

**Tommaso Palamidessi's *The Christian Book of the Dead*:  
A Book for the Living**

Francesco Cresti

*Attorney, Rome*

francescocresti13@gmail.com

Daniele Corradetti

*Universidade do Algarve, Faro, Portugal*

d.corradetti@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT:** *The Christian Book of the Dead* by the founder of Archeosophy, Tommaso Palamidessi (1915–1983), is a treatise and a liturgical breviary aimed at helping those dying by teaching them appropriate prayers, and at accompanying the souls of the deceased in their immediate path after death. The text, which remained unfinished, was posthumously edited and published by Palamidessi's daughter in 1985. It was edited again, and privately published, by Palamidessi's disciple Alessandro Benassai in 2010, after a comparison with the original manuscript. In this article, we present the most important ritual elements and doctrines of *The Christian Book of the Dead*, together with some unpublished autograph documents by Palamidessi that allow to better understand the book's structure and references.

**KEYWORDS:** Tommaso Palamidessi, Archeosophy, Archeosofica School, *The Christian Book of the Dead* (Palamidessi), Death and Dying.

*Introduction*

In 1967, Italian Christian esotericist Tommaso Palamidessi (1915–1983), founder of the Archeosofica School, began drafting *The Christian Book of the Dead* (Baroni 2010). It was intended as a treatise dedicated to the destiny of the soul after death, and at the same time as a liturgical breviary to assist the dying. The text remained unfinished at his death in 1983, and was published

posthumously by his daughter Silvestra Palamidessi (1948–1996) in 1985. In 2010, after a comparison with the original manuscript, it was re-edited by Palamidessi's disciple Alessandro Benassai and published in a private edition.

The title and the argument of the text refer to both the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* and the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*. The latter was a text Palamidessi knew well, both through his frequent visits to the Egyptian Museum of Turin, which hosts the original papyrus on which the first Western translations were based, and because he wrote an “Esoteric Comment” about it (Lullo 2020, 11).

Following the experimental approach typical of the whole work of Palamidessi (Corradetti and Lullo 2020), *The Christian Book of the Dead* is far from being a mere compilation of existing texts and doctrines. It is an original work based on spiritual experiences that Palamidessi reported and analyzed (Palamidessi 2010, 119). Of particular relevance, indeed the true key to understand the whole text, is the experience lived, and meticulously described, by Palamidessi on October 24, 1967, which persuaded him to start drafting the book.

In this article, we will discuss the two editions of the text and its documentary sources. We will then present the experiences identified by Palamidessi himself as the most significant for the book. Finally, we will analyze the fundamental themes of *The Christian Book of the Dead* with reference to both the help to the dying and the phenomenology of the post-mortem states, which Palamidessi proposed as a help on the path the deceased should confront immediately after death.

### The Christian Book of the Dead (1967)

On October 24, 1967, in the day of the Christian feast of Saint Raphael the Archangel, and in connection with a spiritual experience described in the text, Palamidessi started drafting *The Christian Book of the Dead*. Although the text was originally conceived as no. 47 in a series of booklets on Archeosophy, its first publication was in fact in 1985, after the author's death, as a monographic volume edited by his daughter Silvestra (Palamidessi 1985). For more than twenty years, this remained the only edition available, until a second edition was privately published in 2010, after Alessandro Benassai had acquired the original manuscript of Palamidessi and had edited again the text.

Unlike other posthumously edited writings of Palamidessi, *The Christian Book of the Dead* was already almost complete. His daughter Silvestra finished her editing and published the book only two years after the death of her father. However, when compared with the original manuscripts now in possession of Alessandro Benassai, which one of the authors has examined (we present some photographs as Annexes A, B, and C), the first edition of the text appears to differ from these in various points, especially in the liturgical part of the prayers to be performed to help the deceased in the post-mortal path. In the first edition of 1985, for example, a series of prayers, to be conducted on different days and weeks (see Annex B), were merged into a single prayer to be repeated in the same way up until the forty-ninth day after the death of the person in need of help. The prayer included in the 1985 edition, thus, brings together in a reduced form the individual daily prayers mentioned in the original manuscripts.

We do not know whether the prayers presented in the first edition were the fruit of a posthumous editorial process aimed at making the use of the text easier, or transcribed original texts by Palamidessi that are now lost. In general, the 2010 edition is more complete, and includes the full text of the 1985 edition, with the exception of the chapter “Outlines of an Esoteric Theology” (Palamidessi 1985, 22). Several chapters are more extensive in the 2010 edition, particularly with regard to the “Archeosophical Cosmography,” the importance of the Golgotha, and the doctrine of the “breaking of the levels,” together with the description of some personal experiences of Palamidessi (Palamidessi 2010, 152 and 246), which were completely omitted in the 1985 edition. A significant number of ritual details and instructions for those who guide the deceased in the journey of the post-mortem stage (see an example in Annex C) are also absent in the first edition but included in the second.

Apart from these not negligible differences, the two editions maintain the same structure. In the first more theoretical part, the phenomenology of the death and the states of agonal consciousness are described. The problem of death is addressed in both scientific and Archeosophical terms, and reincarnation is presented as compatible with the doctrine of the Christian Church Fathers. The book also offers an analysis of the times when the prayers and liturgical rites should be conducted; the description of some personal experiences of the author; and finally a detailed description of the “Archeosophical Cosmography,” which includes the analysis of the six purgatorial kingdoms of the “Fiery Wheel of Life”

or “closed existential circuit,” and a description of the Kingdom of God. The first part of the book closes with an analysis of the “Particular Judgment” of the soul after death, a reference to the “Body of Resurrection” and to the “Guardians of the Thresholds,” and the Sophianic theme relating to the “archetype of the World Soul” (Palamidessi 1985, 211: “Sophianic” means here connected with the biblical and theological Sophia).

The second part of the book, which has a liturgical and ritual character, includes the instructions and prayers to help the dying and the deceased. In the case of the dying, the action of the helper takes place through prayers and suggestions, which in the agonal travail must allow the dying person to cast out the demonic temptations and embrace the angelic inspirations. The latter are classified by Palamidessi in six different typologies: Faith, Hope, Patience, Humility, Detachment and Altruism, and Perennial Wakefulness (Palamidessi 1985, 233–53).

After a reading, preferably at the exact moment of the passing away, the “spiritual guides” find themselves at the most delicate task of helping a soul in the post-mortem stage. Here, the book is less rigid, and its instructions should be adapted to the circumstances, and to the spiritual evolution and travails of each soul. In the Archeosophical conception of the post-mortem stage, the soul undergoes a period of swooning called “reviving sleep” immediately after the passing away. After a variable time, in general about three days, follows the awakening of the deceased in the hereafter and the beginning of oneiric phenomena that can be guided and helped through certain prayers. These are prescribed for the first seven days, and may be repeated for seven weeks. The text concludes with a prayer aimed at helping the deceased during the “Particular Judgment” that, according to mainline Christian theology, awaits them immediately after death.

### *The Sources of The Christian Book of the Dead*

The interest in the post-mortem stages for Palamidessi goes back at least to his years in Turin in the early 1940s. In 1943, he met Ernesto Scamuzzi (1899–1974), the director of the Egyptian Museum of Turin, under whose guidance he began his study of the Egyptian language. The meticulousness of Palamidessi and his already advanced interest in astrology allowed him to remember the exact date

and hour when he began these studies, which according to what he noted on the first page of his notebook happened on December 23, 1943, at 11 a.m. As a result of this work, Palamidessi drew up, but never published, a “*Commento Esoterico al Libro Egiziano dei Morti*” (Esoteric Comment to the Egyptian Book of the Dead: see Palamidessi 1949, 41), the manuscript of which still exists in the Benassai collection. Palamidessi reported that he made in that “*Commento*” specific comparisons between the phenomenology of the post-mortem stage in Egypt and Tibet. This was a sign that his first studies of the Tibetan doctrines started before this period, and were probably facilitated by the publication of the 1933 French edition by Lama Kazi Dawa Samdup (1868–1923) of the version by American anthropologist and Theosophist Walter Evans-Wentz (1878–1965) of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Lama Kazi Dawa Samdup 1933a).

In 1949, Palamidessi published *Lo yoga per non morire* (A Yoga to Not Die: Palamidessi 1949), whose drafting was probably catalyzed by the new Italian edition of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* as *Il libro tibetano dei morti* by Indologist and Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci (1894–1984) for the publishing house Fratelli Bocca (Tucci 1949). *Lo yoga per non morire* deals specifically with one of the six doctrines of the Indian Buddhist Master Naropa (1016–1100), that is, the *pho-wa*, the “transfer of the consciousness” (see Lama Kazi Dawa Samdup 1933b). In the esoteric sense, this doctrine deals with three typologies of transfer, the most elevated being that of consciousness, which at the moment of death is transferred from the samsaric state to the Dharma-Kâya, the first stage of the Bardo, the “Clear Light” (Palamidessi 1949, 85). The theme of the transfer of the consciousness into the “Clear Light” (which for Palamidessi is the “Clear Light of Christ”) will become a main subject matter of *The Christian Book of the Dead*, as the ultimate goal of the liturgical action and the ascetic effort suggested in the book.

The doctrines of the post-mortem stage, and its overcoming through the Divine Grace and the individual ascetic effort, were already present in their essential features in the writings of Palamidessi of 1949. However, the most important source for the drafting of *The Christian Book of the Dead* came to him through a metaphysical and spiritual experience, which he reported happened precisely on October 24, 1967, from midnight to 3 a.m. (Palamidessi 1985, 123). Following this experience, Palamidessi synthesized twenty-four points which would form the cornerstone of the book and allow the beginning of its drafting.

### *Palamidessi's Personal Experiences*

The method utilized by Palamidessi for the composition of his treatise on death is the same used for the major part of the Archeosophy booklets. Each doctrinal thesis presented is supported by traditional theological teachings but is also corroborated by a personal experience of the author. Archeosophy, according to Palamidessi, is in fact an “a posteriori philosophy” (Corradetti and Lullo 2020), which

springs from the experience, because it rests on the practical and positive principles of the methodical experimentation so as to know the superior worlds, ourselves, and God through the development of new senses we call spiritual (Palamidessi 1979 [1968], 10).

Not surprisingly the same experimental method offers the foundation for *The Christian Book of the Dead*. Through his experiences, Palamidessi hoped to achieve a sapiential growth. He tried to obtain information on spiritual realities, then double-check to make sure that the event was genuine, and finally provide reports to his readers and students based on the principles of scientific positivism transposed in a spiritual key.

In several booklets of the Archeosofica collection, Palamidessi had already discussed the theme of death based on experiences that had occurred to him during the course of his life and in particular states of consciousness (Palamidessi 1969a, 1969 b, 1969c). He included in his works his personal experiences not in a casual manner but for an illustrative and pedagogical purpose.

In the sixth booklet of the Archeosofica collection, entitled *Come viaggiare nei mondi soprasensibili* (How to Travel in the Worlds Beyond Consciousness), Palamidessi examined out-of-body experiences (OBE), where the consciousness is separated from the physical body to explore other dimensions, including the “etheric,” “astral,” and “mental” realms. After practical instructions on how to disassociate the “solid part” (physical body) from the “subtle systems” (the energetic bodies and the consciousness) (Palamidessi 1969a, 4), the author reported a personal experience he went through on January 28, 1946, at the moment of the death of his father.

The author has experienced many phenomena of spontaneous OBE, and others instead obtained with the exercise: authentic experiences, controlled by third parties. Among these experiences were visits to houses and places that those present did not know, or of which they ignored certain particulars, confirmed as authentic by a successive control.

But a case of OBE that has for me an emotional significance is this one: “Carlo Palamidessi [1878–1946], my father, was lying dead in the funeral chamber, on the evening of January 28, 1946. Different friends were present, and, feeling ready for the OBE, I laid down on an easy chair. Slightly later, I experienced the usual symptoms of the exteriorization, and went out of my body in the presence of the dead body of my dad. He was at a certain height from his body, still tenuously linked to it by a dimly lit cord, of a gray-purplish color. It looked like silk, candy floss, silk filament. All around, there was a glacial, whitish landscape, with gray trees that looked as if they were petrified. Then I saw my father going away slowly, like a balloon in a grossly human shape. On the head, I saw a yellow-white radiance, like a small flame, and in the rest of the ghost there was much gray with long pink stripes. He climbed towards a mountain, always slowly. I called him, I urged him not to sleep, to look at the Light of the Lord. In vain, I waited for a change of luminosity, a change of color in his aura. He had already entered into the unconsciousness and could not hear me. I insisted, and I believe I saw the brightness of his head becoming more intense. Then, I lost him in the mist of that mysterious world that ravenously swallows the passed away.” This happened in Turin, Via San Francesco da Paola 10, on the third floor, when the author was 31 (Palamidessi 1969a, 25–6).

This incident shows a particular experience of OBE, which refers to a death and the process of the departure of the soul into the world of the hereafter. The story highlights how the subtle bodies of the deceased remain tenuously bound to the physical body by a kind of energetic wire, and then go into slow disintegration until the complete detachment that determines the setting off into the world of the dead. Similar to the precedent experience is a parapsychological and clairvoyant phenomenon reported by Palamidessi in *The Christian Book of the Dead*, in which he describes the ascent to heaven of Renzo Bernardini (1923–1973), an Archeosophical friend and initiate of Palamidessi’s Order of the Loto+Croce (Lotus+Cross), who had just died.

[...] But going along that long street, uneven with puddles, as if it had just rained, I suddenly found myself emerging into a very white light, with a very wide and never-ending staircase, which from the ground rose towards the heaven, and in the background a glow of gilded light. The marble staircase, which was not marble-like so white it was, had a coming and going of people in white mantles, who went up and came down at the edges of that staircase, which had banisters. Also, they did not speak to each other but were self-absorbed and seemed to skim along the steps. They did not have wings, only white tunics and mantles. Unexpectedly, I saw at the beginning of the staircase, perhaps on the seventh or ninth step, Renzo, who ascended very slowly, step after step, with great weariness, I saw him from behind; he had black shoes, and to his ankles hung the white woolen cloak and the habit, also white, of the Loto+Croce. I raised my eyes and with astonishment saw the rest of the figure, very transparent as to look as if was made of

crystal, so transparent that I saw the diverse steps of the long staircase, which made me think of the stairway to paradise. I was so amazed that I could not speak, my look went now to his feet, to the shoes, to the heavy steps, to the tunic, and to the mantle, which had the right side out, whilst in the coffin it had been placed with the red silk inside out.

I realized that he was walking on the way of God, that he had recognized the Light and ascended in an ever-more absorbed, humble prayer. I shrank back and the vision, which was so alive and unforgettable, liquefied, became deformed, and ceased to be. "We can go, I said to my confreres, the vigil has been fruitful" (Palamidessi 2010, 111).

There is another experience Palamidessi reported both in *Come viaggiare nei mondi soprasensibili* and in *The Christian Book of the Dead* (Palamidessi 2010, 115), a sign that he attached to it a considerable pedagogical importance.

The story is centered on Palamidessi's meeting on the spiritual plane with Master Alexander (d. 251 CE), who was Bishop of Jerusalem in the third century, and was in touch with the Didaskaleion School of Alexandria in Egypt and with its leader Origen (184–253). In an experience of memory of past lives, Palamidessi had in fact discovered that he had been Origen in a previous incarnation.

From that meeting, which happened in the "third heaven of the Paradise" and in a phase of OBE, Palamidessi drew significant insights on the world of the dead and the journey of the souls in the hereafter. The account of the incident ends with a list of twenty-four points, summarized by Palamidessi on the basis of the indications he reportedly received from Bishop Alexander. They describe the passing away of the individual observed from a spiritual point: namely, the journey of the soul in the hereafter; its sojourn in various subtle worlds; the necessity of traversing the pitfalls to be met so as to unite with God, or, in the case of failure to achieve that transforming union, of returning to a new physical life through reincarnation.

We will now mention in full the twenty-four points, as they offer an experiential synthesis of the journey of the deceased in the hereafter.

1st) The dead pass, during the pre-agonal travail, through the summarizing memory of all the events of their existence. As is usually said, they have a panoramic vision of all the good and the evil they did during their sojourn on the earth. It is the vision of the mirror.

2nd) The dead are unaware, for some time varying from individual to individual, of being dead. This unawareness, in some souls, lasts for a long time, as does the suffering caused by wanting to perform certain acts and not being able to do so, or, by not being able to be heard, lacking a body.



3rd) The departed are seen in human shape, and they all confirm to have found themselves in such a shape, except those of the high heavens.

4th) At the moment of the separation from the body, they are received by their relatives and friends who have died before them. Such a welcome had already started some days before the death, and intermittently during the vicissitudes of the agonal crisis.

5th) They pass, for the most part, through a phase of reviving sleep, more or less long. Real swoons of three, three and a half days, and even more.

6th) The deceased who lived in accordance with the moral teachings of Jesus Christ find themselves in a comfortable, spiritual, radiant milieu, among songs, music, gentle colors, in the company of like-minded souls. The depraved and unprepared find themselves in an oppressive and dark milieu.

7th) They find a milieu analogous to the one they knew on earth, but it looks like a spiritualized dream.

8th) The deceased, that is, the disincarnated souls, learn that thought in the spiritual world is a creating force, with which the spirits dwelling in the plane of astral energy can reproduce around them the places of their memories. They learn through personal experience, or through the explanations of helping relatives and spirits. As soon as they think of something, it appears and is materialized. This phenomenon is dangerous, because of the illusions and the tricks of the creative power of the mind. The saints are subject to this game for little or no time, because during their earthly life they have learned to empty themselves of everything that is not God.

9th) The dead realize, very early, that talking through words is an illusion, because they understand that the language among them is spiritual, i.e., is the transmission of the thought.

10th) They find that the faculty of the spiritual vision places them in the condition of simultaneously perceiving and seeing the objects in their innerness, through them and from every side. It is the phenomenon of the dimensions superior to the third, which is that of the living on earth. The moribund can see in the agonal state realities that are both close and far away; they can see what happens in the next room or in another city many kilometers away. The same happens to them when they have already passed away. The living experience a similar phenomenon in the OBE.

11th) They discover that they themselves, or other spirits, can transfer themselves instantly from one state to another, from one condition to another, or from one place to another, regardless of the distance. All this, through an act of will. This allows them to move in their spiritual milieu and also to fly at short or long distance, from the fluidic ground, which could also be, depending on the case, the earth.

12th) The deceased learn to gravitate, fatally and automatically, like the other companions who live in their world, towards the spiritual sphere appropriate for them, through the inescapable force of the law of affinity. For this, the wicked reunite with the

wicked, and experience the disgust and terror of the presence of the demons. Vice versa, the best ones, or “perfetti,” are drawn into the sphere appropriate to them, where they find friendly, likable people, in the company of the angels, of the saints, of the patron saint they had invoked in life, the holy good guiding spirit, and so on. Those who are more advanced enjoy the presence of the Virgin, the Christ, the Apostles, the Archangels. In the state after death, the features assumed by the face and the body mirror the beauty of the soul, and its virtues, and give joy to the other souls. In the worlds of the severe purifying and atoning trials, the souls assume monstrous, disgusting, frightening features, due to the instability or fluidic elasticity of their bodies, which suffer all the emotions, regrets, and agonizing states produced by the sight of the place, of the other deceased similar to them, and of the satanic hierarchies. It is certain, as Master Alexander told me, and as I saw in this and other otherworldly journeys, that the Catholic Church, in affirming the existence of the limbo, the purgatory, the hell and the paradise, has spoken the truth.

13th) The deceased are met by the spirits of their relatives and friends, who are present to guide the new arrivals before the reviving sleep begins, the period of unconsciousness. It is the compassion towards the newly deceased that the Master Jesus and other character will show, assisted by the elect, in the most necessary moments. The help of the relatives and friends will be proportionally stronger as the deceased is remembered in the prayers and in the Masses of intercession. This is the law of the compensation, according to the expression of Saint Paul (*Galatians* 6:8): “Who sows for the Spirit will reap life.”

14th) The relatives and friends one has offended, or the enemies who have not yet reached the inner peace, and do not know how to love those who made them suffer, come and meet the deceased with the purpose of attacking them and pushing them towards oppressive conditions, assisted by the Guardian Angel of Iniquity. This happens before the sleep arrives, but begins again after it.

15th) The deceased see their own bodies in the house, or on the deathbed, and can also see the condensation of their ethereal bodies above the physical bodies. This has been confirmed by clairvoyants who were at the bedside of the dying.

16th) They know that there cannot exist disincarnate individualities so identical as to be able to find themselves in the same spiritual situation or to follow together the same way. Also, in the hereafter, the twin souls, who were connected on earth, are separated in the spiritual world, even though God allows them to meet again whenever they want to. They remain together if they have a mission to complete, and if together they exert themselves to attain the same level of spiritual elevation. It is true therefore what the Church affirms regarding the possible meeting with dear ones, but the permanence of their being together depends on their keeping the same moral, spiritual, and religious rhythm. The guarantee of staying together is connected with the nature of the twinning.

17th) The spirits of the disincarnated, as we have already said, are able to create, with the force of their thoughts, more or less good, what they wish and have need of; but when it

comes to complicated or very important creations, such a faculty is entrusted to the ranks of spirits specialized in this regard.

18th) The disincarnated affirm that in their spiritual world, as a general or permanent condition, the inferior souls, in the sense of the hierarchy of the moral values and of the powers, cannot see the entities of those who are superior to them. This is due to the different types of vibration of their ethereal bodies. To be able to feel and see a syntony is needed, or a design of God.

19th) Those who are dominated by the human passions remain bound to the milieu in which they lived, and this happens for a period sometimes short and sometimes long. Being deprived of the reviving sleep, they continue in the suggestion or illusion of believing themselves to be men or women (according to the sex) still dwelling among the living, thus falling prey to a nightmare, to a curious oppressive dream that can convert them into disturbing and infesting spirits.

20th) The soul of the deceased suffers unspeakably at the sight of the torment of the dear ones whom they leave around their deathbeds. The soul remains as if magnetized, and is prevented from entering into contact with those who have already been for some time in the other condition. A great effort will have to be made to liberate the soul from this harmful attraction.

21st) In the world beyond the living, at a certain moment colors appear with a precise meaning: white, yellow, red, green, turquoise. Lacking the light of the day, the sun, the moon, and the stars, the kingdom of the dead is a kingdom of crepuscular, leaden, grayish light, which changes shade, little by little, in accordance with the changes of the states of consciousness.

22nd) When gripped by uncertainty, loneliness and perplexity, confusion, for whatever reason, a spirit is desperate, then it hears a voice from afar, that gives advice on how to exit from that situation; a voice coming from a relative, a friend, the good guardian angel, the patron saint, or the voice itself of the priest who celebrates the Mass and prays for the dead. Those who perceive the thoughts of the departed ones should hurry to help them, following the impulse of the universal charity.

23rd) The dying see the glimmer of the Perpetual Light, but for a few moments. Rare are those who recognize and fix themselves on this clear Light of God. Blessed are those who recognize and fix themselves on it! Then, they will see it as a second glimmer, which does not have the meaning of the first, but it is still a privilege if one dies fixed on it.

24th) I remember that, during my OBE, the Bishop Saint Alexander said to me: “Those who die as true Initiated Christians, and appear at the Judgment after having attained the perfection of the major and minor Mysteries, can pass through the heavens of the atonement like a thunderbolt, and find themselves immediately in the third, in the fourth, in the fifth, in the sixth, and in the seventh heaven.” Among the Mysteries that the Christian must experiment, whilst still incarnate, there is precisely the “dormition or

initiatric death.” After death, there is no remedy. Once passing away unworthily, there is but one possibility: to suffer in the purgatory, the inferno, and then to escape towards a new reincarnation, to prepare oneself, with the thoughts, the words, and the works, for a better passing away next time (Palamidessi 2010, 119).

*“Psychomachia”: Helping the Dying at the Moment of Passing Away*

*The Christian Book of the Dead* is a treatise and a liturgical breviary addressed both to the deceased and the dying—and to the living as well, so as to let them know what they will find in the post-mortem stage. It includes suggestions to help the dying at the moment of passing away and point out the path they should walk to reach the Light of God. In fact, the journey in the hereafter is presented as steeped in dangers and temptations that try to divert the soul from reaching the “safe haven” that is God.

Following the indications of the book, the living can help the dying by directing them through the various pitfalls, guiding them as if they had in their hand the map where the paths are marked that would allow them to avoid the dangers and snares. The living should place themselves next to the dying, and read to them the various passages of the breviary. They are an aid for the wandering soul who enters the hereafter and does not know which path to follow.

The text should be read both to the dying persons before they pass away, and to the dead immediately thereafter. Those who have just died can still hear the words. Useful, even if it is not mandatory, is also a “telepathic link” established with the deceased to guide them.

The various passages of the soul at the moment of death are summarized by Palamidessi in different stages: pre-agonal stage, agonal stage, passing away stage, immediate post-mortem stage, seven-day stage, forty-nine-day stage.

For each of these stages, the book offers instructions, prayers, and exhortations, all aimed at guiding the soul and avoiding that it may remain stranded in the infernal or purgatorial state and have to experience a reincarnation to try yet again another earthly experience.

Of particular interest is the “psychomachia” (Palamidessi 2010, 29 and 273–97), i.e., the struggle the soul of the deceased is engaged in immediately after the

passing away against certain temptations of the demons, which are balanced by the good inspirations of the angels.

The theme of the struggle between the angels and the demons that takes place during the life in the soul of the individual, that is, between the good inspired by the “Spirit of Equity” and the evil suggested by the “Spirit of Iniquity,” had already been dealt with by Palamidessi in his tenth Archeosophy booklet called *I guardiani delle soglie e il cammino evolutivo* (The Guardians of the Thresholds and the Evolutionary Path”: Palamidessi 1969c). Reported here is an ancient Iranian tradition, also mentioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which foresaw the assignation of two Spirits to each individual: one of good or “of Equity,” and one of evil or “of Iniquity,” which symbolically stand the first on the right and the second on the left of the human being.

From the God of knowledge comes all that is and all that will be. Before humans existed, He established a Plan for them. And they exist in accordance with His Laws and in accordance with His glorious design, they fulfill their task and nothing can be changed. In His hands are the Laws of All that He sustains in all the events. He created humans to rule on the world, and assigned them two spirits which they must continue with until the time of His visitation: these are the Spirit of Equity and the Spirit of Iniquity (Palamidessi 1969c, 16).

By means of the Spirits of Equity and of Iniquity can be manifested the inspirations and temptations of numerous angels and demons, who will therefore reveal themselves to the consciousness of the dying. According to Palamidessi, humans can choose between good and evil by accepting either the angelic inspirations or the demonic temptations. If therefore the life is defined through this choice, the same happens in a focused and instantaneous manner at the moment of death. The soul of the deceased will therefore have to fight to avoid succumbing to the temptations of the demons, and instead should listen to the inspirations of the angels.

Below is a table summarizing the struggle of the soul, or psychomachia, between the temptations and inspirations, and the main features of the demons and the inspiring angels.

TEMPTATIONS-DEMONS	INSPIRATIONS-ANGELS
<b>Temptations of the Demon Against the Faith.</b> The Demon Against the Faith tempts the soul of the deceased by making them believe that there does not exist anything spiritual, that everything is matter, that hell does not exist and that therefore one can behave without following any moral or spiritual precept (Palamidessi 2010, 273).	<b>Inspirations of the good Angel of Faith.</b> The Angel of Faith exhorts the soul to have faith, to believe in the divine mercy, to fix its attention on God and on His light. The reading of the “Credo” of the Christian Catholic religion is expected (Palamidessi 2010, 275).
<b>Temptations of the Demon of Desperation.</b> The demon seeks to drive to despair the souls, suggesting that there is nothing more to be done, that they cannot be saved, that their sins have been so serious that the only outcome can be damnation. It is an attack against hope (Palamidessi 2010, 277).	<b>Inspirations of the good Angel of Hope.</b> In contrast, the good angel suggests cultivating hope, that the divine mercy is at work, that with the repentance there will be salvation notwithstanding the sins committed, that God is always ready to forgive those who repent and welcome them in His own light (Palamidessi 2010, 279).
<b>Temptations of the Demon of Impatience.</b> The demon on the left tries to make the deceased lose their temper by making them believe that nobody cares about them, that their sufferings should have ended instantaneously and that if it was not so, then they are entitled to rage and blasphemy (Palamidessi 2010, 281).	<b>Inspirations of the good Angel of Patience.</b> The angel reminds the dying that patience is the virtue of the strong, that patience helps to face the trials in a more serene way, that they must imitate Jesus in the patience demonstrated by Him in His Passion (Palamidessi 2010, 283).
<b>Temptations of the Demon of Vainglory.</b> The Demon of Vainglory tempts the soul of the deceased with the weapon of the “complacency in yourself and spiritual self-conceit.” It will suggest thoughts of superiority over others, contrary to Christian humility (Palamidessi 2010, 285).	<b>Inspirations of the good Angel of Humility.</b> The angel recalls that whoever is exalted will be humbled, that self-conceit is the father of every vice, and that humility helps to empty the humanity of itself, so as to be filled with the divinity, which can then descend into the humans (Palamidessi 2010, 287).
<b>Temptations of the Demon of Avarice.</b> This demon makes one regret having to leave material things, suggesting an attachment to earthly things so that the soul does not draw	<b>Inspirations of the good Angel against avarice, the Promoter of Detachment.</b> The angel suggests breaking away from earthly things, to remain poor in spirit, so as to

close to God, preventing it from being free of material goods (Palamidessi 2010, 289).	achieve liberty from the world and be able to head towards the Kingdom of Heaven (Palamidessi 2010, 291).
<b>Temptations of the Demon of Sleep at the moment of the death.</b> This demon instills the desire to sleep in such a way as to make the deceased lose consciousness. It seeks to plunge the deceased into nightmares. It suggests they sink into the unconscious so that they are not able to pray and stay awake in the quest for the Light of the Christ (Palamidessi 2010, 293).	<b>Inspirations of the good Angel of Perennial Wakefulness.</b> The Angel of Perennial Wakefulness reminds the deceased of the exhortations of Jesus Christ to the disciples: “Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation.” He reminds them not to sleep and not to become distracted in order to be awake and strive to meet the Perpetual Light (Palamidessi 2010, 295).

As mentioned earlier, humans are continuously confronted during the course of their earthly lives with the choice between good and evil. They should decide whether to embrace the suggestions of the good angel, or “Spirit of Equity,” or accept those of the “Spirit of Iniquity.” Such choices determine, in some way, the spiritual destiny of the individual.

For Archeosophy, the objective of all humans is reaching God, reviving in themselves, through thoughts, words, and deeds, the image and likeness of the Divine Being. Such an objective can be achieved by means of the choice, operated with free will, to accept the “Spirit of Equity.”

The Archeosophical doctrine picks up a concept already expressed by Madame Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891) and Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), the founders respectively of Theosophy and Anthroposophy: humans in the course of their reincarnations have the power to create entities constituted of elemental, etheric, astral, and mental matter, known as “Guardians of the Threshold.” Such entities are created on the basis of the embrace of the Angel of Good or the Angel of Evil.

The two Angels are spiritual and must not be confused with the Guardians, even though they are connected. Guardians are able to contain the charges sensitive to the action of the two Angels, charges that explode when you least expect their reaction (Palamidessi 1969c, 13).

The Guardian of the Threshold, an entity that all humans have in themselves, constitutes the synthesis of the good and the evil that each individual has performed, and therefore denotes the evolutive state. As entities created by humans, the Guardians of the Threshold concentrate the charges or the

tendencies towards which their creators are inclined, be they good or evil. The same Guardians may or may not operate as sources of inspiration.

The Guardian, in different times in our life, at the point of death, when we are about to go into the hereafter or when we re-enter like astronauts on the earth for a new reincarnation, makes itself felt and, sometimes, seen, sometimes with the clothing, the expression, and the words of the Devil tempting against the Faith, sometimes with the inspirations of the good Angel of Faith; sometimes, with the temptations of the Devil of Desperation, sometimes, with the inspirations of the good Angel of Hope; sometimes, with the insinuations of the Devil of Impatience, sometimes, with the wise inspirations of the good Angel of Patience; sometimes, with the thoughts of the Devil of Vainglory, sometimes, with the holy inspirations of the good Angel of Humility; sometimes, with the new temptations of the Devil of Greed, afterwards, with the inspirations of the good Angel of Detachment. Lastly, with the bad advice and maneuvers of the Devil of Sleep or with the healthy stimuli of the good Angel of Perennial Wakefulness. And it is always the same Guardian of the Threshold, animated by the human, strengthened or weakened by the vices and the virtues, inclined to yield to the pressures of the real custodians appointed by God: the Angel of Equity and the Angel of Iniquity (Palamidessi 1969c, 18).

For Palamidessi, an important objective for all humans is that of transmuting, namely changing the bad tendencies (vices) into the good tendencies (virtues) that reverberate on the semblance of the Guardian of the Threshold, which at the end of the evolution will have to appear to every woman and man as an angel of Light. The importance of the transmutation of the Guardian of the Threshold is closely connected to the so-called “Body of Resurrection,” the body which will serve individuals in the future terrestrial evolution, of which the Guardian of the Threshold is an archetype.

### *Eschatological Christology and the “Clear Light of Christ”*

The goal of the ascetic struggle and of the liturgical practices of *The Christian Book of the Dead* is the transfer of the consciousness of the deceased into the “Perpetual Light,” as indicated by Bishop Alexander in the twenty-third point summarized by Palamidessi on the morning of October 24, 1967:

23rd) The dying see the glimmer of the Perpetual Light, but for a few moments. Rare are those who recognize and fix themselves on this clear Light of God. Blessed are those who recognize and fix themselves on it! Then, they will see it as a second glimmer, which does not have the meaning of the first, but it is still a privilege if one dies fixed on it (Palamidessi 1985, 130).



In the Archeosophical Christology, the “Clear Light” is the “Light of Christ.” It is a light that can be perceived in life as the “Light of the Transfiguration” or “Taboric Light,” and at the moment of death appears as the “Light of the Resurrection of Christ” (Palamidessi 2010, 299). The transfer of the deceased into the “Clear Light” of the Resurrection corresponds to their assimilation to the divinity-humanity of Christ and to the consequent liberation from the phenomenal world. For this reason many of the prayers suggested by the book are aimed at the fixation of this Light, and at reaching a consubstantiation with it.

Christian brother do not sleep! Do not be distracted. Pray and fix your spiritual eyes on the Light of Christ, enter into this Light, consubstantiate with this Light (Palamidessi 2010, 262).

In the Archeosophical eschatology, the moment of passing away is the very special occasion in which it is possible to contemplate the Light “that only the saints can see and, for a short moment, the dying” (Palamidessi 2010, 231). Recognizing this Light, however, is not easy. It will be difficult for the deceased to know how to recognize the “Uncreated Light” after the passing away if they have not previously experimented the same Light in life through mystical experiences (Palamidessi 1969b, 9) and the meditation on the heart (Palamidessi 1969b; 2008; 2010, 299).

To facilitate the recognition and the transfer of the consciousness into the Light of Christ, the “Spiritual Guide” helps the dying persons by preparing them for the vision.

The moment of entering into the Eternal Life has arrived for you. Your breathing is about to cease. I put you in front of the Clear Light of Christ. You will know it now in its reality, in the passing away in which all the things appear as free and transparent like the clear sky, and where the intelligence without stain, the pure intelligence, has neither circumference nor center [...]

Son/Daughter of the Light (Name and Surname)! Do not pay attention to anything but the perpetual Clear Light that will appear to you in the dim crepuscular light of the hereafter. Recognize it as the perennial Light of Christ, enter into it, walk in it, do not look back, do not think of anything but of this Light, with Faith, Hope, and Love (Palamidessi 2010, 263–66).

If the deceased are able to recognize the Clear Perpetual Light of Christ and fix themselves on it, then the transfer will be completed and the chains of the phenomenal existence will be broken. Conversely, the deceased will lose consciousness and enter into the “reviving sleep,” triggering oneiric phenomena,

from which however they will still have the possibility of freeing themselves, even if with great difficulties.

In fact, at the twenty-third point of the indications annotated by Palamidessi, Bishop Alexander highlighted two distinct luminous manifestations that appear to the deceased in different moments of their experience. The first is the vision of the Clear Light at the moment of passing away, the second is the Light that can appear to the deceased days after death. The first is transcendent, without form, and is the expression of the Divinity of Christ, the second uses an image and for this can be referred to the Humanity of Christ (Palamidessi 2010, 231). The transfer into the first “Perpetual Clear Light” guarantees liberation. In the same way, when the consciousness is not fixed in the “Perpetual Clear Light,” there will still be the possibility of fixing themselves in the luminous manifestations that can happen in the days immediately following the death and still guarantee an access to the Kingdom of God.

#### *The Journey of the Soul in the Post-Mortem Stage According to Archeosophy*

If the dying had not been able to recognize the “Clear Light” and fix themselves on it at the moment of their passing away, then their consciousness collapses into a sleep of varying duration, with swooning spells of three days or even more (Palamidessi 2010, 119). At the end of the “reviving sleep,” the deceased enter into the “crepuscular state,” that is, into a transitory state characterized by mental confusion and a shrinkage of consciousness, in which they nevertheless conserve a certain coordinated activity. In this state, the departed experiment forty-nine days of wandering life with tests of various kinds, which are in their own way a first “Judgment.”

In the crepuscular state, everything that the deceased had thought or done in life will be objectified by their imagination: friends, enemies, relatives, objects, localities, bad actions, good actions, all composing a panoramic vision of great effect. From the heart spring benevolent visions, and from the brain malevolent and aggressive ones (Palamidessi 2010, 91). At the end of these first forty-nine days in the crepuscular state, the deceased will be directed into the state of consciousness or the “kingdom of existence” more appropriate for them, and helping them will become more difficult (Palamidessi 2010, 319).

Of the preliminary forty-nine days, the first seven are the most important; and it is in these days that the most intense prayers and works of the prompter should take place to open the mind of the deceased to the salvific action of the Christ. In these first seven days from the awakening in the post-mortem stage, the “Clear Light” or “Primordial Wisdom” is revealed in five distinct forms, five “Orders of Wisdom” (Palamidessi 2010, 347), i.e., five luminous forms, whose active contemplation leads to the union with God, “the Quintessence of the Wisdom” (Annex E).

The five Orders of Wisdom are implicitly described in the liturgical and ritual part of the Christian Book of the Dead, which can be integrated with the unpublished and unfortunately incomplete passages that we reproduce in Annexes E, F and G:

— *Wisdom of the Universal Law*, the antidote to the illusion (Palamidessi 2010, 159), which manifests itself on the first day with a sparkling white-azure light, “gleaming and dazzling.” It is also called the Light of the “Eternal Wisdom” (Palamidessi 2010, 320). In its feminine aspect, it is the pure void of space, whilst in its masculine aspect it is the pure light, the Illuminator of the heaven (Annex F).

— *Absolute Wisdom, similar to the mirror*, which manifests itself on the second day of the awakening in the post-mortem stage with a clear and bright light, “sparkling and transparent” (Palamidessi 2010, 327). It is identified with the state in which things are liberated from their objectivity, from their isolation, but without being deprived of their form; stripped of their materiality without being dissolved (Annex F). The consciousness of this wisdom reflects the form of all realities without becoming attached to it, and without being touched or moved (Annex G).

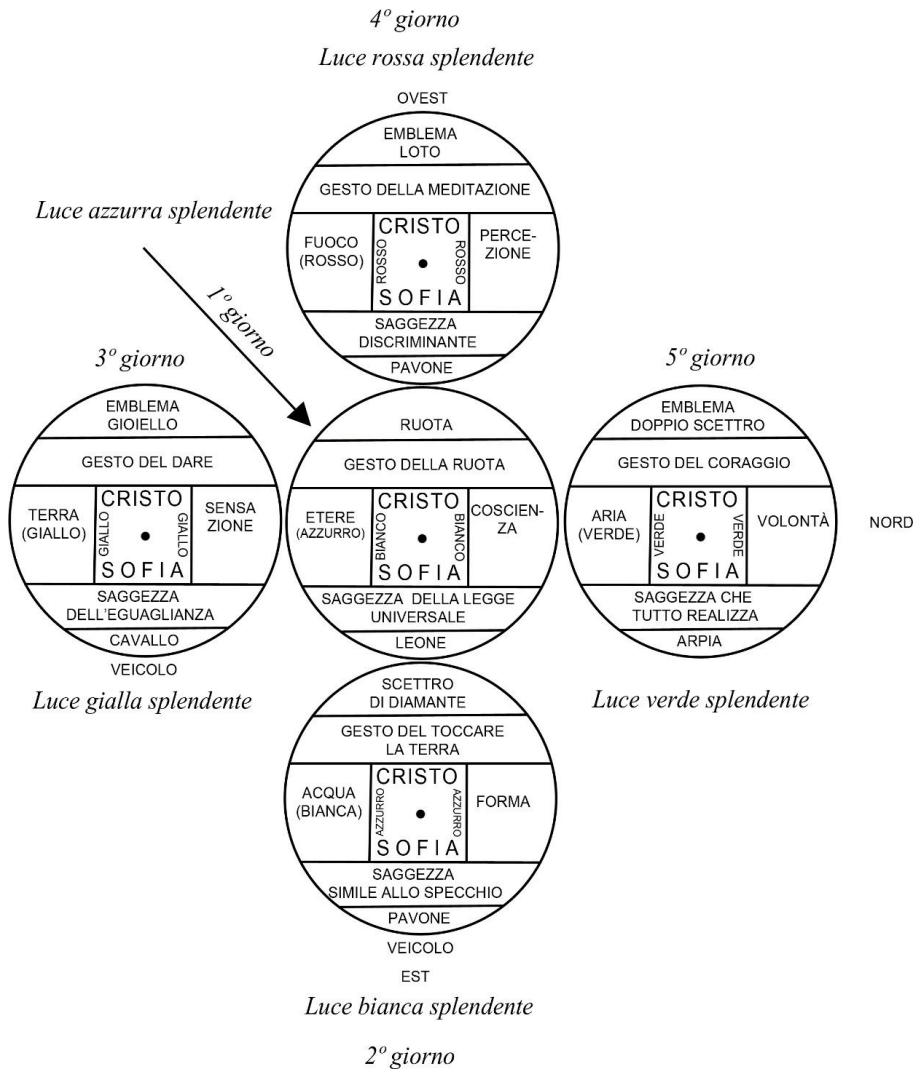
— *Wisdom of the Equality*, which appears to the departed on the third day with a “shining yellow light.” This is also called the “Wisdom of solidarity among all beings” (Palamidessi 2010, 332). It is the knowledge of the fundamental unity of all beings, with feelings of compassion for all living beings. The pure principle of the sentiment is transformed into love and pity for all living beings, into a feeling of identity (Annex F).

— *Wisdom of the Discernment*: typical of the fourth day, and which manifests itself with a shining red light. It is also called “Wisdom of the Perfect Charity”

(Palamidessi 2010, 342), which combats the egoism. We may identify it with the Wisdom that supplies an individual character to every being. The consciousness of such wisdom distinguishes the inner vision (Annex G).

— *Wisdom of All Fulfillments*: also called “Uncreated Eternal Wisdom, which fulfills everything.” It appears on the fifth day as a green light “shining and dazzling,” “sparkling and terrifying,” “iridescent and with luminous circlets” (Palamidessi 2010, 344). This Light, which combats jealousy, is “knowledge of the act” (Palamidessi 2010, 343), i.e., it allows us to fulfill the acts of perfection. It is the natural power of the personal wisdom bestowed by God. It is the “Inner Creative Vision that leads to the ultimate realization of the perfection” (Annex G).

In the first seven days of the awakening in the post-mortem state, the luminous manifestation of Wisdom may appear to the deceased in one of the forms discussed above, associated with a color and an expression corresponding in its masculine aspect to Jesus Christ and in its feminine aspect to Sophia or the Divine Mother. To each Order of Wisdom is associated a spatial direction, a vice to overcome, and a virtue to affirm, a “kingdom of existence,” an animal symbol, some figures typical of the religious tradition of the dying, and one or more liturgical instruments. An autograph scheme by Tommaso Palamidessi (Annex D), is reproduced in Figure 1, and synthetically illustrates the correspondences for each Order of the Wisdom.



**Figure 1.** Synthetic scheme of the journey of the soul in the post-mortem stage.  
From an autographed note of Palamidessi, see Annex D.

The ritual text highlights how the luminous manifestations of Wisdom manifest an extraordinary intensity and luminosity, with a disorienting and sometimes even terrifying effect on the deceased, who can be pushed to flee from them. Catalyzed by the luminous vision of the Wisdom, other opaque lights manifest themselves to the consciousness of the deceased, corresponding to a vice to which the deceased were subject and towards which they may have a certain affinity. To these opaque lights correspond the states of the phenomenal consciousness. If the deceased were to embrace the vision of these opaque lights they would find themselves directed towards a specific state of existence, and a rebirth with consequent features. The action of the “Spiritual Guide” consists in helping the deceased, through prayers and invocations, in the production and recognition of the bright

and shiny Divine Light, and at the same time in preventing the consciousness' embrace of the opaque light.

After the fifth day of permanence in the hereafter, the visions of the "intermediate state" become progressively less divine. The soul of the departed precipitates at a rapid pace into the ocean of hallucinations of the phenomenal world. The good irradiations of the superior nature vanish, to be substituted by lights of an inferior nature (Palamidessi 2010, 342). The prayers of the first seven days can however be repeated in the successive seven weeks, intensifying their action in each period of seven days.

After forty-nine days have passed, the destiny of the deceased should be considered as already oriented. The prayers can be suspended, and conducted only on special occasions. The deceased begin the process of purgatorial atonement, due to the "Law of the contrapasso," with the sojourn in a "kingdom of existence" akin to them. At the end of the sojourn there, the mechanism of the incarnation will be triggered, carrying the soul of the deceased to take a new body of flesh and begin a new spin on the "fiery wheel of life" (Palamidessi 2010, 160).

#### The Christian Book of the Dead, *a Useful Book for the Living*

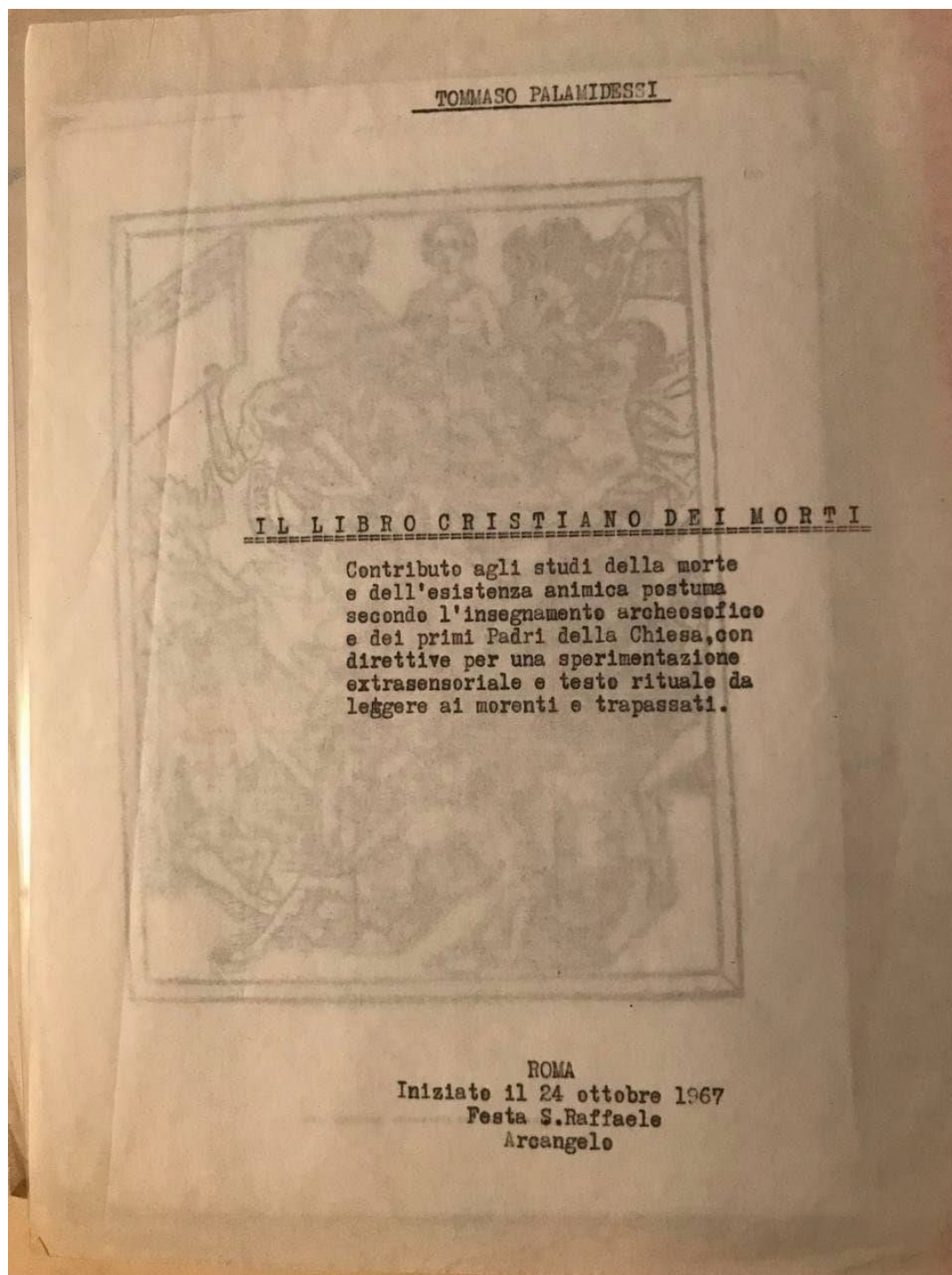
Palamidessi believed that his work was useful both for the dead and for the living. In fact in his own words, "the Christian Book of the Dead is first of all a book for the living, with valid instructions for the living" (Palamidessi 2010, 107). In fact, for the living the book constitutes a preparatory manual for the important and inevitable encounter with death. The Archeosophical doctrine stresses the need in the course of life to practice ascetical exercises that can refine the consciousness with the objective of achieving the transforming union with God. Among the preparatory exercises stands out the Cardiognosis, a mystical practice through which the Archeosophist reaches the "Inner Light," that is,

the intimate embrace with the Christ-Light, the Christ absolute perfection, absolute Wisdom, absolute Love, totality of all perfections; a Christ-vibration, welding with God (Palamidessi 1969b, 10).

In addition to its preparatory role, *The Christian Book of the Dead* is also a guide for those who assist the dying or want to help the deceased through the use of ritual prayers. In this sense, Palamidessi's intention was of "filling a gap" in the Christian liturgy, providing an instrument that may be used by Archeosophists

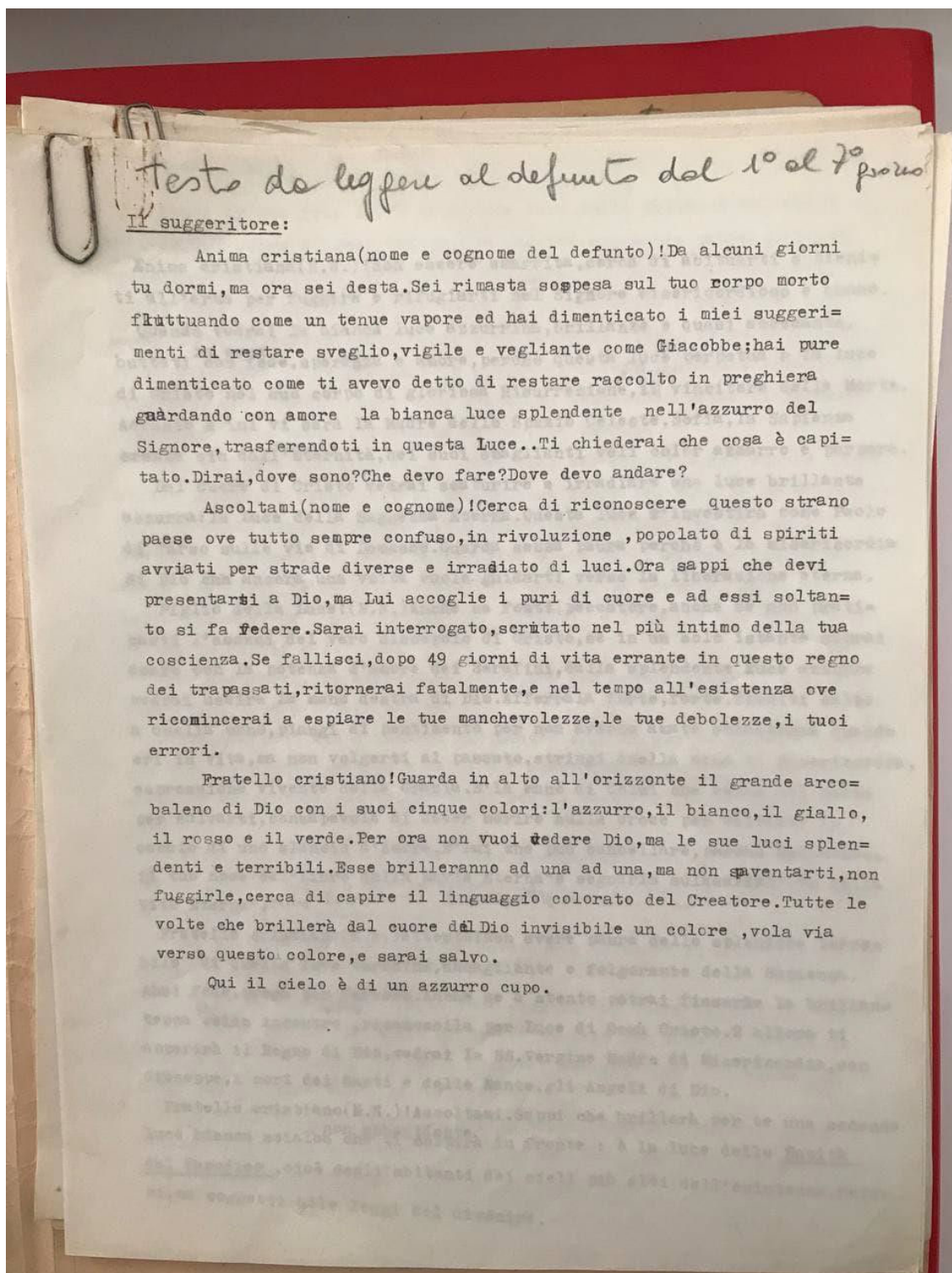
and non-Archeosophists to help their loved ones during one of the most delicate moments of existence.

### **Annexes: Manuscript pages and notes by Tommaso Palamidessi**



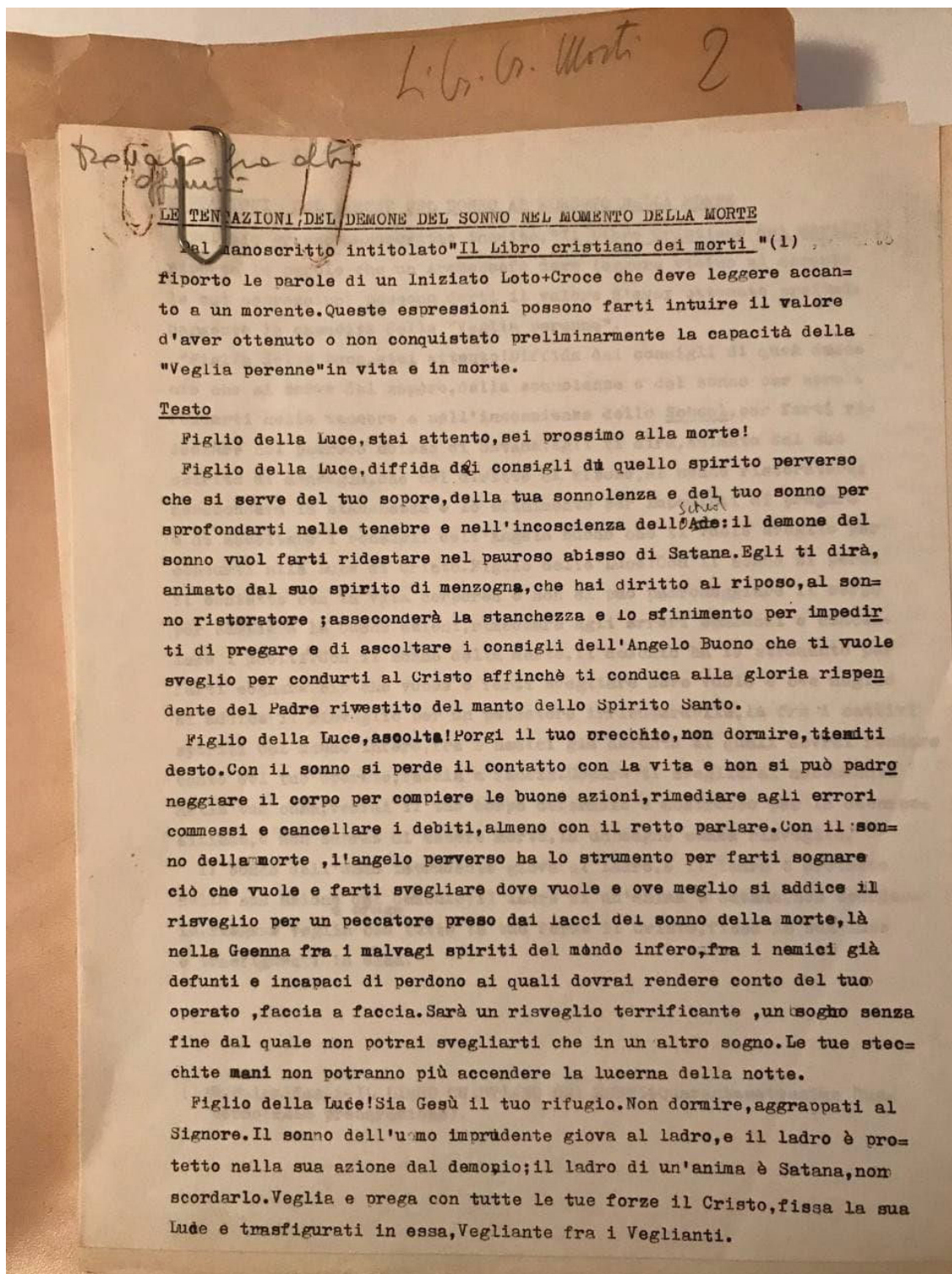
#### **Annex A**



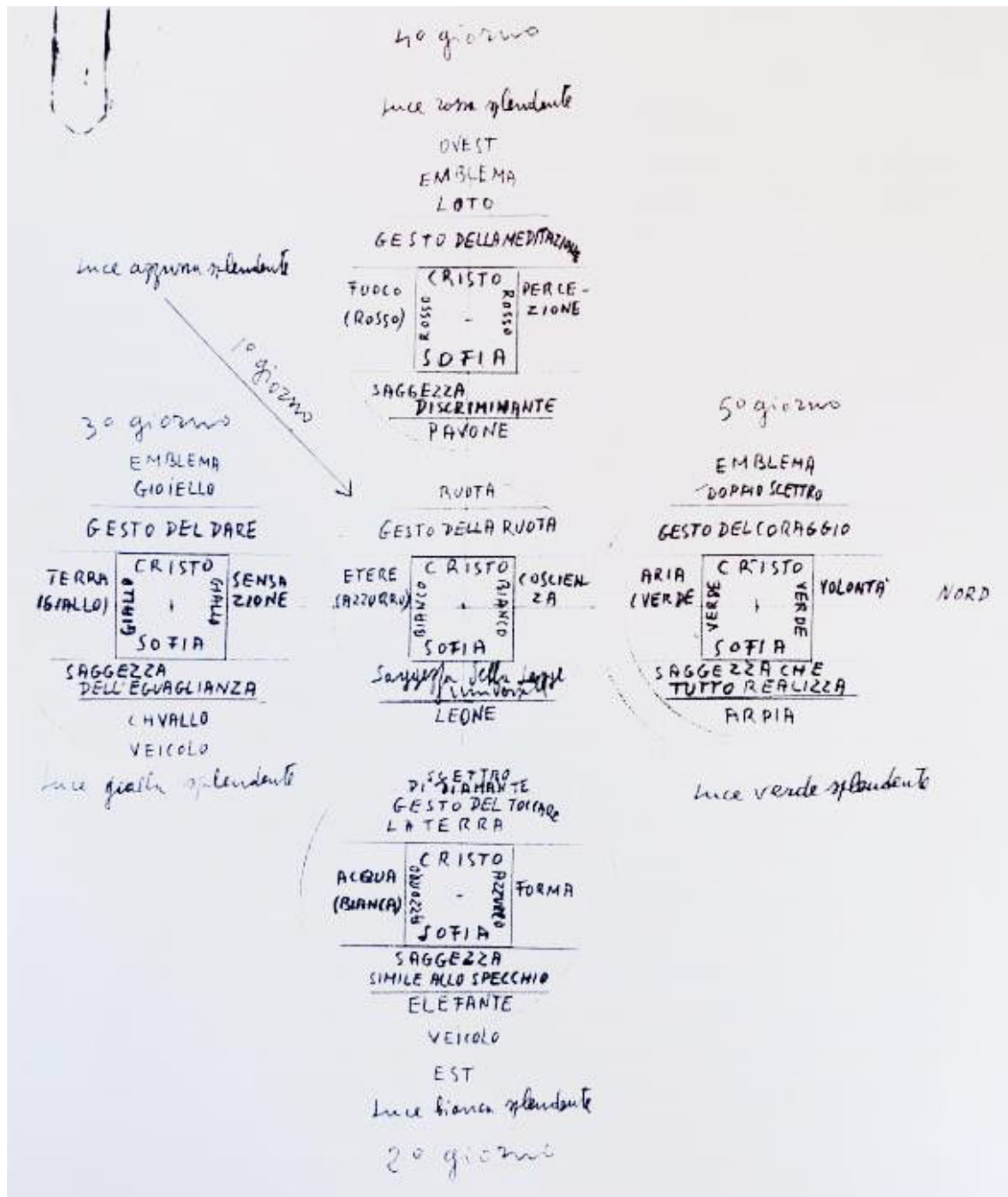


Annex B

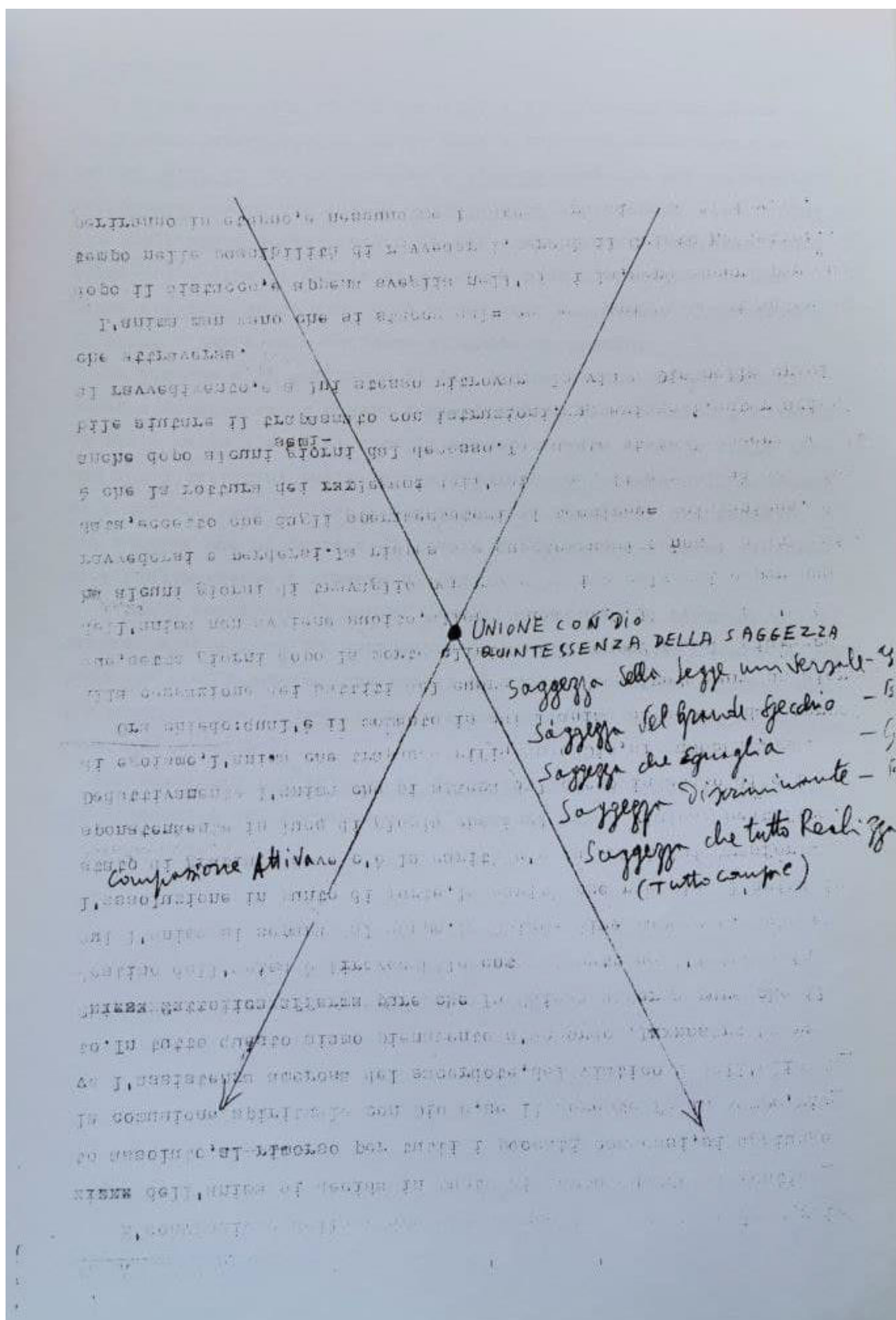




### Annex C



Annex D



# Annex E



3 SAGGEZZA DELL'EGUAGLIANZA: è la conoscenza della fondamentale unità di tutti gli esseri; pietà per tutto ciò che vive. Il puro principio del sentimento è trasformato in amore e pietà per tutti gli esseri viventi, nel sentimento dell'identità.  
Il colore giallo splendente, quando scaturisce dal cuore è la luce dorata del sole secondo la Sapienza dell'Eguaglianza.  
Sul piano elementare vi è la Terra

2 SAGGEZZA SIMILE ALLO SPECCHIO: è quando le cose sono liberate dall'oggettività, dal loro isolamento, ma senza essere private della loro forma; in altri termini spogliate dalla loro materialità, senza essere dissolte, poichè viene riconosciuto come parte attiva della Coscienza di Riserva, il principio creativo della mente, che è ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> cima a ogni forma e materialità. Il principio creativo della mente è come uno specchio <sup>oceano</sup> sulla cui superficie le forme sorgono e scompaiono: se è in tempesta federe i cavalloni e gli spruzzi, se è calma, riflette il puro vuoto dello spazio (la Sapienza della Legge Universale <sup>incarnata</sup> nel suo aspetto femminile) e la pura luce (nel suo aspetto di Sapienza Universale maschile, Illuminatrice del cielo).

## Annex F

I CINQUE VELENI VIRULENTI SONO: lussuria, odio, stupidità, orgoglio, egoismo, gelosia.

I TRE PRECIPIZI DELL'AL DI LA': collera, cupidigia e stupidità.

NON MEDITAZIONE, DISTRAZIONE: il defunto non deve meditare, ma distrarsi nel senso che si deve concentrare mentalmente senza lasciare entrare alcun pensiero come quello della meditazione. E' lo stato di estasi, se si pensa e si medita, questo solo pensiero è già di impedimento alla meditazione.

COSCIENZA DELLA SAGGEZZA SIMILE ALLO SPECCHIO: riflette la forma di tutte le cose senza attaccarsi ad essa e senza esserne toccato o mosso.

COSCIENZA DELLA SAGGEZZA DELL'EGUAGLIANZA: pietà per tutto ciò che vive, *è la conoscenza della forma universale*  
il sentimento egocentrico si trasforma in sentimento per <sup>gli</sup> altri.

COSCIENZA DELLA SAGGEZZA DISCRIMINANTE *è la conoscenza della forma universale*  
*il primo principio del sentimento*  
*che distingue la visione interiore*

COSCIENZA DELLA SAGGEZZA CHE TUTTO REALIZZA: Redenzione. E' la Saggiamentezza della Visione Interiore Creativa che porta alla realizzazione ultima della perfezione.

DELLA SAGGEZZA  
COSCIENZA DELLA LEGGE UNIVERSALE *(colore aggiunto proprio)*  
*luce della Transcendente Sapienza*

*elemento-gioio come un punto blu -*  
*colore giallo*  
*bianco*  
*rosso*  
*verde*

*matà a 5 raggi (Blumen)*

## Annex G

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