

rites of love by Vladimir Megré

Book 8, part 2 of *The Ringing Cedars Series*

Ringling Cedars Press • www.ringingcedars.com

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2nd edition June 2008 • ISBN 978-0-9801812-8-9 (paperback) • LCCN 2008923354

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A VOYAGE OF SELF-DISCOVERY

Translator's Afterword

*And the Lord said unto me,
Arise, take thy journey before the people...
— Moses (Deut. 10: 11)*

It has been a long and interesting journey indeed. This journey began for me in the autumn of 2004 — in a manner of speaking, aboard ship. The ship was the *Patrice Lumumba*, and belonged to one Vladimir Nikolaevich Megré, a seasoned entrepreneur who traded up and down the Ob River in Western Siberia, selling produce and manufactured goods brought from southern cities to northern villages and buying up local handicrafts in return. As with the vast majority of Megré's readers, the description of the *Lumumba* in Book 1, Chapter 1 ("The ringing cedar"), served as my first introduction to the much more powerful (mentally speaking) literary vessel known as the *Ringing Cedars Series (RCS)*.

I was invited on board the *RCS* by its editorial 'Captain', Leonid Sharashkin, who had in turn been commissioned by 'Admiral' Megré to sail across the seas and bring the ship's precious cargo of ideas to the land of Anglophonia. I was hired as an English-speaking 'navigator' familiar with this new land's

linguistic waters, and equipped by forty years' experience in Russian-English translation to present these ideas in a format capable of reaching the hearts and minds of Anglophones. The adventure sounded promising, and, admittedly impelled by a sense of divine guidance, I gladly signed on, eager to set sail with a *Yo-heave-ho!* (or *Ey-ukhnem!* — as the Volga boatmen were said to chant). Eight times (count them!), no sooner had we delivered a shipment to its destination than we went back for more.

Now, as we approach a layover of indefinite duration (following the completion of our ninth voyage), I can look back and honestly say that the experience really has delivered on its promises — these trips have been truly rewarding in terms of both excitement and education,¹ and I am actually going to miss the many ups and downs that my editor and I have been tossed about by in this particular venture in literary navigation. Part of me will be sad, at last, to disembark onto terra firma (safer, perhaps, but not nearly as exciting), but I shall content myself with the 'glad' part — watching from afar as the nine shipments of ideas we helped deliver begin bearing fruit in the consciousness and lives of Americans, Australians, Britons, Canadians, New Zealanders, South Africans and countless others who for some reason have had the English edition of the *RCS* land in their hands.

From a translator's point of view, each of the linguistic shoals, sandbanks and icebergs we met along the way (not to mention the occasional typhoon!) offered a particular challenge. Some of these challenges were more formidable in appearance than others. My editor and I soon discovered that the task at hand was not just a matter of translation, pure and simple, for we were soon confronted in our journey by a whole host of cultural phenomena (references to people, places, institutions, historical events and cultural traditions) that would not be as familiar to Westerners as they were to native Russian readers of the Series, and hence required (sometimes substantial) research and documentation.

Mindful of the lessons of the *Titanic*, I hope we were at least moderately successful in resisting the temptation to place too much trust in technology or to become over-confident and over-reliant on our own previous professional experience.² The above-mentioned challenges, both large and small, were met through constant reference to both paper-published and on-line 'charts' (Russian and English dictionaries, thesauruses, encyclopædias and Google searches) — sometimes it came down literally to 'phone a friend', and on several occasions to a prayer for more of that 'divine guidance' that had urged me to climb aboard in the first place! Not only that, but results were checked over and over again before being entered into the final 'log'.

On occasion we even found ourselves exploring hitherto uncharted waters and had to navigate, as it were, by the seat of our pants. For example:

How to describe a Russian *dacha* and its primary function as a vegetable-raising centre to North Americans (and other anglophones) raised on vacation cottages with their swimming, boating and sundry recreational facilities?³

How to select a suitable English equivalent for the word *chelovek* — a Russian word that still designates a human being of either gender — when faced with a choice between (a) *human*, derived from words associated with lower concepts (like the ground) and (b) *man*, which originally (like *chelovek*)

¹One of the 'educational' rewards was a 'side-trip' around to the other side of a 'mountain', which provided fresh insight into my own beliefs and faith. See Translator's Afterword to Book 6.

²Certain aspects of technology, I admit, were most definitely a time-saving boon. Thank goodness for e-mail and the Internet!

³See Translator's Preface to Book 1.

described a 'thinking, intelligent being' of either gender but has since become narrowed in meaning to include (in popular parlance, at least) only half the human race?⁴

How to portray *dolmens* and other 'sacred sites' to a culture more accustomed to high-rise construction sites and Internet web sites?⁵

How to put across the concept of one's millennia-old *Rodina* ('Motherland') to readers whose roots in their current place of residence may go back no more than a few years or even mere months?⁶

How to express concepts of the pre-Christian Vedic Russian culture in an intelligible manner to English-speakers, when such concepts are still unfamiliar to many Russians themselves in their native tongue?!⁷

How to reproduce the author's plethora of writing styles (from 'choppy novice writer' to authentic-sounding 'blue-collar dialogue' to the 'poetic prose' of Anastasia's metaphysical descriptions — not to mention poetry itself) in such a way as to convey to the reader not only the semantic meaning, but, just as importantly, the *literary feeling* of the original work?⁸

It is the *RCS*'s readers (even more than its literary critics) who will be the ultimate judges of our success in meeting these challenges.

Then, beyond the translation questions (which, after all, can sometimes get bogged down in the nitty-gritty of historical etymology and psycholinguistic nuances), lies the broader issue of how the Series as a whole is reaching an anglophone readership far more attuned to Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek* or J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* than to the *Holy Bible* or the *Bhagavad Gita*⁹ — a readership that is only too ready and willing to embrace phenomena that lie outside traditional physical perception, provided that the works presenting them are duly confined to the 'Fiction' or 'Occult' shelves of their local library, bookshop or video store.

After all, one doesn't have to read too far into the *RCS* before encountering passages that look as though they might be right at home in a *Star Trek* episode or a sci-fi novel — Anastasia's telepathic ray,¹⁰ for example, or the "fiery sphere" described to the author as watching over Anastasia as a baby.¹¹ Or her later reference to the not-so-mythical fire-breathing "Gorynytch Serpent".¹²

It is all too easy, on the basis of such examples, to dismiss the whole Series as just another (albeit very intricately woven) sci-fi yarn. It is all too easy, *upon first glance*, to classify Anastasia's descriptions (in this present volume, for example) of so-called 'pagan' rites in the pre-Christian Vedic Russian civilisation as just another fanciful foray into the esoteric, or the occult. Or to pass off the *RCS* as yet another

⁴See Translator's Preface to Book 1 (especially the 2nd edition).

⁵See Translator's Preface to Book 2.

⁶See Translator's and Editor's Afterword to Book 4.

⁷See Book 6, Chapter 5: "The history of mankind, as told by Anastasia".

⁸Again, see Translator's Preface to Book 1.

⁹*Bhagavad Gita* — a sacred Hindu text written in Sanskrit; the name literally means 'Song of the Divine One'.

¹⁰See Book 1, Chapter 7: "Anastasia's ray".

¹¹See Book 2, Chapter 27: "The anomaly".

¹²See Book 4, toward the end of Chapter 3: "The first appearance of *you*".

entry in the 'wishful thinking' category, where a number of critics have pegged recent 'feel-good' films such as *The Secret*.¹³

What distinguishes the *RCS* from science fiction (or, at least, from the vast majority of science fiction works) is the fact that it attempts to show how even such 'far-fetched' accounts as those mentioned above could actually refer to naturally occurring, scientifically explainable phenomena rather than just mere literary inventions or the occult fantasies of the human mind.¹⁴ After all, in 1865, Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon* was written and received as a science-fiction classic, only to turn into scientific reality a little more than a century later with the success of the Apollo XI Moon mission on 20 July 1969.¹⁵ As for the charge of 'occultism', Anastasia (through the author) takes great pains, especially in Book 6, to distance her concept of the Universe from any kind of occult phenomena. These only lead mankind, she says, to being "completely disoriented as to the Space created by God".¹⁶ And in regard to the "rites of love" in particular (described in the present book), Anastasia's grandfather assures the author: "None of these rites was characterised by occult superstition, as today. Each one served as a school of higher learning, an examination by the Universe."¹⁷

'Anastasia says...' 'Anastasia's grandfather does...'

Yes, in almost any discussion of Vladimir Megré's *Ringling Cedars Series* among its readers, phrases like these tend to trip off the tongue without a second thought, leaving many outsiders (and even some 'insiders') to wonder: *Who is this Anastasia?* Which brings us to what may be the most frequently asked readers' question of all — one which Québec writer Mado Sauvé chose as the opening sentence of her review of the Series in the Spring 2007 issue of *Le Journal Vert*:

"*Anastasia existe-t-elle ?*" (Does Anastasia exist?)

I have a feeling Sauvé expresses what is on many readers' minds as she continues:

Does she really live in the Siberian taiga or was she born of the imagination of a clever entrepreneur? Even after reading the first four [books] of the Series ... it is still difficult to answer this question.¹⁸

¹³*The Secret* — a film produced by Rhonda Byrne for Prime Time Productions, directed by Drew Heriot. Since its release in 2006, the film has stirred up a good deal of excitement along with a heavy barrage of criticism. In my view, this work does indeed hint at a great truth, but one with much deeper ramifications than suggested by the superficial treatment presented on screen (which seems to be focused more on effects than underlying causes).

¹⁴See, for example, the technical explanation of the 'flying saucer' phenomenon presented in Book 1, Chapter 16: "Flying saucers? Nothing extraordinary!". The above-mentioned Book 1, Chapter 7, includes a reference to experiments on 'rays' by the Director of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences' International Institute of Theoretical and Applied Physics. And the account of the 'fire-breathing serpent' in Book 4, Chapter 3, also includes a logical explanation for what is generally dismissed as a mythical phenomenon.

¹⁵It is interesting to note, too, that a number of *Star Trek*'s 'inventions' have already become 'science fact', within mere decades of their presentation as 'science fiction' — the 'medical tricorder', for example — a *Star Trek*-inspired device under development at the University of Alberta. See: Jodie Sinnema, "Scientists test 'tricorder' to root out disease". *The Edmonton Journal*, 16 September 2005, p. B1. In fact, a whole array of books may be found dealing with the factual aspects of *Star Trek* — e.g.: Lawrence M. Krauss, *The physics of Star Trek*. With a Foreword by Stephen Hawking. New York: Harper Collins, 1995. Still another 'science fiction' TV series of the 1990s (this one all too short-lived) — *SeaQuest DSV* — featured a commentary at the end of many of its episodes by Dr Robert Ballard, Scientist Emeritus in the Department of Applied Ocean Physics and Engineering at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, relating the series' science fiction to science fact.

¹⁶See Book 6, Chapter 8: "Occultism".

¹⁷Quoted from Chapter 1: "Love — the essence of the Cosmos".

A broad range of opinion on this issue has indeed been expressed to date by *RCS* readers collectively — from those who dismiss her as a mere figment of the author's imagination to those who see her as the reincarnation of some ancient prophet. But to me this only begs a further set of questions: *What does it mean, to 'exist'? Is 'existence' an objective or a subjective state? Is 'existence' confined to material perception, or can it be determined by non-material criteria (faith, for example)?* Megré quotes Anastasia herself as saying:

"I exist for those for whom I exist."¹⁹ What could that possibly mean?

In pondering the question of the existence of Megré's Anastasia and her family, it might be worthwhile considering a few other personages whose existence has been a subject for questioning over the ages — names like Shakespeare, Santa Claus (Father Christmas), Job in the Old Testament and even Christ Jesus in the New. In a civilisation so reliant upon physical, material evidence as the primary, if not the only criterion for proof of existence, perhaps it is little wonder that sometimes figures with a larger-than-life reputation fall prey to public suspicion as to their very existence. Are we not almost globally educated to be sceptical about anything that departs from a society-defined, materially determined norm?

Such is the case with the man considered to be the greatest writer the English-speaking world has ever produced. No simple village-dweller, some have said, could have possibly produced all the time-tested plays and sonnets credited to the Bard of Avon.²⁰ And yet few today would deny that the writer universally known as *Shakespeare* actually existed in some form. After all, his masterpieces did not magically appear one day out of a vacuum!²¹

Many people today, not only in America but elsewhere in the world, are familiar with the appeal of a little eight-year-old girl named Virginia O'Hanlon to the editor of the New York's *Sun* newspaper in September 1897:

"Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, 'If you see it in THE SUN it's so.' Please tell me the truth: is there a Santa Claus?"

And few can forget the key phrase (*italicised below*) from veteran newsman Francis Church's memorable reply, even if they are not as familiar with the writer's name or his remarkable justification for this reply:

¹⁸Original: "Vit-elle vraiment dans la taïga sibérienne ou est-elle née de l'imagination d'un habile entrepreneur ? Même après avoir lu les quatre premiers [livres] de la série ... il est encore difficile de répondre à cette question." — Mado Sauvé, "Le mystère de la déesse russe". *Le Journal Vert* (printemps 2007).

¹⁹Quoted from Book 1, Chapter 26: "Dreams — creating the future".

²⁰For a sampling of the controversy surrounding Shakespeare's authorship, see: George McMichael & Edgar M. Glenn: *Shakespeare and his rivals. A casebook on the authorship controversy*. New York: Odyssey Press, 1962; H. N. Gibson, *The Shakespeare claimants: a critical survey of the four principal theories concerning the authorship of the Shakespeare plays*. Oxford & New York: Routledge, 2005; Mark Anderson, *'Shakespeare' by another name*. New York: Gotham Books, 2005.

²¹The thought has often come to me over the past few years that, given the powerful ideas and intricately crafted literary structure evident throughout the *RCS*, if it should somehow turn out that the whole story of Anastasia was entirely the author's invention, then Vladimir Megré would have to be considered one of the world's cleverest and most gifted writers since Shakespeare! Even if most of his information were drawn from a variety of secondary sources, weaving them all together into a plausible plot-line over two-thousand-plus pages of text could be considered nothing short of a major literary feat. On the other hand, it would be no denigration of Megré's writing skills to accept that he has simply described pretty much what he actually witnessed, *in some form*, from experience.

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except [what] they see...

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy...²²

And lest anyone hasten to dismiss Santa Claus (in contrast to Shakespeare) as a completely mythical figure, it should be remembered that St Nicholas was indeed a real human being in the flesh. He was the Bishop of Myra in what is now western Turkey, back in the 3rd century C.E. It was his reputation for secret giving to the needy that eventually evolved into the popular story of the world's ultimate holiday gift-giver.

A similar question hangs over the Old-Testament character of Job in the Bible. According to Dummelow's Bible commentary:

It has always been a question whether the book of Job is to be regarded as history or parable. Among the Jews themselves the prevailing opinion was that it was strictly historical, though some of their Rabbis were inclined to think that the person of Job was created by the writer of this book in order to set forth his teaching on the problem that was vexing human thought. ... The opinion of Luther is probably the correct one, viz. that a person called Job did really exist, but that his history has been treated poetically.²³

Can we expect a similar commentary to be written about the person of Anastasia a millennium or two hence?

While *Job* may indeed have been mainly an allegory written for moral instruction, what of that most celebrated among the human figures of the Bible — namely, *Christ Jesus*,²⁴ whose life and works form the very foundation of the whole movement of Christianity? Many Christians believe Jesus to be the earthly incarnation of God Himself; others accept him, rather, as God's Son and messenger to mankind, but there are few indeed who deny his historical existence. And yet the authenticity of the Gospel records is occasionally called into question, and not just by atheists.

²²Francis Pharcellus Church, editorial in *The Sun* (New York City), 21 September 1897 (*italics—JW*). (The full text of the editorial is available in many on-line sources.) Many books and cinema films have echoed Church's thesis in different ways, notably director George Seaton's 1947 film classic *Miracle on 34th Street*. In the 1994 re-make under the same title (this one directed by Les Mayfield), Santa's existence is 'proved' in a court of law by reference to the phrase *In God we trust*, which appears on the reverse of every American one-dollar banknote. This is cited as evidence of the United States government's endorsement of the existence of an entity based on faith alone.

²³Rev. J. R. Dummelow, *A commentary on the Holy Bible*. New York: Macmillan, 1908, p. 292. According to Dummelow, *Daniel* is another biblical figure whose historical existence is a matter of some controversy (see *Commentary*, pp. 525–526).

²⁴While *Christ* and *Jesus* are often used synonymously, the two words are quite distinct in meaning. *Jesus* (*Iesous*) is a Greek adaptation of the Hebrew first name *Yhōwshūa* (lit. 'Jehovah saves'), identical to the Old-Testament name *Joshua*, while *Christ* (*Khristós*) is the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Māshîyakh* ('Messiah', or 'the anointed one'), and can be thought of more as Jesus' title, or the spiritual, immortal idea he embodied (the message itself as distinct from the messenger). For a further explanation of the distinction, see: Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and health with Key to the Scriptures*. Boston: Trustees under the will of Mary Baker Eddy, final English edition 1911, p. 333.

It is instructive to examine the writings of two late-nineteenth-century spiritual thinkers on this point — one of them a peasant philosopher in Russia and the other the founder and leader of a worldwide Christian movement headquartered in America. While neither of them actually question Jesus' existence themselves, both shed a non-traditional light on the ultimate significance of that 'existence'.

On 12 May 1888 the Molokan²⁵ peasant writer Fedor Alekseevich Zheltov (1859–1938), a deeply committed Christian, sent a treatise he had just written to Leo Tolstoy (whom he regarded as a mentor), entitled "On life as faith in Christ". Toward the end of the treatise he makes a rather startling declaration:

None of the actions and events accompanying Christ's sermon are a stumbling-block for me — I do not rely upon them as a basis for understanding truth, and it makes no difference to me whether they happened or did not happen, or how they happened, whether they were imaginary or real, whether the Gospels were written by the apostles or by someone else — none of that makes a difference nor is it dear to me. What is dear to me is only the truth which Christ imparted — it in itself is a precious jewel and my task is to know its price and to know why it is so precious.²⁶

About two decades later, on 1 December 1906, the discoverer of Christian Science,²⁷ Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910), published a statement²⁸ in the weekly magazine she had founded, the *Christian Science Sentinel*, detailing her professional relations with Rev. James Henry Wiggin (whom she had hired as a publishing consultant) and refuting public allegations that he had had a hand in the authorship of her seminal work *Science and health with Key to the Scriptures*. In this statement she reports Rev. Wiggin as asking her the question:

"How do you know that there ever was such a man as Christ Jesus?"

To which she replies (in part):

I do not find my authority for Christian Science in history, but in revelation. If there had never existed such a person as the Galilean Prophet [i.e., Jesus], it would make no difference to me. I should still know that God's spiritual ideal is the only real man in His image and likeness.

It is evident that for both Zheltov and Eddy it was not the *person* of Christ Jesus that was sacred and significant, but the *ideas* (the 'Christ ideas', one might say) that Jesus presented to the world — ideas

²⁵ *Molokans* — a Christian sect which broke away from the Russian Orthodox Church in the mid-16th century, rejecting ecclesiastical hierarchy and its alliance with government and militarism and insisting God must be worshipped primarily in one's heart and mind. They left their initial alliance with the Doukhobors, who, unlike the Molokans, preferred oral Scriptural traditions over written texts. Toward the end of the nineteenth century many Molokans went to America, while large numbers of Doukhobors emigrated *en masse* to Canada, their trip financed largely by Leo Tolstoy and his followers. Interestingly, like the Doukhobors, the Vedic 'wise-men' Anastasia describes also favoured an oral method of teaching; they were able to sum up volumes of detail in just a few words and a single easily remembered rite — see the first section of Chapter 6 ("Into the depths of history") in the present volume.

²⁶ In: Ethel Dunn (ed.), *A Molokan's search for truth: the correspondence of Leo Tolstoy and Fedor Zheltov*. Translated by John Woodsworth. Original editor: Andrew Donskov. Berkeley (Calif.), USA: Highgate Road Social Science Research Station and Ottawa, Canada: Slavic Research Group at the University of Ottawa, 2001, p. 48.

²⁷ *Christian Science* — see footnote 1 in Book 6, Translator's Afterword.

²⁸ Reproduced in: Mary Baker Eddy, *The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*. Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1925, pp. 317–319.

which could be effectively practised in our age and their practice taught to others, as Eddy proved not only by her own remarkable works of healing, but, more importantly, by the thousands upon thousands of spiritual healings brought about by her students, their students and students of their students, right up to the present day.²⁹ For these students, textbook study and class instruction, while an acknowledged help, inevitably have taken second place to individual prayer, to their own direct mental and spiritual connection to God as their ultimate Teacher and ultimate Healer.³⁰

And, lest there be any doubt as to how Eddy viewed her own role as a presenter of the science of spiritual healing to the world, in her later years she stated unequivocally: “Those who look for me in person, or elsewhere than in my writings, *lose me instead of find me.*”³¹

So now, perhaps, we can look at the *Journal Vert* reviewer’s question “Does Anastasia exist?” in a new light.³² It was the same question Sauv e had put to me in an interview in preparation for her review, where she quotes my reply (in French) along these lines:

I believe that Anastasia certainly exists in some form, but not necessarily in a fleshly body visible to our material eyes, even though I would not rule that out. As I see it, there is no doubt that she exists as a very powerful idea and that she is a force of inspiration. She exists in the words, in the rich thoughts of feelings and promises as transcribed by Megr e.

And today I would add (in the spirit of Zheltov): “She exists in the hearts of them who are ready to seek out and apply for themselves the ideas she presents, and this is what is truly dear to me.”

Does that mean that the author’s portrayal of Anastasia as a living human being is irrelevant or unimportant? Not at all. For some readers, accepting her as a bodily personage, at least to begin with, may be extremely helpful. By identifying with a figure who expresses what seem like incredible qualities of the Divine and yet still affirms “I am Man”,³³ many readers may get their first glimmer of awareness of their own innate capacities. But the more they read — especially in a second or third examination of a text they have read before — their initial impressions may gradually evolve away from personage and more into idea.

²⁹Many of these healings have been verified by the medical profession or other eye-witnesses and published as testimonies. See especially: Yvonne Cach e von Fettweis & Robert Townsend Warneck, *Mary Baker Eddy: Christian healer*. Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1998; *A century of Christian Science healing*. Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1966; Robert Peel, *Health and medicine in the Christian Science tradition: principle, practice and challenge*. New York: Crossroad, 1988.

³⁰Eddy also makes some very similar statements to Anastasia’s regarding occultism and mysticism. In *Science and health* (p. 569), she foresees an occult-free future for mankind: “The march of mind and of honest investigation will bring the hour when the people will chain, with fetters of some sort, the growing occultism of this period.” And in the same work (p. 80), she observes: “[Christian] Science dispels mystery and explains extraordinary phenomena; but Science never removes phenomena from the domain of reason into the realm of mysticism.”

³¹M. B. Eddy, *The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, p. 119 (*italics—JW*). Similar sentiments are expressed in other places in her writings— see especially the article “Deification of personality” in her *Miscellaneous Writings* (Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1925, pp. 307–310). Note also Eddy’s statement in *Science and health* (p. 82) in her discussion of the importance of writers’ thoughts and ideas over their personages: “Chaucer wrote centuries ago, yet we still read his *thought* in his verse. What is classic study, but discernment of the *minds* of Homer and Virgil, *of whose personal existence we may be in doubt?*” (*italics—JW*).

³²For one thing, in the ‘club’ of those with a questionable historical existence, these ‘Siberian recluses’ appear to be in pretty good company.

³³See (for example) the middle of Book 1, Chapter 26: “Dreams — creating the future”.

When Francis Church identified the real Santa Claus with the spiritual qualities of “love and generosity and devotion”, he did not thereby obliterate the image of a jolly old man in a sleigh from a young child’s mind, but enriched her temporary image of ‘Santa’ with a new dimension, a new idea. As the child grew older and developed her reasoning capacities, she would have been able to retain this new idea in her thought even when she no longer clung to the old image of a personal gift-giver.

In each of the cases we have looked at, we can witness the *evolution of an image* at work in individual human thought.³⁴ In Book 6, Chapter 6 (“Imagery and trial”), Anastasia describes the *image* as “an entity of energy invented by human thought, ... created by a single Man or by several together”, and further likens it to an actor’s portrayal of a dramatic *persona* on stage — a portrayal in which “the invented image acquires a temporary embodiment”. Note that the portrayal of one and the same *persona* will vary from actor to actor, and even from performance to performance by the same actor, especially as the actor gains new insight into the deeper dimensions of the character he is portraying.³⁵

But just as Zheltov’s image of the central figure of the New Testament evolved into one focused more on the truth itself than the person of its human embodiment, just as Eddy (a real-life historical figure who frequently found herself targeted by both adoring worshippers and malicious critics) finally urged her followers to stop looking to her as a person and start practising the truths she revealed by healing their own and others’ mental and physical ailments, so Anastasia, whatever personal form she may possess, urges (through Megré) a similar charge upon her would-be followers.³⁶

In Book 2, for example, in reply to the author’s query as to whether *she personally* might have been helping him in a particular situation, Anastasia tells him:

Everything in the Universe is interrelated. To perceive what is really going on in the Universe one need only look into one’s self.³⁷

³⁴Note also Megré’s observation in Book 7, Chapter 3 (“You create your own fate”): “*the power of the energy of thought has no equal in the Universe: everything we see, including ourselves, is created by the energy of thought.*” Yet he also relays Anastasia’s warning that the ‘energy of thought’ which we all possess is vastly underutilised. In Book 5, Chapter 12 (poignantly entitled “Do we have freedom of thought?”), after taking account of all the distracting subjects on which people tend to waste their thinking capacities, Anastasia concludes: “All told, the average Man spends only 15 to 20 minutes of his life reflecting on the mystery of creation.”

³⁵Anastasia goes on (in the same chapter) to show the effects of collective images held by members of a society — images of others, of themselves and of the world as a whole. And in Chapter 3 (“Why does love come and go?”) of the current book she points out the vital role played by *image* in finding (and keeping) one’s soulmate and how one’s image may change or stay the same independently of the real person (see especially the section entitled “False images”).

³⁶Does ‘practising the truths’ revealed by Anastasia mean that every single reader should start looking for a plot of land in the country with a view to setting up his or her own ‘family domain’? Anastasia herself recognised that this would not be feasible for everyone at the present time, although she does promote this option as especially suited to providing an ideal nurturing-ground for discovering one’s inner being, even if it starts off with just a simple flower-pot on the window-sill (see Book 5, Chapter 15: “Making it come true”). In Book 8 she outlines the benefits which the ‘domain’ movement will have even on those still living in the city (see the section “Let’s create” in Book 8, Chapter 10: “*The Book of Kin and A Family Chronicle*”). While I can definitely see the logic in Anastasia’s own recommended vehicle of expression for the ideals she shares, I would think there may be as many avenues for putting these ideals into practice as there are individual readers of her books. The important thing is to keep in mind that these ideals *are eminently practicable* in some form — i.e., they are like seeds destined to push their way above and beyond one’s mental soil into the fresh air and sunshine of one’s whole life (see Translator’s Preface to Book 2 for one small personal experience along this line). In many cases this will bring joy to others as well as to one’s self.

³⁷Quoted from Book 2, Chapter 6: “The cherry tree”.

And in Book 3 when Vladimir expresses curiosity as to the extent of her abilities — “Can you answer any question confronting science today?” — Anastasia offers the following reply:

Many of them, perhaps. But every scientist — *indeed, every Man* — can find the answers. Everything depends upon the purity of one's thoughts, and the motive for asking.³⁸

Over and over again she emphasises that the ideas and powers she possesses are within the grasp of every individual on the Earth, because they all come from the same source, i.e., the Creator (God). Over and over again both she and her grandfather keep urging Vladimir (and, by extension, every reader of the *RCS*) to resist the temptation to rely upon *them* as a personal source of wisdom and seek instead to find and utilise the ideas within themselves.

“Try not to wallow in all your information and contemplations, Vladimir,” Anastasia's grandfather exhorts in Book 4. “Decide what's real for yourself.”³⁹

And in Chapter 1 (“Love — the essence of the Cosmos”) of the current volume he accuses Vladimir of “laziness of mind” for constantly pestering him with questions when he should be looking for the answers within.⁴⁰ Subsequently he admonishes:

“I speak, and you listen, and instead of working out your own conclusions in your thought, you are merely taking note of mine.”⁴¹

Similarly, time and again Anastasia urges Vladimir not just to accept her conclusions at face value, but to reason things through for himself by logical thinking — a capacity which (as her grandfather points out), when not actively cultivated, is in danger of being lost by mankind.⁴²

She, too, warns the author against “laziness of mind”. In Book 8, Chapter 5 (“Divine nutrition”), when Vladimir confesses: “It's still not too clear to me just how I should be thinking”, she gently assures him: “It will become clear if you are not too lazy to think.”

Again in Book 8, Anastasia cautions Vladimir to be wary of relying on words alone. When asked by Vladimir about the role of words, she replies:

... it is not the words that are important, but, rather, people's conscious awareness. Words, of course, are necessary to bring it forth. A conscious awareness of eternal life will help perfect Man's way of life.⁴³

Words are similar to outward appearances: they often play an important role in shaping one's initial conscious awareness of an idea. But, like one's early person-focused impressions, they tend to fall away as the image evolves in the direction of the Divine.

³⁸Quoted from Book 3, Chapter 6: “Forces of light” (*italics—JW*).

³⁹Quoted from Book 4, Chapter 33: “School, or the lessons of the gods”.

⁴⁰He teases Vladimir on this point: “So, there's not enough information out there and you've come to me to get it, eh?” Note also his advice to Vladimir regarding the problem of getting legislative approval for setting up family domains: “You ought to be deciding your own course of action, without any kind of advice” (Book 8, Chapter 9: “A fine state of affairs”).

⁴¹Quoted from Chapter 6: “Into the depths of history”.

⁴²See the middle of Chapter 7 (in the present volume): “Russia erased”.

⁴³Quoted from Book 8, Chapter 13: “A new civilisation”. See the Editor's Afterword to the present volume for a delightful illustration of the dangers of putting too much stock in printed books and words at the expense of one's own logical thinking and feelings.

Hence, if one is truly to follow Anastasia, it would seem wise to heed her own advice and start seeking her out (as many readers are already doing) not in person, and not just in words about her (as fascinating as those may be), but in *idea* — the idea which, she says time and again throughout the Series, exists in every single one of us, if we are only alert enough to harness our mental capacities to discover our own innate purity and power of thought in the likeness of our Creator. And then to start applying this idea to renewing and improving our day-to-day lives.

And because the evolution of an image is primarily an *individual* phenomenon (although yes, it may at times be collective, i.e., a shared individual experience), we shouldn't be surprised if our own discovery of Anastasia and her idea appears to evolve in a different way or at a different pace from that of other readers, or is different from the perception we ourselves had in a previous reading.⁴⁴ Like an actor honing a portrayal on stage from performance to performance, each one of us is evolving our own image of her as a *persona*. But the more we seek and find her not so much “in history, but in revelation” — the more we focus on the message rather than on the person of the messenger — and within our own hearts and minds, the stronger a position we shall be in to discover harmony within ourselves and with others, and the more deeply we shall be able to comprehend and appreciate her own beautiful self-declaration: *I exist for those for whom I exist.*

The power of the ‘Anastasia idea’ presented throughout this Series was certainly one of the reasons I signed on to these ‘voyages’ three years ago, and the fascinating concepts that have multiplied therefrom have indeed made the whole venture most worthwhile.

Anastasia's (and her grandfather's) emphasis on the need for logical thinking and a conscious application of universal ideas to one's life-practice is a clear example of how the *RCS* eminently transcends what is popularly classified as *science fiction*. In my Translator's Preface to Book 1, I described the work (and, by extension, the Series) as a *chronicle of ideas* — a metaphysical treatise

...set forth with both the supporting evidence of a documentary account and the entertainment capacity of a novel. In other words, it can be read as any of these three in isolation, but only by taking the three dimensions together will the reader have something approaching a complete picture of the book. And all three are infused with a degree of soul-felt inspiration that can only be expressed in poetry.

Having completed the whole Series, I would now add that it is a chronicle which touches upon very many of the disciplines traditionally defined as ‘academic’, but in the context of their interrelation with each other and their application to our daily human life. As I look back over the *RCS*, apart from its obvious focus on ecology and environmental science, I can think of references to astronomy, biology, chemistry, physics, forestry, agriculture, horticulture, geology, archæology, engineering, architecture,

⁴⁴In a remarkable little book entitled *The five clocks*, former University of Toronto linguistics professor Martin Joos (pron. *Yose*, rhyming with ‘dose’) states that one of the hallmarks of great literature is the capacity to convey a variety of different meanings to different individuals, or to the same individual upon each successive reading. The dedicated writer, he says, can enable the searching reader “to educate himself indefinitely far beyond what the writer put into the text in the first place”. — Martin Joos, *The five clocks*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1967, p. 42. There is no question, to my mind, that this ‘capacity’ Joos describes is eminently inherent in the writings of Vladimir Nikolaevich Megré concerning Anastasia.

medicine and the healing arts, psychology and psychotherapy, sociology, criminology, political science, economics, philosophy, religion, drama, literature, music and poetry, linguistics, foreign languages and quite possibly several more — all presented with a view to their application to everyday life, including work and leisure activities, along with love, marriage, family and other interpersonal relationships. The voyage of the *RCS* has taken in all these 'ports of call' along the way, and not just from a sailor's point of view (try an astronaut's perspective!). The voyage, indeed, reaches unto the very stars!

In line with the 'Moses' epigraph above, I have now taken my journey. And by the time you read this, you may well have already taken yours, at least once. But I trust the ideas you have *taken in* along the way will stand you in good stead for many ages yet to come.

As your English-speaking 'navigator', I salute you and wish you a hearty *Bon voyage!* as you set out on (or continue) your own voyage of self-discovery in the likeness of the Creator.

See you on a star! *On a star see ya!*⁴⁵

Ottawa, Canada
31 December 2007

John Woodsworth

⁴⁵An approximation of the Russian pronunciation of *Anastasia* — see footnote 5 in Book 7, Chapter 28: "To the readers of the Ringing Cedars Series".

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