



LETTERS TO THE EDITORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

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OBJECTIVES:

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.



TRANSITION OF TSC MEMBER

On December 10, 2020, one of our TSC members made his transition in Elliot Lake Ontario, his retirement home. He was my baby brother, Michael Arthur Constantineau, born on November 15, 1944. I remember every detail of the day my parents brought him home from the hospital. I had just turned 4. He was perfect.

From an early age he proved the fact that angels really do watch over us. Our Grandma Fisher made sure that the prayers were said every night to make it so. Michael was just two the summer he somehow got out of the fenced yard at our grandmother's house and disappeared. It was hours before he was found and with only seconds to spare. He had wandered almost two miles away to the area just above the town dump. We had been pointed in that direction and our mother saw his little blonde head among the tall grasses just before he laid down in total exhaustion. We were just about to give up on finding him there, as he wasn't answering our calls.

At age 4, there was another trauma, not just for him but for all of us. One October night, we had a backyard bonfire to burn up all the fallen leaves. Our dad had stepped away for a few minutes to get something and told us that we must not dance around the fire like we always liked to do. As soon as his back was turned, we started whooping

and dancing around the fire. Michael tripped and fell face first into the fire. We were too stunned to pull him out right away and when our dad did pull him out, it seemed he had been in there far too long. Michael was very badly burned and his screams were wrenching. I remember the huge blisters and how our mom cried over him. To everyone's surprise, especially the doctor, Michael's skin healed with not a single scar. In later years, in speaking of the experience, Michael felt that he left his body while in the fire.

Being a boy and a November baby, school presented lots of challenges and many tears for our mom, as she tried to help him with his homework. By grade 10 he had a condition that caused him to miss a whole year of school. He refused to go back and went to work at age 16. By the time he was thirty and a husband and father of two boys, he was missing having an education. He enrolled at Laurentian University as a mature student, and obtained three degrees in four years of continuous study. No breaks.

Having his Bachelor of ED Degree, he then taught across Northern Canada, including Northern BC and Alberta. He settled in Northern Ontario as a school Principal. He always made sure that his northern students had great trips every year to experience other parts of the Province. He was a Principal in Gogama,



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near Timmins, when he retired.

For all of his adult life, Michael was interested in Spirituality, Mysticism and in the Healing Arts. He recalled performing a healing at the age of five and he recalled healing in past lives. He pursued his interests through many years of study with IIHS, International Institute for Integral Human Sciences. Through his studies he met many of his teachers and some lifelong friends.

By 1985, Michael was hosting yearly Spiritual Development weekends at his cottage on Manitoulin Island. As a person who wanted to share what he was learning, he always invited family and some very close spiritual friends to be there. So, for a number of years, both of our parents, our siblings and some nieces and nephews were there for the special weekends. Everyone was invited to share with the group. That's when we found out that our dad was a poet. He worked for days on a charming poem about his little cat, Pierre. When I look back on those August weekends, the sun was always shining and the sky was always blue. No doubt Michael ordered the weather to be just as perfect as it was.

One special teaching that Michael shared was called AmaDeus (Healing with Gods Love). Michael had learned AmaDeus from Alberto Aguas, a third generation Brazilian healer. Alberto had been initiated into AmaDeus by Elders from the South American Guarani tribe, who had practiced it for many genera-

tions. He and his father had promised to keep the teachings alive.

Before he passed away, Alberto gave Michael permission to teach AmaDeus. Although Michael was a Reiki Master Teacher, he valued AmaDeus above all other modalities.

Michael felt very drawn to Indigenous healing techniques. He travelled to Australia to meet with Gerry Bostock, a Bundjalung man from New South Wales. After the two had some amazing experiences in Australia, Michael invited Gerry to come to Manitoulin Island to do some workshops there for Michaels family and friends. Our mom was one of his first students.

When Michael met my spiritual teacher and mentor, Dr. Eugene Whitworth of San Francisco, author of *Nine Faces of Christ* and many other books, the two immediately made plans to exchange their healing techniques. Eugene had travelled to study Indigenous cultures all over the world, but he wanted to learn about AmaDeus. In fact, Eugene suggested that the two leave my daughter's wedding reception to get started right away. I stepped in and told them they could surely wait for one more day .

They complied. Michael subsequently joined me in doing some studies with Eugene through Great Western Brotherhood School of Sacred Studies. He was welcomed by all the other students of Great Western.

He joined the Theosophical Society in



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Canada after meeting our former President, Dr. David Gardner. The two had a lot of experiences to share, including stories about Lobsang Rampa.

Whenever Michael would visit we'd pick David up and go for lunch. Stimulating discussions ensued. We all miss David since his transition.

Conclaves in Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto. He was always an eager student.

While he was still a Principal, he took up singing, as he found that it relaxed him after a day at school. Both of our parents and our two sisters are very musical and, so it seems, was Michael. He particularly loved singing at our mom's Nursing Home. The seniors really appreciated hearing all the songs they loved. Near the end of our mom's life, he would sing with her, just the two of them, for an hour or more. The staff would gather in the doorway to listen. Mom loved those times. After she was gone, he sang in various Senior homes around Elliot Lake. He also became a Hospice Volunteer.

Michael wanted to live a much longer life. He planned to be here to see the great changes that are coming for our World. His body was not cooperating though. The doctors said that his body wasn't keeping him alive any more over the final months. It was sheer will power. In the end Michael grew very weary of the dialysis he required every second day. His passing was so peaceful, just like a baby going to sleep. Our sister and I were with him.

I have no doubt that my dear brother is happy over there, and keeping very busy with his new studies and assignments. His life was a blessing.

Lois Brisbois,
President TSC



THE MYTHIC CHRIST

We have already seen the use that is made of Comparative Mythology against Religion, and some of its most destructive attacks have been levelled against the Christ. His birth of a Virgin at "Christmas," the slaughter of the Innocents, His wonder-working and His teachings, His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension—all these events in the story of His life are pointed to in the stories of other lives, and His historical existence is challenged on the strength of these identities. So far as the wonder-working and the teachings are concerned, we may briefly dismiss these first with the acknowledgment that most great Teachers have wrought works which, on the physical plane, appear as miracles in the sight of their contemporaries, but are known by occultists to be done by the exercise of powers possessed by all Initiates above a certain grade. The teachings He gave may also be acknowledged to be non-original; but where the student of Comparative Mythology thinks that he has proved that none is divinely inspired, when he shows that similar moral teachings fell from the lips of Manu, from the lips of the Buddha, from the lips of Jesus, the occultist says that certainly Jesus must have repeated the teachings of His predecessors, since He was a messenger from the same Lodge. The profound verities touching the divine and the human Spirit were as much truths twenty thousand years

before Jesus was born in Palestine as after He was born; and to say that the world was left without such teaching, and that man was left in moral darkness from his beginnings to twenty centuries ago, is to say that there was a humanity without a Teacher, children without a Father, human souls crying for light into a darkness that gave them no answer—a conception as blasphemous of God as it is desperate for man, a conception contradicted by the appearance of every Sage, by the mighty literature, by the noble lives, in the thousands of ages ere the Christ came forth.

Recognising then in Jesus the great Master of the West, the leading Messenger of the Lodge to the western world, we must face the difficulty which has made havoc of this belief in the minds of many: Why are the festivals that commemorate events in the life of Jesus found in pre-Christian religions, and in them commemorate identical events in the lives of other Teachers?

Comparative Mythology, which has drawn public attention to this question in modern times, may be said to be about a century old, dating from the appearance of Dulaure's *Histoire Abrégée de differens Cultes*, of Dupuis' *Origine de tous les Cultes*, of Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*, and of Godfrey Higgins' *Anacalypsis*. These works were followed by a shoal of others, growing more scientific and rigid in their collec-



tion and comparison of facts, until it has become impossible for any educated person to even challenge the identities and similarities existing in every direction. Christians are not to be found, in these days, who are prepared to contend that Christian symbols, rites, and ceremonies are unique—except, indeed, among the ignorant. There we still behold simplicity of belief hand-in-hand with ignorance of facts; but outside this class we do not find even the most devout Christians alleging that Christianity has not very much in common with faiths older than itself. But it is well known that in the first centuries “after Christ” these likenesses were on all hands admitted, and that modern Comparative Mythology is only repeating with great precision that which was universally recognised in the Early Church. Justin Martyr, for instance, crowds his pages with references to the religions of his time, and if a modern assailant of Christianity would cite a number of cases in which Christian teachings are identical with those of elder religions, he can find no better guides than the apologists of the second century. They quote Pagan teachings, stories, and symbols, pleading that the very identity of the Christian with these should prevent the off-hand rejection of the latter as in themselves incredible. A curious reason is, indeed, given for this identity, one that will scarcely find many adherents in modern days. Says Justin Martyr: “Those who hand down the myths which the poets have made adduce no

proof to the youths who learn them; and we proceed to demonstrate that they have been uttered by the influence of the wicked demons, to deceive and lead astray the human race. For having heard it proclaimed through the prophets that the Christ was to come, and that the ungodly among men were to be punished by fire, they put forward many to be called sons of Jupiter, under the impression that they would be able to produce in men the idea that the things which were said with regard to Christ were mere marvellous tales, like the things which were said by the poets.” “And the devils, indeed, having heard this washing published by the prophet, instigated those who enter their temples, and are about to approach them with libations and burnt offerings, also to sprinkle themselves; and they cause them also to wash themselves entirely as they depart.” “Which the Lord’s Supper the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same thing to be done.” “For I myself, when I discovered the wicked disguise which the evil spirits had thrown around the divine doctrines of the Christians, to turn aside others from joining them, laughed.”

These identities were thus regarded as the work of devils, copies of the Christian originals, largely circulated in the pre-Christian world with the object of prejudicing the reception of the truth when it came. There is a certain difficulty in accepting the earlier statements as copies and the later as originals, but



without disputing with Justin Martyr whether the copies preceded the original or the original the copies, we may be content to accept his testimony as to the existence of these identities between the faith flourishing in the Roman empire of his time and the new religion he was engaged in defending.

Tertullian speaks equally plainly, stating the objection made in his days also to Christianity, that "the nations who are strangers to all understanding of spiritual powers, ascribe to their idols the imbuing of waters with the self-same efficacy." "So they do," he answers quite frankly, "but these cheat themselves with waters that are widowed. For washing is the channel through which they are initiated into some sacred rites of some notorious Isis or Mithra; and the Gods themselves they honour by washings.... At the Apollinarian and Eleusinian games they are baptised; and they presume that the effect of their doing that is the regeneration and the remission of the penalties due to their perjuries. Which fact, being acknowledged, we recognise here also the zeal of the devil rivalling the things of God, while we find him too practising baptism in his subjects."

To solve the difficulty of these identities we must study the Mythic Christ, the Christ of the solar myths or legends, these myths being the pictorial forms in which certain profound truths were given to the world.

Now a "myth" is by no means what most

people imagine it to be—a mere fanciful story erected on a basis of fact, or even altogether apart from fact. A myth is far truer than a history, for a history only gives a story of the shadows, whereas a myth gives a story of the substances that cast the shadows. As above so below; and first above and then below. There are certain great principles according to which our system is built; there are certain laws by which these principles are worked out in detail; there are certain Beings who embody the principles and whose activities are the laws; there are hosts of inferior beings who act as vehicles for these activities, as agents, as instruments; there are the Egos of men intermingled with all these, performing their share of the great kosmic drama. These multifarious workers in the invisible worlds cast their shadows on physical matter, and these shadows are "things"—the bodies, the objects, that make up the physical universe. These shadows give but a poor idea of the objects that cast them, just as what we call shadows down here give but a poor idea of the objects that cast them; they are mere outlines, with blank darkness in lieu of details, and have only length and breadth, no depth.

History is an account, very imperfect and often distorted, of the dance of these shadows in the shadow-world of physical matter. Anyone who has seen a clever Shadow-Play, and has compared what goes on behind the screen on which the shadows are cast with the movements of the shadows on the



screen, may have a vivid idea of the illusory nature of the shadow-actions, and may draw therefrom several not misleading analogies.

Myth is an account of the movements of those who cast the shadows; and the language in which the account is given is what is called the language of symbols. Just as here we have words which stand for things—as the word “table” is a symbol for a recognised article of a certain kind—so do symbols stand for objects on higher planes. They are a pictorial alphabet, used by all myth-writers, and each has its recognised meaning. A symbol is used to signify a certain object just as words are used down here to distinguish one thing from another, and so a knowledge of symbols is necessary for the reading of a myth. For the original tellers of great myths are ever Initiates, who are accustomed to use the symbolic language, and who, of course, use symbols in their fixed and accepted meanings.

A symbol has a chief meaning, and then various subsidiary meanings related to that chief meaning. For instance, the Sun is the symbol of the Logos; that is its chief or primary significance. But it stands also for an incarnation of the Logos, or for any of the great Messengers who represent Him for the time, as an ambassador represents his King. High Initiates who are sent on special missions to incarnate among men and live with them for a time as Rulers or Teachers, would be designated by the

symbol of the Sun; for though it is not their symbol in an individual sense, it is theirs in virtue of their office.

All those who are signified by this symbol have certain characteristics, pass through certain situations, perform certain activities, during their lives on earth. The Sun is the physical shadow, or body, as it is called, of the Logos; hence its yearly course in nature reflects His activity, in the partial way in which a shadow represents the activity of the object that casts it. The Logos, “the Son of God,” descending into matter, has as shadow the annual course of the Sun, and the Sun-Myth tells it. Hence, again, an incarnation of the Logos, or one of His high ambassadors, will also represent that activity, shadow-like, in His body as a man. Thus will necessarily arise identities in the life-histories of these ambassadors. In fact, the absence of such identities would at once point out that the person concerned was not a full ambassador, and that his mission was of a lower order.

The Solar Myth, then, is a story which primarily representing the activity of the Logos, or Word, in the kosmos, secondarily embodies the life of one who is an incarnation of the Logos, or is one of His ambassadors. The Hero of the myth is usually represented as a God, or Demi-God, and his life, as will be understood by what has been said above, must be outlined by the course of the Sun, as the shadow of the Logos. The part of the course lived out during the



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human life is that which falls between the winter solstice and the reaching of the zenith in summer. The Hero is born at the winter solstice, dies at the spring equinox, and, conquering death, rises into mid-heaven.

The following remarks are interesting in this connection, though looking at myth in a more general way, as an allegory, picturing inner truths: "Alfred de Vigny has said that legend is frequently more true than history, because legend recounts not acts which are often incomplete and abortive, but the genius itself of great men and great nations. It is pre-eminently to the Gospel that this beautiful thought is applicable, for the Gospel is not merely the narration of what has been; it is the sublime narration of what is and what always will be. Ever will the Saviour of the world be adored by the kings of intelligence, represented by the Magi; ever will He multiply the eucharistic bread, to nourish and comfort our souls; ever, when we invoke Him in the night and the tempest, will He come to us walking on the waters, ever will He stretch forth His hand and make us pass over the crests of the billows; ever will He cure our distempers and give back light to our eyes; ever will He appear to His faithful, luminous and transfigured upon Tabor, interpreting the law of Moses and moderating the zeal of Elias."

We shall find that myths are very closely related to the Mysteries, for part of the Mysteries consisted in showing living

pictures of the occurrences in the higher worlds that became embodied in myths. In fact in the Pseudo-Mysteries, mutilated fragments of the living pictures of the true Mysteries were represented by actors who acted out a drama, and many secondary myths are these dramas put into words.

The broad outlines of the story of the Sun-God are very clear, the eventful life of the Sun-God being spanned within the first six months of the solar year, the other six being employed in the general protecting and preserving. He is always born at the winter solstice, after the shortest day in the year, at the midnight of the 25th of December, when the sign Virgo is rising above the horizon; born as this sign is rising, he is born always of a virgin, and she remains a virgin after she has given birth to her Sun-Child, as the celestial Virgo remains unchanged and unsullied when the Sun comes forth from her in the heavens. Weak, feeble as an infant is he, born when the days are shortest and the nights are longest—we are on the north of the equatorial line—surrounded with perils in his infancy, and the reign of the darkness far longer than his in his early days. But he lives through all the threatening dangers, and the day lengthens towards the spring equinox, till the time comes for the crossing over, the crucifixion, the date varying with each year. The Sun-God is sometimes found sculptured within the circle of the horizon, with the head and feet touching the circle at north and south,



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and the outstretched hands at east and west—"He was crucified." After this he rises triumphantly and ascends into heaven, and ripens the corn and the grape, giving his very life to them to make their substance and through them to his worshippers. The God who is born at the dawning of December 25th is ever crucified at the spring equinox, and ever gives his life as food to his worshippers—these are among the most salient marks of the Sun-God. The fixity of the birth-date and the variable-ness of the death-date are full of significance, when we remember that the one is a fixed and the other a variable solar position. "Easter" is a movable event, calculated by the relative positions of sun and moon, an impossible way of fixing year by year the anniversary of a historical event, but a very natural and indeed inevitable way of calculating a solar festival. These changing dates do not point to the history of a man, but to the Hero of a solar myth.

These events are reproduced in the lives of the various Solar Gods, and antiquity teems with illustrations of them. Isis of Egypt like Mary of Bethlehem was our Immaculate Lady, Star of the Sea, Queen of Heaven, Mother of God. We see her in pictures standing on the crescent moon, star-crowned; she nurses her child Horus, and the cross appears on the back of the seat in which he sits on his mother's knee. The Virgo of the Zodiac is represented in ancient drawings as a woman suckling a child—the type of all future Madonnas with

their divine Babes, showing the origin of the symbol. Devakî is likewise figured with the divine Krishna in her arms, as is Mylitta, or Istar, of Babylon, also with the recurrent crown of stars, and with her child Tammuz on her knee. Mercury and Æsculapius, Bacchus and Hercules, Perseus and the Dioscuri, Mithras and Zarathustra, were all of divine and human birth.

The relation of the winter solstice to Jesus is also significant. The birth of Mithras was celebrated in the winter solstice with great rejoicings, and Horus was also then born: "His birth is one of the greatest mysteries of the Egyptian religion. Pictures representing it appeared on the walls of temples.... He was the child of Deity. At Christmas time, or that answering to our festival, his image was brought out of the sanctuary with peculiar ceremonies, as the image of the infant Bambino is still brought out and exhibited at Rome."

On the fixing of the 25th December as the birthday of Jesus, Williamson has the following: "All Christians know that the 25th December is now the recognised festival of the birth of Jesus, but few are aware that this has not always been so. There have been, it is said, one hundred and thirty-six different dates fixed on by different Christian sects. Lightfoot gives it as September, others as in February or August. Epiphanius mentions two sects, one celebrating it in June, the other in July. The matter was finally settled by Pope Julius I., in



A.D., and S. Chrysostom, writing in , says: 'On this day i.e. 25th December also the birth of Christ was lately fixed at Rome, in order that while the heathen were busy with their ceremonies the Brumalia, in honour of Bacchus the Christians might perform their rites undisturbed.' Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, writes: 'The Christian Romans, as ignorant as their brethren of the real date of his Christ's birth fixed the solemn festival to the 25th December, the Brumalia or winter solstice, when the Pagans annually celebrated the birth of the Sun.' King, in his *Gnostics and their Remains*, also says: 'The ancient festival held on the 25th December in honour of the birthday of the Invincible One, and celebrated by the great games at the Circus, was afterwards transferred to the commemoration of the birth of Christ, the precise date of which many of the Fathers confess was then unknown;' while at the present day Canon Farrar writes that 'all attempts to discover the month and day of the nativity are useless. No data whatever exist to enable us to determine them with even approximate accuracy.' From the foregoing it is apparent that the great festival of the winter solstice has been celebrated during past ages, and in widely separated lands, in honour of the birth of a God, who is almost invariably alluded to as a 'Saviour,' and whose mother is referred to as a pure virgin. The striking resemblances, too, which have been instanced not only in the birth but in the

life of so many of these Saviour-Gods are far too numerous to be accounted for by any mere coincidence."

In the case of the Lord Buddha we may see how a myth attaches itself to a historical personage. The story of His life is well known, and in the current Indian accounts the birth-story is simple and human. But in the Chinese account He is born of a virgin, Mâyâdevî, the archaic myth finding in Him a new Hero.

Williamson also tells us that fires were and are lighted on the 25th December on the hills among Keltic peoples, and these are still known among the Irish and the Scotch Highlanders as Bheil or Baaltinne, the fires thus bearing the name of Bel, Bal, or Baal, their ancient Deity, the Sun-God, though now lighted in honour of Christ.

Rightly considered, the Christmas festival should take on new elements of rejoicing and of sacredness, when the lovers of Christ see in it the repetition of an ancient solemnity, see it stretching all the world over, and far, far back into dim antiquity; so that the Christmas bells are ringing throughout human history, and sound musically out of the far-off night of time. Not in exclusive possession, but in universal acceptance, is found the hallmark of truth.

The death-date, as said above, is not a fixed one, like the birth-date. The date of the death is calculated by the relative positions of Sun and Moon at the spring



equinox, varying with each year, and the death-date of each Solar Hero is found to be celebrated in this connection. The animal adopted as the symbol of the Hero is the sign of the Zodiac in which the Sun is at the vernal equinox of his age, and this varies with the precession of the equinoxes. Oannes of Assyria had the sign of Pisces, the Fish, and is thus figured. Mithra is in Taurus, and, therefore, rides on a Bull, and Osiris was worshipped as Osiris-Apis, or Serapis, the Bull. Merodach of Babylon was worshipped as a Bull, as was Astarte of Syria. When the Sun is in the sign of Aries, the Ram or Lamb, we have Osiris again as Ram, and so also Astarte, and Jupiter Ammon, and it is this same animal that became the symbol of Jesus—the Lamb of God. The use of the Lamb as His symbol, often leaning on a cross, is common in the sculptures of the catacombs. On this Williamson says: "In the course of time the Lamb was represented on the cross, but it was not until the sixth synod of Constantinople, held about the year , that it was ordained that instead of the ancient symbol, the figure of a man fastened to a cross should be represented. This canon was confirmed by Pope Adrian I." The very ancient Pisces is also assigned to Jesus, and He is thus pictured in the catacombs.

The death and resurrection of the Solar Hero at or about the vernal equinox is as widespread as his birth at the winter solstice. Osiris was then slain by Typhon, and He is pictured on the circle of the

horizon, with outstretched arms, as if crucified—a posture originally of benediction, not of suffering. The death of Tammuz was annually bewailed at the spring equinox in Babylonia and Syria, as were Adonis in Syria and Greece, and Attis in Phrygia, pictured "as a man fastened with a lamb at the foot." Mithras' death was similarly celebrated in Persia, and that of Bacchus and Dionysius—one and the same—in Greece. In Mexico the same idea re-appears, as usual accompanied with the cross.

In all these cases the mourning for the death is immediately followed by the rejoicing over the resurrection, and on this it is interesting to notice that the name of Easter has been traced to the virgin-mother of the slain Tammuz, Ishtar.

It is interesting also to notice that the fast preceding the death at the vernal equinox, the modern Lent—is found in Mexico, Egypt, Persia, Babylon, Assyria, Asia Minor, in some cases definitely for forty days.

In the Pseudo-Mysteries, the Sun-God story was dramatised, and in the ancient Mysteries it was lived by the Initiate, and hence the solar "myths" and the great facts of Initiation became interwoven together. Hence when the Master Christ became the Christ of the Mysteries, the legends of the older Heroes of those Mysteries gathered round Him, and the stories were again recited with the latest divine Teacher as the representative of the Logos in the Sun. Then



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the festival of His nativity became the immemorial date when the Sun was born of the Virgin, when the midnight sky was filled with the rejoicing hosts of the celestials, and

Very early, very early, Christ was born.

As the great legend of the Sun gathered round Him, the sign of the Lamb became that of His crucifixion as the sign of the Virgin had become that of His birth. We have seen that the Bull was sacred to Mithras and the Fish to Oannes, and that the Lamb was sacred to Christ, and for the same reason; it was the sign of the spring equinox, at the period of history in which He crossed the great circle of the horizon, was "crucified in space."

These Sun myths, ever recurring throughout the ages, with a different name for their Hero in each new recension, cannot pass unrecognised by the student, though they may naturally and rightly be ignored by the devotee; and when they are used as a weapon to mutilate or destroy the majestic figure of the Christ, they must be met, not by denying the facts, but by understanding the deeper meaning of the stories, the spiritual truths that the legends expressed under a veil.

Why have these legends mingled with the history of Jesus, and crystallised round Him, as a historical personage? These are really the stories not of a particular individual named Jesus but of the universal Christ; of a Man who symbolised a Divine Being, and who represented a fundamental truth in nature; a Man who filled a certain office and held a certain characteristic position towards humanity; standing towards humanity in a special relationship, renewed age after age, as generation succeeded generation, as race gave way to race. Hence He was, as are all such, the "Son of Man," a peculiar and distinctive title, the title of an office, not of an individual. The Christ of the Solar Myth was the Christ of the Mysteries, and we find the secret of the mythic in the mystic Christ.



LONDON LECTURES OF 1907

By Annie Besant, continued
The Place of Masters in Religions

Everyone of us who belongs to any special religion can trace back along the line of his religion further and further into the past, until he comes to its beginning, its first Teacher. And round that Teacher is usually a group of men and women who to the Founder of the religion are disciples, but to those who accept the religion later are teachers, apostles. And this is invariably true. The Hebrew, if you ask him, will trace back his religion to the time of the great legislator Moses, and behind Him to a yet more heroic figure, Abraham, the "friend of God." Look back to some yet older faith, the faith of Egypt, of Chaldea, of Persia, of China, of India, and you will find exactly the same thing is true. The Parsi, representative of a splendid tradition, but whose religion, as it now is, as has been well said, "a religion of fragments" only—he will trace back his religion to his own great Prophet, the Prophet of the Fire, who led the exodus from the centre of Asia and guided His people into what we now call the land of Persia. Egypt, if you ask her story, will show you heroic figures of her past, and amongst them that great King and Priest, Osiris, who, slain, as the old legend tells us, rises again, as lord and judge of his people. Buddhism, spread in the far east, will trace back its story to the Buddha, and will declare in addition to that, that not only is the Buddha the teacher of particular faith, but that a living person still exist on the earth as teacher, as protector, whom they all call Bodhisattva, the wise and the pure. India will tell you of a great group of teachers gathered round their Manu, the tradition of whose laws is still preserved, and is still used as the basis of the social legislation administered now by the English rulers. And round that great Lawgiver of the past, wise men are gathered whose names are known throughout the land, each of them standing at the head of some noble Indian family, that traces its ancestry backward and backward till it ends in the Sage, the Teacher. And this is equally true of more modern religions. Take the Christian religion, and the Christian traces his religion back until it finds its source in the personality of the Prophet of Judea, of the Jesus the Christ. And it is interesting, as one of those strange parallels which meet us in the comparative study of religions, that just as the Buddhist has his Buddha and also his Bodhisattva, so the Christian has the two names: Christ, representing the living spirit, a stage in the spiritual unfolding, the name representing a stage, an office, rather than a spe-



cial man, and joined to that the individual name of Jesus, in order to mark the intimate connection, as some would say the identity, between the two. But just as among the Buddhists the distinction is drawn, so among the early Christians you will find a similar distinction was made between the man Jesus and the spiritual Christ. So that in those early days many of those who were called "Gnostics" divided the two in a similar fashion, although uniting them at a certain stage of the teaching, of the ministry. And if you take the latest born of the religions, the Mussulmân, the religion of Islâm, that again is traced backward to a Prophet, the Prophet Muhammad, the great Prophet of Arabia. Universally this is true, that the religion traces itself back to a single mighty figure, whom some call a "God-man," a man too divine to be regarded as wholly like those amongst whom he lived and moved and taught; above them and yet of them, closely bound to them by a common humanity, although raised above them by a manifestation of the God within, mightier, more complete, more compelling, than the manifestation in the ordinary men and women around Him. So with all religions, and in that thought of the divine figure, the Founder of every faith, you have the fullest, the truest, the most perfect conception of that which we Theosophists call the ideal of the Master. All such

mighty beings by the Theosophist would be given the name of Master. And not by the Theosophist alone, for that word in

other religions has been applied to the Founder, the Chief of the faith. Nay, to the Christian it should come with special force, with special significance, for it was the name that Christ the Teacher chose as best expressing His own relationship to those who believed on Him, to those who followed Him. "Neither be ye called masters," He said; "for one is your Master, even Christ." And so again you may remember that, in speaking to His disciples, He said: "Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am." So that to the Christian heart the name Master should be above all other names sacred and beloved, since it was the chosen name of their own Teacher, the name that He claimed from His disciples, that name that He used as representing His relation to them. So this idea of a Master in religion certainly should be one which comes with no alien sound, no foreign significance, among those who look up to the Master Christ. And exactly the same idea is that of a Master in any great religion; it is a common idea—it signifies the Founder, the Teacher, divine and yet human. To that point I will return later.

Let us study the central idea of these Masters a little more closely, and see what are the special characteristics which mark Them in the religions of the past. If you go back very, very far, you will always find that the Master wears a double character: ruler, law-giver, on the one side; teacher upon the other. In



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all the old civilisations this is characteristic; for in those days the idea had not arisen of sacred and secular, or sacred and profane, as we say in the modern world. To the old civilisations there was no such thing as sacred history and profane history; no division was made between sacred science and secular science; all history was sacred, all science was divine. And so much was that the case that, when you find an ancient pupil asking of an ancient teacher as to divine science, the answer was given: "There are two forms of divine science, the higher and the lower." And the lower divine science was made up of all the things that now you call literature, science, and art; all those were run over by name, and summed up under the heading of the lower divine science. The higher, supreme Science was that knowledge of God, to which accurately the word Wisdom ought only to be applied. So that to their thought Deity was everywhere, and there was only variety in the manifestations of Deity. All Nature was sacred. God expressed Himself in every object, in every form. All that could be said was that through one form more of His glory came than through another. The form might be more or less transparent, but the inner radiant light was the same in all. And it was natural, inevitable, with such a conception of Nature and of God, that the Master, the Founder, of a religion should unite in His sole person the office alike of the Priest and of the King. And so you find it. The only like-

ness in modern days is not now a very fortunate one in the eyes of many—the King-Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church. For so ill had the duties of the King been performed in that high seat, that the people lost the sense of the divinity, and revolted against it, and cast it off, and left that Pontiff shorn of his royal character. But far back in the old civilisations, in the one person the two offices were united. The Pharaoh of Egypt was truly the Lord of the triple diadem, but also the supreme Priest in every temple of his land. So also in Chaldea, in India, and in many another land; and wherever that is the case you find a certain outline given to the civilisation, differing in detail, but marvelously similar in the broad touches of that sketch. You find that in those days the Priest-King, the Ruler of the land and the supreme Teacher of his people, shaped the polity of the nation as he shaped the doctrines taught in the temples of the religion. Both the religion and the polity have the keynote of duty. And always with increasing power there came greater weight of responsibility, heavier burden of duty; and the freest in those civilisations were the poorest. Those who were regarded as the children of the national household were ever cared for with extremest care. The very fact that they were the lowest in development gave them the greatest claim on the divine Man who ruled, so that all through the note of those civilisations is the note which to-day would be called socialistic—with one enor-



mous difference, that the most wise ruled. The result, in a sense, would be the result that the Socialist dreams of, the absence of poverty, the universality of some form of work done for the State as a whole, a duty of each man to bear a share of the burden; but the burden grew lighter and lighter as it came downwards to the younger members of the family, of the nation; the duty the most burdensome was placed on the highest. And you will find that, while still the tradition remained, it was very difficult sometimes to get rulers and governors of large States and small. It comes out in the Chinese books. The Emperor sends down word that So-and-so is to be governor of a State, and So-and-so, in those degenerate days, generally tried to escape from it, because of the tremendous burden that the governorship imposed. For in the case of the old Rulers, in the days when the divine Kings were the Kings and Priests of the people, anything that was wrong in the nation was related to the Ruler, and not to the people at large. Remember the words of one great Teacher of later days, Confucius, when a King turned to him and said: "Master, why is there robbery, why is there murder in my land? How shall I stop it?" His stern answer was: "If you, O King, did not steal and murder, there would be no robbery and no murder in your land." Always the highest with the weight of responsibility; the younger with the right to enjoy, to be happy, to be cared for. Where food was short, they were the last to starve,

and the King the first; where anything went short of material things, they were the first to be given their share, and the King the last. Such was the outline of the social organisation. Slight traces of it remain even to the present day. You can see traces of it in the civilisation that was destroyed in Peru by the conquerors, the Spanish conquerors, of that land. Some traces of it still remain in India, although degraded and decayed. The note is always the same: the higher, the more burdened; the higher, the harder the life; the higher, the greater the duty. For that is the type of the Master, and the idea ran through the whole of the civilisation. He, the Priest King, mighty in knowledge and in power, must bear upon his broad shoulders the burden that would crush a weaker man. And so downwards through all the degrees of ruler, in proportion to the power and its expansion, so in proportion the weight and the responsibility.

They passed away from earth as humanity grew out of its infant stage. My phrase is too strong—I should not have said: "They passed away from earth." They passed away into silence, not from earth; thereon many of Them still remain. But They drew back from the outer position, from outer power, and became the great company of Elder Brothers of humanity, only some of whom remained in close touch with the race.

And that is the next point in the idea of the Master. Those who founded a reli-



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gion were bound to remain wearing the body of man, fixed to the earth, bound to the outward semblance of humanity, so long as the religion lived upon earth which They had given to it. That was the rule: no liberation for the Man who founded a religion until all who belonged to that religion had themselves passed out of it, into liberation, or into another faith, and the religion was dead. The death of a religion is the liberation from all bondage of the Master who gave it to the world. He in a very real sense is incarnate in the religion that He bestows. While that religion lives and teaches, while men still find in it the expression of their thought, so long that divine Man must remain, and guide and protect and help the religion which He gave to earth. Such is the law. No Master may leave our humanity while that which He started as a human school is still existing upon earth. Some have passed away, and would no longer be spoken of as Masters—the name given to Them in the occult world is different—but Those who have passed away have passed away because Their religions are dead: the Masters of ancient Egypt, of ancient Chaldea, have gone from this earth into the mighty company of Those who no longer bear the burden of the flesh. But the Masters of every living religion live on earth, and are the links, for the people of that religion, between God and man; the Master is the divine Man, one with his brothers, who look to him for help, one with the God around and above, and through

Him the spiritual life is ever flowing. The word “mediator,” applied in the Christian scriptures to the Christ, signifies a real and living relation. There are such mediators between God and man, and they are all God-men, true Christs. Such links between the God without and the God within us are necessary for the helping by the one, and for the manifestation of the other. The God within us, unfolding his powers, answers to the God without us, and the link is the God-man who shares the manifested nature of divinity, and yet remains one with His brethren in the flesh. A bondage, yes. But a voluntary bondage—a bondage assumed in the day in which the Messenger came forth from the great White Lodge to bring a new revelation, to found a new divine kingdom upon earth. Heavy the responsibility of a divine Man who takes upon Himself the tremendous burden of speaking out to the world a new Word in the divine revelation. All that grows out of it makes the heavy burden of His destiny. Everything which happens within that communion of which He is the centre must react upon Him, and He is ultimately responsible; and as that divine Word is always spoken in a community of men and women imperfect, sinning, ignorant, that Word is bound to be distorted and twisted, because of the medium in which it works. That is why every such Teacher is called a “sacrifice”—Himself at once the sacrificer and the sacrifice, the greatest sacrifice that man may make to man, a sacrifice so



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mighty that none in whom Deity is not unfolded to the greatest height compatible with human limitation is strong enough to make it, is strong enough to endure it. That is the true sacrifice of the Christ; not a few hours' agony in dying, but century after century of crucifixion on the cross of matter, until salvation has been won for the people who bear His name, or until they have passed under some other Lord. Hence is that road always called "the Way of the Cross." Long before Christianity came to birth, the "Way of the Cross" was known to every Initiate, and Those were said to tread it who volunteered for the mighty service of proclaiming the old message again in the ears of the world of the time. A sacrifice: for none may tell, who volunteers for the service, what lies before the religion that He founds, what shall be the deeds of the community that He begins on earth. And every sin and crime of that religion, or that Church, falls into the scales of Karma stamped with the name of the Founder. He is responsible for it, and bearing that responsibility is the mighty sacrifice He makes; and the result is inevitable; for in a world imperfect no perfection can be perfectly mirrored. As the sun-ray falling upon water is twisted and distorted, so is it with the rays of a perfect truth falling in amongst a community of imperfect men; and no action down here can be a perfect action, for "action," it is written in an ancient book, "is surrounded with evil as a fire is surrounded with smoke." The imperfection

of the medium makes the smoke round every Word of Fire, every Word of Truth. And the Founder must endure the pungency of the smoke, if He would speak the Word of Fire. The realisation of that, however dimly, however imperfectly, makes the passion of gratitude in the human heart to those Men who bear their infirmities and open up the way to God for man. It is that which in some forms of popular Christianity has been distorted in speaking of the sacrifice of the Christ, when it has been made a sacrifice, not for man, sinful and foolish, but to the Father of all perfection, who needs no sacrifice of suffering in order to reconcile Him to the children sprung from His life. That is one of the distortions of the ignorance of man; that the falsification which has been spoken in the name of religion and has obscured the perfect love of God—for every divine Man who comes out is a manifestation of the divine heart, and a revelation of God to man. And how could it be that the Master of Compassion, who wins human hearts by the tenderness of His love, could be a Revealer of God, if there were not in God a compassion mightier than His own, and profounder than His humanity, as God is greater than man? But the splendor of the truth dazzled the eyes of those to whom it was presented, and their own ignorance, and fear, and limitation, imposed upon that perfect sacrifice the terrible aspect of a sacrifice to God—an aspect which it assumed, not only in Christianity, but in other faiths as well. For the most part,



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not always, in the elder religions they understood that the story of the life and death was an allegory, a "myth," as they called it, revealing a deeper truth. And so they avoided the pain and the sense of revulsion which has roused the conscience of civilised man to revolt against the cruder presentments of the doctrine; the great truth of the sacrifice is true, but it is not a legal, a contract, sacrifice, made between man's representative and God; but the effort of the divine to make itself understood, and the voluntary binding of the sacrifice to the cross of matter until His people are set free. And then, as I said, He passes on into other worlds, to other work, and is no longer called a Master of the Wisdom.

Now, looking at this idea, let us ask: "What is the work of these Masters in the religions of the world, and why is it that this thought of the Masters has been so revived in the modern world, and made so much more living, in a sense, than it has been for many a long year?" In the early days of Christianity, as I said, you find the idea; but it has largely vanished from the Churches as a living truth, and they think of Jesus, the Christian Master, as risen from the dead and ascended into heaven. And the materialising spirit of ignorance has made the ascent a going away, and the Man has gone, although the God remains. But that is only a materialisation of the older truth; for, according to the truth, heaven is not a faraway place to which people go. No one goes there;

they only open their eyes and see it on every side around them. For heaven is a state of the psychic life which is realised in the higher bodies, the bodies of the mental plane, and it does not need to go hither and thither, North, South, East, or West, to find it; for, as the great Teacher said: "Behold, the Kingdom of Heaven is within you"—not far away, beyond the sun or moon or stars. And the ascension of Jesus to heaven, as the Church of England puts it—in words that sound very strange in modern ears, because they have lost their mystic meaning and are only taken in what S. Paul used to call the "carnal" interpretation—in the fourth article of the Church of England, was that He ascended into heaven, taking with Him His "flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature." Now when you take that in the literal and crude signification, naturally the thoughtful man revolts against it. What is this about a physical body and physical bones going up through the air into the sky? And where has it gone to? The modern man cannot believe it in that sense, and so he loses the spiritual verity enshrined in words of symbolism and of allegory. For the fact that Jesus the Master went away, but still dwells on earth in the flesh, that is the truth which the article tries to indicate; and not that He is gone far away into a far-off heaven to sit at the right hand of God, whence He shall come again to judge. He lives in the body, and also lives in the midst of the Church, which is His true mystical body;



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and so long as that Church exists, so long as that Church is found on earth, so long its Master shall live within it, and shall dwell in a human body. He is not gone away, He has not ascended anywhere in the literal sense, but is permeating the whole of His Communion, and living upon earth until the last Christian has passed away to liberation, or is born into some other faith. That is the inner meaning. He lives and may be reached. And if the teachings of the Theosophical Society have any value for the Christian Church, it is because they are bringing back to live in Christian hearts this living truth of the bodily ever-presence of the Christ amongst them. Theosophists who are Christians, and remain within the limits of the Christian Church, have gained a vivid view of this real humanity of Jesus. They learn that He may be reached as truly now as when He walked near the sea of Galilee, or taught in the streets of Jerusalem, that they may know Him with as real a sense of His presence, may learn from Him as truly as any apostle or disciple in the past, that it is a living and real presence—not only, as the Roman Catholic Church says, in the Sacrament of the altar, but in the experience of the Christian heart. And it has never been left without a witness. Look all through the history of the Christian Church, and see how one after another has come into living touch with the Master Jesus. Every great saint has proclaimed his own experience as regards his contact with his Lord. And only in compar-

atively modern days, and in parts only of the Christian Church, has that great and vivifying truth been lost sight of. The Greek Church has never lost it; the Roman Catholic Church has never lost it. The testimony of the saints in those ancient communions bears witness to the continuing connection between the Christian and the Christ. You find it in some of the extreme Protestant communities also, where they bear a living testimony to the reality of the personal communion. Not through books and churches only, but within the living heart of man, visible sometimes even to physical eyes, shining out in the vision of the saint, speaking in the rapture of the prophet—it has never quite passed away from Christianity. It is coming back more strongly year after year, coming back with increased vitality, with more reality and strength behind it; coming back because the Christ within the Church, finding that forgetfulness was coming over the modern mind, has, as in the olden days, used a scourge of whipcord instead of only the voice of love. For inasmuch as the voice of love was not listened to, and the reality of His presence was being forgotten, He has used the whip of what is called the Higher Criticism to drive men out of books back to the living Master of the Christian faith. When you build the house of your faith on books and manuscripts, on councils and traditions, you are building on the sand, and the storm has come—the storm of criticism, of investigation, of scholarship,



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and the house of faith totters, because it is founded on the sand. But build the house of your faith on the rock of human experience, on the one rock on which every true Church is founded, the individual touch between the human Spirit and the divine, the personal experience of the human man on earth with the divine Man in the heaven, beside and around him, and you build the house of your faith on a rock that nothing can shake nor destroy, and it will shelter you, no matter what storms may rage outside. And so, as in the temple, the whip has been used in order that men may learn what they would not learn by the gentle instruction spoken only in the words of the friend. The enemy has been used for it, the foe, the assailant, who has made sharp his weapons, and has cut many of the old manuscripts in pieces; and the result of that is that the Christian Church is thrown back upon the Christ Himself, no longer seen dimly through history, but in vivid reality before the eyes of the heart of the Christian, and that He will give to Christianity a new life. The mystic belief will come back, and the literal interpretations will fall away. And when that is done, then Christianity shall have renewed its youth and its power, and shall know that the Master is living in His Church, and is still the Master of life and death, as in the olden days.

And by a very real instinct you will find that the most earnest Christians cling to the humanity of Jesus, and that is the value of the Master to us, when inside

our hearts is written the truth of His existence. If there were only such men as we, and God, the gulf would be too vast, the difference too terrible—nothing to encourage us to believe that Divinity was within us. We seem so trivial, so foolish, so childish, that we hardly dare sometimes to believe that we are truly God. It seems impossible for us in our modern life, with all the follies in which we spend ourselves, with all the childish ambitions and terrors with which we amuse or frighten ourselves. This little modern life seems so petty and so vulgar that we scarcely dare to believe ourselves divine. We speak of the old heroic days, and think that if we had lived then, we too should have been heroic, as the heroes and martyrs and saints of earlier times. But in truth humanity is just as divine today, as it ever was in the past. And if the divine were manifested in us as it was in the great ones of the past, we should be heroic as they were; it is not circumstances that make the difference, but only that the God within us is more in the stage of childhood than in those mighty ones of the past, in which He had risen to the stature of divine manhood. And when we think of the Masters and realise that They are; still more, perhaps, when in some happy moment we catch a glimpse of such divine Men, or feel Their presence closer than that of a human friend, ah! then it is that the inspiration which flows from Them, as from a ceaseless source, encourages and vivifies the life within. For we real-



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ise that it was not so very, very long ago that They were as we are, plunged down in the trivialities of earth; that They have climbed above them by the unfolding of the God within. And what They have done, you and I may also do. They are a constant inspiration and encouragement for humanity. They are men, and only God as we are God; the only difference being that They have God more manifest in Them than He is in us. They also in Their day were weak and foolish; They also strove and struggled, as we strive and struggle now; They also failed, as we are failing now; They also blundered, as we are blundering now; and They have risen above it all, strength after strength revealed in Them, wisdom and power and love growing ever more and more divine. And what They have done, you and I can do. For They are truly but the first fruits of humanity, the promise of the harvest, and not something strange, miraculous, and far away. The Christian clings to the manhood of Jesus for the reason that as "He hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." And it is a true instinct, a wise faith, for it is by coming into touch with such links between humanity and God, that you and I in time will become divine. In Him that divine seed of Spirit has unfolded into flower and fruit. When you sow a seed in the soil of your garden, you sow it in the full belief that it will grow, that it will become a plant with leaf and flower and fruit. And you believe it by all the promise of the past, which has

proved that out of such seeds grow such flowers; all that is behind you to make your faith a reasonable faith; and when you plant that trivial thing, a little larger than a pin's head, and hide it in the darkness of the ground out of sight, you have a living faith within you that out of that seed shall grow the perfect flower. Have the same faith for the seed of divinity that is planted within you, though it be planted in the darkness of your heart. Even if at present the first little shoot has not come up above the darkness of the soil in which it is buried, none the less the seed is there; it will grow and ripen into the perfect fruit. It must be so. There are no failures for the divine Husbandman, no seed which is not living, which falls from His hands into the ground. And near us the Masters stand ever, the living truth of what man can be—nay, what he shall be in the centuries to come. They are proofs of what you and I shall be, the finished copies of the statues which lie as yet so rough, so unhewn, in the marble of our humanity. That is Their value for all men, and part of Their work is to help us to become what They are, to foster in us every shoot of the spiritual life, to strengthen in us every effort and struggle towards the light. Theirs the glorious work, not only of building up mighty faiths, but of living in them, and pouring out spiritual life on the heart of each who enters within the portals of those faiths. That is Their splendid work; and if Theosophy is doing much in all the religions of the world to make



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them more real to their adherents, and give to them fresh vitality and strength and vigor, it is only because it is the latest impulse from the Masters of the Wisdom, and so is the most convenient channel through which that life may be poured into all the religions of the world. Only the latest of the impulses. All religions have been born out of such an impulse, and the only difference between this and the earlier impulses is that while they each founded a religion and round that religion a wall was built, so that there were believers inside the wall and unbelievers outside, round this spiritual forth streaming no walls are to be built, but the waters are to spread everywhere without limitation, without exception. That is the specialty in the message of Theosophy. It belongs to all alike. As much yours, though you do not call it by that name, perhaps, as it is theirs who call it by that name. It is only living, because it lives in every religion; it is only true, because it comes from the same Masters of the eternal Wisdom, belongs equally to all, to every religion that cares to take any of the truth that it has reproclaimed. And all over the world the glad message is going. There is not one religion which is now living, amongst whose adherents Theosophy is not spreading, and making them better members of their religions than they were before. For there is many a man and woman, in East and West alike, who had gone away from the religion into which they were born, because the mystic element had vanished and the lit-

eral sense of the doctrines was in truth the letter which killeth, while the spirit that was life seemed to have escaped. Many such men and women, in East and West, have come back with joy to the religion in which they were born, in realising that it is only an expression of the one divine Wisdom, and that the Masters of the Wisdom live and move amongst us.

And it may be that if the world grows more spiritual, it may be that if Spirit again becomes triumphant over matter, after passing through the darkness which was necessary in order that the intellect might be thoroughly developed and might learn its powers and its limitations; it may be that, in days to come, when the world is more spiritualized than to-day, climbing as it is again the upward arc, these living Masters of the world's religions will come amongst us again visibly as in the earlier days. It is not they who keep back in silence. It is we who shut them out, and make their presence a danger rather than an encouragement and an inspiration. And every one you -no matter what your faith may be, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Theosophist, what matters it?- every one of you who makes the Master of your own faith a living reality, part of your life, nearer than friend and brother, every such believer and worker is hastening the day of joy when the world shall be ready for the open reception of the Masters, that they may move visibly amongst humanity once more. That it may be so, open your heart to



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every breath of truth; that it may be so, open your eyes to every ray from the one eternal Sun. And until in our heart the love of the Master awakens, until with passionate longing, with continual insistence, we call to the divine Men the welcome, without which they may not come, They must remain hidden. Only when there comes up from heart after one vast chant of devotion and appeal. Only then will they come to the many as they have already come to the few, and show out the visible splendor of their manhood, as glory of their divinity has ever been upon the earth. Theosophy and the Theosophical Society

I want to put before you clearly and plainly what Theosophy means, and what is the function of the Theosophical Society. For we notice very often, especially with regard to the Society, that there is a good deal of misconception touching it, and that people do not realise the object with which it exists, the work that it is intended to perform. It is very often looked upon as the expression of some new religion, as though people in becoming Theosophists must leave the religious community to which he or she may happen to belong. And so a profound misconception arises, and many people imagine that in some way or other it is hostile to the religion which they profess. Now Theosophy, looked at historically or practically, belongs to all the religions of the world, and every religion has an equal claim to it, has an equal right to say that Theosophy exists within it. For Theosophy, as the name

implies, the Divine Wisdom, the Wisdom of God, clearly cannot be appropriated by any body of people, by any Society, not even by the greatest of the religions of the world. It is a common property, as free to everyone as the sunlight and the air. No one can claim it as his, save by virtue of his common humanity; no one can deny it to his brother, save at the peril of destroying his own claim thereto. Now the meaning of this word, both historically and practically, the Wisdom, the Divine Wisdom, is a very definite and clear meaning; it asserts the possibility of the knowledge of God. That is the point that the student ought to grasp; this knowledge of God, not the belief in Him, not the faith in Him, not only vague idea concerning Him, but the knowledge of Him, is possible to man. That is the affirmation of Theosophy, that is its root-meaning and its essence.

And we find, looking back historically, that this has been asserted in the various great religions of the world. They all claim that man can know, not only that man can believe. Only in some of the more modern faiths, in their own modern days, the knowledge has slipped into the background, and the belief, the faith, looms very large in the mind of the believer. Go back as far as you will in the history of the past, and you will find the most ancient of religions affirming this possibility of knowledge. In India, for instance, with its antique civilisation, you find that the very central idea of Hinduism is this supreme knowledge



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, the knowledge of God; As I pointed out too you the other day with regard to this old Eastern religion, all knowledge is regarded in a higher or a lower degree as the knowledge of God; for there is no division, as you know, in that ancient faith, between the secular and the sacred. That division is a modern division, as the unknown in the ancient world. But they did make a division in knowledge between the higher and the lower; and the lower knowledge, or the lower "science" nowadays, the study of the external world. But it also included all that here we speak of as Literature, as Art, as Craft everything, in fact, which the human brain can study and the human fingers can accomplish—the whole of that, in one grand generalisation, was called "Divine Wisdom," but it was the lower divine Wisdom, the inferior knowledge of God. Then, beside, or rather above that, came the Supreme Knowledge, the higher, the superior, that beyond which there was no knowledge, which was the crown of all. Now, that supreme knowledge is declared to be "the knowledge of him by whom all things are known" — a phrase indicating the supreme Deity. It was that was called the supreme knowledge, or par excellence, the Divine Knowledge, and the old Hindu thought is exactly the same as you have indicated by the name Theosophy.

So, again, classical students may remember that among the Greeks and the early Christians there was what was called the Gnosis, the knowledge, the

definite article pointing to that which, above all else, was to be regarded as knowledge or wisdom. And when you find among the Neo-Platonists this word Gnosis used, it always means, and is defined to mean, "the knowledge of God," and the "Gnostic" is "a man who knows God." So, again, among the early Christians. Take such a man as Origen. He uses the same word in exactly the same sense; for when Origen is declaring that the Church has medicine for the sinner, and that Christ is the Good Physician who heals the diseases of men, he goes on to say that the Church has also the Gnosis for the wise, and that you cannot build the Church out of sinners; you must build it out of Gnostics. These are the men who know, who have the power to help and to teach; and there can be no medicine for the diseased, no upholder of the weak, unless, within the limits of the religion, the Gnostic is to be found. And so Origen lays immense stress on the Gnostic, and devotes page after page to a description of him: what he is, what he thinks, what he does; and to the mind of that great Christian teacher, the Gnostic was the strength of the Church, the pillar, the buttress of the faith. And so, coming down through the centuries, since the Christian time, you will find the word Gnostic used every now and again, but more often the term "Theosophist" and "Theosophy"; for this term came into use in the later school, the Neo-Platonists, and became the commonly accepted word for those who claimed this possibility of knowl-



edge, or even claimed to know. And a phrase regarding this is to be found in the mystic Fourth Gospel, that of S. John, where into the mouth of the Christ the words are put, that the "knowledge of God is eternal life"—not the faith, nor the thought, but the knowledge—again declaring the possibility of this Gnosis. And the same idea is found along the line of the Hermetic Science, or Hermetic Philosophy, partly derived from Greece and partly from Egypt. The Hermetic philosopher also claimed to know, and claimed that in man was this divine faculty of knowledge, above the reason, higher than the intellect. And whenever, among the thoughtful and the learned, you find reference made to "faith," as where, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is said to be "the evidence of things not seen," the same idea comes out, and Faith, the real Faith, is only this intense conviction which grows out of the inner spiritual being of man, the Self, the Spirit, which justifies to the intellect, to the senses, that there is God, that God truly exists. And this is so strongly felt in the East that no one there wants to argue about the existence of God; it is declared that that existence cannot be proved by argument. "Not by argument," it is written, "not by reasoning, not by thinking, can the Supreme Self be known." The only proof of Him is "the conviction in the Spirit, in the Self." And thus Theosophy, then, historically, as you see, always makes the affirmation that man can know; and after that supreme affirmation that God may be

known, then there comes the secondary affirmation, implied really in that, and in the fact of man's identity of nature with the Supreme, that all things in the universe can be known—things visible and invisible, subtle and gross. That is, so to speak, a secondary affirmation, drawn out of the first; for clearly if in man resides the faculty to know God as God, then every manifestation of God may be known by the faculty which recognises the identity of the human Spirit with the Supreme Spirit that permeates the universe at large. So in dictionaries and in encyclopedias you will sometimes find Theosophy defined as the idea that God, and angels, and spirits, may hold direct communication with men; or sometimes, in the reverse form, that men can hold communication with spirits, and angels, and even with God Himself; and although that definition be not the best that can be given, it has its own truth, for that is the result of the knowledge of God, the inevitable outcome of it, the manifestation of it. The man who knows God, and knows all things in Him, is evidently able to communicate with any form of living being, to come into relation with anything in the universe of which the One Life is God.

In modern days, and among scientific people, the affirmation which is the reverse of this became at one time popular, widely accepted—not Gnostic but "Agnostic," "without the Gnosis"; that was the position taken up by Huxley and by many men of his own time of the same school of thought. He chose



the name because of its precise signification; he was far too scientific a man to crudely deny, far too scientific to be willing to speak positively of that of which he knew nothing; and so, instead of taking up the position that there is nothing beyond man, and man's reason, and man's senses, he took up the position that man was without possibility of knowledge of what there might be, that his only means of knowledge were the senses for the material universe, the reason for the world of thought. Man, by his reason, could conquer everything in the realm of thought, might become mighty in intellect, and hold as his own domain everything that the intellect could grasp at its highest point of growth, its highest possibility of attainment. That splendid avenue of progress Huxley, and men like Huxley, placed before humanity as the road along which it might hope to walk, full of the certainty of ultimate achievement. But outside that, beyond the reason in the world of thought and the senses in the material world, Huxley, and those who thought like him, declared that man was unable to pierce—hence “Agnostic,” “without the Gnosis,” without the possibility of plunging deeply into the ocean of Being, for there the intellect had no plummet. Such, according to science at one time, was man; and whatever man might hope for, whatever man might strive for, on, as it were, the portal of the spiritual universe was written the legend “without knowledge.” Thither man might not hope to pen-

etrate, thither man's faculties might never hope to soar; for when you have defined man as a reasoning being, you have given the highest definition that science was able to accept, and across the spiritual nature was written: “imagination, dream, and phantasy.”

And yet there is much in ordinary human history which shows that man is something more than intellect, as clearly as it shows that the intellect is greater than the senses; for every statesman knows that he has to reckon with what is sometimes called “the religious instinct” in man, and that however coldly philosophers may reason, however sternly science may speak, there is in man some upwelling power which refuses to take the agnosticism of the intellect, as it refuses to accept the positivism of the senses; and with that every ruler of men has to deal, with that every statesman has to reckon. There is something in man which from time to time wells up with irresistible power, sweeping away every limit which intellect or senses may strive to put in its path—the religious instinct. And even to take that term, that name, even that is to join on this part of man's nature to a part of nature universal, which bears testimony in every time, and in every place, that to every instinct in the living creature there is some answer in the nature outside itself. There is no instinct known in plant, in animal, in man, to which nature does not answer; nature, which has woven the demand into the texture of the living creature, has always



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the supply ready to meet the demand; and strange indeed it would be, well-nigh incredible, if the profoundest instinct of all in nature's highest product on the physical plane, if that ineradicable instinct, that seeking after God and that thirst for the Supreme, were the one and only instinct in nature for which there is no answer in the depths and the heights around us. And it is not so. That argument is strengthened and buttressed by an appeal to experience; for you cannot, in dealing with human experience and the testimony of the human consciousness, leave entirely out of court, silenced, as though it were not relevant, the continual testimony of all religions to the existence of the spiritual nature in man. The spiritual consciousness proves itself quite as definitely as the intellectual or the sensuous consciousness proves itself—by the experience of the individual, alike in every religion as in every century in which humanity has lived, has thought, has suffered, has rejoiced. The religious, the spiritual nature, is that which is the strongest in man, not the weakest; that which breaks down the barriers of the intellect, and crushes into silence the imperious demands of the senses; which changes the whole life as by a miracle, and turns the face of the man in a direction contrary to that in which he has been going all his life. Whether you take the facts of conversion, or whether you take the testimony of the saint, the prophet, the seer, they all speak with that voice of authority

to which humanity instinctively bows down; and it was the mark of the spiritual man when it was said of Jesus, the Prophet: "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." For where the spiritual man speaks, his appeal is made to the highest and the deepest part in every hearer that he addresses, and the answer that comes is an answer that brooks no denial and permits no questioning. It shows its own imperial nature, the highest and the dominant nature in the man, and where the Spirit once has spoken the intellect becomes obedient, and the senses begin to serve. Now Theosophy, in declaring that this nature of man can know God, bases that statement on identity of nature. We can know—it is our continual experience—we can know that which we share, and nothing else. Only when you have appropriated for yourself something from the outside world can you know the similar things in the outside world. You can see because your eye has within it the ether of which the waves are light; you can hear because your ear has in it the ether and the air whose vibrations are sound; and so with everything else. Myriads of things exist outside you, and you are unconscious of them, because you have not yet appropriated to your own service that which is like unto them in outer nature. And you can know God for exactly the same reason that you can know by sight or hearing—because you are part of God; you can know Him because you share His nature. "We are



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partakers of the Divine Nature," says the Christian teacher. "Thou art That," declares the Hindu. The Sufi cries out that by love man and God are one, and know each other. And all the religions of the world in varied phrase announce the same splendid truth of man's Divinity. It is on that Theosophy founds its affirmation that the knowledge of God is possible to man; that the foundation, then, of Theosophy, that the essence of its message.

And the value of it at the time when it was re-proclaimed to the world was that it was an affirmation in the face of a denial. Where Science began to cry "agnosticism," Theosophy came to cry out "gnosticism." At the very same time the two schools were born into the modern world, and the re-proclamation of Theosophy, the supreme knowledge, was the answer from the invisible worlds to the nescience of Science. It came at the right time, it came in the right form, as in a few moments we shall see; but the most important thing of all is that it came at the very moment when Science thought itself triumphant in its nescience. This re-proclamation, then, of the most ancient of all truths, was the message of Theosophy to the modern world. And see how the world has changed since that was proclaimed! It is hardly necessary now to make that affirmation, so universal has become the acceptance of it. It is almost difficult to look back to the year , and realise how men were thinking and feeling then. I can remember it,

because I was in it. The elder amongst you can remember it, for the same reason. But for the younger of you, who have begun to think and feel in the later times, when this thought was becoming common, you can scarcely realise the change in the intellectual atmosphere which has come about during these last two-and-thirty years. Hardly worthwhile is it to proclaim it now, it is so commonplace. If now you say: "Man can know God," the answer is: "Of course he can." Thirty-two years ago it was: "Indeed he cannot." And that is to be seen everywhere, all over the world, and not only among those people who were clinging blindly to a blind faith, desperately sticking to it as the only raft which remained for them to save them from being submerged in materialism. It is recognised now on all hands; literature is full of it; and it is not without significance that some months ago The Hibbert Journal—which has in it so much of the advanced thought of the day, for which bishops and archbishops and learned clerics write—it is not without significance that that journal drew its readers - uism." And the only value of it was this, for man: that man is God, and therefore can know God; and the writer pointed out that that was the only foundation on which, in modern days, an edifice that could not be shaken could be reared up for the Spirit in man. That is the religion of the future, the religion of the Divine Self; that the common religion, the universal religion, of which all the religions that are living in the world



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will be recognised as branches, as sects of one mighty religion, universal and supreme. For just as now in Christianity you have many a sect and many a church, just as in Hinduism we find many sects and many schools, and as in every other great religion of the world at the present time there are divisions between the believers in the same religion, so shall it be- very likely by the end of this century- and all religions of the world ; there will be only one religion- the knowledge of God- and all religion sects under that one mighty and universal name.

And then, naturally, out of this knowledge there must spring a large number of other knowledges subservient to it, that which you hear so much about in Theosophical literature, of other worlds, the worlds beyond the physical, worlds that are still material, although the matter be of a finer, subtler kind; all that you read about the astral, and mental, and buddhic planes, and so on- all these lower knowledges find their places naturally, as growing out of one supreme knowledge. And at once you will ask: "Why?" If you are really divine, if your Self is the same self of which the worlds are a partial expression, then it is not difficult to see that Self in you, as it unfolds its divine powers, and shapes the matter which it appropriate in order to come in contact with all the different parts of the universe, that the Self, creating for itself bodies, will be able to know every material thing in the universe, just as you know the things of

the physical plane through the physical body. For it is all on the same lines: that which enables you to know is not only body- that is the medium between you and the physical world- but the knower in you is that which enables you to know, the power of perception which is of consciousness are there, as perfect as ever, but the knower has left them, and knowledge disappears with him; and so, whether it be swoon, in a fainting fit, in sleep, or in death, the perfect instrument of the physical body becomes useless when the hand of the Master workman drops it. The body is only a tool, whereby he contacts the thing in a universe which is not himself; and at the moment he leaves it, it is a mere heap of matter, doomed to decay, to destruction. But just as he has that body for knowledge here, so he has other bodies for knowledge elsewhere, and in every world he can know, he who is the knower, and every world is made up of objects of knowledge, which he can perceive, examine, and understand.

And the world into which you shall pass when you go through the portal of death, that is around you at every moment of your life here, and you only do not know it because your instrument of knowledge there is not yet perfected, and ready there to your hand; and the heavenly world into which you will pass out of the intermediate world next to this, that is around you now, and you only do not know it because your instrument of knowledge there has not



yet been fashioned. And so with worlds yet higher, knowledge of them is possible, because the Knower is yourself and is God, and you can create your instruments of knowledge according to your wisdom and your will.

Hence Theosophy includes the whole of this vast scheme or field of knowledge; and the whole of it is yours, yours to possess at your will. Hence Theosophy should be to you a proclamation of your own Divinity, with everything that flows therefrom; and all the knowledge that may be gathered, all the investigations that may be made, they are all part of this great scheme. And the reason why all the religions of the world teach the same, when you come to disentangle the essence of their teaching from the shape in which they put it, the reason that they all teach the same is that they are all giving you fragments of knowledge of the other worlds, and these worlds are all more real than the world in which you are; and they all teach the same fundamental truths, the same fundamental moral principles, the same religious doctrines, and use the same methods in order that men may come into touch with the other worlds. The sacraments do not belong to Christianity alone, as sometimes Christians think; every religion has its sacraments, some more numerous than others, but all have some. For what is a sacrament? It is the earthly, the physical representative of a real correspondence in nature; as the catechism of the Church of England phrases it: "An outward and visible sign

of an inward and spiritual grace." It is a true definition. A sacrament is made up of the outer and inner, and you cannot do without either. The outer thing is correlated to the inner, and is a real means of coming into touch with the higher, and is not only a symbol, as some imagine. The great churches and religions of the past always cling to that reality of the sacrament, and they do well. It is only in very modern times, and among a comparatively small number of Christian people, that the sacrament has become only a symbol, instead of a channel of living and divine power. And much is lost to the man who loses out of his religion the essential idea of the sacrament; for it is the link between the spiritual and the physical, the channel whereby the spiritual pours down into the physical vehicle. Hence the value that all religions put upon sacraments, and their recognition of their reality, and their priceless service to mankind. And so with many other things in ceremonies and rites, common to all the different faiths—the use of musical sounds, a use which tunes the bodies so that the spiritual power may be able to manifest through them and by them. For just as in your orchestra you must tune the instruments to a single note, so must you tune your various bodies in order that harmoniously they may allow the spiritual force to come through from the higher to the lower plane. It is a real tuning, a real making of harmonious vibrations; and the difference between the vibrations that are harmonious and



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the vibrations that are discordant, from this point of view, is this: when all the bodies vibrate together, all the particles and their spaces correspond, so that you get solid particles, then spaces, and then solid particles, and spaces again, corresponding through all the bodies; whereas in the normal condition the bodies do not match in that way, and the spaces of one come against the solid parts of the other, and so you get a block. When sounds are used, the mystical sounds called mantras in Hinduism, the effect of those is to change the bodies from this condition to that, and so the forces from without can come into the man, and the forces in him may flow out to others. That is the value of it. You are able to produce mechanically a result which otherwise has to be produced by a tremendous exertion of the will; and the man of knowledge never uses more force than is necessary in order to bring about what he desires, and the Occultist- who is the wise man on many planes- he uses the easiest way always to gain his object. Hence the use of music, or mantras, in every faith. Pythagoras used music in order to prepare his disciples to receive his teachings. The Greek and the Roman Catholic Churches use special forms of music to produce a definite effect upon the worshippers who hear them. All of you must be aware that there are some kinds of music which have the remarkable effect upon you, of lifting you higher than you can rise by your own unassisted effort. Even the songs of illiterate Chris-

tian bodies do have some effect upon them, in raising them to a higher level, although they p r a. In Theosophy you find all these things dealt with scientifically—a mass of knowledge, but all growing out of the original statement that man can know God.

Now it is clear that in all that, there is nothing which a man of any faith cannot accept, cannot study. I do not mean that he will accept everything that a Theosophist would say; but I mean that the knowledge is knowledge of a kind which he will be wise to study, and to appropriate so far as it recommends itself to his reason and his intuition. And that is all the man need do—study. All this knowledge is spread out for you freely: you can take it, if you will. The Theosophical Society, which spreads it broadcast everywhere, claims in it no property, no proprietary rights, but gives it out freely everywhere. The books in which much of it is written are as free to the non-Theosophist as to the Theosophist. The results of Theosophical investigation are published freely that all who choose may read. Everything is done that can be done by the Society to make the whole thing common property; and nothing gives the true Theosophist more delight than when he sees the Theosophical teachings coming out in some other garb which gives them a different name, but hands them on to those who might be frightened perhaps by the name “Theosophy.” And so, when we find a clergyman scattering broadcast to his congre-



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gation Theosophical teaching as Christian, we say: "See, our work is bearing fruit"; and when we find the man who does not label himself "Theosophist" giving any of these truths to the world, we rejoice, because we see that our work is being done. We have no desire to take the credit of it, nor to claim it as ours at all; it belongs to every man who is able to see it, quite as much as it does to anyone who may call himself "Theosophist." For the possession of truth comes of right to the man who can see the truth, and there is no partiality in the world of intellect or of Spirit. The only test for a man's fitness to receive is the ability to perceive; and the only claim he has to see by the light is the power of seeing. And that, perhaps, may explain to you what some think strange in our Society—we have no dogmas. We do not shut out any man because he does not believe Theosophical teachings. A man may deny every one of them, save that of human brotherhood, and claim his place and his right within our ranks. But his place and his right within our ranks are founded on the very truths that he denies; for if man could not know God, if there were no identity of nature in every man with God, then there would be no foundation for our reception of him, nor any reason for welcoming him as a brother. Because there is only one life, and one nature, therefore the man who denies is God, as is he who affirms. Therefore each has a right to come; only the one who affirms knows why he welcomes

his brother, and the one who denies is ignorant, and knows not why he has a right within our ranks. But those of us who try to be Theosophists in reality, as well as in name, we understand why it is that we make him welcome, and it is based on this sane idea, that a man can see the truth best by studying it, and not by repeating formulæ that he does not understand. What is the use of putting a dogma before a man and saying: "You must repeat that before you can come into my Church"? If the man repeats it not understanding it, he is outside, no matter how much you bring him in; and if he sees it, there is no need to make that as a portal to your fellowship. And we believe, we of the Theosophical Society, that just because the intellect can only do its best work in its own atmosphere of freedom, truth has the best chance of being seen when you do not make any conditions as to the right of investigation, as to the claim to seek. To us, truth is so supreme a thing that we do not desire to bind any man with conditions as to how, or where, or why, he shall seek it. These things, we say, we know are true; and because we know they are true, come amongst us, even though you do not believe them, and find out for yourself whether they be true or not. And the man is better worth having when he comes in an unbeliever, and wins to the knowledge of the truth, than is the facile believer who acknowledges everything and never gets a real grip upon truth at all. We believe that truth is only found



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by seeking, and that the true bond is the love of truth, and the effort to find it; that that is a far more real bond than the repetition of a common creed. For the creed can be repeated by the lips, but the seeing of truth as true can only come from the intellect and the spirit, and to build on the intellect and the spirit is a firmer foundation than to build on the breath of the lips. Hence our Society has no dogmas. Not that it does not stand for any truths, as some people imagine. Its name marks out the truth for which it stands: it is the Theosophical Society; and that shows its function and its place in the world—a Society that asserts the possibility of the knowledge of God; that is its proclamation, as we have seen, and all the other truths that grow out of that are amongst our teachings. The Society exists to spread the knowledge of those truths, and to popularise those teachings amongst mankind. “But,” you may say, “if it be the fact that you throw out broadcast all your teachings, that you write them in books that every man can buy, what is, then, the good of being a member of the Theosophical Society? We should not have any more as members than we have as non-members.” That is not quite true, but it may stand as true for the moment. Why should you come in? For no reason at all, unless to you it is the greatest privilege to come in, and you desire to be among those who are the pioneers of the thought of the coming days. No reason at all: it is a privilege. We do not beg you

to come in; we only say: “Come if you like to come, and share the glorious privilege that we possess; but if you would rather not, stay outside, and we will give you everything which we believe will be serviceable and useful to you.” The feeling that brings people into our Society is the feeling that makes the soldier spring forward to be amongst the pioneers when the army is going forth. There are some people so built that they like to go in front and face difficulties, so that other people may have an easier time, and walk along a path that has already been hewn out for them by hands stronger than their own. That is the only reason why you should come in: no other. Do not come to “get”; you will be disappointed if you do. You can “get” it outside. Come in to give, to work, to be enrolled amongst the servants of humanity who are working for the dawn of the day of a nobler knowledge, for the coming of the recognition of a spiritual brotherhood amongst men. Come in if you have the spirit of the pioneer within you, the spirit of the volunteer; if to you it is a delight to cut the way through the jungle that others may follow, to tread the path with bruised feet in order that others may have a smooth road to lead them to the heights of knowledge. That is the only advantage of coming in: to know in your own heart that you realise what is coming, and are helping to make it come more quickly for the benefit of your fellow-men; that you are working for humanity; that you are coworkers with



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God, in making the knowledge of Him spread abroad on every side; that you are amongst those to whom future centuries will look back, thanking you that you saw the light when all men thought it was dark, and that you recognised the coming dawn when others believed the earth was sunk in midnight. I know of no inspiration more inspiring, of no ideal that lifts men to greater heights, of no hope that is so full of splendor, no thought that is so full of energy, as the inspiration, and the ideal, and the hope, and the thought, that you are working for the future, for the day that has not yet come. There will be so many in the days to come who will see the truth, so many in the unborn generations who will live from the hour of their birth in the light of the Divine WISDOM. And what is it not to know that one is bringing that nearer? to feel that this great treasure is placed in your hands for the enriching of humanity, and that the bankruptcy of humanity is over and the

wealth is being spread broadcast on every side? What a privilege to know that those generations in the future, rejoicing in the light, will feel some touch of thanks and gratitude to those who brought it when the days were dark, to those whose faith in the Self was so strong that they could believe when all other things were against it, to those whose surety of the divine knowledge was so mighty that they could proclaim its possibility to an agnostic world. That is the only reason why you should come into the vanguard, that the only reason why you should join the ranks of the pioneers. Hard work and little reward, hard words and little praise, but the knowledge that you work for the future, and that with the co-operation of Deity the final result is sure.



THE HISTORICAL CHRIST

We have already spoken, in the first chapter, on the identities existing in all the religions of the world, and we have seen that out of a study of these identities in beliefs, symbolisms, rites, ceremonies, histories, and commemorative festivals, has arisen a modern school which relates the whole of these to a common source in human ignorance, and in a primitive explanation of natural phenomena. From these identities have been drawn weapons for the stabbing of each religion in turn, and the most effective attacks on Christianity and on the historical existence of its Founder have been armed from this source. On entering now on the study of the life of the Christ, of the rites of Christianity, its sacraments, its doctrines, it would be fatal to ignore the facts marshalled by Comparative Mythologists. Rightly understood, they may be made serviceable instead of mischievous. We have seen that the Apostles and their successors dealt very freely with the Old Testament as having an allegorical and mystic sense far more important than the historical, though by no means negating it, and that they did not scruple to teach the instructed believer that some of the stories that were apparently historical were really purely allegorical. Nowhere, perhaps, is it more necessary to understand this than when we are studying the story of Jesus, surnamed the Christ, for when we do not disentangle the

intertwisted threads, and see where symbols have been taken as events, allegories as histories, we lose most of the instructiveness of the narrative and much of its rarest beauty. We cannot too much insist on the fact that Christianity gains, it does not lose, when knowledge is added to faith and virtue, according to the apostolic injunction. Men fear that Christianity will be weakened when reason studies it, and that it is "dangerous" to admit that events thought to be historical have the deeper significance of the mythical or mystical meaning. It is, on the contrary, strengthened, and the student finds, with joy, that the pearl of great price shines with a purer, clearer lustre when the coating of ignorance is removed and its many colours are seen.

There are two schools of thought at the present time, bitterly opposed to each other, who dispute over the story of the great Hebrew Teacher. According to one school there is nothing at all in the accounts of His life save myths and legends—myths and legends that were given as explanations of certain natural phenomena, survivals of a pictorial way of teaching certain facts of nature, of impressing on the minds of the uneducated certain grand classifications of natural events that were important in themselves, and that lent themselves to moral instruction. Those who endorse this view form a well-defined school to which belong many men of high edu-



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cation and strong intelligence, and round them gather crowds of the less instructed, who emphasise with crude vehemence the more destructive elements in their pronouncements. This school is opposed by that of the believers in orthodox Christianity, who declare that the whole story of Jesus is history, unadulterated by legend or myth. They maintain that this history is nothing more than the history of the life of a man born some nineteen centuries ago in Palestine, who passed through all the experiences set down in the Gospels, and they deny that the story has any significance beyond that of a divine and human life. These two schools stand in direct antagonism, one asserting that everything is legend, the other declaring that everything is history. Between them lie many phases of opinion generally labelled "freethinking," which regard the life-story as partly legendary and partly historical, but offer no definite and rational method of interpretation, no adequate explanation of the complex whole. And we also find, within the limits of the Christian Church, a large and ever-increasing number of faithful and devout Christians of refined intelligence, men and women who are earnest in their faith and religious in their aspirations, but who see in the Gospel story more than the history of a single divine Man. They allege—defending their position from the received Scriptures—that the story of the Christ has a deeper and more significant meaning than lies on the surface; while they

maintain the historical character of Jesus, they at the same time declare that The Christ is more than the man Jesus, and has a mystical meaning. In support of this contention they point to such phrases as that used by S. Paul: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you"; here S. Paul obviously cannot refer to a historical Jesus, but to some forth-putting from the human soul which is to him the shaping of Christ therein. Again the same teacher declares that though he had known Christ after the flesh yet from henceforth he would know him thus no more; obviously implying that while he recognised the Christ of the flesh—Jesus—there was a higher view to which he had attained which threw into the shade the historical Christ. This is the view which many are seeking in our own days, and—faced by the facts of Comparative Religion, puzzled by the contradictions of the Gospels, confused by problems they cannot solve so long as they are tied down to the mere surface meanings of their Scripture—they cry despairingly that the letter killeth while the spirit giveth life, and seek to trace some deep and wide significance in a story which is as old as the religions of the world, and has always served as the very centre and life of every religion in which it has reappeared. These struggling thinkers, too unrelated and indefinite to be spoken of as forming a school, seem to stretch out a hand on one side to those who think that all is legend, asking them to accept a



historical basis; on the other side they say to their fellow Christians that there is a growing danger lest, in clinging to a literal and unique meaning, which cannot be defended before the increasing knowledge of the day, the spiritual meaning should be entirely lost. There is a danger of losing "the story of the Christ," with that thought of the Christ which has been the support and inspiration of millions of noble lives in East and West, though the Christ be called by other names and worshipped under other forms; a danger lest the pearl of great price should escape from our hold, and man be left the poorer for evermore. What is needed, in order that this danger may be averted, is to disentangle the different threads in the story of the Christ, and to lay them side by side—the thread of history, the thread of legend, the thread of mysti-

cism. These have been intertwined into a single strand, to the great loss of the thoughtful, and in disentangling them we shall find that the story becomes more, not less, valuable as knowledge is added to it, and that here, as in all that is basically of the truth, the brighter the light thrown upon it the greater the beauty that is revealed.

We will study first the historical Christ; secondly, the mythic Christ; thirdly, the mystic Christ. And we shall find that elements drawn from all these make up the Jesus Christ of the Churches. They all enter into the composition of the grandiose and pathetic Figure which dominates the thoughts and the emotions of Christendom, the Man of Sorrows, the Saviour, the Lover and Lord of Men.

THE HISTORICAL CHRIST, OR JESUS THE HEALER AND TEACHER.

The thread of the life-story of Jesus is one which may be disentangled from those with which it is intertwined without any great difficulty. We may fairly here aid our study by reference to those records of the past which experts can reverify for themselves, and from which certain details regarding the Hebrew Teacher have been given to the world by H. P. Blavatsky and by others who are experts in occult investigation. Now in the minds of many there is apt to arise a challenge when this word "expert" is used in connection with occultism. Yet

it only means a person who by special study, by special training, has accumulated a special kind of knowledge, and has developed powers that enable him to give an opinion founded on his own individual knowledge of the subject with which he is dealing. Just as we speak of Huxley as an expert in biology, as we speak of a Senior Wrangler as an expert in mathematics, or of Lyell as an expert in geology, so we may fairly call a man an expert in occultism who has first mastered intellectually certain fundamental theories of the con-



stitution of man and the universe, and secondly has developed within himself the powers that are latent in everyone—and are capable of being developed by those who give themselves to appropriate studies capacities which enable him to examine for himself the more obscure processes of nature. As a man may be born with a mathematical faculty, and by training that faculty year after year may immensely increase his mathematical capacity, so may a man be born with certain faculties within him, faculties belonging to the Soul, which he can develop by training and by discipline. When, having developed those faculties, he applies them to the study of the invisible world, such a man becomes an expert in Occult Science, and such a man can at his will reverify the records to which I have referred. Such reverification is as much out of the reach of the ordinary person as a mathematical book written in the symbols of the higher mathematics is out of the reach of those who are untrained in mathematical science. There is nothing exclusive in the knowledge save as every science is exclusive; those who are born with a faculty, and train the faculty, can master its appropriate science, while those who start in life without any faculty, or those who do not develop it if they have it, must be content to remain in ignorance. These are the rules everywhere of the obtaining of knowledge, in Occultism as in every other science.

The occult records partly endorse the story told in the Gospels, and partly do

not endorse it; they show us the life, and thus enable us to disentangle it from the myths which are intertwined therewith.

The child whose Jewish name has been turned into that of Jesus was born in Palestine B.C. , during the consulate of Publius Rutilius Rufus and Gnaeus Mallius Maximus. His parents were well-born though poor, and he was educated in a knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures. His fervent devotion and a gravity beyond his years led his parents to dedicate him to the religious and ascetic life, and soon after a visit to Jerusalem, in which the extraordinary intelligence and eagerness for knowledge of the youth were shown in his seeking of the doctors in the Temple, he was sent to be trained in an Essene community in the southern Judæan desert. When he had reached the age of nineteen he went on to the Essene monastery near Mount Serbal, a monastery which was much visited by learned men travelling from Persia and India to Egypt, and where a magnificent library of occult works—many of them Indian of the Trans-Himâlayan regions—had been established. From this seat of mystic learning he proceeded later to Egypt. He had been fully instructed in the secret teachings which were the real fount of life among the Essenes, and was initiated in Egypt as a disciple of that one sublime Lodge from which every great religion has its Founder. For Egypt has remained one of the world-centres of the true Mys-



teries, whereof all semi-public Mysteries are the faint and far-off reflections. The Mysteries spoken of in history as Egyptian were the shadows of the true things "in the Mount," and there the young Hebrew received the solemn consecration which prepared him for the Royal Priesthood he was later to attain. So superhumanly pure and so full of devotion was he, that in his gracious manhood he stood out pre-eminently from the severe and somewhat fanatical ascetics among whom he had been trained, shedding on the stern Jews around him the fragrance of a gentle and tender wisdom, as a rose-tree strangely planted in a desert would shed its sweetness on the barrenness around. The fair and stately grace of his white purity was round him as a radiant moonlit halo, and his words, though few, were ever sweet and loving, winning even the most harsh to a temporary gentleness, and the most rigid to a passing softness. Thus he lived through nine-and-twenty years of mortal life, growing from grace to grace. This superhuman purity and devotion fitted the man Jesus, the disciple, to become the temple of a loftier Power, of a mighty, indwelling Presence. The time had come for one of those Divine manifestations which from age to age are made for the helping of humanity, when a new impulse is needed to quicken the spiritual evolution of mankind, when a new civilisation is about to dawn. The world of the West was then in the womb of time, ready for the birth, and the Teu-

tonic sub-race was to catch the sceptre of empire falling from the failing hands of Rome. Ere it started on its journey a World-Saviour must appear, to stand in blessing beside the cradle of the infant Hercules.

A mighty "Son of God" was to take flesh upon earth, a supreme Teacher, "full of grace and truth"—One in whom the Divine Wisdom abode in fullest measure, who was verily "the Word" incarnate, Light and Life in outpouring richness, a very Fountain of the Waters of Life. Lord of Compassion and of Wisdom—such was His name—and from His dwelling in the Secret Places He came forth into the world of men.

For Him was needed an earthly tabernacle, a human form, the body of a man, and who so fit to yield his body in glad and willing service to One before whom Angels and men bow down in lowliest reverence, as this Hebrew of the Hebrews, this purest and noblest of "the Perfect," whose spotless body and stainless mind offered the best that humanity could bring? The man Jesus yielded himself a willing sacrifice, "offered himself without spot" to the Lord of Love, who took unto Himself that pure form as tabernacle, and dwelt therein for three years of mortal life.

This epoch is marked in the traditions embodied in the Gospels as that of the Baptism of Jesus, when the Spirit was seen "descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him," and a celestial voice proclaimed Him as the



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beloved Son, to whom men should give ear. Truly was He the beloved Son in whom the Father was well-pleased, and from that time forward "Jesus began to preach," and was that wondrous mystery, "God manifest in the flesh"—not unique in that He was God, for: "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are Gods? If he called them Gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" Truly all men are Gods, in respect to the Spirit within them, but not in all is the Godhead manifested, as in that well-beloved Son of the Most High.

To that manifested Presence the name of "the Christ" may rightly be given, and it was He who lived and moved in the form of the man Jesus over the hills and plains of Palestine, teaching, healing diseases, and gathering round Him as disciples a few of the more advanced souls. The rare charm of His royal love, outpouring from Him as rays from a sun, drew round Him the suffering, the weary, and the oppressed, and the subtly tender magic of His gentle wisdom purified, ennobled, and sweetened the lives that came into contact with His own. By parable and luminous imagery He taught the uninstructed crowds who pressed around Him, and, using the powers of the free Spirit, He healed many a disease by word or touch, reinforcing the magnetic energies belonging to His pure body with

the compelling force of His inner life. Rejected by His Essene brethren among whom He first laboured—whose arguments against His purposed life of loving labour are summarised in the story of the temptation—because he carried to the people the spiritual wisdom that they regarded as their proudest and most secret treasure, and because His all-embracing love drew within its circle the outcast and the degraded—ever loving in the lowest as in the highest the Divine Self—He saw gathering round Him all too quickly the dark clouds of hatred and suspicion. The teachers and rulers of His nation soon came to eye Him with jealousy and anger; His spirituality was a constant reproach to their materialism, His power a constant, though silent, exposure of their weakness. Three years had scarcely passed since His baptism when the gathering storm outbroke, and the human body of Jesus paid the penalty for enshrining the glorious Presence of a Teacher more than man.

The little band of chosen disciples whom He had selected as repositories of His teachings were thus deprived of their Master's physical presence here they had assimilated His instructions, but they were souls of high and advanced type, ready to learn the Wisdom, and fit to hand it on to lesser men. Most receptive of all was that "disciple whom Jesus loved," young, eager, and fervid, profoundly devoted to his Master, and sharing His spirit of all-embracing love. He represented, through the century



that followed the physical departure of the Christ, the spirit of mystic devotion that sought the exstasis, the vision of and the union with the Divine, while the later great Apostle, S. Paul, represented the wisdom side of the Mysteries.

The Master did not forget His promise to come to them after the world had lost sight of Him, and for something over fifty years He visited them in His subtle spiritual body, continuing the teachings He had begun while with them, and training them in a knowledge of occult truths. They lived together, for the most part, in a retired spot on the outskirts of Judæa, attracting no attention among the many apparently similar communities of the time, studying the profound truths He taught them and acquiring "the gifts of the Spirit."

These inner instructions, commenced during His physical life among them and carried on after He had left the body, formed the basis of the "Mysteries of Jesus," which we have seen in early Church History, and gave the inner life which was the nucleus round which gathered the heterogeneous materials which formed ecclesiastical Christianity.

In the remarkable fragment called the *Pistis Sophia*, we have a document of the greatest interest bearing on the hidden teaching, written by the famous Valentinus. In this it is said that during the eleven years immediately after His death Jesus instructed His disciples so far as "the regions of the first statutes only, and up to the regions of the first

mystery, the mystery within the veil." They had not so far learned the distribution of the angelic orders, of part whereof Ignatius speaks. Then Jesus, being "in the Mount" with His disciples, and having received His mystic Vesture, the knowledge of all the regions and the Words of Power which unlocked them, taught His disciples further, promising: "I will perfect you in every perfection, from the mysteries of the interior to the mysteries of the exterior: I will fill you with the Spirit, so that ye shall be called spiritual, perfect in all perfections." And He taught them of Sophia, the Wisdom, and of her fall into matter in her attempt to rise unto the Highest, and of her cries to the Light in which she had trusted, and of the sending of Jesus to redeem her from chaos, and of her crowning with His light, and leading forth from bondage. And He told them further of the highest Mystery the ineffable, the simplest and clearest of all, though the highest, to be known by him alone who utterly renounced the world; by that knowledge men became Christs for such "men are myself, and I am these men," for Christ is that highest Mystery. Knowing that, men are "transformed into pure light and are brought into the light." And He performed for them the great ceremony of Initiation, the baptism "which leadeth to the region of truth and into the region of light," and bade them celebrate it for others who were worthy: "But hide ye this mystery, give it not unto every man, but unto him only who shall do all things which I have said unto you in my commandments."



Thereafter, being fully instructed, the apostles went forth to preach, ever aided by their Master.

Moreover these same disciples and their earliest colleagues wrote down from memory all the public sayings and parables of the Master that they had heard, and collected with great eagerness any reports they could find, writing down these also, and circulating them all among those who gradually attached themselves to their small community. Various collections were made, any member writing down what he himself remembered, and adding selections from the accounts of others. The inner teachings, given by the Christ to His chosen ones, were not written down, but were taught orally to those deemed worthy to receive them, to students who formed small communities for leading a retired life, and remained in touch with the central body.

The historical Christ, then, is a glorious Being belonging to the great spiritual hierarchy that guides the spiritual evolution of humanity, who used for some three years the human body of the disciple Jesus; who spent the last of these three years in public teaching throughout Judæa and Samaria; who was a healer of diseases and performed other remarkable occult works; who gathered round Him a small band of disciples whom He instructed in the deeper truths of the spiritual life; who drew men to Him by the singular love and tenderness and the rich wisdom

that breathed from His Person; and who was finally put to death for blasphemy, for teaching the inherent Divinity of Himself and of all men. He came to give a new impulse of spiritual life to the world; to re-issue the inner teachings affecting spiritual life; to mark out again the narrow ancient way; to proclaim the existence of the "Kingdom of Heaven," of the Initiation which admits to that knowledge of God which is eternal life; and to admit a few to that Kingdom who should be able to teach others. Round this glorious Figure gathered the myths which united Him to the long array of His predecessors, the myths telling in allegory the story of all such lives, as they symbolise the work of the Logos in the Kosmos and the higher evolution of the individual human soul.

But it must not be supposed that the work of the Christ for His followers was over after He had established the Mysteries, or was confined to rare appearances therein. That Mighty One who had used the body of Jesus as His vehicle, and whose guardian care extends over the whole spiritual evolution of the fifth race of humanity, gave into the strong hands of the holy disciple who had surrendered to Him his body the care of the infant Church. Perfecting his human evolution, Jesus became one of the Masters of Wisdom, and took Christianity under His special charge, ever seeking to guide it to the right lines, to protect, to guard and nourish it. He was the Hierophant in the Christian Mysteries, the direct Teacher of the Initiates.



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His the inspiration that kept alight the Gnosis in the Church, until the super-incumbent mass of ignorance became so great that even His breath could not fan the flame sufficiently to prevent its extinguishment. His the patient labour which strengthened soul after soul to endure through the darkness, and cherish within itself the spark of mystic longing, the thirst to find the Hidden God. His the steady inpouring of truth into every brain ready to receive it, so that hand stretched out to hand across the centuries and passed on the torch of knowledge, which thus was never extinguished. His the Form which stood beside the rack and in the flames of the burning pile, cheering His confessors and His martyrs, soothing the anguish of their pains, and filling their hearts with His peace. His the impulse which spoke in the thunder of Savonarola, which guided the calm wisdom of Erasmus, which inspired the deep ethics of the God-intoxicated Spinoza. His the energy which impelled Roger Bacon, Galileo, and Paracelsus in their searchings into nature. His the beauty that allured Fra Angelica and Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci, that inspired the genius of Michelangelo, that shone before the eyes of Murillo, and that

gave the power that raised the marvels of the world, the Duomo of Milan, the San Marco of Venice, the Cathedral of Florence. His the melody that breathed in the masses of Mozart, the sonatas of Beethoven, the oratorios of Handel, the fugues of Bach, the austere splendour of Brahms. His the Presence that cheered the solitary mystics, the hunted occultists, the patient seekers after truth. By persuasion and by menace, by the eloquence of a S. Francis and by the gibes of a Voltaire, by the sweet submission of a Thomas à Kempis, and the rough virility of a Luther, He sought to instruct and awaken, to win into holiness or to scourge from evil. Through the long centuries He has striven and laboured, and, with all the mighty burden of the Churches to carry, He has never left uncared for or unsolaced one human heart that cried to Him for help. And now He is striving to turn to the benefit of Christendom part of the great flood of the Wisdom poured out for the refreshing of the world, and He is seeking through the Churches for some who have ears to hear the Wisdom, and who will answer to His appeal for messengers to carry it to His flock: "Here am I; send me."



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