



Contact

The members' newsletter of the Brisbane Theosophical Society

2012 Issue 1 Jan-Feb-Mar-April



Knights Templar castle at Tomar, Portugal. See page 3

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Brisbane Theosophical Society

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Monday to Thursday 10:30 am to 2:30 pm
Friday 1.00 pm to 4.00 pm & 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm

The programme of Lodge meetings and groups is enclosed and is also placed on the Lodge website which will always be the most up-to-date source of information for any changes.

The Theosophical Society has no official statements of belief. It encourages members to seek the truth by various avenues, but always subject to respect for others. All views expressed in these pages are entirely those of the authors – not of the Society.

PRESIDENT'S MUSINGS

Greetings fellow Theosophists,

2012 has come to us, dry and cool so far (at date of writing). An election for a new committee has occurred and you will find a list of the current committee in the following pages. We thank our outgoing Secretary, Angela Read, for her good work during the past year, and wish her well in her work with Tibetans in India, which will keep her away from Australia for some good part of the year. The rest of the committee remains the same with the addition of John Harris who has kindly taken up the gauntlet.

Looking ahead to the year to come, we are very busy in January with our commitments to the Annual Convention which is at St John's College at the University of Queensland. There will be the usual two Meditation Retreats at Springbrook which are run by Brisbane Lodge. This year Noel Bertelle has taken over from our very dedicated Astrid and Aru Arunachalam who have retired from this activity. Many thanks to them for their initiation of the event and perseverance in its continuation. We are hoping to have a presence at the annual Multi-Cultural Festival held in Roma Street Parklands in the latter part of the year. Apart from these activities, it is business as usual with continuing Friday night talks, a variety of study groups, library and bookshop openings, office work, and the ever present maintenance of garden and building, all being wonderful opportunities for selfless service! Please contact the lodge if you are interested in being involved in any of the above.

We use so many many words in talks and in groups as we try to grapple with the mysteries of life in order to live the life of the true Theosophist. The first verse of the *Tao The Ching* tells us "The Tao which can be expressed is not the unchanging Tao; the name which can be named is not the unchanging name." and from Sextus, "Who then is he who hath given God a name? 'God' is not a 'name' but an 'opinion about God'." Let us all during the coming year allow ourselves times of silence where no words intrude, and in doing so, perhaps come closer to who we really are.

Very best wishes for the coming year.

Fraternal regards,

Phillipa Rooke

2012 Brisbane Lodge Committee

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Cover Picture:

The Knights Templar fortress at Tomar, Portugal. The building complex is actually a fortress or castle, and the church, as it is labelled today, within it is more like a temple for rituals than a church. It has a circular form with four cardinal stations based on Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. Tomar was last headquarters of the Knights Templar long after their destruction in France by Phillippe IV in the 1300's. The Portuguese Templar establishment lasted much longer as it had the support and protection of the King of Portugal. The various courtyards, cloisters and chambers contain many symbolic features, many of which would today be considered masonic. The photo of the wall-plate below explains some of the history. It's a fascinating place. *Photos: G Harrod*



Santa, onde Gualdim Pais permanecera durante cinco anos. O oratório românico, de planta centrada, foi também inspirado no longínquo Templo de Jerusalém.

The fortress of Tomar was founded by Gualdim Pais in 1160 with the double aim of supporting the Christians' progress strategically towards south and serving as headquarters for the Order of the Temple in Portugal. The fortress of the Knights Templar in Tomar incorporates remains of an islamic settlement dating back to the 9th century and was organized over three main areas, strictly separated among them by walls: the *alcáçova*, exclusively used by the Knights; the *yard*, capable of receiving inhabitants of the surrounding territories in case of menace or siege; the *almedina*, where the medieval town of Tomar was first settled. The *castle*, final stronghold, communicated directly with the *alcáçova*. The fortress of Tomar presents a number of quite advanced solutions for its time, some of them previously tested in military buildings of the Holy Land, where Gualdim Pais had stayed for five years. The romanesque rotunda was also inspired by the remote Temple of Jerusalem.

Prophecies Part II

Presentation at Brisbane Theosophical Society, 23rd September 2011

- by **Judith Jeffrey**

PROPHECIES of a positive nature to balance doomsday phenomena and to illustrate the power of the subconscious to reveal potential pathways for humanity.

I will be using forecasts by theosophical seers, the founder of the Baha'i Faith, the Tibetan Master and also prophetic dreams, from a group of students of Jungian Psychology. Prophetic statements of this nature, can be amazing as they are so unexpected, surprising and mostly inspirational. However, whether prophecies are positive or negative — personal or collective — they are *not* predetermined because humans always have the power to change current trends and hence outcomes.

To begin with a prophetic oracle like *The I Ching* (a book of the Ageless Wisdom put into oracle format) – as a metaphor, if a train has left Central Station, it is easy to predict it will arrive at Shornccliffe, as *the train of events* or the energy behind is already set in motion. Even if *The I Ching* were to predict an accident, those conditions too were already building up to that point. Readings reflect such energy patterns, via our own link to the Collective Subconscious (or level of oneness) which is far more aware of underlying patterns than the limited personal ego. But it is not easy to change entrenched patterns unless a great deal of personal willpower is used. Pulling *the emergency cord* to stop a *train* of events is challenging indeed.

Prophecies from the Masters work on the same principle. They say: *This is what you can achieve with greater spiritual awareness if you change entrenched patterns.* Their predictions are usually positive and helpful. They are far from the doomsday scenarios that fundamentalist religion focuses upon.

Prophetic Dreams that Reveal Potential for Humanity

I was fortunate enough to know a group of friends, who often had powerful prophetic dreams and who were interested in universal archetypes, symbols and psychology. This interaction lasted for over ten years and I recorded the main dreams we shared.

Everyone has prophetic dreams. You only have to write them down — give them a name and a date in a special book — and look back at them over the years. For instance, one of my friends recorded a very dramatic dream about aeroplanes flying into twin tower buildings in the U.S.A., destroying them completely. It had a great impact on her. You may be thinking, well what is the point of having an upsetting dream like that, if you don't know where it is — can't warn anyone — nor do anything about it. But perhaps she tuned into the terrorist's planning stage, via the Collective Subconscious as Carl Jung called it — or perhaps it was to prepare her mentally.

Here is another dream from this group which illustrates the power of the subconscious, via the dreams of ordinary people to reveal significant future world trends. It was a very intense volatile scenario. The dreamer was standing on a platform speaking to crowds of people, at the very beginning of the Russian Revolution. They were all fired up with zeal. But the speaker told the crowd that their new system (though incorporating many valuable social improvements) would fail. They all looked very startled, even angry, some began shouting. But the speaker went on. It would fail because it was one sided, i.e. based on military might, dominance, violence and atheism. However, after a time of ruin, there would be another revolution and the second one would succeed. This was because it would be based on democratic and spiritual principles, and consultation with the people (rather than the rule of dictators). In the dream, the crowd went very silent. (End of dream)



This leads me directly to a quote, on the same subject, from the book "Prophecies" by D.K.". It is a book of quotations from the Tibetan Master Dwal Khul, an associate of the great Sages who inspired Madame Blavatsky. He stated in 1948: (paraphrased)

"The liberty to decide on a required form of government or religion is the rightful prerogative of mankind. [Hence] a menace to world freedom lies in the policies of the U.S.S.R. As there is no true spiritual potency [in this system], it is doomed to fail. Even though it may succeed from the angle of material gain and education [which he said was a positive aspect], from a spiritual angle they are doomed. It is because inherently, mankind is free and fundamentally divine. It is

assured that masses of people in Russia and in the satellite states will inevitably react divinely and potently. The people hold the ultimate triumph in their hands." (How's that for an accurate prophecy.)

However, he also said that "Out of Russia will emerge a new and magical religion." Fancy saying that in 1948, when they had just overthrown religion for good, so they thought! Why did Dwal Khul use the word 'magical'? I guess it is because Russian people are mystically inclined - or mostly intuitive types in Jungian psychology. In the past, they were often very superstitious, but through education, were guided away from a more primitive and negative aspect of intuition.



Here is another dream from this group, again on the subject of vast changes in society. These are what Carl Jung might call big dreams that go beyond personal significance. The dreamer saw masses of people (symbolic of humanity) walking down wide boulevards. They were all holding huge rugs over their heads.

On top of these rugs, people on thrones were being supported by the masses.

Thus the dream portrayed an image slightly similar to this photograph. There were kings,

princes, bishops, and people at the top of the tree in society, all dressed in their own special regalia. Hence the masses were under the rugs, in the dark, while those with the crowns on their heads were in the sunlight.

Then suddenly a man who was a comedian started poking a stick up and through the carpet, under one of the thrones. The man on the throne above jumped and the crowds thought this was funny. Gradually they all started poking sticks through the carpet and the thrones were jumping and bobbing all over the place. Then the sticks tore through the rugs, which were eventually broken into pieces. Finally, all the thrones (and the people on them) fell off onto the ground. Those in the regalia picked themselves up and walked alongside the masses of ordinary people. After a while, the people in the special ceremonial clothes felt silly looking different and changed into ordinary street clothes and everyone was much happier, as they all walked together in the sunlight along the road."

Claiming our Own Authority

This dream clearly portrays our time in history, when in a psychological sense, projections onto many people in authority are being withdrawn, on mass. This is a two-way process. When we project our own soul potential onto others, or give others responsibility for things we need to be responsible for, they will of course use that energy, but we don't grow. Some people hand over responsibility for their health to a doctor — or their spirituality to a priest or guru — or their own welfare to a government. We all do this to certain extent.

From being idealized and placed high above ordinary people, those wearing the crowns are now often made fun of, or even ridiculed. We can see this regularly in satire on television. First we see those given authority over us, in an idealized state, e.g. teachers, political leaders, parents, relatives, or when we fall in love. The significant other is seen as god-like and we call this infatuation if it bears no relation to reality. Yet when there *is* mutual respect and self-worth, the significant other can become a mirror to our soul. The aim is *conscious* love or devotion, based on equality, without being subservient. If the recipient is not worthy of respect and especially if there is no mutual energy exchange, when the projection is withdrawn the image we hold of them falls flat (like the rugs falling in the dream).

Likewise, we have gone from seeing our Royal Family like distant gods, to for instance the person of Princess Diana, who was subsequently persecuted and hounded by photographers, even to her death. Then there was mass grief about the loss of the archetypal princess who related to everyday problems and people.

Before her funeral, the Queen and her family had to come onto the streets in London, away from Scotland, in order to reconnect to what people were experiencing emotionally. This they did successfully. This image was so similar to that of the dream with the rugs and the thrones and everyone walking on the streets together, that the two images almost matched. Hence it was not surprising that one media commentator in England said, that the scene with walls of flowers on the streets marked the beginning of Britain entering a new era.

The dream of the rugs and those on thrones falling portrays a gradual falling away of a former hierarchical structures and a changeover to a more equal society. Instead of living in a pyramid-like, class-based society, we will eventually see a society based on a circular concept, where all the points or people on the circumference are of equal value. Madame Blavatsky spoke of this transition in society when she said that the intrinsic oneness of humanity will begin to be given practical expression, in our next phase of development, which would take place especially in the Pacific Rim countries.

A Merging of Religious and Political Goals

This brings us to the next prophetic dream, which was happened to be set in Russia, but also concerned world-wide movements. The following dream suggests a merging of religious and political goals, which involves a new emphasis on social justice in religion, compared to the past. This dream is as follows:

The dreamer saw a Russian boy, about 10 years old, dressed in the uniform of a Young Pioneer (like a Boy Scout) receiving a medal (similar to a Duke of Edinburgh Award) from Mikhail Gorbachev (a great soul himself). It was very similar to this photo. However in the dream, this scene then zoomed into a small area (like looking through a telescope) focusing on the boy's heart. Incredibly, the dreamer saw inside the boy's heart and there was the image of a Great Sage from India. Then the image zoomed in again. Inside the Indian Sage's heart was the image of St. Francis.



The scene then changed to when this boy had matured and he was an older man. He had started a movement which had changed Christianity markedly and it had spread into other countries. The dreamer was told that his ideas were similar to those espoused by Matthew Fox and Creation Spirituality. (This is not the Creation Theology of the fundamentalists).

The movement was a unique merger of religion, ecology and politics, which does not exist as yet in our world. Its main aims were, like the teachings of St. Francis — simplicity, reverence for Nature and a sharing of resources. It was also non-hierarchical.



Their programmes for social justice were carried out mostly on a grass-roots level by ordinary people, who met, not necessarily in churches, but in work-places or their own homes. There were simple ceremonies of sharing the traditional bread and wine, while sitting in circles, but with no set priest or leader. Members of the groups were elected to lead for a specific period of time and they shared duties equally among men and women. Many types of projects for their society or community were carried out in conjunction with government programmes. This was comparable to the Church programmes now undertaken in conjunction with the Australian government, but it was not exactly the same. It was happening all over Russia and then in other parts of the world.

The main difference was that this Church emphasized caring for the Earth and not domination of the earth, which is mostly still the general attitude today. Think of clear-felling forests. This is the really amazing part. The dreamer was told that it represented the *beginning* of Christianity, as Jesus had envisaged.

If you see this dream as a suggestion of likely future trends then it seems that atheism will not win the battle for minds and hearts. The Tibetan Master agreed with this when he said that divine energy is the foundation of our existence. Thus, how can we *avoid* growing spiritually and having organizations that reflect this. He also said that it would be Russia that would produce the next major religion, for they were naturally mystical and intuitive. I don't see any evidence for this, as yet, but I am sure a renewal will occur in that land. This was borne out by another powerful dream at the time of the break-up of the Soviet Union. It included the image

of a huge white Phoenix rising up out of black ashes and laying a large white egg in nearly every major Russian centre. Furthermore an I Ching reading at the same time in history, i.e. Hexagram or Section No. 30 - The Fiery - the Fifth Line (or text) also suggested that out of a time of burn-out, a transformation and regeneration would take place.

Predictions based on Science.

Annie Besant also said that future religions would include science and it is not hard to see ecology, based on the oneness of Nature, as the foundation-stone of holistic science and religion of the future. In the philosophy of Taoism, the Chinese form of Theosophy, a scientific concept like the Unified Field can be equated with the Great Tao of Universal Harmony. Only such a transcendent viewpoint has the power to lift us out of denial, passivity, inaction and give us faith and hope in our ability to repair our environment.

The Master Dwal Khul predicted in the 1940's that energy corporations would fight to the death new ideas about clean energy sources. How accurate he was. As we speak scientists, such as those working on global warming and the barrier reef, or those doing research on fish stocks, are receiving death threats. It is like another Inquisition on science. Hence it is vitally important, especially for Theosophists, not to be taken in by the same people, who flooded the world with misinformation about smoking and cancer for decades, and who are now doing the same about Global Warming. Madame Blavatsky said that the next step for humanity would be based on a fearless search for truth. She was certainly fearless and we would do ourselves and this Society a grave disservice by burying our heads in the sand.

Predictions About a New World Order

There is much paranoia about this subject spread on the internet. But what if a future New World Order were based on decisions made by us, the general populace? What if there was no central authority - only people elected for a short time to take note of *our* decisions? What if there were no central army, only defence forces in all parts of the world ready to merge together when needed in a crisis.?



This beautiful mandala shows a young man dreaming of a world of greater abundance. Dwal Khul said about this subject "The new world order will *not* impose a uniform type of government, nor a synthetic religion, and not a system of standardisation upon the nations. The sovereign rights of each nation will be recognized and its peculiar genius, individual trends and racial qualities, will be permitted full expression."

He continues: "The Principle of Sharing will be a recognized motivating concept of the new civilization. The world will still be full of selfish, self-seeking people, but overall public opinion will be such that certain fundamental ideals will motivate business. The principle of barter and exchange will also be used to benefit all.

"Furthermore, owing to the development of atomic energy [obviously by fusion not fission], on behalf of human welfare, national currencies will have been largely changed, not only by a system of barter, but by a universal monetary exchange and a planned scale of related values.

National material assets and needed commodities will be provided under an entirely new system. Private enterprise will still exist, but will be regulated. The great public utilities, the major material resources.....will be owned by a governing, controlling, international group.....chosen by the people and under international direction.”

Well, that is bound to strike fear into the heart of conspiracy theorists and economic rationalists. These predictions do seem like a fairy-tale to us at our present level of social-awareness.

However, if an Adept makes a prediction, it is highly likely to manifest *when* the need for change builds, usually via a crisis. The prophetic leader of the Baha'i Faith forecast very similar trends in society, when he said that humanity was destined to develop a system of democratic sharing, no matter how long it took and no matter how much we suffered for the lack of it. He said that one of the first things to be relinquished would be the buying and selling of money. We probably can't even imagine the world changing to this extent.

The Purpose of Predictions by the Masters?

It is to sow the seeds of creative imagination, to stimulate our minds with ideas about possibilities for a world that is *not* based on greed and fear — the driving force of the stock market — and to give us an alternative vision. The first step is to imagine that change is possible. Many older people cannot do this, but new younger generations will. When you realize that more is spent on golf than clean drinking water in the world, it is a worthwhile dream.

Here is another quote from Dwal Khul: “There is in the last analysis but One World and One Humanity and in a shorter time than you think, boundaries and territories will mean but little. World citizenship will be the only factor of importance.” With all the world strife at the moment and the huge refugee crisis, one can only say that the Tibetan Master certainly has faith in the human race to change. The adept who founded the Baha'i Faith, Bahá'u'lláh said, “The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens.” “The time will come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of leaders will be universally realized. The rulers of the earth must attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace amongst humanity.”

To conclude, here is another powerful dream. One day in the not too far distant future, peace and order would be maintained in the world, due to international efforts to implement Justice via improved laws. Hence faith and hope were essential. (End of dream) In this light, the founder of the Baha'i Faith said that *world peace was not only possible, but inevitable!*

Bibliography:

“Prophecies by D.K.” Compiled by Aart Jurriaanse, published by World Unity & Service Inc. South Africa. 1977.

Baha'i website. <http://info.baha'i.org/article-1-7-2-1.html>)

‘CONTACT’ on-line –

If you are receiving this magazine in printed form, note that the electronic form has the pictures in colour. You can receive it by email if you send an email to the Lodge, and you can also see all issues of Contact on the Lodge website – <http://www.theosophyqld.org.au>

MEDITATION

A SILENT WEEKEND RETREAT

IN A COOL, CLEAR MOUNTAIN ENVIRONMENT

FRIDAY MARCH 9 to SUNDAY MARCH 11,

PRESENTED BY THE BRISBANE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY AT THE THEOSOPHICAL RETREAT CENTRE, SPRINGBROOK, QLD.



This is a weekend designed just for you where you can relax and settle into a tranquil, stress-free state practicing basic meditation techniques in the company of like-minded people. Whether you are a beginner or one whose practice has lapsed over time you will have the opportunity to regain the calmness and stability you may have been missing. You will receive guidance over the weekend which could help you make meditation a vital part of your life.

The Retreat will be led by Noel Bertelle. You will have a room to yourself and enjoy vegetarian meals. All this will be provided at a moderate cost of \$90.

To **REGISTER** complete the form below and return to The Secretary, Theosophical Society 355 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane 4000 or phone Noel 3203 8511. **Registrations close March 2nd.** Early registration is advised as places are limited.

REGISTRATION FORM

MEDITATION RETREAT 9 – 11 MARCH 2012

NAME

ADDRESS

POST CODE..... PHONE #..... E/MAIL #.....

IS TRANSPORT TO SPRINGBROOK REQUIRED? YES.....NO.....

I ENCLOSE DEPOSIT OF **\$20** (Non-refundable) **OR** FULL COST OF RETREAT **\$90**

SIGNATURE..... DATE.....

SPECIAL DIETARY REQUIREMENTS IF ANY*

What to bring: please bring your own single bed linen, towel, etc; as this helps us keep the overall weekend cost down to a minimum. Additionally for your comfort you may wish to bring a cushion and blanket for meditation practice. A track suit (or similar), joggers and a torch may also be handy.

Special notes: Room Registrations will commence from 4.30 pm Friday. The Retreat will conclude mid-afternoon Sunday. All meals are vegetarian and the property is an alcohol and smoke free zone. To assist your practice, silence will be observed all day Saturday until Sunday lunch.

A phone number or email address is essential for registering.

* If you have special dietary needs above and beyond lacto-vegetarian, e.g. vegan, gluten free, actual medical allergies, we need to know in advance.

THE WISDOM JESUS

Talk at the Brisbane Theosophical Society 16 July 2010

Rev Dr Brian Harding

1. Introduction

Christianity has often been a problem for Theosophists. I think this is largely due to the public face presented by the religion for such a long time – perhaps as long as 1700 years. Almost from its earliest days, Rome-based Christianity became patriarchal and hierarchical. It also became exoteric and literalist.

Because of its suppression, the Wisdom Tradition in Christianity is not easy to find today. Many can't be bothered to look, or even know it exists. However, the search is rewarding and we have been greatly assisted by the discoveries in the 20th century of the Nag Hamadi library (1945), the Dead Sea Scrolls (1947), and other modern research. As a result, in recent times, an increasing number of scholars and Christian writers are recognising what Annie Besant (*Esoteric Christianity*, 1901) long ago called "the hidden side of Christianity."

I have unashamedly borrowed the title of this talk from a book (*The Wisdom Jesus*, Shambala, 2008) by Cynthia Bourgeault, an Episcopalian minister, teacher and retreat leader based in Colorado. In addition to her Christian training, she has also studied Gurdjieff, Kabalah, Sufism and Vedanta.

Here, I will look first at two streams of understanding flowing through Christianity, as explained by Bourgeault. I will then focus on the wisdom stream and how it came to be embraced in the Jesus story. This will entail a quick look at the geographical and social context of the story. Finally, I will select examples of the teachings of Jesus that show he was indeed a Master of Wisdom.

2. Two streams

The discovery of early Christian texts at Nag Hamadi in 1945 brought the attention of Western Christians to a tradition that differed from that within which many had grown up. While thoughtful students had always known of the *gnosis*, or *sophia perennis*, the average church-goer had for centuries seen Jesus simply as their "saviour" or "redeemer" – "Jesus Saves," is seen everywhere on church notice boards today. This approach to Jesus is known technically as *soteriology*.

With the Nag Hamadi discovery, things began to change. Ideas that had been lost began to resurface, and thinking Christians, like Bourgeault, realised the existence of another tradition which she calls *sophiology*, from the Greek *sophia* meaning wisdom.

In the West, *soteriology* has reigned supreme but the East retained more of the wisdom tradition found in early Christianity. To quote Bourgeault (*op cit* p21):

"Christianity was supremely a wisdom path. For the earliest Christians, Jesus was not the Saviour but the Life-Giver. ... In the original Aramaic of Jesus and his followers, there was no word for salvation. Salvation was understood as a bestowal of life, and to be saved was 'to be made alive.' Entering the waters at the hand of John the Baptist, Jesus emerged as Mahyana, 'the Life Giver.' He came forth also as the Ihidaya, 'the Single One' or 'the Unified One.' Nowadays, we would call him 'the Enlightened One' ... Jesus' disciples saw in him a master of

consciousness, offering a path through which they, too, could become ihidaya, enlightened ones.”

A sophiological Christianity, says Bourgeault (*op cit*, p21), focuses on the path. It emphasises how Jesus is like us – what he did, we can do. By contrast, soteriology emphasises how different Jesus is from us – “begotten not made, belonging to a higher order of being.”

And in this, all the modern evidence, Bourgeault says – including the Nag Hamadi texts (eg the Gospel of Thomas), the Syriac liturgies, the African desert fathers, Celtic poetry and the Chinese Jesus sutras – suggests that it’s the Western Church that “holds the variant position” – it is the heresy – not those who hold to the wisdom tradition.

So Jesus is (Bourgeault, *op cit* p4) “first and foremost ... a wisdom teacher, a person who clearly emerges out of and works within” the *sophia perennis*. And this tradition, says Bourgeault, “is concerned with the transformation of the whole human being ... from our animal instincts and egocentricity into love and compassion; from a judgmental and dualistic worldview into non-dual acceptingness.”

Now all this must sound familiar to many of us. It seems to me that Bourgeault is using Christian theological language to describe what has been known for millennia, in ancient Egypt and Greece, for example, as the Outer and Inner Mysteries. The first included myths and rituals that were common knowledge and at the centre of these was the myth of the dying and resurrecting God-Man. The second, the Inner Mysteries, were esoteric and were known only by those who had undergone a process of initiation, through which they learned the deeper meaning of the rituals and myths.

The initiation process, says Freke and Gandy (*The Jesus Mysteries*, 1999, p4), “brought about personal transformation and spiritual enlightenment,” almost the same words as those just quoted from Bourgeault. So we see that her “two streams” at least run parallel with the Mysteries of the perennial wisdom – the Outer Mysteries (exoteric, literal) being equivalent to her soteriology and the Inner Mysteries (esoteric, allegorical, wisdom) to her sophiology.

Before going further, we look briefly at the evidence for Inner Mysteries in Christianity – since average Christians today (including the clergy) seem blissfully unaware of their existence. Or perhaps they are just so familiar that they go unnoticed.

3. The Inner Side of Christianity

Annie Besant (*op cit* p24ff), and other writers before and since, give many references to show the existence of a hidden side to Christian teachings, and I’m sure many here will be familiar with these. I give just a few examples.

One of the most obvious is found in *Mark* 4:10, 11.

“When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables. And he said to them, ‘To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; in order that they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand...’”

I don’t think anyone can doubt the meaning of this. Again in *Mark* 4:33, we are told quite clearly

“With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.”

There are many more such clues “for those who have ears to hear.” There are similar hints in the writings of St Paul. For example, in *1 Corinthians* 2:6, 7 Paul says:

“...we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world ... But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world...”

Paul discusses the mysteries and related matters in the whole of chapters 2 and 3 of *1 Corinthians* and then in ch4:1 says:

“Let a man account us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

As Annie Besant (*op cit*, p38) asked, “can anyone read these passages ... without recognising the fact that the Apostle possessed a divine wisdom given in Mysteries?”

The writings of the early Church Fathers confirm the continuance of the Inner Mysteries of Christianity into their time. In the translation given by Maxwell Staniforth (*Early Christian Writings*, 1968, p76), Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, (c35-c107CE) speaks of himself in his *Epistle to the Ephesians* 3, as “by no means perfect in Jesus Christ .. I am only a beginner in discipleship.” Later (*ibid*, 12), he tells them “you are initiates of the same mysteries as our saintly and renowned Paul of blessed memory...”

St Clement of Alexandria (150-215 CE) speaks of the tradition of Christian gnosticism – the full esoteric knowledge of God and of his revelation in scripture (see Bettenson, *The Early Christian Fathers*, 1956) – as

“... the knowledge that is according to the mystic contemplation ... so that we may be ready to listen to the transmission of the gnostic tradition ...” Stromata I, i

And of the Christian gnostic he says:

“...the growing likeness to God the Father arises in the gnostic ... since he becomes ‘perfect, as the Father in heaven.’” Stromata VI, xii

Besant also quotes from the *Stromata*. Clement says: “The Lord ... allowed us to communicate of those divine Mysteries, and of that holy light, to those who were able to receive them. He did not certainly disclose to the many what did not belong to the many.” And in a later chapter (xii) headed “The Mysteries of the Faith not to be divulged to all,” Clement says that since others than the wise may see his work, “it is requisite therefore to hide in a Mystery the wisdom spoken, which the Son of God taught.”

In Origen’s (185-254CE) famous controversy with Celsus, the latter alleged that Christianity was a secret system. Origen responds that, while certain teachings were secret, many others were public, and that this system of exoteric and esoteric teachings, adopted in Christianity were also in general use among philosophers. In his writings, says Annie Besant (*op cit*, p61), “It is impossible to deny that ... Origen distinctly places the Christian Mysteries in the same category as those of the Pagan world.”

Origen also writes at some length about three levels of understanding scripture. And he adds:

“... The scriptures ... have not only the meaning which is clear on the surface but another meaning also which is hidden from most people, whereby the narrative presents types of certain mysteries and images of divine matters.” De Principiis, praef 8

And finally, I quote from St Augustine (354-430CE), (*Retract 1*, xiii, 3);

“The identical thing that we now call the christian religion existed among the ancients and has not been lacking from the beginnings of the human race until the coming of Christ in the flesh from which moment the true religion, which already existed, began to be called christian.”

So St Augustine, like Origen, places the Christian Mysteries in the same tradition as the ancient Pagan Mysteries, supporting the thesis presented by Freke and Gandy (*op cit*) and other modern writers.

There is much more, but we have seen enough, I think, to show that early Christianity indeed had its Inner Mysteries which derived directly from the ancient Mystery Traditions. In the following centuries, this wisdom was basically stamped out by the increasingly exoteric, literal, Roman Church.

It is important to note, however, that Besant, Bourgeault and others are not talking about Gnosticism with a capital “G.” People often glibly talk about “the Gnostics” when the term actually covers a multitude of different groups and ideas. In eliminating certain “extravagances of early Christianity” – the Rome-based church also suppressed the *gnosis* (small “g”). The baby was thrown out with the bathwater.

Let me now look briefly at the geographical and social context of the Jesus story to see where his wisdom teaching came from – note: I am deliberately leaving aside the question of the historicity of Jesus; that’s a talk and a half in itself!!

4. The Palestine of Jesus’ Day – melting pot of wisdom teachings

What we know today as the Middle East, was conquered by Alexander the Great around 330BCE. The conquest brought with it a culture known as Hellenism – Greek architecture, philosophies, religion and social behaviours. From 37BCE, parts of the territory became a vassal kingdom of the Roman Empire under the rule of Herod the Great.

Now, Herod “saw himself in absolutely every respect as a Hellenistic ruler” (Witherington, *Jesus the Sage*, 2000, p119). His son, Herod Antipas, became ruler of Galilee during the time of John the Baptist and Jesus. By then, significant Hellenisation had occurred, especially among the upper classes of Jewish society (Witherington, *op cit*, p121). It is just this more educated group that would have been introduced to the Pagan Mystery traditions (see for example, Tom Harpur, in *The Pagan Christ*, 2004, pp18, 19; Annie Besant, *op cit*, p8-10, 25 and others).

It is also significant that the immediate setting of the Jesus story is Galilee. Contrary to what one might expect, it wasn’t Jerusalem that was the more Hellenised; it was Galilee, particularly Lower Galilee. Here we find major Greek cities such as Tiberias and Sepphoris, where Greek schools were established. Gadara, scene of the “Gadarene swine” story, was a Greek city. The town of Capernaum, where Jesus is said to have spent a lot of his time, was on a major trade route – part of the Silk Road network that ran through Damascus and down to Egypt (through what is now the Gaza strip). So Capernaum was a cosmopolitan centre of significant population, not just a backwater village.

But there is more. Not only would there have been Greek influence but, as Bourgeault points out (*op cit*, p25), “his [Jesus’] teachings show clear areas of overlap with the great stream of *sophia perennis* flowing through other spiritual traditions, particularly Buddhism and Persian light mysticism” (by which I think she means Mithraism). Doubtless wisdom influences flowed up the coastal trade route from Egypt too.

Now all these ideas were piled on top of the long-existing indigenous Jewish Wisdom Tradition (see my article “Wisdom in the Judaeo-Christian Tradition,” *The Liberal Catholic*, Vol 71 (2),

p31). The influence of writers such as Ben Sira, for example, author of Ecclesiasticus or Sirach (ca 180BCE) is noticeable in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (Witherington, *op cit*, p143ff).

So Jesus would have been exposed to wisdom traditions from many sources. Furthermore, as Bourgeault says (*op cit* pp25-27), “Jesus was not a hick.” From the Gospels we know he could read, he probably spoke several languages, and may well have trained with the Essene Community at Qumran. She concludes: “He was not only a teacher of wisdom; he was a master of wisdom.”

So, now let’s look at some of Jesus’ teachings.

5. The Wisdom Teachings of Jesus

Again, I will take a few points from Bourgeault’s book, *The Wisdom Jesus*.

a)

Jesus makes frequent reference to “the Kingdom of Heaven.” It’s “like this” or “like that;” it’s “at hand” or “within you.” But where is it exactly? It obviously isn’t up in the sky somewhere – space research pretty much dispensed with any notion like that. Another angle people have taken is that it’s some kind of earthly utopia that will eventuate when we have peace, love and justice on earth and all will live together in harmony. But Jesus distinctly said “My kingdom is not of this world” (*John* 18:36).

To get to the point, Bourgeault (*op cit*, p30) says, as others have done, that the Kingdom of Heaven is “a metaphor for a state of consciousness” – it’s not a place at all. It’s Jesus’ way of describing a state we would nowadays call “non-dual consciousness” or “unitive consciousness.” It is a state of non-separation between God and humans, and humans and humans. Bourgeault believes that what Jesus has in mind “is a complete, mutual indwelling: I am in God, God is in you, you are in God, we are in each other.” So Jesus teaches the existence of a higher state of consciousness wherein is realised the Oneness of all life.

b)

The second point is related to this. As Bourgeault says (*op cit*, p37): “You’ll often hear ... that [Jesus] came to this earth calling us to repentance.” Again, signs outside churches proclaim “repent, for the day of the Lord is at hand” or some such dire warning.

The Greek word being translated as “repentance” is *metanoia* which doesn’t mean feeling sorry for doing naughty things. It doesn’t even mean ‘to change direction’ or ‘to mend your ways.’ Says Bourgeault “The word literally breaks down into *meta* and *noia*, which means ... “beyond the mind” or “into the larger mind” depending on how you translate *meta*. So Jesus really is telling us to go beyond the false self, the little ego, into the higher Self. He is calling us to personal transformation. Isn’t that what the spiritual journey is all about?

Bourgeault describes these levels of consciousness beautifully. The false self she calls “the egoic operating system.” She says this is a binary system operating with dualities like either/or – it’s centred in the brain. It loves to separate things – us and them, or God and us.

The higher unitive Self she calls “a nondual or unitive system” and it’s centred in the heart. “In Wisdom, the heart is primarily an organ of spiritual perception,” she says (*op cit*, p35). Someone who is able “to see with the eye of the heart” “is operating out of nondual consciousness – they see “from the perspective of singleness ... and there is now no separation...” (*op cit*, p36-37).

With this in mind, let’s look at more of the teachings of Jesus.

c)

Among the best known Biblical passages are the verses in *Matthew* 5:1-12, known as the Beatitudes (they all start with “Blessed are...”). Bourgeault goes through all of these, looking at them with “the eye of the heart.” She notes that these are also “the least commented upon by the church fathers and theologians – most likely ... because they are clearly nondual teachings of the highest order, and most of the church still isn’t there yet” (*op cit*, p42).

I choose just one, because it brings out an example of the misunderstanding that has been perpetrated throughout most of Church history. “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*” For most church goers, being “pure in heart” means being virtuous and having no sinful thoughts, particularly of a sexual nature. So if we live a “good clean life” we’ll get to heaven.

But, Bourgeault points out, “in wisdom teaching, purity means *singleness*, and the proper translation of this beatitude is ... ‘Blessed are those whose heart is not divided’ or ‘whose heart is a unified whole.’” The meaning then becomes clear, that those who achieve nondual vision will indeed “see God.” We mentioned earlier the (Aramaic) word *ihidaya*, “the single one” who has unified his or her being. Not only has the beatitude been misunderstood, but this word has been interpreted as supporting priestly celibacy!

d)

Let’s have a quick look at the Parables. These are not just stories with a moral – that would be a proverb or an Aesop’s Fable. Jesus’ parables are more like Zen *koans*, says Bourgeault (*op cit* p47) – “profound paradoxes that are intended to turn the egoic mind upside down and push us into new ways of seeing things.”

Think of the wise and foolish bridesmaids, waiting for the bridegroom to come (*Matthew* 25). You probably remember the story. The Groom is delayed and they all fall asleep. In the middle of the night, they hear the cry “The bridegroom is coming!” Five of them had remembered to bring enough oil for their lamps, the other five didn’t have enough oil and they’d run out. They ask the five wise ones if they could borrow some of theirs, but the five wise ones refuse: “If we give you some of our oil, there won’t be enough for any of us. Go and buy your own.”

Sounds really unkind, doesn’t it? A number of Jesus’ parables leave the egoic mind thinking “That isn’t fair!” or “That isn’t very nice!” But, of course, the oil here symbolises something that has to be brought to birth in each individual for themselves – the transformed consciousness. Nobody else can do this for you – it’s solely down to you.

e)

The Gospel of Thomas is one of the best known texts from the Nag Hamadi corpus. Scholars have taken the date back and back as their studies have progressed and many now think it predates the earliest canonical Gospel of St Mark. That is, Thomas is earlier than 70CE. It consists of 114 short sayings (*logia*) of Jesus. They emphasise the unification of consciousness. But, says Bourgeault (*op cit*, p55) “whoever transcribed them was certainly one of his [Jesus’] advanced students.” I have space here for only a couple of short examples.

Logion 7 reads:

Blessed is the lion whom the man devours, for that lion will become man. But cursed is the man whom the lion devours, for that man shall become lion.”

This relates to the need for us to tame or overcome our “animal” nature. The man who devours the lion has his animal nature, or lower nature, under control. He is progressing on the spiritual

journey. But the reverse, if the lion devours the man, means that the animal instincts win out. In that case, says Bourgeault (*op cit*, p56), the person actually devolves into a lower form.

Logion 42 reads:

“Come into being as you pass away.”

This is the shortest of the sayings and its meaning is clear. From the point of view of the lower realm, we die as we pass into the higher. It’s similar to Jesus’ saying in *Matthew* 10:39: “He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”

f)

Finally, returning to the canonical Gospels, I should mention the I AM sayings of Jesus, mainly found in the *Gospel of John*. The one I bring to your attention here is the one which Christian fundamentalists love to throw at me. In *John* 14:6, answering a question from Thomas, Jesus says:

I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.

And, of course, all the exoteric literalists immediately conclude that to get to heaven we have to be good Christian followers of Jesus. There are no other paths to God – Christianity is it. Obviously this is not what Jesus, the master of wisdom, intended. In the Judaic tradition, I AM is the holy name of God, Yahweh. So again Jesus was speaking from that unitive level of consciousness, the Christ consciousness. And of course we have to raise our awareness to that state before we can encounter the Divine. In Hindu terms, Jesus is saying “no-one comes to Brahman except via the atman.” Other I AM sayings have a similar interpretation.

6. Concluding remarks

In concluding, I would like to note that leading early Theosophists envisioned a Western church in which a knowledge and understanding of the Wisdom Tradition would be restored. Annie Besant wrote (*op cit*, p27)

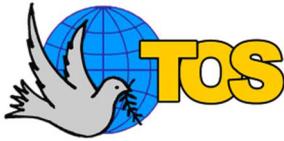
“If it is to live [that is, the Christian Church], it must regain the knowledge it has lost, and again have its mystic and its occult teachings; it must again stand forth as an authoritative teacher of spiritual verities, clothed with the only authority worth anything, the authority of knowledge.”

And she is using “knowledge” in the sense of “gnosis,” of course. This concern was the impetus, I think, behind the establishing of the Liberal Catholic Church.

One final comment; it seems to me that the history of Christianity is a real tragedy. As Bourgeault says (*op cit*, p76) “The gospels record a comical but poignant trail of miscomprehensions and botched efforts to follow the Master’s lead ... In a real sense, Christianity as a religion got off on the wrong foot from the start.” And look at all the wars, persecutions and atrocities that have been perpetrated as a result!

My own thought – it seems to me this is a classic example of what happens when the Inner Mysteries get into the hands of those not able to understand them. Jesus the Master himself warned his disciples (*Matthew* 7:6)

“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”



T.O.S. news

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Email: tinafiedler@bigpond.com
President: Tina Fiedler Vice-President: Geoff Harrod

Annual General Meeting Report

The Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday 3 December, 2011. The office bearers for 2012 are:

President: Tina Fiedler

Vice-President: Geoff Harrod,

Secretary: Janet Harding

Treasurer: Carolyn Harrod.

Robyn Rizzo is the TOS Representative to the Brisbane Theosophical Society Committee.

TOS members work as volunteers in a number of areas, choosing ones of particular interest to them. The areas of service are: community service and education, healing, animal welfare, environment, and peace.

In addition, the group chooses several projects to support each year with donations and voluntary work. For information, talk to one of the committee or visit www.theosophyqld.org.au

Meetings in 2012

All interested people are invited to attend the planning meetings which are held quarterly from 10.00 to 11:30 am in the T.S. rooms.

Meeting dates in 2012 are:

Saturday 3 March,

Saturday 2 June,

Saturday 25 August and

Saturday 1 December (AGM).

Guided Meditation book and CD

A book and CD on Guided Meditation by Dr. K Arunachalam is available from the TOS. Aru has taught meditation at the Brisbane TS for many years. He has generously donated this work to the Brisbane TOS and all profit from sales will go to TOS Projects. The set of book and CD costs \$12. You can purchase a set by contacting any TOS committee member.



Thanks for your donations for mobility aids in India

The TOS sends many thanks to all who donated at the AGM of the Brisbane TS, to the appeal for the mobility aids project organised by the TOS in Assam, India. The Brisbane TS generously matched the donations, so we will be able to send a donation of \$893 for the project.



Our donation will enable the Assam TOS to purchase a number of hand-operated tricycles and wheel chairs for people who cannot afford them. It will provide many recipients with independence and the opportunity to earn a living. Your generosity will truly make a difference to their lives!

Dates for your 2012 diary

The Brisbane TOS will be conducting a number of activities through the year which we hope many TS members will support.

Sat 24 March: *Healing from the Forest Seminar* See the following page for details.

Sat 28 & Sun 29 July: *Working bee at the Springbrook TS Retreat Centre*

Fri 7, Sat 8 & Sun 9 September: *Art Show*

Fri 30 Nov: *Christmas sale table.*

There'll be details closer to these events.



Brisbane Theosophical Order of Service

You are invited to join us for a seminar:

Healing from the Forest

Date: Saturday 24 March 2012

Venue: Brisbane Theosophical Society, main meeting room,
355 Wickham Terrace., Brisbane



Program: 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

- 9:00 am Registration and welcome
- 9:30 am Using essential oils and herbs from the forest *Speaker: Tina Fiedler*
- 10:30 am Morning tea
- 11:00 am Restoring the world's tropical forests *Speaker: Dr David Lamb*
- 12:00 noon Our spiritual connection with nature *Speaker: Dr Lynne Hume*
- 1:00 pm Vegetarian lunch provided
- 2:00 pm Basket weaving workshop with natural materials, for those wishing to stay on after lunch *Led by artist, Karen Cipressi*

Cost: \$10 to cover the cost of lunch, plus a donation to the Pakistan home-schools project

To register, phone Carolyn Harrod on 3378 8534 or add your name to the registration form in the Brisbane TS library by Friday 16 March 2012.

The Theosophical Society

A worldwide body whose primary object is to promote Universal Brotherhood. The Society imposes no belief upon its members, who are united by a common search for truth. Its constitution declares three objects:

1. To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.
2. To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.
3. To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in the human being.

The Theosophical Society has no official doctrine. All philosophies, religions and methods of spiritual practice are within its scope of interest but not endorsed. Material published in this journal therefore does not carry any endorsement or represent any official viewpoint of the organisation.

The Motto of the Society is ***There is no religion higher than Truth.***

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