



**ESOTERIC**  
**KEYS**  
to the  
**Christian Scriptures**  
&  
**The UNIVERSAL**  
**MYSTERY LANGUAGE**  
of  
**MYTH** and  
**SYMBOL**

by  
**Henry Travers Edge**

## THE AUTHOR

Henry Travers Edge, brought up in the Church of England in an atmosphere, he himself writes, more genial than that of some of the narrower sects, and having in early life been a sincere Christian, is thereby qualified to speak with more sympathy and understanding than is sometimes the case with those who can view Christianity only from the 'outside'. More significantly, as a life-long student and teacher of Theosophy, he is able to illumine, both for layman and scholar, what have generally been recognized as many of the baffling aspects of the Christian revelation.

When he was 20, and already graduated from King's College, Cambridge, he met H. P. Blavatsky, and the next year became one of her very few personal pupils in London. Thereafter he devoted his entire life and his outstanding educational and literary talents to the pursuit and promulgation of that Ancient Wisdom which, revived and restated, H.P.B. brought to the Western world.

Dr. Edge's literary outpouring during the more than forty years he was a member of the Theosophical Headquarters Staff at Point Loma, California, covered widely diverse scientific, literary and ethical subjects. Always lucid and penetrating, his writing combines a directness and simplici-

*(Continued on inside back cover)*

**ESOTERIC KEYS TO THE  
CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES**

By

**HENRY TRAVERS EDGE**

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## ESOTERIC KEYS TO THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES

### I—THE BIBLE AN ESOTERIC BOOK

There are still some Christians who believe in the 'verbal inspiration' of the Bible — that it is the Word of God, to be accepted verbally and literally, and this in spite of the fact that it has been translated into many languages, and that our English version teems with mistranslations. There are others who regard it as merely a collection of documents, sacred, historical, and otherwise, recording the beliefs and religions of different people at different times. And there are many engaged in the effort to arrive at some adjustment between the claims of criticism on the one hand and those of religious loyalty on the other. But, if we study the writings of H. P. Blavatsky on this subject, we shall see that Theosophists are the true champions of the Bible and the only ones who can estimate it at its true value. For she tells us that it is one of the world's esoteric works, a version of the Archaic Wisdom, hidden behind many veils, and written in the ancient mystery-language.

It is surely a remarkable fact, and one that should make us pause for thought, that this book, along with the similar books belonging to other religions, should have been put together and preserved for so many ages intact, to wield so great an influence on mankind. Especially is this so when we consider that a great deal of it is not at all of a kind to appeal to the average devout Christian, to whom, indeed such parts as we refer to must be incomprehensible. The explanation of this historical riddle however becomes simple when we bear in mind that the members of the great brotherhood of Masters of Wisdom have the duty of seeing to it that

the sacred knowledge depart not from the earth; and so it is preserved in the form of the world's various scriptures, which have an exoteric meaning for the multitude and an esoteric meaning for those who have the keys to understand the symbolism.

Moses was initiated by the Egyptian sacred hierarchy, and conveyed what he had learned to the people which he led; but his teachings, the original faith of the Hebrews, were modified and edited many times, and turned into an exoteric and national religion by David, Hezekiah, and others, and later by the Talmudists. There exists that wonderful system known as the Kabbalah, which in so many respects is identical with the teachings of the Secret Doctrine; but even the Kabbalah does not unlock the full mystery of the esoteric truths enshrined in the Biblical books.

The story of the creation of the world and of man; of how man changed from an innocent being into a being endowed with the power of self-conscious choice, thus becoming capable of good and evil; the story of the Flood — these are versions, much corrupted it is true, of allegories that are universal. The Biblical accounts were evidently derived from Chaldea, their nearest neighbor. The so-called historical books are of the kind so frequent in ancient records — half historical, half allegoric. The allegoric meaning to be conveyed is grafted upon a basis of historical fact, the parts in the drama being played by personages who actually existed. The symbolic feature is evident in the list of patriarchs, with their long lives and their begotten sons; these refer to cycles of time and also to racial subdivisions. The historical books form a patchwork of contributions from different writers at different times; and the Kabbalistic methods of interpretation, including those keys which depend upon finding the numerical values of words according to the system known as Gematria,\* show that the outer meaning was subordinated to the inner meaning intended to be conveyed.

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\*Each letter in the Hebrew alphabet has a number, and thus the words and names acquire a numerical value by which their esoteric meanings can be found.

The Old Testament also contains the *Psalms of David*, *Ecclesiastes*, the prophetic books, and others, which seem to the ordinary scholar to be merely specimens of Hebrew literature, but which also enshrine an esoteric meaning, the key to which is found by a comparison with the other sacred literatures of the world. In *Ezekiel* in particular we can find the symbolism of the zodiacal signs, the evolution of worlds and of man, and other familiar things treated in H. P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*.

In the New Testament, the Gospels are esoteric books, whose source is difficult to trace. Considered as historical, they present great difficulties, as the events they purport to describe lack confirmation from other sources; and moreover give us but a sorry picture of Jesus and his mission. He seems like an enthusiastic young teacher, with high expectations, who tries to carry off a *coup d'état* in Jerusalem, and is promptly arrested and executed by the Roman magistrate with the help of the Jewish authorities. The character of the sayings and deeds attributed to him shows that we have here a collection of esoteric documents, manuals and epitomes, couched in the usual allegoric form, and built around the person of some teacher with a name more or less like Jesus, who lived at a much earlier date and about whom little can be ascertained. By the same unseen guidance to which we alluded above, these works have been compiled and preserved, so that they have been handed down as the bible of a racial religion until such time as people are able to realize their true esoteric value. That there was an esoteric movement and society behind early Christianity is shown by the otherwise unaccountable fact that so powerful and enduring a religion should have followed upon a mission so paltry as that of Jesus is represented to have been. Paul, in his epistles, proves himself to be a more or less initiated preacher of an esoteric gospel based on the idea of the mystic Christ incarnate in all men, and upon the distinction and interaction of the higher and lower natures in man. To him the narrative of the Gospels seems to have been entirely unknown. Finally, the Bible closes with that remarkable book known as the *Revelation of St. John*; and here particularly we see the

work of guiding hands in preserving a work which can have but little meaning for the ordinary Christian. It is an esoteric manual dealing with the evolution of worlds and man, belonging to the class of Apocalyptic literature then current.

## II—'CREATION'

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.—*Genesis*, ii, 7

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.—*Genesis*, 1, 26-7

These two passages are from the Creation account, which, as said in the last chapter of this study, is the same in essentials as accounts given in other sacred scriptures; but there are differences in detail among these various accounts, because each one of these has diverged from its parent source—the universal Wisdom-Religion or Secret Doctrine. This Hebrew version is seen, by affinity, to have been immediately derived from a more ancient Chaldean version, of which archaeologists have unearthed the records.

There seem here to be two separate accounts of the creation of man, a fact which must have puzzled some Bible readers, but which is explained when we remember that man is a threefold being, so that three, or at least two distinct creations can be recorded. In the Bible the two accounts seem to have become transposed, and it is more logical to begin with that in Chapter II. And it is most important to observe that the Hebrew word translated God and Lord God is *elohim*, which is a plural word and in Young's *Biblical Concordance* is given as 'God, gods, objects of worship.' In fact it means creative powers and includes a large range of such beings. To Theosophy, the whole universe consists of living beings, endowed with intelligence in varying degrees, and all of them

creative each in its own sphere. In the second of the accounts (which, as said, we take first) the Elohim form man out of earth and breathe into him the breath of life, making him a living soul. This represents two stages of creation, physical and psychic. The word translated 'living soul' is *nephesh*, the correct meaning of which is given by Young as 'animal soul.' Next we find Elohim endowing man with their own likeness (observe the plural pronouns 'us' and 'our') and thereby rendering him lord of the other animated creation.

The student of *The Secret Doctrine* will be aware of the great importance attached to this ancient teaching of the dual creation of man. It has been retouched out of the picture by theological dogmatism; yet here we find it unmistakably, if in imperfect form, in our own Bible. The early races of mankind were 'sinless,' knowing not the contrast of good and evil any more than do the birds that hop and sing; but, like those birds, they were creatures of habit and lacking in originality. This state is figured by the Garden of Eden.

God has forbidden Adam and Eve to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which is in the midst of the Garden; but to Eve comes the Serpent, and says: "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Man eats of the fruit and becomes enlightened; the result is that he loses his previous state of innocent but stagnant bliss and becomes a responsible being. His newly acquired free will leads him at first away from spirit towards matter; man becomes a pilgrim. This story is an imperfect version of a cardinal teaching of the Wisdom-Religion, which is found in fuller form in others of the world's scriptures. That teaching is that the earlier races of mankind were 'mindless,' being little more than perfected animals; but that, in the course of evolution, there came a time when this mindless man received a quickening impulse from the *Mânasaputras* or Sons of Mind. These were spiritual beings more highly evolved than man, but who had themselves been men in an earlier cycle of evolution. It was their duty to enlighten the nascent mankind of this present cycle, which they did by lighting up or calling to light the

latent spark of divinity within man; after which man became an intelligent race endowed with self-conscious mind. The Serpent in the allegory stands for these Sons of Mind; for the serpent is a well-known symbol of Wisdom. Thus the so-called Fall of Man, though in one sense a fall, was really an inevitable and natural step forward in his evolution. All this leads on to the question of man's redemption.

### III — REDEMPTION, SALVATION, ATONEMENT

We have seen how the gift of self-conscious mind to man changed him from a state of sinless but unprogressive bliss into the state of a pilgrim journeying through the path of experiences in the flesh, so that his communication with his divinity is for awhile shut off, so that he loses his paradisaical beatitude, but gains in exchange the power of self-conscious evolution, with the promise of one day attaining to complete manhood. This last is what is meant by the word Redemption: man, after his fall, rises again; but rises by his own aspiration and endeavor. It could never have been the divine purpose to create a puppet; man was to be endowed with responsibility — to be made truly in the likeness of God; and it is only by exercising these prerogatives that he can fulfil his glorious destiny.

This doctrine is one of those common to all religions; it is a tenet of the parent Wisdom-Religion, and, like other such tenets, is found in the exoteric religions of today in various perverted and degenerated forms. In *John*, iii, 16, we read:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

This can be taken both ways, either as referring to the special sacrifice of a particular man Jesus, as the Churches teach, or to the sacrifice of the mystic Christ, the higher self in man, who, through his attachment to the flesh, loses for awhile his brightness and freedom, but by that sacrifice eventually achieves the salvation of the flesh, raising the self of earth up to the heaven in which the higher self dwells.

This latter interpretation is favored by what precedes the above quotation.

If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.  
— iii, 12-15

It would seem that the writer of this gospel was trying to teach his hearers a truer understanding of the doctrine than the perverted one that was more or less prevalent. Turning to Paul, who was a mystic, and undoubtedly an initiate in some degree of the Pagan Mysteries, we find the real teaching even more evident. As has been remarked, Paul shows no sign of having heard of the gospel story of the life of Jesus and his crucifixion. It is of the mystic Christ, incarnate in all men, that he speaks.

Our old man is crucified with him [Christ], that the body of sin might be destroyed. — *Romans*, vi, 6

Seeing that they crucify to themselves the son of God afresh, . . .  
— *Hebrews* vi, 6

They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. — *Galatians*, v, 24

As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. — *Galatians*, iii, 27

These are a very few of the numerous passages in which Paul expounds the subject. It is not easy to define exactly what his doctrine was, or that of the writer of *The Gospel according to St. John*: the original pure teaching must have gone through stages of gradual transformation and adaptation to particular times and circumstances. But if we study religions comparatively, checking what we find in one scripture by what we find in others, we shall be able to sift out the accidental circumstances and arrive at the common kernel of truth. The idea of 'sacrifice' is ancient and universal, meaning both the sacrifice undertaken out of love, by the higher in order to redeem the lower; and the sacrifice which



the personal man makes of his earthly desires when he aspires to achieve union with the God within. Christ is crucified for us, and we crucify our flesh with its affections and lust. Atonement means making at one, the reconciliation, between the human and the divine. The important point to bear in mind in all this is that we should abandon the weak and foolish hope that we can abrogate our own manly responsibility and secure a vicarious justification for our faults, instead of reaping what we have sown and making straight what we have wrought awry. Again, it is the wrongs we have done to others which should cause us chief concern and rouse a healthy repugnance against the idea of evading the debt by a personal pardon. The Christ, the Redeemer, is in all men, though he may be specially manifested in the great Teachers who come to humanity in all ages, and whose fate it is to have their persons rather than their teachings venerated.

#### IV — MAN'S SECOND BIRTH

In *Matthew* iii, 11, John the Baptist says: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with Fire." As some of the English words used here have acquired special doctrinal significance since they were written, it will be advisable to give meanings which represent the Greek better in modern English. The word translated 'repentance' means a change of mind, a reformation of life, and does not necessarily imply sorrow; the word translated 'Ghost' would better be rendered 'Spirit,' so as to avoid confusion with the theological conception of the second person of the Trinity.

Remembering that the canonical Gospels are a somewhat haphazard collection and selection of esoteric teachings, veiled in allegorical and apparently historical guise, we may expect to find in them many familiar teachings of the ancient Mysteries, which can easily be read in their right sense by those with any knowledge of such teachings; but which at the same time can be interpreted by theologians to suit the pur-

poses of their religion. And nothing could be clearer than that we have here a reference to the double birth of man, and to its ritual symbolism in the ancient initiation ceremonies. Water is the universal symbol of the material side of nature, whether cosmic or human; fire is symbolic of spirit. There were two stages of initiation: the first, by an inferior Teacher, was the baptism by water, and signified the conferring of knowledge relating to the material planes. To quote from *The Secret Doctrine*, II, 566: "John, a non-initiated ascetic, can impart to his disciples no greater wisdom than the mysteries connected with the plane of matter (water being a symbol of it). His *gnosis* was that of exoteric and ritualistic dogma, of dead-letter orthodoxy; while the wisdom which Jesus, an Initiate of the higher mysteries, would reveal to them, was of a higher character, for it was the 'FIRE' Wisdom of the true gnosis or the *real spiritual* enlightenment."

Turn now to *John*, iii, where a Jewish rabbi comes privately to Jesus to ask questions. He wants to know what is meant by saying that a man must be born again; and is told: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." But can a man enter the womb a second time? asks Nicodemus; and is answered: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Here reference to this twofold initiation is plain enough. The candidate for high initiation must be a complete man.

H. P. Blavatsky has staunchly championed the Gospels, in her articles on "Esotericism of Christian Dogma" (*H. P. Blavatsky: Collected Writings*, Vol. III), showing that this medley of sacred writings yields readily to an obvious interpretation by anyone able (as Theosophists are) to apply the requisite keys and disencumber their minds of prejudice. And the texts above quoted are supported by many others which recount the teachings and acts of an initiated Teacher of high degree, anxious only to set the feet of his disciples on the Path which he himself had followed; but who has been set up on a pedestal and worshiped from afar as the Second Person in the theological triune God.

## V — THE 'FATHER' AND THE 'SON'

No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. — *Matthew*, xi, 27

The Gospel according to Matthew, by whomsoever written or when, is one of those compilations or manuals of sacred teachings used by the early Christian Church, and built up around the personality of one Jesus, about whom little can be ascertained, in much the same ways as Plato builds up his teachings around the personalities of Socrates and other historical figures. This Gospel contains many sayings which can be recognized by those who have studied the mystic sayings in other religions or philosophies, as being familiar items of the Universal Wisdom-Religion, as taught in the Schools of the Mysteries. They are the teachings of initiated Teachers, from whatever source the Christians may have derived them. They gradually lost their esoteric sense and became transformed into theological dogmas; but their original meaning is so clear, and their theological interpretation so forced, that we may safely leave the truth to vindicate itself before the judgment of the student.

These words, 'Father' and 'Son,' are well-known terms of the Ancient Wisdom, and do not refer to individuals; they do not mean the God of theology and his only son the Second Person of the Trinity. We cannot do better than quote the words of H. P. Blavatsky in *The Esoteric Character of the Gospels*, not as seeking to fortify ourselves by an appeal to her authority, but because they so well express the idea we wish to convey:

The first key that one has to use to unravel the dark secrets involved in the mystic name of Christ, is the key which unlocked the door to the ancient mysteries of the primitive Aryans, Sabeans, and Egyptians. The Gnosis supplanted by the Christian scheme was universal. It was the echo of the primordial wisdom-religion which had once been the heirloom of the whole of mankind; and, therefore, one may truly say that, in its purely metaphysical aspect, the Spirit of Christ (the divine *logos*) was present in humanity from the be-

ginning of it. . . . The author of the Clementine Homilies is right; the mystery of Christos — now supposed to have been taught by Jesus of Nazareth — was 'identical' with that which *from the first* had been communicated 'to those who were worthy.'

And we are told that these and other words used —

apply to all those who, without being Initiates, strive and succeed, through personal efforts, to *live the life* and to attain the naturally ensuing illumination in blending their personality — the 'Son' — with the 'Father,' their individual divine Spirit, *the God within* them. This 'resurrection' can never be monopolized by the Christians, but is the spiritual birthright of every human being endowed with soul and spirit, whatever his religion may be. Such individual is a *Christ-man*.

Thus, without going into details as to the several human 'principles,' the broad meaning is clear enough. We have man depicted as a triad: the man himself, the self-conscious human soul, between his spiritual Self on the one hand and his passional terrestrial nature on the other. He achieves his own 'salvation' by conscious and willed union between the Son and the Father, whereby he becomes master of the lower powers instead of their slave, and is a full-grown Man.

Such is the ancient and universal doctrine of salvation by self-conscious evolution and by initiation into the Sacred Mysteries; such is the sublime teaching which, in dark ages, has been corrupted into the dogma of the Vicarious Atonement. These words, 'Son' and 'Father,' are often found in the Gospels, and their correct interpretation at once convinces the mind. Allowance however has to be made for the circumstance that these Gospels were written in times when beliefs were not settled and when there still survived those hopes of the speedy coming of a Messiah which so agitated the Hebrew-Christian world at an earlier date.

## VI — KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

We often hear it said that Christianity has never really been tried, and that we should follow the precepts of Christ rather than bind ourselves by dogmas and ceremonies like the

Pharisees, whom he condemns for that very thing; but a Theosophist cannot but be surprised that so little is made after all of these teachings of Christ, even by those who so strongly advocate our attention to them. Instead of studying their Bible, they would seem to rely on a floating idea as to what Christ said, based largely on what they remember of the Sermon on the Mount. We propose here to direct attention to what is surely a most important and often mentioned teaching of Christ—that indicated by the phrases, ‘Kingdom of God,’ and ‘Kingdom of Heaven,’ — used alternatively in the same sense. In *Matt.* iii, 2, John, the forerunner of Jesus, says: “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” But he declares that a greater than he shall come; and we find Jesus, at iv, 17, making the same exhortation. In verse 23 Jesus is spoken of as going about and teaching the ‘gospel of the kingdom.’ Attainment of the kingdom is mentioned in chapter v as the reward of the poor in spirit and the persecuted. Verse 19 of this chapter speaks of men being lesser or greater in the kingdom, and verse 20 uses the phrase ‘enter the kingdom.’ In vi, 33, we are bidden to seek first the kingdom of heaven; xiii, 11, tells of the mysteries of the kingdom, and verse 52 speaks of being instructed unto the kingdom. In *Luke*, xvii, 21, occurs the well-known passage: “Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” (The pronoun ‘you’ is not indefinite but plural.)

Many more passages in which one of these two expressions occurs might be quoted, but the student may be referred to his Concordance. It is enough to say that we are left in no doubt as to what the Teacher, whose teachings are here recorded, meant. He was speaking of a goal of attainment, open to any man, upon certain conditions, which he continually specifies. Those conditions are the purification of the heart, by the practice of altruism, purity, truthfulness, and the other virtues so often called Christian though common to religions in general. Christians are never tired of insisting on the need of practising these virtues, but they surely lose sight of the real purpose in doing so. It is not merely to atone for sin, escape damnation, achieve bliss after death; nor yet is it

enough to say that we must endeavor to be Christ-like in our lives. The one object is too narrow and personal; the other savors of a barren saintliness. If this gospel is to save the world, it must be through creating a body of real disciples, not merely saintly people, but people endowed with the spiritual gifts which Jesus promises to those who follow in his footsteps. See *Matt.*, v, 38, “Be ye therefore perfect”; *John*, xiv, 12, “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do.” In short the Teacher, like all such Teachers, was pointing out the Path or Way, by following which every man can unfold the latent spiritual powers within him, fructify the dormant germ, and attain to the status of one of the world’s Helpers. This is the true sense of following the Christ and entering into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Mere saintliness, even a life of self-sacrificing philanthropy, is not sufficient. True, self-forgetfulness, to live to benefit mankind, is the first step; but what of the other steps? Why is philanthropy so impotent against the forces of the world? Because it has neglected to equip itself with *knowledge*. “I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” (*Matt.*, x, 16.) If the realm of knowledge is abandoned by the good, it will be seized by the evil; and the world will be ruled by the wisdom that “descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.” (*James*, iii, 15.) But the esoteric basis of Christianity has been expunged from the canon since the days of the Gnostic Christians; and naught of Jesus’ esoteric instructions to his disciples in private is to be found in the Gospels, except such as is veiled in guarded language and symbolism. The mysteries concerning the structure of man and the structure of the universe in which he is have been left to the speculations of a materialistic science, and Christians find themselves but ill-equipped to combat the menacing forces of a knowledge prostituted to curiosity or greed.

## VII — "THE GOD WITHIN"

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?—*1 Corinthians*, iii, 16.

This verse is familiar to Theosophists, as it is often quoted. It is not advisable to rest a case on the authority of an isolated text, especially if it has been copied by one writer or speaker from another without reference to the context. But this text can be taken as illustrative of the teachings in which it is found; and a reference to the context will show that it is not isolated but is amply supported by what accompanies it. The doctrine of Paul, who is considered by many to be the real founder of Christianity, is far more mystical, far nearer to the original Gospel, than the representative Christianity of later times. As has been said, the Christ which he preached is the indwelling Christ in every human heart, the Mediator between God and Man, the Divine-Human Soul between the Divine and the Human in Man. For Paul our terrestrial animal nature became linked with the Divine by the influence of this Christ; and thereby we are enabled to follow the higher and overcome the lower. Students of Theosophy are aware that, at a certain stage of evolution, man acquires the gift of Mind, which is kindled in him by the aid of certain divine Instructors — the *Mânasaputras* — after which, Man becomes like unto the Gods, having the discernment of good and evil. "Ye are Christ's: and Christ is God's," he says in verse 23. He warns us that, if we defile this Temple, we court destruction. He speaks of himself and his colleagues as "stewards of the mysteries of God." This reminds us of Jesus' "Kingdom of Heaven," which he urges his disciples to enter.

It is very important that Christians should recognize the true merits of their religion. These teachings of Paul restore the dignity of human nature, whereas professing Christians have all too often belittled and slandered human nature. To restore the dignity of human nature does not however imply self-conceit — nobody can be more emphatic against

that than is Paul himself; it means *faith*, faith in oneself, faith in the Divinity which has been breathed into us, faith in the eternal Divine Spark from which all beings are sprung.

Pelagius (4th and 5th Centuries A.D.) taught that there was no original sin in man; for man's Creator would in that case be the author of evil; that it is man who, by the abuse of his free will, made sin; that, as there is no original sin, no special salvation by grace is needed; and that man is his own savior. But Pelagius was condemned as a heretic, though he did try to save himself by an awkward compromise on the question of 'grace.' The church authorities said, If this is true, what becomes of Christ and his sacrifice, of salvation, of original sin, of divine grace? What becomes of Christianity itself? they said. And it must be confessed that, if a formal creed be drawn up defining Christianity in a way acceptable to the various sects, it will be found to favor the opponents of Pelagius. But what we are trying to do now is to get away from these creeds and fathom the kernel of which they are the husks. Here is a clear issue, as between the conception of Man as a responsible being, endowed by his divine birth-right with the power both to err and to amend; and Man as an innately corrupt being, requiring 'grace' and a propitiatory sacrifice for his redemption.

In this text an appeal is made to the free will of man; and truly such is the only way in which it is possible to help and teach man. For any other proposed means of help turns man into a puppet, without free will, and dependent upon an external power. The Teacher does not say, Believe in me and I will save you. He says, Save thyself; and points the way by which this can be done. The guilt for destroying man's faith in his own divinity rests partly with himself, for giving way to indolence, and partly with false teachers who have ministered to that indolence, and have thus offered themselves as intermediaries between man and God, and dispensers of the grace which man ought to find in himself. The Jesus of the Gospels says:

These things have I spoken to you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will

send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. — *John*, xiv, 25-26.

The word translated 'Comforter' is, in the Greek, *Paracletos*, and means one who is called in to help. Remembering that the Father is not the personalized Deity borrowed from Hebrew monotheism, but the Universal Spirit which animates every being in the universe, from man down to the atom, we can see in this text the affirmation of the essential divinity of man and of man's power to evoke it to his aid.

Finally, let us note that this body of ours, which we so desecrate, is the Temple of the Holy Ghost; and that we err greatly if we regard it as hopelessly corrupt, instead of looking forward to the ideal of being one day able so to cleanse that Temple that it may be a worthy shrine of its God.

### VIII — SATAN, THE ADVERSARY

Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. — *1 Peter*, v, 8

Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. — *Matthew*, iv, 1

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. — *Job*, i, 6

Belief in his Satanic Majesty was very real and strong in bygone centuries; and though it still persists among some sects, it has much weakened in the succeeding years, while to many it has become little more than a jest. The word is used in the Bible in different senses. In the New Testament it often means merely an evil spirit of some kind, such as those which obsessed maniacs and epileptics. But more often it applies to an evil personal deity, the adversary of God, and the adversary of man because he seeks to seduce man from God. There can be no doubt that belief in such an evil Power was strong in the atmosphere wherein the New Testament books were compiled. In those passages which treat

of the temptation of Jesus, the devil appears as an agent commissioned by God to test a candidate for high initiation; he offers Jesus all the riches and powers of earth on condition of being worshiped, but Jesus declares himself to be already in command of these things by virtue of his own divinity, and the devil retires defeated. In the story of Job, Satan is actually one of the sons of God, sent by God for the purpose of testing Job.

Both the Hebrew *Satan* and the Greek *Diabolos* (the origin of our word *devil*) mean 'adversary'; and this meaning gives the key to the real meaning of the words. The devil was said in theology to have been a rebellious angel, who was cast out of heaven and thereupon became God's adversary, striving to undo God's work and destroy man; in which work he was assisted by a host of subordinates — "the Devil and all his angels." This is a perverted allegory. As Theosophy teaches — in this collecting the sense of many ancient teachings — there was an epoch in the drama of evolution when certain divine powers left their high sphere in order to bring light to the lower kingdoms of Nature. It was then that Man, hitherto innocent, knowing not good and evil, passively obedient to heavenly law—the "mindless," as the teachings say — became endowed with the Fire that aroused within him his own hitherto latent divinity. Man became "as the Gods," knowing good and evil, able to choose. This is what is meant by the War in Heaven and the Fall of the Angels: in one sense it is a rebellion and a fall; in another and better sense, it is a sacrifice, a performance of the duty of love, whereby Man was enlightened and saved.

The story of Venus-Lucifer enshrines this allegory, and so does that of Prometheus the Fire-Bringer. Satan, then, was originally a divine being destined to carry light and life to the nether worlds. He stands for the gift of free will and self-conscious mind to Man; a power which at once seduces and uplifts Man. For with free will comes the power to go astray. Satan is therefore Man's teacher, even as he is in the Book of Job. (It may here be noted that the Bible gives no authority for supposing that it was the Devil who tempted

Man in the Garden of Eden; it was the Serpent. But the idea is the same.)

The perversion of this sublime teaching is the cardinal sin of our theological system, a constant theme of H. P. Blavatsky. The human intelligence has been converted into an enemy, and Man has been set at variance with himself. This has resulted in false asceticism and mortification of the flesh, whereas Man should master the powers of his lower nature, not try to destroy them.

It remains to be added that, just as divine powers were personified in a monotheistic anthropomorphic God, so it became necessary to personify the remaining powers of Nature into a personal deity — his Satanic Majesty. Though this idea may have been derived to some extent from Persian dualism, in Ormazd and Ahriman, yet it differs essentially therefrom; for Ormazd and Ahriman were twin creative powers from the beginning, whereas the theological Satan is simply a rebel, inferior to God and destined to be conquered ultimately by God. The Devil may well stand for corrupt human nature, the alliance between intelligence and passion, which is capable of generating something very like an independent being inhabiting the temple of the body and desecrating it. It may also stand for evil influences from the astral light, born of the corrupt thoughts and lusts of men, which can obsess us if we give them access. As a good rule of conduct, the old biblical adage holds good in any case: "Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you."

## IX — THE FLOOD MYTH

And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.—

*Genesis*, vii, 19

Bible readers must either ignore and reject actual knowledge and indisputable evidence, or else admit that the Flood story is of far greater antiquity than the Biblical account

and is universal, being found in every part of the earth and among all peoples, East and West, North and South. The Chaldean account is older than the Hebrew, and the Sumerian version is older still; India, China, and other Asiatic countries furnish their versions. In the West, we have Prescott's account of the surprise of the Jesuit missionaries on finding that the natives already had the story. It occurs in the *Popol Vuh*, the sacred book of the Quichés. Daniel Brinton, in his *Myths of the New World*, has collected an immense number of flood stories among the ancient American tribes, North, Central, and Southern. The story is found among the ancient Scandinavians in the North and the Polynesian peoples in the South; and among African tribes, such as the Masai of East Africa. No theory of the spreading of Bible teaching could explain such universal diffusion, such great antiquity. Another theory, still more strained, holds that all races of men, at certain stages of their evolution, and in the same circumstances, will invent the same myths. But even if this were true as to the broad outlines, it could never explain the details. It is a fact that, besides the story of a great flood, and of an ark which saves a few people, there are also particulars such as the sending forth of birds from the ark, and its final resting on a mountain. Such exactitude in the similarity could never be explained by the theory of diffusion or by the other theory mentioned; to say nothing of the fact that either theory would explain a good deal more than it was meant to explain; for why should there be such a similarity in the creation and flood stories and yet such differences in other respects?

It may be thought that all these stories preserve traditions of an actual deluge; and geology shows that such a deluge must actually have occurred, and its date is roughly fixed by the usual stratigraphical criteria and by calculations respecting the Glacial Epoch. It is certainly true that the stories do refer to an actual flood, but this is not the entire meaning. The story is evidently an allegory. In all its versions we find that the race of men had become so corrupt that it was necessary to destroy it; there is always a Noah, a righteous man who with his family is to be saved; an ark is built,

and animals and the products of the earth taken in; birds are sent forth, the waters subside, and the ark rests on a mountain.

It may be asked how a story can be at once a historical record and an allegory conveying a figurative meaning. This arises from the universal analogy or correspondence between the workings of Nature on all planes; so that what happens in the affairs of man happens also in the terrestrial world. The history of man, as told in the Secret Doctrine, shows a succession of great races, called Root-Races to distinguish them from the minor division or sub-races; and the change from one Root-Race to the next is marked by great cataclysms in the earth's surface, the earth undergoing its evolution *pari passu* with the beings upon it. The evidences of these cataclysms are preserved in the geological record, where major unconformities mark the change into a new system of strata. It is at such times that the remnants of the earlier Race are destroyed, and *seeds* preserved to serve as generators of the Race that is to come. The story of Deucalion and Pyrrha shows the same thing: when Zeus resolved to destroy the degenerate race of men, Deucalion and Pyrrha, on account of their piety, were the only ones saved. A ship is built, in which they float during a flood. Afterwards they start a new race by throwing behind them stones, which become men and women. Xisuthrus, the Chaldean Noah, has similar experiences, but is nearer akin to the biblical narrative.

The Ark is a symbol which has a wider meaning than that which relates merely to the preservation of the seed of a new race: it symbolizes the preservation of seed in general, and hence is an emblem of rebirth. Nothing is destroyed utterly or finally; death is ever the precursor of rebirth. The death of a man means but the dissolution of his temporary instruments or vestures; but the essence of the man is preserved to be the seed of a future re-creation of similar vestures for the next succeeding life on earth.

If anyone should think that this explanation of the universal story of the deluge and ark is far-fetched, we should be glad to hear any other explanation that may be offered. And it must be remembered that the flood story is only a single

instance of the universal diffusion of myths; for we find also similar accounts of the creation of the world, the creation of beasts and man, the fall of man; and this is not to mention the whole body of mythology, with its almost identical features all over the world, for which scholars have devised the solar myth theory, as though ancient races amused themselves with devising poetical accounts of the succession of the seasons and the course of the sun and moon.

The only rational explanation is that these stories form the symbolical record of the ancient Secret Doctrine, which was enshrined in this form by wise men, for its preservation during dark ages; and the key to which is available for those sufficiently interested to study the pages of H. P. Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*. As said above, owing to the universal correspondences and the analogy of all things in Nature, every such myth has several meanings; and the flood story, of which we find in our Bible a Hebrew-Chaldean version, records the disappearance of the continent of Atlantis, with the degenerate remains of its population, who were destroyed because of their corruption; and the preservation of the human seed for the founding of the next coming (or Fifth) Root-Race of humanity. But the legend at the same time signifies the general law of cycles and rebirth. The word 'ark' is akin to the Chaldean *argha*, meaning the womb of Nature, the crescent moon, and a cup; and it is the receptacle wherein are preserved the seeds for a new birth. Death means rebirth, and destruction means renewal. These processes are everywhere observable in Nature; but scholarship, with an inverted logic, has supposed that their correspondences in human life are merely poetical analogies; whereas the truth is that physical Nature but repeats outwardly the laws and workings of interior nature. The human race is perpetually renewed; for each human individual is in his essence an undying Self, preserved perpetually through manifold successive changes of his outer vestures; and men, races, and worlds, eternal in their essence, are, as to their outer form, perpetually passing away and reappearing in the cycles of rebirth.

## X — THE GOLDEN RULE

All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.— *Matthew*, vii, 12

Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. — *Matthew*, v, 44-5.

The Golden Rule is of course universal. No religion is without it; on it religions are based. Sectarians may say that Christianity superseded all other religions by introducing a new principle of love; but it is not true. Buddhism and the Indian scriptures are full of it; unbiased scholars can find its parallel everywhere. For it is a fundamental truth, basic to man as man independently of race and age. But in our age, when religion has lost its rational element, when the intellect is busy with the world of the senses, and a spurious value has been given to personality, the Golden Rule seems an exotic, a counsel of perfection, an unattainable ideal, a barren emotional indulgence — anything but a practical rule of life. So great is the confusion of thought as to the meaning of this Rule, that some say it would decompose society if followed, and others repeat the saying without stopping to think whether it means anything. This delusion is based on that other delusion whereby it is supposed that society is organized by the motive of self-interest. Self-interest may be a useful and necessary force, but of itself it is disintegrative, as we understand better today; and what really binds men is the law of love which, despite their unwise minds, their human nature compels them instinctively to follow.

Some explanation is needed for the fact that the Golden Rule is so universal, both in religion and in philosophy. It would seem that it has been generally recognized by the wise in all ages as a necessary rule of conduct for mankind. As to the Christian Gospel, as said before, the esoteric and philosophic teachings have mostly disappeared; and the result of

this, as regards the Golden Rule, is that it appears in an emotional aspect, as a counsel of perfection, a more or less unattainable ideal, a law of God superimposed upon the laws of earth, intended chiefly for those who have renounced the life of the world, and to be politely disregarded by people in general. And apart from Christianity, there is no lack of insistence upon the Golden Rule on the part of those who are striving to promote harmony among sects and nations and find a practical cure for our social ills. But the weakness of their cause lies in the lack of an intellectual basis, a philosophy, behind their ethical maxim; and so we find little more than mere exhortations and appeals to the beauty of the rule, without an adequate basis of motive and incentive. On the other hand the forces in a contrary direction are powerful and deeply rooted in human nature.

Now the difficulty here is easily understood when pointed out as a Theosophist can point it out; and the remedy, once the complaint is understood, is equally obvious. Today's philosophy is out of gear with its ethics. Neither our religion, stripped as it is of its most vital elements, nor our philosophies, grounded in materialistic and mechanistic conceptions, supply a rational and logical justification for the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. To find such justification, we must take a different view of human nature.

Christianity, in its familiar historical form, was somehow fabricated out of materials obtained from the numerous centers of esoteric philosophy existing in Alexandria, Antioch, and other places, at the time of the Christian era. And to discover the real essence of Christianity we must examine the tenets of those Gnostics, Nazarenes, Essenes, and others, whose teachings were gradually driven out and the teachers regarded as heretics. Whereas the fact is that the dogmatizing, ecclesiastical, and political Christians were the real perverters, the case has been so misrepresented that these ancient philosophers are made to seem heretics who imported into the Christian Gospels various foreign Greek or Syrian elements. Going back then to the teachings of the Gnostics, we find that their chief doctrine was that man is an emanation from the Supreme



Deity, and that man has therefore had transmitted to him, through a hierarchy of celestial Powers, all the attributes of deity. Some vestige of this teaching is still to be found in our New Testament, in such words as Angels, Archangels, Principalities, and Powers, which are English translations of Greek Gnostic terms; or in the first verses of John's Gospel, where the life of the Word is said to be the light and life of men. Christian apologists may, if it suits them, call this an introduction of Pagan speculations into Christianity; but actually these rejected Gnostic doctrines repeat the universal teachings of the Wisdom-Religion. Bearing in mind what has been said in previous chapters as to the nature of man, we shall recognize him as a divine spirit garbed in various sheaths, the outermost of which is his physical body; and that consequently man has a dual nature, being at once God and beast, partaking of the natures of both, while his self-conscious mind hovers between the two, being destined eventually to tame the beast by allying himself with the divine in himself.

This means that there are two laws in our nature — that of instinctual self-gratification, which we share with the beasts, though in man, being allied with intellect, this instinct acquires an evil character; and that of the divine nature. When Jesus or any other Teacher, enjoins the law of Love, the Golden Rule, he simply points out the only rule of conduct which is proper for man, if man is to live in accordance with man's nature. The fact that these wise teachings seem so ineffectual, so much disregarded, should not cause undue despondency or cynicism. They have remained as a lamp for our feet throughout ages of darkness, and are still recognized as our sheet anchor. Whatever failure there may have been in practice, the principle has been maintained. The doctrine of each for himself was not so long ago proclaimed as an economic panacea; but its disastrous results have become apparent. If there are cynical individuals who try to make a gospel out of self-seeking, they are not happy. The man who worships self exclusively cuts himself off from life and enters a path which, if persisted in, would lead to his being isolated with the object of his worship — a fate awful to contemplate.

One of the greatest teachings of the Wisdom-Religion is

that man is a part of the universe, that the universe consists exclusively of living beings, of many different kinds and degrees, and that all these lives are blended with one another, so that man and the universe interpenetrate. This is very different from the idea that each man is a separately created soul, walking about on a dead earth which has been created as a sort of playground for him. Such a change in our ideas must throw a different light on the meaning of the Golden Rule. It makes us realize how impossible it is for any man to act or feel or think alone; he must necessarily affect, and be affected by, other people.

The subject being somewhat difficult to treat upon, it is advisable to guard against possible misconceptions of what is meant. Some may think that we are seeking to reduce the Golden Rule to a policy of expediency or a means of achieving personal beatitude; but such is by no means the case. Self-renunciation is at the root of the matter; for it is only by freeing oneself from attachment to the personal self that one can hope to experience the freedom of conscious union with the greater Self — what Jesus would have called the Kingdom of Heaven. Hence his maxims as to conduct are meant to be taken seriously. It is through service to others that we learn to enter this Kingdom. And we should remember that charity begins at home, and that the first step for each individual is to reform himself. The need for co-operative efforts, for unions of all kinds, was never more fully recognized than it is today; and we are attempting here to see what can be done to make these ideals more easily realizable. So much of our science, philosophy and economic and social theory, pull in an opposite direction, being grounded in materialism and personalism, that a sound philosophy of life, a better understanding of the real human nature, will help very much. What is so cynically called human nature is only the perverse nature in man; if we understood better what human nature is essentially, we should have a sounder foundation for our philanthropic efforts.

The essential divinity of all men, and the unity of all that lives — these are the groundwork of the Golden Rule.

## XI — THE LORD'S SUPPER

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. — *Luke*, xxii, 19-20

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. — *John*, vi, 53-6

The sacrament of the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, means much to those who partake of it devoutly; but it could mean much more. Its sacredness, its power, are due to its august origin from one of the sublimest rites of the Sacred Mysteries of old. Its frailty as a potent influence for good in the world is due to the attenuated form in which it has come down to us. The writer, having been a devout Christian, and familiar by his own experience with the rite, is not among those who seek strength for their own cause by belittling that of others, or who mix in one sweeping condemnation the most reverend and learned divines with the crudest fanatics and the most ignorant bigots. The sincerity and reverence for things divine and sacred, which he claims for himself, first as Christian in his formative years, and soon thereafter as Theosophist, give him the sympathetic perception which qualifies him to recognize those qualities elsewhere. His experience has not been that of those who, finding absurdities in their religion, have thrown overboard all religion and joined the chill and cheerless ranks of the scoffers and doubters. He feels that he has merely grown and expanded — found the real Gospel underlying the travesty; and it is the purpose of this study to assist others who may find themselves similarly situated.

If we study the accounts of the various ancient Mysteries, we shall find that wine and bread play a foremost part in

the ritual of initiation, as also in the 'Lesser Mysteries' displayed before the lay public. In the 'Greater Mysteries' candidates were initiated into what Jesus calls the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God, into which he seems anxious that his disciples should also be initiated. Wine is often used alternatively with blood, and both signify spiritual life: the words are thus used in the New Testament. Over against these was used bread or grain, or alternatively flesh; and these words also we find in the New Testament. This latter signifies the terrestrial life; so that the two together signify the higher and lower nature of man. There was a twofold initiation, symbolized by bread and wine, or flesh and blood; the candidate had to be pure in body and the lower principles of his nature, before receiving the baptism of blood, or the wine of the Spirit. It was the same truth as that referred to in the private teaching which Jesus gave to Nicodemus, when he spoke of the first birth, which is of the flesh, and the second birth, which is of the Spirit; and this is also a dominant theme of Paul.

Our second quotation, and the verses which precede it, illustrate this symbolic meaning of the words. The Teacher, speaking in the first person, as Krishna does in the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* — that is, speaking as the Higher Self addressing the lower self — says: "I am that bread of life. . . . This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die." By so partaking, man wins the 'eternal life'; he becomes able to live consciously in that part of his nature which does not share the transience of the body. He realizes the impermanent and limited nature of his mere earthly personality, which is but a temporary mask for the the Soul. In short, man must seek to blend his mind with his Higher Self.

This interpretation is consistent with what has been shown in previous chapters as to the real teaching of Jesus. When he uses these terms of the Sacred Mysteries, and himself performs the rite on the Passover day, he speaks and acts as an initiator in those Mysteries. As said, a great force still clings to this rite, all diminished and understood as it is;

and this on account of its august origin. To enter into a discussion of the dogmatic distinctions that have caused so much bitterness between various sects, does not seem pertinent to our present purpose. Whether the sacred elements become transmuted into the flesh and blood of Christ, or are merely intended to help the devotion of the communicant — these points seem trivial by comparison with the gap between the present meaning and the original. The rite is now viewed in the light of current theological and eschatological views, whereby this life is to be regarded as a single brief episode preparatory to an endless and changeless life elsewhere; and whereby God is considered separate from his universe, and man is regarded as separate from Nature. The idea that the universe is composed exclusively of living beings, at various stages of evolution; the idea that man is himself essentially divine; that the deathless part of man inhabits many successive terrestrial vehicles; all this and more quite changes our view of the significance of Holy Communion. It is not denied that comfort and edification may be derived from the participation; but the idea of entering thereby upon a path that leads to self-mastery and divine knowledge, is lost. The Sacred Mysteries await their restoration.

## XII — THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLETH IN YOU

Whether there was a historical Jesus or not, the words of the Gospels have been built up around the mission of some Teacher; and in any case if we are addressing those who believe in the historicity of the Jesus of the Gospels, we can meet them on their own ground, and show that this person had an esoteric school. For instance:

Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. . . . Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

— *Matthew, xiii, 9 et seq.*

The same is repeated in substance in *Mark, iv, 11, and Luke, viii, 10.*

And with such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

— *Mark, iv, 33-34*

In *John, xiv, 12 et seq.*, we read as follows:

He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

The same teachings are found in the Epistles:

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? — *1 Corinthians, iii, 16.*

As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

— *1 Cor., xv, 22*

In this last quotation, the word 'Christ' is used not of a person but of the Higher Self within man. In John's Gospel, Jesus gives man teachings in which he uses the first person, which may easily lend itself to the interpretation that he is speaking of himself personally; whereas he was most earnestly striving to arouse the Christ within his hearers. If man is made in the image of God, he must therefore have free choice; which is abrogated if he relies on the will of another instead of his own. When the man called upon Hercules to lift the cart out of the rut, Hercules bid him put his own shoulder to the wheel; which is the right interpretation of the saying that Heaven helps those who help themselves. Therefore the teacher can but point the way; he cannot perform a man's evolution for him. For ignorant lowly natures it may be necessary help to pray for aid from a personal God; but a time comes when we must do without crutches.

But we must be careful to distinguish the Self from the mere personality of man, for that is trivial and evanescent. The real Man is the eternal Man, he who has the eternal life.

The servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. — *John, viii, 35*

Paul is very emphatic about this difference between the spiritual man and the earthly man.

Once we have in mind this key, it becomes easy to interpret the Gospels and Epistles. They are what is left (in the canon) of the ancient Wisdom, which shows man how to achieve his own salvation by self-directed evolution, by realizing his latent divine potentialities.

In the times of the early Christian Fathers there were extant certain collections of *Logia* or 'sayings' of Jesus, and these are believed by scholars to have been the basis upon which the Gospels were compiled. These were some of the secret teachings of Jesus, as alluded to in the quotations above. There were two sects known as the Ebionites and the Nazarenes, who used these sayings as the basis of their teachings and their rule of life. These sects taught a much purer form of Christianity, in which it was recognized that all men are potential Christs, inasmuch as there dwells in every man the Christ, the Son of the Father; so that man needs only to be quickened by the Second Birth in order to come to a realization of his sleeping divinity. In Jesus himself they saw, not a unique son of God, but one of those men who, having themselves attained to knowledge, then become Teachers for every man. But later on, when the increasing materialism of the age had converted the original gospel into an exoteric religion without any Mysteries, these Nazarenes and Ebionites were regarded as heretics. If Fundamentalists would go back far enough into the fundamentals of their religion, they would find it something very different from what they actually have made of it.

In one of our quotations we find a definite assurance by the Teacher that any one of his hearers would be able to do the works that the Teacher did, provided that he followed the rule of life laid down.

Anyone reading John's Gospel in the light of what has been said cannot fail to recognize the earnestness of a Teacher striving his utmost to deliver his message of salvation and to win disciples for it. One of his disciples, Peter, fails at a test; and then, when too late, repents, and turns the teachings into a rigid and neurotic religion. It has been well said

by people at the present day that Christianity has never yet been really tried; and their words are even truer than they think.

### XIII — "IN CHRIST SHALL ALL BE MADE ALIVE"

The letters of Paul teach a more spiritual and more philosophic Christianity than is usually found in the established forms; and they give plenty of proof that Paul had actually been initiated into some of the Mysteries of the Gnosis. He was under the necessity of adapting his teaching to the capacities of the people he addressed; and he strenuously resisted the strong tide of materialism and earthliness which was turning Christianity into the worldly thing which it became, and literalizing the symbols into superstitious dogmas and rites. The burden of his teachings was that Christ lives in the heart of all men, being in fact the Higher Self of man, the Son — that is, the Father made manifest in the flesh. Jesus the Christ was to Paul an exemplar, a model to copy; not a unique incarnation of the Godhead, as he was according to ecclesiastical ideas. It would be easy to quote passages innumerable in support of this; the only difficulty is one of selection.

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. — *Romans*, vi, 3-8

As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

— *1 Corinthians*, xv, 22

The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. — *1 Corinthians*, xv, 47

Marcion, who founded the churches of the Marcionites in the second century A.D., taught a purer Christianity; he taught

the gospel of Christ and Paul and rejected the corruptions and mutilations which he found prevalent.

In the first of these quotations we note that Christ descends into 'death,' and is raised again; which signifies that the Divine part of man descends into the 'death' of the physical life, from which he is destined to rise glorified. In this process all believers take part, enacting the same drama in their own lives. The word 'crucifixion' is here used in the sense of purificatory chastening; but the cross, with its four arms, is a glyph for the world of matter with its four elements. The second quotation refers to the twofold nature of man, how he is compounded of an earthly part, symbolized by Adam (which in the Hebrew means 'earthy') and a heavenly part — the Christos in man; this is even more clearly rendered in our third quotation. In the time of Paul it was recognized that a true following of the gospel of Christ confers spiritual gifts; for in the twelfth chapter of his epistle to the Corinthians he speaks of such gifts, enumerating wisdom, knowledge, faith, the power of healing, the power of working miracles, the gift of prophecy, the interpretation and speaking of foreign languages. What has become of all this in our day? We hear a little about gifts of healing, but it does not amount to much; but what do we hear of those other gifts? Truly Christianity has become emasculated, diluted, made weak and sentimental; too often has it dreaded and opposed the growth of knowledge, instead of conferring it. It has been concerned rather with a vague life to come than with the life which we are here to live; and when it does concern itself with this life, it plays the part of follower rather than leader.

It is little realized how our view of Christianity suffers from the lack of historical perspective. Christianity was one of a great number of systems competing for favor and combining in various degrees the doctrines of Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, Oriental cults, and Christian theology. Scholars may have considerable acquaintance with Marcionism, Manichaeism, Gnosticism, Mithraism, and many others; but it is surprising how historical facts can be interpreted to suit foregone conclusions. The Theosophist, having ample warrant

for saying that the ecclesiastical creeds are degenerate products of ancient mystery teachings, sees in these competing Oriental faiths the surviving relics of a purer and older teaching, which was gradually ousted by the growing materialism. Christian apologists, having made up their minds that Christianity (as it became) is the last word of divine truth, regard the other elements as extraneous, as heretical, as borrowings from Paganism. Thus we have been viewing the whole matter in a false light; and a flood of illumination is thrown on it when once we have the clue. Christ has indeed descended into the tomb, and we have been buried with him; but it promises resurrection; and when scholars begin to study history with a view to finding out, instead of with a view to disposing of, the truth, they will discover more about that mysterious Teacher upon whose teachings were founded that which has become the Christianity of today.

#### XIV — THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

It is easy to see from the Gospel stories, as also from what we learn about the early Christians from historical sources, that there was a widely-spread idea that Jesus would actually come, and that very soon, in bodily presence and as a conqueror, to overthrow the Roman Empire, destroy the wicked, and set up an earthly kingdom of righteousness. The Jewish expectation of a Messiah was based on their own prophetic books, some of which are included in the canon of the Old Testament. Passing from the particular to the general, it may be said that the notion of Messiahship, the return of some great personage or divinity, has always been more or less prevalent among mankind in the historical periods. It has a real basis of fact, but usually comes to notice in a form which shows us that prophetic sayings have been interpreted too literally and too grossly. In the case of the scribes or compilers of the Gospels, it is clear that they have been influenced by this idea and have fathered it upon the Jesus of the narrative, so that he often seems to be anticipating such a return for himself and such an earthly kingdom.

Writers of 'Lives of Christ,' acting on this clue, have supposed Jesus to have been a kind of deluded enthusiast. But the Gospel writers do not take all the blame, for they have had translators, who have given matters a further twist in the wrong direction. We need not picture these translators as artful villains, for no doubt they were pious and sincere within their lights and believed their own rendering of the Greek text to be adequate. Still, with regard to the particular case about to be mentioned, the learned body of divines and scholars who drew up the 'Revised Version' of 1881 have not endorsed these earlier translators. Following the actual Greek text, they have produced a rendering much more in accord with the view a Theosophist takes of the matter.

Let us turn then to *Matthew*, xxiv, 3, which in the Authorized Version runs as follows:

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

Jesus had just been predicting the destruction of the Temple. Now the Revised Version renders it: "The sign of thy presence, and of the consummation of the age"; and this is strictly in conformity to the Greek, further confirmed by the Latin of Arias Montanus (16th century). The Greek word translated 'presence' or 'coming' is *παρουσία*, *parousia*, which means 'presence,' but can sometimes be equivalent to 'arrival'; and the Latin version gives *praesentia*, which certainly means 'presence.' The 'end of the world' is the A. V. rendering of the Greek *συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος*, *sunteleia tou aiōnos*, which means the completion of the age, and is represented in the Latin version by *consummatio seculi*. *Seculi* certainly cannot mean 'world,' and does mean 'age' or 'cycle'; and *consummatio* means 'consummation' and might possibly imply termination.

A knowledge of the Secret Doctrine of the Ages gives the clue to all such sayings, to the Hebrew symbolic prophecies, to that marvelous allegory called the *Revelation of John*, and to myths like that of Prometheus and the finding of infant boys floating in arks on sacred rivers, etc., etc. That

key is the true history of the human Races and their evolution; and *pari passu* the evolution of worlds and of cycles of time. For it is taught that all evolution proceeds in a circular form, the circle consisting first of a downward arc representing the descent of spirit into matter, and then of an upward arc representing the reascent of matter into spirit. As regards man this means that he first passes into a more and more material state, during which his spiritual faculties become obscured and lie latent; and after having passed the lowest point of the circle he regains his spiritual faculties — paradise lost and regained, we may say. This process, thus briefly stated, might seem to imply merely a forward and a retrograde movement bringing the evolution back to its starting-point; but the teaching further explains that, though there is actually a swing to and fro, yet there is progress all the time, for throughout the whole process spirit is continually expressing itself through matter, first by descending into matter, and then by raising or evolving matter up to a level with spirit. Thus the latter stages of evolution, though analogous to a reversal of the earlier stages, are actually much more advanced.

The doctrine, here briefly and incompletely stated, may be studied in the Theosophical books; our present point is that it is this doctrine which is concealed in the allegory of the descent of the Christ upon earth, as a terrestrial manifestation of Divinity, his going down into the tomb and rising again from it, and his reascent into heaven.

In the same way Prometheus brings down celestial fire to inspire humanity, suffering in his act of self-sacrifice. The various prophetic books speak of the ending of one age in destruction, the saving of a worthy remnant of the old stock, and the initiation of a new age; the races and the ages being personified in various ways. For let it be remembered that this law of the descent into matter and the reascent into spirit prevails not only on the large scale but also in small scales; so that particular prophetic books may refer specially to the end of some particular race or nation and the beginning of the next. Thus the word 'Messiah' may apply to the crest of any new wave of enlightenment that may be due.

It is evident that the Coming of Christ means the awakening of the Christ spirit in humanity, and that he will not come in the rushing wind but in the still small voice; people may cry, Lo here! and Lo there! But verily the kingdom of God is within them. And now witness the folly of humanity, that expects the arrival of Christ on some particular day within the next few months, and gets ready to wait for him on the top of some hill. Or the people who interpret the Book of Daniel into prophecies about the Lost Ten Tribes or what not. Christ is not coming to collect a few devout Protestant Christians and destroy the Church of Rome. He cannot come until a temple is made to receive the presence of their own Inner God.

#### XV — THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament does not play so large a part in the Christianity of today as the New Testament, but it has had a great influence nevertheless. It is one of the world's sacred scriptures; and this fact may explain its great influence, which seems insufficiently accounted for by those atheists and others who regard it as merely a mass of absurd superstition. Sacred knowledge has been handed down from immemorial ages, from the time of those early Races of mankind when man had not become so deeply engrossed in matter, and was in direct communication with his Divine Instructors. All the mythologies preserve the traditions of these instructors under the name of Gods, Demigods, Heroes, etc. Further, the sacred teachings were written down in a mystery-language, in order that they might be preserved through the ages, in a form which would conceal their meaning from the ignorant and unworthy, and yet reveal it to those who were in possession of the keys to its interpretation. These keys were revealed to candidates for initiation in the ancient Mystery-Schools, or perhaps disclosed to the intuition of individuals whose life was pure enough to make such a revelation possible and safe. Here then we have the key to an understanding of the ancient mythologies and sacred allegories: they may be mere fairy-tales on the surface, often very absurd, childish, even

gross; but, read in the light of the proper clues, they are shown to contain the most vital philosophical tenets. The oldest and best, accessible to us, are those of India, Egypt, ancient Persia, and Chaldea; the Jewish Old Testament is derived from the last, but at a considerable distance and in a much deteriorated guise. The Secret Doctrine may thus be said to have been embalmed like an Egyptian mummy, to sleep until the day of a future awakening.

The present contents and arrangement of the Old Testament canon was arrived at about the first century A.D. The Jews, after their return from the Babylonian captivity, set about re-establishing their theocracy; and the scribe Ezra (fifth century B.C.) compiled the first catalog of sacred books, his work being continued by Nehemiah and others at different dates. The Christian Church took over this collection of books from the Jews; but, whereas the Jews knew the work to be allegorical, and have their own interpretation in Kabalistic books, such as the Zohar and the Sepher Jetzirah, and a great mass of commentaries, the Christians have taken the books in a dead-letter sense. This has shed a bad influence on the tone of Christianity, for these books, thus literally interpreted, contain much of war, cruelty, treachery, and grossness. On the other hand, those who scoff at religion, are guilty of the same fault of taking these books in a literal sense. On both sides there is the same lack of the sense of proportion.

The Pentateuch, or first five books, known also as the books of Moses or of the Law, occupy a place of special importance. Though long believed to be the work of Moses, yet intelligent criticism applied to the internal evidence has shown that this cannot be the case. It is largely thought they are the work of Ezra; and though he probably did not originate them, he has most certainly edited and greatly changed the sources upon which he drew. To these five is often added the book of *Joshua*, sometimes also those of *Judges* and *Ruth*. Ostensibly these books contain the accounts of creation and the flood, the ancestry of the Hebrew nation, the wanderings and final settlement, and the Law delivered to and by Moses. The attempt to find consistency and to reconcile the narratives with

other historical and chronological data, is a sore puzzle to Biblical critics. No wonder, for it is a collection of allegorical legends, put together for the main purpose of conveying the hidden meaning. But, read esoterically, in the light of the Zohar, etc., it reveals a mine of priceless occult truths. Many of these are discussed by H. P. Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine*, and no more than a brief allusion can be made here. We have already in previous chapters discussed the creation and flood. The first chapter of *Genesis* gives a symbolic account of the initial stages in the evolution of worlds and living beings. The Spirit of God (or, as the Hebrew has it, the Spirits) moved upon the face of the waters. This interaction of the One Spirit upon the waters of Chaos is the beginning of every cosmogony. The result thereof is 'Light,' which stands for the Creative Logos, with its seven Rays. By this, chaotic matter is organized and vivified, and the further evolution proceeds, as described in former chapters. It is noteworthy that there are *two* Gods at work — one issuing orders, the other executing them. God said, Let there be light: and there was light. Let there be a firmament; and God made a firmament. The work of the second or executive God is frequently summarized in the phrase, "And it was so." This refers to the First and Second Logos.

It is generally accepted that two different accounts are commingled in the Pentateuch — the Elohist and the Jahvistic or Jehovistic, where the word of God is respectively Elohim and Jahveh or Jehovah. The former is more esoteric, as the Elohim were creative Spirits; the latter is a materialization, and God has become a tribal deity, who is said to be a name for the genius called Saturn. This planetary genius was patron of the Hebrews. The story of Moses and the ark is found everywhere in legends of infant boys being cast out by their parents in a vessel on the water, found by somebody and reared to be the founders of a new race. It typifies the universal process of regeneration, by which the seeds of a passing race are preserved to generate a new one. The twelve sons of Jacob are the twelve signs of the Zodiac.

The Old Testament also contains the prophetic books, and *Ezekiel* and *Daniel* contain much easily recognizable occult

symbology, though much tortured by those who try to find in them details as to the second coming of Christ. Then there is the poetical and imaginative literature, such as the *Psalms*, *Ecclesiastes*, and the *Song of Solomon*. They read like the outpourings of a full heart and a well-stored mind; and it may be preferable to accept them as such rather than to try to twist them into any philosophical or didactic significance. The *Book of Job* is a very ancient allegorical story of the trials passed through by a candidate for initiation; it is found elsewhere, and its origin is unfathomable.

## XVI — THE 'HOLY GHOST'

I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth in you, and shall be in you.

— *John*, xiv, 16-17

Mary . . . was found with child of the Holy Ghost. — *Matt.*, 1, 18

He that cometh after me . . . shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire [Said by John the Baptist.] — *Matt.*, iii, 11

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

—, *Matt.* xxviii, 19

The word translated Comforter is the Greek *παράκλητος*, Latin *paracletus*, and means one called to aid, an advocatus, especially in a law-court, but with the more general meaning of a helper. A reference to the meanings of 'comfort,' as given in a dictionary, will show that in the time of Wycliffe it had its etymological meaning of 'to make strong, fortify'; that Shakespeare uses it to mean 'help,' and the idea of consolation is of later usage. As the Bible uses English of the time of Shakespeare, it is understandable why the Greek word should have been thus translated. But the sense attached to the word as applied to the Holy Ghost has changed along with the sense of the word in its general use. A process of emasculation has taken place, as it has also in the idea of Jesus: he is thought of by many as a soother, as is the Holy Ghost. But the original meaning was that of an *inspirer*. Al-



most any deity in mythology will be found to have such a changing meaning: e.g. Dionysos-Bacchus, originally meaning divine inspiration, but degenerating into the god of vinous or erotic stimulation.

The Christian Trinity is a more or less imperfect copy of those trinities which are found at the head of every theogony. It is a necessary postulate of human thought, which sees duality everywhere in the universe, yet is forced to suppose an original and final unity. Again, the generalized idea of Father-Mother-Son is at the root of all generation and evolution. But in the Christian Trinity little more of the original symbology has been preserved than the mere number three; though the Roman Church has to some extent replaced Juno, Isis, etc., by Mary. The Son has a twofold character, as co-existing eternally with the Father, and yet being born of Mary by the Holy Ghost. This again is in accord with what we find in other theogonies.

But we have no intention of entering into learned discussions about the theological trinity and the precise relations of the three Persons to one another and to the whole. It is enough to understand that the Divinity which is at the Heart of the universe has also its seat in the Heart of man. The Sacred Breath or Spirit or Inspiration (which need not be disguised under the archaic term of Ghost) is the life-giving ray from that central Spiritual Sun. Such a Presence stands ever ready to bless him who has made his heart a worthy shrine to receive it. Paul in his Epistles teaches this doctrine; for him the Christ is within every man, and the burden of his discourses is regeneration of our life by the influence of the Spirit — the second birth, the baptism of fire. He is never tired of pointing out the duality of man's nature, due to man's being an incarnation of divinity in a carnal vesture. Many of the Church Fathers were Gnostics, who taught the *Gnosis* or Divine Wisdom, which is Theosophy. They represent the purest Christianity, and between them and the times when the formalized and materialistic Church succeeded in establishing itself, there were many sects which taught a far purer Christianity than we have now (e.g. Marcionites, Marcosians, Manicheans).

The divine birth of Jesus is an attribute common to world saviors in general and very frequent in the heroes of classical mythology. It does not necessarily have any reference to physical parentage; physical heredity is only one of several kinds of heredity which man has, so that it is no contradiction to say that he is born of man and of a deity at once. Nevertheless the idea has been turned into something supernatural, for we hear of Jesus having been born of Mary by a special action of the Holy Spirit; he was a God-man in rather a literal sense, according to this doctrine, and the Godhead was grossly connected with the seed of Abraham through the Jewish father. Alexander claimed to be the son of Zeus Ammon, which gave umbrage to those who honored the memory of his father Philip; and justly, for if there was no intention to dispute Philip's paternity, he was at all events reduced to a cipher. A great Teacher, though he might be a manifestation of a very advanced Soul, would necessarily have to be born in the ordinary way if he was to appear in human form on earth. Buddha's earthly parents are spoken of, and yet he himself was the manifestation of a very advanced Soul. The term 'Virgin Birth' applies to modes of procreation not now existing on earth except in the case of some very lowly organisms. It is appropriately applied to the origin of the immaculate Divine Man who thus appeared on earth in a human body; but not to his physical birth in the womb of Mary. Our second quotation indicates what is meant by being born of the Holy Ghost, and there is enough about the 'second birth' in the Bible, as has been shown in previous chapters.

## XVII — THE CROSS

And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull . . . where they crucified him. — *John*, xix, 17-18

The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. — *1 Cor.*, i, 18

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. — *Matt.*, xvi, 24.

The above are typical examples of uses of the word 'cross' in the New Testament; it means the actual stake used in

execution, or stands for the Christian doctrine, or means a burden or sacrifice. The cross is the sacred symbol of Christianity and a perpetual reminder of its cardinal doctrine that the only Son of God was crucified as an atonement for our sins, whereby we are admitted to salvation. It also signifies the daily burden which we take up in sacrificing our personal will to our faith. But the cross is a universal religious and philosophical symbol, found in places as remote as Palenque in Mexico, India, Tibet; well known in Egyptian symbolism, as in Hinduism; an emblem used in the Grecian Mysteries. Dr. Lundy, in his *Monumental Christianity*, says that "the Jews themselves acknowledged this sign of salvation until they rejected Christ"; and he speaks of a Hindû sculpture of ancient date, a human figure upon a cross, with the nail-marks on hands and feet — a pre-Christian crucifix in fact. This goes to prove the universality of the doctrine which gave birth to Christianity, and may serve to relieve minds from the terrible doctrine that all who lived before the Christian era, or who are outside the pale of the Church, are cut off from salvation. Man achieves salvation by recognizing the God within him and sacrificing his lower nature to that Divine Nature; and the cross is the universal symbol of this mystic rite. It denotes the Word made Flesh, the Divine nature made human by incarnation. Its upright arm stands for Father-Nature, and its horizontal arm, Mother-Nature; the two together denoting the manifested world. The ansated cross, found in Egyptian sculpture, has a handle (or sometimes a circle) at the top, thus symbolizing the terrestrial nature controlled by the spiritual nature. The Sun, Moon, and Cross form a triad frequent in religious symbolism: the sun is the emblem of Japanese reverence; in Islam we find the Crescent and Star (the Star being a variant for the Sun). All three together make the emblem of Mercury — the complete Man, with the Crescent above for his mind, the Cross below for his body, organs, and functions, and the symbol of the Spiritual Sun at his heart.

The Cross means the Word made Flesh, the Son of God crucified, incarnated in a human form; and thus it is that universal sacred emblem of the 'second creation' of man,

whereby the 'mindless' form was enlightened by the Gods who made man in their own image. But several different things have become mixed up in the Christian tradition. The stake, often with a cross-bar, was used in Roman executions; and an actual narrative of such a literal crucifixion has been made. Again, crucifixion was a rite in the Mysteries, especially those of Egypt. See *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. II, p. 558. 'Crucifying before the Sun' was a phrase used in initiations in Egypt, coming originally from India.

The initiated adept, who had successfully passed through all the trials, was *attached*, not *nailed*, but simply tied on a cross in the form of a *tau* (in Egypt), or a *Svastika* without the four additional prolongations, . . . plunged in a deep sleep. . . . He was allowed to remain in this state for three days and three nights, during which time his Spiritual Ego was said to confabulate with the 'gods,' descend into Hades, Amenti, or Pâtâla (according to the country), and do works of charity to the invisible beings, whether souls or men or Elemental Spirits; his body remaining all the time in a temple crypt or subterranean cave.

These three symbols of the Sun, Moon, and Cross, stand for the great primordial cosmic Trinity of Father-Mother-Son; or, in the language of *Genesis*, the Spirit of God, breathing over the Waters of Space, and thereby producing the Universe. And, since Man is the Microcosm or little universe, modeled on the plan of the Macrocosm or great universe, the same symbolism denotes the corresponding Trinity in Man. They are united, as said above, in the sign of Mercury, which thus represents the union of Spirit, Soul, and Body. The Cross therefore stands for the entire human nature of man, with all his organs and functions and faculties; its perpendicular and horizontal lines are the duality of energy and matter, and the four arms are the four elements. When there is a circle above the cross, we get the sign for Venus, and when the circle is below, the sign of Earth; and this, as explained in *The Secret Doctrine* (Vol. II, p. 29, misprinted in some copies) shows the human nature ruled by the divine, or the divine in subjection to the human. The two symbols taken together stand for twin planets, the higher and lower Manas, as is also represented by Castor and Pollux.

Another variant of the Cross is the Svastika or Thor's Hammer; the bends at the end of the arms indicate revolution as of a rotating wheel; and one significance of this is that the adept achieves a stable balance or center by means of a harmonious equilibrium of the four elements and by preserving his balance amid the cyclic changes of his natural elements. This symbol is a universal glyph, as students of ancient sculptures know full well; it is a sacred symbol of India and is often called the Jaina Cross; it was found in the ruins of ancient Troy.

Another variant of the Cross is the Tree; this word is used in the Epistles for the cross on which Christ was crucified, and translates the Greek *ξύλον*, *xylon*, 'timber.' The Tree occurs in the story of the Garden of Eden as the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Often the Tree has a serpent coiled around it, and is then equivalent to the caduceus or wand of Hermes. On this we read:

So little have the first Christians (who despoiled the Jews of their Bible) understood the first four chapters of *Genesis* in their esoteric meaning, that they never perceived that not only was no sin intended in this disobedience, but that actually the "Serpent" was "the Lord God" himself, who, as the Ophis, the Logos, or the bearer of divine creative wisdom, taught mankind to become creators in their turn. They never realized that the *Cross* was an evolution from the "tree and the serpent," and thus *became the salvation of mankind*.

— *The Secret Doctrine*, II, 215-6

### XVIII — DID JESUS HAVE AN ESOTERIC SCHOOL?

And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables: that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. — *Luke*, viii, 10

And with many such parables spake he the word unto them [the people], as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples. — *Mark*, iv, 33-4

As has been before remarked, the Christian religion has come down to us bereft of its most important features. Its ethical teachings, however sublime, are by no means peculiar

to it, but shared in common with other great religions. They have no sufficient basis on which to rest; for the true foundation of ethics is a knowledge of the nature of man and of the universe. The scriptures of ancient India have a vast and profound store of such knowledge, derived from the universal Wisdom-Religion.

Christianity took its rise in the teachings of an initiated Teacher, whose life is lost in obscurity; but among the Jews, before the Christian era, there existed two sects of Jewish Christians — the Ebionites and the Nazarenes. It is believed that they derived their doctrines from a certain Iassou or Jeshu who lived about 100 B.C. They represent the purest form of Christianity, believed that the Christ was in all men, and taught the doctrine of Aeons or Divine Emanations, of which hierarchy man himself is one of the lower members; just as did the Gnostics. It is around the name of Jeshu that the Gospel narratives of Jesus are built. Even in these we can find proof that the Master gave esoteric instructions to his disciples.

The teachings of the Wisdom-Religion have never been entirely absent from among men, and schools of the Mysteries have always existed in one place or another to preserve the tradition. Before and after the Christian era, the Mediterranean world, politically unified under the *Pax Romana*, devoted much thought to philosophical speculation and sought earnestly everywhere for a key to the sorrows of life. Around them were several centers from which radiated rays of the Ancient Wisdom: notably Alexandria, with its heirloom from Ancient Egypt, and the Eastern parts of the Roman Asiatic dominions, whither Indian wisdom had penetrated through Persia, and where many ancient cults had their homes.

It was by many stages that Christianity took its later and more familiar forms. Prof. Adolf Harnack, writing on the Marcionites, in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, says:

In the period between 130 and 180 A.D. the varied and complicated Christian fellowships in the Roman empire crystallized into close and mutually exclusive societies—churches with fixed constitutions and

creeds, schools with distinctive esoteric doctrines, associations for worship with peculiar mysteries, and ascetic sects with special rules of conduct.

One of the most important was that of the Marcionites, which sought to lay the foundations for a pure Christianity based on the authentic teachings of Christ, and rejected most of the Gospels and certain Jewish elements which they believed to have debased the Gospel. They took Paul as their chief exemplar. According to Marcion, the God of the Old Testament was only a first creator of man, making him out of Matter, and imposing on him a rigorous law which he could not keep, so that he fell under a curse; until a higher God, hitherto concealed, took pity on man, and sent his Son to redeem man. This is an example of the more philosophical and esoteric side of Christianity: such forms are found among the Christian Gnostics, heirs of the Alexandrian Neo-Platonists, and later on in numerous modifications occasioned by attempts to adapt the real teachings to the growing materialism and ecclesiastical formalism of the age.

Even the extant authorized gospels contain a number of passages bearing out this point, as for instance *Matt.*, v, 48:

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;

which surely indicates the Path of self-directed evolution whereby man is his own Savior. Or *Matt.*, xi, 27:

Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him;

which as evidently implies that all men have access to divine wisdom through the meditation of the Son or manifested God within themselves. Or the private instructions of Nicodemus, mentioned in Chapter IV of this study. *John*, v, 21, says that "The Son quickened whom he will."

The doctrine of the dual nature of man, and of the impermanent nature of the lower self, contrasted with the abiding character of the Higher Self, is shown in the following:

Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. . . . Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant

abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

— *John*, viii, 32-36

In *John* xiv, he promises that his successful followers shall be able to perform the works which he does, and even greater works.

In these brief chapters there is enough evidence to show that even in the fragments still left in the Christian canon there survive esoteric instruction in symbolic language, readily understood by the disciple who had achieved some degree of initiation, though remaining a riddle to the multitude. The light of the archaic universal wisdom-religion is seen to shine through it all.

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# THE UNIVERSAL MYSTERY-LANGUAGE OF MYTH AND SYMBOL

By

HENRY TRAVERS EDGE

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## THE UNIVERSAL MYSTERY-LANGUAGE OF MYTH AND SYMBOL

### I — INTRODUCTORY

Theosophy is the recent presentation of a body of doctrine known as the Secret Doctrine, the Wisdom-Religion, the Esoteric Tradition, etc., which has existed in all ages, and which constitutes the basis of all religious and philosophical systems. This knowledge concerns the deeper mysteries of man and the universe, and was communicated to the early races of mankind by man's divine ancestors. It has been handed down throughout succeeding ages by those qualified to be its guardians, by whom it is still preserved at the present day.

There have been times in past history when this knowledge was commonly known; and other times, including the present, when it has been esoteric or hidden from public view. But in this latter case, the Wisdom-Religion is communicated to mankind by Messengers, who are the founders of great religions or the teachers of great philosophies. Theosophy accords to the human race, and even to civilization, a far greater antiquity than is allowed by our timid scholars, not yet emancipated from the narrow purview to which theology has accustomed us. But when this prejudice has been overcome, it will be possible to give due value to the evidence of archaeology, which conflicts with the foregone theories of science, but supports the teachings of Theosophy.

Humanity has been on earth for many millions of years, during which the earth has witnessed the rise and fall of countless races and cultures, succeeding each other like waves. It follows from this general plan of cyclic evolution that some of the races of antiquity have been further advanced in knowledge and culture than we as yet are; we stand,

towards such ancient races, in the same relation as a child stands to its parent; the child belongs to a more advanced stage of evolution, but the parent has attained greater maturity. Hence we, though at a more advanced stage in evolution, can learn from our ancestry because they had reached greater maturity in their cycle than we have in ours.

This course of evolution is, broadly speaking, double: there is an evolution upwards from below, and an evolution downwards from above.\* The result of this twofold action is that humanity first descends from spirit into matter, and then reascends from matter into spirit. The earliest races of mankind (represented by Adam in Eden) lived in the presence of God (so to speak); they were in a Golden Age of innocence. In subsequent races, the natural course of evolution led man to become less spiritual and more material (represented by the expulsion from Eden and the acquisition of 'coats of skin'). The spiritual faculties became latent as the physical faculties developed. Man had no longer direct communication with the Gods, and this communication was kept up indirectly by the means of divine instructors. The traditions of these divine instructors are preserved in allegorical form in the ancient mythologies, which tell of Gods, God-men, Heroes, the founders of cities and civilizations, the teachers of arts agricultural or technical. In still later stages, the progress of materialization had so far supervened that even this means of communication was no longer open. In these ages knowledge was kept alive by the sending out periodically of Messengers, from the Lodge of Initiated Adepts who preserve the sacred knowledge, to reawaken the light among men by founding schools of the Mysteries, which schools afterwards became the great religious systems which we find today, or great philosophical schools like those of Pythagoras and Plato.

Thus man is essentially a God, having latent within him the germs of divine faculties, which are ready at some time to germinate and fructify. And this germinating is effected

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\*We do not enter here into the distinction between evolution and involution, in order not to confuse the beginner with too many details.

by the action of other men, of more advanced evolution, who act as teachers and pass on the light which they themselves have received, kindling in their pupils and successors the latent spark of knowledge that is within all men. This is the esoteric tradition in one sense of the term; light is handed down from man to man and from race to race; and history shows us that progress of all kinds is due to the inspiration imparted by individuals and by the movements which they start.

But for our present purpose there is one particular mode of preserving the esoteric tradition which most concerns us; and that is the method of symbolism and sacred allegory. Before H. P. Blavatsky wrote her great work *The Secret Doctrine* in 1888, various scholars had studied this subject and became convinced that there is a system of symbols common to all religions, diffused over the globe, identical in essence among the most widely scattered and diverse peoples; and that the mythologies of Greece, India, Egypt, Scandinavia, etc., have a common basis. But the works written by these scholars were few and sporadic, not generally known, and merely contributing to the rare exotics of literature. It was H. P. Blavatsky who put together these scattered fragments, wove them into a consistent whole, and gave them their real significance; for they are not mere items of curious lore, but facts of the most important character; and in our endeavor to interpret some of these myths and symbols we shall show their bearing upon an understanding of the mysteries of the life we all have to lead.

There are certain broad general truths which transcend the power of expression in ordinary verbal language; and this must necessarily be the case. For verbal language is the instrument of a certain portion of the mind which has limits; the knowledge of which we are speaking relates to powers of the mind which transcend those limits; and therefore they are beyond the power of words. Such profound ideas are expressed by symbols; the full meaning of these symbols has to be grasped intuitively by the exercise of higher faculties of the mind; but we can approximate to such a comprehension by studying the various meanings which the symbol conveys,



and holding all these meanings in the mind, until finally we gain some sense of the real underlying meaning.

It is these symbols which constitute the mystery-language; which thus becomes at once a means of preserving and conveying the knowledge, and a means of concealing it. For mysteries are revealed to those who have eyes to see, and doors are opened to those having the keys. The classical mythology is a much altered form of ancient mystery-teachings which were conveyed to the public in the guise of dramatic presentations. For the Mystery-Schools had outer and inner mysteries, the inner for candidates for initiation, the outer for the public; just as Jesus had private instructions for his disciples, but spoke to the multitude in parables. In the course of our interpretation of symbols, we shall give illustrations of the real meaning of these classical myths and of similar myths in other lands.

## II — THE CIRCLE

We have seen that a symbol sums up in a single picture a meaning which can appear to the mind only as a number of separate meanings; it is beyond the power of the ordinary mind, but not beyond the power of human Intelligence, to visualize the entire meaning at once; hence we must see it in a series of separate pictures, much as we might get an idea of the shape of a crystal by looking at its various aspects separately. The circle may be considered either as a line or as the area bounded thereby. Considered as a line it is infinite, so that it represents endless duration. It can be regarded either as a figure contained by one single line, or as a polygon with an infinite number of sides; which indicates that the One and the Many are extremes which meet. The circle seems to enunciate the proverb, 'Extremes meet.' So it denotes cyclic motion; in virtue of which, continued movement from a point will bring us back to the same point again. So it stands for the repetition of cycles, the course of evolution, resurrection and rebirth, birth after death, death after birth. Of course, as we know, it can be elaborated into the

spiral (helix), and this again into still more involved curves, so that we may thus obtain a completer picture, though not so concise and radical a one.

The circle denotes unity, especially as compared with the line, triangle, and square. It cannot be divided into similar parts, or built up out of similar parts. The number One is at the same time the least and the greatest of numbers. It heads the series of odd numbers, and also the series of powers of Two; so that it is neither male nor female in symbology. It is the first principle, number one, in any hierarchy; it is the First Cause. We see it again in the symbol of the Sun, and the Sun itself is also a symbol; it is the radiating center of our solar system and is typical of other suns which the universe contains.

In the geometrical symbolism found at the beginning of *The Secret Doctrine*, the circle is the first figure. The very root of all cannot be represented by any figure at all, as it is boundless and formless, and the *tabula rasa* or clean slate is the best we can do in the way of representation. When on this we draw a circle we have the symbol of Space, sometimes called the container of all, or better, the root of all, the common parent. For Space is not emptiness, it is utter fullness; it is that from which all springs. Its characteristic is unity, and by virtue of its unity it is all-comprehending. A variant of the circle is the Serpent, which is represented with its tail in its mouth, denoting the union of beginning and end, or rather the absence of beginning and end. But the Serpent has other meanings, as will be seen later.

Motion, eternal ceaseless vibration, is said to be inherent in the nature of things; together with Infinite Space and Infinite Duration, it is a primary postulate which can neither be conceived nor excluded from the mind. This Motion is essentially circular, therefore vibratory; or it is essentially vibratory, therefore circular. A pendulum with its motion unrestricted, vibrates in ellipses, which vary from the straight line to the circle, as extremes; a circular motion can be compounded of, or resolved into, two mutually perpendicular rectilinear motions. A pendulum whose bob describes a circle will throw on the wall a shadow which vibrates to and fro

in harmonic motion. We thus see the connexion between vibrations and circular motion; and this is shown in symbolism by the cross within the circle.

The great problem of squaring the circle means knowing how to accommodate life in the world of limitations with the limitless life at its root. The corresponding mathematical problem is also capable of solution, though it remains insoluble as long as the greater problem is unsolved.

The circle denotes Space, which is not an empty container but the mother of all things. This aspect is also represented by the symbol of the egg, circular in form, productive in function. The egg is more exactly an ellipsoid, whose plane figure is an ellipse; a derivative of the circle, wherein duality begins to supervene over unity. In solid form the circle becomes the sphere, whose surface is a boundless plane. The circumference of the circle stands for zero; it contains no parts, and is divided into one part when a point is taken in it. Thus we obtain the finite line, which is the symbol of the number 1.

What impresses one most in these Theosophical studies is the marvelous unity of thought that prevails throughout. The Theosophist does not (or should not) keep his religion and his science in separate compartments, each pining for the loss of its partner; his deepest devotional feelings are illuminated by knowledge, and his studies made sacred by his understanding of their meaning. Heart and Head unite in one and are not at war. The meaning of these sacred symbols should enter deeply into our heart, and not be left as a barren and interesting pursuit. Our life here seems all ends and beginnings because our view is so contracted that we cannot discern the unity and wholeness. Here we are reminded of that spiritual Sun, which, universal, has its focus in every heart of man — man, the world in miniature, a solar system of planets in rhythmic motions attendant upon their Lord; and we may rise in thought to a forgetfulness of our petty limitations. Through such a symbol illumination may come, so that we may re-enter our humble world renewed and strengthened for the duties we perform. Know that thou art a Sun, whose function is to illumine all, not

to expect benefits. Thus man will rise to his true dignity, fearing neither God nor Devil. Man is deathless, infinite, in his essence; nor is the quality of that essence beyond his reach. At any moment of our life *I am* immortal, eternal; "end and beginning are dreams."

### III — THE CROSS

The sign of the Cross has been very potent in Christianity, but rather as a glyph than a symbol; which means, according to the distinction made in *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 66) a conventional sign, used to bring to mind the ideas which it stands for; whereas a symbol is not arbitrary or conventional, but sums up in its very form certain occult principles. It is the actual correspondence, among figures, of some universal law, too profound and inclusive to be conveyed in language. The Cross is essentially two straight lines of equal length crossing one another at right angles, but has variants, each expressing some particular shade of meaning.

The initial stages of cosmogenesis or the birth of worlds are symbolized by certain geometric figures. We have already spoken of the circle, which by itself represents the primordial abyss of Chaos. Within this there appears a central point, the first germ of all that is to become manifest; it is like the germinal speck in an egg — Nature repeats everywhere the same original process, and the egg is a very pregnant emblem of cosmogenesis. This Primordial Point is the First Logos, or Word, and includes in itself the positive and negative, or active and passive, sides of manifestation, which two have not yet become differentiated from each other. Thus it is sometimes called androgyne or double-sexed; but in using the words 'male' and 'female' in these connexions, we must be careful not to give a physiological sense to them, as they have about as much to do with that as have the terms dextro- and laevo- in chemistry, or positive and negative in physics.

The next stage in Cosmogenesis is represented by the same Circle with a horizontal diameter crossing it. This signifies

a divine immaculate Mother-Nature with the all-embracing infinitude. When the horizontal line is crossed by a vertical one, we have the symbol of Father-Nature added, and the two together form the Mundane Cross and stand for the manifested universe. This duality of Spirit and Matter, Force and Form, Energy and Inertia, etc., pervades the universe, not only in the planes of objectivity, but also subjectively, in our mind, in our feelings; and on the highest plane of all these two intersecting lines may stand for the Divine Thought acting in the Divine Mind. It is impossible to give more than a sketchy and introductory explanation here of these pregnant symbols, but the reader may be referred to the opening pages of *The Secret Doctrine*, where these diagrams will be found, as well as to many other parts of that work.

The Cross is found in a widespread trinity of symbols — Circle, Crescent, Cross, which denote Spirit, Mind, and Matter respectively. The three combine in the symbol of Mercury, denoting a man, with the Crescent for his brain, the Circle for his Heart, and the Cross for his organs — Head, Heart, and Hands, as we may say. Development in biology shows the extrusion of polar elements from the central nucleus, whether in the germ cell or in the seed which sends shoots up into the air and down into the earth. Various combinations of these three symbols make the symbols of planets, and we find them again on standards, as the Star and Crescent of Islam, the Cross of Christianity, and the Sun of Japan. The Circle is the Sun, the Crescent the Moon.

The most interesting meaning of the Cross is its connexion with Crucifixion. It signifies the 'Word made Flesh,' the incarnation of Divinity. And so it stands for the Christ, the Divine Self of every man, which is said to have been crucified on the Cross of Matter, or have taken up the Cross — that is, worldly life — in order to *redeem* the animal nature of man. Paul in his Epistles dwells on the idea of the Christ being crucified in us. This is the real sacrifice; for the God is exiled thereby and has to undergo the tribulations of mortal incarnation; but the sacrifice is made in the spirit of Love, and a reluctant sacrifice is no sacrifice at all. The universal and ancient truth of the redemption of the flesh by

the indwelling God has been turned theologically into a special atonement made by a special son of God at a particular place and time; and the sacred allegory found in the Gospels has been taken to refer to an actual execution. But this idea loses force when we find that many other religions besides Christianity have the same story of a crucified Christ. Some confusion may be caused by the fact that Paul uses the word crucifixion sometimes to mean sacrificing: he speaks of crucifying the flesh, but here he is evidently using the word in a different sense from his use of it in speaking of Christ being crucified in us. The Cross in Christianity has descended from a symbol into a mere glyph: its significance is lost, and it remains a reminder, a banner.

We spoke above of the need for avoiding a gross interpretation of symbolism, but this has actually been done, and a word of comment is required. In degenerate times, there has always been a degradation of symbolism. The two lines of the Cross represent the male and female creative potencies, which on the highest plane are the Divine Thought in the Divine Mind. But, owing to universal analogy, the same symbol may also illustrate the active and passive natural forces in physical organisms and so we find cults for the deification of the procreative powers. These powers are innocent natural functions when confined to their proper use; but if deified, we get licentious cults, and in this way the Cross may acquire a sinister meaning.

The Cross has other forms besides the equal-armed or 'Greek Cross'; the form adopted in Christianity is sufficiently familiar, and has perhaps been chosen from confusion with the Roman method of execution. Sometimes the crossbar touches the top of the upright, forming the Tau. Each of these variants emphasizes some particular meaning, and it would require many articles to go fully into all. When six squares are arranged so that three are horizontal and four perpendicular, we get a figure like the Latin Cross and representing the six faces of an opened-out cube. If a Cross is inscribed in a Circle, the segments of the lines are in geometrical proportion, and the ratio between the arms in various cases may suggest mathematical keys. An alternative to the

Tau or the Cross is the Tree, found in *Genesis* as the Tree of Life, in the Norse Yggdrasil and the Indian Ásvattha Tree. It denotes material Nature, and round it is often twined a Serpent, denoting the life-forces operating in cyclic path through the planes of Matter. When the arms of the Greek Cross are bent at the ends, we get the Svastika, the bends being intended to convey the idea that the Cross is rotating like a wheel. This indicates the eternal motion of the elements and shows how equilibrium is attained by maintaining a neutral center amid continual changes.

#### IV — THE SERPENT

This symbol, like the others, condenses a number of meanings into one; and of these meanings we have already touched upon one in the chapter on the Circle. It was there mentioned that the Serpent is often shown swallowing its tail, as an emblem of the return of cycles upon themselves, and the union of ends and beginnings. It was also shown that, if the ends of the circle pass one another instead of meeting, a spiral curve is formed, which still further expresses the course of evolution. This spiral curve is often shown as a Serpent, so that one meaning of this symbol is that of the spiral course of evolution.

It will be well to say here, with reference to the Serpent, as also to many other symbols, that there is a *dual* meaning. A knowledge of this fact removes many obscurities in the interpretation of symbols; we have seen earlier, for instance, that the Cross may represent the interaction of Cosmic Mind and Cosmic Matter on the highest plane, or the union of physical forces on the terrestrial plane. Similarly we hear of good or bad Serpents, and in our own Bible we are told in one place to be wise as Serpents, and in other places to beware of that old Serpent the Devil. Bearing this dual nature in mind, we shall avoid such confusions as theology has made in confounding the Serpent in *Genesis*, who taught mankind wisdom, with that Devil who is the personification of man's evil passions.

We read in *The Secret Doctrine* that Fohat, Divine Messenger, Intelligent Cosmic Electricity, who at the Divine Word proceeds forth to create worlds and the beings thereon, moves in a *serpentine* course, generates spirals; and this spiral plan of evolution is imitated throughout nature, from the nebulae to the spiral growth of plants. The Serpent means Divine Wisdom, Creative Intelligence; and Masters of Wisdom are called Serpents — which gives a new meaning to the injunction 'Be ye wise as Serpents.' Hermes or Mercury carries the caduceus, a wand with two Serpents entwined on a staff; the Chinese made the Serpent the emblem of their emperors; the Druids called themselves Snakes; serpent-emblems called Dracontia once covered the globe and are still found; Quetzal-Cohuatl was the snake-deity of the ancient Mexicans; Dragons are found throughout ancient symbology with the same sense. But we also hear of evil Serpents. The Gnostics spoke of an Agathodaimon and a Kakodaimon, or a good and an evil divinity, represented as Serpents; Hercules slays Python; Apollo at birth overcomes a Serpent, but does it by means of another Serpent — the higher wisdom in man overcoming the lower. The two nodes of the moon, Rahu and Ketu, are called the Dragon's head and tail. So the Serpent can represent the duality of human nature — which is but a copy of the duality in Cosmos. A dual geometry may be based on the right and left helical curves. There is the Serpent of Spirit and the Serpent of Matter, the Heavenly Wisdom from above and the earthly wisdom from below, of which Paul speaks so often.

These polar forces throughout all creation make the eternal contrast by which growth is promoted and equilibrium sustained. The lower Serpent of Matter is not evil in itself, but becomes evil to man when he sets himself in a wrong relation to it. Man's compound nature enables him to endow the forces of nature with intelligence and thus to create bad Serpents, which impede his progress, but in the long run give him the victor's strength; and cosmically speaking, the descent of Spirit into Matter has engendered fearsome creatures that prey on one another, and deadly poisons and pestilences. So the Serpent or Devil may very well stand for

the lower nature of man, which (as we know) is a dire and dismal reality, a specter we have ourselves raised and must lay; and the Serpent may just as well stand for man's Savior, the Divine Wisdom from above. Only let us not personify them into a Jehovah and a Satan; and let us remember that our body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost, even though we may have desecrated the shrine.

The Serpent is closely associated with the Tree — sometimes the Cross — and, as said earlier, denotes the creative forces circling through the planes of matter. The children of Israel are bitten by Serpents, which causes a pestilence, and are healed by Moses (a magician) setting up a brazen Serpent. The Serpent is the Teacher of man, as are the Christos, Prometheus, Lucifer, and the Savior under various other names. But he is also the Tempter — or rather, the one who tries and tests man. For how is man to exercise the Divine prerogative of free will unless he is given a free choice? Therefore the Teacher is rightly called a Tempter, but not in a malign sense.

As regards Easter, it is appropriate to mention the Serpent in connexion with the Egg. In various parts of the earth are found Serpent Mounds, often with a mound representing the Egg near the mouth of the Serpent. These two symbols are naturally associated; for the Egg symbolizes the womb of nature. Its form is spheroidal, so that it stands for the same as the Circle; but it has a germ inside, from which will spring, in stage after stage of unfoldment, the complete being. For some people this may be a mere 'analogy' — little more than one of the figures of rhetoric in the back of the grammar book. But analogy is the great key to the interpretation of cosmic and human mysteries. The ordinary hen's egg is actually a faithful miniature of the great Cosmic Egg, and it is possible to trace the most wonderful analogies throughout all the stages of the embryo which biologists study. The custom of exchanging eggs at the time of the year's rebirth was observed by many nations and has been adopted into Christianity along with other 'Pagan' customs.

## V — THE DANCE

It may be wondered how this subject comes under our general title, but we do not propose to limit ourselves to squares and triangles or symbols with a geometrical shape, but to use the word 'symbol' in a wider sense. So the word 'dance' can be used as a symbol, and those who want a classical name can use that of the Muse of Choric Song and Dance — Terpsichore. We shall doubtless say things which are being widely said, thought, and acted on today; but the Theosophical key will be found a great aid in interpreting and justifying the inspirations and intuitions of people who might feel the need of definiteness and co-ordination in their aspirations.

The course of evolution runs in curves which bring racial cultures down into materialism and then up again towards a renewed knowledge of the essential values of life. So we may expect to find a reappearance of ancient institutions which have been lost or degraded. The language of symbolism, allegory, and mythology is a means of embalming these institutions, so that their seeds may remain encysted, as it were (it is often convenient to mix metaphors), thus remaining free from harm until they can be safely revived.

All antiquity shows the importance attached to the dance; it still prevails, but in what guise? Apart from the noble efforts of the few alluded to above, it has become at best an amusement, too often with an intrusive element of sex-appeal, more or less innocent; and as part of a dramatic scene, the ballet has more often made its appeal to our coarser than to our more refined tastes. We have to be careful not to transfer our own conceptions to the ancients and accuse them of mixing worship with frivolity because the dance with us has descended to frivolity *from* worship. One is all the more gratified to find that in some quarters at least a nobler conception of the dance is gaining ground; and it is to a wish to second those efforts that the choice of this particular subject is mainly due.

Downward curves in evolution are marked by the misuse of man's divine powers, whereby is created *sin*, from which he strives to escape by holiness. He may become so depraved that asceticism seems his only salvation. A snuffling Puritanism feared even the dance on the village green, because for them it would no longer have been innocent. In the classical age not only the dance but every kind of athletic exercise was an essential part of religious celebration; they were performed in honor of the gods. Simple peoples of today have the same in their tribal dances. It was a practical enactment of the universal principle of rhythm and harmony, the lacking keynote in modern life, whose watchword seems to be *excess* in all things. Who that has fine appreciations can deny that the lack of rhythm and proportion has vitiated our manners, tastes, and institutions? We are becoming aware of it and of the need for amending. For awhile, no doubt, we shall carry even into our amendings the spirit of excess, of self-consciousness, of striving, of artificiality. Spontaneity cannot be won by chasing her with a net; she is coy and must be wooed. We can but make ourself worthy, and then we may be honored with a visit.

It would be wantonly unjust here to omit reference to the work of Katherine Tingley, whose mission was to strike anew so many lost keynotes. The importance of the dance, its real significance, were well known to her, and she introduced its practical enactment among the members of her company of students at Point Loma; chiefly among the children, whose unspoilt minds rendered them better material; but notably among people of all ages as part of her wonderful dramatic presentations in the Greek Theater. The influence thus started has spread widely, and few know to how great an extent the world is indebted to her for this. For not only has the influence spread by direct imitation, but also the unseen communications which bind together the minds of men irrespective of distance; and whatever was done at that center and by that Teacher was broadcast with a hundredfold force.

All concerted movements, whether of the dance, the song,

the orchestra, or even military drill, express the harmonious co-operation of many individuals in one whole; and all those in whom the spirit of life is not dormant or dead experience an indefinable joy therein. For once, they have laid aside personality and are acting as part of a greater self. They have experienced the joys of a life larger than that of the self.

The word 'symbolical' has come with some people to mean unreal, and it is with this feeling that they speak of ancient ritual dances as being symbolical of something or other. Others think that the participants in these rites were actually accomplishing a creative function; and I am sure this is what Katherine Tingley felt — or rather knew. And may it not be our inner awareness of this fact that gave us that mysterious sense of joy? To Theosophists, man is not a poor hapless sinner dumped down in a cruel world by an absurd deity for the purpose of preparing himself by self-mortification for a better world somewhere else; nor is man a mere chance-happening or byproduct of some incredible cosmic process. He is a part of the universe, a part of nature, a part of God. His smallest acts count. It may be hard to define his goal; it may not be best to try to define it. Let us call it self-realization. And if this is not to mean that each petty personality will make the vain attempt to realize a little life of his own apart from others, then it must mean that we must seek to realize that greater life wherein we all share as equal components.

Let us get beyond the distinction of sanctimonious and sinful, sacred and secular; let us get back to the unity of life. The simplest natural functions have been and can be considered sacred, pure, joyous. The body (as H. P. Blavatsky points out) is the temple of the Holy Ghost, but that fane has been desecrated, so that we have turned from it with disgust and regard the body and its functions as something profane.

Those gods of the old Pantheons stand for departed glories of the human race; some went back to Olympus, and some with loving sacrifice departed not from man but suffered degradation with him that they might one day raise him again

to the heights. No doubt Terpsichore, the Muse of Choric Song and Dance, has never been away from us.

There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st  
 But in his motion like an angel sings,  
 Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;  
 Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
 But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
 Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

There are some who have had glimpses — enough to make them home-sick. But harmony cannot be achieved by perfecting oneself in the use of one's own solitary instrument.

## VI — SUN AND MOON

The meaning of Sun can be gathered by considering the sun of our solar system. It is the heart of that system, the center whence flows all the life and light. Earth and other planets attend it, like the retinue around the throne, and shine by reflected luster. There is a sun in the human body, generally called the heart, but rather the vital center controlling the heart than the actual muscular sac. Its contraction and expansion accompany the circulation of the life-streams; its slackening means swoon; its stoppage, death. The solar heart of the solar system also pulsates, in a period said to be eleven years — the sunspot period; an analogy about which we shall know more when we have studied better the magnetic and electric phenomena connected with the sun.

The Sun is the Logos of any hierarchy, which manifests itself as seven rays. The Sun is the father of the Gods. In mythology we find him represented as Helios and Sol, as Phoebus and Apollo. Sun-worship has always been universal. Ignorant people have supposed that sun-worshippers worship the visible orb of day only; they imagine that the sun is nothing more than a vast globe of incandescent gases, and say that people who worship a globe of incandescent gases must be poor untutored savages. What is really worshiped

is the Spiritual Sun, of which the visible sun is but an outer garment; and it is only natural that the Spiritual Sun should be invoked through its outer symbol. The outer ceremonial is made to correspond with the inner meaning; but there would be times when the inner meaning would be forgotten and the worship degenerate into empty form, as may happen in other religions. The Sun is the Divine Light striving to manifest itself in us; its light is reflected from a number of planets, and these may stand for the subordinate phases of our mentality.

The Moon is a complex symbol and it is not practicable to attempt a comprehensive survey of all its meanings. It stands between the Sun and Earth as a reflector of light and life from the former to the latter. If we divide man into Spirit, Soul, and Body, the Moon will stand for Soul — using that term in a wide sense, for the intermediate nature of man, mental, psychic, emotional. The Moon is the imagination. The moon goes through its phases, which are called the light and the dark side of the moon; in one phase it transmits light from sun to earth; in the other it gleams with a light borrowed from earth. So our imagination may reflect the light of the Spiritual or the lower light from the Earth. But our little satellite stands as representative of a far more august divinity — Isis, consort of Osiris, the great Mother, ever-fecund Nature. The Mother of the Gods is the consort of the Father of the Gods. The Great Mother has also been a universal cult. It represents the passive, receptive, fertile, feminine side of the manifested universe — in a word, Nature. This is the highest aspect of the lunar symbolism; but in another and lower aspect it stands for the 'lesser light that rules the night.' Hence we often find lunar worship, lunar magic, lunar cults, etc., contrasted unfavorably with the solar. Man's personal, passionate, emotional nature is sometimes called his lunar self, in contrast with his solar self, the Spiritual Ego. To avoid confusion we must keep in mind this fickle changeful nature of the moon, causing it to have different significations; a clue that may help us to understand several things in our experience. If the Moon is Nature, then, like Nature, she may be anything

from the bride of the Spiritual Sun to the womb of terrestrial Nature.

The usual symbol of the Moon is a crescent, which is a duality as compared with the unity of the solar circle. The two aspects of the Moon are denoted in astrology by the ascending and descending nodes, called the Dragon's Head and Tail, or Rahu and Ketu in India; in the first the bulge is upward and the horns down; in the second it is the reverse way. This Dragon represents the emotional side of our nature, which oscillates from high religious exaltation down to great physiological excitement at the other pole.

We have before mentioned the symbol of the planet Mercury as being composed of a circle with a crescent above and below, and this may stand for a threefold representation of human nature, in which the circle or sun is the Heart, the crescent or moon is the phycho-mental nature, and the cross is the physical. But we must not interpret such highly generalized symbols too narrowly, for they have special applications on many different planes. Thus we may take *Âtma-Buddhi* as being symbolized by sun and moon or *Osiris* and *Isis*, etc.; or again we may consider the higher triad as solar and the intermediate nature of man as lunar; and again, if *Prâna* is solar, *Linga-śarîra* is lunar. Sun and moon make a duad which is found throughout; and these two, with the cross added, make a triad which is of equally universal application. All this illustrates the importance of symbols as enabling us to sum up ideas too broad and general to be conveyed in any other way; and in interpreting them into word-language, we have to present first one aspect and then another, so that the essential meaning may be intuitively grasped out of the multitude of apparently diverse meanings. These symbols are embalmed in the figurative language of poetical diction and stock phrases; but modern scholarship, in discussing the figurative use of such words as *Sun*, *Heart*, *Light*, and the like, has usually viewed matters from the wrong end and supposed the figurative use to be derived from the concrete use. The Sun which the sun-worshippers venerate is called an idealization of the astronomical sun, and an ex-

pression like 'the Heart of the Universe' may be regarded as a mere metaphor.

The Sun and Moon are everywhere the active and passive potencies, or we may say the masculine and feminine, the energetic and the formative, etc. — it does not much signify, so that we get the right idea. More attention is being paid to the influence of our moon in organic life, and it seems to have special relation to the vegetable kingdom. Some items of folk-lore, once dismissed by science as superstition, are receiving more attention.

The moon in classical symbology was denoted by *Hecate*, a triple-headed divinity, which indicated a threefold character of the Moon; for the goddess was powerful in the Heaven-world, on earth, and in the under-world. The Moon presides over birth and death, which lead into each other. The reason for the moon being associated with things uncanny and black-magical is that in her function as goddess of the underworld she presides over the purificatory processes of Nature. Man should not consort with the decaying remnants of creatures which, if let alone, will pass naturally along their appropriate arc in the cycle of evolution.

## VII — THE TRIANGLE

This symbol is usually shown as an equilateral triangle with an apex up, or the same with an apex down. In many respects it represents the Triad or group of three, and is often used synonymously therewith; but it includes more than a mere triad. For it has three points and three lines, which, with the figure itself, make up a septenary. This in mathematics represents the number of combinations of three things, represented as *a, b, c; ab, bc, ca; abc*. This can be applied to show how a septenate is derivable from a triad, how there are two triads, either of which, by the addition of the monad, becomes a quaternary. The triad is in one sense the first number after unity; for no sooner do we conceive a duality, than



we get a trinity by thinking of the unity and the duality together.

A trinity stands at the head of every cosmogony and theogony; it really represents the limits of our thought. Everything which we know of in this world is dual, a pair of opposites; yet we are compelled to think of unity as underlying every duality. Thus hot and cold are the two extremes of temperature, positive and negative are the two poles of magnetism, every line segment has two ends, etc. Thus we have a trinity consisting of a duality and its underlying unity. If we consider life and death as a duality, we may well ask ourselves what is the unity of which they are the opposite phases. And we may ask similar questions as to light and darkness, and many other dualities. We find at the head of cosmogonies the One Life, a Monad or Unity, from which springs a duality of Spirit and Matter. The duality may be expressed in many ways, as Male and Female, Energy and Substance, Force and Matter, etc., etc. The one is the basis of all active powers throughout the universe; the other is the basis of all receptive, formative, or substantial potencies. But this duality springs from a unity which contains both — the Spirit-Matter or unitary source of all.

But besides this trinity we find another, denoted by Father-Mother-Son, of which the symbol would be an inverted triangle. Here we see Spirit and Matter and their offspring, the Son, which is the Universe, or Man, as the case may be. Egypt has it as Osiris, Isis, and Horus. It is seen in the triad of Will, Thought, and Act, the last being the offspring of the two former. The Father is the Universal Spirit; then comes the Great Mother — Nature; from these are born (macrocosmically speaking) the worlds; and (microcosmically speaking) the Christos, the real Man. This is the real meaning of the saying that the Christ is the Son of God; but it is the Christ in all men, not in a particular man. The theology of today makes insufficient provision for the Mother; if the symbology has a Father and a Son, a Mother would seem to be indicated. But it has somehow vanished, and the trinity has been made up to number by the inclusion of the

Holy Ghost. One church makes a great deal of the Virgin Mary, who is an adaptation of the Pagan Magna Mater; but she is not a member of the Trinity.

The triangle is often used in conjunction with the square to signify a triad and a quaternary, the former of which symbolizes the higher world, the latter the lower. Thus we have the seven principles of man so divided into two main parts. As we stated under the Cross, a group of four often implies the lower manifested world, or what is sometimes called 'matter' as opposed to spirit; for the number four is characteristic of material shapes and groupings, as are also the numbers six and eight, derived from it. We read in *The Secret Doctrine*, II, 79, that, in order to make complete septenary man, the gift of Fire had to be made; this Fire was in the possession of the Triangles, free Intelligences, Flames. *Âtma-Buddhi-Manas* is a triad, and when it imbodies it becomes a quaternary, and the imbodiment is itself fourfold, which makes seven.

The triangle symbol is not always used in the ordinary geometrical sense, wherein any of the points may be an apex; but it is considered as having a top and a bottom; the apex then represents a logos, from which emanate twin rays, the sides of the triangle. These rays, united at their upper extremities, are spanned at their lower ends by the base line, which thus signifies the universe created by the interaction of these rays. In a similar way, a distinction is made between a triangle with the apex up and one with the apex down; the former being Fire, the latter Water, or again Spirit and Matter. The combination of these two makes Solomon's Seal, the 'interlaced triangles,' the star hexagon in geometry; and this signifies the blending of *rûpa and arûpa*, spirit with matter, making, with the central point, or with a circumscribed circle, the septenate. So this is a symbol of a complete man.

A pyramid with a square base, such as forms a well-known architectural symbol, shows rays proceeding from a point of union and diverging as they descend, until they compass a square at the bottom, while triangles define the sides; this is an elaboration of a symbol just mentioned. The tetra-

hedron is bounded by four triangles, thus combining these two numbers; and the cube has square faces and three dimensions; and many interesting things can be learnt by the study of geometrical shapes.

When a monad becomes dual it passes from latency into activity, and when the duad becomes one, activity ceases on the plane of that duality. The duad signifies vibration, and the monad is the neutral center. He who realizes this possesses the power of balance and is no longer drawn from side to side. But it is important to observe that the real point of equilibrium is not the mere center of the line, halfway between the ends; it is not on the same plane. A pair of opposites is reconciled by a unity on a higher plane. This shows the distinction between a state of mere apathy or indifference and the true state of balance. The pleasure and pain are two poles of sensation; and the conquest of them does not mean a state of sensation which is neutral and indifferent, but an escape from the plane of (that kind of) sensation altogether, onto a higher plane of fuller life.

### VIII — THE SQUARE

This often denotes a quaternary or group of four, and in this sense it has to some extent been considered in connexion with the Cross and the Triangle. A septenate or group of seven can be divided into a three and a four, a triad and a quaternary, which may be said roughly to represent Spirit and Matter. This is familiar to students of Theosophy in the sevenfold constitution of man, in which we distinguish the higher triad and the lower quaternary, the former denoting the spiritual and immortal part of man, the latter his earthly and mortal part. This is of course not a hard and fast division, but merely a rough one for convenience. Man is not composed of a number of different principles put together, but he is a divine individuality manifesting itself through a series of vehicles. The same twofold division can be made as regards Nature in general; for we can speak of external Nature, represented by the square, and internal Nature or

the spirit which animates external Nature, represented by the triangle.

That the number four is characteristic of physical nature may be seen from a number of instances, especially if we bear in mind that the cube, although having six sides, is a derivative of the square. We have four points of the compass, and cubical shapes are the most frequent in mineral forms. We naturally lay out our buildings and furniture on a rectangular plan. In modern physics four co-ordinates are required to specify the position of an *event* in space-time. It has always been customary to speak of four elements as constituting the physical world — fire, air, water, and earth. These in modern physics are represented by heat, gas, liquid, solid, though there is some hesitancy about including heat in the list. In the lower quaternary of man these are represented by Kâma, Prâṇa, Linga-śarîra, and Sthûla-śarîra.

But there are other ways in which the quaternary can be made. It has already been said that the higher triad becomes a quaternary when we add to it . . . a unit which represents the lower world. Two . . . meanings of the quaternary are shown in the . . . well-known Pythagorean symbol of the Tetraktys. This represents four cosmic planes, and the fourth of these planes is itself a quaternary. In assigning names to these four planes, there might be some difference of choice, but the important thing to get is the idea. We might call them the monadic, the spiritual-mental, the psycho-mental, and the physical. The first is a unit, a self; the next is a duad, representing action and bipolar force; the third is a synthesis of one and two; and the fourth is a kind of repetition of the second. The two and the four are vehicles; the one and the three are what acts through those vehicles. The four suits in the playing cards denote these four planes in the Tetraktys; for the cards derive from the Tarots, which are mystic symbolism and used in divination. The suits were batons, which have become clubs; cups, which are now hearts; swords, Italian *spade*, now spades; and coins or pentacles, now represented by diamonds. The symbolic meaning of the upright stroke or rod, of the cup, and of the sword (a form

of cross, uniting a perpendicular and a horizontal line), are evident.

Under the Triangle we spoke of the Triad of Father, Mother, Son; and we read in *The Secret Doctrine* that

the "Son" of the immaculate Celestial Virgin (or the undifferentiated cosmic protyle, Matter in its infinitude) is born again on Earth as the Son of the terrestrial Eve, and becomes Humanity as a total — past, present, and future. . . . Above, the Son is the whole KOSMOS; below, he is MANKIND. The triad or triangle becomes Tetraktys, the Sacred Pythagorean number, the perfect square, and a 6-faced cube on Earth. — I, 60

The figure of a square within a circle (or a cross within a circle) is one of the most sacred in Occultism; it signifies completeness or perfection in the manifestation of the Universe or of Man from out the Boundless.

The problem of squaring the circle means for the student of practical Occultism the adapting of finite life to the infinite, of Spirit to Matter, and Matter to Spirit. As geometry and mathematics, number and magnitude, are keys to cosmic architecture, it follows that the problem of squaring the circle is a most important key to unlock many mysteries.

## IX — THE SEPTENATE

The number seven, spoken of also as the septenate or septenary or heptad, is the most important number in symbology. It is universal in cosmogonies and theogonies and is familiar to us in innumerable familiar instances. Its use is both traditional and founded on experience: on the one hand we find septenary divisions and classifications which we should not have thought of making ourselves; and these are traditional. On the other hand we find that many things fall naturally into septenary divisions. It seems to be the key number of the present great cycle of evolution. To begin with, the Logos or One Deity, emanates seven rays, which are the world-builders; and there are countless representations of this in the different theogonies: the seven sons of Aditi, the seven Amshaspendas, Angels of the Presence, Builders,

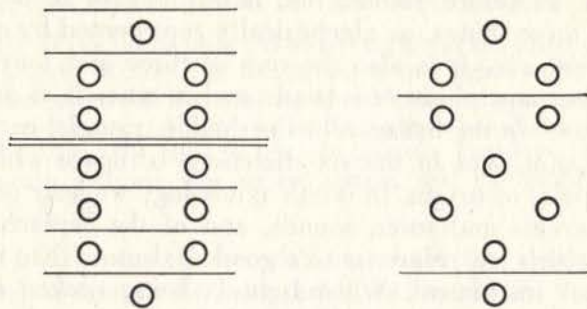
Wheels, Sephiroth, Gods, etc., etc. And this is repeated on all planes till we get to the seven primary elements of the physical plane, the seven colors, seven notes of the scale, etc.

Seven, as before pointed out, is the number of combinations of three things, as algebraically represented by  $a, b, c$ ;  $ab, bc, ca$ ;  $abc$ . It is also the sum of three and four, triad and quaternary; it is two triads and a unit; it is six and one, as seen in the hexagon or the double triangle, each with central point, and in the six directions of space with their central point of origin. In occult symbology we hear of seven mystic vowels and seven sounds, and of the heptachord of Apollo which has reference to a good deal more than merely a musical instrument. When light is being spoken of, the septenate becomes seven colors, and these seven colors have their physical manifestation in the seven colors of our visual perception. It is said that from 'Darkness' comes light, and from white light come the seven colors; and this means that from the unmanifest logos comes the manifest logos, and from that the seven rays. In physics white light is decomposable into seven colors; and the etheric vibrations to which the phenomenon of light is referred do not yield a visible effect until such effect is evoked by contact with physical matter; and thus we have darkness yielding light.

The positive side of creation is represented by seven Forces or Sons of Fohat, etc., and the negative side by seven planes of materiality or seven cosmic planes; and correspondingly in the microcosm we have the sevenfold constitution of man. The chemists Mendeléeff and Newlands arranged the chemical elements in a table according to the relation between their atomic weights and their properties, and found that they fall into a septenary scale; which is one among many proofs that physical nature follows the laws impressed upon it by primary nature. Seven sacred planets are enumerated, and connected with seven Gods and other septenates; the visible planets and their 'chariots.'

The number seven is related to the number twelve; as there are seven planets, so there are twelve zodiacal signs in which they move. Astrology gives one sign each to sun and moon and two signs each to the other five planets. Twelve is also

the sum of seven and five. According to one interpretation, which is likened to 'Ezekiel's Wheel,' the signs from Aries to Libra inclusive are the seven, and the signs from Scorpio



to the end are the five. In Esoteric Tradition twelve globes are placed on seven planes, and seven globes on four planes, as in the diagram. Sometimes the number ten is used in the enumeration of cosmic powers, and can be made by putting above the septenate a triad belonging to the archetypal world, as in the Sephirothal Tree, represented in the diagram; or again we may have a quaternary with a triad above it and an inverted triad below.

## X — THE ARK

Noah's Ark and the Ark of the Covenant will at once occur to the mind of those who have read their Bible: different things, yet akin and almost identical in symbolism. Both were sacred vessels, and in that definition we may find the key to their identity. But those who think it necessary to believe that the Bible is unique will be disconcerted if they chance to discover that the story of a deluge and an ark is world-wide, being found in the mythologies and religions of every people from China to Peru and from the Arctic Circle to the islands of Polynesia; so that it is necessary to go back very far indeed into antiquity to find the common source whence all these diverse peoples derived a story so uniform in all its essential features as is this universal deluge myth.

In all these stories a people grown old in wickedness is destroyed by a flood; an ark is built, whereon are saved a select few, who land after the waters have subsided and form the origin of a new race.

The ancient history of our earth is written in indelible characters on the rocks that compose its crust, so that the humble geologist with his pick can read it. The stratigraphical record tells of periodic cataclysms which have overwhelmed large continental areas; of the rising and sinking of the land; of the pouring forth and drying up of waters; of widespread havoc wrought by the belching of subterranean fires. The searching eye of the astronomer learns to read the same record in the heavens, and to connect the story of vast cyclic displacements of the earth's axis with the tale of the geologic cataclysms. The past records itself automatically in books that he who runs may read; but it also records itself indelibly in the astral light, where it can be read by Seers as other men read the printed book or the Braille script, according to the extent of their visual capabilities. Hence Nature's picture book tallies with the Secret Doctrine, that traditional record of cosmic evolution and the drama of man, preserved in the myths and allegories and symbol language of the world's faiths.

We have said that a symbol condenses a world of meaning in small compass; so that, if several different interpretations are given to the same symbol, there is no contradiction but only amplification. We shall give several meanings to the Ark symbol. It refers to deluges in general, and the passing of old races and the birth of new ones; it refers in particular to the last great flood, when the Fourth-Race continent of Atlantis sank and the first sub-races of the Fifth Race took their rise, in new lands, from the saved remnants of the old race. Thus far we have geophysical applications of the symbol. But the Ark in its widest significance means the Womb of Nature, the Great Mother, the World-Soul, the container of all that is. This great feminine potency stands at the head of every theogony, as its masculine counterpart, the Sun or Circle, is the All-Father, the active creative principle. But in using these terms we have to be

careful not to give them a literal sense according to their analogies on the lowest planes of physical generation. For the Ark was Isis, Moon, Venus, Diana, chaste emblems of eternal bounty, and in the seven principles of man would be Buddhi. We have said something of this in our chapter on Sun and Moon.

Prescott tells of the surprise of the Jesuit missionaries on finding that the Peruvians already had the Flood story; and in Daniel Brinton's *Myths of the New World* we find a large number of versions of the Flood story among Indians of North, Central, and South America; it is among the ancient Scandinavians in the north and Polynesians in the south; in India, China, Africa. What theory can explain such universal diffusion, such uniformity in particulars? Only the theory of a common tradition, very ancient, reaching back to times when peoples now scattered were one; when there was a universal body of knowledge — the Secret Doctrine. In Greek mythology we have the story of Deucalion and Pyrrha, which tells how Zeus determined to destroy the world on account of its wickedness, and these two were saved on account of their piety; and how they reseeded the earth by throwing behind them stones which became men and women. Refugees from sinking Atlantis settled in various places, bringing with them traditions of the great cataclysm.

But, as said, the Ark symbol refers to more than geological cataclysms; for it signifies a sacred vessel which preserves the seed of a new growth after the destruction of the old. There are many tales of infants being consigned to vessels and set afloat on the waters, whence they are rescued to become the founders of new races; the story of the infant Moses is a case in point. The Ark is the symbol of the womb of nature, represented by the crescent of the moon, by the Solar Boat of Egypt, the horns on the head of various female deities. The Spirit of God broods over the face of the deep; the seeds of life are scattered in the great receptacle of primordial matter. The Hebrew Ark of the Covenant signified the same idea, for it was the sacred vessel of Deity; but in later times this original sublime meaning became corrupted into anthropomorphic conceptions.

## XI — THE CHRIST

It may seem strange that we should include this among the symbols, but we do not propose to limit ourselves to those which can be drawn as pictures — though the Christ, to be sure, has one symbol in the Cross (See Chapter III). Christ may be for many people the name of a particular person, but it stands for a universal idea. Christ is the 'Word made flesh' mentioned in *John*, i, 14: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." In the beginning of this gospel we have a fragment of Gnostic teaching, which connects Christianity with its parent source in the Wisdom-Religion. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . In him was life; and the life was the light of men." This is the original doctrine of the Ancient Wisdom. The Logos (Word) is a creative emanation of the supreme deity; he is at the same time one and many; he has his throne in the hearts of all men. Thus man is, in his inmost essence, a God; but this God has been 'made flesh'; man is an immortal soul imprisoned in a mortal body. The Jesus of the Gospels insists on this truth in many well-known passages; he usually speaks of the supreme deity as the Father, and of the Word or Logos as the Son. With this clue in mind, we can see that such was the teaching of Jesus: he desired to show men how they could achieve salvation by invoking their own divinity, by following in his footsteps. But this has been turned into the dogma that man's nature is of itself corrupt, and that he can be saved only by faith in this particular God-man, Jesus of Nazareth.

The Jesus of the Gospels is a character, partly fictitious, partly symbolic, built around some actual personality, whose identity is buried among a confusion of historical and traditional materials. Though every man is an incarnation of divinity, there are some who are so in a special sense. These are men who have progressed in their individual evolution to a point beyond that reached by the average humanity of their time, and who come to the world in times of spiritual darkness to teach the truths of the Ancient Wis-

dom. Such Teachers are the world's Christs; and we find in the religions of India, Egypt, ancient America, and elsewhere, accounts similar in essentials to our own Gospel narratives. The Savior is born by the Holy Spirit of a human virgin, is tempted and overcomes, is crucified on a cross, entombed for three days, rises again. That such is the fact can readily be ascertained by anyone wishing to do so, but it would unduly burden this chapter to enumerate instances. They can be found in *The Secret Doctrine* and other Theosophical writings; they have been known to some eminent Christian writers, to whom they have been the occasion of much wonderment. Suffice it to say here that the story found in our Bible and in our church doctrine is but a particular adaptation of a doctrine that is both old and everywhere diffused; and, in pointing this out, we are by no means disparaging Christianity, but merely reinstating it in the original dignity from which it has departed. The only thing we do call in question is the claim of the Christian doctrine to originality or exclusiveness or finality. And it is only right, in this age of general commingling of human races, that a broader and more tolerant attitude towards the claims of other religions should be adopted.

The hinge-point of the matter is in the individual responsibility of every man for his own salvation. It may be objected that it is presumptuous and impious to set up man's strength against that of his Divine Savior, the only Son of God; but here again we come upon an essential difference between the original doctrine and the perversion of it which has come to us. The perverted form tells us that man is essentially corrupt — due, it is said, to the sin of Adam — and that he consequently needs the special mercy of a Savior in order to secure his salvation. But Theosophy says that man is essentially divine, and such indeed is the teaching of Jesus; and that, being divine, he must save himself by his own innate divinity. The doctrine that man is saved by the divine love and grace, and despite his own unatoned offences, may be very consoling, but it is both unjust and unmanly. The law that we must reap as we have sown holds good; and if death deprives us of the opportunity of paying our debts

to society in this life, then we shall have that opportunity in one of our lives to come. The Christ upon whom we must call for help is the Christ within — our own Higher Self.

The mind in man — *Manas* — is his intelligence, neutral in itself, and colored by that to which it is allied. When allied to the earthy passionate part of our nature, this mind becomes the lower personal self, at odds with other selves, and leading us away from our true path in life. But every man has within him the principle of *Buddhi*, divine wisdom; and if *Manas* allies itself therewith, we have the Higher Self, which is our Savior. It is taught that man was originally created as an animal soul, which was later inspired by the breath of Divinity and so made into a potential God. This is the true Divine Incarnation; this is the Christ in man. But that Christ lies buried, latent, unmanifested, until called into active being by our own will. As has been pointed out, the symbol of the Christ is the Cross, or, more accurately the Cross surmounted by the circle, thus making the sign of the planet Venus. In the symbology of the seven sacred planets, Venus stands towards the Earth in the same relation as the Higher Self stands to the lower self. The circle denotes divinity — the 'Word'; the Cross denotes matter; so that the whole symbol denotes the 'Word made Flesh,' that dwells among us. The mystery of the Christ is therefore that of the Divine Power descending into matter, for the purpose of operating in the lower kingdoms of Nature. The Divine Power is at first sacrificed; for its radiance is obscured, its voice drowned, amid the turmoil of material life and the selfish passions. But it is man's redeemer, and must sooner or later arise from the tomb in the true Resurrection, when man becomes fully aware of his own divinity. This, for the individual man, may take place at any time; for the human race as a whole, at the appropriate cyclic era in the future. When a man, having thus resurrected the Christ within him, becomes perfected, he is able to go forth to the world as a Teacher; either one of those Teachers whose presence remains concealed, or one of the great founders of religions, or perhaps the originator of some great philosophic school like those of Pythagoras and Plato.

So the symbol of the Christ may mean that which takes place in the life of every man, or it may mean the case of some particular manifestation of Divinity, such as the Buddha, or the mysterious Teacher upon whose unknown life has been built the legend of Jesus of Nazareth.

## XII — THE EGG

This is a very favorite and comprehensive symbol. Its spheroidal shape and its function as a life-germ are alike emblematic, and are connected with each other, as will appear. Our Easter is largely made up from an ancient North European festival of rebirth, which was celebrated in Spring, which is the appropriate time of year for such a festival, as it is then that nature comes to new life. It was not the birth of the year that was celebrated; it was rebirth in general, but that particular time was chosen as being most fitting. The egg is of course a familiar accompaniment of Easter celebration, and has not much to do with the ecclesiastical side of the festival, as far as one can see. But scholars will tell us that the egg was used by others besides the Northern peoples and their Christianized successors, and that it has been universally venerated as a sacred symbol, many people refraining from eating it on that account.

The Egg stands for that primordial Chaos, that Great Deep, Water of Space, etc., mentioned in cosmogonies as being the great womb of Nature, the Virgin Mother, out of which the universe is produced by the fructifying breath of Divine Spirit. But again, the same symbol is used to denote the universe thus produced, and in this sense it is spoken of as the Mundane Egg or World-Egg. The comparison of the universe with a great egg is a most profound and apt analogy, and is naturally to be found in all cosmogonies. The spheroidal shape is that of all the worlds that revolve in space, as also the shape of eggs, seeds, and germs in general, drops of water, and many other things. The sphere is the most comprehensive of all shapes and the most perfect and yet simple of forms, produced by an exact balance of


forces expansive and contractile and equal in all directions. Cosmogonies usually go on to describe the splitting of this egg into parts representing the heavens and the earth, etc., and the respective symbolism of shell, white, and yolk. Within the egg is the germinal point; and by studying the anatomy and physiology of the egg before fructification, and the various stages of development of the embryo after fructification, much can be learnt about universal law by analogical reasoning. The development of the egg is actually a repetition of the entire cosmic process by which worlds and living beings are created. Can this be merely an interesting analogy, an accidental coincidence? No; for the same laws pervade the whole universe, as a whole, in its greater parts, and down to its minutest subdivisions; and there is not a living being, however minute and apparently inert, but is following those laws of development, at one stage or another. The body of man himself is born from an egg, though this is developed internally, instead of being dropped as is the case with fowls. A seed may be called an egg — the difference is little more than a question of names.

So the egg stands as symbol of that most comprehensive of laws with which Theosophy deals — universal self-evolution. The universe is a vast aggregate of living beings, all of which are evolving, each according to its own particular stage in the vast process, and according to the particular cosmic hierarchy to which it may belong. And the process is one of self-directed evolution from within. A mechanical doctrine of evolution tries to represent it as a process of accretion or adding together of parts; but that would not be evolution, not natural growth. Such a process would result in a chaotic mass of unorganized fragments; evolution demands that there should be a plan on which to build. That plan is contained in the germ within the egg. Biologists can watch the actual process taking place; but, though they see the scenes shifting, they cannot with their microscopes discern the scene-shifters.

All we can see with the microscope is the builders as they emerge from invisibility; the life-forces at the moment when they enter upon the plane of physical matter. We can trace

things back to a minute speck, and no farther. The minute germinal speck is the point where the forces enter the physical plane. There is an ancient saying that *omne vivum ex ovo*, and since the universe is composed entirely of living beings, the egg must be omnipresent as being the germinal form of every organism, whatever natural kingdom it may belong to. In the numerical symbology of the Secret Doctrine the cipher is sometimes called the egg, which it resembles in its shape; and this, taken with the straight stroke, representing the fecundating principle, makes the sign for the number ten (10). The zero does not imply mere nihility — an utterly untenable idea — but simply the absence of number; it is 'no number'; so that the circle represents the universe in an unmanifested state, which to our conceptions appears as nothing though it is *all*.


### XIII — THE DOUBLE TRIANGLE AND THE PENTAGRAM

This is the familiar six-pointed figure formed by superimposing two equilateral triangles, so that their apexes are symmetrically spaced around a circle. It is the regular star hexagon in geometry. Sometimes the figure is  elaborated by making the lines double, so that the triangle can be interlaced; or again they may be differently colored, or the upright one made light, the other dark. It is often called Solomon's Seal and is a symbol in the Jewish Kabbala; but it is found in ancient India, whence it was probably adopted by the Hebrews. But it is one of the symbols of the universal Wisdom-Religion. These two triangles represent the duality of manifestation, the duality of Nature, variously spoken of as Spirit and Matter, Fire and Water, etc. Here we find them interlocked, thus producing a compound or completed nature. The number 6 is thus obtained, and by adding the central point, or alternatively by enclosing the figure in a circle, we get the synthesizing seventh. The six therefore represents the manifested Logos, which is six-fold (or often spoken of as sevenfold, including the synthesis).

This Logos as first emanation is called the Virgins of

Life or the Great Illusion; the sixth sign of the zodiac is that of the Virgin. In *The Secret Doctrine* it is mentioned as signifying the 6 directions of space, the blending of pure Spirit and Matter, *Arûpa* and *Rûpa*, and is said to be a sign of Vishnu, though elsewhere Vishnu is made to correspond to the inverted triangle only. We must not try to make the symbolism too rigid and precise, for such names as Vishnu are complex in their meaning, and moreover different schools of philosophy have their own ways. The alchemists would have called these two triangles the fiery and the moist principle. They represent the dual nature of man, and the six points stand for the six powers or forces of nature, six planes, six principles, etc., synthesized by the seventh. The shapes of snow crystals are often mentioned as a familiar instance of this sixfold principle, and it represents the six primary axes in the cubical system of crystallization. If a glass cube is held up in a certain position, its twelve edges will show the double triangle within the hexagon. Other names for these six primary forces are the Sephiroth of Construction, Dhyân-Chohans, Prajâpatis, Builders of the lower physical universe — according to the plane which is being illustrated.

This figure is often placed on doors in India as a talisman against evil; but the best protection is the inward harmony we may attain by meditating on its meaning.

The five-pointed star, the pentagram, or the star polygon of the number five, is made by marking five equidistant  points on a circle and joining each to the next but one; the lines and angles are equal, the angles being 36°, 72°, and 108°. The sections of the lines exhibit the Golden Ratio, by which a line is divided into extreme and mean ratio being .618 or 1.618, which plays so important and interesting a part in geometry. In symbolism this figure is often taken as synonymous with the number five, the pentad. The Pythagoreans called it the Pentalpha, because it was like five alphas (A). It combines the two and the three, the first even and the first odd numbers after unity, representing therefore among many other things, on the universal plane, the union of cosmic substance with cosmic intellect. If the three is combined with the four (another symbol of matter)



we get the seven. As a union of five elements it stands for the Heavenly or Macrocosmic Man, and its five points correspond to the head and limbs of a man's body; the same idea lies behind the five wounds of Christ. When the star has its point down, it signifies the polar opposite of the preceding, that is, the nether or material pole of cosmic life; and so can be used as a black magical symbol — the horns of evil are said to be up. The combination of these two produces the decad, in a similar way to that by which the two triangles are combined in Solomon's Seal; and thus we get another symbol of man's dual nature, and of the dual aspect of cosmic forces. In connexion with this, astrologers will remember that each of five planets has two houses, a day house and a night house; while Sun and Moon have each one house, so that we have here the five, the ten, and the twelve, harmonized together. Five is especially important in our times because we are in the Fifth Root-Race, and five elements have so far been manifested (the fifth, ether, only partially as yet). We have five digits on each limb; five is the most frequent number for the petals of a flower, we use the denary scale (twice five), and the number five plays a leading part in the geometry of the dodecahedron and icosahedron. In *The Secret Doctrine* we find the pentagon used for the number five in the formula 31415, the other figures likewise being denoted by geometrical signs.

In the article on "The Twelve Signs of the Zodiac" in *Five Years of Theosophy*, Subba Row tells us that Makara, the tenth sign, is a word compounded of 'five' and 'hand,' so that it stands for two pentagrams. In *The Secret Doctrine* the pentagram stands for the fifth order of Creative Powers.

#### XIV — THE LOTUS

The lotus has been sacred from the remotest antiquity as emblem of the productive power of Nature, both spiritual and physical. But in calling it a symbol, let us remember what has been said about symbols in general: that, as the word is here used, a symbol is not an arbitrary sign chosen by somebody

to represent something because it seems appropriate, but an actual manifestation of the idea or quality of power which it represents. The universe is a manifestation of the cosmic seed, and the plant kingdom is one of the hierarchies of the manifested world. There can be no potency or quality or principle in human nature, spiritual, mental, or physical, which has not its counterpart somewhere in the plant kingdom; in the plants we find an inexhaustible wealth of forms and colors and perfumes and curative essences; astrology and herbalism have found out what plants belong to what planetary spirits, and what are good for certain ills. The lotus must evidently be — not a plant arbitrarily chosen — but *the* plant in particular which wise men of old have discovered to be the actual counterpart of this universal productive power in Nature, whether we call it spiritual nature or physical nature, or what not. One feels, in studying what has been said about the symbolism, that more might have been said; but the truth of a revelation consists not so much in what is said as in what is conveyed to the mind of the hearer; and this latter must depend in no small degree on the condition of that mind.

The lotus grows in the earth, sends its stem through the water, and blossoms in the air and sun; so that it has its home in the four elements and rises from the lowest to the highest. The seeds contain, even before they germinate, perfectly formed leaves, the miniature shape of the plants they will become. What better emblem could there be of that principle by which the part is a miniature of the whole? In a machine or a building, the parts do not at all resemble the whole; in an organism it is otherwise.

The lotus, says *The Secret Doctrine*, is the flower sacred to nature and her gods, and represents the abstract and the concrete universes. It was held sacred by the Āryan Hindûs, the Egyptians, the Buddhists, and by China and Japan. The Christian Churches adopted the symbol, using however the Easter or Madonna lily; in pictures of the Annunciation, Gabriel appears to the Virgin holding them in his hand. It typifies Fire and Water, the two creative principles. This is the same idea as that of the lotus in the hand of the Bodhisat

who announces to Mahâ-Mâyâ the birth of the Buddha. Osiris and Isis were represented in association with the lotus. The lotus is a well-known form of the capital in Egyptian columns. The lotus is the two-fold type of the divine and human hermaphrodite, being of dual sex. Fire and Water are the symbolic names of the two creative powers, the one being energetic, the other receptive and formative. They are Father-Mother, and produce the Son, which is the manifested universe, or a world, or man, or any other being that is produced. In the Bible, the Divine Spirit is represented as brooding on the waters of Space, and similar emblems are found in all other cosmogonies. The lotus symbolizes the emanation of the objective from the subjective, Divine Ideation passing into concrete form. In the first chapter of *Genesis* it is said: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth . . . the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, *whose seed is in itself.*"

The analogy to the birth of a child is shown by the attachment of the seed-bearing flower by a long stalk to mother-earth, from whom it draws nourishment; and in some representations a child is seen seated on the flower. But the original impersonal and pantheistic and reverential view of the early Aryans has been degraded in some later religions by attaching too much importance to the physiological aspect.

(Continued from inside front cover)

ty that cannot, however, conceal his erudition. The authority with which he speaks is the natural product of one who has thoroughly mastered his subject, a wisdom that needs no fanfare. In the two monographs composing this volume students will find what may come to them as new light showing that the Christian Bible is "one of the world's esoteric works, a version of the Archaic Wisdom, hidden behind many veils, and written in the ancient mystery-language." That mystery-language is indeed universal, and the author gives examples of the many symbols and myths which are evidence of this mode of preserving the esoteric tradition.