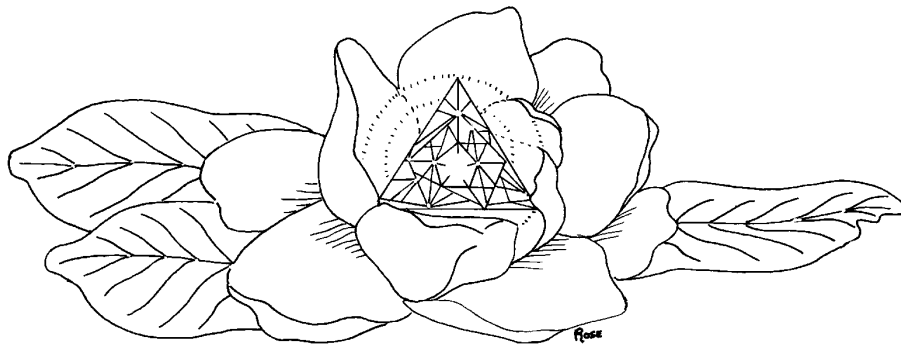


# ThoughtLine

May 2001



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 Workshops and Study Groups

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## Roots And Branches

*“My work is to teach...the Ageless Wisdom wherever I can find a response....” Extract From A Statement By the Tibetan*

Good evening friends and co-workers. Thank you for joining us here at Meditation Mount, for our monthly community meditation meeting in service to Humanity, held—in accordance with our established spiritual rhythm—on the eve of the alignment between the sun, earth and moon; this month in the solar sign of Scorpio. It is always a pleasure and an honor to share one’s thoughts with the group at such gatherings as we have here tonight. It is especially so tonight, given the fact that this month’s meeting is also being held on the eve of our annual fall conference. We hope that many of you will be joining us for our weekend of group meditation, sharing and thoughtform building on the very timely theme of *Visioning Spiritual Governance*.

The primary purpose of our meeting *this evening*<sup>1</sup> is to bring together a group of human beings to perform a service to humanity on the plane of mind. When we do this each month, we and countless groups of co-servers around the world consciously still and open our minds to spiritual impression from a corresponding group of spiritual beings who have, since time immemorial, used their extraordinarily developed powers of mental concentration to guide the evolution of life on this precious fragment of the Universe that we call planet Earth. These exalted beings are known collectively as the Hierarchy, and their number includes several individuals who are known as Masters of the Wisdom.

If you are new to our work, or perhaps simply a guest for the evening or for the weekend, you

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<sup>1</sup> This talk was given at the Community Meditation Meeting at Meditation Mount, Ojai, CA, on 11/10/2000.

may well ask: “Who are these Masters?” “What is this Wisdom of which they claim mastery?” and, most importantly, “How is Humanity served by rhythmic meditative receptiveness to their energy and their insight?” Hopefully, this talk will at least start you in the direction of an answer to such questions. I also hope that my group brothers and sisters—a great many of whom are here this evening and for the weekend conference—will resonate with the central image, or metaphor, of this talk. That image is of a great tree—the Tree of Spiritual Knowledge, if you will—with its roots reaching deep into the soil of planetary and even cosmic consciousness and with its trunk and branches spreading across a broad spectrum of outward expressions from the fertile minds of human beings.

If the trunk of the tree may be understood to symbolize an amalgam of all of humanity’s expressions of spiritual knowledge, the individual branches may be seen to represent each of the world’s religions, moral philosophies and spiritual traditions. The leaves are the many lives in service growing from each branch. Like any tree, this visible structure is held upright and nourished by hidden roots that are the eternal truths and insights that uphold human knowledge and from which our spiritual existence is nourished.

I encountered this particular tree image during the Silence of a meditation, in this room, at last year’s Scorpio community meditation meeting. In my field of imagination, what I saw at first was a circle of Great Oaks of Consciousness, ancient and gnarled; with majestic branches reaching into the heavens, and sturdy roots sinking deep into the heart of the earth. The Oaks in this distinguished circle included several single trunks, such as scientific thought—a relatively young Oak, as these Oaks count themselves, but nonetheless very sturdy and powerful already. My attention was then drawn to two “twin trunks” such as those that are familiar to anyone who, like me, loves oak trees. I have two such circles of oaks in the yard of my home—each with a double

oak of this sort—but they are insignificant compared to the Oaks of Knowledge I envisioned. In my mind's eye, these two twin oaks were philosophy/reason and spirituality/religion. I have revisited these twin oaks in a series of meditations since then, but it was only when I began to focus on the spiritual/religious Oak that this talk began to take form in my mind. I decided to share what I have learned so far about its “roots and branches” on this anniversary of my first encounter of the image—not because I have come to believe it is unique and therefore worthy of your time and attention—but quite the opposite. Certainly the Tree of Knowledge is not a new or original metaphor; rather, its very familiarity—like the equally popular Tree of Life and “family tree”—is what (if anything) gives trees a universal quality that makes such metaphoric imagery powerful.

I suggest that there is many an acorn to be found among such commonplace images. In the case of trees, there is an added significance beyond the fact that acorns come from trees and trees grow from acorns. That well-known fact is that these majestic beings of the Plant Kingdom do diligent service as the “lungs” of our home planet. To this must be added the gravity of the damage being done to these vital planetary servers by members of the Human Kingdom who put convenience and profit above our obligation to act as stewards of the three so-called, “lower” Kingdoms: mineral, plant and animal.

This talk is therefore dedicated to the Plant Kingdom. It is the result of my use of this tree imagery, focused through the lens of a personal study I had already undertaken, which started with a question whether there is a difference between two terms I have often heard used interchangeably: the *Ancient Wisdom* and the *Ageless Wisdom*.

I first encountered these terms, quite a few years ago now, in the writings of Alice A. Bailey, who, along with her Teacher, is familiar to most of us here tonight. For those of you who may not be

familiar with “AAB” as she is often called, she was an English woman who wrote a series of 24 books that form the foundation (though not the exclusive source) of our studies and practices here at Meditation Mount. Five of her books were her own thinking, while the other 19 were the product of her telepathic contact with her teacher—one of the Masters of the Wisdom to whom I made reference earlier—who is variously called by his name, Djwhal Khul, his initials, DK, or simply as “The Tibetan.” Current editions of the 19 books for which he is responsible start with an “Extract From A Statement By The Tibetan” in which he describes himself and his work. It states, in part, that:

“I am a brother of yours, who has travelled a little longer upon the Path than has the average student, and has therefore incurred greater responsibilities. I am one who has wrestled and fought his way into a greater measure of light than has the aspirant who will read this article, and I must therefore act as a transmitter of light, no matter what the cost. I am not an old man, as age counts among the teachers, yet I am not young or inexperienced. *My work is to teach and spread the knowledge of the Ageless Wisdom wherever I can find a response, and I have been doing this for many years.* I seek also to help the Master M. and the Master K.H. whenever opportunity offers, for I have been long connected with Them and with Their work. In all of the above, I have told you much; yet at the same time I have told you nothing which would lead you to offer me that blind obedience and the foolish devotion which the emotional aspirant offers to the Guru and Master Whom he is as yet unable to contact. Nor will he make that desired contact until he has transmuted emotional devotion into unselfish service to humanity,—not to the Master.” (*italics added*)

I ask that you note the particular statement emphasized above, as it focuses on the actual *subject* of this talk: “*My work is to teach and spread the knowledge of the Ageless Wisdom wherever I can find a response, and I have been*

doing this for many years.” Having been for some years a student of the Tibetan’s teaching, shortly before encountering the tree metaphor, I had embarked on an attempt to review what both DK and AAB had written expressly about the Ageless Wisdom. Through the wonders of computer technology, and the fact that the entire body of work produced by the Tibetan and Alice Bailey is now contained on a CD entitled *Twenty-Four Books of Esoteric Philosophy*, I can say with some assurance that the term “Ageless Wisdom” is used 78 times—but that the term is not defined anywhere in those books!

There are, my research informed me, actually *two* other terms which are apparent synonyms—“the Ancient Wisdom” and “the Wisdom of the Ages”—both of which are used only occasionally.<sup>2</sup> All three terms appear that to have reference to the esoteric knowledge that was known at a much earlier time in human history; thus, in Mrs. Bailey’s book *From Bethlehem to Calvary*, she quotes the following passage from *The Secret Doctrine*, by H. P. Blavatsky:

“There was in every ancient country having claims to civilisation, an Esoteric Doctrine, a system which was designated WISDOM, and those who were devoted to its prosecution were first denominated sages, or wise men.... Pythagoras termed this system ... the Gnosis or Knowledge of things that are. Under the noble designation of WISDOM, the ancient teachers, the sages of India, the magians of Persia and Babylon, the seers and prophets of Israel, the hierophants of Egypt and Arabia, and the philosophers of Greece and the West, included all knowledge which they considered as essentially

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<sup>2</sup> The term “Ancient Wisdom” appears, as such, only nine times in the “blue books” of DK/AAB. Of those, only five are capitalized (as the term Ageless Wisdom always is). “Wisdom of the Ages” is capitalized in three of the four times it appears.

divine; classifying part as esoteric and the remainder as exterior.” (*The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. III, p. 55, quoted in *From Bethlehem to Calvary*, at p. 6.)

For a variety of reasons (which are the subject of another talk), we live at a time when many of these once secret teachings are readily available in many bookstores and libraries. Mrs. Blavatsky’s writings, which were also done under the direction of the Tibetan, were a significant milestone in the process by which this sacred knowledge was made public. The result of her work with Master DK, beginning in 1875, founded Theosophy, from which esotericism would branch, beginning with Mrs. Bailey’s writings. This description of the result is from her *Unfinished Autobiography*:

“The esoteric truths of the past are the exoteric fundamental truths of the present. During the past one hundred years, the esoteric doctrines and the secret teaching of the Ageless Wisdom—given to the public often under the pledge of secrecy—have become public property. The nature of man as taught in the ancient mystery schools of the past has—under other names—become recognizable as modern psychology. The mystery of the astral body, of the etheric body and the mental body are now dealt with in our universities, in our psychological courses, dealing with the vitality of the human being, his emotional nature and the mind. The belief in the Masters was a closely guarded secret; now They are discussed from public platforms in all our great cities. The way of meditation and its techniques were closely guarded subjects and the public was taught that such teachings were dangerous; today, this idea is exploded and scores of people throughout the world meditate, make alignment and arrive at soul contact and knowledge.” *Id.* (at p. 275).

As the trunk, branches and leaves of any tree are its visible (exoteric) parts; let me return to my imagery there. Some branches of this tree, indeed many of the oldest of them, are no longer actively

growing and have for some time borne no new leaves—by which I mean that there are few if any practitioners of these religious traditions. Indeed, some of the oldest of humanity’s spiritual traditions are no longer actively practiced and the study of their teachings, at this time in history, is largely academic. These would include most of the ancient pagan religions, such as those that gave rise to the Greek and Roman mythologies, as well as the Aztec and Mayan religions that once dominated the American continents. Please understand that I do not intend to suggest that these traditions did not express true wisdom in their time, or even that they have no current value. Certainly the Gods of Olympus were once among the highest expressions of human spiritual insight and their adherents founded great civilizations and conquered vast empires. Even now, the myths and legends they left behind still have cultural, literary and symbolic significance that more than validates their study. My point is that there are many spiritual traditions that were once dominant on the world stage, but are no longer actively practiced. Still, some of the teachings that flowered from these now dormant branches, like the *Labours of Hercules*, continue to cling to the branch and thus to serve and enlighten human understanding.

Some of the still growing branches, like those of many trees, spring from an older, established branch. For example, the branch of Judaism, which is among the oldest existing religious traditions, sent off a small shoot some two thousand years ago that has since grown to be one of the largest and most prolific branches on our symbolic tree—that which we now call Christianity. This branch, for perhaps a millennium, grew as a single outshoot before dividing into two main branches, each of which continue to grow and generate many active leaves—the Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Then, around the year 1500, the many lush branches that we now know as the Protestant Churches began to sprout from the Catholic branch. In the meanwhile, of course, the original

branch of Judaism has continued to grow and generate leaves.

Other branches on this tree that are active at this time include all of humanity’s existing religions, of which there are many smaller faiths in addition to the larger religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism and Confucianism. Indeed, there are a plethora of tribal and folk religions, largely concentrated in Africa and China, but by no means limited to those areas. There are several branches on this tree that are, in fact, larger than most people realize. For example, there are an estimated 20 million Sikhs, 11 million Shamanists, nearly six million Bahai’s, nearly four million each of Jains and Shintoists, and more than 20 million people practicing “other religions” according to a recent *World Almanac*. Moreover, many of these larger branches have sent off any number of smaller offshoots that represent various sects.

The *World Almanac* gives no estimate of the number of human beings who now adhere to various “new age” religions, nor does it recognize or enumerate what we call esoteric practitioners—in other words, in the exoteric culture, this part of the tree is essentially invisible. What part of a tree is, unless intentionally unearthed, invisible? The roots, of course. Like the trunk and branches above the ground, these “roots” of spiritual knowledge and insight have many “branches” below the surface, such as Masonry, Qabbalism, Rosicrucianism, as well as Theosophy and its offshoot, esotericism. What these branches have in common, I believe, is that they recognize—and base their practices and understandings upon—the fact that the entire tree, including each and all of the branches, are growing from the same roots. This is, of course, a metaphorical way of saying something that is often observed but too seldom acted upon—that all of humanity’s religions and spiritual systems arise from a single source, and that the differences among them are inconsequential compared to their common lineage from that common Divine Source. While each religion

may call God by a distinctive name, each believe that only one God truly exists.

That all of these names refer to the *same* Supreme Being is the central insight which will give rise, in the coming era, to what esotericists call the New World Religion. This name, within the metaphor being expounded here, is a name for the entire tree. By recognizing that they grow from a single tree, the branches of spiritual consciousness in no way lose their distinctiveness as branches of that tree. Most importantly, this metaphor is intended to convey the ultimate moral that war among humanity's religions is as nonsensical as would be war among the branches of the same tree. **As the sap that succors all of the branches rises up from common roots, the health of the entire tree is a vital concern for each and every branch.**

All of the major exoteric religions currently active upon our planet arose either during the past 2500 years—in other words, during the outgoing Piscean Age—or, in the cases of Judaism and Confucianism, the preceding Ages of Aries and Taurus. The wisdom of their teachings is truly ancient, but it was preceded by a body of wisdom that is, in fact, ageless. Throughout those and many preceding ages, there have existed beings, including but not limited to *human* beings, who have had direct knowledge of these ancient and ageless wisdom that sink deep in human consciousness, like the roots of a tree sink into the earth's surface. This knowledge has been intentionally transmitted to humanity through the work of the Masters of the Wisdom, who are always ready to reveal as much of the truth as humanity is ready and able to absorb at any given time. As DK has stated: "The task of any Master is only to bring to the attention of the man, working through the medium of a physical brain, that phase of the Ageless Wisdom which his own soul is seeking to have him register." (*Discipleship in the New Age, Vol. II*, at p. 719.)

The scope of this talk does not encompass any attempt to enumerate the many spiritual groups

and mystery schools that have existed during our planet's ancient history, nor will I attempt here to expiate the specific knowledge which they taught and practiced. This information, however, is rather well known and has been restated for the modern seeker not only in esoteric sources such as Alice Bailey, H. P. Blavatsky and Annie Besant, but also in many exoteric works, such as the extensive writings of the social anthropologist Joseph Campbell. The important point for our present purpose is that all expressions of human spiritual wisdom can trace their roots to a common source.

In Mrs. Besant's very informative book entitled *The Ancient Wisdom*, she aptly observes that: "It is admitted on all hands that a survey of the great religions of the world shows that they hold in common many religious, ethical, and philosophical ideas. But while the fact is universally granted, the explanation of the fact is a matter of dispute." Some, whom Besant calls the "doctors of Comparative Mythology" "allege that religions have grown up on the soil of human ignorance tilled by imagination, and have been gradually elaborated from crude forms of animism and fetishism; their likenesses are referred to universal natural phenomena imperfectly observed and fancifully explained...." After rejecting this cynical explanation of humanity's spiritual traditions, she describes the true source of what I am here calling the "roots" of humanity's spiritual knowledge:

"The second explanation of the common property in the religions of the world asserts the existence of an original teaching in the custody of a Brotherhood of great spiritual Teachers, who—Themselves the outcome of past cycles of evolution—acted as the instructors and guides of the child humanity of our planet, imparting to its races and nations in turn the fundamental truths of religion in the form most adapted to the idiosyncrasies of the recipients. According to this view, the Founders of the great religions are members of the one Brotherhood, and were aided

in Their mission by many other members, lower in degree than themselves, Initiates and disciples of various grades, eminent in spiritual insight, in philosophic knowledge, or in purity of ethical wisdom.” (*The Ancient Wisdom*,<sup>3</sup> at pp. 2-3.)

This, I am sure you have already noted, is a perfect description of the Masters of the Wisdom and the Hierarchy of which They were and are a part. While its usage in the DK/AAB writings provides no basis for a distinction between the terms, and they are generally treated as interchangeable in general discourse on the subject, I continue thinking there may actually be a distinction worth noting between the Ancient Wisdom and the Ageless Wisdom.

Among the most comprehensive surveys of what was actually taught in the ancient esoteric schools and other wisdom traditions is Manley Palmer Hall’s seminal work, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*, which bears this impressive subtitle: *An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy, Being An Interpretation of the Secret Teachings concealed within the Rituals, Allegories and Mysteries of All Ages*.<sup>4</sup> In an almost equally impressive volume, entitled: *Lectures on Ancient Philosophy, An Introduction to the Study and Application of Rational Procedure*, Professor Hall surveys the concepts that underlie the teachings that he spent his lifetime studying and restating for the modern seeker after knowledge. In his chapter on “Rosicrucian and Masonic Origins” he not only places their founders among the great spiritual masters, he attempts to trace these two exalted fraternal orders into the deep mists of human

history and, in fact, suggests that their true origins may be even older than the planet itself:

“Though the great initiate-philosophers of Freemasonry can be counted upon one’s fingers, yet their power is not to be measured by the achievements of ordinary men. They are dwellers upon the Threshold of the Innermost, Masters of that secret doctrine which forms the indivisible foundation of every great theological and rational institution. The outer history of the Masonic order is one of noble endeavor, altruism, and splendid enterprise—the inner history, one of silent conquest, persecution, and heroic martyrdom. The body of Masonry rose from the guilds of workmen who wandered the face of medieval Europe, but the spirit of Masonry walked with God before the universe was spread out or the scroll of the heavens unrolled.” (*Lectures on Ancient Philosophy*,<sup>5</sup> at p. 397.)

From this and many other such statements throughout the body of his work, it may be inferred that Professor Hall might agree with the notion that, while the Ancient Wisdom is traceable to the earliest expressions of truth in humanity’s history, there is an even older body of knowledge that predates life on this planet. I am coming to believe that it is this “older than ancient” line of knowledge that the Tibetan is referring to by the term *Ageless Wisdom*.

While I said before that neither the Tibetan nor Alice Bailey explicitly defines the term *Ageless Wisdom*, they do state the most fundamental of its concepts. What are there called the “four basic postulates of the *Ageless Wisdom*” are stated in *A Treatise On White Magic*, prefaced by the admonition that: “No true investigator of the *Ageless Wisdom* is asked to give blind adherence to any presentation of truth; he is asked, however, to have an open mind and seriously to weigh and

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<sup>3</sup> The Vedanta Press, The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Madras, India (1897).

<sup>4</sup> H.S. Crocker Company, Inc., San Francisco (1928).

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<sup>5</sup> The Hall Publishing Company, Los Angeles (1929).



consider the theories and ideals, the laws and truths which have guided so many out of darkness into the light of knowledge and experience. The postulates might be enumerated as follows and are given in the order of their importance.”

“I. First, that there exists in our manifested universe the expression of an Energy or Life which is the responsible cause of the diverse forms and the vast hierarchy of sentient beings who compose the sum total of all that is.... This great Life is the basis of Monism, and all enlightened men are Monists. ‘God is One’ is the utterance of truth. One life pervades all forms and those forms are the expressions, in time and space, of the central universal energy....

II. The second postulate grows out of the first and states that the one Life, manifesting through matter, produces a third factor which is consciousness. This consciousness, which is the result of the union of the two poles of spirit and matter, is the soul of all things; it permeates all substance or objective energy; it underlies all forms, whether it be the form of that unit of energy which we call an atom, or the form of a man, a planet, or a solar system. This is the *Theory of Self-determination*....

III. The third basic postulate is that the object for which life takes form and the purpose of manifested being is the unfoldment of consciousness, or the revelation of the soul. This might be called the *Theory of the Evolution of Light*.... The goal of evolution is found to be a gradual series of light demonstrations....

IV. The fourth postulate consists of the statement that all lives manifest cyclically. This is the *Theory of Rebirth* or of reincarnation, the demonstration of the law of periodicity. Such are the great underlying truths which form the foundation of the Ageless Wisdom—the existence of life, and the development of consciousness through the cyclic taking of form....” (A *Treatise on White Magic* (at pp. 7-10.)

In an enlightening definition of group service, The Tibetan offers this sage advice about how and where the disciple should seek to express the Ageless Wisdom by putting its precepts into practice:

“*Live a life which is an example to others.* Is it necessary for me to enlarge upon this? It seems as if it should not be and yet here again is where men fail. What after all is group service? Simply the life of example. He is the best exponent of the Ageless Wisdom who lives each day in the place where is the life of the disciple; he does not live it in the place where he thinks he should be.... Men fail to make good where they are because they find some reason which makes them think they should be elsewhere. Men run away ... from circumstances which call for action of a high sort and which are staged to draw out the best that is within a man, provided he stays in them.” *Id.* (at p. 586, *italics* in original)

Plainly, DK does not advocate didactic teaching of the tenets of the Ageless Wisdom as the ideal way to bring these much-needed truths to the attention of humanity. Thus, talks like this one, while hopefully useful to esoteric students, do not compare in spiritual value to an exemplary life that actively demonstrates the Ageless Wisdom. Moreover, both DK and AAB often advise against the creation of an “orthodoxy” with respect to knowledge that, while ageless and constant, continues to evolve along a course parallel to that of humanity’s evolving consciousness. For example, in *The Unfinished Autobiography*, Mrs. Bailey makes this observation:

“ ... dogmas and doctrines appear and disappear as the *Ageless Wisdom* presents itself, generation after generation, and the continuity of revelation unfolds as the need of humanity demands it; but the underlying objective of all esoteric schools ... remains ever the same. That objective is *the revelation of divinity in man and in the universe*, and this leads inevitably to the acknowledgement of God Transcendent, and of God Immanent. It is

right that the terminologies and the presentations of the One Truth should change with the changing times, thus meeting the needs of the varied peoples of the world, but that which they seek to express remains unalterable.” (*The Unfinished Autobiography* at p. 281, *italics* in original).

These timeless and unalterable Truths are tabulated in the final appendix to Mrs. Bailey’s *Unfinished Autobiography*, in a form that she there calls “the fundamental doctrines of the Ageless Wisdom.” They are, in slightly abbreviated form, the following:

1. “That the Kingdom of God, the Spiritual Hierarchy of our planet, can and will be materialized on earth....
2. That there has been a continuity of revelation down the ages and that from cycle to cycle God has revealed Himself to humanity.
3. That God Transcendent is equally God Immanent, and that through human beings, who are in truth the sons of God (if the words of Christ and all the world Teachers mean anything) the three divine aspects—knowledge, love and will—can be expressed.
4. That there is only one divine Life, expressing itself through the multiplicity of forms in all the kingdoms of nature, and that the sons of men are, therefore, ONE.
5. That within each human being is a point of light, a spark of the one Flame. This, we believe, is the soul, the second aspect of divinity and that of which Paul spoke when he referred to ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory.’ It is the *demonstration* of the divine livingness in each person which is our goal, and discipleship is a step upon the way to that attainment.

6. That an ultimate perfection (though relative in nature) is possible for the individual aspirant and for humanity as a whole through the action of the evolutionary process....
7. That there are certain immutable laws governing the universe; man becomes progressively aware of these as he evolves. These laws are expressions of the will of God.
8. That the basic law of our universe is to be seen in the manifestation of God as *Love*.” *Id.* (at pp. 294-95).

With these fundamental tenets of the Ageless Wisdom firmly in mind, and with the knowledge that all of the religious and spiritual traditions of Humanity—like the many variegated branches of a great tree—have grown from the same roots, let us proceed now with our meditation, the group service that has brought us here together this evening.

Jeriel Smith, Scorpio 2000