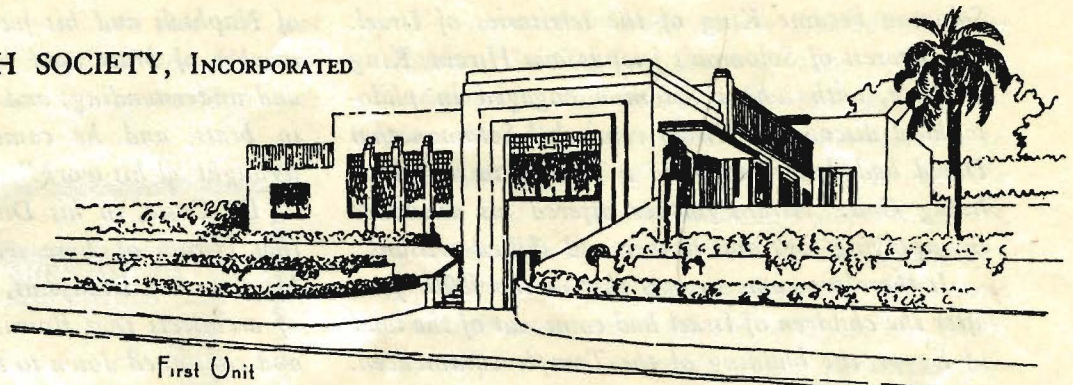


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BIBLE COURSE SERIES

BY MANLY P. HALL

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THE STUDENTS MONTHLY LETTER

Letter No. 5

THE SECRET DOCTRINE IN THE BIBLE

Dear Friend:-

Solomon and the Everlasting House

Those who have carefully studied the Books of the Old Testament realize that the great part of the text is devoted to genealogies and to historical episodes of comparatively little importance. Most of the characters appearing in the Old Testament histories are not preserved in the profane annals of Nations. A comparison between the Bible and other sacred books of the world reveals that most of the Scriptures contain rambling and pointless pseudo histories.

The various commentaries to the Vedas, the most celebrated of the Hindu sacred writings indicate that certain metaphysical truths are concealed under the so-called genealogies.

Every Sunday School pupil has struggled with the "begats." The time expended in memorizing these amounts to little better than waste. If, however, we translate the proper names and interpret the sequences correctly we can discover many interesting things far beyond the ken of the average Sunday School teacher.

The most important commentaries upon the Old Testament are those which have their foundations in the teachings of the Cabala. These commentaries reveal the most profound Jewish scholarship. They are enriched with tradition and a certain instinctive

grasp of values peculiar to the people and culture. The old rabbis pondered every symbol and every character of the Scriptures. They extracted a rare and beautiful metaphysical tradition, which, unfortunately, has never found its way into the text books of Christendom.

This present section is devoted to the interpretation of the account of the building of Solomon's Temple given in the First Book of Kings. The story begins with chapter 5 and continues through chapter 9. For the most part it is taught that this is a true historical account of the actual building of a temple fashioned from rock and wood and ornamented with gold and precious stones. If subjected to analysis, however, it becomes apparent, as in the case of Noah's Ark, that we are dealing, not with an historical fact, but a symbolical fact. It is difficult to determine with accuracy at this late date the origin of the story of Solomon's Temple. It is most probably derived from Egypt as was the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. The architecture generally associated with the Temple is Babylonian and Chaldean. It is probable that several races and cultures contributed to the symbolism.

The story of the building of the Temple is briefly as follows. After the death of his father, David,

Solomon became King of the territories of Israel. The dearest of Solomon's friends was Hiram, King of Tyre, with whom Solomon engaged in philosophical discourse. Hiram reminded Solomon that David had desired to build a Temple to the Ever-living God. Hiram further offered his assistance in supplying logs and timber and skilled artisans.

It therefore came to pass that in the 480th year, after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, the building of the Temple commenced. From the dimensions given in I Kings, chapter 6, it is evident that Solomon's Temple was of no great size. It was not much larger than the average modern home, and it is difficult to imagine that 70,000 men bore burdens and 80,000 hewed wood in mountains, with 3,300 overseers all laboring together for seven years to build this comparatively modest structure.

If a cubit be the distance from the end of the finger to the elbow, about eighteen inches, then the length of Solomon's Temple was ninety feet and the breadth of it thirty feet and the height of it forty-five feet.

Something seems to be wrong in this picture. Various methods of determining the Jewish cubit have been attempted, but in all probability the dimensions we have given are approximately correct. There might be a difference of a few feet.

Of course, there were approaches to the Temple, houses for the priests, chambers for storing sacred utensils, etc., but still there was a wide discrepancy between truth and popular opinion.

The Temple was built on Mt. Moriah, one of the low hills in the cluster upon which the city of Jerusalem is built. There is still a flat rock called the Rock Moriah jutting from the top of this hill. Today a Mohammedan mosque occupies the site of Solomon's Temple, and nothing remains of the original edifice except a few mutilated stone carvings which may or may not be genuine.

Solomon went to his friend, the King of Tyre, and asked that a clever workman be dispatched to superintend the casting of the vessels of the Temple. In I Kings, 7:13, it says: "that a cunning workman by the name of Hiram was sent out of Tyre" and then verse 14: "he was a widow's son of the tribe

of Naphtali and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker of brass; and he was filled with wisdom, and understanding; and cunning to work all works in brass, and he came to King Solomon, and wrought all his work."

Da Costa, in his *Dionysian Artificers*, declared that Hiram of Tyre was an initiate priest of the Mysteries of Dionysius, one of the initiated order of architects that flourished in the ancient world, and continued down to the Architectural Collegium at Rome. This intimated by the Bible statement that he was a man of wisdom and understanding and a cunning worker in metals, that is, he was an initiate of the mysteries of fire, the only element that will work metals. The story of Hiram, called "Our Father Hiram" or "Hiram Abiff" is the principal theme of the third degree of Blue Lodge Freemasonry. In fact Freemasonry traces its original symbology to the three Grand Masters of the Lodge of Jerusalem, that is, Solomon, Hiram of Tyre and Hiram Abiff.

When we say that an account in the Bible may have a symbolical meaning it does not necessarily mean that the account is entirely unhistorical. This is evident in the masonic legend of Hiram Abiff. That a cunning workman by the name of Hiram may have lived is not necessarily unreasonable, but it is certain that legends have been built up about the character which belong definitely in the classification of symbolism.

Throughout the Bible we may find mythology and history, fact and fable, closely entwined. Certain apocryphal legends spring up around any outstanding personality. In fact, the legend may come in time to be more important than the man, when the ages have gently shrouded the truth in forgetfulness and obscurity.

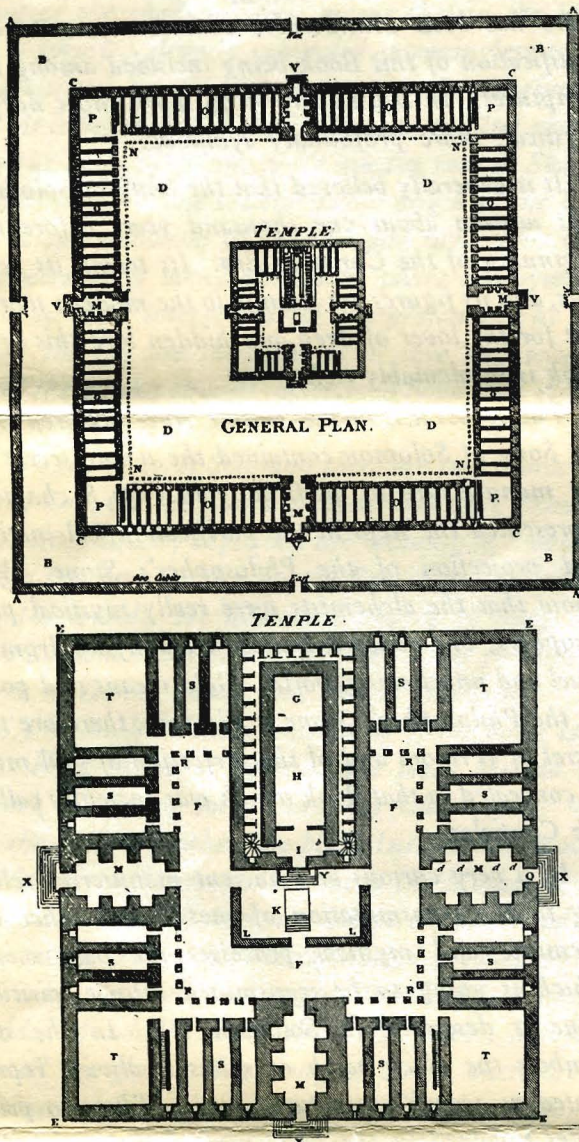
When we learn that it required seven years to build Solomon's Temple we know we have discovered a key to the mystery. Seven is the most sacred of the numbers, associated of course with creative processes, with cosmogony and psychogenesis. In the 7th verse, 1st Kings, chapter 6, it is written "there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron had in the house, while it was in building." This was indeed a temple "built without sound of

hammer or voice of workmen." In fact this was the Everlasting Temple Eternal in the Heavens. Josephus, the Jewish historian, was aware of the fact

The name of Solomon may be divided into three syllables. Sol-Om-On. Each of these syllables is the name of a Sun God or a Divine Principle. Sol means Sun, Om is the sacred syllable of the Vedas, the most magical of all intonations among the Hindus, and On is the name of a Supreme Being in Persia. The building of the Temple was supervised by three men. Solomon of the Sun, the source of all life and power, Hiram of Tyre, the earth, who supplied the materials, and a cunning workman, Hiram Abiff, the energies of space, the ethers, the dancing power of Fohat, the law of the atoms. The three Grand Masters therefore symbolized the three powers which created the world. It requires seven years to build the Temple, that is, seven periods or cycles are necessary to perfect the earth. The thousands of workers are the forces, energies and atoms. The masters of the workmen are the laws of life, and the finished Temple, so symbolically small, represents the physical Universe itself, comparatively insignificant, but requiring for its creation and preservation the benevolent conspiracies of the innumerable Forces that work in Space.

The Creative Triad here represented by the three Grand Masters is present in all the major theological systems of the world. The Trimurti in the Caves of Elephanta in the harbor of Bombay depicts the principal God of the Hindus with three faces. These faces represent the creative, preservative and disintegrative powers resident in Divine Energy. The three faces of Shiva, as the Trimurti is called in India, symbolizes the Triform creative principle of life. All energy manifests through triads. These triads finally accomplish the building of the soul temple, that is, through the interaction of creative agencies life is gradually matured, brought to ripening. The ultimate perfection toward which all life is inevitably moving may be said to be the work accomplished by the three builders.

The building of Solomon's Temple takes place on several planes simultaneously. The Solar System is a product of creative energies. Each of the planets is a house built in Space. All the races and lives evolving upon the planets are likewise little temples built to manifest the Will of the gods. All forms are houses of the Soul. One Spiritual Principle is



SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

THE UPPER FIGURE SHOWS THE TEMPLE WITH THE COURTYARDS. THE LOWER FIGURE SHOWS THE TEMPLE PROPER WITH THE PORCH IN FRONT, THE INNER COURTYARD, AND G THE HOLY OF HOLIES.

that the Tabernacle in the Wilderness was a symbol of the Universe. This is also true of Solomon's Temple in even more perfect measure.

SONG OF SOLOMON

building all these houses, functioning through them, finally discarding them for other better houses and forever growing. The realization of this is a mood rather than an intellectual accomplishment. Man is the Master Builder. Each man is building the temple of his own character, he is building the body through which he must function. He is ennobling his emotions, refining his appetites and improving his mind. Those who accomplish greatly in these endeavors are indeed Master Builders. They are building, not houses of wood and stone, but temples fashioned without the sound of hammer or the voice of workmen.

The whole motion of the Universe is toward Truth. Truth is growing up in everything, manifesting through all forms and natures. Truth, therefore, may be called the hidden good, the secret God who dwells in the temples that are built for It according to the law. In the story of Solomon's Temple we learn that the Holy Place and the most Holy of Holy Places were sanctified to the service of the Living God. The Holy Place of man is his mind and the most Holy of Holy Places is the heart. It is in the heart that the sacrament to consecration must take place; it is in the small room that the whole temple is consecrated; it is in the heart of man that his life is made new.

The Dionysian Artificers concealed under the symbolism of architecture the secret and spiritual mysteries of the regeneration of man. They were truly divine architects, they were building, not houses, but adepts. It says in 1st Kings that the cedars of Lebanon were cut down and were floated to Joppa to become the beams and the uprights of the Everlasting House. The cedars of Lebanon were not trees. There was a Holy Temple upon Mt. Lebanon. As in the case of the Druids, whose name means the "men of the oak trees" the initiates of Mt. Lebanon were called trees or cedars. It was the wisdom of these men that supported the Temple, their knowledge was the beam and wisdom the upright. Houses that endure are not built by man, for their substance is of this earth, but with the secret substances of Wisdom and Knowledge that shall endure all vicissitudes of physical existence.

There is no part of the Old Testament more difficult to interpret than the Song of Songs, which is Solomon. The modern clergy evade this issue and there has been considerable controversy as to the justification of this Book being included among the Scriptures. In truth there is no work more deeply mystical, more profoundly symbolic.

It is generally believed that the Song of Solomon was written about one thousand years before the beginning of the Christian Era. Its terms, its symbols, and its figures are strange to the modern world, but for the lover of deep and hidden lore this brief book is incalculably rich.

The alchemists of the Middle Ages declared that the Song of Solomon contained the whole secret of the manufacture of artificial gold. Its 8 chapters represented the steps in the purification, calcination and projection of the Philosopher's Stone. We know that the alchemists were really mystical philosophers, but concealed their metaphysics from a cruel and unbelieving world. Gold means soul power, the Philosopher's Stone is Wisdom, therefore the secret of Wisdom and of the perfection of soul must be concealed in that Book which was anciently called the Canticles.

In a very curious and ancient manuscript relating to the transmutation of metals and other alchemistic and mystical processes the base metal which is going to be transmuted into a spiritual stone is described in Solomon 1:5. In the old symbols the black earth or rebus is always represented as a dark untinged mass. The two principles involved in the perfection of the stone, that is, the dual forces which are to accomplish the purification of the elements are described in chapter 2:1. The sublimation begins in chapter 2:4, the alchemical fires by which the elements are to be tested, chapter 2:7 and chapter 4:16. The putrefaction of death before the resurrection of the elements is described in chapter 3:1, the sublimation or distillation of the universal elixir in chapter 3:6, the coagulation and change of color chapter 6:9 to 14 inclusive. This tells the colors the elements pass through in the making of a stone. The fixation of the crystal-

lization of the stone is described in 2:12 and 8:4. The multiplication of the elements is described in 6:7, the augmentation and final projection of the stone is explained in chapter 8:8 and through to the end of the chapter. This means that in the work is a formula cleverly concealed, meaningless to the uninitiated but of great moment to the informed.

It is believed that the 1st verse of the 2nd chapter of the Song of Solomon—"I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys" is the origin of the Rosicrucian symbolism of the rose and lily. This verse appears upon many alchemical plates and symbols, but is never interpreted for the profane. The rose and the lily are the symbols of love and wisdom and these must be well understood before the molten sea of the adept can be cast.

In the Song of Solomon there are two characters, Solomon, the king, and a mysterious dark Princess. We have already explained the meaning of Solomon, how this king symbolizes the Sovereign Intelligence of the world. He was the wisest of all kings and his wisdom endured forever. He is the personification of Divine Power and Divine Authority.

The black Princess reminds us of the black Istar, the black Diana of Ephesus, the black Mylitta, the black Virgin of early European Christianity. She is the hidden Mother, the black Isis, Sophia, Mother of Mysteries. In substance she is the Mother of the Gods to whom Julian, the Emperor, addressed his hymns of praise. The dark Mother is called by the Greeks the womb of night, the darkness in the midst of which shines the light power, Solomon in all his glory. The Song of Songs, therefore, is the story of creation. It is a mystical description of the Sun and the earth, for the earth is indeed the dark Mother, Coatlicue, the dark Earth Mother of the Aztecs.

The masters of the Cabala examined deeply into the story of Solomon and the dark Earth Mother. Their findings were in substance as follows: all things manifest themselves from a mysterious obscurity, the origin of life is concealed, the end of life is concealed. The visible world is rounded with the darkness, with origins and ultimates hidden from mortal perception. The Egyptians termed the mysterious veil which hides the superphysical from

the physical the "Veil of Isis." The Alexandrian hermetists called this veil the thrice deep darkness, for in it are concealed three things, the mystery of life, the mystery of thought and the mystery of feeling. The Babylonians made Istar their principal goddess, the daughter of Sin, the God of the Moon, the lighter of the night. All this symbolism teaches us that we are to understand an ancient philosophy to the effect that the true source of all things is called the mother or matrix. From this darkness emerge all living things, progeny of night, so Hesiod calls night the Mother of the Gods. This night or darkness is infinitely related to light. Day and night follow themselves, the eternal alternation. Day is Solomon, night is the Dark Goddess.

There is a fine Hindu fable to illustrate this. Shiva, the Sun, falls in love with Parvati, the daughter of Himalaya, the God of the mountains. The Sun God, Shiva, comes to court Parvati when he meets the mountains of the western sky at sunset. For a moment he rides upon the mountain tops, for the great bull, Nandi, is the earth. From the union of Shiva, the Sun, and Parvati, the sunset, is born Kali, the Goddess of night, worshiped throughout India as the black daughter of the Sun. Thus we see that the black Goddess represents not destruction or evil, but merely the dark origin of things. We find this again in the Gnostic systems where the Virgin Sophia or Wisdom becomes the heroine of strange and curious fables. It was from the Gnostics that the troubadours or wandering musicians of the Middle Ages had their origin. The troubadours were the sweet singers of songs and they always sang of a mystical and unknown woman, the Virgin of the world. These sonnets soon came to be regarded as merely love songs, but in their origin they were mystical hymns of adoration to the Mother of the world. Dante and Beatrice, the dark woman of Shakespeare's sonnets, are both statements of the same myth, rooted in history, but not significant as history.

The spirit of man is regarded as a luminous principle perfect in wisdom, the origin of the life in man. This spirit, descending into dark bodies, achieves through the chemistry of experience the mysterious power that is called Soul. The Virgin

of the world is Soul, in the Universe the World Soul, in man the human soul. The soul is the dark Princess. This we find clearly stated in the Book of Revelation, where Jerusalem, adorned as a bride, comes down out of heaven adorned for her husband, chapter 21:2. The dark Princess is the bride of the Lamb. It is the soul born out of the body, possessing within itself no light, but reflecting the light of the spirit.

Let us think then in these terms. Man, having perfected his material evolution, and having reached that condition of spiritual development in which he becomes aware of his own divine nature, yearns to be united forever with the spiritual truth and reality that are the very substance of himself. The great Sri Ramakrishna taught that the truth of all things was the Great Mother. He thought of God in terms of the mother of all life. When he ended his meditation he passed into a state of ecstacy. He wrote many books describing his understanding of spiritual reality. His words are not so different from those contained in the Song of Songs, soul crying for the real, the spiritual self reaching down to embrace its lower nature and lift it up into one with itself. This is the mystery of the Song of Songs. The old rabbins knew the secret of the lifting up of self. They realized that this secret had been strangely but beautifully concealed in the Song of Solomon.

PROVERBS

The Book of Proverbs is attributed to Solomon and should be understood as reflecting the wisdom and culture of Israel at that time. The difficulty we have today is the lamentably bad translations of these scriptural books. All the subtlety of the originals vanished centuries ago leaving a mass of material still interesting but lacking a certain vitality. We may use one example to summarize the entire situation. In chapter 1:7, it reads "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Now, technically and philosophically speaking, this is untrue, for we are taught to love the Lord, our God, and love and fear cannot abide together, so we wonder what might originally have been intended.

By examining the oldest traditions available we learn that this verse says that the Sod is for the Chasidim. Now the word Sod has been translated 'fear of the Lord' but the actual word has no such meaning. Sod means an assemblage. It may mean technically a group of initiated priests and by rational extension the doctrines or teachings of such a group in its larger sense, therefore Sod means the wisdom of the initiate or the esoteric doctrine, but this does not mean the fear of the Lord. Now the Chasidim were priests who had been accepted as disciples or initiates into all of the ancient mysteries. This is a restatement of another verse in the scriptures which says "The wisdom of God is for those who fear him." These two verses have identical meanings. Let us therefore say for Proverbs 1:7 the esoteric doctrine is the beginning of wisdom or the esoteric doctrine is for those who have been accepted into the mysteries. These are indeed the "true sayings" referred to in verse 6, the hidden teachings. But what does this mean to the average Bible student. This enthusiastic jot and tittle worshiper will insist that the words of the King James version are the very words of God Himself. The beginning of blasphemy is to doubt the wisdom of that decrepit group of old men who made the translation. Time and time again you run against these mistakes and every statement contained in the Bible should be checked with the Greek or Hebrew originals before any interpretation is derived therefrom.

It does not necessarily follow that all of the translations are incorrect. A considerable part of Proverbs is devoted to moral teaching with special emphasis upon the desirability of wisdom. Solomon, the son of David, exhorts those who would be close to God to achieve wisdom. Of course in his day there were not great schools and libraries available to the people. To him wisdom was the accumulated knowledge of his tribe, the law and tradition handed down from father to son, see chapter 1:8. Thus the Book of Proverbs is in strange contradiction to the most familiar teachings of modern Christianity. Solomon cries out that man must be wise. He invites those who love truth to incline their ears unto wisdom and apply their hearts to understand-

ing. Yet in the New Testament the emphasis is entirely upon faith. Solomon says of wisdom that "she is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her" Chapter 3:15. Solomon also teaches that wisdom is found in ways of godliness. Only the man who seeks God can partake of wisdom. How different this is from our modern viewpoint.

The modern scientist has rejected the inferences of religion. Atheism and agnosticism are rampant in the world. Men believe they can be wise without being good, but this can never happen, for wisdom and virtue are inseparably related. If modern thinkers would realize that deepness of understanding requires a spiritual perspective we would have less of war and struggle and conflict and more of the peace and security which are described in the Book of Proverbs.

What is wisdom? Wisdom is knowledge perfected through inward realization. Wisdom comes not out of books nor does truth come out of books. Understanding and wisdom come from within man, they sanctify knowledge, they transmute and perfect education, they spiritualize thought and culture.

Why was Plato a wise man while some modern thinker is only educated? The modern man may possess far more actual technical knowledge, he may not suffer from Aristotle's inability to number correctly the teeth in the human head; yet the man who can number the teeth and split the atoms may be an ignorant man, while some Indian sage seated under a banyan tree, with none of this world's goods and no schooling, may be a truly great man. If education could bestow wisdom we would all be wise, but instead of this we are foolish, filled with prejudices and conceits, incapable of even friendliness and honesty.

It is therefore appropriate to meditate upon wisdom even as Solomon meditated upon it. Wisdom is the most precious thing in the world. It bestows absolute security, it makes man one with the SOVEREIGN TRUTH which sustains the Universe. Plato was wise because he transmuted knowledge into soul power. This great man, gentle and patient, too wise to be angry, too learned to be unjust, is a magnificent example of the breadth and depth the

true wisdom bestows. A comparison between a modern scientist and Plato would be most humiliating for the modern scientist. He may know more but he understands so little of what he knows. He has convinced himself that there is neither God nor reason in the Universe, therefore there is no truth, no wisdom within himself. Plato saw God in everything and communed with truth. The modern scientist sees God in nothing and may commune only with his confreres obsessed with similar unbelief.

Solomon tells us something else in the Proverbs. He tells us that it is impossible to be wise without living in harmony with the Divine Plan. Only the soul that is gentle and filled with the love of truth is capable of great learning, and no man can learn more than he himself is. Increase of knowledge infers increase of spiritual stature. As we grow in integrity we become capable of greater knowledge.

In another place Proverbs 9:1, Solomon writes "wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars" and what are the seven pillars of wisdom? They are the seven laws which sustain the Universe, they are the seven aspects of the real. It is true that wisdom hath builded her house and her house is the Universe, and has not that Power which builded it the wisdom to sustain it. Man, immersed in wisdom, is still foolish. Surrounded everywhere by the evidences of truth he is still ignorant and perverse. In the presence of the Mystery of Life he lives not at all.

Proverbs also tells us that the wicked man cannot flourish. Chapter 11:5 reads "the righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way; but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness." The whole world desires to be happy, it desires security and peace, it longs for green pastures, but happiness must be earned. The stupid, the foolish and the selfish can never be happy. Any man who departs from wisdom departs from peace. A man who clings to the evils in him must suffer for his decision. It appears in this world that the evils flourish, but if we examine closely into their lives we shall see sorrow, misery, sickness and death. The law forbids that any man who is not intrinsically good shall enjoy either wisdom or peace.

Although the Proverbs are attributed to Solomon, no man knows for certain by whom they were written, but whoever he was, the author of these verses was indeed a wise man. He was a Master of the Mysteries of Life, an adept of secret schools. In 12:28 he says "in the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death." This is indeed the teaching of the mysteries of the sacred temples of Eleusis and Sais. Immortality is the reward of wisdom, not immortality in the sense of the perpetuation of the physical body with its infirmities, but rather a conscious participation in eternal life. The wise man perceives the law, obeys it, and his inner life is perfected.

Our modern dictators might profit by the verse "better it is to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." Man lives a little time in this world and departs into the unknown from whence he came. This life is indeed an antechamber of eternity. How little we appreciate the impermanence of our physical existence, how seldom we look beyond this life. Perceiving only this physical existence we live wholly for the day, ignoring and refusing to consider our eternal existence, but time brings to all things the rewards of action. Each person in the end comes to that which is his own. We may regret the seeming injustice of life, but there is a mighty honesty in Space and all men and their deeds shall finally come to their just deserts.

The student of the Christian Bible will do very well to consider the sacred books of other Nations. It is also important for the Biblical student to have the religious literature of the world ever available to him. He soon realizes from the study of comparative religion that the Scriptures of various peoples have a common origin and a common purpose. Not one of the Scriptural Books is complete in itself. Each is derived from the writings and customs of several racial doctrines.

Religious intolerance must be overcome by all sincere truth seekers. The age of bigotry has passed.

Evolving humanity demands and deserves a more tolerant religious perspective. We like to feel that sincere students have outgrown an intolerant addiction to any sect or creed. On the other hand it is impossible for man to function normally without some spiritual guidance. Our present International chaos is due to the failure of idealism in the affairs of men. This failure is due, at least in part, to religion itself, that is, what we call religion. It is due to the intolerance of sects and innumerable superstitions that have been foisted upon a gullible humanity. The commercialism of religion is greatly to be deplored but is inevitable under existing world conditions.

To the average Christian the Old Testament is a book of history, bad and garbled, a history ridden with intolerance and cruelty, but so are the Vedas of India, the Koran of Mohammed, the Zend-Avesta of the Persians. The greatest of the Indian classics, the Bhagavad Gita, is the story of a war, a war of brothers. Krishna comes to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. The wars of Scripture, the massacres and the captivities, are all symbolical. They all represent the great battle of life itself. In the Nordic myths we have the battle between the gods and demons on the planes of Asgard that ended finally in the destruction of the world.

It seems incredible to an intelligent person that any sane man or woman could have accepted literally the spiritual significance of the Old Testament's war and carnage, yet millions of people today live by the jot and tittle of such literalism. This the sincere student must definitely avoid. He must search for the divine mystery in all things, and discovering the true keys to the Scriptures, must apply them, not only to the Book but to the mystical art of living itself.

Yours sincerely,

Manly P. Hall