

The Two Witnesses in the *Revelation of St. John*

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Abstract

The *Revelation of St. John*, sometimes called the *Book of Revelation* or the *Apocalypse*, is the last book of the Bible. It has been a mystery ever since it first appeared about 2000 years ago because of its many puzzling symbols. Chapter 11 of the *Revelation* contains some of its most enigmatic symbols, including two dramatic witnesses. We analyze chapter 11 by using a psychological approach that takes every symbol as representing some aspect of an aspirant who is on the spiritual journey, and show that this chapter depicts the effects of judgment on the one who is judging.

Traditional Approaches of Interpretation

Many Christians, over the centuries, have wondered about the “two witnesses” in chapter 11 of the *Revelation*, because they are among the most dramatic characters in the Bible. These witnesses prophesy before the world for three and a half years wearing sackcloth. They can cause droughts, turn water into blood, and strike the earth with plagues. They are eventually killed by a beast but return to life and ascend to heaven. How can we understand these two witnesses and the unusual events that surround their lives?

The vast majority of published commentaries on the *Revelation* are based on three traditional approaches. The *preterist*, or past historical approach considers the *Revelation* as describing the issues and events that took place during the first century. The *historical* approach considers the *Revelation* as predicting the whole course of human history from the founding of Christianity to the end of the present age. The *futurist*, or eschatological, approach considers the *Revelation* as primar-

ily predicting the events that will occur at the end of the age.¹

For example, the preterist approach might construe the two witnesses as the Apostles Peter and Paul, the historical approach might construe them as the Written Word of God (Sacred Scripture) and the Oral Word of God (Sacred Tradition), and the futurist approach might construe them as the reincarnated prophets Moses and Elijah.

When using these traditional approaches, many commentators consider chapter 11 to be the most difficult chapter in the entire *Revelation* to analyze, because *none* of these approaches readily yields a credible interpretation. For example, Robert Mounce says, “In turning to the matters in 11:1-14, we come to a passage that is universally recognized as difficult to interpret.”² Gerhard Krodel says, “This is the most difficult section in the *Revelation*.”³ John Hinds agrees that it is “the most difficult passage in the whole book of *Revelation*”;⁴ and Craig Keener also agrees that “this section is perhaps the most difficult passage to interpret in the entire book of *Revelation*.”⁵ Thus, it is not surprising that the suggested identities of the witnesses vary widely, even among interpretations that are based upon the same traditional approach.

About the Author

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The three traditional approaches could be called “external-temporal,” because they all interpret the characters and episodes in the *Revelation* as representing people and events that occur in the external world at definite past or future times. None of these approaches seems consistent with what the *Revelation* says about itself. According to Revelation 1:1, its purpose is to show “things which must shortly come to pass.”⁶ Revelation 1:3 states: “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” Thus, according to its own verses, the *Revelation* is concerned with the *present* time, which is whatever time we happen to be reading it, and contains information that we can apply immediately to become blessed.

Psychological Approach of Interpretation

The *Revelation* describes a series of visions in which its scribe, John, participates. Let us consider a method of interpreting these visions that is completely different from the foregoing external-temporal approaches. This method is a psychological one and is based on the following four principles.

1. *Each of John’s visions is similar to a dream.* John’s visions contain symbols, just as a dream contains symbols.
2. *Each episode in a vision depicts a stage, or inner experience, on the spiritual journey.* The traveler on this journey could be anyone who aspires to a higher way of life, no matter what religious tradition is being followed.
3. *Each symbol within an episode represents some aspect of the consciousness belonging to an aspirant who is at the corresponding stage on the spiritual journey.* The various beasts, seals, books, places, and angels that appear in a vision depict fragments of an aspirant’s inner life, just as any part of a dream can be thought of as representing a fragment of the dreamer’s personality.

4. *The role that John plays in his visions represents the conscious attitude of an aspirant, whereas the other symbols represent aspects of an aspirant’s subconscious and superconscious natures.* This distinction between John and his role in a vision is similar to the distinction between a person who is dreaming and the character that the person plays in the dream itself.

A few commentators have used a similar psychological approach to interpret the *Revelation*. Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), co-founder of the Theosophical Society, states: “The fact is ... the whole *Revelation*, is simply an allegorical narrative of the Mysteries and initiation therein of a candidate, who is John himself.”⁷ Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952), founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship, writes: “Certainly in the *Revelation* of St. John we are led by means of metaphor into the profound insights of the yoga science in which Jesus initiated his advanced disciple John, and others, whose consciousness thereby ascended to the exalted Self-realized state of the kingdom of God within.”⁸ Edgar Cayce (1877-1945), a well-known medium, makes a similar point: “For the visions, the experiences, the names, the churches, the places, the dragons, the cities, all are but emblems of those forces that may war within the individual in its journey through the material, or from the entering into the material manifestation to the entering into the glory, or the awakening in the spirit.”⁹

Blavatsky, Yogananda, and Cayce interpreted only a few symbols in the *Revelation* and none of them attempted a verse-by-verse analysis of any chapter. In what follows, we give a detailed psychological analysis of chapter 11, verses 1 through 13, and show that it is concerned with judgment in the sense of censure or criticism. In verses 1 through 3, the soul (or inner divine voice) tells the aspirant to observe himself while judging other people. In verses 4 through 10, the aspirant has a series of insights as to how his judgment of others is harmful to himself. In verses 11 through 13, after having those

insights, he transforms himself by giving up all judgment of other people.

Measurement of the Temple of God

Verses 1 through 3 are concerned with measuring a temple:

(1) And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. (2) But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty *and* two months. (3) And I will give *power* unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

The *Revelation* was composed in a peculiar manner. Krodel reports that the 404 verses of the *Revelation* allude 518 times to earlier sacred texts.¹⁰ These texts include books of the Old Testament, New Testament, and Pseudepigrapha. The latter books are Biblical in character but are not considered canonical. For example, verse 1 probably alludes to Ezekiel 40-42, in which a man with a reed carefully measures each part of the temple of God. When a symbol alludes to an earlier text, its meaning within the *Revelation* could be different from its earlier significance.

Cayce comments on verse 1: “Ye, your own souls as individuals, who will you put in your heaven? Ye of a denomination, ye of a certain creed, ye of a certain measurement, with what measure ye mete it is measured to thee again.”¹¹ *A Course in Miracles (ACIM)* has a similar notion: “Each one you see you place within the holy circle of Atonement or leave outside, judging him fit for crucifixion or for redemption.”¹² The reed in this verse is interpreted as a mental standard of judgment. The temple is taken to be what Cayce calls “your heaven” or what *ACIM* calls “the holy circle of Atonement,” so it represents the people judged as worthy of receiving the

blessings of God. Similarly, the people left outside the temple are those who are judged as unworthy.

These verses do not depict the aspirant as directly condemning anyone. Presumably, the aspirant has been practicing the biblical principle of “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another” (Colossians 3:13), and so has generally avoided grievances, resentments and hatreds. Instead, the aspirant is directly admiring some people, thinking of them as worthy or good. For example, he might be impressed by their honesty or humanitarian concerns. When the aspirant directly judges some people as worthy based on a personal trait, however, he indirectly judges anyone who lacks that trait as unworthy.

Angel is a translation of the Greek word (*angelos*) that means “messenger.” Alice Bailey, a theosophical writer, considers Solar Angel and soul to be synonymous terms,¹³ and uses the term *soul* to represent the inner divine voice or super-conscious self.¹⁴ She also mentions “the intuitions which are sent to you from your soul.”¹⁵ Accordingly, the instructions from the angel in verses 1 through 3 are taken to be intuitions sent from the aspirant’s soul.

The angel tells the aspirant to “rise.” We take this instruction to mean that the aspirant should rise above himself to observe himself in a detached manner. Bailey gives similar instruction: “the task of the disciple is to become consciously aware—like a detached onlooking Observer—of these energies and their expressing qualities as they function within himself.”¹⁶ The Apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians 13:5, also gives similar instruction: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.”

The word *gentile* generally means “any nation except the Jews.” In the course of time, the Jews began to pride themselves on their peculiar privileges, so this word became a term of contempt. By the time of Jesus, according to Matthew 18:17, a Gentile and a tax collector were comparable in opprobrium.

In verse 2, the Gentiles are taken as disdainful concepts of other people.

In theosophy, the *personality* consists of the mental, emotional, and physical bodies. The mental body is sometimes called the “mind,” and the emotional body is sometimes called the “astral body.” The physical body has both dense and vital portions. The dense physical body contains the muscles, organs, and bones, and the vital body contains the seven chakras of yoga philosophy. The vital body has been given many other names: “golden bowl” in the Bible (Ecclesiastes 12:6);¹⁷ “etheric body” in theosophy; “biofield” in alternative medicine; and *pranamayakosha*, a Sanskrit name, in the Hindu Upanishads.

Plato says, “Recall the general likeness between the city and the man.”¹⁸ The city is a community with many inhabitants, and the apparent, or outward, man is the personality, which is inhabited by many thoughts, feelings and motives. Thus, in verse 2, the city is taken as the personality. Joel Goldsmith, a mystical writer, describes how we are perturbed by our concepts of other people: “If we continue to be perturbed about someone, it is because we are entertaining a concept of him, and it is that concept that is causing the conflict within us.”¹⁹ Thus, the treading of the city symbolizes the disturbance that the personality feels through having disdainful concepts of other people.

What is the meaning of 42 months in verse 2? This period of three and a half years has the same symbolic meaning as the three and a half days mentioned in verses 9 and 11. If each month lasts exactly thirty days, the same period is equivalent to the 1260 days mentioned in verse 3. This period has its origin in Daniel 7:25, in which the power of

evil is said to last “until a time and times and the dividing of time.” In verses 2, 3, 9, and 11, this period symbolizes the length of time during which the judgment of unworthiness is maintained.

Verse 3 mentions the “two witnesses,” which alludes to the following rule in the Old Testament: at least two witnesses must provide evidence before an indictment against a suspect is considered valid or substantiated. (see Numbers 35:30, and Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15.) The Talmud, which is the basic book of Jewish law, clarifies how this rule about witnesses is to be applied, stating, “no one can incriminate himself.”²⁰ The Talmud acknowledges that a confession has value for the purpose of expiating sin before God, but not for the purpose of trial and conviction.²¹ Thus, a suspect, even if he or she makes a voluntary confession, should not be counted as one of the two witnesses needed for conviction. This prohibition against self-incrimination is ancient, because the Talmud was transmitted orally for centuries prior to its compilation by Jewish scholars around the fifth century CE.

Who are the witnesses in verse 3? According to our psychological approach of interpretation, they must refer to two parts of the personality. Judgment is performed by the mental body, so the witnesses of judgment ought to be parts of the personality other than the mental body, for otherwise a witness would be incriminating itself. Our approach takes the “two witnesses” as the emotional and vital bodies, because they bear witness to, or provide evidence of, the thoughts held in the mental body. Cayce gives a similar interpretation: “These then are the witnesses. The innate and the emotional.”²²

Paul, in 2 Corinthians 13:1, writes, “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.” In particular, the con-

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dition of our emotional and vital bodies can establish whether judgment is present within us. *ACIM* describes how the condition of our moods, which are part of our emotional body, is a witness: “When your mood tells you that you have chosen wrongly, and this is so whenever you are not joyous, then *know this need not be*. In every case you have thought wrongly about some brother God created.”²³ Bailey describes how the condition of our motives, which are part of our vital body, is also a witness: “the study and understanding of *motives* is of such value and importance, for such a study determines intellectually (if properly investigated) what factor or factors inspires the daily life.”²⁴

Sackcloth is a symbol of loss or mourning. For example, after Jacob heard that his son Joseph had been devoured by wild animals, Genesis 37:34 reports, “And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.” In verse 3, the two witnesses are depicted as wearing sackcloth, indicating that the emotional and vital bodies have lost their spiritual qualities.

Consequently, verses 1 through 3 have the following psychological meaning:

(1) The aspirant has a mental standard that he believes can be used to judge the worth of other people. The soul tells the aspirant, “Observe yourself with detachment while you use your mental standard to identify the people who are worthy of receiving the blessings of God, (2) and while you judge everyone else as unworthy, without explicitly having to consider them. Your disdainful concepts about those other people will cause your own personality to be perturbed as long as you maintain your judgment about them. (3) I will give power to your emotional and vital bodies so that they bear witness to your judgment of unworthiness. These bodies will express your mental judgment as long as you hold it, but they will do so while bereft of their spiritual qualities.”

Powers of the Two Witnesses

Verses 4 through 6 depict the powers of the two witnesses:

(4) These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. (5) And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. (6) These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

The two witnesses might be modeled symbolically after Elijah and Moses. Verse 5 states that fire proceeds out of them to devour their enemies—this power is associated with Elijah because he invoked fire that consumed his enemies (2 Kings 1:10-12). Verse 6 states that the witnesses can stop the rain from heaven—this power is also associated with Elijah because his prayer caused a terrible drought in Israel (1 Kings 17:1). Verse 6 also states that the two witnesses can turn water into blood and smite the earth with plagues—these powers are associated with Moses because he caused similar plagues to occur in Egypt (Exodus 7-8). As shown next, the emotional and vital bodies of every human being could be regarded as having those same powers.

What do the trees in verse 4 signify? Jutta Bell-Ranske, a theosophical writer, interprets these trees as the “the ganglionic nerve-system.”²⁵ Indeed, the phrase “nerve tree” is sometimes used in articles on human anatomy to denote a nervous system, because it has the appearance of a tree. Thus, the two trees are taken as the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, which are the two branches of the autonomic nervous system.

Yogananda considers the seven candlesticks in Revelation 1:20 to be the seven chakras of yoga philosophy,²⁶ so the two candlesticks in verse 4 are two of those chakras. But which

two are they? Bailey says that the solar plexus chakra connects the emotional body with the sympathetic nervous system: “The sympathetic nervous system, that marvelous apparatus of sensation, is closely related to the emotional or astral body. The contact is made via the solar plexus.”²⁷ She also associates the sacral chakra with both the vital body and the area of the physical body affected by the sacral parasympathetic nerves.²⁸ Thus, the two candlesticks are interpreted as the solar plexus and sacral chakras.

Paul, in 2 Corinthians 4:4, states: “the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.” If the “god of the earth” in verse 4 is the same as the “god of this world,” then the “god of the earth” has the power to delude human beings. Blavatsky warns against “the great dire heresy of separateness that weans thee from the rest,”²⁹ and Bailey says, “our race is controlled by the great heresy of separativeness.”³⁰ Accordingly, the “God of the earth” is taken as the belief of separateness, because it distorts the perceptions of most people.

Jiddu Krishnamurti, a religious philosopher, describes how subjective division leads to conflict: “But if we create subjectively a division—I belong to this and you belong to that, I am a Catholic, you are a Protestant, I am a Jew and you are an Arab—then there is conflict.”³¹ In verse 5, the term “enemies” shows that the aspirant is in conflict with the people whom he judges as unworthy, so he must be identifying himself with the people whom he judges as worthy. Even though “enemies” is a concept that the aspirant creates through his own judgment and identification, his reactions to the associated people are based on that projected concept rather than on their actual characteristics.

ACIM states, “Anger must come from judgment.”³² Fire can be a symbol of anger, as in Isaiah 30:27: “Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far, burning *with* his anger, and the burden *thereof is* heavy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire.” In verse 5, “fire” represents the anger arising from the subjective division brought about by judgment.

In the Bible, *righteousness* is a motivation that promotes the well-being and peace of the community (Proverbs 14:34). Paul, in Romans 6:13, says that God’s righteousness can flow through us: “Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God.” Bailey has a similar notion: “Physical plane methods, when motivated by unchanging love of humanity and under the direction of an enlightened soul, become agents of righteousness.”³³ In verse 6, rain is a symbol of righteousness, as in Hosea 10:12: “for *it is* time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.” See also Isaiah 45:8.

Heaven represents the spiritual world, as in Deuteronomy 26:15: “Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel.” Thus, the “power to shut heaven, that it rain not” is the power to block the influence of the spiritual world so that righteousness ceases to flow into the personality.

Geoffrey Hodson, a theosophical writer, says that in the Bible, “Applied to human beings, water typifies the emotional world, the emotional or desire body, and the varied manifestations—calm, troubled or stormy—of the feeling aspect of human nature.”³⁴ For an example of water used as a symbol of emotions, consider Psalms 69:1-2: “Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto *my* soul. I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.”

Blood can be a symbol of conflict, as in Habakkuk 2:12: “Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!” Thus, the “power over waters to turn them to blood” is the power over feelings to make them conflicted.

Hodson also says that in the Bible, “Earth and all physical, solid objects refer, in the main, to the physical body.”³⁵ For example, “the dust of the ground” symbolizes the physical body in Genesis 2:7: “And the

LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground.” In verse 6, “the earth” is taken as the dense physical body, so the power “to smite the earth with all plagues” symbolizes the power to afflict the dense physical body with all kinds of diseases.

The preceding discussion gives the psychological meaning of the powers listed in verses 5 and 6, so the next step is to discover the parts of the personality that possess those powers. Verse 5 states that the witnesses can respond to their enemies with “fire,” or anger. The emotional body has the power to generate angry feelings, as Bailey illustrates: “We are swept by anger or irritation. Instinctively we begin to shout. Why? Emotional energy has us in its grip.”³⁶ The vital body has the power to generate angry behavior from a stream of angry feelings, as Bailey explains: “When you remember that the vital body is the recipient of the streams of energy, and is in fact composed and formed of such streams, and that the physical body is driven into activity by these streams, it is apparent that that stream which is the most potent is the one which will control the action of the physical body upon the physical plane.”³⁷

Verse 6 states that the witnesses have the power over “waters,” or feelings, to make them be “blood,” or conflicted. The emotional body has such power, as shown by Bailey’s list of emanations: “From this [emotional] vehicle emanate the desires, impulses, aspirations and those conflicts of duality which so oft afflict and hinder the disciple.”³⁸ Verse 6 also states that the witnesses have the power to prevent “rain,” or righteousness. The emotional body has such power, as Bailey explains: “The seat of all this trouble is to be found in the desire-feeling-emotional body, and in an undue attachment to externals and forms. These factors prevent that clear-seeing which leads to wise and cooperative action.”³⁹ In addition, the verse states that the witnesses have the power to “smite,” or afflict with disease, the “earth,” or dense physical body. The emotional and vital bodies have such power, as Bailey also explains: “Ninety percent of the causes of disease are to be found in the etheric and astral bodies,”⁴⁰

where etheric and astral are synonyms for vital and emotional, respectively.

Verses 5 and 6 corroborate our earlier identification of the two witnesses as the emotional and vital bodies, because all of the powers attributed by the verses to the witnesses are possessed by those bodies, as shown by the foregoing quotations from Bailey. Consequently, verses 4 through 6 have this psychological meaning:

(4) The activity within the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems reflects the activity within the solar plexus and sacral chakras, which reflects the activity within the emotional and vital bodies, which in turn reflects mental judgments of worthiness and unworthiness. These judgments are based on the belief of separateness, which can be called the God of the earth, because it controls the vast majority of people. (5) If hurt by their enemies, the emotional and vital bodies respond with angry feelings and behavior, and try to hurt those people just as they have been hurt. (6) The emotional and vital bodies have the power to block the influence of the spiritual world, thus stopping the flow of righteousness. They have the power over feelings to make them conflicted and can attack the dense physical body with all kinds of diseases, over and over again.

Death of the Two Witnesses

Verses 7 through 10 describe the death of the witnesses:

(7) And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. (8) And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. (9) And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations

shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. (10) And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

Paul, in Romans 8:5-6, describes a spiritual sense of death: "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace." Just as the physically dead are unconscious of the things of the physical world, the spiritually dead are unconscious of the great facts of the spiritual world, such as God, unity and the soul. The spiritually dead may still be intensely alive to the things of the physical world, but they lack spiritual awareness. As shown next, verses 7 through 10 depict how judgment leads to the spiritual death of the emotional and vital bodies.

The "bottomless pit" in verse 7 is sometimes translated as the "the deep" or the "Abyss." Luke 8:31 describes it as a prison for evil spirits. Bailey uses similar images to depict the subconscious nature: "The subconscious nature is like a deep pool from which a man can draw almost anything from his past experience, if he so desires, and which can be stirred up until it becomes a boiling cauldron, causing much distress."⁴¹ Moreover, *A Commentary on the Book of the Revelation* interprets the bottomless pit as the "subconscious mind" or "area of repression,"⁴² which is how this symbol is construed here.

Matthew 7:1 states, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." *ACIM* gives this explanation: "When the Bible says 'Judge not that ye be not judged,' it means that if you judge the reality of others you will be unable to avoid judging your own."⁴³ Bailey says, "we see in others what is in us."⁴⁴ Thus, the beast that rises out of the bottomless pit is guilt, because judgment of others leads to self-judgment.

Any of the so-called powers depicted in verses 5 and 6 could be used as a defense against guilt. In particular, anger attempts to get rid of guilt by projecting it onto someone else. Unrighteous activity attempts to gain a feeling of superiority that offsets, or compensates for, a feeling of inferiority engendered by guilt. Conflicted feelings can interfere with detached observation of guilt. Sickness can be an excuse for not facing guilt or be an attempt to alleviate the feeling of guilt through self-punishment or eliciting sympathy from other people. *ACIM* concludes, "Sickness is not an accident. Like all defenses, it is an insane device for self-deception."⁴⁵

These defenses are *insane* because their application actually increases the strength of what they would defend against, as *ACIM* explains: "You make what you defend against, and by your own defense against it is it real and inescapable."⁴⁶ Moreover, when the emotional and vital bodies use any of these defenses, they die in a spiritual sense. The spiritual death of the emotional body is its loss of inclusive or spiritual love. Paul, in Philippians 2:1-2, writes about this kind of love: "If *there be* ... any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind." Similarly, the spiritual death of the vital body is its loss of righteousness.

ACIM speaks about the role of memory: "Memory holds the message it receives, and does what it is given it to do ... And if it seems to serve to cherish ancient hate, and gives you pictures of injustices and hurts that you were saving, this is what you asked its message be and that it is. Committed to its vaults, the history of all the body's past is hidden there. All of the strange associations made to keep the past alive, the present dead, are stored within it, waiting your command that they be brought to you, and lived again."⁴⁷ Accordingly, in verse 8, "dead bodies" are taken as painful memories of past emotional and physical experiences.

In verse 8, the “street of the great city” consists of the internal communication channels, alluded to in verse 4, that transmit information from one part of the personality to another, because the city symbolizes the personality, as in verse 2. Sodom was a place of moral degradation (Genesis 19:4-11), and Egypt kept the Israelites in bondage (Exodus 1:13-14). Charles Fillmore, co-founder of Unity Church, says, “Sodom symbolizes the lowest form of sense desire,” and “Egypt signifies the darkness of ignorance.”⁴⁸

Krishnamurti uses metaphors similar to those in verse 9: “What we know is the dead past, not the living. To be aware of the living, we must bury the dead in ourselves.”⁴⁹ In verse 9, “dead bodies” are memories of past experiences, and “to be put in graves” means to forget those memories.

This episode in the *Revelation* depicts an intermediate stage on the spiritual journey. The aspirant is no longer completely identified with his physical form but has not yet become absorbed in his soul. In Bailey’s words, “Duality however, still persists, for the man is sometimes identified with his soul and sometimes with his form nature; this is the stage wherein so many most earnest disciples are at this time to be found.”⁵⁰ In verse 10, “they that dwell upon the earth” are thoughts, feelings and motives that are still identified with the physical form, because the earth represents the dense physical body, as in verse 6.

In John 16:20, Jesus predicts that his disciples “shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice” during the period between his crucifixion and resurrection. The celebration in verse 10 probably alludes to that text and is interpreted as the mutual justification, support and strengthening of the thoughts, feelings and motives still identified with the physical form.

Consequently, verses 7 through 10 have the following psychological meaning:

- (7) The act of judging other people causes guilt to emerge out of the subconscious nature and enter the personality. By using their powers as

defenses, the emotional and vital bodies strengthen guilt and die in a spiritual sense: inclusive love is extinguished from the emotional body, and righteousness from the vital body. (8) Painful memories of past emotional and physical experiences pass throughout the personality, resulting in a pervasive sense of degradation, bondage and suffering. (9) All elements of the personality focus on those painful memories as long as the judgment of unworthiness persists and they maintain those memories. (10) The unredeemed parts of the personality, which are identified with the physical form, use this suffering to justify, support and strengthen each other, because they are no longer superseded by the inclusive love and righteousness that the emotional and vital bodies had previously displayed.

Resurrection of the Two Witnesses

Verses 11 through 13 describe the recovery of the two witnesses:

- (11) And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. (12) And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. (13) And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Detached self-observation yields insights. In verses 1 through 3, the soul instructs the aspirant to observe himself with detachment while he is judging other people. Verses 4 through 10 describe the resulting series of insights that the aspirant has about himself

and that show the cost of judgment, so he is ready to give it up. *ACIM* makes a similar point: “It is not difficult to relinquish judgment ... The teacher of God lays it down happily the instant he recognizes its cost. All of the ugliness he sees about him is its outcome. All of the pain he looks upon is its result. All of the loneliness and sense of loss; of passing time and growing hopelessness; of sickening despair and fear of death; all these have come of it. And now he knows that these things need not be. Not one is true. For he has given up their cause, and they, which never were but the effects of his mistaken choice, have fallen from him.”⁵¹

Paul, in Ephesians 2:4-6, writes about spiritual resurrection: “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ ... And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places*.” Just as verses 7 through 10 describe the spiritual death of the emotional and vital bodies, which is the loss of their spiritual qualities; verses 11 through 13 describe their spiritual resurrection, which is the recovery of those qualities.

After being asked the question “What is signified by the revival of these witnesses?” Cayce gave the following answer: “How hath He given? ‘If ye meditate on these things, I will bring to thy remembrance all things.’ The reviving, the renewing, by the abilities of the soul to take hold upon the witnesses of the life itself! And what is life? God!”⁵² Although Cayce’s answer is not entirely clear, it suggests that the witnesses are revived through “the abilities of the soul” and the effort to “meditate.” Accordingly, in verse 11, “the Spirit of Life from God” is taken as ideas that come from God, via the soul, during meditation and that convey the realization of the essential unity of human beings. Paul, in Ephesians 4:25, also speaks of this unity: “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.”

ACIM describes how ideas from God can transform our minds: “Think honestly what you have thought that God would not have thought, and what you have not thought that God would have you think. Search sincerely for what you have done and left undone accordingly, and then change your mind to think with God’s. This may seem hard to do, but it is much easier than trying to think against it. Your mind is one with God’s. Denying this and thinking otherwise has held your ego together, but has literally split your mind.”⁵³

Arthur Powell, a theosophical writer, says, “The causal body owes its name to the fact that in it reside the causes which manifest themselves as effects in the lower planes. For it is the experiences of past lives, stored in the casual body, which are the *cause* of the general attitude taken up towards life.”⁵⁴ The causal body stores wisdom learned from experiences, expresses abstract thoughts, and transmits divine ideas to the personality. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:1, refers to the causal body with the phrase, “an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”⁵⁵

What is the “great voice from heaven” in verse 12? The foregoing quotation from Paul suggests that this voice might be the causal body, because that body is located “in the heavens.” On the other hand, this voice might be the soul, because the latter is part of the spiritual world, which is symbolized by “heaven.” The angel in verse 1 has already been interpreted as the soul, but perhaps the voice from heaven and the angel denote the same entity. Revelation 10:8 states, “And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go *and* take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel,” showing that the voice from heaven is different from both the aspirant and the angel. Thus, our conclusion is that the voice from heaven is the causal body.

The two witnesses “ascended up to heaven in a cloud.” Here, “ascended up to heaven” is taken as the recovery of the spiritual qualities that were lost in verse 7. A cloud is a symbol of divine guidance, as in Psalm 78:14: “he led them with a cloud.” In verse 12, divine guidance is transmitted by the causal body to the emotional and vital bodies.

A great earthquake is a symbol of a great destruction that is wrought by divine judgment, as in Ezekiel 38:19-20: “For in my jealousy *and* in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; ... and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.” In verse 13, the great earthquake is interpreted as the destruction of all mental judgments through the application of divine ideas. Goldsmith describes the corresponding lesson that the aspirant learns: “In the spiritual life, you place no labels on the world. You do not judge as to good or evil, sick or well, rich or poor.”⁵⁶ Paul, in Galatians 3:28, makes a similar point: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

What do the numerical symbols in verse 13 mean? Ten patriarchs are mentioned before the Flood (Genesis 5), the Egyptians were visited with ten plagues (Exodus 7-12), and there are ten commandments (Exodus 34:28). The *New Bible Dictionary* concludes: “The number 10, therefore, also signifies completeness.”⁵⁷ One thousand, which is ten cubed, signifies the completion of three processes. Genesis 2:3 states: “God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.” The *New Bible Dictionary* also concludes, “Seven ... is associated with completion, fulfillment and

In withholding judgment as to whether the situation is good or evil, we create within us something like a vacuum. Truth rushes with the Truth about the person, situation, or condition. Truth reveals Itself as the harmony unto the situation.

perfection.”⁵⁸ In the context of verse 13, “the tenth part of the city fell” is taken as the loss of all separative feelings, and “slain of men seven thousand” as the perfection that is achieved in the personality through the elimination of all egotistical activities on mental, emotional, and physical levels.

The aspirant is a subjective life who operates through his vehicles of expression, namely, his causal body and personality. The “remnant” in verse 13 refers to what remains after the foregoing purification has taken place. The purified personality certainly remains, but the subjective life and causal body also remain. Thus, the remnant refers to the aspirant and includes both vehicles of expression.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 10:7, advises, “Neither be ye idolaters,” but Goldsmith provides a broad definition of idolatry: “To give power to anything external to consciousness is idolatry. It is to recognize a power apart from God. We must come to the inner conviction that power does not exist in form—any form, no matter how good the form may be.”⁵⁹ Judgment gives power to external conditions, so it is equivalent to idolatry. Thus, when the aspirant gives up judgment, he could be regarded as having true reverence towards God, because he is no longer idolatrous.

In the King James Version of the Bible, “fear” is a translation of a word that could also mean reverence, and the expression “fear of the LORD” often denotes reverence that invokes, or summons, illumination from God. For example, Proverbs 15:33 says, “The fear of the LORD *is* the instruction of wisdom”; Psalms 25:12-14 states, “What man *is* he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way *that* he shall choose ... The secret of the LORD *is* with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant”; and Malachi 4:2 states, “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.” Accordingly, the

phrase “the remnant were affrighted” in verse 13 means that the earlier purification enables the aspirant to have reverence that invokes illumination from God, and the phrase “gave glory to the God of heaven” means that the aspirant shows forth that illumination.

Goldsmith summarizes the foregoing steps: “Here we are today with an evil person, condition, or disease. The first thing we do is retire within ourselves. I can’t call it good or evil. So if it is neither good nor evil, what is it? All I can know about it is that ‘it Is.’ What am I looking at? Am I seeing what Is—or what appears? The minute that I can agree that I am seeing an appearance, then I can disregard it, because behind that appearance is that which Is. In withholding judgment as to whether the situation is good or evil, we create within us something like a vacuum, and into that vacuum Truth rushes with the Truth about the person, situation, or condition. Truth reveals Itself as the harmony unto the situation.”⁶⁰

Consequently, verses 11 through 13 have the following psychological meaning:

(11) After learning the cost of judgment through the insights set forth in verses 4 through 10, the aspirant remembers ideas from God, which imply that the belief of separateness is unreal. The emotional and vital bodies start to recover, and the unredeemed parts no longer can justify themselves. (12) The causal body, which understands the divine ideas, calls upon the emotional and vital bodies to regain their spiritual qualities, which they then do in spite of the unredeemed parts. (13) Soon afterward, the aspirant’s application of the divine ideas eliminates all mental judgments, because they are based on the belief of separateness, all separative feelings, because they are based on mental judgments, and all egotistical activities, because they are based on separative feelings. This purification enables the aspirant to be invocative and show forth illumina-

tion from the God of heaven rather than that of the earth.

Conclusions

The *Revelation of St. John* is written mainly in symbols. If the symbols in chapter 11 are interpreted psychologically, they depict judgment’s formation, cost, and relinquishment. In particular, the “two witnesses” in the chapter show how the emotional and vital bodies are affected by judgment. As illustrated by this exegesis, the *Revelation* provides detailed and practical instructions for the spiritual journey. Although the *Revelation* appears in the holy book of the Judeo-Christian tradition, its instructions can be appreciated and applied by aspirants in all religious traditions.

Bailey says, “the *Book of Revelations* ... was dictated 1900 years ago by the disciple who is now known as the Master Hilarion,”⁶¹ and “the Master Hilarion ... in an earlier incarnation was Paul of Tarsus.”⁶² On the other hand, Bailey also says, “In the *New Testament*, John, the beloved disciple, was privileged to gain a cosmic picture and a true prophetic vision which he embodied in the *Apocalypse*.”⁶³ Modern scholars generally assign the following dates: Paul died around 64 or 65 CE. The *Revelation* was composed at a later date, sometime between 68 and 96 CE. John survived his contemporary apostles, dying about 100 CE. If all of these accounts are true, then Paul, after the death of his physical body, passed into the spiritual world and dictated the *Revelation* to John, who was still incarnated in the physical world.

Although we cannot confirm Bailey’s account that the author of the *Revelation* was in fact Paul, our exegesis of chapter 11 does show a definite Pauline character. In particular, this chapter contains several allusions to Paul’s writings, such as “two or three witnesses” (2 Corinthians 13:1) and “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4), and utilizes many of his doctrines, such as self-examination (2 Corinthians 13:5), spiritual death (Romans 8:5-6), spiritual resurrection (Ephesians 2:4-6), unity of human beings

(Ephesians 4:25), and ending of judgment (Galatians 3:28).

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