

The New World Religion: Opportunities and Challenges

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Summary

During World War II the Tibetan Master prophesied that a New World Religion will emerge to serve humanity's needs in the centuries to come. He provided a broad outline of its characteristics, noting the important roles to be played by the Christ, the Master Jesus, other Masters, and their senior disciples. Parallel prophecies concerning the reappearance of the Christ, the externalization of the Planetary Hierarchy, and restoration of the Mysteries helped fill in details of how the new religion will function.

The Tibetan indicated that Christianity would form the primary foundation of the New World Religion, though many changes would be necessary. Over the last sixty years far-reaching reforms, leading in that direction, have been set in motion by Christians themselves. By contrast, most esotericists, who could also make significant contributions, are missing the opportunity to participate.

This article reviews the Tibetan's prophecies and then explores ways in which esotericists of various Ray types could, and should, become more involved. It also notes the challenges esotericists, and the New World Religion itself, can expect to face.

Introduction

The Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul first mentioned the New World Religion in May 1943, in an essay communicated telepathically to his amanuensis Alice Bailey. She shared the essay with the Tibetan's select group of disciples and sent copies to hundreds of churches.¹ Portions of the essay were later included in two books: *The Reappearance of the Christ*

(1948) and *The Externalization of the Hierarchy* (1957), which are the principal sources for this article.

Providing context for his discussion, the Tibetan made an eloquent statement reiterating his knowledge of spiritual reality and dedication to the work of the Christ:

I would remind you that I write as one who believes in the great spiritual realities and who regards the unfolding spirit of man as the unshatterable evidence of the existence of "the One in Whom we live and move and have our being." I speak as one who believes in and loves the Christ and who knows Him to be the Master of all the Masters and the Teacher alike of angels and of men. I am one who looks to Christ as the supreme expression of divinity upon Earth and who knows the extent of His sacrificial work for humanity, the wonder of the revelation which He brought, the imminence of His return and of His coming Assumption of spiritual rule in the hearts of men everywhere.²

In addition to his prophecies relating to the New World Religion that would serve humanity's spiritual needs in the Aquarian Age, the

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Tibetan Master made other prophecies during and after World War II concerning Christ's reappearance on Earth, the externalization of the Hierarchy of Masters, and restoration of the Mysteries. We understand that a date "for the first stage of the externalization of the Hierarchy will "in all probability . . . be set" at the next General Assembly of the Hierarchy, scheduled for 2025.³ No dates were set for the other developments, though the Tibetan implied that they would occur within decades rather than centuries. Evidently much depends on the establishment of right human relations, and nobody can be satisfied with our efforts; some of the prophesied developments may well have been delayed. Nevertheless, evidence presented in this article suggests that significant progress is being made in preparing for the new religion.

The prophecies concerning the New World Religion have received less attention than the others. Many esotericists seem to have adopted a cautious attitude; content to await reforms within existing religions—or to await Hierarchical action—without getting involved themselves. From time to time they join secularists in criticizing organized religion, especially major Christian denominations. "Dogma and doctrine," "empty ritual," pomp, materialism, reaction to social change, exclusivism, repression of women, and support of unjust wars are staples of anti-Christian rhetoric. Esotericists are fond of saying that organized religion has become a "crystallized form," no longer able to adapt to new conditions and inadequate to support its indwelling life. A popular opinion is that religion is in its death throes, fast declining into obscurity as a fossil of the Piscean Age. Compounding these attitudes is the belief that religion is for "aspirants" and that those on the path of discipleship have no further use for it.

Negative attitudes probably have multiple causes, ranging from unfortunate personal experiences to awareness of Christianity's failings. The churches bear terrible collective karma. Countless people have been harmed by ignorant clergy and misguided teachings. Millions have suffered and died in religious vio-

lence. Reactionism still pervades large segments of institutional Christianity.

On the other hand, Christianity can claim great achievements: in scholarship, the arts, the sanctity of innumerable saints and ordinary people, and a record of service unequalled by any comparable human institution. Christianity came into being as a result of the Palestinian mission of the Christ and the Master Jesus and has expressed much of their vision. It is expected to have a prominent role in the New World Religion—a surprisingly large role, considering what other world religions might also have to offer.

Elsewhere, the present author has discussed the reforms needed to bridge the gap between Christianity, as we have come to know it, and the Tibetan's vision of the New World Religion.⁴ Progress is being made on many fronts to close that gap.

Denominations and groups within denominations have already taken major steps toward needed reform and are working to build an inclusive, responsive, relevant religion for the 21st century. This is true even of large Christian denominations, including the "sacramental churches," which in combination may have the greatest potential to serve as the foundation for the New World Religion. "Sacramental," "evangelical" and "liberal" are three broad categories for classifying denominations.⁵ While the boundaries are not sharp, the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican churches fit comfortably in the sacramental category. Their central act of worship is the Eucharist, and their mission is built upon the sacraments as well as on the personal devotion, preaching and outreach found in all denominations.

Progress has been made without any significant contribution by esotericists. The Tibetan declared that religion, as it currently exists, "is intended to serve the masses and is not intended to be of use (except as a field of service) to the esotericists of the world."⁶ Certainly Christianity developed into a mass religion, not one for a small elite, and esotericists have never formed a substantial fraction of the total mem-

bership. But we should not ignore the great mystics who have graced Christianity, or occultists like Albertus Magnus, Heinrich Agrippa, Emmanuel Swedenborg, Anna Kingsford, and Annie Besant. In any event, two billion people identify themselves as Christian, making it a rich field for service.

Working to establish the New World Religion would seem to be a worthy field of endeavor, offering unique opportunities for service and likely bringing great personal and collective rewards. Sadly, the great majority of esotericists are missing those opportunities. The situation must change, or as a group we shall be left on the sidelines. The present article examines ways in which esotericists can play meaningful roles in the transformation of Christianity and further roles that will open up as the new religion takes definite shape. It also examines the challenges esotericists may face in getting involved. First we need to examine the Tibetan's prophecies concerning the New World Religion.

New World Religion

In a statement of far-reaching significance the Master Djwhal Khul declared: "The three main channels through which the preparation for the new age is going on might be regarded as the Church, the Masonic Fraternity and the educational field."⁷ He went on to explain that they express, respectively, the Second Ray of Love-Wisdom, the First Ray of Will and Power, and the Third Ray of Active Intelligence. The Tibetan explained that the church

is constituted of the sum total of all those in whom the life of Christ or the Christ-consciousness is to be found or is in process of finding expression; it is the aggregation of all who love their fellowmen, because to love one's fellowmen is the divine faculty which makes us full members of Christ's community.⁸

The Christ works through his church, serving the masses of people, particularly those on the Second Ray: "The Church . . . hides in its heart those who vibrate to the great love ray, the Second Ray of Love - Wisdom. Christ Himself

works through it and by its means seeks to contact the vast Christian public. It . . . can touch the great masses of seeking souls."⁹

The Tibetan also shared a larger vision, identifying "the true Church of Christ" with the Planetary Hierarchy.¹⁰ We note that the Christ, the World Teacher, is head of the vast Second-Ray ashram, or "department," of "Religion," "Beliefs" and "Faiths."¹¹ His responsibilities include religious affairs throughout the world. We can assume that he is heavily involved in preparations for the New World Religion now and will remain so after it is established.

Importantly, the Tibetan spoke of a new *religion*, not a new world *spirituality*—though we shall see that spirituality will be an important element. Religion implies some kind of shared or institutional activity. "True religion," he affirmed,

is again emerging in the hearts of men in every land; this recognition of a divine hope and background may possibly take people back into the churches and world faiths, but it will most certainly take them back to God. Religion is the name, surely, which we give to the invocative appeal of humanity which leads to the evocative response of the Spirit of God.¹²

The world's religions that have come down to us through history were human creations, and they often failed. Yet the Tibetan insisted that they achieved certain basic goals: "Step by step man has been led through prayer, the voice of desire, through worship, the recognition of deity, through affirmation of the fact of human identity of nature with the divine, to a belief in the divinity of man."¹³ One would expect that a new religion targeted at the whole of humanity would draw upon the best traditions of all existing world religions. But that may not be the case. The Tibetan occasionally mentioned Buddhism, but the greater part of his discourses focused on Christianity. References to "the church" added further emphasis.

The important question was how much of Piscean-Age Christianity had to go and how much would be preserved. Impeding the establishment of the New World Religion were narrow,

sectarian attitudes and behavior, or what the Tibetan called “churchianity.”¹⁴ The term appears ten times in Alice Bailey’s books, though it tends to be avoided today because of its pejorative quality. “The mass of thinking people,” the Tibetan wrote in the 1940s, are aware of the problem; “unfortunately, these thinking people are still a small minority. Nevertheless, it is this thinking minority which (when it is a majority and it is today a rapidly growing one) will . . . endorse the spread of the true teaching of the Christ.”¹⁵ Whether “thinking people” now comprise a majority in the churches is debatable, but certainly their numbers have increased.

The political power of institutional Christianity was a further impediment. Perhaps because he did not foresee the rise of evangelical fundamentalism, the Tibetan seemed satisfied on that issue and looked forward to expression of the true essence of Christianity:

The rule of the churches is over, but not the precepts of Christianity or the example of the Christ. He is, however, responsible for a newer and more effective presentation of the coming world religion, and for that the churches should prepare, if they have enough illumination to recognize their need and His effort to meet that need.¹⁶

Elsewhere than in fundamentalist churches, Christianity is already recognizing the need and responding to the Christ’s effort. Evidence for this will be examined later in this article. Meanwhile, we are encouraged to know that the “veil that hides [the] real church from us is now in process of disappearing and Christ is on the verge of reappearing.”¹⁷

The Tibetan emphasized that Christianity was essentially good, but its potential has not yet been realized: “Christianity,” he wrote, “is an expression—in essence, if not yet entirely factual—of the love of God, immanent in His created universe.”¹⁸ Much will be preserved to form a basis for the new religion:

The Christ and the spiritual Hierarchy will not come to destroy all that humanity has hitherto found “necessary to salvation,” and all that has met its spiritual demand. When the Christ reappears, the non-essentials will

surely disappear; the fundamentals of faith will remain, upon which He can build that New World Religion for which all men wait. That New World Religion must be based upon those truths which have stood the test of ages and which have brought assurance and comfort to men everywhere.¹⁹

Theological Principles

The nature of the transformation that Christianity will undergo can be glimpsed from the following:

[S]pirituality will supersede theology; living experience will take the place of theological acceptances. The spiritual realities will emerge with increasing clarity and the form aspect will recede into the background; dynamic, expressive truth will be the keynote of the New World Religion. The living Christ will assume His rightful place in human consciousness and see the fruition of His plans, sacrifice and service, but the hold of the ecclesiastical orders will weaken and disappear. Only those will remain as guides and leaders of the human spirit who speak from living experience, and who know no creedal barriers; they will recognize the onward march of revelation and the new emerging truths.²⁰

The Tibetan Master added that “these truths will be founded on the ancient realities but will be adapted to modern need and will manifest progressively the revelation of the divine nature and quality.”²¹ He was critical of sectarian doctrine. “It is impossible to believe,” he declared, that Christ and His disciples “are interested in the views of the Fundamentalists or in the theories of the theologians upon the Virgin Birth, the Vicarious Atonement or the Infallibility of the Pope.”²²

The Tibetan hesitated to use the words like “doctrine” and “theology” in connection with the New World Religion, but he spoke of three “major presentations of truth”:

1. The fact of the Spirit of God, both transcendent and immanent, will be demonstrated, and also a similar fact in relation to man. The mode of their approach to each other, via the soul, will be indicated. This

aspect of the emerging truth might be called Transcendental Mysticism.

2. The fact of the divine quality of the Forces in nature and in man and the method of their utilization for divine purposes by man. This might be called Transcendental Occultism.

3. The fact, implied in the first, that Humanity, as a Whole, is an expression of divinity, a complete expression, plus the allied fact of the divine nature and work of the planetary Hierarchy, and the mode of the Approach of these two groups, in group form, to each other. This might be called Transcendental Religion.²³

The repeated use of the word “transcendental” deserves special attention. The Tibetan seemed intent on distinguishing the three major presentations from mysticism, occultism and religion as understood in the past. The distinction may be relatively minor in the first instance; mysticism of a high order can be found in all world religions and is being embraced increasingly by the masses.²⁴ The history of occultism and organized religion, on the other hand, provides many examples of the need for increased emphasis on the transcendental.

The three presentations of truth were expanded to four, and finally to six, “truths which have stood the test of the ages”:

1. The Fact of God
2. Man's Relationship to God
3. The Fact of Immortality and Eternal Persistence
4. The Continuity of Revelation and the Divine Approaches...
5. The fact of our relationship with each other . . .
6. The fact of the Path to God.²⁵

These truths, the Tibetan explained, are universal and find resonance inside and outside Christianity. In his words: “[T]he study of Comparative Religion has demonstrated that the foundational truths in every faith are identical. Because of this universality, they evoke recognition and response from all men every

where.”²⁶ The Tibetan lamented that “the spiritual unity of all men everywhere” is hindered because of “clerical organizations and their militant attitude to religions and to faiths other than their own.”²⁷ Fortunately such attitudes are less strong now than they were at the time he was writing.

Certain things to which Christianity has always attached special significance will take center-stage in the New World Religion. Among them are events in the life of the historical Christ:

[U]pon the revelation of the risen Christ must the new world religion take its stand. Christ upon the Cross, as will appear when we study the next great crisis, showed us love and sacrifice carried to their extreme expression; but Christ alive from all time, and vitally alive today, is the keynote of the new age, and upon this truth must the new presentation of religion be built and, later, the new theology be constructed. The true meaning of the Resurrection and the Ascension has not yet been grasped; as a divine subjective reality those truths still await revelation. The glory of the new age will be the unveiling of those two mysteries, and our entrance into a fuller understanding of God as life.²⁸

It should be noted that devotion to the cross and the suffering Christ is primarily a feature of western Christianity. The Eastern Orthodox churches place more emphasis on his transfiguration, resurrection and ascension: on Christ as the expression of divine glory. In the future the emphasis on life will become universal:

Life and not death will be proclaimed; attainment of spiritual status through spiritual living will be taught, and the fact of the existence of those who have thus attained and who work with Christ for the helping and salvaging of humanity will be the goal. The fact of the spiritual Hierarchy of our planet, the ability of mankind to contact its Members and to work in cooperation with Them, and the existence of Those Who know what the will of God is and can work intelligently with that will—these are the truths upon which the future spiritual teaching will be based.²⁹

Christianity has a commendable teaching record, though its focus needs to change:

The church as a teaching factor should take the great basic doctrines and (shattering the old forms in which they are expressed and held) show their true and inner spiritual significance. The prime work of the church is to teach, and teach ceaselessly, preserving the outer appearance in order to reach the many who are accustomed to church usages. Teachers must be trained; Bible knowledge must be spread.³⁰

The importance of Bible study also emerges from the following comment: “[The Christ] has told us (and the New Testament in many places emphasizes it) that we also are divine, all of us are the Sons of God and that . . . we are able to do still greater things than Christ did.”³¹ These comments may hint at evangelical Christianity’s role in the formation of the new religion.³²

Of the utmost significance, emphasis will shift gradually to the First-Aspect of Deity, Will and Purpose: “God is now known as Intelligence and Love. That the past has given us. He must be known as Will and Purpose, and that the future will reveal.”³³ In more detail:

We are—if it could be but realized—in process of re-interpreting and re-arranging what can be called “the doctrinal structure underlying the relation between knowledge and wisdom.” This involves the destruction of old concepts such as the trinity of manifestation, and the assembly of those new and more correct ideas which must inevitably be substituted for the old, as the unfoldment of the first aspect is presented to the initiate upon the Path. This, through certain later activities, will gradually seep downwards into the consciousness of humanity, and the New World Religion will be founded upon a deeper spiritual perception of the Father or Life Aspect, in place of the rapidly crystallizing vision of the Son or consciousness aspect.³⁴

Certainly the “Jesus Christ” of traditional Christianity has become a crystallized vision, in need of new light on the distinctions between the Master Jesus and the overshadowing

Christ. But what the Tibetan meant when he implied that “the trinity of manifestation” is an “old concept,” or how its destruction could promote transfer of attention from the Second to the First Aspect of Deity, is unclear. His teachings are replete with references to the triune nature of the Logos.

The Tibetan’s discomfort with “theology” presumably derived from its associations with dogma. Yet much of what he discussed could be classified as theology, understood as the study of the Divine and our relationship with it. Whether spirituality will actually supersede theology is debatable. We are thinking beings, unlikely to stop constructing intellectual models of higher reality. Not insignificantly, the domains of theology and esoteric philosophy overlap to a considerable extent.

Liturgy, Ritual and Invocation

Like the religions of the past the New World Religion will have its liturgical calendar. The Tibetan noted that many “church festivals are fixed by reference to the moon or a zodiacal constellation. Investigation will prove this to be increasingly the case, and when the ritual of the New World Religion is universally established this will be one of the important factors considered.”³⁵ The major events on the calendar will be the full-moon festivals. The Tibetan predicted that through those festivals man will

grasp not only his relation to the spiritual Life of our planet, the “One in Whom we live and move and have our being,” but will also [catch] a glimpse of the relation of our planet to the circle of planetary lives moving within the orbit of the Sun, and the still greater circle of spiritual Influences which contact our solar system as it pursues its orbit in the Heavens (the twelve constellations of the zodiac).³⁶

Easter, the Wesak Festival, and the Festival of Goodwill, corresponding, respectively, to the full moons in Aries, Taurus and Gemini, are already in place and are expected to be major events of the new liturgical year. They delineate the season known as the Higher Interlude. It and the Lower Interlude, which spans the rest of the year, are explained thus: “In the higher interlude, abstract or divine thought

impresses the soul and is transmitted to the waiting mind; in the other [the Lower Interlude], the mind, through concrete thought and an attempt to embody divine thought in form, impresses the brain and produces action through the medium of the physical body.”³⁷

The full-moon festivals of the Lower Interlude will also be important: “Each of the months of the year will . . . be dedicated (through accurate astrological and astronomical knowledge) to whichever constellation in the heavens governs a particular month.”³⁸ For example, August is ruled by Leo, and in turn by the fixed star Sirius:

Sirius is the home of that greater Lodge to which our fifth initiation admits a man and to which it brings him, as a humble disciple. Later, when the new world religion is founded and is working, we shall find that the major, monthly festival in August, held at the time of the full moon, will be dedicated to the task of making contact, via the Hierarchy, with Sirian force.³⁹

The World Servers Festival is observed every seven years in December when “the energies of Capricorn [are] augmented by the pouring in of forces from a still greater constellation which is—to our zodiac—what the zodiac is to the earth.”⁴⁰

The New World Religion will have “its new rituals and ceremonies.”⁴¹ The sacraments, the Tibetan explained, “must be mystically interpreted, and the power of the church to heal must be demonstrated.”⁴² “Properly understood,” the sacraments will “serve to strengthen [the] link and realization” of karmic connections with Christ and the Master Jesus, “and such a one as that of Baptism (when entered upon with understanding) will draw forth oft a response from the Great Lord Himself.”⁴³ The Tibetan then offered a most enigmatic suggestion:

It is almost as if a golden strand were directed from His heart to the heart of the servant. . . . Eventually these many strands will become reabsorbed into their source when the Body of the Christ—one of the seven Heavenly Men on the second or monadic plane—is completed in full expres-

sion, for each one linked to Him becomes, in a vital sense, a cell in His Body.⁴⁴

In what way the Body of the Christ could be “one of the seven Heavenly Men”—a term normally reserved for the Planetary Logoi—is unclear. However, the Tibetan did offer this assurance: “Via this strand passes the power to strengthen, to stimulate, to vivify and to bless, and this is the true apostolic succession. All true disciples are priests unto the Lord.”⁴⁵

The sacraments of the New World Religion will include the Eucharist in a generalized sense:

[M]en everywhere [will] sit down together in the Presence of the Christ and share the bread and wine (symbols of nourishment). Preparations for that shared feast (symbolically speaking) are on their way, and those preparations are being made by the masses of men themselves, as they fight and struggle and legislate for the economic sustenance of their nations, and as the theme of food occupies the attention of legislators everywhere. This sharing, beginning on the physical plane, will prove equally true of all human relations and this will be the great gift of the Aquarian Age to humanity.⁴⁶

We might note that other expressions of the trans-Himalayan teachings give considerable emphasis to the Eucharist in its more traditional sense. For example, the Eucharist became the central act of worship in the Liberal Catholic Church, founded by Theosophists in an attempt to revitalize age-old religious ritual by the infusion of esoteric teachings.⁴⁷ It was, of course, already the central act of worship in Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican churches. These three sacramental churches may be able to play a special role in the New World Religion because of the care with which they preserved sacramental ritual throughout the ages. As noted, the Tibetans’ insistence that “Bible knowledge must be spread” also suggests a continuing role for evangelical Christianity.

The Tibetan reassured us that “prayer, worship and affirmation” will be preserved. But to them will be added “the new religion of Invocation and Evocation . . . in which man will

begin to use his divine power and come into closer touch with the spiritual sources of all life.⁴⁸ That comment may provide clues to the meaning of “Transcendental Occultism.”

The Great Invocation will play an important role: “This new Invocation, if given widespread distribution, can be to the new world religion what the Lord's Prayer has been to Christianity and the Twenty-Third Psalm has been to the spiritually minded Jew.”⁴⁹ Many of us, whether or not we personally identify with Christianity or Judaism, would hope that the Lord's Prayer, the Twenty-Third Psalm, and other revered prayers and scriptural passages can be preserved in the liturgy of the new religion and used alongside the Great Invocation.

The Tibetan explained that the “new invocative work will be the keynote of the coming world religion invocation.” Two groups of people will participate:

There will be the invocative work of the masses of the people, trained by the spiritually minded people of the world (working in the churches, whenever possible, under an enlightened clergy) to accept the fact of the approaching spiritual energies, focused through the spiritual Hierarchy, and to voice their spiritual demand for light, liberation and understanding. There will also be the trained, scientific work of appeal and invocation as practiced by those who have trained their minds through right meditation, who know the uses of sound, of formulas and of invocation, and who can work consciously, focusing the invocative cry of the masses and at the same time using certain great formulas of words which will later be given to the race, as The Lord's Prayer was given by the Christ and The Great Invocation has been given in this day and age.⁵⁰

Humanity's participation in this work of spiritual invocation will be a unique opportunity, and its purpose far-reaching:

This is not magical invocation, as man understands it, and which is concerned with the invocation and control of the substantial and elemental forces of the manifested

world, but the invocation which will evoke contact with the spiritual Lives and the divine embodied Energies as well as with the Hierarchy (which is Their intermediary) in order to bring about the manifestation on earth of the soul of humanity and the qualities of the subjective and inner divine life which all outer forms veil. This is now for the first time possible in the life of the planet.⁵¹

Restoration of the Mysteries

Closely related with establishment of the New World religion will be the restoration of the Mysteries: “When the Great One comes with His disciples and initiates we shall have (after a period of intensive work on the physical plane beginning around the year 1940) the restoration of the Mysteries.”⁵² One wonders how long a “period of intensive work on the physical plane” will be needed—presumably more than the seven decades that have elapsed since that time.

The ancient mystery tradition included both the Lesser and Greater Mysteries, the former performed more or less openly, the latter veiled in secrecy. The Christian sacraments are often cited as the successors of the Lesser Mysteries, while the rites of Freemasonry preserve some sense of the Greater Mysteries. In the future the Greater Mysteries will be the initiations recognized by the Planetary Hierarchy. Eventually, the restored Mysteries may form a continuum in which individuals can progress from the path of aspiration to the path of initiation.

The first initiation, “the Birth of the Christ in the cave of the Heart,” will become “the basic ceremony in the new world religion.”⁵³ The Tibetan emphasized: “It will not, in the future, be the experience of the occasional disciple but the general experience of countless thousands towards the close of the Aquarian Age.” Moreover:

The purifying waters of the Baptism Initiation (the second initiation) will submerge hundreds of aspirants in many lands, and these two initiations (which are preparatory to true service, and the third initiation of the

Transfiguration) will set the seal on Christ's mission as the Agent of the great spiritual Triangle which He represents.⁵⁴

The great triangle will be formed by the Buddha, the Spirit of Peace, and the Avatar of Synthesis who will “stand in power behind” the Christ when he reappears.⁵⁵

We understand that the Mysteries will form “the basis of the new world religion,”⁵⁶ and it is worth noting that the sacraments were always referred to as “the mysteries” in the Eastern Orthodox churches. The Mysteries, in the more specific sense, “will be restored to outer expression through the medium of the Church and the Masonic Fraternity, if those groups leave off being organizations with material purpose, and become organisms with living objectives.”⁵⁷ Reminding us that the Christ “is the Hierophant of the first and second initiations,”

the Tibetan explained that “if the preparatory work is faithfully and well done,” the Christ “will administer the first initiation in the inner sanctuaries of those two bodies.”⁵⁸ We are not told why there will be that duplication of effort. Nevertheless, use of churches and Masonic temples may bring us closer to fulfilling the age-old dream of a convergence of religious and Masonic ritual.⁵⁹

While we are assured that the Mysteries “will unify all faiths,”⁶⁰ the Tibetan never explained whether, or to what extent, the ritual traditions of other world religions will be included. But in a statement that may raise many eyebrows, the Tibetan declared: “The true Mysteries will also reveal themselves through science and the incentive to search for them there will be given by the Christ.”⁶¹ He went on to explain that the mysteries “will unlock the mystery of electricity,” adding: “Only when the Hierarchy is pre-

sent visibly on Earth and the Mysteries of which the disciples of the Christ are the Custodians are given openly to the world, will the true secret and nature of electrical phenomena be revealed.”⁶²

Progress to Date

The Tibetan Master expressed optimism that the New World Religion was an idea whose time (in the 1940s) had come: “Today, slowly, the concept of a world religion and the need for its emergence are widely desired and worked for.”⁶³ “Definite outlines” of the new religion, he wrote, “will appear towards the close of [the 20th] century.”⁶⁴ By now those definite outlines should be evident. More specifically the process of Christianity’s transformation should already have begun. But has it? We might easily say “no”—and console ourselves that the timing of prophecies is notoriously inaccurate and that, for

any of several reasons, establishment of the new religion has been delayed.

In fact the answer should be an emphatic “yes.” Major, positive changes have taken place in the churches since 1949, when the Tibetan’s cycle of writings came to an end. The political power of institutional Christianity continues to wane—though evangelical fundamentalism has gained unexpectedly strong influence in the United States. Mutual respect among denominations is at an all-time high. The Second Vatican Council (1962–65) was a turning point in that respect, for other Christians as well as for Roman Catholics.

The charismatic revival, also in the 1960s, brought about the widespread restoration of healing ministries in western Christianity after a millennium of neglect—though it is worth noting that sacramental healing was never

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abandoned in the Eastern Orthodox churches.⁶⁵ Denominations across the religious spectrum are engaged in large-scale service activities as well as missionary efforts.

Many Christians in the West are suspicious of notions that doctrinal formulations can be adequate for all time. In medieval times the institutional church was the sole center of learning, and an illiterate laity may have been content to be told what to believe.⁶⁶ Today educated laypeople honor their own insights and spiritual experiences. Moreover, they view truth as continually evolving and unfolding. Personal insight is gaining recognition as a legitimate source of new revelation. The Anglican churches recognize the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds but have always emphasized collective worship, or "common prayer," over doctrinal conformity. The Eastern Orthodox churches regard the decrees of the ecumenical councils as infallible, but they also have a strong tradition of mystical theology that incorporates new revelation.

The Roman Catholic Church continues to claim the authority to formulate infallible, unchangeable dogma. The papacy also maintains a tight disciplinary grip on its flock. Since Vatican II the church has returned to a fundamentalist stance on social and ecumenical issues, and a key factor in the selection of bishops is loyalty to the party line. The Church of Rome clings to regressive policies on clerical celibacy, the ordination of women, marriage equality, and contraception. It refuses to recognize the validity of ordinations in the Anglican Communion, even though the latter has an episcopal lineage extending back as far as Rome's.

On the other hand, much progress has been made in Roman Catholicism, below the highest echelons of power. Liberation Theology acquired prominence after Vatican II, focusing on the suffering of the poor, their struggles, and their perspectives on society and Christianity. Jesus was portrayed as a social reformer, even a revolutionary. Liberation Theology gained wide support from the laity and pastoral clergy in South and Central America, before declining in the face of opposition from Rome.

Many initiatives have been taken by Roman Catholic laypeople, members of religious orders, and even a few bishops. Small communities have emerged within, or in some cases outside, the traditional parish structure. One survey identified 37,000 such groups in the continental United States, with a membership approaching one million.⁶⁷ It found that members were committed to traditional religious observance but were willing to follow individual conscience rather than papal edicts.⁶⁸ The church's ban on contraception is ignored by the overwhelming majority of couples. One religious commentator felt confident in announcing: "American Roman Catholics . . . have the most liberal social beliefs of any denomination."⁶⁹ Most recently nuns—distancing themselves from the reactionism of Rome—have emerged as a potent collective voice for social justice.

Anglicanism has offered an active social ministry since the mid-19th century, and its Christian Social Union predates Liberation Theology.⁷⁰ The Episcopal Church has adopted a broad range of progressive policies and is now the most socially liberal of the large denominations in the United States. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Presbyterian Church U.S.A., United Methodist Church, and United Church of Christ have similarly commendable records of leadership on social issues, and the same can be said of many denominations worldwide.

The Tibetan did not mention the ordination of women as one of the features of the New World Religion, but modern society recognizes the artificiality of gender-based restrictions and the outstanding service that women clergy can provide. In 1853 Congregationalist Antoinette Brown became the first woman minister in the United States, though she was dismissed the following year. Olympia Brown was ordained a Universalist minister in 1863. Eighty years later the Anglican Communion ordained Florence Li Tim Oi of Hong Kong "on an emergency basis." The Episcopal Church in the United States Church voted to admit women to the episcopate in 1976, and its current presiding bishop is female.⁷¹ The United Methodist

Church has appointed female bishops since 1980, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany since 1992, and the Czech Hussite Church since 1999. The Unitarian Universalist Association now has a majority of female clergy. The Society of Friends (Quakers) and the Salvation Army do not recognize formal ordination but have always affirmed sexual equality in leadership positions.

Neither did the Tibetan mention the ordination of gay and lesbian people; indeed he expressed strong views about homosexuality.⁷² But again societal attitudes have changed. The United Church of Christ permitted the ordination of gay ministers in the 1970s, and in 2005 it formally endorsed the blessing of same-sex couples. The Church of Sweden agreed to welcome partnered gay clergy in 2006. The Episcopal Church has consecrated two openly gay bishops and recently created liturgies for same-sex unions. Sadly, some other denominations adamantly refuse to admit openly gay people—or even women—to the ministry. They are on the wrong side of history and seem destined for irrelevance if they do not change.

The fragmentation of western Christianity has not been reversed, but denominations are reaching out to one another with unprecedented ecumenical warmth. Much work has been done to improve mutual respect, understanding and cooperation. The World Council of Churches, founded in 1948, now has nearly 350 member churches. United Religions Initiative was formed to build bridges between Christian and other world religions.

High-level, bilateral discussions seeking mutual understanding on theological positions have taken place among the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, and other churches. Considerable progress has been made. For example, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation issued a joint declaration resolving the long-divisive dispute over “justification by faith.” Anglican and Eastern Orthodox Church leaders declared that Mary, the mother of Jesus, “holds the pre-eminent place within the communion of saints and embodies the destiny of the Church.”⁷³ In a few cases denominations have agreed to merge; in many more cases “full” or

“partial communion” has been established, permitting the exchange of clergy and participation in one another’s worship services.

In some ways Eastern Orthodoxy is the most conservative branch of Christianity. Yet Russian Orthodox theologians have created the vision of a universal church that embraces the whole of humanity. Theologian and scientist Pavel Florensky (1882–1937) contrasted the mystical church, “the unifying, preexistent, heavenly, mystical form,” with the “historical church” with its record of successes and failures. The mystical church could be regarded as the archetype, and the historical church as its imperfect realization. Or we could regard the mystical church as the *thoughtform* Christ created during his Palestinian mission, and the historical church as humanity’s response to it. Florensky recognized that the historical church could come closer to its archetype if sectarian divisions were healed. He urged the disparate denominations to come together to be “deified and eternalized in the unifying form.”⁷⁴

Orthodox priest Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944) expanded on the notion of a universal church, linking it to the Divine Feminine Sophia.⁷⁵ His near-contemporary, Russian poet and visionary Daniel Andreev (1906–1959) averred that the world’s religions “will be transformed from a collage of separate petals into one single, whole spiritual flower the Rose of the World.”⁷⁶

The Tibetan Master made a comment of the greatest significance about Russia:

Out of Russia—a symbol of the world Arjuna in a very special sense—will emerge that new and magical religion about which I have so often told you. It will be the product of the great and imminent Approach which will take place between humanity and the Hierarchy. From these two centers of spiritual force, in which the light which ever shineth in and from the East will irradiate the West, the whole world will be flooded with the radiance of the Sun of Righteousness. I am . . . referring to the appearance of a great and spiritual religion which . . . will demonstrate itself and be focused in a great and spiritual Light which

will be held aloft by a vital Russian exponent of true religion—that man for whom many Russians have been looking and who will be the justification of a most ancient prophecy.⁷⁷

Anglicans have long recognized the power of Russian Orthodox mystical theology, and efforts to create a synthesis of mystical theology and modern esoteric teachings could be especially productive. But it would seem that the “Russian exponent” has yet to come forward.

Nobody would claim that Christianity’s transformation is nearing completion or that universal harmony has been attained across sectarian lines. Separatism remains in every denomination, some more so than others, but real progress has been made. Where much more work is needed is in increasing tolerance and understanding among Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and other world religions.

In addition to the changes to institutional Christianity, important changes are taking place in society. The nadir of materialism and rationalism is past, and increasing numbers of people today identify themselves as “spiritual,” even if they do not belong to a church organization. People of all walks of life feel an impulse to respond to higher reality and to express that impulse in ritual, prayer and service. They may include the “intellectual mystics” mentioned later.

The new-age movement was a passing fad, but it left in its wake greater awareness of the unseen worlds, belief in the cycle of rebirth, and a wide range of meditation practices.⁷⁸ Today people find inspirational support in small groups, in workshops, and on the Internet. Esoteric schools and their journals, like *The Beacon* and *The Esoteric Quarterly*, serve the needs of serious students. Networks of people are springing up, offering the sense of spiritual community once provided by church membership. The “Earth religions” are thriving, and feminist theology is providing new insights into the concept of Deity and our relationship to it.

Sensitivity is increasing toward the rights and needs of marginalized people, the animal kingdom, and the planet. Violence and war are be-

ing seen as unacceptable ways to settle disputes. Social justice has become a mass concern, as evidenced by the success of the Occupy movement. People are more accepting of diversity and are reaching out to others across family, class, ethnic and national lines as never before. Sensitivity is also increasing toward the icons and values of other religions. Again, nobody would claim that the great evil of separateness has been banished, but substantial progress has been made.

Implementing the New World Religion

Role of the Planetary Hierarchy

The Christ, as noted, heads the Second-Ray Ashram whose responsibilities include religion, beliefs and faiths. Contributing to its work are a number of supporting ashrams on the same ray, headed by the Masters Koot Hoomi, Djwhal Khul, and others.

Djwhal Khul reminded us that Christ, notwithstanding his alleged ascension into heaven, “has never left us but . . . has worked for two thousand years through the medium of His disciples, the inspired men and women of all faiths, all religions and all religious persuasions.”⁷⁹ In contrast to the “silent, passive Figure, hidden behind a multitude of words written by a multitude of . . . commentators and preachers,” the Christ is “the living, working, active, present Christ Who has been with us in bodily Presence (according to His promise) for twenty centuries.”⁸⁰

Moreover, the Christ is to be thought of not as “the feeble Christ which historical Christianity has endorsed” but as “a strong and able executive.”⁸¹ He applied that competence in the past and continues to do so, revealing truth and instilling hope:

We need to awaken faith in the factual nature of divine revelation, and galvanize the church of Christ into a truer appreciation of Him and of His work. It is the living, acting, thinking Christ with whom we must deal, remembering always that the Gospel story is eternally true and only needs reinterpreting in the light of its place in the long succession of divine revelations. His

Mission on earth two thousand years ago is a part of that continuity and is not an extraordinary story, having no relation to the past, emphasizing a period of only 33 years and presenting no clear hope for the future.⁸²

The Christ “presides over the destiny of the great religions through the medium of a group of Masters and initiates Who direct the activities of these different schools of thought.”⁸³

The Master Jesus has direct responsibility for Christianity:

The Master Jesus, the inspirer and director of the Christian churches everywhere, though an adept on the Sixth Ray under the department of the Mahachohan, works at present under the Christ for the welfare of Christianity; other Masters hold similar posts in relation to the great oriental faiths, and the various occidental schools of thought.⁸⁴

“Temporary reassignments,” if we may use such a term, among ashrams might not be unusual if, as in this instance, they share commonality of purpose. Religion is inspired by the Second and Sixth Rays. It is also inspired by the Seventh Ray, as it pertains to religious ceremony, and the Fourth Ray, to sacred art.

We understand that the care of Christianity has long been Jesus’ primary mission. Like the Christ, he has notable organizational ability. And he has assistance not only from disciples working under him but also from the deva evolution:

The Master Jesus works especially with the masses of the Christian people who inhabit the occidental countries, and who gather in the churches. He is distinctively a great leader, an organizer, and a wise general executive. A special group of devas work under His command, and His connection with all true church leaders and executives is very close. He acts ceaselessly on the inner esoteric council of the churches, and with Him the groups of violet angels cooperate.⁸⁵

We would like to know more about “the inner esoteric council of the churches”: its history, membership, goals and accomplishments.

The Master Jesus is well aware of Christianity in its western environment: “No one so wisely knows as He the problems of the West, no one is so closely in touch with the people who stand for all that is best in Christian teachings, and no one is so well aware of the need of the present moment.”⁸⁶

Jesus and the Buddha will both play key roles in establishing the New World Religion:

[T]he Master Jesus will take certain initial steps towards reassuming control of His Church; the Buddha will send two trained disciples to reform Buddhism; other steps will also be taken in this department of religions and of education, over which the Christ rules, and He will move to restore the ancient spiritual landmarks, to eliminate that which is nonessential, and to reorganize the entire religious field.⁸⁷

We also read: “The Master Jesus will take a physical vehicle, and with certain of His chelas effect a re-spiritualization of the Catholic churches, breaking down the barrier separating the Episcopal and Greek churches from the Roman.”⁸⁸ Jesus’ involvement in, and future plans for, these denominations would seem to refute suggestions that Christianity has run its course and will soon pass out of existence as a relic of the Piscean Age.

Other Masters will perform parallel work: “The Master Hilarion will also come forth, and become a focal point of buddhic energy in the vast spiritualistic movement, whilst another Master is working with the Christian Science endeavor in an effort to swing it on to sounder lines.”⁸⁹ Hilarion, who heads the Fifth-Ray ashram, is known to have inspired the spiritualist movement in the 19th century and is also working with “Psychical Research groups everywhere . . . [and] has under observation all those who are psychics of the higher order, and assists in developing their powers for the good of the group.”⁹⁰

Christian Science, founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1879 as part of the New Thought Movement, represents one of the few attempts to inject esoteric principles into evangelical Christianity (another being the Unity School of Christianity). It is a small denomination in

terms of membership, but the Tibetan viewed it favorably:

Christian Science is a Fifth Ray expression of thought and was one of the effects of the incoming Fifth Ray life. A very large number of Christian Scientists are either Fifth or Sixth Ray egos, for this particular school of thought was one of the means whereby the fanatical emotional idealism (engendered by the potency of the Sixth Ray influence dominant for so many centuries) could be offset, and the mental grasp of truth and of life carefully fostered. Under its influence, the stage was set on which many mystics could begin to organize their mental bodies and discover that they had minds which could be used, and thus be prepared for the occult way.⁹¹

The Master Koot Hoomi, the Christ's "second in command," is also involved in religious matters. Like Jesus, he works through the churches, and he too has help from the devic orders:

The Master K.H., the Chohan on the teaching ray and He Who will be the next world teacher, is . . . attempting to transmute the thoughtform of religious dogma, to permeate the churches with the idea of the Coming, and bring to a sorrowing world the vision of the Great Helper, the Christ. He works with the rose devas and with the blue devas on astral levels, with the wise help of the great guardian Angel of that plane . . . the Lord Varuna. The activity of the astral plane is being much intensified and the angels of devotion, in whom the aspect of divine love is pre-eminent, work with the astral bodies of all those who are ready to strengthen and redirect their spiritual aspiration and desire. They are the angels who guard the sanctuaries of all the churches, cathedrals, temples and mosques of the world. They are now increasing the momentum of their vibration for the raising of the consciousness of the attendant congregations.⁹²

The comments on participation by devic beings are evocative. The violet devas, with whom the Master Jesus is said to be working,

are the "devas of the ethers,"⁹³ "closely allied with the evolutionary development of man's etheric body."⁹⁴ The rose and blue devas, with whom Koot Hoomi works, are the *agnisuryans*—devas of the "astral," emotional, plane. The Lord Varuna is the "God of Water"⁹⁵ and "Raja of the astral plane."⁹⁶ We learn that "He comes into manifestation in connection with one of the Heavenly Men, Who is the Lord of a major Ray," and that the power of emotion stems from "His more advanced stage of development and also to the fact that the Logos Himself is polarized in His astral body."⁹⁷ Significantly, religious devotion is an expression of the Sixth Ray, and the astral plane is the sixth systemic plane (counting from above); its symbol, water, is the essence of the sixth physical subplane.

As we look forward to restoration of the Mysteries, we can also anticipate greater awareness of a "group of devas closely connected with the mysteries of initiation. They form what is esoterically called the 'path of the Heart,' and are the bridge between the astral and the budhic planes."⁹⁸

The Masters Jesus and Koot Hoomi are both working with the leaders of Christian denominations as well as with the masses of the faithful: "Certain great prelates of the Anglican and Catholic churches are wise agents of His [Jesus],"⁹⁹ and: "The Master K.H. works also with the prelates of the great Catholic churches—Greek, Roman and Anglican—with the leaders of the Protestant communions, [and] with the foremost workers in the field of education."¹⁰⁰ If only we knew who those prelates were or are! The "Catholic churches," with which the two Masters are working, are the primary sacramental churches, and their potential to play a collective role in the New World Religion has already been mentioned. Reference to the "Protestant communions" may provide further evidence that evangelical Christianity will also have a role.¹⁰¹

The two Masters' work with religious leaders seems to imply that the value of organizational leadership—and indeed of the organizations themselves—is recognized by the Planetary Hierarchy. It would also suggest that the New World Religion will involve some form of or-

ganizational structure with positions of leadership responsibility resembling those of prelates, primates and presidents in today's churches.

Roles for Disciples

The anticipated involvement of senior members of the Hierarchy in establishing the New World Religion and restoring the mysteries might suggest that the rest of us can sit back and watch developments as spectators. But the Tibetan insisted that each of us can play a role, and there is no time to waste:

It is necessary for you to understand the immediate spiritual possibilities which confront humanity if those of you who have vision and love humanity are to measure up to the immediate opportunity. It is necessary that you should grasp the immediate preparatory steps which you can take in relation to those possibilities and should also have a vision of the principles which must govern the new world religion, with its outstanding points of focus.¹⁰²

Implementation “will take the form of a conscious unified group approach to the world of spiritual values, evoking . . . reciprocal action from Those Who are the citizens of that world—the planetary Hierarchy and affiliated groups.”¹⁰³

The Tibetan identified ten “focal points of energy in the human family through which certain energies can flow into the entire race.” The sixth focal point, consisting of “workers in the Field of Religion,” will bear the major responsibility for building the New World Religion:

Their work is to formulate the universal platform of the New World Religion. It is a work of loving synthesis and it will emphasize the unity and the fellowship of the spirit. This group is, in a pronounced sense, a channel for the activity of the second Ray of Love-Wisdom, that of the World Teacher The platform of the New World Religion will be built by the many groups, working under the inspiration of the Christ and the influence of the Second Ray and

these—in their totality—will constitute this sixth group.¹⁰⁴

The Tibetan made a similar statement several years later, confirming that the work was not confined to the select group of disciples to whom the *Discipleship* books were mainly addressed:

Workers in the field of religion will formulate the universal platform of the New World Religion. It is a work of loving synthesis and will emphasize the unity and the fellowship of the spirit. This group is, in a pronounced sense, a channel for the activities of the Christ, the world Teacher. The platform of the New World Religion will be built by many groups, working under the inspiration of the Christ.¹⁰⁵

Initially, a relatively small group of people will be involved: “[O]nly those souls who are on the Probationary Path or the Path of Discipleship will form the nucleus of the coming world religion.”¹⁰⁶ The “first detachment gathered into the coming Church will be found to be a part of the present great band of servers. These have, down the ages, been associated with the Christ in His work.”¹⁰⁷ But many more people will soon be involved:

The numbers of those associated with Him will be greatly increased, for all who knew Him in earlier incarnations in the ancient East, all whom He cured or taught, all who contacted Him or in any way incurred karma with Him or with the Master Jesus, will have the opportunity to cooperate at this time. Each sincere aspirant who is closely connected with the present Church organizations, who feels a close link with the Christ and who loves Him, can be practically sure that in Palestine they saw Him, knew Him and mayhap served and loved Him.¹⁰⁸

Support for the New World Religion is expected to come from a group, steadily growing in size, whom the Tibetan called “intellectual mystics, the knowers of reality who belong to no one religion or organization, but who regard themselves as members of the Church universal and as ‘members one of another’.”¹⁰⁹ One

could easily apply to them the term “Body of Christ,” long used in Christian circles. They are, the Tibetan continued,

gathered out of every nation, race and people; they are of every color and school of thought, yet they speak the same language, learn by the same symbols, tread the same path, have rejected the same non-essentials, and have isolated the same body of essential beliefs. They recognize each other; they accord equal devotion to the spiritual leaders of all races, and use each other's Bibles with equal freedom. They form the subjective background of the new world; they constitute the spiritual nucleus of the coming world religion; they are the unifying principle which will eventually save the world.¹¹⁰

Assuming that the New World Religion will have some kind of ecclesiastical structure, the roles currently played by senior clergy will eventually be taken over by senior disciples of the Master:

This whole concept of the chela on the thread lies behind the distorted teaching about the prerogatives and privileges of the priesthood and the relation of the Pope, for instance, to God or of the “elect” to the Deity. This latent and unfulfilled ideal is that of the chela on the thread and the Master and His Ashram, interpreted by the ecclesiastical consciousness as the Church. When the coming world religion is built around the work and the activity of the world disciples and knowers, then we shall see these symbols, called the “rights and prerogatives of the priesthood,” correctly interpreted and truly expressed.¹¹¹

Opportunities

The Tibetan assured us that nobody will be coerced into helping to implement the new religion: “I only seek to give you information, leaving you to make due application under the urge of your own souls.”¹¹² For those who respond, many opportunities present themselves.

For convenience the following suggestions refer to “Christians,” defined as adherents to traditional Christian doctrine and religious practices, and “esotericists,” as people who subscribe to modern esoteric philosophy. But we are not necessarily talking about two entirely distinct groups of people. Some traditional Christians are already familiar with

esoteric teachings, and some esotericists are either drawn to, or are members of, mainline churches. This area of overlap, this middle ground, is a particularly fertile area for effective action.

Esotericists in the middle ground have opportunities to participate in transforming Christianity from within. Such work must obviously be approached with sensitivity. To try to subvert a church's activities, or to tell a bishop what is wrong with his or her church, would be harmful as well as counterproductive. Participation means becoming engaged members of Christian communities, building the trust of fellow members, and discovering the richness of their traditions. In the process esotericists may come into contact with “those who vibrate to the great love ray, the second Ray of Love-Wisdom” and discover the environment through which “Christ Himself works.” When opportunities present themselves the esotericists can, with love and wisdom, steer fellow

Support for the New World Religion is expected to come from a group, steadily growing in size, whom the Tibetan called “intellectual mystics, the knowers of reality who belong to no one religion or organization, but who regard themselves as members of the Church universal and as ‘members one of another’.” One could easily apply to them the term “Body of Christ,” long used in Christian circles.

members toward more inclusive attitudes or sow the seeds of new understanding of doctrinal issues. Esotericists with strong Second-Ray influence, at the soul or personality level, may be particularly suited to this kind of work.

Service projects are excellent ways for esotericists and Christians, in the middle ground or otherwise, to come together in a spirit of love and cooperation. Disaster response offers special opportunities insofar as the urgency and critical need for effective action can help overcome mutual suspicions that might otherwise prevail. It is worth noting that large Christian denominations have the resources and experience to take on national and international service projects, while esoteric groups presently lack such capabilities.

Esotericists with Second, Sixth, or Seventh Ray influence may be led to participate in Christian healing and meditation/prayer groups. Healing practices in both sacramental and charismatic churches have much in common with modalities like Reiki.¹¹³ Centering Prayer, which has become popular in multiple denominations, forms a bridge between the contemplative prayer of cloistered religious orders and occult meditation.¹¹⁴ Christian members of the groups can be encouraged to recite the Great Invocation. Questions concerning terminology should be answered as simply as possible; for example, “the Masters” can be equated to the saints. Longer explanations can come later.

Engaging in dialog with individual Christians is another field of service, one that may appeal to esotericists with Fourth or Fifth Ray personalities. Again this must be approached with great sensitivity, and conversations must not be allowed to descend to an emotional level. Religious beliefs and love of tradition run deep, and people are unlikely to abandon them in response to cursory arguments. On the other hand many traditional Christians are interested in esoteric concepts and would like to know more. They may, for example, be interested to learn more about reincarnation and karma but are afraid that it contradicts established doctrine. Christians should be assured that no ecumenical council or papal edict has ever declared belief in rebirth heretical.¹¹⁵ Moreover

the law of karma has scriptural support from the Apostle Paul’s admonition “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”¹¹⁶ Christians may be interested in learning about possible distinctions between the human Jesus and a divine Christ.

Yet another field of service is seeking common ground between Christian doctrine and esoteric philosophy. The mystical theology of the Eastern Orthodox churches may offer the best immediate prospects, but bridging work needs to address both eastern and western doctrine. Common ground already extends beyond the three (four, or six) principles identified by the Tibetan. The two sides are still far apart on some issues, and terminology is a serious stumbling block, but progress has already been made toward a synthesis of understanding. Such work requires more than a superficial understanding of Christian theology. It also requires establishing credibility in religious circles; otherwise the results will be ignored by their target audience. Traditional Christians may be reluctant to read esoteric journals, even if their attention is drawn to articles of potential interest.

Fifth Ray personalities may find their calling in this kind of work. Much research is needed, but the stakes are high. If successful the work could open the way to the “dynamic, expressive truth [that] will be the keynote of the New World Religion.”

Challenges

The transformation of Christianity must be approached with caution. In haste to sweep away the bad, much good could also be lost. The beauty of the Christian liturgy; the prayer lives of the great mystics; sacred architecture, art and music; and the insights of the great theologians represent some of the richest aspects of western—and Greco-Russian—civilization. They have enormous value, and we discard them at our cultural and spiritual peril. Three examples will show what can go wrong.

In the Protestant Reformation justifiable anger over clerical excess led to misguided “reforms” in which the Eucharist was turned into a purely commemorative act, five of the traditional seven sacraments were discarded,

shrines were desecrated, irreplaceable sacred art was destroyed, and monasteries providing the only social services in their day were dissolved. Instrumental music was outlawed in the Reformed Churches, choirs were disbanded, organ pipes torn from churches, and church bells melted down to make guns. Even congregational singing was outlawed for sixty years in Ulrich Zwingli's Zürich.¹¹⁷ Calvinist beliefs and attitudes laid the groundwork for today's evangelical fundamentalism.¹¹⁸

In response to assault by Enlightenment skeptics, 18th-century liberal theologians began to "demythologize" scripture and rationalize doctrine. The end result was the contention that Jesus was just a good man, and scripture just a mixture of questionable historical facts and pious fiction. Faith gave way to agnosticism, and any sense of "the sacred" was lost—or, if any remained, it came largely from outside the Christian tradition.

The liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church was translated into vernacular languages after Vatican II. The changes were well-intentioned, but the resulting liturgies were not well received, and the 1,400-year tradition of Gregorian chant was sacrificed. Efforts are now being made to revive the Latin Mass and daily offices, but two generations of people have grown up with no familiarity with church Latin, and few people today can sing Gregorian chant.

Patience is needed. Christianity is a large institution, with a 2,000-year history. Transforming it is like changing the course of an ocean liner. The ship will not immediately turn through 90°, but firm, sustained force on the rudder will eventually achieve the desired result. The alternative of blowing up the ship will not lead to a successful transformation.

People involved in establishing the New World Religion will face a variety of challenges, both as individuals and as a group. Esotericists may be rebuffed in their efforts to reach out to traditional Christians, or may find that their efforts exacerbate friction—in some cases already intense—between progressive Christians and more conservative clergy and laity. They also face the scorn of other esotericists.¹¹⁹ Esotericists may face hostility from the secular world,

where rationalist skepticism has long waged war against belief in any kind of subtle reality. Esotericists involved in establishing the New World Religion are likely to face considerable opposition from rationalist factions—and from corporate and political interests for reasons to be discussed shortly. Those employed in academia, research laboratories, large corporations, or government agencies who ally themselves publicly with the new religion may jeopardize their careers.

At the organizational level the New World Religion will face opposition from reactionary forces inside and outside institutional Christianity. Djwhal Khul went so far as to say that "a major war" may be fought over the issue: "fought largely with mental weapons and in the world of thought; it will involve also the emotional realm, from the standpoint of idealistic fanaticism."¹²⁰ He offered the following warning:

This inherent fanaticism (found ever in reactionary groups) will fight against the appearance of the coming world religion and the spread of esotericism. For this struggle certain of the well-organized churches, through their conservative elements (their most powerful elements), are already girding themselves. Those sensitive to the new spiritual impacts are still far from powerful; that which is new always faces the supreme difficulty of superseding and overcoming that which is old and established. Fanaticism, entrenched theological positions, and materialistic selfishness are to be found actively organized in the churches in all continents and of all denominations. They can be expected to fight for their established ecclesiastical order, their material profit and their temporal rule, and already are making the needed preparations.¹²¹

The Tibetan may have had in mind traditionally powerful institutions, like the Roman Catholic Church. Much has changed, however, and the greater threat may now come from evangelical fundamentalism. Fundamentalism has gained tremendous political power in recent decades and has shown how effective fear and intimidation can be in achieving its narrow objectives.

The New World Religion, like Christianity as we know it, will operate in relationship to other institutions in modern society. But, unlike Christianity, it is likely to be more effective in fighting social injustice, corporate greed, government corruption, and damage to the environment. In consequence, powerful economic and political forces will feel threatened and will fight back using all the means they have—or will acquire in the decades and centuries to come.

Finally, participation by the Masters and the Christ in the New World Religion inevitably will attract the attention of planetary, and even extra-planetary, evil on the astral and mental planes. These forces of evil will take advantage of reactionary elements, within the churches and in the larger society, in their attempt to prevent or impede establishment of the new religion. The author of the *Epistle to the Ephesians* might have been speaking for our own time when he wrote:

[W]e wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.¹²²

Concluding Remarks

The Master Djwhal Khul's prophecies concerning the New World Religion evoke great excitement, along with the recognition that an enormous amount of work lies ahead. Senior members of the Planetary Hierarchy, including the Christ himself, will do the "heavy lifting," but as always much depends on humanity's own efforts. Christians, members of other world religions, and members of the worldwide esoteric community are all called upon to help.

The Tibetan Master indicated that Christianity will form one of the principal foundations of the new religion, and the present article has taken that focus. He explained that what is best in Christianity will be preserved, while excesses, abuses, destructive attitudes, and faulty thinking must be swept away.

Doctrine needs to be refined in the light of what we now know of the Logos, the Christ, the Master Jesus, and other members of the Planetary Hierarchy, along with their shared vision for the future of humanity. Ecclesiastical structures may be preserved, but leadership will be assumed by the Masters or their senior disciples. The anticipated restoration of the Mysteries suggests that the sacraments—"properly interpreted"—will form the Lesser Mysteries, while the first and second initiations will herald enactment of the Greater Mysteries on the physical plane.

Many Christians share the view that Christianity is in need of transformation and are already working to bring that about. Esotericists have opportunities to get involved too, and several areas of relevant work have been identified. Who is drawn to such work, and where they can make their best contribution, may depend on Ray type. People on even-numbered Rays may be more suited to the work than those on odd-numbered Rays, though opportunities for Fifth and Seventh Ray esotericists have been noted. People with strong Second Ray influence are likely to be the most responsive to the call of the Christ who heads the vast ashram of religion and education.

Esotericists who work individually or collectively in transforming Christianity, or more directly in building the New World Religion, will face many challenges. As an institution the new religion will face many more. But the challenges are not insurmountable, and the work must go forward. While we must do our part, we can be assured that the Masters and the Christ foresee where opposition will be focused and will provide guidance on how to overcome or circumvent it.

Religion is just one facet of human endeavor, but it has always been an important one. If we respond to the initiatives of the Christ and the Planetary Hierarchy, and if we do our part with love and wisdom, we can be sure that the New World Religion will play an important role in humanity's spiritual development throughout the Aquarian Age.

- ¹ The essay is reproduced in a pamphlet available from the School for Esoteric Studies in Asheville, North Carolina. Whether Bailey received any response from the churches has not been recorded.
- ² Contained in the original essay and also included in Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1957), 403.
- ³ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 530.
- ⁴ John F. Nash, "Christianity's Role in the New World Religion," *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Spring 2006), 37-52.
- ⁵ John F. Nash, *The Sacramental Church* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 1-8. "Esoteric Christianity" is not yet an identifiable fourth category; esoteric activity can be found in denominations in all three existing categories.
- ⁶ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 510. Parenthesis in original.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 511.
- ⁸ Alice A. Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1948), 65.
- ⁹ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 511-512.
- ¹⁰ Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, 108.
- ¹¹ Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar* (New York: NY, Lucis, 1922), 49.
- ¹² Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, 42-43. See also *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 596-597.
- ¹³ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 400-401.
- ¹⁴ See the definition in Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Online: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/churchianity>. (accessed July 9, 2012).
- ¹⁵ Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, 140. Parenthesis in original.
- ¹⁶ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 448.
- ¹⁷ Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, 108.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 140. Emphasis removed.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 144.
- ²⁰ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 202.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, 143.
- ²³ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 55-56.
- ²⁴ Traditional practices used by contemplative religions orders and practices imported from India and Japan now offer ordinary people opportunities to tread the mystical path. John F. Nash, "Prayer and Meditation in Christian Mysticism," *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Fall 2011), 17-41.
- ²⁵ Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, 144-150; *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 404-405.
- ²⁶ Alice A. Bailey, *Problems of Humanity* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1964), 156,
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*,
- ²⁸ Alice A. Bailey, *From Bethlehem to Calvary* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1937), 163.
- ²⁹ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 416. See also *Problems of Humanity*, 144-145.
- ³⁰ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 510-511. Parenthesis in original.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 400-401. Parenthesis in original.
- ³² Evangelical churches emphasize preaching, Bible study, and individual conversion and downplay sacramental ritual. Baptists provide a good example of evangelical Christianity.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 202.
- ³⁴ Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1966), 403.
- ³⁵ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 419.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, Parenthesis in original.
- ³⁷ Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1934), 517.
- ³⁸ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1951), 299. Parenthesis in original.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁰ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1942), 195-196. The next World Servers Festival takes place in December 2012.
- ⁴¹ Bailey, *Problems of Humanity*, 155.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 510-511. Parenthesis in original.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, 514. Parenthesis in original.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, 80. Parentheses in original.
- ⁴⁷ See for example Charles W. Leadbeater, *Science of the Sacraments* (Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1920.) Notwithstanding its name, the Liberal Catholic Church is definitely part of sacramental Christianity.
- ⁴⁸ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 401.
- ⁴⁹ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, 164-165.
- ⁵⁰ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 418. See also *Problems of Humanity*, 159.
- ⁵¹ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 150. Parenthesis in original.

- ⁵² Ibid., 514.
- ⁵³ Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, 86.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid. Parenthesis in original.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., 82.
- ⁵⁶ Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, 71.
- ⁵⁷ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 514.
- ⁵⁸ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 514-515.
- ⁵⁹ One man who pursued that dream for much of his life was Alphonse Louis Constant (1810–1875), who wrote under the pseudonym “Éliphas Lévi.” We might also mention several prominent Theosophists who were also involved in Co-Masonry as well as in the Liberal Catholic Church.
- ⁶⁰ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 573.
- ⁶¹ Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, 122-123.
- ⁶² Ibid.
- ⁶³ Ibid., 158.
- ⁶⁴ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 510.
- ⁶⁵ John F. Nash, “Esoteric Healing in the Orthodox, Roman and Anglican Churches,” *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Spring 2007), 37-50.
- ⁶⁶ We note, however, that the great mystics had their own insights and, in consequence, often came under intense scrutiny from ecclesiastical authorities. See for example Nash, “Prayer and Meditation in Christian Mysticism.”
- ⁶⁷ Bernard J. Lee et al., *The Catholic Experience of Small Christian Communities* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000).
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., 10-11, 63-69, 74.
- ⁶⁹ Hal Taussig, *A New Spiritual Home* (Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 2006), 91.
- ⁷⁰ Nash, *The Sacramental Church*, 225-227. Significantly, the social ministry was spearheaded by high-church groups within the Anglican Churches that were also pressing for the restoration of pre-Reformation ritual.
- ⁷¹ Katherine Jefferts Schori was elected presiding bishop and primate of the Episcopal Church in 2006 and is serving a nine-year term of office.
- ⁷² See for example Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 63-64.
- ⁷³ The results of theological dialog between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches are discussed in Nash, *The Sacramental Church*, 232-244, 263-264.
- ⁷⁴ Pavel Florensky, *The Pillar and the Ground of Truth*, trans: B. Jakim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 245. “Deified” was a reference to the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of *theosis*, or “deification.” See for example John F. Nash, “Theosis: a Christian Perspective on Human Destiny,” *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Spring 2011), 15-33.
- ⁷⁵ Sergei Bulgakov, *Sophia: the Wisdom of God* (W. Stockbridge, MA: Lindisfarne Press, 1993), 138-139.
- ⁷⁶ Daniel Andreev, *Rose of the World*, 1, 1, trans: J. Roberts (Moscow, Russia: Daniel Andreev Charity Foundation, 1997). Much of the book was written while Andreev was in a Soviet labor camp.
- ⁷⁷ Alice A. Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1949), 61.
- ⁷⁸ An estimated 25 percent of the population of western countries believes in reincarnation.
- ⁷⁹ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 590.
- ⁸⁰ Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, 64. Parenthesis in original.
- ⁸¹ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 511-512.
- ⁸² Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, 64.
- ⁸³ Bailey, *Initiation: Human and Solar*, 46.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., 46-47. The Mahachohan heads up the great Third-Ray ashram, under which are major ashrams expressing the Fourth-through-Seventh Rays.
- ⁸⁵ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 506.
- ⁸⁶ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 57.
- ⁸⁷ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 573.
- ⁸⁸ Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1925), 759. The Tibetan continued: “This may be looked for, should plans progress as hoped, about the year 1980.” Evidently plans did not progress as hoped.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid.
- ⁹⁰ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 59.
- ⁹¹ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, 685. Parenthesis in original.
- ⁹² Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 505-506. Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson wrote of angelic beings residing in houses of worship and participating in the liturgy. See for example, his *Clairvoyant Investigations*, Wheaton, IL: Quest, 1984, 75-140.
- ⁹³ Alice A. Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1922), 127.
- ⁹⁴ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 90.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid., 626fn.

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- ⁹⁶ Ibid., 897.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid., 661. Comments on pp. 897-898 indicate that the “Heavenly Man” in question is the Logos of Neptune.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid., 678.
- ⁹⁹ Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 57.
- ¹⁰⁰ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 506.
- ¹⁰¹ The Tibetan mentioned the “Greek church” but did not mention the Russian Orthodox Church, which is by far the largest in the Orthodox church family. The Scandinavian Lutheran churches and modern neo-Lutheran groups already form part of sacramental Christianity. Other Lutheran churches straddle the divide between sacramental and evangelical Christianity but, like the Anglican churches, are moving into the sacramental category. Methodists, Baptists, and most other Protestant denominations are primarily evangelical in character.
- ¹⁰² Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 393.
- ¹⁰³ Alice A. Bailey, *Education in the New Age* (New York: Lucis, 1954), 122-123.
- ¹⁰⁴ Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age I* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1944), 38.
- ¹⁰⁵ Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, 158-159.
- ¹⁰⁶ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 513.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 513-514.
- ¹⁰⁹ Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, 328.
- ¹¹⁰ Ibid., 329.
- ¹¹¹ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age I*, 746.
- ¹¹² Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 393.
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- ¹¹³ See for example Nash, “Esoteric Healing in the Orthodox, Roman and Anglican Churches.” Charismatic churches form a subset of evangelical churches.
- ¹¹⁴ Prayer covers a broad spectrum of intent and methodology. The two major forms of contemplative prayer are: *cataphatic* prayer, which involves words and images—but no sense of petition or intercession—and *apophatic* prayer which seeks to transcend words and images. See for example Nash, “Prayer and Meditation in Christian Mysticism.”
- ¹¹⁵ Opposition to belief in reincarnation crept into Christian doctrine on the basis of a series of anathemas against church father Origen, concerning his teachings on the preexistence of the soul, issued by the Emperor Justinian. The anathemas were presented to the Second Council of Constantinople, which the emperor convened in 553 CE. But no record exists that they were ever put to a vote, and they do not appear in the council’s proceedings.
- ¹¹⁶ *Galatians* 6:7 (KJV). The Master Hilarion previously incarnated as Paul. See for example Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 59.
- ¹¹⁷ Zwingli, a close contemporary of Luther’s, spearheaded the Swiss Reformation. John Calvin, based in Geneva, took control of the movement a generation later.
- ¹¹⁸ John F. Nash, *Christianity: the One, the Many*, vol.2 (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2007), 64-89.
- ¹¹⁹ Sadly, separatism has not entirely been eradicated within the esoteric community.
- ¹²⁰ Bailey, *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 453.
- ¹²¹ Ibid. Parenthesis in original.
- ¹²² *Ephesians* 6:12-13 (KJV).