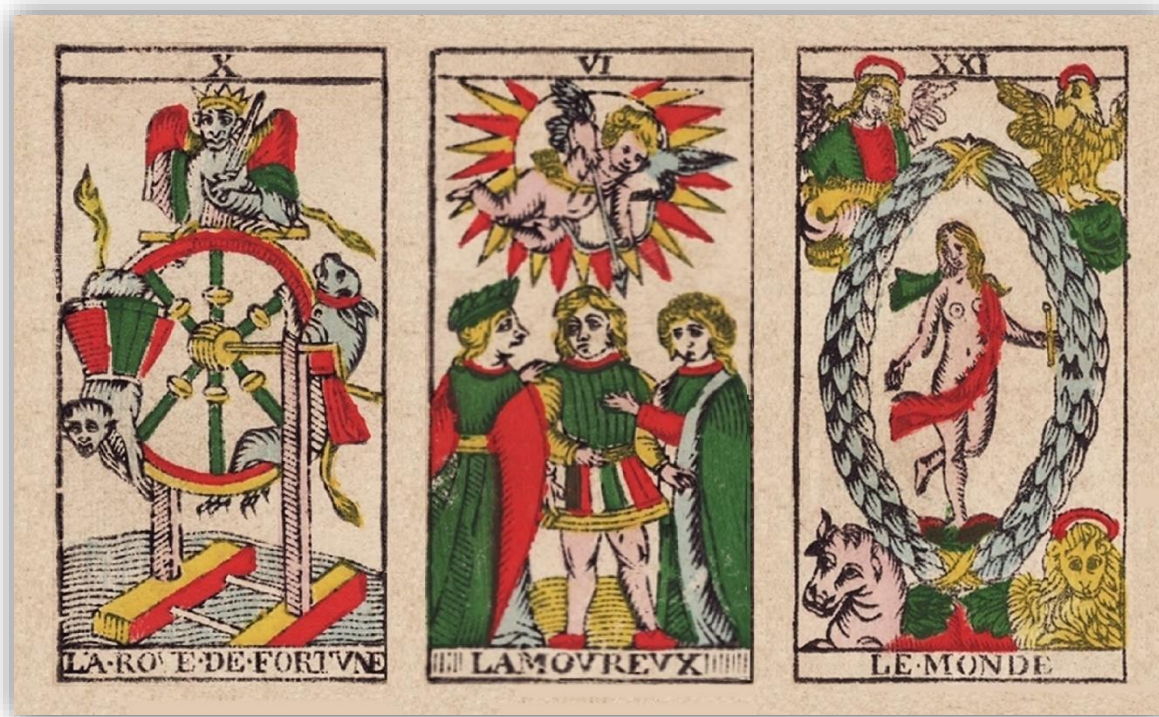


Christian Meditations on the Tarot



The Soul's Choice

Whosoever will may come and drink of the water of life freely...

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements . . . <i>Inside Cover</i>	Introduction / The Lover . . . 1
The Wheel / Moon / Tower . . . 2	The World / Sun / Hanged Man . . . 3
Ace of Swords / The Devil / Ace of Coins . . . 4	Ace of Batons / Temperance / Ace of Cups . . . 5
Commentary . . . 6 - 8	Conclusion / Notes . . . 9

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Meditations on the Tarot: A Journey into Christian Hermeticism

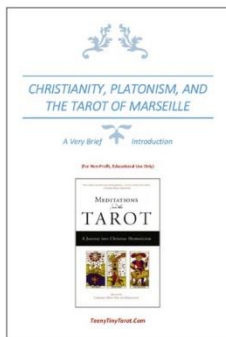
By *Anonymous* (Author), *Robert Powell* (Translator), *Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Afterword)

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Page references for quoted and paraphrased passages from *MOTT* are provided on page 9.

NOTE: Although *Meditations on the Tarot* is the primary inspiration behind this booklet, the interpretations of the Tarot images contained herein— while generally consistent with that work —sometimes diverge without comment from those of *our anonymous author*. Note also that the Tarot Aces, which are discussed here, are not discussed in *MOTT* and that its treatment of the Tarot suits is *Kabbalistic* whereas this approach is best characterized as *Neoplatonic*.

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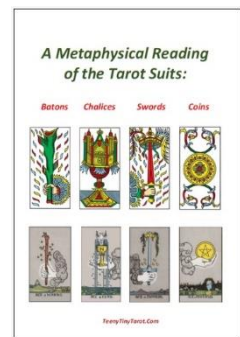


Christianity, Platonism, and the Tarot of Marseille

A Metaphysical Reading of the Tarot Suits:

Batons Chalices Swords Coins

TeenyTinyTarot © Trumps and Aces



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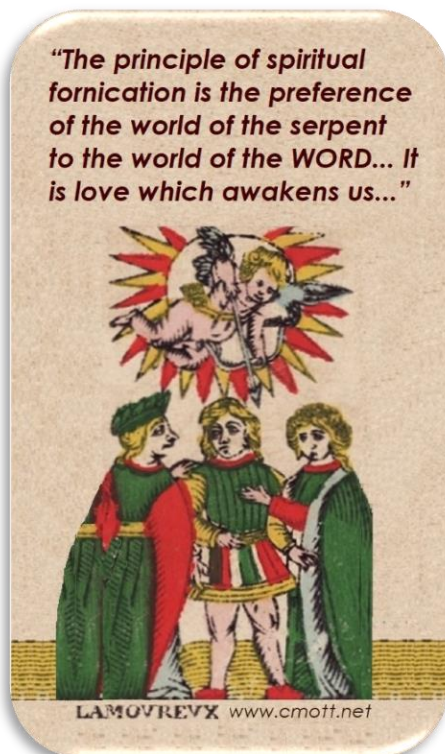
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Introduction

The arrangement of Tarot images on the back cover of this booklet reflects an integral understanding of human existence that is extremely difficult to come by in our postmodern age. This booklet is, in part, an attempt to share this kind of understanding with a wider audience. But there are also sincere seekers for whom meditating on these images will be the occasion of a profound perceptual shift accompanied by authentic moral and spiritual transformation. For what at first sight may appear to be a rather confusing *tableau* of images— *mere Tarot cards* —is, in fact, a very intelligible *map* offering a unique point of entry into the moral and spiritual *territory* which is sought—namely, a realization of *the Way, the Truth, and the Life* (of which Jesus said) “*I AM*”.

Remembering *our anonymous author’s* caution to avoid trying to *explain* a symbol by “reducing it to a few general abstract ideas”, readers should approach the image captions and comments below (pages 1 – 5) as a collection of *sacred*

keys— “not as an end but as the beginning of the way of knowledge” —so as to facilitate the aforementioned realization (*MOTT* 174-175). As such, let us meditate on all the images in our *tableau* in an orderly fashion, beginning with *The Lover*...



The Lover stands in equilibrium between two gravitational fields—*the world of the serpent*, on the one hand, and *the world of the Word*, on the other (cf. the “psychic man” in Letter XII).

The Wheel of Fortune— aka *the world of the serpent* —suggests *separation and duality* (cf. fallen creation, *maya*, *samsara*, or simply *the rat race*).

"Perdition is to be caught up in the eternal circulation of the world of the closed circle— the world of the serpent —the world without a sabbath..."



"The moon is the principle of reflection... The creative light of conscience is eclipsed when 'materialistic intellectuality' prevails."



The Moon points to our *empirical ego* and *personal self-image*—and, more generally, to *discursive thought* and *instrumental reasoning* (cf. analysis, calculation, ratiocination—see also *The Ace of Swords*).

"What one has built through the autonomous effort of the 'lower self' must, sooner or later, be confronted by divine reality..."



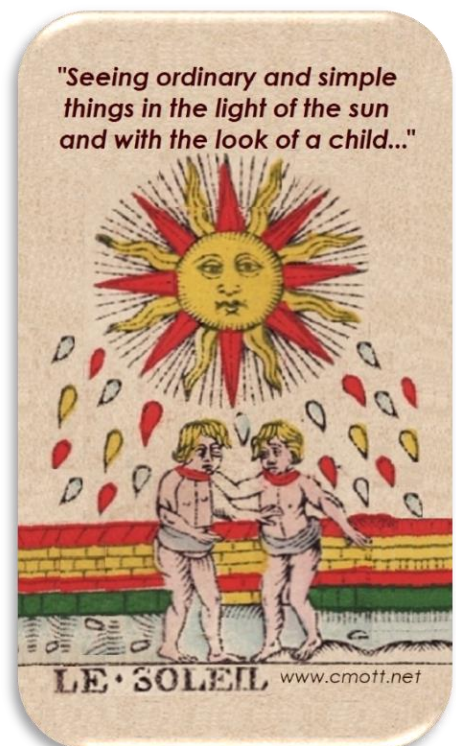
The Tower points to the destiny of the egoic mind together with its projects—i.e. the inevitable end of “the story of me”, however successful “I” may be along the way (cf. “the tower of Babel” or “the house built on the sand”).

The Soul's Choice



The World indicates *union / nonduality* — *the world of the Word* (cf. true nature, *moksha*, *nirvana*, *the kingdom of heaven* or *kingdom of God*).

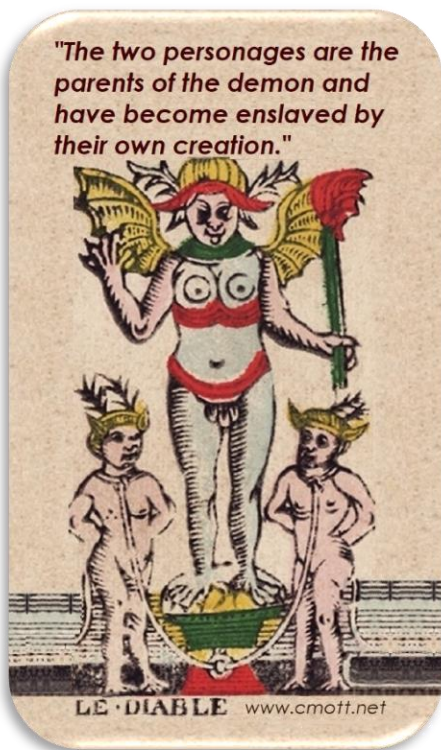
The Sun suggests our *transcendental Self*—*the light of awareness* in which we are called to *walk* (cf. I John 1:5-7). See also Matthew 18:3 — “Unless you become as little children, you cannot enter the kingdom...”



The Hanged Man suggests the possibility of *taking up our cross*— of “dying before we die” —and entering the kingdom *NOW...* (aka *transcending the ego*, *being crucified with Christ*—cf. *Romans 6:4-6*; *Galatians 2:20*).

Christian Meditations on the Tarot

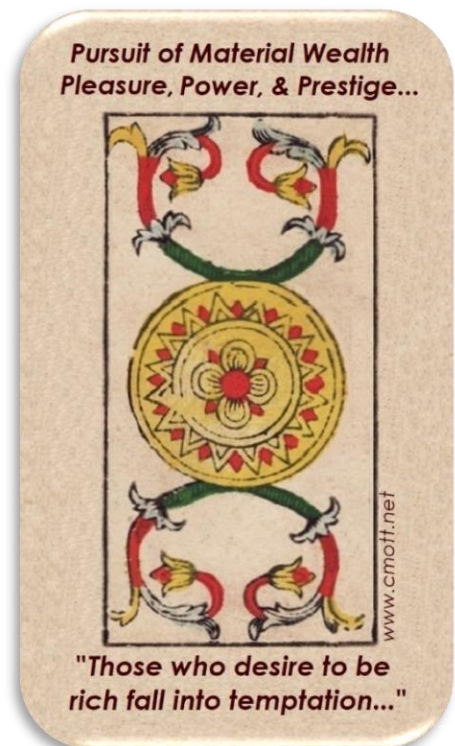
The Ace of Swords, in this context, indicates the rule of the *empirical / dualistic / egoic mind* (cf. the all too often “arbitrary will” of the “emancipated personality” *per MOTT*; compare also *the reign of quantity*).



The Devil

indicates the temptation of duality and forgetfulness (in material, ideological and/or sensual pursuits).

The Ace of Coins here suggests the ego's preoccupation with “laying up treasure on earth” (See Luke 12:15-34; Philippians 3:18-21; I Timothy 6:9-10; James 4:1-3).



The Soul's Choice

Transcendental Awareness
Divine Intelligence / Spirit
Truth / Being / Life / Action



Usually ignored, our eternal
life is sacred and powerful...

The Ace of Batons points to Spirit / Presence / Awareness / God's will / our real will— as we are *in the beginning* —in Christ, the image and likeness of God (cf. GK Nous / Logos / Mind of Christ / Divine Intelligence).

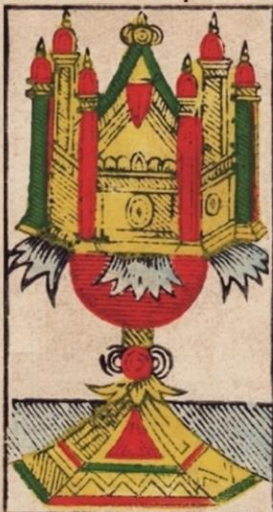
Temperance alerts us to the call of conscience (mindfulness / recollection / remembrance / Divine presence); helps bridge the gap (functionally) between the image and likeness of God in us...

"The guardian Angel is a faithful ally accompanying the divine image in us..."



TEMPERANCE www.cmott.net

Open Hearted Intuition
Receptive Attunement
Quiet Contemplation



Treasure in Heaven: "Set your
affection on things above..."

The Ace of Chalices suggests a heart that is open to Spirit ("If you are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above..." See Colossians 3:1-3; Luke 12:15-34).

Christian Meditations on the Tarot

Note the correlation and, at the same time, the contrasts that can be drawn between each side of the arrangement of images:

- *Ace of Swords* vs. *Ace of Batons*
- *Ace of Coins* vs. *Ace of Chalice*s
- The *Winged Devil* vs. *Angelic Temperance*
- Upside-Down Men Falling from *The Tower* vs. The Upside-Down *Hanged Man*
- Two Dogs Howling at *The Moon* vs. Two Children Playing under *The Sun*
- The Rat Race around *The Wheel* vs. The Four Sacred Animals at Rest around the Feminine Figure in *The World* (a figure appearing at once serene and active).

Note also that the images that make up the two (oval) “mandalas” on the back cover are symmetrical — the one on the left suggesting a world of superficial *appearances* that can quite seamlessly overlay and obscure the richer and more profound *Reality* on the right. Living in ignorance of the transcendental (or “vertical”) dimension of our lives, our world seems out of joint, our lives absurd, and all our efforts ultimately in vain. The *good news*, however, is that the kingdom of heaven is *within us, among us—at hand...*

Towards a Contemplative Model of Christian Faith & Spiritual Formation...

- We are of two minds: 1) The ***Empirical/Dualistic Mind***, on the one hand, and 2) ***Transcendental/Nondual Awareness***, on the other.
- Within the confines of the empirical/dualistic mind, a conventional, egoic identity develops through which we experience life in alienation from God (**SEPARATION/SIN/DEATH**).
- Transcending the confines of our conventional, egoic identity, however, we “put on Christ” and are reconciled to God in transcendental/nondual awareness (**UNION/LOVE/LIFE**).

The Soul's Choice

While the empirical/dualistic/egoic mind rules our lives, we live in alienation from the true meaning and purpose of our existence. This is traditionally associated with “the fall of man” which is attributed to our first parents (cf. Romans 5:12; I Corinthians 15:22). The mind of fallen humanity is referred to in the Christian scriptures as “the carnal mind” or “the mind of the flesh” (cf. Romans 8:5-7). By virtue of this empirically oriented, egocentric mind, we represent the world “horizontally” — slicing and dicing it into spatiotemporal pieces that appear to relate to one another causally/deterministically. This seems to give us (as “separate selves”) some measure of knowledge and control over our environment— so far, so good —but approaching the world *exclusively* in this way (SEPARATION), we live our lives in bondage to sin (and in fear of death) as we endeavor to *evade* our inevitable destruction (or somehow *anesthetize* ourselves to it) rather than facing it lucidly and soberly. As such, we live in ignorance of our *truth and being in Christ* (UNION/atOnement), the experiential knowledge of which constitutes the true meaning and purpose of our existence *and which, alone, can liberate us from the bondage of sin and death as we, by grace, discover what it means to be reconciled to God, to one another, and to the rest of creation* (cf. II Corinthians 5:16-19).

In other words, having “eaten of the tree of [dualistic] knowledge”, we can indeed understand (to some extent) the “horizontal” (empirical) relationships that come to bear on our lives in time and space (“the cause IN appearances”, as Kant puts it), but so doing, we tend to become more and more oblivious to “the cause OF appearances” which can only be apprehended “vertically” (i.e. *spiritually*—cf.

Christian Meditations on the Tarot

I Corinthians 2:14). Moreover, our transcendental/nondual “ground” (*the mind of Christ--aka the Divine intelligence or Logos*) is not (in principle) accessible to our empirically oriented, dualistic understanding. Nevertheless, from another point of view, these two conceptually distinct aspects of life— the “horizontal” (empirical) and the “vertical” (transcendental) —together constitute an integral whole that is, *Christ-like*, both human and Divine. By recognizing and honoring both aspects of our lives, we can trace our natural history and genealogy empirically (“that which is born of the flesh is flesh”) while at the same time realizing our intimate relationship to God transcendently (“that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit”). But living in ignorance of the vertical aspect of our lives— as we said above —our world seems out of joint, our lives absurd, and all our efforts ultimately in vain. The *good news*, however, is that the kingdom of heaven is *within us, among us—at hand*:

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Rev. 3:20).

“Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20-21).

“His disciples said to him: On what day will the kingdom come? It will not come while people watch for it; they will not say: Look, here it is, or: Look, there it is; but the kingdom of the father is spread out over the earth, and men do not see it” (Gospel of Thomas 113).

Whosoever will may come and drink of the water of life freely...

Be still and know...

Conclusion

As such— *Dear Unknown Friends* —***in the stillness of Divine presence***, as we continue to meditate on this arrangement of images, ***let us take up our cross*** (*Le Pendu*); ***let us open our hearts to the abundant life of the Spirit*** (*The Aces of Chalice and Batons*); ***let us become like little children*** (*Le Soleil*); ***and let us enter into the kingdom NOW*** (*Le Monde*).

“The Now is no mere nodal point between the past and the future. It is the seat and region of the Divine Presence itself.... The Now contains all that is needed for the absolute satisfaction of our deepest cravings.... In the Now we are at home at last” (Thomas Kelly, “A Testament of Devotion”).



NOTES: The page numbers below refer to passages from *MOTT* which are quoted, paraphrased, or otherwise alluded to in the card captions and comments on pages 1 – 5:

The Lover: “spiritual fornication” (143); “It is love which awakens” (126); “the ‘psychic man’” (307).

The Wheel of Fortune: “the world of the serpent” (242f, 246f, 253 – cf. “world of the Word” 143; 203).

The World: “creative joy” (644); “the kingdom heaven” and “nirvana” are not equivalent in *MOTT*.

The Moon: “materialist intellectuality” (494).

The Sun: “the look of a child” (552);

The Tower of Destruction: “confronted by divine reality” (444).

The Hanged Man: “attraction from above” (307).

The Ace of Swords: “arbitrary will” (411); “emancipated personality” (119—cf. 116, 125, 127).

The Ace of Batons: “action” as in *Divine activity*; *the ground of authentic action...* (not *fallen reactivity*).

The Devil: “two personages” (404, 408ff – see discussion of “egregores” for the ideological aspect).

Temperance: “faithful ally” (375 – see pages 374ff for the distinction between image and likeness).

"That through death he might release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage..."

Christian Meditations on the Tarot: The Soul's Choice

The Lover stands in equilibrium between two gravitational fields:

- 1) The way of bondage and death, on the one hand (i.e. SEPARATION).**
- 2) The Way of Freedom and Life, on the other (i.e. UNION).**

"The creation itself will also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God..."



The Order of Appearances



The Order of Being



"... in the futility of their minds . . . their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God by the blindness of their hearts..."

"Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may know the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God."

"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened that you may know the hope of His calling and the riches of His glory..."