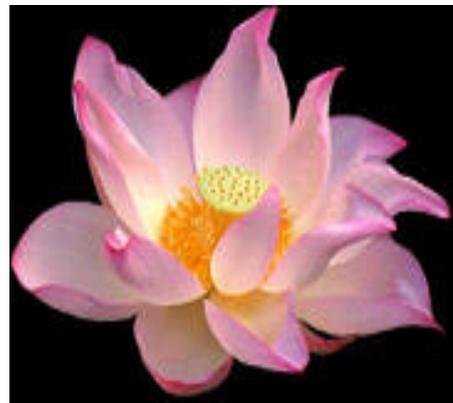


# *The Esoteric Quarterly*

**Winter 2010  
Volume 5  
Number 4**

*A publication of the  
School for Esoteric  
Studies*

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



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**The School for Esoteric Studies.**

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# *The Esoteric Quarterly*

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

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

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# The Esoteric Quarterly

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John F. Nash			

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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## Winter Peace

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The theme for this winter editorial is inspired by Christopher Beikmann's photographic collage. (See our *Picture of the Quarter*.) Beautiful and serene, his archetypal Buddha with its classic hand mudra, derives from the mudra assumed by the Buddha while he was meditating under the bodhi tree in the pursuit of liberation. Nestled in whiteness of winter snow, this image, like winter itself, reminds us of the need to withdraw from external sense perceptions in order to enter into elevated states of meditative concentration and awareness. It represents a great spiritual effort to free ourselves from outworn forms, personality desires and attachments so that, like the Buddha and his emblem, the *padma* or lotus, we become a purified and colorless form—a perfect balance of thought and tranquility. Beikmann's art encourages us to enter the peaceful solitude of winter where the inextinguishable Light of the Soul reveals its presence. In so doing, we can more fully cooperate with the new cycle of cosmic currents that are currently streaming into our planet.

These potent influences form the basis of Jan Detrich's article—the fourth in a series of astrological commentaries concentrating on the present world cycle. In this current article, the author concentrates on the nature and significance of the Cardinal Cross as it emerges in several cardinal squares within the circle of the celestial sphere during the next several years. Cardinal energies intensify the relationship between spirit and matter and provide the momentum for revolutionary change. These powerful spiritual energies “bring the world into greater conformity with the Will of God and carry the directional seeds or impulses which set the stage for a new era.”

The next article in this issue explores the identity and significance of Mary, the mother of Jesus, one of the most widely venerated figures in Christianity. This article is most apropos since it is during the winter season that we can contact the spiritual sub-plane of the Mother Goddess who gives life to the “light of the world.” Written by John Nash, this article considers the diverse narratives concerning Mary that have emerged into historical view, not only in Christianity and the Eastern Orthodoxy, but also in Islam and the western esoteric tradition. The author discusses the mariological basis for Mary's title as the virgin mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Mother of the World. Mary's role as Co-Redemptrix is also touched upon. Nash's article concludes by encouraging an “esoteric Mariology” that views the “new Mary” as a commanding “role model for both men and women” and as a “high initiate” whose existence is completely compatible with esoteric philosophy and the Path of Discipleship.

An article by Zachary Lansdowne examines the compelling similarities between facets of the *Tao Te Ching* and Alice A. Bailey's “Technique of Integration for the Fourth Ray.” Lansdowne discusses all five stages of the Integration Technique, as outlined by Bailey, and provides a corresponding passage from the *Tao Te Ching* followed by an explanation of both passages. His analysis uncovers a primary theme shared by Taoist philosophy and the Fourth Ray Integration Technique—the need to discover and resolve the pairs of opposites that form the basis of our mental constructs. Both the Tao and Bailey's Integration Technique reveal that the harmonization of duality and end of conflict can only take place through alignment, detachment or indifference and

the recognition of the complementary nature and the unity of all things.

The final article in this issue by Adam De Franco considers the new ashrams being externalized in the western hemisphere as a result of the influx of Aquarian energies and the shift in Hierarchical focus from east to west. Based primarily on the writings of Lucille Cedercrans and to a lesser extent those of Alice A. Bailey, De Franco discusses the energetic constructs underlying the establishment of the new ashramic centers in Canada, the US and South America. The value of these new centers, as the author emphasizes, “cannot be underestimated,” since they “raise the vibratory frequency of the planetary grid” and make it more “capable of carrying Hierarchical fire and intent.”

In addition to the articles in this issue, we include a *Student Paper* dealing with the individual and planetary astral bodies. This issue also contains our *Quotes of the Quarter* and a book review for *Sun of God* by Gregory Sams. We also offer two new poems, *Spotless Mirror* by Adam De Franco and *To Those Who Think Deeply* by Marian Crowell.

The Winter Issue also contains an updated cumulative index of articles in Volumes 1 thru 5 of the *Esoteric Quarterly*. The editorial staff would like to take this opportunity to extend its heartfelt thanks to all the authors who have shared their work with us.

Finally, we wish to thank our Review Board and all those who volunteered their time and expertise to ensure the *Quarterly* continued success. We are indebted to their efforts. We are sorry to announce that Rene Fugere has retired from the Review Board. A special thanks to Rene for sharing his wisdom.

We wish everyone Winter Peace and all the blessings of the season.

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

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### **Spotless Mirror** by Adam DeFranco

The path of ultimate receiving is in giving  
This reveals the perfect economy of the  
universe  
The order of the world in it's natural state  
Our differences are diminished  
The yin and yang complementary  
Who we really are is assured  
Unity the very essence

In giving truly of oneself nothing is taken  
away  
The balance is always kept  
The scales are even, unperturbed  
This indigenous sense of ourselves is always  
naturally present and extraordinary  
Atma is the spotless mirror of creation  
Our original definition

### **To Those Who Can See Deeply** by Marian Crowell

To those who can see deeply  
Words can't quite convey  
The beauty and power  
Of that which they realize  
Silence is their path  
Preventing misunderstanding  
And exploitation  
By those  
Who know not what they do.  
Manifestation  
Has its roots  
In silence  
One cannot dig up a seed  
To see

How it progresses  
Without killing it  
It is not the time  
To shout in the ears  
Of those who cannot hear.  
Nor is it the time  
To announce the misdeeds  
Of others  
Who will only feel pain  
If your will belongs to one  
Whose need for fulfillment  
Has been extinguished  
The warmth of the light  
Is enough and all



**Winter Peace**  
by Christopher Beikmann  
[www.ancientartizen.com](http://www.ancientartizen.com)

## Quotes of the Quarter

---

Mary is virtually the only feminine *Avatara* of the Semitic world. She pertains to the category of the major *avataras* of the lunar type, although when she is conceived as the feminine aspect of the *Logos* and even as its essence, her wisdom necessarily transcends these distinctions.

Whereas the Prophet of Islam represents the path and the deployment of all the perfections and Jesus the wisdom of the inward, the Virgin incarnates the non-legislative and primordial wisdom. By contrast with the wisdom of Solomon, which is at once—encyclopedic, cosmological, metaphysical and also practical, the wisdom of Mary—does not embrace certain contingent orders. It is —of necessity metaphysical, mystical and eschatological, and —thereby contains in virtually every possible science, as the one and colorless light contains the varied and colored hues of the rainbow. It follows that her *risalah* (message) is not the *risalah* of her son, but her son himself, who symbolizes in this context the *Logos* as such.

*The Milk of the Virgin: The Prophet the Saint and the Sage*  
by Renaud Fabbri

The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his ways. I existed before he formed any creature. I existed from eternity, before the earth was created. The abysses were not yet ready and already I was conceived. The fountains had not yet come out of the earth; the heavy mass of mountains had not yet been formed: I was begotten before the hills. He had created neither earth, nor the rivers, nor strengthened the world on its poles. When he prepared the heaven, I was present,

when he confined the abysses within their bounds and prescribed an inviolable law; when he confirmed the air above the earth when he balanced the waters of the fountains; when he shut up the sea within its limits and imposed a law on the waters, so that they should not pass their bounds; when he laid the foundations of the earth, I was within him and I regulate all things.

From the *Mass of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin*

In Indian philosophy we frequently come across the idea that everything is dual in relative existence, manifesting as the *dwandwas*—the pairs of opposites such as heat/cold, wet/dry, light/darkness, and so forth. “So it is that existence and non-existence give birth the one to (the idea of) the other; that difficulty and ease produce the one (the idea of) the other; that length and shortness fashion out of the one the figure of the other; that (the ideas of) height and lowness arise from the contrast of the one with the other; that the musical notes and tones become harmonious through the relation of one with another; and that being before and behind give the idea of one following another.” The meaning here is that one *dwandwa* (opposite) instructs us in the existence of the other. The presence gives rise to the concept of the absence of an object or a quality. But the fundamental truth being aimed at is the fact that relative existence teaches us all about itself—that we need only observe it to learn the truth about everything. Buddha speaks of this in the *Dhammapada*, as well. Life is not just the best teacher, it is the only teacher.

*Commentary on the Tao Teh King*  
by Swami Nirmalananda Giri

In...Hindu or Brahmanical thought, the pairs of opposites are experienced as a continuum extending from external opposites such as heat and cold to the fluctuations of inner emotion and the conflict of ideas such as good and bad. The Hindu *marga* or path, aims at freeing the individual completely from the entanglement in the opposites, which seem inherent in human experience, so that he can experience oneness with Brahma (moksa.) “What is meant...is the union of opposites in which they are canceled out...” Brahman is the union and dissolution of opposites, and at the same time stands outside them as an irrational factor. It is therefore wholly beyond cognition and comprehension. The specific psychological process the yogi uses to realize this transcendence is the systematic withdrawing of attention from both external objects and internal psychic states—in other words from the opposites. This eventually results in the elimination of sense perception and the disappearance of conscious contents (rational ideas) which opens up the way for rising images from the collective unconsciousness. These...are the archetypes “...primordial images, which, because of their universality and immense antiquity, possess a cosmic and superhuman character.” The great images of the Vedas, such as *rta* (divine cosmic order) and *dharmā* (universal moral law) are symbols with the power to regulate and unite the destructive tensions between the pairs of opposites.

*Jung and Eastern Thought*, by Harold G. Coward (New York: SUNY Press 1985)

Now we find that the new Synthetic Ashram must carry almost the total responsibility for the manifestation of the Divine Plan for humanity for the next 2500-year period. This period (a cycle) within which much change must take place, within which the evolutionary development of humanity (which has moved ever so slowly over millions of years) must come into a sharp focus and a real apparent change.

That is, that evolution which has accumulated over a long period of time must, in this 2500-year period, be made obvious, be given an outer form

I refer now to the evolutionary development of the consciousness of humanity, a subjective evolution which must be given an objective form.

Lucille Cedercrans, *Ashramic Projections: The Synthetic Ashram* (Wisdom Impressions, 2007)

Metaphysics is not a branch of philosophy concerned with what lies beyond physics. Nor is it in fact a purely human knowledge bound by the context and categories of the human mind. Rather, metaphysics, which some...translators render as metaphysic in order to emphasize its non-multiple but unitary nature, is the science of Ultimate Reality, attainable through the intellect and not reason, of an essentially suprahuman character and including in its fullness the whole of man's being. It is sacred or *scientia sacra*, a wisdom which liberates and which require not only certain mental capacities but also moral and spiritual qualifications. It is gnosis in the original non-sectarian meaning of the term, the *sophia* of the ancient sages and the *sapientia* of the medieval ones. It is the *jnana* of the Hindus and the *al-ma' rifah* or *al-ma' hikmah* of Muslims. It is light and presence and issues from the seat of intelligence which is the heart while its elaboration is carried out by the mind. Its conceptual understanding, however, although of great importance is one thing and its realization quite another.

Seyyed Hossein Nasar, *The Essential Writings of Frithjof Schoun* (Bloomington, World Wisdom, Inc. 2005)



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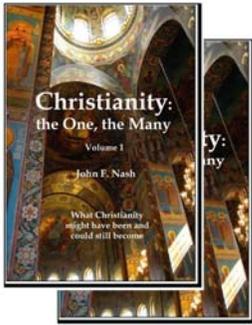


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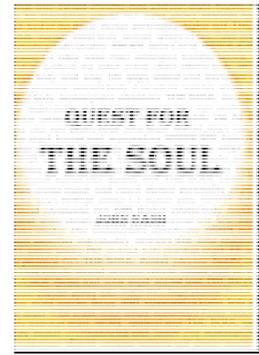
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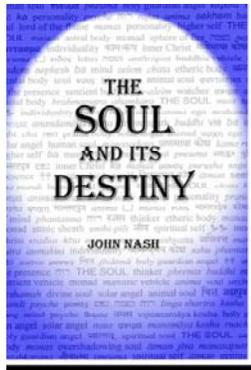
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# Standing at the Crossroads: The Cardinal Squares of 2009-2020

Jan Detrich

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## Abstract

This is the fourth in a series of astrological commentaries on the current world period. This article touches upon the Cardinal Cross and examines the nature of cardinal energies against the backdrop of a series of potent cardinal squares over the coming decade. It explores the revelatory nature of Uranus-Pluto cycles and enlarges upon seven squares between Uranus and Pluto over the next five years. The article concludes with a few clues for navigating the new terrain.

## Overview

*The unfoldment of the Plan is thus carried forward through a progressed series of beginnings, of manifestations, and of consummations—all relative in nature but leading to an absolute consummation.*<sup>1</sup>

Humanity is in the midst of a monumental turning point in history considering the advent of the Aquarian Age, the imminent externalization of Hierarchy and reappearance of the Christ, a major shift in ray cycles, and a long anticipated galactic shift as prophesied in the Mayan calendar and numerous other traditions. The coming decade pales in comparison. However, cardinal energies and particularly a protracted cardinal phase of this magnitude, will undoubtedly be pivotal in shaping these broader events.

As the word “cardinal” suggests, cardinal energies are of paramount importance. They are related to the Will aspect, divine purpose and cosmic unfoldments that are “responsible for bringing about certain great points of synthesis, as a consequence of both change and crisis.”<sup>2</sup> Not only do the cardinal signs denote seasonal turning points in the annual

cycle, but, more broadly and substantially, they earmark pivotal moments in history. The word “cardinal” comes from the Latin word *cardo* meaning “hinge” or “that on which something turns or depends,”<sup>3</sup> which suggests that a cardinal phase such as this not only *hinges* upon certain factors, but it may also *be the factor* on which the future depends.

Decidedly, this phase of cardinal energies will be a source of infusing, life-giving energy that will invigorate, strengthen and vitalize spiritual activity and fortify Hierarchical effort. Astrologically, the coming decade bears the signature of a decisive moment in history that, in retrospect, may very well be viewed as a time when humanity begins to turn a corner and rights itself.

Over the past year, Pluto’s ingress into Capricorn, Saturn’s position opposite Uranus, and an unparalleled conjunction between Jupiter, Chiron and Neptune have been staging and preparing the way for significant change by dissolving and dismantling forms that do not serve the new order. As a result, humanity is now more aware of global issues than ever, but despite increased awareness, world conditions remain largely unchanged. The same difficult and complex problems still loom over us: world hunger, extreme poverty, global warming, economic challenges, religious conflict, war and unrest.

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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 may be contacted at: [janajo9@cs.com](mailto:janajo9@cs.com).

We know the present course is unsustainable, we know change is inevitable, but despite areas of growth and progress, the more substantial work of world reconstruction has not even begun.

Over the coming decade, the incoming tide of cardinal squares will do much to bring about the needed changes. Historically powerful surges of cardinal energies like this are the driving force and impetus behind *revelation* and revolutionary change. They galvanize action, seed new beginnings, and initiate new cycles for humanity. They intensify the relationship between Spirit and Matter and bring the world into alignment with the directional impulses that set entire new eras into motion. “It is through the squares or the quaternial relation that the form aspect is brought into relation and adequacy to the will of Deity,”<sup>4</sup> and this is the hope and promise of the next ten years.

## History

*Tomorrow’s flowers bloom from yesterday’s seeds.*<sup>5</sup>

Planets orbit around the Sun at different rates, creating unique, rhythmic, energetic points of intersection and alignment with Earth and each other. These cyclical alignments between planets are called Planetary Synodic Cycles,<sup>6</sup> which together form “The Harmony of the Spheres,”<sup>7</sup> that inaudible universal symphony that is created by the seamlessly ordered movement of the planets around the Sun.

Like the four phases of a lunar cycle, the four seasons in an annual cycle, and the four periods of day, there are four distinct phases within planetary synodic cycles, which are *cardinal points* of heightened awareness, opportunity, and accelerated activity. They are archetypal turning points that expand upon the preceding quarter and set the tone for the following quarter. These quadratures are inherent in nature and are encoded in life in a myriad of ways. They are represented in the cross—the Holy Cross,<sup>8</sup> the Four Directions of ancient and indigenous cultures, and in the cardinal directions of North, South, East and West in geography. They correspond to the

Cardinal Cross, the horizontal and vertical axes, the angular houses, the equinox-solstice points in the astrological wheel, and they form the core geometrical points that shape the nature and temperament of the “hard” aspects in astrology—the conjunction, square and opposition.

What makes the coming decade, and particularly the next five years, so compelling is a chain of challenging squares between major planets in cardinal signs. From 2010-2012 there are eight important cardinal squares followed by a series of seven exact squares between Uranus and Pluto over the next three years and two major Saturn-Pluto-Uranus configurations, one at the beginning and one toward the end of the coming decade.

When multiple planets constellate in cardinal signs like this, profound moments in history occur. The last time a cycle came even close to the magnitude of this period was during the 15<sup>th</sup> century with nine activations of Uranus-Pluto from 1492-1506 which coincided with Columbus’ discovery of the New World, the very early stages of the Renaissance Period, and the transitional period between the New and Old Worlds, the Middle and Modern Ages.

## The Cardinal Squares and Oppositions of 2010-2012

A series of Saturn-Uranus oppositions<sup>9</sup> over the past year have created a proverbial tug of war between the old and new order, involutory and evolutionary forces, and the real and the unreal. These oppositions have tremendously upset the status quo and exposed a host of inconsistencies in our individual and collective psyches that somehow must be resolved in light of new understandings.

The fourth opposition, while Saturn is in Virgo and Uranus is in Pisces, takes place on April 26, 2010, and the fifth and final opposition in this series will occur on July 26, 2010 with the ingress of Saturn into Libra and Uranus into Aries. In this final opposition, both Saturn and Uranus will be positioned at 0 degrees of cardinal signs, which corre-

sponds to the seasonal equinox and solstice points, denoting new trends and a marked shift in focus, heightened energy and accelerated activity. Moreover, both Saturn and Uranus will be placed in their respective hierarchical positions initializing an enduring trend toward betterment that will almost immediately come under siege with a major T-square involving Saturn in Libra, Jupiter and Uranus conjunct in Aries, and Pluto in Capricorn in early August 2010. This T-square will create pressure, resistance, crisis and turbulence that will generally purge the environment at the time. In this volatile T-square Saturn (Earth) is at odds with Uranus (Heaven) and embroiled in a battle over its destiny (Pluto). This battle will be especially apparent mid-summer 2010 and again between the summer of 2011 and 2012.

A T-square takes place when two planets oppose one another and both are squared by a third planet. This configuration inherently creates tests, obstacles and challenges along with the instinctive drive and pressure to overcome and resolve them. The tension and awareness created by the planets in opposition (in this case Saturn opposes Jupiter-Uranus) are resolved either by the third planet receiving the double square (namely Pluto) or through the empty sign in the configuration (Cancer). Thus we can look to Pluto and the sign of Cancer for important clues to resolve this crisis.

Two similar, yet less dramatic Saturn-Uranus-Pluto episodes took place during the Great Depression of the 1930's and during the social unrest and turbulence of the mid-60's. Saturn-Uranus-Pluto contacts produce crisis between the old and new order, and the intervals immediately preceding these his-

**As the word 'cardinal' suggests, cardinal energies are of paramount importance. They are related to the Will aspect, divine purpose and cosmic unfoldments that are "responsible for bringing about certain great points of synthesis, as a consequence of both change and crisis."**

toric impacts "bring an external stimulus that challenges us to move into action,"<sup>10</sup> which was apparent in the Wall Street crash of 1929 and the civil rights movements preceding the mid-60's, and is now apparent in dozens of national stimulus packages resulting from the current crisis in the global economy.

As indicated, Pluto and Cancer provide important clues for resolving the coming crises. Pluto is "fueled by a higher power, although, as a non-sacred planet, its vital work is focused in the lower realms, bringing the death of personality limitations by destroying all that hinders progress and reorienting the life toward the higher. This is particularly true with Pluto in Capricorn, for Pluto represents the depths and Capricorn the heights of the material world."<sup>11</sup>

Pluto powerfully expresses the First Ray and therefore is equally creative and destructive, which is the reason that Pluto is associated with birth and death. Pluto is also closely related to all forms of power and specifically the primordial power to transform and regenerate.

Dominant, multiple squares to Pluto over the next five years connote a tremendous power struggle between existing power structures of unbridled capitalism, materialism, big business and politics and a newly emerging archetype. Pluto provokes change at a very deep level that shakes our foundations, creating chaos. The weight of these multiple Pluto squares over five years is unrelenting. Undoubtedly, they will weaken and destroy the fabric of old power structures while simultaneously and strenuously birthing a new paradigm. Cardinal periods can quite literally *change the face of Earth* and life as we know it.

The sign of Cancer represents this birthing and manifestation process. Cancer expresses and represents the Divine Mother—sustaining, nurturing and caring for the world and one another—as much as it symbolizes

the masses and mass consciousness as a body of latent potential. During this time, the actions and voices of ordinary people, local communities and grassroots efforts will probably carry far greater import than ever before. And given the Soul keyword for Cancer, “I build a lighted house and therein dwell,” the housing crisis and other “homeland security” issues in America—a Cancerian country—will add to the urgency.

Besides shelter, Cancer also governs a sense of security, safety and our source of supply, which also may be compromised under these difficult aspects. Cancer is a cardinal water sign, and as such our actions and activities related to world water supplies will undergo dramatic change, as will our attitudes about consumption and nurturance. Until we learn the lessons that water provides, vital basic needs such as food and water may be in great demand and distressed during these times, both due to chaotic wet-weather conditions like hurricanes and flooding, and as a result of our persistent misuse and disrespect of the vital waters of Earth.

There are many uncertainties and variables in the midst of these volatile conditions, and the outcome will ultimately depend upon public and political reaction to the forces at play. “Numerous unpredictable factors are at work in co-constituting the events to come: the long-developing and still shifting and pliable historical trends, the spontaneous social and political responses to newly emerging conditions, the state of the collective moral conscience, the extent to which the constellated energies are unconsciously and blindly acted out or consciously engaged and assimilated — and no doubt many other trans-empirical factors beyond our ken, such as perhaps karma and grace.”<sup>12</sup> But one thing is certain: change has already happened—the proverbial train has already left the station—and we must learn to navigate the new terrain. Additionally, old structures based on the love of power and “power over” are reluctantly giving way and conceding to a new power—the power of brotherly love, the power of the people, and the power of the interconnectedness of all Life.

## The Uranus-Pluto Squares

The current synodic cycle of Uranus and Pluto began with a conjunction of Uranus and Pluto in Virgo (opposite Saturn in Pisces) in 1965 and will conclude in 2104 with a conjunction of Uranus and Pluto in Taurus. The first quarter of the current cycle, from 1965 to the present, has merely involved the gestation period of a much grander scheme of evolutionary unfoldment, and the 60’s, while revolutionary and profound, were simply the first breath and initial impulse of latent possibility and potential to be realized later in the cycle.

The second-quarter phase of the overall Uranus-Pluto cycle we are currently in officially begins in 2010 and ends in 2047. It represents a seasonal change from spring to summer in the affairs of Earth. Uranus-Pluto squares involve defining moments in history, and this series of squares will entail seven partite (exact) squares between Uranus and Pluto over a period of five years, which is unusual and therefore highly significant.

A second-quarter phase is analogous to a second-quarter Moon in a lunar cycle, and summer in an annual cycle, which is a time of growth and expansion when the seedlings of spring regenerate. This is why Cancer and the summer solstice are keyed to *rebirth* and *manifestation*.<sup>13</sup> Second-quarter phases expand upon what was previously set in motion, manifesting that which has been percolating internally for a long time. These are times when youthful rebellion gives way to practicality, a time of reorientation, action and externalization where Life literally recreates Itself.

The Uranus-Pluto squares through 2015 bring an appointment with destiny that will exert great pressure and force radical change out of necessity. This combination runs counterculture and is revolutionary. In mythology, Pluto is thunder and Uranus is lightening and, like all thunderstorms, the impact can be alarming, exciting, devastating and cleansing at the same time. This square is known to be the most transformative and far-reaching of all planetary combinations, involving a

breakdown and a breakthrough in social institutions and massive corporations because Pluto intensifies and grounds Uranus' quest for liberation, and releases Uranus' spark of higher potential on a massive scale. A massive power shift is about to take place, and the ultimate goal is the realization of our divinity.

### Navigating the New Landscape

The day will come when, after harnessing the winds, the tides and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of Love. And on that day, for the second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.<sup>14</sup>

Earth is quite literally undergoing a complete transformation and reorganization. We are birthing a new mythology that is dramatically different than the past. It is not an easy or speedy process, and there are no quick fixes. Earthbound materialism has run its course and will reach critical mass in 2012, which will mark the end of the world as we now know it. It will take time and a massive effort to change the course of history, and the outcome of this period will not be fully realized until the mid 2040's. We are told that, "In the destruction of the old world order and in the chaos of these modern times, the work of the new creation is going forward; the task of reconstruction, leading to a complete reorganisation of human living and to a fresh re-orientation of human thinking, is taking place.... [The creative work involves] bringing order out of chaos and preparing the way for the reappearance of the Christ. There is much that must be done to change conditions, institute new values and produce the bringing in of an entirely new civilisation—a civilisation which will permit the externalisation of the Ashrams, or of the Hierarchy, and a restitution, therefore, of Hierarchical or spiritual control as it was known in old

**The Uranus-Pluto squares through 2015 bring an appointment with destiny that will exert great pressure and force radical change out of necessity. This combination runs counterculture and is revolutionary.**

Atlantean days, only this time on a much higher turn of the spiral and with the intelligent cooperation also and the wise assistance of humanity, which was a factor lacking in the earlier civilisation."<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the best indicator of a newly emerging mythology is the growing recognition of common purpose and *understandings* found in various examples of collaboration and cooperative leadership. We are merely at the fringes of realizing our fun-

damental oneness and "to the extent that this new realization—this emerging narrative of interconnectedness as opposed to dominance and exclusivity—takes hold, people will necessarily look at politics, nationalism, gender roles, economics, race, moral values, art, education, religion—at everything—in a new way."<sup>16</sup>

Besides the aforementioned, other trends to watch for that are shaping the emerging culture are:

- Globalization
- Conscious living
- The green economy
- Growing our own food
- Working co-creatively
- Taking greater responsibility for our own lives
- Being accountable for our actions
- Using holistic, alternative and self-healing modalities over standardized healthcare
- Freeing ourselves from old systemic dependencies
- Creating simpler and sounder solutions to complex problems
- Approaching education with integrative styles and forms of learning
- Awakening to a truer relationship between human and earth ecology
- Shifting the focus from outer forms to inner realities

- Exchanging consumerism for a more contribution-based society
- Shifting the attitude of getting to giving
- Living more purpose-driven lives
- Being authentic and “walking our talk”

Even though much of the world is in crisis and moving deeper into chaos, an even vaster spiritual renaissance is definitely underway, and this needs to be the primary focus of all true servers. Without a doubt, coherence will follow chaos—that is a law of nature. The old forms will not support the new civilization and must be built on new ground, with new tools and techniques. We need to look to innovators and be innovative. We cannot do things in the old way and expect a new result. In the words of Henry Miller, “Chaos is the score upon which reality is written.”<sup>17</sup> We need to replace a competitive spirit with the spirit of cooperative consciousness. This is the way forward. “Temporary discomforts, penury and vice may lead the unthinking into the depths of pessimism. But those who know and who sense the inner guiding hand of the Hierarchy are aware that the heart of humanity is sound and that from our present chaos, perhaps largely because of it, there will emerge those who are competent to deal with unification and synthesis. This period has been occultly called the “age of restoration of what has been broken by the fall.” The time has come when the separate parts can be reunited and the whole stand together again in its earlier perfection.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1951), 240.  
<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 350.  
<sup>3</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/cardinal>  
<sup>4</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York: Lucis Publishing), 478.  
<sup>5</sup> Helena Roerich, *Agni Yoga* (New York: Agni Yoga Society, 1929), 364.  
<sup>6</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synodic\\_cycle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synodic_cycle)  
<sup>7</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musica\\_universalis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musica_universalis)  
<sup>8</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Holy\\_Cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holy_Cross)  
<sup>9</sup> [www.esotericstudies.net/quarterly/Files](http://www.esotericstudies.net/quarterly/Files)

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[EQ040409/--Detrich.pdf](#)  
<sup>10</sup> <http://www.lunarplanner.com/Saturn-Opp-Uranus/index.html>  
<sup>11</sup> [www.esotericstudies.net/quarterly/Files040208/EQ040208--Detrich.pdf](http://www.esotericstudies.net/quarterly/Files040208/EQ040208--Detrich.pdf)  
<sup>12</sup> Richard Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche* (Plume Publishing: New York, 2007), 480.  
<sup>13</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1951), 239.  
<sup>14</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, February 1934, “The Evolution of Chastity” in *Toward the Future* (London: Collins, 1975), 86-87.  
<sup>15</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. II* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1955), 218.  
<sup>16</sup> David Leeming, *Myth: A Biography of Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), iii.  
<sup>17</sup> Henry Miller, *Tropic of Cancer* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 2.  
<sup>18</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1951), 409.

# Mary, Blessed Virgin and World Mother

John F. Nash

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## Summary

This article examines the enigmatic figure of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in scripture, religious devotion and doctrine, and modern esoteric teachings. Medieval Christianity built the “Blessed Virgin,” pure in body and soul, into a model of dutiful self-sacrifice and declared her to be the “Mother of God.” Reaction to the “cult of Mary” called her status into question during and after the Reformation, but Mary’s exalted position continues to be affirmed in the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions.

Esotericists—those who do not ignore Mary altogether—also differ in their estimates. However, Mary’s strongest supporters view her as a manifestation of the World Mother, exalted not just through her association with Christ but in her own right. Mary emerges from the writings of certain esotericists as an individuality comparable with the more popular goddesses discussed by feminist theologians and New Age writers.

## Introduction

Mary, the mother of Jesus, has played a key role in Christianity throughout its 2,000-year history. Some Christians—from the stereotypical peasant, to the most erudite theologians, to churchmen in high positions—have elevated her to near-divine status. Others covering a similar spectrum have reacted, as far as scripture and tradition would allow, with indifference or even hostility. Throughout the ages Mary’s Christian devotees, and to a significant degree Muslims, projected onto her the most cherished values of their time and culture. Inadvertently, they left a residue that can now evoke distaste. Feminist theologians, in particular, have tended to shun Mary because her attributes of passivity and subservience do

not support the self-concept to which modern women aspire.<sup>1</sup>

Esotericists also seem reluctant to discuss Mary. Of the 83 articles published in the first four volumes of *The Esoteric Quarterly*, no more than two have been related, even indirectly, to this subject. Perhaps fearful of being relegated to the path of aspiration, esoteric students distance themselves from topics associated too closely with Christianity. Esoteric teachers eagerly discuss the Jewish Shekinah, the Gnostic Sophia, and the Tara of Mahayana Buddhism. But they rarely mention Mary, giving the impression that the subject lies below the level of useful discourse. Meanwhile Mary stubbornly refuses to go away. She continues to occupy a most conspicuous position in western spirituality.

Fortunately a few esotericists have recognized Mary as a high initiate of great importance, and their work inspires the present article. In addition to citing modern esoteric sources, this article draws upon the Mariological teachings of medieval Christianity, Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism and Protestant traditions. It also cites scripture, including the Old and New Testaments, extra-canonical Christian texts and the *Qur’an*.

One objective of this article is to capture the most important knowledge, beliefs and specu-

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## About the Author

John F. Nash, Ph.D., is a long-time esoteric student, author and teacher. Two of his books, *Quest for the Soul* and *The Soul and Its Destiny*, were reviewed in the Winter 2005 issue of the *Esoteric Quarterly*, and his latest book, *Christianity: the One, the Many*, in the Fall 2008 issue. See the advertisements on page 4 of this issue and also the website: [www.uriel.com](http://www.uriel.com).

lation about Mary with a view to stimulating greater interest among esoteric students. A second objective is to provide an understanding of Mary's role in redemption, or human transformation, appealing to a larger population than might be drawn to Marian devotion. Finally, if Mary can validly be depicted as a powerful, active figure, modern women—and men—might be encouraged to view her as an appropriate role model for our time.

## Mary in Scripture

According to the *Infancy Gospel of James*, which dates from the mid-second century CE, Mary was the daughter of Hannah and her second husband Joachim, described as a very rich man. At three years of age Mary was presented to the temple, where she was “fed like a dove and received food from the hand of an angel.”<sup>2</sup>

### Betrothal

Nine years later the priests decided that Mary should be married lest she “defile” the temple, presumably because of impending menstruation. Prospective men were lined up, and the priests asked for a sign from God to indicate who should be Mary's husband. A dove alighted on Joseph's head, whereupon he was duly nominated. Joseph, a widower, protested that he was old and already had grown children;<sup>3</sup> but the priests pressed him to take Mary as his betrothed, and at last he agreed to do so.

The *Infancy Gospel* explains that Joseph left Mary at his home and set out to ply his trade: “I am going out to build houses, but I will come back to you. The Lord will protect you.”<sup>4</sup> Returning six months later he found her pregnant. *Matthew*, probably written 60 or 70 years earlier, recorded that Mary was “with child of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>5</sup> Both sources stated that an angel came to Joseph in a dream to explain her condition and reassure him that Mary should not be “put away.”

According to *Luke*, the angel Gabriel had already appeared to Mary to secure her consent. The words of the Annunciation became immortalized in the liturgy of Christmas:

Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.<sup>6</sup>

Mary questioned the likelihood of pregnancy but eventually agreed: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.”<sup>7</sup>

The *Qur'an*, where Mary features more prominently than in the New Testament,<sup>8</sup> records the words of Annunciation as “O Mary, God has chosen you, made you pure and chosen you above all the women of the world.”<sup>9</sup> The angels—the *Qur'an* speaks of more than one—prophesied that Mary should bear a son whose “name is the Christ Jesus son of Mary, greatly honored in this world and the next, and among those drawn nearest to God.”<sup>10</sup>

*Luke's* Gabriel also announced that her older cousin Elizabeth was pregnant, whereupon Mary set off to visit her in Judea. Elizabeth, who would soon give birth to John the Baptist, greeted Mary with “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” Mary then launched into the canticle of praise which Christian liturgy calls the *Magnificat*:

My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name...<sup>11</sup>

In Christian tradition Mary felt no pain during childbirth because, sinless, she was exempt from God's curse on Eve.<sup>12</sup> Islamic tradition, by contrast, did not spare her the pain. According to the *Qur'an* Mary clutched the trunk of a palm tree, whereupon soft, ripe dates fell to refresh her.<sup>13</sup> But it acknowledged the miraculous birth. When people questioned the circumstances of his birth, the baby Jesus

spoke from the cradle: “I am a servant of God... He charged me... to be dutiful to my mother... Peace be upon me the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I am resurrected...”<sup>14</sup>

## Virgin Birth

Christian apologists have consistently claimed that Jesus had no earthly father but was conceived through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Gnostics challenged that claim on the grounds that the Spirit was female; for example, the *Gospel of Philip* raised the question: “When did a woman ever conceive by a woman?”<sup>15</sup> Theophilus, second-century bishop of Antioch and a representative of the emerging institutional church, also identified the third person of the Trinity as female.<sup>16</sup> However, when trinitarian doctrine took definite shape in the third and fourth centuries, the problem was eliminated by identifying the Holy Spirit as *Pneuma*—grammatically neuter, but with implied masculine qualities.

Apologists also took great pains to show that Mary was a virgin at the time of Jesus’ birth and remained a virgin thereafter. Most dramatic was the passage in the *Gospel of James*, where a midwife verified Mary’s post-partum condition:

Then said Salome: As the Lord my God liveth, unless I thrust in my finger, and search the parts, I will not believe that a virgin has brought forth. And the midwife went in, and said to Mary: Show thyself; for no small controversy has arisen about thee. And Salome put in her finger, and cried out, and said: Woe is me for mine iniquity and mine unbelief, because I have tempted the living God; and, behold, my hand is dropping off as if burned with fire.<sup>17</sup>

The *Qur’an* also referred to Mary’s virginity. Responding to Gabriel’s announcement of her conception, she declared, “no man has ever touched me, nor am I an adulteress.”<sup>18</sup> The text added: “Mary, daughter of Imran, she who guarded her chastity, and We breathed into her of Our spirit, and she reposed her trust in the words of her Lord... and was devout in worship.”<sup>19</sup>

*Matthew* quoted *Isaiah* 7:14 to argue that Jesus’ virgin birth fulfilled Old Testament prophecy: “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”<sup>20</sup> Another passage, from *Ezekiel*, sometimes quoted in support of Mary’s virginity, is “This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it.”<sup>21</sup>

Apart from the passages in *Matthew* and *Luke* relating to Jesus’ conception, birth and boyhood, the New Testament contains few references to Mary. The synoptic gospels record minor incidents where she was present during Jesus’ ministry,<sup>22</sup> while *John* records her presence at the marriage feast of Cana and the crucifixion.<sup>23</sup> The *Acts of the Apostles* relates that Mary was with the disciples in the upper room at the time of Pentecost.<sup>24</sup> And *Revelation* contains the passage customarily linked to Mary: “a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.”<sup>25</sup> That last passage seems oddly out of character with the matter-of-fact accounts found elsewhere in the New Testament; but it would play an important role in the glorification of Mary in later centuries.

Mary’s death was not recorded in scripture; but according to tradition she spent her last years in Ephesus, cared for by John the Beloved to whom the crucified Jesus had entrusted her.<sup>26</sup>

## Reflections

Should we take the scriptural accounts as factual? Probably not, but scripture can be understood on more than just the literal level. Hagiographies are written after their heroes and heroines have been anointed by reverent followers, or occasionally when an associate—like Jesus, in Mary’s case—is anointed. Details of the person’s unusual birth, privileged upbringing, and extraordinary accomplishments typically are filled in many years later, based on whatever fragmentary information may be available. Where reliable information is lacking, or where it lacks sufficient drama, hagiographers draw upon legends, archetypes, or stories of other famous people. Fact and

fiction become inseparable. Nevertheless the stories express the deeply felt beliefs and sincere veneration of the person's followers. A hagiography may not tell us much about a hero's or heroine's actual life, but it tells us much about his or her status in the particular culture.

Efforts to prove Mary's gynecological virginity have to be understood in terms of the misogynistic culture of the times. As skeptics have pointed out, scriptural support for the virginity of Mary is weak. For example, "virgin" in the key quote from *Isaiah*: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child..." translates the Greek word *parthenos* that appeared in the Septuagint.<sup>27</sup> Many scholars contend that *parthenos* was a mistranslation of the original Hebrew *almah*, which simply meant "a young woman." Biblical scholars also question whether the passage in *Isaiah* had any relevance to a coming messiah. The relevance of the quote from *Ezekiel*: "This gate shall be shut..." came under strong attack in by humanists in the 16th century.<sup>28</sup>

Virgin births were not unfamiliar in the mythology of antiquity; Perseus, Romulus, Mithras, Horus and Krishna were just a few of the individuals said to have been so favored. Allegedly the Druids erected an altar to *Virgo paritura* ("Virgin who will give birth") on the site later occupied by the cathedral of Chartres.<sup>29</sup> However we need to examine the very term "virgin" in more detail. The Latin word *virgo* could mean "an independent woman." Thus Artemis and Athena were "virgin goddesses" but not necessarily celibate. When Romans of the classical period wanted to speak of a woman without sexual experience they used *virgo intacta*. Portrayal of the "Virgin Mary" as sexless may have been a deliberate confusion of the terms by the church fathers to produce a suitable feminine ideal for institutionalized Christianity. Salome diagnosed Mary as *virgo intacta*; how we interpret that diagnosis would depend on personal faith.

Nonetheless, even if the scripture writers and their later interpreters portrayed Mary in an unnatural light, they still accorded her the highest honors they could. "Blessed art thou among women," "all generations shall call me

blessed," and "Allah has chosen you... above the women of the world" speak for themselves.

## Marian Doctrine and Devotion

Irenaeus, second-century bishop of Lyon, France, contrasted the disobedience of Eve with Mary's willingness to become the mother of Christ: "Mary the Virgin is found obedient, saying, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.'"<sup>30</sup> From then on Mary became known as the "second Eve." Thus began the long development of Mariology—though that term for the Marian branch of theology would not be coined until the 19th century.

A major advance in Mariology was definition of two Marian dogmas by the Councils of Ephesus and Constantinople. The Council of Ephesus in 431 declared that Mary was the *Theotokos* (Greek: "God-bearer" or "Birth-giver to God"), and the Second Council of Constantinople (553–554) declared that she was "ever virgin."

The Ephesus declaration might be dismissed as devotional hyperbole, but the Council's formal decree added that Mary was *Theotokos* "in the true sense of the word." The decree also affirmed: "We magnify you O Mother of the True Light and we glorify you O saint and [Theotokos] for you have borne unto us the Savior of the world."<sup>31</sup> The Council's purpose was to insist that Jesus Christ was both God and man, but in order to do so it had to concede that in some sense Mary gave birth to God. Cyril (c.378–444), Patriarch of Alexandria, interpreted *Theotokos* to mean *Mater Theou* ("Mother of God"), and the modified title passed into popular Christian devotion.

Not surprisingly, the *Qur'an* warned that neither Jesus nor his mother should be regarded as divine:

Remember when God said to Jesus son of Mary: "Did you really say to people 'Take me and my mother as two gods, instead of God'?" [Jesus] said "Glory be to You! What right have I to assert what does not in truth belong to me?... Worship God, my Lord and your Lord."<sup>32</sup>

The Ephesus' pronouncement stimulated new doctrinal speculation. It also provoked the first stirrings of medieval Marian devotion. The assertion that Mary was taken up body and soul into heaven led to celebration of the feast of the Assumption in the fifth-century Syrian Church. And the feast of the Immaculate Conception grew from the suggestion that she was conceived without the stain of original sin. The latter feast was celebrated in the East, as early as the seventh century, and in the West by the 13th century. The new Marian doctrines were not endorsed by ecumenical councils and so remained matters of personal judgment or devotional metaphor. Eventually, they would be defined as dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church: the Immaculate Conception in 1854 and the Assumption in 1950.

The doctrine of Mary's eternal virginity gained strength at the same time that Christian attitudes toward the human body deteriorated; Mary became the model of purity and the inspiration to confront the concupiscence of the flesh.

### **Marian Devotion in the Middle Ages**

Medieval Christians also viewed Mary as a model of compassion, mercy and self-sacrifice; someone worthy of reverence, even adoration. Anselm of Canterbury (c.1033–1109) wrote three poems dedicated to Mary, the third of which began,

Mary, great Mary,  
most blessed of all Marys,  
greatest among all women,  
great Lady, great beyond measure,  
I long to love you with all my heart...<sup>33</sup>

No medieval apologist gave Mary greater reverence than Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), but he approached the topic with trepidation:

It is true, there is nothing gives me greater delight than to preach on the glories of the Virgin Mother, yet neither is there anything that causes me greater fear. For without speaking of the unutterable treasures of her merits... whatever can be said on that ineffable subject... does not fully satisfy, does not fully please, is not quite acceptable.<sup>34</sup>

Bernard overcame his fear and wrote 17 sermons on Mary, most of them linked to her principal feast days. For her role in Christ's incarnation Bernard accorded Mary the very highest place in creation, above the level of the angels. Certainly, Christ was higher still, but that created a gulf that Mary could help bridge: "So great a Mediator is Christ that we need another to mediate between Him and us."<sup>35</sup> Because of her sweetness and "softness," nobody need hesitate to approach her.

Bernard associated Mary with the "woman clothed with the sun" and made much of the image's symbolism. The moon under her feet symbolized the folly of man, but also the church militant "that shines with borrowed splendor."<sup>36</sup> The serpent crushed beneath her heel was the embodiment of error: "It is through Mary alone that every impious heresy has been vanquished."<sup>37</sup> The twelve stars in her diadem could be divided into three constellations of four, each constellation corresponding to a "prerogative" of grace: that of the heavens, the flesh and the heart.<sup>38</sup>

Bernard's devotion to Mary was not without context. Not far away from where he wrote, the Troubadours were bringing the feminine to the forefront of poetic attention and extolling the sweetness and softness of their *domnae*; comparisons with Mary often lay near the surface of their work. During the same period the Kabbalists of southern France and Spain were writing of the Shekinah's betrothal to the Holy One. The *Sepher ha-Zohar*, or "Book of Splendor," asserted: "we should make a beautiful canopy with beautiful decorations to invite the Supernal Bride, who is the Shekinah."<sup>39</sup> In a reference to the *Song of Solomon*, Bernard wrote: "Mary's womb is the Bridegroom's marriage-bed."<sup>40</sup> Mary, in the emerging devotional imagination, was both the mother and the bride of Christ.

Bernard's contemporary, Hildegard of Bingen, (1098–1179) affirmed: "Mary, you are the bright matter through which the Word breathed all the virtues forth, as once he led forth, in the primal matter of the world, the whole of creation."<sup>41</sup> In identifying Mary with "bright matter," Hildegard drew upon the similarity between the Latin words for "mother" and "mat-

ter.” One of her hymns dedicated to Mary combined age-old Celtic imagery of the Rhineland with hints of the modern active woman:

Hail to you, O greenest fertile branch! You budded forth amidst breezes and winds in search of the knowledge of all that is holy. When the time was ripe your own branch brought forth blossoms... The heat of the sun exudes sweat from you like the balsam’s perfume... [I]n you O gentle Virgin, is every fullness of joy, everything that Eve rejected. Now let endless praise resound to the Most High!<sup>42</sup>

Most of the written works of the time came from the religious orders, but Marian devotion played a major role in the lives of ordinary Christians. People believed that Mary was especially responsive to human need. As Bernard suggested, Mary could be relied upon to intercede with Christ, so petitionary prayers were addressed to her rather than to her son. Not surprisingly she was viewed as the special protectress of women and children.

The cult of Mary grew rapidly after the 12th century. Numerous churches dedicated to Mary were erected, both on the continent of Europe and in England. The latter became known as “Mary’s Dowry” because of its reputation for Marian devotion, and Lady Chapels became the norm in large churches and cathedrals. Marian shrines attracted large numbers of people. On their way to the shrines, pilgrims chanted litanies offering praise and invoking Mary’s bounty or mercy. In the *Litany of Loreto*, for example, the liturgist called on: “... Mother of Christ... Mother of the Church... Mother of divine grace... Mother most pure... Mother most chaste...” and later: “... Mystical rose... Tower of David... House of gold... Ark of the covenant... Gate of heaven... Morning star...”<sup>43</sup> Each invocation was followed by the response: “Pray for us.” Long litanies whiled away the long days of traveling.

According to tradition, Dominic de Guzmán, founder of the Dominican Order, had a vision of Mary in 1214 in which he received a set of prayer beads.<sup>44</sup> The popular devotional practice that developed from his vision became

known as the *Rosary* (Latin: *rosarium*, “garland of roses”). Medieval Christians accorded Mary special reverence as the mother who watched her son die and held his body when it was taken down from the cross. Meditation on her “seven sorrows” led, in 1413, to creation of the feast of the Our Lady of Sorrows by the synod of Cologne.<sup>45</sup>

Devotion to Mary inspired artistic works of timeless grandeur. From the medieval icons, to depictions of the Madonna and Child, to the *Mater Dolorosa* (“Mother of Sorrows”), the works of painters and sculptors grace the world’s art museums. The 13th- or 14th-century Byzantine icon *Our Lady of Perpetual Help*, Jan van Eyck’s *Lucca Madonna*, Fra Angelico’s *Madonna della Stella*, Michelangelo’s *La Pietà*, and Caravaggio’s *Madonna di Loreto* are just a few of the great expressions of Marian visual art. Similarly, sacred musical compositions dedicated to Mary are counted among the greatest works of classical music. Medieval chants for the Marian feast days are renowned for their serene beauty, and the Marian compositions of Claudio Monteverdi, Marc-Antoine Charpentier, Johann Sebastian Bach, and Giovanni Pergolesi are as popular today as they were in their own times.

## Mary in Eastern Orthodoxy

Theologians in the Eastern tradition have long pondered Mary’s virginity and her role in the Incarnation.<sup>46</sup> The seventh-century Maximos the Confessor wrote:

For just as [Christ] Himself became man without changing His nature or altering His power, so He makes her who bore Him a Mother while keeping her a Virgin. In this way He reveals one miracle through another miracle, at the same time concealing the one with the other. This is because in Himself, according to His essence. God always remains a mystery... [T]he bonds of her virginity became even more indissoluble.<sup>47</sup>

Doctrine and devotion have always been closely intertwined in Eastern Orthodoxy. Peter of Damascus, who is believed to have lived in about the 11th century, offered a hymn of praise reminiscent of the *Magnificat*:

Thus I, too, unworthy believer that I am, entreat you, holy Queen, that I may be allowed to perceive the gifts of grace bestowed on you and on the other saints, and to understand how you display so many virtues... Rightly do we, who have been saved through you, pure Virgin, confess that you are the Mother of God, extolling you with the angelic choirs. For God, whom men cannot see, on whom the ranks of angels do not dare to look, has through you become visible to men as the Logos made flesh... For with the true faith we confess that you are the Mother of God and we bless you, the ever-blessed. All generations proclaim you blessed as the only Mother of God, more honored than the cherubim and incomparably more glorious than the seraphim.<sup>48</sup>

In Eastern Orthodox Christianity Mary Theotokos is regarded as the supreme example of cooperation between God and humanity. At times she has received more attention than Christ. Nikolai Berdyaev (1874–1948) was able to say, without great exaggeration: “The Mother of God takes precedence of the Trinity and is almost identified with the Trinity. The people have felt the nearness of the interceding Mother of God more vividly than that of Christ.”<sup>49</sup> Mary Theotokos is considered to be the holy protectress of Russia and is described as “Mother of the World”<sup>50</sup>—a term that would take on great significance in 20th-century western esotericism.

Numerous Orthodox churches are dedicated to Mary, and she is the subject of countless icons. Best known, perhaps, is the “Theotokos of Vladimir,” which shows Mary holding the infant Jesus.<sup>51</sup> Another of Mary’s titles in the Orthodox churches is *Panagia*, meaning “The Most Holy One.” Panagia icons typically show the standing figure of Mary facing the viewer, with her hands extended in blessing and with the image of the child Jesus over her heart. A famous example is the 13th-century “Great Panagia” in the Savior Minster at Yaroslavl, Russia.

Eastern Orthodox authorities rejected the Roman Church’s right to define the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the

Assumption. Orthodox theologians do not view original sin as a personal inheritance, so there was no reason for any miraculous action to spare Mary from it. Nevertheless, in common with some Protestant reformers, Orthodox tradition does hold that Mary remained free of “actual” sin, committed during earthly life.

In place of the Roman doctrine of the Assumption, the Eastern Orthodox Churches teach the *Dormition* of Mary. According to the latter doctrine Mary died a natural death, and her soul was received by Christ. Then on the third day her body was raised, and she was taken up bodily into heaven, whereupon disciples found her tomb empty. According to an apocryphal text:

[T]he apostles... laid down her precious and holy body in Gethsemane in a new tomb. And, behold, a perfume of sweet savor came forth out of the holy sepulcher of our Lady the mother of God; and for three days the voices of invisible angels were heard glorifying Christ our God, who had been born of her. And when the third day was ended, the voices were no longer heard; and from that time forth all knew that her spotless and precious body had been transferred to paradise.<sup>52</sup>

### Mary in European Protestantism

Mary played a smaller role in Protestantism than in either the medieval Church or Eastern Orthodoxy. The Protestant reformers were unanimous in rejecting any suggestion that Mary or the saints could intercede with God on behalf of a person, alive or dead; thus it was pointless, or even blasphemous, to pray to them.<sup>53</sup> Most of the feast days of Mary and the saints were abolished, and statuary and shrines were destroyed. The reformers also abolished the practice of pilgrimages, so many of which had Marian themes.

Nevertheless, the early reformers acknowledged Mary’s role in the Incarnation and were generally supportive of the Theotokos doctrine of the Council of Ephesus. For example, Martin Luther (1483–1546) stated: “Not only was Mary the mother of him who is born [in Bethlehem], but of him who, before the world, was

eternally born of the Father, from a Mother in time and at the same time man and God.”<sup>54</sup>

Luther even affirmed the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception: “It is a sweet and pious belief that the infusion of Mary’s soul was effected without original sin; so that in the very infusion of her soul she was also purified from original sin and adorned with God’s gifts, receiving a pure soul infused by God; thus from the first moment she began to live she was free from all sin.”<sup>55</sup>

Similarly, the Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) wrote: “I esteem immensely the Mother of God, the ever chaste, immaculate Virgin Mary.”<sup>56</sup> Lutheran theologian Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) affirmed: “[T]he Virgin Mary fits in perfectly with the relations of the Trinity, since she conceives without man the Son whom the Father begets without woman; so that thus the Holy Virgin is a necessary, inherently requisite antithesis to the Father in the bosom of the Trinity.”<sup>57</sup> He digressed, echoing the sentiments of Julian of Norwich, to attribute feminine qualities to God the Son, returning to his theme with “the Son implicitly urges upon us the need of a real feminine being.”<sup>58</sup>

Nevertheless, Marian devotion was opposed both by humanist scholars and by Calvinist writers. Prominent humanist Desiderius Erasmus (c.1466–1536) was scathing in his criticism of the Marian cult. In his view it was offensive to project onto Mary titles from biblical Judaism and pagan religion. Moreover, he urged that Mary should be described as “gracious” rather than “full of grace.”<sup>59</sup> His attack on the Marian cult influenced generations of Protestants. Marian devotion also became “a casualty of both the new form of evangelical spirituality introduced by the reformers and the continuing polemic with the Roman Catholic Church, which continued to honor Mary with ever-increasing fervor.”<sup>60</sup> Some Protestant writers rejected the Theotokos doctrine.

### **Mary in Anglicanism**

Like their continental counterparts, the English reformers examined Marian doctrine in detail to determine what would be acceptable. While

they focused on Mary’s role in the Incarnation, they accepted her as the Mother of God, noting that the title was scriptural and consistent with traditions of the early Church. Reformers Thomas Cranmer, Hugh Latimer and John Jewel declined to take a position on whether Mary was preserved from original sin, but they acknowledged the perpetual virginity of Mary. Latimer was instrumental in destroying Marian shrines in England. Still, some expressions of Marian devotion were retained in the liturgy.

Religious reform was less radical in England than it was on the continent, or in Scotland where Calvinism held sway. The Church of England liturgical calendar, published in 1561 during the reign of Elizabeth I, contained five Marian feasts: the Conception, Nativity of Mary, Annunciation (“Lady Day”), Visitation and Purification.<sup>61</sup> Collects for the five feasts were written and scriptural readings selected for the *Book of Common Prayer*. The *Magnificat* was preserved in the liturgy of Evening Prayer. Notwithstanding, devotion to Mary declined in the Anglican Church for more than a century after the Reformation.

Marian devotion was revived on a limited scale in the 17th century by the Caroline Divines, a group of clergy named after Charles I and Charles II whose reigns bracketed the English Civil War and Cromwellian regime. The Divines are regarded as early exponents of “high-church” Anglicanism. For inspiration they turned to Eastern Orthodox tradition rather than to Rome, believing that the former’s Marian teachings were closer to those of early Christianity. Lancelot Andrewes (1555–1626), who oversaw much of the work on the King James Bible, selected *Psalms* 2:7 as the theme for his Christmas sermon in 1609. But he modified “Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee” to create an affirmation for Mary: “Thou art my Son, this day I brought Thee into the world.”<sup>62</sup>

Of all the Caroline Divines, Mark Frank (1612–1665) emerged as the leading exponent of Marian devotion. In a sermon preached on the feast of the Annunciation he said:

Give we her in God’s name the honor due to her. God hath styled her “blessed” by

the Angel, by Elizabeth; commanded all generations to call her so, and they hitherto have done it, and let us do it too... [T]he first Christians... speak of her as the most blessed among women, one “highly favored,” most “highly” too. But all the while give *Dominus tecum* all the glory, the whole glory of all to him; give her the honor and blessedness of the chief of the saints.<sup>63</sup>

Scottish and Canadian revisions of the Prayer Book added the feast of the Dormition, or “Falling Asleep,” of Mary, to be celebrated on August 15, the traditional feast of the Assumption.

The work of the Caroline Divines influenced the Tractarian movement of the 19th century.<sup>64</sup> John Henry Newman, early leader of the movement, emerged as a noted Mariologist even before converting to Roman Catholicism.<sup>65</sup> Some high-church Anglicans have revived the pre-Reformation practice of pilgrimages, and a notable example was the restoration in 1921 of the Anglican shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk, England. Walsingham originally became a popular pilgrimage destination in 1061 when a devout Saxon noblewoman experienced a Marian apparition there. Destroyed during the Reformation, the site was rebuilt and now offers separate Anglican and Roman Catholic shrines.<sup>66</sup> “Mary’s Dowry” has been recovered at least on a small scale.

Marian devotion is now supported by Anglican religious orders and lay organizations, including the Society of Mary formed in 1931 as the combination of two earlier groups. The society, not to be confused with the Roman Catholic religious order of the same name, now operates in many countries. These organizations

seek to popularize devotions, like the Rosary, *Angelus* (“The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary...”), and *Regina Coeli* (“Queen of Heaven Rejoice...”), once popular only in Roman Catholic circles.

## Mary in Roman Catholicism

Mary’s status in modern Roman Catholicism was enhanced by formal definition of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption—adding to the two dogmas defined by early church councils. In 1854 Pius IX declared that Mary “in the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin.” Papal infallibility was not yet an article of faith, but the First Vatican Council in 1870 confirmed as dogmas both the Immaculate Conception and infallibility. Pius XII defined the doctrine of the Assumption in 1950. The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) confirmed the proclamation, asserting that

“the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, when her earthly life was over, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things.”<sup>67</sup>

Louis-Marie de Montfort (1673–1716), renowned French preacher and Mariologist canonized in 1947, offered a number of reasons for Marian devotion:

Jesus gave more glory to God his Father by submitting to his Mother for thirty years than he would have given him had he converted the whole world by working the greatest miracles. How highly then do we glorify God when to please him we submit

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ourselves to Mary, taking Jesus as our sole model.<sup>68</sup>

The Carmelites, whose full name is the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, date from medieval times. But the major religious order dedicated to Mary is the Society of Mary (Marists), founded in 1816 and now offering opportunities for both men and women. Numerous sodalities and other lay groups promote the imitation of Mary in their spiritual lives and daily work.

Recent popes have expressed strong devotion to Mary. In 1954 Pius XII proclaimed that Christ crowned his mother Queen of Heaven and designated May 31 to be the feast of her "Queenship."<sup>69</sup> A generation later, John Paul II reflected on the angel's greeting at the Annunciation, assigning her multiple high honors derived from her association with Christ:

When we read that the messenger addresses Mary as "full of grace," the Gospel context, which mingles revelations and ancient promises, enables us to understand that among all the "spiritual blessings in Christ" this is a special "blessing." In the mystery of Christ she is present even "before the creation of the world," as the one whom the Father "has chosen" as Mother of his Son in the Incarnation. And, what is more, together with the Father, the Son has chosen her, entrusting her eternally to the Spirit of holiness. In an entirely special and exceptional way Mary is united to Christ...<sup>70</sup>

On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1990, John Paul came close to embracing the "World Mother" concept of the Russian Orthodox Church. Praying before an icon in Rome he declared:

O You, who are the first Handmaid of the unity of the body of Christ, help us, help all the faithful, who feel so painfully the drama of the divisions of Christianity, to seek with constancy the way to the perfect unity of the Body of Christ by means of unconditional faithfulness to the Spirit of Truth and Love, which was given to them by your Son at the cost of the Cross and of death... You who serve as Mother of the whole family of the children of God, obtain for the

Church that, enriched by the Holy Spirit with the fullness of hierarchical and charismatic gifts, she may continue with constancy towards the future...<sup>71</sup>

During John Paul's pontificate, popular pressure developed to designate Mary "Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate of humanity." None of those concepts was new; however formal definition would have far-reaching theological implications. John Paul was believed to favor a fifth Marian dogma, but advice from inside and outside the Church urged caution, and no action was taken before his death in 2005.

One measure of contemporary devotion to Mary is interest in Marian apparitions. The most famous incidents in the 19th century were the 18 visions reported by Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes, France, in 1858. Since then, the number of reported apparitions has increased substantially. During the 20th century 386 significant Marian apparitions were reported.<sup>72</sup> The official investigating body, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, rejected 79 incidents but judged that eight were of a character that could not be attributed to natural phenomena, delusion or fraud. They were: Fátima, Portugal, 1917; Beauraing, Belgium, 1932; Banneux, Belgium, 1933; Akita, Japan, 1969; Syracuse, Italy, 1953; Zeitoun, Egypt, 1968–1971; Betania, Venezuela, 1976–1984; and Manila, Philippines, 1986. A further 11 incidents were deemed "worthy of faith" by local bishops.<sup>73</sup> No authoritative judgment was issued concerning the remaining ones, but in every case the apparition sites become popular pilgrimage sites. Roughly five million pilgrims travel each year to Lourdes, many seeking healings.

## Reflections

The Theotokos doctrine raised the difficult conceptual problem of how the Mother of God could be other than divine herself. Aristotelian physiology offered an answer that satisfied for a while: the woman's reproductive role was to provide fertile soil for gestation of the male "seed" but otherwise contributed nothing to the developing embryo. The eighth-century Byzantine emperor Constantine V explained:

“When she bore Christ within her womb, she was like a purse filled with gold. But after giving birth, she was no more than the empty purse.”<sup>74</sup> Several variations of that theme appeared in Protestant writings, some using less complimentary metaphors. Collapse of Aristotle’s theory of reproduction once again leaves the conceptual problem unsolved.

The Eastern Orthodox Churches, Roman Catholicism, and high-church Anglicanism have all assigned Mary special status in the divine order, through the merits of her son. Whether her imputed status competes with Christ’s, as the Protestant reformers claimed, remains a matter of contention. Apologists of the Church of Rome distinguish reverence for Mary, termed *hyperdulia* (literally, “above the level shown by slaves to their masters”), from *latria* (“service” or “worship”), which is reserved for God and Christ. Whether that subtle distinction helps is open to question.

In any event, reverence for Mary clearly meets a deeply felt human need. As Christianity spread throughout the pagan world, Mary and other female saints took the place of traditional feminine divinities. Ephesus, where the Theotokos doctrine was defined was not only the city where Mary reportedly spent her last years; it was also a center of devotion to the goddess Artemis-Diana. According to legend a crowd gathered outside the building during the council meeting and chanted, “give us back our goddess.” Rapid growth of the Marian cult in Ireland has been attributed to the tradition of Celtic goddesses.<sup>75</sup> Why did people need a goddess figure? Bernard of Clairvoix claimed that Christ was so exalted that we need a mediator to reach him. A modern commentary suggests that the burden of guilt may also play a role:

For the people of the Middle Ages, devotion to the Blessed Virgin offered an experience of a female figure intrinsically related to God, along with an experience of the power of love to blot away sin and the power of mercy to ameliorate deserved justice, experiences that were not otherwise readily available in the situation of the times.<sup>76</sup>

The reformers sought to rid Christianity of anything resembling a goddess, and Protestantism has been impoverished in consequence. But the resurgence of Marian devotion in high-church Anglicanism shows that the need for a “female figure intrinsically related to God” is not easily suppressed. For 2,000 years Christians of multiple traditions, at every level of intellect and every level of spiritual attainment, have explored the spirituality of Mary, prayed to her, offered her praise, and visited her shrines. The fact that so many people continue to engage in these activities, in a sophisticated, “post-religious” age, warns against hasty dismissal as aberrant behavior. Whatever personal assessment one might make of the validity of the Marian apparitions, one cannot doubt the powerful transformative experiences reported by those personally favored and by the many pilgrims who flock to the apparition sites.

### Mary in Esoteric Teachings

The name Mary, and its variants—Maria, Maryam and Miriam—are usually assumed to come from the same root as the Latin *mare* (“sea”),<sup>77</sup> giving meaning to Mary’s title of “Star of the Sea.” Mary is also associated with *Maia*, the name of Hermes’ mother. Scholars discount any etymological connection between Mary and the Sanskrit *maya* (“matter”). However the Latin *mater* (“mother”) and *materia* (“matter”) are closely related, implying a connection between “mother,” “matter,” and “matrix” (that is, “form”). Renaissance alchemists referred to undifferentiated “virgin” matter as the *prima materia*, whereupon “Virgin Mary” took on alchemical as well as religious significance. These associations are all replete with symbolism.

### Mary in Western Esotericism

Writers in the western esoteric tradition typically have viewed Mary as divine, linking her with various terrestrial and celestial goddesses. Mary’s role as the Blessed Virgin recalls *Athena Parthenos* (“Athena Virgin”), Greek goddess of wisdom, as well as the constellation Virgo. John Paul II’s reference to Mary’s presence with Christ “Before the creation of

the world” would seem to link her with Chokmah/Sophia of *Proverbs* 8:22-30.

The Christian Kabbalah emerged in the late 15th century and blossomed over the next 200 years. Central to Kabbalistic teachings is the notion of polarities. The first manifestation of duality from the presexual, monadic *Kether* consists of *Abba/Chokmah*, the primeval masculine force, and *Ima/Binah*, the receptive feminine form.<sup>78</sup> Another important polarity involves *Tifareth*, which Christian Kabbalists associate with Christ, and *Shekinah/Malkuth*, the divine feminine form representing the world of human affairs. *Binah* is associated both with the Holy Spirit and with Mary, reminding us that the Neoplatonist Plotinus (c.204–270) asserted that the third aspect of the Trinity was dual in function: looking up to the divine Monad and down to the created universe.<sup>79</sup>

Alternatively, Mary can be associated with *Malkuth*. In either case, geometric patterns within the Tree of Life offer profound insights into the relationships among Christ, Mary and the Holy Spirit. Christ and Mary take the place of the divine son and daughter/bride discussed in the Judaic theoretical Kabbalah.<sup>80</sup> Mary and the Holy Spirit correspond to the lower and higher aspects of the *Shekinah*, the indwelling glory of God. Occultist and physician Paracelsus (1493–1541), who was influenced by the Kabbalah, viewed Mary as the embodiment of a divine feminine principle that, together with God the Father, gave birth to the divine Son.<sup>81</sup> Presumably the traditional role of the Holy Spirit was absorbed into that feminine principle.

Jakob Böhme (1575–1624) was also influenced by the Kabbalah. He wrote at length about the divine “Virgin-Sophia,” declaring that man lost his primeval “Sophia” through the Fall. Mary, in his view, was not immaculately conceived. However, through the merits of Christ, Sophia returned to her, and her virginity was restored:

Mary receives Her immaculate virginity not from Her racial inheritance, not from Her birth from the proto-mother Eve, but from the Heavenly Virgin. Descending upon Her

and becoming flesh of Her is Sophia. Moreover we say about Mary: She hath taken on the holy, heavenly, eternal Virgin of God, and is wrought the pure and holy element with that of Paradise, and is yet truly still a Virgin in this world, begotten of Joachim and [Hannah]. But now She is... an heavenly and pure Virgin in accord... with the heavenly Virgin in Her holiness and purity.<sup>82</sup>

Rosicrucianism conventionally is dated from the early 17th century, but its true origins are obscure, and certainly it absorbed concepts and symbols from earlier traditions. Some of its symbolism is claimed to have come from the Noble Order of the Garter, founded by King Edward III in about 1348, and dedicated “to the honor of Almighty God, the glorious Virgin Saint Mary and Saint George the Martyr.”<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, the rose itself, central to Rosicrucian iconography, was traditionally associated with Mary—and not least with the Rosary. Not surprisingly, Mary has played a significant role in Rosicrucian teachings.

Max Heindel (1865–1919), founder of the modern Rosicrucian Fellowship, declared that Jesus was “a singularly pure type of mind [and through] many lives... trod the Path of Holiness and thus fitted himself for the greatest honor ever bestowed on a human being. His mother, the Virgin Mary, was also a type of the highest human purity.”<sup>84</sup> Heindel’s student Corinne Heline (1882–1975) regarded Mary as a high initiate. In her account, Mary described to John the Beloved an initiation experience at the foot of the cross:

I will tell you an astounding and hidden Mystery, which cannot be known by the heart or mind and cannot be comprehended by the understanding... A shining cloud came and bore me along and took me up into the Third Heaven and set me down at the boundary of the earth. *I looked and saw the whole earth was like a thing of nothing.*<sup>85</sup>

Heline interpreted the passage from *Revelation* describing the “woman clothed with the sun” as a vision of Mary as a “Master Initiate.”<sup>86</sup> Interestingly, Heline referred to the temple

training Mary received as a child, suggesting that she was tutored by angels under the supervision of the Archangel Gabriel.<sup>87</sup> During her earthly life Mary attained four major initiations corresponding to the four elements: the Annunciation, Water; the Immaculate Conception, Fire; Pentecost, Air; and the Assumption, Earth.<sup>88</sup>

### Mary in the Theosophical Society and Its Offshoots

The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 by Helena Blavatsky and Henry Olcott. Blavatsky (1831–1891), who has often been accused of anti-Christian bias, explored similarities between Mary and earlier divine personages in East and West. She noted disparagingly that titles like “Queen of Heaven,” “Queen of the Universe,” “Mother of God,” “Spouse of God,” “Celestial Virgin,” and “Heavenly Peace-Maker” were previously given to “a host of... Pagan goddesses.”<sup>89</sup> She also identified “the actual Queen of Heaven” as the moon. In a more positive light, Blavatsky offered the interesting insight that Hannah, the name of Mary’s mother, was “derived from the Chaldean Ana, heaven, or Astral Light, Anima Mundi.”<sup>90</sup> She also observed

The lotus, the sacred flower of the Egyptians, as well as the Hindus, is the symbol of Horus as it is that of Brahma... The sprig of lilies placed in the hand of the archangel, who offers them to the Virgin Mary, in the pictures of the “Annunciation,” have in their esoteric symbolism precisely the same meaning.<sup>91</sup>

Blavatsky judged that Mary bore the closest similarity with the Egyptian goddess Isis. “‘Immaculate is our Lady Isis,’ is the legend around an engraving of Serapis and Isis... the very terms applied afterwards to that personage (the Virgin Mary) who succeeded to her form, titles, symbols, rites, and ceremonies.”<sup>92</sup> She commented, as have other writers, that depictions of the Madonna and Child were inspired by earlier portrayals of Isis and Horus.<sup>93</sup> Blavatsky attributed the transference of titles and images of Mary to Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, who “openly embraced the cause of Isis, the Egyptian goddess, and... anthropo-

morphized her into Mary.”<sup>94</sup> We recall that it was Cyril who first interpreted *Theotokos* as “Mother of God.”

Blavatsky’s move to India in 1879, and transfer of the Theosophical Society’s headquarters from New York City to Adyar three years later, were more than just symbolic of a change in the Society’s focus from West to East. Leading members came into contact with distinguished Hindu and Buddhist teachers, and from then until well into the 20th century, the Society focused almost exclusively on bringing eastern esoteric concepts to a western audience. Anna Kingsford (1846–1888) was a notable exception, insofar as her interests were distinctly western. A close contemporary of Blavatsky, she became president of the British Theosophical Society in 1883, until disagreements with the Adyar leadership led to her resignation the following year.<sup>95</sup> While Kingsford’s work had minimal impact on the Theosophical Society, it is of great importance to our present theme.

Kingsford rejected the “idolatry” of Christian images but otherwise took a positive attitude to both Christianity and Mary. A compilation of her channeled work appeared under the title *Clothed with the Sun*. Kingsford offered a new understanding of a traditional Marian doctrine:

[T]he Immaculate Conception is none other than the prophecy of the means whereby the universe shall at last be redeemed. Maria—the sea of limitless space—Maria the Virgin, born herself immaculate and without spot, of the womb of the ages, shall in the fullness of time bring forth the perfect man, who shall redeem the race. He is not one man, but ten thousand times ten thousand, the Son of man, who shall overcome the limitations of matter, and the evil which is the result of the materialization of spirit... [b]y force of love.<sup>96</sup>

Later, Kingsford described the dual aspect of God, masculine in “Life” and feminine in “Substance.” The feminine aspect “appears as the Daughter, Mother, and Spouse of God.” Moreover:

[S]he is mystically styled the Blessed Virgin Mary, and in token of her Divine Moth-

erhood and heavenly derivation and attributes, is represented as clad in celestial azure, and bearing in Her arms the infant Man, in whom, regenerate and reborn of her own immaculate substance, the universe is redeemed.<sup>97</sup>

Kingsford also saw the feminine aspect at work in Venus, Aphrodite, Pallas/Minerva, and Isis/Artemis. Unfazed by complaints that Mary's titles were previously given to "a host of Pagan goddesses," she found among those individualities support for titles like "Our Lady of Victories," "Mother of Sorrows," and "Mother of Joys."<sup>98</sup>

Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) headed the German section of the Theosophical Society, but left in 1912 after his studies led him away from the Society's Asian orientation toward a closer relationship with western esotericism. He also developed a favorable attitude toward Christianity. Much of his work focused on the "Mystery of Golgotha," in which Christ initiated a planetary transformation through the crucifixion. Steiner spoke of the search for "a new Isis."<sup>99</sup> Christ's earthly life featured prominently in that search, but Steiner seemed reluctant to identify the new Isis with Mary. Complicating the issue was his theory that the infancy stories in *Matthew* and *Luke* referred to two different children, jointly involved in Christ's incarnation.<sup>100</sup>

Alice Bailey (1880–1949), who served as a regional official in the Theosophical Society in Los Angeles, left during a period of political turmoil in the early 1920s. By then she had already begun her long association with the Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul. In her own book *From Bethlehem to Calvary*, she discussed Mary and the other characters in the life of Jesus at some length. But in the 16 books she wrote for the Tibetan, Mary is rarely mentioned, and then only as a symbol for the lower orders of reality or for humanity's base instincts. To illustrate: Mary symbolizes the lesser builders, contrasted with "the greater Builders... the Holy Spirit, or force overshadowing and fecundating matter."<sup>101</sup> The "Glorification of the Virgin Mary" is associated with overcoming the instinctual desires, "the descending thoughtforms which the developing

human being is always creating and drawing downwards into manifestation, clothing them with the substance of desire."<sup>102</sup> Mary's Assumption into heaven symbolizes the way we "gather up our bodies" on the Path of Return.<sup>103</sup> "Mary, that woman of sorrow" symbolizes materialism.<sup>104</sup>

Somewhat more complimentary, Bailey affirmed that the "three goddesses" Eve, Isis and Mary "embody in themselves the symbology of the entire form nature, which, when integrated and functioning as a whole person, we call the personality."<sup>105</sup> Most complimentary was the assertion: "The feminine aspect in manifestation, symbolized for us in many of the world religions as a virgin mother and in the Christian religion as the Virgin Mary. It is that substance which enables Deity to manifest."<sup>106</sup> Kabbalists would agree with her.

In the 1910s and '20s, when Steiner and Bailey were moving away from the Theosophical Society, other prominent members were working from within the Society to bring about a more Christian focus. Not all Theosophists shared that goal, and some charged the "christianizers" with disloyalty to the Society's mission. One of the christianizing projects was establishment of the Liberal Catholic Church in 1916. James Wedgwood (1883–1951), Theosophist and Freemason who had been consecrated a bishop in the Old Catholic Church, became its first presiding bishop.<sup>107</sup> Shortly thereafter he consecrated prominent Theosophist Charles Leadbeater (1854–1934), who succeeded him in the leadership role in 1923.<sup>108</sup> The Liberal Catholic Church operated as a kind of subsidiary of the Theosophical Society.

The new climate in the Theosophical Society facilitated serious study of Christian subjects within a framework of Theosophical teachings. In particular it made Theosophists receptive to the concept of Mary as World Mother.

### **Mother of the World**

Notions of a Divine Mother have deep roots in Hinduism and Buddhism. Most famous of her devotees over the last 200 years was the south Indian mystic Ramakrishna (1836–1886), another close contemporary of Blavatsky. How-

ever it was not his teachings—and certainly not Anna Kingsford’s, which had long been ignored—that caught the attention of leading Theosophists, but the work of a little-known Hindu writer, Nibaran Chandra Basu. In 1927 Basu published an article on the “World Mother” in *The Theosophist*.<sup>109</sup> As noted, that title was already applied to Mary in Russian Orthodox Christianity.

Soon after Basu’s article appeared, Annie Besant (1847–1933), then-president of the Theosophical Society, declared March 24, the traditional feast of the Annunciation, to be “World Mother Day.”<sup>110</sup>

Besant also announced the formation of a movement to herald the arrival of a “great spiritual Being who represents the feminine side of Divinity, the Ideal Womanhood, the ‘World Mother.’”<sup>111</sup> The Mother, according to Besant and her supporters, had previously incarnated as Isis and Mary and was now embodied in Srimati Rukmini Devi (1904–1986), the young Brahman wife of Theosophist George Arundale.<sup>112</sup> Devi began a long career as a sacred dancer and activist for feminist issues; but she never claimed to be a divine incarnation, and in 1979 she made an emphatic denial of any such status.<sup>113</sup>

Meanwhile Theosophical writers focused on the World Mother’s attributes and her incarnations as Isis and Mary. In 1928, soon after Besant’s declaration of World Mother Day, Leadbeater published *World Mother as Symbol and Fact* in which he asserted:

The World-Mother... is a mighty Being... She is in truth a mighty Angel, having under Her a vast host of subordinate Angels whom She keeps perpetually employed in the work which is especially committed to Her.<sup>114</sup>

**[T]he Immaculate Conception is none other than the prophecy of the means whereby the universe shall at last be redeemed. Maria—the sea of limitless space—Maria the Virgin, born herself immaculate and without spot, of the womb of the ages, shall in the fullness of time bring forth the perfect man, who shall redeem the race.**

Her work included watching over the women of the world, particularly those in childbirth. Leadbeater added that another function was “to try to mitigate the suffering of the world, to act as the Consoler, the Comforter, the Helper of all who are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness or any other adversity.”<sup>115</sup> Through his reference to “the Comforter,” Leadbeater wittingly or unwittingly emerged as a champion of the early Christian assertion that the Holy Spirit is female.

Leadbeater considered the World Mother to be both a cosmic principle and an entity capable of physical manifestation. The cosmic principle, in his account, is *mūlaprakriti* (Sanskrit: literally “root of nature”), “that from which matter emerges when spirit ensouls it.”<sup>116</sup> Leadbeater declared that “The Spirit of God

moved upon the face of the waters of space; but the waters of space are divine in their making just as much as the Spirit that moves upon them, because there is nothing but God anywhere.”<sup>117</sup>

Helena Roerich (1879–1955) never joined the Theosophical Society but made major contributions to the Trans-Himalayan teachings. She asserted that the World Mother was the spiritual mother of both the Buddha and the Christ: “[I]t is time to point out that the one Mother of both Lords is not a symbol but a great manifestation of the Feminine Origin.”<sup>118</sup> Roerich declared that the World Mother shared with all human women in personifying self-sacrifice.<sup>119</sup> However she also noted that joy could come from high spiritual aspiration: “How beautiful is the Image of the Mother of the World! So much beauty, self-renunciation and tragedy is in this majestic Image!”<sup>120</sup> Significantly, Roerich’s husband Nicholas Roerich, artist, philosopher and scientist, created several paint-

ings of Mary that are considered among his best works.

Geoffrey Hodson (1886–1983) belonged to the generation of Theosophists after Besant and Leadbeater, and he was also ordained in the Liberal Catholic Church. Initially Hodson perceived the World Mother as an archetype or abstract principle, reminiscent of Besant’s “Ideal Womanhood”:

Behind all womanhood exists the Eternal Woman, the one divine manifestation of femininity. At its origin, it is cosmic, being the half of all creation. The other half is the Eternal Man, and mysteriously these are not two but one... What are the essential qualities of the archetypal woman? They are sacrifice, tenderness, graciousness, divine radiance, heavenly fragrance, beauty, and grace... They are joyous radiant girlhood, graceful womanhood, creative, preserving, and transforming motherhood. Within the Heavenly Woman is an ascetic refinement of utter purity.<sup>121</sup>

Later, he began to see the World Mother less as an entity than as an *office* held by a succession of entities: “That Official is the World Mother for a planet and a period... There is such a Being, there is such an Official, and Mary the mother of Jesus now holds that Office, as Isis held it in earlier days.”<sup>122</sup> Hodson also expanded his vision of “Eternal Woman” to see a more definite link between the World Mother and women everywhere:

In the holder of the divine Office of World Mother, a conscious union occurs between the archetypal woman fully manifest in the woman Adept and the cosmic principle of womanhood... The potentiality of this hypostatic union exists in every woman... This is in part the mystery of womanhood, this is the secret life of every woman, that on occasion she knows and is one with the Eternal Woman and has her mysterious life in that realm wherein She abides.<sup>123</sup>

Hodson embraced traditional affirmations of Mary’s compassionate, nurturing role, even as he assigned Mary a more exalted status than did mainstream Christianity:

The Blessed Lady Mary, incarnation of the Maternal Spirit of the Godhead, moved by purest compassion and love, holds the whole of humanity in Her arms and at Her breast, nourishing it with spiritualizing life for the purpose of quickening the evolution of all sentient beings.<sup>124</sup>

Like Leadbeater, Hodson saw Mary overseeing the gestation and birthing processes but added that this was true of the animal as well as the human kingdom. He also returned to another of Leadbeater’s themes, describing the World Mother as an archangel and a senior member of the Planetary Hierarchy:

The planetary World Mother is conceived... as a highly-evolved Archangel Representative and Embodiment on earth of the Feminine Aspect of the Deity. She is also thought of as an Adept Official in the Inner Government of the World, in whom all the highest qualities of womanhood and motherhood shine forth in their fullest perfection.<sup>125</sup>

Moreover, the “Queen of the Angels, World Mother, Our Lady, [is in relationship and collaboration] with the Lord of the World—in what might be called, if one may so presume, His femininity-functions, extremely delicate and refined as they are in every kingdom.”<sup>126</sup> To associate Mary with the Lord of the World, Sanat Kumara, appeared to raise her to the level of the Planetary Council.

Andrew Harvey, who never belonged to the Theosophical Society, came to revere the Divine Mother through a long association with “Mother Meera,” an Indian woman whom devotees believed was an incarnation of the Hindu goddess *Shakti*. Later, Harvey had a series of experiences persuading him that Mary was a true manifestation of the Divine Mother:

In Mary the Divine Mother comes to earth and lives on earth and lives the passionate, strong, serious, simple and transforming life that shows us all how to live. Mary is the bridge between heaven and earth, between the human and the divine worlds, between human and divine justice... [S]eeing Mary as the Divine Mother would help us to see Christ too as every much the son of

the Divine Mother as the Divine Father. Seeing that would release Christianity from its patriarchal stranglehold and restore the mystical purity of its passion for fraternity and sorority, for equality and social justice and service.<sup>127</sup>

Elsewhere, Harvey and a coauthor approved of the notion of Mary as mediatrix, noting that it is “the feminine principle of relationship that connects things to each other, for the supreme values of the heart.”<sup>128</sup> They also endorsed a point made earlier in this article: “The extraordinary story of the elevation of Mary to the stature of Divine Mother shows the immense need of people to have the feminine principle at the heart of their religions.”<sup>129</sup>

### Final Reflections

Once we penetrate the protective shells of their respective terminologies, we find surprising continuity between religious and esoteric teachings on Mary. And in this particular case scripture supports both.

Esotericists, like religious authorities, are far from unanimous in their regard for Mary. Some esotericists exhibit a strongly “Protestant” disdain for Mary—at least for the “Mary” of medieval astralism. However her esoteric supporters hold her in *very* high regard—higher than Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and high-Anglican religious traditions have deemed permissible. Their exalted estimation is based not just on the reflected glory of Christ but on Mary’s own role in the redemptive process. Mary’s most enthusiastic esoteric supporters view her as an *avatara* from the highest levels of the Planetary Hierarchy. Interest in Mary’s role as an *avatara* is particularly appropriate at this time because the Aquarian Age and manifestation of the Seventh Ray express the descent of spirit into matter. More generally, the combination of religious, mythological, and esoteric teachings propels Mary toward what the person in the street would call a goddess.

Esotericists endorse the notion of a close connection between Mary and the Holy Spirit, with the possible proviso that the latter is a feminine entity rather than the neuter/masculine personage of Christian trinitarian doctrine.

Viewed as the lower aspect of a twofold feminine structure, Mary dwells in our world, much as the Shekinah does in esoteric Judaism. Esotericists also embrace notions of the “Virgin Mary,” so long as “Virgin” has a larger meaning than it has in gynecology. We affirm that doctrinal propositions should be examined from a viewpoint above the dense physical or literal.<sup>130</sup> From that viewpoint, Mary’s virginity and her immaculate conception become almost interchangeable concepts.

“Mother of God” has always been problematic. However, “World Mother,” or “Divine Mother,” is a concept that has resonated with prominent esoteric writers—and even found an echo in the Mariology of John Paul II. Esotericists view the World Mother as an exalted being, or one of a series of exalted beings who have held that office over the millennia. In either case, the consensus is that she incarnated a number of times before her appearance as the mother of Jesus. Thus the transfer of titles from Isis to Mary was not plagiarism but the natural recognition of the continuity they both embodied. If Mary is a manifestation of the World Mother and the Holy Spirit, the interesting possibility arises that the two latter may be alternative faces of the same reality. Reference to the Holy Spirit as “God the Mother” already has religious precedents, and a synthesis of the Mother of God and God the Mother would be a significant theological development.

The connection between Mary and the angels is another important theme. Traditional Christian appellations, like Queen of the Angels, are viewed by some esotericists as factual. Seemingly, we should look for Mary in the Devic Hierarchy rather than the Hierarchy of Masters. Recognition that the deva evolution has a feminine polarity<sup>131</sup>—contrasting with the masculine polarity of the human kingdom and the Hierarchy of Masters—would make that an attractive possibility. According to one esoteric tradition, Mary departed from the human kingdom at the end of her earthly life to take up new responsibilities in the deva evolution.

Certainly the *avatara* portrayed in modern esotericism, even the Mary who emerges from recent papal Mariology—“Mother of the whole

family of the children of God” and “Co-Redemptrix”—is a more powerful, active figure than the submissive stereotype the modern world disdains. The “new Mary” comes across as a powerful role model, with appeal to both men and women.

Is this new Mary a psychological construct, a thoughtform created out of human need—cynics might say “neurosis”—or does she have independent, objective existence on the level of reality to which her devotees assign her? One response to the question would be to approve of any human construct that can stimulate transformative growth in large numbers of people. A better response would be to seek new insights to see if enough evidence can be found to convince skeptics, Protestant and esoteric, that Mary is the high initiate her disciples believe her to be.

Would “esoteric Mariology” be a worthwhile field when the focus of esoteric work is shifting to service? To be sure, humanity’s needs are such that great effort must be devoted to improving the human condition. But the expansion of human consciousness is a vital part of that work. If the World Mother indeed has objective, independent existence, and if her concern for humanity is as profound as it is said to be, the benefits promised by greater understanding would seem to justify some expenditure of effort. Even Marian devotion can acquire a service dimension and should not automatically be dismissed as antithetical to the path of discipleship.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Mary is not even listed in the index of influential works by Merlin Stone, *When God was a Woman* (New York: Dorset Press), 1976; and *Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood* (Boston: Beacon Press), 1979.

<sup>2</sup> *Infancy Gospel of James*, 8:2, (transl: A. Bernhard), Early Christian Writings.

<sup>3</sup> By one account Joseph was 36 years old. See Edgar Cayce, reading no. 5749-8, 1937, Association for Research & Enlightenment.

<sup>4</sup> *Infancy Gospel of James* 9:11.

<sup>5</sup> *Matthew* 1:18-20. All biblical references in this article are from the King James Bible.

<sup>6</sup> *Luke* 1:30-33.

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<sup>7</sup> *Luke* 1:38.

<sup>8</sup> Mary is mentioned 34 times in the *Qur’an*, far exceeding the number of New Testament references. An entire *surah*, or chapter, is named for her, and significant references appear elsewhere.

<sup>9</sup> *Qur’an* 3:42 (transl: T. Khalidi), Viking Press, 2008. Most other translations retain the Arabic transliterations of “Allah” for God and “Maryam” for Mary.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:45.

<sup>11</sup> *Luke* 1:46-55.

<sup>12</sup> *Genesis* 3:16.

<sup>13</sup> *Qur’an* 19:23-26.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 19:30-33.

<sup>15</sup> *Gospel of Philip*, II 51, 55 (transl: G. MacRae & R. Wilson), Nag Hammadi Library, rev. ed., 1988, 143. In Jewish religious culture at the time of Mary’s conception, the Holy Spirit was identified with *Ruach*, a word that was grammatically feminine

<sup>16</sup> Theophilus of Antioch, *Epistle to Autolychum*, II, 15. Theophilus of Antioch is not to be confused with the fourth-century Theophilus, patriarch of Alexandria.

<sup>17</sup> *Infancy Gospel of James* 19-20, (transl: A. Roberts & J. Donaldson), Early Christian Writings. A reference to Mary’s continued virginity also appears in *The Testimony of Truth*, Nag Hammadi Library.

<sup>18</sup> *Qur’an* 19:20.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 66: 12. *Al ‘Imran* was the Arabic name of Mary’s family.

<sup>20</sup> *Matthew* 1:23.

<sup>21</sup> *Ezekiel* 44:2.

<sup>22</sup> *Matthew* 12:46-50, 13:55; *Mark* 3:31-35, 6:1-6; *Luke* 8:19-21, 11:27-28.

<sup>23</sup> *John* 2:1-12, 19:25-28. It is unclear from the synoptic gospels whether Mary was present at the crucifixion.

<sup>24</sup> *Acts* 1:12-14.

<sup>25</sup> *Revelation* 12:1.

<sup>26</sup> A building in Ephesus is revered as the house where Mary died. See for example <http://www.kusadasi.biz/virgin-mary/>, (accessed September 4, 2009).

<sup>27</sup> The gospel writers drew most of their quotes from the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, which dates from the third century BCE.

<sup>28</sup> John F. Nash, *Christianity: the One, the Many*, Vol. 1 (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2007), 202.

<sup>29</sup> Vincent Sablon, *Histoire de l’Auguste et Vénéérable Église*, 1671; extract in Robert Branner

- (ed), *Chartres Cathedral* (New York: Norton & Co., 1969), 107-114.
- <sup>30</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book III, ch. 22, §4, (transl: W. Rambaut), Christian Classics Library.
- <sup>31</sup> See for example Interfaith Studies, <http://interfaithstudies.blogspot.com/>, (accessed Sept. 3, 2009).
- <sup>32</sup> *Qur'an* 5-116.
- <sup>33</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, *Third Great Prayer to Mary*, (transl: J. Roten), Marian Library, <http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/anselm.html/>, (accessed Oct. 28, 2009).
- <sup>34</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, "Fourth Sermon on the Feast of the Assumption," *Sermons on the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Devon: Augustine Publishing Co., 1987), 200.
- <sup>35</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermon for the Sunday within the Octave of the Assumption," *Sermons on the Blessed Virgin Mary*, 207.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 214-215.
- <sup>39</sup> Zohar, 21, *Trumah*: 80, verse 789. See also John F. Nash. "The Shekinah in Esoteric Judaism." *Esoteric Quarterly*, Summer 2005, 33-40.
- <sup>40</sup> Bernard, "Sermon for the Sunday within the Octave of the Assumption," 203.
- <sup>41</sup> Hildegard of Bingen, Antiphon "O Splendissima Gemma," *Symphonia*, (transl: M. Ather-ton), *Hildegard Selected Readings* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 117.
- <sup>42</sup> Hildegard of Bingen, Hymn "De Sancta Maria," *Book of Divine Works* (Rochester: Bear & Co., 1987), 379.
- <sup>43</sup> See for example: <http://prayers.viarosa.com/LitanyOfLoreto.html>. (accessed September 5, 2009).
- <sup>44</sup> Prayer beads are also used in Buddhism and Sufism.
- <sup>45</sup> The seven sorrows were Simeon's prophecy, the flight to Egypt, loss of the child Jesus, the encounter with Jesus on the way to Calvary, the crucifixion, the descent from the cross, and Jesus' burial.
- <sup>46</sup> All seven of the ecumenical councils took place in the East, and the leading protagonists all came from the Greek Church.
- <sup>47</sup> Maximus the Confessor, "Various Texts on Theology, the Divine Economy, and Virtue and Vice," *Philokalia*, Vol. 2 (transl: G. Palmer *et al.*), (London: Faber & Faber, 1977), 166.
- <sup>48</sup> Peter of Damascus, "A Treasury of Divine Knowledge," *ibid.*, Vol. 3, 130. The editors of this edition of the *Philokalia* dismiss a claim by St. Nikodimos that Peter of Damascus was Peter the Hieromartyr who died in the mid-eighth century.
- <sup>49</sup> N.A. Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, 24.
- <sup>50</sup> Maria Skobtsova, *Veneration of the Mother of God* (transl: S. Janos), (Paris: YMCA Press, 1992/2001), 109-126.
- <sup>51</sup> The icon is now displayed in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.
- <sup>52</sup> John the Theologian, *The Book of John Concerning the Falling Asleep of Mary* (transl: unknown), Wesley Center for Applied Theology.
- <sup>53</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation* (London: Penguin Books. 2003), 576.
- <sup>54</sup> Martin Luther, *The Works of Luther, Vol. 7*, Weimar Edition (transl: J. Pelikan), (St. Louis: Concordia, 572).
- <sup>55</sup> Martin Luther, Sermon: "On the Day of the Conception of the Mother of God," December 1527. Hartmann Grisar, *Luther. Vol. IV* (transl: E. Lamond), (London: Kegan Paul *et al.*, 1915), 238.
- <sup>56</sup> Quoted in E. Stakemeier, *De Mariologia et Oecumenismo*, Rome, 1962, 456.
- <sup>57</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, (transl: G. Eliot), 1843, part 1, ch. 4.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>59</sup> MacCulloch, *The Reformation*, 100.
- <sup>60</sup> Jill Raitt, Bernard McGinn, & John Meyendorff, *Christian spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation, Vol. 2* (London: Routledge, 1987), 411.
- <sup>61</sup> The feast of the Assumption, previously celebrated on August 15, was abolished on the grounds that it was ascriptural and possibly exalted Mary above Christ.
- <sup>62</sup> Quoted in Marianne Dorman, "Andrewes and the Caroline Divines: Teachings on the Blessed Virgin Mary," Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 2000.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>64</sup> The Tractarian movement took its name from the issuance of 90 tracts written to stimulate new perspectives on Anglican teachings.
- <sup>65</sup> See for example Philip Boyce, *Mary: The Virgin Mary in the Writings of John Henry Newman* (Chester: Gracewing, 2001), 90.
- <sup>66</sup> The Anglican shrine was created by Alfred Hope Patten (1885-1958), a Church of England clergyman. The Roman Catholic shrine was restored in 1897.
- <sup>67</sup> Source: *Catholic Encyclopedia*, (Robert Appleton, 1917/2005).

- <sup>68</sup> Louis de Montfort, *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* (transl: F. Faber), Kessinger (reprint), 2007, ch. 1, §18
- <sup>69</sup> Pius XII, Encyclical *Ad Caeli Reginam*, 1954.
- <sup>70</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, part I, 1:8, 1987.
- <sup>71</sup> John Paul II, prayer before the Roman Icon of Our Lady, “Salus Populi Romani,” December 8, 1990.
- <sup>72</sup> Hundreds more incidents reported each year are considered too trivial to warrant serious investigation.
- <sup>73</sup> Source: International Marian Research Institute, Dayton, Ohio:  
<http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/resources/aprtable.html> (accessed September 2, 2009).
- <sup>74</sup> See the discussion in MacCullough, *The Reformation*, 186-187.
- <sup>75</sup> Peter B. Ellis, *Celtic Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995).
- <sup>76</sup> Raitt, McGinn & Meyendorff, *Christian Spirituality*, Vol. 2, 412.
- <sup>77</sup> Alternatively, it is claimed that *Miriam* could mean either “beloved” or “rebellious.”
- <sup>78</sup> Chokmah (“Wisdom”) and Binah (“Understanding”) are the Hebrew names of the sefirot. Abba (“Father”) and Ima (“Mother”) are the Aramaic names of the corresponding partzufim. See John F. Nash, “From the Zohar to Safed: Development of the Theoretical Kabbalah,” *Esoteric Quarterly*, Summer 2009, 21-46.
- <sup>79</sup> Plotinus, *Second Ennead*, 3rd tractate, (transl: S. MacKenna & B. Page). Plotinus referred to the third aspect as the feminine *Psyche* (“Soul”).
- <sup>80</sup> John F. Nash, “From the Zohar to Safed: Development of the Theoretical Kabbalah.”
- <sup>81</sup> Paracelsus, *Liber Sancta Trinitate*; see Andrew Weeks, *Paracelsus* (New York: State University of New York, 1997)80-83.
- <sup>82</sup> N. A. Berdyaev, “The Teaching about Sophia and the Androgyne. J. Boehme and the Russian Sophiological Current.” §II, *Journal Put*, April 1930, no. 21, pp. 34-62; (transl. unknown).
- <sup>83</sup> Hargrave Jennings, *The Rosicrucians: Their Rites and Mysteries* (London: Hesperides Press (reprint), 1870), 317.
- <sup>84</sup> Max Heindel, *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception, or Mystic Christianity* (Oceanside, CA: XXX: Rosicrucian Fellowship, 1909), 378.
- <sup>85</sup> Corinne Heline, *The Blessed Virgin Mary* (London: New Age Press, 1971), 69. Emphasis in original.
- <sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.
- <sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.
- <sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-106.
- <sup>89</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. 2 (Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1877), 96.
- <sup>90</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 1 (Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1888), 91.
- <sup>91</sup> Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. 1, 91-92. See also *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 1, 379fn.
- <sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, 94-95. Parenthesis in original.
- <sup>93</sup> Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 1, 403.
- <sup>94</sup> Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. 2, 41.
- <sup>95</sup> After leaving the Theosophical Society Kingsford co-founded the Hermetic Society, a forerunner of the Society of the Golden Dawn.
- <sup>96</sup> Anna B. Kingsford, *Clothed with the Sun* (London: J. M. Watkins, 1889), 32-33, republished by Forgotten Books, 2008.
- <sup>97</sup> Anna B. Kingsford and Edward Maitland, *The Perfect Way*, 1923, 55, republished by Cosimo Books, 2007.
- <sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-57.
- <sup>99</sup> See for example Christopher Bamford (ed.), *Isis, Mary Sophia: Selected Lectures and Writings by Rudolf Steiner* (Pittsfield, MA: Steiner Books, 2003), 191-226.
- <sup>100</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *From Jesus to Christ* (Forest Row, E. Sussex, UK: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2005), 133ff.
- <sup>101</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (New York: Lucis, 1925), 617.
- <sup>102</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Glamour, a World Problem* (New York: Lucis, 1950), 220-221.
- <sup>103</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, II (New York: Lucis, 1955), 622.
- <sup>104</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (New York: Lucis, 1957), 471.
- <sup>105</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Healing* (New York: Lucis, 1953), 253.
- <sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 362.
- <sup>107</sup> The Old Catholic Church seceded from Rome in 1870 over the issue of papal infallibility. But like the Church of Rome it claimed to have preserved the apostolic succession.
- <sup>108</sup> Leadbeater had served as a high-church Anglican clergyman, but more recently had become a Buddhist.
- <sup>109</sup> Nibaran Chandra Basu, “Dhurga: The World-Mother Aspect of God.” *Theosophist*, January 1927, 433-440; February 1927, 537-545.
- <sup>110</sup> Robert Ellwood, “The Church, the World Mother and the New Age,” *The Liberal Catholic*, Easter 1998.
- <sup>111</sup> Joy Dixon, *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2001), 206.

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- <sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.
- <sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>114</sup> Charles W. Leadbeater, *The World-Mother as Symbol and Fact* (Pasadena: Theosophical Publishing House, 1928), 4.
- <sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.
- <sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-54.
- <sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>118</sup> Helena I. Roerich, *Leaves of Morya's Garden II, 8,11* (New York: Agni Yoga Society, 1925), 68-69.
- <sup>119</sup> Helena I. Roerich, "Mother of the World," *Letters of Helena I. Roerich* (New York: Agni Yoga Society, 1935-1939), 456.
- <sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 372.
- <sup>121</sup> Sandra Hodson (ed), *Light of the Sanctuary* (Adyar: Theosophical Publishers, 1988), 81-82.
- <sup>122</sup> Geoffrey Hodson, *Illuminations of the Mystery Tradition* (Pasadena: Theosophical Publishing House, 1992), 70. See also S. Hodson, *Light of the Sanctuary*, 355.
- <sup>123</sup> S. Hodson, *Light of the Sanctuary*, 82.
- <sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 414.
- <sup>125</sup> Geoffrey Hodson, *The Kingdom of the Gods* (Pasadena: Theosophical Publishing House, 1952), 244.
- <sup>126</sup> S. Hodson, *Light of the Sanctuary*, 355.
- <sup>127</sup> Andrew Harvey, *Return of the Mother* (New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 2001), 343.
- <sup>128</sup> Andrew Harvey & Anne Baring, *The Divine Feminine* (San Francisco: Conari Press, 1996), 104.
- <sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.
- <sup>130</sup> Other doctrines that need to be examined from above the physical level are the Resurrection and the real presence in the Eucharist.
- <sup>131</sup> Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 91.



# The *Tao Te Ching* compared to Bailey's Technique of Integration for the Fourth Ray

Zachary F. Lansdowne

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## Abstract

The *Tao Te Ching*, an ancient Chinese book, is written in an enigmatic manner that makes it difficult to understand. Modern scholars differ in their interpretations of that book, resulting in many translations and commentaries. Alice Bailey's "Technique of Integration for the Fourth Ray" is a modern formula written with abstruse symbols. This article clarifies these two obscure texts by showing that they have similar passages.

## Tao Te Ching

The *Tao Te Ching* may be the most influential Chinese book ever written, because it provides the basis for the philosophical school of Taoism, which is an important pillar of Chinese thought. According to tradition, it was written around the sixth century BCE by the sage Lao Tzu. The book's true authorship and date of composition or compilation are still debated. The Chinese word *Tao* literally means "way" or "the Way." *Te* means "virtue" in the sense of personal character, or inner strength. *Ching* means "canon," "great book," or "scripture." Thus, *Tao Te Ching* could be translated as "The Book of the Way and Its Power."

The *Tao Te Ching* has been translated into English more times than any other Chinese text. In fact, there are at least 112 English translations that can be downloaded from the Internet,<sup>1</sup> and at least 175 English translations altogether.<sup>2</sup> Some translations are significantly different from each other, and new translations appear every year. Each translation of the *Tao Te Ching* requires considerable time and effort to compose, so the new translators must believe that the earlier

translations are deficient in important respects. According to Holmes Welch, "It is a famous puzzle which everyone would like to feel he had solved."<sup>3</sup> Translations that strive for literalness are sometimes criticized for lacking readability, clarity, and poetic beauty, whereas translations that are easy to read are sometimes criticized for being incompatible with the history of Chinese thought and for being based on Western Oriental fantasies. We primarily use the modern translation by John McDonald, because it is promoted by several Taoist organizations, and because it seems to us as especially easy to read and clear.<sup>4</sup> Occasionally, lines are also cited from the translations by Dwight Goddard,<sup>5</sup> Tao Huang with assistance from Edward Brennan,<sup>6</sup> and Stephen Mitchell.<sup>7</sup>

## Techniques of Integration

The *seven rays* are mentioned in the *Rig Veda*—the oldest known Hindu sacred text—and defined in modern theosophy as "the seven breaths of the one Life, the seven basic energies."<sup>8</sup> Each ray is said to provide a pattern of integration for the spiritual journey. Alice Bailey, a theosophical writer, published "Techniques of Integration" for the seven rays that depict symbolically each ray's pattern.<sup>9</sup> Bailey admits that she wrote these techniques in an obscure way: "It is

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## About the Author

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difficult to make easily comprehensible the nature and purpose of these techniques”; “Our study of the Techniques of Integration was definitely abstruse and couched in language quite symbolic.”<sup>10</sup>

Bailey states, “these ray techniques are imposed by the soul upon the personality after it has been somewhat integrated into a functioning unity and is, therefore, becoming slightly responsive to the soul, the directing Intelligence.”<sup>11</sup> Here, the Soul is the inner divine voice or super-conscious self;<sup>12</sup> and the personality, or outer self, consists of the mental, emotional, and physical bodies. If Bailey’s statement is correct, then her ray techniques depict symbolically the archetypal patterns of integration that aspirants are intuitively directed to apply to themselves. In this case, the esoteric teaching of any religion may be a verbal formulation of one of these archetypal patterns, but with some distortions due to the limitations of words. Different exoteric religions may be manifestations of the same archetype but with varying distortions. Thus, if Bailey’s statement is true, it may be possible to show that various methods of psychological or spiritual integration are similar to her ray techniques, in part or in whole.

This article is concerned with only the Fourth Ray, called “the ray of harmony through conflict,” and shows that the *Tao Te Ching* has passages similar to Bailey’s entire Fourth Ray technique. According to Bailey, her technique has five stages: “1. Alignment. 2. A crisis of evocation. 3. Light. 4. Revelation. 5. Integration.”<sup>13</sup> For each stage, the corresponding passage from the *Tao Te Ching* is listed, with regular font style and indentation; followed by the passage from Bailey’s Fourth Ray technique, with underlining and indentation; followed by our explanation of both passages, in italic style without indentation; and then followed by our explanation of the symbols in both passages, in regular style without indentation.

## Alignment

Other people are joyous,  
as though they were at a spring

festival.  
I alone am unconcerned and expressionless,  
like an infant before it has learned to smile.  
Other people have more than they need;  
I alone seem to possess nothing.  
I am lost and drift about with no place to go.  
I am like a fool, my mind is in chaos.  
Ordinary people are bright;  
I alone am dark.  
Ordinary people are clever;  
I alone am dull.  
Ordinary people seem discriminating;  
I alone am muddled and confused.  
I drift on the waves on the ocean,  
blown at the mercy of the wind.  
Other people have their goals,  
I alone am dull and uncouth. (20:6-15)<sup>14</sup>

Midway I stand between the forces  
which oppose each other.

*As their first step in becoming integrated, the aspirants achieve inner alignment, which enables them to observe their personality in a detached way, and discover the pairs of opposites that they use to construct their concepts of themselves and other people.*

Both the Fourth Ray technique and the *Tao Te Ching* have the following implicit premise: human beings make sense of and organize their experiences by constructing concepts out of pairs of opposites. As a result, human beings confuse the actual world with their concepts of the world, and tend to think of the world as being divided into separate and independent parts, rather than as a unitary and interdependent whole. To avoid being misled by dichotomous conceptualization, human beings need to be aware that they are caught by the pairs of opposites and understand how this distorts their perception.

Bailey’s Fourth Ray technique provides instruction to aspirants on how to deal with the pairs of opposites. In the initial sentence, the standing position indicates inner alignment,

as in Romans 11:20, “thou standest by faith.”<sup>15</sup> Alignment means bringing the integrated aspects of oneself into line with the next higher aspect to be integrated, which in this case is the Soul. “The forces which oppose each other” refer to a pair of opposites, and the midway position between these forces symbolizes detached observation of them. Thus, as their first step, the aspirants achieve the alignment needed to observe their personality with detachment, so that they can discover the pairs of opposites that they use in their own conceptualizations.

The technique depicts a *triplicity*: someone standing between a pair of opposites. Elsewhere Bailey provides the meaning of this symbol: “The moment a man differentiates his life into triplicities (as he inevitably must as he deals with the pairs of opposites and identifies himself with one of them) he succumbs to the glamour of separation.”<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, the triplicity in the technique has the following elements: (1) a typical aspirant on the spiritual journey; (2) a personality trait that the aspirant incorporates into his or her self-concept, through being identified with it; (3) the opposite trait, which the aspirant incorporates into his or her concept of someone else, resulting in a feeling of being separate from the other person. For example, this feeling might be the pride of superiority or the jealousy of inferiority. These elements of the triplicity imply that the aspirants need to discover only the pairs of opposites—more specifically, the pairs of opposing personality traits—that they use to construct their concepts of themselves and other people.

All quoted or cited lines of the *Tao Te Ching* refer to McDonald’s translation, unless explicitly reported otherwise. Lines 20:6-15 provide six examples of pairs of opposing mental, emotional, and physical traits. The mental pairs are bright/dark, clever/dull, discriminating/confused, and purposeful/aimless. The emotional pair is joyous/joyless. The physical pair is rich/poor. These lines also illustrate the detached observation that reveals these pairs, the concepts of self and other people that are formed by these

pairs, and the feeling of separateness that comes from these pairs.

All things carry Yin  
yet embrace Yang.  
They blend their life breaths  
in order to produce harmony. (42:5-6)

The masters of old attained unity  
with the Tao.  
Heaven attained unity and became  
pure.  
The earth attained unity and found  
peace.  
The spirits attained unity so they  
could minister.  
The valleys attained unity that they  
might be full.  
Humanity attained unity that they  
might flourish.  
Their leaders attained unity that they  
might set the example.  
This is the power of unity. (39:1-8)

Longing am I for harmony and  
peace, and for the beauty which  
results from unity.

*The aspirants recognize their longing for harmony and peace between themselves and other people, and for the power that comes from unifying their inner and outer selves.*

Line 42:5 of the *Tao Te Ching* mentions the Chinese words, “Yin” and “Yang.” In the earliest records, *yin* refers to “the north side of a mountain,” which is the dark area occluded by the mountain’s peak, and *yang* refers to “the south side of a mountain,” which is the brightly lit portion. As the sun moves across the sky, *yin* and *yang* gradually trade places with each other, revealing what was obscured and obscuring what was revealed. *Yin* and *yang* later became generalized so that they represent every pair of seemingly opposing forces that are interconnected and interdependent.

Line 39:1 mentions the “Tao.” The *Tao Te Ching* does not define this term, but instead states in its first line, “The tao that can be described is not the eternal Tao.” Although the Tao is said to be indefinable, lines 39:1-8

characterize it as the power that safeguards order and harmony in the world.

Elsewhere Bailey writes, “He [the aspirant] then, having discovered the personality, discovers the quality of his own soul life, and the purpose for which he has ‘appeared.’”<sup>17</sup> The Fourth Ray technique is consistent with this sequence. In the first sentence of the technique, considered earlier, the aspirants discover their personality by observing it in a detached way. In the second sentence, which we are now considering, the aspirants discover the purpose for which they were born.

What is the purpose that human beings are to fulfill in the world? Bailey describes it as follows: “The *service* humanity is to render is that of producing unity, harmony, and beauty in nature, through blending into one functioning, related unity the soul in all forms. This is achieved individually at first, then it takes place in group formation, and finally it demonstrates through an entire kingdom in nature.”<sup>18</sup>

Both the Fourth Ray technique and the *Tao Te Ching* incorporate the foregoing purpose. In the technique, the aspirants long “for harmony and peace.” Lines 42:5-6 of the *Tao Te Ching* make a more general statement, saying, “All things ... blend their life breaths in order to produce harmony.” In the technique, the aspirants also long “for the beauty which results from unity.” Lines 39:1-8 provide several examples that illustrate the power of achieving inner unity, suggesting that such power is a worthy goal for one’s aspiration.

When people see things as beautiful,  
ugliness is created.  
When people see things as good,  
evil is created.

**The *service* humanity is to render is that of producing unity, harmony, and beauty in nature, through blending into one functioning, related unity the soul in all forms. This is achieved individually at first, then it takes place in group formation, and finally it demonstrates through an entire kingdom in nature.**

Being and non-being produce each other.

Difficult and easy complement each other.

Long and short define each other.

High and low oppose each other.

Fore and aft follow each other. (2:1-7)

The spirit of emptiness is immortal.

It is called the Great Mother because it gives birth to Heaven and Earth.

It is like a vapor, barely seen but always present.

Use it effortlessly. (6:1-4)

I see the two. I see naught else but forces ranged opposing, and I, the one, who stands within the circle at the centre.

*The aspirants see each pair of opposites as bound together as parts of a mutual whole, and they recognize that they are a spiritual entity confined in a personality.*

At this point in the Fourth Ray technique, the aspirants see “naught else but forces ranged opposing,” which means that they recognize the oneness of things that they previously believed were different. Lines 20:6-15, given earlier, illustrate the contrasting differences that are perceived when a pair of opposites is first discovered. Lines 2:1-7, however, illustrate the subsequent discovery that each pair of opposites is bound together as parts of a mutual whole.

In the technique, the circle is taken as the personality, or outer self, and “the one, who stands within the circle at the centre” as the indwelling self. Elsewhere Bailey describes “the stage wherein the indwelling Self begins to be aware of Itself as well as of the form, and we talk then in terms of the higher and the lower self; we speak of the self and its sheaths, and of the self and the not-self. This dualistic stage is that of the aspirant and of

the disciple ... He begins with a knowledge that he is a spiritual entity confined in a form."<sup>19</sup> Thus, the symbol of the circle and its center is taken as depicting the aspirants' recognition of their spiritual dimension.

Lines 6:1-4 also recognize the spiritual dimension, calling it "the spirit of emptiness." According to these lines, the spiritual dimension is the source of everything, is always present, and can be effortlessly used by human beings.

The Master puts herself last;  
And finds herself in the place of  
authority.  
She detaches herself from all  
things;  
Therefore she is united with all  
things. (7:4-5)

Peace I demand. My mind is bent  
upon it. Oneness with all I seek, yet  
form divides.

*Aspirants demand peace and observe their minds to achieve that goal. They seek a feeling of unity with other people, yet they recognize having a feeling of separateness because of their identification with their mental, emotional, or physical traits.*

For this portion of the Fourth Ray technique, Mitchell's translation of the *Tao Te Ching* provides a better match than does McDonald's translation. Mitchell translates line 31:5 as, "Peace is his highest value," with the possessive pronoun "his" referring to "a decent man." This statement is close to the technique's sentence, "Peace I demand." Mitchell also translates line 10:7 as, "Can you step back from your own mind and thus understand all things?", indicating that self-understanding comes through observing one's own mind. In the technique, "my mind is bent" is taken as depicting the mind's observation of itself.

Returning to McDonald's translation given above, line 7:5 states, "She detaches herself from all things; Therefore she is united with all things." This line incorporates a conditional implication: if there is detachment from all things, then there is a feeling of

unity. A conditional implication that is logically equivalent to the preceding one is the following: if there is a feeling of separateness, then there is identification with something.

In the Fourth Ray technique, the phrase "yet form divides" has a similar meaning, as Bailey explains: "As long as a man is identified with the appearance, these aspects of the mental principle produce in him the 'great heresy of separateness.'"<sup>20</sup> Here, "these aspects of the mental principle" refer to the powers to analyze, discriminate, and separate. Appearance and body are synonyms, so being "identified with the appearance" could be with the physical body and its possessions, or with the emotional body and its appetites, moods, and feelings, or with the mental body and its attributes. Consequently, when the aspirants identify themselves with a mental, emotional, or physical trait, they become involved with a pair of opposites in which they contrast their trait with that of someone else, thereby producing a feeling of separateness, such as pride or jealousy.

The reason I have an enemy is  
because I have a "self."  
If I no longer had a "self," I would  
no longer have an enemy.  
Love the whole world as if it were  
your self;  
then you will truly care for all things.  
(13:7-9)

War upon every side I find, and  
separation.

*The aspirants find themselves in conflict with other people, which they find is caused by having a separated self.*

The Fourth Ray technique mentions both war and separation. Lines 13:7-8 of the *Tao Te Ching* make a much stronger association, stating that having an enemy is a necessary and sufficient condition for having a "self." Here, having a "self" means having a separated self, which is a self with a feeling of separateness. Does having a separated self necessarily lead to outer conflict? Two contemporary writers assert that it does, as shown by the following quotations.

Robert Perry, a commentator on *A Course in Miracles (ACIM)*, associates the pursuit of specialness with having an enemy: “No price is too dear for us to pay for obtaining specialness. We seek it in our special relationships, where others give us special love and their special selves. In this way we try to symbolically extract from them the specialness that God denied us ... We seek it with our body, adorning our body in order to attract it. We also seek it by accumulating idols ... All ways of seeking it involve attack, for specialness requires that others must be beneath us. It causes us to look for and rejoice at any sin we see in others. It makes everyone our enemy and so makes us feel attacked from every quarter.”<sup>21</sup> Here, “specialness” is equivalent to pridefulness, which is the goal of a separated self, and “special relationship” denotes a relationship based on the pursuit of specialness.

Swami Ranganathananda, president of Ramakrishna Math and Mission, makes a similar point: “Narrow-mindedness, secretiveness, and hatred spring always from a sense of separateness. The sense of separateness gives rise to all kinds of selfish desires: the desire to exploit or overcome somebody else, and so on.”<sup>22</sup>

## A Crisis of Evocation

The greatest virtue you can have comes from following only the Tao; which takes a form that is intangible and evasive. Even though the Tao is intangible and evasive, we are able to know it exists. Intangible and evasive, yet it has a manifestation. Secluded and dark, yet there is a vitality within it. Its vitality is very genuine. Within it we can find order. (21:1-6)

One who seeks knowledge learns something new every day.  
One who seeks the Tao unlearns something new every day.  
Less and less remains until you

arrive at non-action.

When you arrive at non-action, nothing will be left undone. (48:1-4)

Knowing you don't know is wholeness.

Thinking you know is a disease.

Only by recognizing that you have an illness

can you move to seek a cure. (71:1-3)

Alone I stand and am. I know too much.

*The aspirants rely upon their inner alignment and renounce prideful activity, but they know that they do not know how they ought to act.*

The Fourth Ray technique incorporates two kinds of aloneness. “Alone I stand” depicts aloneness in the sense of reliance on inner alignment, because the standing position symbolizes alignment, as discussed earlier. Elsewhere Bailey describes how illumination is gained through such reliance: “Seek the pinnacle of loneliness, which is the sole place whereon truth can be known. This is an injunction to increase your capacity to withdraw into the focused point in the illumined mind where no one else can accompany you, and there await the arrival of the truth—that particular truth which your personality demands from your soul and which you feel—at any given time—it is essential that you grasp if your service and your progress are to be properly furthered.”<sup>23</sup>

Line 21:1 states, “The greatest virtue you can have comes from following only the Tao,” which characterizes the Tao as supreme guidance. Line 21:2 states, “Even though the Tao is intangible and evasive, we are able to know it exists.” The phrase “intangible and evasive” suggests an intuition. Mantak Chia and Tao Huang, two Taoist teachers, have a similar understanding when they write, “We develop and trust our intuition as our direct connection to the Tao.”<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, the Tao is supreme guidance conveyed through the intuition, so lines 21:1-6 give instruction similar to the foregoing injunction from Bailey.

“Alone I ... am” depicts aloneness in the sense of loneliness, or lack of companionship. Paradoxically, this loneliness refers to the experience of the aspirants when they renounce prideful activity, because they have virtually no companions who take that step with them. Here, “prideful activity” is an attempt to gain or sustain a feeling of pride regarding a physical, emotional, or mental trait.

Bailey gives similar explanations: “Be prepared for loneliness. It is the law. As a man dissociates himself from all that concerns his physical, astral and mental bodies, and centres himself in the Ego, it produces a temporary separation. This must be endured and passed, leading to a closer link at a later period with all associated with the disciple.”<sup>25</sup> “I refer to the loneliness which comes when the accepting disciple becomes the pledged disciple and steps out of a life of physical plane concentration, and of identification with the forms of existence in the three worlds, and finds himself in the midway place, between the world of outer affairs and the inner world of meaning.”<sup>26</sup> Here, “astral” and “Ego” are synonyms for emotional and Soul, respectively, and “three worlds” refer to the physical, emotional, and mental worlds.<sup>27</sup>

McDonald’s translation of lines 48:2-3, given above, says that seeking the Tao requires unlearning something new every day. Goddard’s translation of these lines, given next, describes the process as humbling oneself: “He who practices Tao daily diminishes. Again and again he humbles himself. Thus he attains to non-doing (wu wei).” Here, “non-action” in McDonald’s rendition, or “non-doing” in Goddard’s rendition, is a translation of the Chinese phrase *wu wei*, which denotes an important concept of Taoism. *Wu* may be translated as “without,” and *wei* as “act,” so *wu wei* may be translated as “without activity.” The association with humility indicates, however, that *wu wei* really means “without prideful activity,” as Chia and Huang explain: “The essence of Wu Wei is ‘not to act with desire,’ ‘not to engage egoistically,’ and ‘not to become possessive.’”<sup>28</sup>

Thus, both the phrase “Alone I ... am” in the Fourth Ray technique and lines 48:2-3 in the *Tao Te Ching* represent the same step: the renunciation of prideful activity. Lines 48:2-3 indicate that the step is implemented in a successive manner. Bailey describes this renunciation as follows: “Ask and look for nothing for the separated self and eliminate all thought along the lines of lower self endeavour.”<sup>29</sup> Before making this renunciation, the aspirants had followed the selfish path of seeking pridefulness for the separated self. After making this renunciation, they try to follow the selfless path that is the opposite of the first one and that seeks nothing for the separated self.

The technique says, “I know too much.” What is it that the aspirants at this point know? Line 71:1 gives the following answer: “Knowing you don’t know is wholeness.” Plato, quoting Socrates, makes a similar statement: “I do not think that I know what I do not know.”<sup>30</sup> Knowing that they do not know how they ought to act, the aspirants seek help from an inner source of wisdom.

## Light

**N**urture the darkness of your soul until you become whole. Can you do this and not fail? (10:1-2)

There is no greater transgression than condoning people’s selfish desires,  
no greater disaster than being discontent,  
and no greater retribution than for greed. (46:3)

The love of unity must dominate, and love of peace and harmony. Yet not that love, based on a longing for relief, for peace to self, for unity because it carries with it that which is pleasantness.

*Aspirants practice a type of meditation in which they seek inner unity with the Soul and spirit, which brings about inner peace and inner harmony, whenever they are tempted to act pridefully, such as based on a longing for*

*an excessive amount of things, for a stable material circumstance, or for a special relationship.*

In Taoism, the Chinese word *hun* denotes an incorporeal part of a human being, as Chia and Huang explain: “The *hun* is the ethereal soul. At the time of physical death, it leaves the body and ascends to heaven to return to subtle realms ... Conscious activities, such as intuition, insight, and awareness, are generated by *hun* ... *Hun* is the impetus of reincarnation. It arises before the body exists and departs after the body ceases to breathe.”<sup>31</sup> All of these characteristics are also true for the theosophical notion of the Soul. The word “soul” in line 10:1 denotes *hun*, which we construe as being equivalent to the theosophical Soul.

Lines 10:1-2 provide instruction on meditation. McDonald’s translation of these lines, given above, is somewhat ambiguous, so let us examine Huang’s translation: “Donning the spirit and soul, and drawing them into Oneness, Can this come apart?” Here, “darkness” in McDonald’s translation appears as “spirit” in Huang’s translation. Bailey also uses “darkness” as a synonym for “spirit.”<sup>32</sup> McDonald’s phrase, “the darkness of your soul,” suggests, in Bailey’s words, the role of “the soul, as the intermediary between spirit and matter.”<sup>33</sup> Although McDonald’s translation tells us to become “whole,” Huang’s translation more clearly states that this wholeness is inner unity with the Soul and spirit, because “donning” means putting on, or wearing.

In the Fourth Ray technique, the first sentence provides similar instruction on meditation, if the “love of unity” is the love of inner unity, and if the “love of peace and harmony” is the love of inner peace and inner harmony. The second sentence also mentions unity, peace, and harmony, but reversing the order in which they appear in the first sentence.

Bailey says, “evil and good are reverse aspects of the same one reality, and evil is that good which we should have left behind, passing on to greater and more inclusive good.”<sup>34</sup>

Thus the reverse order of the symbols in the second sentence suggests that this sentence depicts what should be left behind. The meaning of these symbols is obscure but is clarified by considering line 46:3, which also has three parts.

First, “a longing for relief” in the technique corresponds to “greed” in line 46:3. Greed is a desire for more of something than is needed. Any desire is felt as a deprivation and thus is a form of pain. The relief of this pain is an agreeable sensation called pleasure and occurs

through possessing the thing of which the subject felt deprived. Not all pleasures entail the relief of desire, however, as Ian Crombie, a commentator on Plato, points out: “The self-indulgent ... allow themselves no time to experience the pleasures whose pleasantness does not consist in relief of desire, and cannot conceive of the possibility that such pleasures are worth pursuing.”<sup>35</sup> “A longing for relief” is taken as denoting greed, because its pleasure primarily comes from the relief of desire rather than any intrinsic pleasantness belonging to the possessed things.

Second, “a longing ... for peace to self” in the technique corresponds to “being discontent” in line 46:3. Here, “peace to self” denotes a stable material circumstance, as Bailey explains: “The peace usually desired and discussed concerns material peace, and in every case is related to the personality, whether it is the individual personality or that of humanity as a whole. Therefore I deal not with peace, but am concerned with love, which oft disturbs the equilibrium of matter and material circumstance, and can consequently work against so-called peace.”<sup>36</sup> Discontent arises when something is desired that cannot be obtained. Longing for a stable material circumstance leads to being discon-

**Discontent arises when something is desired that cannot be obtained. Longing for a stable material circumstance leads to being discontented, because the intrinsic nature of any material circumstance is change.**

tented, because the intrinsic nature of any material circumstance is continual change.

Third, “a longing ... for unity because it carries with it that which is pleasantness” in the technique corresponds to “condoning people’s selfish desires” in line 46:3. This unity refers to the special relationship, because such a relationship attempts to satisfy the selfish desires of both of its partners. Perry describes the typical stages of a special relationship: “First we search for a person different from the rest, one who is more special and has a special body with special parts ... Then we offer her special behaviors and gifts that give her our specialness and, ultimately, give her our special self ... These ‘gifts,’ however, are attacks designed to make her guilty and so induce her to give her special self in return ... We (almost certainly) do not receive from her the specialness we think we paid for. So we resort increasingly to taking vengeance on her for not reciprocating.”<sup>37</sup>

## Revelation

**H**eaven and Earth are impartial;  
they treat all of creation as  
straw dogs.

The Master doesn’t take sides;  
she treats everyone like a straw dog.  
(5:1-2)

Pride brings its own trouble. (9:4)

Freed from desire, you can see the  
hidden mystery.

By having desire, you can only see  
what is visibly real. (1:5-6)

The word goes forth from soul to form. “Both sides are one. There is no war, no difference and no isolation. The warring forces seem to war from the point at which you stand. Move on a pace.”

*During meditation, the Soul conveys the following intuition: “You are trying to decide whether or not to act pridefully regarding some circumstance, but these two paths are based on the same illusion, namely, that judgment and sense perception are reliable guides for activities. Although essentially the same, these two paths seem contradictory*

*because of the way you perceive them. Thus shift your perception by viewing them without desire.”*

Lines 5:1-2, which characterize how a battle is perceived by “Heaven and Earth” and by “the Master,” suggest two ideas. First, both sides in a battle are essentially the same, because both sides are treated as “straw dogs.” Second, both sides in a battle are illusions, because a “straw dog,” even though it has the form of a ferocious dog, has only the erroneous appearance of power. Here, the term “illusion” means erroneous concept or belief.

*ACIM* also has the notion that a battle occurs only between illusions: “Truth does not fight against illusions, nor do illusions fight against the truth. Illusions battle only with themselves. Being fragmented, they fragment. But truth is indivisible and far beyond their little reach ... One illusion about yourself can battle with another, yet the war of two illusions is a state where nothing happens. There is no victor and there is no victory. And truth stands radiant, apart from conflict, untouched and quiet in the peace of God.”<sup>38</sup>

The Fourth Ray technique mentions “both sides,” referring to opposing sides in a battle. The earlier portion of the technique implies that this battle is between two different paths of action: whether or not to seek pridefulness for the separated self. The selfish path is felt to be unsatisfactory, as shown by the earlier finding that it leads to outer conflict, and by McDonald’s translation of line 9:4, “Pride brings its own trouble.” The selfless path is also felt to be unsatisfactory, as shown by the earlier temptation to act otherwise, and by Huang’s translation of lines 7:6-7, “Not even relying on selflessness enables the self to be fulfilled.” Thus this inner battle is a choice between a pair of opposites, but with misgivings about each side.

The preceding discussion implies, however, that both sides in this battle are illusions. The statement “both sides are one” indicates that both sides are based on the same illusion. What is that common illusion? Mitchell translates line 52:5 as, “If you keep your

mind from judging and aren't led by the senses, your heart will find peace." Neither path has brought inner peace, so the common illusion is that judgment and sense perception are reliable guides for activities.

*ACIM* also associates illusion with those two factors: "Judgment, like other devices by which the world of illusions is maintained, is totally misunderstood by the world. It is actually confused with wisdom, and substitutes for truth."<sup>39</sup> "The body's eyes are, therefore, not the means by which the real world can be seen, for the illusions that they look upon must lead to more illusions of reality."<sup>40</sup>

How can an inner conflict be resolved? Lines 1:5-6 provide the following answer: "Freed from desire, you can see the hidden mystery. By having desire, you can only see what is visibly real." Thus, the required effort is to step back from an inner conflict and then view it without desire. In the Fourth Ray technique, "move on a pace" is taken as depicting this shift in perception.

Making this shift in perception is a key step in the Fourth Ray technique, so let us examine alternative ways of describing it. Bailey says, "the task of the disciple is to become consciously aware—like a detached onlooking Observer—of these energies and their expressing qualities as they function within himself."<sup>41</sup> Jiddu Krishnamurti, a religious philosopher, refers to the resulting observation as "choiceless awareness": "Ignorance of the ways of the self leads to illusion; and once caught in the net of illusion, it is extremely hard to break through it. It is difficult to recognize an illusion, for, having created it, the mind cannot be aware of it ... There must be an awareness of this total process, a choiceless awareness; then only is there a possibility of not breeding illusion."<sup>42</sup> Thus, observation without desire is equivalent to detached observation and to choiceless awareness.

Thus the Master travels all day  
without ever leaving her wagon.  
Even though she has much to see,  
she is at peace in her indifference.  
(26:3-4)

If you can empty your mind of all  
thoughts  
your heart will embrace the tranquility  
of peace.  
Watch the workings of all of  
creation,  
but contemplate their return to the  
source. (16:1-2)

"See truly with the opened eye of inner vision and you will find, not two but one; not war but peace; not isolation but a heart which rests upon the centre."

*The Soul continues:* "If you make this shift in perception, you will find, not partiality but instead an indifferent attitude; not war with different parts of yourself but instead a feeling of peace; not a feeling of separateness but instead the recognition of the inner divine center of all things."

To avoid the possibility of self-deception, three criteria can be used to ascertain whether the required shift in perception is accomplished. The first criterion is "indifference," which is mentioned in line 26:4. In the technique, "not two but one" indicates that the two paths described earlier are viewed with an indifferent attitude. Elsewhere Bailey writes about "divine indifference": "Note the use of the word 'divine,' for it holds the clue to the needed attitude. It is a different thing to the indifference of not caring, or the indifference of a psychologically developed 'way of escape' from that which is not pleasant; nor is it the indifference of superiority. It is the indifference which accepts all that is offered, uses what is serviceable, learns what can be learnt but is not held back by personality reactions. It is the normal attitude of the soul or self to the not-self. It is the negation of prejudice, of all narrow preconceived ideas, of all personality tradition, influence or background."<sup>43</sup>

The second criterion is "peace," which is mentioned in both lines 26:4 and 16:1. In the technique, "not war but peace" indicates that inner war is replaced by inner peace. *ACIM* describes how either condition can replace the other: "The meeting of illusions leads to

war. Peace, looking on itself, extends itself. War is the condition in which fear is born, and grows and seeks to dominate. Peace is the state where love abides, and seeks to share itself. Conflict and peace are opposites. Where one abides the other cannot be; where either goes the other disappears.”<sup>44</sup>

The third criterion is the recognition of the inner divine center of all things. Line 16:2 refers to such recognition by saying, “Watch the workings of all of creation, but contemplate their return to the source.” In the technique, “not isolation but a heart which rests upon the centre” depicts a similar recognition, because Bailey says that “it is through the heart that we find our way to the Heart of God,”<sup>45</sup> and refers to “the heart of God” as “the centre of all things.”<sup>46</sup>

### Integration

**R**eturning to the source is tranquility because we submit to Heaven’s mandate.

Returning to Heaven’s mandate is called being constant.

Knowing the constant is called “enlightenment.”

Not knowing the constant is the source of evil deeds

because we have no roots.

By knowing the constant we can accept things as they are.

By accepting things as they are, we become impartial.

By being impartial, we become one with Heaven.

By being one with Heaven, we become one with Tao. (16:4-11)

For this reason the Master embraces the Tao,

as an example for the world to follow.

Because she isn’t self centered, people can see the light in her.

Because she does not boast of herself,

she becomes a shining example. (22:6-8)

“Thus shall the beauty of the Lord shine forth.”

*The Soul continues: “If you make this shift in perception, the love and wisdom of the Soul shall shine forth through you as impersonal service.”*

Elsewhere Bailey uses the expression, “the beauty of the Lord of Love shines forth,”<sup>47</sup> which is quite similar to the wording in the Fourth Ray technique, and writes, “The soul is a Lord of love and wisdom.”<sup>48</sup> Accordingly, in the technique, the “Lord” is the Soul, and its “beauty” is love and wisdom. Making the aforementioned shift in perception would bring about a better alignment with the Soul. Bailey also writes, “The bringing about of a better alignment would also release more fully the love of your soul into your personality life and render you more radiant and attractive in the spiritual sense. This would increase your usefulness in service and supply a need.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, this segment of the technique has the following meaning: if the required shift in perception is accomplished, the love and wisdom of the Soul shall shine forth through the personality as service.

The foregoing passages from the *Tao Te Ching* summarize much of the Fourth Ray technique. Lines 16:4-6 describes meditation during the stage of Light: “Returning to the source is tranquility because we submit to Heaven’s mandate. Returning to Heaven’s mandate is called being constant. Knowing the constant is called ‘enlightenment.’” Here, “constant” appears to have the same meaning as eternal, and the phrase “submit to Heaven’s mandate” suggests the receptive form of meditation.

Lines 16:8-9 describe how inner unity, achieved through meditation, leads to impartiality, or indifference, during the stage of Revelation: “By knowing the constant we can accept things as they are. By accepting things as they are, we become impartial.” Lines 16:10-11 describe how impartiality leads to union with the Tao during the stage of Integration: “By being impartial, we become one with Heaven. By being one with

Heaven, we become one with Tao.” Thus, the *Tao Te Ching* explicitly has the notion that meditation, by achieving inner unity, leads to impartiality, which in turn leads to union with the Tao. Lines 22:6-8 describe the effect of a person who is one with the Tao, saying, “she becomes a shining example,” which employs language similar to that in the Fourth Ray technique.

My words are easy to understand  
and easier to put into practice. (70:1)

“The hour is now.”

*The Soul concludes: “You can easily understand what must be done and make the needed shift in perception immediately.”*

Line 70:1 clarifies the meaning of the final sentence in the Fourth Ray technique. *ACIM* makes a related statement: “Nothing is so easy to recognize as truth. This is the recognition that is immediate, clear and natural.”<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, recognizing the truth about the Fourth Ray technique is easy, and accomplishing its steps, which involve recognizing other kinds of truths, is also easy.

## Conclusions

Let us consider the following hypothesis: Bailey’s “Techniques of Integration” for the seven rays depict symbolically the archetypal patterns of integration that aspirants are intuitively directed to apply to themselves. This hypothesis can be tested by comparing Bailey’s ray techniques with various methods of psychological or spiritual integration that are thought to be inspired. The foregoing demonstration, which shows that the *Tao Te Ching* and the Fourth Ray technique have similar passages, supports this hypothesis and clarifies both texts. The *Tao Te Ching* is clarified because we can see how its diverse poems fit together to form a coherent technique. The Fourth Ray technique is also clarified because we can see how its symbolic statements can be expressed in a more comprehensible way and be applied.

When clarified, the Fourth Ray technique can be seen as having three main stages. First, through achieving inner alignment, the aspirants discover the pairs of opposites that they

use to construct concepts of themselves as being separate from other people, and they recognize that such concepts lead to outer conflict. Second, they reject the path of pridefulness and instead try to follow a second path that seeks nothing for the separated self. Finally, through detachment, they discover a third path that resolves their inner conflict between the first two paths. This third path is the shining forth of the Soul through the personality.

Elsewhere Bailey describes the same sequence of stages but in a more obscure way: “The first thing the aspirant becomes aware of is duality ... Thus the dual forces play their part until they are seen as two great streams of divine energy, pulling in opposite directions, and he becomes then aware of the two paths ... One path leads back into the dreary land of rebirth, and the other leads through the golden gate to the city of free souls. One is therefore involutory and involves him in deepest matter; the other leads him out of the body nature, and makes him eventually aware of his spiritual body, through which he can function in the kingdom of the soul ... Clear discrimination of these two paths reveals what is called in some occult books that ‘narrow razor-edged Path’ which lies between the two. This is the ‘noble middle Path’ of the Buddha and marks the fine line of demarcation between the pairs of opposites.”<sup>51</sup>

Why is Bailey’s “Technique of Integration for the Fourth Ray” associated with that ray? This technique provides instructions for accomplishing the purpose that Bailey describes for the Fourth Ray: “This ray of harmony through conflict (the conflict of the pairs of opposites) is necessarily concerned with the bringing in of that vibratory activity which will lead to unity, to harmony and to right relations, and to the release of the intuition.”<sup>52</sup> Moreover, this technique is based on what Bailey calls “the Principle of Conflict, which is the outstanding characteristic of this Fourth Ray of Harmony through Conflict.”<sup>53</sup>

What is the Principle of Conflict? Bailey writes, “It is the Principle of Conflict, latent in every atom of substance, which produces,

first of all, conflict, then renunciation, and finally emancipation; which produces war in some form or another, then rejection, and finally liberation.”<sup>54</sup> Here, the term “atom” denotes a unit of consciousness and could refer to a subhuman, human, or superhuman form of life. Thus, the Principle of Conflict brings about three stages of evolution for whatever form of life it affects.

Our exegesis of the Fourth Ray technique shows that it is simply an elaboration of the three stages that the Principle of Conflict brings about for aspirants on the spiritual journey. First, the aspirants become aware of their conflict with other people. Next, they renounce prideful activity because they recognize that such activity leads to outer conflict. Finally, they experience union with the Soul, which resolves their inner conflict.

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# Ashramic Objectifications

Adam De Franco

## Abstract

Today, as we view evolving Humanity, we see many changes. Civilization as a whole is undergoing a rebirth, and transformations are taking place on many levels. This paper considers an aspect of the externalization of the Hierarchy as it pertains to its incarnate ashramic base. With the influx of Aquarian energies, new ashrams are being externalized in the Western hemisphere. This is an out-picturing of a subjective reality and, as expected, is in line with Hierarchical schedules. As magnetic/radiatory centers, the new ashrams inoculate the planetary web with spiritual fire in preparation for the reappearance of the Christ. As such, they stand and herald the creation of a new planetary civilization.



(Group Work by  
Lynda Vugler)<sup>1</sup>

*One of the things now occupying the attention of the Masters is the externalization of their ashrams on the outer plane.*<sup>2</sup>

*If we look on our planet from above, we will observe...particular vortices of light and darkness.... The importance of pure places are found in the Sacred Writings, in the*

*Bible, and in the Rig-Veda; the Tao likewise contains knowledge of these treasure-places of Earth. We rejoice when We notice the rise of new ashrams, for people so seldom think of the power of their spirits!*<sup>3</sup>

## Introduction

For several thousands of years, a majority of spiritual centers in the world has been located in the East. For various reasons, including safety and protection, the strongholds of the Himalayas, acting as custodians of Wisdom and Mastery, have stood off the beaten track and away from view. But now, with the dawn of the Aquarian Age, many changes are inevitable and new forces are coming into play. A new civilization and a new humanity are being birthed.

People are gaining a sense of themselves as global citizens and many feel part of the One Humanity.

As this contingency is naturally aligned with the Divine Plan, we can see the next step in global evolutionary processes working out into manifestation. What we are witnessing now is an out-picturing of spiritual growth and awareness, the next step in the unfolding drama of human evolution.

As we learn from the work of Alice A. Bailey and Lucille Cedercrans, the new Aquarian civilization is being built on the new

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forms of energetic consciousness. It is being built “from above, downward.” That which manifests on our plane of existence has its roots in a deeper, subjective substrate of reality. The guiding intelligence of humanity is centered in this deeper dimensional field. As a spiritualized, vibrational field, the fifth kingdom, the Kingdom of God, is the intelligent force behind global and planetary evolution. As such, we can understand how the intelligent guiding forces of Hierarchy implement purposeful change to evolve the human species. The establishment of ashramic centers contributes in a multi-dimensional way to this endeavor.

### **The Transmigration of Hierarchical Force**

**T**he transmigration of Hierarchical force to the Western hemisphere is a work in progress. Transmigration proceeds on a schedule of evolutionary design that considers not only the human species, but all that lives and exists on this extraordinary planet of ours. With this in mind, we can see there is a purposeful design for humanity’s growth. The progress of civilization is studied by a great body of illuminated thinkers and seers who foresee, guide and nurture its development.

For thousands of years, the overshadowing spiritual centers of humanity have been in the Eastern hemisphere, the cradle of civilization. For centuries the great religions that began there nurtured and inspired early humanity. It was here, in the historical East, that two world teachers incarnated. The Buddha Gautama of early India and the Christ of Israel instilled and inspired new aspirations, religious ethics, freedom and compassion. But these two world teachers were supported in the background by many hundreds of spiritually evolved human beings. Many of these evolved people are unknown, yet as a large body of supporting disciples and initiates, their contributions are significant. Together, as “one great body,” they form the Hierarchy—an illuminated focus of authentic spiritual power, wisdom and intelligence.

From this epicenter of spiritual Souls, an incarnate group of humans spread over the entire planet and formed a guiding network to bridge and facilitate planetary evolution. Unified by a deliberate focus of spiritual intent, the Hierarchy, as a body of illumined Souls, has over the centuries established certain specific esoteric centers where an externalized incarnate group of personnel gathered. *Ashram* is one of the names by which these gathering places is known. Through immense Hierarchical effort, the ashrams in the Eastern hemisphere have been maintained within the vast stronghold of the Himalayas for thousands of years. Other ashramic bases exist elsewhere in Asia, Europe and the Middle East. But these are never advertised or openly discussed. Their locations are not a matter of public knowledge. Their secret locations are hidden from view and popular interest. Approach by any sincere seeker requires an appropriation of spiritual light. Membership is built on a precedent of consciousness and an individual’s evolutionary/initiatory level. The religious and spiritual ashramic centers and monasteries that are prevalent, advertised or known in the world today are not typically associated with the Planetary Hierarchy. Only those that have their primary focus on the Buddhic plane are being magnetically attracted and manifested on our planet.

Now, however, those centers within the Himalayan focus will be shifting energy in preparation for the emergence of a new civilization. New ashramic objectifications are being established in the mountainous regions of Canada, the United States, and South America. Under due precedence of law, karma and the natural evolutionary processes, this developmental shift in polarization was expected. A quote from *Applied Wisdom* by Lucille Cedercrans addresses the matter:

Those centers [in the East] were established as the focal point of Hierarchical effort to serve the evolving human consciousness until it reached a certain point of development. That point of development is, relatively

speaking, with us now and this shift has to be made.<sup>4</sup>

2025 has been the date slated for the first stage of the externalization of the Hierarchy. The present cycle is called “The Stage of the Forerunner.” It is preparatory in nature, offering a testing period intended to be revelatory in its techniques and results. As such, the entire Hierarchical body at this time is passing through a cycle of great activity. Following upon the sequential steps of externalization, an ashramic group and consciousness is incarnating upon Earth. Foundations have been laid. The superstructure of intent is present in etheric matter. Purposefully oriented to the work at hand, we can see these centers manifesting.<sup>5</sup>

The establishment of the three main centers in the West will have the 2500-year long-range plan of contributing those energies and rays that will assist in bringing in the Age of Aquarius. There is a vast synthetic network of energies sustaining and building the divine circulatory flow of the planet. As an energetic construct, via the quantum etheric grid, more spiritual light is being added daily to planetary substance. With each passing hour, the vibratory frequency of the planetary grid is becoming stronger and brighter and thus more capable of carrying Hierarchical fire and intent. As a prelude to the externalization, a synthesis of all the many global parts and etheric centers must link up into a synergistic working whole. The etheric network of the planet must be considered from many different angles to be fully appreciated. As a harmonic of consciousness, it is actually a planetary fractal and an organic, living hologram. What we are seeing is the sacralization of the planet—a spiritualization of a species—the birth of a new Humanity. What we are feeling is the imposition of a new harmonic accelerating the planet’s etherialization.

### **Ashrams and the Etheric Integrity of the Planet**

*There is no reality in separation. The planetary etheric body is a whole, unbroken and continuous.*<sup>6</sup>

The continuity of this world can be overlooked, but essentially it is one seamless whole. The foundation of this premise is built upon the etheric integrity of the planet. Wholeness is built upon the etheric ley lines, which constitute an invisible electric power grid. All life on the planet is subsumed under this influence. The many evolutionary impacts brought to bear upon humanity and all life flow through and are conditioned by the planetary web. Hierarchy chooses ashramic centers or bases in deep consideration of this fact. To make full use of all available energies and conditions, the vibratory health and spiritual fire of certain areas are scientifically utilized to the best advantage to meet evolutionary protocols. From this epicenter within the quantum field, the establishment of an ashram is an act of radiatory confluence.

The value of the ashramic centers interspersed over the planet cannot be underestimated. As radiating points of magnetic fire, they contribute to the etheric integrity of the planet. They insert new qualities of awareness into the collective consciousness of humanity. Subjectively, they instigate the substance of collective change and transformation.

Besides its contribution to the planetary grid, the ashram is a radiation of consciousness. It is a focal point and precursor of new forms, ideas and beauty. From this center of consciousness the quantum field is effectively transformed; atomic, molecular and cellular transmutation is the result. The human form, its various racial types and even the civilization as a whole, is effectively an out-picturing of subjective awareness. The mutations of consciousness taking place today will result in new forms tomorrow. It can be said that the new racial type is far more *a state of consciousness* than a physical form. Essentially, it is an embodiment of the new consciousness. This new consciousness is carried into the collective milieu by certain individuals who respond and resonate to the frequencies of the ashram. As an international group, they are scattered over the entire planet where they function as the transmitters of the forces of evolutionary

potential. As a discipleship group, these vital centers seed the new ideas of thought and model the new expressions of brotherhood.

Disciples who are representative of any ashramic center, to whatever degree, perform a multitude of service functions and activities merely by the very nature of their solarized consciousness. They become embodiments and projectors of force. Working on etheric levels, they bestow and wield ashramic force and so implement the Plan.<sup>7</sup>

As points of light, these disciples embody the ashramic energy of their particular center and ray group. As projectors of force and rarefied atomic fire, they accord and translate light into the electro-vibratory field of humanity. Together, as an ashramic group life, they literally become a fiery sphere of light, which in turn forms a center of dynamic force within the subtle sheath of the Planetary Logos. The structural integrity of the group field is a potent instrument of the Master's work only insofar as they are able to maintain a coherent, integrated group thought. This unbroken telepathic rapport co-creates the group's radiatory field, which effectively changes human consciousness.<sup>8</sup>

While every human being contributes some small part to the planetary etheric body, disciples, in turn, are integral in supplementing new energies to humanity. Much of their spiritual work as energetic beings is done on subjective levels. From the quantum perspective, higher vibrational atomic substance is being requalified for the creation of new forms. As ashramic outlets and expressions, spiritual workers are often hidden from public view and awareness. Collectively, they contribute a sizable energetic quota into the growing radiatory character of civilization and the planetary web. As points of light, they underlie and invoke the transformations we see in humanity's consciousness. Due to the degree of radiatory light in their vehicles, and by the very nature of the consciousness that they embody, they leave traces wherever they go and accelerate the solarization of the planet. Evolution is co-dependent on this exercise. Even the liberated Master's have such a similarly co-

dependent relationship with their incarnate disciples. They function as the substanding energetic forces in incarnation who implement the ashramic plan into the collective field of humanity. Disciples and initiates who are incarnate Souls inoculate the entire species. "From the standpoint of a clairvoyant vision, the etheric planetary body will grow in vivid radiation and glory as that radiation expresses more and more the true light of the Soul."<sup>9</sup>

## **Constructing the New Centers**

*Forget not, an ashram is a vortex of force and a centre of energy—a centre through which both force and energy flow in order that the vision may be materialized.*<sup>10</sup>

There are many multidimensional considerations when planning for and establishing the new ashramic centers. The energetic condition of the etheric field is "healthier" in some centers than it is in others. Certain energetic fields are healthy in the sense of carrying out the particular vibratory quality of that ashramic center and also in producing and sustaining the mental, astral and etheric bodies of the associated personnel.

Hierarchical choice of such centers is deliberate and consciously qualified to meet the divine circulatory flow. Understanding this we can see how many centers are established at higher altitudes and thus free from certain impacts insofar as world thought and emotion are concerned. The purity of the atmosphere at higher altitudes is significant and also contributes more to the telepathic rapport and clarity of ashramic impressions.<sup>11</sup> But at the core of any ashramic objectification is a Master, or the Masters of the Wisdom. The creative potential of the human hierarchy is but part of our inherent destiny. For the enlightened elders of the race the ability to create and materialize is a pure and purposeful act. Due to their natural alignment to high concentrations of energy and force, and through the power of their directed thought, what they visualize and speak easily manifests. In line with the plan of the Hierarchy, and by the power of their focused intent, these elders attract to themselves those syn-

chronous Souls whose mind, ray and karmic relationships will assist in their planned endeavor.

## The Western Hemisphere's Ashramic Centers

While in time there will be nine ashramic centers established in the Western hemisphere, three, and possibly more, are now being established. All ashramic energies are broadcasted for the sake of humanity.

From Lucille Cedercrans we learn, "The center in South America is concerned almost totally with sound, with the new creative sounds to be imposed upon humanity during the next age."<sup>12</sup>

The South American center was, as of the early 1960's, stated to be the oldest functioning, Western hemispheric center, with 22 people involved in its operation. One might picture a high Andean village of unknown origin being the epicenter of planetary power. Unpretentious and simply constructed, these centers show forth as focal points of light, sound and beauty when viewed etherically. The true authentic power of such centers cannot be underestimated, for their radiation is generating the new world.<sup>13</sup>

The Canadian center will be close to the magnetic North Pole and at a higher altitude than the one in Colorado. And while the work of this center is highly esoteric and yet scientifically exoteric, it will be concerned almost totally with the control of the devic forces of the world. Scientists who are drawn there will be working with Earth's climate and the proper conservation and re-creation of the world's natural resources.<sup>14</sup>

The Estes Park center in Colorado will eventually aid in the externalization of the

Hierarchy, and is the exoteric location of the nucleus center of the western ashrams. As the Synthesis Center, it will carry a synthesized focus of Rays 1, 2 and 7. It has been noted that this center will objectify both a Hall of Learning and a Hall of Wisdom. It will be at the lowest altitude of all the centers and will reside in the vicinity of the great Rocky

Mountain National Park. The Synthesis Center carries a different frequency than the other existing hemispheric centers and is primarily blue-white in color, with gold and what can only be referred to as esoteric purple. The following quote affirms the role of devic life in the creation of this center.<sup>15</sup>

"The frequency of the devic life of the area itself is such as to permit the soul to bring a higher

frequency, a greater quantity and quality of higher energy into focus in that particular area.... The personality has to...make adjustments to the concepts or the soul ideations which are being focused...in the overshadowing, [and] into the brain consciousness."<sup>16</sup>

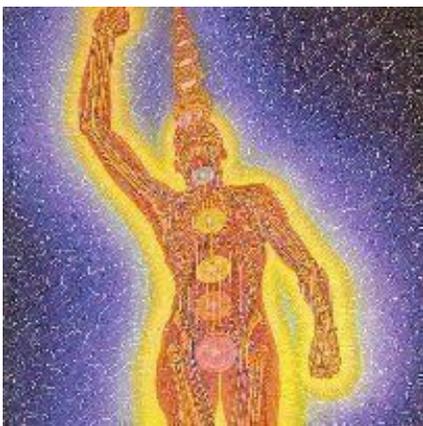
The Estes Park center has the function of directing energy out into the body of humanity. This necessitates the appropriate personnel to maintain it as well as an understanding of how to work with the principles of manifestation and the attending devas. A certain state of consciousness must operate and certain alignments be held in focus so that the devic structure of the center can be built and maintained. Center personnel hold this higher alignment with the Ashram of Synthesis and also with the Avatar of Synthesis. They re-

**[T]he ashram is a radiation of consciousness...a focal point and precursor of new forms, ideas and beauty. From this center of consciousness the quantum field is effectively transformed; atomic, molecular and cellular transmutation is the result. The human form, its various racial types and even the civilization as a whole, is effectively an out-picturing of subjective awareness.**

ceive, invoke and release the higher streams of energy and consciousness for the working out of the divine Plan. The discipline of the ashramic group personnel is paramount, and they work as a single unit. Every disciple performs specific functions. Via their attentive attitude they remain in alignment with the center of the ashram, the overshadowing Christ and the one universal stream of Life.<sup>17</sup>

The close approximation of the Estes Park center to Rocky Mountain National Park will mean that millions of individual visitors will be suffused with devic substance. Subtly, quietly and gently, they will become effective instruments of change and transformation as they return home to their respective locales. By an act of spiritual design, these visitors will gradually absorb a new paradigm. Their consciousnesses will undergo subtle energetic changes that will allow them to carry within themselves the seeds of change. By the direct implementation of ashramic light, they will undergo subtle energetic changes and their hearts will stream forth with a new feeling of brotherhood and unity. Yet, by external comparison, they may be simply immersed in the extraordinary scenery and beauty of the Creator's handiwork.

### **Intuitive Inclusivity**



(alexgrey.com)

**A** point to bear in mind is that the Soul's ashramic life exists above the level of the three lower worlds and that Soul Life – the purpose, place and function of the Soul

within the ashram – cannot be directly represented as thoughts, words, images, feelings, etc. Interpretation, as such, entails an act of witnessing and pure observation. Such an endeavor entails freeing the mind of its usual constraints and employing the intuition.

Intuitional meditations carry a new force of consciousness—a new objective. The power of aligning to the Soul's life on its own plane brings a new interpretation of inclusivity, cooperative spiritual leadership and shared spiritual endeavor. However, the manner of this endeavor entails the rigors of evolving a continuity of consciousness that lifts us off the mental plane onto the Buddhic plane and, in time, even higher.

Building on the integrated personality, the empowered polarization of consciousness can be aligned to Solar, Atmic and Monadic sources. It can be aligned to deeper sources of resonance and identification with All that Is. But such illumination produces a crisis of consciousness and identity. The egoic structure must be prepared for such wide sweeping paradigmatic transformations. Crystallizations must give way to an open-ended, fluid inclusivity—a new way of knowing. In endeavoring to bring the mind to such a state of lucidity, the mind is kept in a state of free moving energy. Rather than being tinged with substance and set into patterns, it is a free moving body of light energy, which in one moment can assemble itself into a thoughtform and then in the next moment back into its free luminous state. Each particle of mind can become a receptor and transmitter of light. This frees the mind from the concretization of reality without form and a perception of reality without words. The value of this endeavor was explained by Alice Bailey in one of her Friday night group meetings;

We have to learn to use intuition because the Master's ashram is not on the mental plane. The plane on which we shall some day eventually work is not the mental plane. One of the things we have to learn to do in this new era is to get off the mental plane with all the knowledge and detail and

technicalities that we have so painstakingly acquired and begin to develop that something that we call the intuition, which is the source of illumination.<sup>18</sup>

Considering the depth of resonance and purity of motive needed for ashramic contact, we can appreciate the creative process that develops the necessary continuity of consciousness. Meditation above the level of logic, outside of the barriers of form, reveals a purer essence. Only a daring spirit can “hear the soundless sound” (the sound of one hand clapping?) or “see the formless form.”

Part of the inspired guidance to write this article came from a dream. In this dream, I flew into an outpost in a deserted part of South America. Looking around, I noticed many other people arriving. People of various nationalities, all speaking different languages, communicated with each other at a telepathic level. We recognized each other as co-workers in the center’s mission. Many of us were there as students and observers learning about the various aspects of this center’s function and operation. Upon deeper observation I could see the center’s main personnel and the stark lay of the land in the middle of a high desert plateau. The chief personnel seemed wise and appeared to be used to the many comings and goings. The form of telepathy this group employed was implicitly aligned to the functions of this center and was ray induced. The entire center was built on Divine Purpose. Later, as I meditated upon this dream, certain things became clearer. I saw that much of what takes place for ashramic workers and incarnate disciples rarely reaches the light of conscious recognition. The reality of subtle relationships is often missed.

The human kingdom is naturally spread over a wide spectrum of awareness from the spiritually undeveloped to the enlightened. Even with this wide variation of self-realization, at the very core of all human beings there is a subjective recognition of being part of the One Soul Humanity. Embodying, expressing and living with the recognition that we are authentic spiritual beings results

in creating the electro-vibratory field which ultimately gives us access to the fifth kingdom of nature.

“Brotherhood is a fact in nature.” “The souls of men are one and I am one with them.” To state these ideas another way; we are derived from the same quantum material. In ascending the arc of dimensional consciousness one’s sense of separation diminishes. As the experience of non-locality develops and as we come to validate the expansive paradigmatic scope of the Buddhist sphere we become more acquainted with a new time/space continuum. At this level, group consciousness is the norm, but without the loss of authentic individuality. Understanding the energetic construct of the ashram, we can see how the personnel are composed of those from far and wide. The ashram is international in its composition and consists of Souls in and out of incarnation. It is not solely confined to those who know and recognize each other; rather, it is an accomplished synthesis of initiates of various degrees and qualifications. The Brotherhood of a thousand times a thousand stands as one body.<sup>19</sup>

### **Disciplic Chakra Systems: Perceptual Empowerment of the Higher Centers**

**M**editations for ashramic contact vary according to the ray and energetic quality of the ashram and also the individual. It might be presumptuous for us to assume there would be any one specific meditational formula for all ashrams or for the various groups of personnel. There is unity in diversity. Though various meditational formats can be given and the words followed perfectly, we should understand it is the pure nature of consciousness that must be attained.

Continuity of consciousness is the result of higher brain function and the activation of the higher chakra energy centers. Our polarization or focus of consciousness, as indicative of our evolutionary level, would gravitate to a path natural to itself. For simplicity’s sake, a viable alternative is in remembering

that the higher brain centers are the gateways to many forms of ashramic contact. However, we should remember that we are dealing with principles of abstract holism. We are making a leap from the usual Newtonian paradigm of three-dimensional living to an Einsteinian paradigm. We are entering the world of energy and force, and these are the prime determinants. The disciple does much of this work within herself. Ashramic contact hinges on becoming an embodied spiritual awareness or “conscious Soul incarnate.” This allows us to bridge the older Newtonian paradigm with the Einsteinian paradigm within ourselves—to translocate our identity and link up two parallel universes. In this process of developing continuity of consciousness, the Antahkarana is built step by step in a non-linear fashion. The disciple is ever vigilant for this recognition of translocation. By learning to hold one’s alignment day by day, hour by hour, we build the requisite atomic substance in the bodies of the personality. As the radiatory substance of the vehicles approaches the light frequencies of

the Soul in the ashram, we become conscious of the real environment. The paradigmatic reality and experience of the Soul stands outside the normal time/space continuum. While it is beyond the normal temporal and spatial dimensions, it is, paradoxically, closer than hands and feet.

The development of the higher brain centers results via natural evolutionary processes. By means of certain meditational practices and alignments, it can be safely and consciously accelerated beyond the norm. This is the purposeful intent of the new Aquarian age. Each man and woman has this potential, for it is built into the very genetic material of the body. While much has been written in the great spiritual traditions of the East and even in esoteric Christianity, today’s caliber of human being is met more adequately by newer, more modern techniques. This does not result in a disregard for the older traditions; it means that they are approached from a different angle more appropriate to citizens of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The “old souls” of today’s

humanity are ripe for tremendous expansions of consciousness and adjustments in universal ethics. To meet the newer needs, certain previously guarded meditational teachings have been given out via the writings of Lucille Cedercrans, Alice A. Bailey and others. As representatives of certain Masters of the Wisdom and certain ashrams, these techniques are given with the express purpose of bridging the two worlds of human and superhuman development. The Creator’s plan for Earth and humanity is designed for the ultimate good of all beings. The disciple’s empowered alignment is crucial since it allows her to function consciously within the ashrams in the Buddhic sphere. To cross this bridge into infinity and make that great transition from humanity to Hierarchy takes the will-to-know and endless compassion. Disciples must recognize that they are a “Soul having a human experience.” This requires a new sense of proportion and the fortitude of holding true to the vision. Then the body lives in the Soul, rather than the Soul living in the body. With this new sense of inclusivity disciples must “not become overly preoccupied either with the accumulation of knowledge or the performing of service to humanity.”<sup>20</sup> The focus has to be held very high. We suspend the overbearing hypnotic fixation of the personality with form existence and rise to another level of alignment in serving the Divine Plan of the Hierarchy. To be a conscious member of Hierarchy serves a high calling. The value to the ashram of a trained and functioning disciple lies in his ability to “see with the ashram.”<sup>21</sup>

The developmental activation of the higher centers awakens the intuition. As in all things, this is a gradual process. One’s sense of oneself begins to expand beyond the usual paradigms of self and other. The veneer of perception begins to acquire depth and multidimensionality. Intuitive inclusivity is marked by gradual expansions of consciousness and new dimensional frames of perceptual reference. The chakras work together to allow a working frame of reference. Abstractions take on a new constancy. The mind is adaptable and moves in a stream of consciousness. The magnetized aura of the

disciple becomes susceptible to ideations. We become impressed with a new reality. As the “Buddhic consciousness fully impresses the physical brain, it gives a new value to all the actions and relations of life.”<sup>22</sup> We no longer simply look at a person or thing, but by degrees we learn to identify with that person or object. The sense of separation is diminished. As humans we have the inherent potential to know another as oneself, to perceive his motives and appreciate his part in the movement of life.<sup>23</sup>

The first quantum physicists were seers. They invoked the august potential of the human spirit. The ability to perceive multi-dimensionally and feel the heart of the Logos is built into our genetic structure. It is our natural inspired birthright. The development of the awakened third eye is built on many processes and there is no simple explanation. But as the epicenter of the human instrument is consciousness itself, we should honor our roots. A valuable contribution in understanding the basis of dimensional consciousness was once explained to Alice Bailey by a young Swedish thinker.

The fourth dimension is the ability to see through and around a thing. The fifth dimension is the ability, for instance, to take an eye, and by means of that eye to put oneself en rapport with all other eyes in the solar system. To see in the sixth dimension might be defined as the power to take a pebble off the beach, and by means of it to put oneself in accord with the entire planet. Now in the fifth dimension, where you took the eye, you were limited to a particular line of manifestation, but in the case of the sixth dimension, where you took a pebble, you were put in touch with the entire planet.<sup>24</sup>

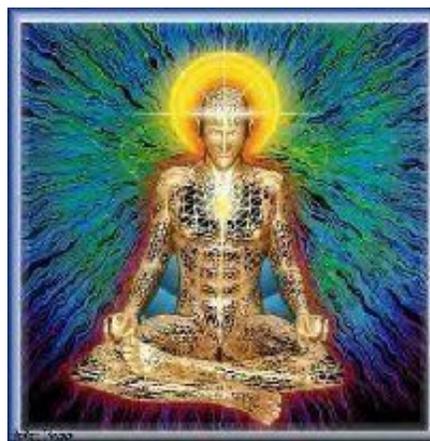
This is something very far ahead of us, but it is interesting to speak about, and holds a promise for each and all.

While the development of the higher centers is ever a work in progress, we know that it does not happen in a step-by-step, linear

sequence. The transformational development of energy from the lower centers to the centers above the diaphragm requires a series of lives. It is a synthetic approach, and changes are occurring simultaneously. For consciousness to respond to Consciousness, which is an aspect of the Soul’s telepathy, we must arrive at a new point in space-time. We must free ourselves from the illusion that we are solely three-dimensional creatures. We must come to know ourselves as multidimensional beings. Such engagement is an invocation of the superconscious and fifth-dimensional spherical time. It represents liberation from the four walls of established time and the release of fixed time sensitivities.

As consciousness is reset from sequential time to NOW, our perception of our form in space is also reset to a newer more inclusive paradigm of multidimensional space-time. The paradigmatic scope of the ego shifts as the polarization of consciousness ascends. This is the end of time as we know it. All dimensions meet here and now. It is the new state of consciousness we are seeking, one in which we are more fully engaged and aware, and one that allows the inclusion of Buddhi and the immediacy of the intuition.

As a point of reference, the process of solarization is depicted for us in the following graphic.



(John Vega)<sup>25</sup>

In a quote by Lucille Cedercrans we are told:

The Head Center constitutes that center in etheric substance of your instrumentality, which is in the same vibratory realm as your home, so to speak, in the ashram. This is a secret little known — an Occult fact — its revelation brings the realization that continuity between the Soul in the ashram and the Conscious Soul Incarnate is but a matter of utilization of these two centers, their alignment, the gradual growth of a magnetic field between them and eventually their merger into one another, until the thousand-petal lotus is manifest as the physical materialization or manifestation of the Spiritual Soul in the ashram... This is only the beginning.<sup>26</sup>

The inner meaning of this quote reveals a wealth of information. The head center, which is a vortex of etheric substance, vibrates at a frequency that tunes it in to the higher energies and frequencies of the Over-shadowing Spiritual Soul. This center is a gateway by which consciousness and the Life Thread are extended from the Spiritual Soul to its lower reflection. The head center also functions as our own personal *stargate*, allowing us to move from the dimensions of space-time to time-space. The rate at which it is reflected downward into the head center is the result of the evolutionary processes of initiation and meditation. We should understand that both the human entity and the Soul on its own plane of existence are developing concurrently. On the path of discipleship this relationship is investigated. Building this Rainbow Bridge, or Antahkarana, facilitates the process of Soul-infusion. As the disciple

is seeking to become an incarnate Soul she willingly makes use of the higher head centers. The more these centers are consciously used the stronger they become.

In advanced disciples, the head center is located approximately six inches above the head, but in the case of the new disciple, it usually extends three inches beyond the head. As the energy of the head center is reflected downward, it descends as a funnel shape into the center of the head.<sup>27</sup> There it creates the “cave in the head.” It is in this cave that the incarnate consciousness focuses itself as the spiritual Soul. The

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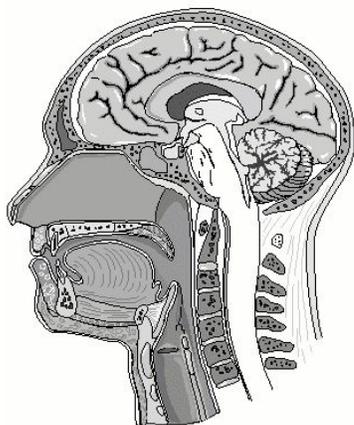
cave or synthesis center becomes part of the head center. Working together they hold the vibratory frequencies of the conscious Soul. Therefore, identification as the Conscious Soul Incarnate takes place within the cave center.

Conscious utilization of the centers sets into motion a new energy, force and substance. Appropriate to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the new techniques utilized within the Synthetic Ashram illuminate the higher activations of the head centers to accelerate Soul-infusion and initiation. Continuity of consciousness and a life of service are the prime objectives of this endeavor.

Within the cave center some disciples have the experience of becoming the body of light. Essentially, the cave center is more than a geographical focus in the center of the head. As a location in the brain center it cannot be accurately located solely by its physiological coordinates. It is located within time and space yet not limited thereby. It is a conflu-

ence of energetic forces, the ley lines of consciousness itself in its descent into matter. The two diagrams that follow are very descriptive for understanding the cave center's placement.

As a golden radiant sun, the cave center reveals the body of light as a group point of light within a greater light. In this light, and within the ashramic field, the individual becomes the group. Consciousness registers this oneness to such a degree that the disciple experiences the Conscious Soul in his own cave center. But now it is holographically expanded so that the disciple is in every cave. This reaffirms the group conscious nature of the Soul and speaks to the idea of *Buddhi*—escape from the limitations of form identification and the entering into fourth and fifth dimensional consciousness.<sup>28</sup>



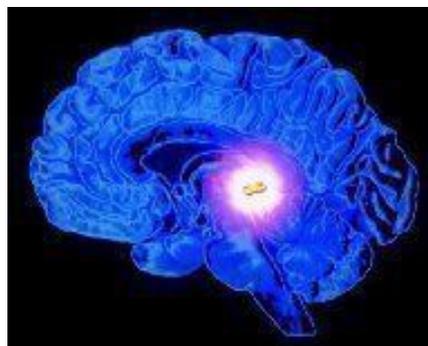
The Cave, *kutashta*, or the spiritual center of the Soul in the physical body. Also referred to as the *Cave of Brahma*.<sup>29</sup>

One exercise that can give us an experience of the higher brain centers is to focus our thinking on the point that lies exactly between the two eyes. The attention is fixed gently and calmly. This is not a forcing process, just a slight alertness. When we fix our thought on the mid-point between the two eyes light streams in of its own accord.

Another exercise requires looking at the tip of your nose. The moment you look at the tip of your nose you become alert to a sense of the third eye and will be drawn to the center of your head. (The higher centers are synthetic.) But there is no forced movement—

one moment, the tip of the nose, the other moment, the cave center. This is an effortless awareness; there is no strain, just an inner focus. Yet let us remember that the cave center is more than a geographical or physiological location in time and space. Even though its approximate location is near the pineal and pituitary glands, it is, above all, a state of consciousness. Its vibratory frequency is a gravitation of consciousness located in the vicinity of the center of the head. A descriptive quote clarifying this point is taken from Alice Bailey:

The gradually increasing downpour of fiery energy increases steadily the “light in the head,” or the effulgence found in the brain in the neighborhood of the pineal gland. This is to the little system of the threefold man in physical manifestation what the physical sun is to the solar system. This light becomes eventually a blaze of glory and the man becomes a “son of light” or a “sun of righteousness.”<sup>30</sup>



The Head Center<sup>31</sup>

Through meditation and ashramic affiliation the evolving disciple becomes aware of the higher brain centers and learns how to use them in service. Each brain center has its own specific and affiliating resonant frequencies and applicability. Each represents a different window of awareness. Therefore, consciousness can be “tuned” via the appropriate use of higher chakric activity.<sup>32</sup> As we bring the alignment from the head center to the cave, into the tone or note of the Soul in the ashram, we are working from the *Buddhic* sphere. From this intuitive center of

consciousness within the quality of its frequency we work and bring the ashramic frequency into the incarnate—our focus is consciousness. As a member of the ashram, we are changing the lower frequencies in our makeup into the ashramic frequencies because the ashram is where we live, move and have our being.<sup>33</sup>

One can picture the consciousness thread projected from the overshadowing spiritual Soul (ashramic focus) extending downward into the threefold instrument. This movement downward represents an omnilateral substitution and transference of the pure consciousness of Buddhi into the higher mental body. In time, this activity creates the Conscious Soul Incarnate or Incarnate Soul. Two parallel universes are thus bridged—the supermundane with the mundane or spirit with matter.

Dr Viola Petitt Neal has given us an accurate description of her experience:

When I make contact with the ashram—I pull into a central point in the center of my head which must be about where the pineal gland is, and is a pinpoint of focus or pinhead of focus—a short point of focus. In this case, I simply seemed to move in consciousness inside my head, and to a chamber inside the head, or a cave in the head rather than a point of focus. Maybe it was a large area which I was pulling into focus.<sup>34</sup>

### **Ashramic Impressions: Bringing Heaven to Earth**

**R**eceptivity to ashramic ideations is a practical matter for disciples. The core of their work is fundamental and native to the group consciousness of the ashram. For such an abstract alignment it is necessary for continuity of awareness to be anchored in the brain consciousness as much as possible in order to carry it through into the world of everyday affairs. The intent of ashramic work involves “bringing the highest into the lowest” or bringing heaven to earth. The quality of such an alignment is maintained and fine

tuned by the grounded and practical application of the Soul’s forces. While reaching up for the stars, disciples’ feet are planted firmly on the ground. Their vertical-subjective alignment is meant to be lived and expressed horizontally and outwardly in the three worlds of human endeavor. Wherever they go, and whomever they are with, they are the embodied representation of the Soul’s frequency and the ashramic group consciousness.

The practicality of this endeavor cannot be overlooked. As outposts for the ashram, disciples need to maintain their connection. Considering the abstract qualities necessary for continuity into the ashramic field, this might seem a paradox. But the practicality lies in its embodiment. Disciples are meant to be functional. They are meant to be grounded in their work even though it may be subtle and abstract. As an expression of their evolutionary status, this brings their multidimensionality into focused spiritual living. They impress their magnetized consciousness and auric fields on their surroundings. They transmute and alter the quantum-etheric field surrounding themselves as they have done within themselves. Disciples serve a purpose in which the energy, force and substance of spiritual ashramic reality can and will make entrance into the world of men. Their ability to hold alignment, to bridge the fourth and fifth kingdoms is subtle yet powerful.

### **Two Examples of Ashramic Meditations**

**T**here are different meditational alignments for ashramic contact. Groups vary in approach, and this is reasonable considering their different energetic qualities. The emerging ashrams of the Western hemisphere are more modern and applicably “tuned” to the emerging tone of the Aquarian Age. The vibratory field of Aquarius will initiate a Seventh Ray civilization more applicable to synthesis and brotherhood. With this in mind let us survey two meditational approaches. Understandably, there are many more, yet this sampling should allow us the opportunity to intuit the variations.

Remember that what we have presented is but a sampling. This first meditational format follows a Seventh Ray (ceremonial magic) approach and was given by the Master John. Living in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, John was a physically active, incarnate disciple and co-worker of the Master Rakoczi. His affiliation in establishing the American Ashram in Estes Park was insightful and profound. It continues to this day.<sup>35</sup>

One will notice that in this, as in many ashramic meditations, there is often some specific intended purpose. The following meditation has a focus on economy. Even though it was not intended for beginners, it is included because it reveals a particular meditational process that highlights the newer ashramic approaches in appropriating spiritual energy. It makes use of the “magic of consciousness” and is appropriate to Seventh Ray techniques, which are specifically intended for the correct utilization and deployment of the higher energy centers.

From the Master John via Lucille Cedercrans: (*abridged version.*)

Focus the consciousness in the cave and identify as the conscious soul incarnate. Establish the higher alignment through the head center with the overshadowing spiritual soul in the ashram and with the Christ.

Establish the lower alignment with the devic forces of the mental, astral and etheric environment, via your threefold vehicle, realizing that all physical appearances are reflections of the real environment, which is subjective.

Focus the attention upon the stated problem of Economy. Realize that all resolutions of the problem are a working out of that economy which best serves the evolutionary and service plan of the soul. Realize that right activity — action — doing proceeds from Be-ing. One must be before one can do. Contemplate that be-ing that is Soul for at least three minutes.

Visualize soul being occupying a radiant body of light standing in overshadowing above the top of the head. Visualize its quality as radiance and beauty. Visualize its purpose as service to the One life. Visualize its movement down into the threefold instrument via the center system.

Visualize now the conscious soul incarnate within the radiant light body as entering into the physical brain and nervous system—taking hold of the body of appearance—life, quality and appearance of being. See the soul being moving the physical body into right activity. Visualize the activities of the day as being carried out by the soul being that you are inside of the total instrument.

Gather this thoughtform and lift it from the throat center to the ajna center, from the ajna center to the cave, from the cave to the head center. When it has been lifted into the head center, hold it there in silence and in the light, waiting for the Christ as the Father to act upon it, producing within your life and affairs that Divine Economy that serves the Divine Plan for humanity.

Try to maintain silence as long as possible in a dynamic wakefulness or alertness, and then sound the OM, focusing right economy into and through the instrument and into outer appearance.<sup>36</sup>

Now, to exemplify another ray approach, we present a meditation given to us by the Master Djhwal Khul. This (abridged) meditation provides more of Second Ray, love-wisdom approach. In this approach we are being asked to hold the mind positive and attentive and use the faculties of the imagination and visualization simultaneously.

GROUP INSTRUCTION (given December 1941, via Alice A. Bailey.)

During the Full Moon, you must link up first with all the group members, pouring yourself out in love to each

of them, [this is Master DK's Naming and Loving process] and to all collectively, and associating yourself with them as a part with the whole. Then in united effort attempt the following procedure:

1. Having linked up with all your group brothers, and having raised your consciousness as high as you possibly can, endeavor then to hold steady, holding the mind unwaveringly "in the light," and letting the brain consciousness and its registration drop below the level of consciousness.
2. Then initiate a new effort. Realize that, on my side, I also stand steady, pouring out upon you my love and strength and endeavoring to lift you up into a higher state of consciousness.
3. Visualize ahead of you (if I may use so inadequate a word) a disk or sphere of indigo, a deep electric blue. In the center of that disk imagine that I, your Tibetan brother, am standing. My appearance and personality matter not.
4. When you have visualized me thus standing waiting, then endeavor to see—stretching between yourself, the group and me—a band of golden light and know this to be the symbol of the Path that we are all treading. See this path gradually shortening, thus bringing us closer together, slowly and steadily, until you enter into the heart of the blue disk.

Hold the mind positive and attentive, using simultaneously the faculties of imagination and of visualization. I would ask you also to make a careful record every full moon—from two days before until two days after the full moon—of all experiences and visions.<sup>37</sup>

## **Conclusion**

*I look at my groups of disciples always subjectively and as a group. It is the total radiance which I see; it is the united rhythm which I note and the united tone and colour; it is the sound they collectively emit which I hear.*<sup>38</sup>

An ashram is an archetype of beauty, love and power. In the coming New Age there will be the out-picturing of the inner ashram upon the outer plane. This will be the first time in history in which disciples will recognize each other as members of the Master's group. The inner ashram is a focus of spiritual Souls, free and unlimited. Under the new Aquarian experiments of externalization, these ashrams will be a potent composite focus of personalities and Souls.<sup>39</sup>

An ashramic or esoteric center is a specific state of consciousness acting as a focal point for the transmission and radiation of Soul awareness into the body of Humanity. It is a vortex of force and center of energy.<sup>40</sup> As foci of extraordinary energy and consciousness, all ashrams originate within the planes of superconscious endeavor. They function at a frequency level much higher than that of the three planes of human endeavor. Not constrained by the time-space continuum as we know it, these ashrams skirt the normal purview of mundane consciousness. Time shifts linearly to a spherical form. The requisite polarization to participate at this level of consciousness and lucidity is very high. Simply stated, as the atomic light substance of the vehicles begins to resonate with a viable quantity of Buddhist substance, we perceive that which was hidden.<sup>41</sup> By intuitive expansion we become available to ashramic impression. We become conscious of our Soul's life in the ashram as the Overshadowing Spiritual Soul. By an "Act of Alignment" disciples transfer their identity from an individualized self-identity to a state of Triadal consciousness. This translocation of identity results in a bridge between the fourth and fifth kingdoms in nature.<sup>42</sup>

This process involves an extension from above downward, moving from Hierarchy or the fifth kingdom, down into the three worlds of human endeavor. This medium of descent

is a cycle of precipitation and manifestation from that which is within the inner spiritual dimension of humanity outward into expression.

Ashramic members are moved and stirred from within the deep well of their Soul relationships. The active complexities of modern life, however, often hinder this awareness from being recognized. Subjective ashramic affiliations run deep, but typically are neither apparent nor obvious to conscious awareness. However, all proceeds according to law. Those who resonate with the ashram's purpose are drawn into its spiritual center of fiery power.<sup>43</sup>

We may be able to picture how together and en masse disciples distribute the energies of consciousness. As solarized vehicles they are transducers of spiritual fire. They invoke, distribute and precipitate the energy, force and substance of the ashram. They work together as one dedicated unit. The direction of ideation and the purposeful intent of their work are in service to the Divine Plan. This activity is orchestrated by the illumined mind of the Master at the energetic core of each ashramic focus.

Relationships by their very nature exist for different purposes. But within the ashram, Souls are related to each other by the commonality of their thoughts. The Center Impulse, or central fire, reaches them subjectively. This nucleus of fire is a living organism of luminous substance and divine consciousness. The incarnate group is overshadowed by their own overshadowing spiritual Souls from within the ashram. As outposts and points of radiatory fire, they magnetize the environment in which they live. They are projectors and conduits of spiritual force, distributing Solar and Monadic forces. The incarnate group becomes part, in some measure, of that Master's impulse which overshadows the etheric light body of the ashram. Together, as One flawless instrument and as non-separate individuals, they serve the Divine Plan.

The esoteric design of any ashramic center is magnificent. As an energetic construct it is constituted of a nucleus, petals and its radiatory auric field. It is built on prototypical designs of the highest order. As disciples come to fulfill their roles under the purpose of their Souls, certain petals are activated within the center's life. Then the ashram becomes more magnetic and radiatory. In the beginning, there are few to fill the ranks, but as time and energy builds, more come to fulfill their Soul plan and recognize their place and function within the ashram. In this way the spiritual body we know as the ashram begins to fulfill its function and serve the evolutionary development of humanity.<sup>44</sup> All the many ashrams together form the one body of the Hierarchy. This vast ashram comes under the overshadowing of the Christ Maitreya Buddha. The Christ is focusing the evolutionary purpose through all these various ashrams. All disciples, whether conscious of the fact or not, are part of this great ashramic Group Life.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.sevenray.net/sri\\_journal\\_v4n3\\_vugler\\_art6.html](http://www.sevenray.net/sri_journal_v4n3_vugler_art6.html) (accessed November 1, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. II* (New York: Lucis Trust, 1955), 521.

<sup>3</sup> Helena Roerich, *Fiery World, Vol. I* (New York: Agni Yoga Society, 1943), 664.

<sup>4</sup> Lucille Cedercrans, *Applied Wisdom* (Whittier: Wisdom Impressions, 2007), 1202.

<sup>5</sup> Lucille Cedercrans, *Ashramic Projections* (Whittier: Wisdom Impressions, 2004), 135.

<sup>6</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), 645.

<sup>7</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. I* (New York: Lucis Trust, 1944), 759.

<sup>8</sup> Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. II*, 504. "Disciples in my Ashram have a dual responsibility ... It is through the unbroken conscious thinking of a welded group of disciples that the Master of an Ashram works. It is not so much the active outer service of a group of disciples which is of major importance (though it has necessarily a vital purpose) as the coherent, integrated group thought which is so potent in effecting changes in the human consciousness."

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- <sup>9</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology Vol. I*, (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1936), 132.
- <sup>10</sup> Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. I*, 731.
- <sup>11</sup> Helena Roerich, *Supermundane IV*, (New York: Agni Yoga Society, 1938), 723.
- <sup>12</sup> Cedercrans, *Applied Wisdom*, 546.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 546.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 544.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 544.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 1200.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-193.
- <sup>18</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Friday Evening Talks*, <http://www.esotericstudies.net/aabtalks/aab03-05-43.pdf> (accessed November 2009). "We have to learn to use intuition because the Master's ashram is not on the mental plane. The plane on which we shall some day eventually work is not the mental plane. One of the things we have to learn to do in this new era is to get off the mental plane with all the knowledge and detail and technicalities that we have so painstakingly acquired and begin to develop that something that we call the intuition, which is the source of illumination."
- <sup>19</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. I*, 728.
- <sup>20</sup> Bruce Lyon, *Occult Cosmology*, <http://www.shamballaschool.org/Cosmology/OCI.htm> (accessed September 7, 2009). "Hierarchy needs souls to take up their conscious functioning within the ashrams on the Buddhist plane. To do this they must cross over the great transition from Humanity to Hierarchy and not become overly preoccupied either with the accumulation of knowledge or the performing of service to humanity."
- <sup>21</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. II*, 391.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 391.
- <sup>23</sup> C.W. Leadbeater, *The Masters and the Path* (Adyar, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1940), 665.
- <sup>24</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Consciousness of the Atom* (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1922), 138-139.
- <sup>25</sup> [http://www.iamshman.com/galleries/4' med/the-artist.htm](http://www.iamshman.com/galleries/4%20med/the-artist.htm), (accessed November 1, 2009).
- <sup>26</sup> Lucille Cedercrans, *Applied Wisdom*, 217.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 266-67.
- <sup>29</sup> <http://www.kryaoga/english/encyclopedia/Kutashta.htm>. (accessed November 1, 2009)
- <sup>30</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, (New York: Lucis Trust, 1927), 180.
- <sup>31</sup> The Head Center Credit: Public domain.
- <sup>32</sup> Lucille Cedercrans, *Applied Wisdom*, 1533-1534
- <sup>33</sup> From the private notes in an on-line unpublished Teacher Training class with Pam Nissen.
- <sup>34</sup> Viola Pettitt Neal and S. Karagulla, *Through the Curtain* (Camarillo: DeVorss and Co., 1983), 61.
- <sup>35</sup> Lucille Cedercrans, *Applied Wisdom*, 932.
- <sup>36</sup> Course notes from Pam Nissen, 11-3-61 Estes Park – *Economy*.
- <sup>37</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. II*, 16-17.
- <sup>38</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. I*, 9.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 707.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 723.
- <sup>41</sup> Two Disciples, *The Rainbow Bridge*, (Staten Island: Triune Foundation, 1981), vii.
- <sup>42</sup> <http://thesynthesist.org/new-centers-consciousness> (accessed August 6, 2009).
- <sup>43</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in New Age, Vol. I*, 723.
- <sup>44</sup> Lucille Cedercrans, *Applied Wisdom*, 173-179.
- <sup>45</sup> Lucille Cedercrans, *Applied Wisdom, Vol. II*, 820.

# The Astral Body and the Planetary Desire Body

## A Student

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### The Astral Body

The spiritual path is one of progressive unfoldment and evolution; its disciplines and rigors help us to move from lower to higher grades through progressive expansions of consciousness that involve adjustment and integration of all the different bodies through which the Soul has chosen to express its nature: the physical, the etheric, the emotional, and the mental bodies. These are the four lower vehicles that form the quaternary of conflict, tests and crises for the aspirant. At a certain point in the long path of human evolution the aspirant must develop the ability to fuse and integrate the four vehicles with the Soul.

Many esoteric instructors tell us that the astral body constitutes the most difficult field to integrate and develop. The astral or emotional body is usually considered the battlefield where the spiritual aspirants must demonstrate their readiness to face the most violent struggles against the lower nature. It is the most intense area of conflict for the majority, and is the field of experience that demands more time to quiet and integrate.

Teachers tell us that, if we could see the emotional plane of any human being, it would look like a chaotic intersection of energies, shapes and colors reflecting the inner disharmony of the personality. Indeed, the emotional body (what psychologists call the personal psyche) is a complex field where diverse forces interact, some of them individual, others archaic or karmic, and yet others bordering on the universal and archetypical. The forces of this plane merge fluidly, making it difficult for the aspirant to understand and discriminate the origin of the emotions that invade this field of perception. The fluid and merging state of the emotional

body corresponds to and is part of the second or “watery” subplane of the cosmic physical plane. Hence our emotions are volatile and changeable.

This chaotic body of emotions can only be integrated and brought under control by the force of the mind, whose light can illumine and pierce the astral fog of the individual and group emotions that have accumulated age after age. The mind serves the aims of the Soul by drawing its light from above. This is accomplished by steadily focusing on the center of the mind and by cultivating, by means of willpower, the faculty of discrimination. Our daily meditation contributes tremendously in this effort by piercing the fog of glamor and by substituting the coarse emotional substance with finer substance.

Whereas the astral body is usually considered in its negative qualities, there are many positive values that can be cultivated that will help in the process of integration and fusion with the Soul. Such cultivation will result not only in healing for the individual person, but will also provide a great service for our groups and for humanity as a whole. This service should be our goal.

First, the astral body is the only complete (non-dual) unit of the personality, and it mediates between the physical and the mental bodies. This gives this body the ability to influence positively or negatively the mind and the body. It is now common knowledge that our emotions influence our health. A cultivation of loving and positive emotions can surely improve the way we feel and the energy level of the entire system. Similarly, we should strive to formulate our thought-forms in a positive way, using constructive, elevating feelings that serve the world by purifying the astral fog.

Second, the watery nature of our emotions can be a tremendous factor in establishing right human relations based on love. Using the Law of Analogy, we can establish that just as the second aspect of the personality is the emotional body, its corresponding higher Divine Aspect (and Ray) is Love/Wisdom. One can only imagine the wonderful impact on our planet of an entire human race whose emotional body is responsive to and transmitter of the energy of Love/Wisdom.

Third, the astral body can also be a field of service for advanced disciples who have, over time, stabilized their center in the higher mind. Given its nature, the astral body of an individual is not clearly separated from that of another's, making it possible for the advanced mind to help those lives in need when they find themselves momentarily transfixed within the fog of glamor. This is surely something we shall not attempt without the guidance of our Master and not until we reach a high level of initiation. Nevertheless, in our daily living there is much we can do to empathize with others in their emotional suffering by lending them a listening ear and helping hand in times of suffering. Compassion and empathy are difficult skills to master, but clearly ones we can all learn to cultivate. Because the emotional body is the battlefield for most of us, we have all suffered crises related to our attachments and negative emotions, and we can use this experience when trying to understand the suffering of others.

Finally, while the astral energies associated with this plane include the full spectrum of negativity, there is also a whole rainbow of

positive emotions that humanity needs to learn and appreciate, which, if cultivated appropriately, can empower and uplift. For each negative emotion, we can think of a positive

counterpart, and these are the ones we want to emphasize in our daily life of service. The alchemy of the emotions consists in turning desire into spiritual aspiration, attachment into freedom, fear into valor, impatience into serenity, and ugliness into beauty, to mention a few. We can start by simply picking one quality we want to work on daily, and try to make the effort to actualize this quality in our daily lives and relationships. In this respect, Assagioli reminds us that we should not repress our emotions, but rather identify with the emotions or ideals we want to cultivate.

The above considerations can now help us consider the ways that the positive values of the astral body can be cultivated by different groups. We have briefly indicated that advanced disciples can help their brothers and sisters by focusing on the light of the higher mind and projecting the light with the aim of dissipating the glamor. We have also very briefly considered the idea that average humanity should be educated to observe their emotions, learn from them and help others by cultivating a spirit of compassion and empathy.

To give an example, educators could help children integrate their emotional nature. Because I am a teacher, it will become clear that while discussing these ideas I will be, incidentally, discussing how I feel I can contribute to this field of service.

Good and bad experiences with different age groups of learners have taught me that one important factor in leading groups of children is that we adults should have a clear idea of what we expect from children and adolescents. The emotional body of the young is even more chaotic than that of adults. Very

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young children, for instance, may not have a clear understanding of the difference between the imaginary world and the real world. They have a wonderful ability to travel into and from the world of fantasy, and they are in very little control over their emotions. If they perceive chaos, they react with chaos. If they perceive love, they respond with love. They also tend to have problems with rules, which is a key element in order to build socialization skills and implies moving from egocentrism to socialization.

In my first years of teaching I was quite utopian and believed that the best way to educate my students was to give them complete freedom. There was nothing wrong with the idea of freedom, except that it usually translated into chaotic lessons where I ended up moving away from the lesson plan to satisfy every little need or whim of the little ones. Looking back, I can say that this was a mistake. Children need guidance and orientation. A teacher may be flexible in the lesson plans, but must still retain full control of the learning environment. Children easily notice if you have carefully planned the lesson, and whether you know why you are doing whatever you are doing. If they perceive that you are organized, lessons go more smoothly and they behave better and more responsively. Conversely, if you don't know what to teach, or how to teach them, or if you have not planned your lessons carefully because you believed that a *laissez faire* attitude would help them better, they become impatient, bored and uncontrollable.

This brief example relates to esoteric studies in one significant way. Following the Law of Analogy we could say that adults should work with children just as the aspirant's mind should work with the emotional body. The loving mind provides guidance and control; it offers that factor of discrimination that students often lack and need to learn in order to make safe and reliable progress on the spiritual path.

## The Planetary Desire Body

Speaking symbolically, I would say that the planetary astral body (viewing it from soul levels) is lost in the depths of a surrounding fog... Looking... at the astral body of the planet, could you but do so, you would see no such clear shining but simply a murky ball of seeming steam and mist and fog. This fog is of a density and thickness that would indicate not only impenetrability but also those conditions that are unfavorable to life. Yet we pass and come and go, we the Teachers on the inner side; and in that fog – seeing all things misshapen and distorted – labor the sons of men. Some are so habituated to the fog and the density that they remain oblivious of its existence, regarding it as right and good and the unchangeable place of their daily life. Others have caught faint glimpses of a clearer world wherein more perfect forms and shapes can be seen and where the fog hides not a dimly sensed reality – though what that reality may be they know not. Still others, such as yourselves, see before you an open path leading to the clear light of day. You know not yet, however, that as you tread the path you must, on the Path itself, work actively and intelligently with the surrounding glamor, following a trail blazed by those who have liberated themselves from the envining mists and passed on into a world of clear horizons. So much of the time spent by disciples on the Path is a process of almost cyclic immersion in glamor and fog, alternating with hours of clarity and vision.”

*Glamour: a World Problem*, pp. 69-70

Materialism – attachment to the form aspect in any of its possible manifestations – is a great deterrent to human evolution. We are told that attachment to form is partially a natural and temporary effect of the involutory arc insofar as matter constitutes the third aspect of Divinity. The evolution of humanity implies recognizing in matter a vehicle for the expression of the Soul, Love/Wisdom, or Second Divine aspect.

There are different degrees of attachment affecting humanity today, from the currently excessive concern with physical beauty and youth (physical/etheric planes) to emotional clinging to people and circumstances (emotional plane), to those fixed ideas and obsessions that become separative and fanatic (mental plane). Something all these forms of attachment have in common is their origin in desire as a motivating factor. All the great sages agree on the fact that desire prevents us from treading the path. Purification and transformation of desire into spiritual aspiration and service are basic prerequisites to the evolution of the Self. Surely this is something that can only be achieved over long cycles of incarnations, yet a definite time comes to any aspirant when the problem of attachment to negative astral forces (karmic and environmental) becomes a definite field of struggle.

As above, so below. Just as individual aspirants spend several lives purifying their astral nature from attachment to negative emotions, so the planetary desire body needs to be purified from some long-rooted negative astral forces. On the other hand, emotions can be empowered (meaning elevated), channeled into service and cultivated. There are a number of positive emotions that exist today in the body of the planet that are helping the advancement of the whole human race.

If we consider the planetary desire body as an entity, it might help us notice our interconnectedness and unity in diversity. Sadly, one negative aspect of this interrelationship is that humanity as a whole is under the effect of *fear* as a primary emotion circulating today around the planet. Because of our unity, it's hard not to be somehow affected by this very powerful emotion. At present, for instance, most nations are undergoing a profound economic crisis that translates into fear

about losing material possessions or fear of not being able to face financial obligations. The effect of this is the reinforcement of attachment to money as something to accumulate rather than energy to share.

**Just as individual aspirants spend several lives purifying their astral nature from attachment to negative emotions, so the planetary desire body needs to be purified from some long-rooted negative astral forces.**

Regarding money, another example may further exemplify the influence of money, considered only in its material aspect, as a problematic factor that tints the planetary emotional body. Recently in Italy, where I live, there's been a completely irrational craze for the lottery. For months there has been no jackpot winner, which has resulted in more and more gamblers each week, all looking forward to getting the winning ticket. At the time of this writing the jackpot has mounted to 144 million euros (about \$280

million US dollars). This is the biggest sum of money any European lottery has ever reached. In my mind, the craze for the winning ticket demonstrates how little control of our emotional nature we have. Isn't it sad that we can't see how much good we could do by sharing that money with those who most need it around the world, or by donating it to fight hunger or for scientific research? The problem is that the enormous amount of players that gamble for the ticket three times a week (and at this time this includes millions of people not only from Italy but from all around Europe) have actually created a gigantic thoughtform associated with money, with competition and with dreams that will never come true, consequently reinforcing the fog of glamor and the darkness of illusion around us.

At a group level, we can find an example of attachment to *power* in the case of the military government ruling the Union of Myanmar, which has once more imprisoned the human rights defender Aung San Suu Kyi. Most probably the activist represents a threat to the military government, as the people of Myanmar look forward to electing her as

their president. In this case, the effect of a single group clinging to one emotion is evident; they keep a whole nation under military rule with the consequent collateral effects: lack of freedom, violence and censorship.

A positive example of the planetary desire body can be found in the gradual incorporation of nations into the UN, with the consequent extension of human rights to many populations around the globe. The UN took shape after WWII under the guidance of international leaders and the Spiritual Hierarchy. At first its role was to prevent war and to deepen dialogues between nations. As of today, there are 192 member states that are part of this organization ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Nations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations)) and work in many areas from education to labor rights and religious tolerance. The esoteric significance of the UN rests in that it is a body that should act as a linking group between the Hierarchy and humanity, and it could be thought of as the externalization of the inner government of the planet. The fact that the number of member states that are part of the UN has increased ever since 1945 reveals the increasing awareness that humanity as a whole can work out solutions to the problems of humanity under the spirit of goodwill and the principle of right human relationships. In addition, it is a demonstration that more nations around the world are interested in assuring

that human rights are protected and put into practice. This indicates that humanity is developing its mental body, which could result in an increased use of discrimination regarding what values are worth living for.

While the Earth is not yet a sacred planet, it is a living entity in which we live and move and have our being. The Logos of the planet has chosen its form and is responsible for its evolution. We are actively involved in this process, for our own evolution, as individuals and as groups, encourages the evolution of the whole. The current state of the planetary desire body is similar to that of an individual; much cleaning and transformation needs to be done. Help can be found in the thought that desire, as the Tibetan tells us, is nothing but a lower manifestation of love. Given this fact, pondering the relationship of desire to love can teach us much. Both of them, for instance, relate to the Law of Attraction, as love is an energy that draws and keeps units together. Love is also the factor that operates in the disintegration of all forms when the Law of Attraction that keeps the parts together ceases to operate. If we think about these ideas, we may be able to foresee a glorious future for humanity, one in which the attraction for matter will be transformed by the power of love, a moment when we will fully operate as One, for indeed all Souls are One.

## Book Review

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**Sun of God: Discovering the Self-Organizing Consciousness that Underlies Everything**, by Gregory Sams. San Francisco, Red Wheel/Weiser, 2009. 232 pages.

The idea that the Sun, the star at the center of our solar system, is a conscious entity and a harbinger of spiritual light and energy is not new to students of the Ageless Wisdom. The works of Alice A. Bailey, Helena Blavatsky and others have provided detailed occult information on the Sun and the Solar Logos, the directing intelligence and ensouling life for our solar system.

Although *Sun of God* portrays the Sun as a “self-governing, celestial being, fully aware of Itself and its place amid creation,” it does not explore or add to the esoteric literature on the Sun or the Solar Logos in the occult sense. Rather, *Sun of God* seeks to blend the scientific ideas of Chaos Theory (a system that searches for the underlying order in nonlinear dynamical systems) and the animistic beliefs of early cultures to show that the “great enabler and support of life,” our Sun, is a “complex form of intelligence that communicates with other conscious beings at its own level, and other levels.” Its author, Gregory Sams, attempts to extend the boundaries of consciousness to show that “creative intelligence was involved in the unfolding of the cosmos or was instigated by the cosmos itself.”

In presenting this thesis, Sams covers a lot of ground. He discusses creation in terms of the animistic belief systems of our ancestors, who made no distinction between the animate and the inanimate. This worldview is contrasted with the materialist approach of modern science, which sees creation as “a chance event untouched by any intelligence or consciousness.” In addition to a general exploration on the nature of light, electro-magnetism and the overarching intelligence permeating all of

creation from the smallest atoms to the far-flung galaxies, Sams ventures into brief considerations of the four elements, free will, fractals, water and green living in an attempt to show how the parts are related to the whole.

Also included, is a chapter on organized religion. Although the author makes a half-hearted attempt to give religion its due, he tends to focus on the faults and limitations of the three Abrahamic faiths. His criticisms, which do not appear to be fully informed by scholarly research into the esoteric philosophies, build into a harsh invective over the hegemony that religion has claimed over humanity’s ideas and beliefs about spirit.

Despite these shortcomings and some peculiar inconsistencies, *Sun of God* poses some thought-provoking questions on the nature of intelligence and life as we know it. The author is passionate in his attempts to “re-acquaint readers with the Sun, the most widespread traditional deity the world has ever known.” In the chapters specifically dedicated to the Sun—our local electromagnetic transmitter—Sams presents a fascinating account of solar structure and solar activity. What we learn about the Sun’s interior, its power source, the core, and its multiple layers, each with their own distinct and far-reaching function, is sufficient to convince even the most skeptical reader that the Sun is the “uber-consciousness in our local system.”

Written in an informal and easily accessible style, *Sun of God* has something to offer all those who are open to thinking about the nature of spirit and consciousness in a new way.

Donna Brown  
Washington, DC

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