritual Consciousness, Tiphareth is the Human Consciousness, and Yesod the Automatic Consciousness... Behind Yechidah are Angelic Forces of which

Yechidah is the manifestor. It is therefore the Lower Genius or Victory of the Higher Genius which is beyond, an Angel Mighty and Terrible. This Great Angel in the higher Genius, beyond which are the Archangelic and Divine.

S. L. McGregor Mathers, *On Man, the Microcosm. Israel Regardie (ed.) The Golden Dawn* (Llewellyn Publications, 1937/1989)

People can have an excessive attachment to money. They can also see money as a source to get what they want and as a protector to keep them safe from harm. The reality is that money derives its power from belief, just as idols did thousands of years ago. The difference today is that money is universally believed to be powerful. But the purpose of money is to simply facilitate relationship as it is the wild card of the barter system. We have unfortunately gotten to a place where people want the money without the relationship. When one finally grasps what money's purpose really is, they will be free from the tyranny of Mammon (the idol worshipped as the giver of riches). Money is not evil, and many religions falsely claim that to have wealth is inherently evil. It is one's belief in money that is the root of many problems, not the money itself.

Drew Tignanelli, *Money Is a Tool* (Forbes Magazine, February 3, 2009)

When there is freedom from want, one of the major causes of war will disappear. Where there is uneven distribution of the world's riches and where there is a situation in which some nations have or take everything and other nations lack the necessities of life, it is obvious that there is a trouble-breeding factor there and that something must be done. Therefore we should deal with world unity and peace primarily from the angle of the economic problem.

A.A. Bailey, *The Problems of Humanity* (Lucis Trust, 1964)

Let us hope that it will be possible to change the thought of humanity where money is concerned so that it will be regarded as a great spiritual asset, as a definite spiritual responsibility and as a means to do real world work. The custodians of money will then shoulder their responsibility without fear and with due understanding. At present they hold on to it through fear of the future and distrust of each other... As money has in the past ministered to personal and family need, so in the future it must minister to group and world need. Groups in the future must act as magnets: they must see to it that they are animated by a spirit of love. Need, love and magnetic power are the three things which consciously or not attract money.

A. A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol.I* (Lucis Trust, 1944)

The Purushas are said to be of two kinds: the perishable and the imperishable. The body is the perishable Purusha (nothing but Prakriti), while the soul is the Imperishable One. The Supreme Purusha (Ishwara) however is none of these. He is beyond the perishable (Prakriti) and higher than the Imperishable (inner self), who sustains the three worlds by entering into them. Since he is beyond the perishable and higher than the imperishable (Self), He is called Purushottama (The Supreme Purusha).

Jayaram V, Purusha, *The Universal Cosmic Male*

Brahma said, 'O son, many are those Purushas of who thou speakest. The one Purusha, however, of whom I am thinking, transcends all Purushas and is invisible. The many Purushas that exist in the universe have that one Purusha as their basis: and since that one Purusha is said to be the source whence all the innumerable Purushas have sprung, hence all the latter, if they succeed in

divesting themselves of attributes, become competent to enter into that one Purusha who is identified with the universe, who is supreme, who is foremost of the foremost,

who is eternal, and who is himself divested of and is above all attributes.

From the Mahabharata of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa: Section CCCLII



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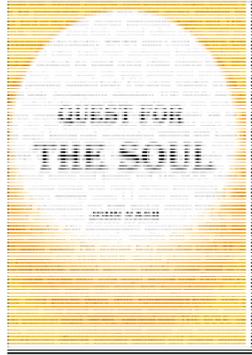
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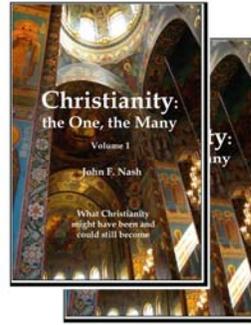
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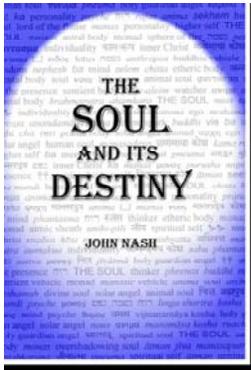
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# Awakening to Cosmos: The Jupiter-Chiron-Neptune Conjunction in Aquarius 2009

Jan Detrich

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## Abstract

This article explores the astrological significance and meaning of a current conjunction of Jupiter, Chiron and Neptune in Aquarius. It touches upon the growing influence of minor planets and examines the impact of the small planet Chiron on world culture since its discovery in 1977. The article concludes with a synopsis of current astrological trends that are setting the stage for a new world order.

## Overview

*“Only in striving for the interplanetary can we be assured of the evolution of humanity.”<sup>1</sup>*

Major planetary configurations convey vital elements of the unfolding cosmic narrative, just like the discovery of each new planet adds dimension and meaning to the revelation of Life and consciousness on Earth. All the major and minor planets in the solar system are living Gods who are “informed by a cosmic Entity under the influence of the Life impulses of the solar Logos.”<sup>2</sup> As they revolve around the Sun they form energetic relationships that enliven, impel and awaken us to new possibilities, fresh perspectives and to that which was, hitherto, unimaginable.

A number of grand, unprecedented, celestial events are concurrently underway that are bringing about a momentous turning point in the evolution of humanity. Pluto’s ingress into Capricorn and a legendary Saturn-Uranus opposition are in full force, and now an auspicious and unprecedented triple conjunction of Jupiter, Chiron and Neptune in Aquarius is emerging on the cosmic scene.

An astrological conjunction occurs when two or more planets are closely aligned, creating an amplification of their combined energy and

power. When multiple planets are involved (like the Jupiter-Chiron-Neptune conjunction) an astrological configuration called a *stellium* occurs, which is a dynamic constellation of energies that are powerfully synergistic. Whenever major planetary configurations involve transpersonal planets or signs, cosmos is unfolding and revealing new facets of the macrocosm that are always far-reaching, although initially somewhat obscure. For example, a Neptune-Uranus conjunction in 1993 coincided with the birth of *Mosaic*, the very first major public browser for the World Wide Web, now credited with popularizing the Internet.<sup>3</sup> Who would have ever imagined the broad impact this technology would have on the world in the years that followed?

The triple conjunction of Jupiter, Chiron and Neptune in Aquarius is considered an auspicious alignment that will have a definite impact on the existing world culture and group consciousness. Planets positioned in Aquarius are intensified at this time because we are entering the Age of Aquarius, and this constellation’s “influence is gaining in momentum...and is largely responsible for the changes now being effected in our planetary life in all the kingdoms of nature.”<sup>4</sup> Aquarius rules the circulatory system in the human body and, on a much larger scale, governs the distribution and flow of energy in the planetary

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## About the Author

Jan Detrich has been a student of astrology and the wisdom teachings for over thirty years. She is currently the Executive Director of Life Wisdom Institute and a regular contributor at Soul Source, Center for Conscious Living in Pennsylvania. Ms. Detrich maybe contacted at: [janajo9@cs.com](mailto:janajo9@cs.com).

etheric body and beyond. It is foremost a sign of “universal relationships, interplay and consciousness.”<sup>5</sup> Thus this combination of planets in Aquarius will re-energize discoveries and exploration into inner and outer space, foster altruism, and encourage a more holistic world-view.

Although Chiron and Neptune have been in close proximity in Aquarius since last year, this ground-breaking conjunction of Jupiter, Chiron and Neptune in Aquarius recently began in May, will continue through August, and recur in December 2009. The lesser conjunction of just Chiron and Neptune will extend into 2010 with two exact conjunctions in February and December.

Historically, similar conjunctions of Jupiter, Chiron and Neptune were renewing and restorative, fueling scientific and technological discoveries and advancements in human welfare and philanthropy. For example, a triple conjunction in Libra in 1945 coincided with the end of World War II and marked a new era of relative peace in the world. It fueled a post-war period of healing and reconstruction, mass evacuation of concentration camps, the return of military personnel to their homelands, and resulted in the official founding of the United Nations on October 24, 1945. A paralleling triple conjunction in Taurus in 1881 coincided with the founding of the American Red Cross and the invention of the world’s first electrical power distribution system, which in time became the basis for electrical power transmission and electrical light grids all over the world.

Although Jupiter, Chiron and Neptune are in the fixed sign of Aquarius at this time, they have an easy and natural affinity with the mutable signs, which will support and complement the “constant movement... changing activity and recurrent mutations”<sup>6</sup> that are so

characteristic of Aquarius. For example, Chiron is strongly linked with Virgo and Sagittarius; Jupiter is the exoteric ruler of Sagittarius and the hierarchical ruler of Virgo; and Jupiter and Neptune are the exoteric co-rulers of Pisces—all mutable placements.

The current triple conjunction of Jupiter, Chiron and Neptune in Aquarius is an opportunity for spiritual and global healing that will cause us to see the interconnectedness and Oneness of life more clearly. At the heart of the current triad is Jupiter, one of the seven sacred planets and the esoteric (soul) ruler of Aquarius. Jupiter expresses the Second Ray of Love-Wisdom, which will further global cooperation and collaboration, greater inclusivity, goodwill, and synthesis. Jupiter in Aquarius is “the outgoing expression of love, which attracts...the good of the whole,”<sup>7</sup> and this placement has often coincided with expansions in group consciousness.

Since 1998 when Neptune first entered the sign Aquarius, areas of world glamour have come to light, and there has been a slow but steady dissolution and dissipation of some of the archaic boundaries that have separated humanity for eons. Neptune expresses the heart of the Sun and the light of wisdom. “It is a planet closely linked with the work of the Soul in manifestation and is thus the vehicle for the Christ Consciousness.”<sup>8</sup> Neptune in Aquarius is fueling united aspiration, brotherhood, spiritual interplay, and a more enlightened social conscience. And likewise, the minor planet Chiron, considered the rainbow bridge between the material and spiritual worlds, is exposing our collective wounds and global challenges, and providing important keys to their integration and reconciliation. Undoubtedly, this confluence of planets has the potential to ameliorate and mitigate some of the sharp edges of the current global crises with elements of transcendence, healing and grace.

**The current triple conjunction of Jupiter, Chiron and Neptune in Aquarius is an opportunity for spiritual and global healing that will cause us to see the interconnectedness and Oneness of life more clearly.**

## Chiron and the Minor Planets

Planetoids are basically small planets that orbit the Sun and are part of the solar body. There are now over 65,000 of these orbiting objects and minor planets—asteroids, comets and dwarf planets—that have been categorized according to their size, makeup, and position within the solar system. Astronomers sort the location of these smaller planetary bodies by regions or zones situated inside the orbit of Jupiter, between Jupiter and Neptune, or in the vast region beyond Neptune.

The Ageless Wisdom teaches that there are numerous minor planets that “have an energy or attractive quality all their own.”<sup>9</sup> However, “owing to their relative insignificance, they have not yet been considered factors of moment. This attitude of mind will change when etheric vision is a fact, and the reality of the existence of an etheric double of all that is in manifestation will be recognized by scientists. This fact will be demonstrated towards the close of the century and, during the early part of the next century a revolution in astronomical circles will occur that will result in the study of the etheric planets.”<sup>10</sup>

Centaur planets are a group of asteroids with comet-like bodies usually located in the region between Jupiter and Neptune. They have an unusual transient orbit that crosses over the orbital path of major planets, and are named after the centaurs in Greek mythology that were half man-half horse because likewise they are half asteroid-half comet, and are known for their somewhat eccentric nature. Chiron, discovered in 1977, was the first known member of this class of centaurs, and the only centaur planet to date to be designated as both an asteroid and a comet with known cometary activity.

The planet Chiron was named after the most renowned centaur in Greek mythology, commonly referred to as “the wounded healer.” Most centaurs were considered to be crude and amoral, with the exception of Chiron who taught all the children of the Gods including Hercules and Achilles, and was celebrated

as a wise teacher, healer and prophet. Chiron was the product of an unfortunate union between the God Kronus and the beautiful nymph Philyra, and upon seeing her newborn son Philyra was so revolted by his appearance as half-horse that she immediately fled, tragically leaving Chiron orphaned. Later, to his great fortune, he was found and adopted by the Greek sun god Apollo who raised him and taught him everything he knew, and Chiron went on to become a revered teacher, healer, astrologer and oracle.

Chiron earned his name as the “wounded healer” when, during the course of an altercation, he was accidentally shot in the leg by Hercules’ arrow that had the poisonous venom of a Hydra still on it. The wound caused Chiron agonizing and protracted pain but because he was the son of a God and immortal, he could not die. So he withdrew to the mountainside and spent the rest of his life deepening his knowledge of herbs and natural healing and administering to the sick and the poor.

In time, as an act of contrition, Hercules bargained with his father Zeus to exchange Chiron’s immortality for the life of Prometheus who had been chained to a rock and left to die for his transgressions. Zeus agreed and the exchange took place. After nine days in the underworld Chiron died and was released from his terrible suffering. Following his death Hercules asked Zeus to immortalize Chiron with a coveted place in heaven as the constellation Sagittarius. For this reason Hercules, who was the catalyst of Chiron’s wound, became the instrument of his supreme glorification.

However blessed and yet tragic Chiron’s story is, it is the perfect allegory for the stages of human evolutionary development from Virgo through Sagittarius. Beginning with the birth of the hidden Christ in Virgo, to Libra where an interlude of balance is achieved between the spiritual and human nature, to the arduous battle between personality and soul—death and immortality—in Scorpio, to the glorification of Self as an accepted disciple in Sagittarius—the

myth of Chiron characterizes the journey of Self-actualization and wholeness. Chiron was born half man and half God, achieved an interlude of harmony and peace as a revered public servant, went on to fight a fierce and painful psychological and physical battle, and later was immortalized and glorified with a place in heaven.

The myth of Chiron is humanity's story. We are both human and divine. We suffer from the daily challenges of being human and from a much deeper longing for our divine nature. There is a "mythic necessity in our particular wound"<sup>11</sup> because it takes us on an evolutionary quest for meaning and wholeness, which causes us not only to face and embrace our problems and challenges, but to undergo a psycho-spiritual process of transformation and atonement that draws forth our higher potential. The archetype of Chiron teaches us that there is a silver lining in the worst possible conditions, and that the grace that arises from our challenges is ultimately liberating. Due to its highly unusual orbit, Chiron is considered a "maverick" planet—a trait that is very much a part of its non-conforming nature. To be "chirotic" is to be an independent, creative thinker who lives outside the bounds of the establishment. Not surprisingly, Chiron's discovery occurred at the height of the human potential movement—when spirituality, psychology and physical healing began to merge into a variety of alternative and "holistic" approaches. The etymology of Chiron's name is derived from the root "chiro," meaning "one who is skilled with hands." Thus chiropractic, massage therapy, acupuncture, and other hands-on healing arts and modalities have grown in popularity since the time of Chiron's discovery.

The impact of the Chiron archetype on psychology, astrology, ecology, medicine, and human consciousness has been extraordinary over the past thirty years. In a relatively short span of time integrative and alternative approaches have become the norm in leadership, management, education, economy, communications, science, criminality, politics, health-care, and science. There is literally no depart-

ment of society that has not been impacted by this integrative trend. For example in Ken Wilbur's groundbreaking first book, *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, published in 1977 (the same year that Chiron was discovered), he introduced a new *integral* approach to psychology that details the stages of human development and consciousness. One of the stages he cites is the "centaur stage"—an existential phase of development where mind and body are united.<sup>12</sup>

## Current Trends

*"We understand how the great future is being prepared...beauty is born of tension."<sup>13</sup>*

The current emphases of planets in Aquarius, and the overall astrological climate of this period, has broad implications given that the entire century leading up to 2025 is a crucial turning point in the history of humanity called "The Stage of the Forerunner." It is *preparatory* in nature, *testing* in its methods, and intended to be *revelatory* in its techniques and results.<sup>14</sup> The Ancient Maya also knew this would be a time of great change in the world because in the Mayan calendar 2012 marks the end and the beginning of a 30,000 year galactic cycle that inaugurates a whole new era for humanity. Unquestionably this is an amazing and unparalleled time in history that carries very serious challenges, yet enormous opportunity.

The two most significant astrological aspects this year are a Saturn-Uranus opposition and the Jupiter-Chiron-Neptune conjunction in Aquarius, which are happening simultaneously and working in tandem. The Saturn-Uranus opposition, which began last November and triggered the crisis in the global economy, is having a huge impact on the entire planet. Historically this opposition involves critical times of reckoning and turning points that mark the end of an era and the birth of a new order. Saturn represents the status quo, the material world and the conventional order of things, and Uranus represents evolutionary progress and change. Within this opposition there is a tug-of-war between ancient material forces and an outworn system of greed and divisiveness, as well as a new incoming era of enlightened

social conscience based on higher values of unity, right human relations, global consciousness, sharing, cooperation and equality.

As an expression of the Second Ray, the energies of Jupiter-Chiron-Neptune in Aquarius are vitalizing and strengthening this new paradigm. We can see this

emerging and manifesting in a number of ways. Most recently in President Obama's speech in Cairo, entitled "A New Beginning," he gave voice to the collective longings of humanity for greater diplomacy, global unity and world peace. He outlined various points of tension and conflict in the world, yet demanded an end to the long cycle of separation and dissension. He said, "So long as our relationship is defined by our differences, we will empower those who sow hatred rather than peace, and who promote conflict rather than the cooperation that can help all of our people achieve justice and prosperity. *This cycle of suspicion and discord must end.*" In his summation he appealed to all of humanity by saying, "We have the power to make the world we seek, but only if we have the courage to make *a new beginning.*" And he closed with the proclamation, "The people of the world can live together in peace. We know that is God's vision. Now that must be our work here on Earth."<sup>15</sup> As a prominent world leader with Aquarius rising, President Obama is emerging right along with the influx of Aquarian energies as a universal guide and agent of change, not only in America but throughout the world. He is acting as a channel for a higher frequency of what the triple conjunction has to offer—world unity, commonality of spiritual ideals and aspirations, and greater coherence in a world long divided.

Another intriguing manifestation of these triadic energies in Aquarius is in science. Since Neptune entered Aquarius in 1993, increas-

ingly science and religion have been merging in profound ways. Science has shifted from simply trying to understand the mechanics of the material world to attempting to understand the world of subtle energies and the interconnectedness of all life. On May 14, 2009, with the triple conjunction in close proximity, Europe's Herschel and Planck telescopes were launched in an effort to probe deeper into outer space than has ever been possible.<sup>16</sup> What's more, just five days later, on May 19, 2009, the Americans released an updated version of the Hubble Space Telescope back into space that will repair and upgrade the aging observatory, making it 90 times more powerful than it originally was.<sup>17</sup> Clearly the incoming Aquarian energies are furthering exploration into outer space and placing a spotlight on our connection to cosmos.

Another demonstration of Chiron and Neptune in Aquarius

over the past several years, which is growing at lightning speed, is the revolution in the communal aspects of digital culture. There are six billion videos shared on YouTube each month, three billion photos available on Flickr, and a mushrooming of collaborative sites such as Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Digg, StumbleUpon, Wikipedia and Wetpaint (to name just a few). There is a huge trend toward digital communities, communal efforts and engagement that is ultimately focusing our attention on our interconnections.

Although not as apparent as the current crisis in the global economy, the Jupiter-Chiron-Neptune energies are subtly infusing world culture with love and wisdom. For example, broad spiritual awareness and consciousness movements such as the "A New Earth Webcast" series, hosted by Oprah Winfrey and Eckhart Tolle last year, had over six million participants; in May 2009 the world's wealthiest philanthropists gathered in an unprecedented secret meeting in New York City to

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collaborate on meeting global need; and, as a positive result of the economic debacle, sociologists report a trend toward greater empathy and “people coming together” in their misfortune.

Astrologically the triple conjunction is not challenged by hard aspects. So there will be very few impediments to the infusion of added empathy, cooperation, compassion and wisdom this year. A semi-sextile with Uranus (the exoteric ruler of Aquarius) may create an air of uneasiness, but it is unlikely that events will reach another dramatic crisis point until the summer of 2010.

In an address to the graduating Class of 2009 at the University of Portland, Paul Hawken, a leading environmentalist and author, captures the gist of incoming Aquarian energies quite vividly. In his speech he said, “What I see everywhere in the world are ordinary people willing to confront despair, power and incalculable odds in order to restore some semblance of grace, justice and beauty to this world. The poet Adrienne Rich wrote, ‘So much has been destroyed, I have cast my lot with those who, age after age, perversely, with no extraordinary power, reconstitute the world.’ There could be no better description. Humanity is coalescing. It is reconstituting the world, and the action is taking place in schoolrooms, farms, jungles, villages, campuses, companies, refugee camps, deserts, fisheries and slums. You join a multitude of caring people. No one knows how many groups and organizations are working on the most salient issues of our day: climate change, poverty, deforestation, peace, water, hunger, conservation, human rights, and more. This is the largest movement the world has ever seen. Rather than control, *it seeks connection*. Rather than dominance, it strives to *disperse concentrations of power*.”<sup>18</sup>

Humanity stands at the threshold of a great awakening where collective consciousness will increasingly demonstrate core Aquarian values of universality and synthesis in acts of cooperation and collaboration, fusion, sharing and goodwill. A new world and new order are coming into being, and the energies in Aquar-

ius this year are both a precursor and prelude to that event.

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# From the *Zohar* to Safed: Development of the Theoretical Kabbalah

John F. Nash

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## Summary

Groundwork for the theoretical Kabbalah was laid in the 13th century by the monumental *Sefer ha-Zohar*, or “Book of Splendor.” But its full potential was realized 300 years later when an elite group of scholars gathered at Safed in Galilee. Moses Cordovero, Isaac Luria, Chaim Vital, and others codified the Zoharic teachings and built the elaborate system of theoretical, or “theosophical,” Kabbalah we recognize today. This article reviews the origins of the *Zohar* and the circumstances that led to the formation of the Safed community. It then proceeds to explore the development of major aspects of the theoretical Kabbalah over the 300-year period. Emphasis is placed on the Kabbalistic doctrine of divine emanation; the story of creation, fall and redemption; and teachings on ethics, the human soul, and spiritual progress. The article also notes that, despite patriarchal attitudes toward women, the Safed scholars articulated in some detail the qualities of the Divine Feminine.

## Objectives and Scope

This article’s primary objective is to stimulate greater appreciation of the Judaic theoretical Kabbalah as it unfolded between the 13th and 17th centuries. The theoretical Kabbalah—often referred to as the “theosophical” Kabbalah—combines traditional Judaic religious beliefs with Gnosticism and other forms of late-Hellenic thought.<sup>1</sup> It provides a conceptual framework for understanding the divine nature and God’s interaction with the universe and humanity. It also provides a roadmap for human spiritual development. The various branches of the Kabbalah overlap, but in

broad terms the theoretical Kabbalah contrasts with the mystical Kabbalah, whose purpose is contemplation of the Divine, and with the “practical” Kabbalah, whose purpose is magical invocation. Although the two latter branches survive to the present, the theoretical Kabbalah is the most familiar to modern esotericists.

During the same period addressed in this article, a “Christian Kabbalah” emerged in Florence and spread to other parts of Europe.<sup>2</sup> Strongly influenced by Renaissance Hermeticism,<sup>3</sup> it provided a basis for 19th- and early 20th-century occultism and for today’s popular Kabbalah. The modern Kabbalah overlaps and interacts not only with Hermeticism, but also with Jungian psychology, Theosophy and its offshoots, and eastern religious philosophy. Commentaries on the correspondences among these esoteric systems and the interactions among them would be welcome contributions to the literature.

## The *Zohar*

From the second century CE onward, Babylonia had been the center of Jewish scholarship, but in the 10th century the

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## About the Author

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Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad went into political and cultural decline.<sup>4</sup> As support eroded, large numbers of Jews left the region and migrated to southern Europe.

Some settled in Provence, in southern France. Provence was Christian, but the feudal jurisdictions that emerged from the breakup of Charlemagne's empire provided a tolerant environment in which orthodox Christians, Cathars and Jews lived together in relative harmony. Many more Jews settled in Moorish Spain, or *Al-Andalus*, as the Muslim conquerors called it. In 912 CE Abd-al-Rahman III proclaimed himself caliph and created a pluralistic society in which Muslims, Jews, and Christians collaborated to move the country toward its cultural apogee. Although discrimination eventually increased as Al-Andalus broke up into independent states, life for Jews remained tolerable until the Moors were driven from the country.

Contacts among the Jewish communities helped mold Sephardic Jewry into something approaching a unified religious and cultural entity.<sup>5</sup> Southern Europe provided a supportive environment for Jewish mysticism and scholarship, similar to what had once existed in Babylonia. Rabbis established elite schools of Kabbalah, first in Provence and then in Catalonia, Castile and other parts of present-day Spain.<sup>6</sup>

The schools' greatest contribution was publication of the classical Kabbalistic texts. The *Sefer Yetzirah* ("Book of Creation") and the *Sefer ha-Bahir* ("Brilliance") were published in Provence, probably in the late 12th century, and the much-longer *Sefer ha-Zohar* ("Book of Splendor") was published in Castile a century later. Whether those texts were newly written, or were compiled from earlier manuscripts or fragments, continues to be debated. But claims of their antiquity are not implausible,<sup>7</sup> and academic skepticism has softened somewhat in recent years.

According to tradition the *Zohar* was written by the second-century CE Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai who lived in Safed, Galilee.<sup>8</sup> Under

sentence of death, presumably for complicity in the bar Kokhba rebellion against Roman rule, Shimon and his son Elazar hid in a cave for 13 years. Shimon spent his time pursuing ascetic spiritual disciplines. Tradition recounts that he was taught by the prophet Elijah and that, upon emerging from the cave, he dictated the *Zohar* to Elazar and other close disciples. The text, formatted as a series of discourses on the Torah among Shimon and other rabbis, was written in a discursive, allegorical style.<sup>9</sup> It has sometimes been referred to as the *Midrash of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai*, drawing upon the term for the scriptural commentaries of the late-biblical and rabbinic periods.

Shimon and some of the other named discussants were real people, but we do not know whether the statements were theirs or were attributed to them later. *Pseudographia*, in which authors attribute ideas to prominent historical figures, was a common literary device throughout the centuries.<sup>10</sup> If Shimon really was the *Zohar's* author, he would be the first known Safed Kabbalist, living 1,400 years before those on whom the city's fame rests. Shimon reportedly prophesied that a time would come when even a six-year-old child could study the wisdom of Kabbalah; meanwhile, the *Zohar* would remain concealed for 1,200 years.

In the 13th century a Castilian rabbi, Moses de Léon (c.1250–1305), also known as Moshe ben Shem-Tov, claimed to have in his possession the manuscript of the *Zohar*, discovered in Shimon bar Yochai's grave. Even in Moses' own time, skeptics accused him of concocting the story to inflate the text's monetary value, and many modern historians agree. Supporting the *Zohar's* antiquity is the fact that it is written in Aramaic, rather than the medieval Hebrew of most contemporary Jewish texts; Aramaic was the vernacular language in Roman-era Palestine. However, medieval rabbis knew enough Aramaic to read the Talmud.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, a version of Aramaic survived in Babylonia, along with its close relative, Syriac. If the *Zohar* was not a medieval creation, it might be of Palestinian or Baby-

lonian origin; or it may have been written over an extended period of time by multiple authors in different locations. In any event Moses seems to have re-written the text, adding his own commentaries and giving it his own distinctive literary style.<sup>12</sup>

The newly published *Sefer Yetzirah*, *Bahir* and *Zohar* initially circulated among an elite group of Kabbalists. Nevertheless, publication permitted greater access to the teachings than had previously been possible. The texts communicated a worldview that reflected the combination of biblical Judaism, Gnosticism and Neoplatonism. They established a theology based on the descent of the Divine into manifestation; defined forms of mysticism and magic involving the Hebrew alphabet and divine names; and provided a wealth of teachings on the human constitution, ethical responsibilities, and spiritual development.

Despite its controversial origins, the *Zohar* was particularly well received. Within two centuries of its publication, the text acquired a canonical standing comparable to that of the Torah and the Talmud, not just in Kabbalistic circles but in Judaism at large.<sup>13</sup> To say that Moses de Léon “published” the *Zohar* should not obscure the fact that all texts of the time were copied laboriously by hand. A printed copy of the *Zohar* did not appear until 1558.

## The Safed School

### Cultural Context

The supportive environment of southern Europe came to an end in the 13th century, just as Kabbalistic studies were reaching their peak. The Inquisition came to France in 1233, and religious toleration rapidly declined. Its main focus was on the Cathars, but Jews soon discovered that they too were unwelcome.

Meanwhile, Al-Andalus was crumbling as Christian armies conquered the Iberian Peninsula. By the mid-13th century, only Granada remained in Islamic hands. Christian rule brought increasing persecution of Jews and Muslims, and their woes increased in

1478 when the Spanish Inquisition was commissioned. In 1492—the year Christopher Columbus discovered America—the armies of Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile captured Granada and claimed the whole of Spain for Christendom. One of the monarchs’ first actions was to issue a nationwide decree giving non-Christians an ultimatum of conversion or exile. Many Jews, whose families had lived in Spain for five centuries, accepted baptism,<sup>14</sup> but others—estimated to be more than 100,000—chose to leave the country. Some Jews took refuge in neighboring Portugal, which had secured independence as a Christian nation in 1249. Unfortunately, that tactic only bought another five years’ freedom. In 1497 the Portuguese Inquisition gave Jews a similar ultimatum, and a further mass exodus ensued.

The forced migration of Sephardic Jews created a large-scale Diaspora. Some moved to the Netherlands,<sup>15</sup> while others settled in Venice or in Fez and Alexandria in north Africa. In due course, many Jews traveled on to Sicily, Greece, and the Middle East. The rapidly expanding Ottoman Empire offered a particularly attractive destination. The Ottoman Turks had conquered Constantinople in 1453 and made it their capital. In 1516 they wrested control of Palestine from the Egyptian Mamluks.<sup>16</sup> Jews were welcomed into the Ottoman Empire with generous promises of religious toleration and opportunities to play significant roles in society. Skills in crafts, business, and the professions—notably medicine—made them sought-after immigrants. Everywhere the Jewish migrants went, rabbis followed to serve their spiritual needs. In due course schools of Torah and Kabbalah were established.

The Diaspora gave rise both to apocalyptic sentiments and to a sense of new beginnings. Influential people claimed that they were receiving messages from prophets of the biblical period. Others claimed to be guided by *maggidim*, or angels. The singular *maggid* (Hebrew: מגיד) is sometimes translated as “mentor-angel,” and some *maggidim* seem to have resembled the “holy guardian

angels” of Ashkenazic tradition.<sup>17</sup> Another widespread belief was that the sufferings of the Jewish people prefaced the appearance of a messiah. That belief gained strength when substantial numbers of Jews arrived in Palestine in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. For the first time in nearly 1,500 years, Jews felt welcome in their ancestral homeland—welcomed, no less, by Muslim rulers.

Within 40 years of the expulsion from Spain, displaced Sephardic Jews began to arrive at Safed, in the mountains of Galilee. Safed already had a small Jewish population, mostly *Musta'arabim*, or Arabic-speaking Jews, whose ancestors had survived oppression by Roman occupation forces, in the first and second centuries, and uneasy relationships with the Byzantine Christian rulers and the pre-Ottoman Muslims of later times. The city was poor; its spiritual leader, Rabbi Peretz Colobo, had to support himself by operating a grocery store.<sup>18</sup> But Safed was replete with legends. One legend asserted that Shem and Ever, son and grandson of Noah, established their *yeshiva*, or school of Torah, in Safed, and that Jacob had studied there. Another popular legend asserted that the first-century Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was buried in Safed.

With the influx of 8,000-10,000 displaced Jews, Safed grew rapidly and increased in prosperity.<sup>19</sup> It also became a major center of Jewish spirituality; the first book in Hebrew to be published in the Middle East was printed there. Most importantly for our theme, 16th-century Safed became a center of Kabbalistic study whose fame soon spread throughout the Middle East and Europe.

### **The Safed Kabbalists**

Among the Jews who left Spain in 1492 were the Rabbi Joseph Saragossi, a native of Saragossa, and a four-year-old boy from Toledo named Joseph Caro. Saragossi traveled to Palestine and in 1496 was appointed chief rabbi of Sidon. Later he established a school in Safed where he taught the Talmud and Kabbalah.<sup>20</sup> Caro (1488–1575) was a

child prodigy and by age 20 was already recognized as an authority on rabbinic law. In 1535, while living in Salonica, Macedonia, a maggid urged him to move to Safed. When he arrived there two years later, he found a community that had already grown to more than 1,000 Jewish families. Along with his teacher, the Rabbi Jacob Taitatzak, he reestablished the ancient rite of rabbinic ordination—believed to be a necessary step before the messiah could come.<sup>21</sup>

Moses ben Jacob Cordovero (1522–1570) was either born in Safed or arrived there in infancy. His family originally came from Córdoba, Spain, though it appears that they may have spent time in Portugal. The teenage Cordovero studied under Joseph Caro. Then, at the age of twenty, his maggid urged him to study the Kabbalah with his brother-in-law, Rabbi Solomon ha-Levi Alkabetz. He soon mastered the *Zohar* and completed his first book, the monumental *Pardes Rimonim* (“Orchard of Pomegranates”), in 1548. Cordovero explained the title thus: “[I]t is the orchard that I planted and where I shall delight. Its treatises are its shoots, its chapters its pomegranates. There, new interpretations are arranged orderly, like the seeds of the pomegranate.”<sup>22</sup>

Whereas the *Zohar* was written in an often-impenetrable midrashic style, Cordovero’s treatment of the Kabbalah was orderly and logical. His methods were influenced by the scholasticism of Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) who introduced Aristotelian categories into Jewish theological speculation.<sup>23</sup> *Pardes Rimonim* put all that was known of the Kabbalah up to that time onto a systematic basis, and it established Cordovero as a leading Kabbalist. Another famous work was his *Tomer Devorah* (“Palm Tree of Deborah”), a treatise on morality based on Kabbalistic principles. As their reputations grew, Caro and Cordovero attracted other scholars to Safed, and each assembled a group of disciples. Had he not been overshadowed—somewhat unfairly, perhaps—by Isaac Luria, Cordovero would be remembered as the greatest of the Safed Kabbalists.

Isaac ben Solomon Luria (1534–1572) was born in Jerusalem to German parents. That ancestry set him aside from most others in Safed because he came from Ashkenazic rather than Sephardic roots. Luria spent some time in Egypt, living as a hermit on the banks of the Nile. In 1569, allegedly in response to instructions from Elijah, he moved to Safed to study with Cordovero just months before the latter's death. An outstanding scholar, poet and mystic, Luria became known as the *Ari*, or "the Lion." "Ari" is interpreted variously as Ashkenazi Rabbi Isaac or as *Adonenu* ("Our Master") Rabbi Isaac. Luria claimed that Elijah and earlier teachers continued to speak to him. It is also said that, every night, angels escorted Luria to "celestial academies" where other ancient sages instructed him.<sup>24</sup>

Whereas Cordovero had taken a rational approach to the Kabbalah, Luria took a more mystical approach. The modern writer Eliahu Klein shares this insight:

The Ari doesn't ask why. He describes and reveals complex levels of intermingling, interfacing, creating, dissolving, and recreating of energy on a myriad of intra-Divine dimensions. It seems he is in the midst of constant visions.<sup>25</sup>

Luria would lead his students—who came to be known as the "Lion Cubs"—on walks through the graveyards in and around Safed. He encouraged them to lie down on the graves of *zaddikim* ("saints") and absorb their wisdom.<sup>26</sup> Luria favored an oral style of teaching, arguing that books could not contain true wisdom. His writings are limited to a commentary on one section of the *Zohar* and a few poems and prayers. Isaac Luria died in an outbreak of the plague at the age of 38. He had spent only three years in Safed, but in that short time he accomplished much and won wide acclaim.

Most of what we know of Isaac Luria's Kabbalistic teachings comes from his disciples, the chief of whom was the Rabbi Chaim ben Joseph Vital (1543–1620). Vital was born in Safed and was educated in the Torah by leading rabbis. As a young man he

had a vision that convinced him to study the Kabbalah. He studied first with Cordovero and then with Luria. Observing that his latter master committed few teachings to writing, Vital began to take copious notes of everything he learned.

However Vital shared Luria's reluctance to see Kabbalistic teachings published. When Luria died, Vital—still in his 20s—demanded that other students give him their notes for safekeeping.<sup>27</sup> According to legend, the teachings only became known because friends took advantage of a period when Vital was sick to make surreptitious copies of his manuscripts. In due course the writings were published as the *Etz Chayyim* ("Tree of Life"), and from that book we have the most complete account of Luria's teachings. Among much else, the teachings asserted that study of the Kabbalah was pleasing to God, because that would facilitate the coming of the messiah. Vital spent most of his later life away from Safed, and he died in Damascus. For several years his outlook was dominated by Luria's teachings, but eventually he developed greater independence and shared his own insights. Before his death, Vital ordered that all his writings be buried with him. Several years later, after performing a ritual known as *Sheilat Shalom* ("Requesting Peace"), students retrieved the manuscripts and published them.

The secrecy favored by Isaac Luria and Chaim Vital represented a return to attitudes in late antiquity and the early medieval period. But the larger Kabbalistic community was eager to study their work, and the teachings quickly spread to Italy, Poland and elsewhere. From then on any attempts to restrict dissemination were fruitless. A major stimulus was the invention of the printing press. The first printed version of the *Zohar* appeared in Mantua, Italy, in 1558,<sup>28</sup> and other important texts were printed soon thereafter.

Sadly, the Safed scholars were accused of sowing the seeds of the Sabbatean messianic movement of the late 17th century. In the 1660s, the charismatic but psychologically unstable Sabbatai Zevi proclaimed himself

messiah and attracted popular support throughout the Jewish world. When Zevi converted to Islam to escape execution by the Turkish sultan, the movement turned into a fiasco.<sup>29</sup> From the lofty heights that the Kabbalah had attained within Judaism after publication of the *Zohar*, Kabbalistic study quickly became tainted, and remained so for three centuries.

A few brave Kabbalists continued their studies, among them the Italian Rabbi Moses Chaim Luzzatto (1707–1746). Reportedly he mastered all the teachings of Isaac Luria by the time he was 14 and wrote his first book on the Kabbalah one year later. He went on to write numerous other works, some of them under the guidance of a maggid whom, he claimed, revealed previously unpublished teachings of Luria.<sup>30</sup> Accused of messianic ambitions of his own, Luzzatto was persecuted and forced to leave Italy, moving first to Germany and then to the Netherlands. He finally settled in Tiberias, Palestine, where he died from the plague at the age of 39. His *Klalout Hailan* (“Essentials of the Tree of Life”)<sup>31</sup> provides a concise summary of Luria’s teachings. Whereas Vital captured Luria’s stream-of-consciousness style of teaching, Luzzatto expressed the teachings more logically.<sup>32</sup>

## The Divine Emanations

The Safed scholars’ greatest contribution was to put the theoretical Kabbalah on a firm foundation. Moses Cordovero, Isaac Luria, and others drew upon concepts from the *Zohar* and developed them into an elaborate system of theology. In the spirit of Maimonides’ scholasticism, the rabbis conceived of the Godhead as “Absolute Being.” Moreover the Godhead was deemed to be *necessary*: its very definition demanded existence.<sup>33</sup> The Godhead was referred to as the “Concealed of the Concealed,” entirely unknowable, beyond any power of human understanding. It was concealed behind three “veils”: the *Ain* (“Ultimate”), the *Ain Sof* (“Limitless”), and the *Ain Sof Aur* (אין סוף אור, “Limitless Light”). Strictly speaking, since we can speak of the veils, they cannot be the true Godhead; however,

for convenience we often refer to it as the “Ain Sof.”

## The Sefiroth

Kabbalistic doctrine asserts that the Godhead manifests, or reveals itself, through the *sefiroth* (singular: *sefirah*, ספירה, “number” or “counting”). Cordovero followed classical Kabbalistic teachings in identifying ten sefiroth: *Kether*, *Chokmah*, *Binah*, *Chesed*, *Geburah*, *Tifareth*, *Netzach*, *Hod*, *Yesod* and *Malkuth* (Table 1).<sup>34</sup> Whereas the Ain Sof is without limitation, the sefiroth are limited by their respective attributes and by being differentiated, one from another.<sup>35</sup> Those attributes allow the sefiroth to be apprehended by the human mind.

The sefirothic names were all common words in the Hebrew Bible, but in Kabbalistic teachings they acquired a richness of meaning that is reflected in the etymology of “sefirah.” Four words from the same root are: *sefar* (ספר, “number”), *sefer* (ספר, “text” or “book”), *sippur* (סיפור, “sound” or “pronunciation”), and *sappir* (ספיר, “sapphire” or “light”).<sup>36</sup> Implicit in “sefirah” are notions of divine light, number symbolism, and the written, spoken, or chanted word. Table 1 shows the conventional English translations of the sefirothic names, but Kabbalists prefer to use the Hebrew names to avoid trivializing the underlying concepts.

Explaining why there must be precisely ten sefiroth, Cordovero turned to the Tetragrammaton, the unutterable name of God. He observed that the four Hebrew letters of the Tetragrammaton, (YHVH, יהוה) expand to ten when the letters are spelled out: *yod* (יוד), *he* (הא), *vav* (ווא), *he* (הא).<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, as Pythagoras had pointed out, ten is the sum of the digits one through four. “Ten” also had special significance in the Torah, where we find the Decalogue and the ten “sayings” of *Genesis* 1: “God said, let there be light... God said, let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters...,” and so forth. On the other hand, the Safed scholars frequently violated the “rule of ten” by speaking of an eleventh quasi-sefirah, *Daath*, interposed between *Binah* and *Chesed*.

sed. Cordovero hinted that Daath served the role of “the Harmonizer” among the ten sefiroth.<sup>38</sup>

An important question addressed by the Safed Kabbalists was whether the sefiroth should be viewed as divine emanations or as the vessels into which the emanations flowed. Cordovero concluded that the two views were both valid and mutually complementary.<sup>39</sup> Each sefirah can be considered as a form and also as the light that dwells within it. The divine light descends from Kether to Malkuth, cascading like water from one sefirothic vessel to the next. At each stage the light encounters denser levels of reality, until in Malkuth it reaches the physical level.

From an early date, scholars and mystics explored the rich symbolism of the sefiroth, citing planets, signs of the zodiac, angels, directions in space, and other meaningful correlates. Kabbalists of the 13th century and the Safed period were fond of correlating the sefiroth with parts of the body: Kether with the head, Chesed and Geburah with the right and left arms, Yesod with the phallus, and so on. They also correlated selected sefiroth with biblical figures; for example, Abraham was associated with Chesed, Isaac with Geburah, Jacob and Moses with Tifareth, and Yesod with Joseph.<sup>40</sup> Verses of scripture offered a further fruitful basis for correlation. Cordovero associated the sefiroth with the ten “praise” verses in *Psalms* 150, and these are shown in Table 2.<sup>41</sup> For example, “Praise God in His sanctuary,” which forms part of verse 1, was assigned to Kether, and “Praise him with the psaltery and harp,” part of verse 3, to Tifareth.

Another practice dating from early times was to assign divine names to the sefiroth. Table 2 shows the assignments according to the Safed tradition.<sup>42</sup> For example, *YHVH Adonai* (יהוה אדוני, “YHVH Lord”) was assigned to Binah, and *Shaddai El-Chai* (שדי אל חי, “Almighty Living God”) to Yesod. While the divine names served the primary purposes of invocatory magic and mystical contemplation, their symbolism

also sheds light on our understanding of the sefiroth.

The *Zohar* hinted that the sefiroth formed a symbolic structure and referred to three columns or pillars. But it was the Safed scholars who depicted that structure in precise spatial terms and drew the glyph, or schematic diagram, known as the *Tree of Life* (*Etz Chayyim*, עץ חיים). Cordovero and Isaac Luria each proposed versions of the Tree, and many later scholars offered their own. Figure 1 shows the sefiroth linked in numerical order. The zigzag path, referred to in modern works as the “Lightning Flash,” represents the primary line of descent of the divine light from the Ain Sof to Malkuth. As the *Zohar* had suggested, the sefiroth are arranged on three vertical pillars. Chokmah, Chesed and Netzach lie on the *Pillar of Mercy*; Binah, Geburah and Hod lie on the *Pillar of Severity*; and Kether, Daath, Tifareth, Yesod and Malkuth lie on the middle *Pillar of Equilibrium*. Safed teachings placed Mercy on the right and Severity on the left.<sup>43</sup> The sefiroth on the two outer pillars represent contrasting divine attributes. As we shall see later, they can also represent contrasting human impulses or experiences.

In most representations of the Tree of Life, the original ten sefiroth are connected by paths, or *netivoth* (singular: *nativ*, נתיב). The paths represent juxtapositions or associations among pairs of sefiroth. Their primary significance is not to the cosmos or even to humanity at large but to individual spiritual challenge.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps, as a result, no universally recognized set of paths has endured. Luria proposed the pattern of *netivoth* shown in Figure 2. Building upon suggestions in the *Sefer Yetzirah*, he related the paths to Hebrew letters. Specifically he assigned the three “mother” letters, *alef*, *mem* and *shin*, to the horizontal paths; the seven “double” letters, *beth*, *gimel*, *daleth*, *kaf*, *pe*, *resh* and *tav*, to the vertical paths; and the 12 “single” letters, *he*, *vav*, *zayin*, *cheth*, *teth*, *yod*, *lamed*, *nun*, *samech*, *ayin*, *tzaddi* and *kof*, to the diagonal paths.<sup>45</sup>

It should be emphasized that Luria's assignments of Hebrew letters are not the same as the assignments suggested in the 19th and 20th centuries and that remain popular today. Notwithstanding, virtually all modern versions of the Tree of Life continue to restrict the number of paths to 22—the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet—even though certain pairs of sefiroth have to be left unconnected.<sup>46</sup> For example, in the Lurianic version shown in Figure 2, Malkuth is not connected to either Hod or Netzach. In an alternative version hinted at by Cordovero and formulated in detail by the 18th-century Kabbalist Eliahu Gaon of Vilna, those two connections are made, but Tifareth is not linked to Chokmah and Binah.<sup>47</sup>

Although the sefiroth are differentiated, the Safed rabbis stressed their unity in the divine essence from which they emanated. By inference, each sefirah contains the seeds of all the others. Thus it is meaningful to speak of “the Kether in Tifareth,” or “the Netzach in Chokmah.”<sup>48</sup> Some representations of the Tree of Life, proposed in the 16th–18th centuries, showed a miniature Tree embedded in each sefirah or drawn beside it. The resulting diagrams became quite complicated. Figure 3 shows an example of the work of the Christian Kabbalist Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1631–1689), who drew his inspiration from Isaac Luria.

### The Four Worlds

In addition to the sefiroth, the *Zohar* identified four levels of reality that they termed “worlds,” or *olamin* (singular *olam*: עולם). The four worlds are: *Atziluth*, *Briah*, *Yetzirah* and *Assiah* (Table 3). The divine light descends through the sefiroth from Kether to Malkuth, and it also descends

through the worlds—from Atziluth, the archetypal World of Emanation, to Assiah, the human World of Action. Cordovero explained: “[E]manation (Atziluth) comes from the Emanator, creation (Briah) from emanation, formation (Yetzirah) from creation, and action (Assiah) from formation.”<sup>49</sup>

The intermediate worlds of Briah and Yetzirah are, respectively, the domains of the archangels and lesser angels. Briah is considered feminine, complementing the masculine Atziluth. Luria correlated the worlds with the four letters of the Tetragrammaton (Table 3).<sup>50</sup>

Other Kabbalists correlated the four worlds with the elements of fire, air, water and earth, and therein we find a parallel with Greek philosophy. Plato told us in *Timaeus* that God created the “body of the universe” from fire and earth, but that “two things cannot be rightly put together”—that is, put together harmoniously—“without a third; there must be some bond of union between them.”<sup>51</sup> However, in an interesting subtlety, because the universe is “solid” this bond requires not one but *two* intervening elements: air and water.

Because of the four worlds, the Tree of Life can provide a psychological as well as a theological model. Its symbolism can be applied to both without minimizing the gulf between God and humanity—and perhaps without fear of blasphemy. Atziluth is the natural domain of the Divine, and Assiah the natural domain of humanity. But the worlds are not isolated from one another, and movement from one to another is possible. Just as the divine light descends through the sefiroth and through the worlds, the human soul has the opportunity to explore the sefiroth above Malkuth and the worlds above Assiah.

**Each sefirah can be considered as a form and also as the light that dwells within it. The divine light descends from Kether to Malkuth, cascading like water from one sefirothic vessel to the next. At each stage the light encounters denser levels of reality, until in Malkuth it reaches the physical level.**

## Creation, Fall and Redemption

One of the most interesting aspects of Kabbalistic thought, as it emerged from the *Zohar* and the Safed school, was a creation story. The story helped explain how the universe came into being in a rather imperfect state. In particular, it offered an explanation for the origin of evil. The story also provided more insight into the Ain Sof, the sefiroth, and humanity.

In the beginning, the story recounts, there was nothing but the Ain Sof—eternal, infinite, and self-sufficient. Then, for reasons which we cannot hope to penetrate, the Divine decided to manifest or reveal itself. The universe was produced by a process of emanation, or outpouring, of the divine light. The *Zohar* explained:

A spark of impenetrable darkness flashed within the concealed of the concealed from the head of Infinity—a cluster of vapor forming in formlessness ... not white, not black, not red, not green, no color at all... It yielded radiant colors. Deep within the spark gushed a flow, splaying colors below.<sup>52</sup>

The explosion of light was expressed through the Hebrew alphabet and the Torah constructed from it:

*And there was light*—light that already was. This light is concealed mystery, and expansion expanding, bursting from the mysterious secret of the hidden supernal aura. First it burst, generating from its mystery a single concealed point... It expanded, and seven letters of the alphabet shone within it [and in turn the remaining 15 letters.] The *expanse* congealed, folding into shape, forming forms. Torah was engraved there, to shine forth.<sup>53</sup>

Like many philosophers before and since their time, the Safed Kabbalists wondered how the infinite and unknowable could become finite and known. In particular, since

the Ain Sof occupied the whole of “space,” where could the universe be created? The proposed solution was that the Ain Sof underwent a “contraction,” or *tzimtzum* (צמצום), which left a circular or spherical region of emptiness. That dark void was penetrated by a single ray of divine light. To quote Luzzatto:

[God] willed to create, and contracted. His light to create all beings, by giving them a space... The space being circular, the Ain Sof encircles it from all sides. A ray emerged from Him, entered on one side...<sup>54</sup>

The void became a region of enormous potency. The prototypical *Adam Kadmon* (אדם קדמון, “primordial man”) was formed there, recalling God’s command: “Let us make man in our image.”<sup>55</sup> In turn, the ten sefiroth emerged, aligned with the various parts of his body.

The sefiroth were created by divine utterance. The theme that God created the universe by the power of speech runs through the whole of Jewish mysticism, and we have already noted the ten “sayings” of *Genesis* 1. We should also note that “sefirah” can be interpreted both as word and number, and the first ten letters of the Hebrew alphabet: *alef* through *yod*, represent the numbers one through 10. The creative ray of light that penetrated the void has sometimes been described as a *yod*, which has a numerical value of 10.

### Breaking and Repair of the Vessels

The divine light, the creation story continues, flowed into the sefirothic vessels in the highest world of Atziluth. However they were not robust enough to withstand the impact. The upper three sefiroth were damaged but survived; the lower seven did not: “All seven [lower] vessels shattered and collapsed, for they were not able to contain the light.”<sup>56</sup> The “breaking of the vessels:” the *shevirat ha-kelim* (שבירת הכלים), was a catastrophe of cosmic proportions.

Much of the divine light was withdrawn into the Ain Sof, while the shards from the broken forms fell into the lower realms to form the *klifoth* (singular: *klifah*, קל"פ, "husk" or "shell").<sup>57</sup> Separated from the Creator, the *klifoth* constituted the seeds of evil. Through the catastrophe duality came into the world. However, without that duality, perhaps we could not have enjoyed free-will—or even physical existence. Where precisely did the *klifoth* go? They were scattered through the three lower worlds: Bria, Yetzirah and Assiah<sup>58</sup>—or even down to a fifth world below them. Some teachers spoke of a World of Klifoth (*Olam ha-Klifoth*, עולם הקליפות), the underworld, the domain of evil. However each *klifah* retained qualities associated with its *sefirah* of origin; thus it is meaningful to speak of the "klifah of Geburah," the "klifah of Hod," and so forth.

God had to reconstruct the *sefirot*. The cosmic catastrophe was followed by the "repairing of the world," the *tikkun olam* (תיקון עולם).<sup>59</sup> Chaim Vital explained: "[I]t arose in His will to recreate all these worlds so they could bear the light... As a result, the lights returned more concealed; thus these worlds were sustained and enabled to contain the light."<sup>60</sup>

According to the Safed Kabbalists, the *sefirot* were not repaired directly. Instead, the *tikkun* involved an intermediate stage: the creation of five divine "personifications," or *partzufim*. The *partzufim* (singular *partzuf*, פרצוף, "face") can be understood in much the same way as the persons of the Christian trinity. They are listed in Table 4, and Figure 4 shows the simplified Tree of Life they form. Three of the *partzufim* were built around the damaged, but surviving, Kether,

Chokmah and Binah, and two new *partzufim* were created.

The *Arikk Anpin* (אריק אנפין), the rebuilt Kether, was identified with the Ancient of Days of *Daniel*<sup>61</sup> or, to emphasize its antiquity even more strongly, was presented as the "Ancient of Ancients." The *Arikk Anpin* stood aloof from duality as the presexual manifestation of God—or perhaps as the principle in which all polarities will eventually be resolved. Among the other four *partzufim* gender polarities were vividly portrayed.

Chokmah and Binah were rebuilt, respectively, as *Abba* (אבא,

"Father") and *Imma* (אמא, "Mother").<sup>62</sup> In turn, the cosmic parents gave birth to a son and daughter.<sup>63</sup> The son, the *Zeir Anpin* (זעיר אנפין, "son" or "heaven"), customarily referred to as "The Holy One," was compared with the biblical Jacob/Israel, father of the 12 tribes. The daughter *Nukvah* (נוקבה, "daughter" or "earth") was compared jointly with two of Jacob's four wives: the rival but complementary sisters, Leah and Rachel. Invoking yet another system of symbolism, the *Zeir Anpin* was identified with the Sun and *Nukvah* with the Moon.

**The Zohar asserts that "Malkuth is a body to the Shekinah," and "Shekinah" is often considered to be an alternative name for Malkuth. The feminine character of the lowest sefirah is not surprising when we recognize that it receives the divine force from all higher sephirot; receptivity is a primary feminine archetype.**

Allegory took precedence over consistency in the birth-story of the Holy One and *Nukvah*. Isaac Luria spoke at length about the children's birth as back-to-back Siamese twins who were separated later and turned "to face each other." Elsewhere he spoke of different gestation periods: the normal nine months for the *Zeir Anpin*, but 12 months for *Nukvah*.<sup>64</sup> In addition to being siblings, the Holy One and *Nukvah* were betrothed to be married. Luria's students, no less than other Kabbalists, were dismayed at the pros-

pect of an incestuous marriage. However, such taboos were held to apply only to humanity and not to the Divine.<sup>65</sup>

The final phase of creation/redemption was the reconstruction of the lower sefiroth from the Zeir Anpin and Nukvah. Nukvah became the new Malkuth. Her dual nature as both Leah and Rachel is reflected in the duality of Malkuth, where two realities coexist: “One is the world of concealment, namely Leah, and one is the world of revelation, namely Rachel.”<sup>66</sup>

The Zeir Anpin, centered on Tifareth, expanded to create five additional sefiroth: Chesed, Geburah, Netzach, Hod and Yesod—or six if Daath is included.<sup>67</sup> The six entities surrounding the Zeir Anpin/Tifareth form a hexagram, or Star of David (Figure 4).<sup>68</sup> The plural nature of the Zeir Anpin is reflected in the opening verse of *Genesis*: “In the beginning God created the heavens [shamayim, שָׁמַיִם] and the earth.” *Anpin* itself is a plural Aramaic word. According to the *Zohar*, Tifareth is identified with the six directions in space and also with the first three letters of the Tetragrammaton: *yod*, *he* and *vav*; the final *he* is associated with Malkuth.<sup>69</sup>

With the recreation of the lower sefiroth, the Tree of Life attained its now-familiar form.<sup>70</sup> According to the Safed Kabbalists, it was only in the “repairing of the world” that the three pillars emerged—and with them the Chesed-Geburah and Netzach-Hod dualities. The four worlds also took their familiar form with ten (or 11) sefiroth on each world (Figure 5).<sup>71</sup> By definition, the sefiroth—the divine emanations—emerged first on Atziluth, the World of Emanations. Subsequently, the corresponding sefiroth were created on the lower worlds: “There is a screen that separates one world from another. From this screen, the ten sefiroth of the lower world come out from the ten sefiroth of the higher world.”<sup>72</sup> The notion that the whole Tree of Life is reproduced on all four worlds contrasts with claims by some modern Kabbalists that there is only a two-dimensional Tree, and the “worlds” are comprised of subsets of sefiroth within it.

Although the partzufim and the sefiroth were now all in place, the link between the son, Zeir Anpin/Tifareth, and the daughter, Nukvah/Malkuth, remained tenuous. Moreover the latter lacked her full divine status. Like the moon that receives its light from the sun, Nukvah had no light of her own but depended on the light of the Zeir Anpin. The *Zohar* commented that the Zeir Anpin resides on the world of Atziluth, while Nukvah has fallen to Briah.<sup>73</sup> The “marriage” of Nukvah and the Zeir Anpin—their reunification on Atziluth—would not be consummated until the messiah comes. Meanwhile, Nukvah’s sole source of sustenance comes from the indirect link with her divine mother, Imma (Figure 4).

### The Shekinah

The story of the divine daughter Nukvah and the preparations for her wedding ran parallel and overlapped with the older story of the Shekinah (שְׁכִינָה).<sup>74</sup> The latter story had been developing for at least a millennium. In the *Talmud* the Shekinah denoted the immanence of God, the divine glory. Over time, the fact that “Shekinah” was a feminine noun took on more than grammatical significance; she began to acquire a feminine persona. Finally she evolved into a divine hypostatis—a feminine aspect of God. The Shekinah is mentioned no fewer than 1,065 times in the *Zohar*.<sup>75</sup>

The *Zohar* asserts that “Malkuth is a body to the Shekinah,”<sup>76</sup> and “Shekinah” is often considered to be an alternative name for Malkuth. The feminine character of the lowest sephirah is not surprising when we recognize that it receives the divine force from all higher sephiroth; receptivity is a primary feminine archetype. The Shekinah of Malkuth is the “lower Shekinah,” contrasting with, yet connected with, the transcendental, “supernal Shekinah” of Binah.<sup>77</sup> The “combined” Shekinah is a feminine divine expression reaching from the very highest levels to the plane of earthly existence. Here we see a parallel with the link, mentioned above, between Nukvah and Imma.

A common theme was the Shekinah's role during the Jews' exile to Babylon in the sixth century BCE. According to the *Zohar*: "The Shekinah is revealed below in this world. When the children of Israel were in exile, the Shekinah was not perfected below or above. This is because the Shekinah is in exile with them."<sup>78</sup> Elsewhere we find: "the angels escorted the Shekinah to Babylon, sat there and wept with Israel"—a reference to the scriptural passage: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof."<sup>79</sup>

As Jews of Safed looked back over history, they began to weave the Shekinah into their own stories of exile and suffering. After the failed revolts against the Romans in the second century CE, large numbers of Jews fled from Palestine or were banished or sold into slavery. The Merovingian King Dagobert I expelled Jews from France in 629, and Edward I expelled them from England in 1290. In 1492 Jews were expelled from Spain, and in 1497 from Portugal. Those tragedies were projected onto the Shekinah. She had been exiled too and shared their suffering; but the Shekinah also expressed the Jewish people's unbreakable link with God and served as the guarantor of the Covenant. The *Zohar* referred to the Shekinah as the "Mother of Israel" and added: "the exile is considered the nakedness of supernal Israel."<sup>80</sup>

As the story of creation and redemption gathered momentum, the Shekinah's exile began to be associated with the shattering of the vessels. Just as the vessels had been shattered and must be restored, the Shekinah was lost and defiled, and the grieving bridegroom awaited her. She must be found, adorned in her finery, and brought to the wedding.<sup>81</sup> Every Sabbath was considered an opportunity for the wedding. The *Zohar* urged "we should to make a beautiful canopy with beautiful decorations to invite the Supernal Bride, who is the Shekinah."<sup>82</sup> Solomon Alkabetz, Cordovero's mentor, encouraged Jews to "go forth to welcome

the Sabbath Queen."<sup>83</sup> Significantly, the Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, and the Shekinah/Malkuth is the seventh of the lower sephiroth.

## Humanity: Constitution and Behavior

### The Soul and Its Destiny

In late-biblical times, Judaism, under Hellenic influence, had warmed to the notion of a threefold, hierarchical soul, consisting of the *nefesh*, *ruach* and *neshamah*. That notion was explored further in the *Zohar*. The *nefesh* (נפש) pervades and animates the body;<sup>84</sup> living beings have a *nefesh*, whereas inanimate objects do not. The *nefesh* can be compared to the Egyptian *ka* and the etheric body of Theosophical teachings. The *ruach* (רוח) and *neshamah* (נשמה), both of which can be translated as breath, wind or spirit, are higher aspects of the soul.<sup>85</sup>

The *Zohar* explained that not everyone has the two higher aspects; they have to be earned: "[W]hen a man is born, he is given a *nefesh* of the animal element... If he gains further merit, he is given a *ruach* from the aspect of the holy living creatures, namely from the world of Yetzirah. If he merits further, he is given a *neshamah* from the part of the throne, namely from the world of Briah."<sup>86</sup> Moreover, acquisition of a *ruach* is the key to immortality:

[A]fter a person's death, [the *ruach*] leaves this world and is separated from the *nefesh*, which remains hovering over the grave, and it enters the Garden of Eden of this world. There, it clothes itself with the air of the Garden of Eden, just as the supernal angels do when they come down to this world.<sup>87</sup>

The *Zohar* also hinted that there might be still higher aspects; the soul, it said, has "five names, *Neshamah*, *Ruach*, *Nefesh*, *Chayah*, *Yechidah*."<sup>88</sup> The *chayah* (חיה, "source of life") appears to be a higher correlate of the *nefesh* on a higher plane, while the *yechidah* (יחידה, "unity") resembles the monad of Neoplatonic and

Theosophical teachings. Unfoldment of the yechidah could be compared with attainment of a high initiation. Isaac Luria suggested that the chayah and yechidah reside on the world of Atziluth.<sup>89</sup>

The concept that God descended into manifestation through the sefiroth is, of course, central to Kabbalistic teaching. The Gnostics and Neoplatonists taught that the human soul also descended into physical manifestation and must find its way back to spirit. Although the Kabbalists did not concern themselves much with the soul's original descent, they emphasized our need to work our way up through the sefiroth from Malkuth and through the four worlds from Assiah. A parallel can be seen here with ascent through the "palaces" of Merkabah mysticism.<sup>90</sup> Briah was often referred to as the "throne-world," the mystics' destination; a passage quoted earlier provided one example.

In our ascent we are destined to explore both the sefiroth and the paths connecting them.<sup>91</sup> The rarified higher sefiroth will provide experiences very different from the "earthiness" of Malkuth. The sefiroth on the two outer pillars will also offer contrasting experiences. For example, the grace of Chesed will be juxtaposed against the fierce justice of Geburah; the exuberant creativity of Netzach against the cold rationalism of Hod. The Kabbalah offered a rich portrayal of dualities; but it was a much healthier one than the stark spirit-matter, good-evil dichotomies of Zoroastrianism and classical Gnosticism.

Everybody faces the struggle between the polar opposites of good and evil. The *Sefer Yetzirah* asserted that good and evil give meaning to each other: "Good defines evil, and evil defines good."<sup>92</sup> However morality was not simply a matter of establishing balance, like harmonizing Chesed and Geburah, or Netzach and Hod. Pious Jews must obey the law and do penance when they failed. Kabbalists, like thoughtful people everywhere, wrestled with the philosophical problem of reconciling evil with belief in a be-

neficent God—and divine justice. Why, the *Bahir* had asked, do the just suffer in this world, while the wicked may prosper? The answer was that the righteous person was being punished for previous wickedness, to which Rabbi Shimon added: "I am not speaking of his present lifetime."<sup>93</sup>

Belief in any kind of personal immortality was slow to develop in biblical Judaism. And certainly the notion of reincarnation was foreign to mainstream Judaism in biblical times and later. But, again under Hellenic influence, belief in reincarnation is evident in the *Bahir* and the *Zohar*, and it continued among Kabbalists in the Safed period. In esoteric Judaism reincarnation was referred to as *gilgul* (גלגול). *Gilgul*, which derived from the Hebrew word for "wheel," captured the notion of "revolving" or "turning over," calling to mind Hindu and Buddhist notions of the "wheel of rebirth."

Assuming progress over time, an individual's spiritual attainment could be expected to reflect the number of times he or she had incarnated. Luzzatto observed: "Not all souls are equal, the new are not like the old, and the reincarnated once is not like the reincarnated twice."<sup>94</sup> Elsewhere he observed: "The *tzadikim* [saints] reincarnate up to a thousand generations, the sinners up to four."<sup>95</sup> On the other hand, rebirth was not always viewed favorably; it could be seen as evidence of failure. Interestingly, the worst possible outcome, in the view of the Kabbalists, was exile from the divine presence and the community of Jewish people.<sup>96</sup> The collective suffering of the people—and the empathetic suffering of Shekinah—would all be focused on that hapless individual.

An additional factor determining spiritual development involved one's parents. According to the *Zohar*:

When a man is aroused ... to mate with his wife, all parts of the body agree on this and are prepared to receive enjoyment from it. Then the nefesh and the desire of the person indulge willingly in that act. The nefesh is drawn down and enters the sperm that comes forth.<sup>97</sup>

Cordovero added that much depends on the father's preparation for the procreative sex act: "If his father sanctifies himself properly, and his intention is right, [the son] merits a holy higher soul."<sup>98</sup> Patriarchal bias in these teachings is unmistakable: the nefesh is implanted via the sperm rather than the ovum and is influenced only on the father's disposition. Moreover, no mention is made of the kind of soul that might be implanted in a daughter.

### **Cosmic Implications of Human Behavior**

The prophets of the biblical period had viewed the Jews' exile to Babylon as punishment for disobedience of the law. Similarly the rabbis of Safed viewed their expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula as a consequence of their own actions. By extension, blame for Nukvah's delayed wedding and the Shekinah's exile and defilement—perhaps even for delays in repairing the sefirotic vessels—could be laid at humanity's feet. Even though God had repaired the sefirot, the shards from the breaking of the vessels were still scattered throughout the world, and each shard contained a spark of the primeval divine light. Devout Jews were responsible for collecting the shards and releasing the light hidden within them. In Chaim Vital's words:

When saints leave this world and pass through the realm of Action [Assiah], they raise up with them sacred sparks from the Shells [klifoth] to the realm of Formation [Yetzirah]; in the same way, when they ascend to the world of Formation to the world of Creation [Briah], and from the world of Creation to the world of Emanation [Atziluth], they transform and raise these sparks and return this great light to the sublime and noble place.<sup>99</sup>

Similarly, everyone—at least all pious Jews—shared the responsibility for restoring the Shekinah to her rightful place. One of Cordovero's disciples, Elijah de Vidas, urged pious Jews to confess their sins in order that the soul could "stimulate the female

waters within the Shekinah."<sup>100</sup> Then, at midnight, they should rise to study the Torah and pray. By so doing they could "feel the distress of the Shekinah [and] weep and mourn over the destruction of the Sanctuary."<sup>101</sup> Midnight is the time when "the Holy One ... forgives those who return to Him."

Entering into and maintaining an honorable marriage had cosmic implications as well as ensuring good souls for one's children. A man who honored his wife honored the Shekinah; while infidelity prolonged the Shekinah's exile.<sup>102</sup> Jews were encouraged to have intercourse with their wives on the Sabbath; to quote modern writer Lawrence Fine:

The traditional emphasis on having marital intercourse on the night of the Sabbath took on heightened significance. The earthly love between wife and husband was held to represent the supernal union between the Shekinah and Tifareth. Even more, it served to facilitate such unification within the sefirotic world. The Sabbath experience as a whole assumed the character of a sacred marriage celebration.<sup>103</sup>

In these various ways, people could help restore the primeval Divine Order. The Safed teachings presented a moral imperative for Jews to take an active role in the redemptive process.<sup>104</sup> Importantly, through their piety, Jews could hasten the appearance of the messiah. Sadly, it was that aspect of the teachings that would be connected with the Sabbatean fiasco of the mid-17th century. The Safed scholars would be blamed for sowing the seeds of that unfortunate episode in European Jewish history.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Most of the fundamental concepts of the theoretical Kabbalah can be found in the *Sefer Zohar*, but those concepts took definite form in Safed. The gathering of outstanding scholars at the Galilean city—a favorable side-effect of the otherwise tragic expulsion of Jews from southern Europe—created a critical mass of talent unequalled

in the history of Kabbalistic studies. Little has been added to the work of the Safed scholars since 1600, and much may have been lost. Because of prominent Kabbalists' reluctance to commit their teachings to writing, what we know of their work depended on the diligence—and correspondingly was limited by the biases—of a handful of disciples. Moreover, for more than two centuries, Kabbalistic studies languished in a backlash from mainstream Judaism.

Gershom Scholem, who launched a renaissance of Kabbalistic studies by leading academic scholars in the mid-20th century, comments that the contents of the *Zohar* “[lie] before us in some measure inaccessible and silent, as befits a work of great wisdom.”<sup>105</sup> Fortunately, for us, the inaccessibility has been eased by the availability of English translations of key texts. While the *Zohar* may not have regained the standing as a sacred text it enjoyed in the 15th century, it remains one of the most important texts of western esotericism. The 22-volume Berg edition is available online, and the five-volume Soncino edition is on CD-Rom, both providing valuable search capabilities. Also the remainder of the 10-volume Pritzker edition—an endeavor of outstanding scholarship—will be published over the next several years. Extracts from the *Zohar* and modern commentaries on it are plentiful, and Gershom Scholem's own book of readings<sup>106</sup> provides a good introduction for students at an early stage in their Kabbalistic studies.

The heritage of Safed continues to inspire seekers as much as it provides opportunities for academic research. Unfortunately many texts from the Safed era are still inaccessible to most of us. Several important texts are only in manuscript, and most have not yet been translated. As a result we are still dependent on secondary sources or, at best, on extracts from key works. Hebrew scholars who provide more complete translations and publishers who make them available will contribute much to the broader study of an important phase in the development of the western esoteric tradition.

The Kabbalah has become a multicultural system of esotericism, and numerous books and articles approach the subject from different perspectives. Yet the Judaic theoretical Kabbalah remains a vital field of study. While much of the recent work by Jewish scholars has been of an historical nature, modern scientific knowledge has provided new understanding of some traditional concepts.<sup>107</sup> Meanwhile, the topics touched on in this article, along with the context in which they developed, continue to offer valuable insights. If one treads carefully through the archaic religious mindset, cultural context, and language of the *Zohar* and the Safed teachings, one discovers material of great richness and potential.

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- <sup>1</sup> The description “theosophical Kabbalah” is accurate, but the term is not used here because of confusion with the work of the Theosophical Society and its offshoots. In this article “Theosophy” and “Theosophical” (both capitalized) refer to the Society and its work.
  - <sup>2</sup> That development was discussed in John F. Nash, “Origins of the Christian Kabbalah,” *Esoteric Quarterly*, Spring 2008, 43-58.
  - <sup>3</sup> Hermeticism was discussed in John F. Nash, “Hermeticism: Rise and Fall of an Esoteric System.” *Esoteric Quarterly*, Part I: Winter 2009, 39-51; Part II: Spring 2009, 33-44.
  - <sup>4</sup> The Abbasid caliphate, whose rich culture was captured by the “Arabian Nights,” came to an end in 1258 after holding power for 500 years.
  - <sup>5</sup> The Sephardic branch of Jewry lived in the Middle East and southern Europe, and the Ashkenazim in Germany and eastern Europe. The two branches developed different religious and cultural traditions.
  - <sup>6</sup> See for example Daniel C. Matt, Introduction to *The Zohar*, Pritzker Edition, Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, vol. 1, 2004, xli-xliii.
  - <sup>7</sup> Texts written in earlier times were closely guarded as part of the secrecy maintained in the Kabbalistic schools of Palestine and Babylonia. See, for example, Aryeh Kaplan, Introduction to *The Bahir*. Boston, MA: Weiser, 1998, xv. References to the *Bahir* go back at least to the ninth century.
  - <sup>8</sup> The *Zohar* mentions Shimon's teacher, the famous Rabbi Akiba.

- <sup>9</sup> Strictly speaking, the Torah consisted of the five “Books of Moses,” but the term was often applied to the whole Hebrew Bible.
- <sup>10</sup> “Forgery” tends to be reserved for situations in which there is purposeful intent to deceive.
- <sup>11</sup> Both the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud were written in Aramaic.
- <sup>12</sup> See the discussion in Gershom Scholem, Introduction to *The Zohar*, New York: Schocken Books, 1949, xivff. See also his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York: Schocken Books, 1946, 156-204.
- <sup>13</sup> Gershom Scholem, Introduction to *The Zohar*, viii.
- <sup>14</sup> Accepting baptism, which was usually forced, did not end their problems. For generations the *conversos* were suspected—with or without justification—of being only half-hearted Christians.
- <sup>15</sup> The Netherlands, at that time, was unique among northern European nations for religious toleration.
- <sup>16</sup> During the next 50 years, the armies of the sultans Bayazid II, Selim I, and Suleiman the Magnificent conquered Egypt, and much of southeastern Europe.
- <sup>17</sup> See for example Georg Dehn (ed.), *The Book of Abramelin*, Lake Worth, FL: Ibis Press, 2006.
- <sup>18</sup> Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah*, Boston, MA: Weiser, 1982, 171.
- <sup>19</sup> Eliahu Klein, *Kabbalah of Creation*, Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2000, xviii.
- <sup>20</sup> Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah*, 172.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.
- <sup>22</sup> Moses Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim*, (Transl: Elyakim Getz.), Monfalcone, Italy: Providence University, 2007, 2. “Pardes” is related to our word “paradise.”
- <sup>23</sup> Maimonides, a Sephardic Jew, is often compared with the Christian Thomas Aquinas, who was born 90 years later.
- <sup>24</sup> Moseh Idel, *Kabbalah*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988, 92.
- <sup>25</sup> Klein, *Kabbalah of Creation*, 105.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, xxv.
- <sup>27</sup> Reportedly, not all of Vital’s colleagues complied, and some writings began to be circulated even in the 1570s.
- <sup>28</sup> The *Zohar* was printed with the approval of Pope Paul IV. Ironically, just a few years earlier, his predecessor had ordered the burning of 12,000 Jewish sacred texts in Italy, including the Talmud.
- <sup>29</sup> See the extensive account of Zevi and his movement in Gershom Scholem. *Kabbalah*. Meridian Books, 1974, 244-286. Also: *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 287-324.
- <sup>30</sup> Raphael Afilalo, *The Kabbalah of the Ari Z’al*, Quebec, Canada: Kabbalah Editions, 2004, 15-22.
- <sup>31</sup> Moses Luzzatto, *Klalout Hailan*, (Transl: R. Afilalo), Quebec, Canada: Kabbalah Editions, 2004.
- <sup>32</sup> Eliahu Klein, who translated Vital’s *Sefer Etz-Chayyim* into English, criticized Luzzatto for trying to codify Luria’s discursive commentaries. See *Kabbalah of Creation*, p.114.
- <sup>33</sup> Here we are reminded of the ontological argument for the existence of God proposed by the 11th-century Christian scholastic Anselm of Canterbury.
- <sup>34</sup> Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim*, treatise 1, chap. 10, 45-49.
- <sup>35</sup> Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim*, treatise 2, chap. 1, 55.
- <sup>36</sup> The *Sefer Yetzirah* begins with a pun relating the first three words.
- <sup>37</sup> Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim*, treatise 1, chap. 5, 25.
- <sup>38</sup> For example, Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim*, treatise 1, chap. 1, 6-8.
- <sup>39</sup> Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim*, treatise 4, 145-223. See also the discussion in Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 402.
- <sup>40</sup> Matt (ed.), *The Zohar*, Pritzker Edition, frontispiece.
- <sup>41</sup> Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim*, treatise 1, chap. 1, 66-78. The wording in Table 1 conforms to the KJB rather than to the translation by Elyakim Getz.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, treatise 1, chap. 10, 45-49. The assignment of divine names to the sefirot was discussed in the *Sefer Yetzirah*. From then on, some variations appeared from one teacher to another.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, treatise 1, chap. 2, 8-9. Later Kabbalists did not always follow that convention.
- <sup>44</sup> See Aryeh Kaplan, *The Sefer Yetzirah*, Boston, MA: Weiser, 1997, 10-11. Significantly, in classical Hebrew, *nativ* refers to a spiritual path rather than a physical one.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup> Graph theory asserts that  $n$  nodes can be connected by  $n(n - 1)/2$  line segments; i.e., 45 for ten sefirotic nodes. However some of the possible lines in the Tree of Life are redundant because of collinear sequences, such as *Kether*, *Tifareth*, *Yesod* and *Malkuth*.

- <sup>47</sup> Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah*, 30.
- <sup>48</sup> A similar situation occurs in connection with the subrays of the seven major rays.
- <sup>49</sup> Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim*, treatise 2, chap. 5, 80. Parenthetical inserts by translator.
- <sup>50</sup> Luzzatto, *Klalout Hailan*, chap. 5, 228.
- <sup>51</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, §31C, (Transl: Benjamin Jowett), Internet Classics Archive. See also Peter Kalkavage, *Plato's Timaeus*, Newburyport MA: Focus Publishing, 2001.
- <sup>52</sup> *Zohar*, 1 *Bereshit A*, 1:1, Pritzker Edition, vol. 1. Only the first four volumes of this new translation have been published so far. The corresponding translation in the complete Berg edition is "With the beginning of the manifestation of the King's will... emanated from the most concealed of all concealed things—from the secret of Ain Sof—and took a shapeless form... From within the spark a fountain spouted, from which the shades down below received their colors." The Berg edition is available online at <http://www.kabbalah.com/k/index.php/p=zohar>.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 123-124. Italics in translation.
- <sup>54</sup> Luzzatto, *Klalout Hailan*, chap. 1, 179.
- <sup>55</sup> *Genesis* 1:26.
- <sup>56</sup> Chaim Vital, *Sefer Etz-Chayyim*, chap. 1, (Transl: Eliahu Klein.), quoted in Klein, *Kabbalah of Creation*, 17.
- <sup>57</sup> In one reference, the klifoth were described as the "bark" on the Tree of Life.
- <sup>58</sup> *Zohar*, 10, *Mishpatim*, 10:403, Berg edition.
- <sup>59</sup> In rabbinic Judaism the term simply meant "maintaining social order." The early Kabbalists gave it its cosmic meaning.
- <sup>60</sup> Vital, *Sefer Etz-Chayyim*, chap. 2, 31. Italics removed.
- <sup>61</sup> *Daniel* 7:9, 13, 22.
- <sup>62</sup> In the light of the strong affirmation of cosmic parenthood, the commandment: "Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," takes on new meaning. See *Exodus* 20:12; *Deuteronomy* 5:16.
- <sup>63</sup> Descriptions of the creation of the Zeir Anpin and Nukvah read like a manual of dating behavior, obstetrics, and child-rearing. See Afilalo, *The Kabbalah of the Ari Z'al*, pp. 75-105.
- <sup>64</sup> Vital, *Sefer Etz-Chayyim*, chap. 3, 58-60.
- <sup>65</sup> Klein, *Kabbalah of Creation*, 25-26.
- <sup>66</sup> *Zohar*, 16 *Vaera* 17: 149. Berg edition.
- <sup>67</sup> Daath was mentioned in the *Zohar*, but it featured more prominently in the work of the Safed scholars. Even there, it was omitted when the paths were drawn among the sefiroth.
- <sup>68</sup> Christian Kabbalists associate Tifareth with Christ. The hexagram retains significance because "six" is regarded as the number of the Christ.
- <sup>69</sup> *Zohar*, 27 *Vayikra* : 41:282. Berg edition.
- <sup>70</sup> Previously the seven lower sefiroth were aligned on a single column. See for example Raphael Afilalo, *Kabbalah Concepts*, Quebec, Canada: Kabbalah Editions, 2006. 48.
- <sup>71</sup> Afilalo, *The Kabbalah of the Ari Z'al*, 115ff.
- <sup>72</sup> Luzzatto, *Klalout Hailan*, chap. 5, 227. Parenthesis in translation.
- <sup>73</sup> *Zohar*, 1 *Bereshit A*, 10:114.
- <sup>74</sup> For a discussion of the origins of "Shekinah" see Fred P Miller, *Zechariah and Jewish Renewal: From Gloom to Glory*, Moeller Haus, 1999, chap. 8.
- <sup>75</sup> Statistic based on the Berg edition, which includes some interpolated commentary.
- <sup>76</sup> *Zohar*, 49, *Ki Tetze*: 21:102, Berg edition.
- <sup>77</sup> *Zohar*, 33, *Kedoshim*: 4:36, Berg edition.
- <sup>78</sup> *Zohar*, 9, *Vayetze*: 27, verse 272, Berg edition.
- <sup>79</sup> *Psalm* 137:1-2.
- <sup>80</sup> *Zohar*, 2, *Bereshit A*: 25:268, Berg edition.
- <sup>81</sup> By contrast, in the other story, Nukvah adorns herself for the wedding. See Luzzatto, *Klalout Hailan*, chap. 6, p. 229.
- <sup>82</sup> *Zohar*, 21, *Trumah*: 80:789, Berg edition.
- <sup>83</sup> Solomon Alkabetz, "The Pious Customs of Moses Cordovero," quoted in Lawrence Fine, *Safed Spirituality*, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1984, 36, 40.
- <sup>84</sup> *Zohar*, 3 *Lech Lecha*, 12:96, Berg edition. See also the Pritzker edition, vol. 2, *Lekh Lekha*, 1:83b, 31-32.
- <sup>85</sup> In the Pritzker edition, ruach is translated as "spirit" and neshamah as "soul breath." See pp. 31-32.
- <sup>86</sup> *Zohar*, 10, *Mishpatim* 2:11, Berg edition. Elsewhere (1 *Prologue* 12:77), we learn that the four legs of the throne are Chesed, Geburah, Tifareth and Malkuth.
- <sup>87</sup> *Zohar*, 3 *Lech Lecha*, 12:100, Berg edition.
- <sup>88</sup> *Zohar*, 21 *Trumah*, 54:591, Berg edition.
- <sup>89</sup> Luzzatto, *Klalout Hailan*, chap. 10, 266. The suggestion that some aspects of the soul reside on Atziluth contrasts with a statement in the *Zohar* (10, *Vayechl*, 81:806) that "souls dwell only in Briah, Yetzirah and Assiah."
- <sup>90</sup> Merkabah mysticism, which developed in the early centuries of the Common Era, envi-

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- sioned mystical journeys through seven “palaces” to the divine “throne-world.”
- <sup>91</sup> The *Sefer Yetzirah* spoke of 32 “paths to wisdom,” consisting of the 10 sefirot and the 22 netivot.
- <sup>92</sup> *Sefer Yetzirah*, §6:4, (Transl: Aryeh Kaplan), 245. See also §6:2, 267.
- <sup>93</sup> *The Bahir*, §195, (Transl: A. Kaplan), 77-78. As in all the classical texts, the statement attributed to Rabbi Shimon may well be pseudographical. Other references to reincarnation in the text can be found in §§122, 155, 184, 185.
- <sup>94</sup> Luzzatto, *Klalout Hailan*, chap. 10, 268. Belief in reincarnation emerged in the medieval Kabbalah and continued through the Safed period.
- <sup>95</sup> Luzzatto, *Klalout Hailan*, chap. 10, 267-268. Italics added.
- <sup>96</sup> Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 250.
- <sup>97</sup> *Zohar*, 3 *Lech Lecha*, 12:96, Berg edition.
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- <sup>98</sup> Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim*, treatise 1, chap. 5, 27.
- <sup>99</sup> Vital, *Sefer Etz-Chayyim*, chap. 1, p. 20. Italics removed.
- <sup>100</sup> Elijah de Vidas, *Beginning of Wisdom*, “The Gate of Holiness,” chap. 7, quoted in Fine, *Safed Spirituality*, 106.
- <sup>101</sup> *Ibid.* 107.
- <sup>102</sup> Fine, *Safed Spirituality*, 13-14.
- <sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34. Emphasis removed.
- <sup>104</sup> By contrast, Christianity—particularly following Martin Luther and John Calvin—insisted that Christ alone procured the redemption, and humanity’s role was limited to the profession of faith.
- <sup>105</sup> Scholem, Introduction to *The Zohar*, vii.
- <sup>106</sup> Scholem, *The Zohar*, 1949.
- <sup>107</sup> For examples of recent work see Kaplan, *The Sefer Yetzirah*, and Leonora Leet, *The Secret Doctrine of the Kabbalah*, Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1999.

**Table 1.**  
**Sefiroth in the Safed Kabbalah**

Sefirah			English Translation*
1	<i>Kether</i>	כתר	Crown
2	<i>Chokmah</i>	חכמה	Wisdom
3	<i>Binah</i>	בינה	Understanding, intuition
--	<i>Daath</i>	דעת	Knowledge, gnosis
4	<i>Chesed</i> or <i>Gedulah</i>	חסד גדולה	Grace, lovingkindness Magnanimity, greatness
5	<i>Geburah</i> , <i>Din</i> or <i>Pachad</i>	גבורה דין פחד	Judgment, Severity Fear
6	<i>Tifareth</i> or <i>Rachamim</i>	תפארת רחמים	Beauty, harmony, heaven Compassion, mercy
7	<i>Netzach</i>	נצח	Endurance, victory
8	<i>Hod</i>	הוד	Splendor
9	<i>Yesod</i>	יסוד	Foundation
10	<i>Malkuth</i>	מלכות	Kingdom, sovereignty, stewardship

\* The Safed Kabbalists associated "Mercy" with Tifareth/Rachamim. In the modern Kabbalah, it is more commonly associated with Chesed.

**Table 2.**  
**Correlations with Praises and Divine Names**  
**(after Cordovero)**

Sefirah	Verse in <i>Psalm</i> 150	Divine Name*	
1 <i>Kether</i>	“Praise God in His sanctuary.” [v. 1]	<i>Eheieh</i> אֵהִיָּה	“I am that I am”
2 <i>Chokmah</i>	“Praise him in the firmament of His power.” [v. 1]	<i>Yah</i> יָה	Yah
3 <i>Binah</i>	“Praise him for His mighty acts.” [v. 2]	<i>YHVH Adonai</i> יְהוָה אֲדֹנָי	YHVH Lord
4 <i>Chesed</i>	“Praise him according to His excellent greatness.” [v. 2]	<i>El</i> אֵל	El
5 <i>Geburah</i>	“Praise him with sound of the trumpet.” [v. 3]	<i>Elohim Gebor</i> אֱלֹהִים גִּבּוֹר	Elohim of Strength
6 <i>Tifareth</i>	“Praise him with the psaltery and harp.” [v. 3]	<i>YHVH Eloah va-Daath</i> יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיבְדַעַת	Lord YHVH of Knowledge
7 <i>Netzach</i>	“Praise him with the timbrel and dance.” [v. 4]	<i>Adonai Tzabaoth</i> אֲדֹנָי צְבָאוֹת	Lord of Hosts
8 <i>Hod</i>	“Praise him with stringed instruments and organs.” [v. 4]	<i>Elohim Tzabaoth</i> אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת	Elohim of Hosts
9 <i>Yesod</i>	“Praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.” [v. 5]	<i>Shaddai El-Chai</i> שְׁדַי אֵל חַי	Almighty Living God
10 <i>Malkuth</i>	“Praise him upon the loud cymbals.” [v. 5]	<i>Adonai</i> אֲדֹנָי	Lord

\* The assignment of divine names varied somewhat from one teacher to another. To reflect the work of other authorities, *Gebor* has been added to the name for *Geburah*, *Eloah va-Daath* to the name for *Tifareth*, and *Adonai* and *Elohim*, respectively, to the name for *Netzach* and *Hod*. *YHVH Elohim* (יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים) is sometimes suggested as the divine name for *Daath*.

**Table 3. The Four Worlds**

World			Denizens	Hebrew Letter
<i>Atziluth</i>	אצילות	Emanation	Divine emanations, names of God, archetypes	Yod, י
<i>Briah</i>	בריאה	Creation	Archangels	He, ה
<i>Yetzirah</i>	יצירה	Formation	Angels	Vav, ו
<i>Assiah</i>	אשיה	Action or "Realization"	Humanity	He, ה

**Table 4. The Partzufim or Divine Personifications**

Partzuf		Significance	Related Sefiroth
<i>Arikh Anpin</i>	אריך אנפין	"Long Face," or "Immortal Face." The "long suffering one."	<i>Kether</i>
<i>Abba</i>	אב	"Father"	<i>Chokmah</i>
<i>Imma (or Ama)</i>	אם	"Mother"	<i>Binah</i>
<i>Zeir Anpin</i>	זעיר אנפין	"Short Face," or "Young Face." The "impatient one." The divine son-bridegroom.	<i>Daath, Chesed, Geburah, Tifareth, Netzach, Hod &amp; Yesod</i>
<i>Nukvah</i>	נוקבה	"Daughter." The divine daughter-bride.	<i>Malkuth</i>

**Figure 1.**  
**Three Pillars and Lightning Flash**

**Ain Sof**

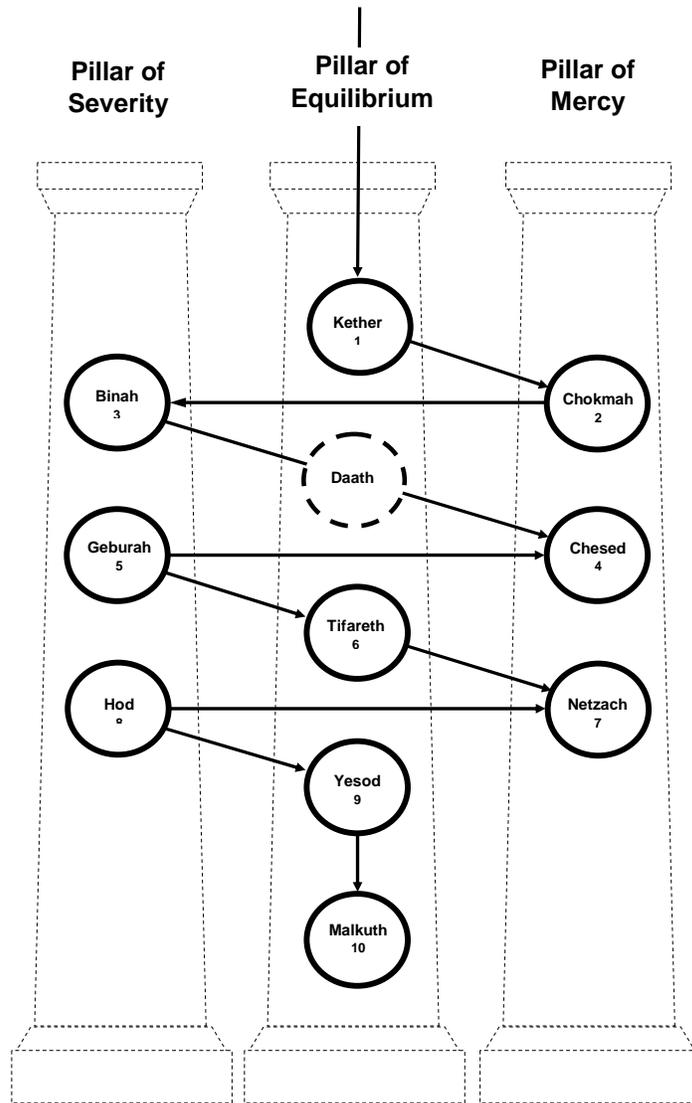
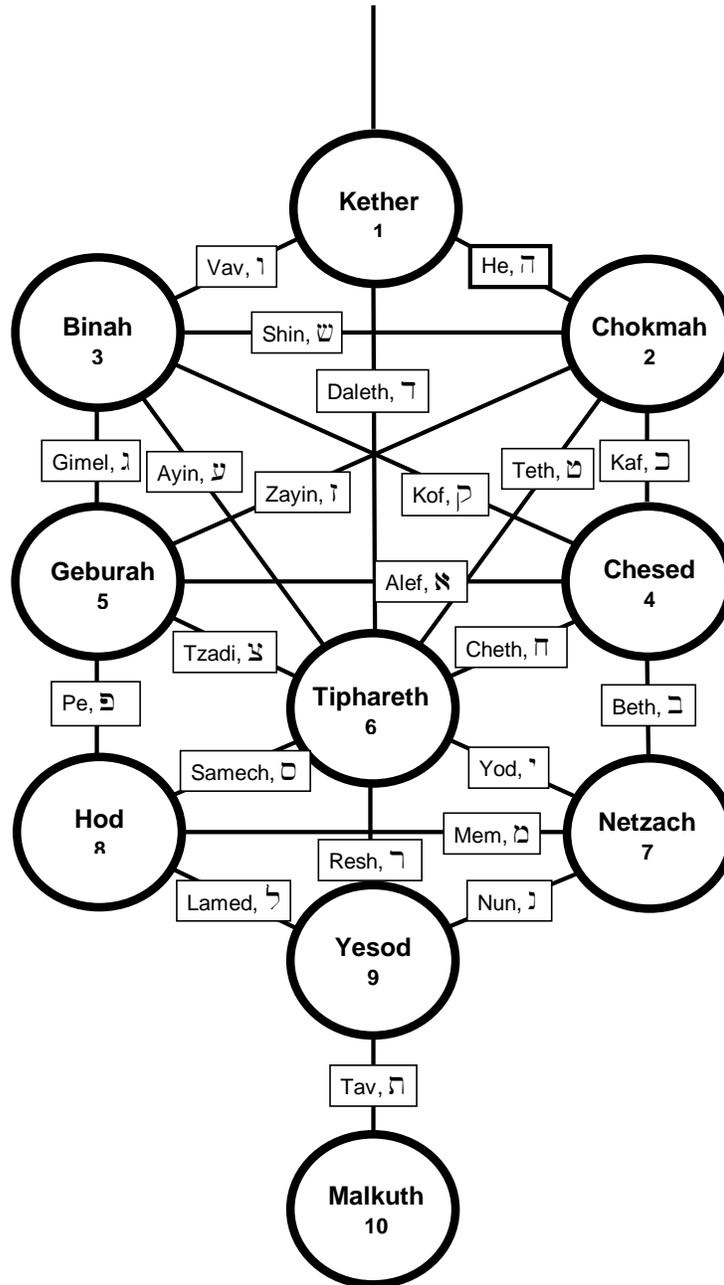


Figure 2. The Sefiroth and Paths  
According to Isaac Luria

# Ain Sof



**Figure 3. Complicated Tree of Life  
in the Spirit of Lurianic Kabbalah  
(after Christian Knorr von Rosenroth)**

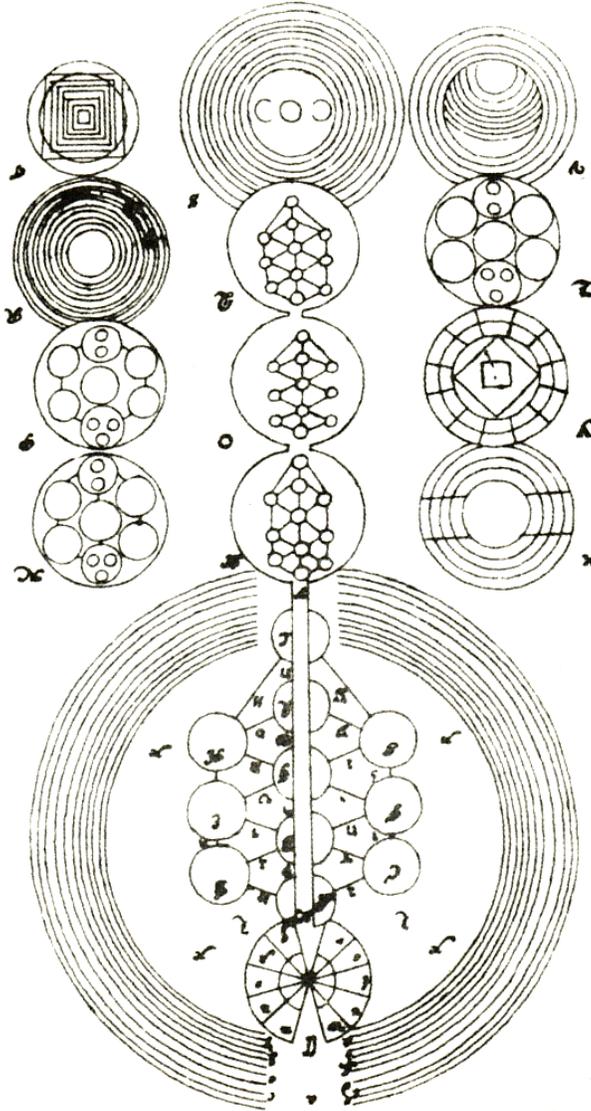
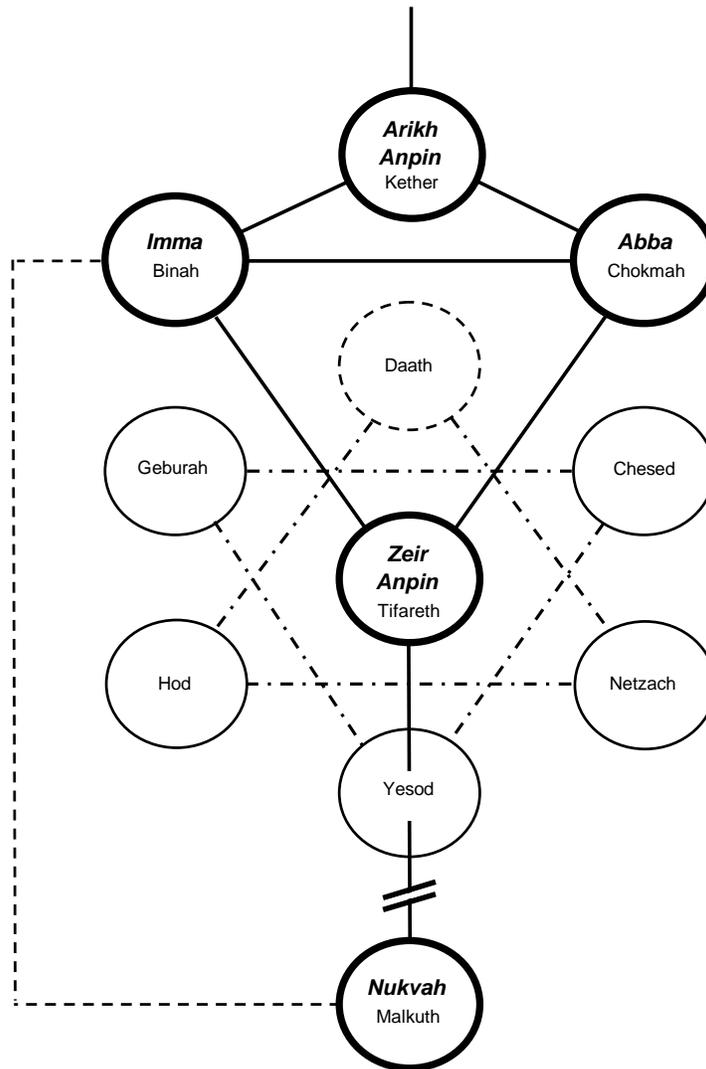
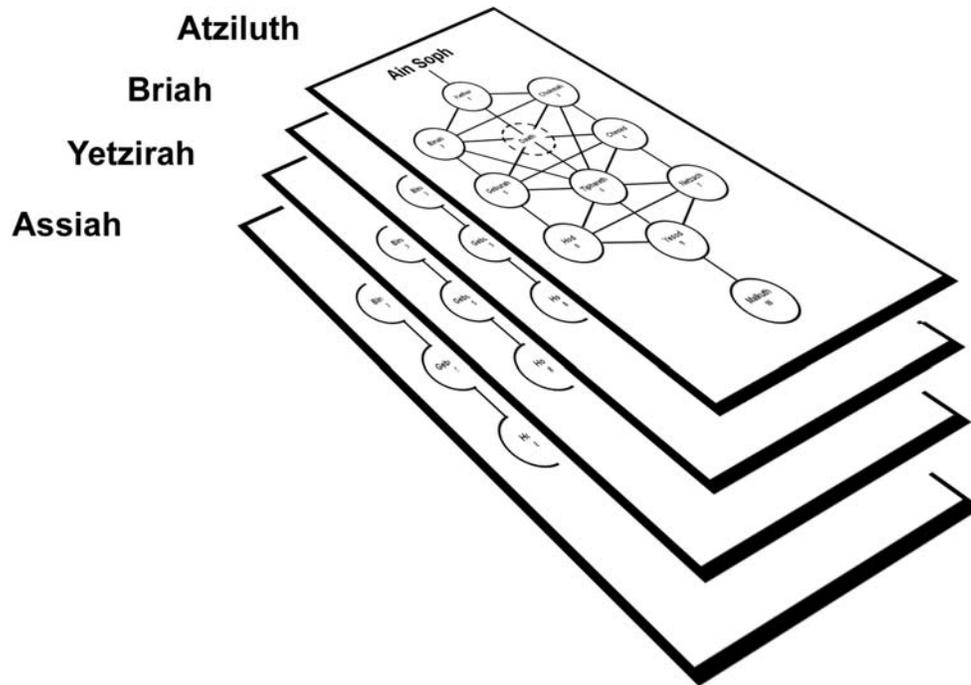


Figure 4. The Partzufim in Relation to the Reconstructed Sefiroth

# Ain Sof



**Figure 5. The Tree of Life and the Worlds**



# The Purusha Sukta—Part II

Zachary F. Lansdowne

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## Abstract

This article continues the analysis of the Purusha Sukta, an ancient Hindu hymn that celebrates the sacrifice of a God-like entity called “Purusha,” focusing on the final six verses. A theosophical interpretation is given, showing that Purusha corresponds to the concept of the Planetary Logos.

## Background

The Purusha Sukta consists of sixteen verses and was originally composed in Sanskrit as a hymn in the Rig Veda. The commentary below first gives each of the remaining six verses of the hymn in English, using the Myers translation,<sup>1</sup> followed by an interpretation in italics and then a detailed analysis of the symbols in that verse. The first ten verses were analyzed in Part I of this article, which appeared in the Spring 2009 issue of *The Esoteric Quarterly*.

## The Characteristics of Purusha

Verses 11 through 16 present, for our consideration, some prescriptive models of human evolution.

- 11. When they divided Purusa, how many ways did they apportion him? What was his mouth? What were his arms? What were his thighs, his feet declared to be?**

*What are the stages of human evolution, and what body parts of the Planetary Logos consist of human beings in those stages?*

The first, third, and fourth verses include the idea that the physical body of the Planetary Logos incorporates all human beings living on our planet. This idea is similar to the notion in

Christianity that the disciples of Christ form his body. For example, the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27: “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ ... Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”<sup>2</sup>

If we accept that all human beings are incorporated into the physical body of the Planetary Logos, then it seems reasonable to think that a group of similar human beings would form an organ or part within that macrocosmic body. Bailey has a similar notion when she says, “The human atom is a part of a group or center in the body of a heavenly Man, a Planetary Logos.”<sup>3</sup> Here, the term “human atom” signifies a human being who is regarded as a unit within a greater body.

Assuming that Purusha (or Purusa) corresponds to the Planetary Logos, the above verse says that the physical body of the Planetary Logos is divided into separate parts. Let us suppose that this division is based on the stages of human evolution because evolution is a major theme in the Purusha Sukta. Similarly, the division of the animal kingdom in the eighth verse is based on the stages of animal evolution. Let us also suppose that all people at the same stage of evolution have a function that is analogous to that of a body part belonging to a human being, so we can say that those

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## About the Author

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people form that same part within the body of the Planetary Logos. Given these suppositions, what body parts of the Planetary Logos consist of human beings in their various stages?

**12. His mouth was the Brahman [caste], his arms were the Rajanaya [Kshatriya caste], his thighs the Vaisya [caste]; from his feet the Sudra [caste] was born.**

*People polarized in their causal body are like priests and act as the mouth of the Planetary Logos; people polarized in their mental body are like soldiers and act as His arms; people polarized in their emotional body are like merchants and act as His thighs; and people polarized in their physical body are like servants and act as His feet.*

The Purusha Sukta is the oldest extant text that mentions the four traditional castes (or classes) of Hindu society, and it is the only hymn in the Rig Veda that mentions them. These four castes are: *Brahmins*, or priests; *Kshatriyas*, or warriors; *Vaisyas*, or merchants; and *Sudras*, or servants and laborers. Although discrimination based on caste is against the law under the Indian Constitution, caste distinctions based on birth unfortunately continue to play a socially destructive role in India even today.

Paramahansa Yogananda, a teacher and writer on Hinduism, states that the caste system known today is quite different from the system that originated in Vedic times:

These [four castes] were symbolic designations of the stages of spiritual refinement. They were not intended as social categories. And they were not intended to be hereditary. Things changed as the yugas [cycles of time] descended toward mental darkness. People in the higher castes wanted to make sure their children were accepted as members of their own caste. Thus, ego-identification caused them to freeze the ancient classifications into what is called the “caste system.” Such was not the original intention. In obvious fact, however, the offspring of a *brahmin* may

be a *sudra* by nature. And a peasant, sometimes, is a real saint.<sup>4</sup>

Yogananda regards the four castes as symbols for the stages of spiritual refinement and provides the following interpretation of them:

1. *Sudra*. “At his lowest level of refinement, man thinks not only of, but *with*, his physical body. Tradition typifies him as a farm laborer, though that is simplistic.”
2. *Vaisya*. “When a person begins to use his intellect, he first does so strictly for personal gain, thinking always, ‘What’s in this for me?’ The obvious example of such a person is a greedy merchant.”
3. *Kshatriya*. “When one develops further in spiritual refinement, he inclines to use his intelligence for the general good rather than only for his own benefit. Such a person is typified as the soldier—not the marauding sort, but one who readily sacrifices his own life, if need be, for the sake of others.”
4. *Brahmin*. “Finally, when the individual evolves spiritually to the point where he wants only God, he is like idealized images of a priest.”<sup>5</sup>

Bailey describes four polarizations of consciousness that are quite similar to Yogananda’s stages:

1. “During this [*first*] period, the man is polarized in his physical body and is learning to be controlled by his desire body, the body of feeling or of emotion. He has no aspirations save such as pander to the pleasures of the body; he lives for his physical nature and has no thought for aught that may be higher.”
2. “The *second period* covers a point in development when the polarization is largely in the emotional body and when lower mind desire is being developed ... He is capable of a deep love for teachers and guides wiser than himself, of a wild unreasoning devotion for his enviroing associates, and of an equally wild and unreasoning hatred, for the equilibrium that mind achieves, and the balance that is the result

of mental action, is wanting in his make-up.”

3. “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 polarizing life shifts to the mental unit ... His desires turn upward instead of downward, and become transmuted into aspiration,—at first aspiration towards the things of mind, and later towards that which is more abstract and synthetic.”
4. “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 ... At the close of that period, liberation is complete, and the man is set free.”<sup>6</sup>

“Causal consciousness,” mentioned in the last quotation, takes place when the polarization of consciousness shifts from the mental body to the causal body. The concept of the causal body is not in contemporary Western psychology but is in Hinduism. Sri Aurobindo, a Hindu philosopher and teacher, shows that symbols of the causal body are incorporated elsewhere in the Rig Veda<sup>7</sup> and gives this description of causal consciousness: “But this causal body is, as we may say, little developed in the majority of men and to live in it or to ascend to the supramental planes, as distinguished from corresponding sub-planes in the mental being, or still more to dwell consciously upon them is the most difficult thing of all for the human being.”<sup>8</sup>

Next, let us consider how the four castes are allegorically related to the body parts listed in the above verse. The Brahmins, who are the teachers of humanity, act as the mouth of the Planetary Logos, just as the mouth is the organ of speech in the human body. The Kshatriyas, who are the defenders of society, act as His arms, just as the human body uses its arms for self-defense. The Vaisyas, who buy food from farmers and then sell it to the rest of the community, act as His thighs, just as the thighs receive digested food from the stomach and then store it for the rest of the body. The Sudras, who are the servants for the other

castes, act as His feet, just as the feet provide support and transportation for the rest of the body.

In conclusion, we consider Bailey’s four polarizations of consciousness to be essentially the same as the four stages described by Yogananda, which in turn are symbolized by the four castes. Moreover, the function of the people in each caste is analogous to that of the associated body part.

**13. The moon was born from his mind; from his eye the sun was born; from his mouth both Indra and Agni [fire]; from his breath Vayu [wind] was born.**

*By being mentally receptive, human beings may grasp the vision of their essential divine nature; they then may build a thoughtform of themselves as the ideal person and use the will that comes from their illumination, along with pranayama, to transmit this thoughtform into their lower nature.*

The above verse can be interpreted on either a macrocosmic or microcosmic scale. On a macrocosmic scale, the verse symbolically depicts the steps of the Planetary Logos in His own creative process. According to the second verse, the Planetary Logos is the prototype for human beings; and so the steps that the Planetary Logos pursues are also steps that human beings could pursue on a microcosmic scale. In what follows, only the microcosmic meaning of those steps is considered, which requires every symbol in the verse to be understood as though it represented some aspect of human life.

Aurobindo states, “The [Rig] Veda is a book of esoteric symbols, almost of spiritual formulae, which masks itself as a collection of ritual poems.”<sup>9</sup> Aurobindo did not publish a commentary on the Purusha Sukta but did give commentaries on several other hymns in the Rig Veda. The verse mentions three deities that appear in those other hymns: Indra, Agni, and Vayu. To understand the microcosmic meaning of these Vedic deities, we draw upon Aurobindo’s insights.

*Indra* is the King of Heaven in Hindu mythology. Several hymns in the Rig Veda describe the battle between Indra, the leader of luminous beings, and Vritra, the leader of ignorant and evil forces. This timeless battle between good and evil, however, has a psychological interpretation because it could be thought of as taking place between the good and evil aspects within every human being. Aurobindo gives the meaning of Indra within this psychological context: “The principle that Indra represents is Mind-Power released from the limits and obscurations of the nervous consciousness. It is this enlightened Intelligence that fashions right or perfect forms of thought or of action not deformed by the nervous impulses, not hampered by the falsehoods of sense.”<sup>10</sup>

*Agni* is the Hindu god of fire. The Rig Veda frequently characterizes Agni with the Sanskrit word *kavikratuh*, which means “will of the seer.” Because of this characterization, Aurobindo concludes, “Psychologically, then, we may take Agni to be the divine will perfectly inspired by divine Wisdom, and indeed one with it, which is the active or effective power of the Truth-consciousness.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, Agni is the purpose, or intention, that comes from illumined consciousness in which there is no misapprehension or error.

*Vayu* is the Hindu god of wind. In Sanskrit literature, *vayu* is used more commonly in the sense of physical wind or air, but is sometimes a synonym for prana, which is a vital, life-sustaining force that flows through the human vital body. Pranayama is the practice of controlling prana through controlling one’s breathing, and this practice is said to lead to an increase in vitality in the practitioner. With regard to the Rig Veda, Aurobindo observes, “Vayu on the other hand is always associated with the Prana or Life-Energy that contributes to the system all the ensemble of those nervous activities that in man are the support of the mental energies governed by Indra.”<sup>12</sup>

The verse incorporates two other celestial symbols: the moon, “which was born from his mind,” is taken as mental receptivity because, as Blavatsky says, “The moon ... shines only by the reflected light of the sun”;<sup>13</sup> and the sun, which was born “from his eye,” is taken as the

vision of one’s own divine nature because, as Blavatsky also says, “The Sun is ... the symbol of Divinity.”<sup>14</sup>

Bailey gives the essential microcosmic meaning of the verse, describing the steps that a human being could follow to achieve his or her spiritual perfection: “He begins to grasp the vision of the spiritual man, as *he is in essence*. He realizes the virtues and reactions which that spiritual man would evidence in physical plane life. He builds a thoughtform of himself as the ideal man, the true server, the perfect master ... He creates a pattern in his mind that hews as true as he can make it to the prototype and that serves to model the lower man and force conformity to the ideal. As he perfects his technique, he finds a transmuting, transforming power at work upon the energies that constitute his lower nature until all is subordinated and he becomes in practical manifestation what he is esoterically and essentially.”<sup>15</sup> Bailey also mentions the role of pranayama: “The power and subtlety of the pranayama process lies in the potency of the thought behind the act of breathing and not at all really in the inflation and deflation of the torso.”<sup>16</sup>

**14. From his navel arose the air; from his head the heaven evolved; from his feet the earth; the [four] directions from his ear. Thus, they fashioned the worlds.**

*From transmuting emotional sensitivity, human beings become intuitively aware of the spiritual world; from being focused in the head center, they become unified with the spiritual world; from rendering service, they help the material world; from developing inner listening, they receive and can distinguish between mental impressions generated by their own subconscious mind, other human beings, their inner divine voice, and the spiritual kingdom. Thus, they act as a bridge between the spiritual and material worlds.*

The above verse symbolically depicts certain qualities and powers of the Planetary Logos. He, however, is the prototype for human beings, so His qualities and powers are within the reach of human beings. The *Theosophical*

*Quarterly* explains this key notion: “Through what divine dispensations are these marvelous attainments within the reach of every valorous man and woman, disciples and lay disciples of either sex? Here, if our understanding be justly based, is the essence of the whole matter. These graces and spiritual treasures are within our reach because they are the qualities and powers, the very being, of the heavenly Purusha, the Divine Man, the Logos; they are within our reach, because the Heavenly Man, who might have dwelt apart in celestial solitude, submitted instead to sacrifice, offering his life and being, giving that life as the sustenance of many.”<sup>17</sup>

Next, consideration is given only to the micro-cosmic meaning of the verse, which provides a description of potential qualities and powers of human beings and how they could be developed. The first phrase says, “From his navel arose the air.” Bailey cites a quotation (attributed to Annie Besant) saying that “the ‘navel’ represents the solar plexus, perhaps the most important plexus of the sympathetic system,”<sup>18</sup> and considers “air” to be a symbol of “the illumination of the intuition.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, this phrase suggests that emotional sensitivity, which is centered in the solar plexus, can be transmuted into intuitive awareness. Bailey also speaks of “the transmutation of the astral life into the buddhic consciousness,”<sup>20</sup> where “astral” is a synonym for emotional, and “buddhic” is a synonym for intuitive.

The second phrase says, “from his head the heaven evolved,” which depicts a technique of meditation and its effects. Bailey describes the technique using phrases such as the following: “Raise the consciousness to the head center;

hold the consciousness at the highest possible point.”<sup>21</sup> Aurobindo describes its effects: “One must open the silent mental consciousness upward to all that is above mind. After a time one feels the consciousness rising upward, and in the end it rises beyond the lid that has so long kept it tied in the body and finds a center above the head where it is liberated into the Infinite. There it begins to come into contact with the universal Self, the Divine Peace, Light, Power, Knowledge, Bliss, to enter into that and become that, to feel the descent of these things into the nature.”<sup>22</sup> Here, “a center

above the head” is the head center, or chakra, which is located in the vital body and is just above the top of the head in the dense physical body.<sup>23</sup>

The third phrase says, “from his feet the earth.” As in the twelfth verse, “feet” symbolizes service to other human beings. Bailey writes, “But unless service can be rendered from an intuitive understanding of all the facts in the case, interpreted intelligently, and applied in a spirit of love upon the physical plane, it fails to fulfill its mission adequately.”<sup>24</sup> The service depicted in this phrase is effective because the earlier phrases imply that it is rendered from an intuitive understanding and applied in a

spirit of love.

The fourth phrase says, “the [four] directions from his ear.” This phrase uses “ear” to symbolize inner hearing and indicates that such hearing could take place in four directions. Bailey also writes about four kinds of mental impressions that can be inwardly heard: “The disciple is taught to be sensitive to ‘impressions’ coming from his own soul and, later, from the Master and the Ashram. He is taught to interpret these impressions correctly by means of his trained and illumined mind; he

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learns to distinguish between that which comes from his own subconscious nature, that which is telepathically recorded as coming from the world of thought and from the minds of other men, and that which comes from the world of spiritual being.”<sup>25</sup> Here, “soul” denotes the inner divine voice,<sup>26</sup> and “the Master and the Ashram” represent the spiritual kingdom.

The fifth phrase says, “Thus, they fashioned the worlds.” In other words, through fulfilling the earlier phrases, human beings connected the spiritual and material worlds. Bailey speaks of this ability: “Every human being who reaches the goal of light and wisdom automatically has a field of influence that extends both up and down, and that reaches both inwards to the source of light and outwards into the ‘fields of darkness’ ... When large numbers of the sons of men can so act, then the human family will enter upon its destined work of planetary service. Its mission is to act as a bridge between the world of spirit and the world of material forms.”<sup>27</sup>

**15. Seven were his altar sticks, three times seven were the kindling bundles, when the gods, performing the sacrifice, bound the beast Purusa.**

*Human beings, like their prototype, face seven inward initiations that are milestones for three interrelated schemes of evolution, are subject to various hierophants who administer these initiations, and remain prisoners of the planet until they complete them.*

This verse is applicable to either human beings or the Planetary Logos. First, let us consider its application to human beings. Initiations, which are mentioned in the commentary for the fifth verse, occur during inward 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.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, initiations could be thought of as milestones for the evolutionary journey of human beings.

An altar stick burning with fire symbolizes an initiation ceremony that is taking place because, as Bailey says, “An initiation is a blaze of illumination.”<sup>29</sup> In the verse, the seven altar sticks indicate that human beings face, or have as a prospect, seven initiations on their evolutionary journey. These altar sticks are not yet burning, indicating that the seven initiations do not take place at the beginning of the evolutionary journey but instead lie ahead. Bailey has the same time orientation when she writes, “There are five initiations ahead of the disciple, with two more ahead of the Master, making in all seven initiations.”<sup>30</sup> After human beings undergo five initiations, they become a “Master,” which means that they have become a member of the spiritual kingdom and therefore a candidate for the two remaining initiations.

The verse says, “three times seven were the kindling bundles.” Here, the phrase “three times seven” is the literal translation of the original Sanskrit words. Some translators carry out this multiplication and assume that the Sanskrit words denote the number “twenty-one.”<sup>31</sup> What else could the phrase “three times seven” mean?

The number *seven* has a symbolic meaning in the Rig Veda, as Aurobindo explains: “The number seven plays an exceedingly important part in the Vedic system, as in most very ancient schools of thought. We find it recurring constantly—the seven delights ... ; the seven flames, tongues or rays of Agni ... ; the seven forms of the Thought-principle ... ; the seven rivers ... All these sets of seven depend, it seems to me, upon the Vedic classification of the fundamental principles, the tattvas, of existence ... In the Veda, then, we find the number of the principles variously stated ... But the full number ordinarily recognized is seven.”<sup>32</sup>

As in the sixth verse, “kindling” symbolizes the limitations that support the continuation of the evolutionary process. If we regard the number seven as a symbol of completion, then seven “kindling bundles” symbolize a complete scheme of evolution; so three sets of seven kindling bundles symbolize three complete schemes of evolution. These multiple schemes of evolution must refer to different

vehicles of consciousness because more than one scheme cannot be associated with the same vehicle. These schemes must be interrelated because they have common milestones. What might these schemes be? Blavatsky writes, "It now becomes plain that there exists in Nature a triple evolutionary scheme ... or rather three separate schemes of evolution, which in our system are inextricably interwoven and interblended at every point. These are the Monadic (or spiritual), the intellectual, and the physical evolutions."<sup>33</sup>

The word *hierophant* comes from the Greek word (*hierophantes*) that means "one who shows sacred things." It was the title of the chief priest at the Eleusinian Mysteries, which were outward initiation ceremonies held in ancient Greece. Bailey uses this title to denote the chief officer at an inward initiation ceremony and says that the identity of this officer depends upon the initiation being taken. For example, she writes, "At the seventh initiation ... the Logos of our scheme on His own plane, becomes the Hierophant,"<sup>34</sup> which means that the Planetary Logos Himself administers the seventh initiation.

A human being is a prisoner of the planet, but, as Bailey explains, such a prison house enables evolution to occur: "Into the prison house of form enter all that live; some enter consciously and some unconsciously, and this we call birth, appearance, incarnation, manifestation ... This produces therefore in the world field of awareness a gradual and slow growth towards self-expression, self-appreciation, and self-realisation ... Finally the time arrives when the Principle of Liberation becomes active and a transition is effected out of a prison house that

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cramps and distorts into one that provides adequate conditions for the next development of consciousness."<sup>35</sup>

The symbols in the above verse also apply to the Planetary Logos because Bailey states: "Our Planetary Logos has for objective seven initiations."<sup>36</sup> Bailey goes on to say that "the cycles in the evolutionary process of all these Entities [a Solar Logos, a Planetary Logos, and a human being] may be divided mainly into three groups"<sup>37</sup> and that "the 'prisoners of the planet' ... [include] the Planetary Logos."<sup>38</sup> Further, she states that the hierophant is "a Cosmic Logos in the initiations of a Solar Logos, and of the three major Planetary Logoi," and is "a Solar Logos in the initiations of a Planetary Logos."<sup>39</sup> Here, "Cosmic Logos" denotes a composite Life who is even greater than the Solar Logos.

**16. The gods sacrificed with the sacrifice to the sacrifice. These were the first rites. These powers reached the firmament, where the ancient demi-gods and the gods are.**

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

Each human being is a composite life that incorporates the lives of the many minuscule

cells in his or her physical body. According to the first, third, fourth, and twelfth verses, the Planetary Logos is a composite life that incorporates the lives of the many human beings living on our planet. The seventh verse indicates that the Solar Logos is a composite life that incorporates the lives of all the Planetary Logoi in our solar system. The above verse indicates that the Solar Logos is a corporate part of a still greater composite Life.

These successive relations show that the Purusha Sukta is based on the philosophical principle of hylozoism, as Bailey explains:

The hylozoistic theory ... posits a living substance, composed of a multiplicity of sentient lives that are continuously swept into expression by the 'breath of the divine Life.' This theory recognizes no so-called inorganic matter anywhere in the universe and emphasizes the fact that all forms are built up of infinitesimal lives, which in their totality—great or small—constitute a Life, and that these composite lives, in their turn, are a corporate part of a still greater Life. Thus eventually we have that great scale of lives, manifesting in greater expression and reaching all the way from the tiny life called the atom (with which science deals) up to that vast atomic life which we call a solar system.<sup>40</sup>

The first sentence in the above verse, "The gods sacrificed with the sacrifice to the sacrifice," may seem paradoxical. According to a hylozoistic perspective, the first-mentioned "sacrifice" is the Planetary Logos for our planet, the "gods" are the other Planetary Logoi in our solar system, and the second-mentioned "sacrifice" is the Solar Logos.

Blavatsky generalizes the first sentence with this statement: "Life is built up by the sacrifice of the individual to the whole. Each cell in the living body must sacrifice itself to the perfection of the whole; when it is otherwise, disease and death enforce the lesson."<sup>41</sup> The Planetary Logoi are part of the greater body of the Solar Logos, so the Planetary Logoi must sacrifice Themselves to the perfection of the Solar Logos, who in turn must sacrifice Himself to the perfection of a still

greater composite Life. Bailey makes similar points: "The Solar Logos expands His consciousness to include the desire of the Cosmic Logos. The Planetary Logos expands His consciousness to measure up to the will and purpose of the Solar Logos."<sup>42</sup>

The second sentence, "These were the first rites," indicates that these sacrifices by the various Logoi are prototypes for human activity. Accordingly, human beings must sacrifice themselves to the perfection of what they conceive of as their surrounding composite whole. In other words, they must eliminate their limited ideals and forms of pride that would prevent them from working in the best interests of their conceived whole. Moreover, their conceived whole becomes more inclusive over time, just as the conceived whole of the Solar Logos is more inclusive than that of the Planetary Logos. For example, human beings might sacrifice themselves initially for their immediate family, then for their community and nation, and finally for the Planetary Logos. Bailey speaks about that final step in which human beings are "turned toward the conscious sacrifice of all to the furthering of the plans of the Planetary Logos, and to the carrying out of His purposes in group work."<sup>43</sup>

The final sentence of the verse indicates that each of these sacrifices leads to advancement. Bailey makes a similar point: "Each step up is ever through the sacrifice of all that the heart holds dear on one plane or another, and always must this sacrifice be voluntary."<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

The Purusha Sukta gives an early account of the history of our planet and how the universe operates. It also depicts the relationships between the Planetary Logos and human beings, the effects of divine sacrifice on the various forms on our planet, and models of human evolution. Can we have confidence in what this Hindu hymn is telling us?

Blavatsky states, "Theosophy is, then, the archaic *Wisdom-Religion*, the esoteric doctrine once known in every ancient country having

claims to civilization,”<sup>45</sup> and also, “the Rig Veda, the oldest of *all the known* ancient records, may be shown to corroborate the occult teachings in almost every respect.”<sup>46</sup> The two parts of this article have supported these claims of Blavatsky by showing that the ancient Purusha Sukta, which is in the Rig Veda, is consistent—even in minute detail—with modern theosophical writings.

Paul, in 2 Corinthians 13:1, states: “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.” The ancient Purusha Sukta and modern theosophical writings are two independent witnesses that corroborate each other. Thus, we can have much greater confidence in their common propositions than if we had a single witness.

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Briens et al., *Reading About the World*, Vol. 1 (3rd ed., Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishing, 2006), 128; [http://www.wsu.edu/~wldciv/world\\_civ\\_reader/world\\_civ\\_reader\\_1/rig\\_veda.html](http://www.wsu.edu/~wldciv/world_civ_reader/world_civ_reader_1/rig_veda.html) (accessed Dec. 20, 2008).

<sup>2</sup>All Biblical verses are taken from the King James Version.

<sup>3</sup>Alice A. Bailey, *The Light of the Soul* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1927), 130.

<sup>4</sup>Swami Kriyananda, *Conversations with Yogananda* (Nevada City, CA: Crystal Clarity Publishers, 2004), 401.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 400.

<sup>6</sup>Alice A. Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1922), 24-26, 28.

<sup>7</sup>Sri Aurobindo, *The Secret of the Veda* (1914-1916; reprint; vol. 15 in *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*, Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1998), 288, 341.

<sup>8</sup>Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1957), 520.

<sup>9</sup>Aurobindo, *The Secret of the Veda*, 363.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 262.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 65-66.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>13</sup>Helena P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I (Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1877), 264.

<sup>14</sup>H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I (1888; reprint; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1977), 479.

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<sup>15</sup>Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1934), 252.

<sup>16</sup>Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, Vol. 1 (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1944), 356.

<sup>17</sup>*Theosophical Quarterly*, Vol. XXVIII (July 1930; reprint; Kila, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), 12.

<sup>18</sup>Alice A. Bailey, *The Soul and Its Mechanism* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1930), 123.

<sup>19</sup>Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1925), 269.

<sup>20</sup>Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, Vol. 2 (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1955), 468.

<sup>21</sup>Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1960), 487.

<sup>22</sup>Sri Aurobindo, *The Integral Yoga* (Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1993), 152.

<sup>23</sup>Alice A. Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1950), 146.

<sup>24</sup>Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, 537.

<sup>25</sup>Alice A. Bailey, *The Unfinished Autobiography* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1951), 276-277.

<sup>26</sup>Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, Vol. 2 (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1942), 491-492.

<sup>27</sup>Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, 538.

<sup>28</sup>Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1922), 15.

<sup>29</sup>Alice A. Bailey, *From Bethlehem to Calvary* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1937), 105.

<sup>30</sup>Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, Vol. 2, 309.

<sup>31</sup>Steven J. Rosen, *Essential Hinduism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 56.

<sup>32</sup>Aurobindo, *The Secret of the Veda*, 97-98.

<sup>33</sup>Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, 181.

<sup>34</sup>Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 92.

<sup>35</sup>Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, 533-534.

<sup>36</sup>Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 384.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>38</sup>Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, 530-531.

<sup>39</sup>Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 126.

<sup>40</sup>Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, Vol. I (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1936), 149.

<sup>41</sup>Helena P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, Vol. VIII (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Society in America, 2002), 14.

<sup>42</sup>Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 1043.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 821.

<sup>44</sup>Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 82.

<sup>45</sup>Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, Vol. II, 89.

<sup>46</sup>Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, 606.



# Using Money as an Instrument of Service

Joann S. Bakula

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## Summary

This article reflects on the significance and use of money in the present economic crisis and more generally in a world of expanding awareness. Practical suggestions are made for translating the will-to-good into socially conscious ways to improve the use of money.

## Introduction

In times of economic and financial crises, with widespread unemployment and fear, a review of how we look at money, how we use it, and how we make it can provide useful clarification. Such a review would include how to use money in service and the philosophy behind our use. Through meditation, reading, and applying our esoteric knowledge we can build a thoughtform that counters the fear currently paralyzing the world. We can adhere to a philosophy of abundance instead of scarcity, or hope instead of fear.

To many of us, young and old, the necessary experience of fulfilling our worldly desires is very familiar. Acquiring and spending money are no longer sufficient nor attractive as major goals. Our needs are met and our wants are endless. A new relationship to living and being is necessary if we are to continue growing psychologically and spiritually. We are part of a group that is realizing the truth that *having* is no substitute for *being*.

Withdrawal from the use of money is not a viable solution. A life that is holistic must include all aspects of daily living, including right relationship to money and work. We must learn the right use of money rather than giving in to the mistaken notion that people with spiritual values should avoid business, finance, and money. To do otherwise would

be to leave the economic field, which determines to such a large degree the life of the majority on this planet, to those who are the most selfish and whose values are indeed the most exclusively materialistic. World need cries for responsible leadership in the economic field—leadership that consciously wills to serve the good of all, instead of putting its own private gain first.

It is a question of values, not occupation. Do we put the greatest value on the objects of physical living or on the quality of life itself? The values we choose to live by determine the quality of our lives. What are we really dedicating our lives to? Those who put their greatest effort into obtaining objects or accumulating money for themselves are materialistic. Those who put greatest value on the quality of compassionate living and a desire to serve humanity have moved on to higher consciousness, to a higher center of being from which to live and act.

## The Planetary Revolution in Consciousness

Many have undergone the planetary revolution in consciousness with a new perspective of what is at the center. Our planet is perceived as one living system, and humanity is only part of it—often an irresponsible part. Subjectively, we have moved

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## About the Author

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on from an egocentric point of view to a systemic point of view. The world is not ours to do with as we want. There are consequences to our actions. We have achieved a truer sense of relationship by realizing that we exist in relationship to a larger world, just as the outer appearance of the personality is planetary to the inner self or “sol” of our being. We have achieved relationship to the whole within, psychologically, and without, having realized the interdependence and interrelationship of the units to the whole. We have moved into a new level of integration.

This growing group of awakened and awakening people is potent, especially *because* it has no outer organization, only the inner realization of the larger whole and the shared values that this realization brings. It is strong because it is composed of people of goodwill of all ages, cultures and occupations who share the vision of a more meaningful and more harmonious world for everyone, based on the correct relationship of the individual good to the common good. From our established positions, whatever they are, whether of power and authority or not, daily decisions can be made from the meditative mind, the holistic sense, instead of the self-satisfying calculating mind or the profit incentive alone.

In the past money has been ruled and regulated by desire. Now we can participate in the experiment of ruling and regulating money with the energy of goodwill, with love in action, and compassion with wisdom, with a sense of synthesis and universal responsibility. Love serves; it does not grasp. The energy of compassion demonstrates in broadening, deepening relationships. Economically, this means sharing by people who recognize that responsibility to the common good is part of the completed

point of view; part of being a citizen of the world. It means bridging the gap between the rich and poor so that the living conditions we all share are sustainable and healthy. It means overcoming exclusiveness with inclusiveness.

## The Group of Responsible People

Each of us is responsible for the money that passes through our hands. Through an enlightened group of responsible people, public opinion can affect policy decisions and regulations. This can affect leadership in business, government and universities. We should not withhold our energy until the world changes. *We are the world.* We cannot expect our governments to use money wisely if the more conscious people in every land also have a wrong relationship to

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money. What is needed is a change in attitude of many, not just a few at the center of the problem—even though their power is immense and the economic crisis they have caused has resulted in widespread suffering, loss and unemployment. Alice Bailey writes that “group use” combined with “need, love and magnetic power” are the keys to attracting money.<sup>1</sup> Along with right attitude and right motive, they constitute right method.

Although money has been the symbol of human greed, and even today can be called the “root of all evil,” properly

used it is the very tool that can transform poverty into plenty and polluted water back into pristine pools. We can visualize money as golden flowing energy. Seen in those terms, money can transform the planet into a small paradise if it is more judiciously distributed, and the financial sector regulated for sustainability. Meeting needs is spiritual service; meeting wants and greed is materialistic, whether for things, for sensations, for

achievement, or especially for control of others. The intelligent person who has also experienced the subjective unity of life knows that the problems of the whole of humanity and its relationship to the planet are his or her problems, not just the problems of small groups of experts or powerful business people. Meeting needs on all levels is the task of the whole group of men and women of goodwill, as well as the new group of world servers.

### Seed Money

Each individual can participate in the transformation of money into a tool of goodwill by dedicating money energy to serve the good of planet and people. One way is to contribute seed money to areas of human need. Consciously, meditatively magnetizing whatever we can afford to give can attract larger sums and send it to key positions of world need. Each contribution liberates a few units of money energy from materialistic control to serving the world. It reinforces the powerful recognition of the fact of unity and oneness and breaks up the illusion of separateness, the single most destructive illusion of human thinking.

Seed money can be dedicated to institutions attempting to alleviate human suffering, and to the areas of world crises currently drawing public attention. Energy follows thought. Clear thinking can provide lines of energy toward the resolution of conflict, the solution of problems and emergence from crisis. Seed money can also be used creatively in the areas of human endeavor with which each of us is affiliated through occupation or interest. Seed money can be dedicated to the creative, forward looking thinkers in each of the following fields:

1. Politics
2. Education
3. Communications
4. Culture
5. Science
6. Spirituality or religion
7. Business

Discrimination is the key to the successful use of seed money—discrimination and the courage to work with the best organization available. It is not being rendered immobile by the cynics who find fault in everything, nor by being gullible about human motivation or corruption. We can reverse the trend of apathy by taking action now, rather than waiting until an ideal solution in each area is reached. There is always a new, more perfect goal to be seen as the evolution of world consciousness proceeds. The effect of clear thinking and meditation on this problem can be substantial, resulting, if successful, in greater skill-in-action.

### Choose to Live Simply

Choosing to live simply kills greed. Energy previously used in decorating body, home and ego is freed for higher and better uses. Concentration on self gives way to concentration on others and on the planet. Many people never move beyond seeking to fulfill their basic needs for food, clothing and shelter. They simply refine their needs into wants by focusing on gourmet food, designer clothes, and bigger houses. This is a shallow value system at a time when humanity is awakening to greater purpose, to perception of how our values are affecting the Earth, and how our behaviors affect the climate. Instead of basing our self-worth on how exclusive we are, we can judge ourselves and others by how *inclusive* we are. Choosing to live simply means we can live on less. It also means we have more freedom to focus on more important things than superficial appearances or status symbols.

The time saved in not having to take care of all the possessions accumulated may be given to more important things. We can see nature, the planet and our fellow humans as more beautiful than our own belongings. By living simply we can choose to value principle over prestige, the power of the inclusive principle over the exclusionary principle, the power of the whole over the power of small wealthy self-congratulatory groups. Many new groups are dedicated to serving the world; they gather around ideas and

ideals worth living their lives for. In short, living simply can give us more time, more freedom, more money, a more meaningful life, and a chance to contribute something of ourselves.

### An Act of Will

An act of will stemming from an underlying will-to-good is another means of reversing the cycle of power, control and supremacy that money brings. As the ego ebbs, the will-to-good floods. A sense of integration and synthesis emerges. Compassion begins to motivate.

If chasms exist between the rich and the starving, the hoarded masses of gold and the humbled masses in need, if this is the heart of the economic problem, then *releasing* the needed funds is the solution. If adequate money energy is available, then releasing, directing and channeling this energy is our task. The supply of money in the world and the demand for change in the areas of greatest need must come together, as surely as the law of supply and demand creates change.

An act of will is not the power of force or a militant following in line with others; it is the will to evolve, to act creatively from the quality of our own being, to be a source of light and love from within, to be a beacon of wisdom and compassion for others. An act of will comes from direct perception unobstructed by the opinions and directives of others. It has a quality of freedom that only authenticity can bring. The imitations of freedom and independent perceptions are a poor caricature of the real thing. An act of will sets you free. Following someone else's will never does. How can it? The will to act is born out of the deep will to be, to overcome the small selfish nature with union through identification with the whole. An act of will comes from the deep will to evolve as a spiritual, ethical and creative being. The act of will is an intelligent crea-

tive act that releases the past and draws from the future.

### An Opportunity for the Young

Many of today's young people are refusing to devote their lives to possessions or positions. For them a way of life built upon spiritual values demands immediate implementation and application. Many are committed to leading spiritual lives of service in this materialistic world by being fully present in both the subjective and objective world. Our values and our motives are our own; *we* choose them. Forging new paths that lead to higher consciousness and greater purpose is a challenging opportunity for young and old alike.

In an atmosphere of severe economic recession such as this one, new college graduates have fewer job opportunities and dimmer prospects. As President Obama pointed out in his 2009 commencement address to Arizona State University, this historic recession was caused in part by greed and irresponsibility. It is this materialistic value system that the new generation is faced with and needs to address: "The elevation," he declared, "of appearance over substance, celebrity over character,

short-term gain over lasting achievement is precisely what your generation needs to help end. It distracts you from what is truly important, and may lead you to compromise your values, principles and commitments." In the absence of an easy job market, Obama advised them to follow their passion and pursue "ideals of opportunity, equality and freedom." He encouraged our nation's young people to continuously adapt, grow, and learn, to use this crisis as an opportunity to adjust their values to the ones that America is most loved for, such as new innovative ideas, human rights advances, responding to

**In the final analysis, economics exists not as theories and texts, but in the values of people. Business exists only by public consent, as a channel through which supply and demand can meet.**

human needs with compassion, and the power of our enduring ideals.<sup>2</sup>

## Business Exists by Public Consent

In the final analysis, economics exists, not in theories and texts, but in the values of a people. Business exists only by public consent, as a channel through which supply and demand meet. As we now know, the toxic self-interest of some corporate actors was at the expense of the world economy, causing suffering around the globe. Killing the goose that lays the golden eggs is a very old tale, told again and again, to no avail apparently. It represents the gullibility of entrusting the goose to those whose value system is foolhardy and selfish, and who think only of short-term gain. Money, like business and so many other things, is a good servant but a poor master.

Now we face the tyranny of size, companies so large we cannot afford to let them fail, or fail to do their bidding. The power of giant corporations to gain undue influence on governments and legislation is legion. They can also control the media, upon which democracies rely and an informed electorate is dependent. It becomes increasingly difficult for small businesses to operate in a climate of legislated favoritism. The disproportionate influence and disturbed equilibrium is costing Americans and the world dearly.

## Small is Beautiful and Integral

Small businesses are truly foundational to the economy; 99% of all businesses, even in the United States, are categorized as small. Small is not only beautiful, it is integral and proportional. It cuts through the arrogance of size and position. Equality can restore equilibrium. It represents the working relationship of the unit to the whole, the atom within the body or system, and the value of the individual within the whole of humanity. The necessity to move on from unhealthy and unfair business practices creating unsustainable giants to a level playing

field in which the full range of businesses has equal rights protected by legislation is upon us. In the final analysis, it is the creative tension between the unit and the whole, the small business and the large corporation, between the value of the individual and the fact of the one humanity, which is the golden mean. It is time once again to review the power of limits.

## Conclusions

For the men and women of goodwill who seek to use money as a tool of service, the following ideas are offered:

1. Assume responsibility for the money that passes through our hands.
2. Use money with the energy of goodwill, or love in action, instead of desire.
3. Meet needs by sharing.
4. Influence public opinion by sounding out the principle of sharing, speaking and writing when opportunity arises,
5. Take a stand on issues concerning the economic common good.
6. Dedicate seed money with discrimination and conviction to:
  - a. those institutions that alleviate world suffering
  - b. areas of world crises
  - c. those in our particular field who are attempting to sound the new, more inclusive note.
7. Refuse to serve greed or make decisions from values of greed.
8. Choose to live simply.
9. Make an act of will stemming from the will-to-good.
10. Learn to release funds and grants in areas of need.
11. Meditate on money, visualized as golden flowing energy, as an instrument of service.

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<sup>1</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, I, New York: Lucis, 272.

<sup>2</sup> Source: [www: huffingtonpost.com/2009/05/13/obama-asu-speech-full-text](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/05/13/obama-asu-speech-full-text) (accessed, June 5, 2009).



# The Sixth Initiation

Al Christensen

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I appreciated Master Djwal Khul's explanation that it was difficult for him to present these higher initiations given that he was between the fifth and sixth initiations, and trying to reach those who had probably only taken the first or second initiation. However, he noted that early discussions of the subject are useful to get us thinking about what lies ahead and to prepare us for initiations far in advance of crisis moments to come.

When I reflect on my past experiences, I see that early renunciations are forced; then later, when more independence is gained, renunciations can be made with more intention. I am at last making more intentional renunciations, and they are more difficult than those I was forced to make. I have often noticed that the choices and conditions forced on humankind are not always understood. People wonder what God is up to. Common explanations are that God is punishing us or teaching us hard lessons or is uninterested in our small crises. The wiser among us see these situations as needed hard lessons, necessary to teach the masses.

In a practical sense it is more efficient to deal with situations as best one can, and then analyze why they happened. The masses are not aware of the energies and forces behind events on Earth, let alone the forces playing upon our planet, and so do not see how certain events came to be through cause and effect. However, some people are now getting

a better idea what is behind war. I am at a point where I am seeing the causes behind events, and I feel I have the responsibility to anticipate how my actions affect others. The presentation of distant initiations is an encouragement to perceive what lies ahead and start living the life needed to culminate in initiation. Working toward initiation can also

improve our ability to deal with crises along the way, as well as increase our sensitivity to new revelations.

It makes sense that when taking an initiation one must be a free agent, able to freely aspire, choose, and change. The sixth initiation, as described by the Tibetan, is definitely to be aspired to. One's decision is completely free from all earthly experiences, and there is a complete break with the past and freedom from karma. One is completely liberated, with no desire to go back or be attached. Ahead lie only choices of which service to render on

the forward Path. I understand the need to start preparing, begin renouncing, and open myself to higher revelation. I think of renunciations as repelling me, just as aspiration draws me forward. My experience is that the moment an idea is in the mind one can start to develop it. When an impediment is recognized, renunciation can be implemented. Looking ahead and starting to work toward an initiation that is still far down the Path can always result in some gain. Any "ascension" strengthens my service.

**Correct choices become more spiritually motivated as one proceeds along the initiation Path. The higher one ascends, the more instinctual lower decisions become; uncertainty is left behind; decisions are more certain, and training in renouncing with intentional purpose makes moving on easier.**

The cycle of right choices, decisions, renouncing, ascending and receiving revelation is most clearly represented to me as an ascending spiral. The initiation is the end of a cycle, or can be graphically represented as a loop of the spiral. As one rises up the ascending spiral, the lower loops are left further behind, still in remembered experience, but one's "being" is no longer identified with the lower cycle.

Correct choices become more spiritually motivated as one proceeds along the Path of Initiation. The higher one ascends, the more instinctual lower decisions become; uncertainty is left behind; decisions are more certain, and training in renouncing with intentional purpose makes it easier to move on. Forsaking the past becomes more definite until it is completely renounced and has lost all possible appeal.

The past is carried with the climber in the five lower initiations. The experiences are there, but descend below the threshold of consciousness. The disciple is more a creator and less acted upon by Hierarchy. These are all conditions that are aspired to at the lower levels. The sixth initiation is a higher correspondence of the second initiation and is the

true ascension brought on by decision. Visually, for me, the spiraling ends and straightens into a path. At the sixth, one can go ahead into Shamballa or turn back as Christ did. From the sixth to the seventh initiations one understands life on Earth and the necessary quality of Love-Wisdom animating our planet and solar system and beyond. The free choice of ray service is the next big decision.

After the sixth initiation and before choosing one of the seven Paths of Higher Evolution, the initiate participates in a conclave to decide what adjustments to make in the Plan, adjustments that do not affect humanity's free will. I would think that these Elder Brothers are in the right position to know what humanity needs. They have dealt with all impediments of human life and mastered the techniques to hasten redemption. As a group they decide what stimulation from Shamballa humanity needs. This conclave happens every 50 years; the last one was in 2001. At first 50 years seems like a long time, but then I imagine that these impacts take an extended period to work out through humanity. As a result of studying these energy impacts, I am more alert to any evidence of how they work out on Earth.

## Book Review

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*Dion Fortune & the Inner Light*, by Gareth Knight. Loughborough, Leicestershire, U.K.: Thoth Publications, 2000. Paperback, 344 pages. US\$29.95.

Dion Fortune was one of the most enigmatic figures of 20th-century western esotericism. Many of us studied *The Mystical Qabalah* (1935) or were fascinated by the vivid imagery of her occult novels. But who or what she was, remained largely a mystery until Gareth Knight published the biography, which is the subject of this review.

Fortune's real name was Violet Mary Firth, and she was born in 1890 in Llandudno, Wales, the daughter of upper middle class parents who embraced Christian Science. Violet was an imaginative, headstrong child, given to daydreaming of far-away, magical places. When she was 20 her parents enrolled her in a women's residential college that specialized in horticulture. In addition to caring for the college's poultry, she began writing plays for the students to perform. Firth left the college after an emotionally devastating encounter with the domineering warden. In an attempt to understand her trauma she briefly studied psychotherapy, but the outbreak of World War I brought those studies to an end. She was drafted into agricultural work before securing a more congenial government job in London. There she discovered the library of the Theosophical Society and the works of Annie Besant.

Firth's intuitive gifts were evident from a young age, but came to full bloom when she was 26. Her first esoteric teacher was Dr. Theodore Moriarty who became "Dr. Taverner" in one of her most successful novels. In 1919 she was initiated into the Alpha et Omega Lodge of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The lodge was headed by Moina Mathers, widow of MacGregor Mathers, autocratic co-founder of the original

Golden Dawn. Firth's initiatory name was *Deo non fortuna* ("[Trust in] God, not luck"), which evolved into the pseudonym, "Dion Fortune," she used for the rest of her life. Her relationship with Moina Mathers deteriorated, and the latter allegedly mounted a violent occult attack on Firth/Fortune, leaving her with physical scars. Nevertheless, the training in the rituals of the Golden Dawn laid the groundwork for Fortune's Hermetic work in her own organization, the Fraternity of the Inner Light.

The Fraternity provided Dion Fortune's principal base of operation from 1927 until her death in 1946. The greater part of its activities was ceremonial in nature, with a pre-Christian focus. Fortune developed the Rite of Pan and the Rite of Isis, both of which are described in her novels. The Fraternity offered in-house training with graded initiatory levels resembling those of the Golden Dawn. Although others rose through the grades, Fortune retained the leadership role, serving as magus in the most important rituals of the Greater Mysteries. Correspondence courses offered training in the Lesser Mysteries. The Fraternity also had an esoteric Christian agenda, which was derived from the work of the Christian Mystic Lodge of the Theosophical Society. Eventually the Christian practices, which included regular Sunday services, were moved to a separate organization, the Guild of the Master Jesus, later renamed the Church of the Graal. Fortune always viewed Jesus Christ as the master of masters, but esoteric Christianity was not her main interest.

In addition to her ritual work Fortune was a gifted medium, though she spurned popular spiritualism. Viewing herself as a "cosmic medium," she focused on channeling teachers from the inner planes. The teachers sometimes identified themselves as masters: for example the "Master of Medicine." More frequently they gave their names, and we find "Socrates," "Lord Thomas Erskine," and "David Car-

stairs.” At least the first two were well-known historical figures, but Dion Fortune warned that one could never be totally sure who the contacts were. Her biographer comments:

These are the principal agencies behind Dion Fortune’s mediumship. Whether their identities be taken at face value, or regarded as convenient stage names for archetypal models, or complexes from the medium’s subconscious, can only be speculative theories. [p. 88]

Israel Regardie, who also came from the Golden Dawn tradition and who wrote influential books on ritual, became scornful of the whole notion of channeling the masters. In later life he treated all occult work as being confined to the individual’s own psyche.

No matter where the teachings came from, Dion Fortune used them as the basis for *The Cosmic Doctrine*, *The Esoteric Orders and Their Work*, *The Training and Work of an Initiate*, and other books. She also wrote numerous articles, which appeared in her organization’s journal, *Inner Light Magazine*.

Initially Fortune’s mediumistic work was conducted in conventional trance. Two or more collaborators recorded the communications while she lay on a couch. But over time, she gradually acquired powers of telepathy that enabled her to receive information in waking consciousness. That was how *The Mystical Qabalah* came to be written:

I would be sitting in my accustomed chair, conscious of the sounds of the house, the touch of the clothes on my limbs, and all that makes up the total impressions that keep us in touch with the external world... Then I would commence my mental rehearsal of the sacred names, and would suddenly find that I was aware of mental pictures only, to the entire exclusion of physical sense impressions. Nevertheless I retained full co-ordination of consciousness, for I knew that I was conscious of the pictures and that the physical impressions would return unless I maintained my concentration on the images ... and did not allow [my consciousness] to wander. [p. 213]

Dion Fortune’s life can be compared and contrasted with that of Alice Bailey. They were born within 70 miles of each other. Bailey was 10 years Fortune’s senior but outlived her by three years. Both had early contacts with the Theosophical Society, and both went on to form their own training organizations. Both wrote books based on information from higher sources. Both married men who collaborated in their esoteric work. Dion Fortune married physician Dr. Penry Evans, who worked for a time with the Master of Medicine, though the marriage eventually ended in divorce. Bailey married Foster Bailey who was her dedicated co-worker for more than 30 years and continued the work of the Lucis Trust after her death.

Their ray influences evidently were not the same. Bailey emphasized teaching and discipleship, while Fortune emphasized teaching and ceremonial ritual. The Golden Dawn tradition included some unsavory characters, and some of its work strayed off the right-hand path. Dion Fortune was never accused of occult misconduct, and in personal and professional life she conducted herself with propriety. Nevertheless, critics might feel that Fortune was tainted by her associations. No doubt students of Alice Bailey would also see a distinction between Bailey’s work as amanuensis for the Tibetan and Fortune’s mediumistic work with the inner-plane teachers. The content of *The Cosmic Doctrine* is not incompatible with Bailey’s teachings, but the latter are much more extensive and on a higher spiritual level.

Be that as it may, Dion Fortune played a significant role in modern esotericism, and we are indebted to Gareth Knight for this intriguing biography. Knight was inducted into the Fraternity in 1953, seven years after Fortune’s death. Despite the fact that they never met, he is often regarded as her protégé. His *Guide to Practical Qabalistic Symbolism* (1965) formed a continuation of *The Mystical Qabalah*. In 1998 he returned to the Fraternity, after many years, to edit and republish several of her other books and to conduct research in its archives. The biography is an important product of that research.

*Dion Fortune & the Inner Light* is enthusiastically recommended to anyone interested in the western esoteric tradition and in the colorful individuals who contributed to it over the last 100 years.

John Nash  
Johnson City, Tennessee

***Creating a World Without Poverty: Social Business and the Future of Capitalism, by Muhammad Yunus.*** Public Affairs paperback (second edition), 2007. 261 pages.

Most people know of Muhammad Yunus as the founder of Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, the originator of the concept of microcredit as a means of fighting poverty, and as the winner of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize (along with Grameen Bank) for this successful and innovative solution to one of the world's most devastating problems. What this book reveals is that Grameen Bank is only the tip of the iceberg; Yunus shows how the same principles can eliminate all poverty worldwide if people have the will to implement his proven techniques. The practicality and common sense behind his arguments make one want to slap the forehead and exclaim, "Why didn't I think of that?!"

Capitalism has often been blamed for creating and promoting the poverty that plagues half the world's population. Yunus gives a colorful account of his early struggles against "the system" when he was trying, in the 1970s to establish a bank-sponsored credit union for the poor so that they could begin to lift themselves out of poverty. But no bank would participate, as they did not consider the poor a good credit risk. Thus Grameen (meaning "Village") Bank was born in 1983 and became the world's first "social business." Yunus defines the term *social business* as a regular business in every respect, except that the owners and investors do not receive dividends. Those go back into the business; that way prices can be kept low enough to be within reach of the very poor. Social business is opposed to "profit-maximized business," the only currently accepted model in the view of the business world.

Since the beginnings of Grameen Bank, Yunus and his partners have been developing social businesses under the umbrella of "The Grameen Family of Companies." By now this includes more than 25 different businesses, all owned by the poor of Bangladesh; they include Grameen Telecom, Grameen Knitwear, Grameen Healthcare, Grameen Star Education, and so on. By means of these and other businesses, many thousands of poor people, most of whom are women (Grameen's activities are targeted at the most disenfranchised segment of the population) have raised themselves and their families above the poverty line. Credit risk? More than 99% of the microloans are repaid on time.

Part of the book is devoted to the interesting story of how the concept of social business "went international." In 2005, the CEO of the French corporation Groupe Danone, which owns Dannon Yogurt, expressed an interest in co-founding a social business with Yunus. The result was the establishment of Grameen Danone in 2007, which supplies vitamin-fortified yogurt to the malnourished poor all over Bangladesh for pennies a cup. This business, like all social businesses, is designed to make a profit and to be financially independent of the parent corporation. The company's concern with reducing waste and improving the product has led to the invention of "edible cups," along the lines of ice cream cones.

Yunus postulates that capitalism today is a "half-developed structure." This is because the businessperson is, in the current model, a one-dimensional being, dedicated to one mission only—to maximize profit. All fulfillment, growth, and the solution of the world's problems will naturally result from maximized profit.

But this is obviously not the case, as the richest entrepreneurs of the past and present have demonstrated by turning away from the game of profit and establishing foundations in order to make their greatest contributions. Certainly foundations help in dealing with poverty issues, but the size and depth of the problem dwarfs the amount of money available—money that needs to be renewed through investment and donations.

Governments are also—in some cases—a source of help. But some governments are helpless, some are unsympathetic, and all governments are prone to red tape, delays, wastage and favoritism.

Non-profit organizations (including non-governmental organizations) attempt to fill the gap, and they provide many vital services. However, they are inadequate in times of disaster or crisis, or in dealing with the intractable problems of extreme poverty and starvation.

Yunus argues eloquently that only through the skills that humanity has developed over millennia—those of successful business building—can world poverty be eliminated. What makes this approach so promising is that business is something that can be counted on to grow, and therefore there will always be money available for everyone who has his or her own small business. The only reason there is any poverty anywhere on Earth is because

the poor do not yet own their own businesses. However, as he has proven over the last quarter-century, the poor make excellent entrepreneurs; and, once given the tools, they are capable of raising themselves above the poverty line and toward the middle class. It is only a matter of time, he says, before poverty will be consigned to museums. The final chapter in the book, “Putting Poverty in Museums,” deals with the vision in considerable detail.

The book ends with a valuable Epilogue in the form of Yunus’ Nobel Prize address on December 10, 2006, and an update from summer 2008. The Nobel Prize address, entitled “Poverty is a Threat to Peace,” presents a cogent summary of the whole subject and explains why there is no time to waste. It makes an excellent introduction to the book.

John Cobb  
Asheville, North Carolina

## News from the School

### Full-Moon Festivals

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#### Festival of Easter 2009: Becoming Radiant Points of Crisis

At the Aries full moon, we begin the period of the three linked festivals – a time of great potential for change and growth. The first festival – the Festival of Easter – symbolizes for us a time of renewal and rebirth, a time of hope and regeneration.

This year our united meditative focus is particularly important. We know that humanity, as well as the individual, grows through its response to testing, to crises. At this point in time, given the global financial crisis, we are certainly immersed in one of those testing times. Our role, we are told, is to be “radiating points of crisis to produce the needed tension.”<sup>1</sup> This may sound a bit odd. Isn’t there enough crisis in the world already without our contributing to it?

To understand what it is that we are being called to do, we can draw on the concept of *cognitive dissonance* from social psychology. Dissonance results from the perceived inconsistency between one set of beliefs or actions and another. As humans, we have a natural tendency to reduce such dissonance, whether by changing so that there is no longer any conflict or by discrediting the source of the dissonance. The Tibetan describes this process for us when he says, “To this...group [of reactionaries] is committed the work of crystallization that will result in the complete destruction of the old form; to them is given the task of defining the old truths so that the mind of the race will be clarified, that non-essentials and essentials will be recognized for what they are, and fundamental ideas so contrasted with the formulation of dogmas that that which is basic

will be seen and the secondary and unimportant beliefs therefore rejected, for only the basic and causative will be of value in the coming age.”<sup>2</sup>

Fundamental to the process of managing dissonance is an awareness of the inconsistency – and that is where we come in. In the passage quoted above, the reactionaries serve an important purpose but without necessarily knowing that that is their function. Our job is to act consciously to heighten public awareness of the contrast between the status quo that has created the current global crisis and spiritual alternatives. In other words, we need to ask the questions that educate others on the fallacies of the status quo and the benefits of the alternatives. In this process, we need to be extremely careful that we “walk the talk,” rather than discrediting what we wish to promote.

#### What Needs to Shift

As “radiating points of crisis,” we need to identify the key aspects of the status quo that need to change so that we can hold a clear focus and intent until the issues of this current crisis are brought into bold relief. Only when the options become crystal clear will others be able to see the contrast sharply enough to make the needed choices. So what are the paradigm shifts that need to occur?

#### *The Shift from Greed and Entitlement*

There are a number of ways that we could view the issues involved. One is to focus on the matter of greed and the climate of entitlement that has developed, which equates happiness with material consumption. Urged on by “you deserve it” advertising, many have come to feel that, if they want something, they *should* have it regardless of context or consequences... or even whether they actually need it. On the political and economic fronts, we see

this dynamic playing out with U.S. financial institutions and other large corporations who have been given financial bailouts in order to help their clients but who instead have squandered the money on additional bonuses and perks for their executives – and now resist any accountability. The extreme greed we have been witnessing, with predatory pricing and executive salaries in the millions while large portions of the world's population are starving, has got to stop. But why would anyone who feels entitled shift away from greed?

The answer lies in seeing positive alternatives modeled in a way that they become attractive to a growing number of people. We can do our part to provide this contrast by examining our own lives. Which of our purchases are actually necessary? How warm do we really need to keep our homes or offices (rather than put on another layer of clothing)? Where can we reuse items rather than purchasing replacements? In short, how can we limit our consumption to that which we truly need and demonstrate that happiness comes from spiritual, rather than material, fulfillment?

#### *The Shift from Fear*

Another perspective is to focus on the issue of fear and the multiplier effects of hoarding and other behaviors that go along with “looking out for number one.” As long as we share and work collaboratively, we can all survive a crisis. But once people retreat into themselves, there is a domino constrictor that accelerates the problems.

Fear is an emotional response to a perceived or real threat or danger. In the present context, fear is being generated most frequently by a belief that there is not enough for everyone. Is that really true? It *is* true that the near term will be challenging, but in the end there is actually enough for us all. It is interesting to note that, while large Wall Street banks are in trouble, community banks across the U.S. are doing fine.

So we can provide a contrast by focusing on generosity instead. In how many ways can we be generous at this time? What about donating money to community food banks rather than purchasing lattes? Are there extra blankets,

clothes, toys, furnishings that we can give to charitable organizations helping the truly needy? By modeling such behavior, we challenge the premise on which fear is based.

#### *The Shift from Piscean Values*

More fundamentally, we can view the current crisis as part of the shift from outmoded Piscean values to the embracing of a more Aquarian perspective. What we have is a situation where old structures no longer support us and the new structures are not yet formed. The Tibetan reminds us that there are at least four areas in which this shift needs to occur:<sup>3</sup>

*The ideal of paternalism.* Although we have been warned repeatedly by the Tibetan to mind our own business and respect the choices made by others, we continue to support structures where “authorities” dictate what is best for others rather than engaging in dialog. We already have more than enough evidence that collaborative models work better than authoritarian ones, that people need to be free to grow through experiencing the consequences of their choices rather than being protected “for their own good.” We can become skilled in group process techniques like appreciative enquiry, nonviolent communication, mediation, and consensus building in order to model alternatives to paternalistic practices.

*The ideal of growth through pain and suffering.* Many of us assume that we learn best through painful experiences and that we change only when our current approach is too painful to continue. In other words, we assume we change out of fear or to avoid discomfort. Pain does play an initial useful role in warning us of potential dangers so that we can avoid them. But when we create mental and emotional suffering through the way we interpret that signal of pain, we begin to immerse ourselves in that suffering, which is counterproductive. While we can learn valuable lessons from pain, its most important function is actually to help us empathize with others ... to be able to “walk in their shoes.”

We can be most helpful by reminding others (and ourselves!) that the choices we make in interpreting our experience create our emotional state. Joy wells up as we reject the role

of victim and embrace the role of creator. While the energy of suffering is constrictive, the energy of curiosity and experimentation and appreciation is that of an open heart.

*The emphasis (particularly for women) on the ideal of self-sacrifice.* While it is true that growth requires the ability to set limits and postpone individual desires for the good of the group, the only true sacrifice is that which is self-initiated. If the sacrifice is imposed by requirement or expectation, then we have coercion. For women as the expected caregivers, the dynamic of putting others' needs before one's own becomes ingrained in childhood, often to the point of exhaustion and ill health. Many women are so absorbed in anticipating others' needs and responding to "shoulds" that they no longer have a sense of their own unique self. In order to sacrifice oneself, one must first have a "self" to sacrifice. While this dynamic is not restricted to women, it is important to keep in mind that many of the teachings on sacrifice (as in placing the needs of the group ahead of one's own) are actually aimed at individuals who are self-absorbed, not those who are already behaving altruistically. We can be most helpful by questioning why the burden of physical or emotional support should fall on only certain individuals and not be shared equitably.

*The idea of the immediate satisfaction of desire.* One would think that the over-abundance of material goods and sensations would have brought people to a point of satiation, but unfortunately that is not the case. We still have a cultural mandate of "more is better" or "bigger is better," and an assumption that aggression in order to get what we want is acceptable. We can help by refocusing on concepts like simplicity and sufficiency to offset the emphasis on acquisition.

We can also identify a fifth area of needed shift from Piscean to Aquarian values – i.e., from a belief in scarcity to a belief in abundance. The mechanistic "either/or" model of Newtonian physics continues to dominate the way that we conceptualize our universe and our choices even though physicists and cosmologists have long since disproved that worldview. In fact, economics has been de-

finied by Lionel Robbins as "the science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means that have alternative uses."<sup>4</sup> Actually we live within an abundant universe, supported by a Sun that daily transforms four million tons of its substance into light that we might exist.

### **Making the Shift from Crisis to Tension**

We know that our growth trajectory is to move from points of crisis through points of tension to a point of emergence or resolution.<sup>5</sup> We have the role of creating and holding the dissonance that precedes choice. In our present situation, what is the dynamic that will help us along this change sequence? We are told that "the clear light of love must sweep away all this [agonizing and self-preoccupation] and joy [shall] be the keynote of the coming new age."<sup>6</sup> So what would it mean to live joyously?

Joy is a quality of the Soul that produces a delight so extreme that we radiate and express it spontaneously. It is similar to happiness, but does not involve having achieved some result. Our natural state, as Souls, is joyous. Shifting to a focus on joy involves a conscious *experimental approach* to life. We need to love obstacles, to welcome making mistakes as part of growth. We need to encourage ourselves in risk-taking instead of aiming for a static state of perfection. Risk-taking, after all, is critical for learning to make appropriate choices. Instead of focusing on our mistakes or on what we are giving up – e.g., attachment to specific outcomes, criticism of others, a sense of separateness and superiority – we need to focus on what we have learned from our mistakes and on strengthening our compassion for ourselves and others.

### **Holding the Tension**

Tension implies potential, a sense of anticipation. While others are bemoaning the terrible saga unfolding, we need to hold fast to our understanding that there are still critical lessons for humanity to learn. The crisis is not yet ready for resolution, and this is perhaps our most challenging task. It is similar to not allowing a wound to close while there is still infection inside; otherwise, the wound will fester and not heal properly. Just as it is our

responsibility to provide an educational contrast so that the issues become clear, so too is it our responsibility to stimulate dialogue and experimentation until a true and sustainable paradigm shift has been reached.

Perhaps another analogy might be helpful regarding our role with tension. Picture a violin with a broken string – the global financial meltdown. Simply placing a new string on the violin will not help. It needs to be tuned to the correct pitch. That tuning involves repeated tightening, almost to the point where it might snap. But it is precisely at that point – just enough tension, but not too much – where the sweetest sound can be produced ... or, in our case, an informed choice can be made.

So how can we help to “birth” the tension needed to produce the needed paradigm shift? Living joyously focuses in the moment on what we gain from each experience. It involves releasing regrets over paths not taken or options not chosen. It requires an openness to experimentation and growth. Choosing to live joyously rather than fearfully allows us to experience the interconnectedness of the cosmos.

Learning to live joyously is not the only answer to the current crisis, but it is fundamental to the changes that we are challenged to undergo.

Another way of thinking about our role at this time is to frame it as holding the questions

## **Festival of Wesak 2009: Shamballa Influx Redux**

A warm welcome to everyone at this special moment within the spiritual year. As we gather together in our various physical plane groups, or lend our support at a distance, let us recall that we are *one*, a single subjective group on the inner planes focusing our energies in service to humanity and the Hierarchy.

The title of this Wesak address was inspired by the cyclic nature of the energies that are received by humanity each year at the time of the Wesak Festival, and which emanate from

open about how best to proceed, resisting premature closure. This position of poised tension is captured beautifully by Vera Grace Frances in the following poem:<sup>7</sup>

I stay my heart,  
I make delays  
For what awaits this eager pace?  
I stand amidst the eternal ways  
And what is mine will know my face.

As we celebrate this Festival of Easter, may we each stand calmly and joyously at the crossroads holding the tension of potential and opportunity for humanity.

Dorothy Riddle, Ph.D.

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<sup>1</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1960), 589.

<sup>2</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1934), 328.

<sup>3</sup> From Alice A. Bailey, *Education in the New Age* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1954), 119-121.

<sup>4</sup> Lionel Robbins, *Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science* (London: Macmillan, 1932).

<sup>5</sup> Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, 623.

<sup>6</sup> Bailey, *Education in the New Age*, 120.

<sup>7</sup> From Vera Grace Frances, *I Have Loved Beauty* (Madras: Solar Printers, 1961).

Shamballa, where our planetary Logos lives and works, and where the Will of God is known.

The title is also intended to convey a subtle allusion to the tenth anniversary – coming up in the next cycle of spring Festivals – of the Shamballa energy impact of 2000. Those who were working esotericists at that time remember how intense that occasion was. The regular annual influx of Shamballa energy is administered via the Hierarchy, who absorb the energies that are too powerful for human beings at this stage in our evolution. But in 2000 the impact was direct and unmediated, part of a large-scale cyclic pattern that occurs at irregu-

lar intervals. The previous direct impact took place in 1975, and the one before that was responsible for the energy conflagration that is known as the two world wars, and which the Tibetan refers to simply as the World War. Educated disciples now know enough to prepare adequately for such a powerful energy inflow, in order to avail themselves of the energy and not just become the victims of it.

Because the primary ray energy associated with Shamballa is the First Ray, this is risky business indeed! This energy of Will or Power, when misused, is capable of causing widespread destruction and misery as has been proven many times in recent history. For a constructive and beneficial use of this powerful energy, the energy of Love has to be present as a balancing factor. This is true of an individual and it is true of a group. The largest group – humanity as a whole – still has a distance to evolve before there is sufficient Love energy to provide a proper balance. Unaided, humanity is still unready to deal with the consequences of direct First Ray energy.

As individuals, many spiritual workers may also be unready because each of us carries a particular set of ray energies that condition our vehicles, and which are aimed at achieving a particular evolutionary purpose during this incarnation. We are also at different stages on the Path, and most of us are juggling issues that tend to distract us from a steady spiritual focus. We are told, “this outpouring of directed energy means a great stimulation of all sensitive and responsive aspirants; the result is not an easy one. Everything in [aspirants] is raised to the surface of consciousness, and while they are faced with a vital and beneficent opportunity, they are also faced with the problem of absorbing more ‘punishment’ than they would normally take. Will they break under the impact of self-discovery and the opportunity to eliminate personality? Or will they rise triumphant from the ashes of their dead selves into living power and beauty?”

Even groups such as SES are not exempt from challenges and surprises, and in 2000 we had our share. But an intentionally constituted group, whether it is small or large, and whether it is a self-contained entity or a subgroup of a

larger one, has a distinct advantage during an important energy impact. The individuals that constitute the group can balance each other’s energies, so that weak areas are strengthened and individual strengths are broadened. And the united and simultaneous spiritual focus of a group has many times the power of a lone individual. Therefore the spiritual group, as long as it is conscious of the energy picture, faces not a time of danger, but rather a time of *opportunity*.

It is an opportunity to serve by enabling “unready humanity” to absorb successfully the Shamballa energies at this time. It is an opportunity to receive special training in group formation, as we attempt to follow in the Hierarchy’s footsteps and perform the tasks that the Masters undertake in other years. Those of us who serve in this capacity can prepare ourselves for success in this undertaking by controlling our personal and group focus, and thus controlling the energies we will work with. In the early twentieth century Shamballa impact, people reacted according to the quality of their conditioning energies, so that “great and good individuals appeared and enunciated the truths needed for the New Age, but evil and pernicious individuals also emerged.” However, in spite of the chaotic energies that this impact initiated and which characterized much of the twentieth century, the Will-to-Good from Shamballa evoked the latent goodwill in humanity, so that there has also been a notable increase in general consideration for others and mass action to promote human welfare on a global basis. We are told that since that impact “human thinking has been more concerned with the production of unity and the attainment of synthesis in all human relations than ever before, and one result of this energy has been the forming of the United Nations.”

Before proceeding further let’s take a moment to recall the distinction between energy *contact* and energy *impact*.

In our discipleship work and meditation process we seek to expand our range of energy *contact*. We do this systematically, using recognized techniques, and gradually bring that which we envision as possible into the realm of actuality. Thus we reap the fruit of our past

efforts. On the other hand an energy *impact* is sudden and extends forward into the future. As a sudden influx of energy from the Greater Life, it is revelatory in nature and opens up all kinds of possibilities for working disciples.

We can see how dealing with sudden impacting energies at this time is quite different from our usual work with energies and forces. We normally seek to become aware of our personality forces and of the energies we are immersed in. Our task is to align the energies of our microcosm with those of the macrocosm and gradually transform the human environment in line with the purpose of the One in Whom we live and move and have our being, transforming our own consciousness in the process. Our whole spiritual orientation – in fact, humanity’s whole spiritual orientation – has been aligned with the goal-oriented process illustrated by the definition of energy contact. The Path of discipleship is often viewed as an ascent and initiation is symbolized as a mountaintop.

Before 2000, probationers and most disciples didn’t consciously participate in “impacts.” These have been experienced mainly as disasters, or perhaps the “hand of God” working out the inscrutable will of Deity. The Deluge and the two World Wars of the twentieth century are examples that D.K. offers. But as humanity has grown in consciousness and the disciples of the world have made unexpected progress, the time was becoming ripe for group participation in Shamballa impact. In 1944, when the Tibetan was writing of these matters during the dark days of siege by the Forces of Evil, it was clear that there was inadequate Will-to-Good available to balance the first aspect of Shamballa energy, the will-to-power. But the Shamballa impact of 1975 showed that a change had taken place. Because of adequate preparation and the marshalling of the Will-to-Good by all disciples, a global process of spiritualization – of acceleration of humanity’s evolution – was the result.

I know personally several people who experienced that impact via circumstances in their lives, resulting in definite growth in consciousness. I responded to it myself by suddenly intensifying my spiritual search – it felt

like an emergency! – and finding this group to work with. Since then I have come to know how concerned the School staff was at the time, facing the first Shamballa impact since the one that precipitated the World War. They took more than three years and guided the School group through four sequential and linked Subjective Group Conferences calculated to produce an effective group energy field. It was a large effort, but definitely worth it, as the Will-to-Good predominated in this group and in others that were on the same wavelength.

Next I want to say a few words about the nature of the Shamballa energy, and then suggest how we might cooperate in its distribution during and after the Wesak Festival.

We are told that there are actually three great energies focused in Shamballa: the Energy of Purification, the Energy of Destruction, and the Energy of Organization. (See *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 84ff.)

The Energy of Purification is the power to eliminate all that hinders Divinity from full expression. Although purification is commonly associated with physical processes, it actually originates in the subtle vehicles and then, if alignment is good, proceeds automatically through to the etheric and physical bodies. It is amazing to think that there is actually an energy out there that automatically “substitutes good for evil.” The process, when it works upon us, can be disorienting, but if we expand our consciousness to participate and even guide it through our deeper understanding, we can mitigate some of the unpleasant effects. Attributes supported by this energy are emotional loveliness, mental clarity, and intuitional illumination.

Closely related to this energy is the Energy of Destruction. Actually, destruction is an aspect of the purificatory nature of the Divine Life. To simplify the relationship of these energies, it could be thought of in the following way: purification is what the Greater Life experiences, and destruction is what we experience! This energy is wielded (1) by the Council at Shamballa, whose intent is to bring all forms into line with the evolving Purpose; and (2) by

humanity who, through initiating causes that are responsible for the cyclic events and consequences in human affairs, becomes master of its own destiny.

The Energy of Organization originally set in motion the great Ray Lives and impulsed “intelligent manifestation” on the planet. Thus was created an ideal arena in which Divine Purpose could be worked out through the medium of the Plan.

We are told that Shamballa energy is available for right use by humanity. We are also told that the power to do so lies in *understanding* and *group use*. We all are members of a group that is seeking to understand the right use of energy and then to impulse that energy in service. Speaking for the group, I think I can say that our motives are clear and our capacities are growing. The group understanding and the group use protect us individually and lend power to our efforts. And we learn by following the teaching of the Hierarchy and seeking to pattern our group activity after Them.

What exactly does the Hierarchy do when it serves as the intermediary between Shamballa and humanity?

There are three ways in which the Shamballa energy is normally managed as it is projected forth at the time of the Wesak full moon. There is an “absorbing Agent” for the energy (the Buddha’s role), a “receiving Agent” (the Christ), and “directing Agents” (the seven groups of Masters). The task at Wesak is to place all this energy “on hold” for a month until at the time of the June full moon it can be released to humanity in seven categories corresponding to the seven subrays of the First Ray of Will or Power. These are:

1. *Power*, needed by the disciples and initiates of the world to direct efficiently and wisely the building of the new world.
2. The *will-to-love*, which will stimulate the seeds of love already in the human heart, and help to overcome all separateness.
3. The *will-to-action*, impelling people to inaugurate activities that will lay the

foundation for a better world.

4. The *will-to-cooperate*, leading to right human relations.
5. The *will-to-know*, leading to an increasingly mental focus in the masses of humanity. This is needed before wisdom can prevail.
6. The *will-to-persist*. This sublimation of the basic instinct of self-preservation will be transformed into the demonstration of immortality.
7. The *will-to-organize*, enabling the continuing and growing cooperation with the Hierarchy.

If we can hold this spectrum of energies in mind as we visualize absorbing, receiving and directing the Will-to-Good from Shamballa during the Wesak Festival and beyond, we may be of real service.

Let us not forget that participating in the Wesak Festival – whether in an objective or subjective group – is an important service in itself. Even in this crucial year, the Hierarchy is with us and always ready to help. This is the spiritual high point of the year, a special moment of contact and impact. Then we must turn our back on that “light supernal” and assist in the realization of the greater Purpose on Earth.

One of my favorite passages beautifully describes our task together and is worth keeping in mind throughout the Wesak Festival.

What we are seeking to do is to carry forward a group endeavor which is of such moment that, at the right time, it could produce, in its growing momentum, such a potent, magnetic impulse that it will reach those Lives Who brood over humanity and our civilization, and Who work through the Masters of the Wisdom and the assembled Hierarchy. This group endeavor will call forth from Them a responsive and magnetic impulse, which will bring together, through the medium of all the aspiring groups, the overshadowing beneficent Forces. Through the concentrated effort of these groups in the world today (who constitute subjectively *One Group*) light and inspiration and spiritual revela-

tion can be released in such a flood of power that it will work definite changes in the human consciousness and help to ameliorate conditions in this needy world. It will open men's eyes to the basic realities, which are, as yet, only dimly sensed by the thinking public. Humanity itself must apply the necessary correctives, believing it can do so in the strength of its own sensed wisdom and strength; yet all the time, be-

hind the scenes, stand the grouped world aspirants, working silently, in unison with each other and the Hierarchy, and thus keeping the channel open through which the needed wisdom, strength and love can flow.

*(Esoteric Psychology, Vol. 2, pp. 113-114)*

John Cobb, Ph.D.

## **Festival of Goodwill 2009: The New World Religion**

**T**he Festival of the Christ – also referred to as the Festival of Humanity, Festival of Goodwill, or World Invocation Day – is the third of the three major full moon festivals that highlight the season known as the Higher Interlude. It was announced by the Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul after World War II and was first observed in 1952. Like the festivals of many ancient traditions, the timing of the new festival is determined by the intersection of lunar and solar cycles. The Festival of the Christ is observed at the full moon in Gemini, which can occur on any day from the last week of May to the third week of June. This year it falls on Sunday, June 7. Observance of the Festival extends over the five-day period June 5–9. Special emphasis is placed on the actual day of the full moon, but the whole period is regarded as “sacred time.”<sup>1</sup>

The first of the three major festivals corresponds to the Jewish Passover and the Christian Easter. The second corresponds to the Wesak Festival, which celebrates the annual descent of the Buddha on his assembled disciples. The third, the Festival of the Christ, corresponds to Pentecost – whose name is derived from the Greek word *Pentekoste*, which means “fiftieth day.”<sup>2</sup> In the Age of Aries, Pentecost was a Jewish feast celebrating the first fruits of the harvest, traditionally collected 50 days after planting. In due course it also came to commemorate God’s revelation of the Ten Commandments to Moses, 50 days after the Exodus. Pentecost acquired new meaning early

in the Piscean Age, when it marked the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles, 50 days after Christ’s Resurrection.<sup>3</sup> According to the book of *Acts*, the apostles went forth with new vigor to preach the message of Christ. Reportedly 3,000 people were baptized, an event customarily taken to mark the birth of Christianity. The latest adaptation of Pentecost, the Festival of the Christ, comes into being at the dawn of Aquarian Age.

Pentecost has long been an important religious festival, commemorating what were perceived to be divine interventions in human affairs – interventions that launched major religious initiatives. The Tibetan’s announcement of the Festival of the Christ occurred in the context of another intervention, anticipated in the relatively near future, which will include the reappearance of the Christ and the externalization of the Hierarchy of Masters. Among the new initiatives for the Aquarian Age will be the establishment of a New World Religion. Christ’s new mission, building upon that of his previous appearance, will focus even more clearly on humanity:

In the Aquarian Age, the Risen Christ is Himself the Water-Carrier; He will not this time demonstrate the perfected life of a Son of God, which was His main mission before; He will appear as the supreme Head of the Spiritual Hierarchy, meeting the need of the thirsty nations of the world – thirsty for truth, for right human relations and for loving understanding.<sup>4</sup>

The Festival of the Christ, we understand, is marked by heightened presence of the Second

Aspect of Deity, not in transcendent form, but expressed through the immanent presence of Love-Wisdom in the world. The Tibetan described it as “the festival of the spirit of humanity ... a day whereon the spiritual and divine nature of mankind will be recognized.”<sup>5</sup> He added that the Festival will be one of “deep invocation and appeal, of a basic aspiration towards fellowship, of human and spiritual unity, and will represent the effect in the human consciousness of the work of the Buddha and of the Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

The Festival of the Christ is intended to be the high point in the liturgical calendar of the New World Religion. This year’s Festival provides an opportune time to reflect on the new religion insofar as it represents a major step toward “human and spiritual unity.” The New World Religion, we are told, will supplant the religions of the Piscean Age. Rather than dividing people, as so often happened in the past, it will embrace people of every persuasion and from every nation. Under the leadership of the Christ, the great unifier, the new religion will bring into harmony all that have been separated and discordant. According to the Tibetan, it will be based on six fundamental principles:

1. The Fact of God
2. Man’s Relationship to God
3. The Fact of Immortality and Eternal Persistence
4. The Continuity of Revelation and the Divine Approaches...
5. The fact of our relationship with each other....
6. The fact of the Path to God.<sup>7</sup>

The New World Religion will not be created by a committee of high-level representatives of existing faiths. Nor will one of the existing faith traditions be anointed to fill the role. Although the Christ will be the new religion’s Hierarch, Christianity is not guaranteed a privileged position to influence what lies ahead. The Christ expresses the Second Aspect of Deity to all religions and all people. The new religion will draw upon multiple traditions, religious and otherwise. We are told, for instance, that it will embrace some aspects of Masonic tradition, restoring ritual to the impor-

tance it had in the ancient mystery schools. Significantly the new religion will have “its new rituals and ceremonies.”<sup>8</sup>

The world religions we know today represent a rich cultural and spiritual heritage. Each has something valuable to offer and has unique appeal – an appeal no longer constrained by geography, ethnicity or culture. To appreciate that appeal, one has only to look at the success of Christian missionary activities throughout the world – and the corresponding success of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism as they make inroads into traditionally Christian societies. Judaism continued to hold its own throughout the world as well as in Israel. The Tibetan emphasizes that the new religion will be built upon the best of what has gone before:

The Christ and the spiritual Hierarchy will not come to destroy all that humanity has hitherto found “necessary to salvation,” and all that has met its spiritual demand. When the Christ reappears, the non-essentials will surely disappear; the fundamentals of faith will remain, upon which He can build that new world religion for which all wait. That new world religion must be based upon those truths that have stood the test of ages and that have brought assurance and comfort to people everywhere.

The New World Religion will not be established in full until the Christ reappears. Nevertheless, it is timely to contemplate what the new religion may look like and lay the groundwork for implementation. We can identify the shared vision and the values and ideals held in common among major religious entities. We can help clarify the vision and encourage universal affirmation of those values and ideals. The Tibetan commented that

the study of Comparative Religion has demonstrated that the foundational truths in every faith are identical. Because of this universality, they evoke recognition and response from all people everywhere. The only factor in reality that militates against the spiritual unity of all people everywhere is the

existent clerical organizations and their militant attitude to religions and to faiths other than their own.<sup>9</sup>

Fortunately, intolerance has become less strident since the 1940s, when those words were written. Interfaith dialogue has increased significantly through bodies like the World Council of Churches and United Religions Initiative. Ecumenical outreach has also increased, and some Christian denominations have merged into larger corporate entities. Greater understanding, the recognition of common concerns, and a willingness to cooperate are all commendable, but the New World Religion will not be established by merger and acquisition.

The New World Religion will not be a one-size-fits-all structure of beliefs, observances, and attitudes. Cultural differences, as well as the very real differences among individuals in every culture, are important elements in the tapestry of human experience. Spiritual development also varies enormously; some people are much farther along than others on their journeys. The new religion must allow for diversity as well as affirming an overarching unity. A conceptual model formulated in a study of Christianity<sup>10</sup> could provide a useful roadmap. As applied to Christianity, the model sought to honor both the essential unity of Christianity and the obvious diversity that has existed within Christianity throughout its 2,000-year history. The result was a two-tiered archetypal structure.

The model's upper tier is an archetype, a Platonic Form – a *thoughtform* – that expresses the Christian ideal. It recognizes that Christ did not found a religion during his sojourn in Palestine 2,000 years ago; rather he created a thoughtform that would work out over time. All Christian traditions, denominations and sects represent partial, temporal expressions of that thoughtform. The lower tier, capturing the diversity within Christianity, consists of seven archetypal spiritual paths that cut across sectarian boundaries. The focus on spiritual paths to represent diversity enables us to stand aside from the factionalism and divisiveness that, tragically, have plagued Christianity since its inception.

The archetypal spiritual paths capture the ways in which people express their Christianity. They are: Devotion, Ceremony, Knowledge, Healing, Service, Activism and Renunciation.<sup>11</sup> The capitalized terms are convenient labels for the paths, but the underlying concepts are broader than everyday usage might imply. For example, “Devotion” refers to the many ways in which the devotee enters into dialog with the Divine, including conventional piety but also including mystical contemplation and the creation and response to sacred art, architecture and music. The seven paths cannot be paired in a one-to-one correspondence with the seven rays, but connections are obvious to anyone familiar with the rays. For instance, the paths of Knowledge, Healing and Service all express the Second Ray of Love-Wisdom. The path of Activism expresses the First Ray of Will and Power, mediated by Love-Wisdom.

The two-tiered archetypal model was formulated as a basis for studying Christianity, but it can apply with equal validity to a New World Religion. Indeed a frequent response to the original model was that it sounds like something more inclusive than the Christianity we know. The upper-tier archetype would become the expanded and strengthened thoughtform that expresses the Hierarchy's Plan for spirituality in the Aquarian Age. The seven spiritual paths of the lower tier can be found, to varying degrees, in all major religions, just as they could be found to varying degrees in all Christian denominations. They will capture the different ways in which people express the New World Religion.

The paths fall into two broad categories – albeit not without significant crossover in most of them. Devotion, Ceremony and Renunciation express humanity's relationship with God. Here we find the first, second and sixth of the Tibetan's fundamental principles. Healing, Service and Activism express our relationships with one another, embodying the fifth fundamental principle. Knowledge – which embodies the fourth principle or, from an alternative perspective, all of them – can be placed in either category according to whether the focus is on study or teaching. We note that the Christ is

the World Teacher. The path of Service, with its strong Second Ray associations, epitomizes the spirit of the Aquarian Age. The path of Ceremony expresses the rich tradition of ritual, the oldest of all religious practices. For a while ritual fell out of favor, but it is now being invigorated by the coming into manifestation of the Seventh Ray of Ceremonial Order. The path of Activism expresses the ideal of right relations among people, while Renunciation expresses right relations between us and the planet. We do not have to be ascetics to recognize the need, in a world of limited resources, to aim at sufficiency rather than abundance.

Formulation of the model in terms of archetypes allows for considerable flexibility in the way those archetypes are translated into beliefs and practices by individuals and by religious entities. People with different aspirations and people at different levels of spiritual development can easily be accommodated. Importantly, it also allows for beliefs and practices to grow organically as circumstances change and human consciousness evolves.

Establishing the New World Religion will require a commitment of global proportions. It will require cooperation among people at all levels in the major world religions. We can anticipate that all who have opened themselves up to Hierarchical impression can become active participants. But leadership responsibilities will fall heavily on those who have committed themselves to discipleship work. Writing in the 1930s the Tibetan described the activities of seven groups of disciples charged with helping the Hierarchy implement the Plan on Earth. The work of the sixth group is particularly significant to our theme:

The workers in the Field of Religion form this group. Their work is to formulate the universal platform of the new world religion. It is a work of loving synthesis and it will emphasize the unity and the fellowship of the spirit. This group is, in a pronounced sense, a channel for the activity of the Second Ray of Love-Wisdom, that of the World Teacher – an office held at present by the Christ. The platform of the new world religion will be built by the

many groups, working under the inspiration of the Christ and the influence of the Second Ray and these – in their totality – will constitute this sixth group.<sup>12</sup>

Much of the work will be carried out on the physical plane. But work on the mental plane will be most important, including the use of creative imagination and thoughtform building. In those ways we can contribute to the overarching thoughtform that will define and unify the new religion. Worldwide use of the Great Invocation will also play a crucial role – and it is no mere coincidence that the Festival of the Christ is also known as World Invocation Day.<sup>13</sup> The Invocation, which will become the liturgical centerpiece of the New World Religion, is at once a ritual, an act of devotion, and a work of service and world healing. It spans at least five of the archetypal spiritual paths. We are told that the Christ himself uses the Invocation during the Higher Interlude, particularly at

the Festival of the Christ, when He – as leader of the New Group of World Servers – employs the new Invocation on behalf of all people of goodwill in all lands; at the same time, He gathers up the inchoate and unexpressed demands of those masses who seek a new and better way of life. They want love in daily living, right human relations and an understanding of the underlying Plan.<sup>14</sup>

The Festival of the Christ acknowledges his role as World Teacher, Head of the Hierarchy of Masters, and Spiritual Head of the New World Religion.

The Festival we are celebrating is not only the Festival of the Christ; it is also the Festival of Humanity – which brings us back to the connection with Pentecost. We note that “Pentecost” is defined by the numbers five and ten. Numerologists associate *ten*, the *decad*, with completion – there were 10 “sayings” in *Genesis* 1, 10 plagues preceding the Exodus, and 10 Commandments in Judaic biblical history; there are 10 sefiroth, or divine manifestations, in the Kabbalah. *Five*, the *pentad*, is associated with humanity, which is still in the fifth root

race but is entering a new phase in the evolution of consciousness. Significantly, the fifth plane of nature is the mental, or *manasic* plane – *manas* is the very word from which “man” is derived. And the Fifth Ray is the ray of Knowledge. During the five days of the Festival, let us celebrate enlightened humanity’s approach to the Fifth Kingdom, where our mental natures will find full expression in love and wisdom.

We honor the divinity in each of us as well as in the whole human family. May we allow that divinity to express itself through new commitment to put the six principles of the New World Religion into practice. Through the collaborative effort of the Christ, the Hierarchy and humanity, we can restore the Plan on Earth.

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<sup>1</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, II, Lucis, 1955, pp. 56-58.

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<sup>2</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations*, Lucis, 1949, p. 151.  
<sup>3</sup> *Acts* 2:1-4.  
<sup>4</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations*, p.150.  
<sup>5</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, Lucis, 1957, p. 421.  
<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>7</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, pp. 404-405.  
<sup>8</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Problems of Humanity*, Lucis, 1964, p. 155.  
<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156,  
<sup>10</sup> John F. Nash, *Christianity: the One, the Many*, Xlibris, 2007.  
<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 310-343.  
<sup>12</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, I, Lucis, 1944, p. 38.  
<sup>13</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, II, pp. 164-165.  
<sup>14</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, Lucis, 1948, p. 46.