

Book Reviews

Planetary Awakening, by Kathy Newburn. Blue Dolphin Publishing, Nevada City, Calif. Paperback, 196 pages. US\$17.95.

Out of the many books being published of late on the Alice Bailey material, this is one of the more practical ones for beginners on the Path. Yet it serves as a good review for more advanced students as well, putting the material that we know so well in a more modern context and relating it to current events. As the author states, “the bulk of this book is an attempt to present a small portion of that material as it relates specifically to the present crises and opportunities unfolding upon our planet.”

This reflection on the teachings of the Tibetan through the works of Alice Bailey is practical in that it uses terminology everyone can understand – beginner and advanced student alike. The writing style is designed to appeal to younger generations who came into this world at a different level of consciousness than the older generations. They live in a world where spiritual paths are easier to find and esoteric wisdom is no longer so esoteric. The author’s hope is that they will be able to receive the important message embedded in Alice Bailey’s presentation of the Ageless Wisdom and then be motivated to pass the message on to others.

The chapters of this book can be read in any order since they are each self-contained modules dealing in a basic way with issues that every student on the Path can relate to such as meditation, glamor, discrimination, challenges encountered on the Path, death and rebirth, the Seven Rays, money, and initiation, among others. Three chapters, in particular, stand out as being of critical practicality to the beginner. The chapters on “Seeking the Way,” “Challenges on the Path” and “Discrimination and Liberation” are meant to guide the beginner to a particular discipline by giving helpful tips about techniques of spiritual approach, advice on how to discriminate among the various pur-

veyors of spiritual disciplines and warnings about the hurdles that inevitably come up to test the would-be disciple’s resolve.

What makes this book especially practical for beginners is that it de-mystifies the Alice Bailey material by extracting essential information that beginners need to know in order to prepare themselves for the Path, thus eliminating the confusing profusion of complex, esoteric details that intimidate many would-be students. This simplified introduction enables students to build a firm foundation that will help them approach the Alice Bailey books on their own.

Specialized meditation formats are given in the Appendix, and there is also a suggested reading list and compilation of resources for those students who are motivated to continue the search after reading this book.

Kathy Newburn is a long-time student of the Ageless Wisdom teaching who has studied and worked with the Arcane School. She is now working for the Seven Ray Institute and is the editor of their online magazine, *The Journal of Esoteric Psychology*.

Editorial Staff

Astrology Illumined: Revealing Soul Through Astrology, by Donna Mitchell-Moniak & Sara Traub. Seeds of Light Publications, Leyden, Mass. 2007. Paperback, 168 pages. US\$15.00.

As the back cover of the book indicates, *Astrology Illumined* is intended for the beginning student of astrology, the practicing astrologer who wants a deeper understanding of esoteric astrology, or the spiritually-minded person with a yearning for greater knowledge. This reviewer qualifies for the first and last of these categories.

Astrology, contend the authors, is a “sea of forces,” and these forces at all levels of mani-

festation, “are actually Beings that share their energies and qualities with us.” Giving credit to the Beings immediately caught my interest.

The authors use a term, “A Turn of the Spiral,” to indicate how astrological interpretations vary and can change according to a person’s growth and evolvment at a soul level. The way in which these growth patterns are described gives this book a clarity, simplicity and, as claimed in the title, an unfolding illumination.

The confusing sea of information and complexity that all previous books I have encountered on this subject almost drowned me, but the fresh language and new keys approaching the major topics of this science—“Spiritual Science,” as Rudolf Steiner would say—were particularly helpful to me. Several examples come to mind:

1. A discussion of the elements—fire, earth, water, air—in the introductory section of the book focused my mind on the importance of these distinctions, unlike previous books or articles that seemed to relegate these matters as a sort of after-thought of minor significance.
2. The planet Earth is given equal rights in her own chapter. And a chapter is devoted to Vulcan, an esoteric, unseen planet, describing that influence on our inner spiritual development.
3. A separate discussion of the cardinal, fixed and mutable qualities is given much notice and even shows an insight into crosses as a Pythagorean geometric relationship.
4. Rulership of the planets is explained prior to the chapters of the zodiacal signs, so when exoteric, esoteric or hierarchical rulers are mentioned, one has a better sense of these differences.

In a departure from other reference books of this ilk, the authors inject a summary, called “A Glance Back,” after the first six signs. Attention is called to the way in which each succeeding sign contrasts with the previous one, e.g. “Aries is about rapid movement. Taurus is

about slow, predictable, steady progress.” A second “Glance Back” occurs after the last six signs.

Another refinement is the inclusion of a special chapter on “The Four Universal Signs.” Once again, the emphasis on the four elements is presented as the third Turn of the Spiral—which has evolved from the personal level to the social level, and now the transpersonal realm. A curious note that had never occurred to me was the fact that the last four signs: Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces, all have mythical animals as their symbols.

The insertion of these special sections into the main body of the book helps solidify the rest of the information that is now needed to make an actual chart. Of course, the Houses, Aspects and Ascendants are given their due and there are several appendices for quick reference.

I guess that I most enjoyed the discussions for each zodiacal sign. Historical, literary, mythological and other illusions seemed to me broader and more penetrating than previous books I’ve read. They are a far cry from the canned phrases and one-size-fits-all paragraphs that are found on the internet, for example. At my age I know many people in each of these signs and it helped me see them with new eyes.

It was helpful to have the Glossary of Terms, but unfortunately, it was incomplete. For instance, the words designated by asterisks: “Afflicted” (page 5) and “Modes” and “Quality” (page 37), were not actually included in the glossary—though they were defined in the text.

Although I am not as informed of the Tibetan’s teachings as these two authors are, their thought-provoking approach to this subject, which has always been daunting to this Sagittarian, has *inspired* me to look more deeply into esoteric astrology. And I trust that many readers will also enjoy this *illuminating* book.

Sylvia Lagergren
Johnson City, TN

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