

Historical Grail Stream and the Grail at the Present Time

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(Revised and Edited by James R. Wetmore)

Let us look back to the historical Grail stream, which first surfaced in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries in Europe, and was founded through a high Initiate named Titurel, who carried the Grail impulse at that time. To understand this founding on a deeper level, we must trace the lineage of this high Initiate in his different incarnations, and in so doing we come to the one called Melchizedek, who brought bread and wine to Abraham some four thousand years ago. Melchizedek introduced the *agape* communion (with bread and wine) in preparation for what Christ would later bring as the Eucharist.

If we go back further from Melchizedek, we come to the time of Noah, the great Initiate who led his people out of Atlantis at the time of the Deluge. In Hindu tradition he is called the Manu.¹ “Manu” is not a personal name, but a title, like “Buddha.” The current Manu (Noah–Melchizedek–Titurel) has the task of overseeing the development of the seven post-Atlantean cultural epochs—that is, the Ancient Indian, Ancient Persian, Egyptian-Babylonian, and Greco-Roman cultures, as well as our present culture, often referred to as the European cultural epoch. The future epochs this Manu will oversee are the Slavic in the age of Aquarius, and the American in the age of Capricorn.

Titurel brought the Grail impulse as a metamorphosis of what he had already initiated in earlier times. Looking back to the work of the Manu as Teacher of the Seven Holy Rishis—the founders of the Ancient Indian culture—we see that the essence of what the Manu transmitted to them (as also to his later disciples) was a work intended to prepare people for the incarnation of the Logos—for the Coming of Christ.

The Manu’s teaching from that time is summarized in the *Vedas*. The term “Veda” means “Word.” The Veda is the Holy Word—that is, in our modern language, the Holy Gospel. The Vedas embody what the Manu was able to bring through the Seven Holy Rishis at the founding of the Ancient Indian culture. The Rishis were priests in service of the Word, and this Ancient Indian tradition lives on there still in its spiritual disciplines. Vedic priests, or Brahmins, have the task of studying the *Vedas*, reciting them, and performing priestly service.

We may say, then, that the Grail stream grows out of this ancient Vedic stream, which reaches all the way back to Ancient India, forming the deep undercurrent of esoteric tradition that flows through all the cultural epochs. It is a stream leading also into the future, preparing us for the imminent descent of Sophia, Divine Wisdom.

¹ The next Manu, the successor to the “Noah” Manu, will be the Mani–Parsifal individuality—the first human Manu—named Sāvāna in the Hindu tradition.

Sophia and the New Grail Mysteries

In considering Christianity, the past event upon which we focus our attention is of course the Mystery of Golgotha, the Turning Point of Time. But as to the future, we look to the New Mysteries of the Holy Grail. We look back still to the Mystery of Golgotha as the most significant event in the history of the Earth, but we look now also to the future in preparation for the Coming of Sophia, who in the Book of Revelation is called the Bride of the Lamb.

Sophia's true mission will unfold in the far-distant future, but something of this mission—perhaps we may say a fragrance thereof—has been coming gradually to expression since the latter part of the Eighteenth Century. Sophia more and more inspires us, and our work draws upon this inspiration. It is important to emphasize that in preparing for the increasing presence of Sophia we are in no way undermining any existing Tradition, but in all ways continue to respect the utmost importance of the time-honored Tradition of Christianity. This point must be made, for in some circles it is believed that we can simply dispense with Christian Tradition and move on to something new. This approach however is *not at all* what lives in Sophia, who honors everything from the past and seeks to renew it, to raise it to a new level of experience, a new dimension of existence.

The Church of John

The book *Meditations on the Tarot* offers a key for entering the path of the Sophia Mysteries. This book is an expression of the great Johannine tradition, which traces its origin back to the beloved disciple John. As the book's author puts it in the First Letter, "The Magician," John is in service to Peter, the rock upon which the Church was founded, who was consecrated to this office by the Risen Christ. Although not recorded anywhere in the Gospels, it is a fact of humankind's spiritual history that in an act of great humility Peter was consecrated by the Risen Christ as Head, or First Bishop, of the Church. This act established the tradition of the Apostolic Succession—and we may say that alongside its Johannine aspect, another key theme of *Meditations on the Tarot* is an exploration of the *inner mission* of the Apostolic Tradition.

The task of Peter is clearly expressed in the final chapter of the Gospel of St. John, where he is thrice asked by Christ, "Lovest thou me?" Each time Peter answers "Yes," to which Christ responds, "Feed my sheep." This interchange expresses the mission of the *exoteric* Church, which has the task, as an expression of the will of Christ, of administering the Sacraments unto the End of Time. And for countless people, the Sacraments *are* their connection with Christ. It may be that at present some are unable to assimilate the esoteric dimension of Christianity, or relate personally to the depth we are trying to address here. But they are not for this reason in any fundamental way lacking! They have the eternal blessing of devotional resonance with the central Sacrament of the Mass! We honor this, for the Mass offers sustenance to human souls through the substances taken in communion with Christ. And has just been said, we know from

the conversation between Peter and the Risen Christ that administering the Sacraments is a central task of the Apostolic Church.

The task of John, however, is different. Pointing to John, who was walking along the shore behind Peter at the time of his conversation with the Risen One, Peter asks, “What is to become of him?” to which the Risen One replies, “What is it to you if he waits until I come again?” Implicit in these words is John’s task to hold true to the element of depth—that is, to the *esoteric* teachings of the Church—until the time of the Second Coming. This is the task given to John, who is to bring these teachings into the world, and in due course—at the time of the Second Coming—into the exoteric Church as well as an impulse of renewal. *And that time is now!* This is exactly what we find in the book *Meditations on the Tarot*, for it seeks to renew the element of depth, the esoteric mysteries, in the Church of Peter.

In the Sophia Grail Circle we hold a Sophia Communion with the substances which are sacred to Sophia. This does not mean we are in any way superior to the traditions of Christianity! We are simply responding to the call of Sophia to *prepare* for the coming age of the Rose of the World, which is to *unfold* in the Age of Aquarius. We honor what comes from the past while *also* incorporating the impulse of Sophia into these time-honored traditions. Peter and John *work together* as the two disciples charged with guarding the Outer and Inner Mysteries of Christianity. The Church—in essence single and undivided—unites past with future.

Let us now consider the esoteric teaching of reincarnation. Any intimation of reincarnation would generally speaking have been incomprehensible to the disciples during the time of Christ. Very few among Christ’s disciples would have been able to understand, had Jesus said to them, for example, “You are the reincarnation of so and so...” Such knowledge was deliberately withheld from human beings at that time, for it was needful that all souls undergo at least one incarnation with no knowledge of previous lives. Only in this way could they fully experience personal freedom. And there are other mysteries Christ was unable to reveal at that time. He could not say to his disciples, for instance, when he spoke the words “I am the True Vine,” that this was a mantram for awakening the root chakra! They would not have understood him. But the time is now come when John is to open up the esoteric mysteries of Christ. As an example of what is meant by bringing the element of depth into the exoteric Church, we find in the Ninth Letter of *Meditations on the Tarot* the seven I AM sayings of Christ set in relation to the seven chakras.

Taking up Christian esoteric practices such as working with the seven I AM sayings of Christ in relation to the seven chakras is an important step on the esoteric path of development leading to the great esoteric *School of Christ*. To enter more fully into the School of Christ is however a matter also of developing *moral qualities*. This esoteric path is not so much a matter of acquiring esoteric wisdom, but of shifting focus to moral deepening. Yes, through Christian esoteric practices we may make strides in knowledge, but ultimately the way we come into closer

connection with Christ is through our striving to become better human beings morally. This is the essence of what is expressed in the profound book titled *Meditations on the Tarot*.

Through entering the School of Christ we may eventually come to a point where Christ begins to bestow certain blessings and graces upon us. We may be shown certain things. Our hearts may be touched by the Risen One, whence flows unimaginable blessing. Such is the heart of the book *Meditations on the Tarot*. It is an elaboration of the Moral Schooling of the Greater Guardian of the Threshold, who is Christ. And so it is one of the fundamental books qualified to prepare us to receive something of the New Christ Mysteries. As an example let us take a reading from the First Letter of this profound work, regarding St. Anthony the Great, one of the Desert Fathers of Egypt:

Among Christian Hermeticists nobody assumes the title and function of “initiator or master.” For all are fellow pupils, and each is master of each in some respect—just as each is a pupil of each in some other respect. We cannot do better than follow the example of St. Anthony the Great, who subjected himself in all sincerity to the pious men whom he visited, making it his endeavor to learn for his own benefit just how each was superior to him in zeal and ascetic practice. He observed the graciousness of one, the earnestness at prayer in another; studied the even temper of one and the kindheartedness of another; fixed his attention on the vigils kept by one and by the study pursued by another; admired one for his patient endurance, another for his fasting and his sleeping on the ground; watched closely this man’s meekness and the forbearance shown by another; and in one and all alike he marked especially devotion to Christ and the love they had for one another. Having thus taken his fill, he would return to his own place of asceticism. Then he assimilated in himself what he had obtained from each and devoted all his energies to realizing in himself the virtues of all. (St. Anthanasius, *The Life of St. Anthony*, chapter 4)

Let this be also the spirit of our work—to bring to realization the words of Christ, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in your midst.” That is how He can be present with us, and that is precisely the meaning of the above quote—to hold in consciousness the ideal of Christ as Teacher, Master, and Initiator, who in our time, working in close collaboration with Sophia toward the fulfillment of the evolution of humanity and the Earth, guides us in all we do.

The Three Christian Streams

Let us now consider the question of Paul and the Pauline tradition. To what source might we turn to learn more on this question? In relation to the newly-arising Sophia teachings in our time, we find such a source in the great Russian poet and philosopher Vladimir Solovyov,² in whose work

² Solovyov was born in 1847 and died in 1900 at the early age of 53. His life was significantly changed by his Three Meetings with Divine Sophia. Through the fruits of his labors, issuing from these encounters with Sophia, he has come to be known as the founder of the stream of *Russian Sophiology*. This stream has the goal of incorporating Sophia into the Tradition of Christianity. Several priests within the Russian Orthodox Church have also taken up this

A Short Story of the Antichrist (written in the last year of his life) we discover much that is helpful with regard to the foregoing question, for “Paul” is an important character in this work.

In his short story, Solovyov describes a great vision of the coming of the Antichrist in our time. He speaks of Three Streams of Christianity: the Petrine, going back to Peter; the Johannine, stemming from John; and the Pauline, associated with Paul.

Paul, previously called Saul, was—as Saul—one of the most zealous persecutors of the early Christians. However, Saul then had a direct supersensible encounter with the Risen Christ before the Gates of Damascus and was converted, after which he undertook his missionary work on behalf of Christ. The Pauline stream of Christianity was founded out of the spirit of this encounter. Such direct illuminations are possible—as we see not only in Saul, who thereby became Paul, but in the case of many another enlightened mystic throughout history. The Protestant tradition can be seen in relation to this primal experience of Saul becoming Paul. Since its inception through Martin Luther in the year 1519, Protestantism has of course split into innumerable sects, but taken together they comprise what Solovyov viewed as the *Pauline stream*.

Moreover, Solovyov saw the Roman Catholic Stream as the *Petrine stream*, and the Eastern Orthodox Church as an *expression* of the *Johannine stream*. Regarding the latter, it would be more accurate to say that the Johannine stream encompasses the *pulse of the living Christ* as shepherded by the great being we call John, whose work shines through *Meditations on the Tarot*, the subtitle of which, tellingly, is *A Journey Into Christian Hermeticism*. This text is the foundational work of the great stream of esoteric Christianity known as *Christian Hermeticism*. Viewing them together, it can be said that the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church represent two branches of the original Apostolic Church. Or we might say, by way of analogy, that just as we have the two lobes of the lungs, so these two branches of Christian tradition form together the two lobes of the Apostolic Church—that is, the Original Church of Christ’s disciples, founded by them through the event of Pentecost, at which they were transformed from the status of disciples into that of apostles.

But then, as we have seen, according to Solovyov, we have the third great stream of Christianity, the *Pauline stream*, founded upon the untiring missionary activity of he who had experienced *direct contact* with the Risen Christ. Paul’s case teaches us also that it is not necessary, in the quest for spiritual enlightenment, to turn to earthly spiritual teachers; rather does his example encourage us to strive for, and to open ourselves to, *direct encounter* with Christ.

Against this background, we can see how these three streams of Christianity relate to three levels in the human being. The quality of Peter is *faith*, seated in the human *will*. The quality of John is

work. The Russian Orthodox priests Pavel Florensky and Sergei Bulgakov being among the best-known representatives of Russian Sophiology.

love, living in the human *heart*. The quality of Paul is *hope*, which lives in the fullness of human thoughts, in the *head*. Paul was a very learned man, and it is clear that Protestantism came about through a powerful awakening in humanity's thinking capacity from around the time of the Renaissance, commencing at the beginning of the age of the *consciousness soul*.³ The Pauline stream really only begins to mature after the onset of the time of the consciousness soul. Thus, alongside the two branches, or lobes, of the Apostolic Church, a new stream of Christianity—of which Paul was a forerunner—began to develop in the age of the consciousness soul, signaled by the birth of Protestantism.

A Fourth Stream: Sophianic Christianity

And now, with the onset of Christ's Second Coming in the Twentieth Century, yet another stream of Christianity is emerging: the *Sophianic stream*.⁴ This newly-arising form of Christianity not only looks back to the Mystery of Golgotha, but seeks to connect with Sophia's increasing influence, leading humanity and the Earth into the future. From our time forward, Christ and Sophia, the Lamb and His Bride, are working together on behalf of the development of the Earth and humankind.

Only in the Apocalypse of John do we find any intimation (through references to the Lamb and His Bride) of this new, Sophianic, stream of Christianity. Thus John, as well as representing Johannine Christianity, plays a key role in the development of Sophianic Christianity. Moreover, it is evident that John has a deep connection to the modern Initiation into the Mysteries of the Holy Grail. John's work is to enliven the *whole stream* of Christianity. Even as at the Last Supper he listened to the beating of the Master's Heart, so does he continue listening to the Master's Heart throughout the unfolding of time. Through his attunement to Christ's Heart he is blessed to be able to inspire the Heart of the Church with the New Mysteries now arising.

John stands steward over tremendous esoteric wisdom, which he administers in measured portions over the course of time as stimuli to the further development of Christianity. John's primary concern is the moral evolution of humankind. To the degree we develop morally, we come increasingly into the spiritual warmth streaming from Christ through John. And as we have just seen, John is guardian also of the new Sophia Mysteries arising in our time, which seek to elevate our head-thinking to heart-thinking. This instreaming of grace is not guaranteed. We must first open ourselves to the grace and blessing streaming in through Christ and Sophia.

³ The age during which the consciousness soul comes to birth—our present age—extends for 2160 years from 1414 to 3574. The consciousness soul is the third and highest aspect of the human soul, after the *sentient soul* (feeling life) and *mind soul* (thought life). The development of the consciousness soul will lead to increasing awareness of the life of spirit. The 2160-year span of the age of the consciousness soul is related cosmologically to the unfolding of the Age of Pisces.

⁴ As indicated by Rudolf Steiner, "Through Holy Sophia, a beholding of Christ in spiritual form is beginning to arise in the Twentieth Century"—see Rudolf Steiner, *Isis—Mary—Sophia* (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 2002).

As already noted, at the heart of the Pauline stream lives *hope*. Ultimately, hope directs us to the Resurrection, to the grace of hoping that one day we too shall find our resurrection. Of course, it is somewhat one-sided to so schematically characterize the Pauline stream, given that the *Letters of Paul* address the importance of all *three* theological virtues: *faith*, *hope*, and *love*. There is nothing surprising in this, for Paul was the one—at the very beginning of the spread of the Christianity—who most clearly elaborated a *theology*. Nonetheless, as Paul was awakened before the Gates of Damascus by the Etheric Body of Christ, *hope* first dawned in the fullest sense that the mission of humanity—the interweaving of faith, hope, and love—might one day be accomplished.

The Rose of the World

Our work in preparation for the Coming of Sophia as Bearer of the Rose of the World entails understanding the importance of *all* World Religions, which latter we may liken to the Petals of the Rose of the World. Among the Great Religions (other than Christianity) are Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Taoism, and the Indigenous or Shamanic Religions directed primarily to the Earth Mother. How do they relate to one another?

Sophia loves every human being, even as Christ does. The vision of the Rose of the World is that of humankind as one great Family. We all of us share a common Origin—the Divine. Viewing humanity as one great Family, we see how the different World Religions each open to us an aspect, a Petal, of the Flower that is Sophia. Her Universal Wisdom has been revealed through the Founders of these Religions, to each of whom was given a key fit especially to one facet thereof. Which key was given to each Founder was a function of geographical location, particular human collectivity, and evolutionary moment in time—factors that come to expression in the *mode of consciousness* of the People for whom each Religion has been destined.

One day, all these Wisdom Streams shall be woven into an all-embracing supersensible structure we may call *Sophia's Beehive*, for it will represent the portal through which the One Colony of Humankind migrates when *surpassing*—which means also *transfiguring*—the Earthly world. In Sophia's Beehive, a spiritual structure is gathered together from the pollen and nectar of the Rose of the World; all Religions are united in higher synthesis. Our great task is to *differentiate* among the World Religions and Great Spiritual Streams, while at the same time holding in overview their *synthesis* as Universal Divine Wisdom. This latter overview represents nothing less than the Transcendent Unity of Religions—the “horizon,” so to say, of Sophia's vantage point.

Yes, this is Sophia's perspective, but it must also be said, from the complementary perspective of the path of humankind *toward* its goal, that all the World Religions *leading up to* Christianity were, in the wake of the momentous event of Christ's incarnation in human form upon the Earth (the Turning Point of Time), given the *new mission* of becoming Christianized (or perhaps better said, Sophianized), of transforming their Mysteries through the light of the Christ Impulse and the gradual Descent of Sophia. Thus may these Religions as freshened tributaries further

renewing the impulse of Christianity in function of the evolution of humanity—signifying a *metamorphosis* of those Religions, as of a stem or leaf into the wonder of the flower that had hitherto shown no clear sign of itself. The Mystery of Golgotha changed all Religions⁵ through the Unique Fact that a God-Born Being became Human. That some Religions, at least in their pre-Christian forms, do not reflect *every aspect* of the final goal of humankind’s evolution (which is resurrection), though an important matter for consideration, may in the end be seen, as has been said before, in function of the time, place, and destined human collectivity concerned—which is to say, it is a question of certain keys opening certain doors on the eventual path to the Heart of the Rose of the World.

The pivotal point is that resurrection is the goal of evolution.⁶ Through many lives we work toward resurrection—that which Christ Jesus attained in a single incarnation—the Incarnation.

From the perspective of Sophia’s Universal Wisdom, we see the World Religions as Petals of the Rose of the World, as partial aspects, or “relative absolutes,” bestowed upon human communities. This breathtaking *panorama* we have called the Transcendent Unity of Religions. However at the same time we must integrate into this more vertical, static, simultaneous “Platonic” dimension, that of the more horizontal, dynamic, evolutionary, “Aristotelian” dimension of the *path* we must tread *toward* the goal of resurrection. We must keep hold of the fundamental truth that a New Humanity was inaugurated at the Resurrection of Christ Jesus! And this monumental reality must also *occupy* the Heart of Sophia’s Wisdom, the Rose of the World. The point where these two dimensions—panorama and path—intersected *in time* was the junction of the upright and horizontal beams of the Cross at the time of the First Coming. Now, in the time of the Second Coming, we may in a sense say that Christianity as an *historical* religion is one among the Petals on the Rose of the World, whereas what we may call *Christosophy*, the *eternal* union of Christ and Sophia, occupies its center. Christosophy functions both as a Heart, taking in and recirculating the life-blood of pre-Christian Religions, and as a Lung, breathing out a renewing fragrance to all the World Religions as they are slowly Christianized (or Sophianized). It is a most difficult, delicate, and challenging task to communicate such a teaching in our secular, materialistic time—for it requires that the Universal nature of both Christ, the Lamb, and Sophia, the Bride of the Lamb, first be fully grasped—a work that will require the collaboration of many in time to come.

*This article was first published in the Advent 2017 issue of **Starlight**, the twice yearly journal of the Sophia Foundation, available from www.sophiafoundation.org—see Natalia Haarahiltunen’s, Are Thoresen’s, Angelika Jenal’s, and Estelle Isaacson’s “Human Soul” article in the same issue.*

⁵Including Islam, the third Abrahamic Religion, which however appeared *after* Christianity, at least insofar as it renewed the promise of Hagar and Ishmael.

⁶The idea of resurrection is proclaimed, for example, in Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity—perhaps also in the specifically esoteric teaching of Islam cultivated primarily by the Sufis. Yet, although it is proclaimed as a *goal*, the actual *attainment* of resurrection is the unique mystery of Christianity. In the words of John: “*Christ is the first born from among the dead*” (Rev. 1:5)—that is, the new Adam or the new human being of the future.