

Book Review

Anna Raimondi, *Conversations with Mary: Messages of Love, Healing, Hope, and Unity for Everyone*, New York: Atria, 2017. Paperback, 192 pages. List price US\$22.00; typical retail price US\$13.96. Also available in hardcover and digital format.

The market is awash with books claiming to be channeled, dictated, or otherwise communicated by higher beings, and esotericists struggle to discern the few that may be authentic. Supportive criteria include intellectual merit, the promotion of love, and the author/scribe's humility; contraindicators include flattery of the author and exploitation for personal gain. Most of us have a short list of "approved" authors and dismiss others, particularly new arrivals on the scene. Few of us are entirely free from bias.

When a coworker encouraged me to read Anna Raimondi's *Conversations with Mary*, I was suspicious but tried to keep an open mind. After a dozen-or-so pages my suspicions eased, and by the end I was persuaded that the book is probably authentic. Perhaps I also learned to be less rigid in my judgment of other authors.

Conversations with Mary claims to have been dictated by Mary, the mother of Jesus. Anna Raimondi describes herself as a "motivational speaker, teacher, intuitive and author," whose "mission is to give others the tools they need to live their lives in joy, while following their souls' mission."¹ Significantly, the author is a lifelong Roman Catholic, well acquainted with traditional Marian devotion and the reported apparitions at Guadalupe, Lourdes, Fátima and elsewhere. She is also familiar with references to Mary in the Christian canonical and extracanonical scriptures and in the Qur'an.

Raimondi believes that the book is not her own: "I knew that the book would be Mary speaking.... Whether she was waking me up in the middle of the night, interrupting my thoughts, or speaking as I sat at my computer, I let whatever she had to say come through. I didn't write this book... Mary did. With utmost

care I typed as she dictated" (p. 189). What does the author feel when taking dictation? "Mary's energy is soft yet strong, and overwhelms me. Often, my heart will begin to race and thoughts start flooding my mind" (p. 190).

The book consists of a brief introduction followed by ten chapters in question-and-answer format, addressing topics like "What is a soul," "Why are we here," and "What happens when we die." Ostensibly the author asks the questions and Mary responds, but the actual process was more complicated: "Before sitting down to write, I pray and meditate. I feel the presence of Mary and begin to write. She sometimes gives me the answers and I have to go back and write the questions. Sometimes, she gives me both" (p. 189). Each chapter is followed by a guided meditation to raise awareness of Mary and, where appropriate, to draw upon ideas from the preceding discussion.

I read *Conversations with Mary* soon after writing of Mary's communications to Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson.² Raimondi seems generally familiar with the esoteric literature; but she does not refer to Hodson's work, or to any similar work on Mary, and we do not know whether she was aware of or influenced by it. The topic material does overlap to a degree, permitting useful comparisons. For example, in her introduction, Raimondi speaks—as did Hodson—of Mary as a personification of the Feminine Aspect of Deity, one of several such personifications that include the Buddhist Kuan Yin (p. 11). But Mary's communications to Raimondi are more voluminous than those reported by Hodson and are addressed to a different readership: the general public rather than an esoteric elite.

In the introduction Raimondi recalls a personal apparition when she was five years old: "She [Mary] said, 'Anna, I am here for you always. Always come to me.' A total unconditional love overtook me, there was a feeling that was

and remains so extraordinary and so difficult to describe in words.” Raimondi continues:

I knew without a doubt that this was Mary, although she didn't look like the renderings I had seen of her in books or even in churches. She was dressed in a well-worn brown robe, the fabric appeared rough, but radiated warmth. There was a light brown dress underneath. She had olive skin, wide, soft mahogany-colored eyes and coffee-colored hair that hung to her waist where a hemp belt was tied and held her dress together. She wore a tan-colored covering adorning the top of her head, but no hood. Her face stood out in repose. Her penetrating eyes captured my attention (p. 2).³

Mary describes the physical form she assumed in Palestine 2,000 years ago: “[A]s a Middle Eastern woman, my skin was dark, my eyes a deep brown, and I was small in stature.... My dark wavy hair came down to my waist” (p. 17). And that was how she appeared to the five-year-old Raimondi.

The apparition was atypical in that respect. More generally, as Hodson also noted, Mary adjusts her appearance to conform to people's expectations. She explains to Raimondi: “I look like what the beholder wants me to look like. If one wants me to be of fair skin and light eyes, so be it. If that brings comfort, so be it.” Mary goes on to say: “I am a being now of love and comfort. I have no skin color and all skin colors. I have no distinguishing features now and yet carry the beauty of all the world as I embrace your energies and raise your vibrations” (p. 17).

Raimondi questions her source about the account in the *Infancy Gospel of James* of Mary's presentation in the temple. Mary confirms the accuracy of the account, explaining: “With heavy hearts, yet ones filled with gratitude for their [her aged parents'] blessings, I was given to the temple at the age of three to be raised by the priests in the ways of my religion and my people.” Mary continues: “It was with great sorrow that they [her mother and father] passed on when I was but a young girl. They passed prior to my betrothal to Joseph well before the birth of my son” (p. 22). That

information conflicts with the visions of eighteenth-century stigmatic Anne Catherine Emmerich who “saw” Anna and Joachim at Mary's and Joseph's wedding.⁴ Which version is correct remains an open question.

Mary shares her experience as a young person in Palestine: “When I was a girl, I played, laughed, and cried as girls do. My life as a child was not extraordinary although my faith and love for God was always foremost” (p. 17). Later in life that carefree attitude changed as she saw Jesus grow up and undertake his redemptive mission: “Even as time moved on, and I began to recognize the purpose of my son's life and death, my pain was raw. I accepted his life's journey and my part in it.... It was as difficult as life on earth can ever be. I knew he lived for a bigger purpose and took my solace in that” (p. 16).

Raimondi presses Mary on her sufferings during Jesus' passion and death, and Mary replies candidly and at some length:

I endured great emotional pain during my son's last days and during his persecution. I witnessed the purity of his love as he spread it to all people even as he was rejected. As a mother and a person who loved him and his message, the way people treated him caused me great pain. I didn't understand fully the true reason for the circumstances of my son's suffering for it wasn't revealed to me until later. Yet, my faith in God never wavered. I was angry at those who tortured him and tormented him. I was angry and frustrated that people could not understand that Jesus came to show them how to save themselves. Instead they killed the one who lived for them. People say that Jesus died for the sins of mankind. That is not totally true. He lived for the sins of mankind; to help teach people how to live and not to sin and transgress against God; and yet they couldn't hear his message. They couldn't see that he only wanted to love them and bring them the peace they were looking for. God did not destroy my son's flesh; men did. As his mother, the one who brought him into the world and loved him as only a mother could, the pain my son endured tore

at me and left a piece of me frayed. I grieved for Jesus and longed for him the rest of my days on earth. I went on and lived my life, giving and receiving, smiling and crying, but never forgetting the pain. The pain was housed in my heart, but my life went on. I recognized that life is a gift and must be lived. I lived for my son and my other children and helped spread Jesus' message. At my death, God granted me the release of my feelings of anger and forgiveness. I so loved my son, grieved and missed him. Yet I recognized within days of his passing that his words and the goodness he spoke of would change my people and the entire world if they would only listen. And so it was and so it is (p. 63-64).

Mary confirms what Hodson and other Theosophists said about her status in the Planetary Hierarchy: "I am an Ascended Master,⁵ as are many other souls. I was also chosen by God to bring the Truth forward as the mother. I am the blue vibration of truth. I am the Queen of Angels and heaven." She goes on to speak of her mission: "I am here, as the other masters in spirit and the angels, to teach and enlighten my children and lead all to the kingdom. I pray that my messages will be heard and the world find love and peace" (p. 32). "Blue vibration" would seem to place Mary on the Second Ray, and that would be consistent with what we know of her mission.

Throughout their conversations Mary stresses the importance of prayer. For example: "You should pray for the end of suffering" and for healing of humanity and the planet. Yet she cautioned against discouragement when efforts to heal a sick person seem to fail. "Remember," she added, people "pass through life and dwell in the kingdom.... Don't cry for those who pass on; rejoice for they are with God" (p. 172).

Among the many forms of prayer Mary encouraged use of the Rosary: "The Rosary is a powerful weapon against evil. It is not only in the prayers said on the beads, but in the energy it creates in the repetition of the prayers. The prayers become a mantra and raise the vibration in and around all who say it" (p. 134).

Mary has also promoted the Rosary in apparitions from the thirteenth century onward.

Prayer is important, but Mary emphasizes that "prayers must be followed with action: compassion and love for all people must be demonstrated." And lest her comments on the Rosary suggest a disproportionate focus on Roman Catholic prayer, she adds: "I am the Queen of Peace for all people. I don't speak peace for only a select few but for the world" (p. 67).

Inclusiveness is reiterated in Mary's support for religious diversity: "Any religion that focuses on sharing love and peace is good but there is no 'one perfect religion.' ... The chosen people don't fill one church or temple and not another.... A religion should be welcoming of all people, for all people were created by God" (pp. 93-94). Mary also reassured people who claim to be "spiritual rather than religious": "It is not necessary to join a group but proclaim God in your heart and share that Love with others!" (p. 105).

Mary discusses the afterlife, explaining: "Upon entering the Divine realm all must go through a life review.... All must see and feel the love and happiness that they gave and received as well as the hate, anger and pain given to others" (p. 111). Eventually they reincarnate in new bodies. "Earth is indeed a classroom, a place to learn to be closer to and to unite with God. Those souls who have lived in opposition to the Truth must return to earth to learn what they didn't learn." They must "leave the realm of pure Love and return to human form." Similarly, people who strive for perfection but fall short of their goal "choose to come back to the earth to become 'better' and more loving. They also come back to teach others about love and to heal the planet and its people" (p. 113). The author seems to experience little difficulty reconciling the notion of reincarnation with traditional church belief that we have only one lifetime.

On its long journey to perfection the soul passes through five "levels," which Mary compared with infancy, childhood, adolescence, maturity, and old age—this last being the level of the "old soul" (pp. 152-153). These levels

do not correlate with the five major initiations; rather they seem to be stages on the Path of Aspiration and possibly the earliest stages of the Path of Discipleship. After reaching the fifth level, the seeker must still “surrender to God, recognize his great love and truly love and have compassion for yourself and others. You must give up the cravings of the ego, and sit in prayer and meditation to connect with God. You must live your life in accordance with the will of God” (p. 153).

One of the advantages of continuing revelation, as compared with an original deposit of faith like scripture, is the opportunity to receive guidance on contemporary issues. For example Raimondi asks Mary “whether or not it is moral for two women or two men to be married and have a family.” Mary replies: “If there is love between two people and they are in line with what is good in the world, and follow God, then it is right. God does not oppose. They can be a family. If they bring children into the unit, that is also a family.” She adds significantly: “God is not judging the sexual desires of people. If people love each other, so be it.” (p. 96). Again, the author seems open to an understanding of sexuality that may differ from her church’s official policy.

Geoffrey Hodson felt obliged to conceal much of his dedication to Mary from the Theosophists who formed his primary teaching audience—and even from the Liberal Catholic Church, which he served as a priest. No doubt because of the tradition of Roman Catholic devotion to Mary, Anna Raimondi feels no such constraint. She has the opportunity to integrate the growing knowledge of Mary into her larger ministry of teaching and healing—and further Mary’s desire for self-revelation. The frequency of Marian apparitions has accelerated over the last century or two, and she has appeared to or communicated with peasant children, Christians and non-Christians, esotericists, and many more. Mary comments in this book: “The people are ready” (p. 32).

Conversations with Mary adds little to the corpus of esoteric knowledge, but neither does it conflict with such knowledge. The book’s primary value lies in its potential to teach basic

esoteric truths to a popular audience, beyond the reach of the mainstream esoteric literature. Raimondi and Mary communicate important truths in language ordinary people can understand, standing aside from both esoteric complexity and religious dogma, but promoting a message of love, goodwill, healing and inclusiveness.⁶ The book provides information about Mary’s childhood not found in scripture. And it shares her reflections, from the standpoint of a mother and an initiate, on the life in which she bore, raised, and then witnessed the crucifixion of her son. As Hodson also noted, Mary is entirely “feminine,” while speaking with the authority of World Mother and Queen of the Angels.

Cynics may dismiss the book as a work of pious fiction or a publicity stunt by the author. Others may be persuaded of its authenticity and appreciate the opportunity to witness a dialog with Mary. They may be attracted by the level of detail in her teachings and by the sense of immediacy—even intimacy—the author captures. Readers must make up their own minds. This reviewer believes the book has considerable value and recommends the book to all esoteric students interested in the nature and role of Mary and to traditional Christians eager to expand their horizons beyond the customary bounds of Marian doctrine and devotion.

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¹ Source: <https://www.annaraimondi.com/> (Last accessed May 2, 2019).

² John F. Nash, Adept, Queen, Mother, Priestess: Mary in the Writings of Geoffrey Hodson,” *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Winter 2019), 37-65.

³ In all direct quotes punctuation and capitalization follow usage in the text.

⁴ Michael Palairat (ed.), *The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary from the Visions of Ven. Anne Catherine Emmerich* (Charlotte, NC: Tan Books, 1954/1970), 133.

⁵ The term “Ascended Master” is confined mainly to New Age literature. The trans-Himalayan teachings refer to fifth-degree initiates simply as “Masters” or “Adepts.” In the

western esoteric tradition they are referred to variously as Adepts, Elder Brothers, or Inner Chiefs.

⁶ Mary generally stood aloof from doctrinal

issues in her apparitions, an exception being the one at Lourdes (1858) in which Mary declared “I am the Immaculate Conception.”

Festival of Easter 2019

The Way from Suffering to Joy

Kenneth Sørensen

We are once again approaching the spring equinox and the full moon in Aries, also called the Festival of Easter, which marks the beginning of the Three Linked Festivals during which the defining energies of the new year will be invoked, received and distributed to humanity.

We can participate in this blessing by embodying these energies through our own initiatory efforts, which is not an easy task. It entails learning to work through points of crisis, points of tension and points of emergence to mature in our capacity to contribute responsibly to the common good.¹ In some cases our maturation process might imply going through a crisis in which we examine how we engage with the world; it can involve acknowledging life transitions and confronting feelings of loneliness as a challenge to work through and dissipate the illusion of separateness, and then emerge into a New Life affirming the reality of the One Soul. A symbol that is related to the Festival of Easter is the Gethsemane moment narrated in Matthew 26:38. It exemplifies what it takes to bring in New Life and the fact that many of us fail to register the potency of the moment.

The Easter Festival is an opportunity to align ourselves with incoming purpose, the New Life and the resurrecting energies of Aries. We face once again a death and resurrection cycle in which we can let go of the old self in order to be reborn through an act of the will. Our challenge is to face the conflict by choosing between the personal will and the Transpersonal or Monadic Will, a choice between prolonged captivity or freedom.

Taking on the Cross of Responsibility

The symbolism of the Easter Festival is about surrendering the personal will to the divine source, symbolically aligning each of the three vehicles—the mental, emotional and physical

bodies—with the New Life. In the Gethsemane episode Jesus took three disciples with him, but none of them was able to stay “awake” during the spiritual crisis, they all fell into a deep sleep, which is one of the prominent defense mechanisms of the personality. Not paying attention—allowing oneself to forget one’s responsibilities—is what we all must guard against during this cycle.

The Master Jesus knew what was coming—the descent into hell and resurrection into life more abundant. And with a determined will and loving kindness, *he showed us the way from suffering to joy and the science of redemption.*

We would all benefit from pondering the following questions:

- What is my responsibility for ushering in the New Life?
- How large a load will I be able to carry?
- When will I embrace this New Life? How will I do it?
- What must die in me in order that I might resurrect?
- What fears, resistances and avoidances must I face, see-through and redeem in order that I might embrace this New Life and fulfil my potential?

Master Jesus faced his decision alone, unaided by his close disciples, and it is through this burning ground that we must all pass in order to become like tempered steel.

Vitalization of the Spiritual Warrior

Aries channels Rays One and Seven, which means that this is a time for decision, action and the reorganization of all our available resources. There is also at this time a tremendous desire and will to realize and manifest the New Life in a physical way, like the buds of spring bursting out of the ground. Aries is a sign that signifies Battle, due to the Sixth Ray

of Mars and the Fourth Ray of Mercury; Aries brings new dynamic ideas, which *insist* on being incarnated; Aries also provides a fighting spirit to help us oppose the energies of transgression in our subconscious and the surrounding culture.

The four key notes in Aries are the will:

1. To express the will to be and to do;
2. To unfold the power to manifest;
3. To enter into battle for the Lord;
4. To arrive at unity through effort. ²

Drawing upon all of these insights, we can conclude that receiving the energies of Aries is a call to become spiritual warriors—and this will test our courage because there is no renewal without conflict and we better have our motives right during battle.

The Great Redemptive Experiment

In *Education in the New Age* we read that esotericism is the science of redemption³, so let us pause and contemplate what we are here to redeem. We learn that we are descending Solar Lords partaking in a great experiment, which the Tibetan speaks about in this way:

This theme of redemption (which underlies all the initiatory processes) is hidden in the karmic responsibilities of Sanat Kumara; stage by stage, initiation by initiation, disciples arrive at an understanding of redemption. First of all, they learn to bring about the redemption of the threefold personality; then the concept enlarges along parallel lines as they seek the redemption of their fellow human beings; later, they share the redemptive work connected with all true hierarchical endeavor and become an “active part of a redeeming Ashram.” At the later initiations, and after the fifth Initiation of Revelation, they see with a new clarity some of the karmic liabilities that have led the planetary Logos to create this planet of suffering, sorrow, pain and struggle; they realize then (and with joy) that this little planet is essentially unique in its purpose and its techniques, and that on it and within it (if you could but penetrate below the surface) a great redemptive experiment is going forward; its prime implementing

factors and its scientific agents are the “sons of mind who choose to be the sons of men and yet for all eternity remain the Sons of God.” These “sons of mind” were chosen, in that far distant time when the fourth kingdom in nature came into being, to carry forward the science of redemption.⁴

We are here on planet Earth to raise the frequency of energies, to transfigure the planetary consciousness into a living expression of love-wisdom, to transform the “planet of suffering, sorrow, pain and struggle” into a joyful and harmonious interconnected whole. This is why we enter into battle for the Lord! However, we soon discover that the battle is internal, because the warring forces are in our innermost being; we also intuit that the peace and harmony we endeavor to manifest are also inside, located at the center of the heart, where we find joy and the fountain of endless summers.

We are here to redeem our three basic vehicles and through this effort redeem the group body we have chosen to serve and in which we live, move and have our being. We realize that it is through our own self-initiated growth and (partial) enlightenment that we can step into a position to serve. We serve through our radiation to the degree that we can allow our Solar Angel to shine through; we serve through our ability to create new thoughtforms and manifest them in tangible forms that can act as a vessel for the divine life.

We might ask ourselves during this full moon:

- What will I sacrifice (put to death) to be of greater service to the group?
- What types of physical forms have I created that can be used to clothe new ideas?

Finding our Planetary Address through the Seven Rays

To partake in the redeeming effort of the planetary Logos we must find our “planetary address” in the larger scheme; we must find our unique redemptive function and role in the divine Plan. A crucial key in this respect, according to Alice Bailey, is for each of us to “discover the nature of one’s own qualified energies (and here the nature of the governing rays

enters in) which are expressing themselves through one's three lower vehicles of manifestation, and later through one's integrated personality."⁵

The rays of our Soul and personality, the rays of the three vehicles, the sun sign and the rising sign, all of these will guide us to our planetary address by informing us about the nature of our redeeming purpose. They designate the type of energies we must learn to identify, observe, control and harmonise, and the sorts of groups we must collaborate with.

We can all participate in the inauguration of the new psychology of energies by building a new thoughtform representation:

You can – if you so desire – help construct the thoughtform of the New Age teaching. You do this, above all, by your thought; by your practical application of any truth, which you may have understood, to your personal life at any cost; by your sacrifice and your service to your fellow human beings and by the constant dissemination of any knowledge that you may possess.⁶

So how can we prepare ourselves for the New Life that rushes in with the full moon in Aries?

We can align ourselves with our subjective affiliations and objective groups and with the purpose that lies behind our efforts of service—this is basic.

We can also strengthen our identification with the Observer—that point of pure consciousness and will—so we don't fall asleep.

In a message to the disciple W.O.I., the Tibetan affirms the necessity of reflecting on the Observer and the value of observing the Observer. The Tibetan creates an illuminating review of the attitude of the Observer⁷. Some of his suggestions are particularly relevant when it comes to the theme of redemption, as follows:

21. I am the redeemer of the lower nature. In what way does observation aid in this redemption?

22. Does redeeming force, released through observation, pour through me?

23. In what fashion will the observation of the Observer bring changes in my life, my habits, and my attitudes?

It can be said that we are not just consciousness but also a potent dynamic will, which is emphasized during the month in Aries. The degree of will and its evolutionary stage are reflected in what we do as individuals and as groups. As we increase our ability to shoulder responsibility and take on leadership, we stop being a follower and start being an initiator. So further themes for reflection could be:

- What have I done in the last year to prepare the ground for the New Life?
- How successful and efficient have I been?
- How much time did I spend on my personal needs and how much on my group's needs?
- How can I purify and expand my influence in the world and thereby help to redeem the particular aspect of humanity I am pledged to serve?

Let us all prepare ourselves for our “Gethsemane Moment” and together step into the stream of death and resurrection so that we might build the way for the One who comes.

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¹ Alice A. Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1948), 68.

² Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1951), 93.

³ Alice A. Bailey, *Education in the New Age* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1954), 65.

⁴ Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. 2*, (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1955), 385.

⁵ op.cit., *Education in the New Age*, 66.

⁶ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology, Vol. 2* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1942), 712-713.

⁷ Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. 1*, (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1944), 443.

Deepening Our Understanding of the Science of Redemption

Dorothy I. Riddle

As we approach the Wesak Festival this year, we do so in the context of our Subjective Group Conference on the Science of Redemption, or the shift in focus from suffering to joy. We know that Wesak is a time of increased clarity and a time when the “energies of enlightenment”¹ are most abundantly available to us for distribution. Presumably then this is the time of year when we are best able to gain new perspectives and deepen our understanding of our role and purpose.

For centuries, spiritual focus has assumed that redemption occurs through pain and suffering, through paying a price so that we may then be “lifted up.” This traditional perspective has resulted in a definition of redemption as being “the action of saving or being saved from sin, error or evil.” The Tibetan has commented on this influence from Christianity as follows:

The Christian interpretation of the Will of God and of the significance of sacrifice is based, in reality, on human revolt and on human refusal to see anything in the spiritual life but an unintelligent acceptance of the inscrutable divine Will; it posits also the need for pain and the suffering of sacrifice in the sense of complete abnegation of all that might be regarded as good and useful, as desirable and joyful.... This presentation involves the unavoidable imposition of the will of a transcendental Deity, and leads inevitably (though totally inconclusively) to the dreadful and symbolic death of the Christ upon the Cross and to the painful and sacrificial life of the spiritual individual.²

In this Wesak Festival talk, I would like to propose that we shift our focus to the alternate definition of redemption as being “the action of regaining possession in exchange for payment.” I suggest that what we are regaining is the memory of who we really are, that “we are

spiritual beings having a human experience, not humans having a spiritual experience.”³ The “payment” that we are to make is our increased responsibility to act with “self-forgetfulness, harmlessness, and right speech” as our awareness or consciousness expands. “The Science of Redemption ... is in reality the applied art of esotericism and of spiritual living,... the art or science of relationship between the One Life and the [individual] lives.”⁴ If we are truly part of the One Life, does our essence need “saving”?

To truly live the assertion that “esotericism is the Science of Redemption,”⁵ we will need a paradigm shift away from assuming that we begin as entities that need “saving” and toward embracing joy as our base state: “[An important] characteristic of the new server is *joyfulness*. This takes the place of criticism (that dire creator of misery) and is the *silence that sounds*.⁶ As the Tibetan has admonished: “The cup of sorrow and the agony of the Cross are well-nigh finished. Joy and strength will take their place.”⁷

Dissolving and Eliminating Negative Energy

Remembering and strengthening our relationship to the One Life does indeed bring with it joy, “which is a quality of the Soul and is realized in the mind when alignment takes place.”⁸ It also brings an awareness of the contrasting harm that has and continues to be perpetrated by humanity. Our responsibility, the “payment” we owe, is to both behave harmlessly and to mitigate harm originating from others. While group initiatives such as the Triangles work play an important role in directing energy towards restructuring and strengthening the etheric field, we also have a responsibility for reversing and eliminating the negative impact of humanity on the communal etheric field:

A gigantic thoughtform hovers over the entire human family, built by individuals everywhere during the ages, energized by the insane desires and evil inclinations of all that is worst in human nature, and kept alive by the promptings of humanity's lower desires. This thoughtform has to be broken up and dissipated by humanity itself. (*A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 948).

We might be able eliminate recently formed thoughtforms by simply refusing to lend energy to them, but that strategy will do nothing for the firmly established, highly energized, ancient thoughtforms that have been gaining in strength over the centuries. We see such thoughtforms strengthening further as hate speech, autocratic rule, and inhumane practices multiple today.

On an energetic level, our “payment” is to cleanse our environment of the glammers and illusions that have accumulated over time so that they no longer have the power to influence us. Some of you are already aware of, and participate in, the Cleansing Initiative that the School for Esoteric Studies launched in 2016 to remove from the astral and mental planes the glammers and negative thoughtforms that reinforce the great heresy of separativeness and thus support the violence that is so prevalent in our communities. Specific information is available at www.esotericstudies.net/group-project-cleansing.html. Please consider joining this initiative as part of your practice of redemption if you haven't done so already.

Enacting Energetic Protections

Removing historic influences is clearly not enough to bring an end to separatism and divisiveness. Through the exercise of free will, all of us are perfectly capable of acting in ways that are “not” in alignment with our “true” selves. In the earlier versions of the Great Invocation, there is the phrase “Construct a great defending wall.”⁹ The Tibetan explains that it is meant to express “Thus far and no further. The limit of effectiveness of the evil expression and of the power of the aggressors has been reached if the disciples and the people of goodwill actually now play their proper part.

Symbolically, they can put up an impregnable wall of spiritual light that will utterly confound the enemy of humanity. It will be a wall of energy – vibrating, protective, and at the same time of such power that it can repulse those who seek to pass in their pursuit of evil and wicked objectives.”¹⁰

Constructing and reinforcing such an energetic wall is an important component of our responsibility, as stated in the Great Invocation currently in use to “seal the door where evil dwells.” Maintaining such energetic protections requires a continuous monitoring of how our focus is directed. One of the common methods used is daily mantras and affirmations. To assist in maintaining a protective and empowering energetic focus, the School has developed a weekly sequence of service mantras or meditations for use – in addition to the Great Invocation, the daily noon recollection, and the daily recitation of the Mantra of the New Group of World Servers – that includes:

Monday Mantra of a Disciple

Tuesday Invocation for the United Nations

Wednesday Affirmation of Goodwill

Thursday Meditation for the Reappearance of the Coming One

Friday Mantra of Unification

Saturday Pledge as a Server

Sunday Meditation on Attracting Money for Spiritual Purposes

The above are only suggestive. We encourage you to develop your own weekly rhythm as the regularity will add potency to your service work. If you are not familiar with any of the above, you can find them at www.esotericstudies.net/meditation-sequence.html. We invite you to join School members in using the sequence given above as part of your practice of redemption.

Inclusive Social Action

A third component of the “payment” is to take a more explicit and public stand for inclusiveness by calling out or denouncing harm in all of its forms. In general, the spiritual community has more practice in sending loving energy

than in stopping violence that is occurring. However, if we do not act when violence is contemplated or occurring, then we become complicit. Remaining silent is not an option.

The School's most recent initiative, focused on inclusive social action, is intended to address our need to find ways to take public, practical action. What we mean by "inclusive social action" is intentional action to stop specific violence in a manner that does not further divisiveness, grounded in an awareness that we are all interconnected and in this together. To ensure that the action does not exacerbate divisiveness, it must spring from compassion. In essence we are proposing a kind of "tough love" on a societal scale.

There is no one right way to take a stand. It depends on the circumstances and the perceived motivations of the perpetrators of harm. Rather than prescribe what action to take, the School has launched a series of White Papers to begin to articulate the issues. Those White Papers can be found at www.esotericstudies.net/white-papers.html along with summaries that other groups may use in newsletters to stimulate discussion. We are also posting comments that we have received, which indicate global interest in exploring the issues together. We invite you to join the School in examining how we can best engage in non-divisive redemptive actions that will declare "No more!" and "Enough!" to those who would purposefully engage in harm.

Moving Forward

The Festival of Wesak provides us with an unparalleled opportunity to engage with the con-

cept of redemption in a new way. We have grown past the period of self-absorption and can now embrace the reality that "joy is the strong basic note of our particular solar system."¹¹ As we rethink what is meant by redemption, we have the opportunity to expand our sense of responsibility to include ensuring that our shared energetic environment, our participation in the One Life, is joyously affirming and free of harmful energies.

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- ¹ Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1957), 484.
 - ² Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Volume 2* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1955), 379-380.
 - ³ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.
 - ⁴ *op.cit*, *Externalisation*, 693-694.
 - ⁵ Alice A. Bailey, *Education in the New Age* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1954), 65.
 - ⁶ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology, Volume 2* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1942), 133.
 - ⁷ Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1960), 233-234.
 - ⁸ Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1934), 369.
 - ⁹ *op.cit*, *Externalisation*, 249.
 - ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 280.
 - ¹¹ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology, Volume 1* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1936), 49.

Festival of Goodwill 2019

Goodwill: Accessing Joy

Anna Vicenzino

We are now approaching the third and final highpoint of the Three Linked Festivals, a period when aspirants and disciples, subjectively united, renew their efforts to contact and work with the Spiritual Hierarchy.

The Redemptive Energies of Gemini

This year's Subjective Group Conference theme is especially linked to the Festival of Goodwill and the Gemini energies. During this full moon we have the opportunity to further integrate our spiritual nature with our human expression. In Gemini we are summoned to embrace "the force that produces the changes needed for the evolution of the Christ consciousness"¹ and "the resolution of duality into a fluid synthesis."²

"Duality" is represented in this constellation by the two cosmic twins, Castor and Pollux. The former symbolizes the mortal aspect, the personality or incarnate human being; the latter symbolizes the immortal Self, the Soul, or discarnate spiritual being. Gemini stands for "the service that the two brothers must render to each other in producing the dissolution ... of the separative relation that exists for so long between them."³ Therefore, this period of the year is especially appropriate for working on the "task of bringing together the two poles of [our] being and of coordinating, or at-one-ing, Soul and body, so that duality gives place to unity and the pairs of opposites are blended."⁴ By observing and working on remembering our true nature, we may deepen our reflective ability and produce fusion. We may find it helpful to reflect on some questions, for example:

- Am I aware of the two poles of my being?
- When does the higher nature find a way to express itself?
- What factors limit that expression?
- What helps to eliminate such obstacles?

Because of the influence of the Fourth Ray of Mercury, the exoteric ruler of Gemini, there are two central experiences related to this constellation: Harmony through Conflict and the Divine Intermediary. The Fourth Ray, the middle point between the first three and the last three rays, reproduces in each of its manifestations the contrast of the poles and the intrinsic capacity to resolve "the sense of duality that is the basic factor in the conflict between desire and spiritual will."⁵

Harmony through Conflict is the keynote of the Fourth Ray and of the fourth kingdom. We know that in the life of any living being, individual or planetary, there are crises and challenges to undergo. This quality of the Fourth Ray promotes the aim of progressively purifying and integrating the three personality vehicles so that they can become clearer channels for divine energy. Awareness of this can help us persevere in the work of redemptive integration, both personal and collective. The certainty of the goal and of our eventual success can be an incentive in the spiritual work that every aspirant and disciple undertakes along the luminous Path.

The intermediary aspect applies both to the individual and to humanity. In the individual it expresses through the mind, the intermediary principle between the Spiritual Triad and the threefold personality; in humanity we serve as the intermediary between the kingdoms on Earth and the kingdom of Souls, the fifth kingdom. The human kingdom—the fourth— is thus intricately connected and expresses the characteristics of the Fourth Ray.

Another fundamental influence during the Gemini full moon festival is that of Venus, Gemini's esoteric ruler. Linked to the Law of Attraction, Venus provides us with an opportunity to work on the synthesis of opposites through the mental principle and the qualities

of the Fifth Ray channeled through Venus. In fact, Gemini is a sign of intellect that influences the fields of knowledge and human relationships where goodwill finds expression.

Drawing Inspiration from Hercules

The labors of the disciple Hercules can be a source of inspiration for us during this period. Hercules faces twelve tests in order to fully realize his divine nature. During the third labor under Gemini (Gathering the Golden Apples of the Hesperides) he learns various lessons: registering contact with the Soul and recognizing Soul qualities; eliminating astral glamor; freeing himself from illusion; relinquishing self-centeredness. As he gives up the search for self-satisfaction, he learns to work in service to the world. In test after test, Hercules faces his own nature and begins to know himself, first as a personality; then, moving forward on his quest for wisdom, he learns to integrate the three aspects of the lower personal self—the physical body, the desire nature and the mind—with the Higher Self and, finally, he has access to the three aspects of Soul: Intelligence, Love and Will. In this labor the motto of Gemini becomes clear, aiding us to understand the work to be done during this period of the year: “I recognize my other self and in the waning of that self, I grow and glow.”⁶ It is the immortal Soul that sounds these words in recognizing the mortal aspect or “the twin” and the need for the progressive integration of the personality through the Science of Redemption.

Thus, the Science of Redemption begins in the individual and continues in the larger context of which we are a part. Here we find our work in the Subjective Group, acting as a link between the microcosm and the macrocosm and reproducing the same redeeming intent; the New Group of World Servers acts as an intermediary between humanity and the Spiritual Hierarchy, and humanity also participates in the redemption of the planetary personality. As was the case for Hercules, we discover that service is not something we do because we feel “forced” to do it, but rather it is the spontaneous outflow of the Soul, of the fact that “we are.” Hercules discovers this as he feels the

inner call to help Atlas. Only then does he find the Golden Apples.

Continuing the reflective work started in Aries and with the clarity of the Festival of Wesak, in this full moon we might consider how we sometimes limit the free and spontaneous flow of the Soul and how we can remember our essence. We could extend this reflection to the whole of humanity and try to understand what our responsibility is, as individuals and as a group, and what concrete contribution we can make to shift the individual and collective attention from suffering to joy, to give voice to *the silence that sounds* and allow its redeeming power.

The task may seem so daunting that we might feel discouraged even before we start. Violence, poverty, ignorance, greed, selfish desire, hatred, separateness, racial and national barriers, low personal ambitions, love for power, cruelty, and indifference are rampant everywhere and could undermine our intentions and our will. The example of Hercules, however, comes to our help again: he learned to cultivate perseverance as he moved forward through achievements and repeated failures. He kept up with the work despite the obstacles, impediments and deviations caused by glamor and illusion, and without feeling conditioned by the long time needed to produce in himself the necessary changes to reach his goal. From his experiences we can draw inspiration to persevere in our intention to evoke goodwill in ourselves and others, knowing that it is a quality of the immortal Soul, thus unconditioned by the passing of time.

As Hercules proves, goodwill naturally expresses through service since service channels divine love, the Second Ray energy that reaches our solar system through Gemini. “The education of the men and women of goodwill will be in relation to the *expression of a practical loving understanding*”⁷ and it is indeed the most powerful instrument available to the Spiritual Hierarchy for the distribution of the energy of love. Goodwill is a reflection of the Will-to-Good, which in turn is an emanation of the divine Will: “Therefore, as the purpose of the Will of God ... seeks to influence human will,

it is an expression in hierarchical terms as the Will-to-Good and in human terms as *goodwill, as loving determination or as a fixed intention to bring about right human relations.*⁸ Goodwill is the instrument available to humanity to manifest the divine Plan, “to transfigure the planetary consciousness into a living expression of love-wisdom.”⁹ While the goodwill of the masses originates in an innate divine drive, the goal of the disciple is the Will-to-Good, “the basic quality of divine purpose,” that originates in the recognition of the Universality of Life and involves “planned activity and a definite goal to be achieved.”¹⁰

Goodwill and Joy

The Festival of Goodwill, also known as the Festival of Humanity, is an opportunity for humanity to take responsibility for our role in relation to the Plan and as a part of the Plan. The invocation of the Festival of Goodwill must therefore translate into concrete actions conducive to human spiritual unity. The rhythm of invocation, accumulation and evocation characterizes human creative power and precedes the externalization of any creation. Visualizing the transformation that will take place on Earth when humanity is finally able to fully express goodwill can help us determine what steps we need to take, individually and as a group, to aid in that process. How we approach this task depends on whether we assume that change occurs because of suffering or is fueled by joy.

What is the connection between goodwill and joy? The experience of joy is possible when we recognize that there is but One Soul and when this realization of unification is used in

the service of humanity. Joy comes from the certainty of humanity’s triumph and arises in us by “bringing about those conditions that lead to the better expression of the souls of those we contact.”¹¹ Joy occurs when the life of the Soul controls the life of the personality.

In working with the Science of Redemption, we have the opportunity to facilitate the transition from the preoccupation with pain, which is evident everywhere today on Earth, to the redeeming power of joy, which naturally flows from the illuminated heart, qualified by the energy of love.

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¹ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1951), 345.

² *Ibid.*, 347.

³ *Ibid.*, 366.

⁴ Alice A. Bailey, *The Labours of Hercules* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1974), 60.

⁵ *op.cit.*, *Esoteric Astrology*, 362.

⁶ *Ibid.* 370.

⁷ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology, Vol. 2* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1942), 645.

⁸ Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. 2* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1955), 172.

⁹ Kenneth Sørensen, *The Way from Suffering to Joy* (School for Esoteric Studies, Easter Talk, 2019), 2.

¹⁰ *op.cit.*, *Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. 2*, 47.

¹¹ Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1934), 370.