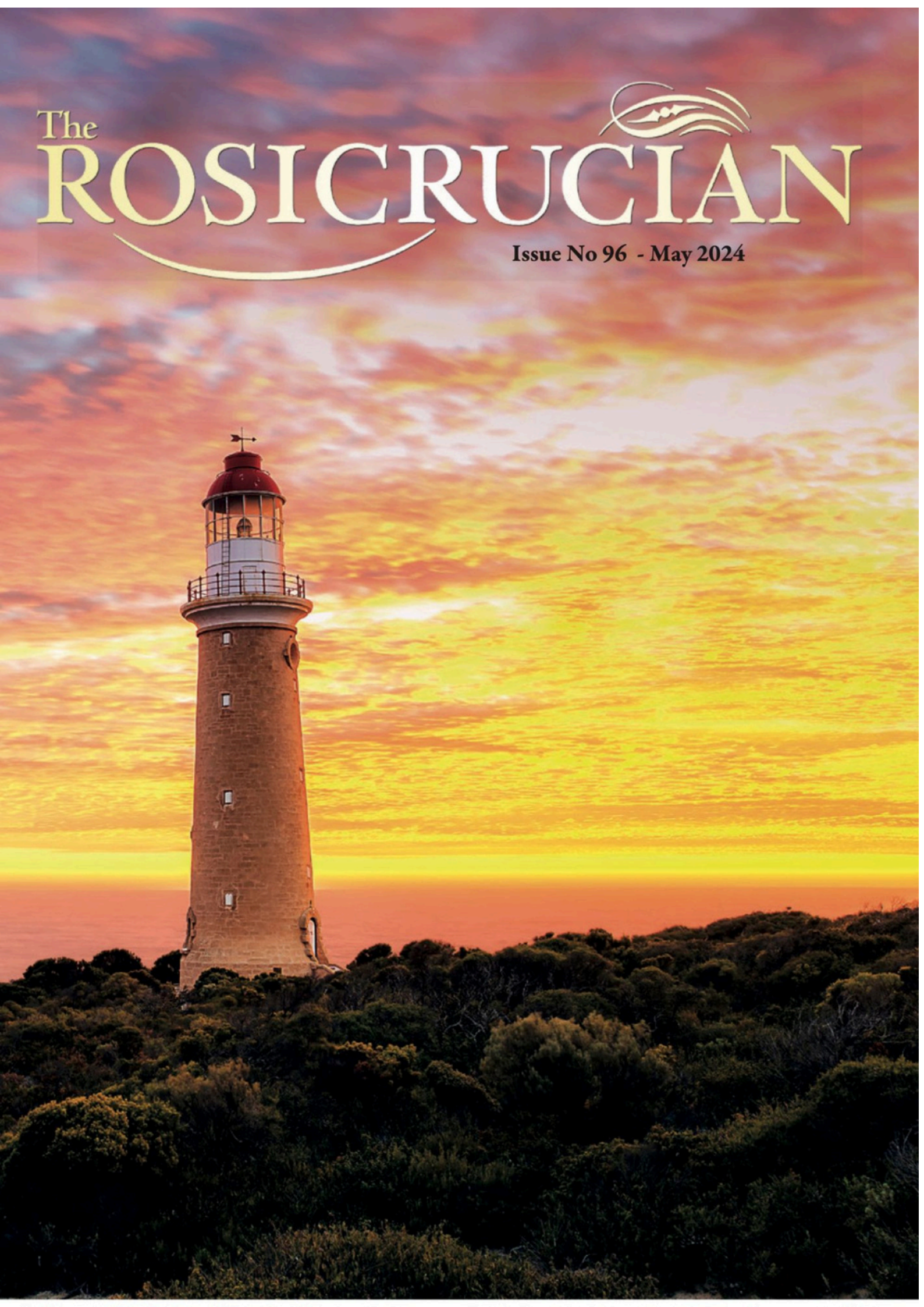
The ROSICRUCIAN

Issue No 96 - May 2024





Contribute to Peace

When we survey the history of humanity from its very dawn to the modern day, we observe that it is littered with wars. Generally speaking, they are caused by vested economic, political or religious interests: for example, the goods belonging to one or another group of people are appropriated, a particular form of government is imposed, or people are forced to convert to a particular religion. Whatever the cause, the common factor is that the decision to conduct war and the waging thereof is people. People are responsible for the horrors they generate; it is not chance or fate, or even God. Throughout the ages, wars have caused the death of millions of men, women and children, plunging so many families into despair and chaos. Today, the situation is ever more disturbing now that humanity has the means to self-destruct on a planetary scale.

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My Contribution to Peace

I contribute to Peace when I strive to express the best of myself in my contacts with others.

I contribute to Peace when I use my intelligence and abilities to serve Good.

I contribute to Peace when I feel compassion toward all who suffer.

I contribute to Peace when I see all people as my brethren, regardless of race, culture or religion.

I contribute to Peace when I rejoice over the happiness of others and pray for their well-being.

I contribute to Peace when I listen with tolerance to opinions that differ from mine or even oppose them.

I contribute to Peace when I resort to dialogue rather than to force to settle any conflict.

I contribute to Peace when I respect nature and preserve it for generations to come.

I contribute to Peace when I do not seek to impose my conception of God upon others.

I contribute to Peace when I make Peace the foundation of my ideals and philosophy.

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Cape du Couedic on South Australia's Kangaroo Island.

Sunset spreads its mystical glow upon the isolated promontory as if symbolising the golden eventide of life's ending, when two worlds seemingly meet and we experience the spiritual vista of our soul (symbolised by a house of light) as well as the departing vista of the physical world and our presence on Earth (symbolised by the lighthouse), which is metaphorically abandoned at the breathakingly beautiful mystical dawn into the Cosmic world at the close of life. (Poem on rear cover.)

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The Fraternal Ark

by Lucy Crawford-Sandison

An address given at the AMORC World Convention in Montréal, Québec in August 2023.

We unite at this convention as fellow travellers on our Rosicrucian journey, as a mystical fraternity having deep spiritual bonds and united in the light, life and love of the way of the Rosy Cross. We have all devoted ourselves to reading, practising and cherishing the teachings and traditions of our beloved Order. This closeness of sharing in those essential Rosicrucian ways opens us to an unquenchable spirit of fraternity that is our heritage.

The teachings and traditions that unite us are a much treasured *'ark of wisdom'.* This ark has been sailing upon the waters of the primordial tradition for centuries and has opened in the hearts of seekers when they are ready. I use the word 'ark' to poetically represent a moving container of wisdom. It can be symbolised by a boat or a ship or as a little treasure chest. The future-making possibilities of our Order's *ark of wisdom* live as a hope and a promise in our hearts.

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Your Rosicrucian journey is a part of the living narrative of our ancient fraternity. Your expression of our Order's teachings in your life, through perhaps your parenting, your talents, your livelihood and your spiritual work, will ensure that this promise will live on. It will always find its future-making light living in your love for our Order.

This is the incredible spirit and strength of our 'fraternal ark'.

A Road Less Travelled

Perhaps sometimes you feel that you walk a lonely road in a situation or in a society that little understands the depths and breadths or the eternal 'dimensions' of what you have been learning. Maybe you have faced the dark vicissitudes of life's challenges, and its chaos, but have overcome these difficulties with serenity through our Order's 'ark of wisdom'. May it be that you always find the same spiritual courage from within that *ark of wisdom* that has helped so many of our Rosicrucian brothers and sisters to find their way in the past, to journey onwards into the new light of each day.

I wish to tell you a story about the spiritual beauty and strength of our *fraternal ark*. It is a story of spiritual courage, of the victory of adventure over adversity and of discovery over desolation.

It is the story of Rosicrucians who, in the 17th century, chose to set sail from Europe for new lands in America. It appears that they carried a promise living in them to safeguard the Rosicrucian wisdom and create a new opportunity for its future-making. In the summer of 1693 these likely brethren of the Rosy Cross sailed forth from Rotterdam in the Netherlands to new lands unknown to them.

The Journey of the *Sarah Maria*

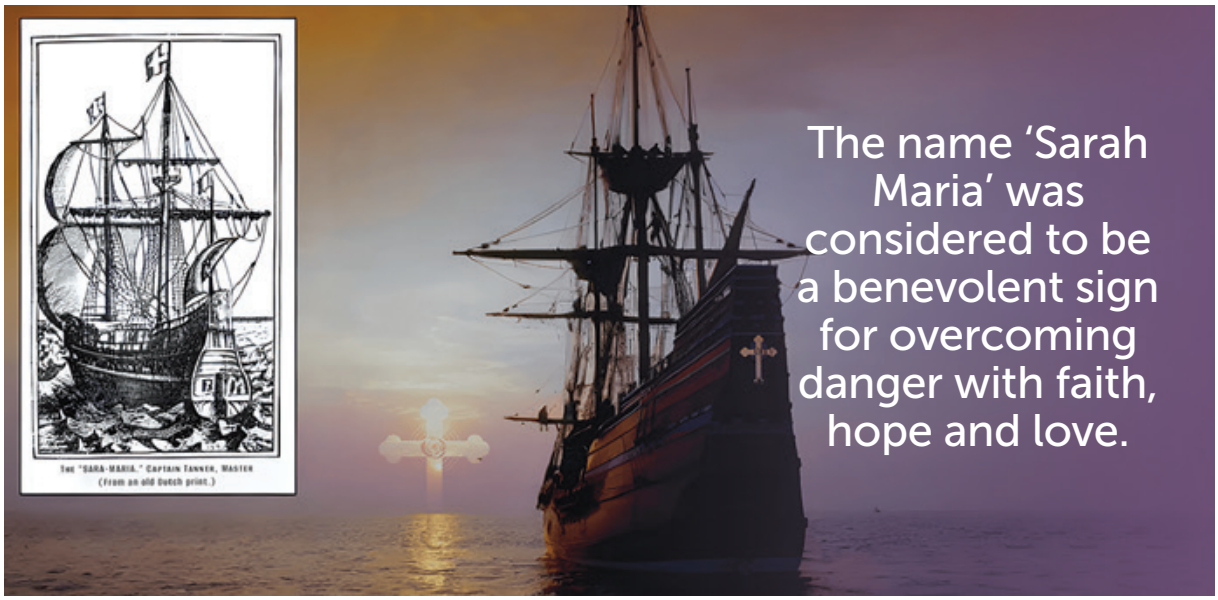
They sailed first to London and then, leaving in the chill of winter, onwards to Philadelphia, in a ship named the *Sarah Maria*, traversing around

This is the incredible spirit and strength of our 'fraternal ark'.





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3,900 nautical miles of ocean and arriving at their destination close to the summer solstice of June 1694. Surely this journey was a momentous event in the greater cosmic sense, and a momentous event in the history and mysteries of our Order.

We know that the voyage of the *Sarah Maria* was filled with trials, but these brethren were steadfast in their purpose and inner promptings, believing wholeheartedly in divine providence. The name of the ship, *Sarah Maria*, was considered by them to be a benevolent sign for overcoming danger with faith, hope and love.

A war between European nations was raging on the seas. Despite warnings from their families, the brethren continued. On the journey, the *Sarah Maria* encountered mysterious serendipity that helped her overcome a near shipwrecking and survive attacks from hostile warships.

The Atlantic crossing was known, in those times, to take around six weeks. Despite initial delays, the ocean crossing was unusually long.

Where did they go? What was this journey for? And what was in the Ark of the *Sarah Maria*? How did the trip come together?

An Imaginative and Historical Voyage

This presentation is going to take you on an imaginative journey as well as provide you with some historical facts about the voyage. But first it



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is important to open a window into a small book that likely provided a wellspring of inspiration to those Rosicrucians on the *Sarah Maria*. This small, unheralded book, published posthumously in 1627, is named *The New Atlantis,* and it was tucked into the back of a much bigger book called *Sylva Sylvarum* or the 'Forest of Materials'. On the cover of *The New Atlantis* are the words:

> A Worke Unfinished, written by the Right Honourable Francis, Lord Verulam, Viscount St. Alban.

The story is about travellers on a ship who get lost in remote oceans and discover an unknown island inhabited by a mysterious fraternity.

Francis Bacon's *The New Atlantis*

While the connection between the voyage of the *Sarah Maria* and the book *The New Atlantis* is one I have made, it is certain that *The New Atlantis* was an important part of the heritage of the Rosicrucian fraternity in the 17th century. As an esoteric narrative, it would have been studied in Rosicrucian circles. The real journey of the *Sarah Maria* followed in the wake of the metaphorical journey of *The New Atlantis*. Spiritually, both are connected and form part of the Ark of the fraternal heritage of our Order.

Sir Francis Bacon was an eminent English Rosicrucian mystic, philosopher and statesman. He led movements for the advancement of both natural philosophy and the scientific method, but many of his writings have highly poetic breadths and metaphorical depths and extensively allude the Rosicrucian fraternity. Right through this period there was a lot of Rosicrucian activity centred around Tübingen University in Germany, a place particularly associated with the 17th century Rosicrucian Manifestoes.

So, when I was researching the voyage of the *Sarah Maria*, I could imagine that there were children of those well-educated Rosicrucians who had likely read *The New Atlantis* with their Rosicrucian parents. Picture for a moment a child encircled by the light of a candle flame, being read this story and those words; so precise, so passionate and spoken with such a silken warmth that the story may have expanded like an airborne lantern in those children's souls.



Picture a child encircled by the light of a candle flame, being read this story...

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The Narrative Begins

'So that finding ourselves in the midst of the greatest wilderness of the waters of the world, without victuals, we gave ourselves up for lost men and prepared for death. We lifted up our voices to God, who showeth wonders in the deep, that is in the beginning, he discovered the face of the deep, and brought forth dry land, so now discover land to us, that we might not perish.'

This story could have fanned sparks in their imagination and strengthened their desire for discovery, especially if, as they grew up, the allegory's meaning was more and more revealed to them. It could have led to one of the greatest journeys of their life if those children became travellers on the voyage of the *Sarah Maria*.

Let me open a doorway for you into the mysterious spiritual beauty of *The New Atlantis* by sharing some parts of this story. This will provide the foundation for us to imaginatively journey further together in this presentation.

After this, the lost travellers discover an island called Bensalem, meaning *'the inheritor of peace'.* Inhabited by a mysterious fraternity who had advanced skills and knowledge in all areas of the highest and most refined arts, science, and philosophy, it is a utopian place pervaded by the cultivation of serenity.

I can imagine students in Rosicrucian circles at Tübingen University debating over the allegorical meaning of this 'lostness', seeing it as representing the lost and sorry state of humanity. Perhaps they felt it to be an allegory for the aching lostness of any person who has forgotten their divine nature. Finding a

Let me open a doorway for you into the mysterious spiritual beauty of 'The New Atlantis'



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peaceful island with refined and learned inhabitants could be a metaphor for the discovery of a special form of wisdom. Bacon was surely alluding to the fraternity of the Rosy Cross. Upon arriving in the waters surrounding Bensalem, the travellers are met by a boat and are read a warning on a scroll about not landing on the shore. Although perplexed by this warning, the travellers experience unusual humanity shown towards them. They are asked





certain questions and, having answered sincerely, are admitted into the *'House of Strangers'.* Their being warned and questioned before being admitted onto the island likely alludes to the requirements of becoming a student of the fraternity.

This beautiful residence on the island of Bensalem is full of crafted provisions and learned attendants, scientific researchers and those healing the sick. In such a beautifully composed atmosphere they wish to refine themselves.

As the allegory unfolds, the travellers are told about an ancient king of Bensalem, named Salomon. He was the lawgiver of that land and wholly dedicated to making the people happy. His house was known as *'the eye of the kingdom of the fraternity'.* This king could, therefore, represent the very highest office of leadership of the fraternity. As a mark of Salomon's supreme office, every 12 years he allowed two ships of three brethren to sail beyond the waters of his crown to give knowledge to other countries.

A Spiritual Trade in Light

Do you know what the only thing was that King Salomon allowed them to trade? The exact words written are:

> 'But thus, you see, we maintain a trade, not for gold, silver or jewels... nor for any other commodity of matter, but only for God's first creature which was light.'

It is a beautiful picture, that this fraternity was only allowed to trade in divine light! I would like you to imagine for a moment a *'fraternal ark'* that is our worldwide community of Rosicrucians being exchangers of divine light!

I wish to describe just one more part of this story, because it seems so significant to our Order's fraternal Ark. One evening, a brother of Salomon's house was sailing on a boat just off the island. He saw a great pillar of light arising from the sea. On top of it, a large cross of light emerged. The cross

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dissolved, leaving a small ark of cedar wood and a palm branch at its fore. The little box-chest-ark contained a book and a letter.

He saw a great pillar of light arising from the sea. On top of it, a large cross of light emerged.

It is important to mention that the main protagonists in *The New Atlantis* are a priest, a king and a philosopher. These three symbolic figures perhaps represent the soul qualities of devotion, dignity and the love of wisdom that the brothers or sisters of the Rosy Cross aspired to achieve, and which those Rosicrucians on the *Sarah Maria* may have exemplified.

But what could the little floating box-chest-ark mean? Bacon stated that parable was a form of ark, containing knowledge about the most precious portions of the sciences, philosophy, the beauty of life, and the human soul. This little box-chest-ark might represent the core treasures of Rosicrucian wisdom.

Esoteric Symbolism of an Ark

To understand the essence of the symbol of an ark it is helpful to reflect upon what it does in many ancient stories. It is a moving container that transfers something of significant importance. Something of great spiritual value is being purposefully moved, to be entrusted into new constructive, benevolent conditions. An ark might be symbolised by a ship traversing a vast ocean, like Noah's Ark, or as a box-chest that appears at a special moment, or as a sacred tabernacle being moved to a promised land, like the Ark of the Covenant. It could even be symbolised as a relocated coffin containing a body, like the casket containing Osiris that floated down the Nile to Byblos. The moving vessel contains higher knowledge, and the aim is to take it on a new course into the future, where it may be of greatest benefit. The voyage of the *Sarah Maria* likely safeguarded the Rosicrucian



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wisdom and created a new opportunity for its future-making. This perhaps explains what this journey was for. But why did they leave in 1693?

Spiritual Courage

The terrible Thirty Years' War between two sides of the Christian faith had left despair and futility in the air of Europe. Then came strange weather, caused by climatic change and vile diseases. The Rosicrucian manifestoes, now around 75 years old, encouraged creating places where peace could reign and humanity could advance and honour of the divine works.

The leader of the brethren, Hans Zimmerman, was someone who devoted himself to measurements of the stars and to the horoscopes of humanity. He calculated divine influences upon the approaching end of century and held millennialist views of an imminent golden age, requiring the fraternity to find new beneficent conditions. Sadly, Hans passed through his great transition of death just two days before the voyage, in Rotterdam. Johannes

The Rosicrucian manifestoes encouraged creating places where peace could reign and humanity could advance and honour of the divine works.

Kelpius was only 27 years old when he took over Zimmerman's leadership. He was a visionary yet introspective young man and was also a student from Tübingen. Kelpius's diary contains an account of the voyage in which he expresses the atmosphere of continuous fraternal discourse and devotional prayers on board. Historically speaking, the travellers are noted as being pietists, but the presence of these two leaders firmly points towards the travellers likely having been a Rosicrucian fraternity.

Also, a large number of Rosicrucian documents and manuscripts were on board. During the 68 years between Bacon's *The New Atlantis* and the ship leaving, it seems that there was much intense communication between brethren in Britain and mainland Europe, including those Behemists,

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hermeticists, pietists, alchemists and kabbalists who might have turned with eyes of interest towards the ideals of the Rosy Cross.

The Philadelphian Society and Jane Leade

Before the brethren crossed the Atlantic Ocean, their sights were set on London, where important meetings were likely held. Members of the Philadelphian Society in London were purported to have financed the ship's journey. The travellers likely met the elusive mystic Jane Leade, known for her visions of the divine Sophia. Although in society she was an ordinary homemaker, she was actually an adept in all manner of esoteric practices and the leader of the Behemist group, which became the Philadelphian Society in the same auspicious year of the voyage.

The Alchemical Ark

Leade's alchemical scripts were clothed in intense expressions of Christian revelation, but her central vision was of an *'alchemical ark'*—a great, glittering, golden ark with six wings and ruby-red eyes, which could fly as well as sail. She was deeply passionate in conveying that we must find this divine ark in ourselves.



...a great, glittering golden ark, with six wings and ruby-red eyes, which could fly as well as sail.

After the *Sarah Maria* left London she was forced to anchor in the seas after becoming almost shipwrecked on sandbanks. There followed lengthy times waiting for the safety of a convoy of ships that did not appear. It seems that only a single sister ship, *Providence*, accompanied them to safer waters, assisting with defence against an attack by warships. After this the route becomes obscure. Perhaps they sailed via the islands of the Azores, which was not uncommon.



The lost civilisation of Atlantis that Bacon had alluded to, and which Plato had written about, mythically centred around the Azores as island remnants of those lands, including the magnificent island of Mount Pico. Atlantis, of course, could allude to spiritual islands rather than physical places, but either way, if the route went via the Azores, it surely would have been evocative of the mysteries.

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Attuning with the Voyage

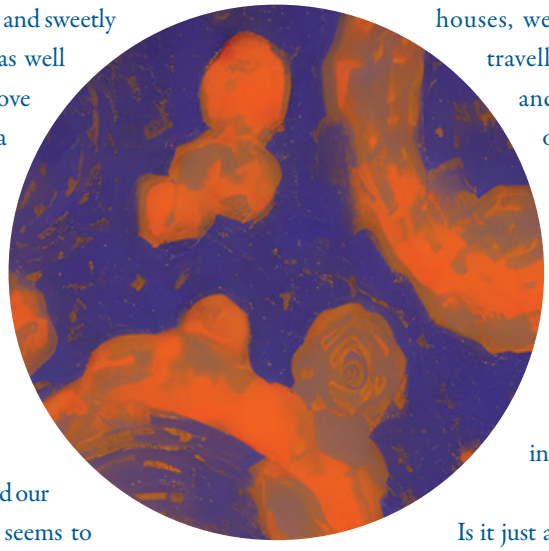
Now imagine attuning with the voyage of the *Sarah Maria* as if you are on that ship.

As night begins to fall, the last promontory of land is enshrouded in a misty eventide light. It is as if a farewell hand is reaching out to us on the *Sarah Maria*, blessing her. With the rest of your brothers and sisters of the Rosy Cross you gaze out over a vast, vast ocean. You are not fearful, for a great guiding majesty seems everywhere present, enveloping the *Sarah Maria* as if giving her pure sails of divine light.



Under the exquisite cosmic architecture, the laws of the universe seem to reflect so very gently and sweetly in the waters of the ocean as well as in the stars, glittering above with a radiant hope. We hear a faint echo of Francis Bacon's words:

'The Divine Majesty took delight to hide His works to the end, to have them found out.'



We gather on the decks around our brazier, where our promise seems to be abiding in each other's eyes. Our cherished manuscripts are stored deep in the hull of the ship, below the water line, rising and falling as every wave passes. After many hours of discussion, a mystical silence descends amongst us and we enter into mystical communication, filled with an atmosphere of eternity and the bonds of fraternal peace. As the midnight hour approaches, we retire to the calm darkness of our cabins, each feeling alone as travellers in the cosmic immensity.

On a foreign shoreline we gather on the beach and burn all the remaining excessive and sentimental objects of our former life. These are dangerous times. This act is to push back our fears through lightening the burden of our sentimentality. Our hope is to strengthen our fraternal unity and our closeness with the omnific mind whose most holy name is love. Providence accompanies our *Sarah Maria* for many weeks, like a benevolent soul, guide and protector.

Arriving at a small village of coloured houses, we welcome on board three travellers wearing turbans of red and green. They bring books of mathematics from the libraries far away to the east, in the lands of Arabia. They give us sweet birds in ornate cages, and attar, a perfume from the roses of Damascus. A pleasant aroma arises, and we meditate in the shadows of our sails.

Is it just a dream that we arrive in the azure remote waters of the Azores, where we ascend the Montanha do Pico for gaining far vision and other reverent acts? Leaving Pico at eventide, our course is now fully set westwards. Each day is closed with the golden eventide silence of meditation and prayer as we move ever closer towards the city of brotherly love, Philadelphia.

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We are not spared further trials and troubles, for in the middle of the great expanse of ocean the wind no longer fills our sails. We drift listlessly for two whole weeks. A mysterious sloop passes us by, its silent grace piquing our curiosity. Yet, after many weeks becalmed, a bickering breaks out between some of our brethren. There is a bitter air hanging over the *Sarah Maria*.

The winds begin to rise once more, but a fire breaks out on the deck, mirroring the unfettered anger and clouded humility in the hearts of some. But nature ensures that goodwill is restored, lest we perish. Our ship is saved from destruction because all hands work together to put out the fire.

But we are tested in our fraternal resolve once more when a mighty storm rises on the seas. We ask the God of our Hearts, with all our united fraternal love, for calm to abide in the waters of the seas as well as in ourselves. The seas calm and a vital breath fills our sails and fills each of us. From then onwards our promise seems to guide the remainder of our voyage, like a star of peace. Our promise is safe.

The light of the rising sun envelops our vessel, surrounding it with a rainbow of new hope. The new lands are not far away now; our promise will be fruitful.

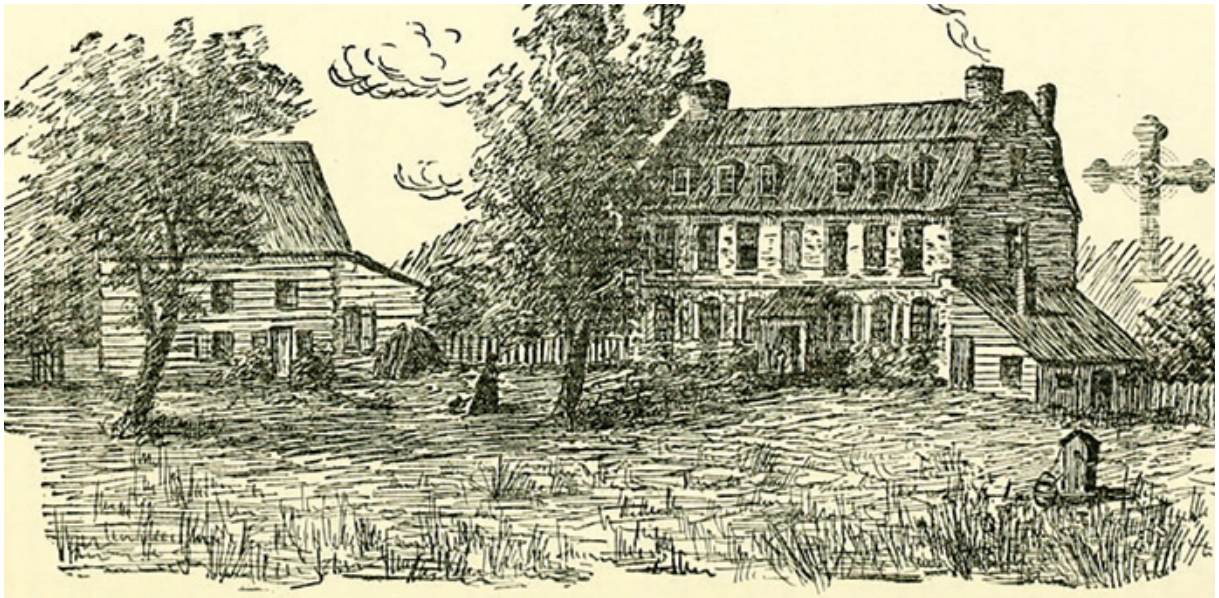
Although our maps and instruments of navigation were tattered or lost in the storm, a cosmic picture, unique to each of us, grows in our midst, and we re-find our course without further trial.

At last we arrive in Philadelphia, where we meditate and give prayers of thanks on the banks of the river for the safe delivery of our promise. The seeds of our meditations and prayers are cultivated as we build our little community, which is later named *Ephrata,* meaning *'fruitful'.*



The light of the rising sun envelops our vessel, surrounding it with a rainbow of new hope. The new lands are not far away now; our promise will be fruitful.

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THE WHITEFIELD OR EPHRATA HOUSE AT NAZARETH.

Historical Records

Returning to historical records, the brotherhood became known as *'The Woman of the Wilderness'* since its activities were likened to the biblical woman in the *Book of Revelation* who had gone into the wilderness to meditate. Kelpius created his own special sanctuary in a cave above a creek in the Wissahickon wilderness.

When, in the early part of the 20th century, past Imperator Dr Harvey Spencer Lewis spoke of being entrusted to develop a new cycle of our Order, he did not speak of it as the *'creation'* of our Order in America but as an 'awakening'. He saw his work as the second cycle of Rosicrucianism in America, as he greatly valued the fruitful works of the 17th century Rosicrucians there. He deeply valued the well-researched account written in 1895 by Julius Frederick Sachse, a descendant of those who went on the voyage.

You might also know that Sir Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, was believed to be the Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order in the 17th century, during the time of King James I. He cast many fruitful Rosicrucian thoughts, words and deeds far and wide.

The Ark of Rosicrucian wisdom was opened in those new lands and became fruitful.

The importance of the direction that Rosicrucian wisdom took by virtue of the voyage of the *Sarah Maria* will likely never be fully known. But it was definitely significant to the future-making of our Order.

The Ark of Rosicrucian wisdom was opened in those new lands and became fruitful.

Our worldwide *'fraternal ark'* continues to sail on into the mists of time, as if a resilient vessel of light surmounted by a Rosy Cross, as if continuously attuned to the ethereal wind of the *'Egregore of our Order'.* We, as its travellers, exchange our light, life and love with the world.

May it be that a promise lives within you...

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Tai Chi *and the Cosmic*

by **Richard Ng**

Around 25 years ago I began learning Tai Chi (tàijíquán in Mandarin Chinese). I went to a Tai Chi school to learn more about the art. During my time at the school, I learned many styles, forms and techniques. However, those were physical exercises; I was looking for more profound knowledge of Tai Chi.

My Tai Chi journey took an unexpected turn when, in 2004, I encountered a teacher whose interest in teaching me appeared almost predestined. During this new phase of my journey, I discovered that he was no ordinary teacher but held a lineage rooted in the esteemed Dong family style. The Dong family lineage is well-respected within the Tai Chi community, even today.

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Thanks to this teacher, I was able to discover the profound principles of Tai Chi as an internal art, revealing its connection to inner energies and cosmic equilibrium. Under his guidance, I experienced a transformative change in my practice. My Tai Chi practice evolved beyond mere physical movements into a profound exploration of the interconnectedness between the self and the cosmos.

Some Insights

Tai Chi Chuan, translated as Tai Chi Boxing or Tai Chi exercise, is many things to many people. It is an art, a science, a philosophy, a fitness or wellness tool, a martial art, a cultural icon or a spiritual path. Developed over a period of more than 3,000 years, Tai Chi is the physical manifestation and culmination of Chinese philosophy, thought and practice. For more than three millennia a national treasure of China has been passed down from one generation to another.

How did it become what we see at the park in the morning? Legend says that the concept of internal Chinese martial arts, specifically Tai Chi, was created by Taoist Grand Master Zhāng Sānfēng during the late Sòng Dynasty. He once saw a bird attack a snake and was impressed by how the snake defended itself. The occurrence inspired him to create a sequence of Tai Chi movements.

To understand the origins of Tai Chi, one must refer to a collection of literary works referred to as the Tai Chi Classics, which are regarded as having spiritual authority and have become a standard for practice and prayer. Both meditation and physical activity are combined in the Tai Chi Classics.

He once saw a bird attack a snake and was impressed by how the snake defended itself.

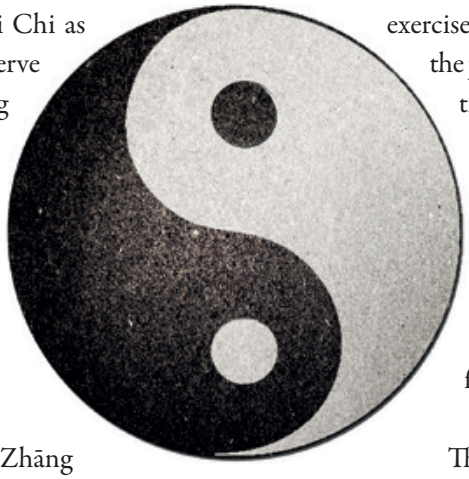
The recent discovery, in 2004, of the Li Family Martial Arts Manual, a collection of ancient texts, has provided significant new evidence regarding the origins of Tai Chi. The Li family wrote many of the Tai Chi Classics, and they are the earliest known versions of this collection of texts.

Historically, Tai Chi as we know it originated in the Thousand-Year Temple. The Thousand-Year Monastery, built around 68 BCE, was where the Li family learned the art. Although this art may have been inspired by an even older tradition, the texts of the Li Family Manual prove with great certainty that Tai Chi as we know it was transmitted from the Thousand-Year Temple in Hénán Province.



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The ancient teachings of Tai Chi as revealed in the Li family's writings serve as a valuable guide in uncovering how the art was first developed. These texts proved that Tai Chi exercise did not originate with the Chén family, as many people had thought, but that the Chén family learned their art from the Li family.



It is also worth noting that Zhāng Sānfēng, who is still considered to be the founder of Tai Chi Boxing, is not mentioned anywhere in relation to the Thousand-Year Temple.

Modern Tai Chi

In 1956 the Chinese Sports Committee brought together major Tai Chi masters in China to create a short form that would make Tai Chi practice accessible to a large population.

The Simplified Tai Chi Form 24 was created using the Yáng style, which eliminates difficult movements and reduces the number of repeated movements. The conciseness of the form captivated learners of all ages, and large groups of individuals could perform due to the straight-line movement choreography.

Next came standard or competition Tai Chi forms, which were created for stage demonstration or sports competition purposes. The Chinese Sports Committee had established a standard set of competition forms by the early 1990s. In this way, Tai Chi Chuan, or Tai Chi Exercise, became today's Tai Chi. This is the Tai Chi practised publicly in China and many parts of the world today.

Tai Chi, when taught publicly, is often lacking in its original meaning and philosophical foundation. To reap the health benefits of practising Tai Chi as an exercise, it is sufficient that one observes the proper application of the principles that govern correct movement in Tai Chi. Numerous scientific studies have substantiated the advantages of Tai Chi exercise. If you search for 'Tai Chi Chuan' in PubMed or Google, big and reliable research sites, you will find over 2,000 results.

The Tai Chi symbol is also known as the Yīnyáng or yin-yang symbol. In Chinese, it is called Tai Chi Tu (Tàijítú). This yin-yang symbol is a metaphor for the polar opposites: masculine and feminine, light and dark, being and non-being, negative and positive, heaven and earth. It is a symbol of how all the dualistic aspects in our world and universe change and interact.

The yin-yang symbol is a metaphor for the polar opposites: masculine and feminine, light and dark, being and non-being...

The yin-yang symbol depicts the dynamic interaction between yin and yang. It is a circle divided into two halves, one white (yang) and one black (yin). Within each half there is a smaller circle of the opposite colour, symbolising the presence of each aspect within the other. The curving line separating the halves suggests that they are interdependent and interconnected and that they coexist and flow into one another.

The circle surrounding the yin-yang symbol is often overlooked, but it is a crucial component of its significance. The outer circle of the yin-yang symbol

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signifies both the entirety of the cosmos and the cosmos itself. It encompasses the dual nature of everything. All things have their own opposite, and the mutual interaction of opposites drives change through time.

Chinese philosophy is deeply rooted in the theory of yin and yang, influencing not only cosmology but also other fields such as medicine, martial arts, Feng Shui and even interpersonal relations. The human being is considered a microcosm that reflects the macrocosm of the universe.

By acknowledging and valuing the interplay between yin and yang, individuals can strive to align themselves with the inherent rhythms of the universe and attain a sense of equilibrium and fulfilment. This holistic view of the universe has profound implications for Chinese culture and everyday life. It is a view of the world that emphasises the interdependence and mutual transformation of opposing forces.

In cosmology, the concept of yin and yang provides a theoretical framework for understanding the fundamental principles governing the universe. The cosmos is viewed as a comprehensive entity where the interaction of yin and yang forces influences its existence and evolution.

This cosmological perspective focuses on harmony, balance and cyclical patterns. The ancient Taoists thought deeply about polarity, and had, in fact, formulated an entire philosophy and way of life based on yin-yang polarity as the fundamental operating principle of the universe.

Today, many disciplines support the notion that the binary oppositional principle is the main organising principle of natural experience and nature itself. The principle of the unity of opposites is perhaps the most significant explanatory principle in the history of science.

Two Examples of Western Thought

The polarity paradigm was used by the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung (1875–1961) to explain the profound dynamics between the sexes. Jung paid explicit homage to Taoist yin-yang teachings on the interpenetration of opposites for his anima-animus theory on the structure of the human psyche.

So too in physics. As the study of the atomic structure intensified, it prompted the renowned 20th century Danish physicist Niels Bohr (1885–1962) to revisit the ancient Taoist notion of polarity as the fundamental structure and creative principle of the universe and reality.



Carl Jung



Niels Bohr

When Bohr was knighted in 1947 (Ridder af Elefantordenen or 'Knight of the Order of the Elephant'—Denmark's highest-ranking Order), he chose as his coat of arms the ancient Chinese yin-yang symbol and the inscription '*Contraria sunt complementa*', meaning 'opposites are complementary'.

How is Tai Chi related to the ancient Yì Jīng (known as the *I Ching*, the 'Book of Changes' in the West)? The *I Ching* is one of the oldest Chinese classics, written about 3,000 years ago. Confucius describes the *I Ching* as a symbolic document rich in moral and spiritual content. In his commentaries, he states that the *I Ching* offers a spiritual experience that allows the individual to understand the deeper patterns of the universe.

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Source of Wisdom

In the book *Cosmic Consciousness* by Richard M. Bucke, Laozi is mentioned as an instance of cosmic consciousness, along with Gautama Buddha, Jesus the Christ, Francis Bacon and many others.

The *Tao Te Ching* remains a source of wisdom in contemporary society, offering insights that can guide individuals, communities and societies towards a more harmonious, balanced and mindful way of life.

The origins of Tai Chi are rooted in the *I Ching*, and in many places the Tai Chi writings refer to it. The *Tao Te Ching*, also known as the Dao De Jing, is a fundamental text in Taoism. It is traditionally attributed to Laozi, a sage believed to have lived in the 6th century BCE, some 2,500 years ago. The title roughly translates to 'The Book of the Way and its Virtue.'

wikicommons/GJo



Coat of arms of Niels Bohr with the motto 'Contraria sunt complementa' ('Opposites are complementary') and the collar of the Danish Order of the Elephant.

The title, *Tao Te Ching*, is made up of three Chinese words: *'Tao', 'Te' and 'Ching'.* The last word, 'Ching', means 'classic' in the sense of a classic text or book. 'Tao' means *'way' or 'path',* the road on which you travel. Chinese words can be both verbs and nouns, so 'Tao' can also mean the act or process of travelling. This travelling can be physical, metaphorical, or spiritual. Language cannot convey the Tao, the nature of mind, God, or whatever term you want to use. It is beyond words. Tao permeates everything and is in everything. The Tao cannot be called by any name. You will only have a word if you do that, because you cannot have what it is. Just as a picture of a tree, or its name, is not itself a tree. A tree is a tree.

The second word, 'Te', is more intricate. For interpretation, I draw on Waysun Liao's book, *Tao: The Way of God*:

> In the Tao Te Ching, Laozi refers to something called the 'Great Te'. That 'Great Te' is a part of what binds us to God. We have something that the old Tao masters called 'Te.' 'Te' is the part of you and me that connects us to God's energy. Because we are each made of that one universal energy, we all have a piece of God inside of us.

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Laozi, by way of the *Tao Te Ching,* invites us to embark on a spiritual and mystical journey towards achieving personal enlightenment and self-transformation. The connection between Tai Chi and the *Tao Te Ching* is in the philosophical and spiritual foundations they share. The slow and deliberate movements, emphasis on balance and harmony, and cultivation of a sense of flow and relaxation are in accordance with the fundamental principles of the *Tao Te Ching*.

According to Waysun Liao, Tai Chi is like a refining oven. It is spiritual alchemy, the goal of which is to establish a connection with our Creator, Source, God or Tao. When the ancient Taoists created Tai Chi, they combined the feeling and flow of life energy with meditation. They discovered it to be the fastest way to connect with their life energy and, by default, with their Tao inside of them.

As well as being a physical and mental exercise, Tai Chi Chuan is meant to be practised as a symbolic form of prayer that acknowledges the omnipotence of the Divine in all things. It is a symbolic prayer that is achieved through movement. The initial posture is dedicated to Heaven, while the final posture is a representation of an *'Amen'* after a prayer (Yang, 20th century CE).

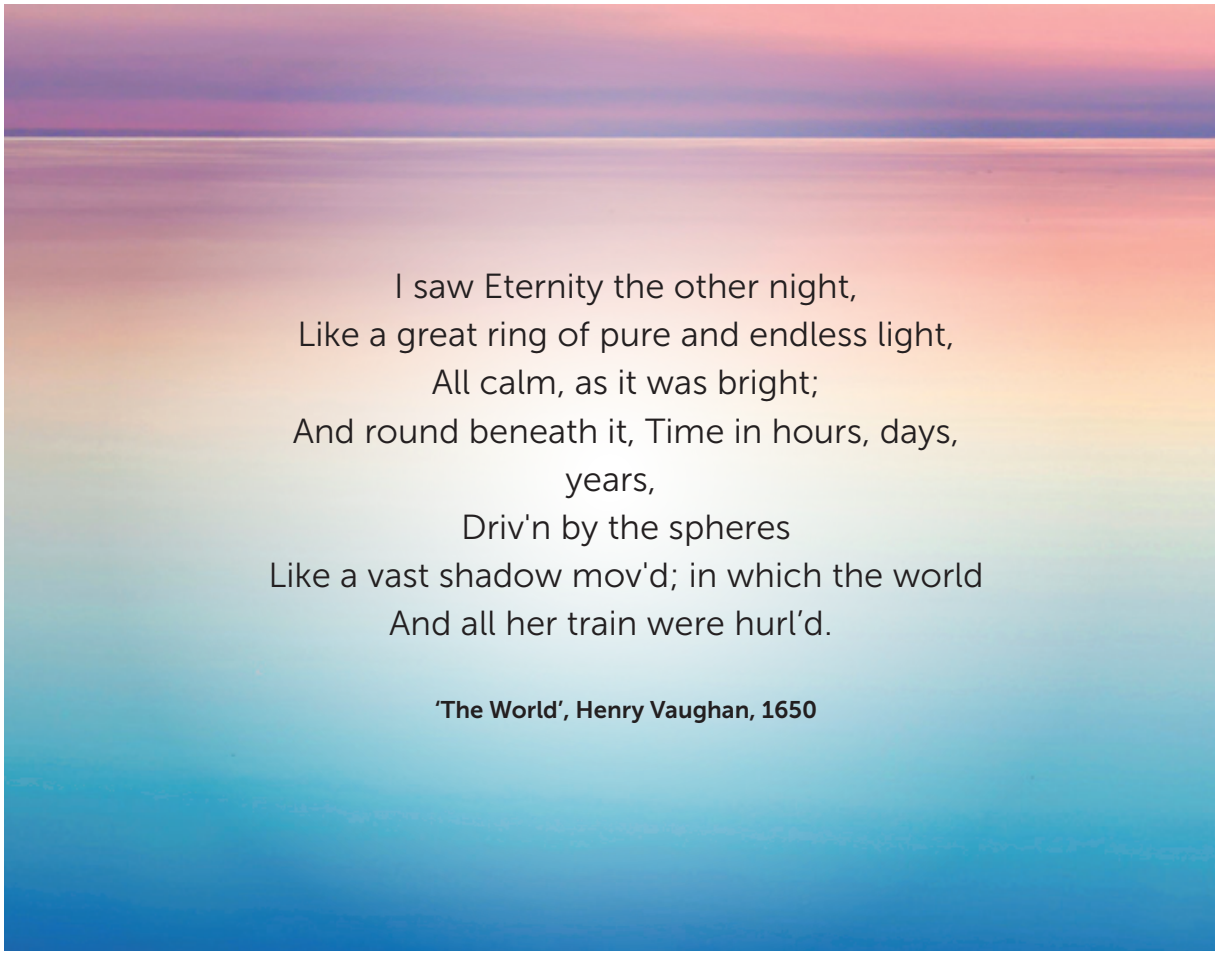
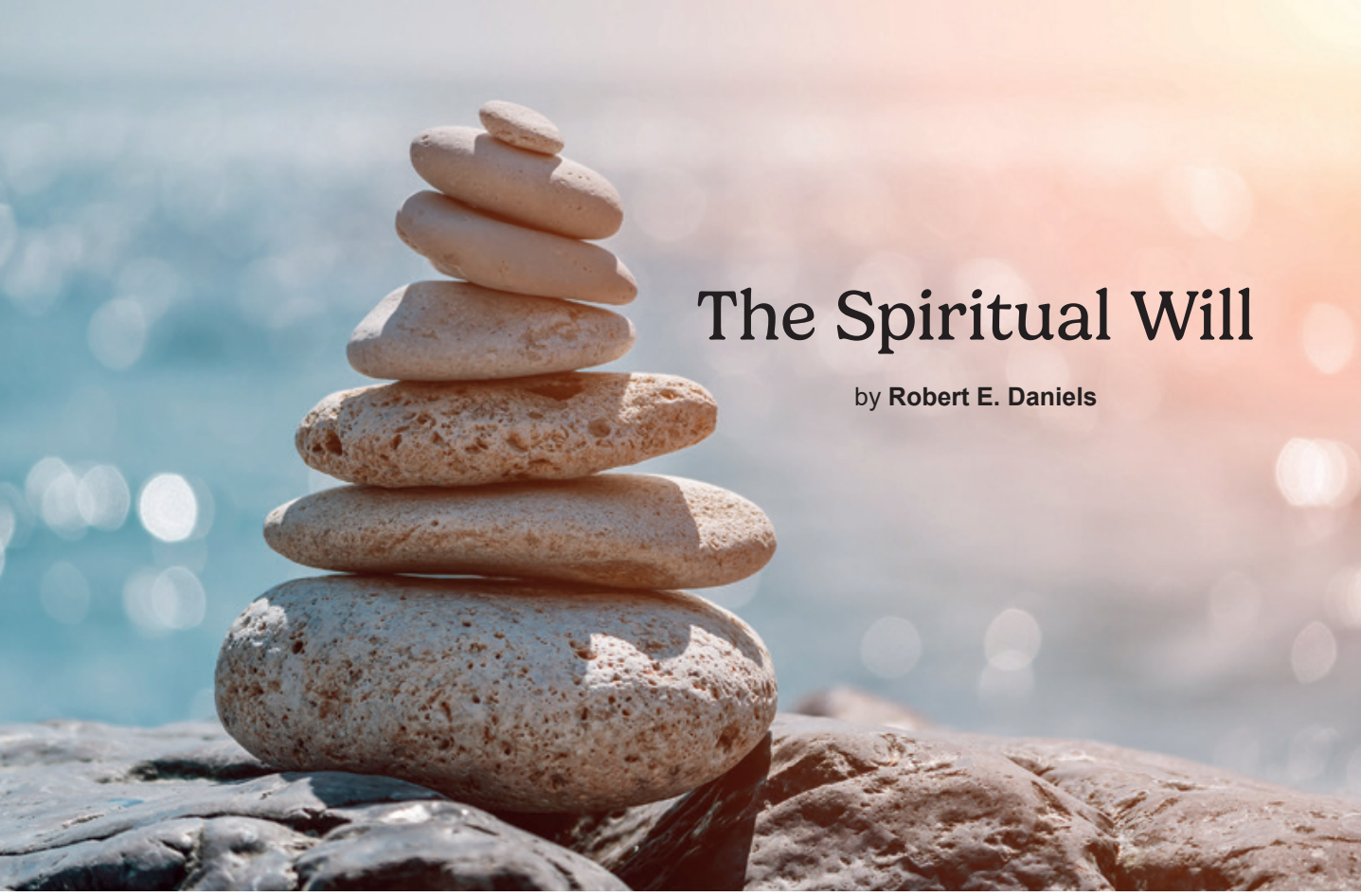


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The Spiritual Will

by **Robert E. Daniels**

We are all aware that we are living in particularly difficult times. Global communications today make us swiftly aware of the turmoil and strife that exist in many parts of the world, and it is natural that we, as Rosicrucians who strive for a better society in which people can live in peace and harmony, should be deeply concerned with the present problems of humanity and the obvious drift and decline of our present much-valued way of life.

Many people question whether or not society is moving in the right direction. Although there is a growing interest in esotericism by an increasing number of people, the world still regards those who are interested in mysticism and the occult as dreamers with an unrealistic outlook on life. It's part of the price we must pay for our ideals, to be criticised by those who have little or no understanding of our studies or philosophy.

To many misinformed or uninformed people we are dreamers, seeking an escape from the normal responsibilities of life. But the study of mysticism is not an escape from life. Rather, as Rosicrucian students we are confronted with many obstacles that stand in the way of reaching our ideals. But by meeting these obstacles head on, which in the main are our own shortcomings and

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deficiencies, we will have the opportunity to ascend the spiral of our own personal development.

We strive unsuccessfully to find more than a handful of leaders of character who can show the way to greater and more meaningful values. There are very few men and women today that can be justifiably called great. Paging through history, however, we see how at various times men and women of remarkable insight and genius emerged and brought long-lasting inspiration to humanity. They were writers, artists, philosophers and of course mystics of the highest calibre. They taught the world how to think, and they have moved human hearts and minds by the unselfish power and compassion they demonstrated.

The Highest Ideals

If there is anything that we need today to give us a proper perspective of the mystical life, it is the inspiration of those whose lives exemplified the highest ideals of human attainment. There is nothing so helpful for acquiring a true perspective of life and of our place in it than the study and review of the works of the great thinkers of the past. Knowledge and experience alone lead to a proper perspective of life, and knowledge and experience alone will bring that peace of mind which is so necessary in these conflicting and disturbing times.

When we are dedicated to our best conduct and when we strive to achieve a greater degree of mystical development, we come into harmony and cooperation on the psychic plane with many others of like thoughts and interests. There is a companionship on the higher planes of consciousness that we are not always aware of. Another thought we should consider is that when we study the works of these great luminaries of the past, whether they were mystics or not, by our own devotion to their work a bond is formed between us, which leads to much insight and inspiration. The works of many writers and artists reveal this fact. By devoting ourselves to the inspired works of these great thinkers and innovators, we can experience an intuitive understanding of their thoughts and ideals.



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It is only natural that, under the pressures of modern daily living, we sometimes feel out of harmony with our present way of life. There is a conflict between the ideal path envisaged by our studies and the environment in which we live. Our lesson here is to adjust to all the circumstances that confront us. We must not avoid but penetrate these problems more deeply and endeavour to view them from an impersonal point of view. We thereby gain insight and strength from such experiences, for this is the way of advancement. We so often cut off the very experiences or opportunities for advancement, under the misconception that these antagonisms have nothing to do with mystical or spiritual evolution. The truth is, however, that from such experiences our character is developed, resulting in a greater understanding of life and its broader purpose.

Our association with others creates many of our difficulties. But these problems can teach us much. By standing detached and apart from others periodically, we can come to understand what these obstacles really mean, and we *must* learn to adjust to them. For in our service to others, it is imperative that we understand the problems of life before we attempt to serve the needs of others.

Using Knowledge

When one first enters on the path of spiritual enlightenment, there is usually no great difficulty in accumulating a great deal of knowledge about mystical principles and beliefs. The assimilation of facts usually proceeds at a fairly rapid pace. But there comes a time in the mystical and spiritual development of each of us, when we have to reflect upon what such knowledge can do for us and how it can be used in our daily affairs for the benefit of ourselves and others.

This is where we meet an important test, because our consciousness has begun to expand and attune itself with the higher levels of inner consciousness. It is at this time that we begin to feel the need to exercise the spiritual will and to find the best method to express all we know in achieving some really useful purpose. At this stage of our development we really begin to think



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and act for ourselves. Up to this time we have been privileged to receive guidance and instruction from others in a purely intellectual sense, but the use of that knowledge now becomes our own responsibility.

Through this knowledge that we have gained, we begin to realise that there is a deeper fount of knowledge which lies within the inner self. We discover that knowledge and truth are always present in the higher reaches of consciousness and that all we need do is become aware of it. This is where our greatest difficulty lies, for one of the most important laws we have to realise is that the light and life of the soul within us will only reveal itself through a concentrated and determined effort. We have to learn to acquire relentlessness in the will and compassion in the heart in order to draw forth from within ourselves the greater light of truth that we desire.

...we begin to realise that there is a deeper fount of knowledge which lies within the inner self.

Learning from Others

Those whose hearts and minds are set upon the highest accomplishments of the mystical life will accept the condition that frustration and strife are necessary elements for the most rapid development and highest mystical attainment. Most of our difficulties and the problems of the world at the present time are not problems of the mind but of the emotional nature of humankind. The spiritual suffering of the world has not decreased with the advent of science, quite the opposite. It is more prevalent today than ever before—all the more reason for us to gain knowledge and understanding so that we may render practical service for the benefit of humanity. We need practical and inspired thinking to carry us through life so that we may attain the lofty ideals that we have envisaged. That is why we should seek knowledge and experience which will give us a deeper understanding of the meaning of life. Life is a test and a challenge, and we have to meet that challenge with all the insight we have gained.

Within each one of us there is a great source of wisdom and knowledge, but we have to draw upon this source with persistent effort in all our endeavours. If we demand little from ourselves, little will be given. This is only saying that we should try to rise to the occasion when we are faced with problems and difficulties and that we can often be surprised at what we can accomplish by a little more effort on our part. It should be a constant practice of ours to demand more from ourselves and a little less from others, for in this lies one of the secrets of our advancement. By interrogating ourselves as to what we know and what we believe, we will reveal the extent of our knowledge and understanding in all aspects of life. By seeking the guidance of the inner self and applying ourselves to study and meditation on the important issues of life with a relentlessness of will, the way will be revealed as to how, with a compassionate heart, we may best serve the cosmic powers to which we have pledged our hearts and minds.

When we study the lives and works of the great thinkers of the past, we see in their works the inspiration for the gradual enlightenment of humankind. It is with pride that we see how many notable Rosicrucians are to be found in the ranks of these great men and women who pledged themselves to seek the truth and who found inspiration by undertaking a voyage of discovery into the realms of the inner spiritual self. Humanity today awaits the guidance of those who, with vision and understanding for the real needs of humankind, will come to the fore and lead the way to the accomplishments of our innermost ideals. This is what we are pledged to. By the light of our own understanding, we will work with others to help guide humanity to a sane, practical, and more spiritual way of life that is in harmony with the Cosmic and which will prove to be a blessing to all humankind.

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Turn the Page

by **Fraser Lawson**

We don't actually write the story of our life, do we? It would use up far too many pens and too much paper, not to mention harming to the environment! But to some extent we can keep a daily 'diary' in the form of each day recalling the key episodes of what happened that day, in as much detail as our stamina permits. It works up to a point, it sharpens the mind, and we find we're able to recall things in great detail weeks or even months later. But it's more work than most of us would care to be bothered with, so it's as well to just live our episodes one day at a time, remember as much detail as we can, and hope the episodes we've missed will find their way into the great *'Book of Life'*, readily available for inspection some day, some time, some place, maybe even in another incarnation.

Our daily episodes will involve tragedies, farces, adventure stories and hopefully some comedies too. But, whatever they actually are, the reality for us is that they are our life experiences, lived and experienced within the mini-universe that wraps around our perceived

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reality. Whether pleasant and enriching or unpleasant and demeaning, the episodes of our life are the interpretations we make of the underlying actualities that impinge upon our consciousness throughout life. In a sense, they can be viewed as what we fundamentally are, namely, a record of all our thoughts, words and actions in excruciating detail—something known in the East for thousands of years as 'karma'.

So, because we are in that case the ultimate authors of our lives, each life is what we made it to be. And because we are the primary reason for the existence of our life story, regardless of the stage props around us, like friends, enemies, jobs, etc., we're ultimately the ones responsible for how our lives turn out to be. A quick apology here: I know it may sound ludicrous and hard-hearted to have this view of human life, for there are, after all, countless things that happen to us that even the most philosophical and forgiving person can't agree fits into the concept of us being *'to blame'* for everything we experience. That's true, but only a true master of life could discover and fully understand the entire chain of causes and effects that have brought us to where we are, and calmly understand the intricate nature of our entanglement with the pleasant and unpleasant events for which we are *'to blame.'*

But here's the thing! We shouldn't just sit idly by, watching our life episodes unfold and being recorded for posterity, while all the time what's happening is *'dictated by circumstances'* or *'forced'* upon us by others. If you habitually meekly submit to what *others* want you to do and never do what *you* want, you'll always be miserable and never as creative as your life was intended to be. You'll be nothing more than a puppet manipulated by people who aren't happy just to control their own lives but who find it necessary to exert their control over the lives of others too.

Those who are strong and aggressive will always exert their strength and power where there's a vacuum. It's the way of Nature after all. But every person is part of a much greater Whole and innately has the same potential to be as creative as all others. Given enough time and effort, success or failure is ultimately a human decision. Make the decision yourself!



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New Day

Regardless of the past, each new day is the same for everyone. It's unmade, uncreated, a blank page on which to write a new story, exactly as you want it. No matter if you're young or old, healthy or unhealthy, rich or poor, each new day is yours to create as you want it to be! Banish all negative, selfish, limiting thoughts, for they will guarantee failure. Whatever advantages people had over you yesterday, leave them behind. The time is gone, they're not worthy of further attention and you have the same blank page as all of us do. Today is before you; it's unshaped. Welcome it with open arms and a supreme sense of a positive, happy episode just waiting to be discovered.

Within you slumbers the creative spark of the Divine incarnate, so discover that unfathomable holiness and allow it to manifest through you. This 'job' of yours is important, so get started! The first step is to control and order your thinking. Too many of your past failures were self-created through your obsession with negative attitudes, blissfully unaware that your uncharitable thoughts were the catalyst that brought you to a state of unhappiness. The unhappy consequences of your own negative thinking will be presented to you repeatedly until you finally realise that you are self-inflicting punishments that could so easily be avoided simply by adopting more positive attitudes. When you start holding positive, kind, charitable thoughts about others, your life will start changing for the better. The pain we experience as a result of negative attitudes is Nature's way of teaching us what is bad for us and what is good for us.

It's a matter of willpower to control our thoughts. It's just as easy to think that you'll succeed as it is to think that you'll fail. It's a lot more pleasant to think well of a person than to harbour thoughts of animosity towards the person. It's no more difficult to think that you'll feel better than to think that you'll feel worse. You just need to decide whether you want happiness and good things to happen today, or unhappiness and disappointing experiences. Remember, you create. Whether or not you enjoy the sense of being responsible for your own actions and inactions, you will be responsible for them. So, get used to the idea of having to control your thoughts.

Attraction

The second step is to study and learn from the *law of attraction*. You attract to yourself what you mentally create around you. A good experiment is to watch people, say, in a nightclub. Even if they don't know each other, after a short time you'll see the outgoing, jovial, fun-loving people gravitating toward one another; while the sour-faced, complaining ones will somberly gather elsewhere.

The fact remains that attraction is a basic and inviolable law of nature. You'll attract whatever dominates your thoughts and attitudes, for you created it that way. If you think negative thoughts about someone or something, you'll attract negative circumstances; like clockwork, it will happen. It's an absolute certainty: negative attracts more negative, positive attracts more positive. All dreams and desires you have that are compatible with natural laws *are possible!* That is why you can and must create a better future for yourself, day by day, by guarding your thoughts and ensuring you have only charitable thoughts always!

Attunement

The third step is attunement. Within you resides the wisdom and power of the Divine, that supremely efficient and effective *'creative spark'* of God. Learn to subdue your ego and let the unlimited, temporarily imprisoned power resurface and take the driver's seat of your life. It thinks only positively, it thinks only of success, and it possesses the ultimate in confidence and refinement of action. It does everything that is

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"It's an absolute certainty: negative attracts more negative, positive attracts more positive."

good and constructive and refuses to do anything that's destructive or contrary to natural law. That inner wisdom is by far the greater part of you, the 99 percent that you have yet to discover.

Realise that you are a unique expression of the Divine and there is special work that you, and only you, can do for the world. What a challenging and tremendous thought! But how will you attune with this power? How will you find out that you're 'meant' to do? *"Who am I to be so honoured?"* I can hear you think. Watch it, that's a negative thought! It's not difficult to practise attunement. Nothing positive is ever placed beyond our reach. We simply need to find a quiet place and dismiss our dominating ego. Then..., remember the biblical exhortation, *"...be still, and know that I am God.'* No further instructions are necessary.

Decision

The fourth and final step is to make your decision. Having been introduced to a greater life, decide to change! Decide to accept the privilege and responsibility! Decide to ignore or eliminate the failures and limitations of the past! Decide that today and tomorrow will be better because you are the one who will help to make it better.

Let it be known that you'll not allow any negative thoughts to come into your mind, you'll not be party to any evil or destructive plans or activities, and you'll do your utmost to see only the good in every person you come in contact with. You'll be surprised to discover how many will be attracted to you and will want to join you in your determination. The law of attraction will not and cannot fail!

Some previous pages in your book of life may be less than satisfactory, and you may even be ashamed of them. But don't dwell on them, for you lived those pages as you then understood life, and your understanding has matured so much since then. The future is before you, ready to be created by you on the remaining blank pages of the Book of Life. So, *turn the page*, start anew to create a better, happier, more fulfilling life.

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The Four Wives

by **Amelia**

The Emir of Baghdad, Nusrayn Al-Haqq, heard of the arrival in his city of a man reputed to be the wisest of all. His interest was piqued particularly by this lowly peasant's claim that he had travelled for years and thousands of miles, enduring great danger and hardships through floods, droughts, icy winters and parched deserts, with the sole purpose of reaching this palace, reputed to be the most lavish ever built, and presuming he would be permitted to address the Emir, the most powerful man in all the world.

Being impulsive and brutal in the treatment of his subjects, he ordered the man be brought into his presence at once to prove his wisdom against that of his own conceited though eloquent advisers. The man was found by the palace guards in the poorest part of the city, put in chains and roughly dragged through the streets before being thrown before the Emir, who haughtily said:

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My people claim you are the wisest of all, wiser even than these, the esteemed advisers of the greatest Emir of all. They have spent their lives in the acquisition of knowledge and you would claim to be wiser than them? Prove your wisdom to me and my counsellors or you will experience a death such as no man has ever endured.

Far from being afraid, the peasant, dressed in a torn and dirty robe, boldly rose to his feet, to the astonishment of everyone in the room, for it was palace protocol that everyone spoken to by the Emir should remain prostrate until ordered to rise. The guards raced towards him to force him down, but the Emir, flushed red in the face with rage, waved them away and icily spat, *"Speak, peasant, for these may be the last words you utter in earthly life."*

Undeterred, the peasant remained standing, cleared his throat and slowly looked around at everyone, in the manner of a man of power who knew men's hearts and could grant their fondest wishes. Then he fixed his eyes upon the Emir and began:

Once upon a time, my Lord, there was an Emir who lived in a country of many merchants and great riches. It was said that he was the wealthiest Emir who had ever lived, and the opulence and beauty that surrounded him in his palace were a sight that rulers from far and wide coveted to see. He was content and happy with life and had four wives, betrothed to him all in strict accordance with the law. But his promise of treating them all equally and with the same care and attention that their dowries had bought, was not honoured.

The Emir loved his fourth wife, Balqis, by far the most and adorned her with the finest robes and jewellery. He treated her to the finest of delicacies, gave her whatever she desired and ordered his slaves to cater to her every wish and fancy. For Balqis was a delight to speak with, and was full of wit and humour to lighten the burden of ruling this mighty kingdom.

The Emir loved his third wife almost as much as his fourth and showed her off regularly to envious visitors from neighbouring kingdoms. Her name was Jamilah, for she was the most beautiful of all women in the world. Her form, her grace, her laughter, her gentle caresses, were more than any man could hope for. However, the Emir feared that one day lovely Jamilah would leave him for another man, for many men of wealth and power desired her and he had heard it said that a great bounty had been placed on her capture by a great rival of his in a far-off land.

The Emir was also fond of his second wife, for she was his most intimate confidante and was always kind, considerate and patient with him. Her name was Huda, and whenever he faced a dilemma he would confide in her and she would assist him to come to wise decisions. For Huda was astute in matters of wealth and was the main reason that the Emir could pay for the loyalty of the provincial chiefs of his kingdom.

The Emir's first wife, Khalida, however, was the most loyal of them all. Although she had made great contributions in maintaining his health, wealth and kingdom, she did not have the wit and humour of the fourth wife, Balqis. Nor did she have the ravishing beauty and sensuality of Jamilah, the third wife. And nor did she have the financial acumen and astuteness of Huda, the second wife. The Emir did not love Khalida; indeed, he hardly noticed her constant presence at his feet, despite knowing her valuable contribution to his success. Yet, despite this, she loved him deeply and served him loyally, day and night. But for all her loyalty, she was treated no better than a slave and was even derided openly by the Emir's esteemed advisers.

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There was complete silence in the hall, broken not even by the usual heavy wheeze of the Emir's laboured breathing, caused by years of overindulgence. The peasant looked around at everyone with a sharp and penetrating gaze and finally rested his eyes on the Emir before him, who stared back with bemused annoyance.

One day, my Lord, by the will of Allah the Almighty, the Emir fell gravely ill and, knowing that his time was short and that he soon would lose the luxury and delight of his opulent life, he said to himself, *"I have four wives and a life of delight even the blessed of eternity would envy. Yet when I die, I shall be alone. I have but a few hours left in this world, so I will speak to Balqis, my beloved fourth wife, for surely she wishes to join me in eternity."*

Summoning his fourth wife, he said to her, *"Balqis, my beloved, I have loved you more than any woman, endowed you with the finest clothing and showered great care over you. Now that I am dying, will you follow me and keep me company?"*

"No, my lord!" she replied. *"You are old and must go alone, for I am yet young and love life more than I have ever loved you and will marry your Vizier Abdul when you die."* And knowing that the Emir was too shocked and weakened to even reply, she turned and walked away without another word. Her answer cut like a sharp knife right through his heart and he was overcome with grief, for this was the wife he had cared for with all his heart and material possessions, and she was not even prepared to accompany him beyond the grave!

But lovely Jamilah, his third wife, would surely follow him and grace him with her beauty in the hereafter. So the sad Emir summoned Jamilah and said to her, *"Jamilah, my beloved, I have loved you all my life and honoured and adorned your beauty, making you the most desired woman in all the world. Now that I am dying, will you follow me and keep me company?"*

No, my lord!" she replied. *"Life is too good! When you die, I will marry your lifelong enemy, Emir Hussein, for he has offered me protection against poverty and a life as luxurious as you have led."* As she turned and left, his heart sank to the depths of despair. The chill of death touched his shoulder, for patience, as my Lord knows, is not a virtue of Death.

In desperation now, the Emir summoned Huda, his second wife, and said, *"My beloved Huda, I have always turned to you for help and you have always been there to advise me rightly. When I die, will you follow me and keep me company?"*

"No, my lord, I cannot," she replied. *"I will help you to your grave, but no more than that"*, she said, and walked away. Her answer came like a bolt of lightning and he was devastated, for now, he thought, he was completely alone, without a friend to turn to, and without a companion to accompany him with Death, who was by now right by his side.

Then a voice called out, *"My Lord..., I will leave with you and follow you wherever you go."* The King looked down, and there was Khalida, his first wife, anointing his feet with oil. She was thin and bedraggled from malnutrition and neglect and stooped over from permanently bowing down to his every whim and fancy. Greatly grieved, the Emir said, *"Dear Khalida, my beloved first wife, how I wish I had taken better care of you when I had the chance, for you are indeed the only one of my four wives who really loved me. How I wish I had known this before this fateful hour."*

The room was in stunned silence as the peasant added:

Indeed, my Lord, he should have known this, as indeed should we all!

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Pausing briefly in complete silence—there wasn't as much as the sound of a breath—he looked around penetratingly at every person in the room, and then continued:

> But our first wife is our soul. Often neglected in the pursuit of wealth, power and the pleasures of this world, the soul is the only thing that will follow us wherever we go, the only true companion we will ever have. Therefore, cultivate, strengthen and cherish your soul now, for it is the only part of you that will be with you always; indeed, for all eternity.

And gazing around the hall as one who knows the deepest mysteries of all hearts, the peasant continued boldly to address the crowd:

In truth, oh followers of the path of comfort, we all have four wives in our lives...

> In truth, oh followers of the path of comfort, we all have four wives in our lives. Our fourth wife is our body. No matter how much time and effort we lavish in making it look its best, it will leave us when we die. Our third wife is our possessions, status and wealth. When we die, they go to others who profit from our labours and care not who we were, and may even have been our mortal enemies in life.

Looking back at the Emir he continued:

> Our second wife, oh great Defender of the Faith, is our family and friends. No matter how much they have been there for us in life, the furthest they can come is to our graveside.

No one stirred or looked up as the peasant bowed and waited for the Emir's response. But the great Emir of Baghdad remained silent, staring sorrowfully at the ground. A great gloom had descended upon him, and he sat on his throne thinking for two full days of what the peasant had said, before returning to his old ways.

But there were others among his guests who were deeply touched by the words of this wise peasant and went away changed forever, with sorrow and contrition for their own disregard for their soul.

No-one knows what happened to this peasant of wise words, for, in the silence that followed his concluding words, no-one, not even the Emir's guards and esteemed wise men, noticed as the teacher of hearts, the legendary *Mustafa the Wise of Córdoba*, slipped silently through a doorway, never again to be seen.

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by **Siobhan Russell**

INCENSE

A Scent of Heaven

I was walking along the 30-foot-wide causeway in the ancient Mayan city of Tikal in present-day Guatemala, when my guide called me over to the foot of a magnificent Ceiba tree which stretched high into the sky. At its foot were what looked like red berries, about the size of redcurrants. The guide took a couple into his hand and let me smell them: a lovely, sweet scent which he told me was called *Pom* by the Maya and *Copal* by the Aztecs.

We know that incense has been used since the most ancient times, and we can only speculate how this came about. Was it when early humans were burning

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wood for their campfires and noticed that some woods or bushes had a more soothing, peace-producing, enchanting smell than all others? In fact, could it be that such moments take us back to the very origins of modern humans, 80,000 or more years ago, when our ancient ancestors pondered and sought the abode of their deceased ancestors—a spirit world of knowledge of future events, and powers beyond human abilities?

For our most ancient ancestors the sense of smell must have been a far more dominant and sophisticated sense than it is for us today. Being able to smell where the next meal was no doubt helped them to survive a lot easier than we would today if left alone in the bush. Being able to smell the presence of dangerous predators upwind would also have been a decided advantage for survival, with its constant imperative to get out of harm's way as quickly and quietly as possible. Smell almost certainly was the most important of all the five senses for our early ancestors, as indeed it is for most mammals today.

Fast Forward

Fast forwarding tens of thousands of years to eras when various forms of spiritual consciousness started to emerge, whether prehistoric ancestor worship rites or a developing sense of an immanent pantheistic spiritual presence pervading all things, we see that various definite religious beliefs began to evolve over the millennia, almost all of which we have no knowledge of today. Humanlike qualities were attributed to the gods, and the gods were the ones to love, fear and respect in equal measure because of their power to both help and hinder humans.



Scented woods were used in cremation to neutralise the strong odour of the burning body or of burnt sacrifices, especially in hot climates, as is done still today in India and Sri Lanka, for example.



Blossom of the Ceiba tree

It was assumed that whatever substances humans found gratifying— such as the pungent, mouthwatering smell of a roasting sacrifice on an outdoor altar, or aromatic, pleasant-smelling incense—the gods would find just as gratifying. After all, the gods were created in the image of humans and most of the time behaved no better than their worshippers, though usually with greater strength and pizzaz.

Eventually it became the norm that if gods were to do anything at all for their worshippers they would need to be placated with precious things that humans enjoyed, and aromatic woods and resins eventually became one of those things.

Special foods, herbs, tree bark and plants with agreeable scents were offered to the gods in solemn rites. If certain areas of holy sites were consecrated to the

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Incense burning in a Buddhist temple.

worship of the gods—such as the natural elements, the sky, the earth and the stars, all of which were respected as supernatural beings—fragrant flowers were spread on the ground or placed on altars. This, it was thought, made the gods more receeptive to their worshippers' appeals.

The original purpose of using aromatic materials in an organised manner was almost certainly for religious rites. The bodies of the dead were decked with flowers and scented with aromatic oils, which were mixed with other ingredients to compose a form of perfume.

The ancient Persians believed that evildoers were punished in the afterlife by being sent to a region of foul-smelling odours. In other words, what was offensive to the living was believed to be more so after death, as retribution for the evil deeds that had been committed during life. This equates with the concept of the evil-smelling odours and fumes said to exist as a form of punishment in the Christian concept of Hell.

So we have seen that incense was used as an important part of various religious practices, as a tool to counteract bad or disagreeable odours, and as a way to repel demons and evil spirits.

Visions of Paradise

The idea that paradise has a pleasant odour is found in the Jewish, Christian and Gnostic writings. It was believed that the abode of the gods must be a region pleasing to the sense of smell. The pleasurable state in the afterlife was therefore a reward.

Aside from its primary purpose as an offering to the gods, incense was used for practical, symbolic and mystical purposes.

Scented woods were used in cremation to neutralise the strong odour of the burning body or of burnt sacrifices, especially in hot climates. Where this is done today, as in India and Sri Lanka, for example, the scent is usually the same in all cremation rites because of the customary use of similar materials. The odour is strong and, once experienced, always suggests the nearby burning of a human body. In fact, the scent has a cloying sweetness.

Symbolically, the smoke of the incense, ascending from the burning of aromatic plants and resins, was thought to bear the words of prayer to the gods, who



Ancient Egyptian incense burner.

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were pleased by the odour. It was also believed that the soul of the dead person ascended to heaven on the smoke of incense burnt on its behalf. It is psychologically interesting that early humans sought some tangible bond between their finite material substance and the infinite, or the invisible region where they believed the gods dwelt. The smoke at first was not symbolic but was thought to be an actual medium for the transmission of the prayer.

Incense in Egypt

In Egypt, incense offerings were made to the gods deep within their temples and on those special occasions when the god's statue left the temple so that the incense would *'draw the soul up to the heaven on the smoke of the incense'.* Probably the earliest reference to the use of incense for any religious purpose appeared in the notice of a pharaoh of the 11th dynasty, Sankhkara Mentuhotep III (c. 2004–1992 BCE). He sent an expedition for aromatics across the desert and sailed south on the Red Sea to the *'Incense Land of Punt'.* This land is believed to have been in the northern region of modern-day Somalia.

We believe that all the temples had incense trees or bushes planted either in their grounds or around them. For those who have visited the mortuary temple of the female pharaoh Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri on the west bank of the Nile at Luxor, it is known that, in addition to the elegant ruins that remain, incense trees, brought from her expedition to the land of Punt, were planted in front of and at the sides of the ramps. We can see this story displayed on the walls of Hatshepsut's temple.



Goddess Isis

On the walls of other royal mortuary temples on the west side of the Nile, opposite modern Luxor, can be seen representations of kings offering incense: *'He holds a censer in one hand and in the other throws small balls of incense upon it, praying to the god to accept it and give him a long life.'* During funerary rites, incense was used to purify the deceased: fine grains were twice offered to the mouth, eyes and hands, one for the north and one for the south.

The Egyptians believed that incense has a divine quality. It was believed the goddess Isis had a wonderful scent, which she could transfer to



Images of incense appear in ancient Egyptian imagery.
Left: Ramesses III offering incense. Right: section of the Book of the Dead showing the use of incense (far left of image).

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others and which had beneficial qualities as well as healing properties. Osiris, too, was believed to be able to transfer his odour and the power that accompanied it to whomever he loved.

Apparently the importation of the ingredients of incense and its compounding were quite thriving industries in ancient Egypt. Immense quantities of incense were used. During the reign of Pharaoh Ramesses III of the 20th dynasty, it was reported that 1,938,766 pieces of incense were used during the 31 years of his reign. Seemingly all the gods were delighted with the scents that were offered to them. Even the statues of the gods were censed with fragrant substances.

Incense in Other Cultures

The Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE–50 CE) relates that the four ingredients of Hebrew incense represented the four elements, namely, earth, air, water and fire, and therefore represented the entire universe. Herodotus, the ancient Greek historian (485–423 BCE), says that in Babylonia 1,000 talents of frankincense were offered on the great altar of Marduk, the god of Heaven and Earth, at his annual feast. Herodotus also referred to a land where incense was placed upon bricks. This probably refers to Babylon, as most of the great structures in that city were made of mud brick and bound with bitumen, an asphalt-like substance, which bubbled up naturally in that petroleum-rich land.



Sandalwood



Image: Unsplash / Andriy Tod

Incense is used extensively today in the religious rituals of the Catholic and Orthodox churches.

The incense was burned as a ritual, accompanied by prayers and the predictions of oracles. Somewhat similar household ceremonies were held, with incense burned on bricks as an offering to Marduk, the sun, the moon, the stars, etc.

Ancient Vedic priests used sandalwood as a principal ingredient in their incense, which they used both in their temples and in their homes in the performance of sacred rites. The sacred fire was fed with the consecrated wood, sandalwood and other aromatic woods—and such is common practice today in India for cremation. The odour of incense can be detected on the Ganges River when one is floating by the burning ghats (steps) at the river's edge where the funeral pyres are built. In the Hindu literary work *The Ramayana*, the poet describes a solemn entrance into his grandfather's capital: *'...the city was adorned with*

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garlands and exhaled the odours of frankincense and sweet-smelling perfume.' These scents were, however, not indigenous to India but were brought principally from Arabia.

Among the Tibetans the ritualistic use of incense was like that of the Roman Catholic Church, in that Tibetan monks censed their altars while chanting. The incense and censer were also used in Tibet in the initiation of a monk and in the daily rites of the monasteries. Early Buddhism was opposed to external rites and ceremonies; in fact, the later external development of ceremonies by one school of Buddhism brought about a schism resulting in a different presentation of Buddhist teachings. In later times incense became generally used in certain ceremonies. Perfumes and flowers are also placed before the image of the Buddha.

The ancient Roman philosopher Pliny the Elder (23/24–79 CE), who died during the famous eruption of the Vesuvius volcano, wrote in his *Naturalis Historia* (Natural History) that the people of Greece only knew the smell of cedar and citrus *'...as it rose in columns of smoke from the sacrifices.'* He added that the majority of fragrant substances were the product of trees in Arabia that were held sacred. Later, incense was more extensively used in varied rituals.

The Phoenicians, after the battle of Arbela in 331 BCE, followed Alexander the Great on his march to India, solely for the purpose of trade.

> They loaded their boats of burden with the gum of the myrrh..., which it yielded in such abundance as to scent the whole region with the fragrance.

Though many religious offerings of the Romans were sacrifices of living things, one of the most important of the bloodless sacrifices was incense. It eventually became an essential function of every rite and was burned on high altars or in braziers. When



Frankincense

Christianity became the official religion of the empire the young church took over the use of incensing the holiest part of their sanctuaries.

Though incense is used extensively today in the rituals of the Catholic and Orthodox churches, one of the early church fathers, Tertullian (155–230 CE), inveighed against it. He declared, *"Not a penny worth of incense do I offer."* And Athenagoras of Athens (133–190 CE), a Christian philosopher and Father of the Church, said that God did not require the sweet smell of flowers and incense. However, incense is now used by the Roman Catholic Church at the solemn mass before the *introit* (the first variable part of the mass) and also at blessings, processionals, burial rites and so on. It is also used ritually in many churches of the Anglican Communion as *'the symbolic rite typifying prayer'.*

Types of Incense

Incense is typically made up of an aromatic material that produces a scent, and a combustible binding material that holds it together in a particular shape. The aromatic materials used for making incense

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Myrrh

are typically plant based and can include a variety of resins, barks, seeds, roots and flowers. The specific ingredients used in incense can vary by region and manufacturer. Some specific examples of aromatic ingredients that you may recognise include:

- cinnamon
- frankincense
- musk
- myrrh
- patchouli
- sandalwood

Gums and resins have been used as incense all over the world for millennia. In the Middle East, frankincense, with its beautiful scent, is used liberally to perfume shops and homes.

The combustible binding material found in incense is what ignites, allowing the incense to burn and produce smoke. The materials used vary but can include things like charcoal or wood powders.

Scents, aromas, fragrances (however you describe them) can be used to trigger specific responses, such as to encourage relaxation, aid sleep, promote concentration, stimulate creativity and increase motivation. As already alluded to, there is also a raft of religious, aesthetic and practical reasons for using incense. A further dimension is that specific fragrances can be used for particular purposes. For example, burning incense is an easy, quick and accessible way of masking unwanted household smells from cooking, pets, damp clothes, etc. Cedar, myrrh and citrus scents will 'cleanse' the air, leaving behind a freshness and a sense of a new beginning.

Scents arouse significant responses in our brain and can instantly remind us of past events, people and emotions. Through scent we can be transported back to ancient Egypt, to springtime in Japan or to anything within our own memory bank—the good feelings are just a moment away.

The effect of good aroma generated from incense has been shown to raise serotonin in the brain. Non-pharmacological methods of raising brain serotonin may not only improve mood but do so without side-effects or dangers of addiction. Serotonin is considered a natural mood stabiliser and helps with sleeping, eating and digestion. Serotonin also helps to reduce depression, regulate anxiety and reduce headaches.

Uses of Incense in Modern Times

Burning uplifting fragrances when working or studying can increase focus and enhance concentration. Less intrusive than music playing in the background,



Cinnamon

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fragrances have a subtler effect on the mind and body, making them a perfect partner for work and study or when engaging in a hobby that requires detailed focus. Insomnia is an increasing affliction, especially in our modern, always-on and interruption-orientated society. Lavender is especially regarded as an aid to sleep, as are vetiver and chamomile.

If you want to relax and unwind, light some incense, curl up on the sofa with a cup of tea, a book and some chilled-out music. Alternatively, run a bath and replace candles with an incense stick or two: soft fragrances will further enhance this time, allowing you to give yourself time and space away from the hassles of everyday living. Frankincense, sandalwood and cedarwood are all 'calming fragrances' and so work well for general relaxation. Reducing stress and anxiety is a step up from merely relaxing, for it crucially calms virtually all body activities—heart rate and breathing being just two of many. Encourage your mind to stop worrying and racing from one thing to another and, for stress reduction, go for the purest and best quality sandalwoods. Lavender and rosemary are other great choices for this as well.

Incense is used widely in many religious practices to deepen attention, heighten senses and uplift your spirit when practising meditation. Sandalwood and lotus are used most frequently in meditation, but you should choose what suits you best: an incense that transports you to the place you need to be, without taking over your thoughts. The burning of incense can act as a doorway to spirituality, whether formal or informal, recognised religion or secular. Incense is, and has been for thousands of years, in daily use in many religions of the world, notably in Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity.

Symbolism and Study of Incense

Aside from its practical uses as a means of dispelling offensive odours or for religious rites, incense perpetuates a mystical and esoteric symbolism.



Lavender

To mystical adherents, the symbolism becomes an objective form of their subjective idealism and sentiment. The burning, the scent and the smoke have no import in themselves; they simply portray the spirit of the thoughts and emotions of the user.

The glow of the fire symbolically depicts the zeal and devotion of the adherent to his or her cause. The fragrance, the agreeable scent, is symbolic of the harmony of transcendent pleasure, and the smoke represents the ascension of consciousness and the projection of our finite human nature to the infinity of the Cosmic.

Burning incense has long been associated with religious practice and meditation and has been used throughout the world for centuries, but does it have any benefits for health or wellness, or have a calming or psychoactive effect? There's limited research on the possible health benefits, and many of the available studies focus on the incense ingredients frankincense and myrrh.

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One 2008 study, conducted in cell cultures and mice, identified a compound in frankincense resin that could cause a response similar to that of an antidepressant. Additionally, a response to this compound was seen in the areas of the brain associated with anxiety and depression. It also activated receptors associated with a feeling of warmth. A 2017 study found that some compounds isolated from frankincense and myrrh resins had an anti-inflammatory effect in mice: researchers isolated several compounds from the resins and found that some of them were able to inhibit an inflammatory response in the mice, depending on the dose.

It should be noted, however, that the researchers in these studies worked with compounds purified from frankincense resin. Further studies will be needed to determine if they are present in incense smoke and whether they elicit the same response in people.

Making Your own Incense

All incense producers have their own techniques when it comes to creating these fragrant items, and the methods vary considerably, depending on the traditions involved. However, there are certain basic principles that you can apply if you are ever tempted to have a go at making your own sticks or cones.



Ginger

Firstly, you'll need to take high-quality natural ingredients to create your loose incense. You can choose from a variety of woods, resins, herbs and spices. Here are some examples of each type of ingredient:

- Woods: sandalwood, agarwood, pine, cedar
- Resins: amber, myrrh, frankincense, hibiscus
- Herbs and spices: vanilla, sage, ginger, cinnamon

Try to always use at least one resin or wood in your mixture. Next, pulverise these ingredients into a very fine powder to aid the burning process. The resulting mixture can be combined with charcoal powder and a binding agent such as tragacanth.

To this mix you can add makko powder, which is made from the bark of the tabu-no-ki tree. This is a combustible material that's also water soluble. When added to the loose incense mix along with a little distilled water, makko allows for the formation of incense cones or sticks. The water should be added very slowly while you mix the ingredients. You want the mixture to become gummy and pliable yet still hold firm when it is moulded.

Once it's at the right consistency, you can form the mix into cones or apply it to sticks. If you're using bamboo sticks, make sure you get blank versions with no additives. Once you have made the items, leave them to dry. This can take a couple of weeks or more, and bear in mind that cones tend to take longer than sticks. To see if cones are ready, turn them upside down and make sure that their undersides are all one colour. If they are darker in the middle, they need more time to dry.

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Children Learn What They Live

A child who lives with criticism learns to condemn.

A child who lives with hostility learns to fight.

A child who lives with ridicule learns to feel shy.

A child who lives with shame learns to feel guilt.

A child who lives with tolerance learns to be patient.

A child who lives with encouragement learns to be confident.

A child who lives with praise learns to appreciate.

A child who lives with fairness learns to be just.

A child who lives with security learns to have faith.

A child who lives with approval learns to appreciate herself.

A child who lives with acceptance and friendship
learns to find love in the world.



by Dorothy Law Nolte

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by **Shirley Elsby**

COMMITMENT

New Year resolutions season is past and, if you were optimistic enough to make any, the chances are they are now in the same state as the midnight fireworks of 31 December: mere damp squibs and distant memories of a glorious but fleeting light show. One American study shows that a paltry 8 percent of people who resolve to change at New Year actually do it, but the rest are still hauling their bad habits around, with the added weight of feeling guilty.

Many a sage person has come to believe that the chief difference between success and failure is commitment. Commitment is a firm, fixed, unshakable determination to do whatever is decided. The 'whatever' can be anything from the trivial to the momentous, from writing a letter to achieving enlightenment. It can be building a wall or living a dream, finding a fitness buddy or seeking a soulmate.

Commitment brooks no failure and accepts no excuses. It doesn't accommodate half measures and it doesn't leave the door open to intruders who would thwart the cause. Commitment is about taking one step after another all the way to journey's end, right through the speed traps and all diversions. As humorist Josh Billings put it a long time ago: *'Be like a postage stamp. Stick to one thing until you get there.'*

When is commitment not commitment? When you're dithering about in two minds! Doubt is the big dream killer. You like the sound of the ultimate goal; the amazing career; the Tibetan trek; the wonderful, loving, life partnership; and so forth, but you harbour misgivings about how much work, worry and hard-earned readies it will take to achieve it; and your resolve is duly diluted in proportion to the anticipated hardships.

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The doubt most frequently fatal to the dream is the one which wonders whether the goal is even possible. If that kind of doubt takes hold, it sucks the juice of sustainability right out of the fledgling dream and it will never take flight. Commitment requires unmitigated certainty that the desired end can indeed be reached, that it is indeed desirable and that the rewards will make the effort worthwhile. Only then does the whole human gamut of physical, psychic and spiritual faculties mesh into an unstoppable force dedicated to the purpose.

The German poet-politician Johann Wolfgang von Goethe is often attributed with saying:

> There is one elementary truth that ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.

Of course, the chances of success rise considerably if you are a devoted seeker of spiritual enlightenment, especially if you practise the exercises that come with any system of spiritual development. The Rosicrucian Order assists its members to hone their skills in this area, something which is invaluable to everyone, whether they consider themselves as being on a spiritual path or not. Mental disciplines such as concentration, contemplation, logic and reason, memory strengthening and autosuggestion are all powerful aids to positive thinking and living. But the indispensable tool to bring to bear if you really want to achieve something worthwhile is harnessing a single-mindedness of commitment to something.

Mastin Kipp, an entrepreneur who forged success in social media, is quoted in Rhonda Byrne's book, *Hero*, as saying:

> If you have a dream, don't make a Plan B. If you have a Plan B you're going to end up at Plan B. You need to be all in on Plan A. All your love, all your faith, all your energy, all your determination.

He is so right. Little of any value is achieved with a half-hearted approach.

In 207 CE, the Chinese military leader Xiang Lu reputedly launched an attack on the rival Qin army. After crossing a river to attack, he ordered his troops to destroy their boats and all but three days of rations, leaving them no option but to prevail against the vastly larger opposition force or die trying. They went on to achieve a notable victory. We are all familiar with the concept of burning our bridges behind us. It's often prefixed by the imperative 'don't', but actually it's certainly one way of ensuring that the only way is forward and, if the intention is to get where you want to go, it's one way of ensuring that you don't back out because of faint-heartedness.

Too often, people listen to others rubbishing their ideas or washing them with a tidal wave of warnings about why they're unworkable, ill-advised, pie-in-the-



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sky or plain stupid. Some of the world's most successful companies and inventions were brought into being by people who, thankfully, ignored the naysayers and went ahead anyway, including FedEx, radios, telephones and computers. Obviously one needs to apply some common sense and realism before setting out on a grand scheme, but numerous people have made their visions come true even when all the technology and evidence of the day said it couldn't be done, and they can all bear witness to the virtue of forging ahead anyway.

Another factor which often gets in the way of a good idea is procrastination: putting off what needs to be done to bring the idea to fruition by allowing yourself to be diverted into other tasks, worthy or not. Commitment means you'll do what needs to be done, regardless of other duties, other people and other possibilities that crop up. Not many of us enjoy the luxury of 24 hours a day to spend entirely on our chosen mission, but actually most people can work toward their goals quite comfortably alongside seeing to the necessities and other considerations of day-to-day living, including carrying out domestic chores, spending time with family and friends, and dealing with routine responsibilities. Many people, not all of them superheroes, manage to do all that and work towards several goals simultaneously, revelling in the grand variety of it all.

Commitment means you'll do what needs to be done, regardless of other duties, other people and other possibilities which crop up.

Yet another foe that often pits itself against the sincere resolutionist is the occurrence of the unforeseen obstacle. This is the googly that can be bowled by no less an adversary than life itself—the drop-everything-and-deal-with-this eventuality that requires a switch in priorities, perhaps from self-development to someone else's pressing interests. It's a genuine emergency, like having to deal with fire or flood (much of that lately); taking care of property matters or distressed relatives in the case of bereavement; or coping with redundancy, trauma or any number of other circumstances that can arise without warning. In these cases it may be the decent thing, or feel like the only thing to do, to drop the dream, at least for a while, although commitment will ensure that it is only set aside for a time, perhaps nurtured with enough to keep it going for a while and not abandoned altogether. Even in such situations, true commitment means that nothing and nobody will change the 'I do' for 'Sorry, I can't'.

New Year resolutions are a January tradition in my part of the world, and a time-honoured, fine one at that. They concentrate the mind, invigorate the soul and give us a map by which to plan our route and mark our progress, even if we sometimes deviate from the main roads. Personally, I like to cross-match several resolutions across all spheres of life, from work to my spiritual pursuits, although it has to be said there's more movement along some than others, and a few remain stubbornly stuck.

When commitment is not all it was envisaged to be, January can be a dismal time in which to strike out anew. (For those of us in the Northern Hemisphere, perhaps it's something to do with long, dark nights and dreary weather.) The spring equinox, among other things, is also an excellent time to make resolutions. After all, spring is the time of resurgence in nature, trees regrowing their foliage, milder weather setting in and the parallel onset of new natural cycles.

It's never too late to rescue a good resolution and, wherever you live in the world, to symbolically connect with spring, but what better time could there be than now to pen those good intentions afresh and set about making them manifest with the real and magical power of commitment?

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by **Irene Beusekamp Fabert** (1915–2012)

A Path

These are long years that I have been in this world. I was five years old when I went to class for the first time. I learnt, studied, and studied more and more, and now I know so much that I no longer know what I know. And, like the French writer Montaigne (1533–1592), I say: *'Que sais-je?' What do I know?*

The interpreters of Montaigne have for a long time thought that by voicing that rhetorical question he was expressing his scepticism and disillusionment. He was only a young child when he was speaking Latin fluently. Later he studied philosophy and law, travelled widely and carried out public duties. But it was the phenomenon of 'being human' which increasingly held his interest.

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Montaigne (1533–1592).

And so it was that he eventually retired to his château, where he devoted himself to the study of mankind. Perhaps because he lived alone, he became the object of his own observations, which he recorded in his *Essays*. It was in silence that he found that which for him was the most important: his Inner Self, which he called his 'back shop'. In the form of essays, he produced a large volume of writings about mankind, and yet he professed he never knew who or what it is. *'What do I know?'* he said. In spite of many years of study, mankind remained for him a mystery. As for possible spiritual experiences in the depths of himself, he always kept silent about them.

My Own Experiences

If you don't mind, I'm now going to revert to my own experiences. Of all that I've learnt, I've acquired a fairly extensive knowledge, but that which I really know doesn't come from what I accumulated in my brain, but from the most profound depths of myself, during the short or long moments of pure silence. Those moments where all is quiet in oneself, where it seems we're enveloped by an ethereal veil, and where all of a sudden our Inner Master manifests and confirms what the great Master said so long ago: *The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.* The Master, the Inner Master, God. A while back I wrote a meditation of words, of expressions, of phrases that I used to read or that I used to hear, and which became engraved in my heart. Here they are:

Adepts on the Path, let me greet you with this eternal affirmation: The Kingdom of Heaven is within you. The current illusion of mankind is the overestimation of the intellect which has brought so much to us and which has made possible, thanks to some miraculous techniques, a total change of our conditions of life. Humanity is under the influence of a technological development which seems unable anymore to come to a standstill. New discoveries are being achieved in all fields. The universe is revealing its secrets to science and we're wearing out and using up all the treasures and resources of our Mother Earth.

...isn't it about time for us to realise the delusions of our intellectual evolution and commit ourselves to new ways...

The World is no longer in balance. While the Western countries, greedy *To Have* (they no longer know how to conjugate the verb *To Be*), are pushed more and more to acquire totally useless products, the other part of the world suffers from hunger and remains deprived of what's most essential for life. Isn't it about time for us to realise the delusions of our intellectual evolution and commit ourselves to new ways, these ways which are emerging more and more and which, since all time, the wise men and women of all civilisations pointed out to be in the scope of one science: the science of the soul?



The serene face of the Sphinx of Giza.

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Meister Eckhart.

How odd that scholars know details about the tiniest of insects they can't see with the naked eye, yet don't even know the why and how of their own existence? Why do geneticists know so much about plants, animals and humans but don't look into the mystery of their own beings and into the characteristics of their own persona? How is it that mankind can cross the universe in all senses, even land on the Moon, but isn't able to find the path which leads us to ourselves?

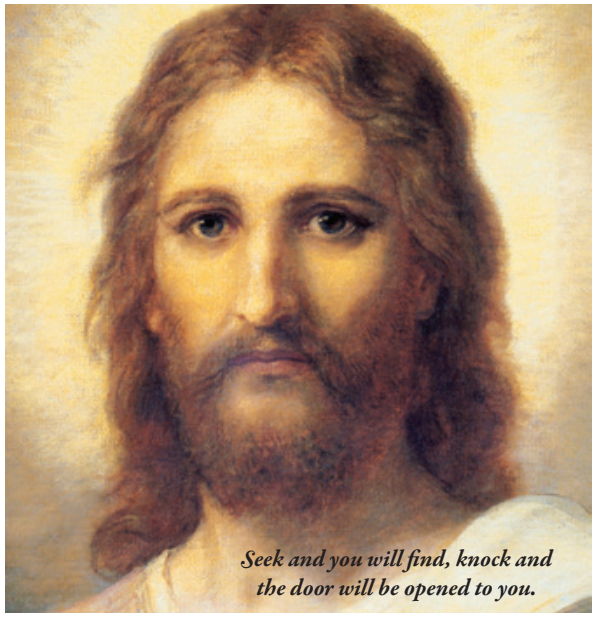
'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.' Adepts of the Path, permit me to repeat to you this age-old message. It's the message of the boundless smile of the Sphinx which rises up calm and serene on the sands of Egypt. It's the message formulated in different terms by the German mystic of the 13th and 14th centuries, Meister Eckhart: *'God is at the centre of Man.'* St Thomas Aquinas and Jacob Boehme gave expression to the same thing in their copious writings, which aren't always easy to read but are based on genuine experience, an experience which is also possible for mankind in this new age.

Our era is precisely the one where divine values are gaining clarity and where the spiritual life is becoming as significant and real as the material life; the one where the term 'initiation' again finds its first significance: a beginning, a new beginning. And this is that which must be, since every creature is a part of the universal Spirit which is at the origin of our world, the Spirit where eternal Love, infinite Wisdom and indestructible Peace abides.

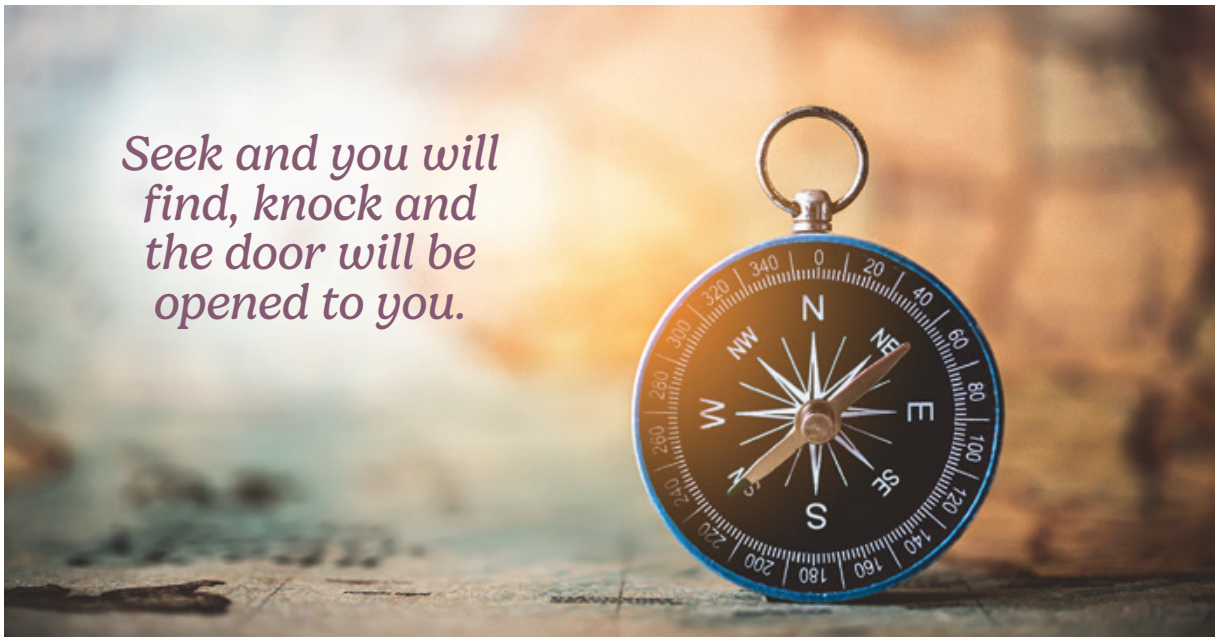
Initiation

In the Mystery Schools of the pre-Christian civilisations, initiation was considered an extremely important act. At the end of the ceremonies of the Eleusinian mysteries in ancient Greece, the last words that initiates heard were *'May Peace be in you'*, after which they resumed their respective paths—souls peaceful and hearts filled with joy. Initiation was for them a profound awakening into that which is genuine. It was the supreme accomplishment of their spiritual life, and whoever didn't make it to that experience was not a complete being.

If this interior experience was possible two thousand years before the Common Era, it should be possible two thousand years into the Common Era too. During these four thousand years, the fundamental nature of mankind has not changed, nor their search for themselves..., Adepts of the Path who aspire to meeting the Divine. In their true reality, the one which was and will always be, men and women are spiritual beings even though they live in material bodies. Our senses, which play tricks of all sorts on us, are the reason why we confuse our true Self with our material body. The



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Divine doesn't surround us only during our earliest infancy but all through life. We don't know it yet or don't know it any more.

Behind the person we think we are, there is a second person we don't see: our real Self, which existed already before thoughts and desires took possession of us. Behind our body of flesh and blood exists a radiant and sublime conscience. Our true life flows out in the depths of our heart and has no place in the superficial mask of the personality we show to the world. Adept of the Path, you are the heir of a hidden treasure in the deep recesses of your own nature. The Kingdom of Heaven is within you. Those who, secluded in their own silence, set out to find themselves are not dreamers. They are only doing what each one must do at a certain phase of their evolution.

Adept of the Path, you are the heir of a hidden treasure in the deep recesses of your own nature.

The way may be long or short, but they keep their spiritual eyes wide open and listen to the voice which speaks within them. One day, their great Self will be revealed to them, and they will be on the verge of Eternity. If the door of our soul opens itself for one second, one minute or one hour, the revelation will be complete. Neither bitter suffering nor a heavy burden can destroy this knowledge, a knowledge which cannot be translated into words. Anyone who, at one time, has felt their innermost being to be dissolved and to be merged in the infinite, knows that this cannot be expressed. It's the illumination of the spirit and of the heart, that which is the most miraculous in the life of each man and woman.

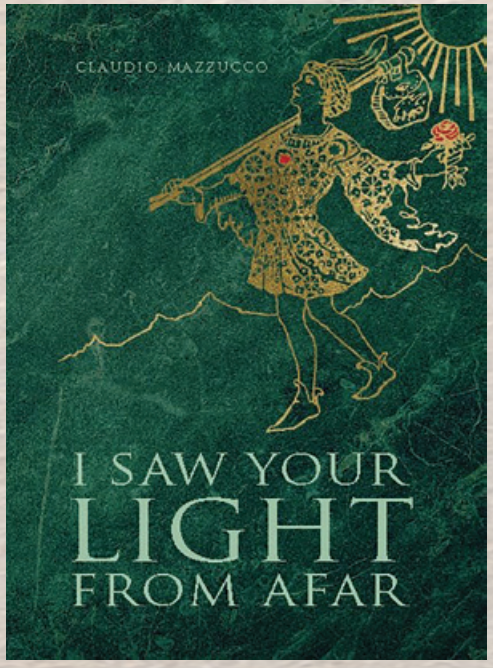
Look for your Self, find your true Self and you will know the sense of life and the mystery of the universe will be revealed to you. Think about the words of the Master of Galilee: *'Seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you.'* Discover that you are one part of an infinite Life which expresses itself in Light and in Love. *'He who knows his own nature, knows Paradise'* said a pupil of Confucius. In other words: *'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.'*

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I Saw Your Light From Afar

By Imperator Fr Claudio Mazzucco

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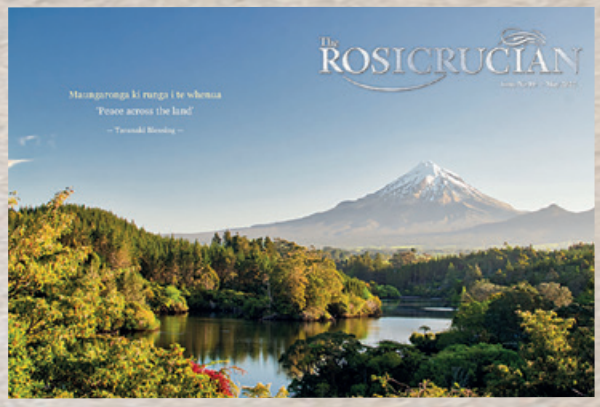
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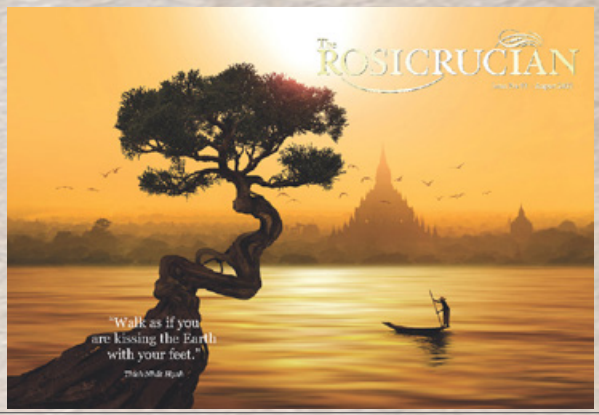
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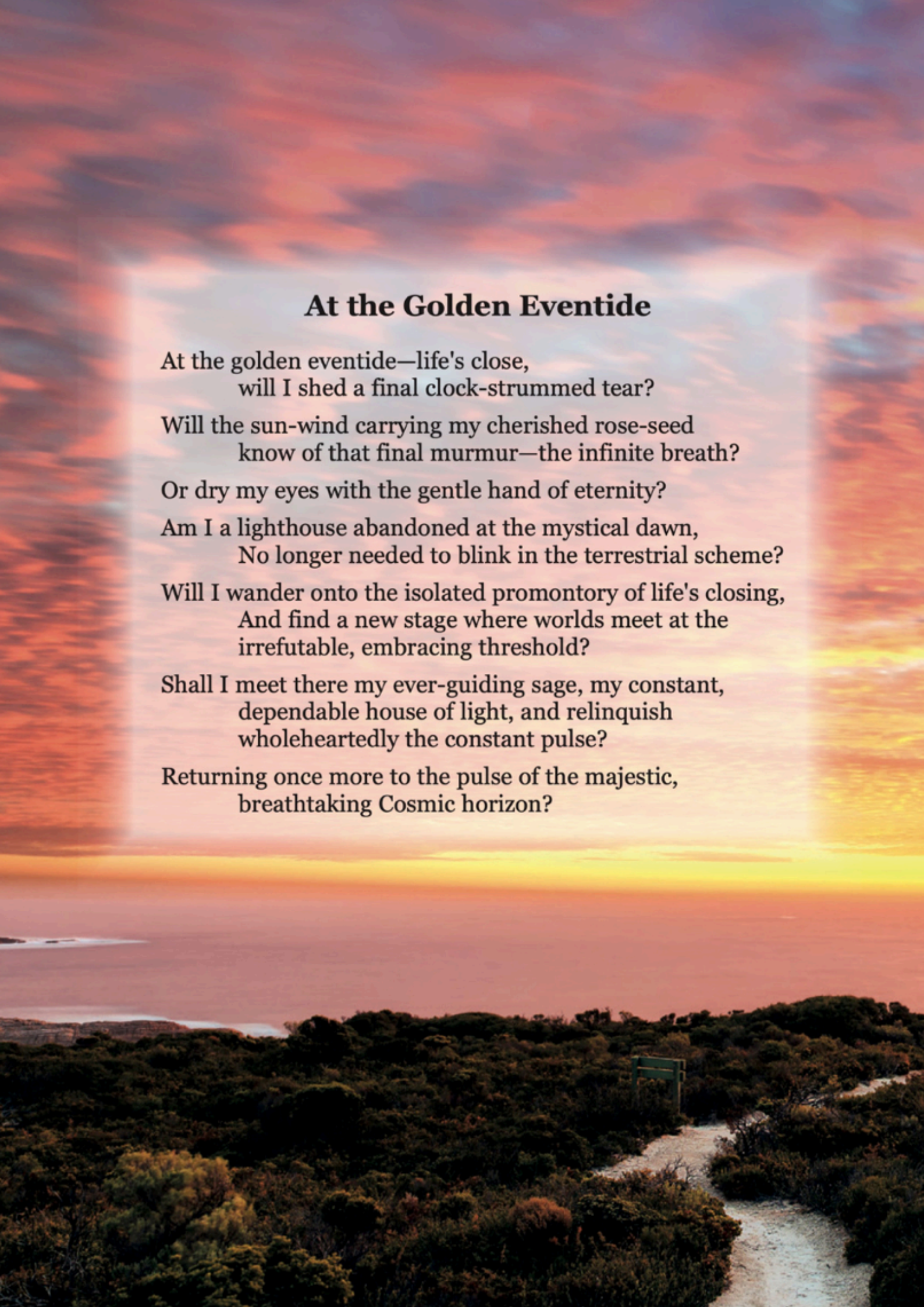








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At the Golden Eventide

At the golden eventide—life's close,
will I shed a final clock-strummed tear?

Will the sun-wind carrying my cherished rose-seed
know of that final murmur—the infinite breath?

Or dry my eyes with the gentle hand of eternity?

Am I a lighthouse abandoned at the mystical dawn,
No longer needed to blink in the terrestrial scheme?

Will I wander onto the isolated promontory of life's closing,
And find a new stage where worlds meet at the
irrefutable, embracing threshold?

Shall I meet there my ever-guiding sage, my constant,
dependable house of light, and relinquish
wholeheartedly the constant pulse?

Returning once more to the pulse of the majestic,
breathtaking Cosmic horizon?