



MAGDALENE CHRISTIANITY

*Crises
of
Materialism*

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CRISES OF MATERIALISM

The fifth era and its changes

The age of the Consciousness Soul began in 1413. Known as the 'European-American' era, it was so named to point to the rapid pace of change in political geography, religion, the arts, sciences and technology that began in fifteenth century Europe and England, and would influence the world until the mid-twentieth century when the USA became dominant.

Today, as we approach the middle of this era we live in societies that are fragmented into separate areas of knowledge and expertise, some of which are more advanced than others, while the old integrated approach to life has fallen by the wayside.

Such a fracturing can be sourced to developments brought about by a growing individualism and a personal urge to explore new frontiers. European and English mariners ventured across unexplored seas and re-mapped the world. Ideas brought change too with the humanist/artistic Italian Renaissance or 'rebirth' that re-imagined the glories of Greece and Rome through the new individualism. Investigation included not only classical antiquity but also Islamic, Hermetic, Kabbalistic and Alchemical texts. And from Germany came the Protestant Reformation against the Catholic church, set alight by Martin Luther (1483-1546) and resulting in widespread religious conflict.

The invention of moveable type and the printing press accelerated change. And another revolution of ideas was challenging the church through the spread of empirical hands-on investigation of the earth and cosmos. Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) did something radical to facilitate his research. Without denying his religious belief he separated this from his scientific study. He probably also hoped to avoid the Catholic Inquisition. His older contemporary Giordano Bruno had been burnt at the stake in 1600 for proposing cosmological views contrary to the Catholic faith. Galileo still had to spend the latter years of his life in home detention. But his move to separate religion and science was a harbinger of the future.

But not yet. In England Isaac Newton (1643-1727), the great mathematician and scientific theorist also wrote tracts on alchemy and the Bible. The painting below shows Newton experimenting with light through a prism. The clearly defined colours we know as the 'spectrum' were not what he saw – the colours have no defined borders and he originally named six, red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet. He

added a seventh, indigo, to align with the classical number of spiritual perfection reflected in musical notes, the days of the week and the (then known) seven sacred objects in the solar system.



By the eighteenth century, the philosophical ideas of the Enlightenment or 'Age of Reason' meant everything was being questioned. In a sense this was a last expression of the intellectual soul although one turning away from the spiritual traditions that had formed its foundation.

Philosophers urged the righting of society's wrongs and looked towards a light-filled future. Yet from a spiritual viewpoint the Enlightenment failed. High ideals would be swamped by materialism, which is essentially a focus on a material world while ignoring the soul and metaphysical forces in the world.

Tradition was upended, often accompanied by violent revolution, from the value of religious beliefs to social structures and classes. Exploration led to outposts of empire, bringing home new products, and imposing western ways on indigenous peoples, often brutally.

An explosion of experimentation led to rapid advances in physical science. Technological innovations based on scientific discoveries brought mechanism to agriculture, manufacturing and mining. An agrarian revolution began in England when small farm plots and common land that for centuries had been available for ordinary people to use, were taken over by wealthy pastoralists, displacing whole villages and driving families into the cities for work. Hard on this change was the Industrial Revolution, as men seized upon new methods of mass production. Greed for profit led to enormous and disruptive social change. Home-based industries were replaced by factories. Mills and mines swallowed up men, women and children who worked, and lived, in appalling conditions.



Nineteenth century cartoon by Robert Cruikshank of children as 'English factory slaves'

Accompanying these radical changes, a spiritual impulse still pushed through, marked by concern for the lives of others. We have a new social conscience emerging led at first by humane non-conformist Christians – a campaign for children's rights that included the revolutionary idea of a distinct 'childhood', and the anti-slavery movement.

The movement known as Romanticism also harnessed the soul's inner wisdom. In the visual arts, music and poetry, nature became a source of

inspiration. And the novel exploring the vagaries of 'the human condition' found a place at the heart of cultural expression.

In the latter nineteenth century, which brought fiercely opposed economic doctrines such as socialism and laissez faire capitalism, workers campaigned for a 'basic wage' through the newly formed unions, for voting rights, which would eventually include women, and the idea of government-funded welfare for the poor who inhabited the polluted, overcrowded towns.

Perhaps the slowest change to take hold was to the role of women – the protest that would grow into the suffragette movement and twentieth century feminism was powerfully voiced back in 1792 with *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by Mary Wollstonecraft.

How are we doing as we head towards the middle of the era?

Two developments are characteristics of the Age of the Consciousness Soul – the urge to know plus the will to apply our knowledge however we choose, and the counter concept of individual rights and responsibilities. These developments have spread worldwide, initially through colonization, latterly through advances in communication technologies.

We have become self-conscious, regarding self as unique, and our thinking is characterized by a spectator consciousness. We are no longer immersed in the world but look on it as separate to us. And by an act of will we make choices moment by moment in our lives. Through empathetic vision this has led to the major social improvements taking hold in an increasing number of societies. Yet looking on from a separated viewpoint can disconnect us from the whole, limiting the focus to self which freezes out compassion and empathy.

The consciousness soul brings the activity of the individual will into play. The deeper purpose of this age is for us to become fully conscious and free individuals who think and act from objective truth alive in the soul. The consciousness soul develops through enacting the spiritual will, which is always directed towards doing the good with what we know.

It's not about following a religion or any other belief system, from atheism to socio-political 'isms' to scientism. Full consciousness involving the spiritual 'I' can penetrate metaphysical meaning and through inner wisdom discover how this is working in everything we create and invent, in environmental, social and personal challenges and into world events. It is, in other words holistic.

The tools of this age are amazing. Just one example: scientific research and discoveries inform us how climate is connected world-wide and how weather is part of one inter-related global system. This is reclaiming

what was innately felt by the ancients. Now we can take hold of external evidence-based knowledge and act upon it to help us avoid catastrophe.

We do not always use discoveries well. The physical world of things is understood by being experimented on, analysed, measured, assessed, compartmentalised, graded – and monetarised. And in our eagerness to discover how everything works and to assert our will towards controlling what we discover, we become cold-hearted. From chemistry to economics to religion, psychology and even the arts we think materialistically and take this for granted as the norm.

Materialism has no place for the inner spiritual life. In our economically based, mechanised, computerised culture, directed towards the made environment, we fail to comprehend the reality of human structures. All of it will die, whether this be material accoutrements, social systems or external bases of religions. Death is built into everything born in the physical.

Yet we still make idols of the mental gymnastics that concern materialism alone – such as the illusory paradise in the minds of the Silicon Valley whiz kid gurus, a paradise where nobody needs to work, and leisure extends ad infinitum so long as we give up our autonomy to those same wizards who create the machines that do everything for us, even think and dream – and evolve. Not so different to the heaven without end promised by many religions if you follow the rules.

We can fall into this kind of false thinking because on an ego level we live with troubling polarities. Esoteric teachings name these after mythological beings Lucifer and Ahriman. Lucifer means 'light bringer', but it becomes a false light in us through overwrought desires of the ego. This distorts our feelings into wishful thinking and self-delusion, and even illusory spirituality out of touch with the reality around us. The Ahrimanic influence is cold, anti-life. It drives out feeling so sensible practicality becomes hard-hearted acquisition of wealth and control over the earth's resources, including the living world, and including human beings.

The spiritual 'I' stands between the two poles. But we are not enlightened yet. Often we slip behind the thrust of soul evolution because we are not yet truly conscious. One day someone will look back and observe how limited thinking was in the 21st century, still chained to redundant mind processes, including thinking only related to the world known through the senses when the invisible realms offer so much opportunity to know and apply truth.

The coming of Liberté, égalité, fraternité

When we feel comfortable and established in a settled way of life, we can believe that everything will continue to sail along. Yet ours is an age of dislocation, endemic wars and virulent new diseases, with a fear-filled muddle of un-thought-through mindsets and divisive opinions. Some say we are in a time of nihilism where belief in anything is falling away and our individualism has led only to selfish wilfulness. But by lifting our gaze above the immediate, a clearer view of the way into the future emerges. I think that we are in another liminal zone, right now. And it's alive with potential.

Liberty fraternity, equality was the calling cry of the eighteenth-century French Revolution, which fell into oppressive dictatorship. It failed to achieve its purpose, as all revolutions fail until they are founded in the triune human being – body, soul and spirit.



'Liberty Enlightening the World' – (colossal statue, better known as the Statue of Liberty, in New York harbour, USA; a gift of the French government in 1886)

Fraternity, true fellowship with our global family, is enacted in the physical world, but only through the *liberty* we achieve individually on a soul level. This entails awakening to the I AM that sleeps in the soul, every soul. *Equality* is of the spirit. In spirit which is our true self, we are

all equal and that too must be acknowledged. This is the way of the consciousness soul and of love.

I'm convinced that a re-emergent spiritual life is a vital companion to evolutionary progress. Our patriarchal, materialistic, egocentric, divisive, nationalistic cultures will die, potentially to be replaced by a holistic, unifying world practice reconnecting us with ancient unity, but without losing our hard-won individuality.

In taking up the way Mary Magdalene walked, through the pure love that she sought and found, through the wisdom alive in her soul, and through developing what might be called the 'higher senses' as Mary did, we can come to know spirit consciously as it works in our being. I have no doubt that her enlightened soul is still available to teach and guide us.

When we stand as truly conscious individuals in freedom, no longer hindered by fear and enmity or defined by roles the world allocates, each one of us becomes a co-creator with the spiritual cosmos, expressing universal love in the world. Further evolution of consciousness involves such a revolution.