

Theosophical Light on the Christian Bible by Henry T. Edge

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01- 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 purposes 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 'The Esoteric Basis of Christianity,' 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 worshipped from afar as the Second Person in the theological triune God.

02- 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 whomever 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 way as Plato builds up his teachings around the personalities of Socrates and other historical figures. This Gospel contains many sayings which can be recognised 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 beginning 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

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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.

03- THE BIBLE AS 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 Kabalah, which in so many respects is identical with the teachings of the Secret Doctrine; but even the Kabalah 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 Chaldaea, 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 Kabalistic methods of interpretation, including those keys which depend upon finding the numerical values of words according to the system known as Gematria, [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.] show that the outer meaning was subordinated to the inner meaning intended to be conveyed.

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

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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 *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.

04- '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, i, 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.

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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 Manasaputras 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, about which we must speak later.

05- 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 fulfill 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 before 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

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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.

06- 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 (see Chapter I, p. 1); 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. [Lest any reader should quote texts which refer to the second coming as an actual and impending political event, we refer them to No. XIV of this series, on 'The Second Coming of Christ,' where this question is fully dealt with.] 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 everlasting 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.)

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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.

07- "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, as with others which have been quoted in these pages, 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 Manasaputras -- 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 recognise 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 birthright 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

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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.

08- 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 worshipped, 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

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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."

09- 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 Quiches. 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

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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.

10- 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 recognised by the wise in all ages as a necessary rule of conduct for mankind. As to the Christian Gospel, as has been said before in this pamphlet, 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. Our philosophy is out of gear with our 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.

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As has been said in a previous chapter, 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 Gospel 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 recognise 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 recognised 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

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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 recognised 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.

11- 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, then as Theosophist, give him the sympathetic perception which qualifies him to recognise 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-Gita* -- that is, speaking as

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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 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 misunderstood 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.

12-- 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 many 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

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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 recognised 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 only 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 recognise 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.

13- "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 recognised 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

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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.

14- 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 *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 *sunteleia tou aionos*, 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

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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.

15-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 interpretations 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)

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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 for 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 recognisable 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.

16- 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., i, 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 *parakletos*, 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 has 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. Almost 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 light-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

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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.

17- 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 Hindu 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 recognising 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

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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 Patala (according to the country), and do works of charity to the invisible beings, whether souls of 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 *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

18- 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 ninth 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

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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 wherof self-directed evolution by 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 mediation of the Son or manifested God within themselves. Or the private instructions to Nicodemus, mentioned in the first chapter 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 xiv, he promises that his successful followers shall be able to perform the works which he does, and even greater works.

In short there is enough evidence to show that even in the fragments still left in the canon there survive esoteric instructions in symbolic language, readily understood by the disciples who had achieved some degree of initiation, but a riddle to the multitude. The references to bread, water, wine, the vine, the serpent, the stone, and similar well-known occult symbols, are alone enough to show it.