

**THEOSOPHY
AND
CHRISTIANITY**

&

**THEOSOPHICAL
LIGHT
ON THE
CHRISTIAN BIBLE**

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ON THE
CHRISTIAN BIBLE**

BY

HENRY TRAVERS EDGE

**COMPILED AND EDITED BY
SCOTT J. OSTERHAGE**

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PREFACE

Henry Travers Edge (1865-1946) was born in England, met H. P. Blavatsky there in 1887, and was a personal pupil of hers. He published *Theosophical Light on the Christian Bible* before 1900, and *Theosophy and Christianity* in 1945. The two articles are somewhat duplicative, but do have some different thoughts, and are presented in a different manner.

Dr. Edge ended up at the Theosophical Society Headquarters at Point Loma in 1899, where he taught Latin and Greek, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Geology. He also conducted classes in *Isis Unveiled*, *The Secret Doctrine*, and the Christian Bible.

From its inception, the Theosophical Society has in part worked to explain the original esoteric meaning of the Christian scriptures, as well as those of all faiths. The Bible — not assembled into its somewhat modern form until a few centuries after Jesus' lifetime, with most of the New Testament not being written down for decades after he is said to have lived — has and still does occupy many forms. There are over 100 different renditions of the Bible today, and it has been consistently modified from its beginnings over the last 2000 years. With those alterations, adjustments, and amendments have come many misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and mistranslations. Many of those were intentionally modified to appease, support, or bolster “church” “authorities.”

Dr. Edge has gone to the teachings of the archaic wisdom religion which is the source of all the major religions. Using this key, he explains the true meanings of many of the mistaken “Christian” teachings of today.

My hope is that you will find a foothold which is unshakeable by which you may come to a deeper understanding of such a great system of thought.

Scott J. Osterhage
Summer 2025
Tucson, Arizona

NOTES ON SOME WORDS

1. The word *occult* is used herein, and it often alarms or offends some people. Taking the first definition in the dictionary, it means simply *hidden* to theosophists. From the back cover of *Studies in Occultism*, Theosophical University Press:

“The term OCCULT has noble but largely forgotten origins. Derived from the Latin *occultus* meaning “hidden,” it properly defines anything which is undisclosed, concealed, or not easily perceived. Early theologians, for example, spoke of “the occult judgments of God,” while “occult philosopher” was a designation for the pre-Renaissance scientist who sought the unseen causes regulating nature’s phenomena. In astronomy, the term is still used when one stellar body *occults* another by passing in front of it, temporarily hiding it from view.

“Writing a century ago, when the word had not acquired today’s mixed connotations, H. P. Blavatsky defined OCCULTISM as “altruism pure and simple” — the divine wisdom or hidden theosophy within all religions. Occultism is founded on the principle that Divinity is concealed — transcendent yet immanent — within every living being. As a spiritual discipline occultism is the renunciation of selfishness; it is the “still small path” which leads to wisdom, to the right discrimination between good and evil, and the practice of altruism.”

2. The word *Race* has nothing separative to do with ethnicity, nationalities, or colors of human groups. It refers to the waves of incarnating humanity, *races*, described in *The Secret Doctrine* and other theosophical works, which describe the great groups of humanity which have evolved and are evolving on this planet.

3. *Lucifer* is also a word many believe is a name for the *Devil*. As theosophists understand it, it means *light-bringer*, or *light-bearer*. More will be explained in the appropriate sections.

4. While this book retains a masculine tone because of when it was written, it is important to remember that, according to theosophical understanding, our true nature is beyond gender. We are spiritual beings, temporarily experiencing a gendered existence — of any or no particular type—in the material world. This book should be read with that perspective in mind.

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THEOSOPHY AND CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTORY

Theosophy is the essential truth underlying all religions and does not recognize any one religion as being supreme over the others or as the last word of truth. It is not hostile to Christianity, but finds itself obliged to combat many things which it considers alien to the genuine Christian gospel and which have gradually crept in since that gospel was originally proclaimed. Among these is the idea that Christianity is paramount among religions or that it is a final revelation of divine truth, superseding other faiths. This idea is contrary to the truth and is becoming more and more difficult to maintain. For this there are two principal reasons. 1) Ancient religions have been widely and intensively studied, especially those of India, which have become accessible through the knowledge of Sanskrit. 2) Intercommunication between nations has grown so wide and intimate. These two causes combine to prevent the exclusive attitude of mind which was possible in past times. But it is hard to give up cherished habits and, moreover, people imagine that if they surrender the paramouncy of Christianity they will be surrendering religion itself. And so we find strange expedients resorted to in the attempt to account for the existence in more ancient religions of so many of the doctrines and rituals which were supposed to be peculiar to Christianity. The Abbe Huc, in his celebrated *Travels in Tartary, Tibet, and China*, describes how he found among the Tibetan priests not only many characteristic doctrines of the Roman Church but even many of their rituals, vestures, and sacred implements. His explanation is that the Devil thus anticipated Christianity in order to deceive mankind; to which he adds a theory that early Christian missionaries may have penetrated to Tibet. A recent improvement on this is found in a theory which we have just seen in a book published under the auspices of a well-known Christian propagation society, to the effect that the lofty

doctrines found in India's sacred books were due to the work of the Holy Spirit, who thus prepared mankind for the "greater things than these" to come in the future. But still it rests with him to show that the Christianity which came was really greater.

There are various brands of broad-church Christianity, which seek to enlarge the scope of the religions so as to take in many things now known to man but which did not occupy the minds of our forefathers; but the difficulty with them is to enlarge the gospel sufficiently without destroying its identity as Christianity; and again, if a body of water be widened without increasing its volume, the result is to make it shallower.

At the Church Congress in October, 1935, the Very Rev. W. R. Matthews, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, said that until recently almost the whole of Christendom would have said that there is one revelation of God, and that it is to be found in the Bible; but (he continued) the supreme revelation is not wholly external and we cannot recognize the "Word made Flesh" unless the Word is within us. He went on to say:

God does not dictate from heaven a creed or articles of faith. He manifests Himself through the experience and personalities of His prophets and of His Son. The doctrines of the Church are formulas in which the revelation has been summed up, guarded and preserved. . . . It may be that more adequate expressions will be found hereafter for the spiritual heritage that they have been formed to express. . . . The Holy Spirit will guide us into new truth.

When such eminent and leading authorities are conceding so much, we can hardly be accused of being altogether unorthodox; we are merely pointing out some of the logical conclusions to which the Dean's admissions inevitably point.

These various attempts all tend to the confession that religions change with the times, that humanity progresses independently of them, and that they must keep up with the needs of humanity or else become a drag upon progress. Yet

we cannot on this account reject all religious truth and lapse into one of the forms of unbelief, atheism, or materialism. We must not throw away the substance with the outgrown form. An organized religious system, with its creed, its prescribed ritual, its church organization, is a spirit imbodyed in a form; and like every other organism, the form has to undergo continual change, though the spirit within may ever be the same. These are facts which cannot be disputed by anyone with a modicum of historical knowledge or an acquaintance with the general laws of growth and evolution.

But there can be only one truth. Religion itself, apart from creeds and churches, is a recognition and observance of the basic laws of the universe. These basic laws are also inherent in man himself, so that the real eternal and universal religion is based on the facts of human nature and must remain the same as long as man is man. The most essential truth is that man is a divine spirit incarnate in an animal body; that his salvation consists in subduing his lower nature by means of his higher; and that the true law of human conduct is that which is expressed in the Golden Rule. This truth lies at the base of all religions, and Christianity, so far from having originated it, or even improved it, has merely inherited it.

It is necessary to refer briefly to certain theosophical teachings which will be found more fully treated elsewhere, and one of these is the teaching as to the wisdom-religion or secret doctrine. This is knowledge concerning the deepest mysteries of nature and man, but in the present cycle of human evolution, it is unknown to mankind in general. During this cycle therefore it rests under the guardianship of the Masters of Wisdom, or the Great Lodge of initiates, whose function it is to preserve the sacred knowledge and to communicate it to the world at appropriate times and in appropriate places. They accomplish this work in several ways: one is by sending out a messenger from themselves, who appears among mankind, gathers a body of disciples, founds an esoteric school in which to give private instruction, and also gives exoteric teaching to the multitude.

“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*, 8:10

“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*, 4:33-4

But after the withdrawal of the teacher, the movement which he has started undergoes changes and degeneration. It falls under the influence of worldly motives and forces; it becomes formalized; it breaks up into schools and sects; it acquires various organic forms with churches, priesthood, and creeds. The process can be traced in the history of religions in general; it can be traced in Christianity, so that the Christianity of today is not in any of its forms the original gospel as given by the founder.

It will be well to say a few words about the attitude towards Christians which we here adopt. That attitude will be sympathetic, and not merely from feeling but from knowledge. For the writer, having been brought up in the Church of England and having in early life been a sincere Christian, is thereby qualified to speak with more sympathy and understanding than is sometimes the case with those who can view Christianity only from the outside. Moreover, there will not be the same likelihood of falling into the common forensic error of misrepresenting the case of one's opponent in a controversy, of comparing what is best in theosophy with what is worst in Christianity, or of attacking men of straw or flogging dead horses.

There is no wish to disturb the peace of those who find in Christianity, as they know it, all they need, and especially those who find in their faith the inspiration to a noble life. But there is a large and increasing number to whom our message may be welcome. The churches confess that they are losing their hold,

and there are more people than ever who find themselves unable to accept what they are taught, and who yet cannot throw over religion itself and lapse into infidelity. Such people are at a loss for an expedient; they may find some way of their own, or they may form movements; but in any case their efforts lack both definiteness and cooperation. These needs are supplied by theosophy; theosophy can justly claim to stand as a champion of Christianity by pointing to the true and original excellence of that religion and showing how to extract the essence from the extraneous matter that encumbers it.

We shall show, then, what are the essential truths of religion which change not with the times, cause no conflict between creeds and sects, and are enshrined in the human heart; and we shall trace these in Christianity, its doctrines, its forms, and its scriptures. Thereby we shall prove that Christianity is kin to the other great religions and to the greatest philosophical systems, and that there is enough external evidence to prove that it is one of the effluents of the great river of the wisdom-religion. We shall try to trace Christianity from its beginnings, through various changes, to its present forms, so far as that may be possible with imperfect knowledge and in a limited scope. The principal dogmas, articles of faith, and ritual observances must be considered, their real meaning shown by comparison with the corresponding elements in other religions, in philosophies, and in mythologies. It will be shown how the teachings ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels, as well as some of those of his apostles in the Epistles, appear in a new light as soon as we have the key to their interpretation; and how many of such teachings have remained obscure because we had not that key.

Various movements have been started, and exist today, for uniting the world's religions in common service, so that they may pool their efforts instead of contending with each other; and though such efforts are worthy of all praise and have achieved beneficial results, yet their shortcomings and the reasons for these will be clear in the light of what we are saying. Religions are one in essence, and different in external

form. The real way to unite them is to get back to the essence in each; attempts to bring about artificial union in externals are not so practicable. Moreover such attempts at unification are apt to take the form of eliminating from the common program the points of difference, so that what remains is a residue more or less vague and lifeless. Such a process resembles subtraction rather than addition; or, better, it is the attempt to find a common factor, which, as we know, becomes smaller in proportion to the multitude of the numbers whose common factor is to be found.

All religions have an esoteric basis beneath their exoteric form, and it is this which has so largely disappeared. Religions as they are do not satisfy the needs of human aspiration, for they leave out so large a part of what vitally concerns man. They are confined chiefly to ethical principles, but tell us nothing about the nature of the universe or the nature of man. Falling thus behind the age, they have allowed to grow up competing influences, such as natural science and abstract philosophy; and so we find the field of knowledge, which should be one, divided into compartments, either independent of each other or else conflicting.

The false antithesis between morals and knowledge, religion and science, righteousness and culture, has been one of the great banes of religion. A unification of the field of knowledge is much desired; a uniform law by which to live; a solid basis for ethics, morals, conduct, instead of dogmas which we cannot believe, or speculations and fads and cults innumerable. A person's real religion is what he lives by — whatever he may profess. Thus the real unification of religions is found, not by trying to force an external union, or by eliminating from them all points of difference and thus leaving a weak residue, but by getting back to the esoteric basis of religions and showing the common parentage of them all; in short, by reviving a knowledge of the ancient wisdom-religion.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL SKETCH

“PAGAN” ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY

In this section we give evidence to show that Christianity was not new, but derived from what went before; that its cardinal doctrines are held in common with older religions; and that many of its rites and dogmas are adopted from what is called pagan belief. Those people called Fundamentalists seek to go back to the true old gospel; but how far back do they propose to go, and just what point in history do they stop at? Let us take a few quotations from early writers on Christianity.

St. Augustine says:

The very thing which is now called the Christian religion, really was known to the ancients, nor was it wanting at any time from the beginning of the human race up to the time Christ came in the flesh; from which time the true religion, which has previously existed, began to be called Christian, and this in our days is the Christian religion, not as having been wanting in former times, but as having in later times received that name. — *Augustini Opera*, I, 12

Eusebius, another Father, though an ardent advocate of the new faith, is constrained to admit that the Christian religion was neither new nor strange, and that it was known to the ancients (*Ecclesiastical History*, see bk. i, ch. iv).

Justin Martyr, in defending Christianity before the Emperor Hadrian, is at pains to show its identity with Paganism.

By declaring the Word (*Logos*), the first begotten of God, our Master Jesus Christ, to be born of a virgin without any human mixture, to be crucified and dead and afterwards to have risen and ascended into heaven, we say no more than

what you say of those whom you call the sons of Jupiter . . . As to the objection of our Jesus being crucified, I say that suffering was common to all the aforementioned sons of Jupiter, only they suffered another kind of death. . . . As to his curing the lame and the paralytic and such as were cripples from birth, this is little more than what you say of your Aesculapius. — *Apology*, 1, chs. 21, 22

Ammonius Saccas says:

Christianity and Paganism, when rightly understood, differ in no essential points, but had a common origin, and are really one and the same thing.

The following quotation from the controversy between H. P. Blavatsky and the Abbe Roca, published in the French magazine *Le Lotus*, April 1888, is appropriate here:

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. . . . The legend of which I speak is founded . . . on the existence of a personage called Jehoshua (from which “Jesus” has been made) born at Lud or Lydda about 120 years before the modern era. . . . 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. Philo Judaeus, born before the Christian era . . . made several journeys to

Jerusalem. He went there to write the history of the religious sects of his epoch in Palestine. No writer is more correct in his descriptions, more careful to omit nothing; no community, no fraternity, even the most insignificant, escaped him. Why then does he not speak of the Nazarenes? Why does he not make the most distant allusion to the Apostles, to the divine Galilean, to the Crucifixion? The answer is easy. Because the biography of Jesus was invented after the first century, and no one in Jerusalem was a bit better informed than Philo himself.

These passages, which are only a sample out of what might be adduced, show that Christianity was recognized as being a continuance of an age-old doctrine, with changes in external form made necessary by changing times.

The history of Christianity proves it to have been inspired by enormous force, all-conquering vitality, enabling it to last through the centuries and dominate so much of the world. And yet, if we seek the origin, we can find only the most meager foundation. The historicity of Jesus is very doubtful; his mission, as recorded in the Gospels, is limited to a few months and is ignored by Pagan historians. Christianity was a revival of the wisdom-religion, started by some great messenger from the Lodge, of whom the record has been lost. The figure in the Gospels is fictitious; the Gospels were not written until long after the time of which they profess to treat; and Paul in his Epistles seems to know nothing of them.

There is a Jewish account of a certain Syrian, named Jeshua or Jehoshua ben Panthera, who lived in the reign of the Jewish king Alexander Jannaeus about a century B.C.; and some think the name Jesus was derived from this. From this man were derived the doctrines of two sects of Jewish Christians, living before the Christian era, the Ebionites and the Nazarenes. They represent the purest form of Christianity, and taught that Christ is in all men, and the doctrines of Aeons or divine emanations, whereby man himself is shown to be a descendant from the highest divinities. Such too was the teaching of the Christian Gnostics and of the Neoplatonists.

Evidently Christianity was originally a form of the wisdom-religion and taught that man is essentially a divine being, the Christ being simply the divine spirit in man; and that man must achieve his own salvation by recognizing his own divinity and invoking it to his aid. Later this sublime and ancient truth was transformed into belief in a personal God, apart from man and from nature, and into the doctrine of vicarious atonement. But this process of change was gradual.

EARLY FORMS OF CHRISTIANITY

The center of Western civilization at the Christian era was the Mediterranean basin, the scene of a wonderful medley of competing beliefs and sects, under the general government of the Roman Empire. There were several centers where the ancient Mysteries were preserved, taught, and practiced — Alexandria, Antioch, and other places in Asia Minor — and these had communications with India and Persia. We find early Christianity maintaining the doctrines of these schools, and it has been customary to regard these forms of Christianity as heresies due to contamination from Pagan sources, which is exactly the reverse of the actual case. It is these which were the genuine Christianity, and later Christianity was a very much expurgated derivative. So much has our attention been focused upon the particular phase of this religion which eventually survived, that we have ignored the many other forms which for centuries rivaled it, only to succumb to the advancing materialism of the times.

Marcion, who founded the churches of the Marcionites in the second century A.D., sought to purify Christianity from the corruptions into which it had fallen. He denied the stories about Christ found in the Gospels, saying that such statements were “carnalizations” of metaphysical allegories and a degradation of the true spiritual idea. He accused the Church Fathers of framing their doctrine according to the capacity of their hearers

— “blind things for the blind according to their blindness; for the dull according to their dullness.”

Manicheism was a formidable rival to the Church. Roman emperors sought to repress it, Popes anathematized it; yet for nearly a thousand years it maintained its influence, which was felt even as late as the thirteenth century by the Albigenses in southern France, who held several of its doctrines. Its founder, Mani, was of Iranian descent, born in Babylonia; and in 242 A.D. he proclaimed himself the herald of a new religion, sent forth apostles, and founded congregations all over Asia Minor.

Clement of Alexandria, born about the middle of the second century, wished to enrich Christianity “with the deep spirituality of Platonism” and “advocated a Christianity resting on free inquiry,” not on faith alone. Origen, who succeeded him, exhorted his pupil to devote himself to Greek philosophy as a preparatory study for Christian philosophy.

Celsus wrote his work, the *True Word*, somewhere between 177 and 200; and what we know of it and its author is contained in Origen’s work written in opposition to it. He maintains that Christianity is of oriental origin; that its ethical teachings are not new; and that many of its ceremonies are the same as those of heathen religions. He asks why the one God whom Christians and Pagans alike recognize cannot be worshipped under various names, such as Zeus, Serapis, etc. Why should Jehovah be the only name by which Deity can be recognized? Why did Jesus come so late to save mankind?

Origen had been a Neoplatonist, both he and Plotinus having been educated in the school of Ammonius Saccas. He was born in 185, and marks a further stage in the development of Christianity from its broad and lofty origins towards its narrow and dogmatic ecclesiastical form. Yet he held many doctrines since condemned as heretical, such as that all souls are in substantial unity with God, and not the soul of Jesus alone; and that the visible universe is a manifestation of a higher spiritual causal world. Like Paul he knew of the doctrine of hierarchies of divine beings intermediate between God and man (“thrones, dominions, principalities, powers,” etc.). The

universe had a beginning, so also it must have an end; but it will be succeeded by other universes, its children — a very theosophical doctrine.

The Gnostics of the first three centuries taught the *gnosis* or divine knowledge, and include such names as Valentinus, Basilides, Marcion, Simon Magus. Their teachings represent a stage of Christianity when it still had teachings about the nature of the universe and of man; but when the religion became vulgarized, these teachings were condemned as heretical. Their principal teachings may be summarized as follows:

1. The opposition between spirit and matter.
2. The allegorical interpretation of Old Testament stories.
3. That the supreme God was not the God who created the world; the world was created by an inferior Aeon, called the Demiurge.
4. Jesus was not the son of Joseph and Mary, but had descended from on high; was in fact the highest of the Aeons, proceeding immediately from the Divine; he was the Redeemer not only of man but of the world, and came to restore the original ancient Gnosis.
5. Belief in karma and reincarnation.

We must confine ourselves to these few samples which will, we hope, invite the student to follow up the subject by his own further studies. That so little is generally known about these matters is due simply to the fact that the condemnation of the churches has prevented people from studying them. But once we become aware that such information is available, we can readily assure ourselves that there is amply sufficient to establish the case. The present object is to indicate that Christianity has come down to us in a very much altered and debased form from much nobler origins.

DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANITY

The history of the early Christians as gathered from contemporary chroniclers of the Roman world is more familiar to the general reader. We find at first a sort of communistic sect, practicing high ideals of conduct; and as this grows larger, it acquires organization and becomes stratified into orders and we have the beginnings of an ecclesiastical hierarchy. The imperial authorities were tolerant or indifferent as regards religious belief, but extremely jealous of any organization which might threaten competition with the imperial sway. Trajan, though a man of broad sympathies, would not even permit the incorporation of a civic fire brigade for this reason.

It was thus that the Christians came in conflict with the powers that be; and the story is familiar to readers of Gibbon. {Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) who wrote *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1776.} It was the refusal of the Christians to enter into the ordinary life of the community, to sacrifice, to perform the usual ceremonies, to serve as soldiers, which set them apart as a dangerous sect and caused their persecution. As we know, they only grew stronger through persecution, until at last the worldly potentates were driven to make terms with the ecclesiastical ones — Clovis in the west, Roman emperors farther east. Two great factions, the Athanasians and the Arians, occupy the arena for centuries, different emperors espousing the one or the other cause; until at last the Athanasian doctrine becomes predominant in the west, the Arian in the east. Christianity is adopted by the northern conquerors of Rome, and becomes, with modifications, the religion of northern Europe.

We need not follow the story through succeeding centuries: the long and bitter struggles of the Reformation, when both parties took their faith very seriously and the temporal power was not distinguished from the spiritual, are familiar enough. We see one side resting their case on authority, supposed to have been derived by lineal descent from the apostles; the other side resting their case on the Bible.

The ghost of the Roman despotic imperium still survives, disputing the field with freedom of thought; but the controversy has lost strength, as humanity is seeking its inspiration at the eternal fount the divine spark within the human breast.

Valentinus was the most famous Christian teacher of the second century, and was the instructor of the Church Fathers Origen and Clement. It suits Christian apologists to regard him as having sought to weld together into one, Grecian, neo-Grecian, Jewish, and Christian elements, and to have displayed marvelous ingenuity and originality in so doing. But a comparison of his doctrines with those of other systems shows at once that they were those of the ancient wisdom which he must have derived from the esoteric schools then existent in Egypt and other parts of the Mediterranean world. His school, the Valentinians, was very influential and widespread for a long time, having main branches in Italy and in Asia Minor, and giving rise to several minor branches. His influence on subsequent thought was very great. He averred that the Apostles had not given out publicly all that they knew, but that they had esoteric teachings. He teaches that the Primal Cause, which he names *Bythos* (the Depth), manifested itself as the *Pleroma* (Fullness), which is the sum-total of the manifested universe. He teaches the doctrine of divine hierarchies, according to which the supreme Deity emanates from himself successive orders of divine beings, to which are sometimes given such names as Archangels, Angels, Principalities, Powers, etc., until we come to man himself, who is thus in direct descent from the supreme Deity, and who therefore contains within himself all divine powers, which are mostly latent but can be called forth into activity. The world in which we live was not created by the supreme Deity, but by some of the inferior Emanations, and this explains its imperfections, which have so often been found hard to reconcile with our faith in divine wisdom. He gives the true teaching as to the meaning of Christ as the divine incarnation in every man, and salvation

as the reawakening of man to a knowledge of his own essential divinity.

This gives some idea of what Christianity really is and what it was at one time known to be. But when Christianity became mainly a political factor, and it was found necessary to adapt it to the needs of so many different peoples — Roman, Greek, Asiatic, Teutonic — the necessity for uniformity and for an established church with fixed doctrines caused these finer teachings to be eliminated.

CHAPTER 3

THE BIBLE

FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS, PART 1

What is the truth between the extreme views that the Bible is the literal word of God, and that it is a mass of foolish folklore? The Bible is an esoteric scripture, full of profound meaning when interpreted aright, a mere collection of stories if taken in the dead-letter sense. H. P. Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society, pays the Bible the greatest respect, but only on the condition that it be understood in the former sense. It is one of many scriptures belonging to various times and nations. It should be studied in due relation to its fellow scriptures.

We have the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament is a collection of ancient Jewish scriptures, and we read that, after the Jews had returned from their Babylonian captivity, the scribe Ezra collected again as much as he could of the old books and reestablished the Jewish canon. From this source, after other changes and eliminations, the Christian Old Testament was ultimately compiled. The Jews have their own interpretations in their Kabalistic books, such as the *Zohar* and the *Sepher Jetzirah*, and a great wealth of commentaries; but the Christians know only the dead-letter sense. This has shed a bad influence on the tone of Christianity, for some of these books, literally interpreted, contain much of war, cruelty, treachery, and grossness.

The Pentateuch or first five books of the Old Testament occupies a place of special importance; though long believed to be the work of Moses, yet intelligent criticism has shown that he cannot have been the author, and it is thought that they are largely the work of Ezra. 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 of Moses. The attempt to find consistency and to reconcile

the narratives with other historical data is a 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.

The Old Testament also contains the prophetic books, and *Ezekiel* and *Daniel* contain much easily recognized occult symbology, though much tortured by those who try to find in them prophecies about the second advent and the end of the world. Then there is the poetical and imaginative literature, such as *Psalms*, *Ecclesiastes*, and the *Song of Solomon*; and *Job*, a very ancient allegory of the trials of a candidate for initiation, which is found elsewhere and whose origin is undiscoverable.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The present canon was arrived at as the final result of a series of decisions, and is a selection out of a larger number of books, some of which are still published under the name of the Apocryphal New Testament. There were other Gospels besides the familiar four, and critics can trace back the present Gospels to older ones from which they are evidently derived. We give some quotations from *The Esoteric Character of the Gospels*, written by H. P. Blavatsky in her magazine *Lucifer* for November, 1887:

the Bible is *not* the "Word of God," but contains at best the words of fallible men and *imperfect* teachers. Yet read *esoterically*, it does contain, if not the *whole* truth, still, "*nothing but the truth*," under whatever allegorical garb.

No more than any other scripture of the great world-religions can the Bible be excluded from that class of allegorical and symbolical writings which have been, from the pre-historic ages, the receptacle of the secret teachings of the Mysteries of Initiation, under a more or less veiled

form. The primitive writers of the *Logia* (now the Gospels) knew certainly *the* truth, and the *whole* truth; but their successors had, as certainly, only dogma and form, which lead to hierarchical power at heart, rather than the spirit of the so-called Christ's teachings. Hence the gradual perversion.

. . . the Christian canon, especially the *Gospels*, *Acts* and *Epistles*, are made up of fragments of gnostic wisdom, the ground-work of which is pre-Christian and built on the MYSTERIES of Initiation.

. . . the more one studies ancient religious texts, the more one finds that the ground-work of the New Testament is the same as the ground-work of the Vedas, of the Egyptian theogony, and the Mazdean allegories.

Not to make too many quotations, we may say briefly that the Gospels are symbolic narratives, sacred writings, written down by unknown scribes from their recollections or notes, and afterwards compiled into a canonical collection and taken in their literal instead of their symbolic sense. But more of this will come out when we treat of the teachings under their separate headings.

As to Paul's *Epistles*, it is evident that he did not teach the representative Christian doctrines of today. The Christ, for him, is an indwelling spirit in all men; he speaks like an initiated teacher, exhorting men to put off the old life of the flesh and to enter into the new life, wherein the Christ becomes alive and conscious in them. He is concerned with attainment and salvation in this life, not in some future life. He is evidently an adept teacher, unable to give out all he knows, especially in open letters, and doing his best to suit his message to the capacities of the various communities he is addressing.

THE CREATION

The creation of the universe and of man occupy a foremost place in all cosmogonies and may be said to form the first chapter in the teachings of the ancient wisdom-religion. The word "evolution" would be preferable to "creation," because the latter word is associated with the idea of a personal God creating the universe out of nothing. The subject of the evolution of worlds is treated of elsewhere, and we are concerned here only with showing it as found in the Christian Scriptures.

In the early chapters of *Genesis* (which means "becoming" or "begetting"), we find a rather confused and abbreviated version of what is to be found in fuller and more accurate form in older scriptures. It derives immediately from Chaldean scriptures of earlier date, some of which have been discovered by archaeologists; but it can be traced farther back to the sacred writings of ancient Persia and India. Similar accounts are to be found in China, in the mythology of ancient Scandinavia, and even among the records of ancient America. This is to mention only a few, for it is not too much to say that the same accounts of the beginnings of worlds and of the evolution of man are to be found all over the globe.

The word "God" is in the Hebrew *elohim*, which is a plural word meaning "gods" or "spirits," and refers to the creative powers. First there existed naught but chaos, void, emptiness, often spoken of as the Waters or the Great Deep. Over this the creative spirits brood, and the first creation is light. From these beginnings are produced the worlds and all living creatures therein. As to the creation of man —

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 2:7*

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and

over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. — *Genesis 1:26-7*

As usual there are two accounts of the creation of man: he is first created a living soul (or, as more accurately translated, an animal soul); and then he is made divine. These two accounts have become transposed in the Authorized Version. Man has really a triple creation: first, out of the dust of the earth; then this is animated with the breath of life; last, this animal being is endowed with divine faculty — made in the image of the gods (*elohim*). The plural word *elohim* has for some reason been translated God or Lord God; it means creative spirits, divine beings. This teaching of the twofold creation of man is very important, as it shows how man came by his dual nature, and in what way he differs from the animal creation.

As is stated elsewhere, the early races of mankind were “mindless,” not endowed with the self-conscious mind; and at a certain stage in evolution, the innate divinity in man was called to life by the manasaputras or “sons of mind,” who incarnated in the nascent human race, thus making man a self-conscious responsible being.

The story is continued in the legend of the Garden of Eden. This Garden represents the sinless innocent state of man before he became self-conscious. He was without sin, but also without the power of progress; he knew neither good nor evil. Then comes to man what has been called the temptation. A Serpent, who is described as very wise, appears to man and persuades him to exercise free will and rebel against God. To obtain this free will he must eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. He does so, and forthwith loses his state of innocent bliss, and becomes self-conscious and distinguishes between good and evil. He is cast out of the Garden and begins a life of struggle in the outer world.

This teaching has been perverted by theology into a curse and a fall; and Adam is represented to have sinned, and thereby to have communicated to all his descendants his sin, so that all men are born in sin and need a special divine sacrifice to save them. But in the original teaching, the so-called fall and temptation is a necessary stage in the evolution of man. The Serpent (who has been turned by theology into the Devil) is merely God over again in another form; for this Lord God is not the supreme deity but those creative spirits (*elohim*) who had made the first unenlightened man. And the Serpent is not the Devil but those sons of mind who, as aforesaid, enlightened mankind, showing him how to partake of the fruit of knowledge and to “become as Gods.” This mystery is found in the Greek mythology in the story of Prometheus who, rebelling against Zeus, brings fire from heaven to enlighten man. Both the Serpent of Eden and Prometheus are the same as Lucifer, the Light-Bringer, who has likewise been turned by theology into a devil.

Satan, or the Red *Fiery* Dragon, the “Lord of Phosphorus” . . . and *Lucifer*, or “Light-Bearer,” is in us: it is our *Mind* — our tempter and Redeemer, our intelligent liberator and Saviour from pure animalism. Without this principle — the emanation of the very essence of the pure divine principle *Mahat* (Intelligence), which radiates direct from the *Divine Mind* — we would be surely no better than animals. The first man Adam was made only a *living soul* (*nephesh*), the last Adam was made a *quickening Spirit*: — says Paul, his words referring to the building or *Creation* of man. — *The Secret Doctrine* 2:513

It is the misinterpretation of this beautiful truth that has given color to the slander against human nature, whereby man is persuaded that he is naturally corrupt, is set at enmity with his own nature and made to mistrust his own intelligence and freedom of thought; it is thereby that man is cursed for performing a simple natural act, which is sinful only when perverted and associated in the mind with guilt and impurity.

This subject of the creation of man and his so-called fall connects naturally with the subject of redemption and salvation, another grand old teaching which has become lost during dark ages, and which has been similarly perverted into something quite different.

THE FLOOD

This is another sacred allegory common to all peoples. The story of a universal deluge, as is well known, is found everywhere, and has been supposed to be a tradition of floods following the last glaciation of parts of the northern hemisphere. And while it is perfectly true that there was an actual physical deluge — one of many, as geologists will admit — there is much more in the legend than its merely physical aspect. Daniel Brinton, in his *Myths of the New World*, has brought together a number of the flood stories of various races of ancient Americans, north, central, and south; and what is remarkable about them is the very close similarity in such details as the ark, its resting on a mountain, the sending forth of birds.

In the Sumerian Epic of Creation, which dates one thousand years earlier than *Genesis*, the flood is placed before the fall. Flood stories, with arks, etc., are found in ancient India, the Norse Edda, the Finnish *Kalevala*, the Mexican *Popol Vuh*, among African tribes and Polynesians. The Greek story of Deucalion and Pyrrha, who escaped from the flood and repopled the earth by casting stones behind them, is familiar to classical readers. The flood story is always connected with a purification of the earth by destruction of the wicked, and there is always an ark or sacred vessel which preserves a few remnants for the founding of a new race.

Is all this physical and historical, or is it allegorical? It is both; for the universal correspondences ordain that physical events shall be molded on spiritual events. There actually have been periodic alterations of the earth's surface, accompanied

by the sinking of lands and the upheaval of new lands, as indeed the geological records show. But these events have been but the physical accompaniments of great moral changes; they have been coeval with the ending of great races and the beginning of new races of mankind; and here we are using the word “race” to mean one of the great root-races, each of which lasts more than a million years. While the flood has this general meaning, the innumerable accounts referred to have usually a special reference to the last great deluge, that which accompanied the submergence of the continent of Atlantis, or to the last remaining portions thereof. This was the habitat of the fourth root-race, followed by the present fifth. The Atlantean race having reached the end of its cycle, many of them had descended into gross materiality and had become black magicians; they were of gigantic stature, which is referred to in the Bible narrative and has given rise to the universal tradition as to wicked giants. It was necessary that this corrupt society should be destroyed, and that the good should be preserved to form the seed of the new race to come. Hence the stories of floods, arks, and the other features. The Greek mythology abounds in stories of the semi-divine founders of cities and centers of civilization, and represents these founders as having migrated into Greece from the far west “beyond the pillars of Hercules” {known today as the Rock of Gibraltar — the entrance from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea}; and there is frequent mention of the sinking of lands beneath the ocean, and the rise of other lands, on which the immigrants settled.

The fact that these deluge stories, so similar to the one in the Bible, are so universally found, is conveniently kept out of sight by most Christians, and is a stumbling-block to others, who wish to regard the Christian revelation as unique and paramount; but the problem is cleared up when we remember how the Old Testament is a compilation of ancient sacred books, which had been preserved by the Hebrews from the still older sources whence they had derived them.

REDEMPTION AND SALVATION

The drama of evolution, whether of worlds or of man, includes a descent from spirit into matter, and a reascent from matter into spirit. Man was at first spiritual, but mindless and undeveloped, living in a "Golden Age" typified by the Garden of Eden. Then he acquires the power of self-consciousness, which is aroused within him by beings who possessed it themselves. The Fall of man is a fall in one sense, but in another sense it is the fulfillment of a vital step in his evolution. He loses for a time his contact with spirit, in order that he may enter on a career of incarnation in this world and pass through all its experiences. His new power of free will he misuses and brings trouble upon himself; but eventually the divinity within him is destined to win through, so that man will rise again a much more glorious and complete being than before, because of all the added knowledge which he has garnered by his experiences. This is what is meant by redemption and salvation. It applies to the human race as a whole, to particular races of mankind, and to individuals. In the case of individuals we must of course take into account reincarnation.

And so the world's great teachers have at many times come into our world to preach anew the glad tidings, or rather to remind man of his forgotten birthright. For man is like some prince in an old story, who has been brought up among peasants so that he is unaware of his royalty; though even in dark ages there have always been a few mystics and intuitive minds who have perceived the truth. The wise one who initiated Christianity (whoever he was) was one of these teachers; and even in the mutilated fragments of his teachings which remain to us we can see that he was proclaiming that old truth. Yet see what ages of spiritual darkness have made of it! Whereas the teacher proclaimed the divinity of man and showed to his hearers the age-old path to salvation, we are told today that we are essentially corrupt and that it is impious to rely on our own resources — we, created in God's own image! Truly theosophy has come to raise the buried Christ from the

tomb wherein his disciples have cast him. For theosophy is just such another revival of the wisdom-religion, two thousand years later; and what Jesus said of the Pharisees of his day might be applied to much that goes today under the name of religion.

The atonement, or making “at one,” is theologically regarded as a reconciliation between God and man, due to the propitiation of his Son; but in the light of what has been said the word acquires a truer sense. It means the uniting of the human ego with the spiritual ego — the innate Christ, whereby man recognizes that this spiritual ego, and not his personal ego, is his true self.

SACRAMENTS: THE EUCHARIST

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*, 22:19-20

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*, 6:53-6

The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper means much to those who partake of it devoutly, but it might mean much more. Its sacredness and 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, its role as a bone of bitter contention, are due to the attenuated and misunderstood form in which it has come down to us. If we study the ancient

Mysteries, we find that bread and wine play a foremost part in the ritual of initiation, as also in the “lesser Mysteries” which were displayed before the public. In the greater Mysteries candidates were initiated into what Jesus calls the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven, into which he seems anxious that his disciples should be initiated. Wine is often spoken of alternatively with blood, and both signify spiritual life: the words are thus used in the New Testament. Over against these we find bread or grain, or alternatively flesh; and these words also are used in the New Testament. This latter signifies terrestrial mortal life, so that the two together mean the higher and lower nature of man.

The reference is to symbols which were used in the ancient Mysteries, in which there was a twofold initiation, symbolized respectively by bread and wine, or by 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. These facts relative to the Greek and other Mysteries can be verified by reference to any encyclopedia or book on the subject. In the Bible we find frequent reference thereto. Besides the two quotations at the head of this section, we may cite the interview with Nicodemus in *John*, 3:

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . 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 we see the double birth: the first of flesh, the second of spirit. This doctrine of the second birth is of course the principal theme of Paul, and it is surprising that so little is made of it; at most it is regarded as referring to a state of mind or heart varying from mere self-satisfaction to a real holiness of character. But the real meaning is quite lost owing to belief in original sin and vicarious atonement and an ignorance of reincarnation.

These ancient teachings are immortal, which is why they survive through the ages, if only in form, until the time comes for them to be restored. The Eucharist is still celebrated as a means of receiving divine grace and as a commemoration, and some attach great importance to the faith in a miraculous transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the actual flesh and blood of Jesus.

SACRAMENTS: BAPTISM

This is another rite derived from the ancient Mysteries. It was the outer and visible form of a purificatory process undergone by the candidate for initiation. Initiatory ablutions are common to all sects. In Christianity it means admission to the Church, and is regarded as cleansing from sin, affiliating with God, and the gift of the spirit. That those who have not been baptized will suffer damnation is a formal article of faith with some. The idea is repugnant to the feelings of the present day; but if we can be saved without baptism, why be baptized?

Sacraments are defined in the Catechism as the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. They repeat physically what has already occurred spiritually, otherwise the ceremony is but an empty form. There are two baptisms: that of water and that of fire, corresponding with the two forms of the Eucharist already mentioned. It would seem that the candidate for baptism should be of an age suitable to the full understanding of the meaning of the ceremony. In these days, when our knowledge of nature is so restricted to externals, we have lost sight of that intimate knowledge of nature, of man, and of man's relation to nature which was possessed in more ancient times. The rites and customs of which we read in Greek and Roman history, or as practiced in ancient and oriental races, seem to us superstition because we do not grasp their real meaning; and it is quite likely that the Greeks and Romans themselves in later times had lost it also and continued the ceremonies merely from custom. But a further study shows that

they originated in the teachings of the ancient wisdom. It is curious that we still go on practicing them; but there is an undying life in these ancient institutions which preserves them through the ages, like a seed under the snow, until the time comes round for them to be revived.

CHAPTER 4

THE BIBLE

FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS, PART 2

REINCARNATION

As the doctrine of reincarnation and its twin doctrine of karma form so important a part of the ancient wisdom from which all religions have descended, it is important to know why we find so little of it in Christianity. The simple reason is that it has been expurgated. A learned scholar, the late Professor F. S. Darrow, writes:

The critical history of the doctrines of Pre-existence and Reincarnation has never been written, but the materials at hand for such a history are most extensive. I have in my library, without the slightest exaggeration, literally *hundreds* of volumes having to do with this subject. Many of the volumes deal entirely with that subject and nothing else. . . . The Theosophical teachings in regard to the pre-existence and rebirth of the human soul have been plainly and continuously enunciated in the Christian world from the very beginning of Christianity until the present day, but the recognition of these truths among professed Christians naturally has varied greatly from time to time in accordance with the degree of publicity permitted by the pendulum swing of the cycles.

The same author divides the subject chronologically into three heads: the period of early Christianity until the Synod of Constantinople in 553, which officially declared the teachings of the Church Father Origen in regard to the nature and destiny of the soul to be “heretical”; from 553 to 1438, when Georgius Gemistus visited Florence and revived the philosophy of Plato; thence down to modern times.

So the only reason why this knowledge of pre-existence and reincarnation is not heard of is that it has never been studied; the literature is there in abundance, but having been banned as heretical it has been neglected. The reason why these teachings have been banned is easy to see. Their admission would open the door to so very much that is incompatible with ecclesiastical Christianity. And so we have to get along with the absurdity that souls are created at a point in time, and yet live for ever; that they survive the body but did not pre-exist it; and the utter insignificance of a life of seventy years amid the ocean of eternity.

The Christian scheme, as generally understood today, affords no explanation for the inequalities and incompleteness of human life, other than attributing them to the inscrutable will of a personal deity. This denies to man his speculative instinct, his thirst for knowledge; thus leaving him to seek satisfaction therefore outside the pale of religion, and to have more than one religion at the same time, and a second God called Nature. His innate sense of justice rebels against what he has been constrained to believe; his study of nature has given him the idea of law and order; but his religious teaching, instead of confirming, thwarts these — good reason for surmising that his religion has come down to him in adulterated form. Instead of discarding the whole thing, let him reinstate it, rejecting what is false and holding to what is true.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost — three Persons and yet only one God. Such is the Christian Trinity; and bitter controversies have raged as to the exact nature of this triune God and the relations of the three Persons to each other. The entire Christian world, in Roman times, was divided by irreconcilable schism turning on the question whether the Son was of the same substance with the Father, or of like substance with the Father. Is the Son coeternal with the Father, or was he

produced from the Father? It is customary to accuse the disputants with raising a turmoil over trifles, but this is unfair, for great issues may turn on a very small point of symbolism, and this difference about the creed was the sign by which were distinguished from one another two bodies of Christians whose general attitude was antagonistic.

Why was the Deity thus represented as a Three-in-One? The doctrine is not to be found formally stated in the New Testament; it was devised by Church Councils who formulated the creed, and the terms used in the formula are not Biblical. But, once formulated, it could be justified by reference to the New Testament.

The fact is that such a triune deity is found at the head of all theogonies and cosmogonies, and philosophical systems usually begin with something equivalent. In the very beginning of the Bible it is represented as the Spirit of God, brooding over the waters of space or chaos, and bringing forth the universe. This is the great creative trinity which stands at the head of cosmogonies: a universal spirit, father of all; then comes the chaos or the great depth or the waters of space, which is often called the great mother. From these two proceed the son, which is the universe. This philosophical trinity, which is indeed a necessity of thought, was naturally enough adopted by the Church; its adoption put them into harmony with all the other religions and philosophies, with Greek thought especially, and with various Eastern systems current in Asia Minor. The persons of this trinity could then be readily found in the New Testament, for Jesus often speaks of the Father and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit which he will send.

But this trinity is defective, for there is a father and a son, but no mother. In one church this last is supplied by the Virgin, though she is not a member of the trinity. The Virgin is taken from the Magna Mater, or "Great Mother," so much revered in many of the Asiatic religions prevalent in parts of the Roman empire; but indeed there is always a Great Mother, regarded as the consort of the Father, whether it is Hera, consort of Zeus;

Juno, consort of Jupiter; Isis, consort of Osiris and mother of Horus; or what not.

In ordinary Christian belief the Father and the Son have been personalized, and the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is a somewhat vague conception. What is called inspiration is in many cases a mere neurotic excitement, with disastrous reactions; but there have always been Christian mystics who have attained to a higher realization of the meaning of inspiration. We are aware that some readers of this may point to the fine characters and noble lives of many devout and earnest Christians, but we prefer to attribute this to the innate nobility of human nature, which has enabled these persons to imbibe the true spirit of their religion in spite of its defects. Under a better understanding of Christianity there would be more of such people.

THE CROSS

And he bearing his cross went forth to a place called the place of a skull . . . where they crucified him.

— *John*, 19:17-18

The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God.

— *1 Corinthians*, 1:18

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. — *Matthew*, 14:24

The above are typical examples of the use of the word “cross” in the New Testament; it means the stake used in crucifixion, or the Christian doctrine, or a burden or sacrifice. This sacred symbol of Christianity is a perpetual reminder of its cardinal doctrine that Christ died for our sins, whereby we are saved. It is also used for the daily burden 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, and Tibet; well known in Egyptian symbolism, as in Hinduism; an emblem used in the sacred Mysteries of ancient Greece. 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.

Theosophy shows that the teachings of the ancient wisdom were preserved in a universal symbol-language, which conveyed the leading tenets; and the cross is one of these symbols, which is why it is so universally found. The sun, moon, and cross form a trinity of symbols, denoting respectively father, mother, son; cosmic spirit, cosmic matter, and the universe produced by their interaction. In the case of man, who is a miniature copy of the universe, the cross denotes what John calls the Word made Flesh, the Son, the Christ, which is in every person and is the divine part of his nature.

In order to explain why such a symbol was chosen to represent this idea, we should have to go more deeply into matters than is appropriate here; but it may be stated that the two lines of the cross (speaking particularly of the Greek cross with four equal arms) stand for spirit and matter, and the fact of their crossing each other denotes the union or interaction of these two elements to form the manifested universe. The divine spirit in man is said to be crucified, made into a cross, caused to dwell in a residence of flesh; and this crucifixion is destined to be succeeded by a resurrection.

It is also to be observed that a ceremony of crucifixion was actually performed upon the candidates for initiation into the sacred Mysteries, which still existed in some parts of the Roman world at the Christian era. These candidates, at a certain stage in their initiation, were fastened to a cross or cruciform couch, where they lay entranced for two days, while their liberated soul went through the necessary experiences and came to life again on the third day. It is possible that the story

in the Gospels was founded on this. However, the Christians have taken over the cross and adopted it as their symbol; the other two, the sun and moon, are seen in the emblems of Japan and Islam.

But this meaning of the cross has become confused or blended with that of the Roman instrument of capital punishment, which was a stake, usually with a cross-bar near the top, to which the criminal was fastened. Whether there really was a teacher who, after a very short ministry, was apprehended, condemned, and thus executed, may be doubted. There is no historical record to substantiate it.

The crucifixion of the Christ is the symbolic name for a cardinal tenet of the ancient wisdom, but it has been materialized into the story of an actual crucifixion of Jesus by Pontius Pilatus in the reign of Tiberius. Critical people, doubting the authenticity of this story, or doubting its importance even if authentic, have gone too far in their objections and thrown over Christianity itself, and even all religion; which shows how important it is to separate the true from the false and to avoid literal and materialistic interpretations of spiritual truths couched in symbolic language.

The sign of the cross has become a sacred *emblem*, a sign which has value through the association of ideas; and in the use of the pious and of mystics has been a potent means of invoking spiritual aid, though also at times a standard of war. To the above it may be added that the cross is a better symbol when drawn within the circle or with a circle joined to the upper arm. The circle stands for spirit, and the cross alone denotes materialism, which may be said to be characteristic of the times wherein Christianity has been prevalent, these times being characterized, as said, by the interpreting of mystic symbols in a literal sense.

THE MYSTERIES

In ancient Greece were the Mysteries of Eleusis and other schools of the Mysteries less well known, where candidates for initiation were received. Such schools existed also in Egypt, India, and several other places, and connections can be traced between the schools in these different localities, whereby confirmation is obtained of the fact that they taught a uniform doctrine. This was the secret doctrine or wisdom-religion of which theosophy is the modern expression. As man is essentially divine, being a lineal descendant through evolution from divine beings, it is possible for him by a particular course of training to arouse the latent spiritual powers within him. This is called the path of wisdom, and is in fact salvation in the real sense of that word. The Gospels contain sufficient evidence that the teacher whose words are quoted therein was aware of the existence of this path and that he wished his disciples to follow it. He calls it the Kingdom of God. It is also stated that he gave his disciples secret instructions apart from the multitude.

At the time of the Christian era there still existed some of these Mystery schools in Egypt and parts of Asia, and their influence is evident in the doctrines of the Gnostics, Neoplatonists, and similar sects, among which Christianity was developed. The process of selection and compilation which resulted in the canonical Gospels led to an inclusion of extracts from these teachings, and the putting of them into the mouth of the teacher called Jesus.

Paul, who seems to have written his epistles before the Gospel narratives were drawn up, interprets the Christian doctrines in a much more esoteric way. One would judge from his manner of speaking that he himself was initiated, to some degree at least; but he was clearly under the necessity of adapting his teachings to the limited comprehension of his various hearers, and he often uses figurative language whose real sense would only be understood by a few of those whom he addressed.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

From the Gospel narratives, and from what history tells us, we gather that there was among the early Christians a widespread and often very confident belief that Christ would really come again in the flesh, and that very soon, to destroy evil and set up a kingdom of the righteous on earth. This idea was connected with the decay of the Roman empire, which figured as the evil dominion that Christ was to overthrow; and it is no wonder that these Christians excited the jealousy of Roman rulers.

The Jews too, who contributed so many Christians and whose influence entered so largely into Christian ideas, had their own prophecies of the return of one or another of their own prophets as the “Messiah,” and this idea evidently contributed largely to the belief as to the return of Christ. Some Biblical critics are convinced that Jesus himself, at one time at least, believed this; but we have to bear in mind that the Gospels, as they have come down to us, were largely made to order.

A most indisputable instance of this is to be found in Matthew 24:3, which the *Authorized Version* translates quite wrongly from the Greek, but which is translated correctly in the *Revised Version*, which was made by a body of divines and scholars in 1881. A comparison of these two renderings will show that the earlier translators have twisted the Greek original into a confirmation of their views about the second coming. The passages are as follows:

Authorized Version: 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?

Revised Version: . . . the sign of thy presence, and of the consummation of the age?

This latter is the meaning of the Greek, and the former is a forced rendering. (While on this subject, it is worth noting that the passage *Mark*, 16:9-20 does not occur in most of the manuscripts and is regarded as a spurious insertion. It contains the words: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.")

We see here an allusion to the doctrine of cycles, in accordance with which great root-races of humanity succeed one another. The "consummation of the age" is when the present root-race has run its course and humanity will be divided into those who have progressed enough to form the nucleus of the next succeeding race, and those who have lagged in the rear of progress. This latter part of the race will come to an end (as a race) in the cataclysms which separate one race from another; while the others will be "saved," as is figured in the allegory of the flood and the ark. Jesus in his answer says that the end is not yet, there will be wars, there will be many false prophets. The Coming of Christ means the reawakening of the Christ spirit in mankind or in as many as are able to receive it.

There are Christian Adventists who still expect an actual physical coming of Christ; and there are some who interpret the books of *Daniel* and *Ezekiel* and *Revelation* in that sense. But though these prophecies do relate to great cyclic changes, and though the Adventists have the intuition that such changes impend, they are too literal and materialistic in their interpretation.

THE GOLDEN RULE

This is often cited as characteristic of Christianity, but it is known to exist in all other religions. To the theosophist it is more than a mere moral injunction; it is a necessary law of man's nature. For man, essentially divine, having wandered away from the knowledge of his own divinity, has to regain it. His great obstacle is self-love; therefore he can only regain his

lost kingdom by overcoming self-love. So he must somehow find out how to act from an impersonal motive. It is evident, therefore, that ideas of self-advancement, of gaining occult powers for his own satisfaction, or even the desire for personal holiness, will never suffice, because the indulgence of such desires is merely increasing the power of the enemy we wish to conquer. To exchange a weak personality for a strong one cannot be the way. But a large part of our daily lives is composed of actions into which self-love does not enter — disinterested actions, actions prompted by a genuine and uncalculating desire to serve another or others. Or perhaps, having witnessed the pain caused to others by some selfish action of ours, and feeling remorse, we have registered a resolve not to act thus in the future, a resolve prompted by no thought of self-benefit whatever, but simply by the desire to avoid wronging other people.

The motive which operates in these cases is that of love — not passionate love, but pure impersonal love. This is a cosmic force. It operates in the animal world; for that which we so disparagingly call “instinct” is truly a pure and simple manifestation of a great cosmic force leading the beast to sacrifice itself for its offspring, the dog to die unhesitatingly for his master. The teacher in the Gospels upholds the simple — the beasts and birds, the lilies of the field, and the children — as well he might, and as we often feel disposed to do after experiences of human selfishness.

So the teacher, in enunciating the Golden Rule, merely points out to those who aspire to fulfill the true human destiny the law of the spiritual life, of the Kingdom of Heaven; which is harmony, not strife. This is a path which the individual may enter upon at any time, and which humanity in the aggregate must one day follow; though there will always be some who, having failed to attain the ideal, will miss their chance for one cycle and have to await another opportunity for progress. It has been said that the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount are impracticable and would result in the dissolution of society; but they set forth the ideal, and it is precisely the possession of such

an ideal which prevents man from sinking under the load of his difficulties. As for ways and means of reforming society, perhaps if we began by setting our own house in order we might thereby gain vision and power towards that end.

The Golden Rule shows the way of realizing the unity of living beings; and this is specially brought out in the injunctions to forgive our neighbor. But if this is only to mean that we suppress our anger towards him, while still continuing to imagine ourself his victim, the real forgiveness has not been achieved. In the greater fullness of life to which we aspire, and to which the teacher points the way, we shall see that our neighbor is actually part of our own self, and then all feelings of animosity or conflict will seem absurd. In our present darkness we have falsely separated a unity into two halves, one of which is supposed to have been injured by the other. Forgiveness consists in the dispelling of this illusion.

This rule is the prime maxim of conduct for the disciple in any system of practical religion or philosophy which aims at self-realization and which sets before the aspirant the path of wisdom and attainment. And truly it must be so; for it is self-seeking which binds a man down to the illusions and frustrations of his mortal life; and to escape, it is necessary to give up this law of self-seeking in favor of a higher law. It may be said, perhaps, that the strict following out of such a law, in the way (for instance) of the Sermon on the Mount, is too much to ask of an ordinary person. But, while the heights may be left to the comparatively few who feel themselves ready to scale them, even the most ordinary is every moment faced with the choice between selfish and unselfish conduct, and must choose one course or the other. With the ideal ever before him, and with an understanding of its rationality, he will be enabled to choose the right course, thus preparing himself for what awaits him in the future. For the day must come for every one when compromise will no longer be possible and he must choose definitely which path he will take. Never was the practice of unselfishness more needed than today, and it will help people to achieve it if they are not hampered by materialistic forms of

religion and science which accentuate the lower aspect of human nature.

THE IMMANENT CHRIST

This means the Christ that dwells in every human heart, as distinct from the man Christ who is said to have been crucified. The doctrine of the indwelling Christ is taught in the Gospels and in Paul's Letters, so it is to be found in the Bible and in Christianity by those willing to look for it. Those who prefer the anthropomorphized ecclesiastical doctrine of the crucifixion of a particular man will have to consider these Biblical teachings as figurative. Yet it would be a mistake to judge Christianity by its crudest forms, and it is true that many enlightened and broad-church teachers adopt this doctrine of the indwelling Christ, and that many devout Christians approximate in varying degrees to it. There are many to whom the life of Christ as represented in the Gospels has been an ideal and a pattern on which they have sought to mold their own lives, and saints and mystics have attained to high levels by contemplation of this ideal. But this is not enough; there still remains the notion that man is a weak creature, born in sin, and looking for salvation beyond the grave, and that it would be presumptuous in him to attempt really to imitate Christ. Yet in the original teaching, the Christ means the divine spirit resident in the core of our being, the Christ which has been sacrificed and entombed and has to be resurrected in us. Certain great teachers may be described in a special sense as Christs, inasmuch as they have attained to a self-realization to which the majority have not yet attained. But they do not set themselves up as the *only* son of God, but merely offer their lives as a pattern for other people to follow. In the real doctrine we are all sons of God in the same way as Jesus was, and can really achieve what he achieved, as he himself promises when he says:

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. — *John*, 16:12

This indwelling Christ is called “the Son”; and the divine spirit is called “the Father.”

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*, 11:27

On this point we may quote from “The Esoteric Character of the Gospels” by H. P. Blavatsky as follows:

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,*” . . .

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 spiritual illumination in blending their personality — the (“Son”) with (the “Father,”) their individual divine Spirit, *the God within* them.

Compare this with the Bible itself:

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 his 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*, 6:3-8

The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from Heaven.

— *1 Corinthians*, 15:47

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

— *1 Corinthians*, 15:22

Adam, in Hebrew, means “earthy”; it stands for the terrestrial nature of man. But the allegory has been literalized; the type figure has been turned into an actual individual man. But Paul here uses it in the right symbolic sense. Contrasted with this is the heavenly man — Christ — the divine part of human nature. The one is mortal, the other immortal. But does this refer to a state of perfection after death? By no means, for the teaching is that we can attain it while on earth. Earth is the place where we achieve; we are here to learn its lessons and to win victory over its forces. This state of attainment, whereby we cease to be dead with Adam, and become alive with Christ, is called the second birth.

In *Matthew*, 3:11, 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.

Turn now to *John*, 3, where a rabbi comes privately to Jesus, asking what is meant by the 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.

It is needless to burden this book with multiplied quotations, but the frequent references to the Kingdom of God (or Heaven) are well enough known. It is evident that this expression refers to a state attainable by man while on earth, and that the sayings in the Gospels, whatever their original source, are those of a teacher of the ancient wisdom. They have been construed to refer to a state of bliss after death, which is not sufficiently vivid to affect the minds of most people, and does not fit in with the general scheme of things which we infer from our knowledge of nature and life.

CHAPTER 5

CHRISTIANITY AND MORALITY

People may wonder if the abandonment of Christianity (as ordinarily understood) will mean a loss of the basis of moral conduct and a consequent general, if gradual, lapse into profligacy of various kinds. This is a question which demands serious consideration and cannot be dismissed with a few bald assertions. Rationalists, Secularists, and others of that genus say that the fount of good conduct is in the human intelligence and instincts, that religion is rather a hindrance than a help, and that this fount will suffice for needs. But to this it can be answered that perhaps these rationalists are living on the capital of good habits accumulated by centuries of religious influence, that this capital would soon become exhausted, and that the human intellect and instinct, as conceived by rationalism, would not suffice to renew the stock.

Here indeed is the weakness of the rationalist and humanist position. Their philosophy lacks foundations; and if pressed on this point, they are too ready to take refuge in agnosticism — the view that these fundamental questions lie beyond the scope of inquiry, that they cannot be known, that it is needless to try to fathom them. We seem to detect here the scientific fallacy of confusing cause with effect: is morality a cause or an effect? Is it any use saying that morality is the effect of morality? Or if, to avoid such tautology, we change the wording and say that morality is the effect of human intelligence and instinct, we have merely dodged the difficulty.

We need to know something about those mysterious powers in the human breast. By what are they inspired? Shall we define them as an enlightened self-interest? In that case we commit ourselves to the proposition that morality is sustained by self-interest, and that self-interest is the foundation of human conduct. The forces which rule in matter must themselves be immaterial, outside of matter; otherwise we are

reasoning in a circle and have an engine generating its own steam, or a motor and a dynamo running each other. And so with the present problem. Human social conduct cannot be represented as a mechanism perpetually running by its own momentum; it could never rise, and would be much more likely to fall. It is clear that this "Unknowable" which the rationalists admit but scorn to inquire into is the very mainspring.

Here is where religion comes in. The rationalists have thrown away the grain with the chaff. It is the *spirit* of religion, religion itself, which keeps alive the eternal vitality of the human race, compelling obedience to the essential laws of moral health and preventing an utter collapse into destruction by unrelieved selfishness.

And this true religion has its shrine in the human heart. But a pious, devotional, emotional attitude will not suffice to keep the fire alive in an age where the intellect is so acute. This intellect has been enlisted on the side of self-interest, with the results which we so much dread. Unless the scope of the intellect can be expanded so as to inquire into and learn about those parts of human nature which lie below the surface, we shall become morally bankrupt. To live healthfully in a physical sense, we must know the laws of hygiene and sanitation; we cannot go by blind faith and guesswork. And this deeper knowledge is what religion can and should give us.

That Christianity has failed so much as it has in this respect is due to the great admixture of dross with the pure metal. We have sought in this book to bring out the essential truths in Christianity, and to explain them in a way which will be more vital and effectual in human life. We have not taken away from man anything needed for his support. Whatever can be said in favor of the influence of Christianity can be said with greater force with regard to the theosophical interpretation of Christianity. We have expressly said that we have no wish to interfere with the faith of those who find in their religion what they need and who seek nothing further; and that our object is to help those for whom this is not sufficient, and who are earnestly seeking for the real basis of human welfare.

Religion which teaches man that he is essentially divine cannot be more immoral in its influence than religion which teaches him he is a miserable sinner. In the theosophical interpretation of Christianity the moral law is the essential law of human conduct, by which alone man can achieve happiness, self-realization, and harmony of his life with that of his fellows. It is this interpretation alone which unifies life and brings into harmony intellect and heart, so that all our faculties may cooperate towards the end of perfection.

GOD

God is not a person standing outside the universe. Nor is he apart from man. God is everywhere; there is nothing which is not God. God is the ultimate fact, the root of all existence, the spiritual foundation of all that is. Many thinkers have arrived at this conception of God, and have realized that the theological God is an anthropomorphized ideal. God, the universe, man, are not separate from each other, but form a unity. We can approach God only by sounding the depths of our own being; for man himself is a manifestation of divinity, and there are no limits to what he can attain through self-knowledge.

The manifold objections to the idea of a personal and extracosmic God are almost too well known to need mention. Such a God seems to manifest little interest in human affairs, and to be apart from nature, which is a sort of secondary deity. It is little wonder that so many have abandoned the idea of God altogether, though it passes comprehension to understand how these explain the meaning of things. To abandon the idea of God does not mean that we must represent the universe as a haphazard mechanism.

The doctrine of extreme materialism means nothing; agnosticism is a confession of ignorance and helplessness. We may call ourselves Humanists, and make man the center of things; but then what is man? Every person, studying the

wonders of his own conscious being, knows that there is a profound mystery beyond the limits of thought. But to suppose that that mystery is utterly insoluble is to turn the whole universe and human life into a horrible jest.

There have always been Christian mystics who have taught that revelation comes through self-communion. This is the only way to knowledge of God; and, as we have shown, Jesus points the way to the attainment of such knowledge. There are faculties in man which transcend the intellect (as we know it now) — not set it aside or abrogate it, but supplement it. We little know the sublimity of our own nature, though many of us have at rare moments obtained glimpses. Let us aspire to the highest we can attain, and forbear to limit our vision by giving it the form of a personal deity, which is in very truth creating a graven image.

PRAYER

Supplication to a personal deity for favors desired is looking for help in the wrong place. It is presuming to dictate to deity and is based on the idea that divine goodness and wisdom needs the help of our prayers. The climax of absurdity is reached when hostile armies pray for victory over each other. This brings out the truth that a personal God is usually partial, local, tribal. There is some sense in such invocations if we believe that each nation has its own special deity, as some peoples believe; but it becomes nonsense when such contradictory prayers are addressed to one and the same God.

Prayer means self-communion accompanied by high aspiration, and should be in the spirit of “Not my will, but thine be done.” Prayer for specific objects is not right, because we do not know what is best for us. Prayer is communing with the Father in Heaven through the Son, reaching towards our own highest and best. Personal wishes must be cast aside, and the unity of life realized as much as possible.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

People often vex themselves with the question how a good God can permit evil. Evil is imperfection, and this world is but an imperfect manifestation of Deity, the All-Good. Contrast and opposition are found everywhere; they are necessary conditions of growth and experience. Evil has been defined as the shadow of God. Attempts to define good and evil philosophically have not much bearing upon duty and conduct, and usually serve merely to bewilder people. In actual life good and evil are as distinct as a good egg and a bad egg. Every person is naturally endowed with the ability to distinguish them.

The words good and evil are very vague, and confusion arises from their being used in varying senses. They may be taken to mean pleasant and unpleasant; but this obviously refers to our tastes, which are unreliable as criteria. What is unpleasant may be good for us; what is pleasant, evil. They may be taken to mean right and wrong, and here again the reference may be to moral law, or social law, civic law, etc.

As far as our own experiences are concerned, the true philosopher can arrive at a state where he recognizes that no evil can befall him because he accepts every event as a part of his equitable lot — the Stoic philosophy. So we see that in this case the terms good and evil imply a contrast which we have made in our own minds by classifying experiences as pleasant and unpleasant and speaking of good and evil fortune.

As long as a person makes personal pleasure an object, he is bound to bring pain upon himself by the same law which renders the glutton or the drunkard sick. Such pursuit of self-gratification upsets the moral balance, and nature restores it by the complementary opposite experience. But what about our conduct to other people? This ought surely to concern most a person of heart and conscience; and it might be better if people spoke more about this aspect of the question than about their own luck and ill-luck and merit and demerit, which are utterly trivial to anybody but themselves.

Can it be denied that we have the power to work evil upon our fellows? And if there is anyone whose mind has become so disordered that he can argue, "Whatever happens to a person is his karma; therefore I cannot injure him," and use this as an excuse for misbehavior; then we can only pity such a one. To do mischief in the world and leave it to the universal laws of harmony to clean up the mess we have made is but a sorry way of manifesting the divinity that is in us. So far as our conduct to others is concerned, there is an unmistakable difference between good and evil, and an inescapable obligation upon every individual who *is* truly human to choose the right. And if he *is* truly human, he will do the right despite all the religions and philosophies in the world.

As said above, in speaking of the fall of man, the making of deity into a personal God has necessitated the making of a personal Satan as the adversary of God. But, as there stated, the Serpent of Eden was man's teacher, who awoke in him the power of intelligence; and when this Serpent is called the Adversary, it means that he was opposed to the first God who created man as an unintelligent though sinless being.

Satan is also a personification of our passions, which seek to lead us to destruction; but it is by fighting them that we learn and progress, so that ultimately they become our savior. But that is only on condition that we fight and overcome them; if we yield to them we are lost. There is no Devil with horns and hoofs, haunting us during life and preparing to torment us after death. But it is only too true that our passions, allied to our intellect, can create a kind of secondary evil self, which is our enemy whom we must conquer. It is also true that the astral light is full of destructive powers engendered by human thoughts and passions; so that the astral light, in one of its aspects, has merited the title of Satan.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Our subject is so large that we have not attempted to comprehend it; and had we done so, we should but have wearied the reader's attention. However enough has been said to invite the interested student to further study of the subject. The evidences for the views taken here are abundant and will be forthcoming in future years; they have been ignored because they have not suited the plans of the custodians of sectarian religion. But once broader views prevail, as they will among the generations of divines that are growing up, these evidences will be brought to light and the gradual development of modern Christianity from its original sources in the wisdom-religion will be historically traced.

All religions in their origin teach the divinity of man; but this teaching is afterwards hustled out of sight, and in its place we have a credal system supported by a hierarchy, by which salvation is made conditional upon the acceptance of certain doctrines and conformity to certain requirements. It is of course inevitable and necessary that there should be organization, since every spirit must have an embodiment of some kind. But the physical framework of a plant does not prevent it from growing and changing; and the outer form of religion must change from age to age to fit the growing needs of the human spirit. And lastly, we must be willing to recognize the claims of other religions, most of them older than Christianity.

THEOSOPHICAL LIGHT ON THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE

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 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.

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 recognized by those who have studied the mystic sayings in other religions or philosophies, as being familiar items of the Universal Wisdom-Religion, as taught in the Schools of the Mysteries. They are the teachings of initiated Teachers, from whatever source the Christians may have derived them. They gradually lost their esoteric sense and became transformed into theological dogmas; but their original meaning is so clear, and their theological interpretation so forced, that we may safely leave the truth to vindicate itself before the judgment of the student.

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

The first key that one has to use to unravel the dark secrets involved in the mystic name of Christ, is the key which unlocked the door to the ancient mysteries of the primitive

Aryans, Sabeans, and Egyptians. The Gnosis supplanted by the Christian scheme was universal. It was the echo of the primordial wisdom-religion which had once been the heirloom of the whole of mankind; and, therefore, one may truly say that, in its purely metaphysical aspect, the Spirit of Christ (the divine *logos*) was present in humanity from the 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 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.

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 Kabbalah, which in so many respects is identical with the teachings of the Secret Doctrine; but even the Kabbalah does not unlock the full mystery of the esoteric truths enshrined in the Biblical books.

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

4

‘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. 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 *Mānasaputras* 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.

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

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.

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 *Matthew*, 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. 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 practicing 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 *Matthew*, 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 {Greek word meaning "love of humanity"} 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." (*Matthew*, x, 16.) If the realm of knowledge is abandoned by the good, it will be seized by the evil; and the world will be ruled by the wisdom that "descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." (*James*, iii, 15.) But the esoteric basis of Christianity has been expunged from the canon since the days of the Gnostic Christians; and naught of Jesus' esoteric instructions to his

disciples in private is to be found in the Gospels, except such as is veiled in guarded language and symbolism. The mysteries concerning the structure of man and the structure of the universe in which he is have been left to the speculations of a materialistic science, and Christians find themselves but ill-equipped to combat the menacing forces of a knowledge prostituted to curiosity or greed.

“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 *Mānasaputras* — after which, Man becomes like unto the Gods, having the discernment of good and evil. “Ye are Christ’s: and Christ is God’s,” he says in verse 23. He warns us that, if we defile this Temple, we court destruction. He speaks of himself and his colleagues as “stewards of the mysteries of God.” This reminds us of Jesus’ “Kingdom of Heaven,” which he urges his disciples to enter.

It is very important that Christians should recognize the true merits of their religion. These teachings of Paul restore the dignity of human nature, whereas professing Christians have all too often belittled and slandered human nature. To restore the dignity of human nature does not however imply self-conceit — nobody can be more emphatic against that than is Paul himself; it means *faith*, faith in oneself, faith in the Divinity which has been breathed into us, faith in the eternal Divine Spark from which all beings are sprung.

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

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 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.”

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 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.

THE GOLDEN RULE

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

— *Matthew*, vii, 12

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

— *Matthew*, v, 44-5

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

unwise minds, their human nature compels them instinctively to follow.

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

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 perversers, 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 recognize him as a divine spirit garbed in various sheaths, the outermost of which is his physical body; and that consequently man has a dual nature, being at once God and beast, partaking of the natures of both, while his self-conscious mind hovers between the two, being destined eventually to tame the beast by allying himself with the divine in himself.

This means that there are two laws in our nature — that of instinctual self-gratification, which we share with the beasts, though in man, being allied with intellect, this instinct acquires an evil character; and that of the divine nature. When Jesus or any other Teacher, enjoins the law of Love, the Golden Rule, he simply points out the only rule of conduct which is proper for man, if man is to live in accordance with man's nature. The fact that these wise teachings seem so ineffectual, so much disregarded, should not cause undue despondency or cynicism.

They have remained as a lamp for our feet throughout ages of darkness, and are still recognized as our sheet anchor. Whatever failure there may have been in practice, the principle has been maintained. The doctrine of each for himself was not so long ago proclaimed as an economic panacea; but its disastrous results have become apparent. If there are cynical individuals who try to make a gospel out of self-seeking, they are not happy. The man who worships self exclusively cuts himself off from life and enters a path which, if persisted in, would lead to his being isolated with the object of his worship — a fate awful to contemplate.

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

The subject being somewhat difficult to treat upon, it is advisable to guard against possible misconceptions of what is meant. Some may think that we are seeking to reduce the Golden Rule to a policy of expediency or a means of achieving personal beatitude; but such is by no means the case. Self-renunciation is at the root of the matter; for it is only by freeing oneself from attachment to the personal self that one can hope to experience the freedom of conscious union with the greater Self — what Jesus would have called the Kingdom of Heaven. Hence his maxims as to conduct are meant to be taken seriously. It is through service to others that we learn to enter this Kingdom. And we should remember that charity begins at home, and that the first step for each individual is to reform himself. The need for co-operative efforts, for unions of all

kinds, was never more fully recognized than it is today; and we are attempting here to see what can be done to make these ideals more easily realizable. So much of our science, philosophy and economic and social theory, pull in an opposite direction, being grounded in materialism and personalism, that a sound philosophy of life, a better understanding of the real human nature, will help very much. What is so cynically called human nature is only the perverse nature in man; if we understood better what human nature is essentially, we should have a sounder foundation for our philanthropic efforts.

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

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 recognize those qualities elsewhere. His experience has not been that of those who, finding absurdities in their religion, have thrown overboard all religion and joined

the chill and cheerless ranks of the scoffers and doubters. He feels that he has merely grown and expanded — found the real Gospel underlying the travesty; and it is the purpose of this study to assist others who may find themselves similarly situated.

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

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

personality, which is but a temporary mask for the 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.

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 Corinthians*, xv, 22

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

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

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

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

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

In the times of the early Christian Fathers there were extant certain collections of *Logia* or 'sayings' of Jesus, and these are believed by scholars to have been the basis upon which the Gospels were compiled. These were some of the

secret teachings of Jesus, as alluded to in the quotations above. There were two sects known as the Ebionites and the Nazarenes, who used these sayings as the basis of their teachings and their rule of life. These sects taught a much purer form of Christianity, in which it was recognized that all men are potential Christs, inasmuch as there dwells in every man the Christ, the Son of the Father; so that man needs only to be quickened by the Second Birth in order to come to a realization of his sleeping divinity. In Jesus himself they saw, not a unique son of God, but one of those men who, having themselves attained to knowledge, then become Teachers for every man. But later on, when the increasing materialism of the age had converted the original gospel into an exoteric religion without any Mysteries, these Nazarenes and Ebionites were regarded as heretics. If Fundamentalists would 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 recognize the earnestness of a Teacher striving his utmost to deliver his message of salvation and to win disciples for it. One of his disciples, Peter, fails at a test; and then, when too late, repents, and turns the teachings into a rigid and neurotic religion. It has been well said by people at the present day that Christianity has never yet been really tried; and their words are even truer than they think.

“IN CHRIST SHALL ALL BE MADE ALIVE”

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

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

— *Romans*, vi, 3-8

As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.
— *1 Corinthians*, xv, 22

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

Marcion, who founded the churches of the Marcionites in the second century A.D., taught a purer Christianity; he taught the gospel of Christ and Paul and rejected the corruptions and mutilations which he found prevalent.

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

It is little realized how our view of Christianity suffers from the lack of historical perspective. Christianity was one of a great number of systems competing for favor and combining in various degrees the doctrines of Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, Oriental sects, 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.

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 Authorized Version rendering of the Greek *sunteleia tou aiōnos*, which means the completion of the age, and is represented in the Latin version by *consummatio seculi*. *Seculi* certainly cannot mean 'world,' and does mean 'age' or 'cycle'; and *consummatio* means 'consummation' and might possibly imply termination.

A knowledge of the Secret Doctrine of the Ages gives the clue to all such sayings, to the Hebrew symbolic prophecies, to that marvelous allegory called the *Revelation of John*, and to myths like that of Prometheus and the finding of infant boys floating in arks on sacred rivers, etc., etc. That key is the true history of the human Races and their evolution; and *pari passu* the evolution of worlds and of cycles of time. For it is taught that all evolution proceeds in a circular form, the circle consisting first of a downward arc representing the descent of spirit into matter, and then of an upward arc representing the reascent of matter into spirit. As regards man, this means that he first passes into a more and more material state, during which his spiritual faculties become obscured and lie latent; and after having passed the lowest point of the circle he regains his spiritual faculties — paradise lost and regained, we may

say. This process, thus briefly stated, might seem to imply merely a forward and a retrograde movement bringing the evolution back to its starting-point; but the teaching further explains that, though there is actually a swing to and fro, yet there is progress all the time, for throughout the whole process spirit is continually expressing itself through matter, first by descending into matter, and then by raising or evolving matter up to a level with spirit. Thus the latter stages of evolution, though analogous to a reversal of the earlier stages, are actually much more advanced.

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

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

It is evident that the Coming of Christ means the awakening of the Christ spirit in humanity, and that he will not come in the rushing wind but in the still small voice; people may cry, Lo here! and Lo there! But verily the kingdom of God is within them. And now witness the folly of humanity, that expects the arrival of Christ on some particular day within the next few months, and gets ready to wait for him on the top of some hill. Or the people who interpret the *Book of Daniel* into prophecies about the Lost Ten Tribes or what not. Christ is not

coming to collect a few devout Protestant Christians and destroy the Church of Rome. He cannot come until a temple is made to receive the presence of their own Inner God.

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) 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 recognizable occult symbology, though much tortured by those who try to find in them details as to the second coming of Christ. Then there is the poetical and imaginative literature, such as the *Psalms*, *Ecclesiastes*, and the *Song of Solomon*. They read like the outpourings of a full heart and a well-stored mind; and it may be preferable to accept them as such rather than to try to twist them into any philosophical or didactic significance. The *Book*

of Job is a very ancient allegorical story of the trials passed through by a candidate for initiation; it is found elsewhere, and its origin is unfathomable.

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.

— *Matthew*, i, 18

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

— *Matthew*, 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.

— *Matthew*, 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 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.

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 Corinthians*, i, 18

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. — *Matthew*, 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 recognizing the God within him and sacrificing his lower nature to that Divine Nature; and the cross is the universal symbol of this mystic rite. It denotes the Word made Flesh, the Divine nature made human by incarnation. Its upright arm stands for Father-Nature, and its horizontal arm, Mother-Nature; the two together denoting the manifested world. The ansated cross, found in Egyptian sculpture, has a handle (or sometimes a circle) at the top, thus symbolizing the terrestrial nature controlled by the spiritual nature. The Sun, Moon, and Cross form a triad frequent in religious symbolism: the sun is the emblem of Japanese reverence; in Islam we find the Crescent and Star (the Star being a variant for the Sun). All three together make the emblem of Mercury — the complete Man, with the Crescent above for his mind, the Cross below for his body, organs, and functions, and the symbol of the Spiritual Sun at his heart.

The Cross means the Word made Flesh, the Son of God crucified, incarnated in a human form; and thus it is that universal sacred emblem of the ‘second creation’ of man, whereby the ‘mindless’ form was enlightened by the Gods who made man in their own image. But several different things have become mixed up in the Christian tradition. The stake, often with a cross-bar, was used in Roman executions; and an actual narrative of such a literal crucifixion has been made. Again, crucifixion was a rite in the Mysteries, especially those of Egypt. See *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. II, p. 558. ‘Crucifying before the Sun’ was a phrase used in initiations in Egypt, coming originally from India.

The initiated adept, who had successfully passed through all the trials, was attached, not nailed, but simply tied on a cross in the form of a *tau* (in Egypt), or a *Svastika* without the four additional prolongations, . . . plunged in a deep sleep. . . . He was allowed to remain in this state for three days and three nights, during which time his Spiritual Ego was said to confabulate with the ‘gods,’ descend into Hades, Amenti, or 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) 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

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 sects 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 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, says:

In the period between 130 and 180 A.D. the varied and complicated Christian fellowships in the Roman empire crystallized into close and mutually exclusive societies: churches with fixed constitutions and creeds, schools with distinctive esoteric doctrines, associations for worship with peculiar mysteries, and ascetic sects with special rules of conduct.

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

and later on in numerous modifications occasioned by attempts to adapt the real teachings to the growing materialism and ecclesiastical formalism of the age.

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

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

which surely indicates the Path whereof self-directed evolution by man is his own Savior. Or *Matthew*, 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.

