

LIBER 6 Qabalism

LIBER OVERVIEW

This Liber we begin our study of the ancient teaching of Qabalism, which forms the basis of the entire Western Esoteric Tradition. Three Lectures, on the Sepher Ietzerah, Initiation, and the Tree of Life, will introduce you to this very important subject. In addition to the Lectures, you will find helpful “Notes to the Student” which will aid your understanding. Then follow two essays, which I think you will find of interest. The Liber closes with an Optional section on Mystic Christianity, with much material that is not available elsewhere in so compact a form.

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LECTURE Sepher Ietzerah

Dear Brothers & Sisters:

The Qabala is a body of esoteric teaching which has been passed down from ancient times mainly from “mouth to ear.” It was the heart of the esoteric knowledge known to early Judaism and practiced by its Rabbis. Obeying the ancient injunction of not “casting pearls before swine” it remained for many centuries an oral tradition, for if certain Qabalistic knowledge should fall into unprepared hands, great harm can be done, especially to the person who attempts to misuse it. For this reason, the real secret arcana remains an oral tradition to this day.

The Qabala is the foundation stone of the Western Esoteric Tradition, just as the *Yoga Sutras*, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Stanzas of Dyzan* and other holy works are the foundations of the Eastern Tradition. The Qabala, in its entirety, is the great body of philosophy and knowledge which is interwoven into the religious texts of the Jews. This includes the Old Testament, especially the Pentateuch (the first five books of the O.T.) the vast complex of astrological, alchemical and occult symbology, the teachings of the Rose + Croix, the Masonic myths and the Tarot.

According to tradition, the Qabala is the revelation of God received by man in the earliest times through the mediation of the great Archangel nearest to God: Metatron. Of the genuine Qabalistic texts, the *Sepher Ietzirah*, or *Book of Formation*, is considered to be the oldest treatise on Qabalistic philosophy. The spelling of “Ietzerah” may vary in English and one finds it being spelled with a “Y”, a “J” or an “I”. Martinists adopt the spelling of Ietzerah with an “I”.

There is no single work, or single authority on the Qabala; it is such a vast subject it would take a person several lifetimes to unravel all its mysteries.

The tradition remained more or less a secret one, owing firstly to persecution by the Christian Church, and later to the derision and disinterest of materialistic science and thought. Because the Secret Tradition was forced to go underground, the West compares rather badly with the East when it comes to the documentation of its sacred wisdom. From about the 12th century some of it was written down and made available through the works of such translators as Picus de Mirandola, Knorr von Rosenrath, Cornelius Agrippa and others. But comparatively, very little was written, and what there was stood a good chance of being destroyed. We see the result of this today in that many, if not most of the students of mysticism in the West derive their learning and inspiration from

Eastern sources, which were brought to the attention of the West largely through the efforts of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. Valuable as the Eastern line of tradition is, students in the West usually feel more at home when given the opportunity to study their own native tradition - the Qabala.

The Hebrews learned the Qabalistic teachings when they were held captive in Egypt. The Chaldeans and Babylonians were aware of it and studied it. The Hebrews took the knowledge and incorporated it into Judaism, although the inner teachings were never given out to the flock.

It was the Qabalists who wrote the various texts which now comprise the various “books” of the Bible. Rabbi Jesus was a Qabalistic Initiate and Master. It is really strange that Christian exegesis has never sought the keys of the scriptures in the Qabala. The closing lines of the Lord’s Prayer: “For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory” is pure Qabalism, referring to certain Sephiroth on the Tree of Life. The first five verses of the Gospel of St. John are another example of Qabalistic doctrine.

Christianity had its esotericism in the Gnosis, which owed much to Greek and Egyptian thought. The exoteric, or outer state-organized section of the Christian Church persecuted and stamped out the esoteric, or inner Section, destroying every trace of its literature upon which it could lay its hands, in an attempt to eradicate every memory of a gnosis from human history. It is recorded that the baths and bake houses of Alexandria, Egypt, were fired for six months with the manuscripts of the Great Library which was located there. The loss of this library of esoteric writings has been described as *the single most tragic loss and the greatest disaster ever to occur within recorded history*. As an example of the value of this library if it existed today, it is said *there is not enough money in the entire world, if it was all collected, that could purchase this library*.

Let us now return to the Sepher Ietzirah. The Sepher Ietzirah presents the process whereby God created all that exists by means of the Hebrew letters. It explains the sacred symbolism of the Hebrew alphabet. Hebrew is the sacred language of Martinism because the Hebrew letters have a versatility of use that is not present in our modern alphabet. Rather than make this lecture too technical I will furnish you with some notes for your individual study. Please keep these notes carefully, study them, and do some additional research of your own.

The Sepher Ietzirah also explains the correspondences of the Hebrew letters to the varied forces that brought Man, Nature and the cycle of Time into existence. It is a small book comprising only six chapters and is recommended reading for Martinists and indeed for all students of the esoteric. I strongly urge each of you to obtain a copy of this inexpensive book *and study it*. You will find it to be a true friend on your journey through life.

According to the Sepher Ietzirah, God created the World in 32 mysterious paths of wisdom, symbolized by 10 Numbers and the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. First there were the three Mothers: *Aleph, Mem* and *Shin* which represented the three primordial elements *Air, Water* and *Fire*. Creation then proceeded by the formation of seven forces endowed with a *dual character* and which produced the planets in the Universe and the seven major antitheses of life in man. Because of their duality these phases of creation are symbolized by seven letters which have two pronunciations: one hard and one soft. For this reason they are known as *double letters*. A further stage of creation is symbolized by the 12 *single letters*.

The seven double letters are: *Beth, Gimel, Daleth, Kaph, Peh, Resh* and *Tau*.

The oppositions are: Life/Death; Peace/War Wisdom/Foolishness; Wealth/Poverty; Beauty/Ugliness; Fertility/Sterility; Dominion/Dependence.

The work at our last conventicle introduced us to the cyclic pattern of nature and immediately made

us consider the workings of reincarnation and karma, because these laws are responsible for the cyclic recurrence of man upon earth.

I wonder if you have thought about this phenomenon and how it fits in with our individual efforts toward reintegration?

In discussing the Martinist Order's teachings regarding eschatology (the doctrine of final things, as death, judgement, etc.) we refer to a statement made by our V::: M::: Martinez Pasquales, who said: "In the end all will come back to the beginning." This statement means that, by the process of reintegration, man will in the end achieve his long-lost unity with Omneity.

But the process of reintegration involves in principle these two fundamental doctrines of mysticism: Reincarnation & Karma. However obscure and unfamiliar these terms may seem, and however vaguely they may have been presented to the profane or to students of unauthenticated schools of mysticism, the Martinist teaching is straightforward and simple. A child in school is not able to evaluate his different studies properly, nor is he ordinarily aware of their purpose or where they are leading him. He judges them as hard or easy, interesting or boring and deals with them as his judgements dictate under the demands of the teacher. Oftentimes, he underestimates the worth of one study because he finds it easy and overvalues another because he finds it more difficult. He is willing to put forth extra effort at times in order to avoid having to repeat his work, should he fail to meet the requirements. The student is, moreover, to some degree, aware of the operation of justice, for he realizes that he need only accomplish the lesson set for the day and that he will not be expected to know that which he has not had the opportunity to learn. It will also become evident after a time, that complete knowledge of any subject can neither be presented, nor assimilated in one day, and for that reason, the student each day is assigned only so much, and provided with an ample period of rest in order that each new day may find him sufficiently rested to grasp that day's new lesson.

In much the same way, man learns the lessons of life. Since complete knowledge of life, however, can never be gained in the short span of the usual human life, it is reasonable to believe that the justice of the Creator equals that of man and so does not pass final judgement on man on the basis of his incomplete experience, but allows him as many opportunities as are necessary to bring complete knowledge.

Such, in the simplest terms, is the teaching of reincarnation as Martinism expounds it. Since the time of our first emanation from the bosom of Omneity as individual cells, we have had numerous earthly experiences in different physical bodies as different personalities. Throughout these experiences, *our Inner Self has been the same*, and through the cycle of earthly existences the separate lessons and experiences of each lifetime have accumulated as added wisdom.

The final goal of this process is the perfection of Selfhood, to the point where earthly experience is no longer required because study and growth, as well as consistent efforts at reintegration has brought that person again to union with Omneity. We become "a pillar in the Temple of God and we go out no more." (Rev. 3:12). (For those brethren interested in esoteric Christianity, the parable of the Prodigal Son, who left his Father's home and journeyed forth to experience life, and then returned home, is the story of our Fall and Reintegration)

Logically and necessarily joined with the doctrine of reincarnation is the companion Law of Karma, or compensation. Karma is simply the carrying over of the basic physical laws of Cause & Effect into the personal, moral and spiritual realm. Simply put, it means that good thoughts and actions result in positive, similar consequences, whereas evil actions and thoughts will ultimately bring sorrow and suffering upon those who express them, plus the necessity for compensation. *Karma is universal, divine justice in eternal operation. That which man sows, he will eventually reap; if not in this life, then in a succeeding one. There is no escaping the*

EFFECTS of the CAUSES we put into motion.

Reincarnation and Karma are immense topics, brethren, and their numerous subtleties and implications will be more fully explored at a later date, especially after you have attained the status of a fully qualified S::I:::. In the meantime, reflect upon the substance of the laws as given — and note their inherent reasonableness — as well as their deep significance.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Why did Omneity emanate the Creation? (Look for your answer in Liber 2, page 2)

What is the Qabala; is it a book?

Where did the Qabala come from?

Do we have a new “Inner Self” with each incarnation?

What *is* our “Inner Self?”

In the Christian New Testament, Luke 16:19-31, it is related that a certain rich man made wealth an occasion for personal indulgence. He lived luxuriously, dressed extravagantly, and denied himself nothing. Wealth was to him merely the means for personal gratification.

A beggar named Lazarus was known by this man to be in dire need. He was not only poor and hungry, but he was also diseased and unable to care for himself. Lazarus begged for food and was given crumbs from the rich man’s table. He pleaded that something be done to rid him of his affliction but the dogs did more for him by licking his sores than the rich man did.

In time, the story tells us, both Lazarus and the rich man died. Lazarus, the beggar, was accorded treatment vastly different from his earthly experience, and the rich man was confined to a place of torment. Realizing their reversed positions, the rich man called for Lazarus to be sent to ease his torment; but he was told that “thou in thy lifetime received thy good things and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and thou art tormented.”

The lesson intended is not that man’s position later will be reversed, but rather that JUSTICE RULES and each must experience for himself the *effects* of whatever *cause* he initiates.

The rich man and Lazarus are also symbols of the pair of opposites, Wealth & Poverty, one pair of the seven major oppositions we encounter in life. Wealth is certainly not wicked, but it may lead to wickedness when it is made the means of selfish indulgence and allowed to blind the vision of the individual possessing it, to the responsibilities it imposes. Poverty, as depicted by the state of Lazarus, is unwholesome and undesirable, but it may serve to teach a valuable lesson if there is willingness to accept it.

As Plato taught: “Wealth is the parent of luxury and indolence; poverty of meanness and viciousness; and both of discontent.” ***Neither is to be sought for. Both are to be avoided.*** If one has wealth he must rule it carefully and meet the obligations which fall to him as the possessor of it. If he is in poverty, he must strive to bear it with good grace and make every effort to lift himself out of it.

It must be seen too, that Wealth & Poverty are not of material things only. There can be *spiritual* wealth and *spiritual* poverty. And wealth of knowledge or poverty of ignorance. Whatever their nature ***both impose responsibilities and both teach lessons.*** As Men of Desire, it is our necessity to recognize these opposites and bring them into balance. If we have wealth, whether it

consists of money, ideas or time, we must use it for the good of the collectivity. We must relieve distress, mental and physical. We must devote our time and our ideas to the purpose of humanity's upliftment.

On the other hand, if poverty is our experience, we must seek for the lesson to be found in it. We must dignify it by refusing to make of it the occasion for hatred, resentment, or bitterness. We must put as many limits on it as we can, never believing that poverty of material things makes necessary poverty of ideas and spiritual values as well.

May you ever dwell in the Eternal Light of Divine Wisdom.

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LECTURE Initiation

Brothers & Sisters:

It has been the obligation of the true mystic Order to preserve and transmit fundamental truth. This is accomplished through Initiation and the use of symbols.

Initiation demonstrates certain universal laws, and symbols have been given to explain these laws. It is the universal and eternal nature of its elements that gives to Martinism its significance. Its symbols, being fundamental and truly mystic, contain almost endless application. The symbol of the Hierarchy of Light with which we became acquainted, well illustrates the triadic nature of all things, even the three great classifications or divisions of men. As there are three gradations of light; so are there three gradations of men. First, there is the commonality which dwells in the shadows: blind, ignorant, living largely for the satisfaction and gratification of the appetites. It is but vaguely aware that life has a purpose or that Light such as has been preserved throughout the ages may be had. It makes little or no effort to reach a higher level of living or acting than that which seems natural and is accomplished with the least effort. Its questions center always in the lowest realms of thought and its answers represent the greatest distortion of truth. In the Hierarchy of Light, the light of the majority of men is only darkness.

Above this gross level of society are those whose aspirations have been awakened, whose natures have been somewhat disciplined and whose desires have become spiritualized. They are no longer content with the shadows, for the presence of Light stirs a faint response in their minds and hearts.

They struggle to open themselves more fully to the Light, although, not knowing its true effulgence, they often fail to recognize its messengers. These dwellers in the penumbra we call Men of Desire; symbolically the initiate may be said to have achieved that classification at the end of the Associate Degree. In the Hierarchy of Light, the Men of Desire are represented by the dissipation of darkness to the degree of penumbra.

At the apex of the pyramid of men stand those truly advanced and perfected beings who are the true leaders and teachers of whose company we aspire to become a part. They are the Unknown Superior Ones who mark out our path in Martinism and shed their Light and their Love over our Conventicles.

Their number is small compared with those in the other two grades; yet by the rite of the mystic cordelier, all Men of Desire are linked to them. In the Hierarchy of Light, they are represented by pure white.

Thus we may trace the plan of man's spiritual evolution from gross ignorance to growing enlightenment, to a state of wisdom and attainment.

Our luminaries have taught us that truth is one even when coming from sources seemingly opposed and at variance with each other; so, in Martinism, we seek to discover this essential oneness, no matter where it is found, or what the channel through which it comes. In bridging the gap between the viewpoints of science and religion, we establish a way acceptable and agreeable to both.

To do this so as to lead most surely to the right understanding of fundamentals, while still allowing the utmost freedom in individual interpretation, our teachers have chosen to follow the traditional pattern of mystical instruction.

Such was the method used by Moses. He wrote of the beginning in words *carefully chosen and capable of several levels of interpretation*. This allowed men to be comforted and reassured... even when not wholly comprehending. *The Light which veiled Moses' instruction was such that it could not be penetrated by the commonality of men*; yet the Men of Desire walked surely by it and those of the highest grade were one with it.

We shall find our best approach to fundamental truth to be through a consideration of Moses' teachings. The mysteries of the early Hebrews (the Qabala) were closely guarded by the Sons of the Doctrine and many of their secrets were derived from Egypt and, later on, from Babylonia. We are told in Scripture that Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22) and that in the first five books of the Pentateuch he has esoterically laid down the principles of the Secret Doctrine. He initiated 70 elders into the mysteries (as recorded Numbers 11:24), which they in turn transmitted from "mouth to ear". Moses kept the Secret Law secretly and transmitted it to the elect. He also compiled the public, or exoteric law, for the multitudes or commonality. In our expositions, then, we shall have the help of those trained in Moses' school, and we can begin our work of reconciliation in confidence by teaming the true nature of creation and the birthright of every human being.

Once we know our birthright, we can the more easily determine the nature of our rightful place in the divine plan and the more intelligently act to make it securely ours.

In this regard, our V::: M::: Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin has written: "At the first glance which Man directs upon himself, he will perceive without difficulty that there must be a science or an evident law for his own nature since there is one for all beings, though it is not universal in all, and since even in the midst of our weakness, our ignorance, and humiliation we are employed only in the search after truth and light. Albeit, therefore, that the efforts which man makes daily to attain the end of his researches are rarely successful, it must not be considered on this account that the end is imaginary. It is only that man is deceived as to the road which leads thereto and is hence in the greatest of privations since he does not even know the way in which he should walk. The overwhelming misfortune of man is not that he is ignorant of the existence of truth but that he misconstrues its nature. What errors and what sufferings would have been spared us if, far from seeking truth in the phenomena of material nature, we had resolved to descend into ourselves and had sought to explain material things by man, and not man by material things; if, fortified by courage and patience, we had preserved in the calm of our imagination the discovery of this light, which all of us desire with so much ardour."

Of the truth of the statement: "the overwhelming misfortune of man is not that he is ignorant of the existence of truth but that he misconstrues its nature," we have daily evidence. It is this fact which makes the corrective supplied by mystical teaching so valuable. Because man has become enslaved by his environment and no longer gives heed to his birthright, it is all the more necessary for mystic instruction to reawaken him.

Of the exact nature of God, mysticism forbears to speak, for the limited senses of man can never compass the Infinite, and to attempt it would but further confuse. It is better to consider the character of the Infinite as it manifests itself in creation and thereby learn by indirection that which in time will unfold into fuller comprehension.

Without attempting definition, Moses wrote simply: "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)

The account then sets forth in detail the *unfolding* aspects of the Creator's nature, showing each stage of creation devoted to a particular kind of activity. In all, six stages, or "days", are recorded, with a final day or period in which Moses tells us God rested or returned to Himself.

The important ideas for us in this account are not necessarily the most obvious. Certainly, they are not those which have intrigued the minds of theologians.

First, it should be noted that creation was a continuing process, not accomplished instantaneously but occupying several stages called "days". In Moses' school, the descriptive word *emanation* was understood by the word *day* and this conveyed the thought of *unfolding*. Scientifically, this might be compared to the process of condensation whereby a gas condenses to a liquid and a liquid to a solid. From the invisibility of utter infinity, visible things became manifest.

Out of the darkness of the void, the Invisible, Unmanifest and Unknowable Godhead moved upon the face of the waters: "And God said, Let there be light." (Genesis 1:3)

Thus, Light was the first creation, or emanation, of Omneity and became the first "day". (Note however that this Light is not what we know commonly as "daylight". Daylight is an emanation of the sun, and the sun and other luminaries were not emanated until later.) The heaven, or the firmament, was the second; the earth and its flora were the third, the luminaries the fourth; the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air the fifth; and cattle, living creatures and man the sixth. After six such active stages or days of emanation, there followed a seventh in which God returned to that impenetrability beyond man's comprehension from which He had first manifested Himself.

Into this realm of impenetrability, man could enter only in theory, and that in negative fashion. He expressed this as a trinity made up of the Not Limited, the Light of the Not Limited, and the Not Being Itself.

This trinity, together with the seven days of creation, produced by addition the number *ten*, referred to in earliest records of Moses' school as the decade. In fact, the Sepher Ietzirah uses this term in referring to creation's manifestation. There we read: "The decade of existence out of nothing has its end linked to its beginning and its beginning linked to its end, just as the flame is wedded to the live coal; because the Lord is one and there is not a second one, and before one what wilt thou count?"


Again, in that section of the Talmud called the *Aggada*, it is written: "The world was created on ten things: on wisdom, on understanding, and on knowledge, on strength, on reproof, and on courage, on justice and righteousness, on kindness and mercy."

As we shall later learn, this decade and the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet are rich in symbolic meaning and altogether essential to the complete esoteric understanding of what Moses wrote in the Book of Genesis.

May you ever dwell in the Eternal Light of Divine Wisdom.

Notes for Students

1. The Martinist Order transmits its teachings by the intellectual method of analogy, in order to bring to comprehension the abstract principles of God, of Man and of Nature.
2. Every idea has *form and motive, letter and spirit*, an *exoteric* or outer and an *esoteric* or inner meaning.
3. Modern languages have evolved so far from their original conception, that they have become nothing but the vehicle of thoughts to which they are no longer directly related. The primitive language of man was that of symbols. These were the outer manifestations of the Angelic tongue of his First Estate. From these symbols were evolved languages in which the letters and words preserved the original symbolic form of the ideas they expressed. These ancient languages have become the sacred languages of the great religions.
4. Ancient Hebrew is the sacred language of Martinism. Each Hebrew letter had five different values:
 - (1) A phonetic value.
 - (2) A numerical value.
 - (3) A positive ideogrammatic value when standing on its own. (An ideogram is a figure which suggests the meaning picture of hieroglyphic.
 - (4) A relative or comparative value when accompanied by other letters.
 - (5) An effective talismatic value combining the powers of thought, word and action.

5. Aleph, , is formed by 2 Yods (the 10th letter of the Hebrew alphabet) placed on either side of a Vau (the 6th letter). We thus have one letter formed out of 3 letters. This is symbolical of one Light arising out of 3 different luminaries and stands for the principle of **UNITY** arising from diversity. Aleph thus represents the three luminaries.

6. The Numerical Value of Aleph is **ONE**, it is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. However: being formed of 2 Yods and 1 Vau, it also has a value of 26. This figure is obtained by adding the value of the 2 Yods (10 + 10) to that of Vau (6). From our principles of Theosophic reduction, we remember $26 = 8$. It can therefore be said that **ALEPH** has three numerical values: 1, 26 and 8.

Let us examine the meaning of each of these values:

26 is the value of the Divine Incommunicable Name: Yod-He-Vau-He. ($10 + 5 + 6 + 5 = 26$).

Eight, formed of 2 superimposed spheres (Heaven & Earth) is the symbol of the all-pervading Mind of God.

We can see therefore that the 3 numerical values of **ALEPH** refer to three aspects of the Divine: (a) Its absolute identity, (b) Its latent creative power expressed by the Word, (c) The Universality of God's presence in Whose Mind is all that exists.

7. A study of the Hebrew language would go beyond the scope of basic Martinist work and may

even be beyond the abilities of most of us. We shall simply study the symbolism of those letters which bear directly on Martinism and leave each member to delve more deeply through his/her own study, if they have the interest. It would be useful, however, if you would practice copying the Hebrew alphabet so as to become familiar with the letters. Be guided by the chart provided in Liber Three. Also, it would be a great help for your own edification if you would read some introductory work on the Qabala. *The Kaballah* by Charles Ponce is usually readily available. Suggestion: In approaching the study of the Qabala it would be a good idea to go slowly. It is a recondite subject. Take it easy!

8. It was said that Hebrew is the sacred language of Martinism because of its affinity with the Primitive Language of Man: that of symbols. These symbols were the tools used by Man to communicate the principles and truths which he had brought down from his First Estate. Man occupied at one time a different place in the Divine Plan than the one in which he now finds himself. In that former place, his First Estate, Man had enjoyed faculties and privileges which he lost when he fell from that spiritual condition, into the world of matter where all is division and opposition.

9. When in his First Estate, Man knew what we could call the Angelic Tongue. At that time, Man had no need of symbols to communicate outwardly because the whole of Humanity had but ***One collective consciousness*** and all communications were effected ***inwardly***. When Man fell, this common consciousness split into numerous ***individualities*** and each division lost the faculty of communicating inwardly with the others. Communications then required a vehicle that would carry the thought expressed to the individuals to whom it was addressed. Out of this necessity therefore, were born symbols and languages.

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LECTURE The Tree of Life

Dear Brothers & Sisters:

In the Lecture entitled "Initiation", certain ideas, drawn from the writings of Moses, were presented. As has been indicated, Moses' writings are couched in words capable of several interpretations. In fact they had a ***simple meaning, a symbolic meaning, and a sacred or hieratic meaning.*** The first two might be expressed by the spoken word; but the deepest or sacred hieratic meaning can only be read in the ***sign*** of the word itself. It is for this reason that it is quite impossible to penetrate the real intent of Moses' writings by reading an English translation.

Students of Moses' school were committed to guarding and exactly transmitting his teachings and since they were in every respect true to their obligation, that original sacred meaning is still preserved, but only in the original Hebrew in which it was written. It is designated "Received Wisdom" or Qabala; but not all readers of Hebrew, not even those who have so carefully preserved the ancient text, are able to speak correctly of that which they have guarded.

Since this is true, it may be understood how much less those outside the tradition itself have been able to penetrate the sacred text and know of a surety Moses' intent. In spite of this, countless religious dogmas have arisen on varying interpretations of the books of Moses, and endless disputes have been engendered because man has recognized the importance of the Bible's teaching even when that teaching is but imperfectly comprehended.

Both Jews and Christians have based their religions squarely upon the Bible, in most cases without knowledge of the hierarchic nature of Moses' writing and almost without any inkling of the highest

or most important layer of meaning contained in it. Even our teachers in the Mystery Schools have often chosen to be obscure on such fundamental matters rather than disclose to immature or unready minds truth which would appear meaningless. For this reason, in our Martinist Order, we proceed slowly, counseling the Associate to prepare himself by meditation and contemplation for the explanations that will be gradually unfolded.

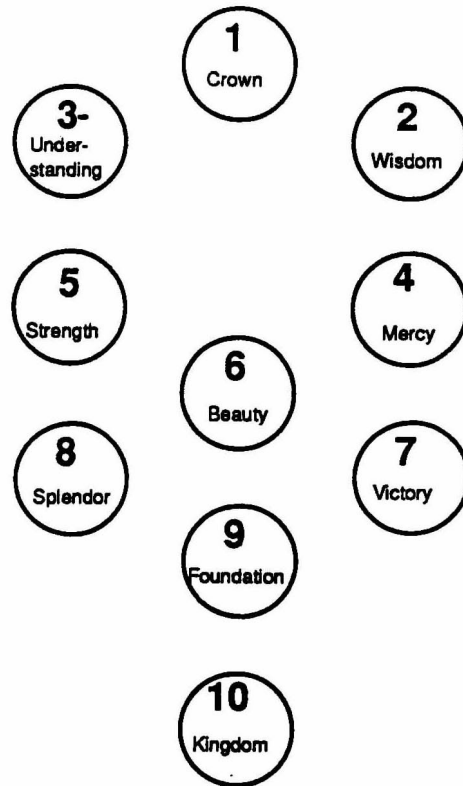
The time-honored questions of philosophy and religion could have been answered immediately if proper knowledge of Moses' teachings had been available. Endless speculation regarding the Fall Of Man, Free Will, the nature of Good & Evil, as well as man's purpose on earth, could have been avoided had the teachings reserved for the initiate been permitted to reach all.

That such procedure was not deemed the one to be followed has resulted in most of mankind's living by half-truths and false knowledge, and has obligated the candidate for the mysteries to *unlearn* much that he had previously accepted as true. It is for this reason that you were questioned thoroughly prior to your Initiation, to ascertain your readiness to accept new viewpoints and to re-examine the essentials of science, philosophy and religion.

In the Lecture entitled "Sepher Ietzerah", we approached the matter of creation as it shaped itself in the thought of Omneity, the pattern of which was seen to be a series of *emanations* of Infinity. The number of such emanations being ten, counted as a triunity, and a heptad comprising the seven days of creation. The name *decade* was chosen to suggest the completeness and invariability of the whole.

Following the explanations of the Qabalists (they of the Received Tradition) we shall find these ten emanations spoken of as *Sephiroth*. Although ten in number, these Sephiroth were still counted *one*, for all are/were but aspects of, and not separated from, the Infinity from which they came. As light seen through colored vessels is one light even though manifesting differently. so God exhibiting Himself under various aspects remains One. Or in Saint-Martin's words: "As all things in God are united by a universal communication, there is nothing separable in His nature. Each faculty is the universality of His faculties, and the universality of His faculties is found in each."

Let us consider, as the Qabalists did/do, these ten essential and unvarying facets of the Godhead called the Sephiroth, or divine decade. They are, in their proper order: (1) Crown, (2) Wisdom, (3) Intelligence or Understanding, (4) Mercy, (5) Strength or Force, (6) Beauty, (7) Victory, (8) Splendor, (9) Foundation, (10) Kingdom



These terms may seem to be without particular distinction. This is partly because their English translations do not carry their complete Hebrew significance and also, because the words themselves are too familiar to us to be associated in our thought with any esoteric meaning.

These Sephiroth constitute a representation of Infinity in action, giving us a picture of creation, outlining the path of creation's fall, and setting forth the pathway of man's ascent. They are also the basis for the mystic's conviction of the triadic pattern of things. This particular way in which the emanations are diagramed is known as *The Tree Of Life*.

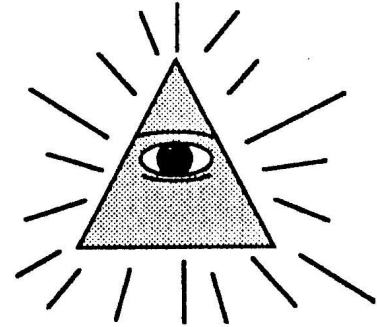
If we were to diagram the Sephiroth, we should do so by three triangles, one below the other, with a single dot below the third. The triangle farthest removed from our sphere of density is that made up of the first three Sephiroth: **Crown, Wisdom, and Understanding**. This, we must remember, embraces those aspects of God most difficult for man to comprehend. Their character is too near the boundaries of Infinity for man to do more than call them the Trinity. They do, in fact, in one school of thought, represent that which became for orthodox Christians the Father, Son and Holy Spirit although such terms are hardly adequate. Nonetheless, this Trinity has often been symbolized by an equilateral triangle with its apex pointing upward, containing within it the All-seeing eye and surrounded with a glory.

This matter of the representation of the Trinity Of Life will engage our attention when we enter into much more work in the future, for the Trinity can be represented in other ways which would be beyond the scope of our comprehension at this time.

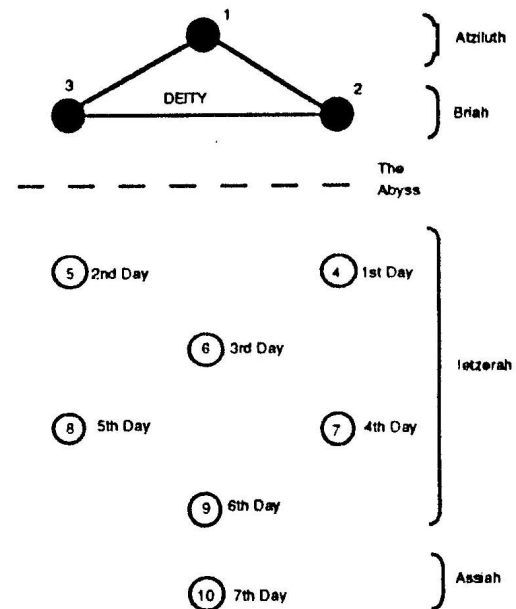
The world or realm of consciousness, inhabited or characterized by **Crown**, was called by the Qabalists **Atziluth**, or World of the Archetype. Please look up in your dictionary this word **Archetype** and have a clear understanding of its meaning. Atziluth is the realm of Seed ideas. It is, therefore, the germinal plane or stage of perfect intellection. The mother letter **Shin**, suggesting celestial fire, is assigned to Atziluth.

Next is the world or level of consciousness expressed by the two Sephiroth: **Wisdom** (2), and **Understanding** (3). This is **Briah**, the World of Creation. Out of the waters, creation took its rise. The mother letter **Mem**, governing the watery element, is assigned to Briah. Now, make this mental note: **Duality begins in Briah**.

The world or level of consciousness immediately above, or preceding, our earth is expressed by the Sephiroth: Mercy, Strength, Beauty, Victory, Splendor and Foundation. This is called the *World of Formation*, an airy plane of pure form called *Ietzirah*. It is suggested by the mother letter *Aleph*, for air is the breath of life and the animator of form. It is in the World of Formation that we find the “days of creation” thus:



| DAY | SEPHIRAH | NAME |
|-----|----------|------------|
| 1 | 4 | Mercy |
| 2 | 5 | Strength |
| 3 | 6 | Beauty |
| 4 | 7 | Victory |
| 5 | 8 | Splendor |
| 6 | 9 | Foundation |



Below these three realms, or higher worlds, stands the one of tangible form which we call the earth. (Material creation, the universe). It is shadowed forth by the tenth Sephirah, named *Kingdom*, in the realm of *Assiah*. It is associated with the 7th day, marking, as it were, the farthest extension or greatest condensation of the ethereal stuff of the Godhead.

Seen from the standpoint of allegory, our earth is the farthest removed from the light, warmth, and beneficence of the Source of Light; and man, whose home it is, seems little better than an exile. Indeed, considering the gulf which stretches between the world into which man was introduced in the beginning, and that in which he finds himself imprisoned at the present time, “the exile” seems an apt characterization of man. (Kingdom, the 4th World, is in the Realm of Assiah)

Much of the writing of our V::: M::: Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, was addressed “to man, the exile.” To console man in his outcast state and to inspire him with faith in his right to return to those realms which once were his, became increasingly the labor of love to which Saint-Martin devoted himself. His books were widely read and his words of advice eagerly sought, not alone among the followers of Pasquales but among the profane of his own country and of the Continent and abroad.

Martinism seeks to exemplify this spirit of concern for the welfare of those searching for the path of return. It outlines, according to the ability of its teachers and the capacity of its initiates, not only the original powers, abilities, and possessions of man as the favorite creation of Omneity, but also the ways by which those powers, abilities, and possessions (now seemingly lost) may be recovered.

There will be little theory or idle speculation to occupy us in regard to these high matters, for Martinism is intent upon opening a way of understanding whereby man may repossess the inner abilities and reawaken the dormant faculties and commence his journey back to that which may rightly be called his lost heritage.

It will be necessary, however, to retell the story of those significant events in man's past which have often been slighted and whose importance to his spiritual progress have been altogether overlooked.

In our next Liber we shall continue our consideration of the writings of Moses in order that we may properly evaluate those fundamental problems with which man, the exile, is faced and which he must overcome.

May you ever dwell in the Eternal Light of Divine Wisdom.

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Notes for Students

1. An *ideogram* is a character, a symbol or figure which suggests the idea of the object, a hieroglyphic. In order that the idea could be expressed verbally, these symbols became associated with a *sound* expressing the same meaning. As the system developed, there came compound symbols, each part representing an idea and the sum of these ideas giving rise to another meaning. We can still find examples of this in the written languages of the Far East. Thus in one of the Eastern languages, a symbol depicting a woman when placed by the side of the symbol of a broom, gives, by association of ideas, the symbol of a home. As symbols, alphabets and languages developed, they have gradually evolved so far away from their original conception that they have become nothing more than the vehicle of thoughts, to which they are no longer directly related. In other words, modern alphabets and languages have no ideogrammatic value. This is why Hebrew is the sacred language of Martinism, because ancient Hebrew has an affinity with the primitive language of man, that of symbols.

2. Three important esoteric symbols are those of: *The Mask; The Cloak; and The Two Columns or Pillars*. To represent the Mask, we use the Hebrew letter *Yod* which has a numerical value of 10 and which also means *thought*, both human and divine. Scholars consider the *Yod* to be the foundation letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The Cloak is represented by the letter *Tau*, 22nd and last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which symbolizes Truth, Knowledge, the Sun, and Perfect Man. The numerical value is 400. Lastly, the Columns are represented by *Daleth* which stands for Power, Strength and Immutability. Its numerical value is 4, which is the number of generation.

3. The Ten Numbers are the Ten Spheres of Creation called *Sephiroth* by Qabalists. The pattern of creation is expressed by a symbol which the *Sepher Ietzirah* calls "the decade out of nothing" and Qabalists designate "*The Tree Of Life*". The 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet are called *stamina* and are divided into three groups: the three *Mother Letters*, or Primordial Elements; the seven *double letters*, signifying the major oppositions of life; and the 12 *simple letters* which refer to man's specific functioning and activity.

4. All students should have a copy of the *Sepher Ietzirah*. It is a small, inexpensive book which should not only be read, but re-read, studied, contemplated and meditated upon.

5. It has been argued that the conditions of savagery and fear of the unknown drove man to worship, in the same way that the elements drove him to seek shelter in caves. Mystics condemn this idea however and contend that the seeds of worship, which gave rise to religious systems, were *in-born* in man and were co-existent with his beginning on earth. In other words, it was there as a memory, carried over or brought down from his previous high estate.

Modern psychology has recognized that behind the unconscious awareness of both humans and animals, there is a *driving force* or *instinctual energy* called *Id* by Freud, and *Libido* by Jung. This raw energy surfaces from the unconscious or subconscious mind to the conscious, and manifests itself in what are known as the fundamental instincts. These are:

- (1) The self-preservation instinct, or will to live.
- (2) The sex instinct, or will to procreate.
- (3) The herd instinct, or social urge.

Karl Gustav Jung, the famous Swiss psychiatrist recognized a fourth instinct which he called:

- (4) The religious instinct.

According to Jung, the religious instinct is the balancing force that allows man to control and direct his more basic urges. It is also the underlying drive behind man's complex system of morality. Man's desire to discover the truths of nature, his need to define his relationships to the universe, and his belief in the existence of God are all expressions of the religious instinct. We must not, however, confuse the term 'religious instinct' with an actual drive in man towards what is known as organized religion; rather this instinct implies an awareness of a reality that extends beyond the physical world or the senses, to a world of nonphysical or spiritual substance, an awareness unsupported by material evidence but existing solely on the strength of intuition.

These intuitive flashes, these vague rememberings, mystics contend, were brought by man into his earthly experiences, obligations which he possessed in the world of his previous estate. There, it was his duty to have a perfect understanding of all that took place in the universe, to prevent the work of malefactors, to maintain peace and order, and to do everything to manifest the power and glory of Omneity. In this superior state, man had more accurate means for carrying out his religious duties, but in his present physical condition he must use sensible or physical means. As a result he is unable to carry out his religious duties with the same success as in his previous existence.

In all religions, two main factors are involved: *worship* and *attunement*. These were used by primitive peoples even before there was any highly developed system of ritual or doctrine. With these two principles, the humblest spot can become a temple. Without them even the most ornate shrine could never become a place of worship.

Mystics have always had their altars or Oratories in which they spend time daily in prayer and meditation. The primitives built their sanctums in the open, on a spot apart, and constructed them of the materials at hand. The sacred fire which served to bring the invisible and visible together, burned on the altar, and into the fire were sprinkled aromatic herbs, sweet-smelling spices or fragrant oils. The mysterious power of fire and the atmosphere created by the incense thus brought the mystic into a condition essential for true worship. The passage of time has not changed these basic requisites. Indeed, concurring with this, our V::: M::: Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin has said: "That altar is always surrounded with lamps which never go out and must always burn as long as the altar itself exists. Secondly, man always carries incense with him when he approaches the altar; thereby, he is able to enter into a state of devotion and thus bring about truer acts of his religion."

Today, although there are many religious sects, in essence they are one, just as we have seen that man himself, hiding behind the *appearance* of different races, is *one*. This should not surprise us for in his original First Estate, he was *one* there too. All religions speak of *one* living God. All state that every man possesses the germ of the Godhead. The spiritual exercises and practices of all religions, too, have a similar purpose: to bring man into attunement with the *One*.

It is not surprising therefore, to find that the sacred books of all religions are fundamentally alike. Atheistic writers contend that they have been copied one from the other, but such is not the case.

Each has been received as divine revelation, which rests on the solid and durable foundation of religious practices carried out in man's previous estate. It is well to remember that sacred and religious books have inner, esoteric meanings. Mysticism has been aware of this ever since the time of Origen, the great Church Father and Christian Mystic of the first century A.D., who tried desperately to maintain in the Christian religion the esoteric teachings which were being suppressed and expunged, as the early church shifted into an organization where expediency, power, politics and the control of people became more important than the perpetuation and teaching of spiritual truth.

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ESSAY Transcendence

Dear Brothers & Sisters:

We frequently hear the words "transcendental" and "transcendence" nowadays, and they are words that have some interesting connotations. They are words which, if we did not have them, we would have to invent others to use in their place. The word "transcend" has a dictionary meaning of "to rise above, to overleap, to surpass, to outstrip, to exceed, to excel." Someone has said that man is unique because he has the power of self-transcendence, the power to overcome, to rise above, to experience life on higher dimensions. The best illustration I can think of which illustrates the meaning of "transcendence" is contained in a book called *Flatland* by a man named Edwin A. Abbut. This book was published in England in 1926 and is probably out of print now. However: the author asks the reader to imagine existing in only two dimensions, that is - living in only a flat, level plane, There would be no ups or downs, no verticalness, no third dimension in other words. The reader is asked to imagine two-dimensional people living there, people who can move forward, backward or, sideways, but who have no up or down. Nor can they think up or down, for they themselves are two-dimensional creatures. Their houses would simply be lines drawn on the plane of their existence, i.e. squares, triangles, circles or some other shape with openings for doors and windows like an architectural floor plan for a house. Remember now, that these people cannot look up or down, only forwards or backwards or sideways; their entire life, thinking, feeling and sensing is operating in a flat, two-dimensional plane.

Now, suppose that you, a person living in three dimensions, looks down on that queer flatland with its little creatures skating about and who cannot jump over or duck under any obstacle in their way, involved as they are in a two-dimensional existence. Suppose that you reach down and pick up one of those two-dimensional people and lift him up above the two-dimensional plane and turn him sideways so that he could look down upon his world. What would be his reaction? For the first time, a creature from Flatland actually sees another dimension. What a mind-blowing experience that would be! Just imagine the perspective he would get for the first time. Now, his friends can't see him because they can't look up, they wouldn't have seen him go up, therefore he would have just simply vanished.

Further suppose that you placed him back down in his world after this experience. His friends would suddenly see him appear out of nowhere, and they would all flock around him and ask: "Where have you been?" He tries to tell them, but just imagine the difficulty of a two-dimensional creature trying to relate the idea of a third dimension when there would be no words, no symbols, no concepts, no means of defining it, no way to describe it. He can't say, "I was up there," because

there is no word “up” in his language. He can only stammer and try to find two-dimensional analogies and metaphors to communicate with. Naturally, his friends would have no understanding of what he was trying to explain, and would probably think he was crazy and lock him up.

Can you think of similar situations involving people in our three-dimensional world who have had a fourth-dimensional experience? The first thing that comes to mind is the experience of mystics who try to tell people about the “Kingdom of God” or the “Kingdom of Heaven”. Jesus, for example, was like a creature from Flatland trying to communicate something about another dimension, (perhaps a fourth dimension). Each of us is a three-dimensional creature and we have certain experiences in life that we take for granted. All the great mystical teachers of the ages, however, have told us of another dimension, a spiritual dimension, where, as Paul says, “we live and move and have our being.”

How do you try to describe heaven? Jesus tried to describe heaven as being within, as a state of consciousness, and he described it as being a seed that grew and developed into tremendous proportions out of its small seed stature, or as leavened dough developing into a whole loaf of bread. He expressed it in many different ways, but he was talking, in other words, about another dimension.

The 91st Psalm is a beautiful meditation that deals with the transcendent experience of life, of things that come when we get into this consciousness of transcendence. It begins, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the almighty.” This “place” is not a place in space, but a level of consciousness. It is a secret state of mind, and when you get into this state then it says that you abide under a shadow; in other words, you abide under a cloud that shields you from the too hot rays of the sun. You are shielded from the harmful difficulties of life; you live, as someone has said, “in the charmed circle of God’s love.” All because you dwell in that secret place.

Now, what does that mean? It means, as Jesus once said, that you “live in the world, but you are not of it.” You should keep your consciousness in the awareness that you are a whole creature. You may be expressing in part, you may be experiencing limitations in your life, but always you should have the awareness of the larger wholeness in which you live and move and have your being.

This is probably what Jesus had in mind when he said: “Judge ye not by appearances.” Now, the appearance of things is basically centered within our three-dimensional perspective, and so if it seems that a situation is at the end of its rope, or a person is near the end of his endurance regarding a physical condition, and the doctors say he is incurable, in a three-dimensional perspective you might be tempted to say, “Well, that’s how it is; what can one do?” But from a fourth-dimensional perspective what we see in the three-dimensional world is a partial, perhaps even a distorted, expression of something that is a whole, that is a real experience. Now, this is perhaps hard to understand and is rooted in faith.

How can you have faith that something is done, or that something can be done, when most people believe that something can’t be done? Well, faith is rooted in this concept of the fourth dimension; faith is an attitude that is born out of this idea of transcendence, and the abilities of self-transcendence. Faith is, in the symbology of the disciples, the “key to the kingdom.” Faith is a key into the world of transcendence, faith that there is more to life than that which is seen, faith that there is more to a person than that which is expressed. Any man has the ability to transcend himself when he develops the secret awareness.

This comes through prayer and meditation, through cultivating an introspective view of life. We need to close our eyes, close out the three-dimensional awareness of life, blot it out entirely, not thinking in terms of limitations, and as Kalihl Gibran said in his definition of prayer, “...expanding yourself into the living ether.” You get the sense that you are a part of the whole, and know then that

you are rooted in wholeness. There is a whole self that has power and capacities beyond anything you have ever known. You just have to be still and know this. This is self-transcendence, and out of this awareness of the larger self of you, comes the confidence to do more than you have ever done, to go further than you have ever gone, to overcome challenges that have seemed totally limiting.

Well, I hope this has given you some kind of an insight into the word *transcendence*. Just get the realization that there is that of you that can rise above, surpass, and go beyond the three-dimensional world of yourself. You can get the higher sense, achieve the secret awareness to look beyond the *appearances*, to see beyond the horizon, to find the faith and the will to go forward and achieve.

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ESSAY Discovering Ourselves

When Solomon said, “As a man thinketh within himself, so is he,” he pointed to the vital truth that a man is constantly being molded and shaped by the mental attitudes that he holds. Each of us is constantly shaping and molding his destiny, though we rationalize our state and station in life as being the result of inevitable events over which we have no control. The truth is that the experiences of life are important only in the attitudes we form about them.

Fundamental in our study of life is a right understanding about this something we call God. We must begin to turn away from the old concept of a God who is personal and sits in the heavens somewhere, to think of God as universal, as principle, as love, substance, life, power - the essence of all that comes forth in experience. We want to think of God not in a particular locality or as a personality, but as a force which is omnipresent. In considering such an approach to God you may feel that you have lost the sense of the presence. “They have taken away my Lord,” said one who came to “find Jesus.” The personal God with which you experience fellowship and communion may seem to be lost. But this is not necessarily so when you get the whole picture.

God is Infinite Mind, and man is an idea in Mind. This idea is an activity in God, a part of God, it is no less than God. But this idea is a self-contained emanation out of Mind that is endowed with the power for unfoldment and expression. The idea forever remains one with Mind and forever has a close communion with Mind. Thus man, as an expression of Mind, is endowed with something of God which goes with him in all experience and has nothing to do but to work for his highest good. It is that something which Jesus referred to as “the Father in me who doeth the work.” It is that something in us that is close, ever-personal, ever-nurturing, ever-loving. It is God imminent and active in man; God who knows our needs and whose good pleasure it is to fill these needs in all ways. *God* is the principle. *Christ* is the ideal of the principle as it is brought into creation. *Man* is that creation on its way to the perfect expression of the Christ. So, in a way, this is the Trinity. We have *Mind*: God, the universal; *Idea*: God the Father principle; *Expression*: man in the unfolding expression of God.

But it is important to know that man is not just the third person in the Trinity. Man is whole; man is being in miniature and all the powers of God are available to him. Man is the very activity of God expressing itself as man. Charles Fillmore says: “Man can never discern more than “a segment of the circle in which he moves, although his powers and capacities are susceptible of infinite expansion. He discovers a faculty within himself and cultivates it until it opens out into a universe of correlated faculties. The further he goes into Mind the wider its horizon, until he is forced to acknowledge that he is not the personal, limited being that he appears, but rather the focus of an

infinite idea. That idea contains within itself inexhaustible possibilities. These possibilities are projected into man's consciousness as an image is reflected in a mirror, and thus man is the most important factor in creation. He is the will of God individualized." Fillmore goes on, "You are just as fully the son of God as was Jesus or any other Christ-like man who ever existed. The 'I AM' is the same in all men and all women; it is without limit in its capacity to express the potentialities of God."

The point is that man is forever answering the question, "Who am I?" by the manner of speech. He is saying, "I am this and that and the other." If he says, "I am weak and tired," he is using his potential of spiritual power by dragging it in the dust. If he says, "I am the Christ, the son of the living God," he is harnessing this Divine force within him and lifting himself to his highest potentiality. When the potential "I" is coupled with the all-sufficiency in God, it becomes the "I AM" which is the very name of God and the nature of man's true son-of-God self. So when Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am," He was not being facetious or ungrammatical; He was simply stating the truth that "I am the eternal son of God," and that this idea was the spiritual power in the life of Abraham even as it was in His own life and experience. When He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the light," He actually was saying, "I AM" is the way, the truth, and the light. This is the great realization that "I AM" is the way for you and for me. So we want to get away from the consciousness of, "I wish," "I hope," "I can't" and dwell in the "I AM," securing a new facet of being. Couple this "I AM" with whatever it is that you seek to manifest in your life and you harness yourself to tremendous power: "I am success." "I am life." "I am wholeness." "I am love."

Remember, Fillmore says that you are "the focus of an infinite idea." This is a marvelous thought. The electric light bulb, in a way, is a focus of electrical energy producing light. But men knew about electricity for a long time before they knew how to properly focus its potential. Man has known about spiritual things for a long time but without realizing how to give focus to his own innate spiritual power. Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world, let your light shine." There is the same need in man of producing the focus for transforming the power of God into tangible and visible light and wisdom as there has been in harnessing great forces of the world.

God created man as a perfect idea in Mind and that idea is being projected as an image upon the screen of the soul nature. Man's role is to duplicate this process and to put this image of the Divine idea into the projector of his own consciousness. If you are showing films or slides and suddenly you get a blurred image on the screen you know that your picture is out of focus, so you adjust the focus until it becomes clear. The film picture was all right, but the projector was out of focus. The focus, you see, is our thought preoccupation. What are we seeing? How are we judging ourself and others? "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind," by getting your mind in focus, by recognizing consciously your oneness with God.

It is a great day in a man's life when he really begins to discover himself. You see, a person may own attractive land for years without knowing its value. And then he may suddenly strike oil on it; he may take water from the land; he may quarry stone to build buildings; he may cut down trees and use them for lumber. All the natural resources may be there, but first he has to discover and use them. Beneath the surface of every man there is a latent capacity greater than he has ever yet discovered. One discovery leads to another, until man finds the deep wealth of his many possibilities.

You can go to this Infinite Mind as you go to the library for information. This is the key to the control of every circumstance, the solution of every problem, the satisfaction of every right desire: "Be still and know that I am God." One reason for our lack of focus and our lack of effectiveness is that we look to good fortune for happiness and for security in the world around us. To us, the light within is the light intended to aid us in the search for something we have yet to find in time world. But it is not in the world, it is in yourself. Walt Whitman said, "I ask not good fortune; I myself am good fortune." Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within."

Within ourselves is the potential to become all that in our heart of hearts we desire. Our tendency is to become centered in things, in outer conditions and circumstances. As the poet said, “We live too close to the circumference of our being.” When our thoughts are centered in money and things and sense-consciousness, we think that we are merely using life, using substance, using ideas, rather than being the expression or the focus of life and substance and intelligence.

You can discover yourself and discover a new dimension to your life when you realize your oneness with the Infinite process and know that the kingdom of God is within you and all potentiality is yours. Live each day as if you had within you all that you need and seek in that day to give expression to that allness — by the way you think, by the faith that you express, by the way in which you relate to life, and by the way in which you constantly turn to the Almighty. Return within yourself, to relate yourself in oneness with God. “Be still and know that I am God.”

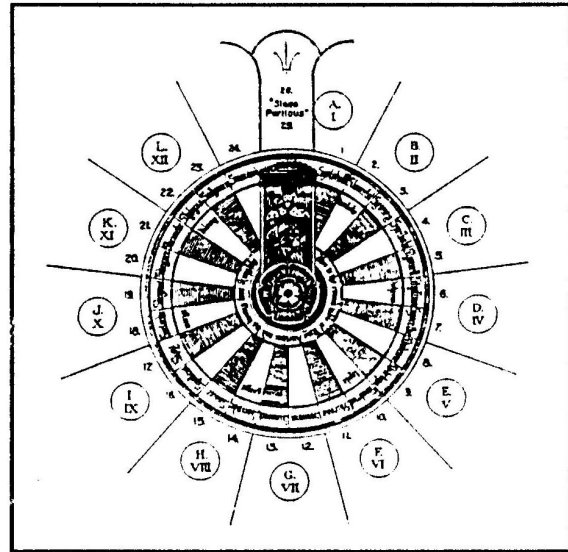
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OPTIONAL Mystic Christianity

The true story of the life of Jesus of Nazareth has never been unfolded to the world, either in the accepted Gospels or in the Apochrypha, although a few stray hints may be found in some of the commentaries written by the ante-Nicene Fathers. The facts concerning His identity and mission are among the priceless mysteries preserved to this day in the secret vaults beneath the “Houses of the Brethren”. To a few of the Knights Templars, who were initiated into the arcana of the Druses, Nazarenes, Essenes, Johannites, and other sects still inhabiting the remote and inaccessible fastnesses of the Holy Land, part of the strange story was told. The knowledge of the Templars concerning the early history of Christianity was undoubtedly one of the main reasons for their persecution and final annihilation. The discrepancies in the writings of the early Church Fathers not only are irreconcilable, but demonstrate beyond question that even during the first five centuries after Christ, these learned men had for the basis of their writings little more substantial than folklore and hearsay. To the easy believer everything is possible and there are no problems. The unemotional person in search of facts, however, is confronted by a host of problems with uncertain factors, of which the following are typical:

According to popular conception, Jesus was crucified during the thirty-third year of His life and in the third year of His ministry following His baptism. About A.D. 180, St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, one of the most eminent of the ante-Nicene theologians, wrote *Against Heresies*, an attack on the doctrines of the Gnostics. In this work Irenaeus declared upon the authority of the Apostles themselves that Jesus lived to old age. To quote: “They, however, that they may establish their false opinion regarding that which is written ‘to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.’ maintain that He preached for one year only, and then suffered in the twelfth month. [In speaking thus], they are forgetful of their own disadvantage, destroying His whole work, and robbing Him of that age which is both more necessary and more honorable than any other; that more advanced age, I mean, during which also as a teacher He excelled all others. For how could He have had His disciples, if He did not teach? And how could He have taught unless He had reached the age of a Master? For when He came to be baptized, He had not yet completed His thirtieth year, but was beginning to be about thirty years of age (for thus Luke, who has mentioned His years, has expressed it: ‘Now Jesus was, as it were, beginning to be thirty years old,’ when He came to receive baptism); and (according to these men,) He preached only one year, reckoning from His baptism. On completing His thirtieth year He suffered, being in fact still a young man, and who had by no means attained to advanced age. Now, that the first stage of early life embraces thirty years, and that this extends onward to the

fortieth year, every one will admit; but from the fortieth and fiftieth year a man begins to decline towards old age, *which our Lord possessed while He still fulfilled the office of a Teacher, even as the Gospel and all the elders testify*; those who were conversant in Asia with John, the disciple of the Lord, (affirming) that John conveyed to them that information. And he remained among them up to the time of Trajan. Some of them, moreover, saw not only John, but the other apostles also, and heard the very same account from them, and bear testimony as to the (validity of) the statement. Whom then should we rather believe? Whether such men as these, or Ptolemaeus, who never saw the apostles, and who never even in his dreams attained to the slightest trace of an apostle?"



From *Jenning's The Rosicrucians, Their Rites, and Mysteries*

THE ROUND TABLE OF KING ARTHUR

According to tradition, Arthur, when a boy of fifteen, was crowned King of Britain, in A. D. 516. Soon after his ascension to the throne he founded the Order of the Knights of the Round Table at Windsor. Thereafter the Knights met annually at Carleon, Winchester, or at Camelot, to celebrate Pentecost. From all parts of Europe came the brave and the bold, seeking admission into this noble order of British knighthood. Nobility, virtue, and valor were its requirements, and those possessing these qualities to a marked degree were welcomed to King Arthur's court at Camelot. Having gathered the bravest and noblest Knights of Europe about him, King Arthur chose twenty-four who excelled all others in daring and integrity and formed of them his Circle of the Round Table. According to legend, each of these Knights was so great in dignity and power that none could occupy a more exalted seat than another, so when they gathered at the table to celebrate the anniversary of their foundation, it was necessary to use a round table that all might occupy chairs of equal importance.

While it is probable that the Order of the Round Table had its distinctive rituals and symbols, the knowledge of them has not survived the ages. Elias Ashmole, in his volume on the Order of the Garter, inserted a double-page plate showing the insignia of all the orders of knighthood. The block set aside for the symbol of the Round Table being left blank. The chief reason for the loss of the symbolism of the Round Table was the untimely death of King Arthur upon the field of Kamblan (A.D. 542) in the forty-first year of his life. While he destroyed his bitter enemy, Mordred, in this famous battle, it cost him not only his own life but the lives of nearly all his Knights of the Round Table, who died defending their commander.

Commenting on the foregoing passage, Godfrey Higgins remarks that it has fortunately escaped the hands of those destroyers who have attempted to render the Gospel narratives consistent by deleting all such statements. He also notes that the doctrine of the crucifixion was a *vexata questio* among Christians even during the second century. "The evidence of Irenaeus," he says, "cannot be touched. On every principle of sound criticism, and of the doctrine of probabilities, it is unimpeachable."

It should further be noted that Irenaeus prepared this statement to contradict another apparently current in his time to the effect that the ministry of Jesus lasted but *one* year. Of all the early Fathers, Irenaeus, writing within eighty years after the death of St. John the evangelist, should have had reasonably accurate information. If the disciples themselves related that Jesus lived to advanced age in the body, why has the mysterious number 33 been arbitrarily chosen to symbolize the duration of His life? Were the incidents in the life of Jesus purposely altered so that His actions would fit more closely into the pattern established by the numerous Savior-Gods who preceded Him?

That these analogies were recognized and used as a perusal of the writings of Justin Martyr, another second-century authority. In his *Apology*, Justin addresses the pagans thus:

“And when we say also that the Word, who is the first-birth of God, and that He, Jesus Christ, our Teacher, was crucified and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, we propound nothing different from what you believe regarding those whom you esteem sons of Jupiter. And if we assert that the Word of God was born of God in a peculiar manner, different from ordinary generation, let this, as said above, be no extraordinary thing to you, who say that Mercury is the angelic word of God. But if any one objects that He was crucified, in this also He is on a par with those reputed sons of Jupiter of yours, who suffered as we have now enumerated.”

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From this it is evident that the first missionaries of the Christian Church were far more willing to admit the similarities between their faith and the faiths of the pagans than were their successors in later centuries.

In an effort to solve some of the problems arising from any attempt to chronicle accurately the life of Jesus, it has been suggested that there may have lived in Syria at that time two or more religious teachers bearing the name *Jesus, Jehoshua, or Joshua*, and that the lives of these men may have been confused in the Gospel stories. In his *Secret Sects of Syria and Lebanon*, Bernard H. Springett, a Masonic author, quotes from an early book, the name of which he was not at liberty to disclose because of its connection with the ritual of a sect. The last part of his quotation is germane to the subject at hand:

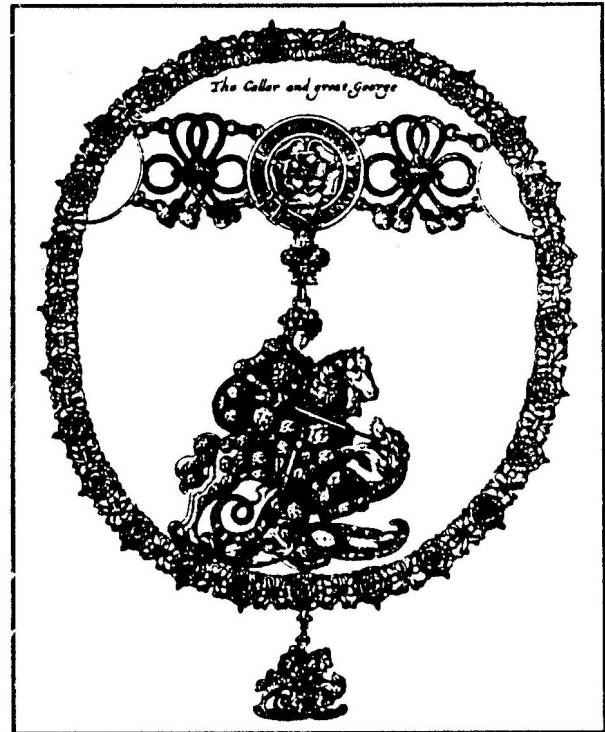
“But Jehovah prospered the seed of the Essenians, in holiness and love, for many generations. Then came the chief of the angels, according to the commandment of GOD, to raise up an heir to the Voice of Jehovah. And, in four generations more, an heir was born, and named Joshua, and he was the child of Joseph and Mary,

devout worshippers of Jehovah, who stood aloof from all other people save the Essenians. And this Joshua, in Nazareth, reestablished Jehovah, and restored many of the lost rites and ceremonies. In the thirty-sixth year of his age he was stoned to death in Jerusalem.”

Within the last century several books have published to supplement the meager descriptions in the Gospels of Jesus and His ministry. In some instances these narratives claim to be founded upon early manuscripts recently discovered; in others, upon direct spiritual revelation. Some of these writings are highly plausible, while others are incredible. There are persistent rumors that Jesus visited and studied in both Greece and India and that a coin struck in His honor in India during the first century has been discovered. Early Christian records are known to exist in Tibet, and the monks of a Buddhist monastery in Ceylon still preserve a record which indicates that Jesus sojourned with them and became conversant with their philosophy.

Although early Christianity shows every evidence of Oriental influence, this is a subject the modern church declines to discuss. If it is ever established beyond question that Jesus was an initiate of the pagan Greek or Asiatic Mysteries, the effect upon the more conservative members of the Christian faith is likely to be cataclysmic. If Jesus was God incarnate, as the solemn councils of the church discovered, why is He referred to in the New Testament as “called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedek”? The words “after the order” make Jesus one of a line or order of which there must have been others of equal or even superior dignity. If the “Melchizedeks” were the divine or priestly rulers of the nations of the earth before the inauguration of the system of temporal rulers, then the statements attributed to St. Paul would indicate that Jesus either was one of these “philosophic elect” or was attempting to reestablish their system of government. It will be remembered that Melchizedek also performed the same ceremony of the drinking of wine and the breaking of bread as did Jesus at the Last Supper.

George Faber declares the original name of Jesus was *Jescua Hammassiah*. Godfrey Higgins has discovered two references, one in the *Midrashjoleheleth* and the other in the *Abodazara* (early Jewish commentaries on the Scriptures) to the effect that the surname of Joseph’s family was *Panther*, for in both of these works it is stated that a man was healed “in the name of Jesus ben Panther.” The name *Panther* establishes a direct connection between Jesus and Bacchus — who was nursed by panthers and is sometimes depicted riding either on one of these animals or in a chariot



From Ashmole's *Order of the Garter*

THE GREAT GEORGE AND COLLAR OF THE GARTER

The Order of the Garter was probably formed by Edward III in imitation of King Arthur’s Knights of the Round Table, which institution was hopelessly scattered after the battle of Kamblan. The popular story to the effect that the Countess of Salisbury’s garter was the original inspiration for the foundation of the order is untenable. The motto of the Order of the Garter is “Honi soit qui mal y pense” (Shamed be he who thinks evil of it). St. George is looked upon as the patron of the order, for he typifies the higher nature of man overcoming the dragon of his own lower nature. While St. George is supposed to have lived during the third century, it is probable that he was a mythological personage borrowed from pagan mythology.

drawn by them. The skin of the panther was also sacred in certain of the Egyptian initiatory ceremonials. The Monogram IHS, now interpreted to mean *Jesus Hominum Salvator* (Jesus Savior of Men), is another direct link between the Christian and the Bacchic rites. **IHS** is derived from the Greek *YHZ* which, as its numerical value (608) signifies, is emblematic of the sun and constituted the sacred and concealed name of Bacchus. (See *The Celtic Druids* by Godfrey Higgins.) The question arises, was early Roman Christianity confused with the worship of Bacchus because of the numerous parallelisms in the two faiths? If the affirmative can be proved, many hitherto incomprehensible enigmas of the New Testament will be solved.

It is by no means improbable that Jesus Himself originally propounded as allegories the cosmic activities which were later confused with His own life. That the *Xpīotos*, *Christos* represents the solar power revered by every nation of antiquity cannot be controverted. If Jesus revealed the nature and purpose of this solar power under the name and personality of *Christos*, thereby giving to this abstract power the attributes of a god-man, He but followed a precedent set by all previous World-Teachers. This god-man, thus endowed with all the qualities of Deity, signifies the latent divinity in every man. Mortal man achieves deification only through at-one-ment with this divine Self. Union with the immortal Self constitutes immortality, and he who finds his true Self is therefore “saved.” This *Christos*, or divine man in man, is man’s real hope of salvation — the living Mediator between abstract Deity and mortal humankind. As Atys, Adonis, Bacchus, and Orpheus in all likelihood were originally illumined men who later were confused with the symbolic personages whom they created as personifications of this divine power, so Jesus has been confused with the *Christos*, or god-man, whose wonders He preached. Since the *Christos* was the god-man imprisoned in every creature, it was the first duty of the initiate to liberate, or “resurrect” this Eternal One within himself. He who attained reunion with his *Christos* was consequently termed a *Christian*, or *Christened*, man.

One of the most profound doctrines of the pagan philosophers concerned the Universal Savior-God who lifted the souls of regenerated men to heaven through His own nature. This concept was unquestionably the inspiration for the words attributed to Jesus: “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” In an effort to make a single person out of Jesus and His *Christos*, Christian writers have patched together a doctrine which must be resolved back into its original constituents if the true meaning of Christianity is to be rediscovered. In the Gospel narratives the *Christos* represents the perfect man who, having passed through the various stages of the “World Mystery” symbolized by the thirty-three years, ascends to the heaven sphere where he is reunited with his Eternal Father. The story of Jesus as now preserved is — like the Masonic story of Hiram Abiff — part of a secret initiatory ritualism belonging to the early Christian and pagan Mysteries.

During the centuries just prior to the Christian Era, the secrets of the pagan Mysteries had gradually fallen into the hands of the profane. To the student of comparative religion it is evident that these secrets, gathered by a small group of faithful philosophers and mystics, were re clothed in new symbolical garments and thus preserved for several centuries under the name of *Mystic Christianity*. It is generally supposed that the Essenes were the custodians of this knowledge and also the initiators and educators of Jesus. If so, Jesus was undoubtedly initiated in the same temple of Melchizedek where Pythagoras had studied six centuries before.

The Essenes — the most prominent of the early Syrian sects — were an order of pious men and women who lived lives of asceticism, spending their days in simple labor and their evenings in prayer. Josephus, the great Jewish historian, speaks of them in the highest terms. “They teach the immortality of the soul,” he says, “and esteem that the rewards of righteousness are to be earnestly striven for.” In another place he adds, “Yet is their course of life better than that of other men and they entirely addict themselves to husbandry.” The name *Essenes* is supposed to be derived from

Like the Gnostics, the Essenes were emanationists. One of their chief objects was the reinterpretation of the Mosaic Law according to certain secret spiritual keys preserved by them from the time of the founding of their order. It would thus follow that the Essenes were Qabalists and, like several other contemporary sects flourishing in Syria, were awaiting the advent of the *Messiah* promised in the early Biblical writings. Joseph and Mary, the parents of Jesus, are believed to have been members of the Essene Order. Joseph was many years the senior of Mary. According to *The Protevangelium*, he was a widower with grown sons, and in the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, he refers to Mary as a little child less in age than his own grandchildren.

In her infancy Mary was dedicated to the Lord, and the Apocryphal writings contain many accounts of miracles associated with her early childhood. When she was twelve years old, the priests held counsel as to the future of this child who had dedicated herself to the Lord, and the Jewish high priest, bearing the breastplate, entered into the Holy of Holies, where an angel appeared to him, saying, "Zacharias, go forth and summon the widowers of the people and let them take a rod apiece and she shall be the wife of him to whom the Lord shall show a sign." Going forth to meet the priests at the head of the widowers, Joseph collected the rods of all the other men and gave them into the keeping of the priests. Now Joseph's rod was but half as long as the others, and the priests on returning the rods to the widowers paid no attention to Joseph's but left it behind in the Holy of Holies. When all the other widowers had received back their wands, the priests awaited a sign from heaven, but none came. Joseph, because of his advanced age, did not ask for the return of his rod, for to him it was inconceivable that he should be chosen. But an angel appeared to the high priest, ordering him to give back the short rod which lay unnoticed in the Holy of Holies. As the high priest handed the rod to Joseph, a white dove flew from the end of it and rested upon the head of the aged carpenter, and to him was given the child.

The editor of *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East* calls attention to the peculiar spirit with which the childhood of Jesus is treated in most of the Apocryphal books on the New Testament, particularly in one work attributed to the doubting Thomas, the earliest known Greek version of which dates from about A.D. 200: "The child Christ is represented almost as an imp, cursing and destroying those who annoy him." This Apocryphal work, calculated to inspire its readers with fear and trembling, was popular during the Middle Ages because it was in full accord with the cruel and persecuting spirit of mediaeval Christianity. Like many other early sacred books, the book of Thomas was fabricated for two closely allied purposes: first, to outshine the pagans in miracle working, second, to inspire all unbelievers with the "fear of the Lord." Apocryphal writings of this sort have no possible basis in fact. At one time an asset, the "miracles" of Christianity have become its greatest liability. Supernatural phenomena, in a credulous age interpolated to impress the ignorant, in this century have only achieved the alienation of the intelligent.

In *The Greek Gospel of Nicodemus*, it is declared that when Jesus was brought into the presence of Pilate the standards borne by the Roman guards bowed their tops in homage to him in spite of every effort made by the soldiers to prevent it. In *The Letters of Pilate* the statement also appears that Caesar, being wroth at Pilate for executing a just man, ordered him to be decapitated. Praying for forgiveness, Pilate was visited by an angel of the Lord, who reassured the Roman governor by promising him that all Christendom should remember his name and that when Christ came the second time to judge His people he (Pilate) should come before Him as His witness.

Stories like the foregoing represent the incrustations that have attached themselves to the body of Christianity during the centuries. The popular mind itself has been the self-appointed guardian and perpetuator of these legends, bitterly opposing every effort to divest the faith of these questionable accumulations. While popular tradition often contains certain basic elements of truth, these elements are usually distorted out of all proportion. Thus, while the generalities of the story may be fundamentally true, the details are hopelessly erroneous. Of truth as of beauty it may be said that it is most adorned when unadorned. Through the mist of fantastic accounts which obscure the true

foundation of the Christian faith is faintly visible to the discerning few a great and noble doctrine communicated to the world by a great and noble soul. Joseph and Mary, two devout and holy-minded souls, consecrated to the service of God and dreaming of the coming of a Messiah to serve Israel, obeyed the injunctions of the high priest of the Essenes to prepare a body for the coming of a great soul. Thus of an immaculate conception Jesus was born. By *immaculate* is meant clean, rather than supernatural.

Jesus was reared and educated by the Essenes and later initiated into the most profound of their Mysteries. Like all great initiates, He must travel in an easterly direction, and the silent years of His life no doubt were spent in familiarizing Himself with that secret teaching later to be communicated by Him to the world. Having consummated the ascetic practices of His order, He attained to the *Christening*. Having thus reunited Himself with His own spiritual source, He then went forth in the name of the One who has been crucified since before the worlds were and, gathering about Him disciples and apostles, He instructed them in that secret teaching which had been lost — in part, at least — from the doctrines of Israel. His fate is unknown, but in all probability He suffered that persecution which is the lot of those who seek to reconstruct the ethical, philosophical, or religious systems of their day.

To the multitudes Jesus spoke in parables; to His disciples He also spoke in parables, though of a more exalted and philosophic nature. Voltaire said that Plato should have been canonized by the Christian Church. For, being the first propounder of the *Christos* mystery, he contributed more to its fundamental doctrines than any other single individual. Jesus discloses to His disciples that the lower world is under the control of a great spiritual being which had fashioned it according to the will of the Eternal Father. The mind of this great angel was both the mind of the world and also the worldly mind. So that men should not die of worldliness the Eternal Father sent unto creation the eldest and most exalted of His powers — the Divine Mind. This Divine Mind offered Itself as a living sacrifice and was broken up and eaten by the world. Having given Its spirit and Its body at a secret and sacred supper to the twelve manners of rational creatures, the Divine Mind became a part of every living thing. Man was thereby enabled to use this power as a bridge across which he might pass and attain immortality. He who lifted up his soul to this Divine Mind and served It was righteous and, having attained righteousness, liberated this Divine Mind, which thereupon returned again in glory to Its own divine source. And because He had brought to them his knowledge, the disciples said one to another: “Lo, He in Himself this Mind personified!”

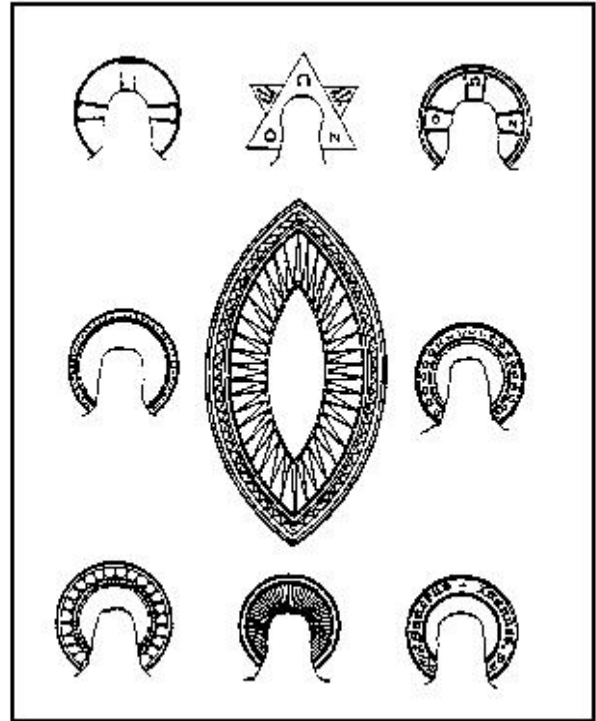
THE ARTHURIAN CYCLE AND LEGEND OF THE HOLY GRAIL

According to legend, the body of the *Christos* (the Spiritual Law) was given into the keeping of two men, of whom the Gospels make but brief mention. These were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, both devout men who, though not listed among the disciples or apostles of the *Christos*, were of all men chosen to be custodians of His sacred remains. Joseph of Arimathea was one of the initiated brethren and is called by A. E. Waite, in his *A New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry*, “the first bishop of Christendom.” Just as the temporal (or visible) power of the Holy See was established by St. Peter (?), so the spiritual (or invisible) body of the faith was entrusted to the “secret Church of the Holy Grail” through apostolic succession from Joseph of Arimathea, into whose keeping had been given the perpetual symbols of the covenant - the ever-flowing cup and the bleeding spear.

Presumably obeying instructions of St. Philip, Joseph of Arimathea, carrying the sacred relics, reached Britain after passing through many and varied hardships. Here a site was allotted to him for the erection of a church, and in this manner Glastonbury Abbey was founded. Joseph planted his staff in the earth and it took root, becoming a miraculous thorn bush which blossomed twice a year and which is now called the Glastonbury thorn. The end of the life of Joseph of Arimathea is unknown. By some it is believed that, like Enoch, he was translated; by others that he was buried in Glastonbury Abbey. Repeated attempts have been made to find the Holy Grail, which many

believe to have been hidden in a crypt beneath the ancient abbey. The Glastonbury chalice recently discovered and by the devout supposed to be the original Sangreal can scarcely be accepted as genuine by the critical investigator. Beyond its inherent interest as a relic, like the famous Antioch chalice it actually proves nothing when it is realized that practically little more was known about the Christian Mysteries eighteen centuries ago than can be discovered today.

The origin of the Grail myth, as of nearly every other element in the great drama, is curiously elusive. Sufficient foundation for it may be found in the folklore of the British Isles, which contains many accounts of magic cauldrons, kettles, cups, and drinking horns. The earliest Grail legends describe the cup as a veritable horn of plenty. Its contents were inexhaustible and those who served it never hungered or thirsted. One account stated that no matter how desperately ill a person might be he could not die 'within eight days of beholding the cup. Some authorities believe the Holy Grail to be the holy cup used in the rites of Adonis and Atys. A communion cup or chalice was used in several of the ancient Mysteries, and the god Bacchus is frequently symbolized in the form of a vase, cup or urn. In Nature worship the ever-flowing Grail signifies the bounty of the harvest by which the life of man is sustained; like Mercury's bottomless pitcher, it is the inexhaustible fountain of natural resource. From the evidence at hand it would indeed be erroneous to ascribe a purely Christian origin to the Grail symbolism.



From Audsley's *Handbook of Christian Symbolism*

THE NIMBUS AND AUREOLE IN SYMBOLISM

The golden halos around the heads of pagan and Christian saints refer both to their being bathed in the glory of the sun and also to the fact that a spiritual sun within their own natures is radiating its glow-ray and surrounding them with celestial splendor. Whenever the nimbus is composed of straight radiant lines, it is solar in significance; whenever they are united, it symbolizes an harmonious blending of both principles. The circular nimbus is solar and masculine, while lozenge-shaped nimbus, or *versica piscis*, is lunar and feminine. The same symbolism is preserved in the circular and lozenge-shaped windows of cathedrals. There is a complete science contained in the shape, color, and adornments of the halos of saints and martyrs. A plain golden ring usually surrounds the head of a canonized saint, usually adorned with a St. George Cross, a flowered cross, or a hued cross, with only three of the arms visible.

In the Arthurian Cycle appears a strange and mysterious figure — Merlin, the magician. In one of the legends concerning him it is declared that when Jesus was sent to liberate the world from the bondage of evil, the Adversary determined to send an Antichrist to undo His labors. The Devil therefore in the form of a horrible dragon overshadowed a young woman who had taken refuge in sanctuary to escape the evil which had destroyed her family. When Merlin, her child, was born he partook of the characteristic of his human mother and demon father. Merlin, however, did not serve the powers of darkness but, being convened to the true light, retained only two of the supernatural powers inherited from his father: prophecy and miracle working. The story of Merlin's infernal father must really be considered as an allegorical allusion to the fact that he was a "philosophical son" of the serpent or dragon, a title applied to all initiates of the Mysteries, who thus acknowledge Nature as their mortal mother and wisdom in the form of the serpent or dragon as their immortal father. Confusion of the dragon and serpent with the powers of evil has resulted as an inevitable

consequence from misinterpretation of the early chapters of Genesis.

Arthur while an infant was given into the keeping of Merlin, the Mage, and in his youth was instructed by him in the secret doctrine and probably initiated into the deepest secrets of natural magic. With Merlin's assistance, Arthur became the leading general of Britain, a degree of dignity which has been confused with kingship. After Arthur had drawn the sword of Branstock from the anvil and this established his divine right to leadership, Merlin further assisted him to secure from the Lady of the Lake the sacred sword Excalibur. After the establishment of the Round Table, having fulfilled his duty, Merlin disappeared, according to one account vanishing into the air, where he still exists as a shadow communicating at will with mortals; according to another, retiring of his own accord into a great stone vault which he sealed from within.

It is reasonably certain that many legends regarding Charlemagne were later associated with Arthur, who is most famous for establishing the Order of the Round Table at Winchester. Reliable information is not to be had concerning the ceremonies and initiatory rituals of the "Table Round". In one story the Table was endowed with the powers of expansion and contraction so that fifteen or fifteen hundred could be seated around it, according to whatever need might arise. The most common accounts fix the number of knights who could be seated at one time at the Round Table at either twelve or twenty-four. The twelve signified the signs of the zodiac and also the apostles of Jesus. The knights' names and also their heraldic arms were emblazoned upon their chairs. When twenty-four are shown seated at the Table, each of the twelve signs of the zodiac is divided into two parts — a light and a dark half — to signify the nocturnal and diurnal phases of each sign. As each sign of the zodiac is ascending for two hours every day, so the twenty-four knights represent the hours, the twenty-four elders before the throne in *Revelation*, and twenty-four Persian deities who represent the spirits of the divisions of the day. In the center of the Table was the symbolic rose of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the symbol of resurrection in that he "rose" from the dead. There was also a mysterious empty seat called the *Siege Perilous* in which none might sit except he who was successful in his quest for the Holy Grail.

In the personality of Arthur is to be found a new form of the ever-recurrent cosmic myth. The prince of Britain is the sun, his knights are the zodiac, and his flashing sword may be the sun's ray with which he fights and vanquishes the dragons of darkness or it may represent the earth's axis. Arthur's Round Table is the universe; the *Siege Perilous* the throne of the perfect man. In its terrestrial sense, Arthur was the Grand Master of a secret Christian-Masonic brotherhood of philosophic mystics who termed themselves *Knights*. Arthur received the exalted position of Grand Master of these Knights because he had faithfully accomplished the withdrawal of the sword (spirit) from the anvil of the base metals (his lower nature). As invariably happens, the historical Arthur soon was confused with the allegories and myths of his order until now the two are inseparable. After Arthur's death on the field of Kamblan his Mysteries ceased, and esoterically he was borne away on a black barge, as is so beautifully described by Tennyson in his *Morte d'Arthur*. The great sword Excalibur was also cast back into the waters of eternity - all of which is a vivid portrayal of the descent of cosmic night at the end of the Day of Universal Manifestation. The body of the historical Arthur was probably interred at Galstonbury Abbey, a building closely identified with the mystic rites of both the Grail and the Arthurian Cycle.

The medieval Rosicrucians were undoubtedly in possession of the true secret of the Arthurian Cycle and the Grail legend, much of their symbolism having been incorporated into that order. Though the most obvious of all keys to the *Christos* mystery, the Grail legend has received the least consideration.