

ROSICRUCIAN DIGEST

Volume 104 Number 1 2026



Mystics and Visionaries

ROSICRUCIAN DIGEST

Vol. 104 - No. 1

2026

Official Magazine
of the Worldwide
Rosicrucian Order ®

© 2026 Supreme Grand Lodge of the
Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae
Crucis. All Rights Reserved.

This publication is provided for your
personal, private use only, on an “as is”
basis, without warranty, and may not
be used for any commercial purpose.
No part of this publication may be
reproduced, distributed, displayed, or
transmitted in any form or by any means,
including electronic, without the express
written permission of the Supreme
Grand Lodge.

ROSICRUCIAN DIGEST (ISSN
#0035-8339) is published two times per
year by the Grand Lodge of the English
Language Jurisdiction of the AMORC
at 1342 Naglee Avenue, San Jose CA
95126.

*On the cover: Nicholas
Roerich, Pilgrim of the
Radiant City, 1933.*

The archive for the
Rosicrucian Digest going back
to the 1920s can be found
at: [www.rosicrucian.org/
rosicrucian-digest-archive](http://www.rosicrucian.org/rosicrucian-digest-archive).

H. Spencer Lewis - Restorer of Rosicrucianism	1
<i>Christian Rebisse, FRC</i>	
Nicolas Roerich: An Artist and Visionary Mystic	13
<i>From a Rosicrucian manuscript</i>	
The Mysticism of Harriet Tubman Made the Impossible Possible	19
<i>Joshua Norman</i>	
Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin and a Brief History of Martinism	23
<i>From a Martinist manuscript</i>	
Jakob Boehme: The Spiritual Awakening of the Teutonic Philosopher	27
<i>Marion S. Owens, SRC</i>	
Mirabai, the Beloved Mystic Poet of India	44
<i>Daniel Ladinsky</i>	
Leonardo da Vinci: Artist, Scientist, and Mystic	48
<i>Steven Armstrong, FRC</i>	
The Mystical Life and Beautiful Words of Rumi	56
<i>Michael Shaluly, FRC</i>	
Francis of Assisi	64
<i>Elissa Cuttjohm, SRC</i>	
Hildegard of Bingen: A Modernly Medieval Mystic	71
<i>Cheri Gandy, SRC</i>	
Rabia of Basra and Divine Love in Sufi Mysticism	77
<i>Margaret Hill, SRC</i>	
The Oracles of Delphi	82
<i>Grand Master Julie Scott, SRC</i>	

H. SPENCER LEWIS - RESTORER OF ROSICRUCIANISM

Christian Rebisse, FRC

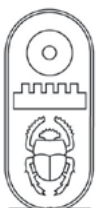


H. Spencer Lewis, the co-founder of AMORC, at his desk, in a colorized image.

Harvey Spencer Lewis was born on November 25, 1883, in Frenchtown, New Jersey. A few years later, his family moved to nearby New York City, where he was raised. His father, Aaron Lewis, was a farmer, college teacher, professional calligrapher, handwriting expert, and genealogist. His mother, Catherine, was a teacher. H. Spencer Lewis's family environment contributed much to the development of his mystical sensitivity. Not content with simply attending church on Sunday, the family read and also discussed the Bible at home. Until he was sixteen years old young Harvey participated enthusiastically in the activities of the Metropolitan Temple of New York City, also known as the Church of the Open Door. He loved to sing in the choir, and he listened attentively to the sermons of Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, the church pastor and a pioneering radio minister. He often spent his free time meditating in this church, and it was here that he had his first mystical

experiences. These experiences had such an impact on his soul that he was led to question himself about the profound nature of humanity and the possibility of establishing a dialogue between the soul and the higher worlds.

In 1900, H. Spencer Lewis completed his schooling and found employment in Baker and Taylor Publishing Company. This job allowed him to have at his disposal many books that helped satisfy his insatiable curiosity. Included among these were books about magnetism, a subject introduced to the United States in 1836 by Charles Poyan, a follower of Puységur. This was at a time when the United States—and New York City in particular—was passionately interested in the supernatural, magnetism, and spiritualism. Out of this infatuation arose both New Thought and the American Society for Psychical Research, two movements that would have a profound effect on the early years of Harvey Spencer Lewis.



Psychic Researches

In contrast to the Theosophical Society, established in the United States in 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, New Thought rejected pure occultism. It proposed instead a method of individual expansion oriented toward self-realization by means of concrete applications meant to resolve everyday problems. Research on undiscovered human faculties also interested the scientific establishment. In 1885 the renowned American psychologist William James established in Boston the American Society for Psychical Research, a branch of the organization located in London. In 1905, following the death of its director, Dr. Richard Hodgson, this psychic research society ceased its activities. However, within a few years, various other groups were formed, such as a special committee investigating fraudulent spiritualistic mediums, of which H. Spencer Lewis was a member from 1902. Although he was not yet twenty years old, H. Spencer Lewis was named president of this committee.

In March 1903, he married Mollie Goldsmith, and the following year they had a son, Ralph Maxwell Lewis. H. Spencer Lewis was at that time the arts editor of the *New York Herald* and presided over a committee created by the newspaper for investigating mediums. It was with the assistance of this daily that he created the New York Institute for Psychical Research—a group composed of scientists and physicians. Among members of the institute were such noted individuals as the writer and poetess Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850-1919) and Dr. Isaac Kauffman Funk (1839-1912), best known for his work on psychic science, which included *The Widow's Mite and Other Psychic Phenomena* (1904) and *The Psychic Riddle* (1907).

Under the direction of Harvey Spencer Lewis, The New York Institute for Psychical Research conducted investigations examining the true abilities of mediums, which resulted in more than fifty fakes being unmasked. During this period Lewis published many articles concerning his researches in the *New York Herald* and in the *New York World*. One of the articles, entitled “Greatest Psychic Wonder of 1906,” published in January 1907 in the *New York Sunday World* with a portrait of the author, discussed the experiments conducted by the New York Institute for Psychical Research with a young Indian medium.

These researches left Lewis dissatisfied, as he found it difficult to believe that the phenomena produced through mediums were derived from the manifestation of spirits. Rather, he was persuaded that they originated in spiritual faculties yet unknown.



Ella Wheeler Wilcox in 1915, in a colorized image.

The Meeting with Mrs. May Banks-Stacey

In 1907, Lewis abandoned psychic research, which he judged to be unproductive. What followed was a period of reflection. While engaged in his daily meditations, he became aware that he was finding the answers to questions touching upon the mysteries of life. Puzzled by this, he confided in May Banks-Stacey (1846-1919), an elderly woman he had met at the New York Institute for Psychical Research. This amazing individual, the widow of Colonel May Humphreys Stacey (1837-1886), was a member of the Theosophical Society and of the Theosophist Inner Circle, the esoteric group formed within the society. She took a keen interest in Asia and studied the teachings of Swami Vivekananda (1862-1902). She was also a member of the Manhattan Mystic Circle. May Banks-Stacey was attracted to all forms of occultism—especially astrology and chiromancy. H. Spencer Lewis related that it was while she was in Asia that she encountered Rosicrucians. It was from May Banks-Stacey that Lewis first heard about the Rosicrucians. Extremely interested, he then began to conduct research on this mysterious group.

At this time, he was only twenty-four years old and was employed as an illustrator at a New York newspaper. He also enjoyed some degree of success as a photojournalist. Along with these activities, he remained occupied with the Institute for Psychical Research and began to write some articles concerning psychic science and esotericism.

In February 1908, he contributed to *The Future*, a monthly publication belonging to the New Thought movement. Under the pseudonym of Prof. Lewis he wrote several articles on astrology and, using the name of Royle Thurston, he also published the first article of a series entitled “The New Ontology.” He described this work as being a series of lessons on a new science explaining life and death, as well as all spiritual phenomena. He touched upon such topics as vital life force, diet, health, magnetism, hypnosis, and psychic energies. But his collaboration with this publication was of short duration, because two months later he would have an experience that changed his life completely.

A Mystical Experience

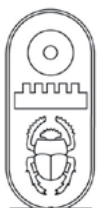
In the spring of 1908, on the Thursday after Easter, while seated in a pew to meditate, he had a mystical experience that would affect the rest of his life. During this experience, he came to understand that the knowledge he sought could not be found in books, but rather deep within himself. He was also convinced that he had to go to France so as to come in contact with Rosicrucians. This mystical experience left

a profound impression upon H. Spencer Lewis and became the starting point for his “Pilgrim’s Journey to the East.”

In the hope of obtaining some information regarding Rosicrucianism in France, he decided to write to a Parisian bookseller whose catalogue he had obtained. We have not succeeded in identifying this



Mrs. May Banks-Stacey, co-founder of AMORC, in a colorized image.





Saint-Denis Gate in Paris, as seen on a postcard from 1908.

individual. However, this person contacted H. Spencer Lewis with the following reply:

If you came to Paris and found it convenient to call at the Studio of M. —, the professor of languages at No. —, Blvd. St. Germain, he might be able to tell you something of the circle of which you inquire. It might be advisable to hand him this note. Certainly a letter to him announcing your coming (by date and name of boat) would be courteous.

The Journey to France

Although his financial situation did not permit him to consider such a voyage, an unexpected opportunity presented itself the following week. His father, Aaron Lewis, an expert in authenticating documents as well as a renowned genealogist, needed an assistant while conducting research in France for the Rockefeller family. On July 24, 1909, the two men sailed for Europe on the *Amerika*, of the Hamburg Amerika

Line. On Sunday, August 1, the ship arrived at Cherbourg, and the two travelers set off for Paris by train. The days that followed were entirely devoted to genealogical research, and it was only in the following week that H. Spencer Lewis was able to visit the bookshop and the professor of languages on Boulevard Saint-Germain. “A Pilgrim’s Journey to the East” reported his meetings with the professor on Saturday, August 7, and on Monday, August 9. This man was about forty-five years old, spoke perfect English, and asked many probing questions to determine Lewis’s intentions. At the end of the second meeting, he recommended that his American visitor travel to southern France, where he would receive further instructions.

Toulouse, the Pink City

Once again good fortune (or maybe more appropriately, Divine Providence) smiled upon our traveler, because his father had just planned to travel

to southern France where he could continue his genealogical research for the Rockefeller family. On Tuesday, August 10, the two men left Paris, and following some adventures that H. Spencer Lewis interpreted as his having been put to the test, they arrived in Toulouse on Wednesday. On the following day, his father resumed his work and probably went to Le Donjon (Keep or Old Tower) to consult the city archives. Meanwhile, H. Spencer Lewis went to the Salle des Illustres (Gallery of the Illustrious) of the Capitol, where he met an individual who was instrumental in bringing his quest to a successful conclusion. After a brief discussion, this person gave him a piece of paper on which was written the name of the street where he should go so as to meet some Rosicrucians.

H. Spencer Lewis does not disclose the name of this individual, but merely



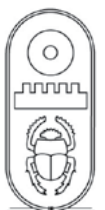
H. Spencer Lewis was gazing upon this painting, The Appearance of Clemence Isaure to the Troubadours, in the Hall of the Illustrious when someone, probably Clovis Lassalle, gave him a piece of paper on which was written the name of the street where he should go so as to meet some Rosicrucians. Painting by Henri Martin, ca. 1898.

indicates that his profession was photography. Later, Ralph M. Lewis, his son, indicated that this person was an eminent photographer. In all likelihood, he was Clovis Lassalle (1864-1937), a photographer who specialized in the fine arts, archeology, commerce, and industry. This hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that H. Spencer Lewis's personal archives contain a letter that Lassalle wrote to him on August 26, 1909.

Traveling by taxi to the address indicated by the photographer—since the trolley line did not go that far—Lewis rode out of the center of town, crossed the Garonne River, and went several kilometers before finding himself opposite a building that had an ancient tower similar to the one on the engraving that the Parisian professor had shown him a few days previously. After climbing the steps of a circular staircase, Lewis arrived at the top story, where he was greeted by an old man with a long gray beard and slightly wavy long white hair. The room he entered was a square chamber, its walls lined with books. The gentleman who received him was the archivist of a mysterious Rosicrucian Order, a group of initiates from Languedoc whose few members worked in the strictest secrecy. Lewis stated that his host was also a member of the same small group of Freemasons to which the Parisian bookseller belonged. After showing him the archives, the old man stated that he had been judged worthy of further knowledge and that he was to meet the Grand Master of the Order on the very same day.

The Initiation

Around three o'clock in the afternoon, Lewis engaged another taxi and went to the address provided by the archivist. Once again he traveled away from Toulouse on a road that ran alongside a stream. After passing through the old town of Tolosa,



he arrived at a stone edifice encircled by high walls and situated on a hill. It was in this castle that, according to “A Pilgrim’s Journey to the East,” he was initiated into the Rosicrucian Order. Although this text does not give any details regarding this ceremony, his autobiography provides some intriguing information. We learn that the person who greeted Lewis was Count Raynaud E. de Bellcastle-Ligne, an elderly man, who lived here with his widowed daughter and whose means of living were modest, despite his noble origins. Speaking perfect English, he conducted Lewis to a drawing room where he questioned him about the psychic research he conducted in America, and showed great interest in his visitor’s previous mystical experiences.

At the end of the interview, Count de Bellcastle-Ligne informed our pilgrim that the moment had now come for him to be initiated and asked whether he felt ready to confront the “terror of the threshold.” He was then led to the second floor of the chateau where he was shown what

remained of an ancient Rosicrucian lodge. The count indicated that this temple had not been used for more than sixty years, although it had been visited by a few Freemasons on several occasions until 1890. His father had been the last presiding officer.

The conversation continued until the count stopped before an iron door to tell his visitor that he must now enter three chambers one after the other, “alone with God [the Divine] and his Master.” Carrying out the command, Lewis entered the first room, an antechamber. He then went into the second room, a darkened place where he underwent the “test of the threshold”; he then had a mystical experience where he sensed once again the presence of the invisible being who had manifested to him the previous year. He finally came to the third room where the count awaited. The latter explained to him that this room no longer had the decorations or furnishings it once had, and consequently he was forced to adapt the initiation ceremony.



The chateau in Old Tolosa where H. Spencer Lewis was initiated. Drawing by H. Spencer Lewis, 1909.

The count led him to different places in the chamber and communicated the secret meaning of this ritual.

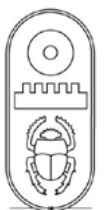
Now considering his visitor to be initiated, the old master led him into a little room. He recommended that the young man lie down, because he needed to rest in this room a few hours before meeting several other people. H. Spencer Lewis sat on a couch and dozed off. Upon awakening, he realized that he had slept for three hours. While asleep, he had dreamed the ceremony he was about to take part in. However, this time around, it was not the count who conducted him, but the “Master” whose presence he had perceived in the second chamber. After a short time, Bellcastle-Ligne introduced him to three elderly men whose forebears as well as themselves had been members of the Rosicrucian Order. At the end of this conversation, Lewis was led once more into the former lodge, where the count placed around his neck a cross adorned with a rose, thus signifying that he was now charged with the founding of the Order in America.

After this ceremony, one of the members present permitted Lewis to consult a collection in which the principles and major laws of the Order were represented. He was also allowed to copy the symbols and diagrams of the various Rosicrucian ceremonies. From a trunk placed in the middle of the room the count drew out some symbolic aprons, an altar cloth, and various archival documents so that the new initiate could take note of the symbols belonging to the different degrees of the Order. Afterwards the necessary information for the establishment of Rosicrucianism in America was communicated to him. The man directing the meeting at this point was not the count, but an individual named Lasalle, who acted as the master of ceremonies. Although the spelling of



H. Spencer Lewis painting in nature, in a colorized image.

his name differs slightly, might this not be Clovis Lassalle, the photographer Lewis had met the same morning in the Gallery of the Illustrious? We would be tempted to think otherwise, seeing that the latter described the master of ceremonies as being the author of numerous historical documents, whereas we know that this photographer wrote no books. However, it is possible that his statement alludes to innumerable photographic works concerning archeology and prehistory that were produced by Clovis Lassalle. Whatever the case, the master of ceremonies informed H. Spencer Lewis that he was now in possession of all the necessary instructions, but that other inner experiences were yet to come. He



concluded by requesting that no lodge be opened in America before 1915.

On August 13, 1909, the day after his acceptance into the Rosicrucian Order, Lewis wrote to his wife Mollie:

All my hopes on this trip have been realized, but not without many tests and trials. A pretty place, here. I have taken plenty of photos of the old fortress where I have participated in many strange ceremonies that I have never seen. At last I am in the R+C, thank God [the Divine] — but the oaths and vows are severe. How many in America will I find to keep them with me?

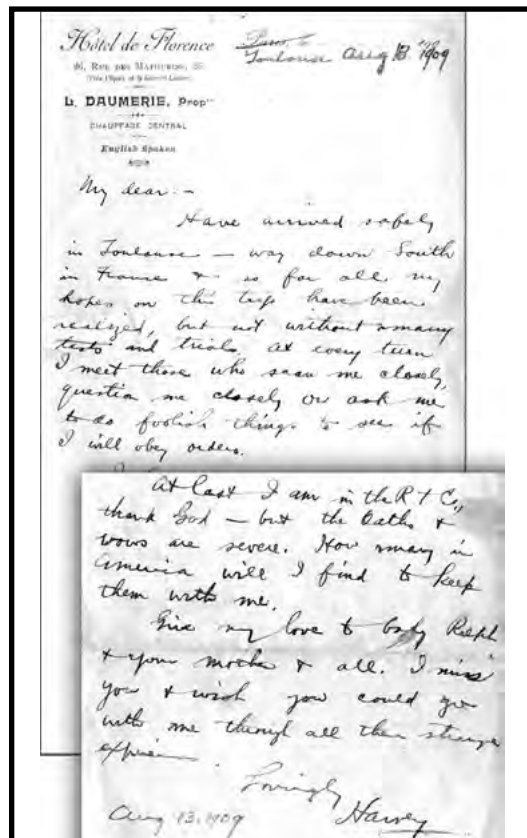
A few days later, on August 26, when he was about to return to Paris, Lewis received a letter from Clovis Lassalle. On the following Monday, Aaron Lewis and his son traveled by train to Paris. After a stop in London, where they visited the British Museum, they boarded the White Star, of the MS Adriatic Line, on Wednesday, September 1, and sailed for New York. For Harvey Spencer Lewis, it was the beginning of a great adventure.

The Renewal of Rosicrucianism

For several years, H. Spencer Lewis prepared for the resurgence of the Rosicrucian Order in America. In May 1913, his wife Mollie died as a result of appendicitis. He was profoundly affected by her passing, which shattered his family life. In the same year, following circumstances that remain little known, H. Spencer Lewis began corresponding with Eugène Dupré, the secretary of the Essenian Temple, a Martinist lodge in Egypt. Before moving to Cairo, this Parisian Martinist had attended groups directed by Papus. In a letter dated July 23, 1913, Eugène Dupré sent to H. Spencer Lewis the rituals and initiation certificates necessary for the creation of a Martinist lodge in America. It seems that

the onset of the war of 1914-1918 put an end to this project.

In December 1913, Lewis confided to members of the New York Institute for Psychical Research his intention of establishing the Rosicrucian Order in America and he invited them to a meeting. However, more time was needed to see this project come to fruition. After a difficult period, Lewis began to see the hints of a new day. In the middle of 1914, he married Martha Morfier, a young woman whom he had met a few months previously. This understanding spouse accompanied him unobtrusively in his great project of restoring Rosicrucianism. Indeed, a few months later, events began to unfold, and a meeting held on Thursday, April 1, 1915, culminated in the official founding of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC) in America. H. Spencer Lewis



Letter written by Harvey Spencer Lewis to his wife Mollie, on August 13, 1909, the day after his initiation.

was elected to head this order, which, under his direction, would experience a rapid development. In the following months other Lodges were established in Philadelphia, Boston, Wilmerding (Pennsylvania), Altoona, Rochester, Harlan (Iowa), and Detroit.

In January 1916, H. Spencer Lewis launched the *American Rosae Crucis*, a monthly magazine for Rosicrucians that was dedicated to science, philosophy, and religion. Until his death in 1939, he regularly wrote articles on Rosicrucian philosophy and mysticism for this magazine, which changed its name several times until it became the *Rosicrucian Digest* in 1929.

In 1926, H. Spencer Lewis, whose mind was endlessly bubbling over with ideas, began to engage in new activities. One of his projects was to set up a radio station that would broadcast special programming. He did not want this to be a source of propaganda for AMORC, but rather a tool dedicated to the arts, culture, and spirituality in general. In 1903, he had constructed a radio apparatus. In November 1913, he had obtained an operating license.

He was thus in possession of all the elements, allowing this experiment to be placed in the service of his ideal. The radio station was soon in operation, and in April 1927, *The Mystic Triangle*, AMORC's magazine made reference to the Order's broadcasting activities. Once again, H. Spencer Lewis gave proof of his creativity by introducing a new trend, in this instance by engaging the listeners by means of the telephone, and he would follow this with other innovations that would soon be copied by numerous radio stations.

AMORC's International Expansion

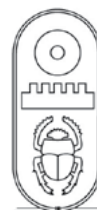
In November 1927, AMORC established its headquarters in San Jose, California. This was the beginning of activities at Rosicrucian Park, whose architecture was inspired by ancient Egypt.



H. Spencer Lewis playing the cello, in a colorized image.

Soon afterwards, in 1930, an Egyptian Museum was opened. Recognized by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and by the Egyptian National Museum of Cairo, it has welcomed millions of guests over the years and remains the largest Egyptian museum in Western North America.

At the beginning of the 1930s AMORC's development was such that H. Spencer Lewis had become the leader of a worldwide organization. He felt that it had become necessary to create an International Supreme Council, the World Council, composed of those individuals who directed the Order in the different parts of the world—France, Denmark, the Netherlands, Canada, Puerto Rico, Bolivia, Australia, Sweden, England, China, and Poland. Among these members, we may note the presence of the Russian painter



Nicholas Roerich (1874-1947), who had apparently become a member of the Order in 1929, the period in which he was proposed as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize. H. Spencer Lewis related that he met Nicholas Roerich at the inauguration of the Roerich Museum in New York in October 1929. The two men were on such friendly terms that Nicholas Roerich was named AMORC's legate and was charged with carrying out certain missions for the Order. In 1934, during an expedition across China and Mongolia to find plants capable of combating the desertification of the American prairies, Roerich stopped at Harbin in order to meet his Rosicrucian compatriots. The local press related the Rosicrucian activities that he participated in during his stay in China.

Writer, Lecturer, and Artist

In 1929 H. Spencer Lewis published several books, including *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers*, which presented the Order through a series of questions and answers,

as well as its history; then he published *The Mystical Life of Jesus*, an essay on the mystical life of Christ, a subject he would return to in a later publication. Always preoccupied with adapting the traditional teachings to modern life, he also wrote *Self Mastery and Fate with the Cycles of Life*, an original work that proposed a method for understanding all matters, allowing people to regulate their lives by using the planetary and biological cycles that mark their existence.

Although endowed with a penetrating, ever-restless mind, Lewis did not lack a sense of humor, and during conversations he loved to slip in humorous maxims that set off volleys of laughter. This big-hearted man knew how to maintain an exemplary simplicity despite his important responsibilities. A musician from an early age, he skillfully played the cello and piano. He was also an excellent painter who created works whose themes were intimately associated with his centers of



H. Spencer Lewis and his second wife, Martha, who was instrumental in the founding of AMORC, 1914.

interest. Thus, one of the oldest pieces that has come down to us, *Arabian Nights* (1917), evokes the Middle East. Egypt was for him an inexhaustible source of inspiration, and many of his pictures were dedicated to this land, such as *The Love Idol*, or the inspiring *Entrance to Karnak Temple, Luxor*, which he painted on the spot during a trip in 1929. Esotericism was never absent from his canvases, as can be seen in *The Alchemist*, completed a few months before his death.

Humanism and Fraternity

H. Spencer Lewis accorded special importance to the matter of fraternity and had a keen awareness of the equality of men and women, whatever their backgrounds may be. On numerous occasions he expressed himself on this point in his writings. In 1929, in *The Mastery of Life*, a booklet providing information concerning AMORC, he emphasized that racial superiority did not exist. In his book *Mansions of the Soul*, published in 1930, dealing with the origins of and the nature of the soul, he stated: “. . . it may be mentioned that this ancient understanding of the association of all egos with each other, and the uniting of all souls into one soul, . . . establishes the fact that all human beings are brothers and sisters under one creator and of the same essence, same vitality, and same consciousness, regardless of race, creed, color, or other distinctive elements of the ego.”

An International Federation

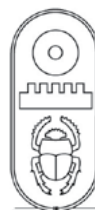
Although busy directing the activities of AMORC, H. Spencer Lewis continued to maintain relations with other individuals in the world of esotericism.

In the years preceding World War II great confusion reigned in the realm of esoteric organizations. Certain people were worried, particularly those who were part of the Rosicrucian movements created in Belgium by Émile Dantinne: the Order of the Rose-Croix Universitaire, founded in 1923, and the Ordre Hérmetiste Tétramégiste et Mystique (O.H.T.M.), instituted in 1927. Following the advice of Franz Wittemans, Jean Mallinger (1904-1982), a close associate of Émile Dantinne, wrote the following to H. Spencer Lewis on January 11, 1933: “We will be very honored to affiliate ourselves with the eminent Rosicrucian Order, of which you are the Chief and Guide . . . we will be very happy to be able to collaborate in AMORC’s activities. . . .”

H. Spencer Lewis welcomed the petition of the European Rosicrucians favorably. In August 1934 he traveled to Brussels so as to participate in the creation of the FUDOSI, a federation meant to bring together authentic initiatic orders. He became one of the three directors of this worldwide organization. He also used this occasion to renew ties with the Martinist Tradition. During this first congress of the FUDOSI, Victor Blanchard, director of the Ordre Martiniste et Synarchique, conferred on him the initiations and authority necessary



H. Spencer Lewis in 1915, in a colorized image.





The pyramid burial marker of H. Spencer Lewis inside the Akhnaton Shrine in Rosicrucian Park.

for the establishment of Martinism in the United States.

During his travels to Europe, H. Spencer Lewis had the opportunity to visit the planetarium at the Deutsches Museum in Munich. On his return to San Jose, he devoted all his energy to drawing up plans and creating the first planetarium projector put together by an American. In July 1936, the Moorish-style building constructed for housing this projector was inaugurated. This audacious creation was a testimony to the genius of the first Emperor of AMORC.

H. Spencer Lewis was a humanist and was a member of numerous philanthropic societies and associations. Despite his constant activities and numerous travels that he carried out in serving AMORC, he still found the time to devote himself to writing. In 1936, he published *The Symbolic Prophecy of the Great Pyramid*, a book that brought forth the mysterious knowledge of the Egyptians. In the following year, he published two more books. In the first, *The Secret Doctrines of Jesus* (1937), he returned to ideas that he had discussed in a previous work. In the second, *Mental Poisoning*, he

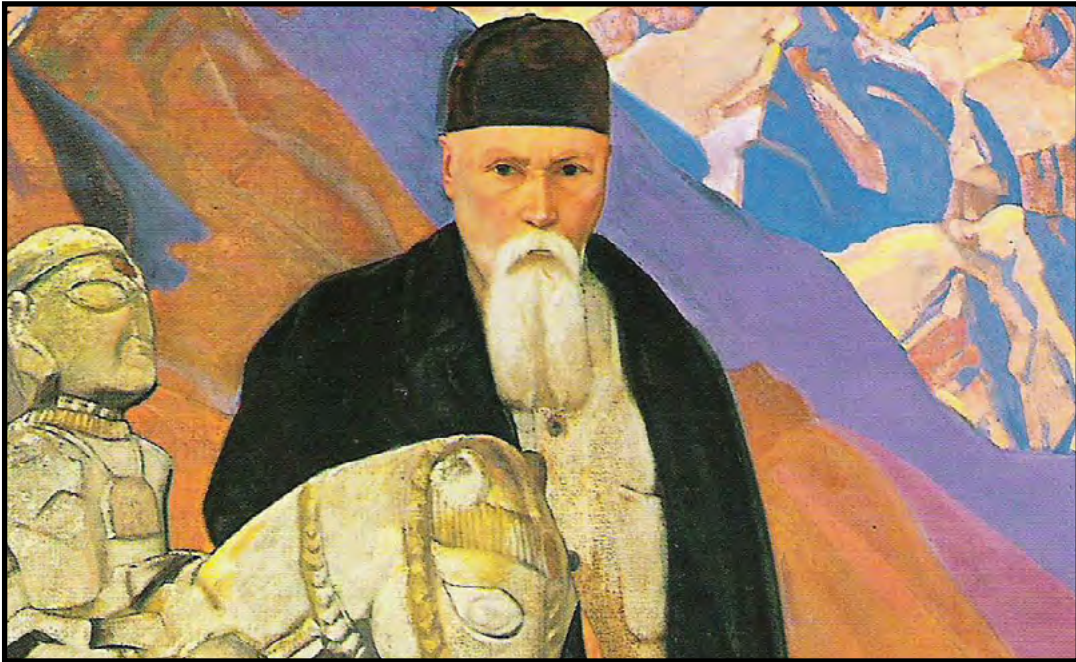
denounced the detrimental effects of negative suggestions and superstitious beliefs. He showed how the laws associated with the activities of the subconscious condition our life, and he proposed keys allowing us to not only liberate ourselves from all forms of mental poisoning, but also to use suggestion in a constructive way.

The Departure toward the Light

Shortly after his return from his European travels, where he had participated in the FUDOSI congress that brought together Rosicrucian leaders from all around the world, H. Spencer Lewis's health went into a decline. Perhaps he had overtaxed himself while serving others for too many years and thus began to pay the price. As is true of all extraordinary individuals, he was naturally criticized and slandered, but he always worked with ardor and conviction in serving his ideal. He passed through transition on August 2, 1939, being only fifty-six years old. Thus disappeared the individual who, following a long quest, had attempted to give a fresh momentum to Rosicrucianism by way of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis.

NICHOLAS ROERICH: AN ARTIST AND VISIONARY MYSTIC

From a Rosicrucian manuscript



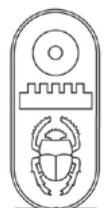
Portrait of Nicholas Roerich with Guga Chohan, painted by his son Svetoslav Roerich, 1937.

Nicholas Roerich was an uncommon character whose countless achievements reflected the Russian soul. Through the diversity of his talents, he left an indelible and timeless mark on the path to Enlightenment, such as Rosicrucians view it. His subtle affinity with nature, his deep intelligence, his taste for beauty in all its forms, and his visionary spirit placed him among the most remarkable personalities of his time. Throughout a prodigious, multifaceted career, the gifts of this artist were revealed. His work was praised by his contemporaries, such as Leo Tolstoy, Sergei Diaghilev, the patron Pavel Tretyakov, the scholar Wladimir Stasov, and many more. Jawaharlal Nehru considered him a “creative genius,” and the famous Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore praised his universal work. Tsar Nicolas of Russia held him in high esteem

and wanted to give him the post of Grand Chamberlain at Court, which he refused.

Nicolas Konstantinovitch Roerich was born in Saint Petersburg, Russia on October 10, 1874, into a family of the Russian upper middle class, whose Scandinavian ancestors were believed to have settled in Russia in early historical times. The name *Roerich* is commonly interpreted as “rich in glory,” and Nicholas illustrated this perfectly. Ever since he was young, he showed a prodigious work capacity.

On the advice of his father, he enrolled in the Saint Petersburg University of Law and the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts in order to embark on an artistic career, which is something that was particularly close to his heart. Created at the age of twenty-two, his final project, *The Messenger*, is recognized as an admirable work and not only conferred on him the title of artist,



but it also placed him immediately in the history of Russian art.

Nicolas Roerich very quickly became director of the Imperial Academy for the Encouragement of the Arts, and instituted an avant-garde artistic training system, namely the teaching of all the arts under one roof, such as painting, music, song, dance, drama, and the so-called “industrial arts,” such as ceramics, porcelain painting, pottery, and mechanical drawing. Great freedom of action was granted to the professors, who were able to finally leave behind obsolete, institutional practices. These bold reforms helped propel the Academy to the highest level. The number of students soon reached 2,000. After it became one of the largest art schools in Russia, its reputation spread internationally.

The intersection of arts advocated by Nicolas Roerich testified to his desire to harmonize apparently hostile or opposed elements. It was an essential quality of his thinking, which is found in all the disciplines he explored throughout his life. He constantly sought to destroy compartmentalization, even in his own artistic production. He thus escaped categorization to create a unique, personal universe. It was at this time that he married Helena Shaposhnikova, daughter of a great Russian architect and niece of the composer Modest Moussorgski. Infinitely gifted and a talented pianist, she was a companion worthy of the great man, sharing his ideas and his achievements, and assuring him of unfailing support, particularly in the difficulties which they did not fail to face. From their union two sons were born: Georges in 1902 and Svetoslav in 1904.

While tending to his professional duties, Nicolas Roerich painted tirelessly, notably producing gigantic wall frescoes in different Russian churches. He also took part in several exhibitions in Russia, in

Europe, and then in 1906, at the famous Salon d'Automne in Paris. Prestigious museums acquired some of his paintings. He also created numerous sets and costumes for operas; among them, those for *The Rite of Spring*, the first performance of which was given in Paris in 1913.

Writing was another facet of his talent. Between 1916 and 1919, he put together a collection of sixty-four poems, in which he described his inner journey and affirmed his commitment to spiritual research; some of his work appeared in Berlin after the war, under the title of *Leaves of Morya's Garden*. In this work he evoked themes that he would later take up in his paintings, adding a layer of understanding to the symbols included in his paintings.



Portrait of Helena Roerich, painted by Valentin Serov, 1909.



Nicholas Roerich, Krishna, 1929.

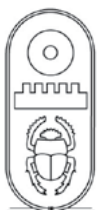
Roerich was deeply affected by World War I, horrified by the human and cultural disasters. He put himself at the service of his compatriots and donated his time and some of his goods to help them. However, a lung disease forced him to leave for Finland to seek treatment. After the revolution of 1917 and the ensuing chaos, he could not return to his native country, so he left with his family for Sweden, and later they went to England. His fame having crossed the Atlantic, he was then invited to America by the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1920, he inaugurated a series of traveling exhibitions, the first taking place at the Kingore Gallery in New York. He exhibited over 400 paintings there.

In 1921, Nicolas Roerich founded in New York the Master Institute of United Arts, based on the model he had established in Saint Petersburg. He said at the time that the education offered by his Institute leads to a very broad knowledge of the arts and “paves the way to universal beauty, thus opening the doors to spiritual enlightenment of the wisdom of the masters.”

A few months later while still in New York, he created Corona Mundi (Crown

of the World) International Art Center, the aim of which was to promote mutual understanding between all peoples by means of art, the international language par excellence. In tribute to the founder of these two Institutes, the Roerich Museum was created in 1924, the only American museum dedicated to the work of a single artist at that time. In the early 1930s, 1,006 works were presented. This museum still exists in a building on 107th Street in New York City, and it brings together one of the most comprehensive collections in the world.

In 1923, the Roerich family left for India, beginning a project that had been dear to their hearts for a long time. When they arrived in Bombay, they visited centers of cultural and historical interest, while meeting Indian scientists, scholars, artists, and writers. Then they went to Sikkim, on the southern flank of the Himalayas. Two years later, at the request of the American government, they embarked on a journey of scientific exploration which led them to Chinese Turkestan, Altai, Mongolia, and Tibet. This three-year expedition was sometimes carried out in the worst conditions. Throughout this expedition,



Nicolas Roerich recorded the reflections inspired by the landscapes, the villages, the people encountered, and the events experienced. When the climatic conditions reached extremes during climbs of passes whose altitude sometimes exceeded 13,000 feet (4,000 meters), he did not stop painting. During this journey, some 300 canvases took shape under his brush.

In 1928, after another expedition, the Roerich family moved to the Kulu valley, at the foot of the Himalayas. The artist established there the Urusvati Himalayan Research Institute, which he founded in order to analyze the results of his travels and to organize future explorations. Among the activities of this Institute were botanical, ethnolinguistic, and archaeological studies.

Under the direction of their father, the two Roerich sons, Georges and Svetoslav, collected medicinal plants and carried out in-depth research in botany. At the same time, they studied ancient medical traditions and the Tibetan and Chinese pharmacopoeia, and also conducted research on a cure for cancer.

Ever since his first archaeological discoveries in Russia in the years 1903 and 1904, Nicolas Roerich had been shocked by the state of disrepair of abandoned marvels. The destruction of prestigious monuments during World War I had reinforced his idea of promulgating a project aimed at protecting cultural treasures in all countries.

This began to take shape in 1928 when, during a stay in New York, he laid the foundations for a treaty for the protection of cultural treasures, in times of war and peace. He drew up a pact and proposed that all the places protected under the terms of the pact be identified by a distinctive flag: the Banner of Peace, marvelously symbolized

by the painting *Madonna Oriflamma*. The motto of the Banner of Peace is *Pax Cultura*. This Pact, which bears the name “Roerich,” is still in force; it was signed at the White House in the United States in 1935 and served as the basis for the 1954 Hague Convention and the founding of UNESCO. In 1929, Nicolas Roerich was nominated as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize, because of his perseverant work. But the prize was not awarded to him.

From the beginning of World War II, Nicolas Roerich once again devoted all of his energy to helping victims of the

war. Horrified by the devastation of his native land, he called on his friends residing in the United States to help his Russian compatriots.

In 1942, they set up the American-Russian Cultural Association (the ARCA), which received the support of eminent figures such as Ernest Hemingway and Charlie Chaplin. The artist then donated to the Red Cross profits from the sale of some of his books and paintings. Around 1939, his health began to decline. He was



Nicolas Roerich, Madonna Oriflamma, 1932. She is seen holding the Banner of Peace.



A small Tibetan reliquary box sent from Nicholas Roerich to H. Spencer Lewis.

diagnosed with heart disease. His wife, Helena wrote on this subject:

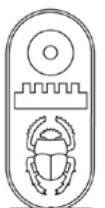
Very distressed by the chaotic events which shook the world and particularly worried by the growth of anti-Russian sentiment in America, his heart could not bear these pressures, nor the terrible pain of seeing everything oppressed that touches on culture, anything that will bring salvation to the next generation.

In 1947, Nicolas Roerich's condition deteriorated considerably. He underwent surgery in Kulu. Once on his feet, despite his state of weakness and the recommendation of his doctors not to get tired, he continued to paint the Himalayan mountains that he loved above all else. On December 13, 1947, after a vision of Sergius of Radonezh called him to join him, watched over by Helena, his faithful and loving companion, he peacefully breathed his last breath while he slept. His body was placed on a pyre of Himalayan cedar, scented with aromatic oils and covered with white flowers. When the fire was lit, large flaming wings hid the body from view until his body was consumed without smoke or odor. Then the artist's

ashes were placed under a gigantic rock, facing the eternal mountains of sublime and captivating beauty that he loved so much.

Throughout his life, Nicolas Roerich never stopped expressing refinement and beauty, a sacred quest in his eyes. He believed that even if temples and other earthly objects perish, the thought that creates and gives birth to them does not die, but is part of the eternal movement and elusive life of consciousness. He was convinced that the survival of our planet and the advancement of the evolutionary process depended on peace, a peace that people had to bring about through art and knowledge.

Although Nicolas Roerich was interested in the ancient teachings of Agni Yoga, or Fire Yoga, he did not adhere exclusively to any established religion. He had his personal, deeply spiritual philosophy, which included elements of Buddhism, Hinduism, pantheism, theosophy, and the Russian Orthodox religion. We also know that he was in close contact with Harvey Spencer Lewis and other leaders of AMORC, which was then working secretly in Russia. The tsar was



very tolerant of the Order and assured Nicholas Roerich of unusual protection for the Order on many occasions. It is even possible that some members of the imperial family were part of it, but there is no source to prove it.

Nicolas Roerich traveled extensively, especially in India, China, and Tibet. During those trips and expeditions, he moved from monastery to monastery, teaching and painting his admirable paintings, imbued with deep symbolism and his prophetic vision of the future of humanity. He also had many interviews with kings, queens, and high potentates during official and secret missions, missions relating to the state of the world and to spiritual questions related to its future. He collected a number of art objects, most of them sacred and dating from very ancient periods, some of which were donated to AMORC.

Nicolas Roerich was praised for his universal and prodigious work, and his fame went around the world. But the most vibrant homage was paid to him by Helena Roerich herself, in a letter dated January 13, 1948:

His heart could not withstand the quantity of poison produced by an insane humanity. . . . Our light, our beloved, went away as he had lived: simply, beautifully, and majestically.

The world has been truly orphaned since the departure of this beautiful spirit! India's reaction to his departure was touching, beautiful, and strong. Newspapers, periodicals, associations, friends, and acquaintances have clearly recognized what an irreplaceable loss to the world was the departure of this great creator of magnificent images, this giant of thought and action, this marvelous human being, this true friend of humanity.



Nicolas Roerich, Guests from Overseas, 1901.

THE MYSTICISM OF HARRIET TUBMAN MADE THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE

Joshua Norman

The basic details of the life of Harriet Tubman (1822-1913) are well known to almost every American. For most people, she was the brave formerly enslaved person who led daring missions to free others still trapped in bondage. What is not widely discussed is the deeply mystical dimensions of her spirituality that helped her flourish during a dark time in history.

Tubman's mysticism took a few forms. She did not believe in an impersonal Christian Divinity high in the clouds and out of touch. Instead, her relationship with the Divine was deeply personal, for she believed she was in direct contact with a Divinity who lent an unmediated hand in guiding her through the many struggles and dangers in her escape from and fight against slavery. Additionally, her visions, trances, prophetic intuitions, and unwavering reliance on direct spiritual guidance place her within a long lineage of religious mystics whose inner lives shaped their outward missions.

Her first biographer, Sarah Bradford, in her 1886 book *Harriet, The Moses of Her People*, wrote about her spirituality: "She seemed ever to feel the Divine Presence near, and she talked with God [the Divine]

'as a man [person] talketh with his [their] friend.'"

For Tubman, it wasn't just council that the Divine gave her; she believed she got direct help from the Divine.

In her recent book *Night Flyer*, about Tubman's spiritual life, author Tiya Miles wrote that "Harriet believed that God

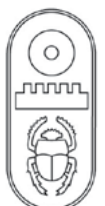
[the Divine] guided and shielded her." Miles also wrote that "through her openness to sources of knowledge that we might view as extraordinary today and her conviction that, with God's [the Divine's] guidance, she had the power to alter outcomes, Harriet Tubman became formidable."

To understand Tubman fully is to recognize that her abolitionist actions were inseparable from her inner spiritual life. Her daring rescues, her resilience, and her uncanny ability to evade capture were rooted in a spiritual worldview that blurred the lines between the material and the unseen.

In addition to her spiritual mysticism, she had a deeply personal connection with nature that enabled her many feats of daring on the Underground Railroad. Miles wrote:



Harriet Tubman, age 43-46, ca. 1866-1868, in a colorized image.





Harriet Tubman, far left, with family and neighbors, some of whom she helped escape slavery, ca. 1885, at her home in Auburn, NY, in a colorized image.

Important, too, in the Black Women’s faith culture that Tubman practiced was God’s [the Divine’s] work in and through nature. Tubman’s relationship with God [the Divine] and her pursuit of his [Its] will unfolded in living ecological contexts—upon and among the changing lands, waters, and residents of the natural world—South and North.

From a young age, Tubman experienced what she described as visions and dreams that she interpreted as messages from the Divine. These experiences intensified after a traumatic head injury she suffered as a teenager at the hands of a slave overseer—an injury that left her with seizures and lifelong episodes of sudden sleep and vivid dream states. Rather than diminishing her, this injury seems to have opened what she interpreted as a channel to direct communication with the Divine.

Miles wrote: “Harriet’s creed of holistic freedom was one that she had negotiated, or co-created through communion, with this god [Divinity] of her belief. . . . She learned not only that God [the Divine] sided with the oppressed but also that

God [the Divine] would respond when she spoke to him [It].”

Biographer Bradford, who spoke with Tubman directly for her book, wrote that Tubman dreamed of her escape from slavery before actually fleeing for the North: “She used to dream of flying over fields and towns, and rivers and mountains, looking down upon them ‘like a bird,’ and reaching at last a great fence, or sometimes a river, over which she would try to fly.”

When Tubman made the daring decision to flee her servitude in Maryland in 1849, she sang before leaving that she was “bound for the promised land.” The exact route of her journey has been lost to time, but in all her travels she said it was the Divine’s hand guiding her forward, and it was the Divine who endowed that promise of freedom.

According to Bradford: “She is the most shrewd and practical person in the world, yet she is a firm believer in omens, dreams, and warnings. . . . She declares that when she came North she remembered these very places as those she had seen in her dreams, and many of the ladies who

befriended her were those she had been helped by in her vision.”

This reliance on and importance of dreams and visions for Tubman, besides being deeply mystical, was part of a continuing spiritual tradition within the African American community. Miles wrote:

The quality of her dreams and visions, represented as prophetic by Tubman herself and by her peers, was not unique. The other Black “holy” women [of her era] also heard voices, saw visions, had fainting spells or blackouts, communed with spirits they took to be God [the Divine], Jesus [Yeshua], or angels, and acted on these experiences in ways that sometimes shocked their contemporaries.

Bradford wrote about a letter written by a friend of Tubman named “Garrett,” who was aware of the details of her escape from slavery: “I never met with any person, of any color, who had more confidence in the voice of God [the Divine], as spoken direct to her soul. She has frequently told me that she talked with God [the Divine], and He [It] talked with her every day of her life. . . . She had a guide within herself other than the written word, for she never had any education.”

Such language places Tubman within a long tradition of mystical figures who claim direct communion with the Divine. Even one of the most famous civil rights writers of her era, W.E.B. Dubois, described her as having “wild, half-mystic ways,” according to biographer Miles. Her spirituality was experiential rather than book-based, grounded in lived encounters rather than theological speculation.

Something else that aligns Tubman with many other mystics is that her visions translated directly into action. Her spirituality did not lead to contemplative

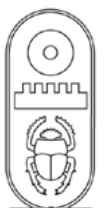
withdrawal; it was a catalyst for resistance. After she struggled to gain personal freedom, Tubman’s spirituality led her back to the South again, believing she should help free others. She told her biographer:

I had crossed the line of which I had so long been dreaming. I was free; but there was no one to welcome me to the land of freedom. I was a stranger in a strange land, and my home after all was down in the old cabin quarter, with the old folks, and my brothers and sisters. But to this solemn resolution I came: I was free, and they should be free also. I would make a home for them in the North, and the Lord helping me, I would bring them all there. Oh, how I prayed then, lying all alone on the cold, damp ground; “Oh, dear Lord,” I said, “I have no friend but you. Come to my help, Lord, for I’m in trouble!”

During her many lonely and scary nights ferrying people to freedom along the Underground Railroad, Tubman both took solace in prayer and used it as a means to communicate directly with the Divine for instruction. Bradford wrote: “She expected deliverance when she prayed,



William H. Johnson, Harriet Tubman, ca. 1945.



unless the Lord had ordered otherwise, and in that case she was perfectly willing to accept the Divine decree.”

Modern biographer Miles wrote that Tubman likely saw herself as a vessel for Divine will. When she learned of the execution of the famed abolitionist John Brown, Miles wrote that Tubman said “it was God [the Divine] in him” that caused Brown to be so righteous and brave until the end. “She saw John as a person very much like herself, a spiritual sibling acting on behalf of God [the Divine] and through whom God [the Divine] acted,” Miles wrote.

This belief gave her extraordinary resilience. If her mission was divinely ordained, then fear became secondary to obedience. Believing that she was under Divine protection, she was able to take risks that others might have found impossible. This mindset is characteristic of many mystical traditions, where union with the Divine dissolves the boundaries of individual limitation.

While Tubman’s beliefs were deeply personal, they were also connected to a broader spiritual community. Enslaved African Americans often shared stories of visions, signs, and divine intervention. “Harriet believed that God [the Divine] guided and shielded her, a view she shared with other women of her faith tradition,” Miles wrote. “She was behaving in ways her family and local community members would have recognized and understood.” This communal validation reinforced her confidence in her experiences. She was not alone in her worldview; she was part of a tradition that honored the mystical.

In addition to comforting her personally and guiding her directly, Tubman’s mysticism expressed itself as a form of resistance. Slavers regularly misinterpreted the Bible to justify their inhumane practice, so believing in a



Harriet Tubman in 1895, in a colorized image.

Divinity that helped her directly along the Underground Railroad was an affirmation of her autonomy and dignity. If she could personally hear the Divine’s voice, then no earthly authority could claim absolute power over her.

Harriet Tubman’s legacy is often told in terms of bravery and leadership, but these qualities cannot be separated from her mystical spirituality. Her visions, dreams, and belief in a personal connection with the Divine were not peripheral—they were central to her identity and her actions.

Through the lens of her biographers, we see a woman who lived at the intersection of the visible and invisible worlds. Her faith was not abstract belief but lived experience, guiding her through danger and uncertainty. Tubman stands as a reminder that mysticism is not always quiet or withdrawn. In her case, it was practical and transformative. It enabled her to navigate perilous landscapes, inspire others, and ultimately reshape history. For Tubman, the mystical was not an escape from reality—it was a deeper engagement with it, a source of strength that made the impossible possible.

LOUIS-CLAUDE DE SAINT-MARTIN AND A BRIEF HISTORY OF MARTINISM

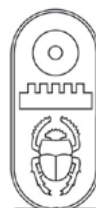
From a Martinist manuscript



A colorized engraving of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin from 1801.

The foundations of the Martinist teachings are the writings of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (1743-1803) and Martinès de Pasqually (1727-1774). The story of these two great mystics begins in the early eighteenth century. In the midst of the great political and economic unrest leading to the French Revolution, France paused to listen to a debonair, inspiring, mysterious man who awed both the nobility and the people with the high level of mysticism contained in his published writings. This author signed his books “The Unknown Philosopher.” Where did his great understanding come from? He could have been easily mistaken for a Sophist, yet he possessed the gentleness and profound understanding of a philanthropist.

This person was Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin. He dared to invade the salons of the wealthy aristocrats to challenge their jaded interests with inspiring discourses. He allowed himself to become the idol of French society with but one purpose—to draw their minds away from their meaningless, self-indulgent existence to contemplate humanity’s true position in the universe. He wished them to comprehend the natural connection existing between the Divine, humanity, and the universe, and to be conscious of the special place we once occupied in our original state and what happened to us during the course of time. Above all, he wanted them to learn how to regain this glorious former state.



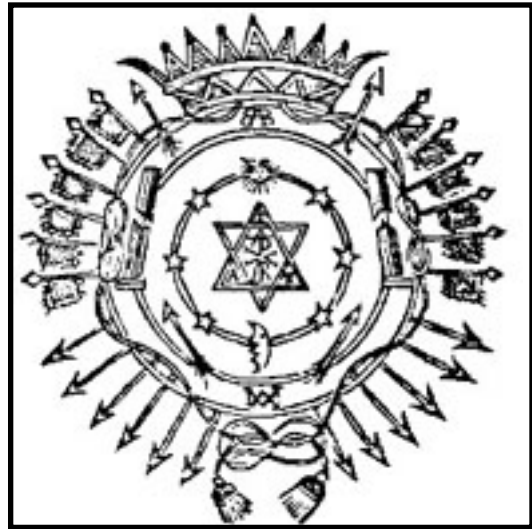
The published writings of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin were read in France, Germany, England, and even in Russia. The knowledge which he imparted became known under the name of Martinism. This great teacher refused to take credit for what he taught, however, instead paying tribute to his initiators. To those who were worthy, he divulged the secret of a higher knowledge they could access. To attain it, they had to transform themselves, and their preparation was through initiation.

The person to whom Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin gave credit for his teachings was Martinès de Pasqually, a powerful mystic, adept, and theurgist of the eighteenth century. Tradition indicates he was well versed in the secret wisdom embodied in the esoteric teachings of Egypt, Greece, and the East. Shortly after 1760, Pasqually went to Bordeaux and established the headquarters for his order, the Order of the Élus-Cohens (Elect Priests).

Saint-Martin, then an officer in the French Army, learned that one of his fellow officers was a member of this Order of the Élus-Cohens. Through this friend, Saint-Martin met with the Supreme Master of the Order, Martinès de Pasqually, and was immediately captivated by the man's goals and teachings.

After due preparation and demonstration of his worthiness, Saint-Martin was initiated into the Order of the Élus-Cohens in the year 1765, at age 22. He eventually attained the highest degree of that Order, that of Réau-Croix. But Saint-Martin was not entirely won over by Pasqually's methods, which called for theurgic rites, very complicated ceremonies concerned with perceivable manifestations. Saint-Martin often asked Pasqually, "Master, is all that necessary in order to know the Divine?"

In 1772, personal matters compelled Pasqually to leave France for Port-au-Prince,



The seal of Martinès de Pasqually.

Haiti, where he died in 1774. Without its founder, the Order progressively fell dormant. His two ablest disciples were Saint-Martin and Jean-Baptiste Willermoz. Willermoz joined with some members of the Élus-Cohens and the Order of the Strict German Templar Observance. They reorganized themselves by adopting part of the theoretical teachings of Martinès de Pasqually to create an order called The Charitable Knights of the Holy City. Others joined this Order, but Saint-Martin, seeing that they were not so much seeking the truth as the Philosopher's Stone, chose to follow an independent path.

Saint-Martin traveled to England, Italy, and Germany to study humanity and nature and to compare the findings of others with his own. It was in Strasbourg, in northeast France, that he became acquainted with the works of Jakob Boehme (1575–1624), which revolutionized his whole mystical life. Jakob Boehme became for Saint-Martin his "second teacher." In order to read Boehme's texts in their original language, Saint-Martin learned German at the age of forty. Through a study of Boehme, he realized that true initiation surpasses theurgic rituals; there is no need to call upon intermediary powers of creation through complex and often

dangerous ceremonies. Initiation can only be produced with the heart. This is what is called “The Way of the Heart.”

From this point until the end of his life, Saint-Martin made a daily task of translating the texts of Jakob Boehme. “I owe my entry into the higher truths to Martinès de Pasqually, and I owe the most important steps I have made into these truths to Jakob Boehme.”

Saint-Martin published his first work in 1775 under the title *Of Errors and Of Truth, or Humanity Recalled to the Universal Principle of Science*. The book’s purpose was to combat the atheism of his time. As with all his other writings, this was published under the pseudonym of “The Unknown Philosopher.”

During the many years of his literary activity, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin wrote numerous works, including *The Natural View of the Connections Existing Between the Divine, Humanity, and the Universe*; *The Man [Person] of Desire*; *The New Man [Person]*; *The Spirit of Things*; and *The Ministry of the Human-Spirit*. He also

left to posterity a revealing and inspiring personal correspondence, as well as a few posthumous works. In addition, he published translations of the writings of the one he called his “most dear B” (Jakob Boehme).

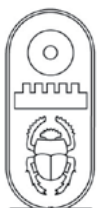
The philosophical works of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin aroused much interest. In order to study his teachings, a circle of disciples was formed, known by the name of Society of Intimates. This society was working for the purest forms of spirituality. Saint-Martin accepted very few people into his society, always exercising extreme prudence.

Despite the political and social turbulence of the French Revolution, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin was never seriously harassed during the Reign of Terror, or at any other time during the Revolution. On October 13, 1803, at the age of sixty, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin went through transition following a stroke.

Following Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin’s transition, the Martinist disciples were not very active. The traditional



Rembrandt, *Philosopher in Meditation*, 1632.



teachings and ceremonies were privately transmitted by groups of initiators, spreading principally throughout Italy, Germany, and France. After a long period of secrecy, a great effort was undertaken in 1888 to restructure Martinism into an initiatic order. It is due to the efforts of Dr. Gérard Encausse (Papus) and Augustin Chaboseau that this order survived and took on the name Martinist Order. Their efforts were rewarded with success in 1891 with the formation of a Supreme Council of the Martinist Order, consisting of twenty-one members with authority over all the lodges in the world. Papus, a well-known French esotericist, was elected the first President of the Supreme Council. Under his brilliant and tireless direction, the Order grew rapidly, and by 1900, it could account for several hundred members in most parts of the world. Papus soon became an authority on Martinism, and his works constitute a precious source of information for Martinists and all those interested in the tradition.

World War I (1914–1918) greatly affected the growth and activities of the Order. Papus died heroically carrying out his duties as a medical doctor, and many other leaders and members of the Order did not survive. It was finally revived in 1931 due to the efforts of Augustin Chaboseau, the co-founder of the Martinist Order with Papus. He, along with the two other remaining survivors of the 1891 Supreme Council, created the Traditional Martinist Order. Augustin Chaboseau, who was a descendant of an uninterrupted filiation back to Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, served as Grand Master and President of the Supreme Council until his transition on January 2, 1946.

Ralph Maxwell Lewis, Emperor of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, was received into the Traditional Martinist Order on September 1, 1939, by



Domenico Quaglio the Younger, Church Ruins by the Sea, 1824,

Georges Lagrèze, legate and representative of Augustin Chaboseau. Consequently, the charters, manifestos, and all other documents needed for the promotion and development of Martinism in the Americas were transmitted to Ralph M. Lewis just prior to the oppression which the Traditional Martinist Order had to endure in Europe during the Second World War.

Currently, the Supreme Council of the Traditional Martinist Order is directed and presided over by the Sovereign Grand Master, Claudio Mazzucco, Emperor of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC. The Traditional Martinist Order goes back through an initiatic transmission which is absolutely authentic, to the purest sources of Martinism. Thus, the Martinist light has been able to shine, spread, and increase, without interruption, its original luster.

JAKOB BOEHME: THE SPIRITUAL AWAKENING OF THE TEUTONIC PHILOSOPHER

Marion S. Owens, SRC



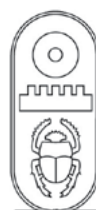
Nicolaus Haublin, Portrait of Jakob Boehme in an Allegorical Framework, 1677.

Jakob Boehme was born in 1575 in Goerlitz, a small town in Silesia, Germany. His parents sent him to a cobbler to take on shoemaking as they thought he was too weak for farming. After mastering this trade, he obtained a shoe bench to make shoes for a living.

One day, a stranger came to order a pair of shoes, paid for them, went outside the shop, and then called, “Jakob, come out!”

Boehme was taken aback that this man knew his first name, but he went outside to see him. The man shook Boehme’s hand and, with electric eyes, looked at him and said, “Jakob, you are little now, but you will become big and a different man that the world will take notice of you in wonderment.”

In his twenty-fifth year, Boehme trained his desire to learn toward the secrets of nature and of the Divine. In



his nature walks and contemplation, he appeared to have received a glimpse of enlightenment into what was later referred to as the Signature of Nature.

In 1612, when he was thirty-seven, Boehme wrote his experiences down as a testament to remember them. It took him five months to write the manuscript. It was actually printed after Boehme's transition in 1624.

Boehme entitled this manuscript *Die Morgenröte bricht an*, later renamed *Aurora*. After Boehme wrote it, he showed it to a Mr. Von Sercha, one of a group of Calvinists who were invited to Boehme's house. Von Sercha wished to take it with him to study and afterwards secretly copied Boehme's manuscript. Additional copies were passed around and traveled amongst circles of Calvinists and others interested in the mystic arts. However, the Lutheran Church's dean became aware of the manuscript and forwarded it to the town's magistrate, whereupon Boehme was arrested and called upon to attest to the meaning of the manuscript.

An entry in the city hall logbook showed Boehme appearing before the authorities to explain his enthusiastic beliefs. Boehme explained his strong belief in the Bible and was surprised at their reaction. He was forbidden to write any more manuscripts, to which he was forced to agree. The original manuscript was confiscated from his home, and he was warned to stay away from "such things" and was released from jail. He never saw his original manuscript again.

Difficult times surrounded him. He sold his shoe bench and, with his wife, traveled selling yarn. This gave Boehme time for solitude and personal contemplation. However, for many years, townspeople and officials still harassed Boehme and his family.

Without Boehme's knowledge, the Church dean himself loaned Boehme's manuscript, with Boehme's "statement of responsibility," to people in different towns and villages. It was circulated and copied many times. It took years until the author came face to face with copies which were made without his knowledge.

Boehme's friends urged him to continue to write, but he was unable to express himself. In 1620, in a letter,

he wrote:

I relented to do nothing but remain silent and let the devil rage above me within his scorn where even the devil himself encountered many storms. What I suffered, I cannot speak of. My outer self did not want to write any more.

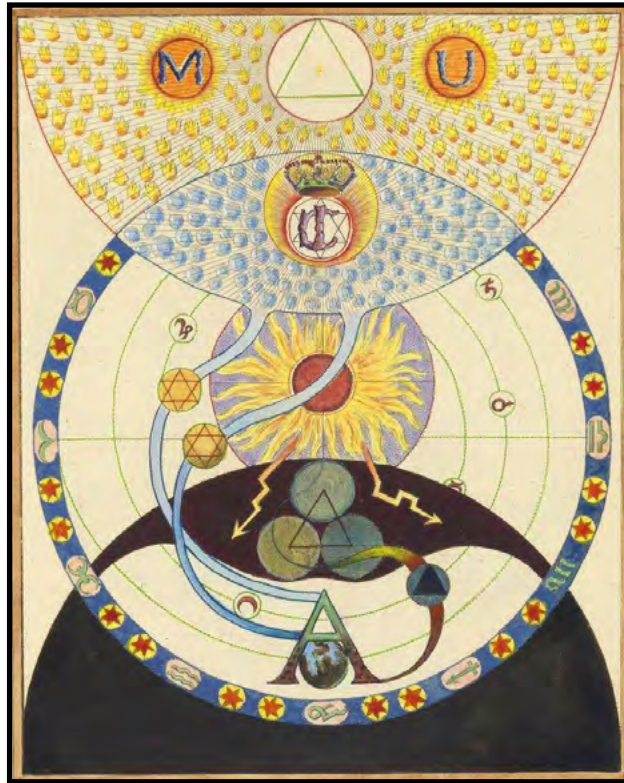
After many years, Boehme finally experienced a breakthrough and wrote:

I experienced as if a seed was sown in the earth and it sprung forth with a storm and thunder and without any sanity, so I was guided from within and wrote what I wanted to write, my soul showed me the depth of the inner mysteries, but without my total comprehension.

Boehme's second work in 1619 was entitled *The Three Principles of Divine Essence*. He describes the eternal creation of the



The frontispiece for the 1682 edition of Aurora, a colorized image.



An illustration by Dionysius Andreas Freher included in the 1781 edition of the works of Boehme, designed to illustrate his principles.

Divine, how the angels were created, the heaven and stars, the elements including all creatures, everything which moves and is moved, the fall of humanity into dismal existence beginning with its first experience of transition, how humanity was then helped to recover, what the wrath of the Divine is (sin, transition, the devil, and hell) and how the Divine exists in eternal peace and joy, how everything began, how everything exists now, and what everything will become.

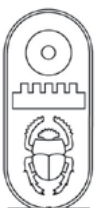
From 1620 to 1623, Boehme wrote seven more manuscripts in book form plus theosophical letters to students and friends. In 1624, *Christosophia* was printed by Johann Rhamba in Goerlitz. In March of 1624, Boehme left Goerlitz without his family. He was much in demand by royalty and was invited to the home of a noble family in Dresden.

In the fall of 1624, Boehme made a last visit to friends in Silesia. In November

1624 he returned to Goerlitz, very ill. Even though he was ill, he continued to write a fragmented work about 177 theosophical questions (*Quaestiones theosophicae*). On November 17, at the time of his transition, he asked his son, Tobias, if he could hear the beautiful music. He then said, "Now I am riding into Paradise." Boehme bid farewell to his family and peacefully fell asleep.

Boehme's Message

Boehme's message was not learned, but was realized through an extraordinary perception which sprang forth amidst common understanding. He did not abhor life nor was he in ill health. His tremendous sensibilities, his spiritual mindedness, should not be confused with wanting to deny life's experiences. One could say it is more of an evolution of the intensity of consciousness through which nature and the created world became more impressed on one's being. Reference to such an

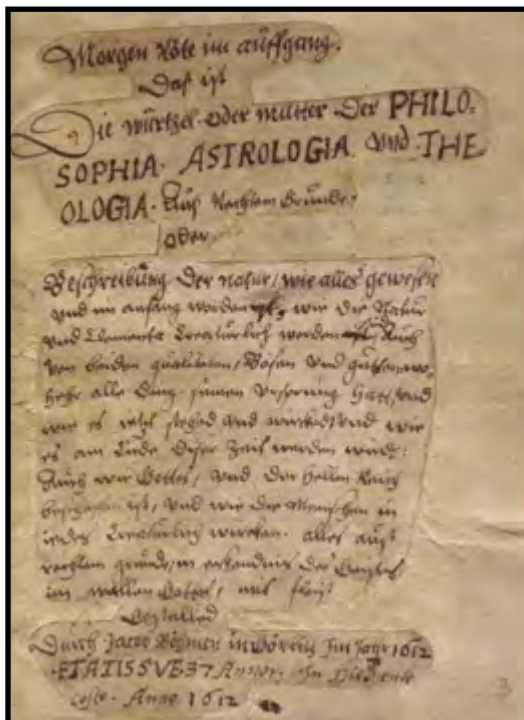


experience is made in the beginning sentence of Boehme's work *Aurora*, in which he stated:

Thus one wishes to speak of the Divine, what the Divine is, one must actively seek the Power and Strength in Nature, and accordingly the entire Creation, Heaven and Earth, including the stars, the elements, and creatures, which came from the Divine.

In the nineteenth chapter of *Aurora*, the then-thirty-seven-year-old described his breakthrough experience. He wrote:

As my miserable soul lifted itself seriously up to the Divine as in a thunder storm, with my heart and mind, including all thoughts and desires locked therein, and without stopping to wrestle, receiving the Divine's love and mercy, and not giving up, the Divine then illuminated me with the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Holy Spirit broke through within me. It was like a thunderstorm!



The original title page of Boehme's "Morgen Röte im auffgang," which was later titled Aurora, 1612.

This breakthrough, which Boehme called, "Beginning on the Portals of the Hill," about life and transition, changed his inner condition of turmoil to a deep peace all at once.

Over many years, what Boehme held in thought most was the question of the beginning and origin of human corruption, the dialectic of light and darkness, the contrast of reality. How is it possible for an academically uneducated person to face such problems?

Describing the Ineffable

Without hesitation, Boehme began to write about that which cannot be described:

After many difficult storms, my soul broke through hell's gates into the innermost beginning of the Divine Being and thus I was surrounded with Love, such as a groom would receive his bride. About the triumphant experience this brought to my soul, I cannot write or even describe. It cannot be compared to anything except that which is born within death and resurrected from the dead.

Boehme permitted us to look within his deepest mystical experience. He referred to this introspection of his inner dimensions of Reality as "the Depth." For him this depth of one's being is bottomless and even this metaphor of depth must be transcended.

Boehme wrote that one who would try to describe what the Divine is needs only to go out into nature to perceive the Deity's power and glory: "See, you blind human being, I will show you, go out into a meadow." He was always referring to concrete, visual appearances, which are mirrors of the unseen. He wrote further:

You will find no book in which you will discover divine wisdom. If you go out into a blooming meadow,



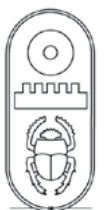
Posthumous portrait of Jakob Boehme by Gottlob Glymann, undated.

where you can perceive (smell and taste, etc.) the Divine's wondrous powers, even though this is only an example of the Divine Power because in Third Principle material matter is made visible. But to seekers, it's a dear teacher. They will find much there.

What is astounding about the genius of Boehme, who had little education and very little language skills except for the lower baroque German of the Middle Ages, was how colorfully he was able to bring to light his unusual thoughts. He could not understand foreign languages, such as Latin, nor use difficult words, but he was still able to describe his illuminating experiences with a picturesque description. He understood the creation of a stone or a plant through this extraordinary ability to observe, and he somehow perceived certain laws. For instance, at the very beginning of *Aurora*, Boehme compares the world with its philosophy, astrology, and theology to a magnificent tree growing within a

beautiful garden, which is permeated by the two opposite polar principles.

In his second work, *Magnum mysterium* (*The Great Mystery*), Boehme is satisfied to pick up a rock or a clump of dirt to describe that the reality and the spirituality of matter, above and below, are united into one. In order for us to realize the Divine power found in nature and the cosmos, we must learn to decipher the signature attached to the universe. Boehme here followed similar thoughts of Paracelsus. All Earthly matter contains similarities, where Divinity conceals the Being of all Beings, and wherein we are as deities within Divinity through whom the Divine reveals Itself. In this manner, Boehme declared a sort of spiritual anthropology as he wrote further that a human being is a small universe within a large universe, and humanity thus carries within itself the qualities found in creation.



However, this is only one page and one dimension of our reality because humanity has a different nature, realization, and formation unlike any other being.

Of particular interest to Boehme was the mystery of androgyny, and androgynous humanity. In the beginning, the male-female androgynous duality existed in the first divine being. The ancient human, Adam, symbolized the completeness of duality, which appears within ancient mythology. Boehme wrote in *Aurora*: “Adam was naked, but dressed in the most heavenly brilliant beauty, as was Paradise. He was beautiful, of a bright crystalline picture, not a man nor a woman, but a human virgin with both tinctures of nature.”

Boehme was describing a harmonious spiritual being with corporeal qualities. However, Boehme understood that this original beauty became diminished and then was lost. The once glorious being split apart and became male and female. According to C.G. Jung, the Anima and Animus in male and female is seeking to reintegrate the psyche. Boehme spoke about a reintegration and regeneration of the broken human being. He looked for the regeneration of the lost wholeness as the future state of humanity.

He climbed “Jacob’s Ladder” into the heavens and desired that others follow him. Boehme felt he could dare to seek the secrets of Nature and surrender to the will of the Divine. Boehme, however, understood the limits of human understanding.

Boehme Speaks

Boehme’s writings are based on his actual experiences, not imagination. He stated that he does not take the writings in his book from other teachers:

And when I write, giving testimony to the heavenly Divinity, the Divine

Itself has impressed these things into my mind so that I believe it without any doubt, understand and experience all, not through my physical body, but through my spiritual being, within my soul, with the Will and Power of the Divine.

Boehme continues:

This is not to construe that my understanding is more evolved than others’, but I am only like a small twig, only a small spark from the Divine. The Divine can place me where the Divine wills, I cannot resist. This is not my Natural Will, bequeathed with all my strength, but as my soul withdraws, I do not understand the work and in all respects have to beat and scratch the devil and am, as are all human beings, subject to sadness and temptation.

I was shown Jacob’s Ladder, upon which I stepped to ascend to



Frontispiece to Jakob Boehme’s Theosophical Works, 1682 Amsterdam edition, a colorized image.



A 1686 colorized depiction of an apocryphal tale regarding a young Jakob Boehme. The Dutch caption describes a story in which Boehme upsets “the preacher Gregor Richter in Görlitz, who was hostile to him in front of everyone.” Richter became so upset at Boehme’s behavior that Richter “showed him the chamber door and threw one of his slippers at his head.” Boehme then “meekly picked up the slipper, put it back on the foot of the angry preacher, and went on his way, wishing him every blessing.”

Heaven (where I received my rewards according to what I had to offer). Others will follow me, who will take care not to be in a state of intoxication but be protected with the Sword of his or her Soul. Because they have to walk through horrifying and dizzying depths, then they have to step through the Kingdom of Hell (or Empire). What they will suffer is mockery and scorn—well, they will soon experience this.

As the human eye can see into the firmament of heavenly stars, from where humanity originated, the soul also looks into the Divine Being, wherein it lives.

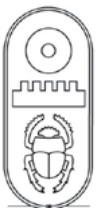
The realization of the Divine is sparked by the Holy Ghost, and at first is small like a seed as the Christ comparatively spoke (Matthew 13:31). Afterwards the seed grows into the size of a large tree and spreads itself in the Divine, its creator. A small drop in the ocean cannot will to do much, but a large river flowing into the ocean can affect more.

In such a manner, in that realization of the spirit, I will write in this book about the Divine, our Parent, in whom all exists and who is all, I will describe how everything differently and creatively came to be and how everything is moved and moves, in the whole Tree of Life.

The Divine has given me this understanding, it is not me who knows this but the I that I am.

Thus, now the Divine Spirit within the children of the Divine lives and exists within and of the grapevine of the Divine and with the Divine, one Body and Soul. Who has Will? Is it mine or the Divine’s? Should I not know within the Divine Spirit how the world was created, the same Spirit which resides within me and which has created the world? The Spirit leans toward the I within me, and my Self toward the Spirit, but the me is dead and understands nothing. But according to my understanding, I say, I live in the Divine and the Divine lives in me. And thus I teach and write about the Divine, dear Brothers and Sisters, otherwise I know nothing.

I saw and realized the nature of good and evil, as one originated in the other. The Divine sowed within me, from time to time, small seeds to grow even though I labored with this for twelve years, wherein this wonder filled me and with a driving force, like



a downpour, overcame me. What the Divine strikes, the Divine strikes. Thus what I could understand and reveal I wrote down.

If people learn and remember that which is written and spend their whole life in church but remain within their souls earthly, animal humans who insincerely seek and harbor falsehood within their hearts, their hypocrisy will get them nowhere.

Seek your self and find yourself not within Earth's kingdom, but with whole will become those who find themselves within the Divine's Kingdom and attract to themselves the Heavenly and Divine Mystery which they can enter.

The Divine has created the human person with all the Divine's strength,

from all the Divine's spirits, the same as the angels. Because humans have fallen, all the Divine Essence they were born with does not always spring forth from them so also not in everything.

Within, the soul perceives the depth of its divinity as the Divine is far and near, One Thing. And the Divinity of whom I write in this book, is also with the Divine Trinity within the body of the Holy Souls in Heaven. From these I take my understanding and from no other things. I do not want any other knowledge but of the One Divinity, as the Divine also creates the wisdom within my soul so that I constantly believe and trust in the Divine.

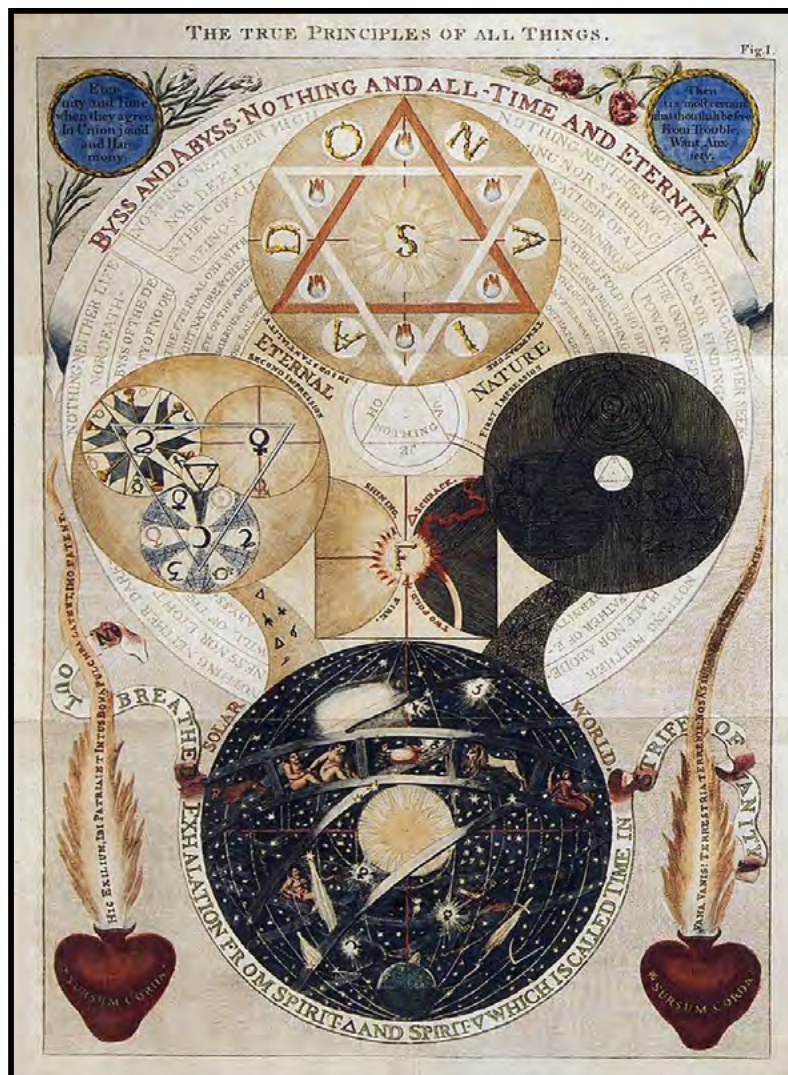
You must understand what this is supposed to mean. Because I speak of comparisons and compare the Son of the Divine with a physical sun or round ball, it does not mean that actually, that It in Its immensity can be measured in depth, or fathomed from Beginning to End. I am writing only the comparison until the reader can understand.

It is written, the Kingdom of the Divine exists not in earthly manifestation, because the material world, this Earth, is not from the Eternal and therefore does not reside within the Eternal. If you want to experience the heavenly Being, you must assure that you do so with a heavenly temperament within your soul, thus may the Divine's Spirit show you the heavenly Being. This is easier for an illuminated person to experience than one tied totally to Earth.

The correct observations are these: If the human will rests within the Divine's Will, the Soul will see with the Divine's eye its eternal depth because it remains within the Divine's Word. Thus the spoken Word and the



The inside cover for Boehme's Three Principles of Divine Essence, 1619, a colorized image.



Another illustration by Dionysius Andreas Freher from the 1764 edition of Boehme's collected works.

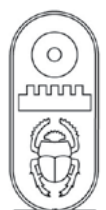
Soul become a magical image of the constellation. The astral Soul cannot become form simply out of fantasy, but becomes form according to the image within Mind. Thus the Soul can see what the Highest of High has planned and what should happen.

Accordingly, the Word of the Divine, as the Source of the soul, speaks to the soul in images and impressions which only the Soul understands.

I am not saying to seek out a pagan magician or to accept the old pagan deities, nay, one must seek to understand the fundamentals of nature

as the created word of the Divine with divine love and wrath, with the divine oppositions, so that one will not be the blindest Being of all Beings!

Thus should magicians surrender their own will to the Divine's will and their magical beliefs, so that they may seek to study the aspects of nature and its form, so that they can perceive only the word of the Divine. In this way, they are true deific magicians and delve into the inner fundamentals of the divine power and bring nature to their realization. Whoever delves differently in this matter is a false magician, just as the devil resides within his sorcerers.





The Jakob Boehme monument in Görlitz, Germany.

So my dear Soul, search only for the Christ-like path. It is not in this world. Do not be attached to this world, as the Christ was not attached to it. But do not misunderstand that this world is of no importance. It is the great mystery and because of it, we were created to be wise rulers of it, to reveal all wonders, and with our will bring them to manifestation all with our joy and splendor.

Through the grace of the Divine and with divine power, I have been shown a little on the Return Path to Paradise. Thus I will work towards this Path as much as I can, and if I cannot, on the way, count all the letters it will be a path so very high. Some will spend a lifetime to learn and claim to understand, but have not learned the first letter of the alphabet about Paradise. No doctorates will be found on the way to this School, but only students!

One must be busy contemplating the Power of Nature, specifically the unseen world, Heaven and Hell.

Reflections

The “alphabet” is also referred to as letters of the alphabet which Boehme considers to be a form of Divine Signature.

Boehme always focused on the ancient question of the origin of evil and what evil has to do with the Divine’s own Self. Boehme felt that the three-fold Divinity was a reflection of the Divine First Principle (Sophia) existing within all creation. The unseen Divinity appears to be introspective, critiquing Itself as artists critique their work, experiencing a joy which is revealed through the divine creation. Boehme calls this *Selbstbeschaunung*, to reflect upon yourself, to critique yourself, somewhat different than self-realization or Consciousness of Self which is *Selbstbennusstsein*.

To Boehme, the Second Principle was the embodiment of the child of the Divine,



the One threefold Divinity manifesting continuously through Light, Love, and the Heart.

The mystery of the Divine is the continuous birthing or becoming and continuous movement as a single, endless, living Being in threefold Oneness. From here, Boehme dared to mention the beginning of Lucifer, and Lucifer's opposition.

Boehme believed that in the end, all will return to the beginning and nothing is ever lost. Boehme trusted in the supreme power of the love of the Divine, and Boehme's continuous appeal to others was: "Look, the Bride (referring to the Christ) is coming. Watch!" He wrote:

As flesh and blood cannot comprehend the Divine's Spirit, the Soul can, but only through illumination from the divine Spark of the Divine. If you want to discover what the Divine is and talk about the Divine, study to comprehend the Power of Nature, all of Creation, the heavens, Earth, Stars, Elements, creatures, all come from the Divine, including the holy angels, humanity, the devil, and hell.

What The Divine Is

Boehme wrote about the Divine:

Although we cannot say of the Divine that the pure Godhead is Nature, but a threefold majesty, we must say however, that the Divine is within Nature even though Nature does not know it.

When reason speaks of the Divine, what the Divine is in spirit and will, it would make sense to consider the Divine to be something remote to this world, and unknown, something in a different place than this world, residing high above the stars, who governs only through Its Spirit with an omnipresent Power somewhere in this world, this

threefold majesty, whose beauty in all is evident. Because of our reasoning, our reason descends into the illusion that the Divine is really a stranger.

The Divine is All. The Divine is Light and Darkness, Love and Hate and Fire, but the Divine alone can name Itself the Divine with the Light of divine Love. It is an eternal contrast between darkness and light. None seizes the other, and one is not the other, but is its own spirit, but different in virtue, and neither one exists by itself.

The Divine cannot be described specifically as this or that. The Divine Self has no nature nor body. The Divine is not inclined particularly towards anything because nothing comes before the Deity—not good, nor evil. The Divine Itself is the beginning, an eternal nothingness. The Divine is nothing and everything and is one will in which lies the whole world



An illustration from the 1682 Amsterdam edition of Boehme's collected works, a colorized image.

and all of creation. In the Divine all is eternal and without beginning, in equal measurement. The Divine is not Light nor Darkness, nor Love nor Hate, but the eternal Oneness.

The Christ differentiates the Heavenly Parent from the parent of nature composed of the elements and the stars. This is our natural parent from which we are made and through whom we live in this world and from whom we receive our nourishment.

But it is for our Heavenly Parent that our soul constantly yearns. The body yearns for nature's parent which is of the elements and Earth.

This three-fold Being with Its own creation, with Its self knowledge of Its wisdom, has existed for an eternity and contains within Itself no other place or reason as that of Its Self. It is a Life in oneness and one Will without want or desire. It is not thick nor thin, not height nor depth, not time nor space, but is through all there is, everything and altogether an incomprehensible nothingness.

My dear reader, if you search far within the stars and elements, the

creatures, in stones, in plants, in trees, metals, search in heaven and Earth, you will find nothing.

Now you ask, "Where shall I search to find?" Dear reader, I cannot lend you the key. However, I will give you the reference, "You must be born anew through the water from the Holy Spirit."

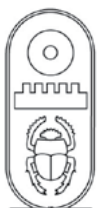
The reason for the creation of this world is recognizable to the inner person much easier than to the outer person. The outer persons recognize little of what they see with their eyes or what they can touch with their hands, or even hear or smell or taste as the reason of the beginning of the outer being.

When I contemplate what the Divine is I say, the Divine has no motive, no beginning, the Divine owns nothing but the Divine Self. The Divine is eternally created and recreates the Divine Self out of nothing. The Divine is the will of wisdom, and wisdom is the Divine's manifestation.

The name of the Divine is YHVH.



The high altar seen here of Karlskirche in Vienna, completed around 1737, features a gilded Tetragrammaton set within a radiating "Sunburst" to symbolize the divine presence of Yahweh.





Johann Sadeler and Maerten de Vos, The Sixth Day: The Creation of Animals, Adam and Eve, from "The Creation of the World", late sixteenth century, a colorized image.

If you wish to write about the Divine, or see the Divine, observe nature. One cannot write about the Divine. The Soul sees the Creator but cannot speak about it because the divine spirit is a power which cannot be spoken or written about in human language.

The Divine Spirit (the Holy Ghost) emerges from the Creator and is the third-fold Being of the godhead. The same as the elements of this world emerge from the Sun and Stars and are the moving spirit within all material things of this world. Likewise the Divine Spirit is the moving spirit within the Divine and eternally emerges from the Divine and fulfills the Divine entirely, i.e., the Divine regenerates. This weaving strength is within the entire Unity of the Creator.

Therefore, you noble human being, let not the antichrist and the devil fool you by trying to convince you that divinity is far away from you, and lead you to a remote and distant

heaven! Nothing is closer to you than heaven because within you are all three Principles of eternity and within you will regenerate the holy Paradise as the Divine lives within.

To describe the Divine further, picture a wheel standing before you with seven other wheels, one wheel is made within the other one, so it could stand on all ends, on all sides. Now remember this, the seven wheels are the Seven Spirits of the Divine, they are reborn, renewed, one within the other, and is if you take one wheel, and within it are seven wheels all existing within each other and all have spherical rims like a round ball.

Thus the Divine's spirit permeates all space in eternity like a wheel wherein the beginning is also the end.

King Lucifer stood high and brilliant within the bliss of heaven, but he left his esteemed estate and separated himself from the Creator's agreement and fell into a dark, cold,

and fiery condition from which originated the birth of suffering and pain. Thus Lucifer left the harmonious state wherein the Divine created him because Lucifer wanted to be the Master over and above all.

The Being of All Beings is One but divides Itself into two principles, light and darkness, in bliss and suffering, in good and evil, love and anger, fire and light, and from this second eternal beginning, a third beginning arises creating its own eternal desire to be.

What else is hidden? The philosophia and the deep meaning of the Divine, the heavenly delight, the revelation of the creation of angels, the revelation of the Fall of the devil, from which comes all evil, the creation of this world, the purpose for the creation of humanity, and all creatures within this world, the secret of the regeneration and eternal life.

This will simply all be revealed in depth. Why not at the height of this mystic work? So that any cannot be praised that they did it! And all would be destroyed through the devil's consorts! Why does the creator do this? To show that the time will come for reintegration and to retrieve what was lost, so that humanity will see

and enjoy the fulfillment and exult in the pure light and knowledge of the Divine.

That is why now will arise an Aurora, the morning red sky, so that the day can be noted and acknowledged. Whoever wants to sleep can continue to sleep. Whoever stays on guard and awake and trims one's lamp, will always be awake. See, the bridegroom is arriving. Whoever is awake and decorated, will go to the eternal heavenly wedding. Whoever sleeps however, will sleep forever and ever in the deep prison of tormented abyss.

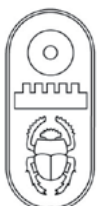
That is why I am warning readers that they busy themselves to read my book and not to become angry over the silliness of the authorities, because the Divine does not look up to the highest because the Divine is the highest. But the Divine observes how to help the lowest. If authority wants to affect your soul and consciousness their warning to you will not affect you because you will rejoice in the elevation of your soul and it will laugh and triumph.

Reflections

Boehme had many difficulties with the authorities who thought these writings



Jakob Boehme 300th Anniversary Commemorative Medal, 1924, made in Meissen, Germany.



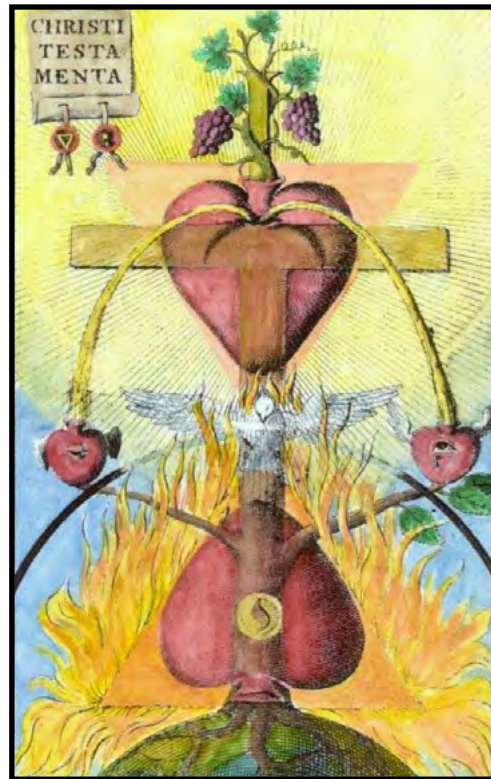
were “the work of the devil.” Boehme was brought before the town’s magistrate on several occasions to answer questions about his work. Boehme was warned several times to suspend his writings.

Boehme described the physical world as being like a fog, brought forth through exhalation and emanation of the four elements from the inner unseen spiritual world through the motion—vibration—of the Divine. These spiritual principles became materialized, and Being, out of nothing and darkness, came out of the Holy Light. Manifestation is brought forth by merging with its own traits, forms, and strength, as can be seen in the stars and planets. Through birth, manifestation becomes another principle as the birth of time which is modeled after the eternal birth always becoming. It is otherwise nothing as eternity with its influence made visible in form of time. Boehme is attempting to describe the beauties of the spiritual world and the Divine for human understanding in the physical world.

Why did Divinity create? Boehme believes Divinity created, not to become complete, but to reveal and manifest the Divine as great bliss and happiness. This bliss did not begin with creation, no, it was forever already within the great mystery, as a spirit within itself, as a great harmony within a musical play. Boehme wrote:

Everything spoken or written about the Divine without comprehending The Signature is mute and without understanding.

The Signature is not the Soul but contains the Soul. The Signature is of the Divine Essence, and is a harp which, when it stands still, has no sound, but if you strike the keys and play the strings, each sound rings according to its own principle.



A colorized illustration from the 1730 Amsterdam edition of Boehme’s Theosophia Revelata.

Boehme believed that human wisdom is bound to all within the Cosmos, but humanity itself is unique, in that:

1. We can see all things within the Heart.
2. We can partake of the endless Divine Wisdom.
3. We can return to our original divine estate within the measurement of time and eternity.
4. Humanity is a microcosm in whom the Three Principles are active in the same way they are active within the highest divine Trinity.
5. As such, humanity is called to reveal the mysterious wonder of the Divine.
6. It is to be understood that the knowledge of human nature will be tied anew to the cosmological knowledge and wisdom.

Contemplate One's Being

Who should preach and show the way of the Divine who themselves do not understand it? If you have read every book ever written and recite them from memory, you are not regarded any higher before the Divine than a shepherd or a poor prisoner who has never seen the light of day.

Observe yourself what you are and look upon the outer world what it is. Then you will find that you are with your outer being and personality the outer world. You are a small world out of the large one. What is above, is also below, and all creatures of this world are the same.

Regarding Prayer

According to Boehme, praying correctly should become a habit so that one should not only speak the words—speaking without heartfelt regard and desire for the Divine is only an outward thing, an outward formation of words. The mouth creates words only with the outer strength of the elements and creates only a form according to one's will wherein there is no real power. Nothing pleases the Divine except what the Divine Itself creates and effects with something.

Conclusions

Boehme regarded the Christ as the new Adam, symbolized as the pearl and return of human oneness. The representation of the Christ's death on the cross releasing humanity's duality back into oneness symbolizes the transformation of humanity, the renewal of the soul with pure Divinity.

Regarding the title of the manuscript, *Die Morgenröte bricht an* (later named *Aurora* by Balthasar Walther), Boehme did not wish to explain how he came to name it or what it means. He said it was a secret kept from the intelligentsia and educated of this world who would have to discover

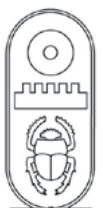
its meaning for themselves. For those who place their hopes and desires in the Divine and who read the work with a sincere desire within their soul, it will not be a secret, but an open revelation.

Boehme wrote his chapters in stages for the benefit of his own realization and understanding. Not everything is laid out with completeness at one time. He felt that our understanding is piecemeal and we can grasp only so much, a little at a time. However, he wrote, the holy soul understands. He regarded the Work as a wonder of the world.

The correct path towards eternity is found within the Human Person.



Salomon Trismosin, The Red Sun, plate 22 from Splendor Solis, Germany, ca. 1535. The rising red sun signifies the final stage of the Great Work, rubedo, representing the successful transmutation of base matter into spiritual gold and the attainment of enlightened consciousness.



MIRABAI, THE BELOVED MYSTIC POET OF INDIA

Daniel Ladinsky



Mirabai surrounded by devotees, ca. eighteenth century.

Mirabai (ca. 1498–1550) is the most renowned woman poet-saint of India, her songs sung by Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs alike. She was born a princess in the area of Rajasthan. Her great-grandfather founded the city of Jodhpur.

It has been said that when Mira was a small child she brought a plate of food to a sadhu (a wandering ascetic) at the palace gate. He whispered a few words in her ear and bestowed a tiny statue of Krishna into her hand, which she forever treasured. There are no other accounts of her having had a teacher or formal religious instruction, so perhaps those few words held some key to a spiritual awakening. Sometime later she questioned her mother about who would be her husband, as marriages were often arranged in the early

years of a girl's life. Her mother, perhaps not fathoming the seriousness of her daughter's inquiry, playfully pointed to the little statue of Krishna and answered that he would be Mira's groom. From that time onward Mira felt herself to be married to Krishna, and when the time came for her actual marriage, she refused to submit to being treated as a piece of property within the conventional marriage that had been arranged for her against her will.

Her husband died soon after their marriage, and this allowed Mira to begin leading a more religious life, toward which she had long felt inclined. She began seeking out the company of wandering sadhus and felt drawn to public temples that were usually only visited by low-caste devotees. Her presence at these

temples, and her singing and dancing and embracing of untouchables enraged her in-laws to such an extreme that they tried to kill her. Mira, when in her early thirties, renounced her title and position and fled. She herself became a sadhu, traveling much of northwestern India on foot, sleeping often in the open, sometimes near temples and mosques.

She was a fierce champion of human rights, especially women's rights, and with a shocking wit and penetrating insight would often expose the ridiculous aspects of politics, orthodox religion, the caste system, and chauvinistic oppression. Her songs often glorified the ascetic's life, and at times her poetry was very erotic. As a finely educated woman, she first composed her poems/songs in the ancient tradition of classical Indian poetry. In fact, Mira's love songs are said to have helped revitalize and evolve North Indian music. Even today her songs are very popular

and sung by classical singers as well as heard throughout the streets of cities and in villages. Several thousand poems are attributed to her though perhaps only a few hundred are authentic. There is an account of a childhood handmaid of Mira, named Lalita, who may have followed her on her wanderings for a while, noting the songs down in a notebook. Records in the Ranchhorji temple at the coastal city of Dwarka, where Mira is last recorded as having lived, mention such a notebook. Mira spent the last few years of her life attending the destitute near the Ranchhorji temple and writing poems until she joined her Lord.



From the Penguin publication, *Love Poems from God: Twelve Sacred Voices from the East and West*, by Daniel Ladinsky, copyright 2002. www.danielladinsky.com. With permission.



An actress in a play about Mirabai in India in 2022.





A HUNDRED OBJECTS CLOSE BY

I know a cure for sadness:

*Let your hands touch something that
makes your eyes smile.*

*I bet there are a hundred objects close by
that can do that.*

Look at

beauty's gift to us—

*her power is so great she enlivens
the earth, the sky,
our soul.*



A GREAT YOGI

In my travels I spent time with a great yogi.

Once he said to me,

“Become so still you hear the blood

flowing through your veins.”

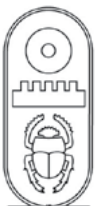
One night as I sat in quiet,

I seemed on the verge of entering

a world inside so vast

I know it is the source of

all of us.



LEONARDO DA VINCI: ARTIST, SCIENTIST, AND MYSTIC

Steven Armstrong, FRC

Leonardo da Vinci (April 15, 1452 - May 2, 1519) typifies the art, science, and spiritual yearnings of the Italian Renaissance. During this vibrant transitional period, medieval Western Europe was reawakening to the knowledge and wisdom of the ancient world. This was transmitted to them through reexamining what had been preserved in the West, but even more dynamically, from Constantinople and the Byzantine Roman East, as well as through Islamic science, art, and literature. The result of this fusion was the Renaissance of the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, which ushered in the modern Western world.

Leonardo's work in all areas of his life typifies this period, a vital connection that links the modern world with ancient civilizations and cultures through this Renaissance in Italy and elsewhere in Western Europe.

Leonardo's full name was Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci, which means "Leonardo, son of Messer Piero, from Vinci." He lived at a time when our modern custom of last names had not yet arisen; although he is popularly known as "da Vinci," this was simply the name of his hometown. The signature he most frequently used

was "Leonardo" or "Io, Leonardo" ("I, Leonardo").

In this article, we will explore Leonardo's art, science, and mysticism through his paintings, inventions, and the legacy he left for the generations that followed him. Few figures have inspired such lasting admiration and been the source of such mystery, as this master of the Italian Renaissance.

Leonardo spent his life investigating the orderly laws that govern the universe and humanity. We can follow his path through the beauty and wisdom he has left for us across the centuries to seek these same truths, discovering the design of nature, revealing nature's ultimate source.

Early Life and Work

Leonardo was born in Vinci, Italy, on April 15, 1452, the son of a notary, Ser Pietro, and a peasant woman, Caterina. He lived with his father in Florence, beginning school at the early age of five. Even as a young man, his ability to draw was notable, and after Leonardo's father showed the painter Andrea del Verrocchio his work, the latter accepted Leonardo as an apprentice at the age of fourteen.

Art was changing as Leonardo grew up. The work of the masters of the previous century was now carried forward with



Francesco Melzi (attributed), Profile of Leonardo da Vinci, ca. 1515. Considered the only surviving drawn likeness of Leonardo da Vinci made from life by a close associate.

even more self-expression, humanism, and emotion. Apprenticing with Andrea allowed Leonardo to learn the crafts necessary for his many future artistic endeavors. In 1474-1475, he collaborated with his master on the *Baptism of Christ*. Leonardo finished the background and the angel on the left. In his first painting *The Annunciation*, his early skill in taking a traditional subject and imbuing it with drama is clear.

Early on, Leonardo's keen intellect and sensitivity for all the beauty and life around him were remarkable. For at least part of his life he was a vegetarian, and even a vegan, speculating at one point that taking milk from cows was theft. This was only one way in which Leonardo inherited the spirit of the ancient Pythagoreans. His first biographer, Giorgio Vasari, reports that he would purchase caged birds on the streets of Florence only to set them free. It would be the first work of many in Leonardo's life that strove to set life free from artificial constraints so that all beings could participate in their own Divine natural order.

Leonardo's Career and Originality

After completing his apprenticeship with Andrea del Verrocchio, Leonardo set up his own studio in Florence in 1476. His talent soon brought him to the attention of the Duke of Milan, Ludovico Sforza. From around 1482 to 1499, Leonardo operated his artistic studio and accepted apprentices under this patronage. The French capture of Milan in 1498 eventually impelled Leonardo to move elsewhere, and by 1500 he entered the employ of Cesare Borgia of Florence, the son of Pope Alexander VI, working as a military architect and engineer. During the period 1500-1515, he accepted commissions and worked in Florence, Milan, Rome, and elsewhere on the Italian peninsula, while creating a body of work that included paintings, sculptures,

drawings, engineering, inventions, and scientific works.

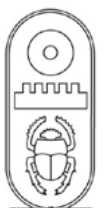
From 1515 to his death in 1519, Leonardo was in the service of the French king, Francis I, setting up his studio and shop next to the king's residence at the Château d'Amboise. He became very close to Francis, and one legend says that he died in the king's arms. At Leonardo's request, his funeral cortege was made up of sixty homeless people.

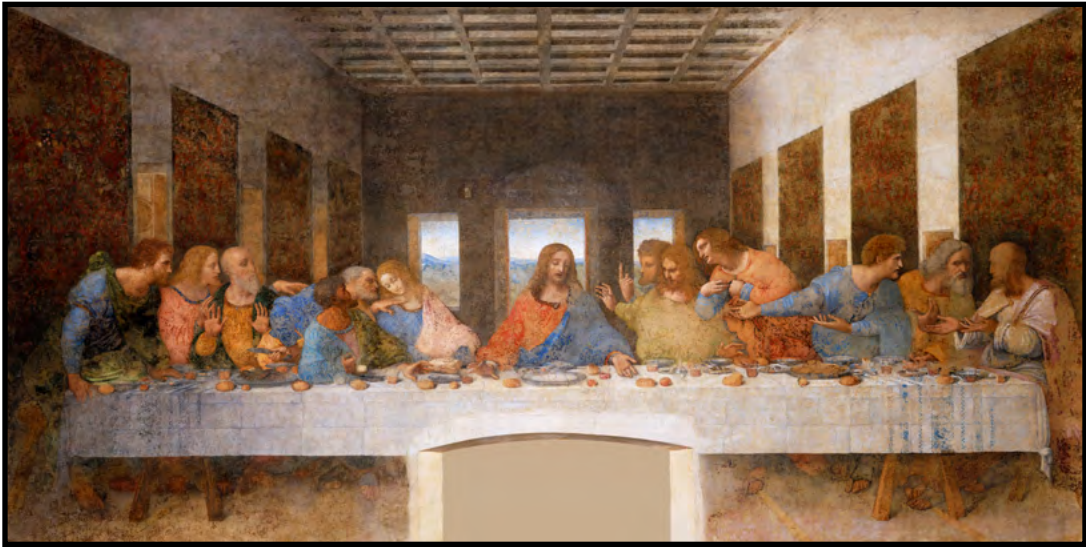
Leonardo was never content to leave an art form as he found it, always seeking new ways to use the understanding of the natural laws around him to bring beauty to light. Two of the painting techniques he is best known for pioneering are *chiaroscuro* and *sfumato*.

Chiaroscuro (Italian: Light-Dark) allows the artist to work with the natural light and dark in a scene to manifest a sense of realism, depth, and motion in a painting. His *Saint John the Baptist* (1513-1516) demonstrates the effectiveness of this technique, which would become dominant in Italian and Flemish art during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.



Leonardo da Vinci, *Saint John the Baptist*, 1516.





Leonardo da Vinci, The Last Supper, 1498.

Using the sfumato (Italian: Smoky) technique, the artist paints “without lines or borders, in the manner of smoke or beyond the focus plane” (Leonardo). This effect is created by painting layers of translucent color, which then give the impression of form, volume, and depth. There should be continuous gradations of color, without perceptible lines of transition. A famous example is the face of Leonardo’s *Mona Lisa* (1503-07), where the shading around the eyes demonstrates this technique perfectly.

Leonardo’s Vision of the World

As an artist, inventor, engineer, and mystic, Leonardo always worked to see how the pattern of all being worked, both large and small, and how all of the parts of the greater system functioned harmoniously.

Modern scholar Martin Kemp, in his book *Leonardo da Vinci*, described how Leonardo had to

... embrace a wide range of natural sciences and mathematics, as he searched for scientific rules governing both humanity and the universe. It was these rules, which provided the basis for his imaginative reconstruction of

nature in master works such as *The Last Supper*, the *Mona Lisa*, and *St. John*, which reveal his increasingly complex vision of humanity in the context of nature. And towards the end of his life, Leonardo became fascinated with the mathematics underlying the ‘design of nature,’ behind which lay the ultimate force of the ‘prime mover,’ as manifested with supreme power in his Deluge drawings.

This quest has been true of all mystics from the beginning of time. Pythagoras and his school in the sixth century BCE said that “the Divine geometrizes,” echoing the wisdom of ancient Egyptian and other, older sources. Leonardo found inspiration for this in the newly rediscovered works of Vitruvius. One of his most famous drawings, *The Vitruvian Man* (1490), clearly illustrates his understanding that human beings and our workings are a microcosm of the whole creation. Expanding on a passage from Vitruvius’s *De Architectura* 3.1.3, Leonardo encloses the human form in a circle—a symbol of the spiritual world, and a square—a symbol of the material world.

This image of the linkage between humanity and the world here “below”

with the whole of creation and beyond is perhaps the most vivid representation of the ancient Hermetic adage “As Above, So Below; As Below, So Above.” The power of this imagery is demonstrated by its resonance down through the centuries, from William Blake’s *Albion or Glad Day* (1796) to the modern Italian 1 Euro coin. Leonardo’s vision is as inspiring and powerful today as it was over 500 years ago.

Leonardo’s Notebooks

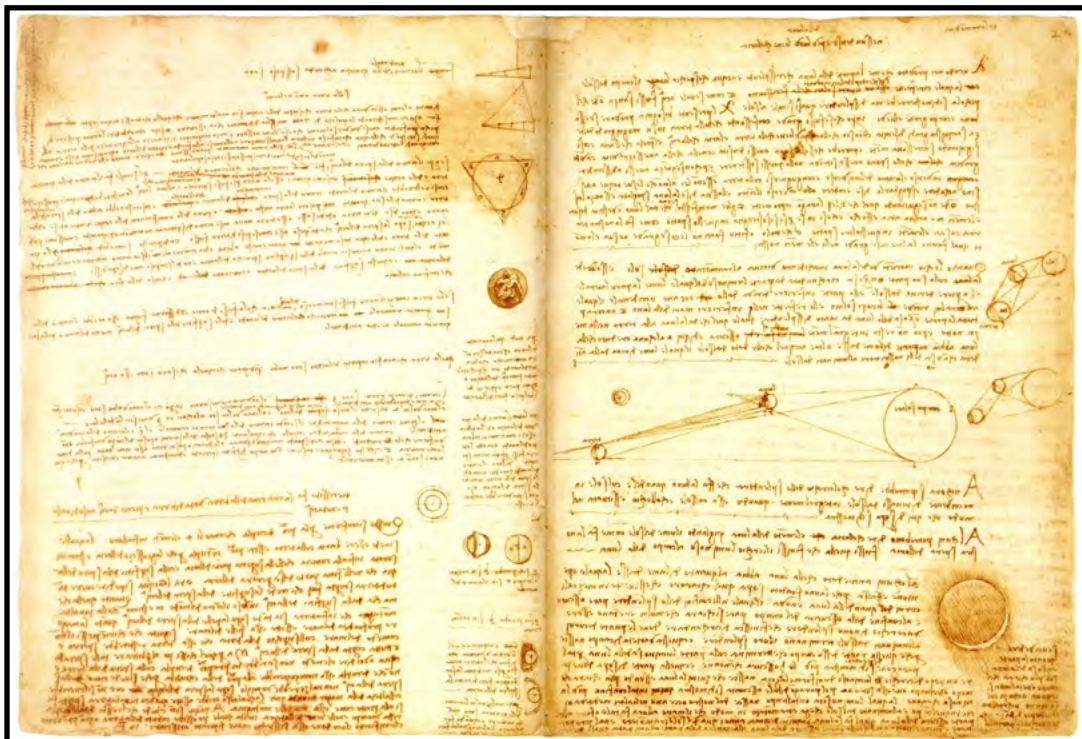
In addition to his painting and sculpture, Leonardo kept detailed notebooks of his scientific, philosophical, and artistic studies, sketches, inventions, and plans for machines. Although their content is brilliant, Leonardo’s notebooks fell into oblivion after his death and were not recollected and recognized until the nineteenth century. Historian Lewis Mumford has suggested that the artist made a deliberate decision not to publish his journals, so that his inventions and knowledge would not be available to those

who would misuse them against humanity, in particular his extensive designs for weaponry.

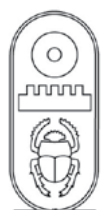
Today, we have over 13,000 pages of material from this master of all the arts. Most of the notebooks and pages have found their way into museums, but one, the *Codex Leicester* (formerly the *Codex Hammer*), a collection of scientific work, is owned by Microsoft’s founder Bill Gates, who exhibits the *Codex* once a year in a different part of the world.

True to the spirit of the Renaissance, and consistent with Rosicrucian thought, Leonardo did not see the sciences and the arts as separate from one another, but simply as complementary approaches to the wonders of the world around him. Leonardo’s ideas, writings, and sketches in the areas of the sciences and engineering are as much works of genius as his painting.

Leonardo’s approach to science was based on observations rather than theory. He attempted to observe the most minute details of whatever he was studying and



Pages from the Codex Leicester, Fol.35v (left) and Fol.2r (right).



then recorded these details with utmost accuracy. He was continually observing all of nature and humanity around him with a keen eye and kept his notebooks in mirror writing—that is, backwards script that would appear normal in a mirror. As a left-handed writer, it was easier to “drag” the quill pen rather than push it. This also gave a certain level of security to his journals.

From the time of his apprenticeship to Andrea del Verrocchio to the end of his life, Leonardo explored human physiology, as is evident from both his notebooks and art. He was given permission to perform dissections in the morgues of several major Italian cities in order to further his researches. Around the year 1495, he created the first known description of how to construct a human-like robot, but there is no evidence that he attempted to build such a machine.

Leonardo the Visionary

Although much of the material in Leonardo’s notebooks and journals is keen observation of the natural world, the artist often goes beyond his own world and dreams of what might be. Inspired by the ancient science described by the work of Vitruvius and other classical writers circulating during the Italian Renaissance, he knew that human society had once been more advanced, and that nothing theoretically stood in the way of even further growth and discovery.

One of Leonardo’s fondest dreams was that of flight. His notebooks are full of sketches and designs for flying machines, both bird-winged and similar to a helicopter. True to his method of close observation, he tracked and recorded the flight of birds with amazing accuracy.

Leonardo is said to have tested one of his gliders in an unsuccessful bid to fly in 1496. His wind-screw would not have worked, due to the rotation of the whole construction. However, his design for a light hang glider was built and test-flown in 2005 for a PBS documentary. With sufficient time and materials, it is likely Leonardo would have succeeded in his own lifetime.

In January 2005, researchers Alessandro del Meglio, Roberto Manescalchi, and Maria Carchio discovered Leonardo’s secret workshop in Florence. It is a set of hidden rooms in what had once been the



One of Leonardo da Vinci's sketches for a flying machine.

Friary of the Most Holy Annunciation, and contains many frescoes and other drawings strikingly similar to those in Leonardo’s paintings and notebooks. These may have been painted by the master himself, or by his students. It was in these rooms that much of Leonardo’s creativity was expressed in the years following his return to Florence in the early sixteenth century, including possibly the

the studies on anatomy and other work in the journals.

Leonardo’s tireless spirit of investigation and invention has continued to inspire all those who seek to learn natural laws in order to live in harmony with them, and achieve potentials yet undreamed.

Mysteries of Leonardo’s Works

With a person of Leonardo’s brilliance in the arts and sciences, in addition to his knowledge of natural laws, it is little surprise that he may have left us some enigmatic messages in his works. Speculation and



The two versions of The Virgin of the Rocks, painted by Leonardo da Vinci. The version in the Louvre is on the left; the version in the National Gallery in London is on the right.

mystery have always surrounded certain aspects of his achievements. Some theorize that he may have been responsible for the image on the Shroud of Turin, but no conclusive evidence has been established.

Certainly, Leonardo was not a typical believer of the fifteenth to sixteenth century. As his biographer Vasari wrote in his 1550 edition on the artist's life: "His cast of mind was so heretical that he did not adhere to any religion, thinking perhaps that it was better to be a philosopher than a Christian." Modern biographer Marco Rosci's 1976 *Leonardo* suggests that he "adopted an empirical approach to every thought, opinion, and action and accepted no truth unless verified or verifiable, whether related to natural phenomena, human behavior, or social activities. . . . He still pinned his faith in logical certainty, in the often-repeated affirmation that mathematics and geometry were the true foundations of knowledge."

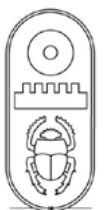
Leonardo followed a path of knowledge—what he could discover for himself, rather than belief in what someone else had told him. Throughout the centuries many have wondered

whether he encoded some of his thoughts and ideas into his art.

Two famous examples of this are in his paintings *The Last Supper* (1498) and *The Virgin of the Rocks*, painted in two versions (1483-1486 and 1495-1508).

In *The Last Supper*, the figure to Yeshua's right has traditionally been identified as John, "the beloved disciple." However, some have speculated (most recently, Dan Brown in *The Da Vinci Code*) that this indistinct figure is, in fact, Mary Magdalene, whom some claim to be the wife of Yeshua. Others also point out that the raised finger gesture by the Apostle to Yeshua's left may be a hostile sign, intended by Leonardo to criticize the official positions of the Christianity of his time.

Leonardo painted two versions of *The Virgin of the Rocks*. Today, the earlier version is in the Louvre in Paris, while the latter hangs in the National Gallery in London. In both, the Virgin has her arm around the shoulders of the infant John the Baptist and holds her hand in a seemingly menacing gesture over the head of the infant Yeshua. In the earlier version,



the angel Uriel also points, not to Yeshua, but to John the Baptist. All of these factors have led some to speculate that Leonardo was pointing away from the mainstream religious patterns of his day to the more ancient traditions represented by John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary. For example, many trace the imagery of the Virgin Mary back to the Egyptian goddess Isis and other images of the Divine Feminine. Another group, often associated with the ancient Gnostics, still exists in the Middle East. Called Mandaean, they maintain that John the Baptist was the true Messiah.

It is likely that we will never know specifically what Leonardo was trying to convey through these ambiguities in his works. Nevertheless, we can certainly know that his own mysticism and spirituality, as expressed in all of his work, was dedicated to discovering the laws that govern the universe and humanity. Leonardo sought to convey those laws through beauty and inventiveness to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Mysticism Before and After Leonardo's Time

Leonardo was by no means alone in his mysticism, or in holding views that challenged the mainstream patterns of thought. Before Leonardo's time, the twelfth-century Italian Christian monk, Joachim of Fiore, had taught that the Age of the Holy Spirit was fast approaching, when the structures of Church authority would no longer be needed, and that all would have direct access to the Divine. Needless to say, those in power at the time often did not favor these kinds of opinions.

Contact with the Christian East, with Islam, and with the Jewish community also began a return of ancient sources of wisdom to the West. This had accelerated during the time of the Crusades (eleventh through thirteenth centuries). Gnostic

Christians also flourished across northern Italy and southern France during this same time and carried with them many of the mystical ideals of the past. Finally, the impending fall of Constantinople and the Eastern Roman Empire in the first half of the fifteenth century resulted in an influx of scholars and religious figures coming to Italy. They brought with them many valuable documents and ideas long lost to the West.

When the ancient Hermetic literature from Alexandria of the second century CE was reintroduced to the West at this time, great interest was aroused. This was quickly coupled with the wisdom of the Jewish Kabbalah that had been brought from Spain and the Middle East.

With this inspiration, Italian Renaissance mystics and scholars of esotericism began to study and teach the venerable wisdom once again. Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), in his biblical commentary *Heptaplus*, advances the notion that all religions and spiritual traditions are harmonious, and point to the same eternal truths. It is little wonder



Leonardo da Vinci, The Ironworker's Beautiful Daughter, 1490.

that Leonardo found inspiration for his unorthodox ideas in such a rich climate of mysticism.

Following Leonardo's time, the tradition of inner spirituality continued, but was also opposed by civil and church authorities. Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), a brilliant scientist, philosopher, and mystic was burned at the stake in Rome for his works and teachings. Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) was also persecuted in Germany for his teachings that all had direct access to the Divine Wisdom.

After the Rosicrucian Manifestoes of 1614-1616, many mystics associated with this movement carried on Leonardo's search for understanding and living according to the Cosmic Laws, which bring together all things according to the ancient adage, "As Above, So Below; As Below, So Above." These include Michael Maier (1568-1622) in Germany, as well as Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and Robert Fludd (1574-1637) in Britain.

Throughout the centuries, the Primordial Tradition celebrated by Leonardo has continued to inspire great works of science, art, and spirituality, and this continues to the present day.

Leonardo For All Times

"Wisdom is the Daughter of Experience." (Leonardo da Vinci, *Notebook III*, 8ob)

Having journeyed with Leonardo, connecting the ancient world to our own, it is not enough to stand in admiration of his genius and creativity. Women and men throughout history have been inspired by the same natural laws and principles to continue his work of discovery, beauty, and invention.

Pioneers in their fields such as Marie Curie, Booker T. Washington, and the Wright Brothers were not content to simply repeat what others had done, but advanced

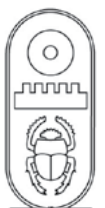


Leonardo da Vinci, Profile of a Warrior in Helmet, 1472.

our knowledge and implementation of the laws which govern all things. Creative genius again and again employs these laws to reveal beauty, as in the works of Marie Corelli, Claude Debussy, Erik Satie, and Edith Piaf.

In each instance, we can hear the sage advice of Leonardo from his *Codex Atlanticus*: "Anyone who, in discussion, relies upon authority, uses, not the understanding, but memory." (75a)

Leonardo understood the ancient wisdom that the human person is a microcosm of the whole world. It follows that one can come to know whatever is needed by a careful study of creation, and inner meditation. In this way, we come to discover what Leonardo did, that we are truly *Capax Universi*, capable of all things. We can follow the path of discovery, invention, joy, and beauty that Leonardo blazed for us in our own lives today, working for the progress of humanity, and our entire planet. This kind of testament is one that Leonardo would most surely appreciate.



THE MYSTICAL LIFE AND BEAUTIFUL WORDS OF RUMI

Michael Shalaby, FRC



Rumi Dancing in the Presence of Three Disciples, *an illustration from Tarjuma-i Thawāqib al-Manāqib (Stars of the Legend), ca. 1590.*

The mystical life and beautiful words of Rumi (1207-1273) just barely touched the surface of what this wonderful mystic individual gave to us. He was a mystic who had found a beautiful place inside of himself that gave him a wisdom to see life from that inner light, and not only did he see it, but he brought it out into the world and shared it with others.

When we are in school, our study of great figures in history often centers around academic achievement. Rarely, do we touch upon philosophical, mystical, or inspirational aspects. Pythagoras was recognized for his contributions to mathematics, Francis Bacon as a statesperson, Albert Einstein as a revolutionary physicist, and so forth. We

study their objective accomplishments from a very narrow angle and lend little credence to how they have helped human consciousness to better understand itself. These studies were outwardly rather than inwardly focused.

In our Rosicrucian work, both the outward and inward contributions of these mystics are studied. We practice using that wordless voice, listening for the divine direction in their works that reveals how their contributions have assisted human consciousness to greater itself. Rumi is another of these great individuals of history. Just a few of his words evoke introspection. He is also studied in different ways: some see his poetry, some see a religious figure, and some see a visionary. As Rosicrucians,

we see all the above, as well as his life as a mystic and how he has helped humanity uncover the illusions we build that veil the love of our Creator and the love we should have for one another.

To set the tone for this article, and to honor the inner work that he conveyed, let's dwell for a few moments on one his poems:

A moment of happiness,
you and I sitting on the veranda.
apparently two, but one in soul,
you and I.
We feel the flowing water of life
here,
you and I, with the garden's beauty
and the birds singing.
The stars will be watching us,
and we will show them
how it is to be the thinnest crescent
moon.
You and I, unselfed, will be
together,
indifferent to idle speculation, you
and I.
The parrots of heaven will be
cracking sugar
as we laugh together, you and I
In one form upon this earth,
and in another form in a timeless
sweet land.

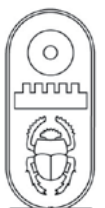
Rumi lived a full and rich life. There are many stories about his mystical experiences—how he touched and taught others during his days on Earth. He had many followers; he loved and was loved by many. He also experienced a deep love for creation and that grand privilege of life. He touched the depths of the indwelling soul and gave what he found to our world. We're unable to grasp that magnitude in a short article like this. It is hoped that this review will guide you to examine Rumi and find that same love that exists in you, that you might fall in love and stay there.



Statue of Rumi in Konya, Türkiye.

In some parts of the Persian-speaking Muslim world, Rumi's texts are studied second only to the Qur'an. He is credited with starting the practice of whirling to commune with the Divine and the rhythms of the universe, the practitioners of which we commonly call Whirling Dervishes. Today we see his excerpts everywhere, invoking inspiration with just a few words. Throughout our monographs, we review his contributions to help restore the greater light to the world. We embrace his expressions of beauty that reside deep within our conscience.

Like us, he struggled at times with the seeming futility of attempting to establish a communion with a higher consciousness. Yet his persistence to find a way inward—to calm the outer noise and amplify the inner song—is a great lesson for everyone who desires and struggles to reconnect to a welcoming and comforting inner world. His life and works remind us of what we intuitively know: there is a conscious connection to a universal consciousness that illuminates human awareness.



Rumi was born on September 30, 1207, in the east of the Persian Empire, in what is today Afghanistan. His father was a well-known jurist, theologian, and Sufi, and Rumi followed in all of these steps. When Rumi was still very young, his father led them more than two-thousand miles west to avoid the invasion of Genghis Khan's armies. It's probably hard for us to appreciate the hardship of such a journey, even if it was a very fancy caravan in that region at that time. Yet the family thrived and settled in present-day Türkiye, where Rumi lived and wrote most of his life.

The tight bonds of the family and their bonds through their faith and mystical work certainly contributed to molding the character within Rumi. Spiritual work was part of everyday life, giving strength during their arduous journey and developing a balance of physical hardships guided by an inner wisdom. He later wrote: "You were born with wings. Why prefer to crawl through life?"

During his early life, Rumi was influenced by the poet Attar of Nishapur, who saw in Rumi a high spiritual presence, as well as by the Persian poet Sanai. The

family established ties with Konya, Türkiye, developing and leading a madrasa—a community of spiritual learning. Rumi was married twice; first in 1225 at the age of 18. He and his wife had two sons. After his first wife died, he remarried, and this second marriage produced one son and one daughter. When his father died in 1231, Rumi became head of the madrasa at the very young age of 24.

Rumi's oldest son, Sultan Walad, managed to save some of Rumi's intimate letters from this period of his life. They revealed that Rumi was often involved in the community—solving disputes, facilitating agreements, and assisting wherever he could. The letters had poetry scattered throughout them, revealing a life filled with material work that was sprinkled by his divine inspirations; he used these divine inspirations to help him in his material efforts.

In 1244, Rumi met the wandering dervish Shams of Tabriz. Shams was also a teacher, writer, and poet, and by all accounts, this was a turning point in Rumi's life. He was 37 years old at the time and Shams was around 60. They saw



Rumi Meeting Shams-i Tabrizi, *from the Cāmi'ü's-siyer of Muhammed Tahir, ca. 1600.*



Mystical Scene with Shams Al-Din Tabrizi and the Reflection of Sun in a Pool, *from Stars of the Legend*, ca. 1590.

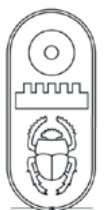
in each other a reflection of the Beloved and spent hours together in study and reflection. Rumi said Shams opened his eyes to a greater beauty that exists within human awareness and that his real poetry began at this time.

Shams led Rumi to work with music, poetry, and dance as a mystical way of connecting with the Divine. This was when he most likely developed his method of whirling to commune with the Divine and the universe—spinning to the rhythms of music, the cosmos, and the God of his Heart, what Rumi called the Beloved. It is these artistic expressions that are characteristic features of the Whirling Dervishes even to this day.

Regarding this whirling method, the author Melody Moezzi wrote in her book, *The Rumi Prescription*: “In Persian, the word for poem, *she’er*, means song as well. By no coincidence, Rumi’s classical Persian verse isn’t meant to be read while sitting, but rather sung while spinning. For this is how Rumi composed his mystical poetry: whirling and rhyming.”

So we know that Rumi set forth much of his work using scribes; perhaps his method involved using them to capture his words during his whirling experiences. Shams of Tabriz himself was a devoted mystic poet, and Rumi and Shams shared their closeness for about four years. Shams was a great inspiration for Rumi, but perhaps because of this close relationship, Shams was disliked by Rumi’s disciples. Shams was a wandering dervish, an eccentric fellow who renounced materialism and was unkempt, and yet somehow had pulled this great, popular mystic’s attention from all those who loved him and followed him. Those closest to Rumi probably felt Shams was not only a bad influence but also that he had taken away their time from Rumi. When you think about it, we might have the same reaction today about an unruly friend taking the time and attention of someone we love.

In December of 1248, Shams disappeared, rumored to have been driven away or possibly even killed by Rumi’s followers, his youngest son Ala al-Din



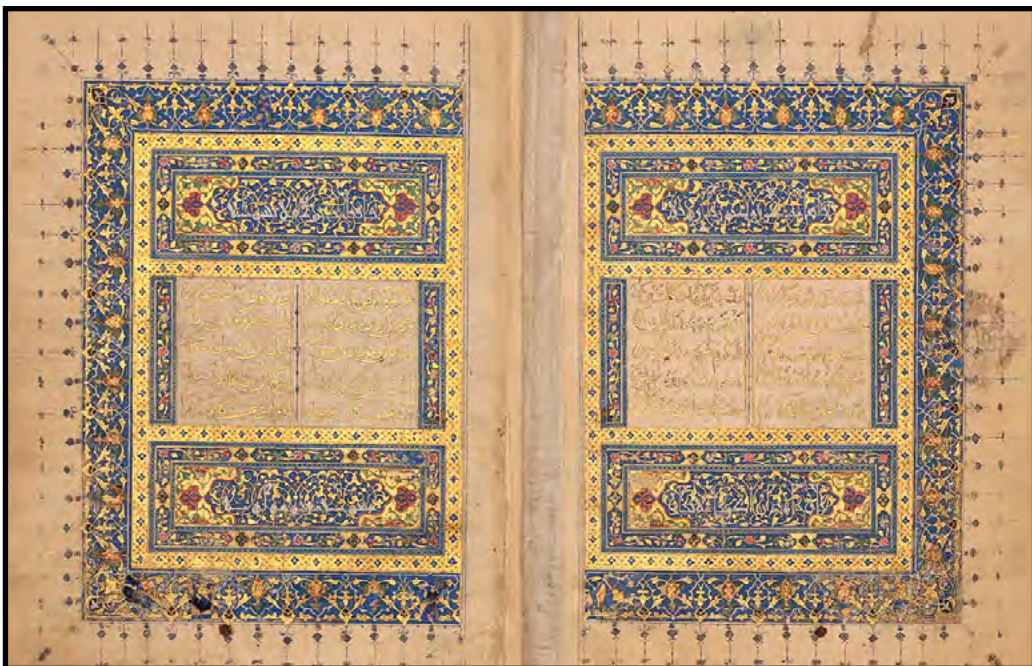
among them. This was a difficult time for Rumi. He spent time searching for Shams, and the loss of his dear mentor affected him deeply. Eventually, of course, he made peace with his loss and returned to his writing and other endeavors with a renewed fervor. He found inner strength and the strong pull of love from his inner Beloved.

For the last 12 years of his life, beginning in 1262, Rumi dictated a single six-volume poem to a scribe. The resulting masterwork, the *Masnavi*, consists of 64,000 lines and is considered Rumi's most personal work of spiritual teaching. Rumi himself described *Masnavi* as "the roots of the roots of the Islamic religion." He died on December 17, 1273, in Konya, Türkiye. His remains were interred adjacent to his father's, and the Green Tomb was erected above their final resting place—now the Mevlana Museum. The site includes a mosque, a hall for dervish dancing, and dervish living quarters.

Like Rumi, we all take care of our responsibilities in life. Also like Rumi, as

our life experiences unfold, there grows an urge that needles our consciousness to find a way inwards to a beauty we intuitively know resides there. That urge found expression through Rumi's works, and it has brought you here now to revel in his example. He recognized the duality of life and was driven to share his inner experiences to light the outer world. His words remind us that we too must learn this mission.

His desire to share included his devotion to his religion of Islam through the Sufi sect. In his writings, you will find his steadfast attachment to the Prophet Muhammad. As a Sufi, Rumi was often looked at as an outsider by those who pushed a more dogmatic and sometimes radical view of their faith. Still today, there are many Muslims who dismiss the Sufi sect. Rather than turning away from his religion, however, Rumi was led to shed light upon its core truths, to respond to that call that excited his spirit, and to preserve the esoteric elements that exist within Islam.



Pages from a 1462 edition from Iran of Rumi's *Masnavi*.



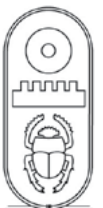
Rumi's tomb in the Mevlana Museum in Konya, Türkiye.

The Sufism that Rumi practiced was preceded by the Hanifs, which, according to recorded documents, shed mystical light upon the Prophet Muhammad and the origins of Islam. One of our monographs states it this way:

Muhammad developed especially close ties with his wife's cousin. Most are unaware that this cousin belonged to the order of the Hanifs. This mystical order constituted a mystery school whose traditional origins may be traced to Abraham himself. Its members possessed knowledge which incorporated Jewish and Christian esotericism. Their concept of the Divinity was monotheistic and they did not hesitate to oppose the polytheism then prevailing throughout Arabia. Observed from both a traditional and historical point of view, Islam as originally promulgated by Muhammad drew upon the philosophy of the Hanifs for its source. In the modern era, Sufism best perpetuates this philosophy.

AMORC is like a cordelier connecting us all, one to the other—to mystics of the past such as Rumi and to us, the mystics of the present. Rumi's works enshrine this progression of light and evoke your higher self to speak to you. In other words, he illuminates the Beloved that is always singing in your heart. Rumi would be pleased to see that AMORC exists today, knowing that the Beloved has a home in human consciousness and a route into this material world.

During his time on Earth, humanity was more prone to suffering and atrocities towards one another than we see today. He lived through those times, yet saw the flowering of the Beloved all around him and nurtured this inspiration into a form that continues to inspire a sometimes-unwelcoming world. And, in a sign of providence, his work was recognized, captured, and maintained within the mystery schools to live on. We owe much to Rumi and to all great mystics of the past for revealing, recognizing, and maintaining this mystic connection through time.



Their actions reflect an unrelenting bravery and zeal to advance humanity towards the divine.

A study of Rumi must include a look at the Whirling Dervishes, whose traditions have roots with him. It was in the 1990s that a form of this dance was inscribed on UNESCO's list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The Sema—the name for the entire ritual dance performance—is imbued with symbolism. The camel-hair hat of the whirler represents the tombstone of the ego, while the white skirt symbolizes the ego's shroud. When the whirler removes his black cloak, it is meant to signify his spiritual rebirth into truth.

When the whirler crosses his arms over his chest, he represents the number one and testifies to the Divine's unity. The dance begins with the singing of a eulogy to the Prophet Muhammad and all the prophets before him. This is followed by a drumbeat symbolizing the Divine's command for the creation of the universe. After this is an improvisation on the reed flute, meant to express the life-giving breath of the Divine, followed by a circular anti-clockwise procession. The whirlers greet each other three times, representing knowledge from others, knowledge through one's observations, and knowledge through direct experience.

After there are four musical movements, the whirler opens both arms to the sides and revolves from right to left, expressing an embrace of the entire universe. With an open palm, the right hand is then extended upwards, thus indicating a reception of the Divine's beneficence; the left hand is extended downwards to indicate the distribution of these divine gifts to all humanity. The whirlers do not aim to lose consciousness or fall into a state of ecstasy, but to submit and unite with the Beloved.



A stamp from Tajikistan depicting Rumi.

When the movements are completed, a verse from the Qur'an is recited, followed by a prayer for the repose of the souls of all the prophets and all believers. The dervishes then retire silently to their rooms for further meditation.

So we see this beautiful tradition of searching and going within to find the Beloved through dance. Dear friends, the legacy of Rumi beseeches us to listen to a harmony in all of nature, and that is the song of the Divine, our Inner Master, the Beloved. Rumi's life was both worldly, practical, and deeply spiritual. He followed his heart and found ways to express the rhythms of existence. He gifted us connections between humanity and nature. He lived and toiled in this world and recognized the balance we must find. "Life is a balance between holding on and letting go," he stated.

To conclude this article, we will review two of his verses. The first verse honors the Beloved and shows the longing Rumi felt to find It. The second verse honors the

feminine in all of us and the tenderness we, as human beings, should have toward one another and all of nature. Allow your consciousness to roam with the words and connect with that which it evokes within you.

My destiny do I strive to review day and night. I know not whence I come nor whither I go. I am the nightingale of paradise, only engaged a while. Joy one day will come when I shall fly to my Beloved, for my wings will beat in my Beloved's abode. But who is my Beloved that both listens and speaks with my breath? And who is my Beloved that looks at me with my eyes? And whose life is my own life? It is you, Lord, and my soul is you. You are there and I find you where I find myself. I will have no peace as long as I have not found you. My voice

will no longer be able to keep quiet. Guide me, show me the road to your house. I want to taste the exhilaration of union with thee. For you only, for your beauty, do I pray.

And now our second verse, honoring the feminine:

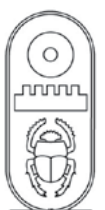
Woman is a ray of the Divine. Muhammad said woman prevails over the wise and intelligent, while the ignorant dominate over her. They lack tenderness and affection because their animality prevails. Love and gentleness are human qualities; aggressiveness and lust are bestial. Woman is a ray of the Divine; she is not that earthly beloved. You could say she is creative, not created.

It was Rumi's desire—and it is the desire of every aspiring mystic—to follow divine inspiration to a holy place inside and then to bring that inspiration out into this world. Rumi did this through his translations of his Beloved into his writings, his whirling, and through his teaching of others. In the spirit of Rumi, may we remember to pause our world and patiently listen for the Beloved to speak in the vibrations animate in matter and all around us.

As you capture your whispers from your own connection to the Beloved, perhaps you might compose what you experience into some outer form to inspire those around you. It can be your gem as a commemoration of your mystical heritage and part of your guidance upon the path of inner discovery. May the essence of Rumi ever inspire your search for the Beloved in you, which, as Rumi says, is also seeking you.



Rumi Addresses his Followers for the Last Time, from *Stars of the Legend*, ca. 1590.



FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Elissa Cuttjohn, SRC



Giovanni Bellini, Saint Francis in the Desert, ca. 1480.

Francesco di Bernardone was born in the ancient hill town of Assisi, in central Italy, in 1181. His father, Pietro, was a successful cloth merchant who frequently traveled to France. His mother was from a wealthy and possibly noble family.

Francis was described as a charming, fun-loving teenager who freely used his family's resources to fund his active social life with his friends. He sometimes traveled with his father to France and was especially fond of the musical tradition of the troubadours of Provence.

In 1202, when he was twenty-one years old, Francis enthusiastically went to war for Assisi with dreams of chivalric glory. During Assisi's devastating defeat, Francis was captured and held for ransom under harsh conditions for nearly a year. His less

privileged comrades, who hadn't died in battle, had been hunted down and killed. Upon his release, Francis fell seriously ill.

The Francis who returned to Assisi was a different man. Instead of the happy-go-lucky youth he had been, Francis was now moody and haunted by nightmares and war-related flashbacks. He gave away his clothes, begged from passersby, and practiced self-mortification. He wandered the nearby forests.

Eighteen months later, an old friend convinced Francis to join another military campaign. However, on the way he had a dream that caused him to return to Assisi. Abandoning his dreams of knighthood, he sold his horse, his equipment, and his clothes.

Francis's Conversion

Following a pilgrimage to Rome, in 1205, Francis stopped to pray before an icon of the crucified Christ in a side chapel of San Damiano, a century-old, run down church outside of Assisi, begging the Divine to guide him. Later he wrote down the words to his prayer and reported his experience:

Most High,
Most glorious God (Divinity),
Enlighten the darkness of my heart.
Give me true Faith,
Certain Hope, and
Perfect Charity;
Give me perception and knowledge,
of you Lord,
That I might carry out
Your holy and just commands.
Amen.

Francis had a mystical vision in which the crucified Christ on the cross came to life and said to him three times, "Francis, go and repair My house, which, as you can see, is falling into ruins." It seems that Francis interpreted this to mean that he should repair San Damiano Church, which he did. He also built a small hut next to it and lived there.

Francis spent more and more time in this church and eventually became a penitent attached to the church. Still, he was not well. He became so abnormally thin and unkempt that townspeople yelled curses and threw mud at him. Francis's father, Pietro, intervened and locked him in his house. Francis escaped.

In 1206, Pietro decided to take Francis to court, with the claim that he was disregarding his responsibilities. Francis claimed that he was an ecclesiastical person and refused to recognize the authority of the court, so the case was sent to the local bishop. The bishop encouraged Francis to give up all claims to his family's resources (Francis had a 50 percent stake in his mother's rich dowry). Francis willingly

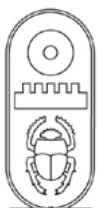
complied. Then he went into a nearby room, took off the clothes his father had given him, and placed them at his father's feet. Standing nearly naked before his father, Francis stated that from then on "Our Father who art in heaven" was his father, not Pietro di Bernardone.

Shortly after this, Francis found himself near some people affected by leprosy. He later wrote, "The Lord granted me, brother Francis, to begin doing penance this way: When I was in my sins, just to see lepers was very bitter for me. And the Lord himself took me among them, and I showed mercy to them. And on leaving them, what seemed bitter to me had turned for me into sweetness of body and soul. And afterwards I waited a little and left the world."

This was Francis's conversion. With zeal, he dedicated his life to helping those whom no one else wanted to help.



A mosaic depicting Francis and a leper, in the General Curia of the Order of Friars Minor in Rome, Italy.





Caravaggio, Saint Francis of Assisi in Ecstasy, ca. 1595.

Sortes Sacrae

Francis's life was simple – he cared for people affected by leprosy and prayed in and repaired San Damiano Church. Two years later, two men asked to join Francis in his life of prayer and penance. Francis didn't know how to proceed so he asked a nearby parish priest to perform a *Sortes Sacrae*, which was a common practice of lay people at this time, although considered superstitious by most educated people. The *Sortes Sacrae* involved a priest opening a bible, lectionary, or missal three times, revealing three verses that would guide the questioner.

In this case, the following three verses were revealed:

Mark 10:17-21—“Go, and sell all you own and give to the poor and you will have a treasure in heaven. Then come follow me.”

Luke 9:1-6—“Take nothing for the road, No staff, no bag, no bread, no silver. Not even two tunics. Whatever house you go into, stay there, and leave from there.”

Matthew 16:24-28—“If anyone wishes to be my follower, deny yourself and take up the cross and follow me.”

Francis and the two brothers memorized these verses. These words guided Francis for the rest of his life.

After meditating on these verses for a year, Francis decided to ask the pope for approval of his way of life. Although there are conflicting reports of how he was able to achieve this, Francis was allowed to meet with Pope Innocent III, who permitted Francis to recruit brothers and instructed him to preach. (While at the same time, this pope, who named himself Innocent, was fanatically exterminating other Christian groups that he considered heretical, an example being the Cathars.) Francis had originally desired to spend time in nature and pray in solitude to the Divine; now he was responsible for a group of eleven men and was expected to recruit others.

Clare

In 1212, after hearing Francis preach, eighteen-year-old Chiara (Clare) Offreduccio (ca. 1194-1253), who was

from an extremely wealthy noble family, asked Francis to help her live according to the Gospel. She became the first woman to join Francis in his work. She and Francis created the Order of Poor Ladies of San Damiano (today called the Order of Saint Clare). The sisters chose to live in poverty and seclusion. Like the brothers, the Poor Ladies sought to imitate the life of Yeshua. They spent their days in manual labor and prayer in a church near San Damiano. In 1216, Clare became the abbess of the order.

The Rule

Eventually the group of brothers grew so large that Francis needed help with governance. On several occasions, other people led the group, however Francis was usually nearby to advise the leader and to keep the brothers true to his original vision. At times, usually in his absence, changes were made, which he generally reversed on his return.

Francis stayed true to his interpretations of the three Bible verses. This manifested in the Rule, a code of conduct that he wrote

as guidance for the brothers. In support of the Luke verse “Whatever house you go into, stay there, and leave from there,” the early Franciscans were prohibited from owning property. They rented their churches and housing. In support of the verse from Mark “Go, sell what you have,” those who joined Francis were required to give away all of their belongings.

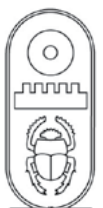
The brothers could not accept money, although later concessions were made to accept alms for people affected by leprosy. Francis wrote:

Our Lord teaches in the Gospel: “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions. . . .” We should not consider money or coin to have any more use than stones. . . . So let us be careful not to lose the kingdom of heaven for such a trifle.

Francis instructed the brothers that they should: “Apply themselves diligently in doing good works, as it is said, ‘Always be busy in some sort of good work so



The Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi in Assisi, Italy, which was completed in 1253 and contains its namesake’s remains.



that the devil will find you busy,' and 'Idleness is the soul's enemy.'" During the day, the brothers performed manual labor and preached. At night they devoted themselves to prayer.

Francis began calling the brothers Lesser Brothers. Many had been wealthy; others had been destitute. Francis accepted them all, with no waiting period, although this was later changed. In support of the Matthew verse "deny yourself . . .," Francis instructed the Lesser Brothers to consider themselves subservient to everyone (with just a few exceptions), even if they believed the other person was wrong. He instructed them to "Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again."

Priests were accepted into the Order and were allowed to study the Bible, however Francis forbade illiterate brothers to learn how to read, so that they would not be tempted by arrogance (for example, in order to know more than the other brothers) or by ambition (for example, in order to become a priest). Francis referred to himself as an *illiteratus*. He believed that the best way to preach was through example.

People who knew Francis reported that he had a deep affinity with animals. He would lovingly speak with them and, like many people, they were attracted to Francis. He praised animals for living day to day, without thinking about whether or not they would have food the next day, serving as examples for Francis and his followers to trust the Creator to supply their needs. In support of the verse from Luke "Take nothing for your journey . . . no bread . . .," Francis prohibited the brothers from carrying food over from one day to the next. He once told a brother that he could not soak beans overnight in order to cook them the next day.



A fresco depicting Francis preaching to the birds in his namesake church in Assisi, ca. 1260.

Francis and the Sultan

Francis encouraged the brothers to travel as missionaries in order to convert "unbelievers," which he did as well. In 1219, he traveled to Egypt to try to convert the Muslim leader there in order to end the Fifth Crusade, a brutal war in which Christians were trying to regain the Holy Land from the Muslims. At this time, Muslims were generally portrayed as "beasts" and pagans by European Christians.

The leader of Egypt, the Kurdish Sultan Malik al-Kamil, a nephew of Salah ad-Din (Saladin), was a cultured man known in Egypt for his wisdom and fairness. When he was eleven years old, the English king Richard the Lion-Hearted had granted him knighthood. The war wasn't going well for al-Kamil so he made several offers to the Crusaders to give them Jerusalem in exchange for peace, however the Roman Catholic Church directed this Crusade and the papal legate, Cardinal Pelagius, repeatedly refused these offers. He wanted to crush the Muslims.

While al-Kamil was waiting for a response to one of his offers of peace, Francis and a companion, knowing that they might be killed, walked across enemy

lines into the Sultan's camp and asked to meet with al-Kamil. They were eventually allowed to do so. The Sultan asked Francis if he was there as an emissary of the Crusaders. Francis informed him that he was an ambassador of the Lord Yeshua and was there to save the Sultan's soul.

Al-Kamil generously welcomed Francis and his companion and eventually arranged for an exchange of ideas between his teachers of Islam and Francis. Al-Kamil later safely returned Francis to the Crusader camp. Francis then returned to Assisi.

Later, after defeating the Crusaders, al-Kamil arranged to have food sent to the starving Crusader troops and their animals. Although Francis did not convert al-Kamil, his example inspired many Franciscan missionaries to come and his calls for peace became more fervent after this. Al-Kamil's generous reception of Francis and his compassion to the defeated Crusaders have become legendary.

“Canticle to Brother Sun”

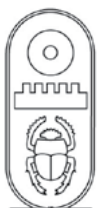
Francis became a passionate preacher and sometimes when addressing a group he would become so inspired during his praise of the Divine that he would begin dancing or singing. In 1224, he wrote the “Canticle to Brother Sun,” a prayer of thanksgiving to and for the Divine, that he and other brothers sang.

Most High, all-powerful good Lord,
Yours be the praises, the glory, and
the honor,
And all blessing.
To you alone, Most High, do they
belong
And no one is worthy to mention
your Name.
Praised be you, my Lord, with all
your creatures, especially Sir
Brother Sun,
Who is the day, and through whom
you give us light.

And he is beautiful and radiant with
great splendor,
And bears a likeness of you, Most
High one.
Praised be you, my Lord, through
Sister Moon and the stars,
In heaven you formed them clear,
and precious and wonderful.
Praised be you, my Lord,
Through Brother Wind, and
through the air,
Cloudy and serene, and every kind
of weather,
Through whom you give sustenance
to all your creatures.
Praised be you, my Lord, through
Sister Water,
Who is very useful, and humble,
and precious, and chaste.
Praised be you, my Lord, through
Brother Fire,
Through whom you light the night.
And he is beautiful, and playful, and
robust and strong.
Praised be you, my Lord, through
our Sister, Mother Earth,
Who sustains and governs us,
And produces fruit with colored
flowers and herbs.



Sassetta, Saint Francis Renounces his Earthly Father, ca. 1444.





Francis's tomb in Assisi.

Praise and bless my Lord and give
him thanks
And serve him with great humility.

**Pardon One Another
for the Divine's Sake**

Towards the end of Francis's life, he suffered horrible pain from various illnesses. While in retreat, trying to recuperate, he was informed about a feud between the chief magistrate of Assisi, Don Oportulo, and Bishop Guido of Assisi. This eventually escalated to the point that Don Oportulo made it a crime to make any agreements with the bishop and the bishop ex-communicated Don Oportulo.

Francis was deeply saddened that no one had intervened to try to make peace. He had already written the "Canticle to Brother Sun" and added the following stanza to the end of that song to be sung to the parties involved in this feud. He sent a brother who instructed, on Francis's behalf, Don Oportulo and the bishop to meet outside the bishop's palace and sent two brothers to sing the revised "Canticle," ending with these words:

Praised be you, O my Lord, for all
who show Forgiveness and

Pardon one another for Your sake,
And who endure weakness and
tribulation.
Blessed are they who peaceably
endure,
For you, Most High, shall give them
a crown.

Don Oportulo was so moved that he fell to the bishop's feet begging for forgiveness and withdrew all of his orders. The bishop had no choice but to ask for forgiveness in return, thus ending this altercation.

Returning Home

At the age of forty-four, Francis was very ill. He was nearly blind, unable to walk, and could barely eat or speak. He was moved to San Damiano, where Clare and her sisters took care of him. Later he went to the bishop's palace in Assisi for medical treatment. There, the brothers often sang songs of joy to him. In the last days of his life, Francis asked to be taken to the little hut that he had built next to San Damiano Church, where the Christ on the crucifix had directed him to rebuild his church. There, Francis went through transition on October 3, 1226.

Bibliography

Joan Acocella, "Rich Man, Poor Man. The radical visions of St. Francis." *The New Yorker*, January 14, 2013. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/01/14/rich-man-poor-man>

Willis Barnstone, *Restored New Testament*. W.W. Norton & Company, New York, NY, 2009.

Paul Moses, *The Saint and the Sultan, The Crusades, Islam, and Francis of Assisi's Mission of Peace*. Doubleday, New York, NY, 2009.

Jon M. Sweeney, *Francis and Clare: A True Story*. Paraclete Press, Brewster, MA, 2013.

Jon M. Sweeney, *Francis of Assisi in His Own Words: The Essential Writings*. Paraclete Press, Brewster, MA, 2013.

Augustine Thompson, O.P., *Francis of Assisi: A New Biography*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 2012.

HILDEGARD OF BINGEN: A MODERNLY MEDIEVAL MYSTIC

Cheri Gandy, SRC



An illustration from the thirteenth-century edition of Hildegard of Bingen's Liber divinorum operum showing Hildegard receiving a divine vision in the presence of her secretary Volmar and her companion, the nun Richardis von Stade.

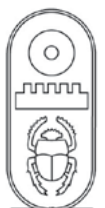
Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), the Benedictine Abbess and polymath, is unique in the breadth of her talents and contributions to humanity. She lived to the age of 81, a considerable lifespan for the Middle Ages; yet the oeuvre for which she is famous was created during the second half of her life. Theologian Barbara Newman frames Hildegard's influence by giving us a few of the “firsts and onlies” to her credit:

The only woman of her age accepted as an authoritative voice on Christian doctrine; the first woman who received express papal permission to write theological books; the only medieval woman who preached openly, before mixed audiences of clergy and laity with full approval of the church

authorities; the author of the first known morality play and the only twelfth-century playwright who is not anonymous; the only composer of her era (not to mention the only medieval woman) known both by name and by a large corpus of surviving music; the first scientific writer to discuss sexuality and gynecology from a female perspective.¹

She was formally canonized by Pope Benedict XVI in May 2012, and that October, declared a Doctor of the Universal Church. This article looks at her extraordinary life and why she is so relevant today.

Hildegard was born in 1098 in Bermersheim near Alzey, Germany, in the diocese of Mainz, the tenth child of



an aristocratic family. She was received as an oblate at age eight and entered the Benedictine monastery of Disibodenberg, where she joined the noblewoman Jutta of Sponheim. Jutta, the *magistra*, taught Hildegard the Psalter and singing; the monk Volmar supplemented her instruction and would become her lifelong secretary, editor, and friend. As more women joined, the hermitage grew into a Benedictine community within the men's monastery, and when Jutta died in 1136, the sisters elected Hildegard as the next *magistra*.

A common theme in Hildegard's writings is her insistence on her ignorance due to her lack of formal education, a perceived deficit that, paradoxically, became one of her strongest claims to authority.² She had experienced visions as a child and they continued throughout adulthood, but she only confided these to Jutta and Volmar. All this changed, however, when her visions began to give

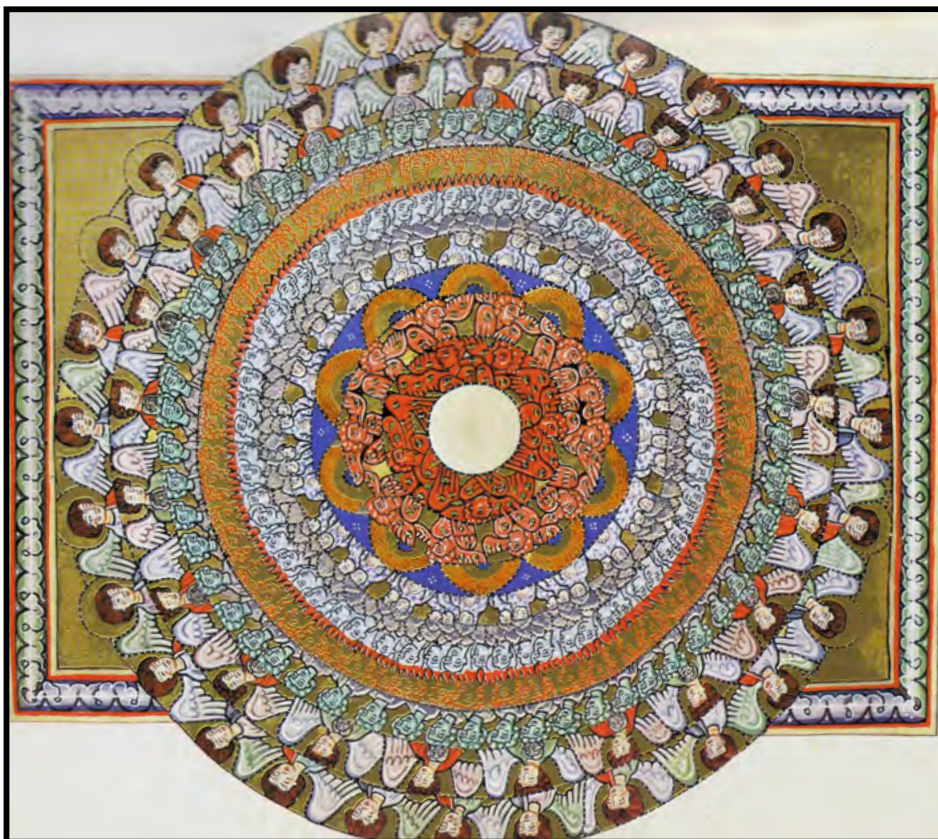
her a different type of education and reveal the deeper mysteries of scripture.

In 1141, at the age of forty-two, Hildegard experienced an extraordinary event that would initiate her into her life's work:

As I was gazing with great fear and trembling attention at a heavenly vision, I saw a great splendor in which resounded a voice from Heaven, saying to me,

“O fragile human, . . . Say and write what you see and hear.”

When I was forty-two years and seven months old, Heaven was opened, and a fiery light of exceeding brilliance came and permeated my whole brain, and inflamed my whole heart, and my whole breast, not like a burning, but like a warming flame, as the sun warms anything its rays touch. And immediately I knew the meaning



Hildegard von Bingen, Scivias I.6: The Choirs of Angels, 1150.



Benedictine Abbey St. Hildegard in Eibingen, founded in 1165 by Hildegard of Bingen.

of the exposition of the scriptures, namely, the Psalter, the Gospel, and the other Catholic volumes of both the Old and the New Testaments, though I did not have the interpretation of the words of their texts.³

With this divine command, Hildegard the seer became Hildegard the prophet!⁴

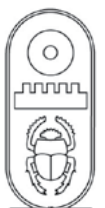
Acting on this divine command was daunting, and she commented that her hesitation brought on one of her painful illnesses. Hildegard had to overcome three inadequacies to write her experiences: she considered herself uneducated; she had no authorization from any human superior to write theology; and she was a woman, in an age when women were generally considered as mentally weak. She turned each obstacle into an asset, insisting that her very lack of education proved her wisdom was of divine origin, since the Divine had long chosen the weak as Its messengers.⁵

Encouraged by Volmar and given approval by her abbot, Hildegard began her first volume, *Scivias*, (*Know the Ways*). In 1147-48, she received confirmation of her prophetic call from Bernard of Clairvaux, and Pope Eugenius III read excerpts from her unfinished *Scivias* at the Synod of Trier and sent her a letter granting apostolic approval to continue recording her visions.⁶

In 1148, Hildegard received a vision instructing her to establish an independent abbey at Rupertsberg, near Bingen. By the mid-1160s, the monastery had grown so prosperous that Hildegard founded a second abbey at Eibingen across the Rhine, of which she was also abbess.⁷

In creating an independent location for herself and her sisters, Hildegard's creativity could now thrive. From her visions and direct knowledge of nature flowed a remarkable body of work. *Scivias* is a guide to Christian doctrine in twenty-six visions across three books, ranging over the Trinity, Creation, the Fall, salvation history, the Church, and the Last Judgment. Her *Book of Life's Merits* (1158–1163) gave form and voice to Vices and Virtues and reflected her engagement with the moral struggle of cloistered life. The *Book of Divine Works* (1163–1173) presented a dynamic cosmos superimposed on the human form, its overarching theme the active presence of the Divine throughout creation. Her two great scientific works of the mid-1150s, *Physica* and *Causes and Cures*, understood the body, plants, stones, food, and other objects of nature as microcosms of the larger balanced cosmic order.⁸

Newman and author Nancy Fierro observe that Hildegard was perhaps the first major medieval thinker to articulate the



Divine in feminine archetypes, and to sense that women were at a spiritual disadvantage because they lacked an image of the Divine in their spirituality.⁹ The visions opened new realities of the divine feminine underpinnings of creation. Sapientia, Lady Wisdom, appears in the *Scivias* as a powerful creative force encircling the cosmos with three wings, one in heaven, one sweeping Earth, and one across the horizon, quickening everything she touches; together with Mother Earth, she continually assists in the creation, survival, and maturation of life. In another vision, Sapientia wears a brilliant gold tunic adorned with green, white, red, and sky-blue precious gems. Ecclesia, the Church, personifies the bride of the Divine.¹⁰ Caritas opens the *Book of Divine Works* as an enormous flaming winged figure who declares:

I, the highest and fiery power, have kindled every spark of life, and I emit nothing that is deadly. I decide on all reality. . . . with wisdom I have rightly put the universe in order. . . . I burn in the sun, moon, and the stars. I awaken everything to life. The air lives by turning green and being in bloom. And thus I remain hidden in every kind of reality as a fiery power, everything burns because of me . . . For I am Life.¹¹

Hildegard developed two related concepts that are woven into her vision of cosmic life: *symphonia* and *viriditas*. *Symphonia*, or harmony, is the natural state of being in tune with the Divine, others, and creation, and we see an example of this

in Lady Wisdom. *Viriditas*, the “greening” life-force, is the nurturing vitality behind nature, fertility, creativity, and motherhood. It is the immanent feminine life-force of the Divine in the cosmos that is displayed in Caritas. These work together to create a harmonious universe that is continually and vitally alive.

Symphonia also feeds and balances the soul through music. In Hildegard’s theology, Adam before the Fall possessed a voice ringing with every harmony, and music attempts to recover that lost celestial sound. This conviction took shape in her great song-cycle, the *Symphonia of the Harmony of Celestial Revelations*, a complete liturgical cycle of antiphons, responsories, hymns, and sequences, arranged hierarchically from the Divine and Mary, through angels and saints,

to Ecclesia. Newman characterizes her style as “gregorianizing but not Gregorian,” identifying distinctive features. First, extreme melismatic richness: the antiphon “O vos angeli” averages more than six notes per syllable, closing with a melisma of some eighty notes on a single word. Second, a wide vocal range sometimes spanning over two octaves, far beyond ordinary chant. In “O gloriosissimi lux vivens angeli,” on the words *qui volare voluit* (who wished to fly), the melody rises, hovers, then sharply plummets, painting Satan’s ascent and fall. She also favors melodic lines marked by ascending and descending fifths.¹² In *Ordo Virtutum* (Play of the Virtues), the oldest surviving morality play, the female Virtues are given sung voices as a penitent soul resists the devil, who being outside the world of harmony, is denied song.



Sculpture of Hildegard of Bingen by Karlheinz Oswald, 1998, in front of Eibingen Abbey.

Beginning in 1158 at the age of sixty, while battling two three-year illnesses, Hildegard undertook four preaching tours throughout Germany. Preaching in twenty-one cities, she confronted the corruption destroying the Church: the buying and selling of ecclesiastical offices, clergy who served as wealthy feudal lords backing Frederick Barbarossa's antipopes, clergy who took concubines, and the clerical negligence that allowed heterodox movements to get a foothold in the Rhineland. On a more intimate level, her correspondence spanned three decades and reached every sector of society, from popes, royalty, emperors, to harried abbots and abbesses dreaming of laying down the burdens of office, to laypeople asking whether their kin suffered in purgatory.¹³

Fierro believes that Hildegard remains so accessible across the centuries because of the human contradiction at the center of her brilliance. Coming from nobility, she never questioned the rigid class hierarchy of her time. The community at the Rupertsberg accepted only girls of noble birth, and when she was challenged on it, she defended the policy without



Wilhelm Fassbinder, Hildegard von Bingen
Contemplates a Flower, 1898.

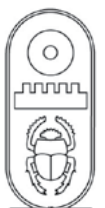
apology. As abbess, she ran her community with a firm hand, governing the women under her care almost autocratically and, when necessary, used her chronic illness to gain political advantage and sometimes bend situations toward her will. She was prone to bouts of depression, and was emotionally tenacious, as she struggled to release her attachments to those she loved, such as the nun Richardis and the monk Volmar.¹⁴

Hildegard went through transition at the age of 81. In her *Vita*, her biographers described the scene of her transition:

At early twilight on that Sunday, two very bright arcs of various colors appeared in the heavens directly over the chamber in which the holy virgin returned her happy soul to the Divine. These rainbows extended over a wide stretch of sky out to the four corners of the earth, one from north to south, the other from east to west. In the vertex where the two arcs crossed, a bright moon-shaped light radiated. It spread its light near and far and seemed to expel the nightly darkness from the death chamber. In this light, a glittering red cross could be seen that at first was small, but then grew to huge size. This cross was surrounded by innumerable varicolored circles in which individual crosses were formed, each with its own circle. . . . When they had spread out in the firmament, they expanded to the East and seemed to lean toward earth toward the house in which the holy virgin had gone home, and they enveloped the entire mount in brilliant light.¹⁵

As she departed, she gave her community the visionary experience she had always known.

On the eight-hundredth anniversary of Hildegard's death, Pope John Paul II called her "a light for her people and her time."



Pope Benedict XVI, on the appointment of Hildegard as a Doctor of the Universal Church, tells us “The teaching of the holy Benedictine nun stands as a beacon. . . . Her message appears extraordinarily timely in today’s world, which is especially sensitive to the values that she proposed and lived.”¹⁶ Regardless of one’s spiritual belief system, gender, or station in life, there is something in Hildegard’s life for all of us. She used all her qualities to break through many of the confines of women in the twelfth century. In bringing her extraordinary mind, talents, and resources together in service of the Divine, she made accessible a new, inspiring view into the love of the cosmos and creation; and she gives us a model for courageous action in our lives and society today. In gifting the world with her “sense of universal life, of a world aflame with vitality,”¹⁷ Hildegard continues to move humanity forward.

Endnotes

- ¹ Barbara Newman, “Sibyl of the Rhine: Hildegard’s Life and Times,” in *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and Her World*, ed. Barbara Newman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 1.
- ² Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard’s Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), e-book, 5–6.
- ³ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, trans. Columba Hart and Jane Bishop (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), “Declaration,” 59.
- ⁴ Gottfried of Disibodenberg and Theoderic of Echternach, *The Life of the Holy Hildegard*, trans. James McGrath (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), introduction, 6.
- ⁵ Nancy Fierro, *Hildegard of Bingen and Her Vision of the Feminine* (New York: Macmillan Audio, 2016), audio program.

⁶ Newman, “Sibyl of the Rhine,” 11–12.

⁷ Newman, “Sibyl of the Rhine,” 12–14.

⁸ Newman, *Sister of Wisdom*, 16–20, 142, 162.



The altarpiece of the Chapel of St. Roch in Bingen depicting Hildegard of Bingen.

⁹ Fierro, *Hildegard of Bingen and Her Vision of the Feminine*, paraphrasing Newman.

¹⁰ Newman, *Sister of Wisdom*, 16, 41; Fierro, *Hildegard of Bingen and Her Vision of the Feminine*.

¹¹ Hildegard of Bingen, *Book of Divine Works*, ed. Matthew Fox (Santa Fe: Bear and Company, 1987), “Vision One: 2,” 9–10.

¹² Barbara Newman, introduction to *Symphonia: A Critical Edition of the Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 28.

¹³ Newman, “Sibyl of the Rhine,” 19–20; Fierro, *Hildegard of Bingen and Her Vision of the Feminine*.

¹⁴ Fierro, *Hildegard of Bingen and Her Vision of the Feminine*.

¹⁵ Gottfried of Disibodenberg and Theoderic of Echternach, *The Life of the Holy Hildegard*, introduction, 99–100.

¹⁶ Benedict XVI, *Apostolic Letter Proclaiming Saint Hildegard of Bingen a Doctor of the Universal Church*, October 7, 2012, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apl_20121007_hildegarda-bingen.html.

¹⁷ Newman, *Sister of Wisdom*, 67.

RABIA OF BASRA AND DIVINE LOVE IN SUFI MYSTICISM

Margaret Hill, SRC



Depiction of Rabiya grinding grain from a Persian dictionary.

Little known in the West, Rabiya of Basra remains one of most famous women in mystical Islam, often credited with introducing the concept of pure Divine Love into Sufism and revered, within her own lifetime and today for her absolute asceticism and knowledge of the Divine Mysteries.

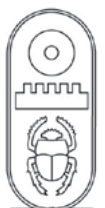
Variouly known as Rabi'a al-Adawiyya al-Qaysiyya and Rabiya al-Basriyya, after her birth place, Rabiya was born into humble circumstances ca. 717 CE in Basra, in present day Iraq and knew great poverty, as well as servitude during her lifetime.

That we know anything at all about Rabiya's extraordinarily inspiring story and teachings is to be credited to Attar of Nishapur (Faridoddin), the renowned Sufi mystic and poet who included her biography in his *Memorial of the Saints*. Writing over three hundred years later, in twelfth-century Iran and anticipating criticism of his having included a woman among revered male saints, Attar addressed

the question of why he had done so by stating "The Divine does not regard your outward forms. The root of the matter is not form, but intention, as the Prophet said: 'Humankind will be raised up according to their intentions'" (Arberry 2000, 29). Perhaps necessarily given the historical distance in time, much of what we do know about Rabiya is considered the stuff of legend. Nevertheless, the many stories of Rabiya and her interactions with her mostly male contemporaries and disciples reveal a great deal about her and her teachings and show a woman renouncing the material world for a life of service to the Divine.

Rabiya's Early Life

The fourth daughter born into a pious but very poor family, Attar tells of the miraculous events reputed to have occurred on the night of Rabiya's birth. There being no oil in the house nor any swaddling in which to wrap the newborn child, her mother had asked her husband to



ask their neighbor for some oil so that she might light a lamp. However unbeknownst to his wife, Rabia's father had made a vow never to ask any living mortal for anything, so after going out and laying his hands on his neighbor's door, he returned saying "they will not open the door." His wife wept and that night, having fallen asleep in distress at his lack of ability to provide for his child, Rabia's father had a dream in which the Prophet Muhammad appeared to him. "Be not sorrowful," the Prophet bade him. "The girl child who has just come to Earth is a queen among women, who shall be the intercessor for seventy thousand of my community tomorrow." The Prophet continued: "go to Isa-e Zadan the governor of Basra. Write on a piece of paper to the following effect: Every night you send upon me a hundred blessings, and on Friday night four hundred. Last night was Friday night, and you forgot me. In expiation for that, give this man four hundred dinars lawfully acquired."

Upon awaking, Rabia's father wrote the letter as directed and the governor, in reply, commanded that two thousand dinars be given to the poor and four hundred dinars to Rabia's father "as a thanksgiving for the Master remembering me."

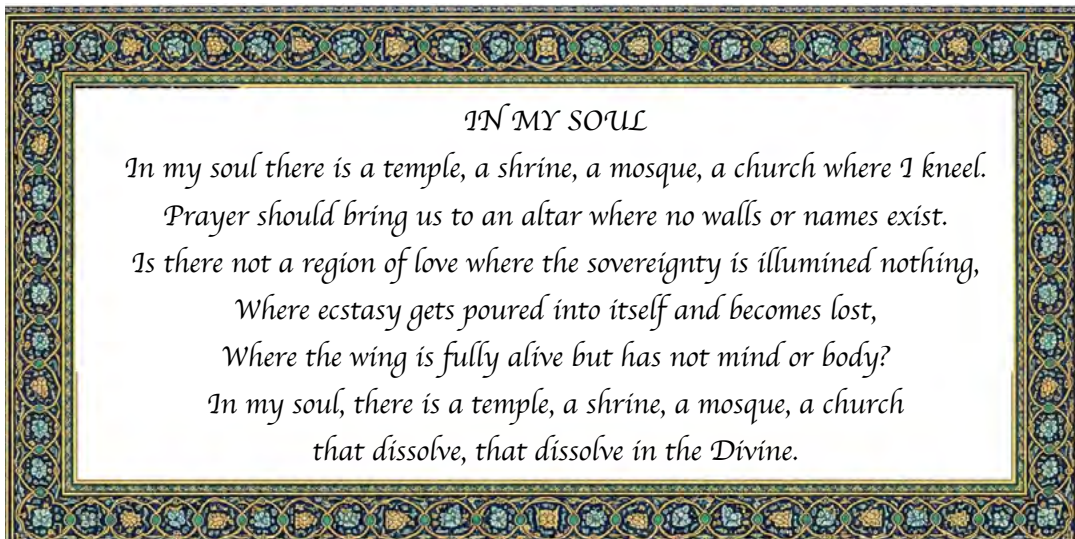
We next learn of Rabia in her youth, when her parents have perished in a famine that swept through Basra, her sisters are "scattered," and she has been sold as a slave for six dirhams. Working in her master's house, Rabia is said to have fasted by day and prayed ceaselessly by night. One night her master awoke from sleep and looking down through a window in the house observed Rabia prostrate and praying: "O my Lord, You know that the desire of my heart is to obey You, and that the light of my eye is in the service of Your court. If the matter rested with me, I should not cease for one hour from Your service, but You have made me subject to

a creature." He also saw what he perceived as a lantern above her head, suspended without a chain. Said to be afraid by what he witnessed, he determined that he would speak to Rabia in the morning whereupon Rabia asked to be set free. The master complied with her request and Rabia left her life of servitude. She journeyed into the desert and in time, built a place of retreat.

This account of Rabia's early life is authoritatively reinforced by her modern biographer, Margaret Smith, and there appears to be little doubt that Rabia had indeed been enslaved. Rabia dedicated the rest of her life to a spiritual asceticism based on celibacy and voluntary deprivation. She rejected many proposals of marriage, including those from companions on the Way. Rabia spent her nights in prayer and her worldly possessions were said to consist of a broken jug from which she drank, an old reed mat to sit upon, and a brick for a pillow. Over time, she attracted to her



The Sufi mystic Rabia Basri Fed by Angels in the Wilderness, *late eighteenth century.*



IN MY SOUL

*In my soul there is a temple, a shrine, a mosque, a church where I kneel.
Prayer should bring us to an altar where no walls or names exist.
Is there not a region of love where the sovereignty is illumined nothing,
Where ecstasy gets poured into itself and becomes lost,
Where the wing is fully alive but has not mind or body?
In my soul, there is a temple, a shrine, a mosque, a church
that dissolve, that dissolve in the Divine.*

simple home a large number of guests and associates, many of whom became her disciples. Although she counted a small number of women among them, the majority of her disciples were men.

Her Teachings and Prayers

Leaving no written legacy, it is chiefly through the recounting of her conversations (and more typically), verbal jousts with her guests and disciples, as well as from her prayers, that the depth of Rabia's teachings is revealed. Among the oft quoted stories and anecdotes, two in particular highlight her unique mystical insights. Discoursing on the impropriety of personal desires with a young man named Sofyan and his companion Abd al-Wahed-e Amer, Rabia disclosed her desire for dates. "For twelve years now, I have been desiring fresh dates. You know that in Basra dates are of no consequence. Yet till now I have not eaten any; for I am the Divine's servant, and what business has a servant to desire? If I wish, and my Lord does not wish, this would be infidelity. You must want only what the Divine wishes, to be a true servant of the Divine. If the Divine gives Itself, that is a different matter." When in reply, Sofyan asked Rabia to say something about his situation, she said: "You are a good man, but for

the fact that you love the world. You love reciting the Traditions." In reply, Sofyan cried out, "Lord Divinity, be content with me!" to which Rabia retorted, "Are you not ashamed to seek the contentment of One with whom you yourself are not content?" Sofyan's companion, listening on, then asked, "When is the servant satisfied with the Divinity Most High?" "When his pleasure in misfortune is equal to his pleasure in prosperity," Rabia famously replied.

In this, we see the very early articulation of what was to become a key Sufi doctrine, simply stated. For the Sufi, the goal of the spiritual quest is union with the Divine, absorption into the Divine. Ultimately, this can only be accomplished by Love. While the Sufis delineate various stages on the Way, including purification and purgation of the nafs (desires), asceticism, and complete submission to the will of the Divine, Love is the final and highest stage to be attained by the adept. This takes the form of a passionate longing for the Divine, a direct intimacy between the Lover and the Beloved, and total Satisfaction. For the Sufi, Satisfaction comprised two aspects: human satisfaction with the Divine and Divine satisfaction with a person.





A Sufi in a Landscape, ca. 1550.

As can be found in *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, the oldest Persian treatise on Sufism:

Divine satisfaction really consists in the Divine's willing that people should be recompensed and in Its bestowing grace upon them. Human satisfaction really consists in a person's performing the command of the Divine and submitting to Its decree. . . . In short, human satisfaction is equanimity towards Fate, whether it withholds or bestows . . . so that it is all one to a person whether they are consumed in the fire of wrath or illuminated by the light of mercy, because both wrath and mercy are evidence of the Divine and whatever proceeds from the Divine is good in Its eyes. (Smith 1928, 88–89)

From this stage of Love, the adept passes directly into a mystical union with the Divine who is unveiled in all Its Beauty and attains direct and true Gnosis of the Divine mysteries. Having annihilated self (*fana*), the Sufi attains unity with the Divine and from there on subsists permanently with the Divine, through the Divine, in the Divine, and for the Divine (*baqa*).

Rabia was the first of the early Sufis to stress the importance of loving the Divine for the Divine's sake alone and not out of fear of punishment or anticipation of reward. In an incident recorded by the Persian writer Shamsuddin Aflaki, Rabia sought to make her contemporaries understand this by walking the streets of Basra with a flaming torch in one hand and a bucket of water in the other. When asked by observers what her intention and meaning were she said: "I am going to light a fire in Paradise and pour water on Hell so both veils may completely disappear from the pilgrims and their purpose may be sure, and the servants of the Divine may see It, without any object of hope or motive of fear."

Rabia's Legacy

Though Rabia was not the first Sufi to realize that Love was the Way to the Divine, she was perhaps the first to lay stress upon the doctrine and combine it with the *Kashf*, the unveiling at the end of the Way of the Beloved to Its lovers, to provide a direct personal experience of Divine revelation. As R. A. Nicholson, the great Sufi scholar, said "with Rabia, Love, the unquenchable flame smoldering in the ashes of ceremonial religion and kindling the torch of mysticism through the darkest ages, began its conquest of Muslim hearts" (Smith 1928: 97).

In her famous verse on the two types of love (shown at the end of this article), Rabia distills the essence of her teachings.

The Love of the Divine to the exclusion of all else, for Its Glory alone, is the Way. In laying stress upon the importance of Sura 5:59 of the Qur'an, "The Divine loves them and they love the Divine" as the cornerstone of all manifestations of love between the Divine and people, Rabia became synonymous with Divine Love, a love which gives up everything and wants nothing but the Divine's eternal Beauty and Grace. This distinguished her from her contemporary ascetics who, for the most part, were pre-occupied with abstention, ritual purity, meticulous observance of religious duties, and a fear of the Divine. Rabia set an example for generations to come and laid the foundations of the multifaceted doctrines of Love of later Sufis.

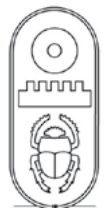
Rabia lived the life a true ascetic, embracing poverty and surrendering herself utterly to the quest for union with the Divine. She is thought to have lived until she was nearly ninety, retaining clarity of mind and continuing to serve as a spiritual guide and director to the many who sought her counsel, prayers, and teachings until her transition in Basra in 801. Considered the first and greatest female Sufi Saint of Islam, Rabia was the first in a long line of female Sufi mystics to follow.

Today, Rabia is inspiring a new generation of seekers who, though they may shy away personally from her example of extreme asceticism, are nonetheless exalted by her insistence on examining intentions and motives, remaining unattached to promises of reward, nor acting out of fear. Rabia's call to rise above personal notions of pleasure and pain, to realize Divine Love and accomplish that which is worthy of the Beloved, continues to help pave the mystic Way.



Bibliography

- Al-Qushayrī, ‘Alī ibn ‘Uthmān. 2000 [1911]. *Kashf al-Mahjūb: The Unveiling of the Veiled*. Translated by Reynold A. Nicholson. Edinburgh: E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust. Quoted in Smith, M. 1928. *Rabia: The Mystic and Her Fellow-Saints in Islam*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Arberry, A. J. 2000. *Muslim Saints and Mystics: Translated and Abridged Version of the Tadhkirat al-Auliya (Memorial of the Saints) by Farid al-Din Attar*. Omphaloskepsis Books.
- Chittick, W. C. 1983. *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Jackson, R. 2006. *Fifty Key Figures in Islam*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Knysh, A. 2000. *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*. Boston: Brill.
- Schimmel, A. 1982. "Women in Mystical Islam." *Women's Studies International Forum* 5 (2): 145–151.
- Smith, M. 1928. *Rabia: The Mystic and Her Fellow-Saints in Islam*. London: Cambridge University Press.



THE ORACLES OF DELPHI

Grand Master Julie Scott, SRC

Imagine a culture that celebrates women as fonts of wisdom.

Imagine a tradition that values more than just intellectual ways of knowing, such as synchronicities and dreams and intuition.

Imagine teachers who encourage their students to anticipate the path ahead, not to just look for an immediate solution.

Imagine a Sage who requires the Inquirer to participate in his or her inquiry, in order to evoke deeper learning.

Imagine Shamanesses who invite us to be all we can be.

These were the Oracles of Delphi.



Michelangelo's depiction of the Delphic Sibyl on the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

For thousands of years the Oracles of Delphi were consulted before any major decision was made. Kings, generals, and philosophers all sought her advice.

The average person was only allowed to approach the Oracle once in their lifetime. The petitioner had to cleanse himself or herself in the nearby sacred spring before approaching her. Then they would ask their question.

When you visit the temple of Apollo at Delphi today, you can see an underground chamber that goes beneath the adyton. This was where the Oracles entered. Ancient historians reported that there were fumes coming up through a fissure in the ground in this area, and the Oracle would sit on a tripod above these fumes. She would hold a sprig of laurel and look into a bowl of water as she answered the petitioners' questions.

Recent research has shown that there are two major geological fault lines that cross like an X under the adyton in the temple of Apollo. There is evidence there of gases, such as ethylene, that could induce a borderline state.

The Oracle would prepare herself. She would fast and would only meet with petitioners on certain days. It's believed that this might have been when the gases were safe enough for her to be able to be seated above them.

The women who served as Oracles were chosen for their natural abilities. They were called Oracles, and their prophecies were also called oracles. Sometimes the women were also called Pythias. Pythias were associated with the mythical python from this area. Serpents were associated with the Divine Feminine. Sometimes the Oracles were called Sibyls. In Greek, sibyl comes from theobule; theo, which is the deity, and bule, which means to sing. So, she's singing from the Divine.

The Oracles presented their oracles for thousands of years, possibly as early as 5000 BCE. The Oracle Tradition ended in the year 394 of our era, when the Roman Emperor Theodosius forbade any of the ancient traditions.

There was a special stone placed in the temple area at Delphi called the omphalos, which means navel or belly button. It was believed that Delphi was the center of the world and that it was connected, through its navel, to the mother goddess. What closer connection have any of us had to our mother than through our navel?

Now, let's look at how the Oracles were celebrated as fonts of wisdom.

In ancient Greece, no major decision was made without first consulting the Oracle. On the path leading up to the Temple of Apollo there are stone treasuries. These are small buildings that

were filled with riches given in thanks for the Oracles' advice.

The Oracles were able to see beyond the usual limits of time and space, again, through synchronicities, intuition, and dreams. You may be familiar with one of the most famous oracles associated with Delphi, that of King Croesus and his request for war advice.

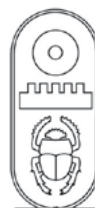
Croesus was the richest man in that part of the world and was very powerful. He was the King of Lydia and had everything he wanted. The Persians were not threatening Croesus, but he felt that they could in the future, so, he asked his representative to ask the Oracle if he should wage war on the Persians. The Oracle replied that if he did, he would destroy a mighty empire.

Croesus interpreted this to mean that he would destroy the mighty Persian Empire, but it didn't turn out that way. The Persians soundly defeated Croesus's army and captured him.

After his defeat and eventual release, Croesus sent his representative back to the Oracle to ask where her error had been. She pointed out that when he had previously asked if Croesus should wage



Aegeus, the mythical king who founded Athens, consults the Oracle, on a plate from ca. 440 BCE..





John Collier, Priestess of Delphi, 1891.

war on the Persians, she had said – if you do, you will destroy a mighty empire. She said that this was true, but he never asked the second, and more important question, which would have been – which empire? It proved to be Croesus's.

The Oracles expected inquirers to participate in their own learning. They often responded in riddles so that the person would have to participate in the response themselves, not just have it handed to them.

You may be familiar with the Oracle's connection with Socrates, as related to us by Plato. Before his famous trial that involved the Oracle, Socrates said that if we can understand something through learning, we should learn it, and if something is common knowledge, don't ask the Oracle. In the same way if there is something we can do in our own lives with the powers that are already available to us to improve our lot, we should do it. He said we should

not count on the deities or some magical formula to do it for us.

The Stoic Epictetus said that inquirers of the Oracle should consider whether they are motivated by fear and desire or by a detached wish for truth. When someone asked the Oracle a question, Epictetus wondered, were they expecting a certain answer and did they just want her to confirm it for them, or were they really looking for the truth? Epictetus said that we should treat the Oracle's response like we treat the perception that we get from our eyes. We don't tell our eyes: "I want you to see this." We look at and perceive what the eyes send to our brain. In the same way, Epictetus said, people should look at what the Oracle said to them very impersonally and, whatever it is that they are told, they should put it to good use, even if it's not the response that they wanted.

The Oracles also invited people to be all they could be to embrace their destiny.

Before Pythagoras was born, his father (or in some versions of the story, his mother) visited the Oracle of Delphi. She knew that Pythagoras's mother was pregnant and said that she would give birth to a man who was supremely beautiful, wise, and beneficial to humankind. This is how Pythagoras got his name; he was named after the Pythia, the Oracle who predicted his birth.

Later, when he had established his famous school, Pythagoras taught in three degrees. The second degree included moral and political laws. He said that he learned what he taught about moral laws from the Oracle at Delphi.

Socrates's advice regarding approaching the Oracle was previously mentioned. You may also be familiar with the story of Socrates and his famous trial that involved the Oracle.

Socrates was put on trial for corrupting the youth of Athens and introducing false deities. However, when Socrates chose to defend himself at his trial, he said that this wasn't really the reason he was on trial. He then shared why he believed he was on trial.

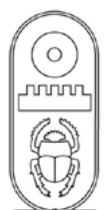
He said that his childhood friend went to the Oracle at Delphi and asked if there was any man wiser than Socrates. She said no. Socrates then said that he was sure that this couldn't be correct, so he started interviewing people whom he was sure were wiser than he was.

First, he interviewed a politician with a reputation for wisdom. He wanted to prove that the politician was wiser than him but after speaking with the politician he said that he was not wiser than Socrates because he thinks he knows something when he does not know it.

Then Socrates spoke with poets, dramatists, and musicians and found that they didn't really understand the sublime messages of their creations, so they weren't wiser than Socrates either. Finally, he spoke with craftspeople and found that, based on the strength of their technical proficiency, they claimed knowledge of all other subjects which they didn't really possess. As Socrates interviewed people to prove that he wasn't the wisest person, he created enmity from those whom he had interviewed, which led to the false charges against him.



A colorized engraving of Socrates by L.P. Boytard from The Life of Socrates, 1750.



Finally, Socrates said that the Oracle might be right because he alone seemed to be prepared to admit his own ignorance rather than pretend to know something he did not know. More than 2,400 years later this is reflected in the “Rosicrucian Code of Life” – “If someone asks you for advice on a subject you do not know well, humbly admit your ignorance.”

Now let's participate in a meditation related to the Oracles of Delphi. Please close your eyes and take three deep breaths.

Visualize the culture that you live in celebrating women as founts of wisdom.

What does that look like?

Who are these women?

What are their roles in your society and your culture, and in your neighborhood?

What is your relationship with them?

Now, see your tradition valuing more than just intellectual ways of knowing, for example, seeing beyond the usual limits of time and space through intuition or dreams or synchronicities.

How can that manifest in your world?

How can it manifest in your life?

Now imagine teachers who encourage foresight to see not just an immediate solution, but to see the greater path ahead.

Consider some questions in your life that you hope to receive answers to.

How can you see beyond just the immediate situation?

Can you see how it fits with the full course of your lifetime?

For the most important activities that you participate in, how can you see that they fit with the full course of your country's history or the future of our planet – beyond just the immediate solution?

How can your actions have a greater impact further down the path?



Ruins of the ancient Temple of Apollo at Delphi, overlooking the valley of Phocis.

Now imagine a sage, either in your life or in your society, who expects inquirers to participate in their own learning. They don't just hand you the answer and, if it's something that you can do on your own, you do it. You don't expect someone to magically produce a result.

What is some action that you can take to be of service to others right now?

Imagine shamanesses who invite us to be all we can be, to step into our destiny.

What do you want to know about your destiny?

If you could speak with the Divine in order to live at your highest potential, what would you ask?

Open yourself to messages from the Oracles of Delphi, from your inner self, from your subconscious, from the Master Within to help you fulfill your destiny.

This can happen at any time, in any place.

So Mote It Be!

