



William Blake, (1799-1807)

Ephemera ~ May 2023

Celestial Gateways



By Mary Stewart Adams, with design by Patricia DeLisa



AT THE SEVENTH CORNICE OF THE *PURGATORY* IN HIS *DIVINE COMEDY*, DANTE IS TERRIFIED

at having to pass through a wall of fire, beyond which God's glad angel stands singing *Beati mundo corde* (*Blessed are the pure in heart*, from Matthew 5:8):

*“Holy souls, there's no way on or round
But through the bite of fire; in, then, and come!
Nor be you deaf to what is sung beyond.”*

-Purgatory, Canto XXVII, lines 10-12

This fire trial precedes Dante's entry into the earthly Paradise, where, after drinking the waters of oblivion from the River Lethe in order to overcome the lower memory, he partakes of the waters of good remembrance from the River Eunoë, at which point he is prepared for face-to-face encounter with his beloved Beatrice, and the journey through the celestial paradise.

This sequence of the fire trail followed by the draughts of forgetfulness and of good remembrance calls to mind the processes in Rudolf Steiner's *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds* chapter 3 on *Initiation*, in which he describes how the seeker after spiritual truths gains entry to the *Temple of Higher Wisdom*. He writes that, after passing through what can be described as the several trails of fire, water, and air, during which the candidate for higher knowledge develops self-confidence and courage; he learns to read the occult script; and develops an unquestionably sound judgement, then:

If the candidate is found fit for the foregoing experiences, he is given what is called symbolically the draught of forgetfulness.

As described in *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*, these trials are not confined to succession, nor are they achieved once and for all, but can be experienced in an on-going way.

What is interesting in the current context of the anthroposophical movement is that we have just entered the fulfillment of a significant rhythm

of time with regard to its history. Looking back 100 years to 1923, we arrive at a time when it is as though Rudolf Steiner was building a bridge, from the ashes of the First Goetheanum to the sacred rite of the Christmas Conference. The imagination that presents itself is that all we who have found our way to anthroposophy at this time, 100 years later, have crossed this bridge, which means we've passed through the trial of fire, even if only in imaginative cognition.



Dante Alighieri, by William Blake, c. 1800

In the context of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and in Steiner's *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*, the fire trial is followed by the opportunity to release the lower memory, to be “initiated into the secret knowledge that enables him to act without being continually distracted by the lower memory.” Having succeeded in this stage of becoming, the candidate for higher knowledge may then take the draught of good remembrance: “Through its agency he acquires the faculty of retaining the knowledge of the higher truths ever present in his soul.” At this moment in the *Divine Comedy*, Dante comes face-to-face with Beatrice, whom Rudolf Steiner refers to as a celestial goddess in line with the Sophia and Philosophia of the pre-Christian era, and, in our time, with the being of Anthroposophia.



SUCH is the progression of human evolutionary history in relation to the spiritual questions we have been considering. Here I must leave the matter to all those who wish to examine in even greater detail, following the destiny of Sophia, Philosophia, and Anthroposophia, how we may show how humanity develops progressively through those parts of the soul we call the intellectual soul, the consciousness soul, and the spirit-self. People will learn how profoundly what anthroposophy gives us is based in our whole being. What we receive through anthroposophy is our very own being.

This once floated toward us in the form of a celestial goddess with whom we were able to enter into relationship. This divine being lived on as Sophia and Philosophia, and now we can once again bring her out of ourselves and place her before us as the fruit of true anthroposophical self-knowledge. We can wait patiently until the world is willing to test the depth of the foundations of what we have to say, right down to the smallest details. It is the essence of anthroposophy that its own being consists of the being of the human, and its effectiveness, its reality, consists in that we receive from anthroposophy what we ourselves are and what we must place before ourselves, because we must practice self-knowledge. -Rudolf Steiner, *The Being of Anthroposophia* 3 February 1913



Sistine Madonna, Raphael Sanzio, c. 1513

Why write about this now? In addition to finding our way to this mystery through the cycle of 100 years, we can also find it in the cycle of the year, every year. A close read of the [Calendar of the Soul](#) verses following the first verse at Easter reveals how we can experience a freeing from the fetters of self-hood now, which can be likened to taking the draught of forgetfulness, of being freed from the distraction of the lower memory.

In his researches on this time in the cycle of the year, specifically between Easter and St. John's, Karl König describes how the Christian festival year ends at Whitsun (which in 2023 is observed on May 28). Then, there is a complete cessation, in which the current year (2023) is freed, carrying its destiny with it up into the cosmic spaces:

“From now on the year (2023) is freed; it is going up and carries its destiny with it, while the earthly year now prepares, during the three months between St. John's and Michaelmas, to receive the seed of the year (2024).”

-Karl König [The Year as a Being](#) 23 June 1963

Just as the future makes its way toward us at St. John's, so in the images of Raphael we experience this sense of life force and mystery floating toward us...

-See Rudolf Steiner, *The Mission of Raphael in the Light of Spiritual Science*, 30 January 1913, GA62



We are called upon to release what may live in the lower memory, particularly as it relates to historical, rather than lived experience, to offer this up so that what calls from the future may find its way, through our striving, into the earthly cycle of the year.

The *Calendar of the Soul* verses progress from this image of being freed from the fetters of one's self-hood (v 3); through widening into worldwide life at verse 5; to arising from our narrow limits at Ascension (v 6); all the way to resting in quiet dream-life with the Whitsun verse 8. Then, there is a pause. Slowly, the verses draw attention to the necessity of losing the self to find the self (v 9); of surrendering to God encounter, which I may only realize in the future (v 10); to fully losing the human I in order to find the cosmic I (v 11).

Only when we arrive at v 12, St John's verse, do we begin again, fructified by cosmic encounter, to cultivate a space for the future that is now present.

To move from an imagination of this opportunity of losing the self to find the self, now we are 100 years from 1923, that seminal year in the history of the anthroposophical movement, through the more generic experience afforded us year after year as expressed in the *Calendar of the Soul*, to the coloration that belongs to 2023 specifically, we can look to the star picture overhead, and to what stirs there.

To do this I will look microcosmically through the tropical zodiac, because of the way it augments the experience in 2023 of our standing at a celestial gateway. It is to be noted here with regard to my use of the tropical zodiac that it is with a mind to ideas from Johannes Kepler, Rudolf Steiner, and later used by Hermann Beckh, that the tropical zodiac, which aligns Spring Equinox to the Sun's entry into the sign (not the constellation) of Aries, that this alignment bears the permanent imprint on the



Diane Haley, Whitsun

soul of the earth from that time when the Christ was incarnate, that this is still physically active today, *“for the blessing is permanent.”* (Hermann Beckh [Marks Gospel - The Cosmic Rhythm](#)) .

The phenomena seen from here include Saturn's movement from the sign of Aquarius into Pisces; Pluto's movement from Capricorn into Aquarius; Jupiter's moving from Aries into Taurus; and the movement of the Moon's Nodes from Taurus/Scorpio back into Aries/Libra. It is neither within the scope nor interest of this article to bring astrological interpretation to these motions, but to consider them phenomenologically. The Moon moves through every sign every month, though its light varies and only repeats every 19 years; the Sun, each year. But the outer planets, in their rhythmic course, take more time, and considered singly may sound a note into our experience. When several outer planets make ingress into new signs at relatively the same time, the sounding is much more pronounced ~ several planetary “bodies” seem to be crossing through a gateway, which leads to the question: Is this something we are experiencing in our lives now?

“Our personal karma is embedded in the spiritual body of a year, which is born during the days between Whitsun and St John's.” -Karl König



For self review, here is a list of the phenomena:

We know ourselves to be from the stars, we know these stars are our bodies.

For we see ourselves. And we see the stars. We are stars seeing stars.

March 7, 2023

Saturn entered tropical sign Pisces, after two years in Aquarius

March 23, 2023

Pluto entered tropical sign Aquarius, after nearly 14 years in Capricorn

May 1, 2023

Mercury, which began its retrograde motion on April 21st, comes to the peak of the current cycle, when it comes to inferior conjunction with the Sun

May 5, 2023

Full Moon penumbral eclipse *not visible in North America*

May 7, 2023

Moon at Antares in Scorpio *visible to the naked eye*

May 9, 2023

Sun meets Uranus in same degree of zodiac *not visible to naked eye*

May 14, 2023

Mercury ends its retrograde, resumes direct motion

May 16, 2023

Jupiter enters tropical sign Taurus

May 17, 2023

Waning crescent Moon meets Jupiter in the morning sky looking east half an hour before sunrise

May 18, 2023

Ascension Day

May 19, 2023

New Moon-*Note that new moon will always occur within a week of Ascension Day, given Full Moon during the Holy Week and the number of days from Easter to Ascension*

May 22-24, 2023

Watch waxing crescent Moon meet Venus then Mars in the West after sunset. Venus and Mars are making their way to closest conjunction in the vicinity of the heart star Regulus at the end of June into July. It is interesting to consider their motion, during the ten days from Ascension to Whitsun, as though it was like a true finding of one's partners, colleagues, companions, just as the Apostles "found" one another in the aftermath of the Ascension, as it is described in the Acts of the Apostles.

May 28, 2023

Whitsunday, and the fulfillment of the Christian festival year

Looking ahead, to mid-July, the Nodes will regress from Taurus/Scorpio into Aries/Libra.



Greenwood Cemetary, Brooklyn, New York

*We never know how high we are
Til we are called to rise;
And then, if we are true to plan,
Our statures touch the skies.*

*The heroism we recite
Would be a daily thing,
Did not ourselves the cubits warp
For fear to be a king.*

-Emily Dickinson