

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

The Zodiac, Key to Man and to the Universe



Izvor Collection

P R O S V E T A

**Omraam Mikhaël
Aïvanhov**

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Key to Man
and to the Universe*



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Readers are asked to note that Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov's teaching was exclusively oral. This volume includes passages from several different lectures all dealing with the same theme.

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Chapter One : THE ENCLOSURE OF THE ZODIAC

Initiatic Science teaches that we live out our lives immersed in the ocean of fluidic matter known as astral light. This fluid is so sensitive that it bears the record of everything that occurs in the universe: the most insignificant gesture, the slightest, most superficial emotion, every fleeting thought that goes through our minds: it is all recorded. According to esoteric tradition, astral light is an extremely subtle substance emanated by all creatures, from human beings, animals and plants, to the rocks of the earth and even the stars in the heavens. It is this fluidic matter that Hermes Trismegistus referred to as Telesma, saying, 'The father thereof is the Sun, the mother the Moon. The wind carried it in its womb, the Earth is the nurse thereof'.

Of course we should not think that the Sun (fire), Moon (water), Wind (air) and Earth of which Hermes speaks are no more than the four material elements familiar to us all: he is speaking of the fundamental cosmic principles out of which all matter was created. 1

The Hindu name for this fluidic matter is Akasha; others know it as Cosmic Electricity, the Primeval Serpent or Fohat. But it doesn't really matter what we call it and it is totally impossible to define or name all the different forms it has taken since the beginning of the world, for every creature, capable of thought, feeling and movement, that exists or has ever existed, is constantly impressing new vibrations on it. Its exact nature is extremely mysterious, and whatever is said of it will always be both true and false. But this we can say with certainty: it is capable of recording absolutely everything that happens in the universe. And the proof that everything

is recorded can be seen in the fact that clairvoyants can read from an object events that have occurred in its vicinity; they can even read in it the destiny of someone who has held that object in his hands for only a minute or two. Of course, I'm speaking of authentic clairvoyants; the very existence of clairvoyance such as this is a powerful argument: if the scientists who put all their faith in materialism took it seriously they would be obliged to modify their understanding of the nature of matter.

This fluid, therefore, this Akasha on which everything is recorded, in which everything is reflected, reaches to the limits of the universe, and these limits are represented for us by the belt of the Zodiac. The space that lies within that belt is the zodiacal enclosure, and it symbolizes the space set aside by God in which to create the world.

Initiatic Science tells us that the order in

which the twelve signs of the Zodiac are placed (Aries ♈, Taurus ♉, Gemini II, Cancer ☊, Leo ♌, Virgo ♍, Libra ♎, Scorpio ♏, Sagittarius ♐, Capricorn ♑, Aquarius ♒, and Pisces ♓) reveals the sequence of the different stages of creation.

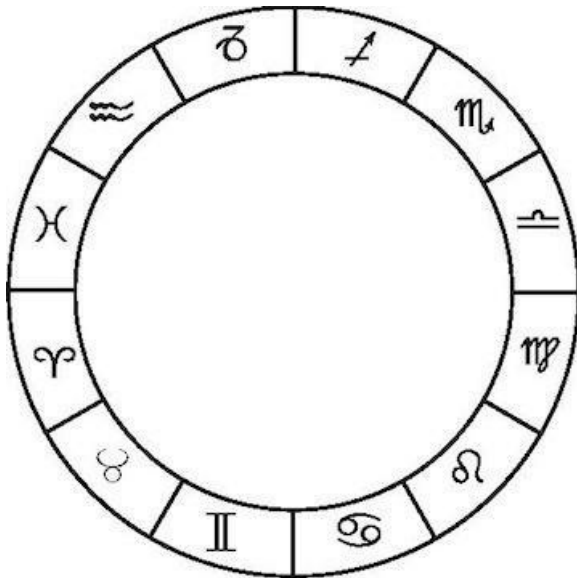


Figure 1

Aries is the first sign in the Zodiac; the sign that sets everything in motion. Aries is the indomitable, irrepressible force bursting out like leaf-buds in spring. To this raw, untamed force, Taurus adds its contribution of matter, but matter which is as yet formless, an inchoate mass of undifferentiated elements. A building site covered with untidy heaps of the raw materials needed to build a house, is a good image of the stage in which Taurus is dominant. But all these elements have to be used to make something, so after Taurus it is time for Gemini to start organizing all the disparate elements by establishing a network of communications: ladders, wheelbarrows, pulleys and cranes, to move the materials into place ready for the building to begin.

With Cancer, the time has come to lay the foundations: a solid base of 'reinforced concrete'. In nature this base is the central germ or core around which

all the different elements converge and cohere. Leo then brings his influence to bear by introducing centrifugal force into the combined elements, and with the intervention of Leo comes a rise in temperature and more intense activity which culminates in an explosion, and the whole mass begins to glow and irradiate in space.

When Virgo comes onto the scene she declares that it is time to order and organize all this, and she sets to work to put everything into its rightful place. But order is not enough: the aesthetic element of beauty and harmony is needed, and it is Libra who introduces this element. With Libra we have reached the seventh day (the seventh sign), and work pauses for a while, allowing the workers a period of rest and refreshment.

It is at this stage, in the prevailing holiday atmosphere, that some of the

workers give way to sloth and indolence and the first signs of disintegration begin to make their appearance. Scorpio comes onto the scene, upsetting the existing balance and introducing a climate of hostility, but he is followed immediately by Sagittarius with his gift for reconciling individuals with each other and with the heavens. Sagittarius channels all these seething energies and directs them upwards to the service of a higher order of activity (this is the symbolism of the bow and arrow held by the Centaur).

Once the world is properly organized and all its parts functioning smoothly, there is a tendency for things to crystalize and harden under the influence of Capricorn: life falters and begins to seep away. At this point it is the turn of Aquarius to set in motion the dynamic forces of the spirit, thus saving everything from destruction by 'over-materialization'.

The world knows peace, at last, with the coming of Pisces, and in this climate of peace and universal harmony, life becomes ever purer and more subtle until all things melt and flow back into the primeval Ocean.

Those who penetrate into the realm of the Zodiac become subject to the constraints of time (periodicity and cycles) and space (localization within the zodiacal enclosure). Only pure spirits are free of the fetters of time and space, but as soon as they incarnate they enter into the zodiacal enclosure and are caught up in the magic circle of implacable destiny which shackles even the most luminous beings, even the greatest sons of God.

This reality is reflected in the human body, in which the spirit is imprisoned: the whole body represents the circle of the Zodiac and each organ or member

corresponds to a particular sign.

Aries ♈ : the head

Taurus ♉ : the neck

Gemini ♊ : the arms and lungs

Cancer ♋ : the stomach

Leo ♌ : the heart

Virgo ♍ : the intestines and solar plexus

Libra ♎ : the kidneys

Scorpio ♏ : the genital organs

Sagittarius ♐ : the thighs

Capricorn ♑ : the knees

Aquarius ♒ : the calves

Pisces : the feet 2

In order to free himself from the coils of the serpent which hold him prisoner, man has to free himself from the cycle of reincarnations.

At the moment of birth, a child's etheric body, which is as soft and malleable as warm wax, receives the imprint of stellar influences and, later, as the wax cools, this imprint can never be effaced. When a child first draws breath, therefore, the heavens put their seal on its etheric body and fix the horoscope in which the child's destiny is written. The only way for man to free himself from the limitations imposed by the stars presiding at his birth is by his conscious effort to restore the bonds that bind him to God, thus escaping from the law of necessity and putting himself under the jurisdiction of the law of grace. But this liberty to which we all aspire is only obtained at the very end,


and this is why it is said to be the crowning glory of the spiritual life, and Initiates are portrayed with a shining halo of light surrounding their heads to show that they have risen beyond the circle of earthly limitations.

And now let's look at the practical consequences of this reality, the zodiacal circle, in our everyday lives. Suppose that you are walking through mountainous country, with peaks and rocky cliffs all around you, and you shout aloud: what happens? The mountains send your words back to you: the sound of your voice strikes against a hard surface and bounces back, exactly as a ball bounces when it hits the ground or, if you throw it against a wall, comes back to strike you. These are physical laws, and physical laws reflect and reproduce spiritual laws. If you call out, 'I love you', you will hear the echo repeat, 'I love you, love you, love you.' But if you shout, 'I hate you', from all

sides will echo the words, 'I hate you, hate you, hate you!'

You must understand that the same patterns are repeated over and over again in life: man emits a ceaseless flow of waves, beneficial or noxious, by his thoughts, feelings and acts, and these waves journey through space until they come up against the outer limits and bounce back to strike the sender in the form of rewards or punishments. This is the return shock, the rebound, and those who know this law take care to send out only waves of light, love, kindness, purity and warmth; they know that one day, sooner or later, they are bound to reap the same blessings in return. They are happy, successful, ³ fulfilled human beings and they think that God is rewarding them. Not a bit of it! God doesn't know anything about it. He is far too busy with much more important things: He doesn't have time to watch our doings and tot up the score to see

whether we should be rewarded or punished. He has established a certain number of laws within and around us and it is these laws that reward or punish us.

The circle with a dot in the centre  is the pattern on which everything in the universe is built. Take any organism, a cell for instance: at the centre is a nucleus which is surrounded by protoplasm and the whole is wrapped in an outer membrane. Take a fruit: in the centre you have a core or stone, then the surrounding pulp, the juicy, edible flesh and, on the outside, the skin or shell. Every living organism exists on the same pattern, with a centre or core, a surrounding space in which life circulates and, finally, a skin which serves as a limit or boundary and enables the law of echo reflection to come into play.

Now it may well happen that the

distance between the centre and the periphery is so great that the 'voice' has to carry a long, long way, and years go by before it bounces back from the outer boundary. But the fact that the rebound is not felt immediately must not mislead you into thinking that it will never come. It will! There's no escaping it. But it may come much, much later, perhaps only in some future incarnation, because the outer limit, the wall against which it bounces, is so far away. And this is how we can explain the destiny written in our horoscope: it is the consequence of our past actions.

The atom and the solar system are identical in their basic structural design: a circle with a dot in the centre. And the area surrounding the central dot represents space. Without space matter cannot exist, whereas the spirit does not need space. The power of the spirit lies in the fact that it is a point without extent or dimension and it can, therefore, be

actively present everywhere.⁴ So everything that occurs travels out through the space occupied by matter until it bumps up against its outer limits and starts on the return journey to its starting point. Everything we do and think, therefore, comes back to us after travelling through matter to the outer limits of space and back. It is matter that reflects the echo; not the spirit. The spirit acts and matter reacts. Matter responds to an impulse. Its role is to stand up to the spirit, to oppose and limit the spirit, to imprison it, even. And the Zodiac is the belt, the wall, that surrounds and imposes a limit on our universe just as the serpent of matter holds the spirit prisoner in its coils.

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

‘If any man will come after me...’

Matthew 16 : 24

‘Be it far from thee, Lord : this

shall not be unto thee' *Matthew 16 : 22*

'If any man will come after me... let him take up his cross' *Matthew 16 : 24*

¹ See '*Et il me montra un fleuve d'eau de la vie*', Synopsis Coll., Part XI, chap. 2: 'Les racines de la matière: les quatre Animaux saints'.

² See *Angels and other Mysteries of The Tree of Life*, Izvor Coll. n° 236, chap. 11: 'The Body of Adam Kadmon'.

³ See *The Book of Divine Magic*, Izvor Coll. n° 226, chap.

⁴ See *The Symbolic Language of Geometrical Figures*, Izvor Coll. n° 218, chap. 2: 'The Circle'.

Chapter Two : THE ZODIAC AND THE FORMING OF MAN

Man was formed in parallel with the universe. To begin with he was a simple, fluidic sphere with no lungs, no stomach, no limbs, only a head which moved about rather like a jellyfish floating on an ocean of fire. When part of this fire condensed to form air, man's lungs were formed. Later, part of the air condensed to form water and his stomach, abdomen and intestines were formed. Finally, part of the water condensed to form earth and man's arms and legs were formed. 1

The four elements that went to make up the substance of man and the universe, however, were not the four material elements that we know: they were far subtler and more etheric, and

man, as he was then, still had no physical existence. Man began to take shape physically only when his feet began to be formed. In fact his feet were the first parts of his physical body to materialize: first the feet, then the legs, thighs, genital organs, solar plexus, stomach and so on, all the way up to the head. The head became a material reality last, in spite of the fact that it was the first part of man to be formed. And the feet, which were formed last, were the first to materialize. These two currents: involutory (the formation of man starting from the head, the lungs and so on, down) and evolutionary (the materialization of man's members in the opposite order), are to be found in the Zodiac.

When you enumerate the signs of the Zodiac, starting with Aries and proceeding via Taurus, Gemini, Cancer and so on, you are following the involutive sequence. This is the

sequence man followed in his forming, starting with his head for, as we have seen, each sign corresponds to part of the human body and Aries corresponds to the head. But the vernal point passes through the signs of the Zodiac in the opposite direction: Pisces, Aquarius, Capricorn, Sagittarius, Scorpio, etc., and this corresponds to the path of evolution, the path followed by the materialization of man's organs and limbs. And now, if you look at the movements of the planets in relation to that of the constellations, you will find the same contrast: the constellations move across the heavenly vault starting with Aries, Taurus, Gemini, etc., whereas the planets move in the opposite direction.**(As this is not an astrology text-book, the basic elements of astronomy are presumed to be known to the reader)*

The opposition between the planets and the Zodiac can also be studied from another point of view: the Zodiac

represents all that is stable and immutable, whereas the planets are always in motion. The Zodiac always follows the same sequence with the same regularity. Never, for example, has Aries been seen next to Libra, or Pisces between Leo and Virgo! The constellations of the Zodiac have kept strictly to this same order since the dawn of time, whereas the planets never stay in the same spot and are never in exactly the same position in relation to each other. They represent the ever-changing psychic dimension of man in contrast to the stable, fixed disposition of the physical organs. The head, stomach or feet have never changed their position. The limbs and organs of man's physical body, like the signs of the Zodiac, remain in the place allotted to them from the beginning of creation. But under the surface, within the body, everything is in a constant state of flux: the blood, the humours and the nerve impulses are in constant motion in the body, just as the

planets are in constant motion in the heavens.

On the other hand, as you know, the planets can find their power greatly enhanced or, on the contrary, reduced, according to the sign in which they are found and they, in turn, influence the signs. Thus when Mars is in Aries, for example, he becomes strong and powerful because Aries gives him a great deal of energy: Mars and Aries are in sympathy with each other and form a good alliance. But when Mars is in another sign, such as Cancer or Libra for example, he is weakened, because these signs are foreign to him. Similarly, those elements in our being which correspond to the planets, that is to say, our impulses, tendencies and feelings, are exalted or debilitated according to the organs or centres through which they manifest. If your love is in your head it will not behave in the same way as it would if it were in your heart. And if

you place wisdom anywhere but in the brain what effect would it have? It is only when the organs and forces are matched and in sympathy that they enhance and draw power from each other. These are a few of the questions that need to be gone into more deeply. Just as the planets are exalted or in their fall in certain signs, so our intellectual, emotional and physical faculties are strengthened or weakened according to the organ through which they attempt to manifest themselves.

You must not be content to study the Zodiac theoretically, in the abstract: you must learn to recognize and interpret it in all the manifestations of life. Only then will astrology really come alive and be useful to you. The Zodiac is an extraordinarily rich, profound book: it contains all the mysteries of life. The innumerable combinations constantly forming and reforming between the planets and the signs of the Zodiac are

like the countless threads of a loom. Day by day it is these combinations which form the warp and woof of our lives.

¹ See *The Philosopher's Stone – in the Gospels and in Alchemy*, Izvor Coll. n° 241, chap. 7: 'The Alchemists' Salt'.

Chapter Three : THE PLANETARY CYCLE OF HOURS AND DAYS

The Sephirotic Tree is an extraordinarily profound symbol by means of which the early cabbalists attempted to account for the creation of the world. The Cabbalah tells us that in the beginning was the Absolute, the Unmanifest, '*Ain Soph Aur*' which means Limitless Light, and that the whole of creation is simply a concentration or condensation of this Light. ¹ The ten Sephiroth or divine regions, then were formed by successive emanations, and to each Sephirah is assigned one of the planets. Earth is associated with *Malkuth*; the Moon with *Yesod*; Mercury with *Hod*; Venus with *Netzach*; the Sun with *Tiphareth*; Mars with *Geburah*; Jupiter with *Chesed*, and Saturn with *Binah*. In modern times

Uranus has been associated with *Chokmah* and Neptune with *Kether*, but the Ancients who did not know of any planets in the solar system beyond Saturn, attributed the Zodiac to *Chokmah* and the First Swirlings to *Kether*.

If we look at the seven planets, from Moon to Saturn, and see how they are disposed on the Tree of Life, we see that they correspond to the seven days of the week, but that they do not follow in the same order. In the Sephirotic Tree, the planets are disposed in the following order: Moon ☾, Mercury ☿, Venus ♀, Sun ☼, Mars ♂, Jupiter ♃, Saturn ♄; whereas the days of the week are disposed as follows: Sun ☼ (Sunday), Moon ☾ (Monday), Mars ♂ (Tuesday), Mercury ☿ (Wednesday), Jupiter ♃ (Thursday), Venus ♀ (Friday) and Saturn ♄ (Saturday). And now I'm sure you will be wondering why the days of the

week follow this order and what it corresponds to...

We must begin with Saturn, the first planet counting from the top of the Sephirothic Tree. Esoteric tradition teaches that Saturn rules the first hour of Saturday, that the second hour is ruled by Jupiter, the third by Mars, the fourth by the Sun and so on to the eighth hour which, once again, comes under the influence of Saturn, and the whole cycle repeats itself. Saturn's influence is dominant every eight hours, which brings us up to the end of the twenty-fourth hour of the day, and the first hour of the following day – which is Sunday – comes under the influence of the Sun.

If you apply the same calculation to each day of the week you will find that the first hour is always ruled by the planet which corresponds to the day: the Moon for Monday, Mars for Tuesday, Mercury for Wednesday and so on. So

that is how the order of the days of the week is determined.

SATURDAY	{	1st hour	♄	♃	♂	☉	♀	♁	☾
		8th hour	♄	♃	♂	☉	♀	♁	☾
		15th hour	♄	♃	♂	☉	♀	♁	☾
		22nd hour	♄	♃	♂				
SUNDAY	{	1st hour	☉	♀	♁	☾	♄	♃	♂
		8th hour	☉	♀	♁	☾	♄	♃	♂
		15th hour	☉	♀	♁	☾	♄	♃	♂
		22nd hour	☉	♀	♁				

But you must also remember that there are living, intelligent entities associated with each planet also, so that each hour of the day brings with it its own group of entities which exert their influence on plants and minerals, on animals and human beings. And as each planet has not only its own particular colour but also its own musical note (C belongs to Saturn, D to Jupiter, E to Mars, F to the Sun, G to Venus, A to Mercury and B to the Moon), the symphony of sounds varies with each hour of the day because

of the successive presence of different spirits. It is the planets that create this music by their song which fills the vastness of space and which is known as the Music of the Spheres. Through meditation and contemplation man can have a perception of this planetary, angelic symphony. Animated by the song of the Angels, the universe lives, breathes and nourishes itself.

Now, let us take another look at the order in which the planets are arranged in relation to the days of the week. Starting with the first day of the week, the day of the Moon, we have: ☾, ☿, ♀, ♃, ♆, ♁. And if we keep the same order but take alternate planets, we get the following: ☾, ♀, ♁, ☿, ♃, ♆, ♁, which corresponds to the order exemplified in the Tree of Life.

Now, let us see what we get if we take the succession of planets for two weeks and write them, linking the

alternate planets.



Figure 2

And now, if we put these two series opposite each other, it gives this:

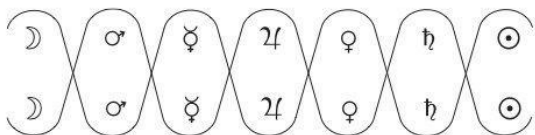
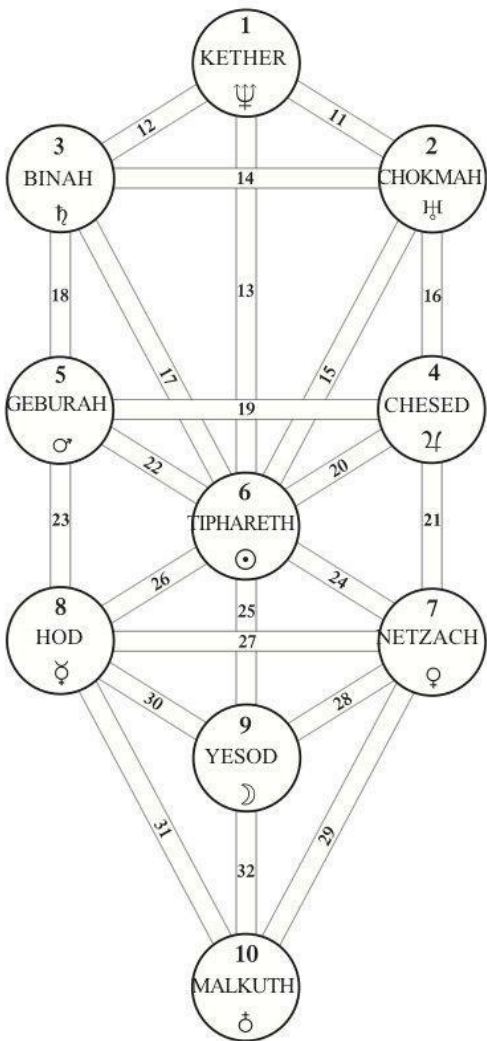


Figure 3

We have here a representation of two undulating waves, and we see that when the curve of the wave is at its maximum for a planet in one of the series,



The Sephirothic Tree

Figure 4

it is at its minimum for the same planet in the opposite series. And if we put the two series end to end we get the result shown in



Figure 5

During the first week, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn are at their maximum whilst the Moon, Mercury and Venus are at their minimum, and during the second week it is just the reverse.

The waves we have just seen can be compared to light waves. When a wave is sent out into space, another symmetrically opposed wave is born and undulates inversely to the one that was sent out initially. Where the one is concave the other is convex and vice

versa, and this shows that fullness and emptiness do not exist of themselves: they are complementary. Fullness and emptiness are the two principles, masculine and feminine, which are always at work, hand in hand, throughout the universe. In man these two principles are represented by the soul and the spirit, the heart and the intellect. And Initiatic Science has a symbol for this: the snake whose movement follows a sinusoidal curve. And have you ever noticed that the human spine which supports the whole bony structure, is also built on the same pattern as light waves: the sinusoidal curve? 2

But to get back to the days of the week: Sunday is linked to Tuesday, which is linked to Thursday, Thursday to Saturday, Saturday to Monday and so on. The days of the week form a chain and the links of the chain correspond to a succession of musical notes. The planets and the days of the week sing in choral

harmony before the throne of their Creator. Linked one to the other they are like the beads of an endless rosary unfolding on the backdrop of eternity. If rosaries have a prominent place in so many religions it is because they are symbols of this endless chain of cosmic forces, this infinite succession of elements and beings. And we, too, are links in that chain. We must never forget that, for we shall live out our lives in unison with cosmic harmony only if we are always conscious of being a part of this infinite unfolding.

¹ See *Angels and other Mysteries of The Tree of Life*, Izvor Coll. n° 236, chap. 6: 'Ain Soph Aur: Unlimited Light'.

² See *Man's Subtle Bodies and Centres – the Aura, the Solar Plexus, the Chakras...*, Izvor Coll. n° 219, chap. 5: 'Kundalini Force'.

Chapter Four : THE CROSS OF DESTINY

The sun travels through all the constellations of the Zodiac in the course of a year. When a child is born, its Sun-sign is that of the constellation in which the sun is found on that day: Aries, from March 21 to April 20; Taurus from April 21 to May 20, and so on.

In addition to the Sun-sign, there are four important points in a birth chart: the constellation which is just appearing on the eastern horizon at the time of birth (the Ascendant); that which is setting in the west, exactly opposite the Ascendant (the Descendant); the Midheaven and the point diametrically opposite is known as the *Imum Coeli* (or I.C.). The axes Ascendant–Descendant and Midheaven–I.C. divide the natal chart into four quadrants, each of which is again

divided into three sections, thus giving the twelve houses. We count the houses starting with the Ascendant, so that the quadrant between the Ascendant and the I.C. contains the first three houses; the next three houses: four, five and six, lie between the I.C. and the Descendant; between the Descendant and Midheaven we find the seventh, eighth and ninth houses, and between Midheaven and the Ascendant we have the tenth, eleventh and twelfth houses. We must take care not to confuse the order in which the signs are placed in the Zodiac (Aries, Taurus, Gemini, etc.) and that of the houses which, as I have just explained, start in the same spot as the Ascendant which may be in any one of the signs.

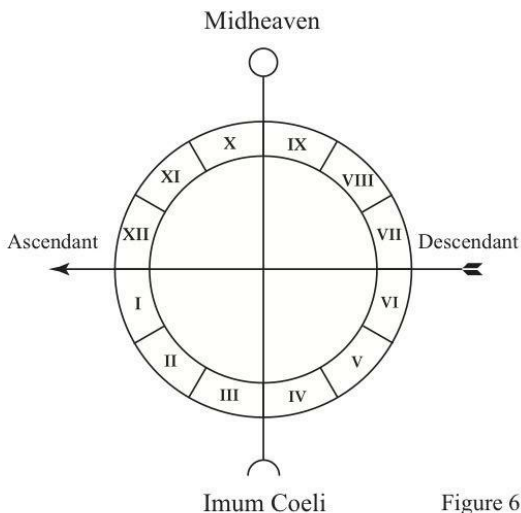


Figure 6

Now, let's look briefly at what the different houses correspond to:

- First house: the person himself and his fundamental tendencies.
- Second house: material possessions and earnings.
- Third house: relations with neighbours and brothers and sisters, studies, minor journeys.

- Fourth house: home and family.
- Fifth house: children, creativity, games, gambling and speculation.
- Sixth house: work and health.
- Seventh house: partnerships, whether matrimonial or business.
- Eighth house: death and the afterlife.
- Ninth house: foreign travel, the spiritual life, philosophy and religion.
- Tenth house: social position and honours.
- Eleventh house: friendships.
- Twelfth house: trials, enemies, sufferings.

Although modern astrology gives us this information about the houses, it does

not tell us why each house means what it does, nor why they are arranged in this order, so now I shall explain this to you.

In the course of his lifetime every human being is influenced by each of the twelve constellations and the influence of each constellation is quite specific, for once he has been born into the physical world, every human being is bound to follow a certain evolutionary path: he grows up, grows old and dies. And this evolution does not depend on him: it depends on the twelve signs of the Zodiac.


As I have just said, one must not confuse the signs of the Zodiac with the houses. However, in the general pattern of evolution followed by each person, there is a correspondence between the signs and the houses.


1. The new-born infant manifests itself through movement. It is constantly

gesticulating and trying to touch and grasp whatever it can reach; as soon as someone comes close it clutches his hair, his beard, his clothes and even pummels him! And yet, in spite of such 'rude' behaviour, everyone thinks a baby is adorable. Well, here you have the typical Aries ♈, the first house, the vital energies bubbling out of the ground.

2. As the child grows, everyone is concerned to see that he has all he needs: food, clothes, toys, sweets, picture-books and so on. This is the second house, Taurus ♉, which corresponds to material possessions.

3. Then comes the time for the child to start going to school: he receives his first readers and copybooks from which he learns to read and write. He begins to notice things around him and asks endless questions. He is agile and active, running all the way to school and back, and his comings and goings

between his home and school are his first little journeys. At school he meets other children: it is the stage of the third house, Gemini , the stage of relations with others, of study, of minor journeys.

4. Before long the child becomes a young man; he meets a pretty girl (or at least he finds her pretty), and gives free rein to his imagination, dreaming of his own home in which he and his beloved will live together, and he introduces the girl to his parents. This is the fourth house, Cancer , the house of home and family.

5. In the next phase the young man is already married and father of a family. When he gets home after work in the evenings, he delights in being with his children and joining in their games: watching them at play makes him happier than any entertainment he might find outside. In front of others he shows how proud he is of being a father. All of

this is characteristic of Leo ♌, who tends to dominate those around him, to make the most of the joys of life and who is proud to show off his creations, his children.

6. Later, life becomes more difficult: burdens weigh more heavily on him, money is in short supply and some of the family are ill. The father begins to take all kinds of odd jobs in order to pay for the most urgent needs of the family, and it all begins to be too much for him and, completely exhausted, he falls ill. He is told he must take more care of his health, live a more balanced life, etc. This is the sixth house, the house of Virgo ♍ which corresponds to work and health.

7. In time, things get better: the father's health improves, he finds a good job and starts to go out and about again with his elegantly dressed wife. Now he is in a position to advise others: 'You'd better do this'; 'Don't do that' and, 'Yes,

I've had my problems too but now that I've gained in experience I can give you some good advice...'And it's true: he gives prudent, level-headed advice, manifesting the equilibrium of the seventh house, the house of Libra ♎ .


8. It sometimes happens that, about this time, he sees his wife looking at other men in a way that he doesn't like: he's not sure what it means and it irritates and angers him. He quarrels with his wife, shows his jealousy and threatens to use a gun or poison to revenge himself! This is Scorpio ♏ , jealous and aggressive: the eighth house. At the same time he is up in arms against the injustices of society and tries to find ways of transforming it, and this, too, is a manifestation of Scorpio.


9. Now he has been promoted in his office, he has a senior civil service appointment or a prestigious professorship. In the desire to get to

know other countries and peoples, their customs and different ways of life, he travels widely. But he also feels the need to reflect on the meaning of his own life and finds himself drawn, more and more, to philosophical and religious problems. This is the ninth house: the house of Sagittarius ♐ .

10. As he grows older he acquires a considerable reputation thanks to his social standing and his personal authority, and feeling secure in his position, he takes it upon himself to pronounce judgment on everyone and everything so that, little by little, he becomes isolated from others. This is the tenth house, the house of Capricorn ♑ , which corresponds to social rank but also to a solitary life.

11. Then comes the day when he realizes that he can no longer assume his habitual workload: the demands it makes on him are too great. He decides to

retire and starts looking for a younger man to replace him. And now that he is less absorbed by his work he has more time to meet his friends and discuss spiritual subjects. This is the eleventh house, the house of Aquarius , the house of friendships and spirituality.

12. And now he is becoming weaker and weaker and so detached from the physical world that three quarters of his being are elsewhere. He is no longer concerned with worldly goods or wealth but only with his approaching departure for the next world. He makes his will and leaves all he has to others. Sometimes he finds himself abandoned in hospital. This is the twelfth house, Pisces , the house of sacrifice, renunciation and trials.

It goes without saying that these indications correspond only in a very general way: in each particular case there will be slight variations and

differences, for the existence of each human being is determined by his previous incarnations. Because of this, someone who has led a bad life may fall very low just at the period in which he should, on the contrary, find himself at the peak of his career. Another, at the approach of old age, instead of showing detachment and preparing for death, will cling to life because it has never occurred to him to develop his capacity for renunciation and abnegation. Each horoscope is unique and may well be very different from the general outline I have just sketched for you. But however that may be, each individual comes under the influence of the twelve constellations and the twelve houses and should be particularly watchful at each change of phase, otherwise he may provoke consequences that could be detrimental to him in a future incarnation. The average duration of each phase is seven years, but in certain cases it can be compressed into six or

stretched out to eight: it all depends on one's previous incarnations.

Also, certain phases take longer to pass through than others: if the ruler of the first house is in a person's third house for example, it means that he will spend a long time as a student and if it is in his sixth house it means that he will have problems with his health, and so on.

Let us look, now, at the axes formed on the circle of the Zodiac by the opposing pairs of signs.

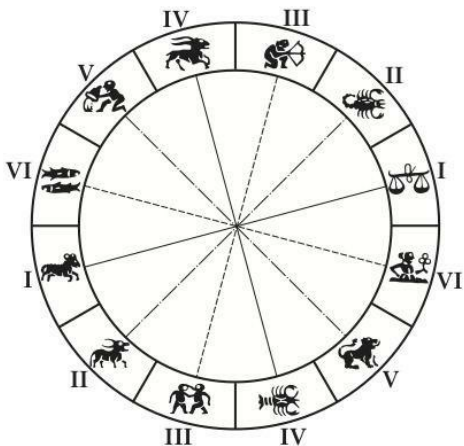


Figure 7

– The first axis (Aries–Libra) represents the relationship between the subject and his or her partner in life (husband or wife). The first half of the axis represents the state of consciousness of the person concerned and the second half the possibilities for exchange and interaction with a person of the opposite sex.

–The second axis (Taurus–Scorpio) represents a person’s power: power of feelings, abundance of sensations and

passions (Taurus) and power of spiritual perception (Scorpio). –The third axis (Gemini–Sagittarius) represents study and learning: practical studies (Gemini) and abstract, philosophical reflection (Sagittarius). –The fourth axis (Cancer–Capricorn) is related to one’s position in life: the family situation (Cancer) and one’s social and professional standing (Capricorn). –The fifth axis (Leo–Aquarius) concerns one’s affections: love and children (Leo), friendship and spiritual affinities (Aquarius). –The sixth axis (Virgo–Pisces) represents sacrifice: the hard work demanded of parents in caring for their children, the dedication of nurses working with sick people in hospitals (Virgo), and the abnegation and sacrifice consented to by Saints and Initiates for the salvation of souls (Pisces).

Each of these six axes crosses another one at right angles so that we have three crosses formed by the following pairs:

1. Aries—Libra and Cancer—Capricorn;
2. Taurus—Scorpio and Leo—Aquarius;
3. Gemini—Sagittarius and Virgo—Pisces.

The horoscope of every human being born on this earth includes a cross formed by the axes Ascendant—Descendant and Midheaven—I.C., and depending upon which signs of the Zodiac compose this cross each person has some specific problem to work out during his life.

This is the cross of destiny, the cross that Jesus was speaking about when he said, *'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever*

will lose his life for my sake shall find it'. Yes, our true crosses are within us and our horoscope is really nothing more than an indication of the problems that we have to confront and solve in life. Whatever the difficulties and sufferings we may meet with, they have been given to us by higher Beings who act always with perfect justice.

We must accept the verdict of these higher Beings and, instead of feeling sorry for ourselves or rebelling against our lot, we should constantly say to ourselves, 'If I have to endure so much suffering now it is because I have not been wise, honest, kind or just in previous incarnations. But now I'm going to shoulder my cross willingly and follow Christ'. If a man rebels, Divine justice punishes him twice as severely, exactly as it happens with the penal system on earth: if a prisoner tries to escape he is caught, taken back to his cell and, instead of a lighter sentence he

is given a heavier one. He who rebels and refuses to accept the destiny that has befallen him in accordance with the laws of Divine Justice will only suffer more: Justice will oblige him to take up his cross again, to go back into the square of his prison.¹

We are told that Jesus came to earth to save us.² Yes, that is true: he accepted to be imprisoned in the flesh of a physical body so that others might be freed. And if we too are willing to sacrifice ourselves for others the Invisible World will reduce our karma.

He who works according to the laws of love will not be subject to the laws of justice, and his sentence will be lightened. If a prisoner manifests great patience and goodwill his judges notice it. 'That man is remarkable', they will say; 'He's an excellent example for others; we must reduce his sentence', and they shorten his prison term or even

grant him a full pardon. But for others, justice is strictly applied and they have to pay every last penny of their debt. If they are condemned to twenty years in prison, they will stay there the full twenty years. Similarly, if a man who is a prisoner of the physical body manifests spiritual qualities, his destiny will be modified, his sufferings will be reduced, his burdens will be lightened, whereas for one whose life is wholly given over to passions and pleasure, the cross will become heavier, so heavy indeed, that in the end it will crush him. It is in this sense that one can say that every man is master of his own destiny.

Jesus said, 'If any man will come after me let him deny himself.' He who denies himself comes under the influence of the Virgo–Pisces axis, that is the sixth and twelfth houses, as did Jesus, who healed the sick (the sixth house) and accepted his enemies, his solitude and his crucifixion so as to save those who

would come after him as well as those who had preceded him (twelfth house).

And now he is asking us to follow him and this is the Gemini–Sagittarius axis, a taste for learning, philosophy and religion.

When Jesus spoke of his cross he was not referring to a wooden or metal cross of any kind, but to the cross of destiny embodied in each man's horoscope. Depending on which constellations form the two axes (Midheaven–I.C. and Ascendant– Descendant) of his horoscope, each human being is faced with certain problems he is going to have to solve during his life. And Jesus was well aware that he too would have to suffer and bear his own cross. This is why, one day when he was speaking of his approaching death and Peter exclaimed, *'Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee'*, Jesus replied, *'get thee behind me, Satan:*

thou art an offense unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.'

So we have to take up our own cross and carry it, and in order to do this we are going to have to stop listening to our lower nature, our personality, which is always advising us to abandon our cross, to neglect our work and all our responsibilities and to let ourselves slide into a life of sloth and pleasure as though that was what we were here for. He who is always trying to avoid hard work and difficulty will inevitably meet with still greater difficulties. Instead of trying to avoid problems it is much better to try to solve them, otherwise we shall find ourselves in a situation far worse than that we had tried to escape from. There is nowhere to escape to until we have solved the problems the Invisible World has set us in order to teach us a lesson. Wherever we went we should only be given an even harder

lesson to learn. The Invisible World would tell us, 'You refused to learn anything where you were before, so now here's something else you're going to have to learn!' So we must not run away from difficulties but try our best to understand what they mean and to do whatever has to be done in order to overcome them. Once we have done that, whatever else we undertake will be beneficial.

Anyone who thinks he can escape from his obligations and find something pleasanter to do knows nothing about the strict laws which rule our destiny. A woman may think that her husband is dull and tiresome and that she would much prefer to find another who would charm and amuse her. Well, if she finds someone more to her liking and abandons her first husband he will suffer, but before long, it is she who will suffer even more. It is not absolutely forbidden to leave one's husband or

wife, but you must only do so if you have already solved the first problem. That which seems the easy way out is, in fact, extremely difficult and vice versa. If you choose the hardest way the Lord will send His Angels to help you, but if you choose the path of facility you will be accompanied by Angels, yes, but Angels of another kind: avenging Angels. ³

From now on, therefore, accept your cross and carry it without complaint. Tell yourself, ‘This is my job; this is a problem I have to solve for myself, but in order to do that I need to learn. I have to learn to solve my problems by means of wisdom, love and purity.’ And if the divine entities who are watching you from above see that that is your attitude, they will say, ‘Let’s reduce his worries and sufferings a little.’

‘If any man will come after me... let him take up his cross.’ A disciple uses the cross as the foundation of the house

in which he shuts up his lower nature. He, himself, that is to say, his higher Self, will live on the roof of that house. ⁴ From up there he will be able to see the sun rise, contemplate the stars and read the rules and recommendations of Cosmic Intelligence. The cross is the sum total of all the experiences, both happy and unhappy, that a disciple has had to endure in life, from which he draws a lesson and on which he crucifies his lower nature, his egoism and pride. If the cross were unnecessary in the life of a disciple, Jesus would simply have said 'Leave your cross there and follow me, for the way is long and you need to be free and unburdened in order to walk for a long time'. But that is not what he said: he said, 'Take up your cross and follow me', for it is by taking up our cross that we free ourselves.

¹ See The Symbolic Language of Geometrical Figures,

Izvor Coll. n° 218, chap. 6; ‘The Cross’, Part II.

[2](#) See Sons and Daughters of God, Izvor Coll. n° 240, chap. 11: ‘Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross: the powers of blood’.

[3](#) See Aux sources inaltérables de la joie, Izvor Coll. n° 242, chap. 3: ‘L’aiguillon de la souffrance’.

[4](#) See The Philosopher’s Stone – in the Gospels and in Alchemy, Izvor Coll. n° 241, chap. 9: ‘The Work of the Alchemist: 3 over 4’.

Chapter Five : THE AXES OF ARIES–LIBRA AND TAURUS–SCORPIO

Initiatic Science teaches that a human being is composed of different bodies. In addition to his physical body he possesses other bodies of a subtler nature: the astral body, the lower mental body, the higher mental or causal body, the buddhic and the atmic bodies. Man, therefore, has six bodies (See Figure 8).

If you examine this figure closely the first thing to strike you is the fact that it is divided into two main segments: the lower nature below and the higher nature above, and that each half is subdivided into three divisions corresponding to the three fundamental principles in man: thought, feeling and action. The lower nature is composed of the physical, astral and mental bodies; the higher

nature is composed of the causal,
buddhic and atmic bodies.

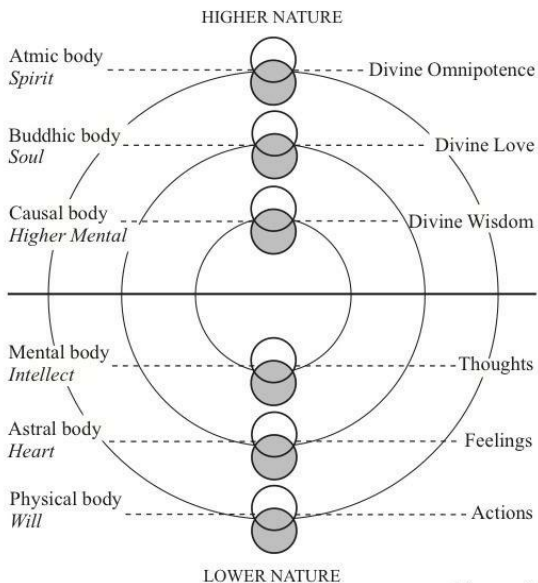


Figure 8

The three large concentric circles show the connection between the higher and the lower bodies. ¹ As you can see, the atmic body which is the seat of the spirit and represents divine power and will, is linked to the physical body which also represents power and will but on the material plane. The buddhic body, seat of the soul and of the highest form of feeling, is linked to the astral

body, seat of the heart. The causal body, vehicle of the most exalted, most luminous thoughts, is linked to the mental body, seat of the intellect. This is a very simple diagram but, as we shall see, it contains and summarizes an extraordinary science.

As you will have noticed, two small circles representing each body, are superimposed on the larger circles. This points to something which is extremely important. In esoteric literature you will find this explained only insofar as the etheric body is concerned, that is, the physical body's double. The etheric body penetrates the physical body and confers on it life, feeling and energy. Once the link binding the physical body to its etheric double is broken, the physical body is no more than a corpse: it is dead.

The physical body, therefore, has its double, but so do the other bodies. Both

the astral and mental bodies possess a double which is made of a subtler matter than they, and if these doubles are absent or deficient in any way, the corresponding bodies cannot function correctly.

Look at how our own planet Earth is made: over the ground, the soil, is the water which covers a substantial proportion of the surface and penetrates every part of the ground. Above the level of soil and water is the atmosphere, which also consists of two elements: air and fire (light rays which penetrate the air). In every facet of creation we find this principle of the double which penetrates the body and gives it life.

And now, let us study the diagram in Figure 9:

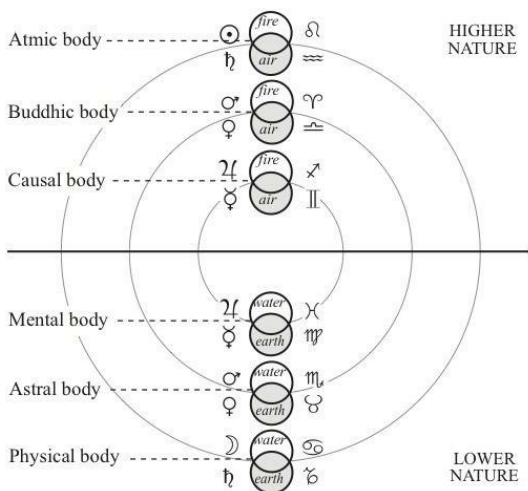










Figure 9

In the lower half of the diagram we see that, for each body, the small circle marked 'earth' represents as it were the 'form' penetrated and animated by its double, 'water'. In the upper half of the diagram the 'form', air, is penetrated and animated by fire. Human beings, therefore, have three lower bodies made up of the two principles, earth and water, and three subtle bodies made up of the principles of air and fire. The

three higher, subtle bodies represent, as it were, the 'atmosphere' of the three dense, lower bodies.

And now let us get back to the Zodiac and see how the twelve constellations correspond to the six bodies: two constellations to each. The planets, too, exert their influence in both worlds: the world above (the higher bodies) and the world below (the lower bodies).

Notice which signs correspond to the different bodies: for the physical body we have Capricorn  governed by Saturn , and for its etheric double, Cancer , which is opposite Capricorn in the Zodiac and which is ruled by the Moon .

For the astral body we have Taurus , ruled by Venus , and for its double, Scorpio  (its zodiacal opposite) ruled by Mars .

For the mental body we have Virgo ♍, ruled by Mercury ☿, and for its double, Pisces ♉ ruled by Jupiter ♃.

On the upper half of the diagram we have the following arrangement: Gemini ♊ and Sagittarius ♐ correspond to the causal body; Libra ♎ and Aries ♈ to the buddhic body, and Aquarius ♒ and Leo ♌ to the atmic body.

As far as the planets are concerned we see that those which figure on the lower level are repeated on the higher level but in reverse order. There is one exception, that of the Moon which is replaced, on the higher level, by the Sun. It is the planets which establish the link between the higher and lower bodies. The following table demonstrates this:

♁ ☽ physical body linked to the atmic body ♁ ☼

♀♁ astral body linked to the buddhic
body ♀♁

♃♈ mental body linked to the causal
body ♃♈

Mercury and Jupiter, therefore,
govern both levels of thought (the mental
and causal bodies).

Venus and Mars govern both levels of
feeling (the astral and buddhic bodies).

Saturn-Moon and Saturn-Sun govern
the two levels of action and of the will
(physical and atmic bodies).

Our atmic body, therefore, is
influenced by Aquarius (Saturn), the
thoughtful, reflective person, and his
double, Leo (the Sun) which represents
the higher heart, whereas the physical
body is under the influence of Capricorn

and Cancer, that is of Saturn and the Moon (sentiment). The Sun represents man's higher nature, ² the stable, radiant element, whereas the Moon represents his lower nature: mobile, unstable and shadowy. Later on we shall study this diagram in greater detail and see how it relates to a great many other questions, but for the time being let me just show you how we can find in it the explanation of Original Sin, the Fall.

The astral body, as I have just said, is ruled by Mars and Venus: Mars in his lower aspects of violence and aggressiveness, the forces of destruction, and Venus, also in her lower aspect of sensuality. On the other hand the astral body is linked to the buddhic body which is ruled by the same planets, but in their higher aspects, so that Mars manifests his influence in courage, dynamic activity, the spirit of chivalry which takes up arms only in defense of others and Venus shows herself in grace,

tenderness and spiritual love.

In the lower half of the diagram (Figure 9) Venus and Mars are in Taurus and Scorpio, whereas in the upper half they are in Libra and Aries. As we know, Aries is opposite Libra and Taurus opposite Scorpio in the Zodiacal circle.

So here, once again, we have two axes:

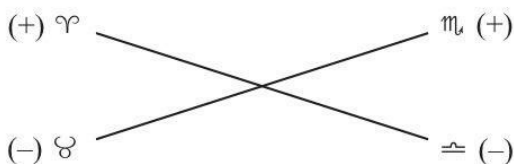


Figure 10

Each axis joins two poles: Venus, the feminine principle, is joined to Mars, the masculine principle. A very simple example will help you to understand the nature of this link between the two poles of the masculine and feminine

principles. If you stare at something red for a few seconds and then transfer your gaze to a sheet of white paper you will see green, and if you stare at something green and then look away you will see red. Why are red and green related to each other in this way? Red is the colour of Mars and green the colour of Venus. To know this enables us to understand certain psychic phenomena. If you behave in a Taurean manner you will arouse Scorpio, and if you behave as an Arien you will arouse Libra, and vice versa, for the two are linked.

In Taurus, Venus manifests her inferior aspect: she incites people to love in a primitive way, to touch, taste and feel love physically, and after a while, those who obey her in this, inevitably experience the influence of Mars in Scorpio because the two planets are linked. Wherever Mars goes he brings with him quarrels, violence and destruction. Someone who indulges in

physical love necessarily becomes harsh, rebellious and even cruel: he will stifle every good thought or kind sentiment in himself or in others. Equally, he who gives way to the evil influence of Mars and becomes harsh and violent will soon find himself plunged in sensuality and passions.

On the higher level, where Venus manifests herself as disinterested love, kindness, beauty and selflessness, Mars also manifests himself, but not in disruption and destruction: he comes to give support, to defend, preserve and reinforce all that is good in us or in others. This is an absolute law. He who manifests his love on the spiritual level will never fall into the trap of becoming violent: on the contrary, he attracts only the benevolent aspects of Martian might. And now let us suppose that you manifest Mars by your efforts to control and dominate your passions, by the courage with which you accept trials:

then Venus will come, like an Angel, to bring you all the treasures of Heaven, to delight your soul and give you a taste of eternal life, offering you a love that will sustain and comfort you and flood you with happiness and light.

In this context Scorpio can be interpreted as another form of the symbol of the serpent. It corresponds to the eighth zodiacal house which is the house of death. Genesis tells us that there were many trees in the Garden of Eden, but it mentions only two of them by name: the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. ³ Adam and Eve were allowed to eat the fruit of all the trees in the Garden with the exception of that of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Why was this? God told them that if they ate of that fruit they would die. But they did eat of that fruit and yet they continued to live. Yes, because in nature there is no such thing as death; that which we call 'death'

is only a change either in a state of consciousness or in a state of matter.

To begin with, Adam and Eve lived on the buddhic plane which is influenced by Libra and Aries. Their existence was one of joy, peace and freedom in union with God, the Angels and all the other sublime beings. Venus, who rules in Libra, gave them gifts of beauty and sweetness, and Mars, who rules in Aries, gave them energy and tireless activity. Thanks to Libra which is the constellation of perfect balance, all their forces were in a state of total harmony; they had no knowledge of the tribulations which accompany the two other constellations associated with these two planets: Taurus and Scorpio.

But Adam and Eve, who were accustomed to absorbing the beneficial forces bestowed on them by Mars and Venus, began, little by little, to draw nearer to the next two constellations.

Their desire for knowledge led them ever closer to Scorpio, which comes after Libra in the Zodiac, and to Taurus, which comes after Aries. It is because they wanted to know more about the new elements, the new forces of these two constellations, that they committed the first sin: they left the region of peace and harmonious balance in which they had dwelt until then, and came under the influence of Taurus and Scorpio in the regions of sexual passions and violence. They died, therefore, to the life of Aries and Libra and were born into the life of Taurus and Scorpio and began to absorb the forces of these two signs which flowed over them in abundance. This was no longer the buddhic plane, the region of perfect happiness and felicity; this was the astral plane, the region of every kind of disruption and distress. So this is what God meant when He addressed the first man, saying, *'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die'*. When they let themselves be

led astray by the inferior forces of Venus and Mars, Adam and Eve died on the buddhic level and descended onto the astral level, and this is what is known as 'the Fall'.

In the Zodiac, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is represented by the axis Taurus–Scorpio whereas the Tree of Life is represented by the axis Aries–Libra. He who lives a life of sensuality and passion eats the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and dies, day by day, to a higher level of consciousness, whereas he who controls himself eats the fruit of the Tree of Everlasting Life in the Kingdom of God.

If you read the *Apocalypse* you will see that it also bears traces of this science of the two axes, Aries–Libra and Taurus–Scorpio. Addressing the church of Ephesus, the Spirit says, '*I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy*

patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured and hast not fainted. (This is the tireless activity of the higher aspect of Mars). Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love (that is to say, the higher aspect of Venus, the Aries–Libra axis). Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works... But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. (Aries is herbivorous and a symbol of purity, and the Nicolaitans were a heretical sect whose members assisted at banquets at which they ate meat that had been immolated to idols, and whose moral code left a lot to be desired)... To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God (that

is to say, on the higher level, the buddhic body being situated in the middle, between the causal and the atmic bodies, just as the Tree of Life was in the middle of Paradise).’

And to the church in Smyrna it was said, *‘I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, but thou art rich...’* Taurus corresponds to the second astrological house, that of wealth and prosperity, and the poverty that is spoken of in this passage is the spiritual poverty of the church of Smyrna which has fallen under the influence of the inferior aspect of Venus in Taurus. *‘I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days (in the suffering of Scorpio): be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown*

of life... He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death', in other words he who repents and reforms will escape the death inflicted by Scorpio, the spiritual death which claimed Adam and Eve.

As you see, these texts correspond in every detail to what I was saying about the two axes, Taurus-Scorpio and Aries–Libra. The *Apocalypse* contains all the mysteries of alchemy, magic, astrology and the Cabbalah.⁴ Most ministers and priests dare not interpret it because they would be obliged to acknowledge these disciplines and, consequently, to change certain aspects of their religion. The *Apocalypse* is ignored because it proves that Sacred Scripture can only be correctly interpreted with the help of other sciences. Even the cards of the Tarot, and their correspondences with numbers and esoteric symbols, are to be found in the *Apocalypse*.

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Tree (The) of the Knowledge of Good and Evil *Genesis 2 : 15-17 and 3 : 1-13*

‘In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die’ *Genesis 2 : 17*

Words of the Spirit to the church of Ephesus *Revelation 2 : 2-7*

Words of the Spirit to the church of Smyrna *Revelation 2 : 9-11*

¹ See *Man's Two Natures, Human and Divine*, Izvor Coll. n° 213, chap. 2: ‘The Lower Self is a Reflection’.

² Op. cit., chap. 5: ‘The Sun Symbolizes the Divine Nature’.

³ See *The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*, Izvor Coll. n° 210, chap. 1: ‘The Serpent of Genesis’.

⁴ See *The Book of Revelations: A Commentary*, Izvor Coll. n° 230.

Chapter Six : THE VIRGO-PISCES AXIS

I

The miracle of the multiplication of the five loaves and two fishes has attracted the attention of many scholars who have written commentaries of the Gospels. How can this miracle be explained? Did Jesus make use of occult forces? In point of fact I don't think it is really so important to answer this question: I want to talk to you about this passage from a quite different point of view, and to show you that it contains some essential truths of Initiatic Science.

First of all, let me read the Gospel story:

'After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of

Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number

about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.'

And now, for a moment, let us forget this story and look at the circle of the Zodiac.

The Sun, as we have already seen, travels through the Zodiac in the order of Aries, Taurus, Gemini, etc., whereas the living point of the heavenly vault, the point of the vernal equinox moves in the opposite direction. Every 2160 years this living point enters a different

constellation and this event coincides with changes in every area of life. Under the influence of the new constellation, new forces and currents begin to flow over mankind. Because of this, the Initiates of Antiquity, who knew exactly what influence each sign exerts, were able to predict what would happen when the vernal point entered a given constellation.

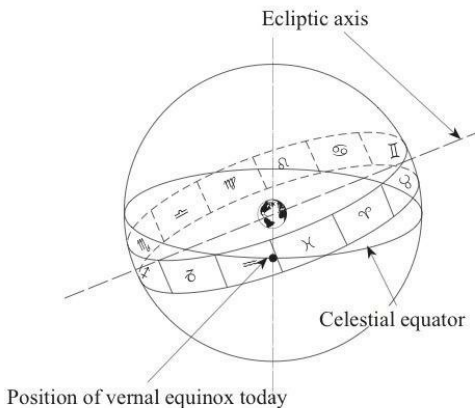


Figure 11

Every religion comes under the influence of two constellations

diametrically opposite each other on the zodiacal circle. The Christian religion comes under the influence of Pisces (the fishes) and its polar opposite, Virgo (the Virgin), and we often find references to these two symbols in the Gospels. The symbol of the Virgin exists from time immemorial; it is the symbol of Nature, pure, inviolate and chaste, who gives birth to the Eternal Son of mankind, the higher Self or, as we say, the Christ. Fishes also have a prominent place in the Gospels. When Jesus called his first disciples, Peter and Andrew his brother, to him, he told them, *'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men'*; so men are here compared to fish. On another occasion, when Peter was told to pay tribute money, Jesus said to him, *'Go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee'*. Then there was the incident of the

miraculous draught of fishes, and in yet another instance we find the words, *'If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?'* These words are not uttered by chance: fishes and bread are always a reminder of the signs of Pisces and Virgo (the zodiacal symbol for Virgo is a young girl holding a sheaf of wheat). Jesus also said, *'I am the bread of life... I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever.'* Fishes and bread, therefore, are essential symbols in the New Testament and Jesus and his disciples meditated on them.

And now let us look at the Virgin and the Fishes (Virgo and Pisces) from the astrological point of view. Pisces is ruled by Jupiter and Virgo by Mercury. The Ancients used only seven planets in their calculations (Sun and Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and

Saturn), distributing them amongst the twelve signs of the Zodiac. Since the discovery of Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, modern astrologers have added the influence of Neptune to the sign of Pisces. But today, in studying the question that interests us, we shall use only the seven planets. When we study other questions we shall have occasion to use all ten, but in any case, as there are more planets still to be discovered, the choice is always somewhat relative.

Mercury rules in Virgo, therefore, and Jupiter in Pisces. Mercury represents a young child and Jupiter a man in the prime of life, so that the two of them are in contrast in every respect: age, activity, mentality, etc. All the planets have an influence in relation to the different ages of man. The Moon influences conception, gestation and birth; Mercury reigns over childhood; Venus is dominant in puberty and adolescence; the Sun rules young

adulthood, when men and women are beginning to plan for a family and employment. Mars influences the adult struggling to protect his home and family; Jupiter reigns in the middle years, the years of maturity: he represents the father of a large family for which he provides with generosity, and whose position in life attracts admiration and respect. Saturn dominates in old age: he is the old grandfather with numerous children and grandchildren, who is getting ready to depart for the next world.

As we have seen: Mercury rules in the sign of Virgo. The symbol of the Virgin and child (Mercury) depicted by Isis and Horus and by the Virgin Mary and Jesus, is a symbol of purity. Whereas Jupiter, planet of generosity and benevolence, rules in Pisces which is the sign of community life and of sacrifice. Virgo and Pisces: this is the axis of Christ and under the influence of these two

constellations, the Christian religion has endeavoured to develop in human souls the two virtues represented by Virgo and Pisces: purity and brotherly love. Jesus, born of the Virgin, manifested as fish. As you know, the early Christian symbol of identification was not the cross, but the fish. Jesus was referred to by the Greek word for fish, *Ichthus*, which was composed of the initial letters of each of the following words: *Iêsous Christos Theou Hyios Soter* (meaning Jesus Christ, son of God, Saviour).

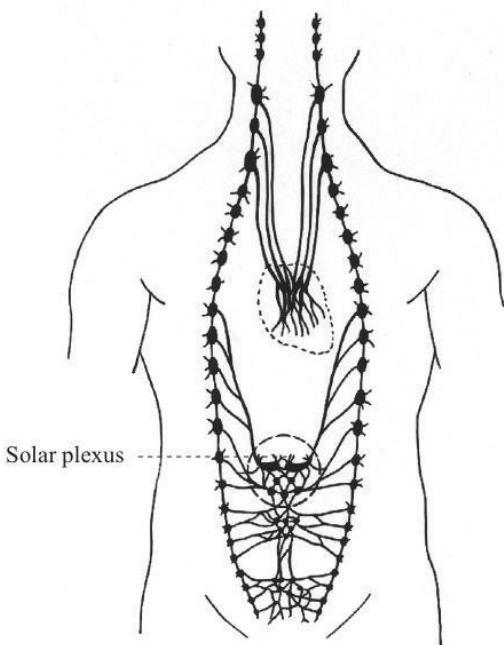
And now, let's get back to the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. As you know, each part of our body is related to one of the constellations in the Zodiac, and astrology tells us that it is the solar plexus that is in relation to Virgo and the feet to Pisces. Since Virgo and Pisces are connected and represent the axis of Christ, there must also be a connection between the feet and the solar plexus.

The solar plexus is a part of the sympathetic nerve system which is a network of nerve fibres, ganglia and plexuses, as you can see from the sketch in Figure 12. [1](#)

We shall come back to this question in greater detail at another time, but for the time being let us just look at the solar plexus. It is located just behind the stomach and consists of five ordinary ganglia and two so-called 'half-moon' ganglia shaped like fishes. These are the five loaves and two fishes, the male and female, united in the solar plexus.

All that I am explaining to you, here, is written in the great book of Nature: you can find it there for yourselves. As long as a child is in its mother's womb it is bound to her by the umbilical cord through which it receives the nourishment it needs. The mother represents Nature. When the child is

separated from its mother at birth the umbilical cord is cut, but there is another, invisible cord which connects every child to Mother Nature who continues to nourish it. And this cord must not be cut until man is fully equipped to live his separate life, for man is a child of Nature and if the cord is cut prematurely he will no longer receive the nourishment he needs and will die. Astrology tells us that this invisible cord links man to Nature, his mother, through the solar plexus.



Chain of ganglia in the sympathetic nerve system

Figure 12

The two half-moon ganglia enable man to move through space at will, and the five ordinary ganglia are the five loaves with which the multitude of his cells are nourished. Each ganglion is related to one of the five virtues symbolized by the pentagram: kindness,

justice, love, wisdom and truth. ²
Mercury, the ruler of Virgo, is represented in the Gospel story by the young boy who brought the loaves and fishes which Jesus multiplied and distributed to the multitude. And the five thousand are all the cells that make up the physical body and which receive their daily nourishment from the solar plexus.

Many will think that these explanations are pure fantasy and have no connection with the actual miracle performed by Jesus. Well, if that is what you think I would like to refer you to the Gospel of St. Matthew in which he reports Jesus' words to his disciples, *'Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees'*. The disciples were discussing his words amongst themselves, saying, *'It is because we have taken no bread'*, and Jesus, knowing this, said, *'O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves,*

because you have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread?’

On the other hand, St. Mark also has a story to tell: *‘And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.*

And he went up unto the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened'.

These two passages indicate very clearly that, in the first place, the loaves and fishes which were multiplied by Jesus were not ordinary, material loaves and fishes and, secondly, that his miracle was in some way related to Jesus' power to move freely in space (in this instance, to walk on water). And this power astonished the disciples because they had not understood the 'miracle of the loaves.'

You are beginning to see more clearly, now, that the account of the miracle by which Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes to feed five thousand, is symbolic and should not be understood literally. In each of us the

solar plexus feeds thousands upon thousands of cells with its five loaves and two fishes. And there is another passage in the Gospels that we can relate to these: *'He that believeth on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.'* Here, too, Jesus was referring to the solar plexus. [3](#)

But if Christ is to be allowed to nourish the multitude of our cells, our higher consciousness must be awakened. Every human being has a solar plexus, but most of them are so bogged down in material things and their lives are so chaotic that the solar plexus cannot do its subtle work. Every human being possesses five loaves and two fishes but the great majority are not properly nourished: they nourish themselves on the physical plane without realizing that they also need spiritual food.

If you take these accounts too literally,

on the material level alone, you might say that Jesus did not do anything special: one day, a long time ago, he fed several thousand people. But now all that is past and forgotten, so it was not really very useful. Even if someone gives you a large and delicious meal today it won't prevent you from being famished again tomorrow. In fact you won't even remember that you have eaten today. The multitude is still with us, today, and Jesus cannot go on supplying it with physical food: there are so many hungry people on earth! On the spiritual plane, on the other hand, Christ can give us the food we need each day. And we, in turn, must become like Christ and nourish the multitude of our cells with a life of love and purity.

As far as my role is concerned, it is not up to me to give you physical food because you would only clamor for more tomorrow. What I give you is far better: the means to draw nourishment for

yourselves from the inexhaustible source of life which alone can satisfy your hunger.

Some people wonder why, in spite of his purity and elevation, in spite of his divinity, Jesus had to suffer as he did; why the Pharisees and Sadducees were so bitterly opposed to him and, above all, why Judas betrayed him. The Virgo-Pisces axis explains this, for these two poles are related to the sixth and twelfth astrological houses. The sixth house is that of health and sickness and also of purity (Virgo). Jesus healed the sick by his purity and taught men that they could only drive out devils and command the spirits by prayer and fasting. Jesus drove out many devils, and when they left the sick or possessed in whom they had been dwelling, they immediately looked for others in whom to take refuge and through whom they could revenge themselves, and their choice often fell on the Sadducees and Pharisees. When

Jesus drove out impure spirits he was obliged to take on himself the karmic debt of those he had freed. This was a very great sacrifice. He knew that he would have to suffer, that he would be betrayed by Judas and crucified, because the twelfth astrological house, the house of Pisces, is the house of trials, secret enmities and betrayals. Judas, therefore, was a collective being: the part he played was necessary.

II

‘And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel

and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, if I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit...'

John 13: 2-10

This passage from the *Gospels* is very well known. The fact that Jesus washed his disciples' feet in the course of the last meal they took together is a surprising gesture and has always been

interpreted as a lesson in humility for the disciples. This interpretation is correct, but incomplete and I would like to add some further explanation.

Jesus rose, therefore, took a cloth and began to wash his disciples' feet. To begin with, Peter would not let his Master wash his feet, but Jesus told him, *'What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter'*, which is a sure indication that his gesture had a deeper meaning than at first appeared. Jesus explained many things to his disciples which were not recorded in the Gospels; to know this you only need to refer to what St. John said at the end of his Gospel: *'And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.'*

When I explained the miracle of the

multiplication of the two fishes and five loaves with which Jesus fed five thousand people, I said that the Christian era was under the influence of Pisces and its opposite sign, Virgo. Jesus was born of the Virgin and he himself represents Pisces, the fish. In the washing of the feet we shall once again find this Virgo–Pisces polarity, but from another point of view.

According to astrological tradition, there is a correspondance between man's feet and the constellation of Pisces and between the solar plexus and Virgo. If Jesus washed his disciples' feet it was in order to show them the extremely important link between the feet and the solar plexus.

Of course it is true that with this gesture it was as though Jesus was telling his disciples, 'This is an example I am giving you. Later on, you too will have to show the same humility and

unselfishness towards others.' And he even washed Judas' feet, although he knew perfectly well that Judas had already betrayed him. Symbolically you could say that someone who refuses to take revenge on those who have done him a wrong, washes their feet. But Jesus' gesture was, above all, intended to awaken in his disciples the constructive energies of the solar plexus.

Probably, in the ordinary circumstances of daily life, some of you have already noticed a connection between your feet and your solar plexus. When your feet are very cold you can feel a tightening of the solar plexus and if you eat while you're feeling like that, your digestion will be more difficult than usual. But you will find that if you soak your feet in hot water it will give you a delightful sensation of relaxation at the level of your solar plexus and you will feel on top of your form. This is why, if you are feeling anxious or tense,

I advise you to consciously and deliberately prepare a basin of hot water, to soak your feet in it and wash them with attention: in this way you will be influencing and strengthening your solar plexus, and your state of consciousness will immediately be transformed. Also, if you find yourself completely incapable of meditating one day, have a footbath, and you will see that you will be able to concentrate much more easily.

You don't have to keep your feet in water for long, but you can speak to them as you wash them gently: 'My dear feet, I'm just beginning to understand how well you serve me. I've never paid much attention to you and yet it is you who bear the weight of my body, and take me wherever I want to go. From now on I promise you I'll show more gratitude for your humility and patience.' The feet are a training ground for certain cells. They are living beings, these cells, and one

day they are going to have to pass tests. If they do well, Cosmic Intelligence will tell them they can move up to a higher level, and they will go to the lungs, the heart or the brain to make further progress in their evolution. But at the moment they have been sent to the feet in order to learn the virtues of humility and kindness which they lacked in the past.

The same pattern can be seen in the lives of men: destiny has condemned those who have been harsh, prideful or vicious to be born into families or nations who are fated to suffer and serve others in order to learn the laws of justice, humility and sacrifice. Whether we believe it or not, this is what Initiatic Science teaches.

We must never forget that it is by means of our feet that we maintain the contact with the earth and its telluric currents: they serve as antennae. But the electro-magnetic currents rising from the

earth or flowing down into it can only circulate freely if the feet are not charged with layers of fluidic impurities; this is why it is good to wash one's feet every evening.

To begin with, Peter refused to let Jesus wash his feet and then, later, he asked him to wash not only his feet but his head and hands as well, and Jesus told him, *'He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.'* The feet being the part of the body which is most closely in contact with the earth, they represent the physical plane which we have to transcend in order to gain access to higher planes, and this is why, if we consciously fix our attention on the centres situated on and under our feet, while we are washing them, we can work towards this liberation from the physical plane.

Have you never wondered why the

Greek god Hermes was portrayed with wings on his heels? Hermes was the messenger of the gods and the wings symbolized his power to move freely through space. But the wings on Hermes' heels must also be seen to represent the spiritual centres, the chakras of men's feet. If these centres are awakened man acquires the power to move at will in space and travel to subtler regions.

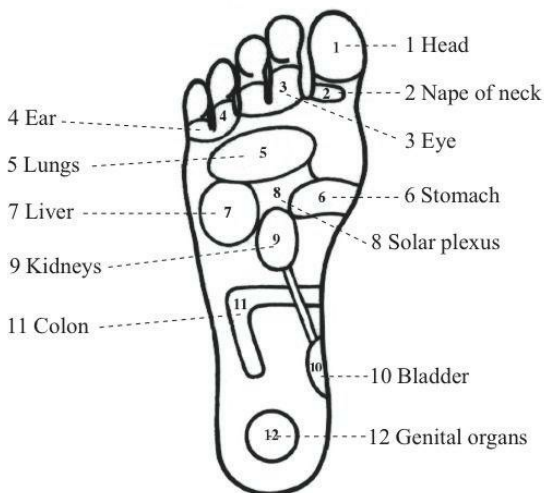
Remember what I said about the solar plexus in my lecture about the miracle of the loaves and fishes*(See *Spiritual Alchemy*, Complete Works, vol. 2, Chapter 6: 'The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes'). The miracle by which Jesus multiplied the loaves is related to his power to move at will through space. St. Mark makes this clear when he tells how Jesus came to the disciples in their ship, walking on the waters, and he adds the remark, '*And they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and*

wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves.' This remark emphasizes the fact that the correspondence between the feet and the solar plexus is related to this power to move at will through space.

The feet, therefore, symbolize the physical sphere and of course it is in the physical sphere that we are always victimized, because it is in such close contact with the astral plane which represents the diabolical underworld. This notion is expressed in Greek mythology by the legend of Achilles' heel. Achilles' mother, Thetis, wanting to render her infant son invulnerable, grasped him by the heel and plunged him headfirst into the waters of the Styx, but the heel by which she held him was not protected, and during the Trojan Wars Achilles was struck in that heel by a poisoned arrow and died. So now you can understand the meaning of Jesus' gesture and of his words, *'He that is*

washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit'. Since the feet symbolize the most material level, to wash one's feet represents the final touch in the work of purification.

From time immemorial sages have known of the correspondences between the microcosmos and the macrocosmos. This science of correspondences reveals that not only does man's body relate to the constellations of the Zodiac (the head corresponds to Aries, the neck to Taurus, and so on) but that each part and member of his body relates to the whole organism, to the whole universe, to all the forces and virtues of the soul.⁴ These relationships have been studied for the hands, but they exist also for the feet: there are certain precise spots on the feet which relate directly to other organs or parts of the body (see Figure 13), and if you massage these points it will have a beneficial effect on the equivalent organs.



Principal reflex zones on the right foot

Figure 13

So, as you see, Jesus' gesture in washing his disciples' feet has a much deeper and more farreaching significance than is usually realized. Think about what I have been saying; begin to work on your feet and your solar plexus on a spiritual level and you will soon feel very beneficial results.

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Multiplication of the five loaves and two fishes *John 6 : 1-15*

‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men’ *Matthew 4 : 19*

‘Go thou to the sea, and cast an hook...’(the piece of money found in the fish’s mouth) *Matthew 17 : 24-27*

‘If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone ?’ *Matthew 7 : 9-10*

‘I am the bread of life’ *John 6 : 35*

‘I am the living bread which came down from heaven’ *John 6 : 51*

‘Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees’ *Matthew 16 : 6-11*

‘And when even was come...’
(Jesus walks on the sea) *Mark 6 : 45-52*

‘He that believeth on me... out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water’ *John 7 : 38*

Jesus washes his disciples’ feet
John 13 : 1-17

¹ See *Man’s Subtle Bodies and Centres – the Aura, the Solar Plexus, the Chakras...*, Coll. Izvor n° 219, chap. 3: ‘The Solar Plexus’.

² See *The Symbolic Language of Geometrical Figures*, Izvor Coll. n° 218, chap. 4: ‘The Pentagram’.

³ See *Sons and Daughters of God*, Izvor Coll. n° 240, chap. 12: ‘Out of his belly shall flow living waters’.

⁴ See *Angels and other Mysteries of The Tree of Life*, Izvor Coll. n° 236, chap. 11: ‘The Body of Adam Kadmon’.

Chapter Seven : THE LEO-AQUARIUS AXIS

I

Cold is often identified with evil, with all that is negative and bad, with contraction and paralysis, whereas heat symbolizes all that is good, beautiful and alive. Reality, however, is more complex than that.

The first thing we have to understand is that there are two kinds of heat and cold. One kind of heat causes things to expand and ripen: it vivifies. The other kind of heat burns and destroys and leaves only ashes in its wake. Then there is one kind of cold which conserves whatever is good and provides excellent conditions for wisdom and mental activity, and another kind which paralyses life itself. These are the two

kinds of cold and heat that we must now study.

There is one kind of heat which comes from the Sun and another which comes from Mars. There is one kind of cold which comes from Saturn, and another which comes from the Earth. The Sun represents vivifying heat and Mars destructive heat. Saturn symbolizes the cold of meditation, intelligence and wisdom and the Earth represents the cold of separation and death.

When Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden they were nourished by the fruit of the Tree of Life which communicated a life-giving warmth. Later, when they wanted to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they fell to earth, into the realm of the cold of separation, hatred and death, and that is where they are to this day! When they dwelt in warmth they were like cells bound together as one,

like atoms moving to the same rhythm within a molecule of gas. But once they had descended to earth they were gripped by the cold which froze and petrified them, and looking at each other they were conscious of being separated from each other. All misunderstandings and conflicts between human beings come from this separation of their consciousness. When one descends into the cold of the earth one becomes incapable of understanding the other kind of cold, that of wisdom.

Cold, therefore, is represented by Saturn and the Earth, and heat by the Sun and Mars. 'And what about lukewarmness?' you may ask, and the answer is that lukewarmness is represented by the Moon. Yes, for whatever concerns the Moon is indefinite, pale and insipid, and this is why people who are influenced by the Moon are indolent, irresolute, dreamy and woolly-headed. You must all know

the passage in *Revelation* in which the Spirit says to the church in Laodicea: *'So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.'* It is not surprising, because if a person is tepid, lukewarm, you cannot count on him; he is always vague, he will never understand the truth, he will never produce anything really solid and stable.

Scientific experiments with heat and cold have shown that the upper limit of heat has not yet been determined, but that cold cannot go below -273° C.; a degree which has not yet been reached, incidentally. There is a force in nature which makes it impossible to reach absolute zero. God has placed a spark of creative fire in every single thing, in every living being. Even if the whole of creation were to combine in an effort to extinguish that spark it still could not do so, for it is the power of creative fire, the power of the Ever-Living God which

abides and remains active in every created thing.

Time and time again the cold has attempted to put out that spark but it has never succeeded. Hatred, jealousy, doubt, pride, fear and discouragement, which are all forms of cold and death, have tried millions of times to put out that spark of life, the light that shines in the world. Never have they succeeded. Never has that divine light been banished from the earth. Never will man succeed in completely destroying the good that is in him. ¹ Everybody should know this: it might prevent them from wasting their time trying to put out the divine spark in themselves and others and encourage them, on the contrary, to work to feed its flame.

And now, let us see in what way we can become warmer or cooler – I'm speaking now of the positive aspect of heat and cold. In order to become cooler

we have to climb to the heights, which means that we have to become sages, philosophers and scholars. And to become warmer we have to go down a little into the valleys where we shall find rivers, flowers and trees and our human brothers and sisters. Love warms us and wisdom cools us. Look at people who do a lot of thinking: they're cold. And you can observe this in yourself: if you meditate for a long time you end by feeling cold. Whereas if you love someone or something you soon feel yourself getting warmer. In winter, when you want to ward off the cold, call on love, joy and kindness. If you are discontented you will feel cold even when you're huddled against a hot stove. That is the lower kind of cold, the cold of the Earth and of death.

And now let's get back to the Zodiac, and see how this question of heat and cold is connected to the Aquarius–Leo axis.

Referring to the passage we just quoted from *Revelation*, the Spirit continues to address the church in Laodicea in these terms: *'Thou art neither cold nor hot... I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten'*. And now you will see how this passage can be interpreted thanks to the Leo–Aquarius axis.

The constellation of Leo represents creative fire. It is the house of the Sun, of the hottest time of the year, July and August. Leo represents the heart, the cosmic heart which supplies blood and life. It is the fifth house, that of love, creation and children. At the other end of the axis we find Aquarius governed by

Saturn who rules over winter. Aquarius is depicted as an old man, Saturn the wise (although Saturn is not the only master in Aquarius: Uranus is also there), who symbolically pours water from his urn to quench the thirst of humanity. The two poles of this axis, therefore, are love and wisdom, heat and cold, the valleys and the peaks. *'Thou art neither cold nor hot'* means 'you have neither love nor wisdom.'

And now let us see what the gold, the white raiment and the eye salve mean.

'Gold tried in the fire': According to alchemical lore, gold is related to the sun; it is the condensation of the beneficial forces, ² the rays of the sun. And Leo represents gold that has been purified by fire: spiritual love which purifies everything. The etymological origin of the words emphasizes these correspondences: The Hebrew word for heart is *'lev'* and for lion, *'lavi'*; in

Russian and Bulgarian the word for lion is 'lev' and for love, 'liubov'. The same root can be seen in the word 'love', in English and, in German, 'Liebe' for love and 'Löwe' for lion.

'White raiment': this is seen as a symbol of purity, purity being here understood as the absence of passion which is the fruit of wisdom.

'Anoint thine eyes with eye salve': the eye salve is Uranus, truth, for truth relates to the eyes. In the ancient rites of initiation Uranus was represented symbolically as an eye floating above the ocean. You must not think that the Ancients did not know of the existence of the planet Uranus or that it was only discovered by Herschel. They knew of it, but they called it Heaven (Uranus comes from the Greek ouranios meaning heaven).

Thus, the Sun brings us life and love;

Saturn brings us wisdom in which to clothe ourselves and Uranus enables us to see the truth. This is why the Aquarius-Leo axis (which will be the active influence in the world henceforth, since we are just entering the Age of Aquarius) represents the new era in which disciples and all children of God will work with the love of the Sun (Leo) and the wisdom of Saturn (Aquarius) and live in the truth brought by Uranus.

The age of Aquarius-Leo will be the age of love and wisdom and, to a certain extent, truth. But the veritable age of truth will come later with the sixth and seventh races, when man has achieved the perfect synthesis of love and wisdom: then truth will be established in all fulness.

Although the church in Laodicea believed itself to be rich (*'Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing'*), the Spirit

knew that it was poor, blind and naked and advised it to buy gold, white raiment and eye salve. This shows us that we can obtain love, wisdom and truth only if we remain within the field of influence of the Aquarius-Leo axis; if we do not accept this we shall always be poor, naked and blind.

He who is cold, therefore, must be capable of becoming hot and vice versa. Moving thus from one pole to the other he will restore his inner balance and discover life itself in this ebb and flow, in this alternation between high and low. He who is permanently fixed in either heat or cold has ceased to evolve; it is all over for him. How do you proceed when you want to cook your vegetables? You put the saucepan on the fire, don't you? And then, after a short time, you take it off again. Why don't you leave it on the fire and let it burn? Because you are wise! And if you love someone, that is excellent, but wisdom tells you that it

is better not to go too far. If you feel that you are getting hotter because of another person, don't leave your saucepan on the fire! You do understand what I'm saying, don't you? Heat (love) is welcome, but on condition that it is followed by a cooler period (wisdom).

Again the Spirit speaks to the church in Laodicea: '*As many as I love (Leo), I rebuke and chasten (Aquarius).*' He who loves is the Sun and he who chastises is Saturn and also Uranus who is always accompanied by great upheavals. If Heaven, which loves us, chastises us, it does so by means of destiny, and Saturn rules over destiny. When we see the chastisement of Saturn approaching we must realize that it is God who is manifesting Himself in this manner. If we want to be loved we must abide both in Leo and in Aquarius, between Saturn, the Old Adam and the Sun, Christ, he who was born of the tribe of Judah. As you know, Jacob had

twelve sons who were the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israël* (See Chapter 10, 'The Twelve Tribes of Israel and the Twelve Labours of Hercules in Relation to the Zodiac'). Each of the tribes is related to one of the signs of the Zodiac, and that of Judah is related to Leo, the lion, and Jesus the Christ was of the tribe of Judah.

And finally, the Spirit says to the church in Laodicea: *'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.'* The throne is that of Leo, there is no other; and in that throne is seated the Sun, the Christ. Christ is the Sun, Christ is the heart pouring out its blood, its love, into the whole universe. ³ He, therefore, who overcomes hatred and death (inner cold) will reign, seated on the Throne of God.

II

The Egyptian Sphinx represents the Zodiac in its relation to the four elements: it has a human head (Aquarius, air sign), the body of a bull (Taurus, earth sign), a lion's paws (Leo, fire sign) and the wings of an eagle (Scorpio, water sign).

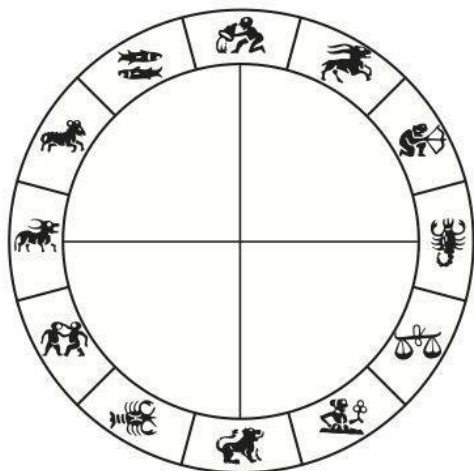
These same figures are to be found in the *Apocalypse* in which St. John describes the four sacred Beasts who stand before the throne of God and '*rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come*'. The first Beast was like a lion, the second like a bull, the third like a man and the fourth like an eagle. Perhaps you will object that in the Zodiac there is a Scorpion, not an Eagle: the truth is that in the primitive Zodiac the place now occupied by Scorpio was that of the Eagle. The reason for this

change is symbolical: owing to the misuse of the sexual energies, the Eagle lost its place in the heavens and was changed into a Scorpion.

Traces of this can be seen in the correspondences established by the Initiates of the past between the different parts of the human body and the signs of the Zodiac: Scorpio corresponds to the genital organs. The Eagle represents a being capable of soaring to great heights but who fell because he ate of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The four sacred Beasts, therefore, like the Egyptian Sphinx, correspond to the two rightangled axes, Taurus-Scorpio* and Aquarius-Leo, which form one of the crosses of the Zodiac.

(* See Chapter 5: 'The Axes of Aries-Libra and Taurus-Scorpio')



Aquarius represents man and, consequently, the realm of thought and knowledge. He is pictured as an old man pouring water from an urn, and this water is the water of life, for the knowledge possessed by Aquarius is a knowledge which gives life, which produces and awakens life. The water flowing from the old man's urn teaches human beings that they have to nourish and water all that exists within and around them so that it shall produce fruit.

The symbol of the Brotherhood, the anchor with the two hands from which a stream of water gushes, is also an Aquarian symbol, and in Greek mythology Aquarius is represented by Ganymede, the cup-bearer of the gods.

Water brings life to the land it irrigates and as human beings have forgotten about water they haven't been irrigated – or perhaps they have been irrigated, but with what? What they need more than anything is life-giving water. This is why, although Aquarius is a symbol of knowledge it is related not to the brain but to the solar plexus, because the solar plexus alone can cause the living waters to flow in man's soul. ⁴ In the Gospel, Jesus said, *'The water that I shall give him will be a well of water springing up into everlasting life.'* ⁵ Already, the Aquarian age was being foretold in such a way that nobody at that time could understand it.

In the absence of this living water you can talk for ever about whatever you please, you will never produce anything but theories, and people who put all their faith in theories become as dry as dust! This is what is happening with modern culture: human beings are extremely knowledgeable but their knowledge is all on the surface; it is not alive. Well, it is far better to possess the knowledge of life than to know all that is contained in books, for the whole universe will be revealed to him who possesses the science of life, that is, who knows how to vibrate in unison, in harmony with the laws of the cosmos. It is in this respect that the Teaching of the Universal White Brotherhood brings to humanity something completely new. Human beings display their vast science and I bow before it in admiration; but that is not what is most important. What I am interested in is living in harmony with the laws of the cosmos.

For years, astrologers and esoterics have been talking about the coming of the Aquarian Age. In point of fact we still have to wait for about two hundred years before the vernal point enters the constellation of Aquarius, but its influence is already being felt. This is perfectly normal: in March, for example, it is still winter but there are days when the sunshine, the birds and the early flowers almost convince us that spring is already there, and indeed it is; its aura, its fragrance and its emanations are already present. And it is the same when a new age is approaching: we perceive a certain number of advance signs of its coming.

Aquarius is an air sign, and this is why, since its influence has begun to make itself felt, science and technology has been largely directed to the conquest of air and space. During the Piscean age the emphasis was on opening up the seaways of the world and developing the

art of navigation, and now, with the advent of Aquarius, we are entering the element air: telecommunications (telephone and television), aircraft, rockets and so on.

Even if we have not yet fully entered the Aquarian Age, so much has already changed! And the thing that is rather disturbing with Aquarius is the influence of its co-rulers, Saturn and Uranus: Saturn who is restrictive, repressive and paralysing, and Uranus who produces shocks, accidents and explosions, all that is sudden and violent. All forms of explosion, both physical (the hydrogen bomb, the atom bomb) and psychological (the liberation movements), are the concern of Uranus, and for this reason the Aquarian Age will lead to important breaks with the past.

Those who have several planets in the sign of Aquarius are particularly well

prepared to pick up the new waves coming from the constellation: they are innovators and inventors. Aquarius is responsible for all the recent psychic and esoteric discoveries and, especially, for the new ideas of community and brotherhood. In this new age, everybody is going to have to take the idea of brotherhood and universality seriously and work to apply it.

The Piscean Age was that of Christianity; the characteristics of the Christian religion, abnegation and sacrifice, are exactly those of Pisces. Before the Piscean Age it was the Age of Aries which saw the development of the religion of Moses and before that, again, the Age of Taurus with the Egyptian and Babylonian religions. With the coming of Aquarius and its polar opposite, Leo, a new era is dawning, that of true knowledge.

You must not think that just because

the Age of Aquarius is upon us, everything will be different and the whole of humanity will be transformed in a flash. What will be different, however, for everybody, is that new possibilities will open up. Superior forces and energies will flow from Aquarius but only those who make the necessary efforts to absorb these energies will be changed by them. Heaven may send us new energies but it will never force us to be wise: Heaven only gives to those who have prepared themselves to be receptive. We are entering the Age of Aquarius, that is true, but if we do nothing to benefit from its influence, the Age of Aquarius will come for others, but not for us.

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

‘So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot...’
Revelation 3 : 16

**Words of the Spirit to the church of
Laodicea *Revelation 3 : 15-21***

**‘I counsel thee to buy of me gold
tried in fire...’ *Revelation 3 : 18-19***

**‘To him that overcometh will I
grant to sit with me in my throne’
*Revelation 3 : 21***

**‘Rest not day and night, saying,
Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God
Almighty...’ *Revelation 4 : 8***

**‘Water (The) that I shall give him
will be a well of water springing up
into everlasting life’ *John 7 : 38***

¹ See *The Philosopher’s Stone – in the Gospels and in Alchemy*, Izvor Coll. n° 241, chap. 13: ‘The Growth of the Divine Seed’.

² Op. cit., chap. 14: ‘The Gold of True Knowledge: the Alchemist and the Gold Prospector’.

[3](#) See *The Splendour of Tiphareth*, Complete Works, vol. 10, chap. 16: ‘Christ and the Solar Religion’ and chap. 20: ‘The Sun, Heart of our Universe’.

[4](#) See *Man’s Subtle Bodies and Centres – the Aura, the Solar Plexus, the Chakras...*, Izvor Coll. n° 219, chap. 3: ‘The Solar Plexus’.

[5](#) See *Sons and Daughters of God*, Izvor Coll. n° 240, chap.12: ‘Out of his belly shall flow living waters’.

Chapter Eight : THE FIRE AND WATER TRIANGLES

The circle of the Zodiac is divided into twelve equal arcs by the twelve signs. The order in which the signs follow each other is based on the four elements, in such a way that each of the elements is represented by three signs which, when linked together, form a triangle.



— · — · — Air
 - - - - - Water

..... Fire
 ————— Earth

Figure 15

Taking the elements in the order in which they are arranged in the Zodiac (fire, earth, air and water), we see that the fire triangle consists of Aries, Leo and Sagittarius; the earth triangle links Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn; the air triangle groups Gemini, Libra and Aquarius, and the water triangle consists of Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces. Today we shall pause to look more particularly at the two triangles of water and fire. Water flows downwards; fire leaps upwards. The triangle of water points

down and represents matter, whereas the triangle of fire points upwards and represents the spirit. ¹

Let's begin by examining the water triangle which includes the signs of Pisces, Cancer and Scorpio, and you will see what a lot of interesting things can be discovered when one relates these three signs to each other.

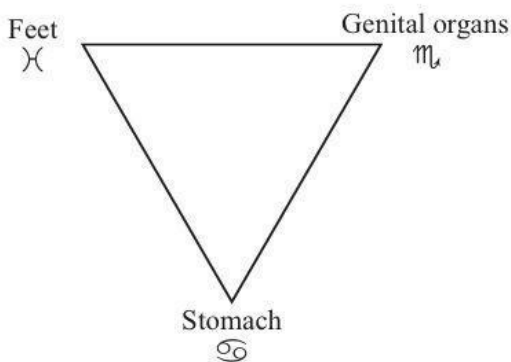


Figure 16

The natural habitat of fishes is water in which they swim about perfectly happily, coming and going with the

greatest of ease. And men, too, are plunged in a boundless ocean, the ocean of life, in which they swim about like fishes. Like them, they are large or small, beautiful or ugly, brightly coloured or drab, adroit or clumsy, and the big ones often devour the little ones!

Fish possess a special organ, the swim bladder, which enables them to move vertically in the water; thanks to this organ they can swim down to the bottom of the sea or up to the surface. Some species, however, have not made proper use of their swim bladder and have gradually sunk lower and lower in the water with the result that they are now unable to swim up to the surface. They remain anchored to the floor of the sea where they grow a thick protective shell and become crawfish, lobsters and crabs. Oh, of course, I know what you're thinking: 'That's nonsense! It's not scientific at all. No zoologist has ever heard of a fish becoming a

crustacean!’ Well, believe it or not, but I have spent a lot of time observing human beings from the point of view of a zoologist (and I can assure you, there’s a lot of scope for observation!), and I have often seen this mutation taking place. Yes, a great many people become so hardened that they end by growing a thick shell around themselves. They began by saying to themselves, ‘There’s no point in trying to swim, it’s too tiring. We’re better off crawling along the ground: let’s stay down on the bottom.’ And they even stopped crawling forwards and began to move backwards. Don’t you believe me? It’s true, you know: I have seen so many who are really proud of their beautiful shells; they strut about, running after others and seeking their company and, naturally, this gives rise to all kinds of comic – or tragic – situations! And in the end they are so heavy that they sink down to the bottom and hide themselves under a rock like a crayfish. I could point out a lot of

these metamorphosed fish to you even here: they are all around you and there are a great many of them.

Pisces-Cancer: this is part of the triangle we are studying. Cancer (the Crab) is a fish that has become a crustacean. Man has allowed himself to become entangled in matter and become hardened and immovable, he has been turned to stone, and he ends up by regressing. And if he continues in this way, if the crayfish continues to regress, it becomes a vicious, venomous scorpion. And here again, I can tell you just how the transformation process takes place for I have studied it scientifically.

Jupiter rules in Pisces (fishes), and Moon rules in Cancer (crab), and Mars rules in Scorpio (scorpion). Jupiterians have a tendency to greed and if they eat too much they get fat and become more and more passive until they end by

refusing to move any more. Also they want to make a lot of money so as to be able to live in comfort. Once they have settled into a big house they take root in it and then they have nothing else to do than to dream up wonderful plans for making more and more money and worry themselves sick about what they are in danger of losing. So there they are, turned into crayfish! And it will not be long before they become scorpions.

In Pisces, which is related to the feet, man walks to his work. In Cancer he becomes lazy and greedy, thereby upsetting his eliminatory system which is related to Scorpio, and waste matter accumulates in his tissues where it putrefies. Then, with his body full of poison and toxic waste, he becomes irritable, bad-tempered and vindictive: he has fallen under the influence of Mars who rules in Scorpio.

Yes, I can see that you are astonished,

but this little story is absolutely true. It is the story of involution, that is, the descent into matter. A man who loses his ability to swim in the ocean of life finds himself snared in matter and, little by little, he becomes paralysed and incapable of action, falls ill and dies. The question is: is this process inevitable? No, it is not. There are ways of remaining active. When we find ourselves in the involutory triangle there are three forces we can call on to come to our rescue: love, hope and faith. Faith is capable of effecting even the most difficult transformations related to Pisces, the sign of religion and mysticism. Hope, the great sustainer, is linked to Cancer, the sign of abundance and fecundity. And love is linked to Scorpio, the sign of the transformation of sexual energy; by 'love' I mean that formidable instinctive force in man which he can learn to sublimate and transform into universal love ready to sacrifice itself for others. By the power

of these three virtues, faith, hope and love, we can put a halt to the process of petrification, of our descent into matter. [2](#)

If someone falls into the water he has to swim. If he doubts and gives way to fear, he will go under and drown. If he has faith he will float because his faith will give him buoyancy and the water will hold him up. And this is equally true in our inner life. We are all fish, and we all possess a swim bladder: when we have faith it fills with air and we become buoyant. Our faith sustains us and enables us to swim in the ocean of life. A strong swimmer need not fear, he will never become a shellfish: as long as he is kept afloat by his faith he will always be a fish. But if he becomes absorbed in material preoccupations and begins to doubt, then he will become a crayfish. Someone who is trapped in matter is already a crab, and the only way for him to react is by hope. And he who is on the way to becoming a

scorpion must free himself through love, the love that gives, radiates and enriches.

Why does the twelfth house, the house of Pisces, impose trials on us? So that, by reason of distress and constraint, our faith may become stronger. Why does Cancer, in the fourth house, oblige us to face up to material problems? So that we shall be forced to sustain and nourish hope. And why does the eighth house, the house of Scorpio, represent death? Because he who is incapable of loving is in danger of death.

And now let us study the fire triangle:

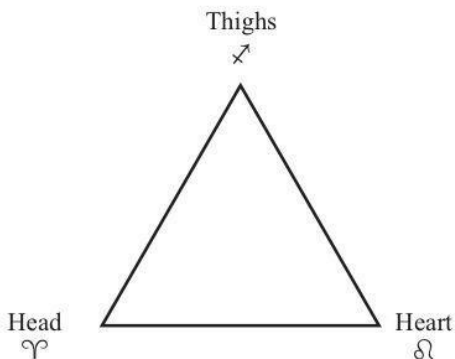


Figure 17

It consists of Aries, Sagittarius and Leo. Aries, who rules the head, represents thought and wisdom; Leo, who rules the heart, represents emotions and love, and Sagittarius, who rules the thighs, represents movement and, consequently, action, the realization on the material plane of thoughts and feelings.

Looking at it from another point of view, Sagittarius can be seen as a symbol of one in whom reason has gained the upper hand over the dark

forces of his instincts. The Centaur, that mythological creature, half horse and half man, expressed the same notion: human beings are composed of two natures, a higher and a lower; they cannot get rid of their lower nature, but they can and must learn to master and control it and put it to work. We can see how the Centaur, or Sagittarius, is portrayed: the horse is moving, galloping forward, and there is a reason for this movement, it is not gratuitous. It means that it is galloping to carry out a well-considered action expressed by the bow, drawn and ready to shoot its arrow. And you know what strength and control are needed to shoot straight and true with a bow and arrow. Sagittarius, therefore, represents the man who puts the movement of his lower nature (the galloping horse) at the service of an ideal (the arrow aimed straight at the target). As for Leo, he represents strength and power, whereas Aries is identical with the lamb, that eternal

symbol of self-sacrifice and love: he is the Christ.

The Prophet Isaiah foretold the day when the lamb and the wolf would dwell in peace together. The wolf is the astrologer's Aries, for it is also ruled by Mars, the governor of this sign, and the lamb, as I have just said, is another representation of the same sign. Isaiah also prophesied that the lion would eat straw like the ox and that the serpent would eat dust (in astrological language the serpent is the equivalent of the scorpion which we have just talked about in the water triangle), and his prophecy speaks of men and of 'a little child' who will be with them. The lion, the lamb and man, therefore, will one day live in peace together. Artists who knew this teaching of Initiatic Science have often been inspired by it, and have painted scenes representing the Golden Age in which one sees a child walking between a lion and a lamb. These

paintings illustrate the fire triangle: the triangle of evolution. The lion, the lamb, the wolf (Aries) and the child, that is to say man (Sagittarius), represent the new teaching, the new world which is on its way.

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Prophet (The) Isaiah foretold the day when the lamb and the wolf would dwell in peace together *Isaiah 65 : 25*

¹ See *The Symbolic Language of Geometrical Figures*, Izvor Coll. n° 218, chap. 3: 'The Triangle'.

² See *The Faith That Moves Mountains*, Izvor Coll. n° 238, chap. 1: 'Faith, Hope and Love'.

Chapter Nine : THE PHILOSOPHERS' STONE: THE SUN, THE MOON AND MERCURY

The old treatises of alchemy taught that in order to obtain the Philosophers' Stone, symbolized by Mercury, the adept had to begin his work at the exact moment when the Sun entered the constellation of Aries and the Moon was in Taurus, for the Sun is exalted in Aries and the Moon in Taurus. Gemini, the next sign in the zodiacal circle, is the home of Mercury. These three signs, Aries (the Sun), Taurus (the Moon) and Gemini (Mercury) follow each other in order to show that it is the union of the Sun ☉ and the Moon ☾ that produces the child, Mercury ☿. The glyph of Mercury is made up of the solar disk and the crescent moon joined by the + which is

the symbol of earth as well as the plus sign in arithmetic. Alchemists also saw in this glyph a representation of the four elements: two masculine and two feminine. The Moon represents water, the Sun fire, the + represents the Earth and Mercury itself represents Air.

The union of the Sun and the Moon, therefore, gives birth to Mercury, the Philosophers' Stone. ¹ But the Philosophers' Stone sought by alchemists was, in reality, a symbol for the transformation of man. When alchemists speak of working with the Sun and the Moon, they are saying that they work with the masculine and feminine principles: will and imagination, and that, through this work, they succeed in transmuting their own matter and in becoming, symbolically, like the Sun (radiant) and the Moon (pure). And it is no coincidence if Aries is ruled by Mars and Taurus by Venus, for it is by working with the Sun and the

Moon in order to sublimate his sexual energy (Venus) and the active, dynamic forces of his will (Mars), that the alchemist obtains the spiritual powers symbolized by Mercury, the magic agent.

In the tradition of the Knights Templar the magic agent was represented by Baphomet, that hideous figure which led many people to think that the Templars worshipped the Devil. Others called the magic agent 'Azot', using the first letter of the alphabet in Latin (A), Greek (Alpha) and Hebrew (Aleph), and the last letters of the same three alphabets: Z (Latin), O (Greek) and T (Hebrew). The word signifies that the magic agent is the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end.

The alchemists went to a great deal of trouble to obtain this magic agent and, often enough, they failed in their quest because they did not understand that their work with the Sun and the Moon

should not be confined to the physical plane but should also be carried out on the spiritual plane, working with the two principles: the will and the imagination. This is what is intended in the expression 'to take the bull by the horns'. To take the bull by the horns means, for a disciple, to begin that interior work which will give him control of his own instincts. Unfortunately, nowadays, people do not take the bull by the horns. On the contrary, they let it loose to rampage and trample everything underfoot. Young people especially: if you only realized what havoc the bull creates! 2

To take the bull by the horns means to subject the imagination to the control of the will. The imagination is always linked to sensuality. Those who have a very powerful imagination tend to be lazy and sensual: the Moon and Venus always go hand in hand. But if the Sun intervenes with his light and orients the

power of the imagination in the right direction, then the Moon becomes extraordinarily useful because it has the faculty of giving concrete form to things. I have already told you about the different ages through which the earth has passed in the course of its evolution: the Age of Saturn, the Age of the Sun, the Age of the Moon and so on; and I explained that the Age of the Sun was a period of expansion whereas the Age of the Moon, on the contrary, was characterized by the process of coagulation and materialization. For the sun and the moon are also symbols of the two alchemical processes, *solve et coagula* (dissolve and coagulate).

In the glyph that stands for Mercury, the Sun is represented by a circle and the Moon by a portion of that circle, as though it were a rib of the Sun, and this is the explanation of that passage in Genesis which describes how God made a woman out of one of Adam's ribs. So

when the Initiates represented Mercury by combining the circle of the Sun and the crescent of the Moon with the + which, as we have seen represents the Earth, their intention was to show that it was this combination, this intelligent fusion of the two principles that produced Mercury. The symbol of Mercury is sufficient evidence of the profound knowledge of the Initiates who composed it, and one of its numerous variants is the Caduceus of Hermes, portrayed as a wand and two interlacing snakes, and which is a symbol used by doctors and pharmacists even today.

Another form of this symbol of Mercury can be seen in the recent scientific discovery of the laser. What exactly is a laser? The simplest type of laser is a small synthetic ruby crystal in the form of a cylinder which is silvered at one end and partly silvered at the other. The crystal is surrounded by a green spiral flash lamp which excites the

chromium atoms in the ruby (a process known as optical stimulation). When the stimulation is sufficiently intense, a narrow beam of extremely powerful light is emitted from the half-silvered end of the crystal.



Figure 18

The beam of light produced in this way is none other than Mercury, born of the combined work of the two principles. But the question now is to find the laser within oneself: then it will

really be something prodigious! [3](#)

From earliest antiquity, Initiates have used all those things which are being discovered today by scientists (radio, telephone and television, nuclear fission, etc.), in their own psychic and spiritual lives. Scientists are simply workers who have to apply in the physical world laws which exist already in the spiritual world.

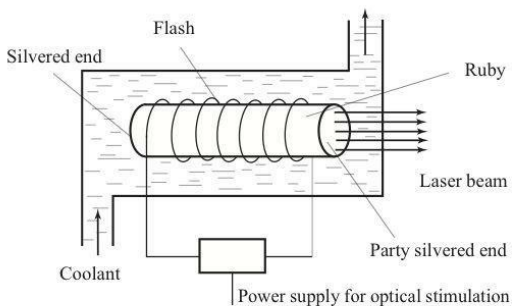


Diagram of a simple ruby laser

Figure 19

Sooner or later everything that exists must be given material existence also. This is why modern-day inventors are

often Initiates, alchemists, magis and cabbalists from the past who have returned to the world in order to materialize all those things which they have known and achieved on the spiritual level. If these phenomena did not already exist on the spiritual plane there would be no way of discovering anything at all on the physical plane. For that which is below is like to that which is above, and this means that all that exists on high, in the spiritual world, must be given concrete expression below, in the world of matter.

By creating the symbol of Mercury, the Initiates wished to teach human beings to exercise their will and their imagination in order to gain the mastery of their sexual energies and use them to obtain magical powers. For the authentic 'strong fortitude of all strength' of which Hermes Trismegistus speaks is love. Only love produces life and there is nothing more important than life, for it is

the source and origin of everything that exists. God has given us these forces of love so that we may learn to sublimate and transmute them into life, into the most intense form of life, and thereby obtain magic powers, omnipotence. The symbol of Mercury ☿ is composed of the Sun ☉, the Moon ☾ and the Earth +, but if you remove the Moon from this symbol you are left with the symbol of Venus ♀, love. All the different elements included in the symbol of Mercury are included also in the functions of the god Hermes whose magic wand, the Caduceus, symbolized the powers he possessed on every level.

In the glyph that stands for Mercury, the Moon, which represents the imagination, resembles a bowl of water and, indeed, the Moon – symbol of the feminine principle – is related to water. Beneath the Moon is the Sun, fire, which heats up the imagination in a particular direction. And below that again is the

Earth, symbol of material realization. He who has grasped the full significance of this glyph and all its implications, can become all-powerful and, given the right conditions, is capable of turning the whole world upside down, because he has understood its essential message: how the will can work on the imagination. Just as a woman has the power to condense life in her womb, the Moon has the power to give concrete form to things, to materialize them, to transform them into earth; in other words, to give them physical reality. [4](#)

A disciple must make up his mind to gain mastery of the bull, that is, he must control the untamed, brutal, violent force of sensuality, so as to benefit from its energies. To gain mastery of the bull does not mean to kill it: if you kill it you will not be able to benefit from its energies. You have to take the bull by the horns, that is you have to take control of the Moon, your imagination, which is

inseparably linked to sensuality except in those who, like all truly creative beings, have already taken the bull by the horns: the scholars, philosophers, artists and Initiates who have learned to orient their imagination in other directions. Those who have never managed to take the bull by the horns let their imagination run wild and prostitute itself. You have to try to give your imagination some specific work to do so that it may continually produce the most beautiful, the most luminous and noble creations. A disciple must not allow his 'wife', his imagination, to wander wherever she likes and sleep with anyone who takes her fancy, for she will give birth to monsters: he must keep her for himself.

And now, from all that I have been saying, retain just this: in order to attain true fulfilment, you must learn to work with the Moon, your imagination, taking care to safeguard its purity (the Moon, in

fact, in its true spiritual significance, represents the imagination in all its purity); with light, the fire of the Sun; with the disinterested love of Venus and, finally, with the justice of the cross, the Earth. Mercury is the symbol of perfected man in whom the two currents circulate in such balance and harmony that he dwells in perfect peace and becomes a radiant source of light, capable of leading others towards good.

When the Moon lacks the stimulus provided by Mars and the Sun she encourages man's tendency to be lazy and to invent all kinds of machines and appliances that make any kind of effort unnecessary. The symbol of Mercury, on the contrary, teaches us that activity and effort are indispensable. There is no harm in machines and gadgets of all kinds on condition that they free man from material tasks and enable him to undertake new, spiritual activities, gigantic labours of will and imagination,

in order to create divine works. Unfortunately, so far, nobody is working towards this goal. Everyone tries to eliminate the Sun and Mars, that is activity and effort, which are essential, and to keep only the Moon and Venus. They don't realize that this is the royal road to degeneracy.

The Moon is open to every kind of influence; she exercises no discrimination. Anyone and anything can manifest itself through the moon; she is like water which takes the form of the container into which it is poured. Water, the Moon, imagination: they are all about the same. If the Sun does not look after the Moon, the imagination, it may well reflect even Hell itself. This is why Initiates keep an eye on the Moon, that is to say, their imagination, their 'wife', so as to prevent her from wandering off in all directions and to ensure that, thanks to the Sun, she may receive an element of light and eternity. When this happens,

yes, the Moon becomes a marvellous, adorable woman, and other, divine, laws intervene to accomplish on the material level those things that are formed in the imagination. This is the meaning of the cross on which the symbol of Mercury is based. The cross is the cube of stone, the expression of the Earth*. For the alchemists the cross, the stone cube, was the virgin earth thanks to which they could begin to build their edifice.

(* See *The Symbolic Language of Geometrical Figures*, Izvor No. 218, Chapter 6: 'The Cross')

The work with the Sun and the Moon, the will and the imagination: this is the work of Initiates and it is valid for eternity, for the will – as an expression of thought – and the imagination are the two fundamental principles in man. This is why all alchemical books are full of these two images: the Sun and the Moon, the King and the Queen. They may take

all kinds of different forms but it is always the same two principles: Sun and Moon, man and woman, and together they give birth to the Royal Child, the Philosophers' Stone, the Elixir of Everlasting Life, the Universal Panacea, the Magic Wand, the Caduceus of Hermes... [5](#)

Man's mission is to realize Heaven on earth, to resemble his Heavenly Father, the Creator. But in order to fulfil his ultimate mission in all its splendour, he has to be familiar with the factors indispensable to success: the two principles, active and passive, emissive and receptive, masculine and feminine, the Sun and the Moon, the will and the imagination, so that, knowing them he may impregnate the Moon with the solar qualities of nobility and light, for it is only then that the Moon will be able to reflect and propagate the qualities of the Sun.

A disciple must not let a day pass without setting his sights on the most lofty, noble schemes, in order to put them into effect on earth. In the first place, therefore, he must use his imagination, then, bringing his heart and will into play, he must give the fruits of his imagination physical reality. He must not be content to dream beautiful dreams in the air or to flatter himself that he has wonderful ideas in his head: that is not enough. He has to give concrete reality to his ideas by his actions on the physical plane: the whole world must be able to see that what he has created on a higher level has come down to earth and taken root in the soil.

Whether it is the spirit acting on the soul or the will on the imagination, whether it is the Sun fertilizing the Moon or man fertilizing woman, the result will always be the creation of a child. And what is this child? When you put a saucepan full of water (the Moon) on the

fire (the Sun), the water is changed into steam and that steam is a tremendous force, it is the 'strong fortitude of all strength', water that has expanded under the influence of heat. So, the child of this work in which the will acts on the imagination, the spirit on the soul, the Sun on the Moon and man on woman... the child born of this work is a force: Mercury, and Mercury is capable of carrying tremendous undertakings through to a successful conclusion. The Sun or the Moon alone cannot do much. Taken separately fire burns and water floods, but together they produce a tremendously powerful force: the Philosophers' Stone which has the power to transform base metals into gold. The Emerald Tablet says of that force, 'The father thereof is the Sun, the mother the Moon. The wind carried it in its womb (in the Moon's womb), the Earth is the nurse thereof'. And the Earth is the cross, the stone cube.

A disciple must think constantly of this work of the will acting on the imagination, and it is something that concerns women just as much as men. For it is on the spiritual plane that a disciple has to fertilize his own wife and produce children, thousands of angelic children streaming out into space to accomplish the tasks he asks of them. You know how all fairy tales end: 'And they lived happily everafter and had many children...' But having a lot of children is not restricted to the physical plane. What is an Initiate? He's the father of a large family, and his children are all around him, pulling at his clothes and rummaging in his pockets, but they love him so much that they never really bother him. When he needs them he calls them to him and sends them off on errands: 'You, go and take a present to so-and-so... And you, go and tweak so-and-so's ears for him', and off they go and do as he asked them. They are his children, his own flesh and blood.

Whereas an ordinary man is lonely and childless: he is miserable because he has to work alone and has no one to help him. Well, all this is unknown territory for some, but others are familiar with it because they have experienced it in their lives. [6](#)

Before incarnating on earth, man has already worked to fashion his physical body, that physical body which is none other than the Caduceus of Hermes, with the currents running down from the left and right hemispheres of the brain and crossing on the level of his organs. A human being is the fruit of the combined work of will and imagination, of spirit and soul, which has been given material form on the physical plane. And since he is the Caduceus of Hermes he has the power to create in the three worlds. For the time being he creates only on the physical plane, but he has to learn to create in the other worlds also.

The Caduceus of Hermes is the 'strong fortitude of all strength', life on its highest level of manifestation. And this means that when a man succeeds in developing the powers of the Caduceus of Hermes lying dormant within him, life begins to circulate and reaches out to all creatures, even to the farthest stars. It is this highest level of life which is the true strength, the true life which never ceases to flow, and which is something very different from vitality: vitality is the 'bull' which has to be taken by the horns. Every human being possesses life, of course, but in most it manifests as vitality, a destructive force. This vitality has to be directed, intensified and spiritualized so as to be transformed into divine life.

This is why I tell you: never stop striving, day and night, to spiritualize your life in order to give it, in order to send it out into the whole universe to vivify and give light to all creatures.

This is the idea contained in the ancient representations of Hermes with wings on his feet.

The Caduceus of Hermes is life at its most sublime. When you radiate this life far and wide it means that you have tremendous strength; if it extends only a few centimetres beyond the limits of your physical body, it shows that you are weak and cannot achieve much. If your radiations extend for miles around you, you can act on other creatures. The more intense your emanations, therefore, and the farther they reach, the greater your powers.

It is essential that you understand the importance of this work. Leave aside all those useless occupations which bring nothing but suffering into your lives, and work on yourselves until that 'strong fortitude of all strength' begins to manifest itself through you.

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

God took a rib from Adam's side... and made Eve *Genesis 2 : 21-22*

1 See *The Philosopher's Stone – in the Gospels and in Alchemy*, Izvor Coll. n° 241, chap. 10: 'The Philosopher's Stone, Fruit of a Mystic Union'.

2 See *Youth: Creators of the Future*, Izvor Coll. n° 233, chap. 1: 'Youth: a World in Gestation'.

3 See *Light is a Living Spirit*, Izvor Coll. n° 212, chap. 9: 'The Spiritual Laser'.

4 See *The Fruits of the Tree of Life – The Cabbalistic Tradition*, Complete Works, vol. 32, chap. 17: 'The Cardinal Feasts'.

5 See *Angels and other Mysteries of The Tree of Life*, Izvor Coll. n° 236, chap. 5: 'The Sephiroth of the Central Pillar'.

6 See *Hope for the World: Spiritual Galvanoplasty*, Izvor Coll. n° 214, chap. 11: 'Replenish the Earth!'.

***Chapter Ten : THE
TWELVE TRIBES OF
ISRAEL AND THE
TWELVE LABOURS OF
HERCULES IN
RELATION TO THE
ZODIAC***

The twelve signs of the Zodiac have inspired innumerable symbolical tales in the religions and mythologies of the world. Amongst the best known we find the story of the twelve sons of Jacob who became the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel, and that of the twelve Labours of Hercules. Of course we need to possess the science of symbols if we want to see the correspondences between these tales and the Zodiac, but once we have that, everything becomes as clear as day.

Let us begin by reading Chapter 49 in the Book of *Genesis*:

‘And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; hearken unto Israel your father.

Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father’s bed; then defiled thou it: he went up to my couch.

Simeon and Levi are brethen; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in

their selfwill they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon.

Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: And he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.

*Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.
I have waited for thy salvation O Lord.*

Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.

Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.

Naphthali is a hind let loose: he

giveth goodly words.


Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:.) Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts and of the womb: The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the outmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

Benjamin shall raven as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.'

Reading this chapter of *Genesis* you will certainly have noticed that Jacob had something very different to say to each of his sons and, on closer examination, his descriptions of each one, with his blessings and prophecies, reveal striking correspondences between his twelve sons and the twelve signs of the Zodiac. It is these correspondences that we shall now study.

Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, is said to possess '*the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power*'. However, he is as '*unstable as water*', and he must


forfeit his pre-eminence as eldest son because he has defiled his father's bed. Perhaps you are thinking that this description of Reuben corresponds to Aries which, according to modern astrologers, is the first sign of the Zodiac and which, like Reuben, is very impulsive. But Aries cannot be compared to water; this comparison shows that the sign which corresponds to Reuben is Aquarius, whose symbol  is in the form of waves. In addition, Aquarius is ruled by Saturn but also and especially, by Uranus, which represents audacity and unconventionality, the need to go against recognized norms. This characteristic could explain the fact that Reuben 'went and lay with his father's concubine'. However, in its higher aspect, Uranus introduces innovations into collective, universal life.


Jacob's second and third sons, *Simeon and Levi*, are mentioned together. Jacob says, '*Unto their*

assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man ... I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel'. This is almost a curse. Simeon and Levi had killed some men on the pretext of avenging the honour of their sister, Dinah. Shechem, prince of the country, had taken Dinah, Jacob's daughter and lain with her, but then he had asked Jacob to give her to him in marriage and Jacob had agreed. In spite of this, Simeon and Levi were bent on exacting retribution for the outrage against their sister and they killed Shechem and his father, Hamor, and all the men of their city and took possession of their flocks and all their wealth. When Jacob learned of their crime he was very angry with them.

These two brothers, so ready to act treacherously, to kill and steal, are the Twins (Gemini **II**), represented in Greek mythology by Castor and Pollux: they too, according to the legend,

delivered their sister Helen who had been taken captive by Theseus. The constellation of Gemini corresponds to the lungs, arms and hands, and is ruled by Mercury, the god who is so quick and ingenious, so ready to act, even to act dishonestly and unscrupulously.

Speaking to his fourth son, *Judah*, Jacob says that he is like a lion cub, and his description of the young man (*thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies... From the prey, my son, thou art gone up*) and the mention of the insignia of royalty (*'sceptre'* and *'lawgiver'*) correspond exactly to the characteristics of Leo . Leo is the sign of authority, sovereignty, breadth of vision and action. *'Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise... Thy father's children shall bow down before thee.'* Judah's sovereignty was to last until the coming of Shiloh whom all nations would obey. Shiloh is one of the names for the Messiah.

The only thing Jacob had to say about his fifth son, *Zebulun*, was that he would *'dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon.'* (Sidon, as it is now called, is a Phoenician port on the coast of what is now Lebanon.) Zebulun corresponds to Cancer  which is a water sign. Cancer is represented as a crab, an animal which lives along the coast. This sign rules the stomach; in other words, he takes his food and extracts from it all he needs to sustain life.

Speaking of *Issachar*, Jacob says that he is *'a strong ass'* lying in a stable. You will probably think that there is no such thing as an ass in the Zodiac ... True, but one must not always take biblical texts literally. The qualities attributed to Issachar are those of the ox, or Taurus: endurance, patience, tenacity and love of work, even hard, painful work. So


Issachar represents Taurus ♉ which is an earth sign and which has an affinity for the flowering of the forces of spring (April 21 to May 21), the fields, pastures and orchards, the fertile land. Jacob expresses all this, saying, *'And he saw that rest was good and the land that it was pleasant.'* Taurus is ruled by Venus, the primitive, instinctive, prolific aspect of Venus.

Speaking of his seventh son, *Dan*, Jacob says that he will judge his people but also that he will be like a serpent on the road. These seem to be almost contradictory characteristics, for a judge is generally considered to be an honest, upright man, so this comparison to a viper is surprising. And yet these contradictory traits of character are to be found in Libra ♎. Libra, with its two pans, is a symbol of balance, good judgment, justice, conciliation; its influence is predominant in magistrates, lawyers and all the legal professions, as

well as in artists: painters, sculptors, musicians and so on. Libra is ruled by Venus, but Saturn is exalted in this sign and if it is badly aspected the balance is upset and tips towards Scorpio, the following sign. It is then that the serpent makes its appearance.

Gad, says Jacob, will be attacked by armed bands but he will fight back and pursue them and it is he who will be victorious in the end. *Gad* represents Scorpio ♏, the eighth astrological house which is under the rulership of Mars, planet of violence and warfare, as well as that of Uranus and Pluto. Scorpio is the most mysterious sign in the Zodiac; it represents the hidden aspects of life: the subconscious, sexual energy, fermentation, putrefaction and death, and all those things that are plotted in secret: revolutions and insurrections, social upheavals, espionage. But for those who work on the spiritual level in order to sublimate

and use their instinctive energies for good, Scorpio becomes the sharp-eyed Eagle who flies up to the Sun. Scorpio is the sign of great magnetic and magical powers and, as you know, one of the four Sacred Beasts is the Eagle, Scorpio raised to the divine level, which represents St. John.


Speaking of *Asher*, his ninth son, Jacob says that he produces excellent bread and supplies delicacies for the king. Asher corresponds to Virgo  who is portrayed as a young girl with a sheaf of wheat. Virgo is the sign of the sixth astrological house, the house of health, hygiene and nutrition.

Naphtali, Jacob's tenth son, is compared to a 'hind let loose' who 'giveth goodly words'. The word 'hind' must not be taken literally, any more than the word 'ass' mentioned in relation to Issachar: the agile hind reminds us of a goat, and Naphtali corresponds to

Capricorn ♄. Saturn, who rules in Capricorn, is orderly, methodical and economical; he leads the spirit of man to the highest regions where he acquires authority and mastery through hard work, perseverance and tenacity. The Sun is in Capricorn from December 21 to January 21, which means that he enters this sign at Christmas and the 'goodly words' he utters are the Christmas greetings expressed by pastors, priests and friends and relations during the festive season, but, above all, they are the words of the Angel announcing

the birth of Jesus to the shepherds: *'Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger... Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will*

toward men.' At this time of year the days are at their shortest and the nights at their longest, but Capricorn brings with him the hope of renewal and springtime.

Jacob speaks to *Joseph* at length, but we shall take only the two main points of the blessing he bestows on this son. The first is the notion of elevation or height. *'Joseph is a fruitful bough... whose branches run over the wall... The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brethren.'* The second idea is that conveyed by the image of the bow and arrow: *'The archers have sorely grieved him... and hated him: But his bow abode in strength'*. Joseph corresponds to the sign of Sagittarius  which represents a man carrying a bow and arrows. Sagittarius is the ninth

astrological house, the house of spiritual elevation symbolized by the centaur, half man and half horse, shooting an arrow from his bow as he gallops. The Centaur represents the efforts we have to make to free our higher nature (man) from our lower nature (the horse), and speed upwards, like the arrow, towards heavenly regions. Sagittarius is the sign of great spiritual struggles of the kind that produces Initiates. That is why his father says that although Joseph had been pursued his bow had remained strong and his hands had been strengthened by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.

Sagittarius is ruled by Jupiter whose qualities of uprightness, nobility and generosity accentuate even more strongly the spiritual character of this sign. You all know the story of Joseph: his brothers, who were very jealous of him because he was their father's favourite and they felt that he was better than they, sold him as a slave. Led captive into

Egypt, Joseph showed such notable qualities that he gained the trust and respect of the Pharaoh, who ended by entrusting him with the government of his country. But before that, he had had all kinds of misadventures. The best known is that which led to his being imprisoned: the wife of Potiphar his first master, fell in love with him and tried to seduce him, but as he would have nothing to do with her, she accused him of attempted rape and her husband threw him into prison. Years later, when Joseph was already a powerful figure in Egypt, not only did he forgive his brothers who had sold him into slavery but he was extremely generous with them. This ability to forgive and to be generous, and the ease with which he succeeds in whatever he undertakes, are characteristic traits of the Jupiterian. Those who are born under the influence of Jupiter, especially if that planet is in their first house, are always first amongst their brothers and sisters and

their parents' favourite. Very often, too, they enjoy considerable advantages on the social level. Sagittarius is, as we have seen, the third sign in the fire triangle formed by Aries, Leo and Sagittarius. Aries corresponds to the head (thought), Leo to the heart (feelings, emotions) and Sagittarius to the thighs, that is to say, to the concrete realization of thoughts and feelings. Sagittarius gets things done: he gives concrete form to the wisdom which is in the head and the love which is in the heart.

Benjamin is presented as a wolf, and in this context the wolf corresponds to Aries ♈. At first sight there seems to be a contradiction between Aries (the Ram) and the wolf, but it is at first sight only. Aries is ruled by Mars and if it is not kept under control, this sign, the first in the fire triangle which we examined earlier on, is an aggressive, violent, destructive sign. But if it is sublimated, the fire of violence becomes the fire of

self-sacrifice, and Aries, instead of being the ravening wolf, becomes the lamb immolated from the beginning of the world, a figure of Christ. In fact, this idea can be seen in Jacob's words: *'In the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.'* Of course, these words can be taken literally: in the morning a warrior destroys his enemies and in the evening he shares out the spoil brought back from battle. But morning and evening represent the beginning and end of a day, and a day can be an entire evolutionary era, like the seven days of Creation. If we understand them in this way, Jacob's words mean that in the course of its evolution, the constellation of Aries will become the constellation of the Lamb, that is, of love and sacrifice, which not only no longer destroys men but gives its own life for them.

You have probably noticed that, since one sign (Gemini) is represented by two


of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, the twelve sons can represent only eleven of the twelve signs of the Zodiac, and this means that we have not found one who corresponds to the sign of Pisces. For Pisces we have to go to the preceding chapter in the Book of *Genesis* (chapter 48, verses 8 to 20), in which we read of how Jacob blessed Joseph's two sons, *Ephraim and Manasseh*.

'And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these? And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them. Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed. And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed*

himself with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him. And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed all my life long unto this day, The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto

Manasseh's head. And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head. And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.'

(* The angel with whom Jacob wrestled had blessed him and changed his name to Israel (Genesis 32: 28))

We can see from this passage that Jacob blessed Joseph's sons just as he blessed his own, later on. *Ephraim and Manasseh* correspond to Pisces . Jacob said, *'Let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth... he*

also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. From this it is obvious that Jacob's blessing emphasized the fecundity which is a characteristic of the sign of Pisces in which Jupiter rules and Venus is exalted. The constellation of Pisces symbolizes the cosmic ocean, matrix of all the created worlds. Creation begins with the constellation of Pisces: life issues from the sea and moves through each of the other signs in turn until it comes back full cycle to Pisces. Everything created follows this path, this reversion to Pisces, the reversion to chaos out of which new worlds will spring once again.

Sagittarius (Joseph) and Pisces (Ephraim and Manasseh) are both ruled by Jupiter, so Joseph's two sons follow the same tutor as their father, but Jupiter does not have exactly the same influence

in the two cases. Sagittarius manifests the ambition, authority and domination of the Jupiterian influence, whereas Pisces manifests the kindness and gentleness which can reach great heights of abnegation, renunciation and sacrifice.

In practically every civilization, the Zodiac has inspired myths and legends reflecting the particular characteristics of each of the signs. Greek mythology has given us the legend of the twelve Labours of Hercules.

You are all familiar with the story of Hercules (Heracles in Greek). He was the son of Zeus and Alcmena, wife of the Theban general Amphitryon, whom Zeus had seduced by visiting her in the shape of her husband. When Hercules was born, Hera, the wife of Zeus who was jealous of his constant infidelities, tried to murder the baby boy by sending two snakes to strangle him in his crib. But it was the baby Hercules who strangled the

snakes! As a young man, Hercules received an excellent education and he had already accomplished a number of exploits by the time he married the Princess Megara, daughter of the King of Thebes, who bore him three children. One day, in a sudden fit of madness, he killed his children and their mother. Overcome with remorse, he went to consult Apollo's Oracle at Delphi to find out how he should expiate his crime. Apollo ordered him to go and put himself at the service of King Eurystheus for twelve years, and it was Eurystheus who purged him of his crime by ordering him to carry out the twelve tasks that we know of as 'the Labours of Hercules'.

One after the other, Hercules:

1. strangled the Lion of Nemea;
2. killed the Hydra of Lerna;
3. captured the Boar of Erymanthus

alive;

4. outran the Arcadian Hind;
5. shot the Stymphalian birds with his arrows;
6. overcame and captured the Cretan Bull that Poseidon had sent to Minos;
7. killed Diomedes, King of Thrace, who fed his mares on human flesh;
8. conquered the Amazons;
9. cleaned out the Augean stables by diverting the two rivers, Alpheus and Peneus, so that they flowed through them;
10. fought and killed the ogre, Geryon, and stole his cattle;
11. found and brought to Eurystheus the Golden Apples of the Hesperides;

12. delivered Theseus from Hades.

Now, let's look at these twelve Labours one by one and see how they match up to the signs of the Zodiac.

1. The Lion of Nemea: this Labour, obviously, corresponds to Leo.

2. The Hydra of Lerna: the Hydra was a sevenheaded dragon whose pestilential breath was poisoning the region of Lerna. Hercules attempted to cut off its heads with a golden sickle, but as fast as he cut them off they grew again. The only way seemed to be to cut them all off at one blow. Finally Hercules' servant, Iolaus, came to his aid: he set fire to the forest and every time Hercules managed to cut off one of the dragon's heads, Iolaus brought him a burning brand with which he seared the wound so that another head could not grow again. The Hydra of Lerna corresponds to Scorpio.

Scorpio is the symbol of sexual energy which continually grows another head, that is renewed strength, every time one of its heads gets chopped off. Only the divine fire can get the better of it. Sexual love cannot be slain: it has to be transformed into divine love. This explains how certain human beings who suffered perpetual torment because of their sexual energies became creatures of sublime sacrifice: they managed to transform that energy. Those who simply struggle mindlessly against it, exhaust themselves in the process and never really conquer it. They become embittered, frustrated and cruel and a prey to all kinds of inner turmoil.

3. The great Boar of Erymanthus: like the wolf in the passage we have just studied (*Benjamin is a ravening wolf*), the Boar represents the brute force of Mars and corresponds to the sign of Aries. In fact there is a tale in Greek mythology which recounts how Mars

metamorphosed into a boar in order to take revenge on Adonis.

4. The brazen-hoofed Hind of Arcadia: you will remember that Jacob spoke of his son Naphtali as a '*hind let loose*'. In this context, also, the hind is the equivalent of the goat and this exploit corresponds to Capricorn.

5. The Stymphalian Birds: the legend says that they were vultures. Hercules killed these birds with his arrows, so this obviously corresponds to Sagittarius who is always portrayed drawing his bow.

6. The Cretan Bull: just as it was obvious that the slaying of the Lion of Nemea corresponded to Leo, so the bull captured by Hercules quite obviously corresponds to Taurus.

7. Diomedes: this exploit corresponds to Gemini. The relationship is less obvious here, but it exists nevertheless.

The legend tells us that Diomedes fed his mares on the flesh of travellers who lost their way in his kingdom. To punish him Hercules took him captive and fed him to his own mares. But what relationship is there between this story and Gemini? First of all the horses: Castor and Pollux are often portrayed on horseback. Also, when we read the account of how Jacob blessed his sons we saw that when it came to Simeon and Levi, who correspond to Gemini (the Twins) Jacob cursed them because they had slain men. Diomedes also slew many men. And now, if we examine the question of the identity of Mercury, we see – as we have already seen in respect to Simeon and Levi – that Mercury is the planet which rules in Gemini and that it goads its natives into action, even to acts of robbery and murder. Also, according to Greek mythology, Mercury was the god of travellers, and Diomedes is said to have given the flesh of lost travellers to his mares. And we could go even

further with this symbolism and remember that Mercury represents the intellect and that the intellect is a faculty which destroys. Yes, indeed! Man uses his intellect to destroy: it analyses, criticizes and dissects and, in the end, it destroys not only all around it but also itself. And isn't this exactly what happened to Diomedes? He fed his mares on the flesh of human beings and, in the end, he himself was devoured by his mares.

8. The Amazons: They were a nation of female warriors who fought on horseback, with bow and arrows. There were no men amongst them and they represent, therefore, an aspect of Virgo.

9. The Augean stables: Augeas was a prince who had thousands of cattle and his stables had never been cleaned. Hercules diverted the two rivers, Alpheus and Peneus, and caused them to flow through the stables to clear out all

the filth. This Labour is related to Aquarius whose spiritual waters flow through the 'stables' of our subconscious to cleanse and purify them.

10. The ogre Geryon: Geryon was an enormous monster with three bodies. He lived on an island and possessed a herd of oxen. This Labour corresponds to the constellation of Cancer. A little while ago we saw that Jacob's fifth son Zebulun was spoken of in a context of sea coasts: in the story of Hercules, the sea is represented by the island; Geryon possessed a herd of oxen, and the Moon, which rules in Cancer, is depicted in certain traditions as a heavenly chariot drawn by oxen. But the most interesting aspect of Geryon is his three bodies. I have already explained that man is composed of the three principles: intellect, heart and will and that the three exist both on the lower level of the personality and on the higher lever of the individuality. In traditional symbolism

the personality is represented by the Moon and the individuality by the Sun. Geryon's three bodies, therefore, correspond to the physical, astral and mental bodies which make up our personality.

11. The golden apples of the Garden of the Hesperides: this Labour is related to Libra in which the Sun dwells from September 21 to October 21. This is the beginning of Autumn, the period during which the last fruits are gathered in. As you know, this sign is ruled by Venus who reigns over gardens, flowers and beauty. On the other hand, the name of the planet Venus in Greek is Hesperos: the morning star.

12. Theseus delivered from Hades: as I told you a little while ago, the constellation of Pisces represents universal chaos, the original tohubohu from which emerged all that exists; it is the world of non-differentiation, of the

unconscious, of darkness: Hades from which Hercules delivered Theseus to bring him back to consciousness and the light.

Apart from these twelve Labours, Hercules accomplished many exploits, but I shall not talk about them today as they have no connection with the signs of the Zodiac.

So now, to recapitulate, let us just take a quick look at this table of correspondences between the signs of the Zodiac, Jacob's twelve sons and the Labours of Hercules.

♈ Aries	Benjamin	the great Boar of Erymanthus
♉ Taurus	Issachar	the Cretan Bull
♊ Gemini	Simeon and Levi	King Diomedes
♋ Cancer	Zabulun	the ogre Geryon
♌ Leo	Judah	the lion of Nemea
♍ Virgo	Asher	the Amazons
♎ Libra	Dan	the golden apples of the Hesperides
♏ Scorpio	Gad	the Hydra of Lerna
♐ Sagittarius	Joseph	the Stymphalian birds
♑ Capricorn	Naphtali	the brazen-hoofed Hind
♒ Aquarius	Reuben	the Augean stables
♓ Pisces	Ephraim and Manasseh	Theseus delivered from Hades

The twelve Labours of Hercules can be seen as a representation of the sun's passage through the different signs of the Zodiac, each sign symbolizing a stage in the gradual transformation of nature in the course of the year.

When the sun enters Aries it is the beginning of spring: the irresistible upsurge of the forces of nature which brings the leaf-buds bursting out of their winter wrapping. This impetus continues through Taurus and Gemini with the

appearance of leaves and flowers. With the coming of Cancer summer begins: the seed is formed, the fruit ripens (Leo) and once it is ripe it is harvested (Virgo). Then comes autumn (Libra, Scorpio and Sagittarius): the late fruits are gathered, the leaves fall from the trees, vegetation dies and rots. And finally it is winter (Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces): the seed is buried deep in the ground where it dies and becomes one with the soil. But from this death new seeds, a new upsurge of life-forces, new flowerings will spring. Each sign, therefore, accomplishes its appointed task.

The work of the sun in the plant world can be interpreted, from the alchemical point of view, as the transformation which the *prima materia* undergoes in the Great Work: the seed is cooked, rots, is born again, etc. But alchemical work does not consist only in the transformation of matter in the Great Work. The veritable alchemy, for a

disciple, consists in causing the seeds buried in himself to grow, exactly as the forces of nature cause plant seeds buried in the soil to grow, and as each sign of the Zodiac has its positive and its negative aspect, he has to struggle like Hercules against the negative aspects and cultivate the positive aspects in himself.

He must fight against the wolf and the wild boar of Mars (savagery and cruelty) and cultivate willingness to make whatever sacrifices are necessary for the seed to germinate.

He must conquer the materiality and sensuality of Taurus and acquire his patience, tenacity and strength.

He must resist the baneful tendencies of Gemini, the intellect which is so ready to cheat and deceive, criticize and calumniate and, at the same time, always be ready to carry out the commands of

love and wisdom.

He must master his emotionalism and the wayward, shadowy activity of his imagination favoured by the influence of the Moon, whilst becoming sensitive to spiritual currents and developing the desire to elaborate and purify his life and all the forces which have been bestowed on him.

He has to conquer the fierce pride and love of ostentation of Leo and, at the same time, cultivate his nobility, magnanimity and rectitude.

He must overcome the narrow-mindedness, the coldness and avarice of Virgo and learn to cultivate her purity, her sense of order and method.

He must overcome the laziness and indecision of Libra and develop his taste for harmony and beauty.

He has to triumph over the jealousy

and sexual passion of Scorpio and be ready to die to everything inferior, as Jesus taught when he said, *'Except ye die ye shall not live'*.

He must fight against the instinct of revolt and the instability of Sagittarius and be able constantly to raise his mind to God; he must develop great power of thought and be ready to defend the citadel of the Initiates and children of God. Sagittarius is the defender; with bow at the ready, he keeps watch from the ramparts to protect the Kingdom of God, the Universal White Brotherhood.

He must conquer the pride, harshness and intransigence of Capricorn in order to reach the greatest spiritual heights through meditation and contemplation.

He must conquer the individualism and the appetite for scandal and revolt of Aquarius and melt into the immense community of universal brotherhood,

into the cosmos.

He must free himself from the mists and the inner prisons of Pisces and learn abnegation, renunciation and self-sacrifice.

A disciple's task, as you see, requires him to work his way through all the signs and face up to the enemies within himself: the wild boars, wolves, lions, bulls, birds, goats, scorpions, etc. When he has accomplished these labours and acquired the twelve virtues, like Hercules he becomes a demigod. Throughout the myths and religions of all peoples, traces of Initiation can be found. The language and the wisdom are identical: only the form varies. Wherever he may be, a man can learn to become a superior being, a hero, a divinity. 1

We must never give up in our effort to become perfect because, even though we

may not succeed, it is our efforts which justify us in the sight of Heaven. Heaven will never blame us for not succeeding: it is the effort that counts and that depends only on ourselves. When the Heavenly powers see that we keep trying they will decide to give us all we ask for, and joy, light, beauty and freedom will pour down on us. These gifts will be specially chosen to suit the character and structure of the person who asks for them; they will be adapted to his affinities and the work he has already accomplished, as well as to his needs in view of his further evolution. Like fishes in the sea, each human being will receive these gifts from the cosmic ocean and draw from them the elements he needs to form his skin, his finery and his intelligence.

It would be possible to explore many more aspects of this subject and study, for example, the correspondences between the twelve signs of the Zodiac

and the twelve precious stones which formed the foundations of the New Jerusalem, ² or the twelve Apostles. But, for today, be content with these few revelations: they already give you immense possibilities for your spiritual work.

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Jacob calls his sons ; his final words to each of them *Genesis 49 : 1-28*

‘Fear not : for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy’ *Luke 2 : 10-14*

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1 See 'You Are Gods', Synopsis Coll., Part I: 'You Are Gods', and *The Philosopher's Stone – in the Gospels and in Alchemy*, Izvor Coll. n° 241, chap. 13: 'The Growth of the Divine Seed'.

2 See *The Book of Revelations: A Commentary*, Izvor Coll. n° 230, chap. 17: 'The Heavenly City'.