



THE CANADIAN THEOSOPHIST

## LETTERS TO THE EDITORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

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THE CANADIAN THEOSOPHIST

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## OBJECTIVES:

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To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.

To encourage the Study of Comparative religion, Philosophy and Science.

To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.



## FROM THE DESK

Lois Brisbois

### How Am I Doing?

Today the world is in an unprecedented position. No matter if the Covid19 virus is man-made or a natural outcome of our life here on Earth, it has changed our way of being. How will we weather this storm and who will we be when it's over?

From my personal perspective this is a test for the whole world. How will we manage? To keep it simple I will present various check lists and ideas to help you to determine how you are managing on your personal journey. I think most people who read our TSC Magazine are on a spiritual journey of some kind. Where you may be along the path matters not. What matters most is that you have begun.

From Great Western Brotherhood, I share the following:

### Ten Commandments to Spiritualize the Grosser Self

#### NEGATIVE

1. Never condemn
2. Never criticize
3. Never withhold love
4. Never restrict totally
5. Never challenge a belief system
6. Never be proudly different from others

7. Never destroy a sense of security
8. Never doubt or cause doubt
9. Never crush an ego
10. Never accuse

#### POSITIVE

1. Always exonerate
2. Always praise
3. Always give love
4. Always allow freedom
5. Always respect a belief system
6. Always be proud to be like others
7. Always assure security
8. Always remove doubts and fears
9. Always respect an ego
10. Always commend

To turn these commandments into Mantrums, begin with "I will".

From the Chopra Center, here are some thoughts:

### Ten Common Signs of Spiritual Awakening

1. Observing your daily patterns  
You become aware that you are observing what you eat and what you do and how you react to life situations
2. Feeling a sense of connection



You have a heightened sense of awareness of other humans and other creatures that share the Earth with you.

3. Letting go of attachments

You stop being attached to what you always thought about yourself and start to drop the veils.

4. Finding inner peace

When things go badly you are less flappable.

5. Increasing your intuition

You are apt to connect with the energies of others on a more regular basis.

6. Having synchronicity

You have that feeling that the universe is conspiring to bring good into your life.

7. Increasing your compassion

Compassion for others feels normal, natural and fulfilling.

8. Removing fear of death

Your consciousness transcends the physical body so that the loss of the body seems less tragic.

9. Increasing authenticity

You feel confident and have a strong sense of self-worth. You lose the need to please others.

10. Flourishing

You have happiness and success across various domains.

Some schools of Yoga claim to develop Supermen. I think it's becoming known that these super powers are now more prevalent in society.

They include:

1. Clairvoyance, or knowledge of past and future
2. Ability to understand and talk with animals
3. Ability to know past incarnations of one's self and others
4. Prophecy and foresight
5. Ability to see events in distant places by sending the mind
6. Ability to see into one's own body, the body of others and into the ground
7. Ability to use all psychic powers

Then there are the Eight Superior Powers

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Be able to:

1. Shrink to the size of an atom
2. Become extremely light
3. Become extremely heavy
4. Extend the sense organs without limit
5. Have irresistible will
6. Obtain unlimited dominion over everything
7. Control all powers of nature



8. Transport oneself anywhere at will
9. Have all things in time and space appear simultaneously

The above lists are from the Metaphysics section of the book *Eternal Truth*, written by Dr. Eugene E. Whithworth. He was a true Metaphysician with a goal of personal God contact and believed that it was available to all, not just to Eastern yogis.

I hope the above lists will give searchers something to ponder. As we navigate our changing times together, take some time each day for reflection and for meditation. That's how to keep Truth central in your life.

Lois Brisbois





## LONDON LECTURES OF 1907

*by Annie Besant, continued*

### Part I Psychism and Spirituality

Our subject to-night consists of two words: psychism—spirituality. I am going to speak to you on the subjects denoted by these two words, because there is so much confusion about them in ordinary conversation, in ordinary literature, and out of that confusion much of harm arises. People think of one thing and use the name of the other, and so continually fall into blunders and mislead others with whom they talk. I want to-night to draw a sharp and intelligible division between psychism and spirituality; if possible, to explain very clearly what each of them means; so that, thoroughly understanding the meaning of the things, people may choose for themselves which of the two they desire to evolve, or unfold, within themselves. For if a person, desiring to unfold the spiritual nature, uses the means which are only adapted for developing the psychic nature, disappointment, possibly danger, will result; while, on the other hand, if a person desires to develop the psychic nature, and thinks that he will reach that development quickly by unfolding his spiritual powers, he also is equally doomed to disappointment; but in the second case, only to disappointment for a time. For while it is not true that the great psychic is necessarily a spiritual person, it is true that

the great spiritual person is inevitably a psychic. All the powers of Nature are subject to the Spirit, and hence, when a man has truly unfolded his spiritual nature, there is nothing in the lower world which is not open to him and obedient to his will. In that sense, then, the man who follows the spiritual path will not ultimately be disappointed if he is seeking psychic development, but the very seeking for it will, on the spiritual path, act as a certain barrier. I shall return to the point again presently, and show you in what sense, and why, it is true that the development of the psychic powers may hinder the unfolding of the spiritual.

Now, to distinguish clearly between the two, I will begin with two brief definitions. They will be expanded naturally in the course of the lecture, but I will define each of these two words in a single sentence so as to make the definition clear and brief. Spirituality is the Self-realisation of the One; psychism is the manifestation of the powers of consciousness through organised matter. Each word of that definition has its own value. We are far too apt, in our ordinary thought and talking, to limit the words "psychical," "psychic," or "psychism" in a quite illegitimate way, and the popular use of the term is illegitimate. It is generally used amongst us to mean unusual manifestations of the



powers of consciousness, whereas, properly speaking, the word ought to cover every outer manifestation of consciousness, whereas, on the physical, on the astral, on the material, or on the buddhic plane, it does not matter in what world you are moving, in what matter your consciousness is acting so long as it is utilising organised matter for its own expression so long are those manifestations psychic, and are properly included under the term psychism. You may perhaps wonder why I lay stress on this. You will see it at once if I remind you that unless we keep this definition in mind—accurate, legitimate as it is—we shall be making a division between the manifestation of the consciousness on the physical and on the astral and mental planes, between its manifestation in the physical and those in the astral and mental bodies; and if we do that the whole of our thought will be on mistaken lines. You need practically to be pressed back to what you know of consciousness on the physical plane, before you can thoroughly follow its manifestations on the astral and on the mental. If you try to separate off manifestations which are the same in kind though differing in degree, according to the fineness of the matter which is employed, if you try to separate them off, you will always regard what you call psychism—that is, astral and mental manifestations in the subtler bodies—in an artificial and unwise manner. If, on the other hand, you realise that consciousness is one, that its manifestation on any plane is conditioned by the matter of

the plane, that it is one in essence, only varying in degree according to the lessening or the increase of the resistance of the matter of the planes, then you will not be inclined to take up exaggerated views with regard to what people are so fond of calling psychism. You will not denounce it in the foolish way of many people, because in denouncing it you will know that you denounce all intellectual manifestations, an absurdity of which very few people are likely to be guilty; if you take your intellectual manifestations in the physical world as admirable things, to be always encouraged, strengthened, developed, then you will be compelled, by parity of reasoning, to understand that the manifestations of the same consciousness in finer matter, astral or mental, are equally worthy, and no more worthy, of development, of consideration. You will not find yourself in the absurdly illogical position of declaring it a good thing to train the physical plane consciousness, while it is dangerous to cultivate the astral and mental plane consciousness. You will understand that all psychism is of the same kind, that on each plane the development of psychism has its own laws; but that it is absurd to admire the working of consciousness on the lower plane, and shrink from it as something dangerous, almost diabolical, when it appears on a plane higher than the physical.

It is this rational and common-sense view which I want to impress upon you to-night, to get you out of the region of mystery, marvel, wonder,



and fear, which to so many people surround what is called psychism; to make you understand that you are unfolding consciousness, showing out your powers on one plane after another according to the organisation and the fineness of the bodies in which your consciousness is working; and that if you will only keep your common sense and reason, if you will only not allow yourself to be terrified by what at present is unusual, you may then walk along the psychic pathway in the astral or mental world, as resolutely, and with as great an absence of hysteria, as you walk along the psychic pathway in the physical world. That is the general idea; and, of course, this is the meaning in which, after all, the word is often used down here. When you say "psychology" you do not mean only the workings of consciousness in astral and mental bodies; you mean the whole consciousness of the man, the workings of the mind, wherever the mind is active; the whole of that you include under "psychology." Why, then, when you change its form, should you narrow it down, as though that which is mind on one plane is not also mind on all planes on which the mind is able to function?

Now let us consider for a moment the workings of the mind on the physical plane: they are familiar. There is, however, one important point about them. In the materialistic science of the last century you had very widely spread, amongst scientific men, the view that thought

was only the result of certain kinds of vibration in certain kinds of matter. I need not dwell on that. But you are aware that both in England, and more especially in France and Germany, most elaborate disquisitions were written to prove that thought was only the product of nervous matter. You rarely, I think never, now find a well-trained scientist prepared to commit himself to that position. Those who survive as representatives of that same school may do so, but they are literally survivals. The mass of psychologists of to-day admit that the manifestations of mind cannot any longer be regarded as the results of vibrations in the physical brain, that at least we must go beyond these limitations when dealing with the results of the study of consciousness, as it is now studied amongst scientific men. They will no longer, then, regard thought as the product of matter. They certainly will not be prepared to go as far as I now propose to go, and say that the thinking organism is the production of thought—the very antithesis, you will agree, of the other position, but which is vital to the understanding of the unfolding of the powers of consciousness through matter. It is recognised in ordinary biology that the function appears before the organ. There I am on safe scientific ground. It is recognised that the exercise of the function gradually builds up the organ. All the researches into the simpler forms of organisms go to prove that. It is also recognised that when the exercise of the function has



built the organ in a very simple form, the exercise of the function continually improves the organ which originally it builded. So far, we are hand in hand with ordinary science. I think I shall not go too far in saying that a large number of the more scientific psychologists of to-day will at least agree that the brain as you find it in the adult man is very largely the result of the exercise of thinking through the earlier years of life. I do not think they would go so far as to say that thinking has literally produced it. They would, however, judging by very many things that have been said, be willing to admit that by hard thinking we can improve our apparatus of thought. That is one reason for thinking hard—in order to think better. And the harder you think; the more will your thinking instrument improve.

In my next step, however, I cannot by any stretching of ordinary science persuade it to accompany me, or give me a foundation; for the point is that your consciousness, working on the next plane above the one on which the organ of consciousness is being built, is the shaper of that mechanism. To put it concretely: your physical brain is built up from the astral plane, and it is your consciousness working in matter finer than the physical which builds up the brain in the forming child within the limits laid down by karma. Now, that is a general law for healthy evolution. You will see the importance of this law a little further on. Everybody which we possess—physical,

astral, mental, buddhic—is always built up by consciousness working in the plane next above it; the next plane, or world, is a world very much more “next” than you are next each other sitting here—not far away beyond the stars, removed by great spaces. It is interpenetrating you in every portion of your being. It is only “next” in the sense that the solids, liquids, and gases of your bodies are next each other in the body—not far away, but here. So that the working is of the closest and most intimate kind. Some of you who are students of Theosophical literature will remember that H.P.B. has spoken of all of us as working in the astral consciousness. You will see that you are not working with a physical consciousness in the literal sense of the term, if you think for a moment. How much do you know of the consciousness working in the various cells and tissues of your physical body? Practically nothing, except when you are ill. Only when the body is disorganised do you become conscious of that working. Normally, the motion of your blood, the building up by assimilation of your muscles and nerves, the life of your cells, the protective action of some of the living cells in your body—the “devourers,” as they are called—go on without your knowledge, without your thought, without your giving one moment’s conscious attention to them. In the Perfect Man, the consciousness of all this is ever present, but in us, imperfect, it is not; we are not yet sufficiently vitalised and unfolded to carry



on the whole of our consciousness, with full awareness of all its activities. We are only able to manage a very small part of it, and so have let go the consciousness that keeps at work the physical body, to concentrate ourselves in a higher world, and utilise the nervous mechanism as the apparatus of our thinking. That law obtains, then, all through. If you want to organise and build up your astral body, you can only do it from the mental plane. You must raise your thought to a higher power by concentration, by regular meditation, by deliberately working on the consciousness, before you can raise it to that power from which it shall be able to organise your astral body, as it has already organised your physical body. That is the reason why meditation is necessary in all these things; because without the creative power of thought we cannot organise the body in the world which is nearest to the physical.

Now, supposing that we recognise that our consciousness working in the physical brain, the instrument over which we have complete control, is continually at work contacting the outer world, using the brain as an instrument on which it can play, and continually bringing down from higher worlds impressions which it transmits more or less perfectly to the physical plane, we need not dwell upon our ordinary thinking. Let us take thinking a little more unusual, where the finer part of the brain, its etheric matter, is being more largely vitalised, more definitely used. The

powers of the imagination—the creative power—the artistic powers, all creative in their nature, these utilise most the ethers of the brain, and, by working in those, bring into activity the lower and coarser matter of the dense brain. Now, the thought passes from the consciousness through vehicle after vehicle to find its clear expression here. But do you not have many mental impressions that are not clear, not well defined, and yet which impress you deeply, and of which you feel sure? They are of many kinds, and reach you in many ways. What is important to you is simply this for the moment: that being surrounded by the astral and mental worlds, contacts from these are continually touching you, continually causing changes in your consciousness. If your astral body were thoroughly organised like your physical, the impressions made would be clear and sharp like the physical. If your mental body were well organised, the impressions of that plane, the heavenly plane, would be clear and sharp like the physical. But as the astral and mental bodies at this stage of evolution are not well organised, the impressions received by them, causing changes in the consciousness, are vague and indeterminate, and it is these which are generally called "psychic." And when you have a Psychical Research Society, it is not dealing with the ordinary processes of thought, but with those which are not ordinary; and all those things to which it gives many strange names are all workings of the con-



sciousness, in sheaths or bodies of which it has not yet gained the mastery, which it has not yet definitely organised for its purposes. Slowly and gradually they become organised, and strenuous thinking is the method for the astral body, and the working of the pure reason is the method for the mental body. Let us consider with regard to this, whether there is any other way of bringing the astral body and mental body into activity. For you may have noticed that I used the word "normal" evolution, orderly evolution on the lines of natural evolution, always from above. But you may stimulate it from below. It is possible to stimulate the astral body, at least, from the physical plane, but you do it at the cost of higher evolution a little later on, and the reason you can do it is simple enough. In the astral body are all the centres of your senses. You know how after death a man's desires are the same as they were during his physical life. You know how in dreams your desires resemble desires that you may have in your waking consciousness. The centre of all your psychic powers, of your conscious powers, the centres of these are in the astral, and if (especially with your senses, each of which has its own centre in the astral body) you overstrain the physical senses down here, you will get an action on the astral plane, but an unhealthy, because disorderly one, one not going along the line of evolution but trying to create from below instead of from above. None the less, you

may have some results, and in the two famous Indian systems for developing the powers of the consciousness, and for unfolding the consciousness itself, you have this recognised, and you read of Râja Yoga and of Hatha Yoga, of the Kingly Yoga and of the Yoga of Effort. The Yoga of Effort is Hatha Yoga, and is practised by physical means and followed by physical effects. The eye is stimulated in certain ways, and the effect of straining the physical eye is to bring about a certain limited kind of clairvoyance. You can gain it in that way by gazing into crystals, and so on. They do stimulate the centre of physical sight, but not the astral; and that is why they cannot go very far. You can get a certain amount of clairvoyance by these means, but you are only expanding your physical sight, and working on centres of the astral body connected with the physical organ of vision, the eye. The true astral sight is an entirely different thing. That comes from a centre of its own in the astral body. It has to be created from the mental body, as the organ of the physical was from the astral. The centre of that sight will be in the mental body and not in the astral, and only the organ of it in the astral body. The method of the Kingly, the Râja Yoga, is always by thought—concentrate, meditate, contemplate, think: by that means, in a healthy, normal, natural way you will inevitably develop the powers of sight on the astral, as in the course of Nature the powers of sight were developed on the physical plane.



And if you realise that your consciousness is one, building its bodies for its fuller and more complete expression, that you are here in order to become masters of matter instead of its slaves, to become lords of matter, using every organ of matter for knowledge of the world to which that matter belongs, and not to be blinded by it, as we are for so long a time in our climb upwards, then you will see that this natural development of astral powers is inevitable in the course of evolution, and all that you can do is to quicken it, following the line which Nature has traced. As Nature slowly will evolve in every human being the power of using the astral body as freely as you use the physical body now, so can you quicken the coming of that day for yourselves by understanding the powers of thought and turning them to the object you desire to obtain. There are many ways in which this may be done, and many rules you may learn for your guidance. Those rules may be summed up under two heads: clear and strenuous thinking, discipline for the bodies that you are trying to evolve; and also, I should add, for the body below them in evolution. Those are the two great laws for the safe evolution of these so-called psychic powers, what I call the powers of the consciousness on the astral and mental planes. There must be a discipline for the bodies, for you have to choose the material which will serve you best in the work you are doing out of the innumerable combina-

tions of matter with which Nature presents you. You must choose the combinations that will serve your purpose, which you can utilise in the building of the organs of sense on plane after plane. Just as really as the man who is a drunkard will injure his nervous system by his excesses, and by supplying coarse and over-active compounds will injure the physical body, so making it a less useful instrument for the man—as any excess, not only drunkenness, but gluttony, profligacy, and so on—as these injure the physical body as an instrument of consciousness, and to have full and perfect consciousness here we must train, discipline, build up our body with knowledge and with self-control, so also is that true on the higher planes. A regimen is necessary when you are dealing with the organisation of the subtler matter of the astral and mental worlds, for you cannot build up your physical body out of the coarser combinations of matter on the physical, and have finer combinations on the astral and mental. The bodies have to match each other. They have to correspond with each other; and as you find all sorts of combinations related the one to the other on every plane, you must choose your combinations on the physical if you desire to choose them also on the astral and mental. You cannot make your physical body coarse, and organise the astral and mental bodies for the finer purposes of the man; and you must settle that in your minds if you wish to try to develop these higher



powers of consciousness. Not only because if you gather together the coarser materials of the astral world, you will find yourself hampered by them in the higher expression of consciousness, but also because the presence of these combinations in you exposes you to a number of dangers on the astral plane. The purer the elements of your astral body, the safer you are in your earlier wanderings on that plane. It is important to mention this, because in some of the schools of thought which are trying only to develop astral powers, you will find that they deliberately use other methods in order to make their astral body active. Many schools of the "left hand path" in India will use spirits, wines, meats of all sorts, in order to bring about a certain astral condition, and they succeed, because by these means they attract to themselves, and for a time govern, the elemental powers of those lower planes—the elementals of the lower astral worlds. So that you may find that an Indian, who knows a little of this and wants to use it for his own purposes, will deliberately use these things which are attractive to the elementals of those lower worlds, and gather them around him and use them. But he does it knowing what he does, and aiming at that which he desires to conquer. But amongst those who practise black magic of the higher kinds—of the mental kinds—you have an asceticism as stern and rigid as has ever been used by those who are trying to develop their higher

bodies for nobler ends. It is a mistake to think that the brothers of the dark side are, as a rule, licentious and indifferent to what you call morality. On the contrary, they are exceedingly strict. Their faults are the faults of the mind, not the faults of the lower desires, of the organs of the different bodies which may gratify them. Their faults are the more dangerous faults of mental powers misused for personal ends. But they realise very well that if they want the mental powers and the higher ranges of those powers, they must be as rigid in the discipline of the lower bodies as any pupil of the White Lodge could be. Take it, then, that to develop in this way, a regimen for the bodies, as well as the strict working and training of the mind, is absolutely necessary. But with these the result is sure. You cannot set a time for the result, for it depends where the worker is beginning in his present life. In all these matters Nature's laws will not permit of what is called miraculous growth, and if you find persons developing psychic powers very rapidly, when perhaps they have been meditating only a few months, it is because in a previous life they have cultivated these powers and are taking up their lessons again in a more advanced class of evolution, and not in the infant class, as many do in the present life. So that there are differences. Some now beginning are not likely to succeed in their present incarnation; but if that discourages them, one can only say: "If you do not do it now,



you will have to begin again next life, and so on and on and on. For Nature's laws cannot be violated, and Nature knows no favoritism and no partiality. Some time or other you have to begin, and the sooner you begin the sooner will you succeed."

Now the whole of this, you will remark, is the training, the organising of bodies. And psychism implies that. You must train, purify, organise, in order that the powers of the consciousness may show forth. You will see very fully now why at the beginning I urged you to realise that the whole of these manifestations are similar in kind, so that when you find someone saying to you: "Oh! So-and-so is a psychic," as though that were to condemn the person; "Such-and-such a person is a mere clairvoyant," and so on, as though the fact of possessing clairvoyance were a disadvantage rather than an advantage; then the proper answer is: "Are you prepared to go the whole way with that?" Many Indians do so his, (it is the point to which I said I would return)

the powers of consciousness manifested on the lower planes, are hindrances to the spiritual life. And so, they are in a sense. The spiritual life goes inwards: all psychic powers go outwards. It is the same Self in either case—the Self turning inwards on Itself, or the Self going outwards to the world of objects. But it does not make one scrap of difference whether it goes out to physical, astral, or mental objects: it is all the objective. But it does not make one

scrap of difference whether it goes out to physical, astral, or mental objects: it is all the objective consciousness, and therefore the very reverse of the spiritual. But the Indian does not shrink from that as ordinarily the man in the West does. He is perfectly honest. He says: "Yes, the powers of the intellect applied to the objects of the world are a hindrance in the spiritual life. We do not want them, do not care to think about it. We give up all the objects of the physical plane when seeking the Self." And if you are prepared to say that, then by all means turn aside from psychism, but do not at one and the same time encourage intellectuality on the physical plane and denounce what you call psychism on the others, because that is mere folly. If it is better to be blind here than to see—and the Indian will tell you it often is, because it shuts out all the distracting objects of the physical plane—if you are prepared to say that, and say: "Yes, I would rather be blind than see," then you may go on to denounce seeing on the astral plane. But if you value your physical sight, why not value the astral sight—it is a stage higher—as well? and the mental sight—which is a stage higher yet—as well? Why denounce astral and mental, and praise up the physical? Why admire the power of sight of the painter, who sees more shades than you can see, and denounce the sight of the clairvoyant, who sees very much more than the cleverest painter? They all belong to the object world;



they all lead the Self away from the realisation of himself, and they are all exactly on the same level. It seems strange when one sees the same person exalting the psychic on the physical plane and denouncing it on the astral and mental. But now let us turn to "spirituality" and see what that means. "The Self-realisation of the One"; not the declaring that all men are one, that all men are brothers: we can all do that. Anyone who has reached a certain stage of intellectual knowledge will recognise the unity of mankind; will say, with the writer in the Christian book, that God has made all men of one blood—quoted again from what is called a Pagan book. That intellectual recognition of the unity is practically universal among educated people; but very few are prepared to carry out the intellectual recognition into practical life and practical training. Now for the development of what are called psychic faculties some amount of retirement from the world is very useful. For the development of the spiritual consciousness no such retirement is necessary. In fact, for the most part, except in the earlier stages perhaps, seclusion is a mistake; for the world is the best place for the unfolding of the sense of unity, and best amongst men and women and children can we call out the powers of the spiritual life. And that for a simple reason. In the lower world the Spirit shows itself out by love, by sympathy; and the more we can love, the more we can sympathise, the greater will be the

unfolding of the consciousness of the Self within. It was a true word of the early Christian Initiate, that if a man loves not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen? And if the perfection of the spiritual consciousness be that vision of the Supreme, the consciousness which knows itself to be one with God, then the way to the realisation will be by the partial realisation of loving sympathy, for which the world is the most fitting field, and our brethren around us the natural stimulus. Love, sacrifice, these are the manifestations of the Spirit on the physical plane, as is right knowledge also. For the Spirit is not a one-sided thing, but a Trinity, and knowledge is as necessary as love. The special value of love lies in its unifying power, and in the fact that it makes what the world calls sacrifice natural and delightful. You know it in your own experience. Just in proportion as you love another is it a joy and not a sorrow to give up things in order that the happiness of the other may be increased. It is no sacrifice for a mother to give up personal enjoyment for the sake of giving it to her children. A deeper joy is felt in the happiness of the child than could possibly have been felt in the enjoyment of the thing by herself; a sweeter, finer, profounder happiness is the enjoyment of the happiness of the beloved. And that a little widens out the consciousness, and hence family life is one of the best schools for spiritual unfolding; for in the continual sacrifices of the



family life, springing from love and rendered joyful by affection, the Self feels itself a larger Self, and reaches the sense of unity with those immediately around. And after the family the public life, the life of the community, the life of the nation: these also are schools for the unfolding of the spiritual consciousness. For the man who is a good citizen of the community feels the life of the community as his own life, and so becomes conscious of a larger Self than the narrow self of the family. And the man who loves his nation, his Self widens out to the boundaries of the nation, and he is conscious of a larger Self than the self of the family, or the community within the State. And just in proportion as the love widening does not grow superficial and shallow (for if you have only a certain amount of water and you make your dish wider and wider; the water will become shallower and shallower) does it approach spiritual love. Too often love becomes unreal with those who try to love the far-off when they do not love the near. But if you avoid the temptation, and remembering that the Spirit has no limitations, and that you can draw and draw and draw on the love within you and never find the bottom of the source of love; if you are strong enough to do that, then the love of the family, of the community, of the State, will widen out into the love of humanity, and you shall know yourself as one with all, and not only with your family, or your community, or your nation. All these local loves

are schoolmasters to bring us to the wider love of man. But do not blunder in the idea that you can have the wider unless you have gone through the narrower; for the bad husband, the bad citizen, the bad patriot, will never make a real lover of humanity. He must learn his alphabet before he can read in this book of love, and must spell out the letters before he may pronounce the word. None the less, these successive stages are all stages towards the spiritual life, and prepare the man for the consciously spiritual realisation. And if you would really train yourself for the unfolding of this life within you, practise it on those who are nearest to you by meeting them with love and sympathy in the daily paths of life. Not only those whom you like, but those you care not for as well; not with those who love you only, but with those who dislike you also. Remember that you have to break down barriers—barriers of the bodies that bar you out from your fellow Selves in the worlds around you, and that breaking down of the barriers is part of the training in the spiritual life. Only as barrier after barrier is broken down, only as wall after wall is levelled to the ground, will the freedom of the Spirit become possible in manifestation on every plane and in every world. The Spirit is ever free in his own nature and his own life, but, confined within the barriers of the body, he has to learn to transcend them, before, on these planes of matter, he can realise the divine freedom which is his eternal birth-



right. So long as you feel yourself separate from others, so long are you shut out from the realisation of the unity; so long as you say "my" and "mine," so long the realisation of the Spirit is not yet possible for you. Love of individual possessions, not only physical but moral and mental, not the vulgar pride of physical wealth only, but moral pride, intellectual pride, everything that says "I" as against "you," and does not realise that I and you are one—all this is against the spiritual life. Hardest of all lessons when brought down to practical life; most difficult of all attainments when effort is made to realise it, and not only to talk about it and imagine it. It is best practised by continual renunciation of the individual possessions on every plane, and the constant thought of unity. When you are trying to live the life of the Spirit, you will try to be pure. You do well, but why? In order that you may be pure, and leave your impure brethren in their impurity? Oh no! You must try to be pure, in order that there may be more purity in the world to share amongst all men, because you are pure. You are not wanting to be purer than others, but only gathering purity that you may spread it in every direction, and most joyous when your own purity lifts someone from the mire, who is trampled into it under the feet of the world. You want to be wise. You do well; for wisdom is a splendid possession. But why? In order that you may look down on the ignorant and say: "I am wiser than thou," as the

pure man might say: "I am holier than thou"? Oh no! but in order that the wisdom that you gather may enlighten the ignorant, and become theirs and not only yours. Otherwise it is no spiritual thing; for spirituality does not know "myself" and "others"; it only knows the One Self, of whom all forms are manifestations. We dare not call ourselves spiritual until we have reached that point which none of us as yet has reached, for to reach it means to become a Christ. When, looking at the lowest and basest and most ignorant and vilest, we can say: "That is myself, in such-and-such a garb," and say it feeling it, rejoicing in it—because if there are two of you, and one is pure and the other impure, and the two are one, then neither is perfect, but both are raised above the level of the lowest—that is the true atonement, the real work of the Christ; and the birth of Christ within you means the willingness to throw down all walls of separation, and the stature of Christ within you means that you have accomplished it. For the most part we claim our unity above; we do not take pride in claiming our unity below; we are glad to say, "Yes, I also am Divine; I am a Christ in the making; I am one with Him." Harder to say: "I am one with the lowest of my brethren, sharing with them the same Divine life." Yet our Divinity is only realised as we recognise that same Divinity in others. You may remember that exquisite story of Olive Schreiner, breathing the very essence first of the unspiritual, and

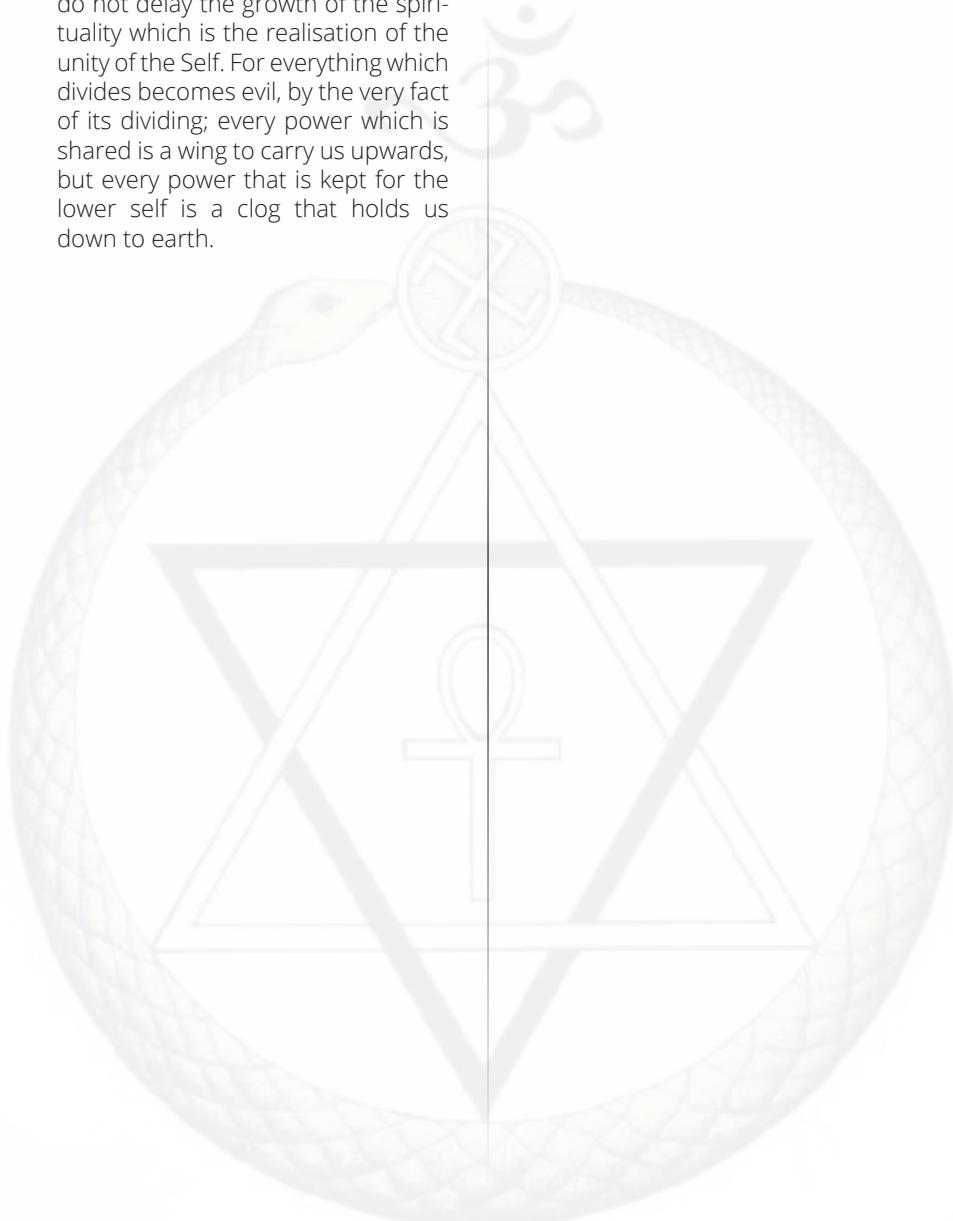


then of the spiritual life. In the first case a woman, pure and spotless, her garments shining with whiteness, and her feet shod as with snow, went up to the Gates of Heaven and trod the golden streets. And as she trod them in her shining robes the angels shuddered back, and said: "See, her garments are blood-spotted, and her sandals are stained with mire and blood." From the throne the Christ asked: "Daughter, how is it that your garments are blood-spotted and your sandals stained?" And she answered: "Lord, I was walking in miry ways, and I saw a woman there down in the mire, and I stepped upon her that I might keep my sandals clean." The Christ and the angels vanished, and the woman fell from heaven, and wandered again in the miry ways of earth. Once again, she came to the heavenly portal and trod the golden streets, and this time she was not alone. Another woman was with her, and the garments of both were blood-flecked, and the sandals of both were stained with the mire and blood of earth. But the angels seeing them pass by, cried out: "See how whitely their garments shine! And see how white are their feet!" And the Christ, when they came before the throne, said: "How come ye here in garments that are soiled?" And the answer came: "I saw this my sister trampled upon, and I bent down to lift her up, and in the picking of her up my garments were soiled, but I have brought her with me to Thy presence." And the Christ smiled and lifted them up beside Him, and

the angels sang for joy. For it is not the sin and the shame that are shared that soil the garments of the Spirit, and leave upon it the mire of earth. If, then, you would lead the spiritual life, go downwards as well as upwards. Feel your unity with the sinner as well as with the saint. For the only thing that makes you divine is the Spirit that lives in every human heart alike, in all equally dwelling, and there is no difference in the divinity of the Spirit, but only in the stage of its manifestation. And just as you and I climb upwards and show more of the spiritual life in the lower worlds, should we raise our brethren with us, and know the joy of the redeemer, and the power of the life that saves. For Those whom we call Masters, those who are the Christs of the world, those are revered and beloved, because to Them there is no difference, but the sinner is as beloved as the saint—nay, sometimes more, because compassion flows out to the weaker more than to the strong. Such is the spiritual life; such the goal that every man who would become spiritual must place before his eyes. Very different from the psychic, and not to be confused with it—the unfolding of the divinity in man, and not the purification and the organisation of the vehicles. Both are good, both necessary, and I finish with the words with which I began, that while to be psychic is no proof of spirituality, to be spiritual is to possess every power in heaven and on earth. Choose ye each your road. Tread whichever you



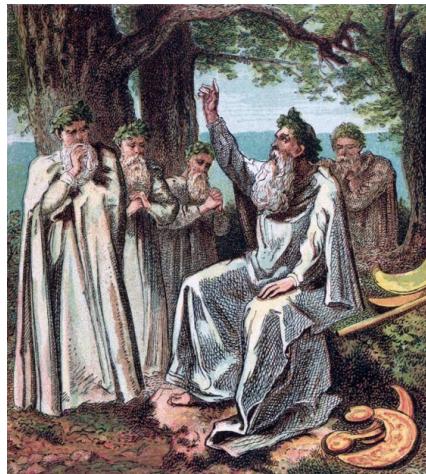
will, but beware that by the growth of your powers here, in separation, you do not delay the growth of the spirituality which is the realisation of the unity of the Self. For everything which divides becomes evil, by the very fact of its dividing; every power which is shared is a wing to carry us upwards, but every power that is kept for the lower self is a clog that holds us down to earth.





## THE DRUIDS – CUSTODIANS OF THE ANCIENT WISDOM

by Luke Michael Ironside



Picture credit: Joseph Martin Kronheim, *Druids of Old England*. Sourced from Wikipedia Commons: public domain.

*“...it does not seem unreasonable to assume that the Druids were to the Fourth Sub-Race, what the Theosophical Movement is to the Fifth, and that the same great fundamental teachings of life which inspired the Druids are now the ideals by which many try to live as Theosophists.”*

- Peter Freeman, *The Druids and Theosophy* (1924)

The Druids were the custodians of the Ancient Wisdom of the Celtic peoples. They possessed knowledge of the various sciences, the art of music and poetry, of right governance and justice, and were also responsible for

the preservation of the genealogical record of their tribe. Once the wisest of the West, they were driven out by persecution and ignorance, robbed of their ancestral lands, and eventually extinguished altogether. Their wisdom, however, lives on through the unbroken record of the Ancient Wisdom that we have inherited in our modern age through the teachings of Theosophy.

We know from The Secret Doctrine that the Celts were of the Fourth Sub-Race of the Aryan Root Race. The original Celts are believed to have migrated from Central Asia to spread over the breadth of Europe. Despite repeated invasions and brutal persecution from



Rome, the Celts live on today through the ethnic people of Brittany, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, and the Isle of Man.

Madame Blavatsky refers to the Druids at many points throughout *The Secret Doctrine*, speaking highly of their teachings and influence and comparing them with the Brahmins of India, the Magi of Persia, and the Orphic Teachers of Greece. She further refers to them as the "descendants of the last Atlanteans" and states that "they were connected, in their esoteric teachings, with the universal Wisdom Religion".

The Druids did not commit their teachings to writing, upholding instead an oral tradition whereby their history and cosmology would be transmitted in poetry and verse. However, a number of prominent Greek and Roman writers (including Julius Caesar himself) wrote of the Druids and their practices, and it is from these that we may deduce the nature of their philosophy. From these classical writers, we learn that the Druids had a belief in reincarnation, and that this belief was integral to their understanding of the world. To the Celts, death was merely one aspect of the cycle of life. It was not an end, but rather a period of rest; a temporary darkness before the return of the dawn.

This perspective of life and death as alternating states of a broader, continual existence fit into their understanding of the world as being of a cyclic nature. To the Druids, everything was a cycle, from the seasons to the stages of life to the extremes of birth and death. Their mythology reflected this cyclic theme, with the seasons

taking anthropomorphized forms throughout the Wheel of the Year as heroes would die (journey to the Otherworld), and subsequently be reborn (return from the Otherworld). Such cyclic initiation myths can be found in the mythologies of all cultures of the world; however, the Celts were particularly emphatic in their belief in the rebirth and immutability of the soul when contrasted with the prevailing Roman ideas of the time.

One Welsh myth recounts the journey of a young boy, Gwion Bach, who had been tasked to stir a magic potion for the sorceress Cerridwen. According to the legend, the sorceress had given birth to a hideously ugly son and wished to compensate for his ugliness by brewing him an elixir of prophetic wisdom. Gwion was to stir the potion for a year and a day (the Celtic Wheel of the Year), after which the magical concoction would be ready. However, in the process of tending to this task, three hot drops spilled onto Gwion's thumb, causing him to instinctively place it in his mouth. The wisdom intended for her son was thus transferred to him. Realizing that Cerridwen would be angry, the boy fled, and a chase ensued. Using the powers of the potion, Gwion shapeshifted into various animals whilst the sorceress likewise pursued him by shifting into complementary predatory forms. Finally, Gwion transformed into a grain of wheat and was eaten by Cerridwen who had taken the form of a hen. Nine months later, she gave birth to the boy in human form – Taliesin, the inspired poet-seer of Celtic legend.

This myth encapsulates the essence of the Druidic worldview. In it, we find the



Picture credit: J.M. Edwards, *Y Mabinogion*. Sourced from Wikimedia Commons: public domain.

themes of cyclic death and rebirth, of spiritual initiation, of the transformation of worldly forms, and of alchemical transmutation. The divine inspiration which the boy Gwion receives from the potion was called by the Welsh, "awen", and was conceived as being the flowing spirit and essence of life. It was awen that was the fount of all knowledge and inspiration, and it was thus the muse of bards and poets. This conception of a "flowing spirit" as the essence of life further reveals an understanding of a universe pervaded by cyclic motion, in which birth and death, creation and destruction, and the incessant changing of the seasons are but the eternal turnings of the Wheel.

Celtic myth is rooted in the processes of nature; it is a symbolic rendering in story of that which was perceived by an observation of the natural envi-

ronment. Madame Blavatsky writes of the Druidic veneration for nature in *Isis Unveiled*, in which she praisingly notes that they would gather in their "natural academies built by the hand of the Invisible Architect" where the "chaste goddess of night beamed her most silvery rays on their oak-crowned heads; and their white-robed sacred bards knew how to converse with the solitary queen of the starry vault." To the Druids, nature itself was a temple, finely ordained by the gods, and the sun an ever-burning flame that would illuminate both hearts and minds.

From these fragments and hints of that once rich world of sun and stone and song that now remain, it is clear that Druidism was one expression of that Ancient Wisdom, or Theosophia, that has existed across all cultures and climes since time immemorial. Like modern Theosophists, Druids were



concerned chiefly with the search for Truth, in whatever form it may reveal itself. They recognized the hierarchical basis of life, and they conveyed this knowledge through the methods of myth and song. They preached the interconnectedness of man and nature and lived in harmony with the natural world. Central to their worldview were the concepts of periodicity and correspondence, and their rituals reflected the incessant cycles of life.

During the conquests of Julius Caesar, Druidism was essentially obliterated from the world. Blavatsky writes in *The Secret Doctrine* that "Caesar, as a barbarian worthy of Rome, had already accomplished the destruction of the ancient Mysteries by the sack of the temples and their initiatory colleges, and by the massacre of the Initiates and the Druids. Remained Rome; but she never had but the lesser Mysteries, shadows of the Secret Science. The Great Initiation was extinct."

In the examination of the cultures of antiquity may ever be found new evidence of the universality of Theosophy. And while the tale of these ancient custodians of that Ancient Wisdom

may be a tragic one, we can rejoice in the knowledge that the flame of their wisdom burns yet ever bright. For it lives on in our modern Theosophy and the message of Universal Brotherhood that is central to our worldview. By a study of these teachings we may arrive at a deeper appreciation of the sacredness of nature and the harmony inherent to the order of the universe. In serving as custodians of the Ancient Wisdom in modern times we are therefore the inheritors of the great and archaic tradition that was the Theosophy of the Celtic world. Let us endeavor to be worthy of this heritage.

#### Biography:

Luke Michael Ironside is a Theosophical writer and lecturer from the UK. He formerly served as the President of the Pranava Lodge of the Theosophical Society in the Philippines and has lectured at lodges throughout India, the Philippines, and the UK. A passionate researcher of Celtic history, Luke is also a member of the British Druid Order and the Reformed Druids of Gaia.



Picture credit: Stukeley, William (artist); I. Harris (engraver), *The great temple & grove of the druids at Treridrew in Anglesey*. Sourced from Wikimedia Commons: public domain.



## THE HIDDEN SIDE OF CHRISTIANITY

*Annie Besant*

Having seen that the religions of the past claimed with one voice to have a hidden side, to be custodians of "Mysteries," and that this claim was endorsed by the seeking of initiation by the greatest men, we must now ascertain whether Christianity stands outside this circle of religions, and alone is without a Gnosis, offering to the world only a simple faith and not a profound knowledge. Were it so, it would indeed be a sad and lamentable fact, proving Christianity to be intended for a class only, and not for all types of human beings. But that it is not so, we shall be able to prove beyond the possibility of rational doubt.

And that proof is the thing which Christendom at this time most sorely needs, for the very flower of Christendom is perishing for lack of knowledge. If the esoteric teaching can be re-established and win patient and earnest students, it will not be long before the occult is also restored. Disciples of the Lesser Mysteries will become candidates for the Greater, and with the regaining of knowledge will come again the authority of teaching. And truly the need is great. For, looking at the world around us, we find that religion in the West is suffering from the very difficulty that theoretically we should expect to find. Christianity, having lost its mystic and esoteric teaching, is losing its hold on a large number of the more highly edu-

cated, and the partial revival during the past few years is co-incident with the re-introduction of some mystic teaching. It is patent to every student of the closing forty years of the last century, that crowds of thoughtful and moral people have slipped away from the churches, because the teachings they received there outraged their intelligence and shocked their moral sense. It is idle to pretend that the wide-spread agnosticism of this period had its root either in lack of morality or in deliberate crookedness of mind. Everyone who carefully studies the phenomena presented will admit that men of strong intellect have been driven out of Christianity by the crudity of the religious ideas set before them, the contradictions in the authoritative teachings, the views as to God, man, and the universe that no trained intelligence could possibly admit. Nor can it be said that any kind of moral degradation lay at the root of the revolt against the dogmas of the Church. The rebels were not too bad for their religion; on the contrary, it was the religion that was too bad for them. The rebellion against popular Christianity was due to the awakening and the growth of conscience; it was the conscience that revolted, as well as the intelligence, against teachings dishonouring to God and man alike, that represented God as a tyrant, and man as essentially evil, gaining salvation by slavish submission.



The reason for this revolt lay in the gradual descent of Christian teaching into socalled simplicity, so that the most ignorant might be able to grasp it. Protestant religionists asserted loudly that nothing ought to be preached save that which every one could grasp, that the glory of the Gospel lay in its simplicity, and that the child and the unlearned ought to be able to understand and apply it to life. True enough, if by this it were meant that there are some religious truths that all can grasp, and that a religion fails if it leaves the lowest, the most ignorant, the most dull, outside the pale of its elevating influence. But false, utterly false, if by this it be meant that religion has no truths that the ignorant cannot understand, that it is so poor and limited a thing that it has nothing to teach which is above the thought of the unintelligent or above the moral purview of the degraded. False, fatally false, if such be the meaning; for as that view spreads, occupying the pulpits and being sounded in the churches, many noble men and women, whose hearts are half-broken as they sever the links that bind them to their early faith, withdraw from the churches, and leave their places to be filled by the hypocritical and the ignorant. They pass either into a state of passive agnosticism, or—if they be young and enthusiastic—into a condition of active aggression, not believing that that can be the highest which outrages alike intellect and conscience, and preferring the honesty of open unbelief to the drugging of the intel-

lect and the conscience at the bidding of an authority in which they recognise nothing that is divine.

In thus studying the thought of our time we see that the question of a hidden teaching in connection with Christianity becomes of vital importance. Is Christianity to survive as the religion of the West? Is it to live through the centuries of the future, and to continue to play a part in moulding the thought of the evolving western races? If it is to live, it must regain the knowledge it has lost, and again have its mystic and its occult teachings; it must again stand forth as an authoritative teacher of spiritual verities, clothed with the only authority worth anything, the authority of knowledge. If these teachings be regained, their influence will soon be seen in wider and deeper views of truth; dogmas, which now seem like mere shells and fetters, shall again be seen to be partial presentments of fundamental realities. First, Esoteric Christianity will reappear in the "Holy Place," in the Temple, so that all who are capable of receiving it may follow its lines of published thought; and secondly, Occult Christianity will again descend into the Adytum, dwelling behind the Veil which guards the "Holy of Holies," into which only the Initiate may enter. Then again will occult teaching be within the reach of those who qualify themselves to receive it, according to the ancient rules, those who are willing in modern days to meet the ancient demands, made on all those who would fain know the reality and truth of spiritual things.



Once again we turn our eyes to history, to see whether Christianity was unique among religions in having no inner teaching, or whether it resembled all others in possessing this hidden treasure. Such a question is a matter of evidence, not of theory, and must be decided by the authority of the existing documents and not by the mere *ipse dixit* of modern Christians. As a matter of fact both the "New Testament" and the writings of the early Church make the same declarations as to the possession by the Church of such teachings, and we learn from these the fact of the existence of Mysteries—called the Mysteries of Jesus, or the Mystery of the Kingdom—the conditions imposed on candidates, something of the general nature of the teachings given, and other details. Certain passages in the "New Testament" would remain entirely obscure, if it were not for the light thrown on them by the definite statements of the Fathers and Bishops of the Church, but in that light they became clear and intelligible.

It would indeed have been strange had it been otherwise when we consider the lines of religious thought which influenced primitive Christianity. Allied to the Hebrews, the Persians, and the Greeks, tinged by the older faiths of India, deeply coloured by Syrian and Egyptian thought, this later branch of the great religious stem could not do other than again re-affirm the ancient traditions, and place in the grasp of western races the full treasure of the ancient teaching. "The faith once delivered to the

saints" would indeed have been shorn of its chief value if, when delivered to the West, the pearl of esoteric teaching had been withheld.

The first evidence to be examined is that of the "New Testament." For our purpose we may put aside all the vexed questions of different readings and different authors, that can only be decided by scholars. Critical scholarship has much to say on the age of MSS., on the authenticity of documents, and so on. But we need not concern ourselves with these. We may accept the canonical Scriptures, as showing what was believed in the early Church as to the teaching of the Christ and of His immediate followers, and see what they say as to the existence of a secret teaching given only to the few. Having seen the words put into the mouth of Jesus Himself, and regarded by the Church as of supreme authority, we will look at the writings of the great apostle S. Paul; then we will consider the statements made by those who inherited the apostolic tradition and guided the Church during the first centuries A.D. Along this unbroken line of tradition and written testimony the proposition that Christianity had a hidden side can be established. We shall further find that the Lesser Mysteries of mystic interpretation can be traced through the centuries to the beginning of the th century, and that though there were no Schools of Mysticism recognised as preparatory to Initiation, after the disappearance of the Mysteries, yet great Mystics, from time to time, reached the



lower stages of exstasy, by their own sustained efforts, aided doubtless by invisible Teachers.

The words of the Master Himself are clear and definite, and were, as we shall see, quoted by Origen as referring to the secret teaching preserved in the Church. "And when he was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable. And He said unto them, 'Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables.'" And later: "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 the significant words, "when they were alone," and the phrase, "them that are without." So also in the version of S. Matthew: "Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house; and His disciples came unto Him." These teachings given "in the house," the innermost meanings of His instructions, were alleged to be handed on from teacher to teacher. The Gospel gives, it will be noted, the allegorical mystic explanation, that which we have called The Lesser Mysteries, but the deeper meaning was said to be given only to the Initiates.

Again, Jesus tells even His apostles: "I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now." Some of them were probably said after His death, when He was seen of His disciples, "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." None of

these have been publicly recorded, but who can believe that they were neglected or forgotten, and were not handed down as a priceless possession? There was a tradition in the Church that He visited His apostles for a considerable period after His death, for the sake of giving them instruction—a fact that will be referred to later—and in the famous Gnostic treatise, the Pistis Sophia, we read: "It came to pass, when Jesus had risen from the dead, that He passed eleven years speaking with His disciples and instructing them." Then there is the phrase, which many would fain soften and explain away: "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine"—a precept which is of general application indeed, but was considered by the early Church to refer to the secret teachings. It should be remembered that the words had not the same harshness of sound in the ancient days as they have now; for the words "dogs"—like "the vulgar," "the profane"—was applied by those within a certain circle to all who were outside its pale, whether by a society or association, or by a nation—as by the Jews to all Gentiles. It was sometimes used to designate those who were outside the circle of Initiates, and we find it employed in that sense in the early Church; those who, not having been initiated into the Mysteries, were regarded as being outside "the kingdom of God," or "the spiritual Israel," had this name applied to them.

There were several names, exclusive of the term "The Mystery," or



"The Mysteries," used to designate the sacred circle of the Initiates or connected with Initiation: "The Kingdom," "The Kingdom of God," "The Kingdom of Heaven," "The Narrow Path," "The Strait Gate," "The Perfect," "The Saved," "Life Eternal," "Life," "The Second Birth," "A Little One," "A Little Child." The meaning is made plain by the use of these words in early Christian writings, and in some cases even outside the Christian pale. Thus the term, "The Perfect," was used by the Essenes, who had three orders in their communities: the Neophytes, the Brethren, and the Perfect—the latter being Initiates; and it is employed generally in that sense in old writings. "The Little Child" was the ordinary name for a candidate just initiated, i.e., who had just taken his "second birth."

When we know this use, many obscure and otherwise harsh passages become intelligible. "Then said one unto Him: Lord, are there few that be saved? And He said unto them: Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able." If this be applied in the ordinary Protestant way to salvation from everlasting hell-fire, the statement becomes incredible, shocking. No Saviour of the world can be supposed to assert that many will seek to avoid hell and enter heaven, but will not be able to do so. But as applied to the narrow gateway of Initiation and to salvation from rebirth, it is perfectly true and natural. So again: "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad

is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it." The warning which immediately follows against the false prophets, the teachers of the dark Mysteries, is most apposite in this connection. No student can miss the familiar ring of these words used in this same sense in other writings. The "ancient narrow way" is familiar to all; the path "difficult to tread as the sharp edge of a razor," already mentioned; the going "from death to death" of those who follow the flower-strewn path of desires, who do not know God; for those men only become immortal and escape from the wide mouth of death, from ever repeated destruction, who have quitted all desires. The allusion to death is, of course, to the repeated births of the soul into gross material existence, regarded always as "death" compared to the "life" of the higher and subtler worlds.

This "Strait Gate" was the gateway of Initiation, and through it a candidate entered "The Kingdom." And it ever has been, and must be, true that only a few can enter that gateway, though myriads—an exceedingly "great multitude, which no man could number," not a few—enter into the happiness of the heaven-world. So also spoke another great Teacher, nearly three thousand years earlier: "Among thousands of men scarce one striveth for perfection; of the successful strivers scarce one knoweth me in essence." For the Initiates are few in each genera-



ation, the flower of humanity; but no gloomy sentence of everlasting woe is pronounced in this statement on the vast majority of the human race. The saved are, as Proclus taught, those who escape from the circle of generation, within which humanity is bound.

In this connection we may recall the story of the young man who came to Jesus, and, addressing Him as "Good Master," asked how he might win eternal life—the wellrecognised liberation from rebirth by knowledge of God. His first answer was the regular exoteric precept: "Keep the commandments." But when the young man answered: "All these things have I kept from my youth up;" then, to that conscience free from all knowledge of transgression, came the answer of the true Teacher: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me." "If thou wilt be perfect," be a member of the Kingdom, poverty and obedience must be embraced. And then to His own disciples Jesus explains that a rich man can hardly enter the Kingdom of Heaven, such entrance being more difficult than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle; with men such entrance could not be, with God all things were possible. Only God in man can pass that barrier.

This text has been variously explained away, it being obviously impossible to take it in its surface meaning, that a rich man cannot enter a post-mortem state of happiness. Into that state the rich man may enter as well

as the poor, and the universal practice of Christians shows that they do not for one moment believe that riches imperil their happiness after death. But if the real meaning of the Kingdom of Heaven be taken, we have the expression of a simple and direct fact. For that knowledge of God which is Eternal Life cannot be gained till everything earthly is surrendered, cannot be learned until everything has been sacrificed. The man must give up not only earthly wealth, which henceforth may only pass through his hands as steward, but he must give up his inner wealth as well, so far as he holds it as his own against the world; until he is stripped naked he cannot pass the narrow gateway. Such has ever been a condition of Initiation, and "poverty, obedience, chastity," has been the vow of the candidate.

The "second birth" is another well-recognised term for Initiation; even now in India the higher castes are called "twice-born," and the ceremony that makes them twice-born is a ceremony of Initiation—mere husk truly, in these modern days, but the "pattern of things in the heavens." When Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus, He states that "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," and this birth is spoken of as that "of water and the Spirit;" this is the first Initiation; a later one is that of "the Holy Ghost and fire," the baptism of the Initiate in his manhood, as the first is that of birth, which welcomes him as "the Little Child" entering the Kingdom. How thoroughly this imag-



ery was familiar among the mystic of the Jews is shown by the surprise evinced by Jesus when Nicodemus stumbled over His mystic phraseology: "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"

Another precept of Jesus which remains as "a hard saying" to his followers is: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The ordinary Christian knows that he cannot possibly obey this command; full of ordinary human frailties and weaknesses, how can he become perfect as God is perfect? Seeing the impossibility of the achievement set before him, he quietly puts it aside, and thinks no more about it. But seen as the crowning effort of many lives of steady improvement, as the triumph of the God within us over the lower nature, it comes within calculable distance, and we recall the words of Porphyry, how the man who achieves "the paradigmatic virtues is the Father of the Gods," and that in the Mysteries these virtues were acquired.

S. Paul follows in the footsteps of his<sup>55</sup> Master, and speaks in exactly the same sense, but, as might be expected from his organising work in the Church, with greater explicitness and clearness. The student should read with attention chapters ii. and iii., and verse of chapter iv. of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, remembering, as he reads, that the words are addressed to baptised and communicant members of the Church, full members from the modern standpoint, although described as babes

and carnal by the Apostle. They were not catechumens or neophytes, but men and women who were in complete possession of all the privileges and responsibilities of Church membership, recognised by the Apostle as being separate from the world, and expected not to behave as men of the world. They were, in fact, in possession of all that the modern Church gives to its members. Let us summarise the Apostle's words:

"I came to you bearing the divine testimony, not alluring you with human wisdom but with the power of the Spirit. Truly 'we speak wisdom among them that are perfect,' but it is no human wisdom. 'We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world' began, and which none even of the princes of this world know. The things of that wisdom are beyond men's thinking, 'but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit ... the deep things of God,' 'which the Holy Ghost teacheth.' These are spiritual things, to be discerned only by the spiritual man, in whom is the mind of Christ. 'And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.... Ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal.' 'As a wise master-builder I have laid the foundation,' and 'ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.' 'Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the Mysteries of God.'"



Can any one read this passage—and all that has been done in the summary is to bring out the salient points—without recognising the fact that the Apostle possessed a divine wisdom given in the Mysteries, that his Corinthian followers were not yet able to receive? And note the recurring technical terms: the “wisdom,” the “wisdom of God in a mystery,” the “hidden wisdom,” known only to the “spiritual” man, spoken of only among the “perfect,” wisdom from which the non-“spiritual,” the “babes in Christ,” the “carnal,” were excluded, known to the “wise master-builder,” the “steward of the Mysteries of God.”

Again and again he refers to these Mysteries. Writing to the Ephesian Christians he says that “by revelation,” by the unveiling, had been “made known unto me the Mystery,” and hence his “knowledge in the Mystery of Christ”; all might know of the “fellowship of the Mystery.” Of this Mystery, he repeated to the Colossians, he was “made a minister,” “the Mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints”; not to the world, nor even to Christians, but only to the Holy Ones. To them was unveiled “the glory of this Mystery”; and what was it? “Christ in you”—a significant phrase, which we shall see, in a moment, belonged to the life of the Initiate; thus ultimately must every man learn the wisdom, and become “perfect in Christ Jesus.” These Colossians he bids pray “that God would open to us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ,”

a passage to which S. Clement refers as one in which the apostle “clearly reveals that knowledge belongs not to all.” So also he writes to his loved Timothy, bidding him select his deacons from those who hold “the Mystery of the faith in a pure conscience,” that great “Mystery of Godliness,” that he had learned, knowledge of which was necessary for the teachers of the Church.

Now S. Timothy holds an important position, as representing the next generation of Christian teachers. He was a pupil of S. Paul, and was appointed by him to guide and rule a portion of the Church. He had been, we learn, initiated into the Mysteries by S. Paul himself, and reference is made to this, the technical phrases once more serving as a clue. “This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee,” the solemn benediction of the Initiator, who admitted the candidate; but not alone was the Initiator present: “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery,” of the Elder Brothers. And he reminds him to lay hold of that “eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses”—the vow of the new Initiate, pledged in the presence of the Elder Brothers, and of the assembly of Initiates. The knowledge then given was the sacred charge of which S. Paul cries out so forcibly: “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust”—not the



knowledge commonly possessed by Christians, as to which no special obligation lay upon S. Timothy, but the sacred deposit committed to his trust as an Initiate, and essential to the welfare of the Church. S. Paul later recurs again to this, laying stress on the supreme importance of the matter in a way that would be exaggerated had the knowledge been the common property of Christian men: "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me.... That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us"—as serious an adjuration as human lips could frame. Further, it was his duty to provide for the due transmission of this sacred deposit, that it might be handed on to the future, and the Church might never be left without teachers: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses"—the sacred oral teachings given in the assembly of Initiates, who bore witness to the accuracy of the transmission—"the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." The knowledge—or, if the phrase be preferred, the supposition—that the Church possessed these hidden teachings throws a flood of light on the scattered remarks made by S. Paul about himself, and when they are gathered together, we have an outline of the evolution of the Initiate. S. Paul asserts that though he was already among the perfect, the initiated—for he says: "Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded"—he had not yet "attained,"

was indeed not yet wholly "perfect," for he had not yet won Christ, he had not yet reached the "high calling of God in Christ," "the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death;" and he was striving, he says, "if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." For this was the Initiation that liberated, that made the Initiate the Perfect Master, the Risen Christ, freeing Him finally from the "dead," from the humanity within the circle of generation, from the bonds that fettered the soul to gross matter. Here again we have a number of technical terms, and even the surface reader should realise that the "resurrection of the dead" here spoken of cannot be the ordinary resurrection of the modern Christian, supposed to be inevitable for all men, and therefore obviously not requiring any special struggle on the part of any one to attain to it. In fact the very word "attain" would be out of place in referring to a universal and inevitable human experience. S. Paul could not avoid that resurrection, according to the modern Christian view. What then was the resurrection to attain which he was making such strenuous efforts? Once more the only answer comes from the Mysteries. In them the Initiate approaching the Initiation that liberated from the cycle of rebirth, the circle of generation, was called "the suffering Christ;" he shared the sufferings of the Saviour of the world, was crucified mystically, "made conformable to His death," and then attained the resur-



rection, the fellowship of the glorified Christ, and, after, that death had over him no power. This was "the prize" towards which the great Apostle was pressing, and he urged "as many as be perfect," not the ordinary believer, thus also to strive. Let them not be content with what they had gained, but still press onwards.

This resemblance of the Initiate to the Christ is, indeed, the very groundwork of the Greater Mysteries, as we shall see more in detail when we study "The Mystical Christ." The Initiate was no longer to look on Christ as outside himself: "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more."

The ordinary believer had "put on Christ," "as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ." Then they were the "babes in Christ" to whom reference has already been made, and Christ was the Saviour to whom they looked for help, knowing Him "after the flesh." But when they had conquered the lower nature and were no longer "carnal," then they were to enter on a higher path, and were themselves to become Christ. This which he himself had already reached, was the longing of the Apostle for his followers: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." Already he was their spiritual father, having "begotten you through the gospel." But now "again" he was as a parent, as their mother to bring them to the second birth. Then the infant Christ, the Holy Child, was born in the soul, "the hidden man of the

heart;" the Initiate thus became that "Little Child"; henceforth he was to live out in his own person the life of the Christ, until he became the "perfect man," growing "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Then he, as S. Paul was doing, filled up the sufferings of Christ in his own flesh, and always bore "about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," so that he could truly say: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Thus was the Apostle himself suffering; thus he describes himself. And when the struggle is over, how different is the calm tone of triumph from the strained effort of the earlier years: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." This was the crown given to "him that overcometh," of whom it is said by the ascended Christ: "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go no more out." For after the "Resurrection" the Initiate has become the Perfect Man, the Master, and He goes out no more from the Temple, but from it serves and guides the worlds.

It may be well to point out, ere closing this chapter, that S. Paul himself sanctions the use of the theoretical mystic teaching in explaining the historical events recorded in the Scriptures. The history therein written is not regarded by him as a mere record of facts, which occurred on the physical plane. A true mystic, he saw in



the physical events the shadows of the universal truths ever unfolding in higher and inner worlds, and knew that the events selected for preservation in occult writings were such as were typical, the explanation of which would subserve human instruction. Thus he takes the story of Abraham, Sarai, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac, and saying, "which things are an allegory," he proceeds to give the mystical interpretation. Referring to the escape of the Israelites from Egypt, he speaks of the Red Sea as a baptism, of the manna and the water as spiritual meat and spiritual drink, of the rock from which the water flowed as Christ. He sees the great mystery of the union of Christ and His Church in the human relation of husband and wife, and speaks of Christians as the flesh and the bones of the body of Christ. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews allegorises the whole Jewish system of worship. In the Temple he sees a pattern of the heavenly Temple, in the High Priest he sees Christ, in the sacrifices the offering of the spotless Son; the priests of the Temple are but "the example and shadow of heavenly things," of the heavenly priesthood serving in "the true tabernacle." A most elaborate allegory is thus worked out in chapters iii.-x., and the writer alleges that the Holy Ghost thus signified the deeper meaning; all was "a figure for the time."

In this view of the sacred writings, it is not alleged that the events recorded did not take place, but only that their physical happening was a matter of

minor importance. And such explanation is the unveiling of the Lesser Mysteries, the mystic teaching which is permitted to be given to the world. It is not, as many think, a mere play of the imagination, but is the outcome of a true intuition, seeing the patterns in the heavens, and not only the shadows cast by them on the screen of earthly time.

While it may be that some would be willing to admit the possession by the Apostles and their immediate successors of a deeper knowledge of spiritual things than was current among the masses of the believers around them, few will probably be willing to take the next step, and, leaving that charmed circle, accept as the depository of their sacred learning the Mysteries of the Early Church. Yet we have S. Paul providing for the transmission of the unwritten teaching, himself initiating S. Timothy, and instructing S. Timothy to initiate others in his turn, who should again hand it on to yet others. We thus see the provision of four successive generations of teachers, spoken of in the Scriptures themselves, and these would far more than overlap the writers of the Early Church, who bear witness to the existence of the Mysteries. For among these are pupils of the Apostles themselves, though the most definite statements belong to those removed from the Apostles by one intermediate teacher. Now, as soon as we begin to study the writings of the Early Church, we are met by the facts that there are allusions which are only intelligible by the



existence of the Mysteries, and then statements that the Mysteries are existing. This might, of course, have been expected, seeing the point at which the New Testament leaves the matter, but it is satisfactory to find the facts answer to the expectation.

The first witnesses are those called the Apostolic Fathers, the disciples of the Apostles; but very little of their writings, and that disputed, remains. Not being written controversially, the statements are not as categorical as those of the later writers. Their letters are for the encouragement of the believers. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, and fellow-disciple with Ignatius of S. John, expresses a hope that his correspondents are "well versed in the sacred Scriptures and that nothing is hid from you; but to me this privilege is not yet granted"—writing, apparently, before reaching full Initiation. Barnabas speaks of communicating "some portion of what I have myself received," and after expounding the Law mystically, declares that "we then, rightly understanding His commandments, explain them as the Lord intended." Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, a disciple of S. John, speaks of himself as "not yet perfect in Jesus Christ. For I now begin to be a disciple, and I speak to you as my fellow-disciples," and he speaks of them as "initiated into the mysteries of the Gospel with Paul, the holy, the martyred."

Again he says: "Might I not write to you things more full of mystery? But I fear to do so, lest I should inflict injury on you who are but babes. Pardon me in this respect, lest, as not being

able to receive their weighty import, ye should be strangled by them. For even I, though I am bound for Christ and am able to understand heavenly things, the angelic orders, and the different sorts of angels and hosts, the distinction between powers and dominions, and the diversities between thrones and authorities, the mightiness of the æons, and the pre-eminence of the cherubim and seraphim, the sublimity of the Spirit, the kingdom of the Lord, and above all the incomparable majesty of Almighty God though I am acquainted with these things, yet am I not therefore by any means perfect, nor am I such a disciple as Paul or Peter." This passage is interesting, as indicating that the organisation of the celestial hierarchies was one of the subjects in which instruction was given in the Mysteries. Again he speaks of the High Priest, the Hierophant, "to whom the holy of holies has been committed, and who alone has been entrusted with the secrets of God."

We come next to S. Clement of Alexandria and his pupil Origen, the two writers of the second and third centuries who tell us most about the Mysteries in the Early Church; though the general atmosphere is full of mystic allusions, these two are clear and categorical in their statements that the Mysteries were a recognised institution.

Now S. Clement was a disciple of Pantænus, and he speaks of him and of two others, said to be probably Tatian and Theodotus, as "preserving the tradition of the blessed doctrine



derived directly from the holy Apostles, Peter, James, John, and Paul," his link with the Apostles themselves consisting thus of only one intermediary. He was the head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria in A.D. , and died about A.D. . Origen, born about A.D. , was his pupil, and he is, perhaps, the most learned of the Fathers, and a man of the rarest moral beauty. These are the witnesses from whom we receive the most important testimony as to the existence of definite Mysteries in the Early Church.

The Stromata, or Miscellanies, of S. Clement are our source of information about the Mysteries in his time. He himself speaks of these writings as a "miscellany of Gnostic notes, according to the true philosophy," and also describes them as memoranda of the teachings he had himself received from Pantænus. The passage is instructive: "The Lord ... allowed us to communicate of those divine Mysteries, and of that holy light, to those who are able to receive them. He did not certainly disclose to the many what did not belong to the many; but to the few to whom He knew that they belonged, who were capable of receiving and being moulded according to them. But secret things are entrusted to speech, not to writing, as is the case with God. And if one say that it is written, There is nothing secret which shall not be revealed, nor hidden which shall not be disclosed,' let him also hear from us, that to him who hears secretly, even what is secret shall be manifested. This is what was predicted by

this oracle. And to him who is able secretly to observe what is delivered to him, that which is veiled shall be disclosed as truth; and what is hidden to the many shall appear manifest to the few.... The Mysteries are delivered mystically, that what is spoken may be in the mouth of the speaker; rather not in his voice, but in his understanding.... The writing of these memoranda of mine, I well know, is weak when compared with that spirit, full of grace, which I was privileged to hear. But it will be an image to recall the archetype to him who was struck with the Thrysus." The Thrysus, we may here interject, was the wand borne by Initiates, and candidates were touched with it during the ceremony of Initiation. It had a mystic significance, symbolising the spinal cord and the pineal gland in the Lesser Mysteries, and a Rod, known to Occultists, in the Greater. To say, therefore, "to him who was struck with the Thrysus" was exactly the same as to say, "to him who was initiated in the Mysteries." Clement proceeds: "We profess not to explain secret things sufficiently—far from it—but only to recall them to memory, whether we have forgot aught, or whether for the purpose of not forgetting. Many things, I well know, have escaped us, through length of time, that have dropped away unwritten.... There are then some things of which we have no recollection; for the power that was in the blessed men was great." A frequent experience of those taught by the Great Ones, for Their presence stimulates and renders active powers



which are normally latent, and which the pupil, unassisted, cannot evoke. "There are also some things which remained unnoted long, which have now escaped; and others which are effaced, having faded away in the mind itself, since such a task is not easy to those not experienced; these I revive in my commentaries. Some things I purposely omit, in the exercise of a wise selection, afraid to write what I guarded against speaking; not grudging—for that were wrong—but fearing for my readers, lest they should stumble by taking them in a wrong sense; and, as the proverb says, we should be found 'reaching a sword to a child.' For it is impossible that what has been written should not escape become known, although remaining unpublished by me. But being always revolved, using the one only voice, that of writing, they answer nothing to him that makes enquiries beyond what is written; for they require of necessity the aid of some one, either of him who wrote, or of some one else who has walked in his footsteps. Some things my treatise will hint; on some it will linger; some it will merely mention. It will try to speak imperceptibly, to exhibit secretly, and to demonstrate silently."

This passage, if it stood alone, would suffice to establish the existence of a secret teaching in the Early Church. But it stands by no means alone. In Chapter xii. of this same Book I., headed, "The Mysteries of the Faith not to be divulged to all," Clement declares that, since others than the wise may see his work, "it is requi-

site, therefore, to hide in a Mystery the wisdom spoken, which the Son of God taught." Purified tongue of the speaker, purified ears of the hearer, these were necessary. "Such were the impediments in the way of my writing. And even now I fear, as it is said, 'to cast the pearls before swine, lest they tread them under foot and turn and rend us.' For it is difficult to exhibit the really pure and transparent words respecting the true light, to swinish and untrained hearers. For scarcely could anything which they could hear be more ludicrous than these to the multitude; nor any subjects on the other hand more admirable or more inspiring to those of noble nature. But the wise do not utter with their mouth what they reason in council. 'But what ye hear in the ear,' said the Lord, 'proclaim upon the houses'; bidding them receive the secret traditions of the true knowledge, and expound them aloft and conspicuously; and as we have heard in the ear, so to deliver them to whom it is requisite; but not enjoining us to communicate to all without distinction, what is said to them in parables. But there is only a delineation in the memoranda, which have the truth sown sparse and broadcast, that it may escape the notice of those who pick up seeds like jackdaws; but when they find a good husbandman, each one of them will germinate and will produce corn."

Clement might have added that to "proclaim upon the houses" was to proclaim or expound in the assembly of the Perfect, the Initiated, and by no



means to shout aloud to the man in the street.

Again he says that those who are "still blind and dumb, not having understanding, or the undazzled and keen vision of the contemplative soul ... must stand outside of the divine choir.... Wherefore, in accordance with the method of concealment, the truly sacred Word, truly divine and most necessary for us, deposited in the shrine of truth, was by the Egyptians indicated by what were called among them adyta, and by the Hebrews by the veil. Only the consecrated ... were allowed access to them. For Plato also thought it not lawful for 'the impure to touch the pure.' Thence the prophecies and oracles are spoken in enigmas, and the Mysteries are not exhibited incontinently to all and sundry, but only after certain purifications and previous instructions." He then descants at great length on Symbols, expounding Pythagorean, Hebrew, Egyptian, and then remarks that the ignorant and unlearned man fails in understanding them. "But the Gnostic apprehends. Now then it is not wished that all things should be exposed indiscriminately to all and sundry, or the benefits of wisdom communicated to those who have not even in a dream been purified in soul (for it is not allowed to hand to every chance comer what has been procured with such laborious efforts); nor are the Mysteries of the Word to be expounded to the profane." The Pythagoreans and Plato, Zeno, and Aristotle had exoteric and esoteric teachings. The philosophers

established the Mysteries, for "was it not more beneficial for the holy and blessed contemplation of realities to be concealed?" The Apostles also approved of "veiling the Mysteries of the Faith," "for there is an instruction to the perfect," alluded to in Colossians i. - and -. "So that, on the one hand, then, there are the Mysteries which were hid till the time of the Apostles, and were delivered by them as they received from the Lord, and, concealed in the Old Testament, were manifested to the saints. And, on the other hand, there is 'the riches of the glory of the mystery in the Gentiles,' which is faith and hope in Christ; which in another place he has called the 'foundation.'" He quotes S. Paul to show that this "knowledge belongs not to all," and says, referring to Heb. v. and vi., that "there were certainly among the Hebrews, some things delivered unwritten;" and then refers to S. Barnabas, who speaks of God, "who has put into our hearts wisdom and the understanding of His secrets," and says that "it is but for few to comprehend these things," as showing a "trace of Gnostic tradition." "Wherefore instruction, which reveals hidden things, is called illumination, as it is the teacher only who uncovers the lid of the ark." Further referring to S. Paul, he comments on his remark to the Romans that he will "come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ," and says that he thus designates "the spiritual gift and the Gnostic interpretation, while being present he desires to impart to them present as 'the fulness of Christ, according to the rev-



elation of the Mystery sealed in the ages of eternity, but now manifested by the prophetic Scriptures'.... But only to a few of them is shown what those things are which are contained in the Mystery. Rightly, then, Plato, in the epistles, treating of God, says: 'We must speak in enigmas; that should the tablet come by any mischance on its leaves either by sea or land, he who reads may remain ignorant."

After much examination of Greek writers, and an investigation into philosophy, S. Clement declares that the Gnosis "imparted and revealed by the Son of God, is wisdom.... And the Gnosis itself is that which has descended by transmission to a few, having been imparted unwritten by the Apostles." A very long exposition of the life of the Gnostic, the Initiate, is given, and S. Clement concludes it by saying: "Let the specimen suffice to those who have ears. For it is not required to unfold the mystery, but only to indicate what is sufficient for those who are partakers in knowledge to bring it to mind."

Regarding Scripture as consisting of allegories and symbols, and as hiding the sense in order to stimulate enquiry and to preserve the ignorant from danger. S. Clement naturally confined the higher instruction to the learned. "Our Gnostic will be deeply learned," he says. "Now the Gnostic must be erudite." Those who had acquired readiness by previous training could master the deeper knowledge, for though "a man can be a believer without learning, so also we assert that it is impossible for a man without learn-

ing to comprehend the things which are declared in the faith." "Some who think themselves naturally gifted, do not wish to touch either philosophy or logic; nay more, they do not wish to learn natural science. They demand bare faith alone.... So also I call him truly learned who brings everything to bear on the truth—so that, from geometry, and music, and grammar, and philosophy itself, culling what is useful, he guards the faith against assault.... How necessary is it for him who desires to be partaker of the power of God, to treat of intellectual subjects by philosophising." "The Gnostic avails himself of branches of learning as auxiliary preparatory<sup>85</sup> exercises." So far was S. Clement from thinking that the teaching of Christianity should be measured by the ignorance of the unlearned. "He who is conversant with all kinds of wisdom will be preeminently a Gnostic." Thus while he welcomed the ignorant and the sinner, and found in the Gospel what was suited to their needs, he considered that only the learned and the pure were fit candidates for the Mysteries. "The Apostle, in contradistinction to Gnostic perfection, calls the common faith the foundation, and sometimes milk," but on that foundation the edifice of the Gnosis was to be raised, and the food of men was to succeed that of babes. There is nothing of harshness nor of contempt in the distinction he draws, but only a calm and wise recognition of the facts.

Even the well-prepared candidate, the learned and trained pupil, could only hope to advance step by step in



the profound truths unveiled in the Mysteries. This appears clearly in his comments on the vision of Hermas, in which he also throws out some hints on methods of reading occult works. "Did not the Power also, that appeared to Hermas in the Vision, in the form of the Church, give for transcription the book which she wished to be made known to the elect? And this, he says, he transcribed to the letter, without finding how to complete the syllables. And this signified that the Scripture is clear to all, when taken according to base reading; and that this is the faith which occupies the place of the rudiments. Wherefore also the figurative expression is employed, 'reading according to the letter,' while we understand that the gnostic unfolding of Scriptures, when faith has already reached an advanced state, is likened to reading according to the syllables.... Now that the Saviour has taught the Apostles the unwritten rendering of the written (scriptures) has been handed down also to us, inscribed by the power of God on hearts new, according to the renovation of the book. Thus those of highest repute among the Greeks dedicate the fruit of the pomegranate to Hermes, who they say is speech, on account of its interpretation. For speech conceals much.... That it is therefore not only to those who read simply that the acquisition of the truth is so difficult, but that not even to those whose prerogative the knowledge of the truth is, is the contemplation of it vouchsafed all at once, the history of Moses teaches; until accustomed to gaze, as

the Hebrews on the glory of Moses, and the prophets of Israel on the visions of angels, so we also become able to look the splendours of truth in the face."

Yet more references might be given, but these should suffice to establish the fact that S. Clement knew of, had been initiated into, and wrote for the benefit of those who had also been initiated into, the Mysteries in the Church.

The next witness is his pupil Origen, that most shining light of learning, courage, sanctity, devotion, meekness, and zeal, whose works remain as mines of gold wherein the student may dig for the treasures of wisdom.

In his famous controversy with Celsus attacks were made on Christianity which drew out a defence of the Christian position in which frequent references were made to the secret teachings.

Celsus had alleged, as a matter of attack, that Christianity was a secret system, and Origen traverses this by saying that while certain doctrines were secret, many others were public, and that this system of exoteric and esoteric teachings, adopted in Christianity, was also in general use among philosophers. The reader should note, in the following passage, the distinction drawn between the resurrection of Jesus, regarded in a historical light, and the "mystery of the resurrection."

"Moreover, since he Celsus frequently calls the Christian doctrine a secret



system of belief, we must confute him on this point also, since almost the entire world is better acquainted with what Christians preach than with the favourite opinions of philosophers. For who is ignorant of the statement that Jesus was born of a virgin, and that He was crucified, and that His resurrection is an article of faith among many, and that a general judgment is announced to come, in which the wicked are to be punished according to their deserts, and the righteous to be duly rewarded? And yet the Mystery of the resurrection, not being understood, is made a subject of ridicule among unbelievers. In these circumstances, to speak of the Christian doctrine as a secret system, is altogether absurd. But that there should be certain doctrines, not made known to the multitude, which are revealed after the exoteric ones have been taught, is not a peculiarity of Christianity alone, but also of philosophic systems, in which certain truths are exoteric and others esoteric. Some of the hearers of Pythagoras were content with his *ipse dixit*; while others were taught in secret those doctrines which were not deemed fit to be communicated to profane and insufficiently prepared ears. Moreover, all the Mysteries that are celebrated everywhere throughout Greece and barbarous countries, although held in secret, have no discredit thrown upon them, so that it is in vain he endeavours to calumniate the secret doctrines of Christianity, seeing that he does not correctly understand its nature."

It is impossible to deny that, in this important passage, Origen distinctly places the Christian Mysteries in the same category as those of the Pagan world, and claims that what is not regarded as a discredit to other religions should not form a subject of attack when found in Christianity.

Still writing against Celsus, he declares that the secret teachings of Jesus were preserved in the Church, and refers specifically to the explanations that He gave to His disciples of His parables, in answering Celsus' comparison of "the inner Mysteries of the Church of God" with the Egyptian worship of animals. "I have not yet spoken of the observance of all that is written in the Gospels, each one of which contains much doctrine difficult to be understood, not merely by the multitude, but even by certain of the more intelligent, including a very profound explanation of the parables which Jesus delivered to 'those without,' while reserving the exhibition of their full meaning for those who had passed beyond the stage of exoteric teaching, and who came to Him privately in the house. And when he comes to understand it, he will admire the reason why some are said to be 'without,' and others 'in the house.'" And he refers guardedly to the "mountain" which Jesus ascended, from which he came down again to help "those who were unable to follow Him whither His disciples went." The allusion is to "the Mountain of Initiation," a well-known mystical phrase, as Moses also made the Tabernacle after the pattern "showed



thee in the mount." Origen refers to it again later, saying that Jesus showed himself to be very different in his real appearance when on the "Mountain," from what those saw who could not "follow Him on high."

So also, in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, Chap, xv., dealing with the episode of the Syro-Phœnician woman, Origen remarks: "And perhaps, also, of the words of Jesus there are some loaves which it is possible to give to the more rational, as to children, only; and others as it were crumbs from the great house and table of the well-born, which may be used by some souls like dogs."

Celsus complaining that sinners were brought into the Church, Origen answers that the Church had medicine for those that were sick, but also the study and the knowledge of divine things for those who were in health. Sinners were taught not to sin, and only when it was seen that progress had been made, and men were "purified by the Word," "then and not before do we invite them to participation in our Mysteries. For we speak wisdom among them that are perfect." Sinners came to be healed: "For there are in the divinity of the Word some helps towards the cure of those who are sick.... Others, again, which to the pure in soul and body exhibit the 'revelation of the Mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest by the Scriptures of the prophets,' and 'by the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,' which 'appearing' is manifested to each one of those who

are perfect, and which enlightens the reason in the true knowledge of things." Such appearances of divine Beings took place, we have seen, in the Pagan Mysteries, and those of the Church had equally glorious visitants. "God the Word," he says, "was sent as a physician to sinners, but as a Teacher of Divine Mysteries to those who are already pure, and who sin no more." "Wisdom will not enter into the soul of a base man, nor dwell in a body that is involved in sin;" hence these higher teachings are given only to those who are "athletes in piety and in every virtue."

Christians did not admit the impure to this knowledge, but said: "Whoever has clean hands, and, therefore, lifts up holy hands to God ... let him come to us ... whoever is pure not only from all defilement, but from what are regarded as lesser transgressions, let him be boldly initiated in the Mysteries of Jesus, which properly are made known only to the holy and the pure." Hence also, ere the ceremony of Initiation began, he who acts as Initiator, according to the precepts of Jesus, the Hierophant, made the significant proclamation "to those who have been purified in heart: He, whose soul has, for a long time, been conscious of no evil, especially since he yielded himself to the healing of the Word, let such a one hear the doctrines which were spoken in private by Jesus to His genuine disciples." This was the opening of the "initiating those who were already purified into the sacred Mysteries." Such only might learn the realities of the unseen worlds, and



might enter into the sacred precincts where, as of old, angels were the teachers, and where knowledge was given by sight and not only by words. It is impossible not to be struck with the different tone of these Christians from 95 that of their modern successors. With them perfect purity of life, the practice of virtue, the fulfilling of the divine Law in every detail of outer conduct, the perfection of righteousness, were—as with the Pagans—only the beginning of the way instead of the end. Nowadays religion is considered to have gloriously accomplished its object when it has made the Saint; then, it was to the Saints that it devoted its highest energies, and, taking the pure in heart, it led them to the Beatific Vision.

The same fact of secret teaching comes out again, when Origen is discussing the arguments of Celsus as to the wisdom of retaining ancestral customs, based on the belief that "the various quarters of the earth were from the beginning allotted to different superintending Spirits, and were thus distributed among certain governing Powers, and in this way the administration of the world is carried on."

Origen having animadverted on the deductions of Celsus, proceeds: "But as we think it likely that some of those who are accustomed to deeper investigation will fall in with this treatise, let us venture to lay down some considerations of a profounder kind, conveying a mystical and secret view respecting the original distribution of the various quarters of the earth

among different superintending Spirits." He says that Celsus has misunderstood the deeper reasons relating to the arrangement of terrestrial affairs, some of which are even touched upon in Grecian history. Then he quotes Deut. xxxii. :- "When the Most High divided the nations, when he dispersed the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the Angels of God; and the Lord's portion was his people Jacob, and Israel the cord of his inheritance." This is the wording of the Septuagint, not that of the English authorised version, but it is very suggestive of the title the "Lord" being regarded as that of the Ruling Angel of the Jews only, and not of the "Most High," i.e. God. This view has disappeared, from ignorance, and hence the impropriety of many of the statements referring to the "Lord," when they are transferred to the "Most High," e.g. Judges i. .

Origen then relates the history of the Tower of Babel, and continues: "But on these subjects much, and that of a mystical kind, might be said; in keeping with which is the following: 'It is good to keep close the secret of a king,' Tobit xii. , in order that the doctrine of the entrance of souls into bodies (not, however, that of the transmigration from one body into another) may not be thrown before the common understanding, nor what is holy given to the dogs, nor pearls be cast before swine. For such a procedure would be impious, being equivalent to a betrayal of the mysterious declarations of God's wisdom....



It is sufficient, however, to represent in the style of a historic narrative what is intended to convey a secret meaning in the garb of history, that those who have the capacity may work out for themselves all that relates to the subject." He then expounds more fully the Tower of Babel story, and writes: "Now, in the next place, if any one has the capacity let him understand that in what assumes the form of history, and which contains some things that are literally true, while yet it conveys a deeper meaning...."

After endeavouring to show that the "Lord" was more powerful than the other superintending Spirits of the different quarters of the earth, and that he sent his people forth to be punished by living under the dominion of the other powers, and afterwards reclaimed them with all of the less favoured nations who could be drawn in, Origen concludes by saying: "As we have previously observed, these remarks are to be understood as being made by us with a concealed meaning, by way of pointing out the mistakes of those who assert ..." as did Celsus.

After remarking that "the object of Christianity is that we should become wise," Origen proceeds: "If you come to 99 the books written after the time of Jesus, you will find that those multitudes of believers who hear the parables are, as it were, 'without,' and worthy only of exoteric doctrines, while the disciples learn in private the explanation of the parables. For, privately, to His own disciples did Jesus open up all things, esteeming above

the multitudes those who desired to know His wisdom. And He promises to those who believe on Him to send them wise men and scribes.... And Paul also in the catalogue of 'Charisma' bestowed by God, placed first 'the Word of wisdom,' and second, as being inferior to it, 'the word of knowledge,' but third, and lower down, 'faith.' And because he regarded 'the Word' as higher than miraculous powers, he for that reason places 'workings of miracles' and 'gifts of healings' in a lower place than gifts of the Word."

The Gospel truly helped the ignorant, "but it is no hindrance to the knowledge of God, but an assistance, to have been educated, and to have studied the best opinions, and to be wise." As for the unintelligent, "I endeavour to improve such also to the best of my ability, although I would not desire to build up the Christian community out of such materials. For I seek in preference those who are more clever and acute, because they are able to comprehend the meaning of the hard sayings." Here we have plainly stated the ancient Christian idea, entirely at one with the considerations submitted in Chapter I. of this book. There is room for the ignorant in Christianity, but it is not intended only for them, and has deep teachings for the "clever and acute."

It is for these that he takes much pains to show that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures have hidden meanings, veiled under stories the outer meaning of which repels them as absurd, alluding to the serpent



and the tree of life, and "the other statements which follow, which might of themselves lead a candid reader to see that all these things had, not inappropriately, an allegorical meaning." Many chapters are devoted to these allegorical and mystical meanings, hidden beneath the words of the Old and New Testaments, and he alleges that Moses, like the Egyptians, gave histories with concealed meanings. "He who deals candidly with histories"—this is Origen's general canon of interpretation—"and would wish to keep himself also from being imposed on by them, will exercise his judgment as to what statements he will give his assent to, and what he will accept figuratively, seeking to discover the meaning of the authors of such inventions, and from what statements he will withhold his beliefs, as having been written for the gratification of certain individuals. And we have said this by way of anticipation respecting the whole history related in the Gospels concerning Jesus." A great part of his Fourth Book is taken up with illustrations of the mystical explanations of the Scripture stories, and anyone who wishes to pursue the subject can read through it.

In the *De Principiis*, Origen gives it as the received teaching of the Church "that the Scriptures were written by the Spirit of God, and have a meaning, not only such as is apparent at first sight, but also another, which escapes the notice of most. For those words which are written are the forms of certain Mysteries, and the images of divine things. Respecting which

there is one opinion throughout the whole Church, that the whole law is indeed spiritual; but that the spiritual meaning which the law conveys is not known to all, but to those only on whom the grace of the Holy Spirit is bestowed in the word of wisdom and knowledge." Those who remember what has already been quoted will see in the "Word of wisdom" and "the word of knowledge" the two typical mystical instructions, the spiritual and the intellectual.

In the Fourth Book of *De Principiis*, Origen explains at length his views on the interpretation of Scripture. It has a "body," which is the "common and historical sense"; a "soul," a figurative meaning to be discovered by the exercise of the intellect; and a "spirit," an inner and divine sense, to be known only by those who have "the mind of Christ." He considers that incongruous and impossible things are introduced into the history to arouse an intelligent reader, and compel him to search for a deeper explanation, while simple people would read on without appreciating the difficulties.

Cardinal Newman, in his *Arians of the Fourth Century*, has some interesting remarks on the *Disciplina Arcani*, but, with the deeply-rooted ingrained scepticism of the nineteenth century, he cannot believe to the full in the "riches of the glory of the Mystery," or probably never for a moment conceived the possibility of the existence of such splendid realities. Yet he was a believer in Jesus, and the words of the promise of Jesus were



clear and definite: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." The promise was amply redeemed, for He came to them and taught them in His Mysteries; therein they saw Him, though the world saw Him no more, and they knew the Christ as in them, and their life as Christ's.

Cardinal Newman recognises a secret tradition, handed down from the Apostles, but he considers that it consisted of Christian doctrines, later divulged, forgetting that those who were told that they were not yet fit to receive it were not heathen, nor even catechumens under instruction, but full communicating members of the Christian Church. Thus he states that this secret tradition was later "authoritatively divulged and perpetuated in the form of symbols," and was embodied "in the creeds of the early Councils." But as the doctrines in the creeds are to be found clearly stated in the Gospels and Epistles, this position is wholly untenable, all these having been already divulged to the world at large; and in all of them the members of the Church were certainly thoroughly instructed. The repeated statements as to secrecy become meaningless if thus explained. The Cardinal, however, says that whatever "has not been thus authenticated, whether it was prophetical information or comment on the past dispensations, is, from

the circumstances of the case, lost to the Church." That is very probably, in fact certainly, true, so far as the Church is concerned, but it is none the less recoverable.

Commenting on Irenæus, who in his work *Against Heresies* lays much stress on the existence of an Apostolic Tradition in the Church, the Cardinal writes: "He then proceeds to speak of the clearness and cogency of the traditions preserved in the Church, as containing that true wisdom of the perfect, of which S. Paul speaks, and to which the Gnostics pretended. And, indeed, without formal proofs of the existence and the authority in primitive times of an Apostolic Tradition, it is plain that there must have been such a tradition, granting that the Apostles conversed, and their friends had memories, like other men. It is quite inconceivable that they should not have been led to arrange the series of revealed doctrines more systematically than they record them in Scripture, as soon as their converts became exposed to the attacks and misrepresentations of heretics; unless they were forbidden to do so, a supposition which cannot be maintained. Their statements thus occasioned would be preserved as a matter of course; together with those other secret but less important truths, to which S. Paul seems to allude, and which the early writers more or less acknowledge, whether concerning the types of the Jewish Church, or the prospective fortunes of the Christian. And such recollections of apostolical teaching



would evidently be binding on the faith of those who were instructed in them; unless it can be supposed that, though coming from inspired teachers, they were not of divine origin." In a part of the section dealing with the allegorising method, he writes in reference to the sacrifice of Isaac, &c., as "typical of the New Testament revelation": "In corroboration of this remark, let it be observed, that there seems to have been in the Church a traditional explanation of these historical types, derived from the Apostles, but kept among the secret doctrines, as being dangerous to the majority of hearers; and certainly S. Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, affords us an instance of such a tradition, both as existing and as secret (even though it be shown to be of Jewish origin), when, first checking himself and questioning his brethren's faith, he communicates, not without hesitation, the evangelical scope of the account of Melchisedec, as introduced into the book of Genesis."

The social and political convulsions that accompanied its dying now began to torture the vast frame of the Roman Empire, and even the Christians were caught up in the whirlpool of selfish warring interests. We still find scattered references to special knowledge imparted to the leaders and teachers of the Church, knowledge of the heavenly hierarchies, instructions given by angels, and so on. But the lack of suitable pupils caused the Mysteries to be withdrawn as an institution publicly known to exist, and teaching was

given more and more secretly to those rarer and rarer souls, who by learning, purity, and devotion showed themselves capable of receiving it. No longer were schools to be found wherein the preliminary teachings were given, and with the disappearance of these "door was shut."

Two streams may nevertheless be tracked through Christendom, streams which had as their source the vanished Mysteries. One was the stream of mystic learning, flowing from the Wisdom, the Gnosis, imparted in the Mysteries; the other was the stream of mystic contemplation, equally part of the Gnosis, leading to the exstasy, to spiritual vision. This latter, however, divorced from knowledge, rarely attained the true exstasis, and tended either to run riot in the lower regions of the invisible worlds, or to lose itself amid a variegated crowd of subtle superphysical forms, visible as objective appearances to the inner vision—prematurely forced by fastings, vigils, and strained attention but mostly born of the thoughts and emotions of the seer. Even when the forms observed were not externalised thoughts, they were seen through a distorting atmosphere of preconceived ideas and beliefs, and were thus rendered largely unreliable. None the less, some of the visions were verily of heavenly things, and Jesus truly appeared from time to time to His devoted lovers, and angels would sometimes brighten with their presence the cell of monk and nun, the solitude of rapt devotee and patient



seeker after God. To deny the possibility of such experiences would be to strike at the very root of that "which has been most surely believed" in all religions, and is known to all Occultists—the intercommunication between Spirits veiled in flesh and those clad in subtler vestures, the touching of mind with mind across the barriers of matter, the unfolding of the Divinity in man, the sure knowledge of a life beyond the gates of death. Glancing down the centuries we find no time in which Christendom was left wholly devoid of mysteries. "It was probably about the end of the th century, just as ancient philosophy was dying out in the Schools of Athens, that the speculative philosophy of neo-Platonism made a definite lodgment in Christian thought through the literary forgeries of the Pseudo-Dionysius. The doctrines of Christianity were by that time so firmly established that the Church could look upon a symbolical or mystical interpretation of them without anxiety. The author of the *Theologica Mystica* and the other works ascribed to the Areopagite proceeds, therefore, to develop the doctrines of Proclus with very little modification into a system of esoteric Christianity. God is the nameless and supra-essential One, elevated above goodness itself. Hence 'negative theology,' which ascends from the creature to God by dropping one after another every determinate predicate, leads us nearest to the truth. The return to God is the consummation of all things and the goal indicated by Christian

teaching. The same doctrines were preached with more of churchly fervour by Maximus the Confessor ( ). Maximus represents almost the last speculative activity of the Greek Church, but the influence of the Pseudo-Dionysian writing was transmitted to the West in the ninth century by Erigena, in whose speculative spirit both the scholasticism and the mysticism of the Middle Ages have their rise. Erigena translated Dionysius into Latin along with the commentaries of Maximus, and his system is essentially based upon theirs. The negative theology is adopted, and God is stated to be predicateless Being, above all categories, and therefore not improperly called Nothing query, No-Thing. Out of this Nothing or incomprehensible essence the world of ideas or primordial causes is eternally created. This is the Word or Son of God, in whom all things exist, so far as they have substantial existence. All existence is a theophany, and as God is the beginning of all things, so also is He the end. Erigena teaches the restitution of all things under the form of the Dionysian adunatio or deificatio. These are the permanent outlines of what may be called the philosophy of mysticism in Christian times, and it is remarkable with how little variation they are repeated from age to age."

In the eleventh century Bernard of Clairvaux (A.D. -) and Hugo of S. Victor carry on the mystic tradition, with Richard of S. Victor in the following century, and S. Bonaventura the Seraphic Doctor, and the great S. Thomas Aquinas (A.D. -) in the thir-



teenth. Thomas Aquinas dominates the Europe of the Middle Ages, by his force of character no less than by his learning and piety. He asserts "Revelation" as one source of knowledge, Scripture and tradition being the two channels in which it runs, and the influence, seen in his writings, of the Pseudo-Dionysius links him to the Neo-Platonists. The second source is Reason, and here the channels are the Platonic philosophy and the methods of Aristotle—the latter an alliance that did Christianity no good, for Aristotle became an obstacle to the advance of the higher thought, as was made manifest in the struggles of Giordano Bruno, the Pythagorean. Thomas Aquinas was canonised in A.D. , and the great Dominican remains as a type of the union of theology and philosophy—the aim of his life. These belong to the great Church of western Europe, vindicating her claim to be regarded as the transmitter of the holy torch of mystic learning. Around her there also sprang up many sects, deemed heretical, yet containing true traditions of the sacred secret learning, the Cathari and many others, persecuted by a Church jealous of her authority, and fearing lest the holy pearls should pass into profane custody. In this century also S. Elizabeth of Hungary shines out with sweetness and purity, while Eckhart (A.D. -) proves himself a worthy inheritor of the Alexandrian Schools. Eckhart taught that "The Godhead is the absolute Essence (Wesen), unknowable not only by man but also by Itself; It is

darkness and absolute indeterminateness, Nicht in contrast to Ich, or definite and knowable existence. Yet It is the potentiality of all things, and Its nature is, in a triadic process, to come to consciousness of Itself as the triune God. Creation is not a temporal act, but an eternal necessity, of the divine nature. I am as necessary to God, Eckhart is fond of saying, as God is necessary to me. In my knowledge and love God knows and loves Himself."

Eckhart is followed, in the fourteenth century, by John Tauler, and Nicolas of Basel, "the Friend of God in the Oberland." From these sprang up the Society of the Friends of God, true mystics and followers of the old tradition. Mead remarks that Thomas Aquinas, Tauler, and Eckhart followed the Pseudo-Dionysius, who followed Plotinus, Iamblichus, and Proclus, who in turn followed Plato and Pythagoras. So linked together are the followers of the Wisdom in all ages. It was probably a "Friend" who was the author of *Die Deutsche Theologie*, a book of mystical devotion, which had the curious fortune of being approved by Staupitz, the Vicar-General of the Augustinian Order, who recommended it to Luther, and by Luther himself, who published it A.D., as a book which should rank immediately after the Bible and the writings of S. Augustine of Hippo. Another "Friend" was Ruysbroeck, to whose influence with Groot was due the founding of the Brethren of the Common Lot or Common Life—a Society that must remain ever mem-



orable, as it numbered among its members that prince of mystics, Thomas à Kempis (A.D. -), the author of the immortal *Imitation of Christ*.

In the fifteenth century the more purely intellectual side of mysticism comes out more strongly than the exstatic—so dominant in these societies of the fourteenth—and we have Cardinal Nicolas of Cusa, with Giordano Bruno, the martyred knight-errant of philosophy, and Paracelsus, the much slandered scientist, who drew his knowledge directly from the original eastern fountain, instead of through Greek channels.

The sixteenth century saw the birth of Jacob Böhme (A.D. -), the “inspired cobbler,” an Initiate in obscuration truly, sorely persecuted by unenlightened men; and then too came S. Teresa, the much-oppressed and suffering Spanish mystic; and S. John of the Cross, a burning flame of intense devotion; and S. Francois de Sales. Wise was Rome in canonising these, wiser than the Reformation that persecuted Böhme, but the spirit of the Reformation was ever intensely anti-mystical, and wherever its breath hath passed the fair flowers of mysticism have withered as under the sirocco.

Rome, however, who, though she canonised Teresa dead, had sorely harried her while living—did ill with Mme. de Guyon (A.D. -), a true mystic, and with Miguel de Molinos (), worthy to sit near S. John of the Cross, who carried on in the seventeenth century the high devotion of the mystic,

turned into a peculiarly passive form—the Quietist.

In this same century arose the school of Platonists in Cambridge, of whom Henry More (A.D. -) may serve as salient example; also Thomas Vaughan, and Robert Fludd the Rosicrucian; and there is formed also the Philadelphian Society, and we see William Law (A.D. -) active in the eighteenth century, and overlapping S. Martin (A.D. -), whose writings have fascinated so many nineteenth century students.

Nor should we omit Christian Rosenkreutz (d. A.D. ), whose mystic Society of the Rosy Cross, appearing in , held true knowledge, and whose spirit was reborn in the “Comte de S. Germain,” the mysterious figure that appears and disappears through the gloom, lit by lurid flashes, of the closing eighteenth century. Mystics too were some of the Quakers, the much-persecuted sect of Friends, seeking the illumination of the Inner Light, and listening ever for the Inner Voice. And many another mystic was there, “of whom the world was not worthy,” like the wholly delightful and wise Mother Juliana of Norwich, of the fourteenth century, jewels of Christendom, too little known, but justifying Christianity to the world.

Yet, as we salute reverently these Children of the Light, scattered over the centuries, we are forced to recognise in them the absence of that union of acute intellect and high devotion which were welded together by the training of the Mysteries, and



while we marvel that they soared so high, we cannot but wish that their rare gifts had been developed under that magnificent disciplina arcana.

Alphonse Louis Constant, better known under his pseudonym, Eliphas Lévi, has put rather well the loss of the Mysteries, and the need for their re-institution. "A great misfortune befell Christianity. The betrayal of the Mysteries by the false Gnostics—for the Gnostics, that is, those who know, were the Initiates of primitive Christianity caused the Gnosis to be rejected, and alienated the Church from the supreme truths of the Kab-bala, which contain all the secrets of transcendental theology.... Let the most absolute science, let the highest reason, become once more the patrimony of the leaders of the people; let the sacerdotal art and the royal art take the double sceptre of antique initiations, and the social world will once more issue from its chaos. Burn the holy images no longer; demolish the temples no more; temples and images are necessary for men; but drive the hirelings from the house of prayer; let the blind be no longer leaders of the blind, reconstruct the hierarchy of intelligence and holiness, and recognise only those who know as the teachers of those who believe."

Will the Churches of to-day again take up the mystic teaching, the Lesser Mysteries, and so prepare their chil-

dren for the re-establishment of the Greater Mysteries, again drawing down the Angels as Teachers, and having as Hierophant the Divine Master, Jesus? On the answer to that question depends the future of Christianity.





