

RUDOLF STEINER 100.0377

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CHRISTIANITY
AS
MYSTICAL FACT
AND
THE MYSTERIES OF ANTIQUITY

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

CHRISTIANITY AS MYSTICAL FACT was the title given by the author to this work when, eight years ago, he gathered into it the substance of lectures delivered by him in 1902. This title is intended to indicate the special character of the book. The attempt has been made not merely to represent historically the mystical content of Christianity, but to describe the origin of Christianity from the mystical point of view. Underlying this intention was the thought that at the genesis of Christianity mystical facts were at work which can only be perceived from this viewpoint.

Only the book itself can make clear that by "mystical" its author does not imply a conception which relies more on vague feelings than on strictly scientific statements. It is true that mysticism is at present widely understood in the former sense, and hence it is declared by many to be a sphere of the human soul life with which true science can have nothing to do. In this book the word mysticism is used in the sense of the presentation of a spiritual fact which can only be recognized in its true nature by a cognition derived from the sources of spiritual life itself. If the kind of knowledge drawn from such sources is rejected, the

reader will find no point of contact with this book. Only one who concedes that the same lucidity may exist in mysticism as in a true representation of the facts of natural science will be ready to admit that the content of Christianity as mysticism may also be mystically described. For it is not only a question of the contents of the book, but first and foremost of the means of gaining knowledge through which the statements in it are made.

Many there are at the present day who have a violent dislike for such means, which are regarded as conflicting with the ways of true science. And this is the case not only with those unwilling to admit other interpretations of the world than their own, on the ground of genuine knowledge of natural science, but also with those who as believers wish to study the nature of Christianity.

The author of this book bases his standpoint on the belief that the achievements of natural science in our age must lead straight to true mysticism. In fact, this point of view shows that any other attitude toward knowledge actually contradicts everything presented by the achievements of natural science. The facts of natural science, indeed, cannot be comprehended by those means of gaining knowledge which so many people would like to employ to the exclusion of others, under the illusion that they stand on the firm ground

of natural science. Only he will not reject this book who is prepared to admit that a full appreciation of our present admirable knowledge of nature is compatible with genuine mysticism.

The author's intention is to show, by means of what is here called "mystical knowledge", how the source of Christianity prepared its own ground in the Mysteries of pre-Christian times. In this pre-Christian mysticism we find the soil in which Christianity throve as a germ of quite independent nature. This point of view makes it possible to understand Christianity in its own independent being, even though its evolution is traced from pre-Christian mysticism. If this point of view be overlooked, it is easy to misunderstand that independent character, and to think that Christianity was merely a further development of what already existed in pre-Christian mysticism. Many people of the present day have fallen into this error, comparing the content of Christianity with pre-Christian conceptions, and then thinking that Christian ideas were only a continuation of the former. The following pages are intended to show that Christianity presupposes the earlier mysticism, just as a seed must have its soil. It is intended to emphasize the peculiar character of the essence of Christianity through a knowledge of its evolution, not to extinguish it.

It is with deep satisfaction that the author is able to

mention that this account of the nature of Christianity has found acceptance with a writer who has enriched the culture of our time in the highest sense of the word by his important works on the spiritual life of humanity. Edouard Schuré, author of *Les Grands Initiés*,* is so far in accord with the attitude of this book that he undertook to translate it into French, under the title, *Les Mystères Antiques et les Mystères Chrétiennes*. It may be mentioned by the way, and as a symptom of the existence at the present time of a longing to understand the nature of Christianity as presented in this work, that the first edition has been translated into other European languages besides French.

The author has not found occasion to alter anything essential in the preparation of this second edition. On the other hand, what was written eight years ago has been enlarged, and the endeavor has been made to express many things more exactly and circumstantially than was then possible. Unfortunately the author was obliged, through stress of work, to let a long period elapse between the time when the first edition was exhausted and the appearance of the second.

RUDOLF STEINER.

May, 1910

*This book is to be had in an English translation, by F. Rothwell, under the title: *The Great Initiates, A Sketch of the Secret History of Religions*, by Edouard Schuré.

CHRISTIANITY AS MYSTICAL FACT

I POINTS OF VIEW

NATURAL SCIENCE has deeply influenced modern thought. It is becoming more and more impossible to speak of spiritual needs and the life of the soul without taking into consideration the achievements and methods of this science. It is true that many people still satisfy these needs without letting themselves be troubled by its influence. But those who feel the pulse beat of the age must take this influence into account. With increasing swiftness do ideas derived from natural science take possession of our brains, and, unwillingly though it may be, our hearts follow, often in dejection and dismay. It is not a question only of the number thus won over, but of the fact that there is a force within scientific thinking which convinces the attentive observer that it contains something which no modern philosophy can encounter without receiving significant impressions from it. Many of the outgrowths of this thinking compel a justifiable rejection. But such rejection is not sufficient in an age in which very many

resort to this way of thinking, and are attracted to it as if by magic. The case is in no way altered because some people see that true science, by its own initiative, passed long ago beyond the shallow doctrines of force and matter taught by materialists. It would clearly be better to listen to those who boldly declare that the ideas of natural science will form the basis of a new religion. Even if these conceptions appear shallow and superficial to one who knows the deeper spiritual needs of humanity, he must nevertheless take note of them, for it is to them that attention is now turned; and there is reason to think they will claim more and more notice in the near future.

Another class of people have also to be taken into account: those whose hearts have lagged behind their heads. With their reason they cannot but accept the conceptions of natural science. The burden of proof weighs heavily upon them. But those conceptions cannot satisfy the religious needs of their souls; the perspective offered is too dreary. Is the human soul to rise on the wings of enthusiasm to the heights of beauty, truth, and goodness, only to be swept away in the end like a bubble blown by the material brain? This is a feeling that oppresses many minds like a nightmare. But scientific concepts oppress them also because they obtrude with the mighty force of authority. As long as they can, these people ignore the

discord in their souls. Indeed, they console themselves by saying that full clarity in these matters is denied the human soul. They think in accordance with natural science in as far as the experience of their senses and the logic of their intellect demand it, but they keep to their acquired religious sentiments and prefer to remain in darkness as to these matters—a darkness that clouds their understanding. They have not the courage to battle through to clear vision.

There can be no doubt whatever that the way of thinking derived from natural science is the greatest force in modern intellectual life, and it must not be heedlessly passed up by anyone concerned with the spiritual interests of humanity. But it is none the less true that the way in which it sets about satisfying spiritual needs is superficial and shallow. If this were the right way, the outlook would indeed be dreary. Would it not be depressing to be obliged to agree with those who say: "*Thought is a form of force. We walk by means of the same force by which we think. Man is an organism which transforms various forms of force into thought-force, an organism the activity of which we maintain by what we call 'food', and through which we produce what we call 'thought'. What a marvellous chemical process it is that was able to transform a certain quantity of food into the divine tragedy of 'Hamlet'!*" This is quoted from a pamphlet by Robert G.

Ingersoll, bearing the title, *Moderne Götterdämmerung*.^{*} It matters little if such thoughts find but scanty acceptance in the outside world. The point is that innumerable people find themselves compelled by the system of natural science to take an attitude toward world processes in conformity with the above, even when they think they are not doing so.**

It would certainly be a dreary outlook if natural science itself compelled us to accept the creed proclaimed by many of its modern prophets. Most dreary of all for any one who has gained from the content of natural science the conviction that in its own sphere its mode of thought holds good and its methods are unassailable. For he is driven to concede that, however much people may dispute about individual questions, though volume after volume may be written and thousands of data accumulated about the struggle for existence*** and its insignificance, about the omnipotence or powerlessness of natural selection, natural science itself is moving in a direction which, within certain limits, must find acceptance in an ever-increasing degree.

But are the demands made by natural science really such as those described by some of its representatives?

^{*}*Modern Twilight of the Gods.*

^{**}Cf. Notes.

^{***}Cf. Notes.

That they are not is proved by the method employed by these representatives themselves. The method they use in their own sphere is not that which is so often described and claimed for other spheres of thought. Would Darwin and Ernst Haeckel ever have made their great discoveries about the evolution of life if, instead of observing life and the structure of living beings, they had shut themselves up in a laboratory and there made chemical experiments with tissue cut out of an organism? Would Lyell have been able to describe the development of the crust of the earth if, instead of examining strata and their contents, he had analysed the chemical qualities of innumerable rocks? Let us really follow in the footsteps of these researchers who tower like giants in the domain of modern science! We shall then apply to the higher regions of spiritual life the methods they used in the study of nature. We shall then not believe we have understood the nature of the "divine" tragedy of *Hamlet* by saying that a wonderful chemical process transformed a certain quantity of food into that tragedy. We shall believe it as little as a researcher of nature could seriously believe that he has understood the mission of heat in the evolution of the earth when he has studied the action of heat on sulphur in a retort. He does not attempt to understand the construction of the human brain by examining the effect of lye on a fragment of it, but rather by

inquiring how the brain has, in the course of evolution, been developed out of the organs of lower organisms.

It is therefore quite true that anyone who is investigating the nature of spirit can do nothing better than learn from natural science. He need only proceed as science does, but he must not allow himself to be misled by what individual representatives of natural science would dictate to him. He must make research in the spiritual as they do in the physical domain, but he need not adopt the opinions they entertain about the spiritual world, beclouded as they are by their exclusive contemplation of physical phenomena.

We shall only be acting in the spirit of natural science if we study the spiritual development of man as impartially as the naturalist observes the sense world. True, we shall then be led, in the domain of spiritual life, into a kind of contemplation which differs from that of the naturalist as geology differs from pure physics and biology from chemistry. We shall be led up to higher methods which cannot, it is true, be those of natural science, but are quite conformable with the spirit of it. In this way many a lopsided tenet in the domain of natural science can be seen from another angle and be modified or corrected; and this is not sinning against natural science but merely carrying it forward. Such methods alone are able to bring us to the core of spiritual developments, such

as that of Christianity, or other religious conceptions. Anyone applying these methods may arouse the opposition of many who believe they are thinking scientifically, but, for all that, he will know himself to be in full accord with a genuinely scientific method of thought.

A researcher of this kind must also go beyond a merely historical examination of the documents relating to spiritual life. This is necessary just on account of the attitude he has acquired from his study of the processes of nature. When a chemical law is explained, it is of small use to describe the retorts, dishes, and forceps which have led to the discovery of the law. And it is just as useless, when explaining the origin of Christianity, to ascertain the historical sources drawn upon by the Evangelist St. Luke, or those from which the hidden revelation of St. John is compiled.* History can in this case be only the outer court to research proper. It is not by tracing the historical origin of documents that we shall discover anything about the dominant ideas in the writings of Moses or in the traditions of the Greek initiates. These documents are only the outer expression for the ideas. Nor does the naturalist who is investigating the nature of man trouble about the origin of the

*Cf. Notes.

word "man", or the way in which it has developed in a language. He keeps to the subject, not to the word in which it finds expression. And in studying spiritual life we must likewise abide by the spirit and not by outer documents.

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THE MYSTERIES AND MYSTERY WISDOM

A KIND of mysterious veil hangs over the manner in which spiritual needs were satisfied during the older civilizations by those who sought a deeper religious life and fuller knowledge than the popular religions offered. If we inquire how these needs were satisfied, we find ourselves led into the dim twilight of the Mysteries, and the individual seeking them disappears for a time from our view. We see that the popular religions cannot give him what his heart desires. He acknowledges the existence of the gods, but knows that the ordinary ideas about them do not solve the great problems of existence. He seeks a wisdom that is jealously guarded by a community of priest-sages. His aspiring soul seeks a refuge in this community. If he is found by the sages to be sufficiently prepared, he is led up by them, step by step, to higher knowledge in a way that is hidden from the eyes of the profane. What then happens to him is concealed from

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the uninitiated. He seems for a time to be entirely remote from earthly life and to be transported into a hidden world.

When he reappears in the light of day, a different, quite transformed person is before us. We see a man who cannot find words sublime enough to express the momentous experience through which he has passed. Not merely metaphorically, but in a most real sense does he seem to have gone through the gate of death and to have awakened to a new and higher life. He is, moreover, quite certain that no one who has not had a similar experience can understand his words.

This was what happened to those who were initiated into the Mysteries, into that secret wisdom withheld from the people, and which threw light on the greatest problems. This secret religion of the elect existed side by side with the popular religion. Its origin vanishes, as far as history is concerned, into the obscurity in which the origin of peoples is lost. We find this secret religion everywhere among the ancients as far as we know anything concerning them; and we hear their sages speak of the Mysteries with the greatest reverence. What was it that was concealed in them? And what did they unveil to the initiate?

The enigma becomes still more puzzling when we learn that the ancients looked upon the Mysteries as something dangerous. The way to the secrets of ex-

istence led through a world of terrors, and woe to him who tried to gain them unworthily. There was no greater crime than the betrayal of secrets to the uninitiated. The traitor was punished with death and the confiscation of his property. We know that the poet Æschylus was accused of having reproduced on the stage something from the Mysteries. He was only able to escape death by fleeing to the altar of Dionysos and by legally proving that he had never been initiated.

What the ancients say about these secrets is significant, but at the same time ambiguous. The initiate is convinced that it would be a sin to tell what he knows, and also that it would be sinful for the uninitiated to hear it. Plutarch speaks of the terror of those about to be initiated, and compares their state of mind to preparation for death. A special mode of life had to precede initiation, tending to give the spirit the mastery over sensuality. Fasting, solitude, mortifications and certain exercises for the soul were the means employed. The things to which man clings in ordinary life were to lose all their value for him. The whole trend of his life of sensation and feeling was to be changed.

There can be no doubt as to the purpose of such exercises and tests. The wisdom which was to be offered to the candidate for initiation could only produce the right effect upon his soul if he had previously purified the life of his lower sensations. He was intro-

duced to the life of the spirit. He was to behold a higher world, but he could not enter into relations with that world without previous exercises and trials. These relations were the crucial point.

In order to judge these matters aright it is necessary to gain experience of the intimate facts concerning the life of cognition. We must feel that there are two widely divergent attitudes towards that which the highest knowledge gives. In the first instance, the world surrounding us is the real one. We feel, hear, and see what goes on in it, and because we thus perceive things with our senses, we call them real. And we reflect about events in order to get an insight into their connections. On the other hand, what wells up in our soul is at first not real to us in the same sense. It is *merely* thoughts and ideas. At the most we see in them only images of sense-reality. They themselves have no reality, for we cannot touch, see, or hear them.

There is another relation to the world. A person who clings to the kind of reality described above will hardly understand it, but it comes to certain people at a certain moment in their lives. Their whole relation to the world is completely reversed. They then call the images that well up in the spiritual life of their souls truly real, and they assign only a lower kind of reality to what the senses hear, touch, and see. They know that they cannot prove what they say, that they can

only relate their new experiences, and that when relating them to others they are in the position of a man who can see and who imparts his visual impressions to one born blind. They venture to impart their inner experiences, trusting that there are others round them whose spiritual eyes, to be sure, are still closed, but whose intelligent comprehension may be aroused through the force of what they hear. For they have faith in humanity and want to give it spiritual sight. They can only lay before it the fruits their spirit has gathered. Whether another sees them depends on his receptivity to what the spiritual eye sees.*

There is something in man which at first prevents him from seeing with the eyes of the spirit. It is not primarily within his horizon. He is what his senses make him, and his intellect is only the interpreter and judge of them. The senses would ill fulfil their mission if they did not insist upon the truth and infallibility of their evidence. An eye must, from its own point of view, uphold the absolute reality of its perceptions. The eye is right as far as it goes, and is not deprived of its due by the eye of the spirit. The latter only allows us to see the things of sense in a higher light. Nothing seen by the eye of sense is denied, but a new brightness, hitherto unseen, radiates from what

*Cf. Notes.

is seen. And then we know that what we first saw was only a lower reality. We see that still, but it is immersed in something higher, which is spirit. It is now a question of whether we sense and feel what we see. The person who lives only in the sensations and feelings of the senses will look upon impressions of higher things as a *Fata Morgana*, or mere play of fancy. His feelings are focussed only on the things of sense. He grasps emptiness when he tries to lay hold of spirit forms. They elude him when he gropes for them. In short, they are thoughts only. He thinks them but does not live in them. They are images, less real to him than fleeting dreams. They rise up like bubbles while he faces his own reality; they disappear before the massive, solidly built reality of which his senses tell him.

~~It is otherwise with one who has altered his perceptions and feelings with regard to reality. For him that reality has lost its absolute stability and value. His senses and feelings need not become dulled, but they begin to doubt their unconditional authority. They leave room for something else. The world of the spirit begins to animate the space left.~~

At this point a possibility comes in which may prove terrible. A man may lose his sensations and feelings of outer reality without finding a new reality opening up before him. He then feels himself as if suspended in the void. He feels bereft of all life. The old values are

gone and no new ones have arisen in their place. The world and man no longer exist for him. Now, this is by no means a mere possibility. It happens at one time or another to everyone who seeks higher knowledge. He comes to a point at which the spirit represents all life to him as death. He is then no longer in the world, but under it, in the nether world. He is passing through Hades. Well for him if he sink not! Happy, if a new world open up before him! Either he dies away or he appears to himself transformed. In the latter case he beholds a new sun and a new earth. Out of the fire of the spirit the whole world has been reborn for him.

It is thus that the initiates describe the effect of the Mysteries upon them. Menippus relates that he journeyed to Babylon in order to be taken to Hades and brought back again by the successors of Zarathustra. He says that he swam across the great water on his wanderings, and that he passed through fire and ice. We hear that the mystics were terrified by a flashing sword, and that blood flowed. We understand this when we know from experience the point of transition from lower to higher knowledge. We ourselves had felt as if all solid matter and things of sense had dissolved into water, and as if the ground were cut away from under our feet. Everything which we had previously felt to be alive had been killed. The spirit had passed through the life of the senses like a sword pierc-

ing a warm body; we had seen the blood of sensuality flow.

But a new life had appeared. We had risen from the nether-world. The orator Aristides relates this: "I thought I touched the god and felt him draw near, and I was then between waking and sleeping. My spirit was so light that no one who is not initiated can describe or understand it." This new existence is not subject to the laws of lower life. Growth and decay no longer affect it. One may say much about the Eternal, but words of one who has not been through Hades are "mere sound and smoke." The initiates have a new conception of life and death. Now for the first time do they feel they have the right to speak about immortality. They know that one who speaks of it without having been initiated talks of something which he does not understand. The uninitiated attribute immortality only to something which is subject to the laws of growth and decay. The mystics, however, did not desire merely to gain the conviction that the kernel of life is eternal. According to the view of the Mysteries, such a conviction would be quite valueless, for this view holds that the Eternal as a living reality is not even present in the uninitiated. If such a person spoke of the Eternal, he would be speaking of something non-existent. It is rather this Eternal itself that the mystics seek. They have first to awaken the Eternal within them, then

they can speak of it. Hence the hard saying of Plato is quite real to them, that the uninitiated sinks into the mire,* and that only one who has passed through the mystical life enters eternity. And it is only in this sense that the words in Sophocles' *Fragment* can be understood: "*Thrice-blessed are the initiated who come to the realm of the shades. They alone have life there. For others there is only misery and hardship.*"

Is one, therefore, not describing dangers when speaking of the Mysteries? Is it not robbing a man of happiness and of a most precious part of his life to lead him to the portals of the nether-world? Terrible is the responsibility incurred by such an act. And yet ought that responsibility to be evaded? These were the questions which the initiate had to put to himself. He was of the opinion that his knowledge bore the same relation to the soul of the people as light does to darkness. But innocent happiness dwells in that darkness, and the mystics were of the opinion that that happiness should not be sacrilegiously interfered with. For what would have happened in the first place if the mystic had betrayed his secret? He would have uttered words and only words. The sensations and feelings which would have evoked the spirit from the words would have been absent. To accomplish what

*Cf. Notes.

was lacking, preparation, exercises, trials, and a complete change in the life of sense would be necessary. Without this the hearer would have been hurled into emptiness and nothingness. He would have been deprived of what constituted his happiness without receiving anything in exchange. One may also say that nothing could have been taken away from him, for mere words would have changed nothing in his life of feeling. He would only have been able to feel and experience reality through his senses. Nothing but a life-destroying premonition would have been given him. This could only have been construed as a crime.*

The foregoing does not altogether apply to the attainment of spiritual knowledge in our time. Today spiritual knowledge can be conceptually understood, because in more recent times man has acquired a conceptual capacity that formerly was lacking. Nowadays some people can have cognition of the spiritual world through their own experience, and others can understand such experiences conceptually.

The wisdom of the Mysteries resembles a hothouse plant that must be cultivated and fostered in seclusion. Anyone bringing it into the atmosphere of everyday ideas brings it into air in which it cannot thrive. It

*Cf. Notes.

withers away to nothing before the caustic verdict of modern science and logic. Let us, therefore, divest ourselves for a time of the education we gained through the microscope and telescope and the habit of thought derived from natural science, and let us cleanse our clumsy hands which have been too much occupied with dissecting and experimenting, in order that we may enter the pure temple of the Mysteries. For this a truly unprejudiced attitude is necessary.

The important point for the mystic is at first the soul mood in which he approaches that which he feels as the highest, as the answers to the riddles of existence. Just in our day, when only gross physical science is recognized as containing truth, it is difficult to believe that in the highest things we depend upon the keynote of the soul. It is true that knowledge thereby becomes an intimate personal concern. But this is what it really is to the mystic. Tell some one the solution of the riddle of the universe! Give it to him ready-made! The mystic will find it to be nothing but empty sound, if the personality does not meet the solution half-way in the right manner. The solution in itself is nothing; it vanishes if the necessary feeling is not kindled at its contact. A divinity may approach you: it is either everything or nothing. Nothing, if you meet it in the frame of mind with which you confront everyday matters; everything, if you are prepared and at-

tuned to the meeting. What the divinity is in itself is a matter that does not affect you; the important point for you is whether it leaves you as it found you or makes a different man of you. But this depends entirely on yourself. You must have been prepared by a special education, by a development of the inmost forces of your personality for the work of kindling and releasing what a divinity is able to kindle and release in you. Everything depends upon the way in which you receive what is offered you.

Plutarch has told us about this education, and of the greeting which the mystic offers the divinity approaching him: "*For the god, as it were, greets each one who approaches him with the words, 'Know thyself!' which is surely no worse than the ordinary greeting, 'Welcome!' Then we answer the divinity in the words, 'Thou art!' and thus we affirm that the true, primordial, and only adequate greeting for him is to declare that he is. In that existence we really have no part here, for every mortal being, during its existence between birth and death, merely manifests an appearance, a feeble and uncertain image of itself. If we try to grasp it with our understanding, it is like water which, when tightly compressed, runs over merely through the pressure, spoiling what it touches. For the understanding, pursuing a too definite conception of each being that is subject to chance and change, loses*

its way, now in the origin of the being, now in its destruction, and is unable to apprehend anything lasting or really existing. For, as Heraclitus says, we cannot swim twice in the same wave, neither can we lay hold of a mortal being twice in the same state, for, through the violence and rapidity of movement, it is destroyed and recomposed; it comes into being and again decays; it comes and goes. Therefore, that which is becoming can never attain real existence, because growth neither ceases nor pauses. Change begins in the germ, and forms an embryo; then there appears a child, then a youth; a man, and an old man; the first beginnings and successive ages are continually annulled by the ensuing ones. Hence it is ridiculous to fear the one death, when we have already died in so many ways, and are still dying. For, as Heraclitus says, not only is the death of fire the birth of air, and the death of air the birth of water, but the change may be still more plainly seen in man. The strong man dies when he becomes old, the youth when he becomes a man, the boy on becoming a youth, and the child on becoming a boy. What existed yesterday dies today, what is here today will die tomorrow. Nothing endures or is a unity, but we become many things, whilst matter plays around one image, one common form. For if we were always the same, how could we take pleasure in things which formerly did not please us, how could we love and hate, admire

and blame opposite things, how could we speak differently and give ourselves up to different passions, unless we were endowed with a different shape, form, and different senses? For no one can very well enter a different state without change, and one who is changed is no longer the same; but if he is not the same, he no longer exists and is changed from what he was, becoming someone else. Sense perception only led us astray, because we do not know real being, and mistook for it that which is only an appearance."*

Plutarch repeatedly described himself as an initiate. What he portrays here is a condition of the life of the mystic. The human being achieves a degree of wisdom by means of which his spirit sees through the illusory character of sense life. What the senses regard as being, or reality, is plunged into the stream of becoming; and man is in this respect subject to the same conditions as all else in the world: Before the eyes of his spirit he himself dissolves; his entity is broken up into parts, into fleeting phenomena. Birth and death lose their distinctive meaning and become moments of appearing and disappearing, like any other happenings in the world. The highest cannot be found in the connection between development and decay. It can only be sought

*Plutarch's Moral Works, *On the Inscription EJ at Delphi*, pp. 17-18.

in what is really abiding, in what looks back to the past and forward to the future.

To find that which looks backward and forward means a higher stage of cognition. This is the spirit, which is manifesting in and through the physical. It has nothing to do with physical becoming. It does not come into being and again decay as do sense-phenomena. One who lives entirely in the world of sense carries the spirit latent within him. One who has pierced through the illusion of the world of sense has the spirit within him as a manifest reality. The man who attains to this insight has developed a new principle within himself. Something has happened within him similar to what occurs in a plant when it adds a colored blossom to its green leaves. True, the forces causing the flower to grow were already latent in the plant before the blossom appeared, but they only became a reality when this took place. In the same way, divine, spiritual forces are latent in the man who lives merely in his senses, but they only become a manifest reality in the initiate. In this consists the transformation that takes place in the mystic. By his development he has added a new element to the world as it had been. The world of sense made him a sense man, and then left him to himself. Nature had thus fulfilled her mission. What she is able to do with the forces operative in man is exhausted; not so the forces themselves.

They lie as though spellbound in the merely natural man and await their release. They cannot release themselves. They vanish into nothingness unless man seizes upon them and develops them, unless he calls into actual being what is latent within him.

Nature evolves from the most imperfect to the perfect. She leads beings, through a long series of stages, from inanimate matter through all living forms up to physical man. Man looks around and finds himself a changeable being with physical reality; but he also senses within himself the forces from which this physical reality arose. These forces are not the changeable, for they have given birth to the factor of change. They are within man as a sign that there is more life within him than he can physically perceive. What can grow out of them is not yet there. Man feels something flash up within him which created everything, including himself; and he feels that it is this which will inspire him to higher creative activity. This something is within him; it existed before his manifestation in the flesh, and will exist afterwards. By means of it he *became*, but he may lay hold of it and take part in its creative activity.

Such are the feelings that animated the ancient mystic after initiation. He feels the Eternal and the Divine. His activity is to become a part of that divine creative activity. He may say to himself: "*I have dis-*

covered a higher ego within me, but that ego extends beyond the bounds of my sense existence. It existed before my birth and will exist after my death. This ego has created from all eternity, it will go on creating in all eternity. My physical personality is a creation of this ego. But it has incorporated me within it, it works within me, I am a part of it. What I henceforth create will be higher than the physical. My personality is only a means for this creative power, for this divine that exists within me." Thus did the mystic experience his birth into the divine.

The mystic called the power that thus flashed up within him his true spirit, his *daimon*. He was himself the product of this spirit. It seemed to him as though a new being had entered him and taken possession of his organs, a being standing between his sense personality and the all-ruling cosmic power, the divinity.

The mystic sought this true spirit. He said to himself: "*I have become a human being in mighty nature. But nature did not complete her task: this completion I must take in hand myself. Yet I cannot accomplish it in the crude kingdom of nature to which my physical personality belongs. What it is possible to develop in that realm has already been developed. Therefore I must leave this kingdom and take up the building in the realm of the spirit at the point where nature left off. I must create an atmosphere of life not to be found in outer nature."*

This atmosphere of life was prepared for the mystic in the Mystery temples. There the forces slumbering within him were awakened, there he was changed into a higher creative spirit-nature. This transformation was a delicate process. It could not bear the untempered atmosphere of everyday life. But once completed, its result was that the human being stood as a rock, founded on the Eternal and able to defy all storms. But it was impossible for him to reveal his experiences to any one unprepared to receive them.

Plutarch says that the Mysteries provided "*the deepest information and interpretation of the true nature of the daimons.*" And Cicero tells us that from the Mysteries, "*when they are explained and traced back to their meaning, we learn the nature of things rather than that of the gods.*"* From such statements we see clearly that for the mystics there were higher revelations about the nature of things than what popular religion was able to impart. Indeed, we see that the *daimons*, that is, the spiritual beings, and the gods themselves needed explaining. Therefore initiates went back to beings of a higher nature than *daimons* and gods, and this was characteristic of the essence of the wisdom of the Mysteries.

*Plutarch: *On the Decline of the Oracles*; Cicero: *On the Nature of the Gods*.

The people represented the gods and *daimons* in images borrowed from the world of sense reality. Would not one who had penetrated into the nature of the Eternal doubt the eternal nature of such gods as these? How could the Zeus of popular imagination be eternal since he bore the qualities of a perishable being? One thing was clear to the mystics: that man arrives at a conception of the gods in a different way from the conception of other things. An object belonging to the outer world compels us to form a very definite idea of it. Compared with this our conception of the gods is freer, even somewhat arbitrary. The control by the outer world is absent. Reflection shows us that what we set up as gods cannot be externally verified. This places us in logical uncertainty; we begin to feel that we ourselves are the creators of our gods. Indeed, we ask ourselves: What led us to venture beyond physical reality in our life of conceptions? The mystic was obliged to ask himself such questions; his doubts were justified. "*Look at all representations of the gods,*" he might think to himself. "*Are they not like the beings we meet in the world of sense? Did not man create them for himself by giving or withholding from them, in his thought, some quality belonging to beings of the sense world? The savage lover of the chase creates a heaven in which the gods themselves take part in glorious hunting, and the Greek peopled his*

Olympus with divine beings whose models were taken from his own surroundings."

The philosopher Xenophanes (575-480 B.C.) drew attention to this fact with ruthless logic. We know that the older Greek philosophers were entirely dependent on the wisdom of the Mysteries. We will later prove this in detail, basing it on Heracitus. What Xenophanes says may without question be taken as the conviction of the mystic. It runs thus:

"Men, who picture the gods as created in their own human forms, give them human senses, voices, and bodies. But if cattle and lions had hands and knew how to use them like men in painting and working, they would paint the forms of the gods and give shape to their bodies like their own. Horses would create gods in horse-form, and cattle would make gods resembling cattle."

Through insight of this kind man may begin to doubt the existence of anything divine. He may reject all mythology and only recognize as reality what is forced upon him by his sense perception. But the mystic did not become a doubter of this kind. He saw that the doubter would be like a plant saying: "My crimson flowers are null and futile, because I am complete within my green leaves. What I may add to them is only adding illusive appearance." Just as little also could the mystic rest content with gods thus created,

the gods of the people. If the plant could think it would understand that the forces which created its green leaves are also intended to create crimson flowers, and it would not rest till it had investigated those forces and come face to face with them. This was the attitude of the mystic toward the gods of the people. He did not repudiate them or say they were futile, but he knew they had been created by man. The same forces, the same divine element, which are at work in nature, are at work in the mystic. They create within him images of the gods. He wishes to see the force that creates the gods; it does not resemble the popular gods; it is of a higher nature. Xenophanes alludes to it thus: "*There is one god greater than all gods and men. His form is not like that of mortals, his thoughts are not their thoughts.*"

This god was also the God of the Mysteries. He might have been called a hidden God, for the human being could never find him with his senses only. Look at outer things around you: you will find nothing Divine. Exert your reason: you may be able to detect the laws by which things appear and disappear, but even your reason will show you nothing divine. Saturate your imagination with religious feeling, and you may be able to create images which you take to be gods; but your intellect will pull them to pieces, for it will prove to you that you created them yourself and

borrowed the material from the sense world. As long as you look at outer things simply in your capacity of a reasonable being, you must deny the existence of God; for God is hidden from the senses and from that intellect of yours which explains sense perceptions. God lies hidden, spellbound in the world, and you need his own power to find him. That power you must awaken in yourself.

These are the teachings which were given to the candidate for initiation. And now there began for him the great cosmic drama with which he was closely bound up. The action of the drama meant nothing less than the deliverance of the spellbound god. Where is God? This was the question asked by the soul of the mystic. God is not existent, but nature exists. And in nature he must be found. There he has found an enchanted grave. It was in a higher sense that the mystic understood the words "God is love." For God has infinitely expanded that love, he has sacrificed himself in infinite love, he has poured himself out, fallen into number in the manifold of nature. Things in nature live and he does not live in them. He slumbers within them. He lives in man, and man can experience his life within himself. If we are to give him existence, we must deliver him by the creative power within us.

The human being now looks into himself. As latent creative power, as yet without existence, the Divine

lives in his soul. In the soul is a place where the spellbound god may wake to liberty. The soul is the mother who is able to conceive the god by nature. If the soul be impregnated by nature she will give birth to the divine. God is born from the union of the soul with nature—no longer a hidden, but a manifest god. He has life, perceptible life, moving among men. He is the spirit freed from enchantment, the offspring of the spellbound God. He is not the great God, who was and is and is to come, yet he may be taken, in a certain sense, as his revelation. The *Father* remains in the unseen; the *Son* is born to man out of his own soul. Mystical knowledge is thus an actual event in the cosmic process. It is the birth of a divine offspring. It is an event as real as any natural event, only enacted upon a higher plane.

The great secret of the mystic is that he himself creatively delivers his divine offspring, but that he first prepares himself to recognize him. The uninitiated man has no feeling for the father of that god, for that Father slumbers under a spell. The Son appears to be born of a virgin, the soul having seemingly given birth to him without impregnation. All her other children are conceived by the sense world. Here the father may be seen and touched, having the life of sense. The divine Son alone is begotten of the hidden, eternal Father-God himself.

THE GREEK SAGES BEFORE PLATO IN THE LIGHT OF MYSTERY WISDOM

NUMEROUS FACTS combined to show us that the philosophical wisdom of the Greeks rested on the same mental basis as mystic knowledge. We understand the great philosophers only when we approach them with feelings gained through study of the Mysteries. With what veneration does Plato speak of the "secret doctrines" in the *Phædo*! "And it almost seems," he says, "as though those who have appointed the initiations for us are not such bad people after all, and that for a long time they have been enjoining upon us that anyone who reaches Hades without being initiated and sanctified falls into the mire; but that he who is purified and consecrated when he arrives dwells with the gods. For those who have to do with consecrations say that there are many thyrsus*-bearers, but

**Thyrus*, Θύρσος, a staff entwined with ivy and surmounted by a pine-cone, or by a bunch of vine or ivy leaves, with grapes or berries. It is an attribute of Dionysos, or the Satyrs. (Ed.)

few really inspired. These latter are, in my opinion, none other than those who have devoted themselves in the right way to wisdom. I myself have not missed the opportunity of becoming one of these, as far as I was able, and have striven after it in every way."

It is only a man who is placing his own search for wisdom entirely at the disposal of the condition of soul created by initiation who could thus speak of the Mysteries. And there is no doubt that a flood of light is shed on the words of the great Greek philosophers when we illuminate them from the Mysteries.

The relation of Heraclitus of Ephesus (535-475 B.C.) to the Mysteries is plainly given us in a saying about him, to the effect that his thoughts "*were an impassable road*", and that anyone entering upon them without being initiated found only "*dimness and darkness*"; but that, on the other hand, they were "*brighter than the sun*" for anyone introduced to them by an initiate. And when it is said of his book that he deposited it in the temple of Artemis, this simply means that initiates alone could understand him.* Heraclitus was called "The Obscure", because it was only through the Mysteries that light could be thrown on his views.

*Edmund Pfeiderer has already collected the historical evidence for the relation of Heraclitus to the Mysteries. Cf. his book: *Die Philosophie des Heraklit von Ephesus im Lichte der Mysterienidee*, Berlin, 1866.)

Heraclitus comes before us as a man who took life with the greatest seriousness. Even his features show us, if we can recall them, that he bore within himself intimate knowledge which he knew words could only suggest, not express. Out of this background arose his celebrated utterance, "*All things are in flux,*" which Plutarch explains thus: "*We do not dip twice into the same wave, nor can we twice come in contact with the same mortal existence. For through abruptness and speed it disperses and brings together, not in succession but simultaneously.*"

A man with such views has penetrated the nature of transitory things, for he has felt impelled to characterize the essence of transitoriness itself in the clearest terms. Such a description as this could not be given unless the transitory were being measured by the Eternal; and in particular, it could not be extended to man without an insight into his inner nature. Heraclitus has extended his characterization to man: "*Life and death, waking and sleeping, youth and age are the same; this in changing is that, and that again this.*" In this sentence there is expressed full knowledge of the illusory nature of the lower personality. He says still more forcibly: "*Life and death are found in our living even as in our dying.*" What does this mean but that only a point of view based on the transitory can value life more than death? Dying is to pass, in order to make

way for new life, but the Eternal lives in the new life, as in the old. The same Eternal appears in transitory life as in death. When we grasp this Eternal we look upon life and death with the same feeling. Life has a special value only when we have not been able to awaken the Eternal within us. The saying, "*All things are in flux,*" might be repeated a thousand times, but unless said in the mood of this feeling, it is empty sound. The knowledge of eternal growth is valueless if it does not detach us from temporal growth. It is the turning away from that love of life which impels toward the transitory that Heraclitus indicates in his utterance: "*How can we say of our daily life, 'We are,' when from the standpoint of the eternal we know that 'We are and are not?'*"* "*Hades and Dionysos are one and the same,*" says one of the *Fragments*. Dionysos, the god of joy in life, of germination and growth, to whom the Dionysiac festivals are dedicated is, for Heraclitus, the same as Hades, the god of destruction and annihilation. Only one who sees death in life and life in death, and in both the Eternal, high above life and death, can view the merits and demerits of existence in the right light. Then even imperfections become justified, for in them, too, lives the Eternal. What they are from the standpoint of the limited

*Cf. *Fragments of Heraclitus*, No. 81.

lower life they are only in appearance: "*The gratification of men's wishes is not necessarily a happiness for them. Illness makes health sweet and good, hunger makes food appreciated, and toil, rest.*" "*The sea's water is the purest and impurest, drinkable and wholesome for fishes, it is undrinkable and injurious to human beings.*" Heraclitus is not primarily drawing attention to the transitoriness of earthly things, but to the splendor and majesty of the Eternal.

Heraclitus speaks vehemently against Homer and Hesiod, and the learned men of his day. He wished to show up their way of thinking which clings to the transitory. He did not desire gods endowed with qualities taken from a perishable world, and he could not regard as supreme that science which investigates the laws of growth and decay of things. For him, the Eternal speaks out of the perishable, and for this Eternal he has a profound symbol. "*The harmony of the world returns upon itself, like that of the lyre and the bow.*" What depths are hidden in this image! By the pressing asunder of forces and by the harmonizing of these divergent forces, unity is attained. One tone conflicts with another, but together they produce harmony. If we apply this to the spiritual world we have the thought of Heraclitus: "*Immortals are mortal, mortals immortal, living the death of mortals, dying the life of the immortals.*"

It is man's original guilt to cling with his cognition to the transitory. Thereby he turns away from the Eternal, and life becomes a danger for him. What happens to him comes to him through life, but its events lose their sting if he ceases to set unconditioned value on life. In that case his innocence is restored to him. It is as though he were able to return from the so-called seriousness of life to his childhood. The adult takes many things seriously with which a child merely plays, but one who really knows becomes like a child. "Serious" values lose their value when looked at from the standpoint of eternity. Life then seems like play. On this account does Heraclitus say: "*Eternity is a child at play, it is the reign of a child.*" Where does the original guilt lie? In taking with the utmost seriousness what ought not to be so taken. God has poured himself into the world of objects. If we take these objects and leave God unheeded, we take them in earnest as "*the tombs of God*". We should play with them like a child, but at the same time should earnestly strive to call forth from them the Divine that sleeps spellbound within them.

Beholding of the Eternal acts like a consuming fire on ordinary speculation about the nature of things. The spirit dissolves thoughts which come through the senses; it fuses them; it is a consuming fire. This is the higher meaning of the Heraclitean thought, that fire

is the primary element of all things. This thought is certainly to be taken at first as an ordinary physical explanation of the phenomena of the universe. But no one understands Heraclitus who does not think of him in the same way as Philo, living in the early days of Christianity, thought of the laws of the Bible. *"There are people,"* he says, *"who take the written laws merely as symbols of spiritual doctrines, who diligently search for the latter, but despise the laws themselves. I can only reprove such, for they should pay heed to both, to an understanding of the hidden meaning and to the observation of the obvious one."* If the question is discussed whether Heraclitus meant by "fire" physical fire, or whether fire for him was only a symbol of Eternal Spirit which dissolves and rebuilds all things, then a wrong construction has been put upon his thought. He meant both and neither of these things; for spirit was also alive for him in ordinary fire, and the force that is physically active in fire lives on a higher plane in the human soul, which melts in its crucible mere sense-knowledge and engenders out of this the perception of the Eternal.

It is very easy to misunderstand Heraclitus. He makes strife the father of things, but only of "things", not of the Eternal. If there were no contrasts in the world, no conflicting interests, the world of becoming, of transitory things, would not exist. But what is re-

vealed in this antagonism, what is poured out into it, is not strife but harmony. Just because there is strife in all things, the spirit of the wise should pass over them like a breath of fire, and change them into harmony.

From this point there shines forth one of the great thoughts of Heraclitean wisdom. What is man as a personal being? From the point of view just stated Heraclitus is able to answer. Man is composed of the conflicting elements into which Divinity has poured itself. In this state he finds himself, and beyond this becomes aware of the spirit within him, the spirit which is rooted in the Eternal. But the spirit is born for man himself out of the conflict of elements, and it is the spirit also which has to calm them. In man, nature surpasses her creative limits. It is indeed the same universal force that created antagonism and the mixture of elements which afterwards by its wisdom is to do away with the conflict. Here we arrive at the eternal dualism which lives in man, the perpetual contrast between the temporal and the Eternal. Through the Eternal he has become something quite definite, and out of this he is to create something higher. He is both dependent and independent. He can participate in the Eternal Spirit whom he beholds only in the measure of the compound of elements which that Eternal Spirit has effected within him. And it is just on this account that he is called upon to fashion the

Eternal out of the temporal. The spirit works within him, but works in a special way. It works out of the temporal. It is the peculiarity of the human soul that a temporal thing should be able to act like an eternal one, should work and increase in power like an eternal thing. This is why the soul is at once like a god and a worm. Man, owing to this, stands midway between God and the animal. The productive and active force within him is his *daimonic* element—that within him which reaches beyond himself.

"*Man's daimon is his destiny.*" Thus strikingly does Heraclitus make reference to this fact.* He extends man's vital essence far beyond the personal. The personality is the vehicle of the *daimon*, which is not confined within the limits of the personality, and for which the birth and death of the personality are of no importance. What is the relation of the *daimonic* element to the personality which comes and goes? The personality is only a form for the manifestation of the *daimon*.

One who has arrived at this wisdom looks beyond himself, backward and forward. The experience of the *daimonic* in himself proves to him his own immortality. And he can no longer ascribe to his *daimon* the sole function of occupying his personality, for the

**Daimon* is used here in the Greek sense. Today we would say "spirit".

latter can be only one of the forms in which the *daimon* manifests itself. The *daimon* cannot be shut up within one personality; he has power to animate many. He is able to transform himself from one personality into another. The great idea of reincarnation springs as something obvious from the Heraclitean premises, and not only the idea, but the experience of the fact. The idea only paves the way for the experience. One who becomes conscious of the *daimonic* element within himself does not find it innocent and in its first stage: it has qualities. Whence do they come? Why have I certain propensities? Because other personalities have already worked upon my *daimon*. And what becomes of the work which I accomplish in the *daimon* if I am not to assume that its task ends with my personality? I am working for a future personality. Between me and the spirit of the universe, something interposes that reaches beyond me, but is not yet the same as Divinity. This something is my *daimon*. As my today is only the product of yesterday and my tomorrow will be the product of today, so my life is the result of a former and will be the foundation of a future one. Just as earthly man looks back to numerous yesterdays and forward to many tomorrows, so does the soul of the sage look upon many lives in his past and many in the future. The thoughts and aptitudes I acquired yesterday I use today. Is it not the same

with life? Do not people enter upon the horizon of existence with the most diverse capacities? Whence this difference? Does it proceed from nothingness?

Our natural sciences take much credit to themselves for having banished miracle from our views of organic life. David Friedrich Strauss, in his *Old and New Faith*,* considers it a great achievement of our day that we no longer think that a perfect organic being is a miracle issuing from nothing. We comprehend perfection when we are able to explain it as a development from imperfection. The structure of an ape is no longer a miracle if we assume its ancestors to have been primitive fishes that have been gradually transformed. Let us at least accept as reasonable in the domain of spirit what seems to us to be right in the domain of nature! Is the perfect spirit to have the same antecedents as the imperfect one? Does a Goethe have the same antecedents as any Hottentot? The antecedents of an ape are as unlike those of a fish as are the antecedents of Goethe's spirit unlike those of a savage. The spiritual ancestry of Goethe's spirit is a different one from that of the savage. The spirit has evolved as has the body. The spirit in Goethe has more progenitors than the one in a savage. Let us take the doctrine of reincarnation in this sense and we

*David Friedrich Strauss, *Alter und Neuer Glaube*.

shall no longer find it unscientific. We shall be able to explain in the right way what we find in our soul, and we shall not take what we find as if it were created by a miracle. If I can write, it is owing to the fact that I learned to write. No one who has a pen in his hand for the first time can sit down and write offhand. But one who has come into the world with the stamp of genius, must he owe it to a miracle? No, even the stamp of genius must be acquired. It must have been learned. And when it appears in a person we call it spirit. This spirit too must have gone to school; its capacities in a later life were acquired in a former one.

In this form, and this form only, did the thought of Eternity live in the mind of Heraclitus and other Greek sages. There was no question with them of a continuance of the immediate personality after death. Compare some verses of Empedocles (490-430 B.C.). He says of those who accept the facts of existence as miracles:

*Foolish and ignorant they, for they do not reach far
with their thinking,*

*Who suppose that what has never been can really
come into being,*

*Or that beings there be that die away and vanish
completely;*

*It is ne'er possible for being to begin from what is
non-being,*

*Quite impossible also that being can fade into nothing;
For wherever a being is driven, there will it remain in
being.*

*Never will those believe, who have in these things
been instructed,*

*That the spirits of men live only while what is called
life here endures,*

*That only so long do they live, receiving their joys
and their sorrows,*

*But that ere they were born they were nothing, and
after they die they are naught.*

The Greek sage never even asked whether there was an eternal element in man, but only inquired of what this element consisted and how man can nourish and cherish it in himself. For from the outset it was clear to him that man is an intermediate creation between the earthly and the Divine. There was no thought of a Divine being outside and beyond the world. The Divine lives in man but lives in him only in a human way. It is the force urging man to make himself ever more and more divine. Only one who thinks thus can say with Empedocles:

*When leaving thy body behind thee thou soarest up
into the ether,*

*Then thou becomest a god, immortal, beyond the
power of death.*

What may be done for a human life from this point of view? It may be introduced into the magic circle of the Eternal; for in man there must be forces which the merely natural life does not develop, and the life might pass away fruitless if the forces remained idle. To release them, thereby to make man like the Divine, this was the task of the Mysteries. And this was also the mission the Greek sages set themselves. In this way we can understand Plato's utterance* that "he who passes unsanctified and uninitiated into the nether-world will lie in a slough, but that he who arrives there after initiation and purification will dwell with the gods." We have to do here with a conception of immortality the significance of which lies bound up within the universe. Everything man undertakes in order to awaken the Eternal within him he does in order to raise the value of the world's existence. His enlightenment does not make him an idle spectator of the universe, imagining things that would be there whether he existed or not. The power of his insight is a higher one, a creative force of nature. What flashes up within him spiritually is something divine which was previously under a spell, and which, failing the knowledge he has gained, would have to lie fallow, awaiting some other exorcist. Thus the human per-

*Cf. p. 19.

sonality does not live in and for itself but for the world. Life expands far beyond individual existence when looked at in this way. From within such a point of view we can understand utterances like that of Pindar, giving a glimpse of the Eternal: "*Happy is he who has seen the Mysteries and then descends under the hollow earth. He knows the end of life, and he knows the beginning promised by Zeus.*"

We understand the proud features and solitary nature of sages such as Heraclitus. They were able to say proudly of themselves that much had been revealed to them, for they did not attribute their knowledge to their transitory personality, but to the eternal *daimon* within them. Their pride had as a necessary adjunct the stamp of humility and modesty, expressed in the words, "*All knowledge of perishable things is in perpetual flux like the things themselves.*" Heraclitus calls the eternal universe a game: he could also call it the most serious of realities. But the word "serious" has lost its force through being applied to earthly experiences. On the other hand, the game of the Eternal leaves man that sureness in life of which he is robbed by such seriousness as derives from the transitory.

A different conception of the universe from that of Heraclitus grew up, on the basis of the Mysteries, in the community founded by Pythagoras in the 6th cen-

ture B.C. in Southern Italy. The Pythagoreans saw the basis of things in the numbers and geometrical figures into whose laws they made research by means of mathematics. Aristotle says of them: "*They first developed mathematics; then, completely absorbed in it, they considered the roots of mathematics to be the roots of all things. Now as numbers are naturally the first thing in mathematics and they thought they saw many resemblances in numbers to things and to development,—more in numbers than in fire, earth, and water,—in this way one quality of numbers came to mean for them justice, another, the soul and spirit, another, time, and so on with all the rest. Moreover, they found in numbers the qualities and relations of harmony; and thus everything else, in accordance with its whole nature, seemed to be an image of numbers, and number seemed to be the first thing in nature.*"

The mathematical and scientific study of natural phenomena must always lead to a certain Pythagorean habit of thought. When a string of a certain length is struck, a particular tone is produced. If the string is shortened in certain numeric proportions, other tones will be produced. The pitch of the tones can be expressed in figures. Physics also expresses color relations in figures. When two bodies combine into one substance, it always happens that a certain definite quantity of the one body, expressible in numbers, combines

with a certain definite quantity of the other. The Pythagoreans' sense of observation was directed to such arrangements of measures and numbers in nature. Geometrical figures also play a similar role in nature. Astronomy, for instance, is mathematics applied to the heavenly bodies. One fact became important to the thought life of the Pythagoreans: that man, quite independently and purely through his mental activity, discovers the laws of numbers and figures; and yet, that when he looks around in nature, he finds that things obey the same laws he has ascertained for himself in his own mind. Man forms the idea of an ellipse, and ascertains the laws of ellipses. And the heavenly bodies move according to the laws which he has established. (It is not, of course, a question here of the astronomical views of the Pythagoreans. What may be said about these may equally be said of Copernican views in the connection now being dealt with.) Hence it follows as a direct consequence that the achievements of the human soul are not an activity apart from the rest of the world, but that in those achievements the cosmic laws are expressed. The Pythagoreans said: "*The senses show man physical phenomena, but they do not show the harmonious order regulating these phenomena.*" The human spirit must first find that harmonious order within itself if this

spirit wishes to behold it in the outer world. The deeper meaning of the world, that which holds sway within it as an eternal, law-obeying necessity, this makes its appearance in the human soul and becomes a present reality there. *The meaning of the universe is revealed in the soul.* This meaning is not to be found in what we see, hear, and touch, but in what the soul brings to light from its own unseen depths. The eternal laws are thus hidden in the depths of the soul. If we descend there, we shall find the Eternal. God, the eternal harmony of the world, is in the human soul. The soul element is not limited to the bodily substance enclosed within the skin, for what is born in the soul is nothing less than the laws by which worlds revolve in celestial space. The soul is not in the personality. The personality only serves as the organ through which the order pervading cosmic space may express itself. There is something of the spirit of Pythagoras in what one of the Church Fathers, Gregory of Nyssa, said: "*It is said that human nature is something small and limited, and that God is infinite, and it is asked how the finite can embrace the infinite. But who dares to say that the infinity of the Godhead is limited by the boundary of the flesh, as though by a vessel? For not even during our lifetime is the spiritual nature confined within the boundaries of the flesh. The mass of the body, it is true, is limited by neighbouring parts,*

but the soul reaches out freely into the whole of creation by the movements of thought."

The soul is not the personality, the soul belongs to infinity. From such a point of view the Pythagoreans must have considered that only "fools" could imagine the soul force to be exhausted with the personality.

For them, too, as for Heraclitus, the essential point was the awakening of the Eternal in the personal. Enlightened knowledge for them meant intercourse with the Eternal. The more man brought the eternal element within him into existence, the greater must he necessarily seem to the Pythagoreans. Life in their community consisted in holding intercourse with the Eternal. The object of Pythagorean education was to lead the members of the community to that intercourse. Education was therefore a philosophical initiation, and the Pythagoreans might well say that by their manner of life they were aiming at the same goal as that of the Mystery cults.

PLATO AS A MYSTIC

THE IMPORTANCE of the Mysteries to the spiritual life of the Greeks may be realized from Plato's conception of the universe. There is only one way of understanding him completely. It is to place him in the light which streams forth from the Mysteries.

Plato's later disciples, the Neo-Platonists, credit him with a secret doctrine which he imparted only to those who were worthy, and which he conveyed under the "seal of secrecy". His teaching was looked upon as mysterious in the same sense that the wisdom of the Mysteries was viewed. Even if the seventh Platonic letter is not from his hand, as is alleged, it does not signify for our present purpose, for it does not matter whether it was he or another who gave utterance to the view expressed in this letter. This view is of the essence of Plato's philosophy. In the letter we read as follows: "*This much I may say about all those who have written or may hereafter write as if they knew the aim of my work, that no credence is to be attached*

to their words, whether they obtained their information from me or from others, or invented it themselves. I have written nothing on this subject, nor would anything be allowed to appear. This kind of thing cannot be expressed in words like other teaching, but needs a long study of the subject and a making of one's self one with it. Then it is as though a spark leaped up and kindled a light in the soul which thereafter is able to keep itself alight." This utterance might only indicate the writer's powerlessness to express his meaning in words—a mere personal weakness—if the idea of the Mysteries were not to be found in them. The subject on which Plato had not written and would never write must be something about which all writing would be futile. It must be a feeling, a sensation, an experience not gained by instantaneous communication, but by "the making of one's self one with it," in heart and soul. The reference is to the inner education which Plato was able to give those he selected. For them, fire flashed forth from his words, for others, only thoughts.

The manner of approach to Plato's *Dialogues* is not a matter of indifference. They will mean more or less to us according to our spiritual condition. Much more passed from Plato to his disciples than the literal meaning of his words. The place where he taught his listeners thrilled in the atmosphere of the Mysteries. His

words awoke overtones that vibrated in sympathy, but these overtones needed the atmosphere of the Mysteries, or they died away without having been heard.

In the centre of the world of the Platonic Dialogues stands the personality of Socrates. We need not here touch upon the historical aspect. It is a question of the character of Socrates as it appears in Plato. Socrates is a person consecrated by his dying for truth. He died as only an initiate can die, as one to whom death is merely a moment of life like other moments. He approached death as he would any other event in existence. His attitude towards it was such that even in his friends the feelings usual on such an occasion were not aroused. Phædo says this in the *Dialogue on the Immortality of the Soul*: "Truly I found myself in the strangest state of mind. I had no compassion for him, as is usual at the death of a dear friend. So happy did the man appear to me in his demeanor and speech, so steadfast and noble was his end, that I was confident that he was not going to Hades without a divine mission, and that even there it would be as well with him as it is with any one anywhere. No tender-hearted emotion overcame me, as might have been expected at such a mournful event, nor on the other hand was I in a cheerful mood, as is usual during philosophical pursuits, and although our conversation was of this nature; but I found myself in a wondrous state of mind and in

an unwonted blending of joy and grief when I reflected that this man was about to die." The dying Socrates instructs his disciples about immortality. His personality, which had learned by experience the worthlessness of life, furnishes proof far stronger than any logic or arguments founded on reason. It seems as though it were not a man speaking, for this man was passing away, but as if it were the voice of Eternal Truth itself which had taken up its abode in a perishable personality. Where something temporal dissolves into nothing there seems to be the medium in which it is possible for eternal harmonies to resound.

We hear no logical proofs of immortality. The whole discourse is designed to lead the friends where they may behold the Eternal. Then they will need no proofs. Would it be necessary to prove that a rose is red to one who has a red rose before him? Why should it be necessary to prove that spirit is eternal to one whose eyes we have opened to behold spirit? Experiences, inner events are what Socrates points to, and first of all to the experience of wisdom itself.

What does he desire who aspires to wisdom? He wishes to free himself from what the senses offer him in every-day perception. He seeks for the spirit in the sense world. Is not this a fact which may be compared with dying? "For," according to Socrates, "those who occupy themselves with philosophy in the right way

are really striving after nothing else than to die and to be dead, without this being perceived by others. If this is true it would be strange if, after having aimed at this all through life, when death itself comes they should be indignant at that which they have so long striven after and taken pains about." To corroborate this, Socrates asks one of his friends: "Does it seem to you befitting a philosopher to take trouble about so-called fleshly pleasures, such as eating and drinking? or about sexual pleasures? And do you think that such a man pays much heed to other bodily needs? To have fine clothes, shoes, and other bodily adornments,—do you think he considers or scorns this more than utmost necessity demands? Does it not seem to you that it would be such a man's whole preoccupation not to turn his thoughts to the body, but as much as possible away from it and towards the soul? Therefore this is the first mark of the philosopher, that he, more than all other men, relieves his soul of association with the body."

This justified Socrates in saying that the search for wisdom has this much in common with dying, that it turns man away from the physical. But whither does he turn? Towards the spiritual. But can he demand from spirit the same that his senses offer? Socrates thus expresses himself on this point: "But how about reasonable knowledge itself? Is the body a hindrance or

not, if we take it as a companion on our search for knowledge? I mean, do sight and hearing procure for us any truth? Or is what the poets sing meaningless, namely, that we see and hear nothing clearly? . . . When does the soul catch sight of truth? For when it tries to examine something with the help of the body it is manifestly deceived by the latter."

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Everything we perceive by means of our bodily senses appears and disappears, and it is this appearing and disappearing that is the cause of our being deceived. But when with our reasonable insight we look deeper into things, the eternal element in them is imparted to us. Thus the senses do not offer us the eternal in its true form. The moment we trust them implicitly they deceive us. They cease to deceive us if we confront them with our thinking insight and submit what they tell us to its examination.

But how could our thinking insight sit in judgment on the declarations of the senses unless there were something living within it that transcends sense perception? Therefore the truth or falsity in things is decided by something within us that opposes the physical body and is consequently not subject to its laws. First of all, this something cannot be subject to the laws of growth and decay, for it contains truth within itself. Now, truth cannot have a yesterday and a today; it cannot be one thing one day and another

the next, like objects of sense. Therefore truth must be something eternal. And when the philosopher turns away from the perishable things of sense and towards truth, he approaches an eternal element that lives within him. If we immerse ourselves wholly in spirit we live wholly in truth. The things of sense around us are no longer present merely in their physical form. Says Socrates: "And he accomplishes this most perfectly who approaches everything as much as possible with the spirit only, without either looking round when he is thinking, or calling in the aid of any other sense when reflecting; but who, making use of pure thought only, strives to grasp everything as it is in itself, separating it as much as possible from eyes and ears, in short from the whole body, which only disturbs the soul and does not allow her to attain truth and insight when associated with her . . . Now, is not death the release and separation of the soul from the body? And it is only true philosophers who are always striving to release the soul as far as they can. This, therefore, is the philosopher's vocation, to deliver and separate the soul from the body . . . Therefore it would be foolish if a man, who all his life has taken measures to be as near death as possible, should, when it comes, rebel against it . . . In truth the real seekers after wisdom aspire to die, and of all men they are those who least fear death." Moreover, Socrates bases all higher

morality on liberation from the body. He who follows only what his body ordains is not moral. Who is valiant? asks Socrates. He is valiant who does not obey his body but the demands of his spirit even when these demands imperil the body. And who is prudent? Is not this he who *"does not let himself be carried away by desires, but who maintains an indifferent and moral demeanor with regard to them? Therefore are not those alone prudent who set least value on the body and live in the love of wisdom?"* And so it is, in the opinion of Socrates, with all virtues.

Thence Socrates goes on to characterize rational cognition itself. What, after all, is knowledge? Undoubtedly we arrive at it by forming judgments. I form a judgment about some object; for instance, I say to myself: the object before me is a tree. How do I come to say that? I can only say it if I already know what a tree is. I must remember my conception of a tree. A tree is a physical object. If I remember a tree, I remember a physical object. I say that something I behold is a tree, if it resembles other things which I have previously observed, and which I know are trees. Memory is the medium for this knowledge. It makes it possible for me to compare the various objects of sense. But this does not exhaust my knowledge. If I see two similar things I form a judgment and say: these things are alike. Now, in reality two things are never exactly

alike. I can only find a likeness in certain respects. The idea of a perfect similarity therefore arises within me without its having any counterpart in reality. And this idea helps me to form a judgment, as memory helps me to a judgment and to insight. Just as one tree reminds me of others, so am I reminded of the idea of similarity by looking at two things from a certain point of view. Thus, there arise within me thoughts like memories which are not due to physical reality.

All manner of knowledge not borrowed from sense-reality is grounded on such thoughts. The whole of mathematics consists of them. He would be a bad geometrician who could only bring into mathematical relations what he can see with his eyes and touch with his hands. Thus we have thoughts which do not originate in perishable nature, but arise out of the spirit. And it is these that bear in them the mark of Eternal Truth. What mathematics teaches will be eternally true, even if tomorrow the whole cosmic system should fall into ruins and an entirely new one arise. Conditions might prevail in another cosmic system to which our present mathematical truths would not apply, but these would be none the less true in themselves.

It is only when the soul is alone with herself that she can bring forth these eternal truths. She is at these times related to the true and eternal, and not to the ephemeral and deceptive. Hence Socrates says: *"When*

the soul returning into herself reflects, she goes straight to what is pure and everlasting and immortal and like unto herself; and being related to this, cleaves unto it when the soul is alone, and is not hindered. And then the soul rests from her mistakes, and is like unto herself, even as the eternal is, with whom the soul is now in touch. This state of soul is called reason. . . . Look now whether it does not follow from all that has been said that the soul is most like the divine, immortal, reasonable, monogeneous, indissoluble, what is always the same and like unto itself; and that on the other hand the body most resembles what is human and mortal, unreasonable, multiform, soluble, never the same nor remaining equal to itself. . . . If, therefore, this be so, the soul goes to what is like herself, to the immaterial, to the divine, immortal, reasonable. There she attains to bliss, freed from error and ignorance, from fear and undisciplined love and all other human evils. There she lives, as the initiates say, for the remaining time truly with God."

It is not within the scope of this book to indicate all the ways in which Socrates leads his friends to the Eternal. They all breathe the same spirit. They all tend to show that man finds one thing when he goes the way of transitory sense perception, and another when his spirit is alone with itself. It is to this characteristic nature of spirit that Socrates points his

hearers. If they find it, they see with their own spiritual eyes that it is eternal. The dying Socrates does not prove immortality; he simply lays bare the nature of the soul. And then it comes to light that growth and decay, birth and death, have nothing to do with the soul. The essence of the soul lies in the true, and this can neither come into being nor perish. The soul has no more to do with becoming than even has to do with odd. But death belongs to becoming. Therefore the soul has nothing to do with death. Must we not say of what is immortal that it admits of mortality as little as even admits of odd? Starting from this point, Socrates adds: "*Must we not maintain, if the immortal is imperishable, that it is impossible for the soul to come to an end when death arrives? For from what has been already shown she does not admit of death, nor can she die any more than three can be an even number.*"

Let us review the whole development of this dialogue, in which Socrates brings his hearers to behold the Eternal in human personality. The hearers accept his thoughts, and they search within themselves to see whether or not they can find in their inner experiences something that assents to his ideas. They make the objections which strike them. What has happened to the hearers when the dialogue is finished? They have found something within themselves which they did not

possess before. They have not merely accepted an abstract truth, but they have gone through a development. Something has come to life in them which was not alive in them before. Is not this comparable with an initiation? And does it not throw light on the reason for Plato's setting forth his philosophy in the form of conversation? These dialogues are nothing else than the literary form of the events which took place in the sanctuaries of the Mysteries. We are convinced of this from what Plato himself says in many passages. As a philosophical teacher Plato wished to be what the initiator into the Mysteries was, as far as this was compatible with the philosophic manner of communication. It is evident that Plato feels himself in harmony with the Mysteries. He thinks he is on the right path only when this leads to the initiate's goal. He expresses himself on the subject in the *Timæus* as follows: "*All those who are of right mind invoke the gods for their small or great enterprises; but we who are engaged in teaching about the universe—how far it is created and uncreated—have the special duty, if we have not quite lost our way, to call upon and implore the gods and goddesses that we may teach everything first in conformity with their spirit, and next in harmony with ourselves.*" And Plato promises those who follow this path: "*that Divinity, as a deliverer, will grant them illuminating teaching at the*

conclusion of their devious and wandering researches."

It is especially the *Timæus* that reveals to us the Mystery character of the Platonic cosmogony. At the very beginning of this dialogue there is mention of an initiation. Solon is initiated by an Egyptian priest into the evolution of the worlds and the way in which eternal truths are expressed in the imagery of traditional myths. "*There have already been many and various destructions of part of the human race,*" says the Egyptian priest instructing Solon, "*and there will be more in the future; the most extensive by fire and water, other lesser ones through countless other causes. It is related in your country that Phaeton, the son of Helios, once mounted his father's chariot, and as he did not know how to drive it, everything on the earth was burnt up, and he himself slain by lightning. This sounds like a fable, but it contains the truth of the change in the movements of the celestial bodies revolving round the earth, and of the annihilation of everything on the earth by much fire. This annihilation happens periodically, after the lapse of certain long periods of time.*" This passage in the *Timæus* contains a plain indication of the attitude of the initiate towards folk-myths. He recognizes the truths hidden in their images.

The drama of the evolution of the world is brought before us in the *Timæus*. Anyone who will follow up

the traces which lead to this genesis of the cosmos arrives at a dim apprehension of the primordial force from which all things proceeded. "Now, it is difficult to find the Creator and Father of the universe, and when we have found Him, it is impossible to speak about Him so that all may understand." The initiate knew what this impossibility means. It points to the drama of God. God is not present for him in what belongs merely to the senses and understanding. In those He is only present as nature. He is under a spell in nature. The ancient mystic was convinced that only one who awakens the Divine within himself is able to approach Him. Thus He cannot at once be made comprehensible to all. But even to one who approaches Him, He does not appear Himself. The *Timæus* stresses that. The Father made the world out of the body and the soul of the universe. He mixed together, in harmony and perfect proportions, the elements which came into being when He, pouring Himself out, sacrificed His separate existence. Thereby the body of the world came into being, and the soul of the world is stretched upon it in the form of a cross. She is what is divine in the world. She suffered the death of the cross so that the world might come into being. Plato may therefore call nature the tomb of the Divine, a grave, however, sheltering not what is dead but the Eternal, to which death only gives the opportunity of

bringing to expression the omnipotence of life. And man sees nature in the right light when he approaches her in order to release the crucified soul of the world. The soul of the world must rise again from her death, from her spell. Where can she revive? Only in the soul of initiated man. Then wisdom finds its right relation to the cosmos. The resurrection, the liberation of God, that is knowledge.

In the *Timæus* the development of the world is traced from the imperfect to the perfect. An ascending process is represented imaginatively. Beings are developed. God reveals Himself in their development. Evolution is the resurrection of God from the tomb. Within evolution, man appears. Plato shows that man stands for something special. It is true, the whole world is divine, and man is not more divine than other beings. But in other beings God is present in a hidden way, in man He is manifest. At the end of the *Timæus* we read: "And now we might assert that our study of the universe has attained its end, for after the world was provided and filled with mortal and immortal living beings, it, this one and only begotten world, has itself become a visible being embracing everything visible, and an image of the Creator. It has become the God perceptible to the senses, and the greatest and best world, the fairest and most perfect which there could be." But this one and only begotten world

would not be perfect if the image of its Creator were not to be found amongst the images it contains. This image can only be engendered in the human soul. Not the Father Himself, but the Son, God's offspring, living in the soul, and being like unto the Father, Him man can bring forth.

Philo, who was said to be the resurrected Plato, characterized as the "Son of God" the wisdom born of man that lives in the soul and contains the reason existing in the world. This cosmic reason, or *logos*, appears as the book in which "everything in the world is recorded and delineated." It also appears as the Son of God, "following in the paths of the Father, and creating forms, looking at their archetypes." The platonizing Philo addresses this *logos* as Christ: "~~As God is the first and only king of the universe, the way to Him is rightly called the 'Royal Road.'~~ Consider this road to be philosophy . . . the road which the company of the ancient ascetics took, who turned away from the entangling fascination of pleasure and devoted themselves to the noble and earnest cultivation of the beautiful. The law names this Royal Road, which we call true philosophy, God's word and spirit."

It is like an initiation to Philo when he enters upon this path, in order to meet the *logos* that to him is the Son of God. "I do not shrink from relating what has happened to me innumerable times. Often when I

wished to put my philosophical thoughts in writing, in my accustomed way, and saw quite clearly what was to be ascertained, I nevertheless found my mind barren and rigid, so that I was obliged to desist without having accomplished anything, and seemed to be caught in idle speculation. At the same time I could not but marvel at the power of the reality of thought, with which it rests to open and to close the womb of the human soul. Another time, however, I would begin empty and arrive, without any trouble, at fulness. Thoughts came flying like snowflakes or grains of seed invisibly from above, and it was as though divine power took hold of me and inspired me, so that I did not know where I was, who was with me, who I was, or what I was saying or writing; for just then the flow of ideas was given me, a delightful clearness, keen insight, and lucid mastery of material, as if the inner eye were able to see everything with the greatest distinctness."

This is a description of a path to knowledge so expressed as to show that anyone following it is conscious of flowing in one current with the Divine, when the *logos* becomes alive within him. This is also expressed clearly in the words: "When the spirit, moved by love, takes its flight into the most holy, soaring joyously on divine wings, it forgets everything else and itself. It only clings to and is filled with him whose satellite and servant it is, and to whom it offers

the incense of the most sacred and chaste virtue."

There are only two ways for Philo. Either man follows the world of sense, that is, what perception and intellect offer, in which case he limits himself to his personality and withdraws from the cosmos; or he becomes conscious of the whole cosmic force and experiences the Eternal within his personality. *"He who wishes to escape from God falls into his own hands. For there are two things to be considered, the universal spirit which is God, and one's own spirit. The latter flees to and takes refuge in the universal spirit, for one who goes beyond his own spirit says that it is nothing and connects everything with God; but one who avoids God, abolishes the First Cause, and makes himself the cause of everything which happens."*

The Platonic view of the universe sets out to be knowledge that by its very nature is religion. It brings knowledge into relation with the highest to which man can attain through his feelings. Plato admits the validity of such knowledge only when feeling may be completely satisfied in it. It is then not abstract knowledge, it is the substance of life. It is a higher man within man, that man of which the personality is only an image. Within man himself is born a being who surpasses him, the archetypal man; and this is another secret of the Mysteries brought to expression in the Platonic philosophy. Hippolytus, one of the

Church Fathers, alludes to this secret: *"This is the great secret of the Samothracians (who were guardians of a certain Mystery-cult), which cannot be expressed and which only the initiates know. But these latter speak in detail of Adam, as the primordial, archetypal man."*

The Platonic *Dialogue on Love, or Symposium*, also represents an initiation. Here love appears as the herald of wisdom. If wisdom, the eternal word, the *Logos*, is the Son of the eternal creator of the cosmos, love is related to the *Logos* as a mother. Before even a spark of the light of wisdom can flash up in the human soul, a dim impulse or desire for the Divine must be present in it. Man must unconsciously be drawn to what afterwards, when raised into his consciousness, constitutes his supreme happiness. What Heraclitus calls the *daimon* in man* is associated with the idea of love. In the *Symposium*, people of the most various ranks and views of life speak about love—the ordinary man, the politician, the scientist, the satiric poet Aristophanes, and the tragic poet Agathon. They each have their own view of love in keeping with their different experiences of life. The way in which they express themselves shows the stage attained by their *daimon*. By love one being is attracted to another.

*Cf. page 42.

The multiplicity, the diversity of the things into which divine unity was poured aspires to unity and harmony through love. Thus love has something divine in it, hence every man can understand it only as far as he participates in the Divine.

After those of different degrees of maturity have given utterance to their ideas about love, Socrates takes up the word. He considers love from the point of view of a man in search of knowledge. For him it is not a divinity, but something that leads man to God. Eros, or love, is for him not divine, for a god is perfect and therefore possesses the beautiful and good; but Eros is only the desire for the beautiful and good. He thus stands between man and God. He is a *daimon*, a mediator between the earthly and the Divine.

It is significant that Socrates claims not to be giving his own thoughts when speaking of love. He says he is only relating what a woman had imparted to him as a revelation. It was through *mantic** art that he came to his conception of love. Diotima, the priestess, awakened in Socrates the *daimonic* force that was to lead him to the Divine. She initiated him.

This passage in the *Symposium* is highly suggestive. Who is the "wise woman" who awakened the *daimon* in Socrates? She is more than a mere poetic mode of

*Cf. Notes.

expression, for no wise woman on the physical plane could awaken the *daimon* in the soul unless the *daimonic* force were latent in the soul herself. It is surely in Socrates' own soul that we must also look for this wise woman. But there must be a reason why that which brings the *daimon* to life within the soul should appear as a being of external reality. The force cannot work in the same way as the forces that may be observed in the soul as belonging to and native to her. We see that it is the soul-force which precedes the conception of wisdom that Socrates represents as a "wise woman." It is the mother-principle that gives birth to the Son of God, wisdom, the *Logos*. The unconscious soul-force that brings the divine into consciousness is represented as the feminine element. The soul that as yet is without wisdom is the mother of what leads to the Divine. This brings us to an important conception of mysticism. The soul is recognized as the mother of the divine. Unconsciously she leads man to the divine with the inevitability of a natural force.

This conception throws light on the view of Greek mythology taken in the Mysteries. The world of the gods is born in the soul. Man looks upon what he creates in images as his gods (cf. p. 29). But he must advance to another conception. He must transmute into divine images the divine force that is active within him before the creation of those images. Behind the

Divine appears the mother of the Divine, which is nothing but the original force of the human soul. Thus side by side with the gods man sets up goddesses.

Let us look at the myth of Dionysos in this light. Dionysos is the son of Zeus and a mortal mother, Semele. Zeus wrests the undeveloped child from its mother when she is slain by lightning, and shelters it in his own side till it is ready to be born. Hera, the mother of the gods, incites the Titans against Dionysos, and they tear the boy in pieces. But Pallas Athene rescues his heart, which is still beating, and brings it to Zeus. Out of it he creates his son for the second time.

In this myth we can accurately trace a process enacted in the depths of the human soul. Interpreting it in the manner of the Egyptian priest who instructed Solon about the nature of myths (*cf. p. 65 et seq.*), we might say: It is related that Dionysos was the son of a god and of a mortal mother, that he was torn in pieces and afterwards born again. This sounds like a fable, but it contains the truth of the birth of the Divine and its destiny in the human soul. The Divine unites itself with the earthly, temporal human soul. As soon as the Divine, the Dionysiac element stirs, the soul feels a violent desire for the true spiritual form of that element. Ordinary consciousness, which now appears in the form of a female goddess, Hera, becomes jealous at the birth of the Divine out of the higher conscious-

ness. It arouses the lower nature of man (the Titans). The undeveloped divine child is torn in pieces. In man the divine child is present as intellectual science broken up. But if there be enough of the higher wisdom (Zeus) in man to be active, it nurses and cherishes the immature child, which is then born again as a second son of God (Dionysos). Thus from science, which is the dispersed divine force in man, is born undivided wisdom, which is the *Logos*, the son of God and of a mortal mother, of the perishable human soul that unconsciously aspires to the divine. As long as we see in all this merely a process in the soul and look upon it as a picture of this process, we are a long way from the spiritual reality enacted in it. In this spiritual reality the soul is not merely experiencing something in herself, but she has been completely detached from herself and takes part in a cosmic event that is not enacted within the soul at all but outside her.

Platonic wisdom and the Greek myth are closely linked; so, too, are Mystery wisdom and myth. The created gods were a feature of popular religion, the history of their origin was the secret of the Mysteries. No wonder that it was held to be dangerous to betray the Mysteries, for thereby the origin of the gods of the people was betrayed. A right understanding of that origin is salutary, a misunderstanding is pernicious.

v

THE WISDOM OF THE MYSTERIES AND THE MYTH

THE MYSTIC sought forces and beings within himself which are unknown to the human being as long as he clings to the ordinary attitude towards life. The mystic puts the great question about his own spiritual forces and laws that transcend the lower nature. A man of ordinary views of life, bounded by the senses and logic, creates gods for himself; or when he realizes that he has made them, he repudiates them. The mystic knows that he creates gods, he knows why he creates them, he has discovered the natural law that makes man create them. It is as though a plant suddenly became conscious and learned the laws of its own growth and development. As it is now, it develops in serene unconsciousness. If it knew about the laws of its own being, its relation to itself would be completely changed. What the lyric poet feels when he sings of a plant, what the botanist thinks when he

investigates its laws, would hover about a conscious plant as an ideal of itself.

This is the case of the mystic with regard to his laws, to the forces working within him. As one who knew, he was forced to create something divine beyond himself. And that is the attitude the initiates took toward that which the people had created beyond nature; that is, toward the world of popular gods and myths. They wanted to penetrate the laws of this world of gods and myths. Where the people beheld the form of a god, or conceived a myth, they looked for a higher truth.

Let us take an example. The Athenians had been forced by the Cretan king Minos to deliver up to him every eight years seven boys and seven girls. These were thrown as food to a terrible monster, the Minotaur. When the mournful tribute was to be paid for the third time, the king's son Theseus accompanied it to Crete. On his arrival there, Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, became interested in him. The Minotaur dwelt in the labyrinth, a maze from which no one could extricate himself once he was within it. Theseus was anxious to deliver his native city from the shameful tribute. For this purpose he had to enter the labyrinth into which the Minotaur's booty was usually thrown, and kill the monster. He undertook the task, overcame the formidable foe, and succeeded in re-

gaining the open air with the aid of a ball of thread which Ariadne had given him.

The mystic had to discover how the creative human mind comes to weave such a story. Just as the botanist watches the growth of plants in order to discover its laws, so did the mystic watch the creative spirit. He sought for a truth, a nucleus of wisdom, where the people had invented a myth.

Sallust discloses to us the attitude of a mystical sage towards a myth of this kind. "*We might call the whole world a myth,*" he says, "*which contains bodies and things visibly, and souls and spirits in a hidden manner. If the truth about the gods were taught to all, the unintelligent would disdain it, because of not understanding it, and the more capable would make light of it. But if the truth is given, veiled in a myth, it is assured against contempt and serves as a stimulus to philosophic thinking.*"

When the truth contained in a myth was sought by an initiate, the latter was conscious of adding something to what existed in the consciousness of the people. He was aware of being above that consciousness, as a botanist is above a growing plant. Something was expressed which was different from what was present in the myth-consciousness, but it was looked upon as a deeper truth, symbolically expressed in the myth. Man is confronted with his own sense-nature

in the form of a hostile monster. He sacrifices to it the fruits of his personality, and the monster devours them and continues to do so till the conqueror (Theseus) awakes in man. His knowledge spins the thread by means of which he finds his way again when he repairs to the maze of sensuality in order to slay his enemy. The mystery of human cognition itself is expressed in this conquering of sensuality. The initiate knows that mystery. It points to a force in human personality unknown to ordinary consciousness, but nevertheless active within it. It creates the myth, which has the same structure as mystic truth. This truth finds its symbol in the myth.

What, then, is to be found in the myths? In them is a creation of the spirit, of the unconsciously creative soul. The soul follows well-defined laws. In order to create beyond herself she must work in a certain direction. At the mythological stage she does this in images, but these are built up according to the laws of the soul. We might also say that when the soul advances beyond the stage of mythological consciousness to deeper truths these bear the same stamp as did the myths, for one and the same force was at work in their formation.

Plotinus, the philosopher of the Neo-Platonic school (204-269 A.D.), speaks of this relation of mythical representation to higher knowledge in reference to the

priest-sages of Egypt. "Whether as the result of rigorous researches, or whether instinctively when imparting their wisdom, the Egyptian sages do not use for expressing their teaching and precepts written signs which are imitations of voice and speech, but they draw pictures, and in the outlines of these they record in their temples the thought contained in each thing, so that every picture comprises knowledge and wisdom and is a definite truth and a complete whole, although there is no explanation nor discussion. Afterwards the contents of the picture are extracted from it and expressed in words, and the cause is found why it is as it is, and not otherwise."

If we wish to find out the relation between mysticism and mythical narratives we must see what attitude there is toward the latter in the views of those who knew their wisdom to be in harmony with the methods of the Mysteries. We find such harmony in Plato to the fullest degree. His explanations of myths and his application of them in his teaching may be taken as authoritative (cf. p. 65 et seq.). In the *Phædrus*, a dialogue on the soul, the myth of Boreas is introduced. This divine being, who was seen in the rushing wind, one day saw the fair Orithya, daughter of the Attic king Erechtheus, gathering flowers with her companions. Seized with love for her, he carried her off to his grotto. Plato, through the mouth of Socrates, rejects a merely ra-

tionalist interpretation of this myth. According to such an explanation, an outward, natural occurrence is poetically symbolized in the narrative. A hurricane seized the king's daughter and hurled her from the rock. "Interpretations of this sort," says Socrates, "are learned sophistries, however popular and usual they may be. . . . For anyone who has pulled to pieces one of these mythological forms must, to be consistent, elucidate sceptically and explain naturally all the rest in the same way. . . . But even if such a task could be accomplished, it would in any case be no proof of superior talents in the one carrying it out, but only of facile wit, boorish wisdom, and snap judgment. . . . Therefore, I leave on one side all such inquiries, and believe what is generally thought about the myths. I do not examine them, as I have just said, but I examine myself to see whether I too may perhaps be a monster, more complicated and therefore more disordered than the chimæra, more savage than Typhon, or whether I represent a more docile and simple being, to whom some particle of a virtuous and divine nature has been given."

We see from this that Plato does not approve of a rationalistic and merely intellectual interpretation of myths. This attitude must be taken in conjunction with the way in which he himself uses myths as a means of expression. When he speaks of the life of the soul, when

he leaves the paths of the transitory and seeks the Eternal in the soul where images borrowed from sense-perception and reasoning thought can no longer be found, then Plato has recourse to the myth. *Phædrus* treats of the Eternal in the soul, and the latter is portrayed as a car drawn by two horses winged all over, and driven by a charioteer. One horse is patient and wise, the other wild and stubborn. If an obstacle comes in the way of the team, the troublesome horse takes the opportunity to impede the docile one and defy the driver. When the car arrives where it has to follow the gods up the celestial steep, the intractable horse throws the team into confusion. Upon the strength or weakness of the stubborn horse depends the possibility of the good horse conquering it, and of the team overcoming the obstacle and reaching the supersensible realm. So the soul can never ascend without difficulties into the kingdom of the Divine. Some souls rise more to the vision of Eternity, some less. The soul that has seen the world beyond remains unscathed until the next journey. One that, on account of the intractable horse, has seen nothing must try again on the next journey. These journeys signify the various incarnations of the soul. One journey signifies the life of the soul in one personality. The wild horse represents the lower nature, the wise horse the higher nature; the driver, the soul longing for union with the Divine.

Plato resorts to the myth in order to describe the course of the eternal soul through her various transformations. In the same way he has recourse, in other writings, to the myth, to symbolical narrative, in order to portray the inner nature of man which is not perceptible to the senses.

Plato is here in complete harmony with the mythical and allegorical manner of expression used by others. For instance, there is in ancient Hindu literature a parable attributed to Buddha:

A man very much attached to life, who seeks sensuous pleasures and would not die under any circumstance, is pursued by four serpents. He hears a voice commanding him to feed and bathe the serpents from time to time. The man runs away, fearing the serpents. Again he hears a voice, warning him that he is pursued by five murderers. Once more he escapes. A voice calls his attention to a sixth murderer who is about to behead him with a sword. Again he flees. He comes to a deserted village. There he hears a voice telling him that robbers are shortly going to plunder the village. Continuing to flee he comes to a great expanse of water. He feels his position very unsafe, so out of straws, sticks, and leaves he weaves a basket in which he is able to reach the other shore. Now he is safe, he is a Brahmin.

The meaning of this parable is that the human

being has to pass through the most various conditions before attaining to the Divine. The four serpents represent the four elements, fire, water, earth, and air. The five murderers are the five senses. The deserted village is the soul that has escaped from sense-impressions, but is not yet safe when alone with herself; for if her lower nature takes hold of her, she must perish. Man must construct for himself the boat which is to carry him from one shore, the sense-nature, over the flood of the transitory to the other, the eternal, divine world.

Let us look at the Egyptian mystery of Osiris in this light. Osiris had gradually become one of the most important Egyptian divinities; he supplanted other gods in certain parts of the country; and a significant cycle of myths formed round him and his consort Isis.

Osiris was the son of the Sun-god, his brother was Typhon-Set, and his sister, Isis. Osiris married his sister, and together they reigned over Egypt. The wicked brother, Typhon, sought to kill Osiris. He had a chest made which was exactly the length of Osiris' body. At a banquet this chest was offered to the person whom it exactly fitted. This was Osiris and none other. He lay down in the chest. Typhon and his confederates rushed upon him, closed the chest, and threw it into the river. When Isis heard the terrible news she wandered far and wide in despair, seeking her husband's

body. When she found it, Typhon again took possession of it, and dismembered it into fourteen pieces which were scattered in many and various places. Numerous tombs of Osiris were shown in Egypt. In many places, up and down the country, parts of the god, Osiris, were said to be buried. Osiris himself, however, came forth from the nether-world and vanquished Typhon. A beam shone from him upon Isis, who in consequence bore a son, Harpocrates or Horus.

And now let us compare this myth with the view of the universe taken by the Greek philosopher, Empedocles (490-430 B.C.). He assumes that the one primordial being was once divided into the four elements, fire, water, earth, and air, or into the multiplicity of being. He presents two opposing forces, love and strife, which within this world of existence bring about growth and decay. Empedocles says of the elements:

*They remain ever the same, yet by uniting their forces
Become transformed into men and the numberless
beings besides.*

*These are now joined into one, love binding the many
together;*

*Now once again they are scattered, dispersed through
hatred and strife.*

What, then, are the objects in the world from Empedocles' point of view? They are the elements in

various combinations. They could only come into being through the breaking up of primeval unity into the four natures. This primordial unity was thus poured into the elements. Anything confronting us is part of the outpoured Divinity. But this Divinity is hidden in the object; it had first to die that objects might come into being. And what are these objects? Mixtures of divine constituents effectuated by love and hatred. Empedocles says this distinctly:

*See, for a clear demonstration, how the limbs of a man
are constructed,*

*All that the body possesses, in beauty and bloom of
existence,*

*All joined together by love are the elements there
forming one.*

*Hatred and conflict come after, and fatally tear them
asunder,*

*Once more they wander alone, on the desolate con-
fines of life.*

*So it is with the bushes and trees, and the water-in-
habiting fishes,*

*Wild animals roaming the mountains, and birds
swiftly borne by their wings.*

Clearly it was Empedocles' belief that the sage finds again the divine primordial unity, hidden in the world by a spell, and entangled in the meshes of love and

hate. But if man finds the Divine he must himself be divine, for Empedocles takes the point of view that only like recognizes like. This conviction of his is expressed in Goethe's lines: "*If the eye were not of the nature of the sun, how could we behold light? If divine force were not at work in us, how could divine things delight us?*"

These thoughts about the world and man, transcending sense-experience, were found by the mystic in the myth of Osiris. Divine creative force has been poured out into the world; it appears as the four elements; God (Osiris) is killed. Man is to raise him from the dead with his cognition, which is of divine nature. He is to find him again as Horus (the Son of God, the *Logos*, wisdom), in the opposition between Strife (Typhon) and Love (Isis). In Greek form Empedocles expresses even his fundamental conviction by means of thoughts that suggest myth. Love is Aphrodite and Strife is Neikos. They bind and unbind the elements.

The portrayal of the content of a myth in the manner followed here must not be confused with a merely symbolical interpretation of myths, and still less with an allegorical one. This is not intended. The images forming the content of a myth are not invented symbols of abstract truths, but actual soul-experiences of the initiate. He experiences the images with his

spiritual organs of perception just as the normal man experiences the mental images of physical things with his eyes and ears. But just as a mental image is nothing in itself, if it is not aroused in perception by an outer object, so the mythical image is nothing unless it is excited by real facts of the spiritual world. Only, in regard to the physical world man is at first outside the stimulating causes, whereas he can experience the images of myths only if he is within the corresponding spiritual occurrences. In order, however, to be within them, he must have gone through initiation, as the ancient mystics had always believed. Then the spiritual occurrences within which he is perceiving are, as it were, illustrated by the myth-images. Anyone who cannot take the mythical element as an illustration of real spiritual occurrences has not yet attained to the understanding of it. For the spiritual events themselves are supersensible, and images reminiscent of the physical world are not themselves of a spiritual nature, but only an illustration of spiritual things. One who lives merely in the images lives in a dream. Only the one who has come to the point of sensing the spiritual element in the image just as he senses a rose in the physical world through the conception of a rose, really lives in spiritual perceptions. This is the reason why the images of myths cannot be unequivocal. On account of their illustrative character the same myths may express

several spiritual facts. It is therefore not a contradiction when interpreters of myths sometimes connect a myth with one spiritual fact and sometimes with another.

From this standpoint we are able to find a thread to conduct us through the labyrinth of Greek myths. Let us consider the legend of Heracles. The twelve labors imposed upon Heracles appear in a higher light when we remember that before the last and most difficult of these he seeks initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries. He is commissioned by King Eurystheus of Mycenæ to bring the hell-hound Cerberus from the infernal regions and take it back there again. In order to undertake the descent into hell, Heracles had to be initiated. The Mysteries conducted the neophyte through the death of perishable things, that is, into the nether-world; and through initiation they rescued his eternal principle from perdition. As an initiate he could vanquish death; as an initiate he overcomes the dangers of the nether-world. This justifies us in interpreting his other ordeals as stages in the inner development of the soul. He overcomes the Nemæan lion and brings him to Mycenæ. This means that he becomes master of purely physical force in man; he tames it. Afterwards he slays the nine-headed Hydra. He overcomes it with firebrands and dips his arrows in its gall, so that they become deadly. This means that he overcomes lower knowledge derived through the senses.

He does this through the fire of the spirit, and from what he had gained through the lower knowledge he draws the power to look at lower things in the light that belongs to spiritual sight. Heracles captures the hind of Artemis, goddess of the chase: everything nature offers the human soul Heracles makes his own. His other labors may be interpreted in the same way. We cannot here trace out every detail and only wish to show how the general sense of the myth points to inner development.

A similar interpretation is possible of the expedition of the Argonauts. Phrixus and his sister Helle, children of a Bœotian king, suffered much at the hands of their stepmother. The gods sent them a ram with a golden fleece, which bore them through the air. When they passed over the straits between Europe and Asia, Helle was drowned. Hence the strait is called the Hellespont. Phrixus came to Æetes, King of Colchis, on the east shore of the Black Sea. He sacrificed the ram to the gods and gave its fleece to the King, who had it hung up in a grove and guarded by a terrible dragon. The Greek hero Jason undertook to fetch the fleece from Colchis in company with other heroes, Heracles, Theseus, and Orpheus. Æetes laid heavy tasks upon Jason in his effort to obtain the treasure, but the king's daughter Medea, who was versed in magic, aided him. He subdued two fire-

breathing bulls. He ploughed a field and sowed it with dragon's teeth from which armed men grew up out of the earth. On Medea's advice he threw a stone into their midst, whereupon they killed each other. Jason lulls the dragon to sleep with a charm given him by Medea and is then able to obtain the fleece. He leaves with it to return to Greece, Medea accompanying him as his wife. The king pursues the fugitives. In order to detain him, Medea slays her little brother Absyrtus and scatters his severed limbs into the sea. Æetes stops to collect them, and thus the pair are able to reach Jason's home with the fleece.

Each of these incidents requires a deep elucidation. The fleece is something belonging to man, and infinitely precious to him. It is something from which he was sundered in times of yore, and for the recovery of which he has to overcome terrible forces. This is true of the Eternal in the human soul. It belongs to man, but man is separated from it by his lower nature. Only by overcoming the latter, by lulling it to sleep, can he recover the Eternal. This becomes possible when his own consciousness (Medea) comes to his aid with its magic power. Medea is to Jason what Diotima, as a teacher of love, was to Socrates, (*cf.* p. 72). Man's own wisdom has the magic power necessary to attain the Divine after having overcome the transitory. From the lower nature there can only arise a lower human prin-

circle, the armed men who are overcome by spiritual force, the counsel of Medea. Even when man has found his Eternal, the fleece, he is not yet safe. He must sacrifice part of his consciousness (Absyrtus). This is exacted by the physical world which we can only apprehend as a multiple (dismembered) world. We might go still deeper into the description of the spiritual events underlying the images, but it is only intended here to indicate the principle according to which myths originate.

Of special interest, when interpreted in this way, is the legend of Prometheus. He and his brother Epimetheus are sons of the Titan Iapetus. The Titans are the offspring of the oldest generation of gods, Uranus (Heaven) and Gæa (Earth). Kronos, the youngest of the Titans, dethroned his father and seized control of the world. In return, he and the other Titans were overpowered by his son Zeus, who became the chief of the gods. In the struggle with the Titans, Prometheus was on the side of Zeus. By his advice, Zeus banished the Titans to the nether-world. But in Prometheus there still lived the Titan spirit: he was only half a friend to Zeus. When the latter wished to exterminate men on account of their arrogance, Prometheus espoused their cause, taught them the art of numbers, writing, and other things that lead to culture, especially the use of fire. This aroused the wrath of Zeus against

Prometheus. Hephaistos, the son of Zeus, was commissioned to create a female form of great beauty whom the gods adorned with every possible gift. She was called Pandora, the all-gifted one. Hermes, messenger of the gods, took her to Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus. She brought him a casket as a present from the gods. Epimetheus accepted the present although Prometheus had warned him against receiving any gift from the gods. When the casket was opened all sorts of human ills flew out. Hope alone remained, and this because Pandora quickly closed the box. Hope has, therefore, been left to man as a doubtful gift of the gods. By order of Zeus, Prometheus, on account of his relation to man, was chained to a rock in the Caucasus. An eagle perpetually gnaws his liver, which is constantly renewed. He has to pass his life in agonizing loneliness till one of the gods voluntarily sacrifices himself, that is, gives himself up to death. The tormented Prometheus bears his sufferings steadfastly. He had been told that Zeus would be dethroned by the son of a mortal woman unless Zeus consented to wed her. It was important for Zeus to know this secret. He sent the messenger Hermes to Prometheus in order to learn something about it. Prometheus refused to divulge anything.—The legend of Heracles is connected with that of Prometheus. In the course of his wanderings Heracles comes to the

Caucasus. He slays the eagle that was devouring the liver of Prometheus. The centaur Chiron who cannot die, although suffering from an incurable wound, sacrifices himself for Prometheus, who is thereupon reconciled with the gods.

The Titans are the force of will, proceeding as nature (Kronos) from the original universal spirit (Uranus). Here we must think not merely of will-forces in an abstract form, but of actual will-beings. Prometheus is one of them, and this characterizes his nature. But he is not altogether a Titan. In a certain sense he is on the side of Zeus, the Spirit who enters upon the rulership of the world after the unbridled force of nature (Kronos) has been subdued. Prometheus is thus the representative of those worlds that have given man the progressive urge, half nature-force, half spiritual force: will. The will points on the one side towards good, on the other towards evil. Its fate is decided according as it leans toward the spiritual or the perishable. This fate is that of man himself. He is chained to the perishable, the eagle gnaws him, he has to suffer. He can reach the highest only by seeking his destiny in solitude. He has a secret, which is that the Divine (Zeus) must marry a mortal woman (human consciousness bound up with the physical body), in order to beget a son, human wisdom (the *Logos*) that will deliver the deity. By this means consciousness

becomes immortal. He must not betray this secret until an initiate (Heracles) comes to him and eliminates the power that was perpetually threatening him with death. A being half animal, half human, a centaur, is obliged to sacrifice itself to redeem man. The centaur is man himself, half animal, half spiritual. He must die in order that the purely spiritual man may be delivered. That which is disdained by Prometheus (human will) is accepted by Epimetheus (mind, intelligence). But the gifts offered to Epimetheus are only troubles and sorrows, for the mind clings to the transitory and perishable. Only one thing is left--the hope that even out of the perishable the Eternal may some day be born.

The thread running through the legends of the Argonauts, of Heracles, and Prometheus, holds good in Homer's *Odyssey*. The method of interpretation here may seem forced; but on closer consideration of everything which has to be taken into account, even the sturdiest skeptic must cease to doubt. Most startling of all must seem Odysseus' report that he, too, descended into the nether-world. Whatever we may think about the author of the *Odyssey* in other respects, it is impossible to imagine his representing a mortal descending to the infernal regions without bringing him into relation with what the journey into the nether-world meant to the Greek world conception.

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It meant the conquest of the perishable and the awakening of the Eternal in the soul. It must therefore be conceded that Odysseus accomplished this, and thereby his experiences and those of Heracles acquire a deeper significance. They become a delineation of the non-sensuous, of the soul's progress of development. Furthermore, the narrative in the *Odyssey* is not in the manner demanded by a series of outer events. The hero makes voyages in enchanted ships. Actual geographical distances are dealt with in most arbitrary fashion. It is not in the least a question of what is physically real. This becomes comprehensible if the physically real events are only related for the sake of illustrating a spiritual development. Moreover, the poet himself says at the opening of the book that

it deals with a search for the soul: "*O Muse, sing to me of the man full of resource, who wandered very much after he had destroyed the sacred city of Troy, and saw the cities of many men, and learned their manners. Many griefs also in his mind did he suffer on the sea, although seeking to preserve his own soul, and the return of his companions.*"

We have before us a man seeking for the soul, for the Divine, and his wanderings during this search are narrated. He comes to the land of the Cyclops. These are uncouth giants with only one eye, and that in the centre of the forehead. The most terrible, Polyphemus,

devours several of Odysseus' companions. Odysseus himself escapes by blinding the Cyclops. Here we have to do with the first stage of life's pilgrimage. Physical force or the lower nature has to be overcome. It devours any one who does not wrest from it its power, who does not blind it. Odysseus next comes to the island of the enchantress Circe. She changes some of his companions into grunting pigs. She also is subdued by Odysseus. Circe is the lower mind-force that cleaves to the transitory. If misused, it may thrust men down even deeper into bestiality. Odysseus has to overcome it. Then he is able to descend into the nether-world. He becomes a mystic. Now he is exposed to the dangers that beset the mystic on his progress from the lower to the higher degrees of initiation. He comes to the Sirens who lure the passer-by to death by sweet magic sounds. These are the forms of the lower imagination, which are at first pursued by one who has freed himself from the power of the senses. He has achieved freedom of action for his spirit, but not initiation. He pursues illusions from the power of which he must break loose. Odysseus has to accomplish the awful passage between Scylla and Charybdis. The neophyte wavers between spirit and sensuousness. He cannot yet grasp the full significance of spirit, yet sensuousness has already lost its former value. All Odysseus' companions perish in a shipwreck; he alone escapes and comes to the nymph

Calypso, who receives him kindly and takes care of him for seven years. At length, by order of Zeus, she dismisses him to his home. The mystic has arrived at a stage at which all his fellow-aspirants fail; he alone, Odysseus, is worthy. He enjoys for a time, which is defined by the mystically symbolical number seven, the tranquility of gradual initiation. Before Odysseus arrives at his home he comes to the isle of the Phæaces, where he meets with a hospitable reception. The king's daughter gives him sympathy, and the king himself, Alcinous, entertains and honors him. Once more does Odysseus approach the world and its joys, and the spirit that is attached to the world, Nausicaa, awakes within him. But he finds the way home, to the Divine. At first, nothing good awaits him at home. His wife, Penelope, is surrounded by numerous suitors. Each one she promises to marry when she will have finished weaving a certain piece of fabric. She avoids keeping her promise by undoing every night what she has woven by day. Odysseus is obliged to vanquish the suitors before he can be reunited with his wife in peace. The goddess Athene changes him into a beggar so that he may not be recognized on his entrance to his home; he then overcomes the suitors. Odysseus is seeking his own deeper consciousness, the divine powers of the soul. He wishes to be united with them. Before the mystic can find them he must over-

come everything which sues for the favor of that consciousness. The band of suitors springs from the world of lower reality, from perishable nature. The logic applied to them is a spinning of fabric which is always undone again after it has been spun. Wisdom (the goddess Athene) is the sure guide to the deepest forces of the soul. It changes man into a beggar, that is, it divests him of everything of a transitory nature.

Wholly steeped in Mystery wisdom were the Eleusinian Festivals, celebrated in Greece in honor of Demeter and Dionysos. A sacred road led from Athens to Eleusis. It was bordered with mysterious signs intended to bring the soul into an exalted mood. In Eleusis there were mysterious temples served by families of priests. The dignity and the wisdom bound up with this dignity were inherited in these families from generation to generation.* The wisdom that qualified for service was the wisdom of the Greek Mysteries. The festivals, which were celebrated twice a year, presented the great world-drama of the destiny of the Divine in the world, and of that of the human soul. The lesser Mysteries were observed in February, the greater in September. With the festivals, initiations were con-

*Instructive information about the organization of these sanctuaries will be found in Karl Bötticher's *Ergänzungen zu den letzten Untersuchungen auf der Akropolis in Athen*, *Philologus*, Supplement, vol. III, part 3.

nected. The symbolical presentation of the cosmic and human drama formed the final act of the initiations of the mystics that took place here.

The Eleusinian temples had been erected in honor of the goddess Demeter. She was a daughter of Kronos. She had given Zeus a daughter, Persephone, before his marriage with Hera. Once while at play, Persephone was carried away by Pluto, god of the nether-world. Demeter wandered far and wide over the earth, seeking her with lamentations. Sitting on a stone in Eleusis, she was found by the daughters of Keleus, ruler of the place. In the form of an old woman she entered the service of his family, as nurse to the queen's son. She wished to endow this boy with immortality, and for this purpose hid him in the fire every night. When his mother discovered this she wept and lamented. Henceforth the bestowal of immortality was impossible. Demeter left the house. Keleus then built a temple. The grief of Demeter for Persephone was limitless. She spread sterility over the earth. The gods had to appease her in order to prevent a great catastrophe. Thus Zeus induced Pluto to release Persephone into the upper world, but before letting her go he gave her a pomegranate to eat. This obliged her to return periodically to the nether-world. Henceforward she spent a third of the year there, and

two-thirds in the world above. Demeter was appeased and returned to Olympus; but at Eleusis, the place of her suffering, she founded the cult which should keep her fate in remembrance.

It is not difficult to discover the meaning of the myth of Demeter and Persephone. That which lives alternately above and below is the soul. The immortality of the soul and her perpetually recurring transformation by birth and death are presented in pictures. The soul derives from the immortal—Demeter. But she is led astray by the transitory and is even condemned to share its destiny. She has partaken of the fruits of the nether-world: the human soul is satisfied by the transitory, therefore she cannot permanently live in the heights of the Divine. She has always to return to the realm of the perishable. Demeter is the representative of the being out of which human consciousness arose; but we must think of it as the consciousness capable of coming into being through the spiritual forces of the earth. Thus Demeter is the primordial essence of the earth, and her endowment of the earth with the seed-forces of the fruits of the fields points to a still deeper aspect of her being. This being wishes to give man immortality. Demeter hides her nursling in the fire by night. But man cannot bear the pure force of fire (the spirit). Demeter is obliged to abandon the

idea. All she can do is to found a temple service through which man can participate in the Divine to the extent of his ability.

The Eleusinian Festivals were an eloquent confession of the belief in the immortality of the human soul. This confession found pictorial expression in the Persephone myth. Together with Demeter and Persephone, Dionysos was commemorated in Eleusis. Just as Demeter was worshipped as the divine creatress of the Eternal in man, so in Dionysos the ever-changing Divine in the world was venerated. Dionysos, the god, poured into the world and torn to pieces in order to be spiritually reborn, (cf. p. 74) had to be worshipped together with Demeter.*

*A brilliant description of the spirit of the Eleusinian Mysteries is found in Edouard Schuré's book, *Sanctuaires d'Orient*. Paris, 1898.

THE MYSTERY WISDOM OF EGYPT

WHEN leaving thy body behind thee thou soarest
up into the ether,
Then thou becomest a god, immortal, beyond the
power of death.

In this utterance of Empedocles (cf. p. 46) is epitomized what the ancient Egyptians thought about the eternal element in man and its connection with the Divine. Proof of this may be found in the so-called *Book of the Dead*, which has been deciphered by the diligence of nineteenth-century scholars.* It is "the greatest coherent literary work that has come down to us from ancient Egypt." It contains all kinds of instructions and prayers that were put into the tomb of each deceased person to serve as a guide when he was released from his mortal tenement. The most intimate ideas of the Egyptians about the eternal and the origin

* (Cf. Lepsius, *Das Totenbuch der alten Ägypter*, (*The Book of the Dead of the Ancient Egyptians*.) Berlin, 1842).

of the world are contained in this work. These views point to a conception of the gods similar to that of Greek mysticism.

Osiris gradually became the preëminent and most universally recognized of the various deities worshipped in different parts of Egypt. In him were comprized the ideas about the other divinities. Whatever the majority of the Egyptian people may have thought about Osiris, the *Book of the Dead* indicates that the priestly wisdom saw in him a being that might be found in the human soul herself. Everything said about death and the dead shows this plainly. While the body is given to earth and kept by it, the Eternal in man enters upon the path to the primordial Eternal. It comes before the tribunal of Osiris and the forty-two judges of the dead.

The fate of the Eternal in man depends on the verdict of these judges. If the soul has confessed her sins, and has been deemed reconciled to eternal justice, invisible powers approach her and say: "*The Osiris N. has been purified in the pool which is south of the field of Hotep and north of the field of Locusts, where the gods of verdure purify themselves at the fourth hour of the night and the eighth hour of the day with the image of the heart of the gods, passing from night to day.*" Thus, within the eternal cosmic order the Eternal in man is itself addressed as an Osiris. After the name Osiris comes the deceased person's own name; and the

one who is uniting with the eternal cosmic order also calls himself "Osiris". "*I am the Osiris N. Growing under the blossoms of the fig-tree is the name of Osiris N.*" Thus man becomes an Osiris. Being Osiris is only a perfect stage in human development. It seems obvious that even the Osiris who is a judge within the eternal cosmic order is nothing more than a perfect man. Between being human and being divine there is a difference in degree and number. The mystic view of the *mystery of number* underlies this. Osiris as a cosmic being is One, yet he exists, nevertheless, undivided in each human soul. Every human being is an Osiris, yet the One Osiris must be represented as a separate being. Man is in course of development, and at the end of his evolutionary career he becomes divine. In taking this view we must speak of Divine-ness, or becoming divine, rather than of a finished divine being, complete in himself.

~~It cannot be doubted that, according to this view,~~ only he can really enter upon the Osiris existence who has reached the portals of the eternal cosmic order as an Osiris. Thus the highest life which man can lead must consist in his changing himself into Osiris. Even during mortal life a true man will live as a perfect Osiris as far as he can. He becomes perfect when he lives as an Osiris, when he passes through the experiences of Osiris. This lends a deeper significance to the

Osiris myth. It becomes the ideal of the man who wishes to awaken the Eternal within himself.

Osiris is torn to pieces, killed by Typhon. The fragments of his body are preserved and cared for by his consort, Isis. After his death he let a ray of his own light fall upon her, and she bore him Horus. This Horus takes up the earthly tasks of Osiris. He is the second Osiris, still imperfect, but progressing towards the true Osiris.

The true Osiris is in the human soul, who at the outset is of a transitory nature; but as such she is destined to give birth to the Eternal. Man may therefore regard himself as the tomb of Osiris. Man's lower nature (Typhon) has killed his higher nature. Love in his soul (Isis) must nurture the dead fragments of his body, and then the higher nature, the eternal soul (Horus) will be born, who can progress to Osiris-existence. The man aspiring to the highest kind of existence must repeat in himself microcosmically the macrocosmic universal Osiris process. This is the meaning of Egyptian initiation. What Plato (*cf.* p. 66) describes as a cosmic process—that the Creator has stretched the soul of the world on the body of the world in the form of a cross; and that the cosmic process is the redemption of this crucified soul,—this process had to be enacted in man on a smaller scale if he was to be qualified for Osiris-existence. The candidate

for initiation had to develop himself in such a way that his soul-experience, his becoming an Osiris, blended into one with the cosmic Osiris process.

If we could look into the temples of initiation in which people underwent the transformation into Osiris, we should see that what took place represented microcosmically a cosmic genesis. Man who proceeded from the Father was to give birth to the Son in himself. What he actually bears within him, that is, Divinity under a spell, was to become manifest in him. This divinity is kept down in him by the power of the earthly nature; this lower nature must first be buried in order that the higher nature may arise.

This clarifies what we are told about the incidents of initiation. The candidate was subjected to mysterious procedures by means of which his earthly nature was killed and his higher nature awakened. It is not necessary to study these procedures in detail if we understand their meaning. This meaning is contained in the confession possible to everyone who went through initiation. He could say: *"I envisioned the endless perspective at the end of which lies the perfection of the Divine. I felt that the power of this Divine is within me. I buried what keeps down that power in me. I died to earthly things. I was dead. I had died as a lower man; I was in the nether-world."*

I had intercourse with the dead, with those who have already become part of the eternal cosmic order. After my sojourn in the nether-world I arose from the dead. I overcame death, but now I have become a different being. I have nothing more to do with perishable nature. For me this has become saturated with the Logos. I now belong to those who live eternally, and who will sit at the right hand of Osiris. I myself shall be a true Osiris, part of the eternal cosmic order; and the judgment of life and death will be placed in my hands." The candidate for initiation had to submit to the experience which made such a confession possible for him. It was an experience of the highest kind that the neophyte passed through.

Let us now imagine that a non-initiate hears of such experiences. He cannot know what has really taken place in the initiate's soul. In his eyes the initiate died physically, lay in the grave, and rose again. What is a spiritual reality at a higher stage of existence appears, when expressed in the form of sense-reality, as an event which breaks through the order of nature. It is a "miracle". In this sense initiation was a miracle. One who really wished to understand it must have awakened within himself powers to enable him to stand on a higher plane of existence. He must have approached these higher experiences through a course of life specially adapted to that purpose. In whatever

way these prepared experiences took place in individual cases, they are always found to be of quite a definite type; so an initiate's life is a typical one. It may be described quite apart from the single personality. In fact, an individual could only be described as being on the way to the Divine if he had passed through these definite typical experiences.

Such a personality was Buddha, living in the midst of his disciples. Jesus appeared as such a personality to his followers. Nowadays we know of the parallelism that exists between the biographies of Buddha and of Jesus. Rudolf Seydel has convincingly proved this parallelism in his book, Buddha und Christus. We have only to follow out the two lives in detail in order to see that all objections to the parallelism are futile.

The birth of Buddha is announced by a white elephant that descends from heaven and declares to the queen, Maya, that she will bring forth a divine man who "*will attune all beings to love and friendship, and will unite them in a close alliance.*" We read in St. Luke's Gospel: "*To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured. . . . Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest.'*"

The Brahmins, or Indian priests, who know what the birth of a Buddha means, interpret Maya's dream. They have a definite, typical idea of a Buddha, to which the life of the personality about to be born will have to correspond. Similarly we read in Matthew II, 1, that when Herod "had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born." The Brahmin Asita says of Buddha: "This is the child which will become Buddha, the redeemer, the leader to immortality, freedom, and light." Compare with this Luke II, 25: "And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him . . . And when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

It is related of Buddha that at the age of twelve he was lost, and found again under a tree, surrounded by poets and sages of the olden time, whom he was teaching. With this incident the following passage in St.

Luke corresponds: "Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers." (Luke II, 41-47).

After Buddha had lived in solitude and returned, he was received by the benediction of a virgin, "Blessed is thy mother, blessed is thy father, blessed is the wife to whom thou belongest." But he replied, "Only they are blessed who are in Nirvana," that is, who have entered the eternal cosmic order. In St. Luke's Gospel (XI, 27), we read: "And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice and said unto him, 'Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.' But he said, 'Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.'" •

similarities

In the course of Buddha's life, the tempter comes to him and promises him all the kingdoms of the earth. Buddha refuses everything in the words: "I know well that I am destined to have a kingdom, but I do not desire an earthly one. I shall become Buddha and make all the world exult with joy." The tempter has to own that his reign is over. Jesus answers the same temptation in the words: "Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him." (Matthew IV, 10, 11). This description of the parallelism might be extended to many other points with the same result.

The life of Buddha ended sublimely. On a journey, he felt ill; he came to the river Hiranja, near Kushinagara. There he lay down on a carpet which his favorite disciple, Ananda, spread for him. His body began to be luminous from within. He died transfigured, his body irradiating light, saying: "Nothing endures."

The death of Buddha corresponds with the transfiguration of Jesus. "And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening."

Buddha's earthly life ends at this point, but it is

here that the most important part of the life of Jesus begins—His suffering, death, and resurrection. What differentiates Buddha from Christ exists in the conditions necessitating the extension of the life of Christ Jesus beyond the scope of the Buddha life. Buddha and Christ will not be understood by merely mixing them. (This will become clear in the course of this book.)

Other accounts of Buddha's death need not here be considered, even though they reveal profound aspects.

The agreement in the lives of the two redeemers leads to the same conclusion. The narratives themselves indicate the nature of this conclusion. When the priest-sages hear what kind of birth is to take place, they know what is involved. They know that they have to do with a God-Man; they know beforehand what kind of personality it is who is appearing. And therefore his course of life can only correspond with what they know about the life of a God-Man. In the wisdom of their Mysteries such a life is traced out for all eternity. It can only be as it must be; it comes into manifestation like an eternal law of nature. Just as a chemical substance can only behave in a certain definite way, so a Buddha or a Christ can only live in a certain definite way. His life is not described merely by writing a fortuitous biography, but by giving its typical features that are contained for all time in the wisdom of the Mysteries. The Buddha legend is no

more a biography in the ordinary sense than the Gospels are meant to be a biography of the Christ Jesus in the ordinary sense. In neither is the merely accidental given; both relate the course of life marked out for a world-redeemer. The pattern of the two accounts is to be found in the Mystery traditions, not in outer physical history. Jesus and Buddha are, to those who have recognized their divine nature, initiates in the most eminent sense. (Jesus is the initiate by virtue of the Christ Being dwelling in Him.) Hence their lives are lifted out of things transitory, and what is known about initiates applies to them. The fortuitous incidents in their lives are not narrated, but rather it is said of them:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a God . . . And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." (St. John I, 1 and 14).

But the life of Jesus contains more than does the life of Buddha. Buddha's life ends with the transfiguration; the most momentous part of the life of Jesus begins after the transfiguration. In the language of initiates this means that Buddha reached the point at which divine light begins to shine in men. He faces mortal death. He becomes the light of the world. Jesus goes farther. He does not physically die at the moment when the light of the world shines through

him. At that moment he is a Buddha. But at that very moment he enters upon a stage which finds expression in a higher degree of initiation. He suffers and dies. What is earthly disappears. But the spiritual element, the light of the world, does not. His resurrection follows. He is revealed to his followers as Christ. Buddha, at the moment of his transfiguration, dissolves into the blissful life of the universal spirit. Christ Jesus once more calls the universal spirit into present existence in human form. Such an event had formerly taken place at the higher stages of initiation in a symbolical sense. Those initiated in the spirit of the Osiris myth attained in their consciousness to such a resurrection as a symbolical experience. (In the life of Jesus, this "great" initiation was added to the Buddha initiation, not as a symbolical experience, but as reality.) Buddha demonstrated by his life that man is the *Logos*, and that he returns to the *Logos*, to the light, when his earthly part dies. In Jesus, the *Logos* itself became a person. In Him, the Word was made flesh.

Therefore, what was enacted in the innermost recesses of the temples by the guardians of the ancient Mysteries has been apprehended through Christianity as a historical fact. The followers of Christ Jesus confessed their belief in Him, the initiate; in Him who was initiated in a manner unique in its magnitude.

He proved to them that the world is divine. In the Christian community the wisdom of the Mysteries was indissolubly bound up with the personality of Christ Jesus. That which man previously had sought to attain through the Mysteries was now replaced by the belief that Christ had lived on earth, and that the faithful belonged to him.

Henceforward, part of what was formerly only to be gained through mystic methods could be replaced in the Christian community by the conviction that the Divine had been manifested in the Word present among them. Not that for which each individual soul underwent a long preparation was now alone decisive, but what those had heard and seen who were with Jesus, and what was handed down by them. *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which . . . our hands have handled, of the Word of Life . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us."* Thus do we read in the first Epistle of St. John. And this immediate reality is to embrace all future generations in a living bond of union, and as a church is mystically to extend from race to race. It is in this sense that the words of St. Augustine are to be understood, *"I should not believe the Gospels unless the authority of the Catholic Church induced me to do so."* Thus the Gospels do not contain within them-

selves testimony to their truth, but they are to be believed because they are founded on the personality of Jesus, and because the Church from that personality mysteriously draws the power to make the truth of the Gospels manifest.

The Mysteries handed down traditionally the means of arriving at truth; the Christian community propagates truth itself. To the confidence in the mystical forces that spring up in the inmost being of man during initiation was to be added the confidence in the One, in the primordial Initiator.

The mystics sought to become divine, they wished to experience divinity. Jesus was divine, we must hold fast to Him, and then we shall become partakers of His divinity in the community founded by Him—this became Christian conviction. What was divine in Jesus became so for all His followers. *"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."* (St. Matthew, XXVIII, 20). The one who was born in Bethlehem has an eternal character. The Christmas anthem rightly sings of the birth of Jesus as if it took place each Christmas: *"Christ is born to-day, the Saviour has come into the world to-day, today the angels are singing on earth."*

In the Christ-experience we should recognize a definite stage of initiation. When the mystic of pre-Christian times passed through this Christ-experience

he was, through his initiation, in a state that enabled him to perceive something spiritually—in higher worlds—to which no fact in the world of sense corresponded. He experienced in the higher world what the Mystery of Golgotha comprises. Now, when the Christian mystic goes through this experience by initiation he at the same time beholds the historical event that took place on Golgotha, and he knows that in that event, enacted within the physical world, there is the same content that existed formerly only in the supersensible facts of the Mysteries. Thus there was poured out on the Christian community, through the Mystery of Golgotha, that which formerly had been poured out on the mystics within the temples. And initiation gives Christian mystics the possibility of discerning what is contained in the Mystery of Golgotha, whereas faith makes man an unconscious partaker of the mystical stream which flowed from the events depicted in the New Testament, and which has ever since pervaded the spiritual life of humanity.

VII

THE GOSPELS

THE ACCOUNTS of the life of Jesus that can be submitted to historical examination are contained in the Gospels. All that does not come from this source might, in the opinion of one of those who are considered the greatest historical authorities on the subject (Harnack), be "easily written on a quarto page."

But what kind of documents are these Gospels? The fourth, that of St. John, differs so much from the others that those who think themselves obliged to follow the path of historical research in order to study the subject come to the conclusion: "*If John possesses the genuine tradition about the life of Jesus, that of the first three Evangelists (the Synoptists) is untenable. If the Synoptists are right, the Fourth Gospel must be rejected as a historical source*".* This is a statement made from the standpoint of historical research.

*Otto Schmiedel, *Die Hauptprobleme der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, (*The Main Problems of Research into the Life of Jesus*), p. 15.

In the present work, in which we are dealing with the mystical contents of the Gospels, such a point of view is to be neither accepted nor rejected. But attention must certainly be drawn to such an opinion as the following: "*Measured by the standard of agreement, inspiration, and completeness, these writings leave very much to be desired; and even measured by the ordinary human standard they suffer from not a few imperfections.*" This is the opinion of a Christian theologian.*

One who takes his stand on a mystical origin of the Gospels easily finds an explanation of what is apparently contradictory, and also discovers harmony between the fourth Gospel and the three others. For none of these writings are meant to be mere historical tradition in the ordinary sense of the word. They do not profess to give a historical biography (*cf.* p. 113 *et seq.*). What they intended to give had always existed as a prototype in the traditions of the Mysteries, as the typical life of a Son of God. It was these traditions which were drawn upon, not history. Now, it was only natural that these traditions should not be in complete verbal agreement in every Mystery center. Still, the agreement was so close that the Buddhists narrated the

*Harnack, *Wesen des Christentums*, (*The Essential Nature of Christianity*).

life of their God-Man almost in the same way in which the Evangelists narrated the life of Christ. But naturally there were differences. We have only to assume that the four Evangelists drew from four different Mystery traditions. It testifies to the exalted personality of Jesus that in four writers, belonging to different traditions, he awakened the belief that he was one who so perfectly corresponded with their type of an initiate that they were able to describe him as one who lived the typical life marked out in their Mysteries. For the rest they each described his life according to their own mystic traditions. And if the narratives of the first three Evangelists resemble each other, it proves nothing more than that they drew from similar Mystery traditions. The fourth Evangelist saturated his Gospel with ideas reminiscent of the religious philosopher Philo (*cf.* p. 68). This only proves that he was rooted in the same mystic tradition as Philo.

There are various elements in the Gospels. First: facts are related that seem to lay claim to historicity; Second: there are parables in which the narrative form is used only to symbolize a deeper truth. And third: there are teachings characteristic of the Christian conception of life. In St. John's Gospel there is contained no actual parable. The source from which he drew was a Mystery school which considered parables unnecessary.

The part played by ostensibly historical facts and parables in the first three Gospels is clearly shown in the narrative of the cursing of the fig tree. In St. Mark XI, 11-14, we read: "*And He (Jesus) entered into Jerusalem, into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, it being now eventide, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve. And on the morrow, when they were come out from Bethany, he hungered. And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon; and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for it was not the season of figs. And He answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit from thee henceforth forever.*" In the corresponding passage, St. Luke relates a parable (XIII, 6, 7): "*He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the vine dresser, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why doth it also cumber the ground?*" This is a parable symbolizing the uselessness of the old teaching, represented by the barren fig tree. That which is meant metaphorically, St. Mark relates as a fact appearing to be historical. We may therefore assume that no facts related in the Gospels are to be taken as historical, as if they were only to hold good in the physical world, but as mystical

facts; as experiences for the recognition of which spiritual vision is necessary, and which arise from various Mystery traditions. If we admit this, the difference between the Gospel of St. John and the Synoptists ceases to exist. Historical research does not enter into mystical interpretation. Even if one or another Gospel were written a few decades earlier or later than the others, they are all of equal historical value to the mystic, St. John's Gospel as well as the others.

And the "miracles"⁸ do not present the least difficulty when interpreted mystically. They are supposed to break the laws of nature. They do this only when they are assumed to be events which have come about in such a way on the physical plane, in the perishable world, that ordinary sense perception could have seen through them without difficulty. But if they are experiences which can only be fathomed in a higher state of existence, namely the spiritual, it is obvious that they cannot be understood by means of the laws of physical nature.

It is thus first of all necessary to read the Gospels correctly; then we shall know in what way they are speaking of the Founder of Christianity. Their intention is to narrate in the manner in which communications were made through the Mysteries. They narrate in the way a mystic would speak of an initiate. Only, they give the initiation as a unique peculiarity of a

single, unique Being. And they make the salvation of humanity depend on man's holding fast to the initiate of this singular order. What had come to the initiates was the "Kingdom of God." This unique Being has brought the Kingdom to all who will cleave to Him. What was formerly the personal concern of each individual has become the common concern of all those who are willing to acknowledge Jesus as their Lord.

We can understand how this came about if we admit that the wisdom of the Mysteries was imbedded in the folk-religion of the Israelites. Christianity arose out of Judaism. We need not, therefore, be surprised at finding those Mystery conceptions engrafted on Judaism with Christianity, those Mystery conceptions which we have seen to be the common possession of Greek and Egyptian spiritual life. If we examine folk-religions we find various conceptions of the spiritual; but if, in each case, we go back to the deeper wisdom of the priests, which proves to be the spiritual nucleus of them all, we find agreement everywhere. Plato knows himself to be in agreement with the priest-sages of Egypt when he is trying to set forth the core of Greek wisdom in his philosophical view of the universe. It is related of Pythagoras that he travelled to Egypt and India, and was instructed by the sages in those countries. Thinkers who lived in the earlier days of Christianity found so much agreement between the

philosophical teachings of Plato and the deeper meaning of the Mosaic writings that they called Plato a Moses with Attic tongue.

Thus, Mystery wisdom existed everywhere. From Judaism it acquired a form which it had to assume if it was to become a world-religion.

Judaism awaited the Messiah. It is not to be wondered at that when the personality of a unique initiate appeared, the Jews could only conceive of him as being the Messiah. Indeed, this circumstance throws light on the fact that what had been an individual matter in the Mysteries became an affair of the whole people. The Jewish religion had from the beginning been a folk religion. The Jewish people looked upon itself as a single organism. Its Jao was the God of the whole people. If the Son were to be born, He must be the redeemer of the whole people. The individual mystic was not to be saved apart from others, the whole people was to share in the redemption. One of the basic assumptions of the Jewish religion is that one shall die for all.

It is also certain that there were Mysteries in Judaism which could be brought out of the obscurity of a secret cult into the folk religion. A fully-developed mysticism existed side by side with the priestly wisdom attached to the outer formalism of the Pharisees. This Mystery wisdom is spoken of among the Jews just as

it is elsewhere. Once when an initiate was proclaiming it, and his hearers sensed the secret meaning of the words, they said: "*Old man, what hast thou done? Oh, that thou hadst kept silence! Thou thinkest to navigate the boundless ocean without sail or mast. That is what thou art attempting. Wilt thou rise upwards? Thou canst not. Wilt thou descend into the depths? An immeasurable abyss yawns before thee.*" And the Kabbalists, from whom the above is taken, also speak of four Rabbis; and these four Rabbis sought the secret path to the Divine. The first died; the second lost his reason; the third caused monstrous evils; and only the fourth, Rabbi Akiba, entered the spiritual world in peace and left in peace.

We thus see that within Judaism as elsewhere there was a soil in which a unique initiate could develop. He had only to say to himself: I will not let salvation be limited to a few chosen people. I will let all people participate in it. He was to carry out into the world at large what the elect had experienced in the temples of the Mysteries. He had willingly to assume the responsibility of representing, through the spirit of his personality, what formerly the Mystery cults meant to their adherents. It is true, He could not at once give to the whole community the experiences of the Mysteries, nor could He have wished to do so. But what He wanted to give to all was the certainty of what the

Mysteries regarded as truth. He wished to cause the life that flowed within the Mysteries to flow through the further historical evolution of humanity, and thus to raise mankind to a higher stage of existence: "*Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*" He wished to plant unshakably in human hearts, in the form of confidence, the certainty that the Divine really exists. One who stands outside initiation and has this confidence will surely go further than one who is without it. It must have weighed like a mountain on the mind of Jesus that there might be many standing outside who do not find the way. He wished to lessen the gulf between those to be initiated and "the people". Christianity was to be a means by which every one might find the way. Should one or another not yet be ripe, he is, at any rate, not cut off from the possibility of sharing, more or less unconsciously, in the benefit of the spiritual current flowing through the Mysteries. "*The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*" Henceforward even those who cannot yet share in initiation may enjoy some of the fruits of the Mysteries. Henceforth the Kingdom of God was not to be dependent on outward ceremonies; "*Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.*" With Jesus the point in question was not so much how far this or that person advanced in the kingdom of the

spirit as that all should be convinced that this kingdom exists. *"In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."* That is, put your faith in the Divine. The time will come when you shall find it.

THE LAZARUS MIRACLE

AMONGST the miracles attributed to Jesus, very special importance must be attached to the raising of Lazarus at Bethany. Everything combines to assign a prominent position in the New Testament to that which is here related by the Evangelist. We must bear in mind that St. John alone relates it, the Evangelist who by the weighty words with which he opens his Gospel challenges a very definite interpretation of it.

St. John begins with these sentences: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a God. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, a glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."*

One who introduces his narrative with words of that sort points clearly to his intention to be interpreted in a very deep sense. The man who approaches it with merely intellectual explanations, or otherwise in a superficial way, is like one who thinks that Othello

really murders Desdemona on the stage. What is it, then, that St. John means by his introductory words? He says plainly that he is speaking of something Eternal, of something that existed at the beginning of things. He relates facts, but they are not to be taken as facts observed by the eye and ear, and upon which logical reason exercises its skill. He hides the *Word*, dwelling in cosmic spirit, behind the facts. For him the facts are the medium in which a higher meaning is expressed. And we may therefore assume that in the fact of a man being raised from the dead, a fact which offers the greatest difficulties to the eye, ear, and logical reason, the very deepest meaning lies concealed.

Another point must be taken into consideration. Renan in his *Life of Jesus* has pointed out that the raising of Lazarus undoubtedly had a decisive influence on the end of the life of Jesus. Such a thought appears impossible from the point of view Renan takes. For why should the spreading popular belief that Jesus had raised a man from the dead appear to his opponents so dangerous that they asked the question: "Can Jesus and Judaism exist side by side?" It does not do to assert with Renan: "The other miracles of Jesus were passing events, repeated in good faith and exaggerated by popular report, and they were forgotten after they had happened. But this one was a real event, publicly known, and by means of which it

was sought to silence the Pharisees. All the enemies of Jesus were exasperated by the sensation it caused. It is related that they sought to kill Lazarus." It is incomprehensible why this should be so if Renan were right in his opinion that all that happened at Bethany was the staging of a mock scene intended to strengthen belief in Jesus. "Perhaps Lazarus, still pale from his illness, had himself wrapped in a shroud and laid in the family grave. These tombs were large rooms hewn out of the rock and entered by a square opening that was closed by an immense slab. Martha and Mary hastened to meet Jesus and brought him to the grave before he had entered Bethany. The painful emotion felt by Jesus at the grave of the friend whom he believed to be dead (John XI, 33, 38) might be taken by those present for the agitation and tremors that were wont to accompany miracles. According to popular belief, divine power in a man was like an epileptic and convulsive element. Continuing the above hypothesis, Jesus wished to see once more the man he had loved and, the stone having been rolled away, Lazarus came forth in his shroud, his head bound with a napkin. This apparition naturally was looked upon by every one as a resurrection. Faith knows no other law than that which it holds to be true." Does not such an explanation appear positively naïve when Renan adds the following opinion: "Everything seems to suggest

that the miracle of Bethany materially contributed to hasten the death of Jesus"? Yet there is undoubtedly an accurate perception underlying this last assertion of Renan. But with the means at his disposal he is not able to interpret or justify his opinion.

Something of quite special importance must have been accomplished by Jesus at Bethany, if such words as the following are to be accounted for: "*Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, 'What do we? for this man doeth many miracles'*" (John XI, 47). Renan, too, conjectures something special: "*It must be acknowledged,*" he says, "*that John's narrative is of an essentially different kind from the accounts of miracles of which the Synoptists are full, and which are the outcome of popular imagination. Let us add that John is the only Evangelist with accurate knowledge of the relations of Jesus with the family at Bethany, and that it would be incomprehensible that a creation of the popular mind could have occurred within the frame of such personal reminiscences. It is therefore probable that the miracle in question was not among the wholly legendary ones, for which no one is responsible. In other words, I think that something took place at Bethany which could pass as a resurrection.*" Does not this really mean that Renan surmises the occurrence of something at Bethany which he cannot explain? He entrenches him-

self behind the words: "*At this distance of time and with only one text, bearing obvious traces of subsequent additions, it is impossible to decide whether, in the present case, all is fiction, or whether a real event that happened at Bethany served as the basis of the report that was spread abroad.*" Might it not be that we have to do here with something of which we could arrive at a true understanding merely by reading the text in the right way? In that case, we should perhaps no longer speak of "fiction".

It must be admitted that the whole narrative of this event in St. John's Gospel is wrapped in a mysterious veil. To show this we need only mention one point. If the narrative is to be taken in the literal, physical sense, what meaning have these words of Jesus: "*This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*" This is the usual translation of the words, but the actual state of the case is better arrived at if they are translated, "*for the revelation of God, that the Son of God might be manifested thereby.*" This translation is also correct according to the Greek original. And what would these other words mean: "*Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live*"? (John XI, 4, 25.) It would be a triviality to think Jesus meant to say that Lazarus had only become ill in order that

He—Jesus—might manifest His skill through him. And it would again be a triviality to think Jesus meant to assert that faith in Him brings to life again one who is dead in the ordinary sense. What would be remarkable about a person who has risen from the dead, if after his resurrection he were the same being he was before dying? Indeed, what would be the meaning of describing the life of such a person in the words: "*I am the resurrection and the life*"? Life and meaning at once permeate the words of Jesus if we understand them as the expression of a spiritual occurrence, and then, in a certain sense, even literally as they stand in the text. Jesus actually says that He is the resurrection that has happened to Lazarus, and that He is the life that Lazarus is living.

Let us take literally what Jesus is in St. John's Gospel. He is "*the Word that was made flesh*". He is the Eternal that existed in the beginning. If He is really the resurrection, then the Eternal, Primordial has risen again in Lazarus. We have, therefore, to do with a resurrection of the Eternal Word, and this Word is the Life to which Lazarus has been raised. It is a case of illness, not one, however, leading to death but to the glory, that is, the manifestation, of God. If the Eternal Word has been resurrected in Lazarus, the whole event really serves to manifest God in Lazarus. For by means of the event Lazarus has become a dif-

ferent man. Previously the Word, or Spirit, did not live in him; now it does. The Spirit has been born in him. It is true that every birth is accompanied by illness, that of the mother; but the illness leads to new life, not to death. In Lazarus, that part of him becomes ill from which the new man, permeated by the Word, is born.

Where is the grave from which the Word is born? To answer this question we have only to remember Plato, who calls man's body the tomb of the soul. And we have only to recall Plato's speaking of a kind of resurrection when he alludes to the coming to life of the spiritual world in the body. What Plato calls the *spiritual-soul*, St. John denominates the *Word*. And for him, Christ is the Word. Plato might have said: One who becomes spiritual has caused something divine to rise out of the grave of his body. For St. John, that which took place through the life of Jesus was that resurrection. It is not surprising, therefore, if he has Jesus say: "*I am the resurrection.*"

There can be no doubt that the occurrence at Bethany was an awakening in the spiritual sense. Lazarus became something different from what he was before. He was raised to a life of which the Eternal Word could say: "*I am that Life.*" What, then, took place in Lazarus? The Spirit came to life within him. He became a partaker of the Life which is eternal. We

have only to express his experience in the words of those who were initiated into the Mysteries, and the meaning at once becomes clear. What does Plutarch (cf. p. 24 *et seq.*) say about the object of the Mysteries? That they served to withdraw the soul from bodily life and to unite it with the gods. Schelling describes the feelings of an initiate thus:

"The initiate through his initiation became a link in the magic chain, he himself became a Kabir. He was admitted into an indissoluble union and, as ancient inscriptions express it, joined to the army of the higher gods."*** And the revulsion that took place in the life of the one who received initiation cannot be more significantly described than in the words spoken by Aedesius to his disciple, the Emperor Constantine: *"If one day thou shouldst take part in the Mysteries, thou wilt feel ashamed of having been born merely as a man."*

If we fill our souls with such feelings as these, we shall gain the right attitude towards the event that took place at Bethany and have a very special experience through St. John's narrative. A certainty will dawn upon us which cannot be obtained by any logical interpretation or by any attempt at rationalistic

*Cf. Notes.

**Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*.

explanation. A Mystery in the true sense of the word is before us. The Eternal Word entered into Lazarus. In the language of the Mysteries, he became an initiate (*vide p. 107 et seq.*), and the event narrated to us must be the process of initiation.

Let us look upon the whole occurrence as though it were an initiation. Lazarus is loved by Jesus (John XI, 36). No ordinary affection can be meant by this for it would be contrary to the spirit of St. John's Gospel, in which Jesus is the Word. Jesus loved Lazarus because he found him ripe for the awakening of the Word within him. Jesus had relations with the family at Bethany. This only means that Jesus had made everything ready in that family for the final act of the drama, the raising of Lazarus. The latter was a disciple of Jesus, such a one that Jesus could be quite sure that in him the awakening would be consummated. The final act in a drama of awakening consisted in a symbolical action, unveiling the spirit. The person involved in it had not only to understand the words, *"Die and become!"* He had to fulfill them himself by a spiritually real action. His earthly part, of which in the spirit of the Mysteries his higher being must be ashamed, had to be put away. The earthly must die a symbolic-real death. The putting of his body into a somnambulant sleep for three days can only be denoted as an outer event in comparison with the

greatness of the transformation taking place in him. An incomparably more momentous spiritual event corresponded to it. But this very process was the experience which divides the life of the mystic into two parts. One who does not know from experience the higher significance of such acts cannot understand them. They can only be suggested by means of a comparison.

The substance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* may be compressed into a few words. Anyone who learns these words may say in a certain sense that he knows the contents of *Hamlet*; and logically he does. But one who has let all the wealth of the Shakespearian drama stream in upon him knows *Hamlet* in a different way. A life content has passed through his soul which cannot be replaced by any mere description. The *Hamlet* concept has become an artistic, personal experience within him.

On a higher plane of consciousness, a similar process takes place in man when he experiences the magically significant event which is bound up with initiation. What he attains spiritually, he lives through symbolically. The word "symbolically" is used here in the sense that an outer event is really enacted on the physical plane, but that as such it, nevertheless, remains a picture. It is not a case of an unreal, but of a real picture. The earthly body has really been dead for three days. New life comes forth from death. This life has

outlived death. Man has gained confidence in the new life.

That is what happened to Lazarus. Jesus had prepared him for resurrection. His illness was at once symbolic and real, an illness which was an initiation, and which leads, after three days, to a really new life.*

Lazarus was ripe for undergoing this experience. He wrapped himself in the garment of the mystic and fell into a condition of lifelessness which was symbolic death. And when Jesus came, the three days had elapsed. "*Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, 'Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me'*" (John XI, 41). The Father had heard Jesus, for Lazarus had reached the final act in the great drama of knowledge. He had learned how resurrection is attained. An initiation into the Mysteries had been consummated. It was an initiation such as the whole of Antiquity had envisioned. It had taken place through Jesus, as the initiator. It was thus that union with the Divine had always been conceived of.

In Lazarus Jesus accomplished the great miracle of

*What has here been described refers to the ancient initiations that actually called for a sleep condition lasting three days. Genuine modern initiation does not demand this—in fact, it leads to a heightened consciousness; and ordinary consciousness is never obscured during the drama of initiation.

the transmutation of life in the sense of immemorial tradition. This constitutes a link connecting Christianity with the Mysteries. Lazarus had become an initiate through Christ Jesus Himself, and had thereby become able to enter the higher worlds. He was at once the first Christian initiate and the one initiated by Christ Jesus Himself. Through his initiation he had become capable of recognizing that the Word which had been awakened within him had become a person in Christ Jesus, and that consequently there stood before him in the personality of his awakener the same force which had been spiritually manifested within him. From this point of view these words of Jesus are significant: "*And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.*" (St. John, XI, 42). The point is to make evident that in Jesus lives the Son of the Father in such a way that when He awakens His own nature in man, man becomes an initiate. In this way Jesus made it plain that the meaning of life was hidden in the Mysteries and that they were the path to its understanding. He is the living Word; in Him was personified what had been immemorial tradition. And therefore the Evangelist is justified in expressing this in the sentence: "*in Him the Word was made flesh.*" He rightly sees in Jesus Himself an incarnated Mystery. On

this account St. John's Gospel is a Mystery. In order to read it rightly we must bear in mind that the facts are spiritual facts. If a priest of the old order had written it he would have described traditional rites. These for St. John took the form of a person and became the life of Jesus.

When an eminent modern scholar* says of the Mysteries that "*they will never be cleared up*", this merely means that he has not found the path to enlightenment. If we take the Gospel of St. John and see in it the working out, in symbolic-corporeal reality, of the drama of knowledge presented by the ancients, we are really gazing upon the Mystery itself.

In the words, "*Lazarus, come forth,*" we can recognize the call with which the Egyptian priestly initiators summoned those back to everyday life who submitted to the exalting processes of initiation in order to die to earthly things and to gain a conviction of the reality of the Eternal. And thereby Jesus had revealed the secret of the Mysteries. It is easy to understand that the Jews could not let such an act go unpunished, any more than the Greeks could have refrained from punishing Æschylus, had he betrayed the secrets of the Mysteries.

The main point for Jesus was to demonstrate in

*Burkhardt, *Die Zeit Konstantins.*

the initiation of Lazarus, before all "*the people which stood by,*" an event which in the old days of priestly wisdom could only be enacted in the recesses of the Mystery-temples. [The initiation of Lazarus was intended to prepare the way for an understanding of the Mystery of Golgotha.] Previously, only those who saw—that is to say, who were initiated—were conversant with the nature of such an initiation; but from now on, insight into the secrets of the higher worlds was to be opened up as well to those who "*had not seen, and yet had believed*".

THE APOCALYPSE OF ST. JOHN

AT THE END of the New Testament stands a remarkable document, the Apocalypse, the Secret Revelation of St. John. We have only to read the opening words to feel the deep mystic character of this book. "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants how the necessary things are shortly going to happen; and this is sent in signs by the angel of God unto his servant John.*" What is here revealed is "sent in signs". Therefore we must not take the literal meaning of the words as they stand, but seek for a deeper meaning of which the words are only signs. But there are other things also which point to a hidden meaning. St. John addresses himself to seven churches in Asia. Not actual, material churches can be meant: the number seven is the sacred number, clearly chosen on account of its symbolic meaning. The actual number of Asiatic churches was different. And the manner in which St. John arrived at the revelation also points to some-

thing mysterious. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, 'What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches.'" Thus, we have to do with a revelation received by St. John in the spirit. And it is the revelation of Jesus Christ. Wrapped in a hidden meaning, there appears what Christ Jesus manifested to the world. Therefore we must look for this hidden meaning in the teachings of Christ. This revelation bears the same relation to ordinary Christianity as the revelation of the Mysteries bore to popular religion in pre-Christian times. On this account the attempt to treat the Apocalypse as a Mystery appears to be justified.

The Apocalypse is addressed to seven churches. To see the reason for this, we have only to single out one of the seven messages sent. In the first of these it is said: "*Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; these things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast*

left thy highest love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the best works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." This is the message addressed to the angel of the first community. The angel, who represents the spirit of this community, has entered upon the path pointed out by Christianity. He is able to distinguish between the false adherents of Christianity and the true. He wishes to be Christian and has founded his work on the name of Christ. But it is required of him that he should not bar his own way to the highest love through any errors. He is shown the possibility of taking a wrong course through such errors. Through Christ Jesus the way for attaining to the Divine has been pointed out. Perseverance is needed for advancing further in the spirit in which the first impulse was given. It is also possible to believe too soon that one has grasped the right spirit. This happens when the disciple lets himself be led a short way by Christ and then leaves His leadership and gives way to false ideas about it. The disciple thereby falls back again

into the lower self. He strays from the highest love. The knowledge attached to the senses and intellect may be raised into a higher sphere, becoming wisdom by being spiritualized and made divine. If it does not reach this height it remains in the realm of the perishable. Christ Jesus has pointed the path to the Eternal, and knowledge must with unwearied perseverance follow the path that leads to its becoming divine. Lovingly must it trace out the methods which transmute it into wisdom. The Nicolaitanes were a sect who took Christianity too lightly. They saw one thing only, that Christ is the divine Word, the eternal wisdom born in man. Therefore they concluded that human wisdom was the Divine Word, and that it was enough to pursue human knowledge in order to realize the Divine in the world. But the meaning of Christian wisdom cannot be construed thus. The knowledge which in the first instance is human wisdom is as perishable as anything else, unless it is first transmuted into divine wisdom. Thou art not thus, says the spirit to the angel of Ephesus; thou hast not relied merely upon human wisdom. Thou hast patiently trodden the Christian path. But thou must not think that the very highest love is not needed to attain to the goal. A love is necessary which far surpasses all love for other things. Only such can be the highest love. The path to the divine is an endless one, and it must be understood

that when the first step has been gained it can only be the preparation for ascending higher and higher. Such is the first of these messages, as they are to be interpreted. The meaning of the others may be found in a similar way.

St. John turned and saw "*seven golden candlesticks,*" and "*in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire.*" We are told (I, 20) that "*the seven candlesticks are the seven churches.*" This means that the candlesticks are seven different ways of attaining to the Divine. They are all more or less imperfect. And the Son of Man "*had in his right hand seven stars*" (I, 16). "*The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches*" (I, 20). The guiding spirits, or *daimons* (cf. p. 71), of the wisdom of the Mysteries have here become the guiding angels of the churches. The churches are represented as bodies for spiritual beings; and the angels are the souls of those bodies, just as human souls are the guiding powers of human bodies. The churches are the imperfect ways to the Divine, and the souls of the churches were to become guides along those paths. For this purpose they must themselves have for their leader the being who has in his right hand seven stars.

"And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." This sword is also found in the Mysteries. The candidate for initiation was terrified by a sword (cf. p. 17). This indicates the situation of one who wishes to know the Divine by experience, so that the face of wisdom may shine upon him like the sun. St. John also goes through this experience. It is to be a test of his strength (cf. p. 17). "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not" (I. 17). The candidate for initiation must pass through the experiences which otherwise man only undergoes in death. His guide must lead him beyond the region in which birth and death have any meaning. The initiate enters upon a new life. "And I was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

Thus prepared, St. John is led on to learn the secrets of existence. "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." The messages to the seven spirits of the churches make known to St. John what is to take place in the physical world in order to prepare the way for Christianity. What he now sees

"in the Spirit" takes him to the spiritual fountain-head of things, hidden behind physical evolution, but to be realized as a subsequent spiritualized age by means of physical evolution. The initiate experiences now in the spirit what is to happen in the future. "And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." In this way is described the source of the world of sense in the pictures in which it appears to the seer. "And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold" (IV. 4). Beings far advanced on the path of wisdom thus surround the fountain-head of existence in order to gaze on its infinite Beingness and bear testimony to it. "And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings; and they were full of eyes round about and within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." It is

not difficult to see that the four beasts represent the supersensible life underlying physical forms of life. Afterwards, when the trumpets sound, they lift up their voices, that is, when the life expressed in sense-forms has been transmuted into spiritual life.

In the right hand of him who sits on the throne is the book in which the path to the highest wisdom is traced out (V, 1). There is only one worthy to open the book. "*Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof.*" The book has seven seals—human wisdom is sevenfold; and the fact that human wisdom is represented as being sevenfold is again associated with the sacred character of the number seven.* The mystic wisdom of Philo designates as seals the eternal cosmic thoughts that come to expression in things. Human wisdom seeks those creative thoughts; but only in the book sealed with them is Divine Truth to be found. First the fundamental thoughts of creation must be unveiled, the seals opened, before that which is in the book can be revealed. Jesus, the Lion, has power to open the seals. He has given a direction to the great creative thoughts which, through them, leads to wisdom. The Lamb that was slain and has bought its divinity with its blood, Jesus,

*Cf. Notes.

who received the Christ into Himself, and who thus passed through the Life-Death Mystery in the supreme sense, opens the book (V, 9, 10). And as each seal is opened (VI), the four beasts declare what they know.

At the opening of the first seal, St. John sees a white horse on which sits a rider with a bow.* The first universal power, an embodiment of creative thought, becomes visible. It is directed into the right course by the new rider, Christianity. Strife is allayed by the new faith. At the opening of the second seal a red horse appears, ridden by one who takes Peace, the second universal power, away from the earth, so that humanity may not, through sloth, neglect to cultivate divine things. The opening of the third seal shows the universal power of Justice, guided by Christianity. The fourth discloses the power of Religion which, through Christianity, has received new authority.

The meaning of the four beasts thus becomes plain. They are the four chief universal powers, to which Christianity gives a new direction: War (the lion); Peaceful Work (the bull); Justice (the being with the human face); and Religious Ardor (the eagle). The meaning of the third being becomes clear when it is said at the opening of the third seal: "*A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a*

*Cf. Notes.

penny," and that the rider holds "a pair of balances". And at the opening of the fourth seal a rider becomes visible whose name "was Death, and Hell followed with him". This rider is Religious Justice (VI, 6, 8). When the fifth seal is opened there appear the souls of those who have already acted in the spirit of Christianity. Creative thought itself, embodied in Christianity, shows itself here; but by this Christianity is meant at first only the first Christian community which was transitory like other forms of creation. The sixth seal is opened (VI); it is made evident that the spiritual world of Christianity is an eternal world. The people at large appear permeated by that spiritual world out of which Christianity itself proceeded. What it has itself created becomes sanctified. "And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel" (VII, 4). They are those who prepared for the Eternal before the coming of Christianity, and who were transformed by the Christ-Impulse.

The opening of the seventh seal follows. It becomes evident what true Christianity is to mean to the world. The seven angels, "which stood before God," appear (VIII, 2). [Again these angels are spirits from the ancient Mysteries transferred to Christianity] They are the spirits who lead to the vision of God in a truly

Christian way. Therefore what occurs next is a leading to God: it is an initiation bestowed upon St. John. The proclamations of the angels are accompanied by the signs necessary during initiations. "The first angel sounded and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up." And similar things take place when the other angels sound their trumpets.

At this point we see that this was not merely an initiation in the old sense, but that a new one was taking the place of the old. Christianity was not to be confined, like the ancient Mysteries, to a few elect ones. [It was to belong to the whole of humanity] It was to be a religion of the people; the truth was to be given to everyone who "has ears to hear". The old initiations were singled out from a great number; the trumpets of Christianity sound for every one who is willing to hear them. It is for him to approach. This is the reason why the terrors accompanying this initiation of humanity appear enormously intensified. What is to become of the earth and its inhabitants in a far distant future is revealed to St. John at his initiation. Underlying this is the thought that initiates are able to foresee in higher worlds what is realized in the lower world only in the future. The seven messages represent the meaning of Christianity to the present

age, the seven seals represent what is being prepared through Christianity for future accomplishment. The future is veiled and sealed to the uninitiated; it is unsealed in initiation. When the earthly period is over, during which the seven messages hold good, a more spiritual time will begin. Then life will no longer be as it appears in physical forms, but even outwardly it will be a copy of its supersensible forms. These are represented by the four animals and the other seal-pictures. In a still more distant future appears that form of the earth which the initiate experiences through the trumpets.

Thus the initiate learns prophetically what is to happen. And the Christian initiate learns how the Christ-Impulse intervenes and works on in earthly evolution. After it has been shown how everything perishes that clings too closely to the transitory to attain to true Christianity, there appears the mighty angel who has open in his hand a little book which he gives to St. John. *"And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey"* (X, 9). St. John was not only to read the little book, he was to absorb it and let its contents permeate him. What avails any knowledge unless man is vitally imbued with it? Wisdom has to become life, man must not merely recognize

the Divine but must himself unite with it. Such wisdom as is written in the book no doubt causes pain to the perishable part of man: *"it shall make thy belly bitter;"* but so much the more does it make happy the eternal part: *"but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey."*

Only by such an initiation can Christianity become actual on the earth. It kills everything pertaining to the lower nature. *"And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."* By this is meant the followers of Christ who are ill-treated by the temporal powers. But what is ill-treated is only the mortal part of human nature which they will then have conquered by their true being. Thereby their fate is an imitation of the model destiny of Christ Jesus. *"Spiritual Sodom and Egypt"* is the symbol of a life which cleaves to the outer and is not changed by the Christ-Impulse. Christ is everywhere crucified in the lower nature. Where the lower nature conquers, all remains dead. The dead bodies of men lie about in the public places of cities. Those who overcome the lower nature and awaken the crucified Christ hear the trumpet of the seventh angel: *"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for-*

ever and ever" (XI, 15). "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament" (XI, 19).

In the vision of these events the initiate sees renewed the old struggle between the lower and the higher natures. For everything the former neophyte had to go through must be repeated in one who follows the Christian path. Just as Osiris was threatened by the evil Typhon, so now "the great dragon, that old serpent" (XII, 9) must be overcome. Woman, the human soul, gives birth to lower knowledge, which is an adverse power if it is not raised to wisdom. Man must pass through that lower knowledge. In the Apocalypse it appears as the "old serpent". From the remotest times the serpent had been the symbol of knowledge in all mystic wisdom. Man may be led astray by this serpent—knowledge—if he does not bring to life in himself the Son of God, who crushes the serpent's head. "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (XII, 9). These words disclose the purpose of Christianity; a new kind of initiation. What had been attained in the Mysteries was to be attained in a new form. For in them, too, the serpent had to be overcome, but this was no longer to take place in the old way. The one

primary Mystery, the Christian Mystery, was to replace the many Mysteries of antiquity. Jesus, in whom the Logos had been made flesh, was to become the initiator of the whole of humanity, and humanity was to be His own community of initiates.

What was to take place was not a segregation of the elect but a linking together of all. As each grows up to it so does he become an initiate. The good tidings are announced to all, and he who has an ear to hear hastens to learn the secrets. The voice of the heart is to decide in each individual case. Not this person or that is to be introduced into the Mystery-temples, but the word is to be spoken to all; and to one it will then appeal more strongly than to another. It will be left to the *daimon*, the angel within each human breast, to decide how far the initiation can go. The whole world is a Mystery-temple. Not only is salvation to come to those who see the wonderful rites in the temples devoted to initiation which give them a guarantee of eternal life, but "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Even if at first they grope in the dark, the light may nevertheless come to them later. Nothing is to be withheld from anyone; the way is to be open to all.

The latter part of the Apocalypse describes clearly the dangers threatening Christianity through anti-Christian powers, and the final triumph of Chris-

tianity. All other gods are merged into the one Christian Divinity: "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof". (XXI, 23). The secret of the Revelation of St. John is that the Mysteries are no longer to be kept under lock and key. "And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand."

The author of the Apocalypse has set forth what he believes to be the relation of his church to the churches of antiquity. His purpose was to express in a spiritual Mystery what he thought about the Mysteries themselves. He wrote his Mystery on the Isle of Patmos, and he is said to have received the "revelation" in a grotto. These details indicate that the revelation was of a Mystery character.

(Christianity, then, grew out of the Mysteries.) Its wisdom is born as a Mystery in the Apocalypse, but a Mystery that aims to transcend the limits of the old Mystery world. The individual Mystery was to become the universal Mystery.

It may appear to be a contradiction to say that the secrets of the Mysteries were revealed through Christianity, and that nevertheless a Christian Mystery is to be seen again in the spiritual visions of the writer of the Apocalypse. The contradiction disappears directly

we reflect that the secrets of the *ancient* Mysteries were revealed by the events in Palestine. Through these there became manifest what had previously been veiled in the Mysteries. There is now a new secret, namely, that which has been infused into the evolution of the world through the appearance of the Christ. The initiate of ancient times, when in the spiritual world, saw how evolution points to the as yet hidden Christ. The Christian initiate experiences the concealed effects of the *manifested* Christ.

JESUS AND HIS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

IN THE WISDOM of the Mysteries is to be sought the soil out of which grew the spirit of Christianity. All that was needed was the spread of the fundamental conviction that this spirit must be introduced into life in greater measure than had been done through the Mysteries. But such a conviction was already widespread, as may be seen from the manner of life of the Essenes and Therapeutæ, who existed long before Christianity arose.

The Essenes were an exclusive sect, living in Palestine, whose numbers at the time of Christ were estimated at about four thousand. They formed a community which required that its members should lead a life calculated to develop a higher self within the soul, thus bringing about a rebirth. The aspirant for admission was subjected to a severe test in order to ascertain whether he were ripe enough to prepare himself for a higher life. If he was admitted he had to

undergo a period of probation, and to take a solemn oath that he would not betray to strangers the secrets of the Essenian discipline. The object of this life was the conquest of the lower human nature, so that the spirit latent within the soul might be awakened ever more and more. Anyone who had experienced up to a certain point the spirit within him was raised to a higher grade and enjoyed a corresponding degree of authority, not imposed from without, but conditioned by the nature of the fundamental principles.

Akin to the Essenes were the Therapeutæ, who dwelt in Egypt. We get abundant details concerning their mode of life in a treatise by the philosopher Philo, *On the Contemplative Life*.^{*} A few passages from Philo's treatise will give an idea of the main tenets of the Therapeutæ. "*The dwellings of the members of the community are extremely simple, affording only the necessary shelter from extreme heat and cold. The dwellings are not built close together, as in towns, for contiguity has no attraction for one who seeks solitude; nor are they at a great distance one from another, in order that the social relations, so dear to*

^{*}The dispute as to the authenticity of this work must now be regarded as settled, and it may be rightly assumed that Philo really described the life of a community existing long before Christianity, and well known to him. Cf. on the subject, G. R. Mead's *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*.

them, may not be made difficult, and that they may easily be able to assist each other in case of an attack by brigands. In each house is a consecrated room called a temple or monasterion, a small chamber or cell in which the mysteries of the higher life are cultivated. . . . They also possess works by ancient authors who once directed their school and left many explanations about the customary method used in allegorical writings. Their interpretation of sacred writings is directed to the deeper meaning of allegorical narratives."

From this we see that what had been striven after in the narrower circle of the Mysteries was being made universal. But such a procedure naturally relaxed the austerity of the character of the Mystery strivings. The Essene and Therapeutic communities form a natural transition from the Mysteries to Christianity. But Christianity wished to extend to humanity in general what with the Essenes and Therapeutæ was the affair of a sect. This Christian attitude, of course, prepared the way for a still further diminution of the original severity.

The existence of such sects makes it possible to understand how far the time was ripe for the comprehension of the Mystery of Christ. In the Mysteries a man was artificially prepared for the dawning in his consciousness, at the appropriate time, of an awareness of the spiritual world. Within the community of the Essenes or Therapeutæ it was by an appropriate mode

of life that the soul sought to become ripe for the awakening of the higher man. A further step forward is that man struggles through to a feeling that a human individuality may have evolved to higher and higher stages of perfection in repeated earth lives. One who had arrived at a glimpse of this truth would also be able to feel that in Jesus a being of lofty spirituality had appeared. The loftier the spirituality, the greater the possibility of accomplishing something of importance. Thus the individuality of Jesus could become capable of accomplishing the deed which the Evangelists so mysteriously indicate in the Baptism by John, and which, by the way in which they speak of it, they so clearly point out as of the utmost importance. The personality of Jesus became able to receive the Christ into its own soul, the *Logos* Who was made flesh in that soul. Thenceforward the Ego of Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, and the outer personality was the vehicle of the *Logos*. The event of the Ego of Jesus becoming the Christ is enacted in the Baptism by John. During the period of the Mysteries, union with the Spirit was only for those who were to be initiated. Among the Essenes, a whole community cultivated a life by means of which all its members were able to attain to the mystical union. In the coming of Christ something—namely, His deeds—was placed before the whole of humanity, so that it might share in the mystical union.

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY

THE DEEPEST effect must have been produced upon believers in Christianity by the fact that the Divine, the Word, the eternal *Logos* no longer came to them in the dim twilight of the Mysteries as spirit only, but that when they spoke of the *Logos* they were made to think of the historical, human personality of Jesus. Formerly the *Logos* had been materially seen only in different degrees of human perfection. The delicate, subtle differences in the spiritual life of personalities could be observed, and the manner and degree in which the *Logos* came alive within those seeking initiation. [A higher degree of maturity was to be interpreted as a higher stage of evolution of spiritual life.] The preparatory steps had to be sought in a spiritual life already passed through, and the present life was to be regarded as the preparatory stage for future degrees of spiritual evolution. The conservation of the spiritual force of the soul and the eternity of that force could be asserted in the words of

the Jewish occult teaching in the book of Sohar: "Nothing in the world is lost, nothing falls prey to the void, not even the words and voice of man: everything has its place and purport." Any given personality was but one metamorphosis of the soul that develops from one personality to another. The single life of a personality was only considered as a link in the chain of development stretching backwards and forwards.

This *Logos*, transforming itself within the many single human personalities, has through Christianity been directed away from these to the one unique personality of Jesus. What had previously been distributed throughout the world was now united in one unique personality. Jesus became the unique God-Man. In Jesus something was present once which must appear to man as the greatest of ideals, and with which, in the course of man's repeated lives, he should unite himself more and more. [Jesus took upon Himself the divinization of the whole of humanity.] In Him was sought what formerly could only be sought in one's own soul. One no longer beheld the Divine and Eternal within the personality of a man; all that was now beheld in Jesus. It is not the eternal part of the soul that conquers death and will one day rise through its own power, as the Divine; but it is that which was in Jesus, the one God, who will appear and raise the souls of men.

It follows from this that an entirely new meaning was given to personality. The eternal, immortal aspect had been taken from it. Only the personality, as such, was left. If immortality were not to be denied, it had to be ascribed to this personality itself. Out of the belief in the soul's eternal metamorphosis arose the belief in personal immortality. Personality acquired infinite importance, because it was the only thing left to man.

Henceforth there is nothing between personality and the infinite God. A direct relation with Him must be established. Man was no longer capable of becoming divine himself, in a greater or lesser degree. He was simply man, standing in a direct but outward relation to God. This brought quite a new note into the conception of the world for those who knew the point of view held in the ancient Mysteries. There were doubtless many people in this position during the first centuries of Christianity. They knew the nature of the Mysteries. If they wished to become Christians they were obliged to come to an understanding with the old order. This must have brought about most difficult conflicts within their souls. They doubtless sought in every way to harmonize the two tendencies in the conception of the world. This conflict is reflected in the writings of early Christian times: in those of pagans attracted by the sublimity of Christianity, as well as in the writings of those Christians who found it hard to

give up the ways of the Mysteries. Slowly did Christianity grow out of these Mysteries. On the one hand Christian convictions were presented in the form of the Mystery truths, and on the other, the Mystery wisdom was clothed in Christian words.

Clement of Alexandria,* a Christian writer whose education had been pagan, is an instance of this. *"God has not forbidden us to rest from good deeds when keeping the sabbath. He permits those who can grasp them to share in the divine Mysteries and in the sacred light. He has not revealed to the masses what is not suitable for them, but only to a few whom he judged able to grasp it and to work out in themselves the unspeakable mystery which God confided to the Logos, not to the written word. And God hath set some in the Church as apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."* Individual souls in those days sought by very different paths to find the way from the ancient views to the Christian ones. And the one who thought he was on the right path called others heretics. In the meanwhile, the Church grew stronger and stronger as an outward institution. The more power it gained, the more did the path recognized as

*Ob. 217 A. D.

the right one by the decisions of councils take the place of personal research. It was for the Church to decide who deviated too far from the divine truth which she guarded. The idea of a "heretic" took firmer and firmer shape. During the first centuries of Christianity the search for the divine path was a much more personal matter than it afterwards became. A long distance had been travelled before the conviction of Augustine became possible: "*I should not believe in the truth of the Gospels unless the authority of the Catholic Church forced me to do so*" (cf. p. 116).

The conflict between the method of the Mysteries and that of the Christian religion acquired a special stamp through the various Gnostic sects and writers. We may class as Gnostics all the writers of the first Christian centuries who sought for a deep, spiritual meaning in Christian teachings.* We understand the Gnostics when we look upon them as saturated with the ancient wisdom of the Mysteries and as striving to understand Christianity from that point of view. For them Christ was the *Logos*, and as such primarily of a spiritual nature. In His primal essence He cannot reach man from without. He must be awakened in the soul. But the historical Jesus must bear some relation to this

*A brilliant account of the development of the Gnosis is given in G. R. S. Mead's book mentioned above, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*.

spiritual *Logos*. This was the crucial point for the Gnostics. Some settled it in one way, some in another; but the essential point common to them all was that to arrive at a true understanding of the Christ-idea, mere historical tradition was not enough, but that it must be sought either in the wisdom of the Mysteries, or in the Neo-Platonic philosophy, derived from the same source and flourishing in the early Christian centuries. The Gnostics had confidence in human wisdom, and believed it capable of bringing forth a Christ by whom the historical Christ could be measured: in fact, through whom alone the latter could be understood and beheld in the right light.

Of special interest from this point of view is the doctrine given in the books of Dionysius the Areopagite. It is true that there is no mention of these writings till the sixth century; but it matters little when and where they were written, the point being that they give an account of Christianity which is clothed in the language of the Neo-Platonic philosophy and presented in the form of a spiritual contemplation of the higher world. At all events, this is a form of delineation that belongs to the first Christian centuries. In older times the truth was handed on in the form of oral tradition; the most important things were never entrusted to writing. The Christianity described in the writings of Dionysius is set forth in the mirror of the Neo-Platonic

conception of the world. Sense-perception dims man's spiritual vision. (He must reach out beyond the senses.) But all human concepts are primarily derived from sense-observation. What man perceives with his senses he calls existent; what he does not thus perceive he calls non-existent. If, therefore, he wishes to open up an actual view of the Divine he must rise above existence and non-existence, for these also, as he conceives them, have their origin in the sphere of the senses. (In this sense God is neither existent nor non-existent; He is super-existent.) Consequently He cannot be reached by means of ordinary cognition, which has to do with existing things. We must be raised above ourselves, above our sense-observation, above our reasoning logic, if we are to find the way to spiritual vision. Thence we are able to get a glimpse into the perspectives of the Divine.

But this super-existent Divinity has brought forth the *Logos*, the basis of the universe, filled with wisdom, and even the small powers of man can reach Him. He appears in the cosmos as the spiritual Son of God, He is the Mediator between God and man. He may be present in man in varying degrees. He may be realized in an external institution, in which those diversely imbued with His spirit are grouped into a hierarchy. A "church" of this kind is the outer reality of the *Logos*,

and the power that lives in it lived in a personal way in the Christ become flesh, in Jesus. Thus the Church is through Jesus united to God: Jesus is its culmination and its meaning.

One thing was clear to all Gnosis, that it must come to an understanding about the personality of Jesus. Christ and Jesus must be brought into relationship with one another. Divinity had been taken from human personality and must, in one way or another, be recovered. It must be possible to find it again in Jesus. The mystic was concerned with a degree of divinity within himself and with his earthly personality. The Christian was concerned with the latter and also with a perfect God, exalted above all that is attainable by humanity. If we hold firmly to this point of view, a fundamental mystic attitude of the soul is only possible when the soul's spiritual eyes are opened; when, through finding higher spiritual possibilities within herself, the soul throws herself open to the light which issues from the Christ in Jesus. Union of the soul with her highest powers is at the same time union with the historical Christ. For mysticism is the direct consciousness and feeling of the Divine within the soul. But a God, so far transcending everything human, can never dwell in the soul in the real sense of the word. The Gnosis and all subsequent Christian mysticism repre-

sent the effort, in some way or other, nevertheless to lay hold of that God, and to apprehend Him directly in the soul.

A conflict in this case was inevitable. It was really only possible for a man to find his own divine part, but this is both human and divine—the Divine at a certain stage of development. Yet the Christian God is a definite one, perfect in Himself. It was possible for a person to find in himself the power to strive upwards to this God, but he could not characterize what he experienced in his own soul, at any stage of development, as being one with God. An abyss opened between that which it was possible to find in the soul and that which Christianity called Divine. (It is the abyss between knowledge and faith, between cognition and religious feeling.)

This chasm cannot exist for the mystic in the old sense of the word; for he knows that he can only comprehend the Divine by degrees, and he also knows why this is so. It is clear to him that this gradual attainment is a real attainment of divine life, and he finds it difficult to speak of a perfect, finished divine principle. A mystic of this kind does not seek a perfect God; he seeks to experience the divine life. He seeks to be made Divine himself, not to gain an external relation to the Godhead.

It lies in the nature of Christianity that its mysticism

is not in this sense void of presuppositions. The Christian mystic seeks to behold divinity within himself, but at the same time he must look up to the historical Christ just as his physical eyes look up to the sun. Just as the forces of the physical eyes behold physical objects through the power of the sun, so does the Christian mystic's intensified inner soul force behold the Divine through the light that is shed by the appearance of Christ. HE IS! This enables me to rise to the Highest in me. It is in this way that the Christian mystics of the Middle Ages differ from the mystics of the ancient Mysteries.*

*Cf. my book, *Mystics of the Renaissance*.

CHRISTIANITY AND PAGAN WISDOM

AT THE TIME of the primal beginnings of Christianity there appear in antique pagan culture conceptions of the universe which present a continuation of the Platonic philosophy, and which may also be taken as a deepening and spiritualization of the wisdom of the Mysteries. They began with Philo of Alexandria (25 B.C.-50 A.D.). From his point of view the processes leading to the Divine take place in the innermost part of the human soul. We might say that the temple in which Philo seeks initiation is solely his inner being and its spiritual experiences; and processes of a purely spiritual nature replace the initiatory ceremonies of the sanctuary.

According to Philo, sense-observation and knowledge gained through the logical intellect do not lead to the Divine. They have merely to do with what is perishable. But there is a way by which the soul may rise above these methods. She must leave what she calls her ordinary self; must be lifted out of it. Then she enters

a state of spiritual exaltation and illumination in which she no longer knows, thinks, and learns in the ordinary sense of the words; for she has become merged, identified with the Divine. The Divine is experienced in its essence which cannot be fashioned in thoughts nor communicated in concepts.

It is *experienced*, and one who goes through this experience knows that he can speak about the Divine only if he is able to imbue his words with life. The visible world is an image of this mystic reality experienced in the inmost recesses of the soul. The world has come forth from the invisible, inconceivable God. The harmony of the cosmos, which is steeped in wisdom and to which sense-phenomena are subject, is a direct reflection of the Godhead, its spiritual image. It is divine spirit poured out into the world—cosmic reason, the *Logos*, the off-spring or Son of God. The *Logos* is the mediator between the world of sense and the unimaginable God. By steeping himself in cognition man unites with the *Logos*. The *Logos* becomes embodied in him. The person who has developed spirituality is the vehicle of the *Logos*. Above the *Logos* is God; beneath is the perishable world. It is man's vocation to form the link between the two. What he experiences in his inmost being as spirit is the universal Spirit. Such ideas are directly reminiscent of the Pythagorean manner of thinking (*cf. p. 48 et seq.*).

The center of existence is sought in the inner life, out this life is conscious of its cosmic import. St. Augustine was thinking in virtually the same way as Philo when he said: "*We see all created things because they are; but they are, because God sees them.*" And he adds, concerning what and how we see: "*And because they are, we see them outwardly; because they are perfect, we see them inwardly.*"

Plato has the same fundamental idea (cf. p. 53 et seq.). Like Plato, Philo sees in the destiny of the human soul the consummation of the great cosmic drama, the awakening of the divinity that is under a spell. He thus describes the inner actions of the soul: the wisdom in man's inner being "*emulates the ways of the Father, and shapes the forms by beholding the archetypes.*" It is accordingly no personal matter for man to create forms in his inner being: they are eternal wisdom, they are cosmic life.

This is in harmony with the interpretation of the myths of the people in the light of the Mysteries. The mystic searches for the heart of truth in the myths (cf. p. 77 et seq.). And as the mystic treats the myths of paganism, Philo handles the Mosaic story of the creation. The old testament accounts are for him images of inner soul-processes. The Bible relates the creation of the world. One who takes it merely as a description of outer events knows but half of it. It is certainly written:

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved on the face of the waters." But the real inner meaning of such words must be experienced in the depths of the soul. God must be found within, then He appears as the "*Primal Splendor, who sends out innumerable rays, not perceptible by the sense, but wholly thought.*" This is Philo's expression. In the *Timæus* of Plato the words are almost identical with those in the Bible: "*Now when the Father, who had created the universe, saw how it had become living and animated, and an image of the eternal gods, he felt pleasure therein.*" In the Bible we read, "*And God saw that it was good.*"

The recognition of the Divine is for Philo, as well as for Plato, and in the wisdom of the Mysteries, to experience the process of creation as the destiny of one's own soul. The history of creation and the history of the soul who is becoming divine in this way flow into one. Philo is convinced that the Mosaic account of the creation may be used for writing the history of the soul who is seeking God. Everything in the Bible thereby acquires a profoundly symbolical meaning, of which Philo becomes the interpreter. He reads the Bible as history of the soul.

We may say that Philo's manner of reading the

Bible corresponds to a feature of his age that originated in the wisdom of the Mysteries. He even relates that the Therapeutæ interpreted ancient writings in the same way. *"They also possess works by ancient authors who once directed their school and left behind many explanations about the customary method pursued in allegorical writings. . . . The interpretation of such writings is directed to the deeper meaning of the allegorical narratives"* (cf. p. 161). Thus Philo's aim was to discover the deeper meaning of the "allegorical" narratives in the Old Testament.

Let us try to realize whither such an interpretation could lead. We read the account of creation and find in it not only a narrative of outward events, but an indication of the way the soul must take in order to attain to the Divine. The soul must reproduce in herself the ways of God microcosmically, and in this alone can her striving for wisdom consist. The cosmic drama must be enacted in each individual soul. The inner life of the mystic sage is the realization of the model given in the account of the creation. Moses wrote not only to relate historical facts, but to represent pictorially the paths the soul must travel if it would find God.

All this, in Philo's world-conception, is enacted within the human soul. Man experiences within himself what God has experienced in the universe. The Word of God, the *Logos*, becomes an event in the soul.

God brought the Jews from Egypt into Palestine; He caused them to suffer distress and privation before giving them that Land of Promise. That is the outward event. Man must experience it inwardly. He goes from the land of Egypt, the perishable world, through the privations that lead to the suppression of the sense-nature, into the Promised Land of the soul; he attains to the Eternal. In Philo's philosophy, all that is an inner process. The God who poured Himself forth into the world consummates His resurrection in the soul when that soul understands His creative word and echoes it. Then man has spiritually given birth within himself to Divinity, to the Divine Spirit which became man, to the *Logos*, Christ. In this sense enlightenment was, for Philo and those who thought like him, the birth of Christ within the world of spirit. The Neo-Platonic philosophy, which developed contemporaneously with Christianity, was an elaboration of Philo's thought.

Let us see how Plotinus (204-269 A.D.) describes his spiritual experiences: *"Often when I come to myself on awaking from the sleep of my bodily nature and, turning from the outer world, enter into myself, I behold wondrous beauty. Then I am sure that I have been conscious of the better part of myself. I live my true life, I am one with the Divine and, rooted in the Divine, gain the power to transport myself beyond even*

the super-world. After thus resting in God, when I descend from spiritual vision and again form thoughts, I ask myself how it has happened that I now descend and that my soul ever entered the body at all, since, in her essence, she is what she has just revealed herself to me. . . . What can the reason be for souls forgetting God the Father since they come from the beyond and belong to Him, and, when they forget Him, know nothing of Him or of themselves? The first false step they take is indulging in presumption, the desire to become, and in forgetfulness of their true self and in the pleasure of only belonging to themselves. They coveted self-glorification, they rushed about in pursuit of their desires and thus went astray and fell completely away. Thereupon they lost all knowledge of their origin in the beyond, just as children, early separated from their parents and brought up elsewhere, do not know who they themselves and their parents are." Plotinus delineates the kind of life the soul should strive to develop: "The life of the body and its longings should be stilled, the soul should find calm in all that surrounds her: in earth, sea, air, and heaven itself no movement. She should learn to see how the soul pours herself from without into the serene cosmos, streaming into it from all sides; as the sun's rays illuminate a dark cloud and make it golden, so does the soul, on entering the body of the world encircled by the heavens, give it life and immortality."

It is evident that this world conception has a profound similarity to Christianity. Believers of the community of Jesus said: "That which has occurred from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life . . . declare we unto you." In the same way it might be said in the spirit of Neo-Platonism: That which has occurred from the beginning, which cannot be heard and seen, must be spiritually experienced as the Word of Life.

And so the development of the old world conception suffers a split. It leads in Neo-Platonism and similar systems to an idea of Christ that is purely spiritual; on the other hand, it leads to a fusion of the idea of Christ with a historical manifestation, the personality of Jesus. The writer of the Gospel of St. John may be said to have united these two conceptions. "In the beginning was the Word." He shares this conviction with the Neo-Platonists. The Word becomes spirit within the soul, thus do the Neo-Platonists conclude. The Word was made flesh in Jesus, thus does St. John conclude, and with him the whole Christian community. The inner meaning of the manner in which the Word alone could be made flesh was made clear through the whole development of the ancient cosmogonies. Plato says of the macrocosm: God has extended the soul of the

world on the body of the world in the form of a cross. The soul of the world is the *Logos*. If the *Logos* is to be made flesh He must recapitulate the cosmic process in fleshly existence. The *Logos* must be nailed to the cross and rise again. In spiritual form this most momentous thought of Christianity had long before been prefigured in the old cosmogonies. The mystic went through it as a personal experience at initiation. The *Logos* become man had to go through it as a fact valid for the whole of humanity. Something which was present in the development of ancient wisdom as an incident in the Mysteries becomes a historical fact through Christianity. Hence Christianity was the fulfillment, not only of what the Jewish prophets had predicted, but also of the truth prefigured in the Mysteries.

The Cross on Golgotha is the Mystery cult of Antiquity epitomized in a fact.

We find the cross first in the ancient cosmogonies. At the starting-point of Christianity it confronts us in a unique event intended for the whole of mankind. It is from this point of view that reason is able to apprehend the mystical element in Christianity. *Christianity as mystical fact* is a milestone in the process of human evolution; and the incidents in the Mysteries, with their attendant results, are the preparation for that mystical fact.

ST. AUGUSTINE AND THE CHURCH

THE FULL FORCE of the conflict enacted in the souls of Christian believers during the transition from paganism to the new religion is revealed in the person of St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.). The spiritual struggles of Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Gregory Nazianzen, Jerome and others are revealed to us in a mysterious way when we see them quietly assimilated in the mind of Augustine.

In Augustine's personality, out of a passionate nature, deep spiritual needs developed. He passed through pagan and semi-Christian ideas. He suffered deeply from the most appalling doubts such as attack one who has felt the impotence of thoughts in the face of spiritual problems, and who has tasted the depressing effect of the question: "Can man know anything whatever?"

At the beginning of his struggles, Augustine's thoughts clung to the perishable things of sense. He could only picture the spiritual to himself in material

images. It is a deliverance for him when he rises above this stage. He thus describes it in his *Confessions*: "*When I wished to think of God, I could only imagine quantities of matter and believed that was the only kind of thing that could exist. This was the chief and almost the only cause of error which I could not avoid.*" He thus indicates the point at which a person must arrive who is seeking the true life of the spirit. There are thinkers, not a few, who maintain that it is impossible to arrive at pure thought, free from any material admixture. These thinkers confuse what they feel bound to say about their own inner life with what is humanly possible. The truth is rather, that it is only possible to arrive at higher cognition when thought has been liberated from all material things, when an inner life has been developed in which images of reality do not cease when their demonstration in sense-impressions comes to an end. Augustine relates how he attained to spiritual vision. Everywhere he asked where the *Divine* was to be found. "*I asked the earth and she said 'I am not it', and all that was upon the earth said the same. I asked the ocean and the abysses and all that lives in them, which said, 'We are not thy God, seek beyond us.' I asked the winds, and the whole atmosphere and its inhabitants said, 'The philosophers who sought for the essence of things in us were under an illusion, we are not God.' I asked the sun, moon, and*

stars, which said, 'We are not God whom thou seekest.'" And it came home to St. Augustine that there is only one thing which can answer his question about the *Divine*—his own soul. The soul said: No eyes nor ears can impart to thee what is in me. For I alone can tell thee, and I tell thee in an unquestionable way. "*Men may be doubtful whether vital force is situate in air or in fire, but who can doubt that he himself lives, remembers, understands, wills, thinks, knows, and judges? If he doubts, it is a proof that he is alive, he remembers why he doubts; he understands that he doubts; he will assure himself, he thinks, he knows that he knows nothing; he judges that he must not accept anything hastily.*" Outer things do not resist when their essence and existence are denied, but the soul does offer opposition. She could not be doubtful of herself unless she existed. By her doubt she confirms her own existence. "*We are, and we recognize our being, and we love our own being and cognition. On these three points no illusion in the garb of truth can trouble us, for we do not apprehend them with our bodily senses like external things.*" Man learns about the *Divine* by leading his soul to know herself as spiritual, so that she may find her way, as a spirit, into the spiritual world. Augustine had battled his way through to this knowledge. It was out of such an attitude of mind that there grew up among pagan

peoples the desire to knock at the gate of the Mysteries. In the age of Augustine, such convictions might lead to becoming a Christian. Jesus, the *Logos* become man, had shown the path the soul must follow if she would attain to the goal of which she speaks when in communion with herself. In 385 A.D., at Milan, Augustine was instructed by St. Ambrose. All his doubts about the Old and New Testaments vanished when his teacher interpreted the most important passages, not merely in a literal sense, but *"by lifting the mystic veil by force of the spirit."*

What had been guarded in the Mysteries was embodied for Augustine in the historical tradition of the Gospels and in the community where that tradition was preserved. He comes by degrees to the conviction that *"the law of this tradition, which consists in believing what it has not proved, is moderate and without guile."* He arrives at the idea: *"Who could be so blind as to say that the Church of the Apostles deserves to have no faith placed in it, when it is so loyal and is supported by the unanimity of so many brethren; when these have handed down their writings to posterity so conscientiously, and when the Church has so strictly maintained the succession of teachers, down to our present bishops?"*

Augustine's mode of thought told him that with the coming of Christ conditions had set in for souls seek-

ing the spirit other than those which had previously existed. For him it was firmly established that in Christ Jesus had been revealed in outer historical fact that which the mystic had sought through preparation in the Mysteries. One of his significant utterances is the following: *"What is now called the Christian religion already existed among the ancients and was not lacking at the very beginnings of the human race. When Christ appeared in the flesh, the true religion already in existence received the name of Christian."* There were two ways possible for such a method of thought. One way maintains that if the human soul develops within her the forces which lead her to the knowledge of her true self, she will, if she only goes far enough, also learn to know the Christ and everything connected with Him. This would have been a Mystery-wisdom enriched by the Christ-event. The other way is that taken by Augustine, by which he became the great model for his successors. It consists in ceasing to develop one's own soul-forces at a certain point, and in borrowing the conceptions connected with the coming of Christ from written accounts and oral traditions. Augustine rejected the first way as springing from pride of the soul; he thought the second was the way of true humility. Thus he says to those who wished to follow the first way: *"You could find peace in the truth, but for that humility is needed,*

which does not suit your proud neck." On the other hand, he was filled with boundless inward happiness by the fact that since "the coming of Christ in the flesh" it was possible to say that every human soul can come to spiritual experience if she goes as far as she can in seeking within herself, and then, in order to attain to the highest, has confidence in what the written and oral traditions of the Christian Church tell us about the Christ and His revelation. He says on this point: "What bliss, what abiding enjoyment of supreme and true good is offered us, what serenity, what a breath of eternity! How shall I describe it? It has been expressed, as far as it could be, by those great incomparable souls who we admit have beheld and still behold. . . . We reach a point at which we acknowledge how true is what we have been commanded to believe, and how well and beneficently we have been brought up by our mother, the Church, and of what benefit was the milk given by the Apostle Paul to the little ones. . . ."*

Whereas in pre-Christian times one who wished to seek the spiritual basis of existence was necessarily directed to the way of the Mysteries, Augustine was

*It is beyond the scope of this book to give an account of the alternative method which is evolved from the Mystery wisdom, enriched through the Christ event. A presentation of this method will be found in my book, *Occult Science, an Outline*.

able to say, even to those souls who could find no such path within themselves: Go as far on the path of knowledge as your human powers will carry you; thence trust (faith) will lead you up into the higher spiritual regions.

It was only going one step further to say: It is natural for the human soul only to be able to reach a certain degree of knowledge through its own powers; thence it can advance further only through trust, through faith in written and oral tradition. This step was taken by the spiritual movement that assigned to cognition a certain sphere above which the soul could not rise by her own efforts. Everything beyond this domain was made an object of faith which must be supported by written and oral tradition and by confidence in its representatives.

Thomas Aquinas, the greatest teacher within the Church (1224-1274), has set forth this doctrine in his writings in a variety of ways. His main point is that human knowledge can only attain to that which led Augustine to self-knowledge, to the certainty of the Divine. The nature of the Divine and its relation to the world is given by revealed theology, which is no longer accessible to man's own researches, but is, as the substance of faith, superior to all knowledge.

The origin of this point of view may be studied in the world conception of John Scotus Erigena, who

lived in the ninth century at the court of Charles the Bald, and who represents a natural transition from the earliest ideas of Christianity to the ideas of Thomas Aquinas. His world conception is couched in the spirit of Neo-Platonism. In his treatise *De Divisione Naturæ*, Erigena has elaborated the doctrine of Dionysius the Areopagite. This doctrine started from a God far above the perishable things of sense, and it derived the world from Him (*cf.* p. 169 *et seq.*). Man is involved in the transmutation of all beings into this God, Who finally attains to what He was from the beginning. Everything reverts to the Godhead which has passed through the universal process and has finally become perfected. But man, in order to reach this goal, must find the way to the *Logos* that was made flesh. In Erigena this thought leads to another: What is contained in the writings giving an account of the *Logos* leads, when received in faith, to salvation. Reason and the authority of the Scriptures, faith and knowledge, stand on the same level. The one does not contradict the other, but faith must bring that to which knowledge never can attain by itself.

Knowledge of the Eternal, withheld in the Mysteries from the multitude, became for this mode of thought, through the Christian attitude, *the substance of faith*, which by its very nature had to do with something unattainable by mere knowledge. The conviction of the

pre-Christian mystic was that to him was given knowledge of the divine, while the people were obliged to have faith in its expression in images. Christianity came to the conviction that God has given His wisdom to mankind through revelation, and man attains through his insight an image of this divine revelation. The wisdom of the Mysteries is a hothouse plant revealed to a few individuals who are ripe for it. Christian wisdom is a Mystery revealed as knowledge to none, but as a content of faith to all. The standpoint of the Mysteries lived on in Christianity, but in a different form. All, not only the special individual, were to share in the truth; but this was to occur in such a way that at a certain point man recognized his inability to penetrate farther by means of knowledge, and thence ascended to faith. Christianity brought the content of the Mysteries out of the obscurity of the temple into the clear light of day. The one spiritual stream within Christianity designated led to the idea that this content must necessarily be retained in the form of faith.

NOTES

Page 6. This passage from Ingersoll is by no means quoted with only those people in mind who express it literally as their conviction. Very many who do not do this, nevertheless form mental pictures of the phenomena of nature and of man that would lead them—were they really consistent—to just such expressions. It is not a matter of what someone utters theoretically as his convictions, but of whether this conviction really grows out of his whole way of thinking. Someone might even consider the words quoted from Ingersoll hateful or absurd; but if he explains the phenomena of nature on a purely external basis, without rising to the spiritual causes underlying them, it follows logically that an Ingersoll will make a materialistic philosophy out of this.

Page 6. To one who has true perception, the spirit of nature speaks powerfully in the facts currently expressed by the catchword, "struggle for existence," "power of natural selection," and so forth; but not in

the conclusions which modern science draws from them. In the first fact lies the reason why natural science is attracting more and more widespread attention. But it follows from the second fact that scientific conclusions are not necessarily a corollary of the knowledge of facts. The possibility of being led astray in this respect is, in these days, infinitely great.

Page 9. It should not be concluded from these remarks about the sources of St. Luke's Gospel that purely historical research is undervalued by the writer of this book. This is not the case. Historical research is absolutely justified, but it should not be impatient with the method of presentation developed by a spiritual point of view. It is not considered of importance in this book to bolster every statement with quotations; but one who is willing will be able to see that a really unprejudiced, broad-minded judgment will not find anything here stated to be contrary to what has been actually and historically proved. One who refuses to be broad-minded, who holds this or that theory to be a firmly-established fact, may easily think that assertions made in this book are untenable from a scientific point of view, and are made without any objective foundation.

Page 15. It was said above that those whose spiritual eyes are opened are able to see into the spiritual world. The conclusion must not on this account be drawn that

only one who possesses spiritual sight is able to form an intelligent opinion about the results arrived at by the initiate. Spiritual sight is needed only for research. What is afterwards communicated can be understood by everyone who gives fair play to his reason and preserves an unbiassed sense of truth. And such a person may also apply the results of research to life and derive satisfaction from them without himself having spiritual sight.

Page 19. "*The sinking into the mire*" spoken of by Plato must also be interpreted in the sense referred to in the previous note.

Page 20. What was said about the impossibility of imparting the teachings of the Mysteries has reference to the fact that they could not be communicated to those unprepared in the same form in which the initiate experienced them; but they were always communicated to those outside in such a form as was possible for the uninitiated to understand. For instance, the myths gave the old form in order to communicate the content of the Mysteries in a way that was generally comprehensible.

Page 72. Everything that relates to knowledge gained through the eyes of the spirit is called by ancient mysticism *mantic*. *Telestic*, on the other hand, is the indication of the ways that lead to initiation.

Page 136. *Kabirs*, according to ancient mysticism, are

beings with a consciousness far above the human consciousness of today. Schelling means that man through initiation ascends to a state of consciousness above his present one.

Page 150. An explanation of the meaning of the number seven may be obtained in my book, *Occult Science, an Outline*.

Page 151. The meanings of the Apocalyptic signs can only be given very briefly here. Of course, all these things might be much more thoroughly explained, but the scope of this book does not allow this.