



MYSTICAL CHRISTIANITY

AN INTRODUCTION

GEOFFREY HODSON

©Theosophical Publishing House, Auckland, 2022

First Published 2022

ISBN 978-0-473-62299-2

This work is copyright. Apart from fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, and review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Cover design by John Sell.

Theosophy, in its abstract meaning, is Divine Wisdom, or the aggregate of the knowledge and wisdom that underlie the Universe – the homogeneity of eternal good; and in its concrete sense it is the sum total of the same as allotted to man by nature, on this earth, and no more.

H.P. BLAVATSKY

Table of Contents

Editor's Foreword.....	1
Introduction.....	2
The Eternal Within the Temporal.....	6
Stilling the Tempest, Walking on the Water, The Woman Healed.....	9
The Fish.....	11
The Mount.....	13
The Prodigal Son.....	14
The Garden of Eden.....	16
Satan.....	18
Fire, Water, The Thief, Crucifixion.....	21
Goliath, Sampson, John the Baptist.....	23
The Birth of the Christ Child.....	25
Baptism, Transfiguration, Crucifixion, Ascension.....	27
L'Envoi.....	30

Editor's Foreword

This small book has not been published before. Unfortunately there are three small chapters that have not been able to be found and so are missing. However as there is valuable information in it, it has been decided to make a book with what chapters are available.

While some subjects have been dealt with in some of the published books on the deeper wisdom in the Bible, *The Hidden Wisdom in the Holy Bible* Vol. 1–4, *The Christ Life: From Nativity to Ascension* and the newly published *Initiates, Initiations and the Path*, one would have to read all of the six published books to cover them all.

This small book serves as an introduction to the larger books in print and can stand on its own as such.

The King James Bible has been used throughout.

Elizabeth Sell

Introduction

The word 'Theosophia', derived from two Greek words meaning divine wisdom, was coined by the Neo-Platonists in the second century of the Christian era to connote the great body of truth revealed through religion and discovered by research.

Knowledge concerning humanity, the universe and the relation between them has been the subject of both revelation and research throughout all ages. The full fruits of this dual process have been preserved by the still living Hierophants of the Ancient Mysteries in which they were imparted to pledged neophytes alone. They consist of a vast body of teaching which embraces every conceivable subject to which the mind of humans can be turned.

The fundamental principles of religion, philosophy, art, science and politics are all contained within this wisdom of the ages. From the time of the closing of the neo-Platonic and Gnostic Schools to the last quarter of the nineteenth century, save for the few alchemists, Kabalists, Rosicrucians, occultly-instructed Masons and the Christian mystics, Theosophy was unknown in the Western world. Before then it was known and studied in various forms by the Platonists, the Pythagoreans, Grecians, Egyptians and Chaldeans whilst in India and China it has been preserved in unbroken continuity down the ages. It is the wisdom of the Upanishads and the Vedas, the very heart of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and Islam. In Christianity it is revealed in its fullness, chiefly by means of allegory and symbol, the 'dead-letter' reading of which has blinded Christians to their deeper significance.

The Theosophical Society, founded in New York in 1875, reincarnation of innumerable similar movements in the past, is one of many channels chosen from time to time by the Teachers of the Race for the transmission of the Ancient Wisdom to humanity. Its members are offered the opportunity of studying, living and presenting the age-old truths to the world in terms of modern thought. Though the presentation may vary somewhat through the ages, Theosophy itself, being all truth, is unchanging and eternal.

In the Seal of the Theosophical Society the symbol used to represent Theosophy is that of a serpent with its tail in its mouth. The serpent is an ancient symbol of wisdom and the circle of eternity. Together they represent truth.

The study of comparative religion reveals the existence of certain doctrines which are common to all world faiths. Although differently interpreted in each, when collected and blended into a whole they constitute a basic body of revealed truth which can be studied independently of all systems of religious teaching.

Each world religion reveals an arc of the circle of eternal wisdom. Theosophy is the full circle of Truth, as yet but partially revealed to humanity. Age by Age, at the direction of Those Who are the Guardians of knowledge and its accompanying power, aspects of the eternal wisdom are revealed to humans through world religions and philosophies.

The great practical value of Theosophy consists of its revelation of the meaning and purpose of life. Without Theosophy, life is a hopeless puzzle which defies solution. Theosophy throws a flood of light upon human life and we see it in its inception, its evolution and its goal.

A puzzle may be solved by two methods. One is that of trial and error, of experimenting with various pieces in the hope that ultimately they will fit together. This is a slow and unsatisfactory method, particularly in the attempt to solve the puzzle of life. The other method, far more satisfactory, is based on pre-knowledge of the position of the various pieces in the complete design. Theosophy reveals the plan of life and shows within it the place of every individual and every event.

Life resembles somewhat a piece of tapestry. On the underside one sees little but incomprehensible tangles, knots, badly-blended colours and a general confusion. Examination of the upper side reveals the whole pattern, shows that the confusion is only apparent, since every juxtaposition is essential to the completion of the design.

So with the apparent confusion in the lives of individuals and of nations. Every individual and every event has its essential place in the fulfilment of the great plan of life. Theosophy reveals this plan, thereby bestowing mental serenity upon those who study it and making possible for them intelligent and purposeful living.

This series of books [Mr Hodson was writing a series of small books at the time of writing] is offered as an introduction to the science of Theosophy. No single book deals fully with the subject of the title though in each every effort has been made to present in outline the essential tenets. Book lists at the end of each volume enable those interested to extend their knowledge.

No book or any series of books can ever offer more than a few drops of the ocean of truth which is Theosophy. The total body of theosophical knowledge in the world today, though considerable, is but a fragment of the great science known to the occult Brotherhood¹, the Adept members of which in modern days, as of old, have presented that fragment to humanity as food for thought and guidance for conduct.

The student of Theosophy will do well to recognise that the human mind, being finite, cannot fully comprehend abstract truth which is infinite. As the human intellect develops, humanity's power of comprehension increases. Truth appears to change as does the shape of a mountain gradually approached and seen from different points of view. The mountain itself is changeless as also is eternal truth.

Theosophy being all truth, no final theosophical statement is ever possible. No theosophical teacher can legitimately make authoritative pronouncements. In the Theosophical Society opinion is therefore free, save perhaps, concerning the Brotherhood of Man which is regarded as a fact in Nature to be recognised rather than a dogma to be enforced or a condition to be established. With this exception, no theosophical utterance is binding upon another and no statement is made as representing final truth.

Despite this complete absence of dogmatism, which should be the hall-mark of all expositions of Theosophy, there does exist a general body of teaching, a synthesis of the common doctrines of world philosophies and religions, ancient and modern, which in practice is generally accepted *as long as it rings true*.

Failing the development and use as means of research of supersensual powers, this constitutes the test which each student should apply to all theosophical teachings – do they ring true? If an

affirmative answer is possible, they may be accepted as working hypotheses until fuller knowledge proves or disproves them. Should a statement not ring true, three courses are open to the student. They may reject, ignore or suspend judgement until by self-training they develop the capacity to discover the facts for themselves. The last of these is advised.

Thus the attitude of mind in which Theosophy should be studied is that of the scientist – the acceptance of a well-supported theory as a working hypothesis until it is proved, disproved or superseded.

The statements in these books are offered not as theosophical dogmas since none exist – but as the result of the author's own study and perception of Theosophy. He is, for example, a Christian. With thousands of others, he acknowledges a debt of gratitude to Theosophy which has deepened and intensified his comprehension of and his devotion to his own religion. Addressing himself chiefly to an English-speaking and therefore predominately Christian audience, he has partly expressed his Theosophy in terms of his understanding of Christianity. If he were exclusively addressing followers of other faiths, he would as far as his knowledge permitted, present Theosophy in terms of their religion. This is possible because Theosophy is in part a synthesis of the basic doctrines common to all faiths.

The primary source of theosophical information in modern literature consists of the writings of Madam H.P. Blavatsky. Though branded as a charlatan by those who have neither investigated her life nor understood her literary work, this great lady is revered by tens of thousands of students of Theosophy as a light-bringer to the modern world. They believe her to have been chosen for this mission by the Sages¹ Who have been both Guardians and Revealers of Theosophy to humanity throughout the ages.

These Sages, the Hierophants of the Mystery religions of past civilisations, used Madame Blavatsky as occult amanuensis and with her aid gave Theosophy to the world in our time. Two main methods were employed. One consisted of clairvoyance and mental telepathy in which, as a result of training under Them, she was highly skilled, and the other, of the occult precipitation of letters written by Them or by Their disciples at Their direction.

By the first, Madame Blavatsky produced her two great works: *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*, both practically inexhaustible mines of esoteric wisdom and knowledge.

By the second, Mr A.P. Sinnett, at the time editor of the Pioneer newspaper in India, obtained the material for the first modern presentation of Theosophy in terms of purely Western thought. His first books were: *The Occult World*, *The Growth of the Soul*, and *Esoteric Buddhism*.

These teachers were followed by A. Besant and C.W. Leadbeater who, in addition to the receipt of direct instruction from the Sages, were trained by Them in the development of occult powers and their use as a means of research. Their subsequent contribution to human knowledge is immense.

Dr G.S. Arundale, the present President of the Theosophical Society, and Mr C. Jinarajadasa, both greatly respected theosophical leaders, teachers and authors have also made their own valuable contributions. The latter has collected and published in two volumes many of the letters of the Sages to Mr Sinnett and others with the titles: *Letters of the Masters of the Wisdom*, Series I and II.

Many other authors have also contributed to theosophical literature.

To these various sources the interested reader is referred as basis for most of the statements made in this series of books.

Theosophy, however, is a great awakener and in the course of some twenty five years of study, the author in common with many other students has obtained a modicum of direct experience concerning theosophical teachings. On this he has also drawn in some small measure for these expositions. He is aware that, despite all his efforts, both his perception and his presentation of Theosophy are imperfect, incomplete. He knows that as yet he sees 'through a glass darkly' though inspired by the knowledge that one day he and all humankind will see 'face to face'.

Fortunately the province of the exponent of Theosophy is not to present final truth but to lead each student to the discovery of their own truth. May these books offered entirely in this spirit thus serve those who read them.

¹See *The Masters and the Path*, C.W. Leadbeater; *The Masters*, A. Besant; *Destiny: A Theosophical Testament*; *Theosophy, the Inner Government of the World and the Great Plan*.

The Eternal Within the Temporal

Religion may be said to consist of two parts – spiritual illumination and a spiritual mode of life. The source of spiritual illumination is the divine life shining in every human being. The spiritual life is one in which every thought, emotion, word and deed is irradiated by that life.

Church and Temple are but aids to the discovery of the inner light. Ceremonies elevate participants above the outer world in which divine light is veiled into the inner world in which it for ever shines undimmed. They also cause that light to shine forth into the darkness of the material worlds. Yet neither church nor ceremonial is essential to success in the quest of light. Humans are themselves a temple, their life a continuous ceremonial, part of the great ritual drama of Creation.

The divine light is one of the eternal realities, part of the very substance of which all beings and all worlds are made. Shining perpetually without and within all things and all worlds, it shines no more, no less, in church than elsewhere. It may be perceived as the beauty of nature, in the clear eyes of a child, in the lover's gaze, the mother's tenderness, in heroism, courage, compassion and genius – for what are these but the light of God shining in nature and in humans?

The religion of light is the heart of all world faiths, each a ray of the light of eternal truth.

Spiritual illumination is best gained in silence and retreat. The eyes must be closed, blind indeed to the light of this world, before the 'true light' may be perceived. The ears must be deaf to the sounds of this world, before the music of the divine Voice may be heard. Alone, in silent contemplation, one-pointed, without desire, beyond ambition and the slightest thought of self, the suppliant for the vision of the light divine seeks within himself the one 'true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world' (John 1:9). Thus should they pray, not asking gifts from God, but giving love and ardently aspiring to enter and become the glory of His Light.

The Christian Faith is a ray of the one white light of all truth. This ray is many-hued, for within it are mingled the rays of all other Faiths. Christianity is a synthesis of the religions of the world. It is truth portrayed less by the medium of thought and word than by a life lived perfectly. The accent in Christianity is upon daily, hourly, thought and word and deed. In Christianity the daily life is regarded as the greatest medium for the expression of truth.

Whilst Christianity is above all things a life to be lived, it is in no sense deficient as a revelation of divine wisdom. The Christian Scriptures contain all light, all truth. Though many have edited and interpreted them, though many have lived them in lives of purity and beauty, they still await their great intellectual interpreter. Though many have here and there discovered the vein, the gold within them has not yet been mined.

Teachers of ancient days deliberately concealed that vein of hidden wisdom for its safeguarding and revelation when the time should be ripe. The covering, the earth above, consists of history told in an unusual way. Themselves illumined, rich in gold, the ancient teachers saw eternal truths mirrored in events of time. For them every material happening was alight with spiritual significance. They knew the material world for what it is – the shadow of a great reality. Their records portrayed far more than history; they revealed reality. Sometimes the real was more visible to them than the shadow, whereupon history took second place. At other times physical events predominated.

This fact is the key to the mystical study of the Bible, to discovery of the inexhaustible treasures of wisdom and truth concealed within the casket of exoteric Scripture. How shall it be inserted in the lock and turned? By the use of the intuitive faculty alone, which means by meditation and by prayer. Each story must first be grasped mentally, then dwelt upon in concentrated thought seeking the reality behind the shadow, the eternal truth within the story in time. Aspiring ardently to discover truth itself, aflame with the will to know, the student by the light of the divine within them thus may disperse the mists of ill-recorded history and perceive the light beyond.

Certain age-old symbols serve as sign-posts on the way, each with its meanings constant throughout all time. The Hierophants of Egypt, Persia, Assyria and Greece, The Sages of the Eastern worlds, the inspired Authors of the Bible all made use of these symbols, perceiving them as living, time-free ideographs which humans of every age might use as common tongue. Nations, civilisations and religions rise and fall, appear and disappear, but these earthly symbols of Heavenly truths are ageless and unchanging. By their use an Egyptian Hierophant, a Jewish Prophet, an Essene monk, an Eastern Sage may speak direct from the remote past to the mind of modern human beings.

These symbols are as the many wards in the great key which unlocks the door to the treasures of wisdom preserved throughout the ages in scripture, mythology and folk-lore. They are all common objects of the material world, each with its cosmic, solar, planetary, racial and individual, psychological and physical significance. Since humanity, an epitome of the Cosmos, contains within themselves potentially sun, planets and every type of being and attainment, these symbols all refer to aspects of human nature, qualities of character, states of consciousness, divine powers innate in humans.

The list begins with solid substances and things, the earth and all that it contains. These generally refer to the physical body and to states of waking consciousness. Liquids, such as water, wine, oil, blood, saliva, and tears, refer to aspects of the human being's emotional nature and experience, as also in their higher aspects to the divine life and wisdom of which intuition, love, compassion and devotion are human manifestations. The denizens of water are of two kinds: those which symbolise the higher of these two, such as fishes, and those referring to the lower, such as monsters of the deep. Ships and boats are symbols of the body which is the vehicle that bears the Inner Self over the waters of life.

Fire is the symbol of the mind, fiery in its nature, the ever-changing form of flames typical of the restlessness of an uncontrolled mentality.

All winged things symbolise the divine Self of human beings. The head denotes intellect, the wings power and wisdom, body and tail individuality, egohood, intellect, directive capacity. All people in inspired allegory represent qualities of character of every individual, aspects of human nature, powers of body and of mind.

These are the wards of the keys which each student must for themselves insert in order to discover for themselves the wisdom concealed in allegory, myth and symbol.

On reading the first book of this series (*Destiny: A Theosophical Testament*), the Christian student of Theosophy will have realised that its basic teachings are to be found in various forms in the Christian Scriptures. This later publication consists of interpretations of Biblical incidents and teachings in the light of Theosophy.

As stated above, one method of teaching in ancient days was to construct and relate supposedly-historical stories which contained moral instruction for the many, and at the same time revealed to the more advanced truths of deeper significance. Anthropomorphic cosmogony and genesis, the ancient classical myths, Freemasonry and the more modern Grail legends are examples of this method, all of which, rightly interpreted, reveal various aspects of divine wisdom and truth. By this method of writing, an inspired author of any age overcomes the limitations of time, is able to reveal to readers of their own or later times the deeper truths of life and even thousands of years after their death to give to individuals in need the solution of their problems.

Our Lord Himself used this method, speaking to the people in parables, but more directly to His disciples, saying: 'Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables' (Mark 4:11).

A 'new' and fruitful method of studying the Bible is thus revealed; it consists of the use of certain keys to discover in an account of an event in time a truth which is eternal.

Thus the whole drama of the life of Christ and His disciples as recounted in the Gospels is enacted perpetually within every human being. As is propounded in 'Goliath, Sampson, John the Baptist', every individual experiences conversion or spiritual rebirth, reorientation, after which much that they prized in the past is then without value to them. All humans are baptised in the waters of sorrow. Emerging stronger spiritually, they are tempted in the wilderness of this world's materialism, fail at first, but ultimately conquer, are transfigured, betrayed, crucified by defamation, isolation and frustration, and finally ascend to the full manifestation of their divine powers.

Stilling the Tempest, Walking on the Water, The Woman Healed

The first story chosen to illustrate this thesis is that of the stilling of the tempest (Matt. 8:23–27). On a certain occasion the Lord and His disciples entered a ship, He sleeping whilst they navigated the vessel. All was well until a great storm arose, threatening their safety. In this emergency the disciples awoke the sleeping Christ, Who by His divine power bade the raging elements be still.

In this story certain well-known symbols are used, such as an Embodiment of divine power, human beings, a ship, water, and a storm. The Master represents the divine in humans, the ship the body within which it is incarnate, for the body is the vessel which bears the human being over the waters of life. Water is generally the symbol of emotion, and storms refer to the surgings of passion, the cravings and uprisings of desire which so often threaten the spiritual welfare of humans.

In symbology, the people in a story represent aspects of human nature, qualities of character of every human being, particularly of the student themselves to whom the message is being given. Thus, most people have in them the impulsiveness of Peter, the simplicity and straightforwardness of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, humble fishermen, the business man of St Matthew who sat at the receipt of custom, the capacity for love of St John, the only disciple who was present both in the Court Room and at the foot of the Cross. Also, symbolically, most people have in them the Judas that leads them to conduct that which is a betrayal of their divine nature. In addition, deep within every human being resides inherent divine powers, the Christ in them, asleep in the great majority until awakened by the storms of life.

All humans experience these awakening storms, and in this story we are advised of the one sure means by which temptation may be resisted, passionate cravings and desires be sublimated into spiritual powers and peace of heart and mind be regained.

This sure way is that followed by the disciples: to ignore rather than fight desire, to rise above it, approach and awaken the divine power, the sleeping Christ within. Thus exalted, conscious far more of their spiritual than of their material nature, the human being by virtue of the power within them is able to say to their storm-driven emotions: 'Peace be still', with assurance of complete obedience.

Thus interpreted, the story of an event of two thousand years ago, reveals a truth valid now as always and gives wise guidance in the solution of one of the most pressing of life's problems.

The story further tells the meaning and purpose – the value indeed – of the storms of life; for had it not been for the storm the Christ would have slept on.

In this story there is peace at the beginning and peace at the end. But the two states are different. In the first the divine principle is in the peace of sleep, and in the second the peace is the result of the command over tumultuous forces by the awakened divine principle: it is a positive peace. This portrays the Evolution of the divine Self of human beings which emerge 'in the beginning' (Gen. 1:1) in the sleep of unrealised and unselfconscious divinity, power and peace. Eventually, as a result of the experience of life, the human being attains self-consciously and perpetually abides in 'the peace of God which passeth all understanding' (Phil. 4:7), a peace which is a positive power.

The incident of Christ walking on the water (Matt. 14:25), and of St Peter's failure to do so, may be similarly interpreted. Christ, representing the perfect human, had completely mastered emotion, had

sublimated its forces until, no more a danger, they had become a means of attainment. Thus He was able symbolically to walk upon the water. St Peter on the other hand was far from having conquered emotion, as various incidents in his history reveal; he therefore began to sink until the Master, the divine within him, stretched out his hand, and brought him safely to the shore. By discovery of and reliance upon the divine within us our human weaknesses may be overcome.

The story of the woman healed (Mark 5:25–34), (Luke 8:43–48) offers a further example of a hidden meaning within a beautiful story. The woman had been sick of an incurable disease for twelve years. Hearing of the presence of a great Rabbi in her land, she became convinced that if she could but enter His presence and touch Him she would be whole. In spite of her weakness, inspired by a great faith – in modern terms, intuition – she sought and found Him. Even then she was unable at first to enter His presence because of the throng of people in the way. Supported by faith, she pressed through the throng, touched the hem of His garment and straightway was whole.

The woman represents all humanity, for all are sick, imperfect from the spiritual point of view. In this case, using the numerical symbol of thirty years, we are imperfect physically, emotionally, and mentally. The way of self-healing is clearly indicated. Inspired by a great faith, the quest for the divine within must be entered upon. With determination and strength such as hers, success is assured, despite the throng which at first bars the way for all. This symbolises those qualities of character and errors of conduct which express the human rather than the spiritual nature: selfishness, cruelty, impurity, envy, hatred, malice and greed, every un-Christlike thought, word and deed, these constitute the ‘throng’ between the outer human being and the Christ within. If, however, faith and aspiration be strong and steadfast, humans can press through, touch the ‘hem of His garment’ and be whole. The ‘hem of His garment’ is a beautiful symbol for the fringe of the consciousness either of the divine Self within the human being or of the Christ Who is the Saviour of humanity.

The reader will notice that in these three incidents the presence of the divine within every individual is stressed, as also the desirability, nay the necessity, of discovering and releasing its power. This would seem to be the central message of Christianity: that enshrined within every human being there is divine power, life and wisdom all sufficient for every need of life, material and spiritual.

The Fish

This is further brought out by the frequent use of the symbol of the fish. According to the teachings of astrology – an age-old science and key to knowledge only partially understood today – each of the zodiacal signs in the heavens is related to an aspect of human nature. The sign Pisces connotes the latent Christ Principle, the divine life, wisdom and compassion in the human being which, when active, bestows great powers and capacities including conscious use of the intuitive faculty and full realisation of the unity of life.

Part of the mission of the Christ – perfect expression of this spiritual aspect of human nature, and perfect example of its manifestation in life – Who came when the Sun was in the sign Pisces, would seem to have been to awaken this divine power in human beings, that they might learn to draw upon and live by it instead of depending upon external sources of supply.

The feeding of the five thousand (Matt. 15:32) with a few loaves and fishes may be thus interpreted. In this story the author deliberately makes an arresting statement, at the same time offering a clue, by saying that there was more food after than before. This refers to an especial quality of divine love and compassion, which is, that the more it is out-poured in ministration to the world the wider the channels in the individual for its further flow. With every act of service the servant of the world wins greater spiritual power and capacity with which to serve.

Even in the material needs of life we are instructed to place our trust continually in this hidden treasure within.

Our Lord needed tribute money. Poor Himself, He did not say ‘Let us labour in the fields in order to earn money’, but, symbolically, instructed the disciples to catch a fish and, when caught, to open it (Matt. 17:24). Within the body of the fish the necessary money was found. This surely indicates to us that within the divine Self, the ‘fish’ within each of us, is contained all that is necessary for the fulfilment of our lives, both spiritually and materially.

If, however, any one seeks the hidden powers for personal ends, attempts to exalt their own personality by the addition of selfishly guarded knowledge and power, they will inevitably fall. This is clearly brought out in the incident of the miraculous draught of fishes (Luke 5:4) which, when caught, broke the net – symbolical of the concrete and possessive mind – so that the fishes escaped. Significant statements in this story are that: ‘They toiled all night and caught nothing’ although the same work was done in the same place, the result was a miraculous draught.

Night symbolises the spiritual darkness of those whose whole purpose is that of personal and material gain. Fishing in the dark means work which is founded on purely selfish motives. Such people are indeed working all night, and even if materially rich are spiritually poor, that is ‘catching’ nothing of permanent value – a not inaccurate description of the condition of the world today. Western civilisation is in danger of withering away, like the barren fig tree, not because cursed by a higher power – the story is symbolical – but because of the law by which those who do not give to the world a measure of their lives, inevitably stagnate.

When spiritual motives rule, however, there is a phenomenal success even in the same work and in the same field, as is indicated by the miraculous draught of fishes.

Although ‘give to have’ is as yet a paradox too difficult of comprehension for the majority, it expresses, nevertheless, a profound truth. The things to which we cling we inevitably lose; those which we renounce as personal possessions are ours for ever-more. Usually when the renunciation is made it is not demanded of us, as is shown in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac (See ‘The Mount’ also (Gen. 22:1–12)) by his father ‘on the Mount’, and the gifts of the three kings (Matt. 2:11) to the Christ child born in poverty in the stable of an inn – symbol of renunciation (see ‘The Birth of the Christ Child’).

The Mount

The Mount is an oft-recurring Biblical symbol. Many of the great happenings in the Bible occurred 'on the Mount'. Elijah heard the still, small voice (I Kgs. 19:11), Abraham rose to his greatest heights of sacrifice (Gen. 22:1), Moses received the Commandments (Deut. 5:4) and Christ preached His greatest sermon (Matt. 5:1) and was transfigured (Matt. 17:1) 'on the Mount'. This is a symbol of the higher consciousness in human beings, those levels beyond the analytical mind, of the synthetic intellect, of intuition and spiritual vision. The process of self-exaltation on to the Mount and into communion with the God within is beautifully described in the story of Elijah. First came the command: 'Go forth and stand upon the Mount before the Lord'(I Kgs. 19:11). Elijah obeyed, and rising above the physical, the emotional and the mental aspects of his nature, entered the presence of God. First came the earthquake – symbol of the physical body – and the Lord was not in the earthquake: then the rushing wind – symbol of the emotions – and the Lord was not in the wind: then the fire – symbol of the mind – and the Lord was not in the fire. After the earthquake, the wind and the fire, silence, and in the silence the still, small voice of the Lord.

Goethe said: 'The best government is that which teaches us to govern ourselves'. Similarly, the best form of religion is that which leads us to the discovery of God. This Christianity does, and in this story of Elijah we are shown in detail the way to the mountain top and into the presence of the God within. It is trodden by raising the level of consciousness successively above the flesh, the feelings and the thoughts on to the Mount of the higher consciousness, there to hear the 'still, small voice'. To reverse the metaphor, we must descend into the innermost depths of our nature, the cave which Elijah entered, and in the silence which there reigns hear the voice of the silence, the voice of the God within.

Only in the mountain could Moses, symbol of every human being, particularly of the leaders of humanity, receive the commandments of the Lord – divine guidance for his people and his time. To those who refuse to ascend, deliberately remaining in the vale, divine inspiration is unobtainable. The hidden truth and wisdom is marred, distorted – symbolically the tablets are broken – before reaching the minds of those who remain in the vale. Here again we have an accurate picture of the condition of the world today.

Western humanity, encouraged one fears by many of its leaders, not only remains in the vale whence selfishness, cruelty, exploitation, oppression and sensuality rule, but also persists in the worship of the golden calf of purely temporal possessions and powers.

The Prodigal Son

In this chapter further interpretations are offered of stories from both the Old and the New Testaments, especially those which refer to the process of the descent and ascent of consciousness referred to in Christian Theology as the Fall and Redemption of human beings. Reference has been made in preceding books of this series to this dual process of the out-breathing and in-breathing of the divine breath, called in Theosophy involution and evolution, or the paths of forth-going and return.

This process resembles the swing of a mighty pendulum, ever moving back and forth between highest spirit and lowest matter, non-manifestation and manifestation, quiescence and activity. The student of Theosophy learns that both movements are equally necessary, that the path of forth-going which brings consciousness down from spiritual levels into the imprisonment of matter is an essential to the divine power as is the ascent or return which follows.

The parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32) describes allegorically the great involutory and evolutionary journey made by the Solar System as a whole, by humanity as a race, as also by the ego and personality of each individual.

The Solar System first emerges from an invisible, subjective condition and passes through nebular, fire and fire-mist states into solid physical manifestation. This period ended, life and consciousness are withdrawn, leaving behind planets in obscurity and sun as a dead star. This is the major cycle of forth-going and return completed by the whole Solar System. With all reverence, we may regard the Logos Himself as Prodigal Son, His physical manifestation as ‘the husks which the swine did eat’, entry on the pathway of return when spirit begins to gain ascendancy over matter as His utterance of the words, ‘I will arise’, and the process of obscurity and withdrawal as the return home.

The story of the descent is told in symbol and allegory in the Book of Genesis, whilst the gospels deal almost exclusively with the ascent or return. We are informed that ‘In the beginning’ ‘the earth was without form and void’ (Gen. 1:2) and ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’ (John 1:1). This refers to the period immediately before the path of forth-going is entered, and corresponds to the condition of being in the Father's home.

Then God spake saying: ‘Let there be light’. As a result of His utterance of the Word – symbol of form-producing, divine, creative energy – the various worlds (or, theosophically, the seven planes of Nature) began to appear.

This is the beginning of the journey. Eventually the physical world and all created things come into existence, representing for the Solar System the point of deepest descent, ‘the husks which the swine did eat’.

After a certain time a general refinement and spiritualisation both of substance and of beings occurs, marking the beginning of the evolutionary process, the stage at which the divine Prodigal Son says: ‘I will arise’. Ultimately the material Solar System disappears. The spiritual essence alone remains. The Prodigal Son has returned home, the divine plan has been fulfilled.

According to Theosophy, a period of relative quiescence follows. Yet the great pendulum swings on. Again the Word is spoken. The dual process is repeated on a higher cycle of the spiral pathway of the evolution of the Solar System, and all that it contains (cf. *Call to the Heights*).

A study of Theosophical ethnology shows that the humanity of a planet passes through these same phases of descent and ascent, involution and evolution. In number, the races of the globe are seven, each developing an aspect of consciousness, one of the seven bodies, one sense and specific qualities of character.

The first three races to inhabit this earth were on the involutory arc. The first used instinctively (not self-consciously) emotional and etheric bodies, the second denser etheric bodies. The third race reached the physical plane and inhabited physical bodies, or as in the story of Genesis, its members were clothed in 'coats of skin' (Gen. 3:21). This deepest point of descent constitutes for the race 'the husks which the swine did eat'.

The fourth race entered upon the evolutionary arc and was chiefly concerned with emotional development, which implies the organisation and self-conscious use of the emotional body. This marks the stage at which the racial Prodigal Son says, 'I will arise'. The fifth race, the Aryan (*Call to the Heights*) carries the process further, being concerned with the development of the mental body and the faculties of self-initiated thought, first concrete and analytical, and later abstract and synthesising. The sixth race, the progenitors of which are now being born from fifth race parents, will develop the faculties of intuition and the higher clairvoyance. It will attain to full realisation of the unity of all life. The seventh and last race will complete the evolutionary process as far as this earth is concerned. It will bring all these faculties to perfection and will add that of clairaudience.

Its special task will be the development of the spiritual will and attainment of full realisation of the identity of the part, with the whole, of human beings with God. With Christ its members will be able to say: 'I and My Father are one'. This, in the evolution of the race as Prodigal Son, corresponds to the return home.

Similarly, each individual ego is a prodigal son and completes the historic journey. The prenatal period is occupied by descent or forth-going, physical existence after birth constitutes 'the husks which the swine did eat' and death the beginning of the return journey, symbolically the utterance of the words, 'I will arise'.

The mode of life, and especially the motive behind conduct, also display the characteristics of descent and ascent. Primitive and partially-civilised human beings live to acquire, competition and conflict being the predominating characteristics of this period. Eventually a change occurs, contribution becomes more important than acquisition, co-operation than competition, service than selfishness. The human being, the prodigal son, says symbolically, 'I will arise'. Eventually the whole personality becomes spiritualised, the Way of Holiness is trodden to the goal of Adeptship (See *Destiny: A Theosophical Testament, The Yogic Ascent to Spiritual Heights*) which, both for ego and personality, represents 'home'.

The Garden of Eden

The stories of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2–3) and of the birth, life and death of Christ also refer symbolically to the process of human forth-going and return. The Garden of Eden is a state of consciousness rather than a place; it is an allegorical description of the state of pure innocence of early humans which is repeated in every child. Adam is a symbol of primeval man, especially of the third race which occupied a continent now sunk beneath the waters of the Pacific Ocean.

These humans were dual-sexed or androgynous, were self-reproductive, and consequently entirely innocent of passion. Mentally and spiritually they were unawakened, as symbolised by the sleep of Adam. In the slow process of evolution one or other of the sexes began to predominate, the gradual change culminating in the middle of the third race in a division of the sexes into male and female. Thus, allegorically, Eve was formed from the side of the sleeping Adam. In the child this corresponds to the attainment of puberty.

The apple represents the Life Principle in human beings, as emotion in the early stages and wisdom and intuition or Christ-consciousness in the later. In Eden, the apple represents the experience of passion associated with physical manifestation of the Life or reproductive Principle. In the Garden of the Hesperides, the apple, also associated with a serpent, is golden to symbolise the higher aspect of the same principle in Nature and in humans.

Temptation by the devil represents both the involutory pressure and the experience natural to the approach of adolescence. The tree of knowledge of good and evil represents all self-conscious experience. The act of eating the fruit is self-conscious participation in the experience of life, including that of personal affection and of sex, as a result of which the pure innocence – really ignorance – of childhood, or the Eden state, is lost.

Naming the animals refers to their attainment of self-conscious individuality, their change from instinct to self-directed thought.

The human being, it should be remembered, is a dual being, a spiritual essence within a material form.

In the human being, the highest of the animals, life and form, essence and manifestation, are linked by intellect. Intellect also is dual, part pertaining to the inner essence and part to the outer form.

In lower animals, the intellectual principle is yet dormant, this being the essential fact which differentiates them from humans. There is as yet, neither single spark of spiritual flame nor cell of divine body in any one of them. Both are present in every animal it is true, but being shared by many, are diffused.

Animals gradually attain to humanity's co-ordinated self-consciousness as the fire of mind, lighted in them by contact with human beings in whom it is awakened, thus fusing highest spirit with lowest matter.

In human beings this fire already burns, having been lighted by their evolutionary seniors, mighty Sons of Fire, in ages long past.

This function human beings must in their turn perform for their younger brethren, the animals. For this reason Nature draws the animals near to human beings, that through trust, through devotion and through growing comprehension they may receive from them an awakening of the fire of the mind.

Then the descending power of the One Will meets the ascending energy and life, to form with them units, threefold in their nature, which are the spiritual Selves or egos of human beings (See *A Study in Consciousness* by A. Besant). Thus humanity 'names', i.e. individualises, the animals.

Below the animal is the plant. Below that, mineral, the greatest depth to which the outflung energy of the One descends on the involutory arc, the densest form in which the divine Life and Consciousness are incarnate, 'the husks which the swine did eat'.

The human being, the adult, is both racially and individually self-expelled from the Garden of Eden – the pure innocence of an androgynous race and of the child. They then go forth to deeper and deeper experience of bodily life, symbolically partaking of 'the husks which the swine did eat'. In human life this is the stage of puberty.

The angel guarding the gate with the flaming sword symbolises the Will of God ever pressing forward to evolutionary progress.

Satan

Theologically, the process of descent into physical existence is referred to as the Fall of Man and is regarded as a great tragedy. Tempted by a personal external devil, Adam and Eve are supposed to have committed a great sin involving all humankind. The race could only be saved from the consequences of this Fall by divine intervention – the appearance, ministry and death upon the Cross of God's beloved Son.

If, however, the significance of the two processes of involution and evolution is grasped, it is at once seen that not only was the Fall not a mistake, but that on the contrary, it was the only means by which human destiny of full enfoldment of the Christ-principle within to the 'measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' (Eph. 4:13) could be fulfilled. Without a sacrifice of pure innocence there could be no attainment of knowledge, wisdom and self-mastery.

The idea of original sin, with all the sense of evil and of guilt associated with it, vanishes like a dark cloud in the light of Theosophy.

The universal Satan, primarily, symbolises the downward pressure or swing characteristic of the involutory period. The Tempter in the Garden of Eden refers also to the influence of the human mind with its powers of analysis, of memory and anticipation.

The whole purpose at this stage of racial evolution is to bring primitive 'group' consciousness into a state of clear-cut individuality through which on all planes of Nature growth-producing experience may be gained. As a result of this 'Fall', realisation of divinity and unity is *temporarily* lost and the pure innocence of the child state for the time being is laid aside.

The especial quality of the concrete mind is that of accentuating separateness and division and it is this characteristic which produces the desired experience of clear-cut individuality, whilst its faculties of memory and anticipation enhance the appeal of sensual enjoyment. These, on the downward arc, serve the useful purpose of inciting the pure, but undeveloped egos of the early races to enter into incarnation in the flesh. This is the Satanic function of the mind. On the path of forth-going it is beneficial and must evoke response; on the path of return it is adverse and must be resisted. Continued resistance develops will and upon will victory depends.

In order to comprehend the meaning and the place of Satan in the divine purpose, it must be remembered that the plan of the Logos for this Solar System is at least dual, the two parts being the production of perfect forms (to a certain pre-ordained standard) on the one hand, the 'perfect' unfoldment of consciousness on the other. These two are mutually interdependent, for form cannot develop unless consciousness is incarnate within; consciousness cannot unfold unless incarnate within a form.

In the fulfilment of this plan, the Logos is assisted by lofty Intelligences such as the Seven Mighty Spirits before the 'Throne' (Rev. 1:4), the 'just men made perfect' (Heb. 12:23), the Communion of Saints and the Angelic Hosts. One order of these Ministers of God assist in the production and development of form; another, known in Theosophy as the Pitris – a Sanskrit word meaning 'ancestors' – assist in inducting consciousness into the forms and in its subsequent unfoldment.

These officials have arisen from the human kingdom in pre-terrestrial ages, and are the fruitage of earlier Chains (see *The Pedigree of Man* by A. Besant). According to *The Secret Doctrine* (a monumental work on Occult Science, a revelation from advanced Intelligences, by H.P. Blavatsky) there are three hierarchies of Pitris. The *Asuras*, who were the humanity of the first Chain of our Earth Scheme, the *Agnishvattas*, humanity of the second Chain and the *Barhishads* of the third or Moon Chain.

In Asura evolution the intellect was accentuated, its members are, therefore, highly skilled in mental processes, experts in co-ordinating consciousness and form at the level of the concrete mind.

The mind is declared in occultism to be ‘the great slayer of the Real’ (see *The Voice of the Silence* translated by H.P. Blavatsky). The Real is the fact of unity. It is slain in any being who becomes ignorant, is robbed of unity, who falls under the delusion – the great heresy as it is called – of separateness. The essential quality of the concrete mind is analytical; it sees and accentuates differences; it compares, after dividing sharply, aspects of a single phenomenon. Only when the higher and abstract mind is developed does intellect become also synthetical and approach its ‘Perfection’.

In Their ministry, the *Asuras* are especially concerned with the attainment by beings younger than Themselves of mental ‘perfection’ according to the Plan. In the process, their charges – human egos newly-individualised from the animal kingdom– must be ‘tempted’ by the dual appeal of concreteness and of sex, to enter mental bodies and become subject to the conditions of the concrete mind and to enter physical bodies and experience physical life including sex. This seems that the Real is temporarily slain for them, for they lose their consciousness of unity, fall into the heresy of separateness with all the painful, but essentially educative, consequences.

Human beings today, being still under the delusion, even whilst realising its painful effects, regards the process of descent as evil and the *Asura* hierarchy as Satanic. The Fall of Man is regarded by Christian Theology as a great tragedy and Satan as the embodiment and chief cause of all evil.

There is some reason for this attitude if evolution up to the present alone is considered. Evolution is, however, a continuous process and, also with the help of the *Asuras*, human beings will eventually ‘slay the slayer’ (*The Voice of the Silence*, translated by H.P. Blavatsky) of the Real, master the concrete mind and then, aided by the redeeming or Christ Principle within and by Christ the Redeemer externally, will return self-consciously to that realisation of unity which originally was but instinctive and innate. This implies the awakening and active functioning of Christ Consciousness, symbolically the ‘birth of the Christ Child’, the true Redeemer and Saviour *within* human beings.

Thus the Fall is followed by the ascent, involution by evolution, separateness by unity, pain by bliss. The Fall was no tragedy; the *Asuras* are not enemies of human beings. On the contrary, the Fall was essential to the Ascent. The *Asuras*, that is Satan, are humanity's friends, their mental tutors, ministers of the Logos in the realm of mind. Satan is as valuable to human beings on the downward arc as is Christ on the pathway of return.

This fact is beautifully expressed by James Stephens in his poem 'The Fullness of Time'.

On a rusty iron throne
Past the furthest star of space
I saw Satan sit alone
Old and haggard was his face;
For his work was done, and he
Rested in eternity.

And to him from out the sun,
Came his father and his friend
Saying, now the work is done
Enmity is at an end;
And he guided Satan to
Paradises that he knew.

Gabriel without a frown,
Uriel without a spear,
Raphael came singing down,
Welcoming their ancient peer,
And they seated him beside
One who had been crucified.

Fire, Water, The Thief, Crucifixion

Fire with its destructive and its purificatory power is a much used symbol of the dual mind of human beings. Elijah, symbol of the developed human being (1 Kgs. 19:12), racial and individual, did not find God, i.e. realise and commune with his own divine nature, either in the earthquake – the physical body, in the wind – emotion, or in the fire – mind. Only as he rose above these was the ‘still, small voice’ perceptible. Eventually he mastered mind and used it as a means of ascent. Symbolically, he ascended into heaven in a chariot of fire, as all human beings will one day ascend.

All who thus ascend uplift those who are left behind, bestowing upon all a measure of the power to which they have attained. Symbolically, the mantle of Elijah, elder brother of the race, descends upon Elisha, younger humanity. The Redeemer voiced this truth in His words ‘I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me’ (John 12:32).

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Dan. 1:7) represent the three aspects of the Blessed Trinity, both Macrocosmically in the Logos and microcosmically in humans. Their ability to walk unharmed through the fire symbolises mental mastery, both by the major evolving Power, Life and Consciousness, and by that same triplicity as the Higher Self of human beings. The fourth individual walking in the fire may possibly refer to the human, mortal personality illumined by the Higher Self and in consequence sharing in Its powers. The real sacrificial fires are those in which the purificatory power of fire – the higher mind – is used to burn up the dross of the animal nature, as Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24), symbols of human grossness, were burned.

Similarly, – to digress for a moment – water is the symbol of emotion. When physical self-consciousness – the turning-point in the cycle of forth-going and return – had been attained, emotional development was undertaken. At a certain stage – the middle of the Atlantean period (*The Story of Atlantis*, Scott Elliott) – human beings fell into gross excesses, deep sensuality. Symbolically, in terms of consciousness they were flooded, drowned in water – emotion. The physical flood did occur at this period and this historical fact is used by the inspired Authors of the Old Testament to portray a stage in the evolution of man.

Noah (Gen. 7) represents the Creative Principle. This is personalised primarily as God the Father, the Divine Parent of all, and secondarily, as reflected in human beings as Noah. This principle in humans when rightly used, i.e. under divine direction – the Higher Self illuminating and controlling the lower – brings humans safely through the great evolutionary journey. In this case, the flood period and experience represents the early dangerous stages of emotional development both racially and individually. The Ark is the physical body, containing within itself potentially all powers and possibilities; it is an epitome of the whole man, a synthesis of all Nature. About this time in the human sensory evolution, physical powers were developed to the stage in which they became aware of colour; symbolically God ‘set His bow in the cloud’ (Gen. 9:13).

To return to the consideration of the mind. The thief is also a symbol of the mind and refers to its sceptical, analytical, separative, critical and possessive characteristics. As a result of the undue accentuation of these during early stages of mental development, such as the present, the mind temporarily ‘robs’ human beings of their great treasure which is their knowledge of their own divine nature and of their unity with God and all that lives. The present division of the European nations

into armed groups in mutual fear and distrust is typical, is indeed, the natural result of passage through this stage. The separative mind unduly accentuated today has robbed humanity of its sense of kinship, of realisation of the essential unity and solidarity of the human race.

Mercury, the God of Thieves, represents the higher intuitive intellect, the mastermind, and His Caduceus the released three-fold divine, creative energy in human beings. In procreation this power flows down the spinal cord into and through the creative organs. When at advanced stages of evolution, this force has been sublimated and desire transmuted into will, the direction of its flow is reversed. The three component streams flow upward from the sacral nerve centre, the central power ascending through an etheric canal in the middle of the spinal cord. The positive and negative complementary forces accompany it on either side, crossing each other at each of the force-centres of the body situated at the solar plexus, heart and throat. Thereafter the triple stream enters the head, the central current following the medulla and passing out through the third ventricle and the anterior fontanelle – etherically opened as a result. The complementary currents enter the pituitary and pineal glands, oppositely polarising them so that they interact across and through the main stream to form a cross of power within the head.

The effect of this is greatly to enhance the capacities of the brain and body and to release the consciousness from the limitations of the normal waking state into the freedom of the inner worlds and awareness as the Higher Self. Hence Mercury who represents this achievement is both the Messenger of the Gods and Master of Thieves – symbol of the spiritually-limiting characteristics of the concrete mind (see *The Science of Seership*).

When this Mercury-state is attained, the mind is consciously separated into higher or synthetic and lower or analytical. The thieves are crucified one on either hand. Thereupon the intuition, the divine wisdom or Christ Principle in human beings becomes manifest in the brain and functions in physical waking-consciousness by virtue of the cruciform flow of the sublimated creative power, the cross within the head. Thus, symbolically crucified, the Christ Principle in man shines forth physically on Golgotha, the place of the Skull (Matt. 27:33).

Such manifestation is a crucifixion in the sense that the free divine life and consciousness of the immortal Self of humans is limited by reason of its manifestation through a mortal body, however refined.

Of the two thieves, one on either side at the Crucifixion, one represents the critical, unintuitive mind of the mortal personality, which, failing to perceive the Christ Presence, jeers; whilst the other, the higher mind of the immortal Self, invokes the aid of the Christ. This latter cannot die and therefore will be ‘with me this day in Paradise’ – symbol of the state of illumination by the supermental principle of intuition.

Goliath, Sampson, John the Baptist

The opposition of the lower mind to the influence of the higher is also portrayed in the stories of David and Goliath (Sam. 17:4) and Samson and Delilah (Judg. 16:4).

David represents the Christ Child, reflection of the Second Aspect of the Logos, the intuitive faculty in man, which manifests as wisdom, spirituality, simplicity. The stone is the transmuted creative fire, which has been sublimated from its emotional expression – the stone has been taken out of the water. This transmuting creative force in the process of self-mastery must, even if by force, enter the head of the personal self. Goliath is the lower concrete mind with its characteristics of arrogance, pride, self-satisfaction (the armour), and rigid conformity to tradition.

David slings the stone which penetrates the head, killing Goliath, destroying the limitations of the concrete mind and liberating personal consciousness from the limitations of the non-intuitional, spiritually-unawakened evolutionary stage. The lower mind is then 'slain' and loses its power to blind or symbolically the head is cut off. This does not imply that the ratiocinating mind is discarded, but that it is mastered and used for the most part as a vehicle for intuition. In the beginning King Arthur grasps Excalibur with flashing blade and glittering, jewelled hilt, symbol of the brilliance of the mind. In the end he casts the sword away, though Sir Bedivere, less developed, has difficulty in doing so. On the one side of the sword in the oldest tongue was written 'Take me' and on the other in a tongue which all men may read 'Cast me away'.

Samson is the whole human being and the epic story of his life is an allegory of individual and racial evolution. The enticements of Delilah represent the lower qualities of the personal nature – concrete individuality, possession, passion, desire, deceit and disloyalty. The head is the concrete mind and the hair the higher intellect. As long as the two were conjoined Samson was safe. Intuition rendered him immune from self-deceit and imprisonment in the darkness of mere personal existence.

Then the hair was cut off – intuition and vision lost – the personality was powerless and sightless, becoming a blind slave of physical appetites.

Recovery is always possible, especially for one who had previously slain the lion – passion and desire – and discovered and extracted from it, honey – the pure spiritual food of wisdom. Eventually the opposing positive and negative bodily forces and the 'pairs of opposites', the two pillars of the temple, are mastered – broken – and the temple, the Self-limiting personality with all its worldly attributes, is destroyed, the Inner Self becoming free from the symbolically-deceased personality.

The same ideas are traceable in the story of John the Baptist (Mark 6:21) who individually represents the Ego of highly-developed human beings, racially spiritualised but not as yet perfected humanity. He is thus a forerunner of the perfect human being. Before they can attain to final liberation they must be free of desire and the limitations of the ego-accentuating concrete mind – his head must be cut off. Thus they achieve, after great austerities, the ascetic's mastery of the appetites.

Salome represents the personal self and her dance the play or dance of the mind upon the emotions producing personal arrogance, desire and spiritual blindness by which the higher qualities of womanhood, in this case that of compassion, were temporarily eclipsed. Doubtless her fury was that of the woman scorned, or symbolically the defeated lower self. Though she does not realise it, she is

his saviour, and brings about the desired result, again showing as in walking on the water that the dangerous enemy of desire when sublimated, becomes the very means of attainment.

Herod is the personality still slave to pleasure and passion and the prison is John's body from which by death he is freed. When desire is transmuted into will the consciousness is able to rise above bodily limitations.

The whole process of self-liberation, dramatic in the extreme, is in reality a great art, a veritable dance of ascending life. Deep within the inner consciousness, despite the pain and strain inseparable from the later stages of spiritual ascent, exists a divine and mounting ecstasy, as if the God within were singing perpetually a song of joy, chanting a paean of victory. This stage successfully entered, the Christ Principle becomes manifest in spiritually-illuminated human beings. In the Gospel story the Christ appears amongst humanity.

Thus the wonderful story of the pilgrimage of life is told in the Bible by means of history, allegory and symbol.

On the pathway of return or self-redemption the second great Figure, Christ, the Redeemer of humans, appears. Mystically, the Christ represents a divine Principle – the Second Aspect of the Blessed Trinity – within both the race and the individual. This is the inherent divine Wisdom and Love of which combined with the First and Third Aspects of Divine Will and Divine Intelligence, the Inner Self of human beings consists.

Both Tempter and Redeemer are within every human being, are part of the human constitution. Both, when awakened from their germinal state, perform important though apparently-opposed, functions. Satan, symbolising the mind, entices human consciousness towards the sensual and material. Christ – also the Golden Fleece and Golden Apple of pre-Christian allegory and the wine within the Holy Grail – symbolising spiritual vision and wisdom, inspire man to seek the supersensual and divine.

The Birth of the Christ Child

When once the door of the heart is opened, the Master enters in. Then is enacted by the individual the great drama of the Christ-life portrayed in the Gospel story. The neophyte is symbolically reborn as a little child, is baptised, tempted of the devil, transfigured; he experiences the dark night of the soul, is crucified, and finally ascends. Even before the Path is entered, these experiences come to prepare the soul for the greater experiences through which, when ready, his Master will lead him to his final enactment of the fivefold drama of the liberation of human beings. The sorrows, lowlinesses, frustrations, betrayals and crucifixions of life all have their spiritual significance. They are rehearsals, preparations from which strength and wisdom are drawn to face the great experiences of the Way of Holiness.

The Ancient Wisdom speaks of the five great stages of birth, baptism, transfiguration, crucifixion and ascension as 'Initiations'. This is a technical term which implies both an expansion of consciousness, an entry into deepening realisation of the unity of life, and a ceremonial acceptance *whilst still alive* into the Brotherhood of the Just Men made Perfect, the Company of Those Who have trodden the Path to its end.

Guided by the Teacher, strengthened and purified by self-discipline, living a life of service and following their light according to their strength, the neophyte is led through the portals of the First Great Initiation. Temporarily freed from the body and its limitations – the experience generally occurs whilst the body is asleep or entranced – the candidate enters for a time into conscious unity with all life. Oneness is no longer an intellectual conception; it is henceforth a living experience, a life known and lived.

The disciple is led by their Master into the presence of the august body of assembled Adepts, There they make their vows, there they kneel before the King Who is the Lord of all this World, to receive that true accolade of which all outer knighthoods are the shadow and the symbol. Touched by the thyrsus of the One Initiator, their whole being is illumined and inspired. They know themselves as one with the Eternal Flame of which they are a spark, and there is 'enkindled within him the fire of divine love and the flame of everlasting charity' (see *The Liturgy of the Liberal Catholic Church*, 230). They come forth from that great experience, utterly changed. Their old self is dead. They have been born anew. They are 'as a little child'.

Much of this is told in allegory and symbol in the Gospel story. The birth of the Christ child in feebleness and innocence symbolises the surrender of all earthly possessions and powers. For the Initiate surrenders all, lays aside all personal desires and ambitions, gives up for ever all pride of possession. By a strange paradox, in that state of feebleness and poverty, the Kings of the earth unite to lay their treasures at the Initiates feet, as did the Magi of old at the feet of the Christ child, – symbol of all Initiates in whom the great renunciation has occurred. The three Kings from the East, the Wise Men, have a deep spiritual significance. They represent three Officials in the Inner Government of the World, the Lords of divine Will, divine Wisdom and divine Intelligence, in Whose presence and by Whose concurrence in the assembled company of Adepts, the Initiation is conferred. The three gifts which They symbolically lay at the feet of the neophyte when the spiritual 'birth' occurs – gold, frankincense and myrrh – are those powers which They possess in fulness and which the Initiate will, in the highest degree, some day may develop from within themselves.

Complete development and control of the body, perfect purification of desire and full mastery of the mind – these are the powers of attainment awakened in the Initiate, symbolically the three gifts given to the Christ child.

This is the birth which St Paul longed to take place in the heart of his converts, the awakening of the divine Principle in every human being, the ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory’ (Col. 1:27). Indeed there are many phrases in his teachings which suggest that he was an Initiate. He says: ‘We speak wisdom among them that are perfect’ (Cor. 2:6), and adjures his disciple Timothy not to repeat those things which he had heard amongst the Elders (1 Tim. 6:20).

The true purpose of religion is to hasten this mystical birth of the Christ-Child in the human heart. It is an experience which completely revolutionises life, brings into the personal existence the power of divine and all-inclusive love, awakens the consciousness to realisation of the unity of all that lives, and brings about the great renunciation which culminates in the surrender of the personal self to the larger self of the Universe – the individual to God.

Then follow the many experiences attributed in the Gospels to the new-born Christ, each with its mystical meaning for every human being. The flight into Egypt – symbol of the place of light, externally the Temple of Initiation, interiorly the divine light within portrays the withdrawal of the personality from the outer, world to meditate upon inner truth, in order that the newly-acquired powers may be brought to full manifestation in waking-consciousness. This flight refers also to the flight of the Soul, the withdrawal of the consciousness from the body. For, as has been said, the ceremony of Initiation and the accompanying expansion of consciousness occur whilst the body is asleep or entranced. For it is the Inner Self of human beings, the Ego, which receives the spiritual accolade. Afterwards the triple powers of the God within – symbolically Father, Mother and Son – shine forth and conquer the fourfold lower nature, symbolised by the four-footed creature, the ass, which bears them to Egypt, the place of Light.

Thereafter the Initiate is free. No longer can any ties, bind them, either of family or of race. They become a wanderer over the face of the earth, a servant of all humanity. This truth Mary, Mother of Jesus, learnt when chiding Him for His long absence in the Temple. She received the reply which all Initiates must give to those who seek to bind them to the pact: ‘Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?’ (Luke 2:49). Often it is those who have hitherto been nearest to them, their family, who find their new life most difficult to understand. If they are wise, they will meet their opposition always with kindness and love, fulfilling all obligations dutifully, for such is the way of freedom. Having themselves achieved, both Christ and Buddha (see *The Light of Asia*, Sir Edwin Arnold) took their families with Them on the pathway to eternal peace.

Baptism, Transfiguration, Crucifixion, Ascension

Gradually, as the Initiate accustoms themselves to their new powers and learns to use them aright, the second portal opens before them. A new stage is entered upon, symbolised by the baptism in the waters of Jordan. The neophyte voluntarily goes down into the waters of this world's sorrows in order that they may aid those who are struggling therein. A second superphysical ceremony is enacted, at which a spiritual baptism occurs. Floods of divine power descend upon them, new potentialities awaken within them and their presence amongst humans assumes a deeper significance.

Before their ministry can reach its greatest height, the temptation in the wilderness must be met and overcome. They are tempted repeatedly to use their newly-found powers for personal gain. Pride constitutes the chief danger – the devil – who is no external being but dwells within each one of us, side by side with the indwelling God. The devil symbolically stands the neophyte upon the pinnacle of the Temple – exalted pride – shows him the cities of the World, symbolising worldly ambitions and their gratification, and says in effect: ‘By your newly-found powers you could conquer them, rule those dwelling therein and enter into a temporal dominion which would make you a lord of humankind’.

Grave danger threatens all who, falling under this temptation, use spiritual forces and occult knowledge for material gain, whether for themselves or others: for thus the devil within constantly tempts all who become possessed of superior knowledge and power.

These temptations overcome, there follows the ministry among humanity. The Initiate uses their powers solely for the benefit of others, awakens the spiritually dead, turns the water of emotion into the wine of wisdom, displays authority over the forces of Nature, heals the sick, feeds the hungry with the Bread of life and the ‘few fishes’, symbols of the unfolding Christ-power within. Of that life it is true, as it was of the fishes with which Christ fed the multitude, that as it is given so does it increase. As has been said, the symbol of the fish, so often used in the Gospels, refers to the Zodiacal sign Pisces, through which the sun was passing at the time of the coming of the Lord, reinforcing his power to awaken the Christ-Consciousness in human beings.

As the life of ministration is lived, the third portal – symbolised by the Transfiguration – opens before the neophyte.

On the Mount – in the higher consciousness – the Initiate is for a time transfigured. Side by side with the Masters of the Wisdom Who are guiding them, and with their brethren on the Path who recognise their unfolding divinity – they pass through the third of the five great Initiatory ceremonies.

Thereafter they look to that which lies ahead, see the darkness of Gethsemane and the tragedy of Golgotha, Yet in spite of their fore-knowledge, they go forth, their ‘face set steadfastly toward Jerusalem’, symbol of the outer world of humans. They know that their every forward step hastens the advance of the whole race. This is the knowledge which inspires and supports them throughout the trial which follows. In effect, every Initiate knows and says: ‘I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me’ (John. 12:32).

Then the Christ in the Gospel story experiences His dark night of the soul, – His Gethsemane, the quintessence of loneliness. Deserted by His friends, he endures ridicule, suspicion, defamation and betrayal. He sees His disciples sleeping around Him, no hand outstretched to help Him in his hour of need.

This ordeal is necessary, that He may cease to rely upon any external aid, may learn to rest upon the power of the God within. Rarely, it is said, does a soul pass this stage of utter loneliness without a cry of anguish: ‘Could ye not watch with me one hour? (Matt. 26:40). Yet, after the momentary shrinking of human nature, the cup is accepted, the individual will is surrendered to the divine will and His face is set ‘steadfastly towards Jerusalem’.

The Fourth Great Initiation through which the neophyte passes is symbolised by the Crucifixion; it marks the final death of the separated Self. Here they enter the deeper darkness of an hour in which a gulf seems to open between the Father and the Son – between Life Infinite and Life embodied. The Father, Who was yet realised in Gethsemane, is veiled in the passion of the Cross.

This is the bitterest of all ordeals. The hour of hoped-for triumph becomes one of deepest ignominy. They see their enemies exultant around them and drink the ‘bitter draught’ – symbol of the inner anguish of this stage – of defamation, isolation and betrayal, no contact with God or human being bridging the void in which hangs their helpless soul. Then from the heart which feels itself deserted, rings forth the cry: ‘My God, my God, Why hast Thou forsaken me? (Mark 15:34).

Why this last terrible ordeal? It is necessary, in order to reach the goal of full realisation of unity and identity with all that is. They must know not only God without, not only God within, but God their innermost Self: that they are the Eternal, the Eternal is themselves. Then they are beyond all possibility of separateness and know at last; ‘I and my Father are one’ (John 10:30). The final secret is won; then and not till then, may they say: ‘It is finished’ (John 19:30), and give up the ghost.

This experience of identity with God is the result of the awakening of and development of awareness in the highest principle of humans – that of Spiritual Will – the true ‘Father which is in Heaven’.

The highest purpose of incarnation in the flesh, of the battle between spirit and matter, self and vehicles, is to awaken and release this divine power. Just as Siegfried drew the sword from the tree of life and King Arthur drew Excalibur from the waters of emotional experience (transmuted desire into will) so every human being eventually discovers and learns to wield this power of the first aspect of the Blessed Trinity. This is the true Elixir of Life, the secret of eternal youth, of life everlasting. Unless both empowered and controlled by this inner Spiritual Will all experience in the lower worlds is ephemeral. Joy, friendship, love are transient, mortal.

The secret of the power of this inward will lies in its universality. Though it is the very substance of which the Self is made, it is nevertheless beyond the Self. It is the Fire of the One Self of the Universe.

Then awakened in human beings its subsequent individual manifestation always occurs in surrender to the Universal Will. All through whom this power is released say with the Christ, whether in illumination on the Mount or in darkness in Gethsemane ‘not my will but Thine be done’ (Luke 22:42).

In consequence of this surrender they are also able to say with Him in self-liberation: 'I and my Father are one' (John 10:30).

Earthly life is ended for them. They have endured all, conquered all and there follows naturally the Resurrection and the Ascension of the glorified and perfected Christ in human beings. The fifth portal is passed. Human life reaches its perfection, the 'measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' (Eph. 4:13). 'For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:' (Eph. 4:12). 'Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:' (Eph. 4:13).

Thus the Gospel story portrays the Way of Holiness.

Theosophy affirms that this Path is open to all, that final emancipation from the wheel of birth and death can be obtained by each and every human being if they will. The Master awaits the would-be disciple today as always, and, for the sake of a world in need, is ready to lead them through the Gateway to Eternal Life (Eph. 4:13).

The author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to Dr Annie Besant both for the interpretation of the five stages in the drama of the Christ-life, and in certain cases for the actual words taken from her various books and addresses.

L'Envoi

From the unreal lead me to the Real.
From darkness lead me to the Light.
From death lead me to Immortality.

There are at least two aspects of Theosophy, the abstract and the concrete. The abstract is eternal reality, the concrete is temporal expression through the human mind.

There is but one truth, one basic, everlasting verity. All separate truths, all philosophic systems are at best imperfect expressions of the one truth.

Just as to the white light all colour is false, so to the Real, all forms and facts are unreal, untrue.

In the realms of the Real, unity is the basic fact. All division is illusion.

Reality is timeless. Past, present, future, and the succession of events are illusions.

The reality consists of one fundamental synthetic principle, one evolutionless archetype.

This single synthetic principle is the Theosophy of the Ego or immortal Self of humans. Its discovery and realisation are interior experiences which can only be attained by each individual for and by themselves. Complete attainment liberates consciousness from all illusion.

Concrete Theosophy consists of a scientific explanation of the universe, of human beings and the relation between them. Study of it leads to an understanding of the meaning and the purpose of life, and to knowledge of universal law.

This is the Theosophy of the concrete-minded personality of human beings which, whilst recognising eternal truth as the ultimate goal, considers the study of facts and systems to be a valuable aid to attainment.