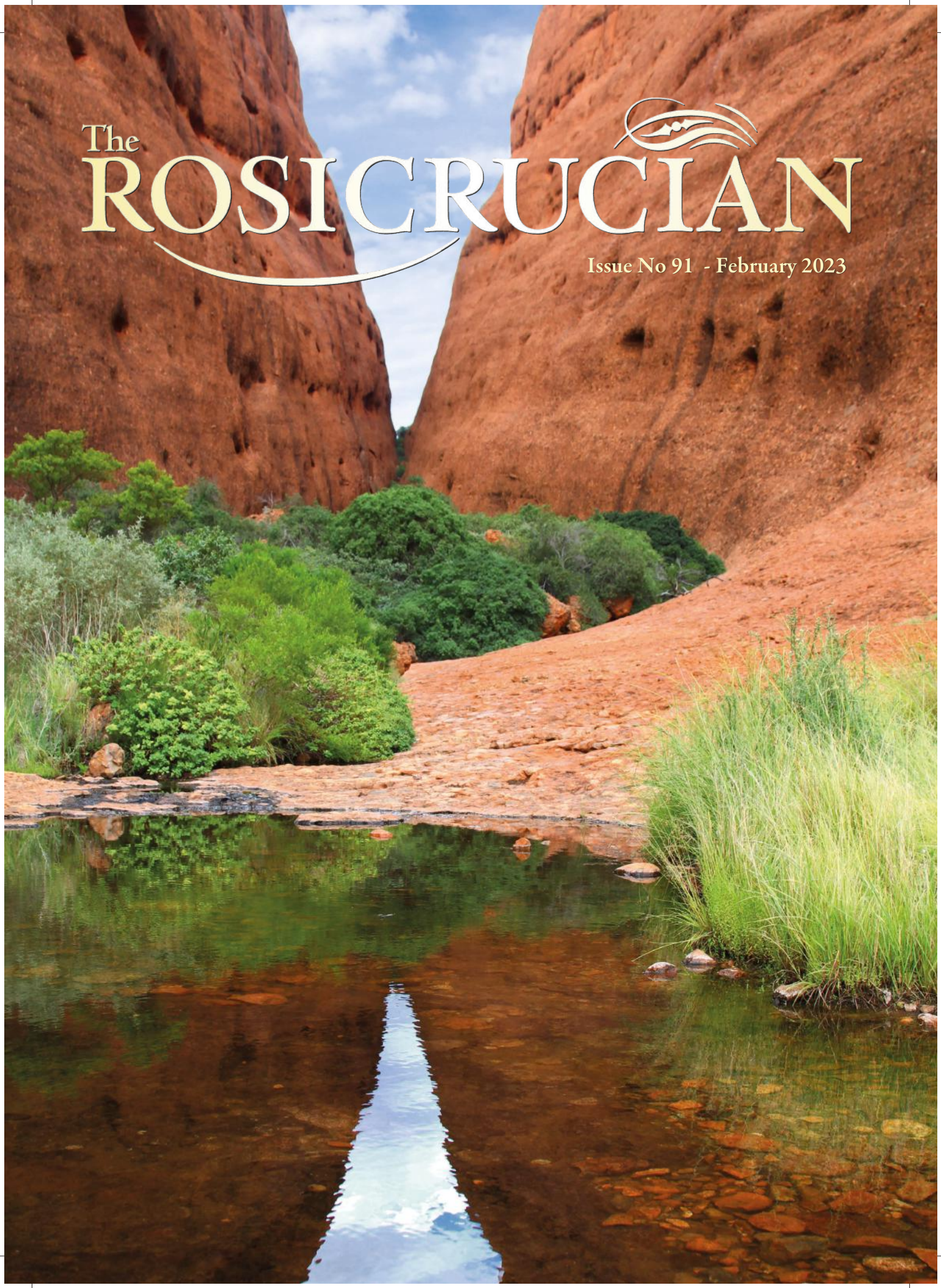


The ROSICRUCIAN

Issue No 91 - February 2023



In the depths of Your Being

In the depths of your being resides your deeper Self, an aspect of your being which breathes in calm reflection the very rhythm of the universe. It is in touch with all things and communicates with all that matters for life on Earth. It seeks to instruct and guide its human ward how to live a good life, and does so with care for its wellbeing, and above all, with love and compassion for all expressions of life.

Your Self knows why you are here and what you are meant to accomplish in this incarnation. It knows what your chances are of attaining the goals you have set for yourself, and whether they are beyond your reach or fully attainable. And it assists you to reach the attainable goals with care and attention to the minutest details.

Your deeper Self is a veritable slumbering genius, eager to help you express your hidden talents with greater refinement and sophistication than you have ever considered possible. The most productive thing we can ever do is to find and communicate with this Self.

For millennia, seekers of universal truths have known of the existence of a kernel of perfection lying dormant in every person, manifesting supreme confidence, calmness, maturity and wisdom. This deeper Self is called by Rosicrucians, the 'Inner Master', for it has in abundance, qualities of refinement, high purpose and spiritual maturity we would expect only of the most accomplished of humans.

You can discover how to access this high level of achievement and embark upon the definitive, true direction of your life simply by learning how to contact and regularly commune with your deeper Self. If you are searching for a way of accomplishing the most fulfilling and rewarding things in life, in a fair and ethical way, then learn from the ineffable wisdom of that inner perfection.

To find out more about the Rosicrucian Order and how it can help you achieve your most treasured goals, visit our website or contact us for a copy of our introductory booklet 'The Mastery of Life.'

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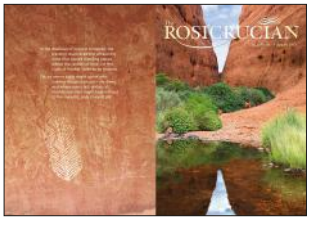
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ULURU-KATA TJUTA NATIONAL PARK.

Front cover: Inhabited for at least 30,000 years, and located in the remote heart of the central Australian desert, Kata Tjuta, ('many heads'), and nearby Uluru ('Great Pebble') are sacred to the Anangu-Yankunytjatjara Pitjantjatjara people. Tranquil ravines give shelter to precious life, and gentle winds seem to whisper with the voices of an ancient wisdom.

Rear cover: A teaching wall at Uluru is a place where practical and spiritual education unite; where the care of the land has been passed on from generation to generation, carrying a deep ecological wisdom and a profound reverence for the importance of listening to the land.

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Seeking Salvation

by **Walter J Albersheim**

With the current surge of radical fundamentalism in many parts of the world, some people of faith, Christians in particular, believe that the concept of redemption or salvation is essential, not only to their faith but to all other religions as well. But is there any actual need for the sort of salvation that many fundamentalists demand, or is it merely an arrogant fantasy, there for no other purpose than to keep the faithful in line? Pre-historic religions consisted mainly of magical rites designed to propitiate or coerce nature spirits into carrying out the wishes of the shamans of those religions. But there is little or no evidence of any wish or need by those shamans to be saved or redeemed from anything.

Even in historical times (3,000 or more years ago), with a religion such as Judaism from which Christianity and Islam eventually emerged, it appears that for many centuries there was no thought of redemption, nor even hope for an afterlife in the nature of a Christian

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heaven. The ancient Hebrews believed their god *Yahweh* could become angered and punish individuals, or even entire nations, but could also be appeased through repentance, obedience and by following the many rules of their religion. There was no official belief in personal survival, neither in eternal bliss nor in eternal damnation from which one had to be saved. Survival was not an individual matter but consisted in the continuance of the nation, the tribe, one's children and their descendants.

And when salvation was sought, it was often only under conditions of widespread suffering and despair. Conditions like this were especially prevalent in the Middle East under Roman rule and in war-torn ancient India, where life was hard for all but a few rulers, though brutally harsh for the lowest caste. When times were difficult, salvation, either in the negative form of liberation from suffering or in the positive form of heavenly bliss, was hoped for in some transcendental *'Beyond.'* This came to be considered as a special grace reserved for those who had the right knowledge and faith, while all others, by implication, either ceased to exist or were eternally damned.

Christianity, and to a greater degree Islam, depicted the rewards of the faithful and the tortures of the disobedient in primarily material terms: streets of gold, jewelled garments, rivers of milk and honey and sensuous female companions for the Good, with serpent fangs and hellfire reserved for the Wicked.

The concepts of original Buddhism, on the other hand, were more sophisticated. The illusion of individual, personal existence itself was regarded as the prime evil that one had to overcome in order to become free. Final liberation could only be attained by renouncing all desires and cravings, for these were the chains that tied all living beings to the wheel of rebirth and continued suffering. Every selfish thought, every passionate action, brought its own automatic punishment by forging new links to the chain of Karma.

According to the original texts, the Buddha – meaning the *'Awakened One'*, the One who had attained full insight – was merciful enough to teach his noble truths to personal followers and to found an Order that could perpetuate them and help many to become free like himself. After one lifetime of teaching, though, he withdrew from the world and attained the final liberation of *Nirvana* in death.

This initial version of Buddhism was too austere for the downtrodden, unlearned multitudes. So his followers created a new image of a *'Compassionate Buddha'* who renounces his own Nirvana and voluntarily returns to earth, time and time again, to preach his message until every last living creature is saved.



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Who Is To Be Saved?

Comparing the two interpretations of salvation, with that of Christianity and Islam on the one hand and Buddhism on the other, both ask: *'Who shall be saved, and how?'* The monotheistic religions of Jerusalem and Mecca have their own particular answer: *'Only those who believe in a particular personal God and obey his commands will be saved.'* These commands include belief in certain articles of faith: In Christianity this is a literal belief in the Bible and in Jesus, through whom alone salvation comes to Christians. In Islam it comes through belief in the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed, as laid down in the Koran.

Both these religions believe in only two lives: the present one on Earth and an *eternal* afterlife. They *exclude all animals*, and the Roman Catholic Church states, without ambiguity, that *animals have no souls*. From the mystical point of view, Buddhism is considerably more inclusive and merciful. It promises ultimate salvation to *all creatures*; and even in the popular versions that include heavens and hells these places of reward or punishment are regarded only as interludes or way-stations on the long journey toward final liberation. Since Buddhism, like its closely related ancestor Hinduism, believes in transmigration, all animals must also be saved: the tiger and the lamb, the ant and mosquito!

The difficulty of this all-encompassing hope is obvious when one thinks clearly about it. If even we humans need untold aeons and numerous incarnations to overcome our selfish passions, what eternities must pass before every microscopic insect, through aggregation and constant evolution, rises in complexity and sophistication to eventually reach something approaching the potential of human nature? The problem becomes even greater when we realise that the lower limit of possible life is extremely remote from our understanding, let alone our perception. There is life in plants, viruses and every one of the hundreds of billions



of cells in every human or animal body. And in every one of the countless atoms and sub-atomic particles that compose our oceans, primaeval rocks and the fiery interiors of the stars themselves, there is a template for self-assembly, self-replication and, in the far distance of time, even the beginnings of life.

Must every one of these *'entities'* be *'saved'* just to vindicate the goodness of God? Even if we believe that the world, or indeed the entire universe, will exist long enough to accomplish *'universal salvation'*, the problem of suffering cannot be solved in this way. We know that, even among advanced seekers of spiritual revelation, the minute fraction who eventually attain Cosmic Consciousness in any one lifetime is exceedingly small, though, of course, possibly rising rapidly as our world population continues its suicidal expansion beyond the limits of human life sustainability. If life is really a *'vale of tears'*, if suffering is the common lot of all people, is it fair that most creatures must undergo aeons of lives of suffering before attaining ultimate peace? There must surely be a better way!

Now, let us re-examine the foundations of this gloomy view! As mystics, we believe that divine consciousness pervades the universe and all life within it, *'from atoms to archangels.'* If this is true—and this is an important point—no one needs salvation, for no one is, or ever was, separate from their concept of an

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'Absolute Reality' or what most refer to simply as their *'God'* or the *'Cosmic Mind.'* We know there is suffering and death all over the world but we believe that the joy of living is stronger than the fear of death. Every living creature clings to life without thought or, in most cases, even the ability to consider their condition, except for some very few humans who gain possession of a unique, universe-wide form of consciousness of self.

Each vibrating molecule, atom and subatomic particle dances to the *'music of the spheres'*, in ignorance of the certainty that it will eventually be transmuted into other forms of matter or energy. Countless fish swim in the sea, breathing, feeding and procreating up to the instant they are consumed by bigger fish or are caught to feed humans. As the round of life goes on through joy and fear, through birth and death, who would dare to call *'undesirable'* that which nature made so universally and passionately desired?

The feeling of alienation, of being forsaken by God, the Cosmic Mind, Absolute Reality, etc., arises only in the self-conscious minds of humans. We should accept this *'soul-suffering'* as a badge of honour, for it proves that the Cosmic Mind uses us as one of its myriad *'instruments'*, its myriad means of self-expression. By realising and knowing our own *'Greater Self'*, we have become mirrors of the glories and imperfections of the ever-evolving universe. In the midst of suffering, the mystic is free, at any moment, to attain *Illumination* and *Peace Profound* by recognising the Divine Mind within him or herself and surrendering that *little personal self* to the *Greater Self*.

What Then of Salvation?

At the end of their ages-long quest, master mystics who have attained permanent Illumination may at last outgrow the need for personal, individual existence. They may become entirely submerged in the infinitely broad and sophisticated consciousness of the Cosmic itself, in the same way that a drop of water is eventually re-absorbed by the boundless ocean.

But this is not something to be proud of! They will only achieve, through conscious effort, what countless raindrops over the oceans are doing every second of every day and night and have done through all ages without conscious effort. Our need therefore is not to be *'saved'*; it is solely to realise that salvation was ours from the day the universe began and remains so to this day.



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The Will

by **Amelia**

A man died while far away from his home and left, as his last wishes, a sealed, written will to be forwarded to his village. The will said simply:

> Let the community where my land is situated take what they wish for themselves; and let them give that which they wish to Arif the Humble.

Arif was a young man from a poor family and had, as a result, little authority in the community. Because of his youth and inexperience, the elders took possession of whatever they wished from the land in the will and allocated to Arif a few barren acres that no one wanted.

Many years later, Arif, having grown to strength and wisdom, went to the community to claim what he believed had been his patrimony from the start. Haughtily, the elders said:

> We allocated to you the portion of land that was due to you in accordance with the will. How can we disrespect the wishes of the deceased?

As far as they were concerned, that was the end of the matter. They believed they had acted fairly and taken nothing that was not due to them in accordance with the will. After all, had they not been told to *'take what they wished'* for themselves? But there, hidden in

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the carefully composed words of the will, lay the deeper meaning they had all missed.

During Arif's discussions with the elders in the presence of the wider community, an unknown man of grave countenance and compelling presence stood up and addressed the elders:

> Brothers of the faith, the meaning of the will is clear to all who understand the way of the heart. What it says, in an eloquent way, known only to those who have been blessed with understanding, is that you, beneficiaries of the will, must give to Arif all portions of the will you wished for yourselves.
>
> Noble beneficiaries of the deceased, you took the best portions for yourselves, leaving the young and vulnerable Arif with the sole portion that none of you cared to till. Arif is now a man of age, he is strong and wise and is now able to use, for the benefit of all, the land that you took from him. Give to him therefore what was, through your own wishes, his from the start.

It was a moment of revelation for the elders, for they understood for the first time the true meaning of the words, *"...let them give that which they wish to Arif."* The unknown man continued:

> Know that the testator died while unable to protect his property, which would, in case of his making Arif his legatee in an obvious sense, have been usurped by this Community, and at the very least would have caused dissension. So he entrusted the land to you, noble beneficiaries, knowing that if you believed it was your own land you would take good care of it. Hence, he made a wise provision for the preservation and transmission of this treasure to his true chosen successor. The time has now come for the land to be returned to its rightful heir.

And so it came to pass that all portions of land were given to Arif, for the elders of the community at last understood the sublety of the testator's will.

In the commotion and jubilation that overcame the crowd, no one but the blind widow of the deceased recognised the voice and sensed the grave and radiant countenance of the unknown man, *Mustafa the Wise of Cordoba*, as he placed in her begging hands a king's ransom in gold coins as he silently slipped away through a hidden doorway, never again to be seen.

"...let them give that which they wish to Arif."



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The Philosophy of PEACE

by **Ralph M Lewis**
Imperator of AMORC (1939-1987)

Throughout the world, the demands for widespread cooperation among nations continues. But before people can live and work in harmony, they must have a common understanding. Physically and organically people have much in common. Mostly, they react alike to the external forces of the environment. We know that the primary qualities of sense impressions are almost identical among all humans. We all know and have a commonality in our experiences of cold and damp conditions. We also have a commonality in our experiences of warm and dry conditions. And we also have a common experience when it comes to the extension of space, namely, the perception of the three dimensions of length, breadth and width.

In the emotional and intellectual realms, however, we can be quite different from each other. One person

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may be amused by something that angers another, while another person may see beauty in a painting that to someone else is merely a distorted mess of colour. Intellectually, one person may find an idea that inspires and may even seem profound, while another finds the same idea dull or unintelligible. And even words often prevent us from having a unity of thought. In themselves, words are supposed to be symbols of ideas, though they are often mere frameworks for names or labels for things and it is left to the individual to place his or her own understanding upon those words.

Peace

Peace is one of those words for which there doesn't appear to be a universal understanding, although its use is, of course, very common. We know it is cast about freely by the press and is often used in private conversations. But for most of us, the word *'peace'* is much more than a mere word in a sentence; it is a symbol signifying freedom from strife, the avoidance of physical or mental distress. In this way then, peace is a negative type of symbol, namely, one denoting the absense of something. It is negative because it is not a thing sought in itself but is rather looked upon as a state or condition where there is freedom on a mundane level from the aggravation of something else.

Consequently, to millions of people today the word *'peace'* is just a negation, a doing away of undesirable things while in itself remaining empty. For analogy, peace is, for them, like darkness, something that is determined only by the absence or diminishment of light. Peace is not a thing in itself, and any pleasures derived from peace are therefore seen in negative terms, analogous to the relief felt when scratching an itch. When the itch is gone, so is the satisfaction that came with the scratching.

Lost Meaning

Has peace, in the long course of history, lost some hidden or secret meaning which it once had? Did the word perhaps at one time convey to ancient people a point or principle which has been forgotten with the passing of time? The dream of peace, either collectively or as an individual experience, is as old as history. Even to people of ancient civilisations, there appears to have been no general agreement as to the meaning of peace, and it was often used by them to explain feelings and conditions which are difficult to express in a modern paradigm; so different is it from our concept of peace today.

Has peace, in the long course of history, lost some hidden or secret meaning which it once had?

Perhaps the earliest reference to peace comes from the Memphite mystery school of Egypt some 4,000 years ago. Not far from the Great Pyramid of Khufu was the ancient city of Memphis with the royal cemetery of Saqqara on the west side of the Nile, just opposite. Memphis, or *'Inebu-hedj'*, as it was known, was a site of great learning. It is also the world's oldest centre of abstract metaphysics. Upon a tablet, which has come down to us from this remote period and from this old city, we find the injunction:

> As for he who does what is loved, and he who does what is hated, life is given to the peaceful and death befalls the criminal.

What is emphasised in this age-old teaching is that when we are of a peaceful nature our conduct draws to us the love of other people. To do what is in harmony with other people in society constitutes *'goodness.'* The *good person* then, according to these ancients, is the *peaceful one*. They neither offend nor disturb others by their conduct; and, in return for such behaviour, they receive the pleasurable response of the friendship

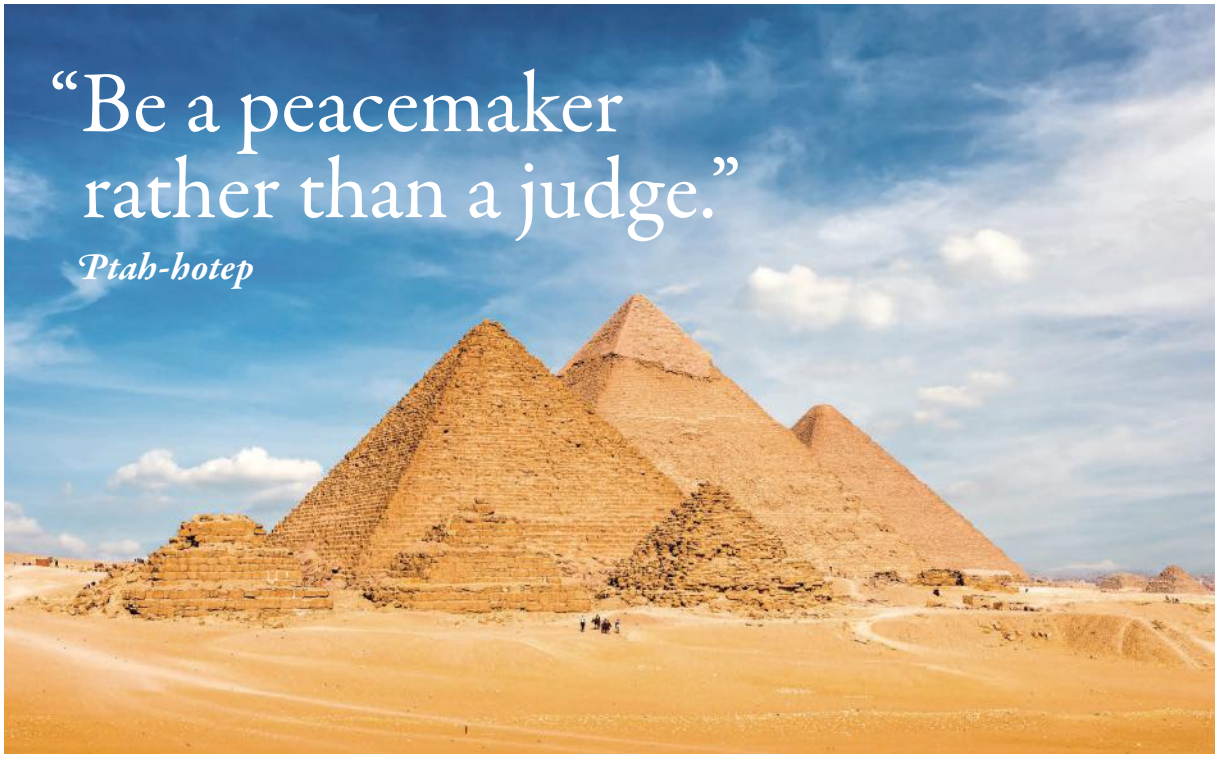
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of those they come in contact with. Conversely, the guilty one, according to this ancient injunction, is the one who does what is hated and evokes a commensurate response of rebuke from others.

Now let us realise that these teachings of some 4,000 years ago were uttered before there existed a commonly understood meaning of words such as *'good'* and *'evil.'* At that time the concept of being peaceful was construed as the proper moral or ethical conduct for a member of society. A person of virtue was in fact referred to as a *'man of peace.'* Such people made their lives and actions contribute towards the happiness of others in society, and society responded in turn. Peace meant mutual satisfaction among people, compatible behaviour or just fitting-in with others. No one, therefore, could know personal peace without first having the love and respect of others in their immediate community. This required them to be useful and accepted members of society.

Ptah-hotep was the vizier of an ancient Egyptian pharaoh of the 5th Dynasty, *Djedkare Isesi* (*Tancheres* to the Ptolemaic Greeks), approximately 4,400 years ago. In a book of advice to his son, known to us today as *'The Instruction of Ptah-hotep'*, an early piece of Egyptian wisdom literature, Ptah-hotep said: *"Be a peacemaker rather than a judge."* Here, definitely, was an admonishment to the youth of the land that it is far more important to prevent the emergence of conflict than to decide later who is right in the conflict.

Among the ancient Hebrews, the word *'peace'*, *'shalom'*, had two original meanings. Principally it meant prosperity and health. In fact, a regular ancient form of salutation was: *'Peace be unto you.'* The second use of the word, by both the Hebrews and the ancient Egyptians, was psychological. It meant *peace of mind and of heart*. This signified a state of personal welfare and repose as opposed to unrest and dissatisfaction. For the Hebrews and ancient Egyptians, a love of peace



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was considered one of greatest of human virtues. Peace, however, was an attribute that needed to be individually attained. It was not something that descended from on high like the bestowal of a divine mantle. It was considered an exalted form of conduct which the person had acquired. In the Torah, the Hebrew name for the divine laws or construction of these laws, there appears this sentence: *"By these things is the world preserved: truth, judgement and peace."*

Conflict

We can say that, in the main, people of ancient civilisations indulged in a sentimental dream of eventual universal peace for all humankind. Their principle of peace was conceived as the avoidance of conflicts which would disturb society and, of course, which would disturb the individual's repose. At the height of the Roman Empire, there existed an ideal state known as the *Pax Romana*, namely, *Roman Peace*. But this, in effect, meant an enforced peace by the Romans, a peace as the result of the establishment of a strong empire bringing all cultures together and ensuring that they lived and behaved as Romans.

Actually, the Pax Romana was nothing more elevated than peace at the point of a sword, acquired through conquering people and subjugating them to the will of Rome. In the eyes of the rulers of Rome, if conquered people were subjugated and showed no appetite for conflict with Rome, that was a sign that social and political peace had been reached. As history has shown, however, unrest still raged in the hearts of many of those conquered people.

This engenders the question: Does mere conformity to a prescribed method or regulation constitute peace in itself? Do we experience personal satisfaction and contentment when we're compelled to conform to certain regulations and provisions that have been set up but for which we have no intimate response? As we have seen, emotionally and intellectually we are all different to some extent. That which our reason rejects and which may be emotionally or culturally displeasing to us never results in a personal peace, regardless of how it may have been legislated by society. Even the ancient Egyptians of forty centuries ago knew that peace had a dual character; it must provide for personal satisfaction as well as social and political unity.

Too much emphasis has been placed upon peace in the collective sense and from a political point of view. Peace is primarily and individually a personal matter. Often it has been considered as merely a system of order and restraint which can be set up legally; but unless individuals experience this peace it is non-existent to them. In fact, peace is principally a personal construction on the part of every individual. It is necessary, therefore, that we rid ourselves of any preconceived false notions about peace and instead give it psychological consideration. Let us look at peace empirically, objectively, and see how intimately it touches each of us.

Does mere conformity to a prescribed method or regulation constitute peace in itself?

The Difficulty of Desire

Humans are creatures of desire, various inclinations and motivations. These urges compel us to both mental and physical action; indeed, our being is constantly active. For example, the body is nourished by replenishing itself. We are driven to this desire for replenishment by the aggravation and urges of our restless appetites. The mind is active through having its consciousness aroused in the form of sensations from which our ideas arise. Pleasure, then, is the gratification of both our physical and mental desires.

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An excessive indulgence in most of our desires induces just the opposite of pleasure. Such excesses bring about states of abnormality and, in their wake, distraction. However, the commonest aggravations we experience are inadequate satisfactions, those that fall short of fulfilment. They are usually caused by obstructions to some gratification of our desires. This posits the question, and it is an important one:

> Which is the most desired state of living..., the positive pleasures which stimulate and thrill our senses, or the negative pleasures which follow merely by avoiding conflicts which aggravate us?

For analogy, we seek the fragrance of a rose; yet, in trying to pluck that rose and enjoy its fragrance, we risk pricking our hands on thorns. Now the question is: Would it be preferable to forego the pain caused by the thorns or should we risk it for the pleasure of the scent of the rose? In general then, peace is a negative state, or as someone once said: *"It is the restfulness of a surrendered will."* In other words, by desiring nothing, by wanting nothing, we retreat from the reality of existence and any distractions that may come from it. We are required to construct our life in such a way that potential conflicts and distractions are lessened. We have run away from life in order to avoid disturbance.



We seek the fragrance of a rose; yet, in trying to pluck that rose and enjoy its fragrance, we risk pricking our hands on thorns.

Buddhist Viewpoint

The negative concept of peace is well expressed in Buddhist doctrines. The first sermon of the Buddha, the *Dharmachakra Sutra*, followed his great enlightenment under the traditional Bo tree, also known as Bodhi, in Bodh Gaya, India. In this sermon the Buddha sets forth his famous *'Four Noble Truths.'*

1. *The first truth* is that existence is suffering. Birth, disease, decay and death are suffering. Furthermore, to be separated from what we want is suffering and not to get what we want is also suffering.

2. *The second truth* states that craving or desire (called *Karma* in Buddhism and Hinduism) is the cause of all suffering.

3. *The third truth* is that the cessation of suffering is the release from desire.

4. *The fourth truth* then expounds the *Eightfold Path* by which this freedom from desire is to be attained.

The Buddha has been called the world's first psychologist, for he makes certain ends in life exist within the human mind instead of in remote places or future periods.

He taught that the notion of *'I'* or the ego and the word *'mine'* give rise to the existence of desire. When we think of the *'atman'* (Sanskrit: *self, soul, breath*) of the Self as being independent, we come to identify the body with this elevated Self. Humans have an everlasting love for this Self which is identified with the body and is forever trying to gratify it. To eliminate desire, according to the Buddha, it is necessary to deny the atman or deny the individuality of Self. When we think of Self as being separate, we also then conceive something beyond it. According to the Buddha, we are ever-after disturbed in trying to reconcile this

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To eliminate desire, according to the Buddha, it is necessary to deny the atman or deny the individuality of Self.

individual self with something that we conceive of as being beyond it, *not-Self*.

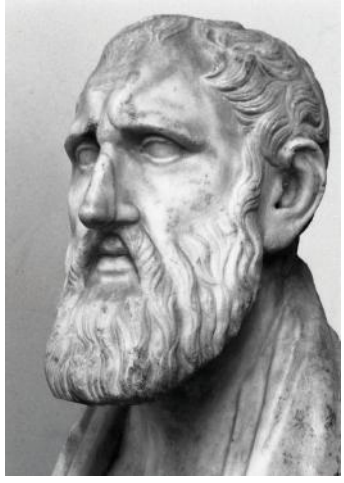
The Buddhist doctrine furthermore relates that the things of the world that we daily experience have no independence; that is, there are no particular things as they appear to us through our senses. If the Self has no separate reality and the things of the world, which the Self desires, do not exist independently either, the craving of the Self for those things is but a useless illusion. *"Put down desire"*, the Buddha exhorts, and thereby attain the state of Nirvana, a peace beyond all understanding.

In these doctrines of the Buddha, the principal application of the personal will is to suppress one's desires for the pleasures of the senses. In doing so, it is claimed, the individual will avoid the conflicts that come from pursuing these pleasures. Needless to say, however, this cannot be carried out without major disruption to society, especially in our Western world. However, in a more conservative application, it will result in greater self-control or self-discipline.

The Stoic View

The ancient Stoics also advocated a negative peace, that is, withdrawal from the worldly state of mind. The Stoics, the ancient Greek philosophers and the later Roman school, criticised sensual pleasures as being futile, considering them as resulting in distraction from the more important things in life. Seneca, the Roman philosopher, statesman and prominent Stoic, said: *"I am seeking to find what is good for man, not for his belly."* The Stoics even believed that the emotions were a sort of disease. Compassion, sympathy and pity were viewed as weaknesses to be overcome, though assistance to people in distress was good, even though emotions should not be involved in that goodness. They took the position that emotions and sensual pleasures centred around desires disturbed the individual's sense of peace.

Zeno Image: Wikimedia / Paolo Monti / BEIC Foundatiuon



Zeno of Citium, the founder of Stoicism.

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To sum up the Stoic philosophy in connection with peace: happiness and peace were to be found only in imperturbability. This is interpreted as avoiding anything that will perturb us, arouse our appetites or our emotions. But this kind of peace is so negative that it robs us of our dynamic action and initiative. It would not permit us to create anything if such action were to disturb our repose.

Many people also entertain the fallacy that peace is nothing more than ignorance of the future moment. We all know people who don't care much about planning for the future and, in extreme cases, don't want to study or acquire any new knowledge. Any such activity is disturbing for them, depriving them of their peace of mind. Such people may be momentarily at peace because they insist on being ignorant of what lies around the corner. But they cannot escape the reality of their existence, a reality which eventually overtakes and descends upon them. At that time its effects are far worse because such people are wholly unprepared for them. Such a philosophy of peace is like closing one's eyes in the belief that what one can't see won't affect one.

The View of Aquinas

Mysticism is often declared today to be so abstract, so idealistic, as to be completely opposed to rationalism. On the contrary, however, mysticism offers the most cogent and plausible approach to individual peace. Thomas Aquinas, the 13th century theologian and philosopher, said:

> Peace implies two things: first, that we should not be disturbed by external things and, second, that our desires should find rest in one.

It is the second part of his remarks which is the most important to us. Note that he does not deny the existence of desires, nor is he critical of the fact that people have desires. Rather, he requests that one rests one's desires in *'the one.'* This can be interpreted as meaning focusing all our desires in a single impersonal ideal, a superior, transcendental love that constitutes

The desire for peace must be above all other desires.

that one of which he writes. It is like the drawing together of the threads of all our lesser desires, the various aspects of ourselves, to serve some superior, exalted end. For analogy, the candleholder and its candle and flame are all combined to bring forth light. The candle and its holder, and even the flame, are finite; they are limited, but the light that comes forth from their combination is infinite in its nature. The light reflects all objects which are exposed to it.

"Peace implies two things: first, that we should not be disturbed by external things and, second, that our desires should find rest in one."

Thomas Aquinas



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A Practical Approach

We will always have various desires, but the desire for peace must be above all other desires. It must be an all-inclusive desire, one that is Cosmically inspired and surpasses all others in importance. The desire for peace must arise from the depths of the spiritual self and the end of such a desire is not negative. It means more than just avoiding some distraction or conflict; the desire for peace is positive. It is the seeking to bring satisfaction to the whole of humanity.

Referring to peace as *'intellectual repose'*, St Paul also described it as *'peace in believing.'* From a mystical point of view, this is the submerging of oneself in some ideal that is in harmony with life's activities and the demands which life makes upon us. In other words, conceive a mission for your existence, a reason why you are here, and then direct your whole self, not just your mental and physical being, towards that conceived end. As a mortal being, you will of course continue to experience certain external distractions and certain rebuffs from the vicissitudes of life. But when you have attained the supreme desire of peace in the spiritual, mystical sense, these rebuffs of life, these distractions, will then be considerably lessened in their effects upon you by the inner certainty and assurance you have attained.

The greatest causes of our anxieties and restlessness are not external forces. The cares and responsibilities that come to us are not necessarily the greatest disturbers of peace. The principal cause of these disturbances which we experience is the feeling of insecurity and lack of independence which we have at times. When we have an ideal which can be related to our inner self, that is, to the evolved self, we are never too deeply disturbed by things of the world. There is always an inner peace, no matter what the turmoil of the day. Self-confidence is born from an assuring knowledge of our inner harmony and free conscience. These are the first requisites of peace.



The candle and its holder, are finite; but the light that comes forth from their combination is infinite in its nature.

Inner peace, then, is the full activity of our whole being. The various disturbances and distractions we experience are a consequence of insufficiencies of some personal satisfaction. Ignorance is mental starvation; jealousy and envy are emotional starvation; moral degeneration and selfishness amount to starvation of the soul. There is no peace where the self is out of harmony with any source of its supply.

Finally, the symbol of personal peace which we should always keep in mind is a balanced scale. It is never a scale at rest but one a scale that is always active. It is the scale of compensation, of adjustment between the objective and subjective worlds, the finite and the infinite and between unity and diversity.

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To Thee I Grant

by **Joan O'Gorman**

In our quest for understanding, in our yearning to find a concept of reality both just and compassionate and which includes an element of the sanctity of life in all creatures, we sometimes experience a growing sense of sadness and separation from the world as we drift ever further away from the centre of our being. If the process is not rectified firmly, we risk losing our ability to discern what our true purpose in life is, what we should really be accomplishing.

If family and friends bear the brunt of our affliction, we may, in reaching this impasse, find that the force of necessity propels us to unleash our burden and despair into the abyss of the unknown. Former Rosicrucian Imperator Ralph M Lewis gave us the following insight:

> Through the ages, every ideal and philosophical principle that has been accepted as 'good' was a motivating force to compel us to achieve something higher in our lifetime. It is only in this way that we become a whole being and not divided against ourselves.

Turn to the Light

These luminous words challenge us to renew our Rosicrucian pledge to turn toward the Light with the ever-increasing conviction of our need and desire to serve a higher cause. Many are drawn to the masterful figures of life, while others are touched by the simplicity of a seemingly *'ordinary'* person. Each

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quietly follows his or her own vision, projecting a ray of hope to all who are trying to hold fast to the good and the true in their lives.

Inspiration has an ennobling effect on us, drawing us ever closer to ultimate truth. It strengthens our resolve to search, to seek, to strive ever onward and upward, to prize the beauty of truth, to set an example for those who follow behind. In some inexplicable manner our memories may be pierced by the written word, and it is as if we are seized by a *'something'* that strikes at the very root of our being. Even though we can't find details of this memory, we feel we are part of that eternal truth. It is the outpouring of the soul whispering to us, telling us of the fathomless depths to which other intrepid seekers have plunged before securing for themselves a part of the sacred through their work. And when we read their words, we are inspired and receive sustenance for our own journey.

At their most sublime, the arts give us a massive lift. They bring us solace both from the swinging pendulum of time and the ego's fearful grip on our lives. This is a salient reminder that we should oust fear from its position of power over us and that we need to recognise the detrimental effect it has in devouring our time.

Inspiration has an ennobling effect on us, drawing us ever closer to ultimate truth.

The Challenge

Hé Píng once said that our failings are not so much faults in themselves but the difficulties we have to overcome when we try to extricate ourselves from the discouragement that ensues after the failing. If we can't extricate ourselves we will be less prepared, less deserving and less capable of being re-formed and rebuilt.

We find it much more challenging to slowly unravel and examine in a kinder light each motif and darkened shadow pressed into our consciousness. Instead, very carefully, we begin to weave a new light, an ethereal material of the most precious quality. As we anchor ourselves to the *'music of the spheres'*, to the God of our understanding, and follow the musical score as it is being composed, we blend together the lower and darker part of our lives with the higher and more spiritual elements.

When we begin to breathe as one with the Cosmic, we have the free will and freedom to ignite the spark of divinity within us so it burns brightly, like a beacon of hope in our suffering world.

And we find that we have only one simple choice to make: whether or not to let the will of the Cosmic take precedence, and thereby decrease the power of the Ego which is the ultimate source of all our unhappiness. When we begin to breathe as one with the Cosmic, we have the free will and freedom to ignite the spark of divinity within us so it burns brightly, like a beacon of hope in our suffering world.

As we explore the possibilities within our understanding, and consider the facets and complexities of our life, we dare to go beyond our self-made limitations, beyond our fear and failure to trust, and take up the role allotted to each of us on this plane of existence. And when we are truly grounded in thankfulness, prayer truly finds its home.

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Sanctuary

by **Cecil A Poole**

The word *'sanctuary'* has different meanings for different people. Many interpret it in religious terms, applying the word to the physical area of a temple, mosque, church or other site which they consider sacred. For others, it means a release from responsibility and troubles, symbolising an escape from problems that are inevitably a part of the daily life of each person.

But to others the word has little meaning. Faced by the demands of an objective world in a ceaseless effort to keep themselves mentally and physically occupied, people do not objectively acknowledge the need of turning away from these demands which they allow to dominate their lives.

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What is Sanctuary?

The significance of various words is of course based on the experience and background of the individual. All of us assign to various words and phrases meanings which we feel they express, and these interpretations are not necessarily always the same as the dictionary meaning generally agreed upon by society. Sanctuary, however, should carry for everyone the connotation that there is a release of some sort for a troubled mind. Sanctuary should provide the means by which one can detach oneself from those things that cause pain and suffering, whether physical or mental.

With all the pain, suffering and grief that exists in our world, we have to face the facts of existence and realise that not all the reasons for events are known to us. The purpose of some events can only be explained when we are able to retreat from the usual demands of daily life and carefully analyse, internalise and file away the experiences we have had. By *'taking ownership'* of our experiences in this way, we get a better overall view of things, a view separated entirely from the objective and petty considerations of everyday living. And this view is utterly essential to our continued spiritual growth.

Sanctuary should provide the means by which one can detach oneself from those things that cause pain and suffering, whether physical or mental.

Some years ago a book was published containing in its title the words: *'No Place to Hide.'* This book implied that, should the Earth suffer a catastrophic event, as has happened many times in the past, the most notable being the end of the age of the dinosaurs, there would be no place where anyone could be safe. The book emphasised the fact that great destruction is possible and that, regardless of where one might be, one would have little chance of escaping the consequences of any such extinction-level event.

A Place to Retreat

If applied purely to the physical environment and to the physical human being, this statement certainly is true. It is very discouraging to look to the future with the constant thought that some event will eventually end life and civilisation as we know it. The statement that there is no place to hide may literally be true as far as our material selves and possessions in daily life are concerned. But apart from catastrophic physical realities, there has always been a place to which we can retreat if we wish, and that place is of course an inner one.

In using the word *'retreat'*, I do not mean trying to evade the consequences of one's existence or trying to avoid the consequences of one's actions and attitudes. Retreat in this sense simply means retiring inwardly in such a way that one gains a broader perspective of things. Retreating from life has been the desire of many people in all times. In every age in history, regardless of the extent of the advancement of civilisation or the physical, mental and other accomplishments of humanity, there have always been those who were recluses, namely, those who isolated themselves from the physical world in order to avoid the responsibility of meeting the consequences of the environment of their era. These individuals retired to caves or monasteries and, in one case, to the top of a pillar, with the sincere purpose that they would be able to better serve their God by doing so. Many times a desire to retire from the world has been due to a personal psychological concept, a desire to retreat from the obligations of life and thereby to avoid them.

We may be able to retreat or retire from the immediate demands of physical obligations, for a while

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at least. It is possible, at least theoretically, to move and relieve ourselves of our obligations. Every week, there is a story or two of someone who has simply vanished from life, left their family and debts, and in that way have seemingly been able to escape from obligations which they felt were pressing in upon them. But few of these people ever really made their escape for good, and sooner or later the law caught up with them. They seemed to create similar conditions wherever they went, and if they escaped in order to avoid the payment of debts in one place, debts of another kind would sooner or later accumulate again.

Most people fail to realise that the environment, our particular circumstances, is as much a cause as an effect of how we think, feel and act. In the early part of the 20th century, psychologists tended to base human behaviour almost exclusively on the influence of the environment. It was believed that the environment moulded the character and personality of the individual and that they were therefore wholly a product of that environment. This is an application of the mechanistic philosophy which was prevalent at that time. If this were completely true, it would seem that to solve any problem all one would need do is escape from one's environment. In this theory, sight was lost of the fact that humans are more than the various phases of their environment. They are not only composed of matter but of other less tangible substances too.

Life itself is a factor that cannot be accounted for exclusively by material composition. Consequently, between the human entity and the environment there is no one-way street; there is constant interaction. Our environment affects each of us and we in turn affect our environment. And our particular personality, habits and behaviour tend to affect the environment in which we live. If we move away from that environment, we don't necessarily solve our problems, we only create the same problems in other situations.

In other words, there is no retreat from self. Self is a continuity and is with us always. It is the phase of us that endures, regardless of the condition of the physical world or of the environment in which we live. It is possible to retreat from the problems of the physical world temporarily, and possibly even in such retreat to gain some inspiration or insight about how to improve the handling of the problems that our environment and obligations demand of us. But it is not necessary to go anywhere to do this. Some travel long distances to enter a monastery, to find a place where they can be alone. But the eventual result of such an attempt is that they will still be with themselves and will still face their self wherever they may be. Remember, you take your self with you, wherever you go.

Entering a theoretical, or we might say a mental, sanctuary requires no physical action.

Celestial Sanctum

In the late 1920s, former Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order Dr H Spencer Lewis established the group concept of a *'Celestial Sanctum'*, a place of sanctuary in the broadest terms possible. He called it the *'Cathedral of the Soul'* which remains to this day an inner *'place of sanctuary'* to which any person can retreat when seeking temporary release from the demands of life and the tiresome work and responsibilities which are a part of everyone's life.

Entering a theoretical, or we might say a mental, sanctuary requires no physical action. It merely requires the association of the mind with people of like mind and purpose, and a strong desire to unite with them in attuning with the highest levels of spiritual experience humans are capable of. Through a specific process, a brief period of complete inner silence can be found which produces peace and adds

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to the fortification of the mental and spiritual values inherent in us. In this meeting of minds, we may be encouraged or may receive inspiration for dealing with the problems which are a part of our karmic environment.

Sanctuary for every person is the ability to face life consistently with confidence and the ability to accomplish all that is needed in one's life. The greatest achievement we can attain is to be able to leave unanswered some of the questions that are not readily apparent insofar as their purpose is concerned and to find an inner strength that will cause us to adjust to our environment in a way that will contribute to the development of peace of mind. The modern Celestial Sanctum of the Rosicrucian Order fulfils that desire which we all have for a place to which we can voluntarily retire. It is a point of absolute privacy because it is privacy of the self. And in it you can find, as thousands have before you, a point of contact with powers or forces which supersede those that play around us in our environment and create the petty problems of physical living.

Whether you are a member of the Rosicrucian Order or not, we invite you to contact us and request a booklet entitled Liber 777 which explains how the Celestial Sanctum provides a sanctuary, free from any restriction that might be imposed by people, for the rehabilitation of the human spirit.



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Plato's Doctrine of Ideas

by **Bill Farley**

"Through Cosmic attunement a person can pass beyond the veil which separates the *'uninitiated'* from the world of Reality."

As a cognisant, thinking being, you are a vibrant unit of energy occupied largely with percepts[1] and concepts regarding your environment, your place in the universe and the *Ultimate Reality* or great *First Cause*. This *'mind-energy'* is constantly weighing, comparing and making judgments, whether consciously or unconsciously. And on these judgments depend the resulting decisions involving your Will and the Action that results from it.

The philosopher Immanuel Kant once wrote:

> Objects of the senses are perceptible by us only as they appear and not as they really are. In the same way, objects which are beyond our apperception are not objects as far as our theoretical knowledge is concerned.

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> All attempts to obtain a comprehension of the transcendental by means of the reason be definitely renounced. Agnosticism denies any possibility of attaining transcendental truth by means of reason [alone].

How then can we attain to the transcendental, the super-physical, the real, or what lies behind or above the changing phenomena of the material world? How can we sense the noumenon[2] behind the many manifestations of the physical world? To advanced thinkers and mystics like Socrates, Plato and Jakob Boehme, cognition of the real is immediate: Through Cosmic attunement a person can pass beyond the veil which separates the *'uninitiated'* from the world of Reality.

As Boehme wrote after his last Illumination:

> In a quarter of an hour I saw and knew more than if I had been many years together at a University, for I saw and knew the Being of all things, the Abyss and the Byss [sic], so I did not only wonder but exceedingly rejoice.

And we are told that the Buddha...

> ...knew by direct cognition the laws behind the phenomena revealed by the senses. He perceived an ordered Universe, the smallest movement definitely caused and itself the cause of action, and he perceived that when these are understood, power follows as a necessity.

Becoming

In the higher interpretation of a mystic, facts which heretofore seemed dull and lifeless take on an added lustre of wonder and achievement, a living reality. Thought is vital and progressive, and consists of a continuous series of judgments, a constant tearing-down and building-up in the light of newer knowledge



In our journey toward the heights of Illumination there are many milestones; and we who are endeavouring to travel along that pathway have realised many marvellous manifestations of psychic phenomena hitherto hidden and unsuspected.

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and experiences, as Hegel so ably demonstrated in his famous *'doctrine of 'Becoming.'* All scientific disciplines are simply segments of the great circle of the knowable universe, and scientists everywhere are devotedly toiling to reveal hidden treasures of knowledge..., what mystics consider to be the very laws that uphold the universe..., laws that proceed from a primary and ultimate *'First Cause'.* As the philosopher Baruch Spinoza wrote...

When one is able to perceive super-physical phenomena, one knows that one has made at least some progress on the Path.

> We do not see the law of inverse squares, but it is there and everywhere. It was there before anything began and will survive when all the world of things is a finished tale.

And from the great French philosopher Henri Bergson we read...

> Reality is fundamentally a spiritual activity.

For those who have committed themselves to lives of inner spiritual discovery, how well they understand this definition! It is, to use one of Plato's phrases, *"a priceless pearl of philosophy."* As opposed to the purely mental processes of thought, the mystic's immediate cognition of realities is inspiring and illuminating. And as the writer Clifford Bax says...

> The purpose of the mystic is the mightiest and most solemn that can ever be...; for the central aim of all mysticism is to soar out of separate personality up to the very consciousness of God.

In our journey toward the heights of Illumination there are many milestones; and we who are endeavouring to travel along that pathway have realised many marvellous manifestations of psychic phenomena hitherto hidden and unsuspected. When one is able to perceive super-physical phenomena, one knows that one has made at least some progress on the Path. And this knowledge, however slight, motivates further development which will open a doorway of infinite possibilities and may lead to the very footstool of Divinity.

Cosmic Attunement

Plato, we are told, attained that greatest of human attainments, a state of being known to modern mystics simply as *'Cosmic Consciousness.'* To him ideas were real, and many who have worked through their Rosicrucian mystical studies have realised the validity of Plato's *'Doctrine of Ideas'.* Up to this time, for most of us, this doctrine may have been only an interesting hypothesis,



In the luminous Cosmic garden, vibrant with architectonic and prismatic harmonies "...a light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread..., the soft sky smiles, the low wind whispers near", and one senses part of the divine plan of the great Cosmic Mind of the Universe.

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an unproven theory. But if experience is knowledge, then the experiences we have had in mounting the first steps of the Rosicrucian path have given us a clearer conception of Plato's meaning than years of book study and philosophical speculation could otherwise have done.

Through Cosmic attunement, all the subtle forces impinging on the sensitive nerve centres of the human organism give us varied and multitudinous visions of the land-beyond-the-veil, the veil which separates our objective consciousness from our subjective consciousness. Who, for example, that has been privileged to enter the Cosmic Garden can doubt that it is the archetype of all the particular manifestations of gardens on the physical plane? In that luminous garden, vibrant with architectonic and prismatic harmonies *"...a light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread..., the soft sky smiles, the low wind whispers near"*, and one senses part of the divine plan of the great Cosmic Mind of the Universe.

With Cosmic attunement we are enabled to penetrate beyond the veil and sense the Ideal as opposed to the Real, which manifests on the earth plane as Actuality, or the objective phenomena of the physical world. The Idea of the Supreme Mind is creative and manifests first on the super-physical plane as thought-forms or, as Plato calls them, Ideas, and later on the physical plane as the objective phenomena of all the outward manifestations of nature.

The Cosmic Mind

Plato's *Idea* is the eternal, the ideal, the universal, the prototype, the noumenon..., and all physical phenomena are but the temporal and particular. *'As above, so below'*, thought is creative. Let us take a painted portrait as a concrete example of the creative power of the human mind. What is the power behind this picture? Surely not the pigment, not the canvas, not the brush..., these are but instruments in the



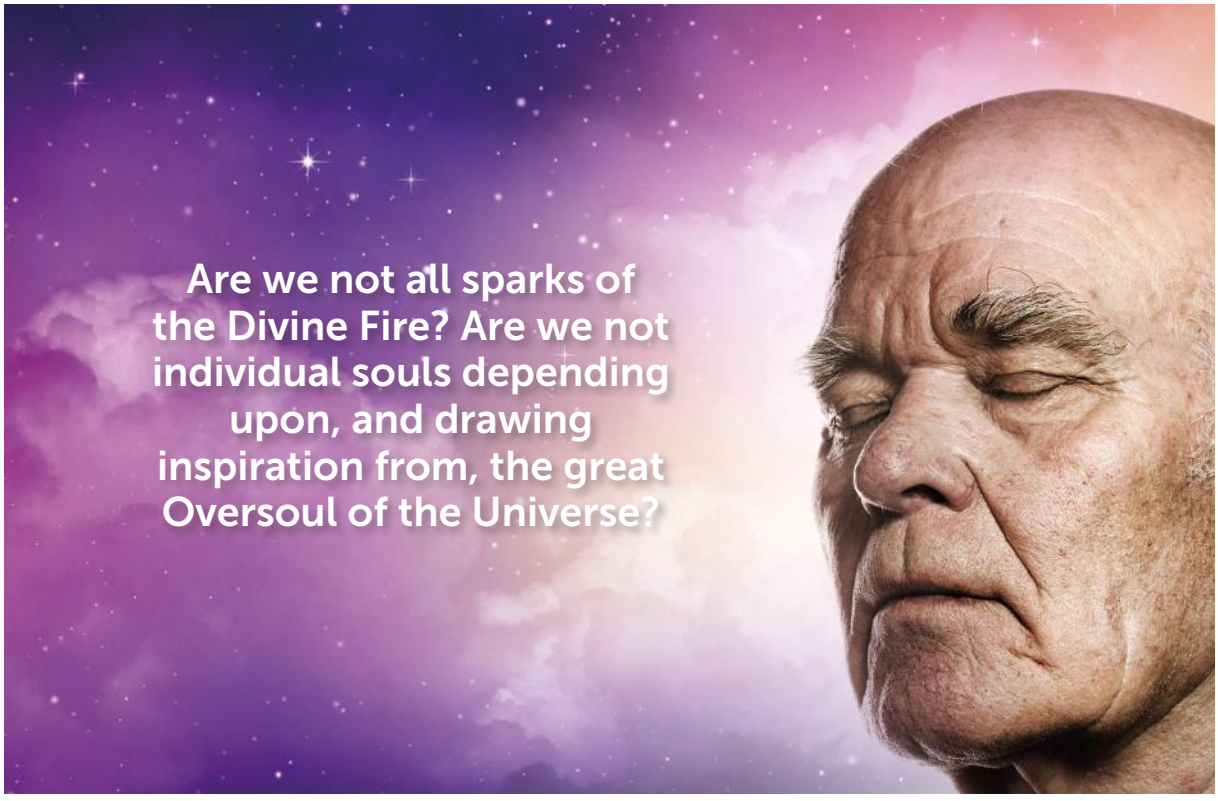
With Cosmic attunement we are enabled to penetrate beyond the veil and sense the Ideal as opposed to the Real

guiding hand of the artist who brings to fruition his Idea, his idea of colour, form, proportion and harmony, plus the personality of the sitter.

In the realm of abstract qualities or activities of the soul, such as goodness, justice, temperance, beauty, truth and so on..., for this seer of the invisible there is a norm or pattern inherent in the human mind and deriving from the Universal Mind, against which and with which one judges all particular manifestations of these qualities.

These transcendental Realities or Ideas are eternal conceptions in the Cosmic Mind. And it is only by refining, by a constant process of dialectical inclusion and exclusion of definition, that we may hope to attain an approximate comprehension thereof. This inward dialectic is the birthright of every individual, and its

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spokespersons are the two inner voices that are never silent but are constantly defining, analysing, weighing, judging, accepting or rejecting by the power of reason vouchsafed to us by the Divine Mind.

He himself professes to know nothing but only to be a lover of wisdom.

The Human Mind

Are we not all sparks of the Divine Fire? Are we not individual souls depending upon, and drawing inspiration from, the great Oversoul of the Universe? And can we not by loving search partake in some measure of the ineffable wisdom, and approach in thought the intellectual beauty of perfect justice, perfect truth, and the other virtues?

In his *Dialogues*, Plato makes his beloved Master Socrates, *"...that old gadfly who brings souls to birth"*, the arbiter and judge of all the definitions of abstract qualities brought forward by his listeners. For Socrates, the human mind and reason are much more worthy of study than the physical world around us, and this is expressed in his famous dictum, *'Know Thyself.'* He himself professes to know nothing but only to be a lover of wisdom. And he occupies himself with the eternal verities, those Ideas of all the intellectual abstractions which form the subject matter of Plato's *Dialogues*. For Plato, as for Socrates, the supreme *Idea* is the *Idea of the Absolute Good*, or God, the essential unity-in-variety of all that *IS*.

Endnotes

1. Percept: The representation of what is perceived; a basic component in the formation of a concept.
2. Noumenon: The intellectual conception of a thing as it is in itself, not as it is known through perception.

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Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger (1887-1961) was one of the giants of theoretical physics during the first half of the 20th century. A close friend of Albert Einstein, he received the 1933 Nobel Prize in Physics for his now well-known *Schrödinger Equation*. He was strongly influenced by the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). As a result of this, he became deeply interested throughout his life in colour theory, philosophy, perception and eastern religion, especially the Hindu Vedanta, the goal of which is what in the West is often referred to as *'Cosmic Consciousness.'* This article is extracted from his 1925 essay *'Seek for the Road.'*

VISION

by **Irwin Schrödinger**

Suppose you are sitting on a bench beside a path in high mountain country. There are grassy slopes all around, with rocks thrusting through them; on the opposite slope of the valley there is a stretch of scree with a low growth of alder bushes. Woods climb steeply on both sides of the valley, up to the line of treeless pasture; facing you, soaring up from the depths of the valley, is the mighty, glacier-tipped peak, its smooth snowfields and hard-edged rock faces touched at this moment with soft rose colour by the last rays of the departing sun, all marvellously sharp against the clear, pale, transparent blue of the sky.

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According to our usual way of looking at it, everything that you are seeing has, apart from small changes, been there for thousands of years before you. After a while, not long, you will no longer exist, and the woods and rocks and sky will continue, unchanged, for thousands of years after you. What is it that has called you so suddenly out of nothingness to enjoy for a brief while a spectacle which remains quite indifferent to you? The conditions for your existence are almost as old as the rocks.

For thousands of years men have striven and suffered and begotten and women have brought forth in pain. A hundred years ago perhaps, another man sat on this spot; like you, he gazed in awe and yearning in his heart at the dying light on the glaciers. Like you, he was begotten of man and born of woman. He felt pain and brief joy as you do. Was he someone else? Was it not you yourself? What is this Self of yours? What was the necessary condition for making the thing conceived this time into you, just you, and not someone else?

The conditions for your existence are almost as old as the rocks.

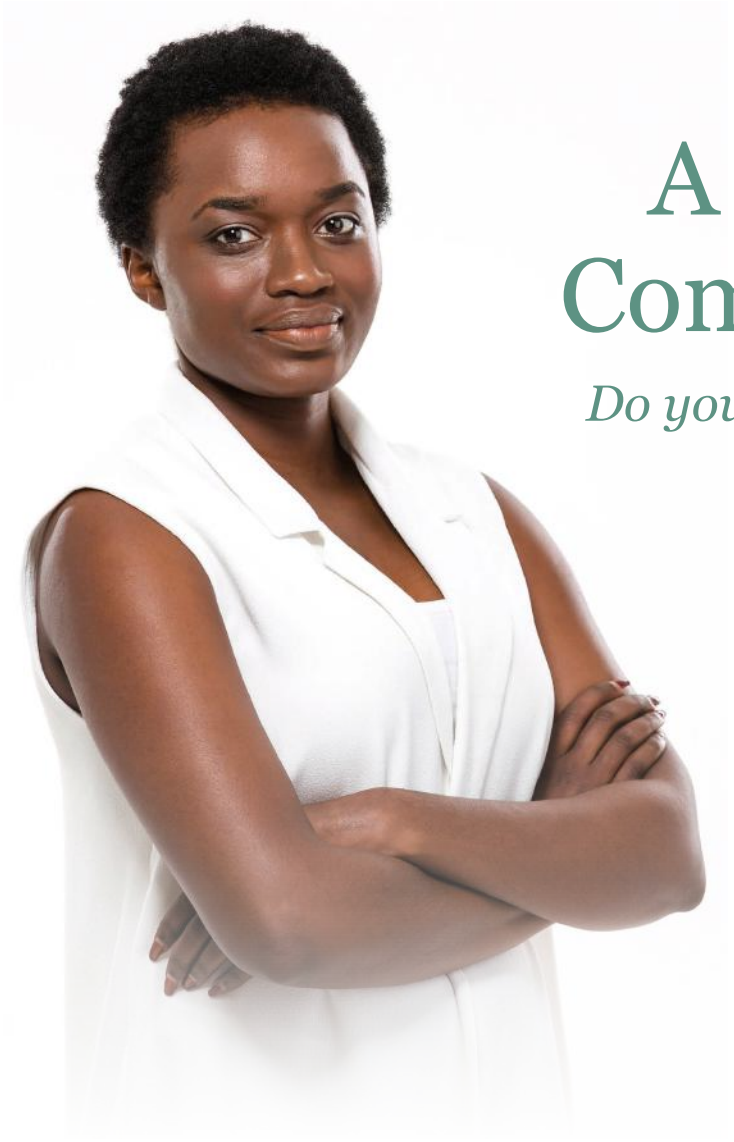
What clearly intelligible scientific meaning can this *'someone else'* really have? If she who is now your mother had cohabited with someone else and had a son by him, and your father had done likewise, would you have come to be? Or were you living in them, and in your father's father, thousands of years ago? And even if this is so, why are you not your brother? Why is your brother not you? Why are you not one of your distant cousins? What justifies you in obstinately discovering this difference, the difference between you and someone else, when objectively what is there is the same?

Looking and thinking in that manner you may suddenly come to see, in a flash, the profound rightness of the basic conviction in Vedanta: it is not possible that this unity of knowledge, feeling and choice which you call your own should have sprung into being from nothingness at a given moment not so long ago; rather this knowledge, feeling and choice are essentially eternal and unchangeable and numerically one in all humans, indeed in all sensitive beings. But not in this sense, that you are a part, a piece, of an eternal, infinite being, an aspect or modification of it, as in Spinoza's pantheism. For we should then have the same baffling question: which part, which aspect are you? What, objectively, differentiates it from the others?

No, but inconceivable as it seems to ordinary reason, you, and all other conscious beings as such, are all in all. Hence this life of yours which you are living is not merely a piece of the entire existence, but there is in a certain sense the whole; only this whole is not so constituted that it can be surveyed in one single glance. This, as we know, is what the Brahmins express in that sacred, mystic formula which is yet really so simple and so clear: *Tat tvam asi*, *'this is you'*. Or, again, in such words as: *"I am in the east and in the west, I am below and above, I am this whole world."*

Thus, you can throw yourself flat on the ground, stretched out upon Mother Earth, with a certain conviction that you are one with her and she with you. You are as firmly established, as invulnerable as she, indeed a thousand times firmer and more invulnerable. As surely as she will engulf you tomorrow, so surely will she bring you forth anew to new striving and suffering. And not merely *some day*, but now, today, every day she is bringing you forth, not once, but thousands upon thousands of times, just as every day she engulfs you a thousand times over. For eternally and always there is only now, one and the same now; the present is the only thing that has no end.

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A Spiritual Coming of Age

Do you know who you are?

by **Laura Kacoutié**

When I reflect on this question, I try to think of a particular moment in my life when I somehow understood myself better and gained greater certainty of my identity. Naturally, I look back to my childhood and my transition into adulthood, and I focus on my adolescence, the period of my life when I was trying to assert my identity and discover who I was…, for it was here that I started making decisions for myself in my education, my career and my relationships. Many experiences from that time made me question my purpose, my identity and my reason for being on our planet.

This narrative aligns with the concept of a *'coming of age'* moment. It is a particular experience or defining moment where the innocence of childhood is replaced with the maturity of an adult. The boy becomes a man, the girl becomes a woman, the adult within emerges and we gain a new perspective of ourselves and the world. But as defining and life-altering as this moment can be, is it truly the moment when we fully come to understand ourselves? Is the transition from childhood to adulthood all it takes to know ourselves?

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Coming-of-Age Ceremonies

For centuries in many traditions, this transition from childhood to adulthood has been seen as the defining moment when a new identity is assigned to a person. Upon reaching the age of maturity, the newly found adult is given more responsibility, more accountability and a greater purpose in the community. This naturally strengthens their sense of identity and alters how they see themselves.

For centuries in many traditions, this transition from childhood to adulthood has been seen as the defining moment when a new identity is assigned to a person.

The purpose of a coming-of-age ceremony is beautifully illustrated in the *'Sunrise Ceremony'* practised by the Apache in Native American culture. An Apache girl will partake in the Sunrise Ceremony the summer after she begins her first menstrual cycle, and for four days and nights she will undergo various spiritual ceremonies, prayers, songs and dances as she re-enacts the life of the first ever woman as described in the Apache creation story known as the *'White Painted Woman'* or the *'Changing Woman.'* Throughout the days and nights of this solemn induction into adulthood, the girl performs special dances towards the four directions, starting with the East.

The girl's mental and physical endurance is tested. She must overcome her weaknesses and draw upon the influx of Divine feminine energy which is at her disposition throughout the ceremony. Indeed, throughout this days-long sacred ordeal, the girl is imbued with the physical and spiritual energy of the *'White Painted Woman'* and is transformed into a *'Changing Woman.'*

At the end of the ceremony the little girl is no more, for she has become a woman with new roles and responsibilities in the community. Although she will receive gifts from the community to commemorate the experience, it is the mental shift, above all, which is the most significant and permanent. Many women have expressed that they no longer saw themselves as children when the initiation was over. They had gained new confidence, new strength and, above all, a new identity.

The impact that such a ceremony can have on a person's identity and sense of purpose is clear. Yet, in this day and age, the coming-of-age ceremony is far less common and adhered to. It still exists in some cultures and religions but arguably does not carry the same weight as it did a long time ago. But wait a minute, are there any remnants of those old ceremonies that have survived into a modern-day equivalent? Do we have a ceremony that truly compels us to reflect upon our identity or that assigns us an entirely new one?



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A Modern Equivalent

There are many milestones in modern life that have an impact on our identity. Wearing the cap and gown at your graduation ceremony, your first job, getting married, having a child, these are just examples of life-changing moments that may have truly made us reflect on who we are as people or altered the way we saw ourselves. Nevertheless, none of these milestones can be reasonably be viewed as being stages that one must forcibly go through to reach adulthood. Many are experiences of choice, though some of them may carry more social pressures than others. They aren't automatically triggered by virtue of reaching a certain age in the same way the coming-of-age ceremonies were.

It is also clear that merely reaching a certain age does not mean we will suddenly know ourselves. Reaching the age of 18 does not guarantee self-knowledge as there are many adults in their forties or fifties who are still trying to find themselves. The so-called '*mid-life crisis*', though widely humoured, is the time of life when the spiritual impulse of the inner Self starts to become more prominent and the ego is required to take a back seat. During this time the bigger questions in life become more urgent and

It is clear that merely reaching a certain age does not mean we will suddenly know ourselves.

we start questioning who we really are. At the same time, there is a popular sentiment that our thirties are now the new twenties. Our twenties are now reserved for greater exploration and less commitment, for we are settling down later, having kids later and studying longer. Age is clearly nuanced and not a definition of self-knowledge.



So have we stopped thinking about who we are as a society? Does the absence of a widespread coming-of-age ceremony mean we don't really know who we are anymore? I don't think this is the case. As with most things, mindsets evolve and change. The absence of a coming-of-age ceremony does not equate to an absence of self-knowledge, and we need to look at the essence of what coming-of-age ceremonies were trying to achieve. By being assigned a new identity, and having to undergo various ordeals to demonstrate the child's worthiness to receive the identity, it was really a ceremony that allowed girls and boys to reflect on who they were and the sort of person they wanted to become.

In our modern era, I believe that, for this type of reflection to carry any form of lasting resonance with us, we absolutely must consider our spiritual identities as essential to our lifelong wellbeing and hasten the advent of that *spiritual* coming of age that every human being

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must eventually reach, whether in their teens, twenties, forties or sixties. Discovery and expression of that inner spiritual life is ultimately the firm bedrock upon which all else in life depends, and it sets out for each of us a clear roadmap for the rest of our life.

A Spiritual Coming of Age

When I am asked the question of *'Who I am'* I can't help but answer it from a spiritual perspective. By *'spiritual'* I mean not restricted to my purely physical identity. I can't simply answer the question by giving my name, occupation, race or gender because these features are not all that I am. *'Who am I?'* automatically leads me to several follow-on questions equally important to my knowledge of self: Why am I here? What is my purpose? What am I meant to contribute in life?

These important questions can't simply be answered by listing my physical characteristics only.



My external circumstances don't paint the whole picture—I need to have some understanding of my soul, my core personality, my inner self.

It is no coincidence that this knowledge of inner self seems to be the missing piece for a lot of people who constantly search for that 'something.'

It is no coincidence that this knowledge of inner self seems to be the missing piece for a lot of people who constantly search for that *'something.'* We can see it in the world around us now, that there is an attraction towards spiritual things, a yearning for more substance to life and the need to explore new ways of thinking. Our souls are calling us to recognise our spiritual identities in many of the ways we go about our daily lives.

For example, many of our interests involve a spiritual dimension, and hobbies such as yoga, meditation, retreats and wellbeing workshops have become more mainstream. There is a greater emphasis on the non-physical aspects of our health—mental health, counselling and therapy are subjects which are less taboo. We are more considerate of the health of our planet and the quality of the food we put into our bodies, with organic food, ethical trading, vegetarianism and veganism on the rise. We are so much more conscious of our impact on the world and the things we put into our bodies. Our soul is yearning for us to keep a healthy body and mind and to preserve the beautiful nature around us.

The amount of social awareness is also demonstrative of our soul's inner yearning to express itself. Protests, social justice, speaking out..., we don't just want to live, we want to live a *'good'* life, be *'good*

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people', do the *'right thing.'* Our soul is calling us to reflect its highest qualities of peace, love, fairness and equality in the societies we live in.

The Answer Within

We can see from these examples that our spiritual identities are constantly trying to assert themselves in this modern world. The absence of a coming-of-age ceremony does not mean we do not know ourselves anymore. In fact, it has probably faded away because so many people have understood that the simple process of growing older or reaching an age of physical maturity does not necessarily mean we know ourselves better.

Our soul is calling us to reflect its highest qualities of peace, love, fairness and equality in the societies we live in.

Who am I? Why am I here? What is my purpose? Why is the world like this? What can I do to change the world? If, despite our various titles and the years we have lived on our blessed planet, we are still asking these questions, then we are having our spiritual coming of age. We want to understand our source, the power within us and who we are in a context that extends far beyond any earthly title or identity.

The spiritual coming of age is not dependent on when we menstruate or when we form an Adam's Apple. It is a prompting that arises when we are ready, and which will continue until we finally take the step forwards and begin the initiation.

Like the Apache girl awaiting her *Sunrise Ceremony*, we must also cross the threshold into understanding a part of ourselves we have yet to discover but which is the key to our identity. If we continue to ignore the calling and the answers to the questions our inner self is asking, then, regardless of our age, we will remain in an eternal adolescence, never really crossing the threshold or beginning the path to understanding ourselves. But when we do, we are truly on the road to discovering who we are.

Who am I? Why am I here? What is my purpose? Why is the world like this? What can I do to change the world?



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The Eye in Ancient Egypt

by **Paul Goodall**

The importance of the eye to ancient Egyptians stems from its status as the premier organ of perception. As such, it was seen to express abstract qualities like consciousness, intelligence, knowledge and understanding. Having the ability to discriminate between light and dark, this led to it being regarded as a religious symbol. The Egyptians also believed that power emanated from the eyes, eventually leading to the concept of the *'evil eye.'* In order to combat its influence, an amulet was worn as a protective piece of jewellery featuring the eye in the form of the *wedjat* symbol, commonly known as the *Eye of Horus*.

Although the origin of this symbol is uncertain, the use of the *wedjat* in Egyptian iconography was widespread and extensive, and it is the most numerous of all amulets found in archaeological excavations. It depicts the highly stylised eye of the falcon god Horus. On examination it will be seen that this depiction is

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an amalgamation of human and falcon form. Beneath the human eye can be seen the *moustachial stripe*, the characteristic feature that is found under the eye of the bird in nature.

Horus was the son of Osiris and Isis and, as such, one of the primary gods of the Egyptian pantheon. According to Egyptian mythology, Horus fought against Set, his uncle, in order to avenge the death of his father, whom Set had killed. During the battle Set tore out the left eye of Horus, shredding it into pieces. These were discovered by Thoth, the god of wisdom and writing, who reassembled them by magic. Myths such as these are prone to variation, however, and some say that it was Hathor who healed Horus's eye.

From this myth was derived the method of representing fractions in arithmetic whereby each separate part of the *wedjat* was assigned a certain fractional value. In hieroglyphic writing these elements were used to indicate fractions in accounting. The sum total of these parts, however, amounted only to $63/64^{th}$, not quite a whole, but the Egyptians presumed that Thoth's magic made up the remaining $1/64^{th}$.

Taken together, both eyes of the falcon god Horus expressed duality. The right eye represented the sun, and the left, the moon. As a funerary amulet this was indicated physically by the different material used for manufacturing each eye; the solar eye was made from red jasper (a type of quartz) and the lunar eye from lapis lazuli (a blue mineral). The two eyes were frequently paired together and it was common to see them painted on the left (east) side of coffins. The mummy would be turned onto the left side to enable it to use the eyes to look out. In effect, the corpse was facing east toward the living rather than westward into the underworld, which demonstrates that the Egyptians were not totally preoccupied with death.[1] This method of using the eyes was also employed on boats to allow the path ahead to be seen and thus afforded advance protection to the sailors, a practice that is still carried on to this day.

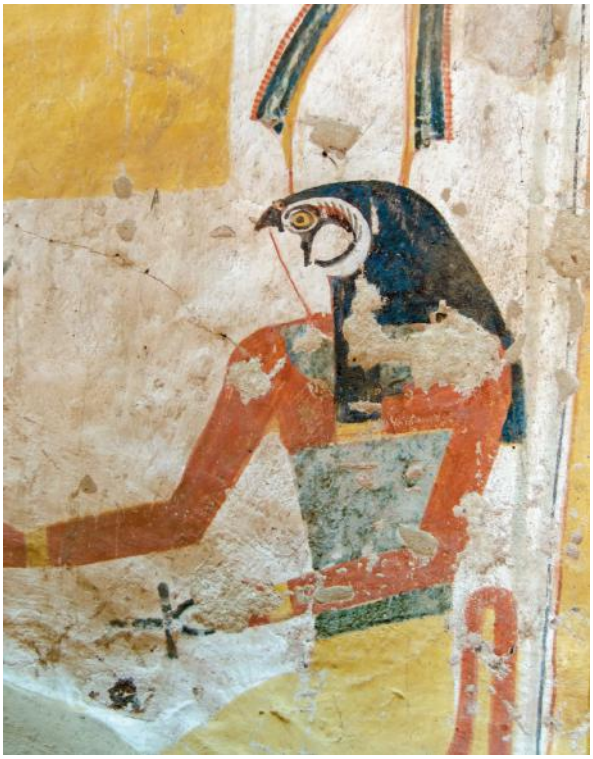


Protective pieces of jewellery featuring the eye in the form of the wedjat symbol, commonly known as the Eye of Horus.

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Ancient Egyptian inlay in the form of the falcon-headed god Horus.



Ancient Egyptian wall painting of the falcon-headed god Horus. Inner wall of the Tomb of Amenemonet, priest of Ptah-Sokar from the Ramesside Period, Thebes, Luxor, Egypt.

Protection was the prime motive for the use of the *wedjat*, and representations of this symbol abound. Amulets and jewellery were the main artefacts to incorporate the sign, but also plates inscribed with the *wedjat* were placed over the incision through which the viscera were removed from the deceased during the embalming process. Ornate pectorals were another way of displaying the sacred eye for protection. Winged eyes were encountered too, hovering over gods and kings.

Yet another function of the sacred eye, derived from mythology, was its use as a symbol of offering based on the presentation of the restored eye by Horus to his father, Osiris. Variations of this act are found widely, but more so in the later art of Egyptian history.

The symbolism of the eye was not confined to Egypt, of course. Everywhere in the ancient world it was feared and revered and today it still remains a potent esoteric symbol. It even appears on the currency of the United States. Its enduring appeal remains, not just as a multi-semantic symbol but also in its aesthetic design that is a testament to Egyptian art and that will ensure its continued use in future.

Footnotes

1. Bob Brier, *Ancient Egyptian Magic*, Quill New York, 1981, p.121.

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by **Helen Rocaro**

My Life Portrait

"Youth is the work of nature.
Age is a work of art."

Think of the challenge in that quotation! It makes artists of us all, for, whether we realise it or not, by the simple act of living we create a self-portrait, a life-size canvas that will hang in the gallery of the memory of every person who has known us. And that life portrait is our very own walking, talking karmic destiny, the path we've taken and the one we'll take from here on.

I wish I'd thought of this earlier in life, for it would have inspired me to dream of worthy things to do, and to do those things so my canvas would today show more warmth and inspiration for those who need to see it most. I would like my life portrait to be something I'm proud of. I want it to reflect truth and honesty, to carry a message of goodwill towards all beings, and to inspire purpose, strength,

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kindness and compassion in all who gaze upon what I once was.

As I visualise what I would like my canvas to be, I see colours, many colours, some bright oils, others subtle pastel shades. I would like to see green forests, golden meadows, white beaches, blue skies, puffy clouds and glorious sunsets over peaceful waters. I want my portrait filled with sounds of happiness and genuine laughter but for it also to reveal some of my moments of sadness and heartbreak, though especially the golden dawns which eventually came after every unhappy moment. Snow-covered alps, paths through sun-dappled glades where birds are many and wildlife roams free, unafraid.

I would like my canvas to be filled with events of all description: happy times, times of learning, times of love, and times of pain. And amid its colour, my portrait must be alive with all the people I've known, each one having contributed to my growth in untold ways, portraits of dear ones, and images and memories of lifelong friends. I want my canvas to show the best side of living, the kindness of individuals and my own appreciation for the goodness of life. And then, speckled here and there throughout the canvas, I want the laughter and happiness that echoes through the years to be a visible reminder to all that, despite the occasional tears and heartbreak, mine was a happy life, one I would gladly do all over again.

So, how would you like the portrait of your life in the great gallery of life to be? Plan it carefully, and remember that each new day gives the opportunity to turn your unadorned canvas into a work of living art. For this portrait is you, the real you, the path you've taken to get here and the path you're destined to take from here on. *'Karma'* it is called by some, *'soul'* it is called by others; but dearest of all friends it will always be for me.



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MOUNT KAILASH

by **Juan Jimenez-Velasco**



There is no other mountain like the Kailash (*Kang-Rimpoché – Lord of the Snows*). For countless generations, the devout have followed old worn-out tracks into the Himalayas to circle this most sacred of all mountains in the desolate fastness of Asia.

I don't think there exists anywhere in the world a sight so magnificent, so overwhelming, as the Himalayas. The sight of those giants of rock, snow and ice is an ongoing invitation to rise to the impregnable heights of one's deeper self. No-one can ever forget a sunset in the Himalayas when the mountain is dressed in red, violet and purple. We feel infinitely small before the supreme *Darshan*, a vision of gods on earth. In those moments, all nature seems to explode in a climax of light, life and love. And so do we! In silence, we can but blend with that symbol of the unexplored, inaccessible summits of the self. In no other place can the presence be felt so close, the invisible overpowering presence of Divinity that, with its loving protection, watches over the many stages of human evolution.

The inhabitants of those holy regions do not experience the pleasure that westerners have in climbing mountains. To them, this mountain fastness is the abode of spirits, gods and demons, of semi-human powers and nefarious beings. To those who are spiritual, the value

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Pilgrims take a ritual bath in Lake Manasarovar before undertaking their journey.

of the Kailash does not come from the statistics of its height, which is so important to those who wish to conquer summits, but from its nature, its exceptional character. Just as they would never dare tread on a holy talisman, the religious Tibetans would never dare to *climb* a holy mountain. Instead of *conquering the mountain*, they seek to be *conquered by it*. There are many difficult and dangerous adventures but the conquest of oneself remains the hardest, most heroic and most silent of quests.



Small cairns of stones left by pilgrims.

Of all the mountains of Tibet, the fame of the holy Kailash has spread throughout Asia. There is no other mountain like it: *Kang-Rimpoché*, the *Lord of the Snows*, that forms the axis of two great civilisations, India and China. Both for Hindus and for Tibetan Buddhists, it is the centre of the universe, the land of absolute peace, the *throne of Shiva*, the abode of the gods, the wise and the immortals.

Twenty five years ago, an expedition led by my dear friend and sensei Michel Rivert left Berlin for the Forbidden Territory of Tibet. Our goal was not to climb mountains, but—after travelling over 6,000 miles and crossing the forests of northern India and then another 1,000 miles of desert to reach the Holy Mountain, the Kailash—we were intent on carrying out the ancient ritual of walking around the throne of the gods, the *Parikrama*. This involves going around the Holy Mountain, travelling always from left to right, along a path of some 35 miles. Before beginning this pilgrimage, the most holy of all that exist, we had to take a ritual bath

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Tibetan woman performing body-length prostrations at intervals throughout her circumambulation of Kailash.

in Lake Manasarovar, which afforded us the merits necessary for the exacting experience of reaching 14,500 feet on the Parikrama. The entire area was dotted with small cairns of stones carefully carved by pilgrims who had come to this magical land from all over Asia, often putting their very lives in danger. The traditional prayer of the Tibetans could be read carved in stone: *OM MANI PADME HUM*, *'Hail to the jewel of the lotus.'*

I could never describe in words the joy we felt when we saw for the first time the frozen summit of the Kailash after long, hard weeks of exhaustion and austerity. All our past suffering melted away before the sight, or rather, the contemplation of the Holy Mountain. Knowing that we had reached the holiest place on Earth brought us an indescribable feeling of happiness. The shadows, the darkness and the bad memories dissipated, just as the mist disappears under the caress of the benign rays of the awakening of the soul. We had been told that in these lands one's mental faculties were elevated and that a person's sensitivity became infinite; that close to the Kailash mysterious voices could be heard and visions and revelations were to be seen; that the obstructions to thought faded away and all that was dark inside oneself turned to light. Other legends spoke (and we heard it from Tibetan lips) of the presence of supra-human spirits who help pilgrims in the ritual of walking around the mountain. Legends they may have been or perhaps the hidden desire of the collective, unconscious mind; but it is true that this is a strange land, unique in all the world, a mysterious and terrible land but infinitely fascinating. At the foot of the Holy Kailash one cannot avoid the profound feeling that one is before something sacred, before a symbol of the virgin, unexplored lands of the interior of humankind.



Mount Kailash, Tibet, South face.

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To the people of the east, karma is the law of cause and effect. The errors or otherwise in life generate positive or negative reactions in this or a following life; all of which cause an eternal process of reincarnation in which we purify ourselves by compensating our wrongful deeds with benign acts. Every thought, every word, every act is the seed of subsequent manifestations which tend to show us the correct path to freedom. In the west, we have still not realised the importance and the evidence of this natural law, and we understand it even less in its fundamentally creative purpose. On the contrary, submerged still in the ambiguity of the concept of good and evil, we interpret this basic law of the universe as a punishment or as a reward. And it is true that the extensive literature on the subject has not helped to clarify to any great extent this teaching. Whether we want to accept it or not, the law exists and nothing and no-one can escape from its cycle of actions and reactions. Nevertheless, far from being a fatal principle, karma can be voluntarily compensated and even neutralised.



Tradition says that a single circuit around the Kailash purifies the karma of a whole lifetime, and ten times around the Holy Mountain will purify the karma of numerous existences. One hundred and eight ritual circuits of the mountain will ensure freedom in this lifetime. It is certainly true that this ancestral rite is a very tough ordeal, and in order to carry it out it is necessary to undertake (and I can bear witness to this) a superhuman mental and physical effort and pay a high price in enormous personal suffering. But all the ways to freedom and knowledge demand this from us, do they not? Let us follow them to heaven.



High above a glacial valley leading off from Kailash, pilgrims pause at a monastery to view the sacred mountain. In the vastness of Tibet, they are but the latest to pass this way, just a few of the millions who have made their way, painstakingly, from monastery to monastery, from century to century in search of the sacred. With the rigours of a devotion and tenacity which few in the Western world could even imagine, it is likely that at least some of these pilgrims reached their goal of Illumination and a final release from the cycle of birth and rebirth in material reality.

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by **Isabel Donald**

How Can You Buy or Sell the Earth?



Sunset over a river and Mt Baker, Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Washington State, USA

Chief Seattle, the anglicised version of his name *See-atch*, was a leader of the *Duwamish* tribe who lived around the present city of Seattle in Washington State on the Northwest Coast of the USA. What follows is a version of his magnificent speech that appeared in the Seattle Sunday Star on 29 October 1887. The original speech, given in 1854, was made in the *Lushootseed* language and translated into *Chinook* before being translated once again into English. We may never know his exact words, but this version, though almost certainly heavily westernised, still calls to the very depths of our soul and our shame.

Although we call him a *Chief* Seattle, there were no hereditary chiefs among the Puget Sound Indians. Strong leaders arose in each village from time to time who, distinguishing themselves by their actions or particular skills, were respected and followed. For

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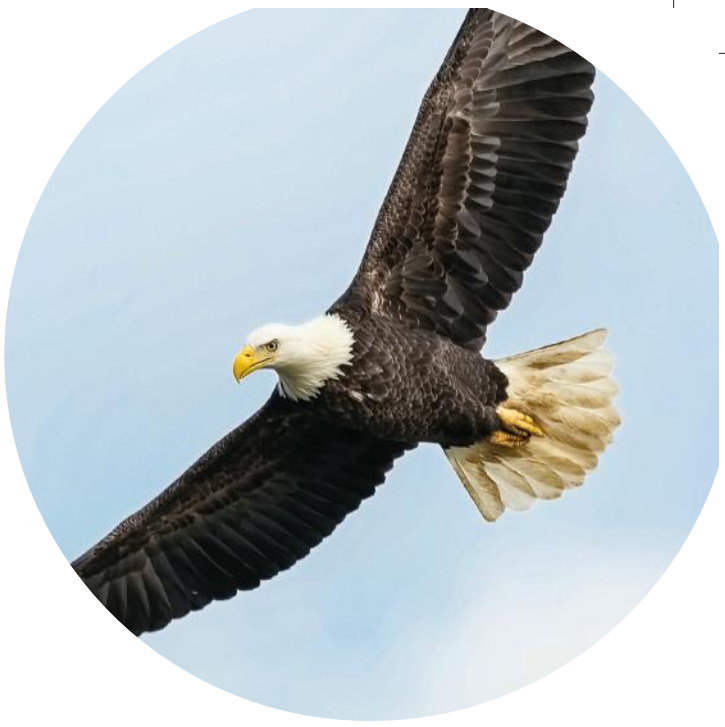
instance, there were fishing leaders, peacetime leaders and leaders in times of crisis. Chief Seattle was one of the latter. In addition to his leadership skills and his ability to understand what the white settlers' intentions were, he was also a noted orator in his native language. At the presentation of the treaty proposals in 1854, Chief Seattle delivered a magnificent speech, which is widely remembered today. It is the speech of a man who has seen his world turned upside down in his own lifetime

Chief Seattle's father, *Schweabe*, was a *Suquamish* chief from Bainbridge Island, across Puget Sound from the present city of Seattle. But Chief Seattle was considered a member of the *Duwamish* tribe, who lived on a river in southwest Seattle, across Puget Sound from the present-day reservation of the Suquamish tribe on the Kitsap Peninsula. His mother, *Scholitza*, was the daughter of a Duwamish chief, and the line of descent among the Duwamish traditionally runs through the mother.

In 1854, the United States government offered to buy two million acres of Indian land in the Northwest state of Washington. Below is a translation of Chief Seattle's reply to President Franklin Pierce in December of that year. It has been described as the most beautiful and prophetic statement of an environment ever made.



Chief Si'ahl, known to settlers as Chief Seattle



The Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. The Great Chief also sends us words of friendship and goodwill. This is kind of him, since we know he has little need of our friendship in return. But we will consider his offer.

How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and every humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man. So, when the Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land, he asks much of us.

This we know: All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself. But we will consider your offer to go to the reservation you have for my people. We will live apart, and in peace.

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One thing we know, which the white man may one day discover, our God is the same God. You may think now that you own him as you wish to own our land: but you cannot.

He is the God of man; and his compassion is equal for the red man and white. This earth is precious to him and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its creator. The whites too shall pass; perhaps sooner than all other tribes. Continue to contaminate your bed, and you will one night suffocate in your own waste.

But in your perishing you will shine brightly, fired by the strength of the God who brought you to this land and, for some special purpose, gave you dominion over this land and over the red man. That destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand when the buffalo are all slaughtered, wild horses are tamed, and a view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires. Where is the thicket? Gone. Where is the eagle? Gone. And what is it to say goodbye to the swift pony and the hunt? The end of living and the beginning of survival. So we will consider your offer to buy the land.



So, if we sell our land, love it as we've loved it. Care for it as we've cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you take it.

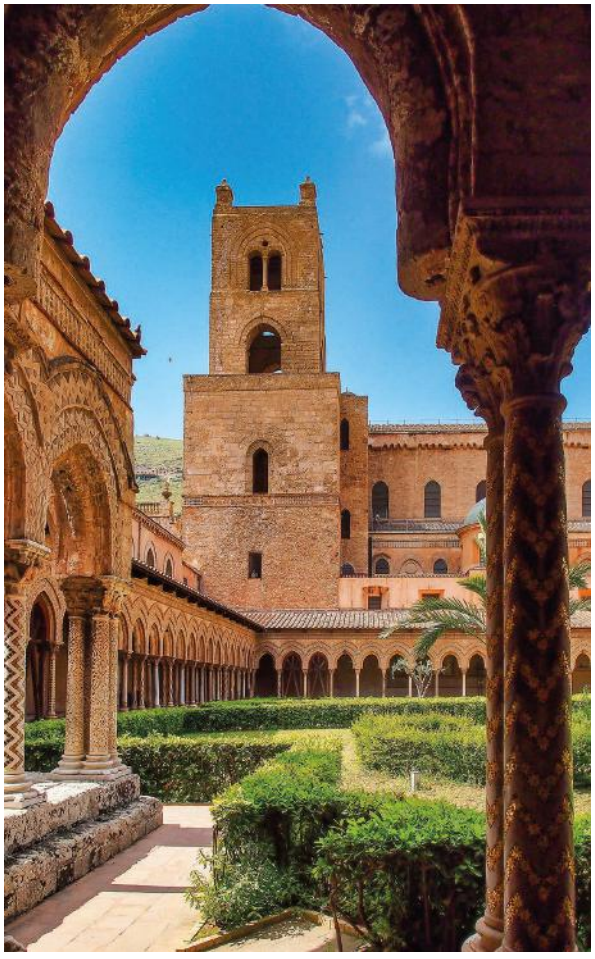


If we agree, it will be to secure the reservation you have promised. There, perhaps, we may live out our brief days as we wish. When the last red man has vanished from the earth, and his memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, these shores and forests will still hold the spirits of my people. For they love this earth as a newborn loves its mother's heartbeat.

So, if we sell our land, love it as we've loved it. Care for it as we've cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you take it. And preserve it for your children and love it as God loves us all. One thing we know. Our God is the same God. This earth is precious to him. Even the white man cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all.

We shall see.

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The Glories of Norman Sicily

by **Betty Main**

As Rosicrucians, we are taught to be tolerant of others' views and beliefs. We have brothers and sisters of like mind throughout the world, of every race and religion. The history of humankind has often demonstrated the worst human aspects, but from time to time, in what seemed like a sea of barbarism, there appeared periods of calm and order, otherwise known as *'civilisation.'* The era we call the *Dark Ages* in Europe was not quite as dark as may be imagined. There were some parts of the Western world where the light shone like a beacon. This is the story of one of those places.

It all started in the year 1016, when a group of Norman *'pilgrims'* visited the shrine of St Michael on the Monte Gargano in southern Italy. After they had surveyed the fertile lands of Apulia lying spread out before them, promising boundless opportunities for making their fortunes, they decided they would start a crusade to *'rescue'* southern Italy from the Byzantine Empire and the Greek Orthodox Church and restore it to the Church of Rome. As they were few in number, they decided to return to Normandy, recruit more followers and return the following year. Thus the Normans started to arrive in the region, which was to become the hunting ground for Norman knights and others anxious for land and booty. At first they arrived as individuals and in small groups, but soon they came flooding in as mercenaries to indulge in warfare and brigandage. Their Viking ways had clearly not been entirely forgotten.

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Robert Guiscard and Roger de Hauteville

One of them, *Robert Guiscard*, having established his ascendancy over the south of Italy, acquired from the papacy the title of Duke of Naples, Apulia, Calabria and Sicily. The papacy, caught between the Lombards and the German Holy Roman Empire to the north and the Byzantine Empire to the south, came to regard the Normans as guarantors of its independence.

Robert Guiscard, though primarily a Norman knight, was a shrewd politician and used his natural astuteness to achieve a concordat with *Pope Nicholas II*, whereby, in return for receiving the title of Duke of Apulia, he agreed to force the Saracen Arabs to leave Sicily, and to restore Christianity to the island. For this purpose he summoned his half-brother *Roger de Hauteville* to join him from Normandy. Contemporary records describe the youth as being handsome, tall and well proportioned as well as being strong and courageous in battle, yet always remaining friendly and cheerful.

Roger arrived in Italy in 1056, a mere 10 years before another buccaneering Norman, *William of Normandy*, invaded England. During his early years, Roger helped Robert Guiscard to establish his rule over southern Italy, fighting not only against the Byzantine forces but also against dissident Norman and Lombard barons. Together they started the conquest of Sicily, but after Robert had helped Roger to conquer Palermo, the Arab capital of Sicily, and Roger in turn had helped Robert to storm Bari, the Byzantine provincial capital on the Adriatic Sea, Robert remained on the mainland. This left Roger with the freedom to deal with Sicily as he pleased. As Roger recognised Robert as his overlord, he was, in return, granted the title of Count of Sicily and Calabria.



Robert Guiscard.

Prior to the Norman entrada into Sicily, the Arabs had occupied the island for two-and-a-half centuries. It was divided into three mutually antagonistic emirates. Although the majority of the population was Greek, having been a part of the Byzantine Empire for centuries, the laws and administration were Islamic.

Roger appreciated that occupying Sicily would be a challenge as well as a chance to escape from Robert's shadow. Whenever possible, he and his knights avoided military confrontation unless they were sure of winning the battle. When they did engage in operations, their discipline and military tactics gave them the victory. Yet it was impossible to administer a country with so few Normans. The terms under which Roger accepted the surrender of Palermo laid down the principles he was to adopt in pacifying the rest of the island. There would be no reprisals, and he would stop looting immediately. All Arab lives and property would be respected. He sought their friendship and would ask only for their allegiance and an annual tribute.

In return, he undertook not to interfere with the practice of the Muslim faith or the application of Islamic law. These terms applied to the conquest of the rest of the island, though that took him nearly 30 years to complete. The Arabs lost their independence, but for them it was the beginning of an unprecedented order such as they had never

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known before, under a strong central government that enabled them to develop their artistic and intellectual talents.

Roger realised that the Muslims needed to be persuaded to voluntarily accept his regime, and to do so he had to treat them with tolerance and understanding, thereby creating an atmosphere of internal harmony and mutual respect. For this purpose he accepted the Arab bureaucracy which existed on the island, consisting of a mixture of Arabs and Greeks. He also adopted many of their titles; for instance, the Christian governor of Palermo being addressed as *'Emir'*, while his principal minister, George of Antioch, a Greek, who was also the Admiral of his Navy manned by Greek crews, held the title of *'Emir of Emirs.'*

Roger also established a crack force of Arab troops with Arab officers. By maintaining their traditional fighting methods, the corps provided an outlet for the military instincts of the Muslims while giving them pride and participation in the new Sicilian state.

Some mosques, which had originally been Christian, were reconverted, but others remained untouched. Islamic law was administered by Emirs in local courts. Arabic became an official language, along with Latin, Greek and Norman French. Where Greek Christians were resentful of these changes, he allowed them to keep their local titles and also provided material aid for the reconstruction of their churches. While encouraging the establishment of Latin cathedrals and abbeys, he himself helped to found Basilian monasteries and churches, using imported Byzantine craftsmen. Arab scientific and artistic endeavours were encouraged, and many who had fled to North Africa or Spain returned to the island. Thus he laid the foundations of a multiracial



Christ Pantocrator fresco inside Monreale cathedral.

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polyglot state, in which Norman, Greek and Arab, under a firmly centralised administration, followed their own cultural and religious traditions in freedom and concord.

The result was that, when the *'Great Count'* died in 1101, he had transformed Sicily into a nation, heterogeneous in religion and language but united in loyalty to its Christian ruler. Sicily was well on the way to becoming the most brilliant and prosperous state in the Mediterranean, if not in the whole of Europe.



Detail of the Normans' palace, Palermo, Sicily.

Floreat Sicilia

His son Roger II (ruled 1101–1154) was nine years old when he succeeded as Count. His mother, a northern Italian from Liguria, acted as Regent for him. During his long minority he was educated by Greek and Arab tutors, who helped him to develop the exotic side of his nature. With dark eyes, hair and complexion, his appearance was that of a southerner. He had grown up in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect, so he was able to understand the complex system of checks and balances on which the internal stability of his country depended. Unlike his forefathers, he disliked war and preferred to use diplomacy, possibly accompanied by financial inducements. By these means he was able to acquire the duchies of Apulia and Calabria and so unite the south of Italy into a single dominion.

During a crisis in the papal tenure, when two popes were elected at the same time, he first acquired the triple dukedom and then in 1128 was named King of Italy south of the Garigliano. By 1140 he was able to depute two of his sons, Roger of Apulia and Alfonso of Capua, to administer his mainland territories while he remained at Palermo. King Roger II was able to establish a corpus of laws, many of them borrowed from the Byzantine Emperor Justinian's codification in the 6th century. While making it clear that the existing laws of his subject peoples should continue in force, except where there was a direct clash with royal ordinances, all Greeks, Arabs, Jews, Lombards and Normans under his rule were to continue to live according to the customs of their forebears.

Roger adopted an almost mystical view of the divinely held power of the King. The law was the will of God, and the King was its ultimate interpreter. The feudal system which prevailed on his mainland dominions belonged to Western Europe; the civil service in the Sicilian provinces was based on Arabic institutions, but the monarchy followed Byzantine traditions, many of which went back to ancient Persian times and can still be found in British royal ceremonial.

The King also established a coinage for the whole kingdom. A small coin, worth a third of a ducat, minted in Palermo, had on the obverse a Latin inscription surrounding a Greek cross and, on the reverse, in Arabic, the date when it was struck in Palermo, using the Islamic calculations from the Hijrah (departure of the Prophet Mohammed from Mecca).

Although Palermo was an Arab city, the Greeks played a part in building the new nation, respecting the balance between Muslims and Normans. In

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Cefalù cathedral, Sicily.

the early days, before the arrival of Latin religious and civil immigrants, they prevented the Latins from being swamped. By neatly counterbalancing the claims of the Latin Church they gave Roger a powerful bargaining counter in his dealings with Rome.

Sicilian-Norman Art

During the 12th century there was a flowering of Sicilian-Norman art, as illustrated in their sacred buildings, which were a fusion of Byzantine, Arab and Norman design and construction. They were actively encouraged by the clergy who, along with the Norman barons, were responsible for commissioning them. Their architecture combined various elements—Muslim, Romanesque, Byzantine and Gothic—producing monuments of composite style, harmony and dignity.

The Sicilian-Norman secular buildings also reflected Muslim models, whose levels of refinement were unknown in northern Europe. Their architectural remains can be seen and admired in the cathedral of Cefalù, with its colossal mosaic figure of Christ Pantocrator (Ruler of All) holding an open book with words in Latin and Greek from the Gospel of John: *"I am the Light of the World, he who follows me will not walk in darkness."*

At Monreale, the cathedral was one of the architectural wonders of the Middle Ages, with its aura of majesty and splendour. In the Cappella Palatina, or Palatine chapel, attached to the royal palace, the light changes constantly, highlighting the mosaics representing the Holy Spirit and the theology of light. The Martorana, also in Palermo, founded by George of Antioch, had quotations from Byzantine hymns, written in Arab calligraphy, around its walls.

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These buildings illustrated, in their different ways, the fusion of Norman, Byzantine and Islamic art. They are exemplified by the solidity of Norman architecture, the beauty and elegance of Greek mosaics, and the slender arches supported on twin columns, as well as the honeycombed ceilings, of a style that was purely Islamic. Moreover, in the tolerant atmosphere of Palermo there were visible advances in style. The static figures of Byzantine iconography gave way to swirling draperies with rhythm and movement in the drawing. Islamic artists moved away from their abhorrence of the human form to experiment with painting figures in mythical scenes.

The King himself was famous for his insatiable intellectual curiosity as well as a profound respect for learning. He gave a permanent home in Palermo to many of the foremost scholars, scientists, doctors, philosophers and mathematicians of the Western and Arab worlds. Roger himself was very knowledgeable in mathematics, also studied by Arab scholars, in addition to medicine and astronomy. At his court, Arabic became an intellectual scientific language in its own right. He would spend much of his time in the company of these savants. Such poets as flourished in Palermo were nearly all Arab, but the King's preference was for science. He encouraged his geographer al-Edrisi to collect information from ships arriving in his ports, about the places, climates, conditions and peoples of the areas they had visited. From the hard geographical facts elicited, Roger was aware that the Earth was round, with water adhering to it as seas and oceans.

There were also flourishing developments in classical literature. The Norman churchmen stimulated a return to the study of Latin writings, while ancient Greek documents (many originals having been destroyed by barbarian invasions) were released from Byzantine sources, and texts which had hitherto only been known from Arab translations were now seen in their original form.

Through Roger's enthusiasm, Sicily became the clearinghouse where, for the first time, western and oriental scholars met on an equal footing. Under his inspiration, studies were made in philosophy, mathematics, applied chemistry, medicine and astronomy by scholars who brought learning from around the Mediterranean Sea. At that time, Roger II was probably the wealthiest ruler in Europe and his court in Palermo the most brilliant.

Many future developments during the 12th century can be attributed to the influences of the court of Roger II. There was a transformation of philosophical methods. Legal studies entered a new phase. New styles of architecture were instituted, while poets composed their verses in the secular language. By reviving an interest in the writers of Roman antiquity, scholars learned to express themselves in a graceful and efficient form of Latin, in addition to studying ancient Greek traditions. In the Muslim world, moreover, there was an expansion of knowledge in mathematics, science and astronomy.

The End of an Era

The centralised constitution which both Rogers established in Sicily needed a strong, efficient monarch at its centre. Roger's remaining son and grandson, William I and William II, lacked that capacity, and in their reigns the pattern of government began to unravel at the seams.

The arrival of German influence in 1194 in the person of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI Hohenstaufen, the son of Barbarossa, caused the triumphs of Norman Sicily, except for their architectural achievements, to wither, fade and die. Until today they are but a memory.

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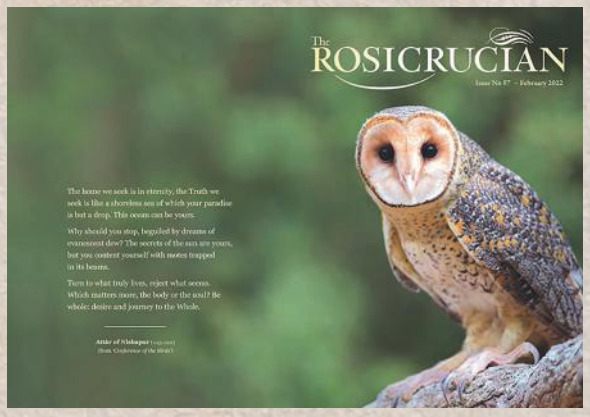
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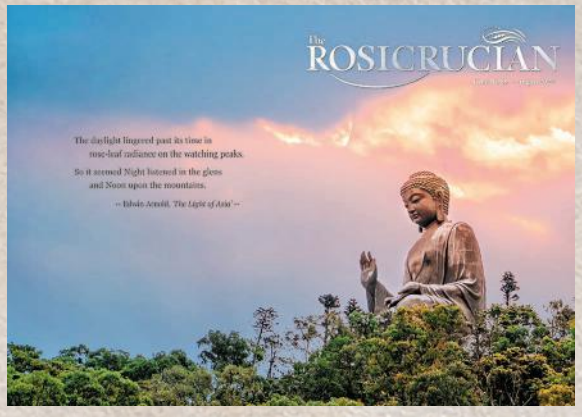
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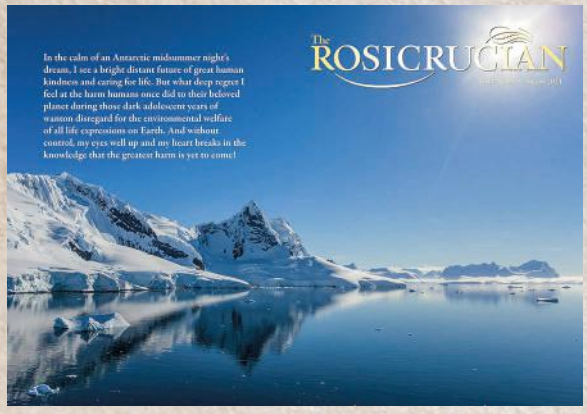
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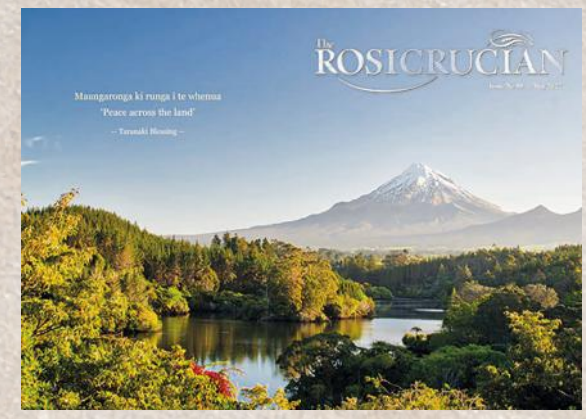




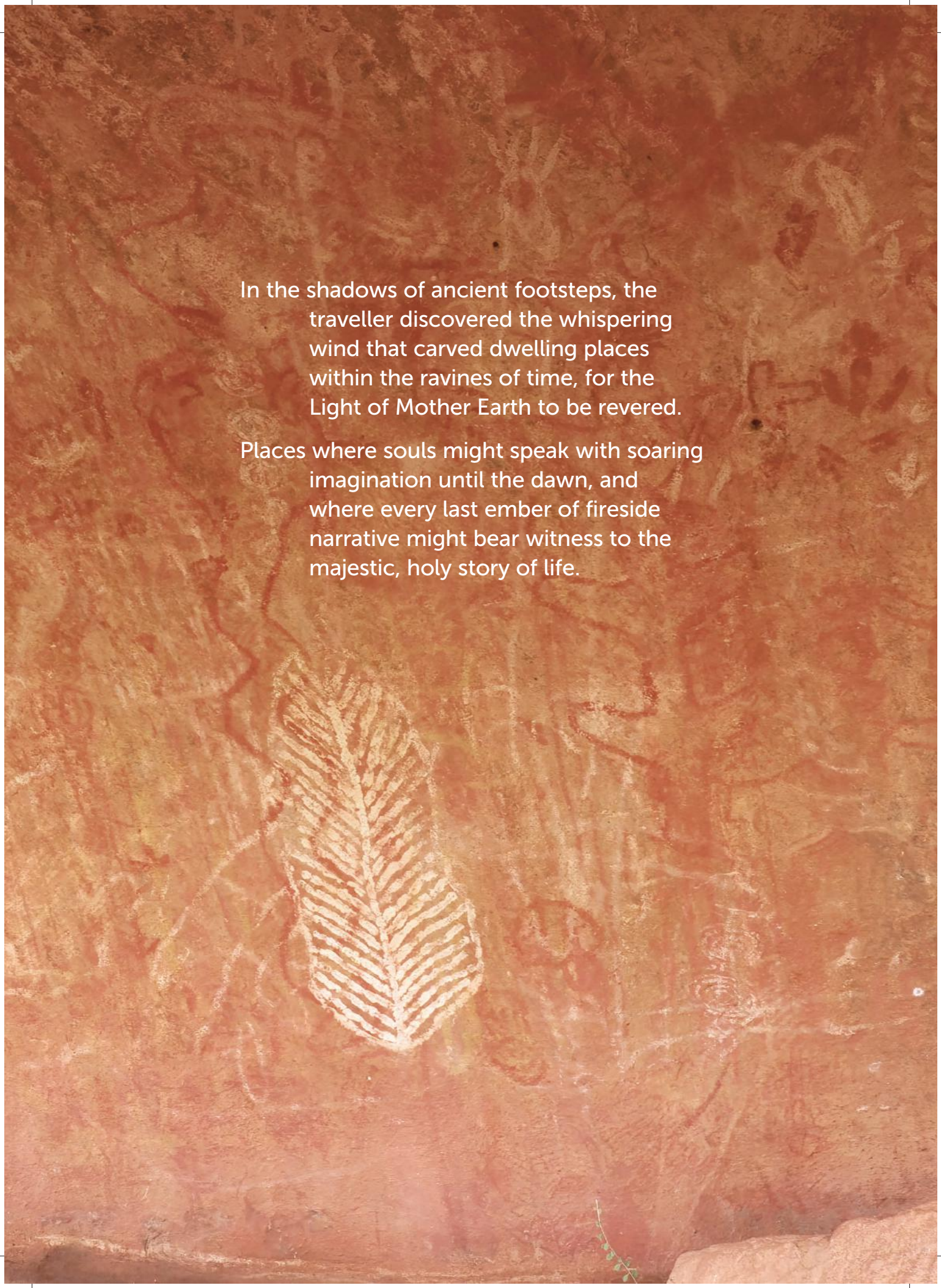








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In the shadows of ancient footsteps, the traveller discovered the whispering wind that carved dwelling places within the ravines of time, for the Light of Mother Earth to be revered.

Places where souls might speak with soaring imagination until the dawn, and where every last ember of fireside narrative might bear witness to the majestic, holy story of life.