

## MYSTIC LIGHT

### *The Virgin Mary*



### *and the Evangelion*

**T**HE VIRGIN MARY may get short shrift from students of the occult, seekers on the “head path” of spiritual development. For Mary, what we know of her, seems to exemplify the path of the mystic. In fact, she was all heart. Hers was the way of luminous obedience, high devotion, and eloquent silence.

Yet how unintelligent was the mother of one of the most advanced members of the human life wave? The strongly patriarchal emphasis to the last three millennia of Western culture is currently undergoing some revision. The popular imagination has always intuited an imbalance in the exclusively masculine Christian Trinity and has sought to rectify the error through devotion to and elevation of the Virgin, most notably in Roman and Eastern Catholicism. Long before it was fashionable Corinne Heline, a student of Max Heindel, sought to dignify the whole human by rehabilitating the divine feminine, and while Heindel personally rejected the relative passivity of the the Catholic path, he increasingly emphasized the importance of the heart nature in spiritual development.

If all occult development begins with the vital body, we must conclude that strengthening that vehicle is our primary objective and we note that in women the vital body is positive, making them

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naturally more readily disposed to spiritual pursuits and attainments, and frequently becoming better examples of Christian faith and charity.

The cult of the Virgin began to pervade Christian piety in the middle of the first millennium.

She was addressed by myriad honorifics, including Mother of Truth, Mother and Daughter of Humility, Mother of Christians, Mother of Peace, and

City of God. Since she was “the one by whom the Savior came,” she increasingly came to be regarded as the one “through whom we ascend to Him,” that is, as Mediatrix—for both the Incarnation and the Redemption.

The universal esteem in which the Virgin Mary is held has its roots in Scripture. To better appreciate her appeal to large numbers of the world’s humanity we will consider Mary’s Immaculate Conception, the Annunciation and Virgin Birth, and briefly review the understanding of Mary by Church fathers, saints, and clairvoyants.

For centuries the Jewish people were expecting the Messiah, God’s Anointed. Isaiah prophesied how he would come: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” (7:14. This passage is also quoted by Matthew in 1:22-23.) The Virgin *did* conceive and bear a son, to whom the Angel of the Annunciation gave the three names of Jesus, “the Son of the Most High,” and “the Son of God.” He, Mary’s son, was to “reign over the house of Jacob for ever;

Pieta (detail), Michelangelo, Vatican, photo Scala

and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

This was good news, was it not? Yes, literally. As is well known, the word “gospel” (from AS. *godspell*, good story) is a translation of the Greek *euangelion*, or good tidings. Though the Angel Gabriel certainly spoke to Mary in Aramaic and not Greek, the New Testament was written in Greek. The Greek word for “Annunciation,” *euangelismos*, is the same root for the word “gospel.” And what is this gospel, this good news? The Angel salutes Mary: “Hail, thou that are highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1:28). The good news is that through Mary, a Savior, Christ the Lord, will be given to the world. When the Angel says, “the Lord is with thee,” it is Jehovah, the Holy Spirit, Who is signified, Who, by “overshadowing” Mary, initiates conception. This “overshadowing,” however, is not a unique event. Rosicrucian philosophy teaches that the Holy Spirit rules the creative principle in nature, the life ether, and has the power to fructify the human ovum. As the bearer of this vital body or etheric matrix, which is a body of formative forces that organize atomic matter and imbue it with life, Mary is the mother of God on earth. So, potentially are all mothers. The esoteric perspective requires that all truth have a personal or individual application. The Gospels themselves are formula of initiation, and, indeed, as the entire Bible portrays the account of human genesis in, separation from, and eventual reunion with God, all biblical characters and events describe specific facets of this entire process of human involution and evolution *in the single individual*.

The Virgin Mary is both the paragon of chastity and the Blessed Mother. The believing lay public has no problem with this oxymoron. They accept it on faith. The significance of chastity (as distinguished from virginity), has been fully expounded by Max Heindel. It is a requisite for attainment in the higher stages of initiation, for it is by the retention and transmutation of the holy creative force that the soul body can serve as an independent vehicle for the soul and spirit. Philo of Alexandria, a theologian and contemporary of Jesus and Paul, wrote about the Therapeutae, Jewish ascetics who lived in monastic communities in Egypt. They

included women who were “virgins in respect of their purity...out of an admiration for and love of wisdom...indifferent to the pleasures of the body, desiring not a mortal but an immortal offspring.”

Esoterically, this is how Mary is identified. She represents our purified soul nature whereby the Christ, our immortal Self, is conceived and nurtured in us. As Heindel has also made clear, it is possible to be a virgin and *unchaste*, and chaste as a mother or father. In other words, true virginity or chastity is a condition of the soul. It designates a purity of heart and mind which are not sullied by the act of generation when it is dispassionately performed as a sacrament.

There is a distinction, often overlooked, between two Marian dogmas affirmed by orthodox Roman Catholics. *Virgin Birth* refers to how Jesus was conceived, while the *Immaculate Conception* refers to how Mary was conceived. As Max Heindel writes, “purity of purpose” (*AMI*, p. 72) in the preparation for and act of procreation preserves the parent’s virginity, for true virginity is of the heart and mind. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception states that Mary was not tainted by the original sin bequeathed to all humanity through willful and ignorant abuse of the generative force by Adam and Eve. Again, esoteric science explains that Mary’s exemption from the stain of original sin was not unique, though it is rare, for it required that her parents, Anna and Joachim, be celibate and chaste and perform the generative act as a sacrament.

Giving virgin birth to Jesus was in part a function of Mary’s age (14), a time when her chaste vital body, which produces the life-giving forces, had fully matured and her individual desire body had just been born, which, though sinless and pure, should have been tainted by the intrusion of the luciferic element through Eve into the planetary desire substance, from which human desire bodies are specialized. It is this passional element which is the perpetual cause of degeneration and deterioration of the human race, while it is through Christ that purification of the planetary desire substance is effected, making possible the building of purer desire bodies. In Catholic theology Mary’s Immaculate Conception in her mother Anna exempted her from this “guilt” of Original Sin.

While Mary's birth by immaculate conception was well established in the popular mind by medieval times, it did not become dogma until 1854. Less than four years later, in the French village of Lourdes in the Pyrenees, a "lovely lady" appeared to a peasant girl, Bernadette Soubiroux, and announced, in the vernacular dialect, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

As to why Mary is called the *Blessed* Virgin, the prescription is given in Luke's account of the Magnificat: "For, behold, from hence forth all generations shall call me blessed" (1:48).

At the time of the Annunciation, according to the Austrian clairvoyant Anne Catherine Emmerich, Mary was "a little over fourteen years old." The seer's vision of this event is memorable: After the Angel Gabriel appeared bearing his momentous tidings and Mary uttered the words "May it be done unto me according to thy word," Emmerich

*saw an apparition and the whole apparition environed by dazzling splendor, as if surrounded by wings. From the breast and hands, I saw issuing three streams of light. They penetrated the right side of the Blessed Virgin and united into one under her heart. At that instant Mary became perfectly transparent and luminous. It was as if opacity disappeared like darkness before that flood of light.*

*"While the angel and with him the streams of glory vanished, I saw down the path of light that led up to heaven, showers of half-blown roses and tiny green leaves falling upon Mary. She, entirely absorbed in self, saw in herself the Incarnate Son of God, a tiny, human form of light with all the members, even to the little fingers perfect. It was about midnight that I saw this mystery.*

As Eve is the mother of all living on a downward involutionary path, Mary is the *new* mother of all living, those on the upward evolutionary path, those born again in Christ. Mary as the chaste soul conceives and gives birth to the Christ within. If Christ Jesus is the second or new Adam, Mary is the second or new Eve. Although the term *atonement* is usually applied to the deed of Christ that offsets human transgressions, Mary's life of sacri-



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*The Annunciation*

cial purity could also be called vicarious atonement. Moreover, she suffered crucifixion vicariously with her Son, becoming the first and foremost instance of Christian overcoming through her Son's and Savior's example.

Eve used the generative principle for self-centered motives. Mary's creative power was used for God-centered and God-directed purposes. Irenaeus, in his second century treatise *Against Heresies*, extended this parallel: "Eve [had necessarily to be restored] in Mary, that a Virgin, by becoming the advocate of a virgin, should undo and destroy virginal disobedience by virginal obedience." As Eve "was led astray by the word of an angel [Lucifer], so that she fled from God when she had transgressed His word," so did Mary "by an angelic communication, receive the glad tidings that she would be a bearer of God, being obedient to His word"—perfectly obedient: "Behold, the

handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38). As expressed by Irenaeus, the second century Bishop of Lyons, “the knot of Eve’s disobedience was untied by Mary’s obedience. What Even bound through her unbelief, Mary loosed by her faith.”

We recall that as a result of the Fall, Eve and all subsequent women were destined to bring forth children in pain. The “curse,” as that proclamation has sometimes incorrectly been called, is also a slang term for a woman’s monthly flow of blood, a usage which retains an insight of folk wisdom. Upon conception or fertilization, a woman’s monthly flow stops and the blood is used to give substance and nourishment the growing embryo.

The relation of female menses to the Grail legend, specifically to Amfortas, the Grail king, is highly instructive. Amfortas, the guardian of the Grail, suffered from a wound that would not stop bleeding, resulting from using the creative force (represented by the holy spear) for selfish purposes. Amfortas waited for one holier than he to reconsecrate the Grail and to confer spiritual healing. The esoteric significance of woman’s menstrual flow tells her that she has not yet spiritually conceived, just as the wounded Grail king continued to bleed until he could be redeemed by Parsifal, who, by subduing his desire nature, had mastered the creative force. It is this Christ-evoking power of chastity that inspired the troubadours to call Mary the “Grail of the World.”

In Grail symbolism the chalice is emblematic of the calyx (cup) or seed pod of the flower which contains the ovary that is chastely fertilized by male pollen. It represents the transmuted life ether.

While the Holy Grail was a vessel that contained some of the divinity of God, it is also the womb of Mary and by extension emblematic of the marvel of human formation. In the great medieval *Litany of Loretta*, Mary is praised as the “spiritual vessel, vessel of honor, singular vessel of devotion.” Further, it calls the Virgin “Cause of our Joy, Ark of the Covenant, Tower of David, Tower of Ivory, House of Gold, Seat of Wisdom, Mirror of Justice, Queen of Prophets.”

The pure soul, the forming Mary of each aspirant, seeks to bring forth the inner Christ. The

Elder Brothers of the Rose Cross, through their own attainments, preview the recovered state of an hermaphrodite humanity that can generate their own physical bodies by transmuting their etheric life energies. When humanity has collectively attained to this ability, the “curse” will have been lifted, the flow of blood shall cease, the stigmatic wounds shall bleed no more, for the sidereal vehicle, the soul body, formerly locked at five points (plus a sixth), will be liberated from the cross of the physical body. Then shall the planetary Christ be given birth *from* the Earth as humanity itself assumes the power and responsibility for its upliftment.

Mary’s supreme symbol is the rose. It figures in many of her honorifics, including Rose of the World, Rosa Alchemica, and Queen of the Most Holy Rose Garden, in which the Grail lies hidden. The mysteries of Mary are represented in Catholic tradition by the rosary. Following a devotional practice that appeared in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, the rosary is a string of beads used as a mnemonic aid for the recitation of prayers. The very word “bead” comes from the German word for “to pray,” and is retained in the English “bid.” It was transferred from “prayer” to the beads themselves, used for counting prayers or “telling beads.” Prayers of the rosary consist of fifteen recitations of *The Lord’s Prayer*, fifteen sets of ten recitations of the *Ave Maria* (Hail Mary, etc.), and fifteen recitations of the *Gloria Patria*, each of the fifteen sets of prayers being concentrated on one of the fifteen Mysteries of redemption, which are divided into the Five Joyful, Five Sorrowful, and Five Glorious Mysteries. Here is a potent method for focusing the mind, strengthening the memory, and deepening the devotional nature.

Esoterically, the rosary, a chain of fifty beads, represents the circuit of blood in the body, which devotional meditation calms and purifies, leading to the blooming of the roses on the cross of the body and the filling of the chalice of the heart with light and love. Prayer’s beaded path leads to a state of recollectedness that builds an etheric tabernacle of security and draws down the power to achieve objective peace.

For Dante, Mary was “the Rose in which the Word of God became flesh,” thus identifying her

with the occult aspirant's goal—to so purify the blood (which is “the highest expression of the vital body” and “the seat of the soul”) and desire nature that the roses of spiritual sensing will bloom or become active and usable by the indwelling Spirit, the Ego. In the Protestant hymn by Matthew Bridges, Christ is saluted as “Fruit of the mystic Rose,/ As of that Rose the Stem”; that is, Christ as God is Creator (Stem or Vine), but as the creature Jesus, he is the fruit of creation, the child of Mary (Rose). Five is the number of Marian devotion and the number associated with the vital body. As symbol the rose is usually depicted with five petals.

The Greek for “rose,” *rhodon*, as in rhododendron, or rose tree, derives from *rheein*, meaning to flow. In this context the relation between the rose and blood becomes clear. It is possible, indeed essential, that one becomes a virgin, in order to give birth to Christ. This requirement is symbolized by the “soft heart” of the Rosicrucian motto. It is the sacred heart of Jesus whose pericardium was pierced by the lance of Longinus, enabling Christ's purified blood to flow into the heart of the earth bearing His Ego. The white rose in the Rosicrucian Emblem represents the purified heart of the Invisible Helper.

The creative imagination, the image-shaping capability which is every female's in special measure, is reflected in the creative role of the mother in forming her child, even if at present it be largely unconscious. Mary is the esoteric paradigm for the conception and birth of the individual Christ through the twin forces of will and imagination. We form images of God's will for us and we resolve, we will, to realize that will.

Red roses in the Rosicrucian emblem symbolize purity. The Rose Cross and Star symbolize the path of spiritual attainment, just as orthodox Catholics regard the Virgin Mary as the vestibule, as it were, through which one may come into Christ's presence. The occult student is in the process of interiorizing Mary. She is the precondition for the conception of Christ consciousness. As Heindel states



Oil on canvas, 1922, Joseph Stella (1877-1946), The Brooklyn Museum of Art. Gift of Adolph Lewisohn

#### *The Virgin*

*The artist beautifully captures the simultaneous purity and fruitfulness of the Blessed Virgin and her Cosmic counterpart, the celestial Virgo.*

it, “purity is the key by which alone he [the aspirant] can hope to unlock the gate to God” (*AMI*, p. 52). Mary possesses the positive vital body of the female whose life, light, and reflecting ethers are stronger and more readily serve the developing Ego. Evolved Egos who take a male body also tend toward a more positive vital body.

The abundance of Mary's services to her son Jesus and her Lord Christ Jesus evoke her paradigmatic role as Virgo (Latin for Virgin), the Server, she who harvests the staff of life. As mother Mary bore the Bread of Life and, as *mater dolorosa*, she held yet again the deposed body of the Bread of Life in her lap.

The words *stabat mater dolorosa*, “there stands the mother of sorrows,” which has inspired much sacred music during the Christian era, arose anonymously during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a time characterized as the Age of the Virgin, so prominently did Mary figure in the arts and consciousness of this period. If she experienced vicarious crucifixion, she also knew exaltation and

became, through the Assumption and Coronation (roughly paralleling her Son's Resurrection and Ascension to the right hand of His enthroned Father) the *mater glorioso*.

A more esoteric insight into the *mater dolorosa* is found in an earlier classical threnody, the *Kontakion* of Romanos Melodos, in which Christ from the Cross instructs Mary: "Lay aside your grief, mother, lay it aside./ Lamentation does not befit you who have been called 'blessed.' Do not obscure your calling with weeping. Do not liken yourself to those who lack understanding, all-wise maiden./ You are in the midst of my bridal chamber."

The gold of wisdom is crystallized pain. Saint Birgitta of Sweden hears Jesus say to his mother: "You are like the precious gold that has been beaten on the iron anvil, for you have been tried with countless tribulations. Through my suffering, you have suffered more than anyone else"—and, we may add, that suffering has gained for Mary the gold of wisdom wrought in the crucible of her heart.

Mary has been sought as an intercessor or mediatrix to Christ and the Father precisely because she was, in the words of the Angel of the Annunciation, "full of grace." She possessed God's grace in its fullness and was therefore authorized to act as its dispenser—between man and God. After all, if she gave Jesus to the world, how could she not give lesser graces, being so favored, being, as the Eastern Church calls Mary, the Mother of God, *Theotokos*, a designation canonically established at the Council of Ephesus in 431.

Supporting testimony for Mary's intercessory role is given in the words John the Evangelist records as spoken by Christ Jesus on the Cross to Mary: "Woman, behold thy son! Behold thy mother." This is the charter pronouncement for entrust-

ing into Mary's maternal care not only the one whom Jesus loved, but the whole ecclesia of Christian believers.

Iconoclasts in the last three centuries of the first millennium objected to the veneration of icons of Mary. Defenders of the practice distinguished between adoration (*latría*), proper devotion to the Trinitarian God, and reverence (*dulia*), which was directed to the spirit of the holy person depicted, a distinction first made by Augustine in the sixth

century. Aquinas amended this distinction by stating that Mary deserved more than the reverence due the saints, which he termed *hyperdulia*. This qualification served to deflect accusations of Mariolatry advanced by Protestants.

Fellowship students who favor a less visual or iconic devotional environment may be reminded of the picture of the child Jesus, son of Mary, that graces the wall behind the reader's lectern in the Pro-Ecclesia, Mt. Ecclesia's Chapel. He is preparing, as are we, to make his person fit to receive the Christ. This picture has iconic significance for some

of us. And rightly so. Marian icons carry no less significance for thousands of Christians.

Possibly the most dramatic portrayal of the Virgin Mary in Byzantine art was the *Deesis*, the Greek word for entreaty or intercession. As an art form the *deesis* was divided into three sections or panels. Christ is in the center, flanked by John the Baptist and the Mother of God, both of whom are pleading with Christ on behalf of sinners.

According to Jaroslav Pelikan in his balanced study, *Mary Through the Centuries* (Yale University Press), "devotion to Mary found its supreme expression in the Byzantine liturgy," and early Church fathers transmitted Greek Mariology to the Latin Church. (Continued) □

—C.W.



detail, Rogier van der Weyden (1400-1464), Beaune Hospice, France

***The Virgin as Intecessor***

*Mary is invoked in the Catholic Church as Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix.*