

THE STORY  
OF  
JESUS



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G. DE PURUCKER

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## TO THE READER

During the course of some fourteen years, Dr. de Purucker had occasion while lecturing to refer in scattered but relevant fashion to the life, work, and mystical story of Jesus called the Christ. Thus it happened that many historic, quasi-historic, and distinctly esoteric data concerning the life of Jesus were mentioned. These various references concerning Jesus the Avatāra were gathered together in 1938, and with a few connecting sentences woven into a continuous narrative which serves as the answer to hundreds of requests received by him to give students an outline of what the life and teachings of Jesus really were in occult fact and from the standpoint of theosophy.\*

\* For more information and writings on *theosophy*, go to: [theosociety.org](http://theosociety.org)





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. . . as one of the greatest reformers, an inveterate enemy of every theological dogmatism, a persecutor of bigotry, a teacher of one of the most sublime codes of ethics, Jesus is one of the grandest and most clearly defined figures on the panorama of human history. His age may, with every day, be receding farther and farther back into the gloomy and hazy mists of the past; and his theology — based on human fancy and supported by untenable dogmas may, nay, must with every day lose more of its unmerited prestige; alone the grand figure of the philosopher and moral reformer instead of growing paler will become with every century more pronounced and more clearly defined. It will reign supreme and universal only on that day when the whole of humanity recognizes but one father — the UNKNOWN ONE above — and one brother — the whole of mankind below.

— *Isis Unveiled*, II, 150-1



# I

## JESUS — MAN OR MYTH?

Jesus lived. Whatever name he may have had, the individual known as Jesus (the Hebrew name being Jeshua or Joshua) was an actual man, a great sage. He was, furthermore, an initiate into the secret doctrine of his period; and around him, after his death, grew up legends and tales which were woven in later days — say a century after his death — into the so-called Gospels.

But who was Jesus? When did he live? When was he born? Did he ever live in fact? Was he a myth? Nobody really knows. There is not one single, definite, conclusive, and proving answer to this question — not a single answer which is known to be a certainty. The answers to these questions still occupy the attention of not a small army of scholars and students; but behind all the cloud of uncertainty and the dust of conflicting opinions, through all the ages since Jesus, later called the Christ, came and taught his fellowmen, through all and behind all this, we nevertheless discern the sublime figure of a great Teacher — not the only great Teacher in the annals of history, but nevertheless a grand and sublime teacher of men, his heart full of love and pity for erring mankind, who passed his life upon earth in instilling elevating teachings into men's hearts and minds, and who finally passed away, according to the Gospel theory, by suffering the death penalty of crucifixion. Was he indeed crucified or was he not? Here again, while most scholars believe he was crucified, we are obliged to say "nobody really knows."

The Gospel story is merely an idealized fiction, written by Christian mystics in imitation of esoteric mysteries of the Pagans, showing the initiation trials and tests of the candidates for initiation; and it is not very well done, there being much error and many mistakes in the Gospels.

Within a short time after the alleged crucifixion of the Master Jesus — at any rate from the time when the Christian Scriptures began to have circulation in the Mediterranean world — and all through the Middle Ages and till nearly our own days, men quarreled and fought about the documents composing the Christian New Testament, not only with regard to just what these documents had to say, but about mere words and phrases, and also as regards their age

and who wrote them. Even today nobody knows anything positive, real, and certain about them, although many clever and learned theories have been emitted and have been accepted as true because of utter lack of positive proof.

Now, consider what all this means. Men do not know the exact date when the four Gospels were written, nor the exact date when the *Book of Acts* was composed, nor the exact date when the various Epistles were written and sent forth, nor when the last book called the *Apocalypse* was composed, supposedly by St. John on the Isle of Patmos. Even today nobody knows anything about the writers of these various scripts or “scriptures” as they are called.

Nobody knows who wrote them; nobody knows when they were written; and furthermore nobody knows if the things recorded in these New Testament Books were true, or about the mystical aspirational feeling of those who wrote them down. Consider also what Christianity has been for nigh upon nineteen hundred years: a religion of vigorous dogmatic propaganda, a religion teaching certain very definite and strict doctrines of faith which one must believe at the peril of his supposedly immortal soul.

The four canonical Christian Gospels are not by any means the only Gospels that were ever written. We know from the ecclesiastical history of Christianity that there were dozens of old Gospels, which, with the exception of the four now accepted as canonical, were after the third or fourth century of the Christian era set aside, and for many centuries have been called “apocryphal.”

Now, in view of the almost complete darkness of ignorance enshrouding the origins and writers of these mystical scriptures, what are we to conclude therefrom? We know that at the very least there were something like twenty-four or twenty-five different Gospels which are now called apocryphal, also a great number of Epistles, and many Books of Acts — Gospels and Epistles and Acts of all kinds emitted and circulated by the various primitive or early Christian sects. They are called “apocryphal” or doubtful merely because they do not now belong to the present Canon of accepted scriptures; and yet scholars know full well that these so-called apocryphal writings were in their times considered canonical by those who accepted them and used them.

The story of Jesus is not new as a type; in essentials it is in large part a repetition in the case of that particular Teacher called Jesus of what other great seers and sages or avatāras or buddhas did and taught; and most of these great figures of history after they died

or had vanished, left behind them an entangled system of symbol, of allegory, usually supposed in much later years to be accurate historical records; but such they were not at all. This does not mean that these entangled records, whether in the case of Jesus or in the cases of others, were wholly devoid of some actual historical facts or recorded instances; but it does mean that the historical record or actual events have been so garmented with symbol or so disguised in allegory that they are difficultly discernible in these enshrouding veils.

There is no record, historically speaking, of the appearance of the great Syrian sage called Jesus in the accepted Year 1 of the Christian Era, or in the Year 4 B.C. This is one of the reasons why Occidental scholars of a critical turn of mind have said that no such personality as Jesus ever lived, because there is no undoubtedly historical record of his existence outside of the Christian Scriptures. But he did live; he lived about one hundred years more or less before the Year 1, as at present accepted, of the Christian Era.

The date of the present Christian Era was first arbitrarily set by a Christian monk called Dionysius Exiguus, *i.e.*, “Dionysius the Small,” who lived in the sixth century of the Christian Era, under the Emperors Justin and Justinian. He did not know when the Master Jesus was born, but he made calculations according to the literary material under his hand, not much of it, but such as he had. And he set the birth of the Christian Master at about six hundred years before his own time. Soon after, this hypothetical date became accepted as the Year 1 of the Christian Era, the year of the birth of the great sage called Jesus. But actually it was one hundred and a few more years before the time set by Dionysius Exiguus.

## II

### THE BIRTH OF JESUS, AND THE CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

The exact birth-date of Jesus the man, as already stated, is totally unknown, not only as regards the year in which the event occurred, but equally so as regards the day of the month on which it happened. From the earliest time the Christians have been in doubt as to the year and day of the birth of their great teacher, but the 25th of December finally in time became accepted as the day of his physical birth.

Now the 25th of December was very evidently intended to be the date of the Winter Solstice, occurring in our times on or about December 21-22, and was from early times in Imperial Rome observed as the day of the new birth of the *Sol Invictus* or Unconquered Sun, signifying the lowest course of the solar orb in the winter time and the beginning of his return on his northern journey.

Mithras, the Persian divinity, was also given this title of “Unconquered”; and as one of the very earliest Christian writers tells — Justin Martyr (*Dialog with Trypho*, p. 305) — Mithras was mystically said to have been born in a cave or grotto, as was also Jesus, according to very early and widespread orthodox Christian legends. Justin adds: “He was born on the day on which the Sun was born anew, in the stable of Augeas”: and, as all know, the Christian gospels which are now considered as canonical say that Jesus was born in a “manger” or in a “stable,” because, so the legend runs in the New Testament, there was no room for Joseph and Mary in the inn.

The Venerable Bede, an English chronicler of the island of Britain, his native country, writing in the seventh century of the Christian era, in his book *De temporum ratione* tells us that the ancient Anglo-Saxons, whom he shortly calls the Angli, “began the year on December the 25th when we now celebrate the birthday of the Lord.” He means Jesus, who was his Lord.

“And the very night which is now so holy to us  
(December 24-5) they called in their own tongue *modra necht*.\*



Their meaning is “Night of the Mothers,” by reason of the ceremonies, we believe, that they performed in that night-long vigil.”

\* Bede has misspelled these Anglo-Saxon words, or followed a dialect; they should be written *modra niht*.

It is obvious that Bede’s reference to this midwinter festival was taken from some ancient non-Christian ritual or ceremony, based on the fact of a divine motherhood, which had its human correspondence in a mystical human birth. It goes without saying that if the sun was symbolized or figured as being born at a certain season of the year, motherhood was closely involved in the idea back of the ritual — the motherhood very likely of the Celestial Virgin in giving birth to man’s greatest friend and illuminator. Some such idea unquestionably must have swayed the minds of the early Christians in fixing upon so definitely a pagan festival as commemorating the birth of their human savior, Jesus, from the woman whom they call Mary the Maiden.

Even as the Christ-child, in the beautiful Christian legend, is said to have been born on December 25th, so likewise was the Mithraic divinity said to have been born into human form on that same day of the year, which was the winter solstice. This day, or one a few days thereafter, has been commemorated as the birthday of other religious type-figures also.

The Christmas Festival is in one sense only, a Christian festival. It is based upon something belonging to the Greek and Roman paganism which the Christians took over. It is therefore older than Christianity. It is “pagan,” to use the popular word.

There were at least three dates when commemorative festivals were held in the early Christian era: on December 25th, on January 6th called the Epiphany, and on the 25th of March — practically the time of the spring equinox. Now, all these dates were based upon astronomical data and facts; and the Christians of about the fifth or sixth century of the Christian era finally chose the date which had been in use for the celebration of the birthday of the Persian god, Mithras — December 25th.

The Mysteries of Antiquity were celebrated at various times of the year — in the spring, in the summer, in the autumn, and at the winter solstice. But the greatest of these mystical celebrations, the greatest of the Mysteries, was that which was in the wintertime,

when the sun had reached his southernmost point, and turning, began his return journey northwards.

Beginning with the winter solstice, on December 21st, these most sacred of the ancient Mysteries began. Therein were initiated certain men who had been chosen on account of having perfected a certain preliminary period of training: chosen to go through initiatory trials for the purpose of bringing into manifestation in the man the divine faculties and powers of the inner god.

Two weeks were passed in this cycle of training or initiation; and on the 6th of January, later called Epiphany (a Greek word which means “the appearance of a god”), celebrated even today in the Christian Church, came the supreme moment in the ancient crypts of initiation, when the aspirant, having successfully passed through the preliminary trials, was brought face to face with his own inner god.

If he withstood successfully the supreme test, he was suddenly suffused with splendor, with light which shone from him, so that he stood there radiating light like the sun. His face shone brilliantly; back of his head was an aureole of splendor, and he was said to be “clothed with the sun.” This splendor is the Christ-light, called in the Orient the Buddhic Splendor, and is simply the concentrated spiritual vitality of the human being pouring forth in irradiation. The “Christ-sun” was born.

I could bring proofs from the Greek and Latin literatures, proofs of many kinds, showing what took place at this very sacred time of the pagan initiatory cycle. On that day was born the Christ, to use the mystical phraseology of the primitive Christians; and — using the phraseology of the Greeks and Romans, from whom the Christians adopted and, alas! adapted, the ideas — on that supreme day was born the mystical Apollo — to give the mystical name given to the man so raised; and in the Orient it was said that a Buddha was born.

Theosophists commemorate the Christmas Festival on account of the facts that I have briefly outlined; and furthermore, remember that these initiations take place today. The Theosophist looks upon this season with reverence and awe, for he knows that in the proper quarter some human being is undergoing the supreme test, and that if successful, if he is “raised,” if he can raise his own personal being into communion with his inner god and hold it there, so that he becomes suffused with the divine splendor, a new Christ is born to

the world, a teacher of forgiveness, of compassion, of almighty love to all that is.

You may now begin to see how the entire matter of the story of Jesus is all tangled up, partly by those who so arranged the situation and partly by reason of the lack of modern understanding of ancient ways and institutions. We see, therefore, that the Christian story of Jesus is a series of symbolic scriptures written in symbolic form and style, not pretending to be an accurate personal history, but trying to convey a truth to men, a spiritual bait; trying to convey to men a mystic Hope and Call under the guise of allegory and symbolology, so that men in taking this bait would discover that their minds were fascinated and their hearts turned to the Light; and thus, in all probability, they would come and seek for initiation, as the old expression had it: they would come to the door of a temple and “knock” and “ask.” Such was the old way of making a public Appeal or Call to “come up higher” and to develop the spiritual part of the human constitution.

### III

## THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Jesus the Syrian avatāra did not teach anything new. What he did was to point once again to the old, old pathway to the spiritual life: the pathway to wisdom and spiritual power. And he told his followers how and what they might achieve by following this pathway, so that ultimately they could become such as he was — such as he was so far as wisdom and power went; for in the heart of the heart of every human being there is a divinity, his own inner god, which Christians of a mystical turn of mind today call the immanent Christ.

Therefore each one of you has it within the power of his will and of his choice to follow this pathway that the great seers and sages of the past ages have trodden, and to become like unto them. This inspiring teaching lay at the basis of the reason for choosing such a great individual and weaving around the legends of his personality as he appeared on earth a mystical tale describing in symbolic form what took place in the chamber of initiation.

Every one of these great sages and seers, whether he was the Buddha-Gautama of India, or Lao-Tse of China, or Śaṅkarācārya of India again, or Jesus, or Empedocles, or Pythagoras, or Apollonius of Tyana: any one of the numerous host of them all taught the same fundamental doctrines which therefore were identic. What were some of these teachings? “Man, Know thyself!” For self-knowledge — the knowledge of the higher spiritual self — is the pathway of wisdom, of understanding, of light, of peace, of power; and it comes to man through self-forgetfulness, and self-forgetfulness is the mystic knocking at the door of the initiation chamber of the temple. You cannot express universal powers, you cannot manifest the divinity within you (because that divinity is entirely impersonal) if your mind and heart are restricted and imprisoned by your personal desires. You must expand your nature and open it in order to let the sunlight of the spirit stream into you. Therefore self-forgetfulness and impersonality mean the gaining of wisdom and great and holy power.

Another one of their teachings was that every human being, every entity anywhere, is a child of the universe. The universe is his

or its home. A man is *de facto* as much at home in the starry spaces as he is here on this planet earth; and thus the great seers and sages also taught that it is possible for a man to pass from sphere to sphere, from plane to plane, from solar system to solar system, as the cycles of evolution roll by; and that his sojourn on earth is like the putting up at a tavern or at an inn for a day-night.

This noble teaching evokes a realization of the essential oneness of all that is; for we are of the substance of the universe — each one of us its child, an inseparable part of it; and therefore are we at home everywhere and remain so throughout endless Duration.

How this one teaching cuts the very root of selfishness and therefore of evil doing. It gives strong and unanswerable proof of the natural reality of ethics: how ethics are founded on the very structure and operations of the universe, for what the All is, that we are; and what every man is, that is also the Boundless. Bone of its bone is man, heart of its heart, blood of its blood, substance of its substance. He is eternally at home in the Boundless All, spiritually united with all things; because all things come forth from the same Fountain of Being and all things return, after any individual cycle is ended, to that same fountain, only to issue forth again on a pilgrimage or course of evolution still more sublime than the preceding one.

Is it at all conceivable that the spiritual powers that be, which rule and inspire the universe and infill it with light and life, with guidance and intelligence, of which we human beings are inferior reflections, could exist as they most certainly do, and yet have left the entire human race from its appearance on earth without spiritual guidance and without spiritual teaching, until a certain Jewish boy was born some two thousand years ago? What a limited, insane, and therefore repulsive idea! The ancient doctrine of a god living in the core of the core of every human being tells us in vibrant notes a very different story; for our hearts and minds both, when we consult them apart from prejudices and misconception and miseducation, vibrate with instant sympathy to the doctrine of the divinity indwelling in the core of every being. How familiar is this doctrine of the indwelling god in our hearts! I tell you in all the earnestness of my soul that in the heart of the heart of every one of you abides a living and inspiring god, of which you as human beings are feeble expressions, feebly manifesting the divine powers of the individual divinity within. What does the Christian scripture say as to this

point: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of the living divinity and that the spirit divine dwelleth within you?”

Jesus the Avatāra is also said to have taught that every man could become like unto him, and as he did, so could they also manifest forth the divine powers within. But instead of accepting this sublime teaching among others of the beautiful doctrines and teachings of spiritual Christianity, men have battled for dogmas, opinions, words, phrases, and theories; so that certain medieval battlefields of European countries flowed with human gore, shed because men quarreled insanely about the meanings of words. How could it be otherwise? Lose the spirit, and you lose the vision, and in losing the vision you lose hold of truth, and compassion, and peace, and love, and brotherhood.

We look upon Jesus called the Christ as having been one of the theosophical teachers of his time. Our doctrines tell us of a long line of such teachers stretching far back into the dim mists of antiquity and reaching in inverse direction even to the present day — a long line of great seers and sages, each of whom has become one with his own inner divinity, with the god within, the immanent Christos, the inner Buddha; and having become so at one with the inner divinity, they knew all necessary knowledge because they saw it, and therefore could they teach the truth.

The teachings ascribed to Jesus in the New Testament are not new. You won't find a single new thing in all the alleged teaching of Jesus; and in that lies the splendid proof in one sense of the mission of Jesus on earth. He taught the same old wisdom-doctrines that were given to the first human protoplasts aeons and aeons and aeons in the distant evolutionary past, by the spiritual beings who descended among mankind and worked with them and guided them and taught them. And the man is either degenerate or willfully blind who, after studying the records of history, religious and philosophical, does not see the traces, the insignia, written across and through human life in spiritual flame, setting forth the ideals, the spirit, of what these great beings taught.

Jesus taught theosophy in a manner and in words appropriate to his era. He was the theosophical teacher of the people to whom he came, but a very great and noble one; for teachers vary among themselves, just as ordinary men do. There are the average teachers, then the greater, then the still greater, and finally the greatest, if you like to call them so; but their hierarchy does not stop there.

“Believe not,” said in substance the Syrian sage of old to his disciples, “men when they come to you and tell you: ‘Lo! I am the Christ, follow me!’ Or when another one comes and says: ‘Lo! I am the Christ, follow me!’ Believe them not.” But when one comes before you, in the name of the Christ-spirit, and tells you to follow truth whose ringing tones are heard in every normal heart of man, and who speaks in the name of the god within, in the name of the inner Christ, in the name of the inner Buddha, then, said in substance the Syrian sage, “He is my own. Follow him.”

## IV

### THE STORY OF JESUS — A MYSTERY-TALE

The entire story of Jesus is a Mystery-tale setting forth in dramatic form certain very important events which took place in initiation chambers or crypts; and the parables included in this Mystery-tale also referred very definitely, if briefly, to certain of the fundamental teachings given to the neophytes at such times.

A study of the lives of the great seers and sages of past times will reveal more or less exactly the same entanglements of thought and circumstances that are so easily discernible in the Christian story of Jesus. The very names of most if not all of these great seers and sages have been covered around with allegory and symbol; myths have been told about them: in a few cases they are alleged to have been born of a virgin or born in some other mysterious way, and to have lived and taught, moving human hearts of men by their works of marvel; and, after finishing their teaching, finally passing away in some mysterious manner.

Furthermore, as the initiatory cycle in the case of individual men simply copied the grand term of cosmic existence, therefore does the Christian New Testament in its symbolic allegory and imagery, in addition to being a covered and undisclosed tale of the initiation crypt, likewise set forth the imbodiment of the cosmic spirit in material existence.

Every country had its schools of initiation, its schools of the great Mysteries; and these mysteries were closely guarded and kept very secret indeed. It was the habit in those days to choose some great human being who had taught men, and around that individual to weave a web of symbolic teaching, setting forth — so that ordinary men in reading could understand but yet would be attracted to spiritual things — what actually took place in the initiation chamber.

That is what happened in the case of Jesus called the Christos. Consequently, the sayings of the four books called the Gospels were not written for *historical* truth but *symbolic* truth.

“Christos” is a Greek word which means one who has been anointed. This is a direct reference, a direct allusion, to what happened during the celebration of the ancient Mysteries. Unction



or anointing was one of the acts performed during the working of the rites of those ancient Mysteries in the countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. The Hebrew word for an anointed one is *Māshīāhh*, meaning exactly the same thing as the Greek word “Christos” — the “Anointed.”

It is of course well known that the Jews were even then expecting and still expect the coming of their “Messiah,” which is a common way of misspelling the Hebrew word *Māshīāhh*; and the mystical allusion here in this ancient Jewish belief is identical with the mystical and esoteric meaning that the word Christos contained when employed with an allusion to the rites of initiation.

It is stated in the words of the story of Jesus that he came riding towards and into Jerusalem on an ass and the foal of an ass; and thereafter came upon him his life-work in the earthly Jerusalem — material existence; leading, as the legend sets it forth, to his arrest, his trial before the Roman Prefect, Pontius Pilate, and to his death.

In the Oriental mystical cycle of the Hither East, of what is now called Asia Minor, the planet Saturn was frequently mystically called an “ass,” or rather the ass represented that planet in mystical symbolology. And in equivalent symbolology the “foal of the ass” was this Earth, because the ancient seers said that this physical globe Earth was under the direct formative influence of the planet Saturn. When you recollect also that the cyclical peregrinations of the monad take place strictly according to law and order in the solar system, and according to set routes, running from one planet to another; when you recollect also that the earthly Jerusalem according to the Jewish symbolology was this Earth, as the heavenly Jerusalem according to the Christian symbolology was the existence in spiritual spheres and the goal of human evolutionary attainment, you may begin to have a clearer idea of what I am briefly and in part trying to tell you.

The spiritual soul rides into “Jerusalem” — material existence — on an ass, meaning Saturn, and the foal of an ass, meaning this Earth; and the monad, the Christ-spirit, descending into matter thus, is crucified on the cross of matter, that is to say is betrayed and crucified, following the Platonic imagery of the ancients.

The one thing you should always be on guard against is the reading of any line of these Christian Scriptures as recounting an actual historical physical event. Every *main* thought or idea in the Christian Scriptures is allegorical, and refers directly to the cycle of

initiation and to some of the teachings given during the initiation ceremonies.

Let us now turn to an important aspect of the mystical story of Jesus. Remember one scene, as it is given in the Christian scriptures, told in all four Gospels in various fashion, setting forth how, according to the Christian Gospel story, Jesus, after he was betrayed and when brought before Pilate, received the unconscious homage of that Roman official — “I see no fault in this man.” But as it was the custom of that day, says the Christian narrative, to release a political prisoner to the Jews on the Feast of the Passover, Pilate is stated to have said to the accusers of Jesus: “Whom will ye that I release unto you, Barabbas — or Jesus who is called the Christ?” And they said: “Barabbas.”

Now here is a very interesting and significant point of the narrative. In some of the old manuscripts of the Christian New Testament, the full name of the so-called “robber” Barabbas is given as Jesus Barabbas. As Jesus means “Savior” and Barabbas is a compound word which means “son of the father,” when we remember that the name of the Christian Savior is given as Jesus and that he also is frequently alluded to in a vague way as the son of a divine father, we find not a little of interest in these mystically significant facts. “Whom will ye that I release unto you: Jesus, son of the Father, or Jesus whom ye call the Anointed?” We have here therefore two Jesuses — two saviors, because remember the word Jesus means savior. Therefore: Whom will ye (according to the esoteric rendering) that I shall release unto you for freedom, although having offended your man-made laws? Jesus, the son of the father — the inferior part of a human being — or Jesus the anointed of the divine Spirit? And the legend states that the answer was: Barabbas. Give us the man Barabbas.

Let me now carry you on a little farther in our mystical story, reminding you again that the entire story of Jesus as given in the New Testament is an esoteric or mystical tale setting forth in mystical form what took place in the initiation chambers — initiation signifying the dying of the lower man, so that the higher nature of the neophyte could thereafter be released; and further that the postulant, when he had finished his three-days’ initiation trial, might go forth “anointed,” or as one who had received the unction or anointing in the Mysteries.

They took Barabbas, the Jesus Barabbas, the lowest part of the man considered as a human being, and they “crucified” the divinity

within — not a crucifixion according to the Roman way of punishing by hanging on a physical cross until death mercifully came; but the neophyte was taken and laid upon a cruciform couch, a bed in the shape of a cross, and there he lay in a trance for three days and three nights, and thereafter arose as a Messiah, a Christos, an anointed one. Remember the Christian tale of Jesus rising from the tomb three days after his crucifixion, commemorated by the Christian Easter. These terms are all esoteric terms, every one of them.

Jesus is stated to have said, according to the story in *The Gospel according to Matthew*: “I come but unto the lost sheep of Israel.” What does this Hebrew word Israel mean? It is more accurately written in the Hebrew *Yiśrā’ēl*, a word derived from a Hebrew verbal root *śārā*, which means “to rule,” “to govern,” “to command,” and also by a connection of sense “to struggle to attain.” Consequently, the phrase, the *Bnei Yiśrā’ēl*, meaning “the sons of Israel,” was a phrase used exactly in the same sense in which the Hindus spoke of the *Āryas*, meaning the noble, the elevated, the superior, the rulers, as contrasted with the *Mlecchas* or inferiors or outcastes; and exactly in the same sense again in which the Greeks spoke of the *Aristoi*, the aristocrats — not meaning aristocrats in the modern social sense, but signifying men who were aristocrats in heart and mind, built by natural evolution to be better ones, the evolved ones, the superior, the grand men, no matter what their physical birth was; and just as the Hindu spoke of the *Mlecchas*, so did the Greeks speak of the *Barbaroi*, barbarians. In a similar way did the Jews speak of all those who were not *Bnei Yiśrā’ēl* as outsiders, or Gentiles, etc. Note also that the alleged statement of Jesus says that he came to teach the “lost sheep” of Israel, mystically signifying those by nature ready for and capable of esoteric training, but who had not yet received it and therefore were wandering in the outer darkness of material life.

The fact that the story of Jesus is a story of initiation accounts for the inconsistencies and the difficulties and the contradictions and the readings of those scriptures which still exist. This mystical and esoteric tale is a very interesting and a fascinating one, for it was in fact a tale told around the ideal figure of a great seer and sage. For Jesus as a man was quite different from the esoteric or mystical or mystery-figure discerned as the Jesus of the scriptures, an ideal figure, one represented as having attained quasi-divinity by having passed through the initiatory rites then used in Palestine, and who

because of this had become a “son of the spiritual Sun,” a son of Father-Sun.

We can say today that men are divided into two classes: first, into those who are spiritually “dead” although alive in the body, the “living dead” as Pythagoras neatly put it; and, second, into the “sons of Israel” — in other words those who are the natural-born spiritual rulers of men, or who became such through initiation. Let us also remember that just as the Hindus and the Greeks spoke of themselves as being “superior” men, the Āryas and the Aristocrats, doubtless partly from motives of racial pride; so the Hebrews in exactly the same way and doubtless from the same motives, spoke of themselves generally as being the typical *Bnei Yiśrā’el*, “the sons of Israel” or the natural rulers or superiors of other men. Such racial or national pride and prejudice is a psychological phenomenon that may be observed in the history of every distinct people or racial strain, and exists even today in the foolish and blind racial or national pride and prejudices with which we are all, alas, so well acquainted.

## V

### THE AVATĀRA-TEACHING

In the preceding chapters the foundations or key of the esoteric or mystical story of Jesus have been outlined. Now let us ask the question: Who was Jesus as a matter of fact? Was Jesus man-god, great seer, or myth? The answer is that Jesus was an avatāra.

*Avatāra* is a Sanskrit word. It means the descent of a divine being, not into human flesh, but as it were *towards* incarnation in human flesh. It means the overshadowing, or more correctly speaking the over-illuminating, of some great and noble man by a divinity, by a god. So that, to use ordinary language, an avatāra is an incarnate god because the noble human so chosen expresses through himself some more or less large part of the Over-illuminator.

Jesus was an avatāra, a manifestation through the form of a human being, of a god, of a divinity — one of the spiritual beings controlling our part of the stellar universe.

An avatāra is one who has a combination of three elements in his being: an inspiring divinity; a highly evolved intermediate nature or soul, the channel of that inspiring divinity; and a very pure, clean, physical body. An avatāra is a partial manifestation of a divinity in a human being, and is not the manifestation of a man's own inner god; for when this latter happens, then we have among us a *Buddha*. This is a technical term meaning an "Awakened One," one who manifests the Divinity which is the very core of the core of his own being. But an avatāra is one who is not the reincarnation of a reincarnating ego, and therefore not a unitary being as ordinary humans are, but is one who appears as a great glory among men, and who does an especial work on earth. An avatāra as a unit never has a prior birth, nor a succeeding reincarnation.

The Avatāra Jesus, for instance, will never have a birth on earth again, in other words will never reincarnate; for such is an avatāra: a divinity manifesting through the psychological apparatus of one of the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion and Peace who gives himself for that purpose, in order that the sublime powers of divinity thus manifesting may show themselves among men and teach them.

Obviously, then, such a particular composite entity, such a spiritual-psychological-physical composition, is not the reincar-

nation of a preceding unitary entity coming over from other lives as a reincarnating ego and having future reincarnations when the present earth-life is ended, as is the case with all other human beings. Jesus as an entity never existed before, and never will exist again. It is not a case of reincarnation here, but the case of an avatāra: the incarnation, in certain very mystical circumstances, of a Ray of a Divinity, of the Fire of a Divinity, for the purposes of cyclic teaching. The coming of the Ray flashes across the horizons of human history like a great Light, and then is gone.

But what happens? Acts have been done, teachings have been given, so that the whole destiny of races of men perhaps has been changed. Who is responsible? That part of the avatāra which was the intermediate nature of the avatāric being who lived. An Avatāra, as said, consists of three things: a physical body; an intermediate part; and a ray — actually the spiritual fire of a god, of a divine being, working through this intermediate part; and both then expressing themselves through the physical body.

An avatāra's intermediate part is furnished by one of the Masters of Wisdom who loaned, as it were, his own soul for this cyclic work: who loaned his own intermediate nature, so that the holy body of the child could receive the spiritual fire from the god or divinity. Therefore the Master of Wisdom who loaned himself, takes upon himself the load of responsibility for what has been done. That is where the karma inheres: the consequences, and therefore the responsibility.

Thus then, as Jesus was the manifestation, or rather the channel for the manifestation, of a portion of the powers of a divinity, he was a man-god or a god-man; he was of course also a great sage and seer at the same time, for sage he certainly was and seer he most emphatically was, for he had wisdom and he "saw."

There are two classes of great human spiritual luminaries known as the avatāras\* and the buddhas of compassion. The avatāra is a sublime natural mystery, not a mystery in the sense of inability to understand it, but a mystery in the sense that the average person has never heard the explanation; while a Buddha is one who has attained the lofty spiritual stature of buddhahood through self-devised efforts lasting through many lives; and thus, in one sense, is really — if the phrase can be used — superior even to an avatāra.

\* Of these unusual beings there are also two kinds — firstly, human avatāras, of which Jesus and Śaṅkarācārya of India were types, and secondly, non-

human avatāras, technically called “aupapāduka” avatāras. This latter kind refers only to what may be called a cosmic mystery. *Aupapāduka* is a Sanskrit compound word which literally means “parentless” or “without a parent,” or more accurately “one who does not follow” as a son follows his father in direct serial succession. This latter class of avatāras would take too long to explain in a short treatise. The student interested in this teaching is referred to my work entitled *Occult Glossary*.

Jesus belonged to the first class, the avatāra, and was therefore, as said, a direct manifestation of a portion of the powers of a divinity working through the psychological apparatus of one of the Masters of Compassion and Wisdom and Peace, who gave himself for that purpose, in order that at that cyclical time, which then had arrived on the whirling wheel of destiny, the particular divinity involved in the case could show at least somewhat of its sublime powers among men and teach them, and once more point out the way of truth and of light and of compassion. For the Wise Ones do not come irregularly, fortuitously, or by chance. They come at stated periods because everything in the universe moves according to order and law. Consequently those who know how to calculate need not even consult the stars. They know that at a certain period after a great soul has appeared among men some other great soul will come.

There was no reincarnation at all in the case of Jesus the Avatāra, because he was not at all the reincarnation of a reincarnating ego. An avatāra is what may truly be termed an act of supreme white magic. The Masters of Wisdom and Compassion and Peace knew that the time had arrived for the manifestation of a divinity among men, an actual manifestation of one of the gods with which the universe, and in this case more particularly the solar system, is filled full. One of this noble company, of this Brotherhood of Masters of Wisdom, gave himself for the purpose of enabling this divinity to manifest through him, and overshadowed the human which was to be born — in perfectly normal human fashion — in Palestine as a little child: enlivened and inspired that boy; and then, when the time came, when adulthood had been reached, in one of the sanctuaries of the Mysteries which existed in those days, Jesus, then or later called by that name, was “baptized,” a technical word — this meaning that he was “raised” from manhood into divinity by the “descent” or “avatāra” of the divinity upon him which thereafter worked through him.

Jesus the Avatāra was one who followed all the esoteric teaching of his time in his youth; he was initiated in the Mystery

Schools of Syria, of the Hither East, in his early manhood. He was one who had been “crucified, dead, buried, rose from the dead on the third day, and ascended to his Father in Heaven.” Every word of this recital is taken *literatim*, literally, from the language of the Initiation chamber — an example of the use of the mystical tongue before alluded to. *How then is it to be interpreted?*



## VI

### THE CRUCIFIXION-MYSTERY: The Spear Thrust, and the Cry on the Cross

The crucifixion itself was one of the phases of the ancient ceremonial rite. The neophyte in trance was laid upon a cruciform couch, a couch in the form of a cross, with arms outstretched; and for three long days and nights — and sometimes for a longer period, such as six or even nine days and nights — the spirit of the neophyte passed through the spheres of cosmic being, thus learning at first hand the mysteries of the universe. For I tell you truly, there is a way of unloosing the spirit of man from the trappings and chains of the lower part of him; so that, free, it may pass as a pilgrim from planet to planet and from planet to sun before it returns to the earth-body that it had temporarily left.

In this connection there is an exceedingly interesting, very profoundly mystical and suggestive passage from one of the Scandinavian Eddas, taken from what is known as Odin's Rune-Song. It is as follows:

I know that I hung on a wind-rocked tree, nine whole nights,  
With a spear wounded and to Odin offered — myself to myself —  
On that tree of which no one knows from what root it springs.

In these few lines this passage from the Edda gives another version, and a most interesting one, of the "crucifixion"-mystery. The reference also to "hanging on a tree" is most suggestive, because this very phrase was frequently used in the early Christian writings as meaning "hanging on the cross." In this Scandinavian mystical story, the "tree" is here evidently the cosmic tree, which is a mystical way of saying the imbodyed universe; for the universe among the ancient of many nations was portrayed or figured under the symbol of a tree of which the roots sprang from the divine heart of things. The trunk and the branches and the branchlets and the leaves were the various planes and worlds and spheres of the cosmos; the fruit of this cosmic tree containing the seeds of future "trees," being the entities which had attained through evolution the end of their evolutionary journey, such as men and the gods — themselves

universes in the small, and destined in the future to become cosmic entities when the cycling wheel of time shall have turned through long aeons on its majestic round.

This Scandinavian version of the cosmic crucifixion, which crucifixion is also mentioned by Plato in a Greek form of it, refers to the cosmic Logos “crucified” in and upon the cosmic world-tree of which that same Logos is the enlivening and intellectual spirit.

All initiation, so far as pictorial rite or figurative symbolism went, portrayed the mystic structure and operations and secrets of the hid universe as expressed in the acts and words of the Master initiator and of the neophyte.

The “spear thrust” was one of the parts of the initiatory rite or ceremony, having its own particular signification, but it was not a physical act causing a physical wound. In some of the initiatory ceremonials, instead of a spear being used, some other instrument such as a dagger was employed in the symbolic rite; but the fundamental meaning in either case was the same, to wit, that the man gave up his lower personal being as a sacrifice, so that the power and influence of the god within might have free flow through the entirety of the constitution of the man when he left the “chamber of light” after the initiation was completed. The spear thrust signified the dying of the personal, so that the inner spiritual man could be freed, untrammelled, unhindered.

The last words, as given from the cross, are found in the first two Gospels, in *Matthew 27:46* and in *Mark 15:34*: *Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani*. These words, called “the cry on the cross,” have been translated into Greek in the Christian New Testament as follows, and this is the English rendering of the Greek translation: “My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?” This is a false translation into Greek, although correct in English from the Greek, because these words in the original Hebrew mean “My God! My God! How thou hast glorified me!” For these words are good ancient Hebrew, and the verb *šēvaḥ*\* means “to glorify,” certainly not “to forsake.” But in the twenty-second Psalm of the Old Testament in the first verse, there are the following words in the original: *’Ēlī ’Ēlī lamāh ’āzavtānī* which mean “My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?”

\* The entire point of this so-called Cry from the Cross lies in the meanings and force of the Hebrew verb *šēvaḥ* for this verb signifies several things, as, for instance, “to bring peace to,” “to glorify,” “to soothe,” and all with the atmosphere of consequential reward, or perhaps rather the fruits of some

notable spiritual and intellectual achievement. The other verb mentioned in the text, *‘āzav*, means “to abandon” or “to forsake.”

This is proof that the Christian Scriptures are written in symbolic form and with mystical allusions. But why in the name of holy truth should the writers of these two Gospels use words which are good Hebrew and yet give a perfectly wrong translation of them? Because the intent was to hide the truth and yet to tell a truth — typically in line with the mystical atmosphere and manner of the ancients when dealing with the Mysteries. Both the original Hebrew meaning and the wrong Greek translation are right when properly understood. The personal man, when it dies, always cries “My God! Why hast thou forsaken me to become dust?” But the higher, the nobler, part of the man, the spiritual man within, exclaims with a shout of joy: “My God! My God! How thou dost glorify me!” This last was an exact rendering of the actual reaction of the neophyte when reaching glorification during initiation. It was the symbolic cry of every neophyte initiated by the great Teacher into the grander life.

It is also a proof, to one who knows how to read it, of the symbolic character of the writings of the Christian Gospels: although the meanings were all tangled up, they were deliberately so tangled, so that the real inner teaching could not be received by every curious eye which ran along and tried to read; and they contained just enough of mystical thought-suggestion to be a bait to men whose inner character, whose inner being, had begun to awaken; so that reading these things, seeing these strange discrepancies and contradictions, their interest would be aroused — and they would come to the Temple door and “knock,” give the right “knock,” and enter in.

These initiations, it should be understood, take place even today, and they take place at a certain time of the year; and when these initiations occur, the neophyte who has passed through the rite successfully, and who has gained his godhood in his manhood, is in so elevated and ecstatic a condition that for a short time this inner divinity streams through his being like the flaming splendor of a sun, so that in very truth, as the ancients put it, he is clothed with the sun. When this sublime event takes place during initiation, the whole spiritual being of the man answers as it were with a cry of joy: “Oh! My God within! my Divinity at the core of my being, how thou dost glorify me!” — the very words that are alleged to have been used by Jesus on the cross.

Jesus the Christ was one who was laid on the cruciform couch of which I have spoken to you, and who successfully passed the dread test; and after three days he rose from the ones “who were dead,” which is the real meaning of the phrase “from the dead” — not from death — as a Christ.

The Christ within him was then manifest. This last and supreme phase of this initiation brought forth the inner god, so that he taught his fellowmen as one having authority, because he spoke from the fountain of truth welling up within himself. That fountain of truth is the path of the spiritual selfhood, which is your link with the universe: that path leading ever more and more inwards, more and more inwards and inwards, until the very heart of the universe is realized to be one with yourself. Every human being in his spiritual nature is an inseparable part of the universe, its child: so to say bone of its bone, flesh of its flesh, blood of its blood, life of its life. How can it be otherwise? You cannot live outside of the universe. You are a part of it. And this is what the ancient sages of Hindustan taught when they spoke of the *ātman* or spiritual-divine self. They said: *Ātmānam ātmanā paśya*, “See the Self by means of the self”: that is to say, understand divinity by and through the divinity within you; for there is no other way of understanding divinity than through your own divine part. Does the swine understand the man his keeper? No, because the swine has not reached humanhood. But man understands man; and man by means of the god within can understand divinity by the same rule. Greatness recognizes greatness. Genius responds to the call of genius. Divinity recognizes divinity.

Once you have followed this inner path, this spiritual selfhood, to your own divine essence, and then grow to realize that your nature is of the very fabric of the universe, then you will feel that all things are yours because they are you. Infinity and eternity are but words; but within, you will have the actual realization of your oneness with the frontierless, Boundless All, in frontierless, Boundless Duration.

No, this sage, this Syrian seer, was not crucified, literally and physically. A crucified god is an anomaly in human thought. But a crucified neophyte or aspirant: yes, in the sense in which I have tried to set the matter forth. And there is another mystical use of the term “crucifixion”: a man may be crucified by his own passions, torn and rent instead of standing like a man, free, a free man. That is a very real and yet mystical crucifixion; and when you know somewhat of the inner Christ, you shall attain freedom; and all the boundless

universe shall be your playground, not merely in thought, not merely in imagination, not by sitting in your armchair or lying on your couch and thinking that it is so and so, but by actual experience; for a man can loosen his spirit and go forth with it even to and passing beyond the portals of the Sun.

The ancient Mysteries were guarded with extreme care, and when any reference was made to them — the penalties for betrayal of the secrets of initiation being extremely severe — such reference to them was made in trope, by metaphor, by figure of speech, by fairy tale, by myths, by a story. Nothing was so disguised that another initiate could not read it. The truth was said there, but only those who had the key to this mystic language could understand it. To those who had not this key, the reference or the recital seemed to be a mere myth or strange legend.

The man Jesus was truly a “Christos,” simply because that Palestinian avatāra manifested the divinity of which he was the carrier. Every human being has a similar but not identic end before him as his destiny — to wit, the manifestation of his own inner god, his “Father in Heaven.” (Mark the distinction between the avatāra on the one hand, and on the other hand, one who becomes a buddha, the manifestation or carrier of his *own* inner god.) This then is the message of Christmas. Forget in its literal sense the old story of the babe in the manger and all the other legendary decorations given (which pious but unwise men gave) to the grandest story in human history in order to carry over easily into the minds of the uninstructed the story of a spiritual initiation not alone applicable to Jesus but to a long line of great sages who preceded him and who followed him; forget the literal wording of all this, and remember that the essential meaning of the Christ story is the living Christ within you, born anew at every time when a man surrenders to his spiritual self, to the god within him. Then the Christ is “born anew.”

## POSTSCRIPT

*While the manuscript of this booklet was in composition at the press the author's attention was called to an article written in French by H.P.B. and sent by her to the French Theosophical magazine, LE LOTUS, where it appeared in No. 13, issue of April, 1888. An extremely apposite series of remarks bearing directly on the theme of the present booklet was made by H.P.B. in this article, and because of their intrinsic interest these her remarks are here reproduced in translation.*

For me, Jesus Christ, that is to say the Man-God of the Christians, a copy of the Avatars of all countries, from the Hindu Krishna as well as the Egyptian Horus, was never a historical person. He is a deified personification of the glorified type of the great Hierophants of the Temples\* and his story told in the New Testament is an allegory, assuredly containing profound esoteric truths, but an allegory. It is interpreted by the help of the *seven keys*, similarly to the Pentateuch. This theory of the seven keys, the Church, according to the Abbé Roca, has simply reduced to three “without disfiguring it”: but, on the contrary, it has fabricated three false keys which do not open anything. The legend of which I speak is founded, as I have demonstrated over and over again, in my writings and my notes, on the existence of a personage called Yehōšūa‘ [meaning “YHWH (or Yahweh) is salvation” or “YHWH saves”] (Anglicized Jehoshua then Joshua, from which “Jesus” has been made) born at Lud or Lydda about 120 years before the modern era. And if this fact is denied — to which I can hardly object — one must resign oneself to regard the hero of the drama of Calvary as a myth pure and simple. But, in spite of all the desperate researches made during long centuries, if we place on one side the witness of the “Evangelists,” *i.e.*, unknown men whose identity has never been established, and that of the *Fathers* of the Church, interested fanatics, neither history nor profane tradition, nor official documents, nor the contemporaries of the *soi-disant* drama, are able to provide one single serious proof of the historical and real existence, not only of the Man-God but even of him called Jesus of Nazareth, from the year 1 to the year 33. All is darkness and silence.

\* Every act of the Jesus of the New Testament, every word attributed to him, every event related of him during the three years of the mission that he was made to accomplish, rests on the program of the Cycle of Initiation, the cycle itself founded on the Precession of the Equinoxes and the Signs of the Zodiac. When the Hebrew Gospel not *according to* but *by* Matthew the Gnostic, of whom they have made an Evangelist, — the gospel of which (saint) Jerome spoke in the Fourth century and which he refused to translate on the pretext that it was falsified (!) by Seleucus, the Manichean disciple (*Vide Hieronymus: De viris illust.*, cap. 3) — when, I say, that original document shall have been translated, if ever it is found, and the Christian Churches will have at least *one* document not falsified, then one may speak of the “Life of Jesus” of the events of which “no one is ignorant.” In the meantime, and without losing time in disputing about the subject of the century in which Jesus or Jehoshua lived, one fact is certain, which is that the Occultists are prepared to prove that even the sacramental words that are attributed to him on the cross have been disfigured and that they mean quite another thing than what the Greek translation renders. . . .





ADDITIONAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM:

*The Esoteric Tradition*, by G. de Purucker:

Jesus and the Mysteries, pp. 17-18

Avatāra and Buddha, pp. 491-493

Birth-date of Jesus, pp. 609-610

Special festivals, Epiphany, etc., p. 603 to end of chapter

*Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, by G. de Purucker:

Sermon on the Mount, p. 254

The Crown of Thorns, p. 255

Jesus, a Mystery Story, pp. 260-261

Avatāra and Buddha, pp. 276-277

*Occult Glossary*, by G. de Purucker

Look up individual words.

*The Encyclopedic Theosophical Glossary*:

Look up individual words at:

[theosociety.org/pasadena/etgloss/etg-hp.htm](http://theosociety.org/pasadena/etgloss/etg-hp.htm)

*The Collation of Theosophical Glossaries*:

Look up individual words at:

[theosocietyamsec.org](http://theosocietyamsec.org) under Publications

