

Fundamentals of the Work

Meditation with Seed Thought

Daily meditation must be a fundamental part of our practice as disciples if we truly wish to make progress on the spiritual path. Although there are many types of meditation, what they all have in common is the goal of controlling the three lower personality vehicles in order to reach the ultimate goal of stabilizing our awareness at the highest possible level of consciousness. Being able to maintain this heightened consciousness at will allows us to tap into resources that reveal the nature of the Self and help us become who we really are. Eventually, meditation provides an unimpeded, reliable contact with the Soul – our true Master on this spiritual journey.

The meditation practice that we use in the School for Esoteric Studies is meditation with seed thought. This form is highly suitable as a method for developing the mental body and expanding our ability to communicate in both the objective and subjective worlds. In this type of meditation we use an aspirational passage from our studies and focus the mind on it as we attempt to penetrate into the world of meaning or the “soul” of the seed thought. The benefits of this type of meditation are twofold.

First, we learn how to control the mental body, which is our point of access to the Soul. By selecting an aspirational seed thought and concentrating on its words and inner meaning, we put the mind on a vibrational level that is more receptive to Soul energies. We are also giving the mind something to focus on, forcing it to slow down. This focus makes it easier to filter out extraneous thoughts and channel the energy of the “monkey mind,” away from its continuous, automatic and mindless chatter, toward a more elevating task. In this way we strengthen our ability to concentrate and to think more clearly and one-pointedly. As we gain facility with this technique, we discover the importance of consciously choosing our thoughts rather than allowing automatic thoughtforms to control us.

The practice of consciously choosing our thoughts will also help us to consciously choose and control our emotions.

Second, as we take the seed thought deep into our consciousness and work with its implications, we are training the mind to look beyond the surface of things to discover the world of meaning. As the deeper meanings of the seed thought begin to surface, they have the power to gradually and subtly transform our habitual mental attitudes into a more positive state of mind. This leads to increased self-understanding, to the ability to be in the present and detached from our usual preoccupations with the past and the future, and to the transformation of our personality by such Soul qualities as patience, tolerance, acceptance and compassion. We also learn how to bring down abstract thoughtforms into a concrete form, to express what may seem to be inexpressible, to create practical thoughtforms and manifest them on the physical plane.

The key to success in this type of meditation is to *actively* engage the mental body and not allow it to become passive or lazy. In an active process we use the mind as a tool to analyze the seed thought, looking for connections to deeper meanings, utilizing analogies, and considering practical applications. This method involves an active engagement or communication with the Soul, just as we would engage in a conversation with a friend.

As we seek deeper meanings behind a particular seed thought, the mind will naturally come up with many superficial observations in the beginning, but we can't let the mind rest there. The mental body needs to grapple with deep thoughts in order to develop strength and flexibility; otherwise it will be content with platitudes and fixed ideas, and will not develop the ability to think things through. People who do not develop this ability tend to passively accept the information that comes to them via their circle of family and friends and from the media.

To give the mental body a good workout, the suggestion is to work with a seed thought daily over the course of a few weeks (preferably in the morning when our minds are at their freshest and not in the evening, which might disrupt our sleep cycle). During the first few days of work with the seed thought, while it is still fresh and new, we may find it easy to maintain an active dialog, but then the work begins as we attempt to dig ever deeper. Every day we approach the seed thought anew, and we are a subtly different person from one day to the next. Some days it will seem like we are trudging through a desert at night, but then on other days we will discover a lighted oasis of new insights.

We may also observe that at times we approach the seed thought with the emotional body, rather than the mental body. We “feel our way” into the seed thought and respond to its emotional appeal. This is a normal experience when we are just beginning to learn how to meditate with a seed thought, and the emotional body can certainly help to evoke thoughts from our mental body. Nevertheless, we must persist with the mental approach, and this perseverance through the difficult times not only strengthens our mental muscles and our will power, it can also be a test of our willingness to do what it takes to build our connection to the Soul. The Soul won’t do the work for us. It will only meet us halfway. One suggestion for getting through the dry spells is to simply hold the seed thought in the light of the Soul and wait for the Soul to release its wisdom.

As with any organic process, our daily meditation goes through various phases, and we devel-

op a rhythm similar to breathing in and breathing out. Thus there will be a stage in which we are *actively creating* thoughtforms, and this will be followed by a stage in which we are *actively receptive*. This means that we are alert and aware of our firm alignment with the Soul; we have reached a high point of conscious identification with the meaning of the seed thought, and we are in a state of conscious and dynamic invocation.

In this stage – receptive meditation – we use the will to maintain our connection with Soul, and our attitude is one of openness and willingness to receive whatever may come through. What comes through, however, will not necessarily be in the form of clear words or ideas. It may be received in the form of a subtle energy, and the effects of this energy may not become evident immediately. The insights may percolate through later in the day or manifest in symbolic form in our dreams. We can picture the process of invocation and evocation as though we were receiving a compressed transmission that may not be “readable” until later when the brain has had a chance to process it and “unfold” the message.

True meditation is a conscious active interplay between the mental body and Soul in which we lose all sense of self and become the Soul, and we think and act *as* the Soul as we meet the challenges of daily life.

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Book Review

And if He Has not been Raised and *Secrets of the Stations of the Cross and the Grail Blood*, both by Judith von Halle, Forest Row, UK: Temple Lodge 2007, £14.95 and £11.93, respectively.

These two books were originally published in Germany, in 2005, as volumes of a single work. They have now been translated into English, the first by Brian Stevens, the second by Matthew Barton, and are readily available from online and other retailers. The title of the first book is a quote from *1 Corinthians* 15:14.

The two books and a number of other publications are the works of Judith von Halle, a German esotericist and stigmatic. She is an Anthroposophist, a student of the works of Rudolf Steiner. She also bears on her body painful and bleeding wounds resembling those suffered by Jesus the Christ during his trial and crucifixion. Her situation alerts us to the reality that stigmatics walk the Earth today, and some may be educated, professional people.

Judith Von Halle studied in Germany and the United States, graduated with a degree in architecture in 1998, and set up an architectural practice. By that time she had developed an interest in Anthroposophy and eventually was hired by the Rudolf Steiner House in Berlin to lecture on esoteric topics.

Von Halle received the stigmata during Holy Week (the week before Easter), 2004. Her situation caused great controversy in the Anthroposophical Society. She was harshly criticized by the society's international Executive Council at Dornach, Switzerland. The following year, she and her supporters were fired by the governing board of the Steiner House. Continuing attacks by high-ranking members ranged from accusations of fraud, and charges that her "clairvoyant" activities were damaging to the Society, to allegations that she claimed to be the reincarnation of a contemporary and co-worker of Rudolf

Steiner! She denies making any such claim. One still-active blog denounces her for raising "the spectre of atavistic Catholic superstition."

Some segments of the Anthroposophical Society have embraced her, and her books are distributed by SteinerBooks in the United States. Von Halle continues to write, gives lectures and conducts workshops on esoteric topics, and lives with her husband in Berlin.

In addition to receiving the stigmata Judith Von Halle acquired exceptional gifts, not uncommon among stigmatics. She is an *inedic*; she does not and cannot eat but displays none of the symptoms of anorexia. Interestingly, before receiving the stigmata she loved cooking and eating. Like some other stigmatics, she also has the ability of remote viewing, reporting in great detail events from the past, including the events of the first Holy Week. Following is part of her account of Jesus' trial before Pontius Pilate:

At last Pilate uttered the sentence of death on Jesus of Nazareth. After the proclamation he himself wrote the judgment, of which [his] secretary made several copies. Grounds were attached to the sentence, in which Pilate justified his reasons for having Jesus of Nazareth crucified. These grounds were that a religious community with other customs had demanded this verdict of him, and he had ceded to their demand in order to avoid rebellion. . . . Now there followed a storm of protest from the high priests and their followers, because Pilate had thereby placed the responsibility on them. [*Secrets*, 89]

The scene on the Sunday morning when the "gardener" asked Mary Magdalene "Whom seek ye?" was described thus:

He asked her this question as a teacher of initiation asks his pupil. With this question He asked her if she was seeking *Jesus* or *Christ*. But initially she was only looking for Jesus of Nazareth, her beloved teacher in his

physical body. But as Christ then touched her heart (in the Gospels this is when He called her by her name) she reacted immediately, so filled with love and so overwhelmed . . . that she forgot everything. . . . At the moment of “reunion” everything was forgotten; she believed He was by her again as before. She fell down before Him full of love and wanted to kiss his feet. [*And If*, 134; emphasis and parenthetical clause in original]

Von Halle interpreted her experiences in terms of Steiner’s teachings on the “Mystery of Golgotha.” For example she discussed the disposition of Christ’s etheric body when Jesus died on the cross:

Let us now look at the other part of His etheric body [the first part was reassembled to form the “resurrection body,”] which enters the aura of the earth already from the Cross. As the Redeemer’s blood flows from the nail wounds, the earth’s etheric sphere is transformed in an instant. Rudolf Steiner describes this in moving terms in his lectures on the Fifth Gospel. The blood that flows from the wounds touches the earth and renews its encircling aura before the Christ Spirit undergoes earthly death. [*Secrets*, 49]

The material for the two books came from lectures given to a restricted audience at the Rudolf Steiner House in 2004 and 2005, before von Halle was dismissed. She states in the Introduction to *And If* that one of her reasons for publishing the material in book form was to clear the atmosphere of suspicion that was swirling around her at that time—though that does not seem to have happened. Another reason was that she believed that the material was entirely consistent with Steiner’s teachings and in no way was intended to supplant them. Most importantly, von Halle wanted consideration to be given

to that which I place at the heart of my efforts to achieve through psychic and spiritual contemplation of the most decisive and factual event in the development of mankind a living and truthful relationship to the contemporary Christ. This alone is capable of being each single individual’s most precious treasure

and will be the quiet source of all selfless love and sympathy. [*And If*, 2]

The chapters in both books—and presumably the lectures and her visions—do not follow the chronological sequence of the events before, during and after Holy Week. For example, successive chapters in *And If* are: “An Account of the Events between Death and Resurrection,” “The Transfiguration on Mount Tabor and the Last Night on the Mount of Olives,” and “The Easter Event at the Time of Christ.” In *Secrets*, four chapters dealing with “The Spear-Wound Mystery and the Grail Blood” are followed by six chapters under the section heading “The Stations of the Cross and the Seven Words of Christ on the Cross.”

Secrets is identified as “Volume 2,” but its material does not begin from where Volume 1 ends. In order to follow the story of the passion and resurrection one is forced, not only to refer to one book and then the other, but to read later chapters before earlier ones. This may not create a problem for the serious reader, bent on detailed study and multiple readings of the books, but it is irritating for someone who wants to read the whole story from beginning to end.

In *And If*, von Halle’s own material is interspersed with commentary by Peter Tradowsky, founder of the Steiner House in Berlin and one of her strongest supporters. Although the commentary may be of interest to serious readers, someone who is primarily interested in von Halle’s accounts is likely to find the interruptions intrusive.

One wishes that the material in the two books could be edited to remove extraneous matter and put the chapters in chronological order. Meanwhile, all we have is the books as they have been published.

This reviewer is familiar with several of Rudolf Steiner’s books (most of which are themselves collections of lectures). While, unlike Judith von Halle, I do not consider myself his disciple, I found a wealth of useful information in the books. They raise the veil on von Halle and her very unusual circumstances: living stigmatic,

esotericist, intellectual, married. They also shed unique light on the events of the life, death and redemptive mission of Jesus the Christ.

I strongly recommend the two books to all serious students of Christian esotericism and particularly to students of Anthroposophy.

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Easter Festival: The Full Moon in Aries

Kathy Newburn

The work that we do together at this time inaugurates the high point of the spiritual year, the period of the higher interlude. Throughout the world many individuals and groups are meeting for meditation and prayer at this time. The Jewish celebration of Passover as well as the Christian celebration of Easter make this period a time of concentrated spiritual aspiration for many of the world's people. Through this combining of our spiritual holidays the work is strengthened and given increased potency.

As we link up in meditation with all the many other individuals and groups who are working together at this time, we recite the mantra of the New Group of World Servers:

May the Power of the One Life pour
through the group of all true servers.

May the Love of the One Soul characterize
the lives of all who seek to aid the Great
Ones.

May I fulfill my part in the One Work
through self-forgetfulness, harmlessness
and right speech.

As most of you know, this mantra is used by many people throughout the world each afternoon at 5 p.m. as a means of sustaining the group nature of our spiritual work. This mantra speaks of the divine triplicity of Will or Power, Love-Wisdom and Creative Intelligence, which are known as the three rays of aspect. The triplicity is also reflected in the three great planetary centers: Shamballa, the center of divine Will; Hierarchy, the center of love upon our planet; and humanity, the kingdom that reflects the intelligence principle. The trinity that this mantra symbolizes is also reflected in the three spiritual festivals that we celebrate each year at the time of the Aries, Taurus and Gemini full moons. The Easter Festival, which

we are observing at this time, marks the real "new year" in the spiritual sense, and this is reflected in the rebirth that occurs at this time in the natural world with the coming in of spring in the northern hemisphere.

During this period of the higher interlude, those of us who have some understanding of the spiritual factors that condition and substand outer events have a special responsibility to stand behind the Hierarchy and the work that it must do during this time of inspiration. This subjective support provided by the spiritual and esoteric workers in the world is a real service and helps in the manifestation, on the physical plane, of the needed changes. Our task is to stand as a united channel through which the livingness of divinity can flow outward into human consciousness. We provide a vital link within the chain of Hierarchy, bringing the Plan into outer recognition.

Aries is the first sign of the spiritual year and is known as the point of all beginnings. It provides an impulsive, outgoing and vital energy. It is a positive, masculine sign, and is traditionally linked with the aggressive nature of its ruler, the planet Mars. It signifies the descent of the life force, or spirit aspect, into matter. Aries is a fire sign, and it is the purveyor to our solar system of pure electric fire and the dynamic nature of God. It is a fire that fosters and nourishes heat and also a fire that burns and destroys. Electric fire is related to the Will aspect and to the jewel in the Egoic Lotus, the hidden, central point of pure, fiery Will. In Aries the "jungles of experience are set on fire and dissolve in flames, and then the Path stands clear, and unobstructed vision is achieved." [*Esoteric Astrology*, p. 95] Fire is the great liberator, clearing away obstacles and bringing forth the truth. Through the agency of fire, Aries is said to "fuse the beginning and

the end, to blend the opposites and dispel both time and space.” This quality of blending links Aries with its opposite sign of Libra, for both are concerned with the bringing together of the opposites and the process of fusion. Through Aries the blending of spirit and matter is achieved through the consecrated use of the mind.

Aries is also one of the zodiacal signs that is concerned with death, and in this case it is death through the agency of fire. Through the death of self-will the individual is released into Shamballa, and Aries opens that door into the center of Will and Purpose. Aries is the primary sign through which the energy of the First Ray releases our planetary Life. But First Ray energy is something that we cannot, as yet, fully understand because it is only now coming into prominence within our planet as it begins to be appropriated by humanity in a group sense. The First Ray is at times feared because of its power, which – if not qualified by love – can create some of the cruelest and most destructive types of individuals, those whose lives are conditioned by the unrestrained pursuit of power as an end in itself. But the individual conditioned by the First Ray who has also cultivated a strong link with the love aspect would be capable of wielding power on a vast scale for the good of the whole.

The combination of First and Second Ray energies is a potent force for good; it conveys garnered power and strength, the unfoldment of love-wisdom and compassion and serves to widen the circle of influence and to include and uplift many. Through Aries, the person who embodies First Ray force “develops the power of organization, of control over forces, particularly over the energy of death, over the power of destruction applied with love, of dominance over multitudes, of cooperation with the Plan and the practice of the will in rightly and correctly guiding and directing planetary affairs.” [*Esoteric Astrology*, p. 108]

The world has witnessed much of the destructive aspect of this ray, but as we become more adept at responding to this energy we will see that the First Ray energy can provide that impetus for change that sweeps away obstacles

and brings rapid evolutionary growth. When this energy works out in combination with the incoming energy of the Seventh Ray, we know that a real period of opportunity is before us.

Through Aries, the First Ray energy enters into our solar system in the cosmic sense. Aries would be instrumental, therefore, in implementing the Shamballa impacts that have occurred twice in the 20th century and again in the year 2000. With each impact humanity becomes better able to withstand and understand the mysterious nature of the Will, and then the effects of this powerful energy are not so detrimental.

The First Ray of Will and Power is also known as the Ray of the Destroyer. But it is equally known as the conveyor of synthesis. The destructive aspects of this ray are readily apparent all around us. Even though the destructive aspects of this ray have about run their course on the spiritual plane, upon the physical plane we are still feeling the horrific effects of the energy of destruction as it works out in all the many departments of our civilization. However, destruction ever paves the way for that which is new and better, and without it there would be no change. Destruction can, therefore, be seen as a real part of the Plan, for it is only because we cling to the tangible and to that which is known that we find change and destruction troubling.

The synthetic aspect of the First Ray is becoming more widespread at this time, although it is not given as much attention from the media and is perhaps less dramatic in its effect. This energy can be seen working out in the move toward global planning, international relationships, and the unified blocs and amalgamations that we see taking shape in so many areas. Synthesis, on the outer level, is a reflection of the fact that humanity is moving into fuller cooperation with the Plan and the underlying Purpose, and this is reflected in our sometimes feeble attempts to reconcile our differences despite any real inclination to do so upon the part of the personality. We move toward reconciliation because we have no other choice and because the Soul is demanding recognition. All the parties involved in reconciliation

fear change and, in some cases, the line of least resistance is to hold onto the old order; but change must come, and it will always involve compromise on all sides.

The Easter Festival is a time of resurrection, rebirth and the renewal of life. Mental illumination – light – pours into the mind of humanity during this festival, revealing our true nature. It is this light and spirit of renewal that can contribute to the elevation of humanity as a whole. This Light is poured forth into our planet through the medium of the Christ. Energy from Shamballa and the Hierarchy is focused through the Christ, who stands at the midpoint and center of our planetary life, and this light is then distributed to humanity through the intermediary of the New Group of World Servers and the people of goodwill.

This festival really symbolizes joy – the joy of liberation. The quality of joy is one that humanity desperately needs to learn, and yet this seems difficult for us because of the long-standing tradition of pain and suffering that conditions the human kingdom on this planet Earth. It is through relinquishment and renunciation that the lessons of joy are learned, and these attitudes enable us to eventually overcome the ancient habits of misery. In regard to this quality of joy, there are some interesting passages to be found in the book *The World's Religions* by Huston Smith. In the section on Christianity he eloquently conveys to the reader what seems like a true impression of the quality of life that permeated the early disciples and followers of Christ after his death. He wrote that the real turning point and the determining event within the lives of these early followers was their experience of and reac-

tion to the resurrection initiation through which Christ passed at this period of the Easter full moon. Smith does not attempt to answer the many questions that surround this mysterious event, questions that can become real stumbling blocks to people today who could not even allow for the possibility of such an event. Instead Smith highlights the transformation in consciousness that the resurrection

The forces of restoration that flow into our planetary life at this time emanate from the Mind of God and stimulate the principle of intelligence. But the intention of these forces of restoration should not be misinterpreted or viewed as a call for the restoration of the old order and a longing for the past and that which no longer exists. The restoration that is called for is rather the restoration of the mind and the spiritual values that have, in many cases, been overlooked because of the demands of the outer world.

caused within the disciples. He said, “It brought about the juncture of goodness and power.... If Christ’s life had convinced the disciples of God’s love, his resurrection convinced them of his power.”

He goes on to describe how from that moment the disciples were seemingly transformed and irrevocably linked in an entirely new manner with the inner source of spiritual energy. They were transformed from simple and inarticulate men and women into pas-

sionate, eloquent servers of the race. They now possessed a fire that set the whole Mediterranean world aflame. And this inner transformation was carried forward despite the many obstacles, the ridicule and persecution that the disciples had to endure. Smith believed that their transformation was a direct result of the love which they had known through Christ. This love they had experienced through his living presence sustained them after his death through a process that esotericists would call “overshadowing.” This overshadowing presence helped to ensure that the seeds of this teaching could become firmly anchored for the Piscean Age.

Today we are involved in a process that parallels the experience of these early disciples. Yet

this process is different in some respects. Today we do not have the direct experience of having lived and worked with the Christ as did these early disciples. We work without any outer recognition, holding fast to the inner recognition that the same love that they felt is abundantly available to us today, even though concealed from our sight. Disciples and spiritual workers today face a no less difficult task than did the early disciples, for each must find the manner in which they can best aid in the present process of the externalization of the Ashrams. When you think about aiding in this preparatory work you quickly realize how very difficult it is and how rare are those moments when you are met with interest or genuine understanding. We live in a world that is quite similar in many ways to that of the Romans 2000 years ago, with the focus primarily upon the material values. But our world is also infinitely more complex, and nowhere is this more apparent than within the mental bodies of humanity today. The intellect has become so developed that it often proves to be the “slayer of the real,” overpowering and rendering silent the considerations and straight knowledge of the heart.

Resurrection is concerned with the “livingness of life,” and it provides the keynote for the coming world religion. It is said that the resurrection of the spirit of humanity, and eventually of all forms of life, will ultimately be the goal of future religious training. It is not the resurrection of the physical body that is of concern, but rather the resurrection of the spiritual nature. The resurrection experience symbolizes the power of the indwelling life to draw all people out of the world of material values into the world of spiritual recognitions.

It is resurrection that is the keynote of nature, not death. This was the real message of the Christ 2000 years ago, not the distorted teaching upon death and sin. Crystallization of the form has led present-day Christianity to focus upon externals rather than upon the inner spiritual principles. Usually, once crystallization sets in, it takes a crisis in order to evoke change. In terms of the world’s major religions, we can see that this process of crystallization is strong during this end of the age. But

when we consider Tibetan Buddhism, we can perhaps sense an exception to this condition. It seems that from all of the voices within the religious communities of the world, the Tibetans, under the leadership of the Dalai Lama, are seeking to work in greater concert and dialog with the contemporary world. As much as we lament the terrible tragedy of the Chinese invasion of Tibet, we can also recognize that this crisis served a real purpose for the rest of the world by bringing these gentle people and their teachings and culture to many who might otherwise never have been exposed to them. Through the crisis that the Tibetans have endured, they have come forth at this time as real messengers of spiritual truth to the West. The ancient Tibetan prophecy that when the iron bird flies the dharma will go to the West has certainly proven true.

The forces of restoration that are active at the time of the Easter Full Moon are under the direction of a great extra-planetary being who works through Shamballa and is known as the Spirit of Resurrection. This living spiritual entity, temporarily working under the direction of the Christ, seeks to restore livingness to people’s spiritual goals and life to their planning; his task is to foster the vitality needed to implement the trends of the New Age. At this time of the Easter Festival, this Spirit of Resurrection pours forth his energy into our planet. He is sometimes called the “Sun of Righteousness” with “healing in his wings,” for he carries life-giving energy and hope that can restore nations and dispel the glamor and distortion that still surrounds death.

The forces of restoration that flow into our planetary life at this time emanate from the Mind of God and stimulate the principle of intelligence. But the intention of these forces of restoration should not be misinterpreted or viewed as a call for the restoration of the old order and a longing for the past and that which no longer exists. The restoration that is called for is rather the restoration of the mind and the spiritual values that have, in many cases, been overlooked because of the demands of the outer world. While it is tempting to look with nostalgia at the innocence, relative simplicity and security of the past, we know that for many

reasons we would never want to go back, for this is contrary to the law of forward evolutionary progress and growth. Great transformations have taken place within the human mind and civilization through the instrument of the struggles of this past century. We have become more open to new ideas and concepts, and the entire form of our civilization has changed. It takes time to construct new forms adequate to meet the changing need, but these changes will be rapidly carried forward with the aid of the incoming energies of the New Age.

It is said that the effect of these forces of restoration are primarily physical and that their objective is the production of the new Earth and all the outer evidences of an inflowing new life. As they condition human consciousness they create a renewal of the psychological health of humanity – elevating it to a more wholesome and happier approach to life, bring-

ing hope and optimism where none existed. One of the inevitable effects of this process of mental transformation will be the acquiring of vision. This sensing of the vision is not the impractical imagining of some vague future but rather the visioning of that which can be realized within the confines of our present resources and capabilities. These forces of restoration are primarily effective in regard to the spiritual workers of the world, stiffening their will-to-live and their will-to-good, which in turn works out within humanity as a fostering of goodwill and right human relations.

Easter is a time of creation and new beginnings, a time when out of the familiar and known new life can spring. As we come together in meditation, let us work positively to provide a channel so that the energies that are flooding our planet at this time will find release into receptive human hearts and minds.

The Wesak Festival: The Dynamic of Determination-Enlightened, Enthusiastic Will

John Cobb

“Two men look out through prison bars. One sees mud, the other stars.” (Frederick Langbridge)

These familiar words can be applied to all of us, for as Souls we are imprisoned in the three worlds. Of course, our imprisonment is not punishment, but a voluntary self-imposed confinement to lift and redeem the “substance” or lesser lives of those three worlds, in line with the redemptive Will of God.

As for one person seeing mud and the other stars, what we, as esotericists, have learned to see is *both* the “mud” and the “stars,” as we “look above and help below.” And if we apply the analogy to present national and world conditions, we can certainly see a great deal of “mud” around us. But at this Festival period, if

we focused on the “mud,” we would only hamper what should be accomplished at the time of Wesak, which is not only to look up to, but to *reach for* the “stars.”

We are concerned, however, not only with the Vision, without which the people perish, but also with the means of making it factual in living experience.

As many of us know, the Wesak Festival is primarily an annual Hierarchical event, during which the Masters of the Wisdom, the Lords of Compassion, the Spiritual Hierarchy in their various ranks, make alignment with, approach, and invoke the highest center of the planetary Life, Shamballa, where the Will of God is known. The key participants are the Christ, as head of the Hierarchy, and the Buddha, as representative of Shamballa.

In that great approach – which for long ages involved only the Hierarchy and Shamballa – we, humanity, are now not only invited to share, but we *must* share because of the changes within the planetary life already brought about under the influence of the dawning Aquarian Age.

Let us see if we can together grasp more of the meaning and significance, the reality and importance of the Wesak Festival, of the interplay between the three major planetary centers – humanity, Hierarchy and Shamballa – resulting in clearer “visions” respectively for both the Hierarchy and humanity – plus the great transference of certain spiritual energies from Shamballa that will speed both the Hierarchy and humanity toward their destinies.

So let us temporarily set aside our personal concerns and reach out in our aspiration, our thinking and our spiritual intention toward the Masters and the Hierarchy. We visualize them not as remote, distant, grandiose beings, but rather as individuals who have trodden the Way we are now treading; who have experienced to the full as human beings; who have learned to love selflessly, and who have joyously transformed their lives so that they now not only experience the joy of the Soul but also know the bliss of identification with Triadal and Monadic levels of being.

And yet, with all Their high attainment and despite the Way of the Higher Evolution beckoning Them forward, They strive to stimulate and help the rest of us humans to achieve, to know the wonders of planetary, systemic and cosmic Life that is at present beyond our awareness. They help us to pass from suffering to fulfillment, from darkness to Light, from the unreal to the Real, from death to immortality, from chaos to Beauty.

All this is tied in with the Law of Cycles. Just as daily we do our individual meditations and monthly our Full Moon Approaches, so each

year at Wesak the Hierarchy joins with humanity in making an approach to Shamballa.

We are told that the Spiritual Hierarchy expresses fully two Aspects of Deity, intelligence and Love, and is perfecting a third, the Will. The Masters are learning to fully wield and express the First, or Will Aspect, but as yet They are still striving to grasp and understand the Purpose as it is known in the Council Chamber of Shamballa – the Purpose that will

require for its ultimate fulfillment the use of divine Will, Love and intelligence throughout the planetary life.

A common objective of this process could be described as catching a glimpse of the purpose of Sanat Kumara, that great Being Who is pledged to lift and redeem the total planetary life.

It is probably beyond us, at our present stage of

evolution, to accomplish this, but we can expect to achieve a clearer vision of the Plan that embodies the Will of God and that surely must be in line with the great underlying redemptive Purpose of the Logos. Humanity can now tap, to a certain extent, a measure of that Shamballic Will. This is so because, under Cyclic Law, the influence of the Aquarian Age is already bringing great changes throughout the planetary life – although it is true that most of those changes are on the higher or inner levels and have yet to externalize. Since the Hierarchy always works under the Law of Cycles and of Cyclic Compensation, it follows that they are masters of Time and of right timing.

The Hierarchy – which constitutes the Ashram of Sanat Kumara, “is coming peculiarly and in a new sense under the influence of His Will nature,” and the Masters “are being brought to a new and more appropriate conception of the divine Purpose that lies behind the Plan and motivates it. The Will of God is becoming plainer to Them.” But that’s not the whole story. The Tibetan writes, “from the Christ down

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to the newest and latest accepted disciple, each in his own place, all are becoming increasingly responsive to the Will of God. This is bringing about great, necessary and unexpected changes, some now taking place, some to follow later.”

Regarding the first change, He states,

the entire technique of training disciples for initiation and of absorbing them into the various ashrams has been altered. ... The older methods built around the direct relationship between a Master and a disciple reached their highest point of usefulness early in the Piscean Age. For nearly two thousand years these methods have proven so successful that the intensity of humanity’s response is that hundreds are now ready for absorption. With the arrival of the Aquarian Age, group preparation, group instruction and group acceptance must and will supersede the older methods.

Linked to this first change is the second one, whereby

a measure of the training is now objective and exoteric. Hence the establishment of the New Group of World Servers, which provides not only a field of service for accepted disciples, but also a rallying point for all determined aspirants, where they can be tried out, and where their motives and persistence can be tested prior to direct acceptance into the Ashram. This shifts the responsibility of preparing aspirants for accepted discipleship onto the shoulders of the pledged disciple and away from the immediate attention of the accepting Master, who is thus freed for other fields of service. This, in itself, is one of the major indications of the success of the evolutionary process as applied to humanity.

We could discuss more fully the implications of these two changes, but it is probably more timely and more fitting to consider the third change, one that is particularly relevant to our work together at the Wesak Festival. This is how the Tibetan describes it:

The third great change has been in the relation of the Hierarchy to Shamballa, and of

this you can necessarily know and understand little. I could perhaps express the underlying significance to you in symbolic language. The energy emanating from Shamballa has been divided into two direct and distinctive streams. One stream, embodying the *dynamic of purpose*, is now pouring into the Hierarchy and its seven major ashrams.

Another stream, embodying *the dynamic of determination or of enlightened, enthusiastic Will*, is reaching humanity direct via the New Group of World Servers. Hitherto a blended stream of Shamballa force has poured into the Hierarchy and has streamed, in its undifferentiated type and quality, into all the groups within the Hierarchy. Now (written 1944), the quality of determination or of what the average person understands by the use of the word “Will,” is pouring into the New Group of World Servers, while the energy of dynamic Purpose, differentiated into seven diverging streams, is pouring into each of the “seven points of reception,” the Masters’ Ashrams within the ring-pass-not of the Hierarchy. These seven types of Purpose embody the seven energies that will reorganize and redefine the Hierarchical undertaking, and thus inaugurate the New Age. [The above extracts are drawn from *The Rays and the Initiations*, pp. 239-241]

Do these words give a clear indication of why humanity can and must increasingly share in the Wesak Approach?

We are not concerned, of course, with the first stream of energy from Shamballa, which embodies the dynamic of Purpose. That is not for us to understand or to handle, but is the task of the Spiritual Hierarchy. *Our* concern is surely with the other stream, which, “embodying the dynamic of determination or of enlightened enthusiastic Will, is reaching humanity direct via the New Group of World Servers.”

This final phrase – “reaching humanity direct via the New Group of World Servers” – is a reminder of an aspect of the New Group that we are apt to forget, or of which we may not even have grasped the significance. The Tibet-

an explains: “The New Group of World Servers is *primarily* a group that, while working on the outer plane of daily, physical living, yet preserves a close ashramic integration.”

So we need to remember that the New Group of World Servers is not only outwardly responding to needs in line with the Plan, but is also preserving a strong subjective spiritual life, thus constituting an open channel from humanity to the Kingdom of God – to the Spiritual Hierarchy and to Shamballa.

Let us ponder the nature of the Shamballa energy that we – that is, the planetary group of which we are a part – can together receive. The Tibetan uses two phrases to describe this energy: first, as embodying “the dynamic of determination or of enlightened enthusiastic Will”; and second, “the quality of determination or of what the average person understands by the use of the word ‘Will’.”

The first description seems the more appealing and evocative one. We all know how greatly we and the whole world need that enlightened, enthusiastic Will, not only in treading the Spiritual Path, but in resolving the enormous prob-

lems that we face. We do not lack the means to resolve our difficulties; we simply lack the *will* to apply those means. That willingness, that enlightened enthusiastic Will-to-Good, is being directed to us by Shamballa, by Sanat Kumara. Let us identify with the New Group of World Servers and joyously accept this energy in the service of our fellow human beings.

And let us also hold in mind, in connection with Shamballa, that the Great Invocation “embodies the divine intent and summarizes the conclusions of the thinking of the planetary Logos.” (DINA 2, p. 156) If that is the case, then response to our use of the Great Invocation is certain, response not only from the Spiritual Hierarchy but also from Shamballa, for our voicing of the Invocation, signaling our cooperative intention, is what the Great Ones are waiting for!

As the Master DK wrote to one of his disciples (see DINA 1, p. 629): “No cost is too great to pay in order to be of use to the Hierarchy at the time of the Full Moon of May, the Wesak Festival; no price is too high in order to gain the spiritual illumination that can be possible, particularly at that time.”

The Festival of Goodwill: The Full Moon in Gemini

John Nash

The Festival and the Future

The Festival of Goodwill is celebrated at the Full Moon in Gemini. This year’s festival, on June 4, 2012, will be the sixtieth in the series (the first was observed in 1952), and the “golden jubilee” adds further significance to an already important occasion.

The other two festivals of the Higher Interlude, the Easter and Wesak Festivals (celebrated, respectively, at the Full Moons in Aries and Taurus) draw upon religious traditions that date back to the dawn of the Piscean Age. Their continued relevance is not in question, but to some degree the focus is on the past. By contrast, the Festival of Goodwill, also known

as the Festival of the Christ, Festival of Humanity, or World Invocation Day, looks unambiguously to the future, to the Aquarian Age. It celebrates the increasing presence in the world of the Second Aspect of Deity: the immanent presence of Love-Wisdom, expressed through humanity. The Christ established a link with the center of planetary life known as Shamballa, and the festival offers opportunities to contact levels of reality hitherto beyond our reach.

The Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul announced the new festival shortly after World War II. He explained that the Festival of Goodwill “will be the festival of the spirit of humanity – aspir-

ing towards God, seeking conformity with the Will of God and dedicated to the expression of right human relation.... It will be a day where-on the spiritual and divine nature of humanity will be recognized.”¹

Actually the Festival of Goodwill was new only to humanity. The Tibetan noted that it had long been observed on the inner planes:

On this festival, for two thousand years, the Christ has represented humanity and has stood before the Hierarchy and in the sight of Shamballa as the God-Man, the Leader of His people and “the Eldest in a great family of brothers”.... Each year at that time He has preached the last sermon of the Buddha before the assembled Hierarchy. This will therefore be a festival of deep invocation and appeal, of a basic aspiration towards fellowship, of human and spiritual unity, and will represent the effect in the human consciousness of the work of the Buddha and of the Christ.²

This reference to the Christ and the Buddha places the Festival of Goodwill in relationship to the Easter and the Wesak Festivals and hints that its energy helps synthesize that of the older festivals. Announcement of the Festival of Goodwill came in the context of prophecies of far-reaching importance. The Tibetan Master predicted that the Christ will reappear on Earth, the Hierarchy of Masters will be externalized, the Mysteries will be restored, and a New World Religion will emerge to serve humanity’s spiritual needs in the Aquarian Age. No dates were given for these momentous events, and we understand that much depends on our own progress toward establishing right human relations. Whether they will begin in 2012 or 2025 is purely a matter of speculation; some mentioned dates have already passed.

In the spirit of the Festival of Goodwill’s future orientation, this talk will focus on the emergence of the New World Religion and the closely related restoration of the mysteries. The new religion, we understand, will grow out of, and eventually replace, the religions of the Piscean Age. It will also embrace some aspects of “Masonic tradition,” which perhaps we can interpret to include other expressions of

Western esotericism, such as Rosicrucianism and the Golden Dawn. Instead of dividing people, as religions have in the past, the New World Religion will embrace people of every persuasion and every nation. The Tibetan sketched its broad outlines thus:

Spirituality 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.³

The Tibetan 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. 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.”⁴

Certainly we see evidence of progress toward implementing the New World Religion. Many people today identify themselves as “spiritual” rather than “religious.” They may be disillusioned with organized religion, particularly that of their upbringing, but they feel a strong impulse to respond to higher reality and to express that impulse in ritual, prayer and experiential worship. For their part religious bodies have changed in significant ways since 1949 when the Tibetan’s cycle of writings came to an end. The political power of institutional Christianity continues to decline – though evangelical fundamentalism has achieved strong influence in the United States. Christian denominations are reaching out to one another with increasing ecumenical warmth; mutual respect and understanding are at an all-time high. Also there is much greater emphasis on

service, including the healing ministry, which has only recently been restored in the western church after a millennium of neglect.

Nobody would claim that Christianity's transformation, on the lines envisioned by the Tibetan, is complete, or that universal harmony has been attained across sectarian lines. Separatism remains in every denomination, in some more so than others, but real progress has been made. Where much more work is needed is in overcoming mutual suspicion among Christianity, Islam, Judaism and other world religions.

Belief in an original repository of truth, adequate for all time, and notions of infallible, unchangeable dogma are increasingly unpopular both outside and inside organized religion. In medieval times the institutional church was almost the sole center of learning, and it served an illiterate laity content to be told what to believe. Today an educated laity honors its own insights and spiritual experiences. Moreover, people view truth as continually evolving and unfolding; what might once have been satisfactory doctrine may now need to be updated or replaced in the light of new insights. Whether spirituality will actually supersede theology, however, is debatable. We are thinking beings who are unlikely to stop constructing intellectual models of higher reality. Not insignificantly, the domains of theology and esoteric philosophy overlap to a considerable extent.

The Master Djwhal Khul hesitated to use the word "doctrine," but he declared that the New World Religion will incorporate 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.⁵

4. The Tibetan's repeated use of the word "transcendental" deserves special attention. He seemed intent to distinguish the three major presentations from mysticism, occultism and religion as they have usually been understood. The distinction may be relatively minor in the first instance; mysticism of a high order can be found in all world religions and now is being embraced increasingly by the masses. The history of occultism, on the other hand, provides many examples of the need for more transcendentalism in that area.

Will and Purpose evidently will receive considerable emphasis in the New World Religion. The Tibetan spoke of the importance to us of the First Aspect of Deity.

We are – if it could be but realized – in process of reinterpreting and rearranging 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 that 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.⁶

Whether or not spirituality supersedes theology, the Tibetan spoke of a New World Religion, not a new world spirituality. Religion

implies the sharing of spiritual experiences and a collective response to those experiences. It implies common ideals, a sense of communion, and some form of group worship. Indeed 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.”⁷ That comment may provide clues to what the Tibetan meant by “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.”⁸ 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.

Like the religions of the past the New World Religion will have its liturgical calendar, and the Festival of Goodwill along with Easter and the Wesak Festival will be major events. The dates of those festivals are governed by a combination of solar and lunar cycles. The Tibetan acknowledged 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 The

Eastern Orthodox churches have always placed more emphasis on Christ’s transfiguration, resurrection and established this will be one of the important factors considered.”⁹ He also predicted that 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

[gain] 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).¹⁰

Events in the life of the historical Christ will continue to serve as sources of inspiration in the New World Religion:

Upon 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.¹¹

Significantly, emphasis on the cross and the suffering Christ is primarily a feature of western Christianity.

[T]he Tibetan spoke of a New World Religion, not a new world spirituality. Religion implies the sharing of spiritual experiences and a collective response to those experiences. It implies common ideals, a sense of communion, and some form of group worship. Indeed 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.

ascension: on Christ as the expression of divine glory. The Tibetan did not mention Pentecost, which has Judaic as well as Christian roots. But it falls within a few days of the Festival of Goodwill, and the latter is sometimes referred to as the Pentecost, or Whitsun, Festival.

Implementation of the New World Religion will require action on multiple levels. The Tibetan identified ten “focal points of energy in the human family through which certain energies can flow into the entire race.” The sixth of those focal points, consisting of “workers in the Field of Religion,” will bear the major responsibility:

Their work is to formulate the universal platform of the New World Religion. It is a work of loving synthesis and it will emphasize the unity and the fellowship of the spirit. This group is, in a pronounced sense, a channel for the activity of the Second Ray of Love-Wisdom, that of the World Teacher – an office held at present by the Christ. The platform of the New World Religion will be built by the many groups, working under the inspiration of the Christ and the influence of the Second Ray and these – in their totality – will constitute this sixth group.¹²

Interaction will also be necessary between humanity and the Hierarchy of Masters. It “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.”¹³ When the necessary groundwork has been laid, two senior members of the Hierarchy will take decisive action:

The 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.¹⁴

The Master Jesus’ plans to “reassume control of His Church” 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. Indeed it would seem that Christianity will play a significant role in the New World Religion. We shall see shortly that its role may be larger than would have been expected.

Involvement by high-level members of the Hierarchy will make way for the restoration of the Mysteries, which “will unify all faiths.”¹⁵ The mysteries, we understand,

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. 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 and their exoteric presentation, as a consequence of the first initiation. Why can this be so? Because the Christ, as you know, is the Hierophant of the first and second initiations and He will, if the preparatory work is faithfully and well done, administer the first initiation in the inner sanctuaries of those two bodies.¹⁶

Several statements in this passage merit attention. First, the reference to 1940 may raise eyebrows. For example, 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 then. Second, the Tibetan’s statement that the restored mysteries will be expressed through “the Church and the Masonic Fraternity” is highly significant. Certainly we can see how the Masonic tradition, which draws upon the ancient mysteries, will be a useful ingredient. But reference to “the Church” suggests that Christianity may be the only religion to play a major role. To be sure, Christianity has a strong tradition of sacramental ritual, and it is worth noting that in the Eastern Orthodox Churches the sacraments have always been referred to as “the mysteries.” But it is unclear at this time how the mysteries “will unify all

faiths” if age-old rituals of other world religions are not included. Finally, since the Christ is the hierophant of the first two initiations, it would seem that full restoration of the mysteries on the physical plane will not occur before his reappearance. Perhaps the restoration will come relatively late in the timeframe of the Tibetan’s prophecies.

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 from the sidelines. But the Tibetan was emphatic that action is required from all of us and that there is no time to waste:

It is necessary for you to understand the immediate spiritual possibilities that 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 that you can take in relation to those possibilities and should also have a vision of the principles that must govern the New World Religion, with its outstanding points of focus.¹⁷

The Tibetan assured us that nobody is to 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.”¹⁸ Whether or not we belong to a church or a Masonic order, there is much we can do. Perhaps, as we prepare for the Festival of Goodwill, the Festival of the Christ – and as we hold the vision of the New

World Religion – we shall find that the urge of our own Souls is more powerful than any external coercion might be.

¹ Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, New York: Lucis, 1957, 421.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 55-56.

⁶ Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, New York: Lucis, 1966, 403.

⁷ Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 401.

⁸ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, 164-165.

⁹ Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 419.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* Parenthesis in original.

¹¹ Alice A. Bailey, *From Bethlehem to Calvary*, New York: Lucis, 1937, 163.

¹² Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age I*, New York: Lucis, 1944, 38.

¹³ Alice A. Bailey, *Education in the New Age*, New York: Lucis, 1954, 122-123.

¹⁴ Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 573.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 573.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 514-515. Elsewhere the Tibetan commented that the mysteries will also be restored in the sciences. See for example Alice A. Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, New York: Lucis, 1948, 122.

¹⁷ Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, 393.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*