Invocation to Sophia
By Robert McDermott

For the Re-emergence of Sophia in the 21st Century
for the Transformation of Self and Society

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I. Sophia, We Call to You

We invoke you, divine mother,1
humanity’s first image,
and first word.

You were Demeter and Persephone,
the goddess Zoe,
and the mother of the lunar cycle.

As Ishtar and Inanna you waged war
—and you’d better again
to save the Earth.

As Inanna you were Queen of Heaven,
a title and identity
you lost in Christendom.

Before the garden of Eden
and Plato’s cave2
you held spirit and matter as one.

We know you hear with the aged sagacity of the Psalms,
of Hokhmah, essential Hebraic wisdom,
who was there when god created the heavens and earth. 3

As Isis you were sacred cow, pig, and bird;
guardian of the underworld;
Sirius and loving mother of your son Horus.4


3 Proverbs, 8: 2-31.
We recall the litany of your images as Mary—
holy mother of God, mother ever faithful,
queen of angels and saints, portal of heaven. 5

As Isis you weep,
as Mary you suffer and comfort,
as Sophia you inspired6 Plato’s Diotima

These many names and more point to you.
Tao, sunyatta, Quan Yin, shakti also name you,7
but not one is your eternal name.8

Water, womb, silence, and mother,
the inner and subtle, soul and spirit,
mystery and secret, all try to name you.

You reigned as Isis for three millennia,
as Mary you inspired Christendom
—Dante’s Beatrice9 and the Grail.10

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4 See Baring and Cashford, chapter 6.


8 See the first stanza of LaoTse: “The Dao that can be named is not the eternal Dao.”


II. That We Lost You

We are too accustomed to the guy project,
a brilliant faustian bargain ending too slowly.
Steiner taught “we have not lost Christ, we have lost Sophia.”

Cosmic alienation has seized the modern mind.
We didn’t lose you in a day or a year.
A profound cosmic transformation takes a century or two.

A Cartesian-Newtonian billiard ball cosmos,
not to mention the quest for gold,
fueled passion for control and power.

The modern project can’t handle interiors and subtleties:
bring on the visible and solid, surfaces only;
nothing too soft, fluid, or flexible.

They say the take-over started with Enu Elish,
in Baghdad—still in the news—
as Inanna you hung on a hook for three days.

Crucifixion has been a male specialty;
no more the generative goddesses,
give us the thunderbolt gods.

As goddess, you’re assigned to girls and crones,
but empires need Marduk;
a god’s gotta do what a god’s gotta do.

On he came morphing and starring—
as Zeus, ruling the sky and mountain tops,
as YHWH, vengeful god of the garden.

Your daughter Eve made a bad marriage.
In the Garden Adam was a loser;
Eve, a scapegoat.

All sin then traceable to a woman,
childbirth a curse, males in charge,
sin and salvation over service and generation.

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11 For the loss of original participation, see Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry (NY: Harcourt, 1965).

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14 For Inanna and Marduk see Baring and Cashford, pp. 275-79.
Your archetypal image surfaced
in Mediaeval European towns,
hundreds of cathedrals to Notre Dame!

Too good to be go unopposed,
from Notre Dame of Paris
to the Temple of Reason,

Bacon is our Man.\textsuperscript{16}
nature on the rack,
control at all cost.

By the shadow of the Enlightenment,
knowledge and power over wisdom,
analysis and argument over insight.

We will have knowledge,
get the secret, blow the atom,
take charge, go the limit, no price too high.

And we did, and it feels good.
We have dominion, even over death—sort of.
Why are we so depressed, fearful, and violent?

What shall we make of the hard images
Are you really Kali with a company of destroyers?\textsuperscript{17}
Are they you embracing all opposites?

Should we accept your embrace of suffering and evil—
war, hunger, rape, HIV/AIDS, cancer, despair, suicide?
Does your hard mother-love find these useful?

Are you the source of pain, illness, and loss?
—alienation, deadends, Beckett’s Endgame?
We really need to know this!

Were you behind Gettysburg, Verdun, Hiroshima?
Could you have stopped them?
What are you doing about sex slaves?

\textsuperscript{15} For the negative influence of the Genesis myth see Teilhard de Chardin, Christianity and Evolution (NY: Harcourt Brace, 1969) and Carolyn Merchant, Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture (NY: Routledge, 2003).


\textsuperscript{17} Ajit Mookerjee, Kali: The Feminine Force (London: Thames & Hudson, 1988).
We believe you bind each nation’s wounds, comforting soldiers slain, and their widows and orphans.  

But why are these? Why? Is this your way to make us conscious? For us to try harder? What a strange way! And what of spiritual suffering? Have you led the West to suffer the loss of your comfort?

III. By Sight and Sound We Call to You

As your Christopher has written, you are again arising like Venus. Some are seeing the hem of your mantle. 

Searching for inner realities, seeing behind, and within, are we seeing signs of your presence?

We practice philo-sophy, looking to interiors and a single vision, participating subject and object.

We know such sightings are rare in a culture of denial, a passion for “nothing but.”

What about the books on your behalf? Are they seeing you, or fantasizing your mantle, your image, and sound?

Leonardo, Michael Angel, and Rapha-el renaissanced your sacred image, Mama and Bambino, for all times and all hearts.

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18 See Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, 1865: “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”

19 Christopher Bamford, editor of Steinerbooks and Lindisfarne Press, author of An Endless Trace (New Paltz, NY: Codhill Press, 2003), and editor, Isis Mary Sophia.

20 “Over the past centuries, the being of Sophia, or feminine Divine Wisdom, has been emerging from the mists of ancient history, like Venus from the waters, to become a sign and mystery of our times. Though it is difficult to say who she is, wherever we turn, we see traces of her coming—as if tracking the fringes of her mantle as it brushes aside the tangled, sclerotic cobwebs of centuries of cerebration. As she draws near, much that was forgotten is reentering consciousness, not only as memory but also from the future, as possibility.” “Introduction,” Isis Mary Sophia, p. 7.
We see you through the holy Fra,\(^{21}\)
Duccio and the Sienese School,\(^{22}\)
and the American Henry Ossawa Tanner.\(^{23}\)

You’ve sent healing cosmic sounds
to Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven.
_Deo gratias_ for Schubert’s “Ave.”

Shakespeare has revealed you:
“There are more things under heaven and earth...”\(^{24}\)
They are the hidden, subtle, and mysterious.

Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe,
the greatest three, all know you
in ambiguity, artistry, inner _anthropos._

Goethe’s poetry and _urpflanze_, gentle science,
alchemy, mysteries, polarities\(^{25}\) —
and Faust, the rascal—all approach you.

Your Gretchen, Faust’s victim and savior,
in the end reveals your grace:
“The Eternal Feminine draws us onward.”\(^{26}\)

You’ve sent us the mantras of wise women,
mothers, teachers, poets, and children.
Abigail wrote to John, “Remember the Ladies.”\(^{27}\)

Henry Adams, son and grandson of presidents,
looked past the dynamo to the Virgin
and saw the secrets of Chartres.\(^{28}\)

\(^{21}\) Fra Angelico, early Renaissance Italian painter, 1387-1455.

\(^{22}\) For Duccio and the Sienese School, see Enzo Carli, _Sienese Painting: from the Origins to Duccio_ (NY: Scala Books, 1983).


\(^{24}\) _Hamlet_, Act I, Scene 5.


\(^{26}\) Goethe, _Faust_, Part Two, Act 5 (last line).

\(^{27}\) Abigail Adams’ letter to her husband John, 1776: “Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors.” See David McCullough, _John Adams_ (NY: Simon and Schuster, 2001), p. 104.

We still learn from Laotse,
a correction for Confucian rigidity,
bringing grace to order, surprise to tradition.

Not mere chaos, Dao weaves subtly.
After enlightenment the river remains.
Jack teaches laundry after ecstasy.29

You’ve shown the interiors of exteriors.
You are shakti, a hot knife through butter;
you slice as needed, and at the joint.

No Rama without Sita,
no Krishna without Radha,
no Buddha without Quan Yin.

No Jesus without you,
no Aurobindo without the Mother; 30
His Holiness, verily Avalokisteshvara.31

We know you break through concrete,
like the lily in the wall,
and grass on Madison Avenue.

As prajnaparamita you teach us “gate’, gate’,”
“Go beyond, beyond,
Wisdom beyond knowledge, Emptiness beyond form.”32

With Blofeld we see you as Quan Yin, in the crevice,
arranging pregnancies, auspicious births,
tending to the bereft.33

29 Jack Kornfield, After Ecstasy the Laundry (NY: Bantam, 2000).


31 For the relationship between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Avalokistesvara, the goddess of wisdom and compassion, see Glenn H. Mullin, The Fourteen Dalai Lamas: A Sacred Legacy of Reincarnation (Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers, 2001), p. 90, and throughout.


Long before Lovelock, you knew you were Gaia. long before permaculture
the farmers of Assam rotated crops.

You taught Derzu Uzala to know the river and the wind, Francis to celebrate the sun
and befriend the wolf of Gubbio.

You led Teilhard and Thomas to reverence Gaia,
Mary Evelyn and John to teach religion and ecology,
Joanna to teach the truth of Chernobyl and deep time.

Surely you led Al to teach,
and the Norwegians to applaud,
the inconvenient truth.

Will fundamentalist Christians,
held by Calvin’s misanthropy and the Rapture,
replace “dominion” by “protection”? When New York State sprayed DDT,
Marjorie sued, Rachel took notes
and wrote Silent Spring.

Despite these whistle blowers,
as Gaia you burn,
are you Pieta forever?

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35 Akira Kurosawa, director, Derzu Uzala (1975)


39 Al Gore, An Inconvenient Truth. Book and film

40 Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, multi-volume “Left Behind” fictional series on the “The Rapture.”

41 Genesis 1:28: “And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’” (Revised Standard Version)

His Holiness knows you as Tara, faithful to the bodhisattva vow,\(^{43}\) he holds Tibet as you held your Son.

We know you as Notre Dame in blue veil, as the Virgin of Chartres, as Guadalupe in gold, revealed by the peasant, the pure, the peaceful.

We still need our guide books, and fabulous Icons—Greek, Russian, Bulgarian; we study the Grail, Dante, Hildegard,\(^ {44} \) Julian.\(^ {45}\)

We call to you by your many names, knowing you as Isis-Mary-Sophia, three names for your singularity.

**IV. Gaiasophia’s Response**

Saving my body is the next great work,\(^ {46}\) turn the Ganges from brown to green,\(^ {47}\) plant trees in Africa,\(^ {48}\)

Spread *Blessed Unrest*,\(^ {49}\) save the rainforest,\(^ {50}\) speak truth to power.\(^ {51}\)

My mantle will do for some of you, others need a good smack and a “Thou Shalt Not.”

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\(^{43}\) “And now, as long as space endures, as long as there are beings to be found, may I continue likewise to remain to soothe the sufferings of those who live.” In the Dalai Lama, *A Flash of Lightning in the Dark of Night: A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life* (Boston: Shambala, 1994), 126.


\(^{45}\) Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (NY: Viking Press, 1982). In mid-14\(^{th}\) century Julian prayed: “As truly as God is our Father, so just as truly He is our Mother.”

\(^{46}\)


\(^{50}\) Rain Forest Action Network (RAN)

Thou shalt not poison my blood,
Thou shalt not burn my body,
Thou shalt not commit deicide.

I am the sucking infant and the Alzheimer patient,
I am the Mississippi and the Hudson,
I am Mt. Tam and Mt. Kailash.

Recall the forgotten ancient wisdom:
HPB announced my unveiling;
er her Indian and Tibetan masters knew me.52

Heed Steiner’s divine coniunctio
—Anthropos and Sophia—
and Sophianic thinking.53

And my Sophiologists,
Soloviev,54 Bulgakov,55 Florensky,
and the wise Tarot meditator, Valentin Tomberg.56

Read the profound Prokofieff.57
Robert Powell knows me as
Trinosophia—Mother, Daughter, Holy Soul.58

I am the Primordial Flaring Forth,59
Steiner’s etheric, Jung’s anima mundi60
and Thomas’s great work.61

60 J. Bockemuhl, et. al., Toward a Phenomenology of the Etheric World (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 1988).
Know me, 
come to me and love me, 
as I have loved you.

Your Mother,  
GaiaSophia.

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