

Part Three

TRANSFIGURATION – JESUS' AND OURS

Transfiguration of Christ

Carl Heinrich Block

Block (1890 – 1834) was a celebrated Danish artist whose paintings are found in museums all over the world.

This painting depicts the following passage from the Gospel of Matthew, also found in Mark and Luke.

“Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them.

His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. . . a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, ‘This is my Child, the Beloved, with him I am well pleased; listen to him!’”

When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” (Mathew 17: 1-6)

As you see the brilliant light shining forth from Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, reflect, on these three statements:

- Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.”
- Jesus said, “You are the light of the world.”
- Hafiz of Shiraz said, “I wish I could show you, when you are lonely or in darkness, the astonishing light of your own being.”

Have you taken the journey into God as the light of your own being yet?





The Transfiguration **Raphael, completed in 1520** **Vatican Museum**

Raphael was an Italian artist and the only one of the High Renaissance who saw that the transfiguration of Jesus was an event that included both the mountain top and the valley below.

Paul Smith calls this event “The Moses and Elijah Phenomena — Jesus with three close friends, two dead guys, and one sick boy.” Can you see all seven people?

It was a visionary experience of higher consciousness that involved four events:

1. God, the awesome, infinite, self-named “I AM,” being present manifest as a visionary voice as with Moses:
2. Jesus in his luminous state, his essential divine self as pure light shining through his clothes:
3. Two friends of Jesus, Moses and Elijah who had been dead for centuries and now offering encouragement concerning Jesus’ upcoming crucifixion:
4. The healing of a sick boy after coming back down the mountain.

Coming down the mountain they encountered Jesus’ other friends trying to heal this boy. Jesus healed him and later, in private, his friends asked him why they could not heal the boy. Jesus’ answer was that this kind of healing can only come about by prayer (Mark 9:29).

Jesus’ friends might well have thought, “But we’ve been praying over him for hours.” However, Jesus did not mean that kind of praying, but rather the kind of praying that he had been doing on the

mountaintop. Only a transfigured consciousness can be a channel of this kind of powerful healing.

Notice that the sick boy is the only one in the picture who has his eyes on the scene above, making the connection between transforming spiritual experience and the power of healing love.

**The Transfiguration of our Lord
15th century icon, Novgorod School
Museum of Art, Novgorod, Russia**



Russian icons are typically paintings on wood, often small, though some in churches and monasteries may be much larger. There is a rich history and elaborate religious symbolism associated with icons. Because icons in Orthodoxy must follow traditional standards and are essentially copies, Orthodoxy never developed the reputation of the individual artist as Western Christianity did, and the names of even the finest icon painters are seldom recognized except by some Eastern Orthodox or art historians.

These icons are meant not only to be looked at, but to see them looking back at you and elevating your consciousness to a higher place.

The Transfiguration
Giovanni Bellini in 1455-1460
Museo Correr, Venice

Bellini was an Italian Renaissance master.

The Transfiguration is described in the Bible in Matthew, Mark, and Luke and was a central event in the life of Jesus. These sixteen pictures in Part Three relate it to our lives and our own spiritual journey.

Jesus becomes luminous spirit and his three friends are either blinded by the light—or sleeping through the spectacular event!



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The Transfiguration
Giuseppe Cesari in 1620
Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, England

Cesari was an Italian Mannerist painter who was also named Il Giuseppino and called Cavaliere d'Arpino.

Jesus made the Kingdom of God the center of his teaching. He said the Kingdom or Reign of God was the goal of life. He never defined it, but rather talked around it. However, one time he told his friends he would show it to them.

What followed is Transfiguration as depicted in the sixteen images in Part Three.

These images are not only about Jesus' transformation but our own as we evolve spiritually to more and more embrace the reality of the Kingdom of God — that there is no separation between us and God and us and one another.



Transfiguration Lewis Bowman in 2008

Transfiguration, Jesus' and ours, is a radical awakening to spiritual realities. This ethereal, abstract version of transfiguration is quite appropriate since mystics report their awakening experiences in many visionary forms. Brilliant light and color are often a part of a peak spiritual experience.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12). His brilliant inner divine luminosity shined out in the Transfiguration.

However, Jesus most astonishing statement was, "You are the light of the world." (Matt. 5:14) He said this to a crowd of people in which absolutely no one was a Christian, not even Jesus! Jesus' religion was Judaism because Christianity had not yet evolved into an identifiable form. The crowd included Jews who believed in God and non-Jews who may not have believed in God at all. Jesus did not differentiate — he said they were all the light of the world!

Notice also that Jesus did not say we can *become* the light of the world. He stated we were *already* the light of the world!

However, he further said that we should not hide that light underneath bushel baskets of ego and ignorance of our divine nature. We may have moments and peak experiences of that light in inner divine love, joy, and peace, but more often we slowly evolve in stages of higher and deeper spiritual awareness.

The more we grow and evolve spiritually, the more that inner divine light within every person to begin to shine out on the world in healing love.



The Transfiguration of Christ Julius von Carolsfeld in 1860

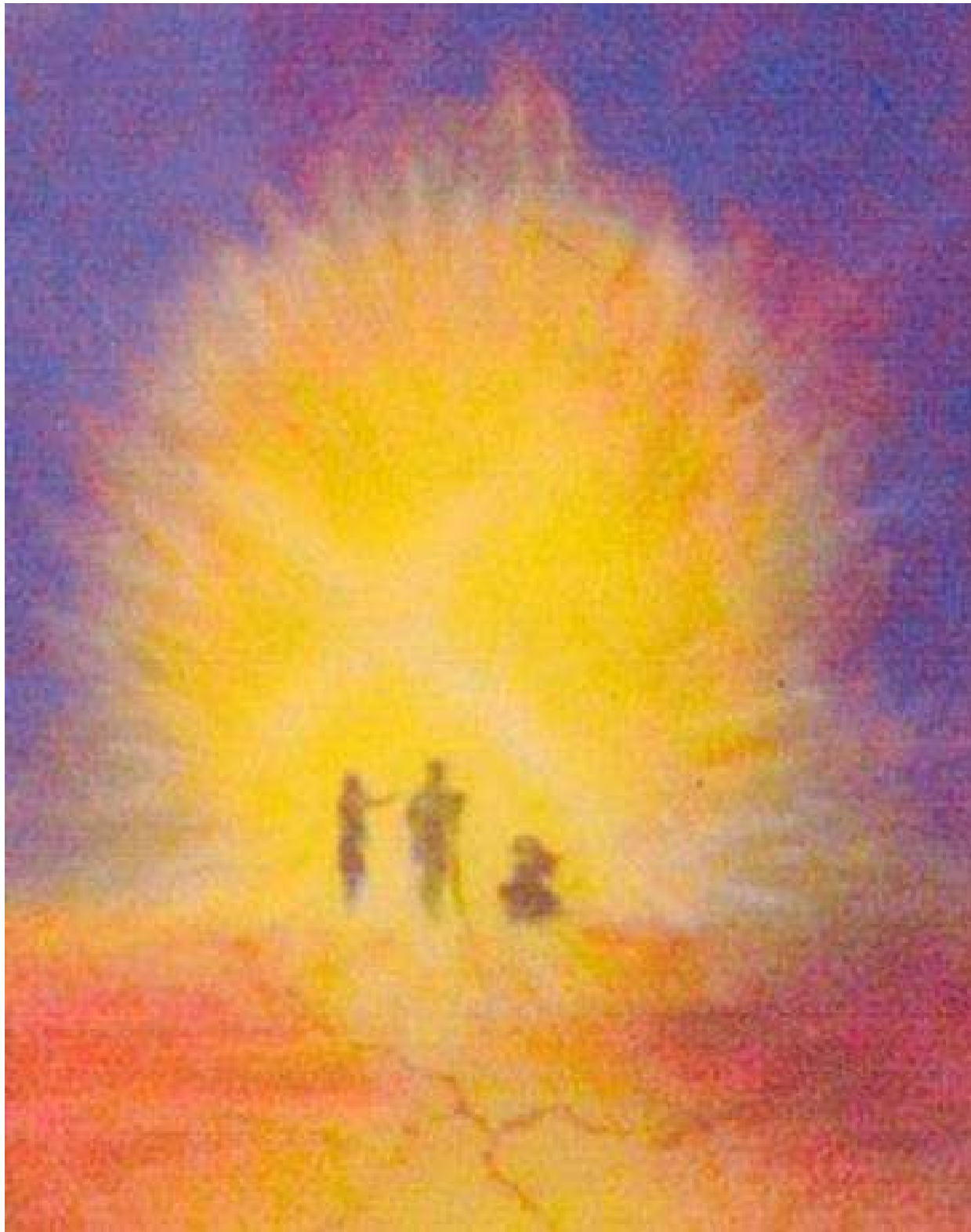
Carolsfeld was a German painter associated with the Nazarene movement which hoped to return to art that embodied spiritual values. This woodcut focuses our attention on the brilliant light shining out of Jesus,

Jesus modeled in dramatic fashion the shining light that is divine essence of every human being. When Jesus said to the crowds, “You are the light of the world,” he not only meant that we could light up the world, but that we are literally pure divine light deep within us and as us — our True Self.

Our task is to identify with that light as our essential essence rather than all the distractions and false identities we are drawn to. As we distance ourselves from these lesser identities and rest in our divine identity, we unveil the divine light

within that is our real Self.

Rupert Spira, international teacher of Advaita Vedanta, the direct path method of spiritual self enquiry, writes, “In the Christian tradition . . . the Transfiguration is the outshining of all experience in the light of pure knowing, or, in religious terms, in God’s infinite being. In time this recognition is reflected and expressed in the absence of fear, lack or limitation and, as a result, the prevalence of love, compassion, justice, equity and humor.”



Transfiguration Pat Turlington

This work by artist and teacher Turlington (1939 - 2009) was chosen by *Christianity Today* to be a permanent part of their website in 2007.

The overwhelming brilliance of light was the focus of the New Testament accounts as in this image.

Mystics down through the centuries and today testify to the light that often accompanies sacred visions. It is a visionary manifestation of the divine spiritual; light that is in every person, waiting to be recognized, embraced, and acted upon.



Transfiguration Cornelis Monsma

Monsma, Friesian-Dutch born residing in New Zealand, is a modern day expressionist Christian artist “painting the unseen.”

Influenced by Mark Chagall, Monsma writes, “True contemporary Christian art is not a picture of religious divinity but rather an expression of the Christ presence from within.”

Notice the presence of Moses and Elijah with Jesus on the mountain. This indicates Jesus acceptance of and familiarity with spiritual guides from the past.

Authentic, high level, spiritual guides are present now to encourage and help those open to them. Jesus himself appears in that fashion to millions today, as well as other saints such as Mary to spiritual seekers down through history and today.

Transfiguration Alex Grey in 1993

This is a depiction of what can happen to the human body during a transforming spiritual event.

The body appears to be solid flesh starting at the feet; moving up the legs it becomes increasingly transparent until the body suddenly enters a huge glowing rainbow lattice.

This is reminiscent of not only Christ's transfiguration but also the potential for ours. Grey saw this image in a dream and then later experienced it temporarily himself in an altered state of consciousness.

These experiences are often available in deeper prayer and meditation.

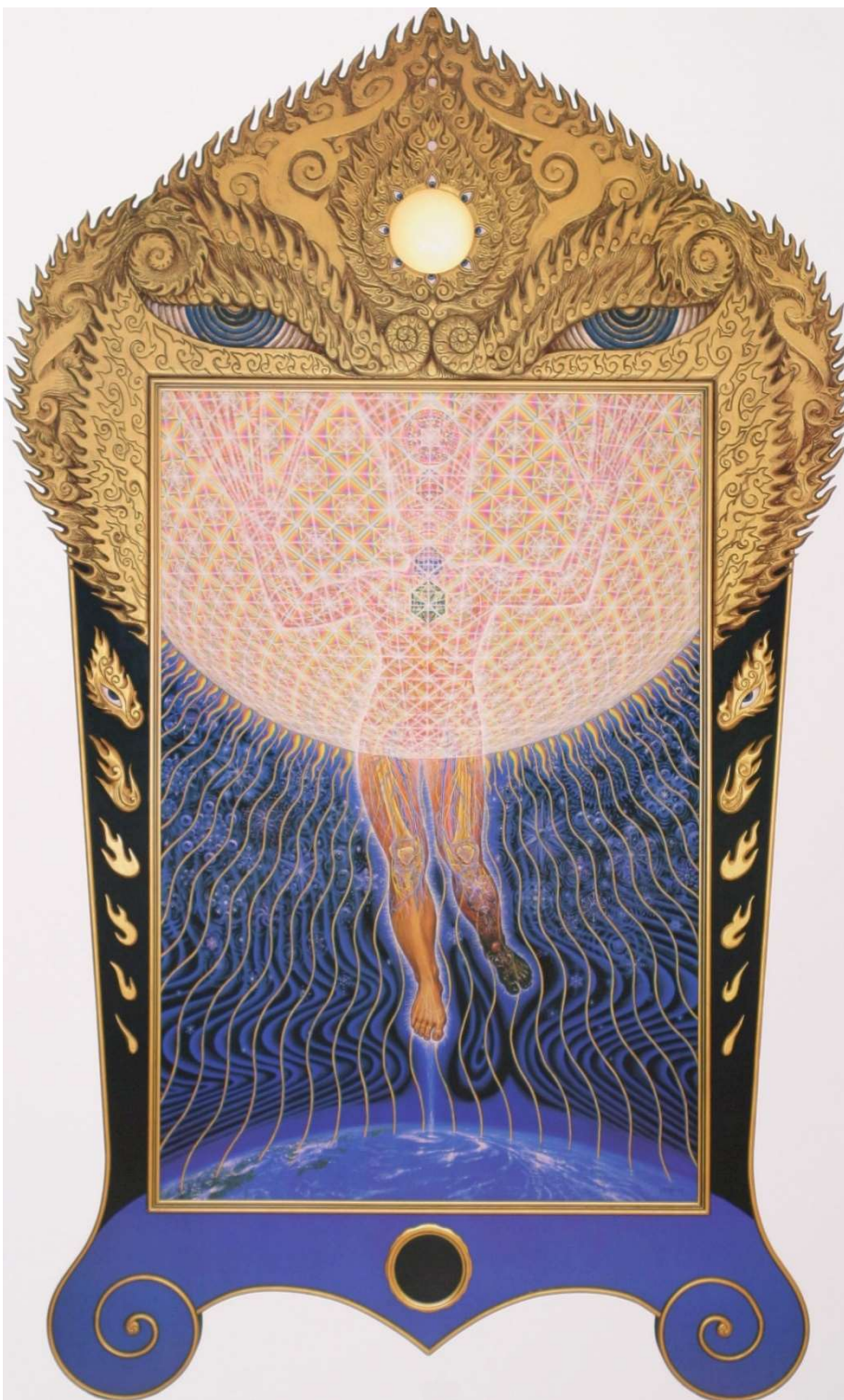
In his "transfiguration" Christ literally became pure universal light, transcending his material being. That is where we are headed, too. Jesus said that we are the light of the world.

Contemporary sacred artist and visionary Grey says that pictures are meant to awaken and catalyze the viewer's mystical potential and transfigure his/her consciousness and body. According to Grey, "to be transfigured is to be healed." He continues with:

"Art comes from the level of consciousness of the artist. What we see or experience in viewing art also depends on our level of consciousness in receiving that artist's intent. Some art is simply the picturing the physical dimension. Other art sends emotional and symbolic signals that move us. The rarest form of art is visionary art that depicts and elicits in viewers an experience of going beyond the merely physical to higher spiritual states."

Sensitive viewing of visionary art can induce an altered state of consciousness and help move us not only to an altered state but help push us to the next stage of spiritual development. Visionary art such as

these here can be transformative art by helping us glimpse aspects of our own deeper and truer nature."



Psychic Energy System Alex Grey in 1980

Grey is an American visionary artist, author, teacher, and practices Vajrayana, a complex and multifaceted system of Buddhist thought and practice which has evolved over several centuries. Grey's work spans a variety of forms including performance art, process art, installation art, sculpture, visionary art, and painting.

Grey spent five years at Harvard Medical School working in the Anatomy department studying the body and preparing cadavers for dissection. He also worked at Harvard's department of Mind/Body Medicine with Dr. Herbert Benson and Dr. Joan Borysenko, conducting scientific experiments to investigate subtle healing energies. Holland Cotter, art critic for the New York Times wrote in 2002, "Alex Grey's art, with its New Age symbolism and medical-illustration finesse, might be described as psychedelic realism, a kind of clinical approach to cosmic consciousness."

For Grey, the process of artistic creation holds the potential of transcending the limitations of the mind and more fully expressing the divine spirit. He also believes that art can induce within the viewer an elevated state wherein spiritual states of being are attained.

These next six images deal with the inner workings of transfigured states of consciousness in us. The Bible is filled with descriptions of intensified consciousness described as the "coming" or "filling" of the spirit.

This image is a representation of the psychic energetic face of Jesus, as well as our own psychic energy fields.

Jesus' Transfiguration was an explosion of light filled psychic and spiritual energy. Jesus used his psychic and spiritual energy centers to put him in touch with God and create avenues of wisdom and healing for others.

God's spirit and our spirit (*ruach* in Hebrew and *pneuma* in Greek) can be seen today as divine/human consciousness in all its modes from everyday awareness to paranormal and mystical awareness. Spirit is the life-force given to all living



persons in the Old Testament. In the New Testament it becomes the awakened life-force of consciousness of higher levels of transcendence seen at Pentecost and subsequent “fillings.”

Psychic energy manifests itself in intuition, insights, and other subtle phenomena such as dreams, visions, and inner spiritual guidance and encouragement.

Grey’s seven round lights in a column in center of the body represent what some see as the primary subtle (non-physical) energy centers that energy healers and some mystics experience. They can be seen as a rough developmental map of evolving consciousness. They are interpreted by some this way, from bottom to top: The first center focuses on stability, security, and our basic needs; the second center focuses on creativity and sexual energy; third center focuses on personal power; fourth (heart) center focuses love and connecting. It is the bridge connecting the lower and higher energies of our being and is the place where we most deeply sense our True Self or spirit; the fifth center focuses on communication, self-expression and creativity; the sixth center focuses on intuition and direct spiritual vision; the seventh center focuses on highest levels of consciousness and awakening.

The blue background represents the metaphoric universal lattice of divine Infinite Being and Infinite Consciousness —the meaning of God’s response to Moses that God be named “I AM THAT I AM” (Exodus 3:14). This is what the Apostle Paul describes as “in whom we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).



These six Alex Grey images in this section come from his “Chapel of Sacred Mirrors.” Visitors can come and stand in front of the images, considering them a mirror reflecting their own inner spiritual energetic systems.

Gray’s original paintings of these images are life-sized and meant to be viewed by standing in front of it with arms held in the same position as the full-sized painting. This then becomes a “sacred mirror” in which one’s own psychic energy fields of awakened consciousness can be seen.

Imagine yourself standing in front of each image and see reflected something of a metaphorical description of the mystical flow of your own internal spiritual energy systems.

By open-minded aesthetic contemplation of the Sacred Mirrors, one’s identity shifts from a material body to spiritual light. The life-sized representations of the human body, portraying its physical and energetic systems, are both scientifically realistic and vividly.

Spiritual Energy System

Alex Grey in 1981

This is a representation of the bio-spiritual, energetic face of Jesus and our own, too. Alex Grey, in mystical visionary consciousness, sees the flow of spiritual energy in and around us.

Mystics of many traditions down through the ages have experienced variations of this energy flow. When we wake up in higher or alternative consciousness to non-physical spiritual realities through the elevation of our divine/human consciousness we begin to be aware of a life force that might be imaged in this way.

From the spiritually awakened consciousness we see everyone as lovingly connected both to God and one another. We begin to have a vast mind and spacious heart that senses everything “out there” is also “in here.” Our heart holds the cosmos and our mind has no boundaries.

Jesus called this the Reign (or Kingdom) of God. “The Kingdom of God is within you” Luke 17:21. The Reign of God begins as an inside job and then manifests outwardly in love and justice for all.

Here is an image of JESUS, YOU, and EVERYONE who experiences heightened divine awareness that the Bible calls human-divine holy spirit. The body becomes a permeable channel for the circulation of the awakened and transcendent energies of spiritual consciousness that are ever present and interpenetrate the self and surroundings.

This work is best viewed facing it, with palms open outward, mirroring the image. Think of it as looking in an actual mirror and seeing yourself as the divine spiritual being that you are — but may not normally be aware of.

Intense prayer, worship, devotion, deep meditation, moments of great insight, peak experiences of oneness with nature, feeling one with God, an overflowing of God’s presence, and/or experiencing your own divinity, all produce this energy

flow in and around you. The direct recognition of this life source (called by many names) is immediately available to any of us as soon as we stop being distracted by everything else. Isn’t it time for you to become aware of this?





Wonder Alex Grey in 1996

Rings of rainbow light emanate from the moon. A child gazes up at the celestial magnificence, radiating atmospheres alive with physical and non-physical spiritual forms both in the child and all creation.

The great mystic and intellectual Apostle Paul reminded the Christians of Rome about this truth: *“Ever since the creation of the world God's invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made” (Rom 1:20).*

Creation that is filled with both material physical objects and immaterial energy fields is God's first Bible. Creation reveals God and God would not have made it if it did not.

One can settle for only being aware of material objects. In the Transfiguration, the friends of Jesus were awakened to a spiritual world of luminosity, energy fields, and spiritual forms.

Many have glimpses of such paranormal phenomena. Those who learn to pray and/or meditate deeply can also get in touch with the world of spirit that is beyond the material realm and even more real!

Praying Alex Grey in 1984

Praying is a portrait revealing a sun in the heart and mind. From the inner light in the center of brain, a halo emanates and surrounds the head.

The halo is inscribed with signs of contemplation from six different paths:

- The symbols of Yin and Yang from Taoism;
- A description of the magnitude of Brahman from Hinduism;
- The watchword of the Jewish faith, “Hear, Oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One”;
- The Tibetan Buddhist mantra, “Om Mani Padme Hum,” a prayer for the unfolding of the mind of enlightenment;
- Christ’s words of the “Lord’s Prayer” in Latin;
- A description of Allah along with the Islamic prayer, “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger.”

Hands are clasped on the heart center where compassion and love radiate to all beings.

Praying presents the spiritual core of Divine Light which transcends, unites, and manifests in the various loving religious and spiritual paths.





Holy Fire Alex Grey in 1986-87

The soul-searching pilgrim arrives on the mountaintop of transfiguration in the often long process of spiritual evolution. The seeker's bio-spiritual energy that Jesus called "rivers of living water shall flow from within them" (John 7:38) begins to ascend within.

The healing staff, sometimes called the caduceus is internalized. The eye of God in the form of an angelic presence channels heart-opening flames of divine grace into the body's center, sending the body/mind into a state of God intoxication and mystical shock.

This is a bio-spiritual-energetic phenomenon experienced within the body by mystics and other spiritual practitioners. It is sometimes referred to as kundalini, a Sanskrit word meaning "coiling like a snake" and is represented by the symbol of medicine, the caduceus, a winged staff with two snakes wrapped around it.

The early Christians appear to have referred to this as a "filling" experience of *pneuma* which means spirit, breath, consciousness, and/or life-force. We see this in the New Testament at Pentecost where the friends of Jesus looked drunk (Acts 2:1-31), and again in Acts 10:44-46 and 19:6.

There are recent parallels in contemporary Christian charismatic "Spirit baptism or release" — phenomena with counterparts in Quakerism, Shakerism, Judaic Shuckling (torso-rocking prayer), the swaying zikr and whirling dervish of Islam, the quivering of the Eastern Orthodox hesychast, the flowing movements of tai chi, the ecstatic shamanic dance, the ntum

trance dance of the Bushman, Tibetan Buddhist tummo heat as practiced by Milarepa, the Indically-derived Andalusian flamenco, Japan's Aum Shinrikyo group and Kundalini-yoga.

Paul Smith, pastor for 49 years of Broadway Church in Kansas City, Missouri, which originally housed the physical pictures in this collection, says, “In over forty years of healing prayer experience, I have personally witnessed this bio-energetic spiritual phenomenon in the Christian context of healing prayer with hundreds of recipients. Often there seems to be an external shutting down of outward “circuits” which results in a peaceful resting (sometimes called “resting in the Spirit”) while sitting or laying down as internal healing occurs. It is usually accompanied by a strong sense of God’s presence, peace, and love. Occasionally there may be bouncing, rocking, crying, laughing, or extended peaceful resting, sometimes for several hours.

One may also experience holy spirit saturation (that is best understood today as an awakened or intensified state of consciousness) in a quiet, deeply peaceful, blissful way.

Dying Alex Grey in 1984

Grey is widely recognized as one of the foremost artists working in spiritual and esoteric themes as he tries to “find the core truths in all the different spiritual/wisdom traditions and bring them into a contemporary sacred art.”

In “Dying,” we see a numinous nebulous form, one’s unique divine/human consciousness, sometimes called “soul,” moving through the crown of the head, ascending through a tunnel of infinite awareness toward the clear white Light that is I AM, Being Itself, God beyond God. This is us as the light of the world coming home to the Eternal Divine Light that is God beyond us.

The body is a divine, marvelous vessel that carries — temporarily — our true, eternal selves. The entire scene is surrounded by wide-open eyes, which is symbolic of the heightened or expanded awareness that the New Testament refers to as holy spirit.

Through “*Dying*,” Alex Grey gives us the sense that death is merely another step in the soul’s development, a transition that propels us forward on our transfiguring, evolutionary path toward God realization. The Eastern Orthodox Church calls this God realization “deification” or “theosis” which is becoming like God or in union with God. This “becoming God” is considered the goal of our lives.

Roman Catholic priest and world-wide leader in Centering Prayer, Father Thomas Keating eloquently puts it this way: “The goal is to be God in the most humble way.”

