

OCCULT SYMBOLS AND PRACTICE

Articles by H. P. Blavatsky

CROSS AND FIRE

1890! ON THE NEW YEAR'S MORROW

"PRECIPITATION"

H. P. BLAVATSKY ON PRECIPITATION

AND OTHER MATTERS

MODERN APOSTLES AND PSEUDO-MESSIAHS

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FRAGMENTS

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FOREWORD

IN “Cross and Fire,” published in the second issue of the *Theosophist*—for November, 1879—H.P.B. traces the closely related significance of these symbols in ancient myth and religious practice, showing that “on the combined powers of the two rests the whole plan of universal laws.” In their meaning are united the secrets of cosmic origins and the key to psycho-moral strivings—the movement and process of both the outer and the inner universe. It becomes evident that the writer of such material was possessed of a true Ariadne’s thread, enabling her to find her way without difficulty through the maze of countless ancient teachings and beliefs. She also shows the survival of some of these beliefs in European customs.

“On the New Year’s Morrow” appeared in the January, 1890, issue of *Lucifer*. In this article H.P.B. made the custom of New Year’s greetings an occasion for giving her readers some idea of the complex network of cyclic influences represented by numbers. Beneath the satirical asides of this discussion is a strong current of affirmation, stressing the need to find balance by living in the Eternal. The birth of the New Year, in antique belief, was a time of moral accounting, and from this idea H.P.B. turns to exposure of the vindictive logic of the Holy Inquisition, showing how false was its claim to “charity”! She concludes by giving the true New Year’s Day, and the reason for its observance “by those who study ancient wisdom.”

A comparatively detailed account of how adept-communications may be “precipitated” is the content of H.P.B.’s article, “Precipitation,” printed in two parts in the *Theosophist* for December, 1883 and January, 1884. She shows how foolish it is for anyone to form an opinion about such communications on the basis of how they appear

or are received. H.P.B. explained as much as she could, hoping that what she said would be a least “a clue as to many apparent mysteries in regard to precipitated letters.”

More by H.P.B. on this question, in the form of a letter, was published by Mr. Judge in the *Path* for March, 1893, under the title, “H. P. Blavatsky on Precipitation and Other Matters.” Here the emphasis is on the folly of expecting the adepts to respond to appeals for merely personal assistance in practical affairs, with further discussion of the hazard to inquirers of forming their opinions of occult teachers by ordinary ways of thinking.

H.P.B. published “Modern Apostles and Pseudo-Messiahs” in *Lucifer* for July, 1890, less than a year before her death. With freedom of thought, she points out, comes the confusion produced by self-announced “Messiahs” and spiritual teachers. She lists some of the misconceptions and dangerous beliefs spread by the eloquence of “lawless prophets,” along with notice of occasional good accomplished. H.P.B. then points to the contrasting influence of Theosophy, which makes possible orderly thinking about such delusions and claims, and protects students from assuming such “giddy pedestals” by directing their energies to the tasks of service to others.

“African Magic,” which appeared in *Lucifer* for November, 1890, is H.P.B.’s report of a personal experience in West Africa, illustrating the unquestionably real powers of those trained in the tradition of sorcery.

The posthumously published “Fragments” provides commentary by H.P.B. on the symbolic content of several ancient teachings—giving light on polytheism, the evolutionary meaning of the doctrine of Avatars, the realities of Initiation, and the multiple significance behind figures representing cycles. She ends with a discussion of the extreme distortions which result from ignorant and shallow interpretations of past symbolism by partisan theologians. This article was published in *Lucifer*, August, 1896.

Theosophist, November 1879

CROSS AND FIRE

PERHAPS the most widespread and universal among the symbols in the old astronomical systems, which have passed down the stream of time to our century, and have left traces everywhere in the Christian religion as elsewhere,—are the Cross and the Fire—the latter, the emblem of the Sun. The ancient Aryans had them both as the symbols of Agni. Whenever the ancient Hindu devotee desired to worship Agni—says E. Burnouf (*Science des Religions*, c. 10)—he arranged two pieces of wood in the form of a cross, and, by a peculiar whirling and friction obtained fire for his sacrifice. As a symbol, it is called *Swastica*, and, as an instrument manufactured out of a sacred tree and in possession of every Brahmin, it is known as *Arani*.

The Scandinavians had the same sign and called it Thor’s Hammer, as bearing a mysterious magneto-electric relation to Thor, the god of thunder, who, like Jupiter armed with his thunderbolts, holds likewise in his hand this ensign of power, over not only mortals but also the mischievous spirits of the elements, over which he presides. In Masonry it appears in the form of the grand master’s mallet; at Allahabad it may be seen on the Fort as the Jaina Cross, or the Talisman of the Jaina Kings; and the gavel of the modern judge is no more than this *crux dissimulata*—as de Rossi, the archaeologist calls it; for the gavel is the sign of power and strength, as the hammer represented the might of Thor, who, in the Norse legends splits a rock with it, and kills Medgar. Dr. Schliemann found it in *terra cotta* disks, on the site, as he believes, of ancient Troy, in the lowest strata of his excavations; which indicated, according to Dr. Lundy, “an Aryancivilization long anterior to the Greek—say from two to three thousand years B c.” Burnouf calls it the oldest form of the cross known, and affirms that

it is found personified in the ancient religion of the Greeks under the figure of Prometheus “the fire-bearer, “crucified on mount Caucasus, while the celestial bird—the *Cyena* of the Vedic hymns,—daily devours his entrails. Boldetti, (*Osservazioni* I., 15, p. 60) gives a copy from the painting in the cemetery of St Sebastian, representing a Christian convert and grave-digger, named Diogenes, who wears on both his legs and right arm the signs of the *Swastica*. The Mexicans and the Peruvians had it, and it is found as the sacred Tau in the oldest tombs of Egypt.

It is, to say the least, a strange coincidence, remarked even by some Christian clergymen, that *Agnus Dei*, the Lamb of God, should have the symbols, identical with the Hindu God Agni. While *Agnus Dei* expiates and takes away the sins of the world, in one religion, the God *Agni*, in the other, likewise expiates sins against the gods, man, the manes, the soul, and repeated sins; as shown in the six prayers accompanied by six oblations. (Cole-brooke—*Essays*, Vol. I, p. 190.)

If, then, we find these two—the Cross and the Fire—so closely associated in the esoteric symbolism of nearly every nation, it is because on the combined powers of the two rests the whole plan of the universal laws. In astronomy, physics, chemistry, in the whole range of natural philosophy, in short, they always come out as the invisible cause and the visible result; and only metaphysics and alchemy—or shall we say *Metachemistry*, since we prefer coining a new word to shocking sceptical ears?—can fully and conclusively solve the mysterious meaning. An instance or two will suffice for those who are willing to think over hints.

The Central Point, or the great central sun of the Kosmos, as the Kabalists call it, is the Deity. It is the point of intersection between the two great conflicting powers—the centripetal and centrifugal forces, which drive the planets into their elliptical orbits, that make them trace a cross in their paths through the Zodiac. These two terrible, though as yet hypothetical and imaginary powers, preserve harmony and keep the Universe in steady, unceasing motion; and the four bent points of the *Swastica* typify the revolution of the Earth upon its axis. Plato calls the Universe a “blessed god” *which was made in a circle and*

decussated in the form of the letter X. So much for astronomy. In Masonry the Royal Arch degree retains the cross as the triple Egyptian Tau. It is the mundane circle with the astronomical cross upon it rapidly revolving; the perfect square of the Pythagorean mathematics in the scale of numbers, as its occult meaning is interpreted by Cornelius Agrippa. Fire is heat,—the central point; the perpendicular ray represents the male element or spirit; and the horizontal one the female element—or matter. Spirit vivifies and fructifies the matter, and everything proceeds from the central point, the focus of Life, and Light, and Heat, represented by the terrestrial fire. So much, again, for physics and chemistry, for the field of analogies is boundless, and Universal Laws are immutable and identical in their outward and inward applications. Without intending to be disrespectful to any one, or to wander far away from truth, we think we may say that there are strong reasons to believe that in their original sense the Cristian Cross—as the cause, and Eternal torment by Hell Fire—as the direct effect of negation of the former—have more to do with these two ancient symbols than our Western theologians are prepared to admit. If Fire is the Deity with some heathens, so in the Bible, God is likewise the Life and the Light of the World; if the Holy Ghost and Fire cleanse and purify the Christian, on the other hand Lucifer is also Light, and called the “Son of the morning star.”

Turn wherever we will, we are sure to find these conjoint relics of ancient worship with almost every nation and people. From the Aryans, the Chaldeans, the Zoroastrians, Peruvians, Mexicans, Scandinavians, Celts, and ancient Greeks and Latins, it has descended in its completeness to the modern Parsi. The Phoenician Cabiri and the Greek Dioscuri are partially revived in every temple, cathedral, and village church; while, as will now be shown, the Christian Bulgarians have even preserved the sun worship in full.

It is more than a thousand years since this people, who, emerging from obscurity, suddenly became famous through the late Russo-Turkish war, were converted to Christianity. And yet they appear none the less pagans than they were before, for this is how they meet Christmas and the New Year’s day. To this time they call this festival *Sourjvaki*, as it falls in with the festival in honour of the ancient Slavonian

god Sourja. In the Slavonian mythology this deity—Sourja or Sourva,—evidently identical with the Aryan *Surya* . . . sun . . . is the god of heat, fertility, and abundance. The celebration of this festival is of an immense antiquity, as, far before the days of Christianity, the Bulgarians worshipped Sourva, and consecrated New Year's day to this god, praying him to bless their fields with fertility, and send them happiness and prosperity. This custom has remained among them in all its primitive heathenism, and though it varies according to localities, yet the rites and ceremonies are essentially the same.

On the eve of New Year's day the Bulgarians do no work and are obliged to fast. Young betrothed maidens are busy preparing a large *platiy* (cake) in which they place roots and young shoots of various forms, to each of which a name is given according to the shape of the root. Thus, one means the "house," another represents the "garden"; others again, the mill, the vineyard, the horse, a cat, a hen, and so on, according to the landed property and worldly possessions of the family. Even articles of value such as jewellery and bags of money are represented in this emblem of the horn of abundance. Besides all these, a large and ancient silver coin is placed inside the cake; it is called *babka* and is tied two ways with a red thread, which forms a cross. This coin is regarded as the symbol of fortune.

After sunset, and other ceremonies, including prayers addressed in the direction of the departing luminary, the whole family assemble about a large round table called *paralya*, on which are placed the above-mentioned cake, dry vegetables, corn, wax taper, and, finally, a large censer containing incense of the best quality to perfume the god. The head of the household, usually the oldest in the family—either the grandfather, or the father himself—taking up the censer with the greatest veneration, in one hand, and the wax taper in the other, begins walking about the premises, incensing the four corners, beginning and ending with the East; and reads various invocations, which close with the Christian "Our Father who art in Heaven," addressed to Sourja. The taper is then laid away to be preserved throughout the whole year, till the next festival. It is thought to have acquired marvellous healing properties, and is lighted only upon

occasions of family sickness, in which case it is expected to cure the patient.

After this ceremony, the old man takes his knife and cuts the cake into as many slices as there are members of the household present. Each person, upon receiving his or her share, makes haste to open and search the piece. The happiest of the lot, for the ensuing year, is he or she who gets the part containing the old coin crossed with the scarlet thread; he is considered the elect of Sourja, and every one envies the fortunate possessor. Then in order of importance come the emblems of the house, the vineyard, and so on; and according to his finding, the finder reads his horoscope for the coming year. Most unlucky he who gets the cat; he turns pale and trembles. Woe to him and misery, for he is surrounded by enemies, and has to prepare for great trials.

At the same time, a large log which represents a flaming altar, is set up in the chimney-place, and fire is applied to it. This log burns in honour of Sourja and is intended as an oracle for the whole house. If it burns the whole night through till morning without the flame dying out, it is a good sign; otherwise, the family prepares to see death that year, and deep lamentations end the festival.

Neither the *momtzee* (young bachelor), nor the *mommee* (the maiden), sleep that night. At midnight begins a series of soothsaying, magic, and various rites, in which the burning log plays the part of the oracle. A young bud thrown into the fire and bursting with a loud snap is a sign of happy and speedy marriage, and *vice versa*. Long after midnight, the young couples leave their respective homes, and begin visiting their acquaintances, from house to house, offering and receiving congratulations, and rendering thanks to the deity. These deputy couples are called the *Souryakari*, and each male carries a large branch ornamented with red ribbons, old coins, and the image of Sourja, and as they wend along sing in chorus. Their chant is as original as it is peculiar and merits translation, though, of course, it must lose in being rendered into a foreign language. The following stanzas are addressed by them to those they visit:

Sourva, Sourva, Lord of the Season,

Happy New Year mayst thou send;
Health and fortune on this household,
Success and blessings till next year.

With good crops and full ears,
With gold and silk, and grapes and fruits;
With barrels full of wine, and stomachs full,
You and your house be blessed by the God . . .
His blessing on you all —Amen! Amen! Amen!

The singing Souryakari, recompensed for their good wishes with a present at every house, go home at early dawn. . . And this is how the symbolical exoteric Cross and Fire worship of old Arya-vart go hand in hand in Christian Bulgaria. . . .

Lucifer, January 1890

1890!
ON THE NEW YEAR'S MORROW

The veil which covers the face of futurity
is woven by the hand of Mercy.

—BULWER LYTTON

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL! This seems easy enough to say, and everyone expects some such greeting. Yet, “Whether the wish, though it may proceed from a sincere heart, is likely to be realized even in the case of the few—is more difficult to decide. According to our theosophical tenets, every man or woman is endowed, more or less, with a magnetic potentiality, which when helped by a sincere, and especially by an intense and indomitable *will*—is the most effective of magic levers placed by Nature in human hands—for woe as for weal. Let us then, Theosophists, use that will to send a sincere greeting and a wish of good luck for the New Year to every living creature under the sun—enemies and relentless traducers included. Let us try and feel especially kindly and forgiving to our foes and persecutors, honest or dishonest, lest some of us should send unconsciously an “evil eye” greeting instead of a blessing. Such an effect is but too easily produced even without the help of the occult combination of the two numbers, the 8 and the 9, of the late departed, and of the newly-born year. But with these two numbers staring us in the face, an evil wish, just now, would be simply disastrous!

“Hullo!” we hear some casual readers exclaiming. “Here’s a *new* superstition of the theosophic cranks: let us hear it. . . .”

You shall, dearly beloved critics, though it is not a *new* but a very *old* superstition. It is one shared, once upon a time, and firmly believed

in, by all the Caesars and World-potentates. These dreaded the number 8, because it postulates the *equality of all men*. Out of eternal *unity* and the mysterious number *seven*, out of Heaven and the seven planets and the sphere of the fixed stars, in the philosophy of arithmetic, was born the *ogdoad*. It was *the first cube of the even numbers*, and hence held sacred.¹ In Eastern philosophy number eight symbolises equality of units, order and symmetry in heaven, transformed into inequality and confusion on earth, by selfishness, the great rebel against Nature's decrees.

"The figure 8 or oo indicates the perpetual and regular motion of the Universe," says Ragon. But if perfect as a cosmic number it is likewise the symbol of the lower *Self*, the animal nature of man. Thus, we augur ill for the *unselfish* portion of humanity from the present combination of the year-numbers. For the central figures 89 in the year 1890, are but a repetition of the two figures in the tail-end of 1889. And *nine* was a digit terribly dreaded by the ancients. With them it was a symbol of great changes, cosmic and social, and of versatility, in general; the sad emblem of the fragility of human things. Figure 9 represents the earth under the influence of an *evil principle*; the Kabalists holding, moreover, that it also symbolises the act of reproduction and generation. That is to say that the year 1890 is preparing to reproduce all the evils of its parent 1889, and to generate plenty of its own. *Three times three* is the great symbol of *corporisation*, or the materialisation of spirit according to Pythagoras—hence of gross matter.² Every material extension, every circular line was represented by number 9, for the ancient philosophers had observed that, which the philosophicules of our age either fail to see, or else attribute to it no importance whatever. Nevertheless, the natural depravity of this digit and number is awful. Being sacred to the spheres it stands as the sign of circumference, since its value in

1 As shown by Ragon, the Mason-Occultist, the gnostic ogdoad had eight stars representing the 8 cabiri of Samothrace, the 8 principles of the Egyptians and Phoenicians, the 8 gods of Xenocrates, the 8 angles of the cubic stone.

2 The reason for this is because according to the Pythagoreans each of the three elements that constitute our bodies is a ternary: water, containing earth and fire; earth containing aqueous and igneous particles; and fire being tempered by aqueous globules and terrestrial corpuscles serving it as food. Hence the name given to matter, the 'non-agous envelope.'

degrees is equal to 9—*i.e.*, to $3 + 6 + 0$. Hence it is also the symbol of the human head—especially of the modern average head, ever ready to be parading as 9 when it is hardly a 3. Moreover, this blessed 9 is possessed of the curious power of reproducing itself in its entirety in every multiplication and whether wanted or not; that is to say, when multiplied by itself or any other number this cheeky and permicious figure will always result in a sum of 9—a vicious trick of material nature, also, which reproduces itself on the slightest provocation. Therefore it becomes comprehensible why the ancients made of 9 the symbol of Matter, and we, the modern Occultists, make of it that of the *materialism* of our age—the fatal *nineteenth* century, now happily on its decline.

If this antediluvian wisdom of the ages fails to penetrate the "circumference" of the cephaloid "spheres" of our modern Scientists and Mathematicians—then we do not know what will do so. The occult future of 1890 is concealed in the exoteric past of 1889 and its preceding patronymical eight years.

Unhappily—or shall we say, happily—man in this dark cycle is denied, as a collective whole, the faculty of foresight. Whether we take into our mystic consideration the average business man, the profligate, the materialist, or the bigot, it is always the same. Compelled to confine his attention to the day's concern, the business man but imitates the provident ant by laying by a provision against the winter of old age; while the elect of fortune and Kar-mic illusions tries his best to emulate the grasshopper in his perpetual buzz and summer-song. The selfish care of the one and the utter recklessness of the other make both disregard and often remain entirely ignorant of any serious duty towards Human kind. As to the latter two, namely the materialist and the bigot, their duty to their neighbours and charity to all begin and end at home. Most men love but those who share their respective ways of thinking, and care nothing for the future of the races or the world; nor will they give a thought, if they can help it, to *post-mortem* life. Owing to their respective psychical temperaments each man expects death will usher him either through golden porches

into a conventional heaven, or through sulphurous caverns into an asbestos hell, or else to the verge of an abyss of non-existence. And lo, how all of them—save the materialist—do fear death to be sure! May not this fear lie at the bottom of the aversion of certain people to Theosophy and Metaphysics? But no man in this century—itsself whirling madly towards its gaping tomb—has the time or desire to give more than a casual thought either to the grim visitor who will not miss one of us, or to Futurity.

They are, perhaps, right as to the latter. The future lies in the present and both include the Past. With a rare occult insight Rohel made quite an *esoterically* true remark, in saying that “the future does not come from before to meet us, but comes streaming up from behind over our heads.” For the Occultist and average Theosophist the Future and the Past are both included in each moment of their lives, hence in the eternal PRESENT. The Past is a torrent madly rushing by, that we face incessantly, without one second of interval; every wave of it, and every drop in it, being an event, whether great or small. Yet, no sooner have we faced it, and whether it brings joy or sorrow, whether it elevates us or knocks us off our feet, than it is carried away and disappears behind us, to be lost sooner or later in the great Sea of Oblivion. It depends on us to make every such event non-existent to ourselves by obliterating it from our memory; or else to create of our past sorrows Promethean Vultures—those “dark-winged birds, the embodied memories of the Past,” which, in Sala’s graphic fancy “wheel and shriek over the Lethean lake.” In the first case, we are real philosophers; in the second—but timid and even cowardly soldiers of the army called mankind, and commanded in the great battle of Life by “King Karma.” Happy those of its warriors by whom Death is regarded as a tender and merciful mother. She rocks her sick children into sweet sleep on her cold, soft bosom but to awake them a moment after, healed of all ailing, happy, and with a tenfold reward for every bitter sigh or tear. *Post-mortem* oblivion of every evil—to the smallest—is the most blissful characteristic of the “paradise” we believe in Yes: oblivion of pain and sorrow and the vivid recollection only, nay once more the living over of every happy moment of our terrestrial drama; and, if no such moment ever occurred

in one’s sad life, then, the glorious realization of every legitimate, well-earned yet unsatisfied desire we ever had, as true as life itself and intensified seventy-seven times sevenfold. . . .

Christians—the Continental especially—celebrate their New Year days with special pomp. That day is the *Devachan* of children and servants, and every one is supposed to be happy, from Kings and Queens down to the porters and kitchen-malkins. The festival is, of course, purely pagan, as with very few exceptions are all our *holy days*. The dear old pagan customs have not died out, not even in Protestant England, though here the New Year is no longer a sacred day—more’s the pity. The presents, which used to be called in old Rome *strenoe* (now, the French *etrennes*), are still mutually exchanged. People greet each other with the words: *Annum novum faustum felicemque tibi*, as of yore; the magistrates, it is true, sacrifice no longer a white swan to Jupiter, nor priests a white steer to Janus. But magistrates, priests and all devour still in commemoration of swan and steer, big fat oxen and turkeys at their Christmas and New Year’s dinners. The gilt dates, the dried and gilt plums and figs have now passed from the hands of the tribunes on their way to the Capitol unto the Christmas trees for children. Yet, if the modern Caligula receives no longer piles of copper coins with the head of Janus on one side of them, it is because his own effigy replaces that of the god on every coin, and that coppers are no longer touched by royal hands. Nor has the custom of presenting one’s Sovereigns with *strenoe* been abolished in England so very long. D’Israeli tells us in his *Curiosities of Literature* of 3,000 gowns found in Queen Bess’s wardrobe after her death, the fruits of her New Year’s tax on her faithful subjects, from Dukes down to dustmen. As the success of any affair on that day was considered a good omen for the whole year in ancient Rome, so the belief exists to this day in many a Christian country, in Russia pre-eminently so. Is it because instead of the New Year, the mistletoe and the holly are now used on Christmas day, that the symbol has become Christian? The cutting of the mistletoe off the sacred oak on New Year’s day is a relic of the old Druids of pagan Britain. Christian

Britain is as pagan in her ways as she ever was.

But there are more reasons than one why England is bound to include the New Year as a sacred day among Christian festivals. The 1st of January being the 8th day after Christmas, is, according to both profane and ecclesiastical histories, the festival of Christ's circumcision, as six days later is the Epiphany. And it is as undeniable and as world-known a fact as any, that long before the advent of the three Zoroastrian Magi, of Christ's circumcision, or his birth either, the 1st of January was the first day of the civil year of the Romans, and celebrated 2,000 years ago as it is now. It is hard to see the reason, since Christendom has helped itself to the Jewish Scriptures, and along with them their curious chronology, why it should have found it unfit to adopt also the Jewish *Rosh-Hashonah* (the head of the year), instead of the pagan New Year. Once that the 1st Chapter of *Genesis* is left headed in every country with the words, "Before Christ, 4004," consistency alone should have suggested the propriety of giving preference to the Talmudic calendar over the pagan Roman. Everything seemed to invite the Church to do so. On the undeniable authority of revelation Rabbinical tradition assures us that it was on the 1st day of the month of *Tisri*, that the Lord God of Israel created the world—just 5,848 years ago. Then there's that other historical fact, namely that our father Adam was likewise created on the first anniversary of that same day of *Tisri*—a year after. All this is very important, pre-eminently suggestive, and underlines most emphatically our proverbial western ingratitude. Moreover, if we are permitted to say so, it is dangerous. For that identical first day of *Tisri* is also called "Yom Haddin," the Day of Judgment. The Jewish *El Shaddai*, the Almighty, is more active than the "Father" of the Christians. The latter will judge us only after the destruction of the Universe, on the Great Day when the Goats and the Sheep will stand, each on their allotted side, awaiting eternal bliss or damnation. But *El Shaddai*, we are informed by the Rabbins, sits in judgment on every anniversary of the world's creation—i.e. on every New Year's Day. Surrounded by His archangels, the God of Mercy has the astro-sidereal minute books opened, and the name of every man, woman and child is read to Him aloud from these Records, wherein the minutest thoughts and deeds

of every human (or is it only Jewish?) being are entered. If the good deeds outnumber the wicked actions, the mortal whose name is read lives through that year. The Lord plagues for him some Christian Pharaoh or two, and hands him over to him to shear. But if the bad deeds outweigh the good—then woe to the culprit; he is forthwith condemned to suffer the penalty of death during that year, and is sent to Sheol.

This would imply that the Jews regard the gift of life as something very precious indeed. Christians are as fond of their lives as Jews, and both are generally scared out of their wits at the approach of Death. Why it should be so has never been made clear. Indeed, this seems but a poor compliment to pay the Creator, as suggesting the idea that none of the Christians care particularly to meet the Unspeakable Glory of the "Father" face to face. Dear, loving children!

A pious Roman Catholic assured us one day that it was not so, and attributed the scare to *reverential awe*. Moreover, he tried to persuade his listeners that the Holy Inquisition burnt her "heretics" out of pure Christian kindness. They were put out of the way of terrestrial mischief in this way, he said, for Mother Church knew well that Father God would take better care of the roasted victims than any mortal authority could, while they were raw and living. This may be a mistaken view of the situation, nevertheless, it was meant in all Christian charity.

We have heard a less charitable version of the real reason for burning heretics and all whom the Church was determined to get rid of; and by comparison this reason colours the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination to eternal bliss or damnation with quite a roseate hue. It is said to be stated in the secret records of the Vatican archives, that burning to the last atom of flesh, after breaking all the bones into small fragments, was done with a predetermined object. It was that of preventing the "enemy of the Church," from taking his part and share even in the last act of the drama of the world—as theologically conceived—namely in "the Resurrection of the Dead," or of all flesh, on the great Judgment Day. As cremation is to this hour opposed by the Church on the same principle—to wit, that a cremated "Sleeper"

will upon awakening at the blast of the angel's trumpet, find it impossible to gather up in time his scattered limbs—the reason given for the *auto da fe* seems reasonable enough and quite likely. The sea will give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell will deliver up their dead (*Vide* “Revelation” xx. 13); but terrestrial fire is not to be credited with a like generosity, nor supposed to share in the asbestosian characteristics of the orthodox hellfire. Once the body is cremated it is as good as annihilated with regard to the last rising of the dead. If the occult reason of the inquisitorial *autos da fe* rests on fact—and personally we do not entertain the slightest doubt of it, considering the authority it was received from—then the Holy Inquisition and Popes would have very little to say against the Protestant doctrine of Predestination. The latter, as warranted in Revelation, allows some chance, at least, to the “Damned” whom hell delivers at the last hour, and who may thus yet be pardoned. While if things took place in nature as the theology of Rome decreed that they should, the poor “Heretics” would find themselves worse off than any of the “damned.” Natural query: which of the two, the God of the Calvinists or the Jesuit of God, he who first invented burning, beats the other in refined and diabolical cruelty? Shall the question remain in 1890, *sub judice*, as it did in 1790?

But the Inquisition, with its stake and rack and diabolical tortures, is happily abolished now, even in Spain. Otherwise these lines would never have been written; nor would our Society have such zealous and good theosophists in the land of Torquemada and the ancient paradise of man-roasting festivals, as it has now. Happy NEW YEAR to them, too, as to all the Brethren scattered all over the wide globe. Only we, theosophists, so kindly nicknamed the “sevening lunatics,” would prefer another day for *our* New Year. Like the apostate Emperor, many of us have still a strong lingering love for the poetical, bright gods of Olympus and would willingly repudiate the double-faced Thessalonian. The first of Januarius was ever more sacred to Janus than Juno; and *janua*, meaning “the gate that openeth the year,” holds as good for any day in January. January 3, for instance, was consecrated to Minerva—[^] *thene* the goddess of wisdom and to *Isis*,

“she who generates life,” the ancient lady patroness of the good city of Lutetia. Since then, mother Isis has fallen a victim to the faith of Rome and civilization and Lutetia along with her. Both were converted in the *Julian* calendar (the heirloom of pagan Julius Caesar used by Christendom till the XHIth century). Isis was baptized Genevieve, became a beatified saint and martyr, and Lutetia was called Paris for a change, preserving the same old patroness but with the addition of a false nose.³Life itself is a gloomy masquerade wherein the ghastly *danse Macabre* is every instant performed; why should not calendars and even religion in such case be allowed to partake in the travesty?

To be brief, it is January the 4th which ought to be selected by the Theosophists—the Esotericists especially—as their New Year. January is under the sign of Capricornus, the mysterious *Makara* of the Hindu mystics—the “Kumaras,” it being stated, having incarnated in mankind under the 10th sign of the Zodiac. For ages the 4th of January has been sacred to Mercury-Budha,⁴ or Thoth-Hermes. Thus everything combines to make of it a festival to be held by those who study ancient Wisdom. Whether called Budh or *Budhi* by its Aryan name, *Mercurios*, the son of *Coelus* and *Hecate* truly, or of the *divine* (white) and infernal (black) magic by its Hellenic, or again Hermes or Thoth its Greco-Egyptian name, the day seems in every way more appropriate for us than January 1, the day of Janus, the double-faced “god of the time”—*servers*. Yet it is well named, and as well chosen to be celebrated by all the political Opportunists the world over.

Poor old Janus! How his two faces must have looked perplexed at the last stroke of midnight on December 31! We think we see these ancient faces. One of them is turned regretfully toward the Past, in the rapidly gathering mists of which the dead body of 1889 is disappearing. The mournful eye of the God follows wistfully the chief events impressed on the departed *Annus*: the crumbling Eiffel tower;

³ This festival remains thus unchanged as that of the lady Patroness of Lutetia = Paris, and to this day Isis is offered religious honours in every Parisian and Latin church.

⁴ The 4th of January being sacred to Mercury, of whom the Greeks made Hermes. the R Catholics have included St. Hermes in their Calendar just in the same way, the 9th of that month having been always celebrated by the pagans as the day of the “conquering sun” the R. Catholics have transformed the noun into a proper name, making of it St. Nicanor (from the Greek nican, to conquer), whom they honour on the 10th of January.

the collapse of the “monotonous”—as Mark Twain’s “tenth mule”—Parnell-Pigot alliteration; the sundry abdications, depositions and suicides of royalty; the *Hegira* of aristocratic Mahomeds, and such like freaks and *fiascos* of civilization. This is the Janus face of the Past. The other, the face of the Future, is enquiringly turned the other way, and stares into the very depths of the womb of Futurity; the hopeless vacancy in the widely open eye bespeaks the ignorance of the God. No; not the two faces, nor even the occasional four heads of Janus and their eight eyes can penetrate the thickness of the veils that enshroud the karmic mysteries with which the New Year is pregnant from the instant of its birth. What shalt thou endow the world with, O fatal Year 1890, with thy figures between a unit and a cipher, or symbolically between living man *erect*, the embodiment of wicked mischief-making, and the universe of matter!⁵ The “influenza” thou hast already in thy pocket, for people see it peeping out. Of people daily killed in the streets of London by tumbling over the electric wires of the new “lighting craze,” we have already a premonition through news from America. Dost thou see, O Janus, perched like “sister Anne” upon the parapet dividing the two years, a wee David slaying the giant Goliath, little Portugal slaying great Britain, or her *prestige*, at any rate, on the horizons of the torrid zones of Africa? Or is it a Hindu Soodra helped by a Buddhist Bonze from the Empire of the Celestials who make thee frown so? Do they not come to convert the two-thirds of the Anglican *divines* to the worship of the azure coloured Krishna and of the Buddha of the elephant-like pendant ears, who sits cross-legged and smiles so blandly on a cabbage-like lotus? For these are the theosophical *ideals*—nay, Theosophy itself, the divine Wisdom—as distorted in the grossly materialistic, all-anthropomorphizing mind of the average British Philistine. What unspeakable new horrors shalt thou, O year 1890, unveil before the eyes of the world? Shall it though ironclad and laughing at every tragedy of life sneer too, when Janus, surnamed on account of the key in his right hand, *Janitor*, the door-keeper to Heaven— a function with which he was entrusted ages before he became St. Peter—uses that

⁵ It is only when the cipher or nought stands by itself and without being preceded by any digit that it becomes the symbol of the infinite Kosmos and—of absolute Deity.

key? It is only when he has unlocked one after the other door of every one of the 365 days (true “Blue Beard’s secret chambers”) which are to become thy future progeny, O mysterious stranger, that the nations will be able to decide whether thou wert a “Happy,” or a *Nefast* Year.

Meanwhile, let every nation, as every reader, fly for inquiry to their respective gods, if they would learn the secrets of Futurity. Thus the American, Nicodemus-like, may go to one of his three living and actually reincarnated Christs, each calling himself Jesus, now flourishing under the star-bespangled Banner of Liberty. The Spiritualist is at liberty to consult his favorite medium, who may raise Saul or evoke the Spirit of Deborah for the benefit and information of his client. The gentleman-sportsman can bend his steps to the mysterious abode of his rival’s jockey, and the average politician consult the secret police, a professional chiromancer, or an astrologer, etc., etc. As regards ourselves we have faith in numbers and only in that face of Janus which is called the Past. For—doth Janus himself know the future?—
or

. . . perchance himself he does not know.

Theosophist, Dec, 1883, Jan. 1884

“PRECIPITATION”

OF all phenomena produced by occult agency in connection with our Society, none have been witnessed by a more extended circle of spectators or more widely known and commented on through recent Theosophical publications than the mysterious production of letters. The phenomenon itself has been so well described in the *Occult World* and elsewhere, that it would be useless to repeat the description here. Our present purpose is more connected with the process than the phenomenon of the mysterious formation of letters. Mr. Sinnett sought for an explanation of the process and elicited the following reply from the revered Mahatma, who corresponds with him:

... Bear in mind these letters are not written but impressed, or precipitated, and then all mistakes corrected. . . . I have to think it over, to photograph every word and sentence carefully in my brain before it can be repeated by precipitation. As the fixing on chemically prepared surfaces of the images formed by the camera requires a previous arrangement within the focus of the object to be represented, for, otherwise—as often found in bad photographs—the legs of the sitter might appear out of all proportion with the head, and so on—some have to first arrange our sentences and impress every letter to appear on paper in our minds before it becomes fit to be read. For the present, it is all I can tell you.

Since the above was written, the Masters have been pleased to permit the veil to be drawn aside a little more, and the *modus operandi* can thus be explained now more fully to the outsider.

Those having even a superficial knowledge of the science of

mesmerism know how the thoughts of the mesmeriser, though silently formulated in his mind are instantly transferred to that of the subject. It is not necessary for the operator, if he is sufficiently powerful, to be present near the subject to produce the above result. Some celebrated practitioners in this Science are known to have been able to put their subjects to sleep even from a distance of several days’ journey. This known fact will serve us as a guide in comprehending the comparatively unknown subject now under discussion. The work of writing the letters in question is carried on by a sort of psychological telegraphy; the Mahatmas very rarely write their letters in the ordinary way. An electromagnetic connection, so to say, exists on the psychological plane between a Mahatma and his chelas, one of whom acts as his amanuensis. When the Master wants a letter to be written in this way, he draws the attention of the chela, whom he selects for the task, by causing an astral bell (heard by so many of our Fellows and others) to be rung near him, just as the despatching telegraph office signals to the receiving office before wiring the message. The thoughts arising in the mind of the Mahatma are then clothed in word, pronounced mentally, and forced along the astral currents he sends towards the pupil to impinge on the brain of the latter. Thence they are borne by the nerve-currents to the palms of his hands and the tips of his fingers, which rest on a piece of magnetically prepared paper. As the thought-waves are thus impressed on the tissue, materials are drawn to it from the ocean of *dkas*, (permeating every atom of the sensuous universe) by an occult process, out of place here to describe, and permanent marks are left. . . .

From this it is abundantly clear that the success of such writing as above described depends chiefly upon these things: (1) The force and the clearness with which the thoughts are propelled and (2) the freedom of the receiving brain from disturbance of every description. The case with the ordinary electric telegraph is exactly the same. If, for some reason or other the battery supplying the electric power falls below the requisite strength on any telegraph line or there is some derangement in the receiving apparatus, the message transmitted becomes either mutilated or otherwise imperfectly legible. The telegram sent to England by Reuter’s agent at Simla on the

classification of the opinions of Local Governments on the Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill, which excited so much discussion, gives us a hint as to how inaccuracies might arise in the process of precipitation. Such inaccuracies, in fact do very often arise as may be gathered from what the Mahatma says in the above extract. "Bear in mind," says He, that "these letters are not written, but *impressed*, or precipitated, and *then all mistakes corrected*." To turn to the sources of error in the precipitation. Remembering the circumstances under which blunders arise in telegrams, we see that if a Mahatma somehow becomes exhausted or allows his thoughts to wander off during the process, or fails to command the requisite intensity in the astral currents along which his thoughts are projected, or the distracted attention of the pupil produces disturbances in his brain and nerve-centres, the success of the process is very much interfered with.

It is to be very much regretted that the illustrations of the above general principles are not permitted to be published. Otherwise, the present writer is confident that facts in his possession alone would have made this paper far more interesting and instructive. Enough, however, has been disclosed above to give the public a clue as to many apparent mysteries in regard to precipitated letters. It ought to satisfy all earnest and sincere inquirers and draw them most strongly to the path of Spiritual progress, which alone can lead to the knowledge of occult phenomena, but it is to be feared that the craving for gross material life is so strong in the western Society of the present day that nothing will come to them amiss so long as it will shade off their eyes from unwelcome truth. They are like Circe's swine.

Who not once their foul deformity perceive,

but would trample down Ulysses for seeking to restore them their lost manhood.

Path, March, 1893

H. P. BLAVATSKY ON PRECIPITATION AND OTHER MATTERS

[The following is the greater part of a letter written by H. P. Blavatsky some years ago at a time when, subsequent to the Psychical Research Society's Report on Theosophical phenomena, not only the public but fellow members of the Society were doubting her, doubting themselves, doubting the Adepts. Its publication now will throw upon her character a light not otherwise obtainable. Written to an intimate and old friend for his information and benefit, it bears all the indicia of being out of the heart from one old friend to another. Those who have faith in her and in the Masters behind her will gain benefit and knowledge from its perusal.]

Now what you advise me to do, I have for the last three or four years attempted most seriously. Dozens of times I have declared that / *shall not* put the Masters any worldly questions or submit before Them family and other private matters, personal for the most part. I must have sent back to the writers dozens and dozens of letters addressed to the Masters, and many a time have I declared I will not ask Them so and so. Well, what was the consequence? People still worried me. "Please, do please, ask the Masters, only ask and tell Them and draw Their attention to" so-and-so. When I refused doing it—would come up and bother, or —, or someone else. Now it so happens that you do not seem to be aware of the occult law—to which even the Masters are subject Themselves—whenever an *intense desire* is concentrated on Their personalities: whenever the appeal comes from a man of even an average good morality, and all the desire is intense and sincere even in matters of trifles (and to Them what is *not* a trifle?): They are disturbed by it, and the desire takes a material form and would haunt Them (the word is ridiculous, but I know of no other) if They did not create an impassable barrier,

an Akasic wall between that desire (or thought, or prayer) and so isolate Themselves. The result of this extreme measure is that They find Themselves isolated at the same time from all those who willingly or unwillingly, consciously or otherwise, are made to come within the circle of that thought or desire. I do not know whether you will understand me; I hope you will. And finding Themselves cut off from *me*, for instance, many were the mistakes made and damages *realized* that could have been averted had They not often found Themselves *outside* the circle of theosophical events. Such is the case ever since . . . , throwing Their names right and left, *poured in torrents* on the public, so to say, Their personalities, powers, and so on, until the world (the outsiders, not only Theosophists) *desecrated* Their names indeed from the North to the South Pole. Has not the Maha Chohan put His foot on that from the first? Has He not forbidden Mahatma K. H. to write to anyone? (Mr. knows well all this.) And have not since then *waves* of supplications, torrents of desires and prayers poured unto Them? This is one of the *chief* reasons *why* Their names and personalities ought to have been kept *secret* and inviolable. They were desecrated in every possible way by believer and unbeliever, by the former when he would *critically* and from *his* worldly standpoint examine Them (the Beings beyond and outside every worldly if not human law!), and when the latter positively slandered, dirtied, dragged Their names in the mud! O powers of heaven! what / have suffered—there are no words to express it. This is my chief, my greatest crime, for having brought Their personalities to public notice unwillingly, reluctantly, and forced into it by and-

Well, now to other things. You and the Theosophists have come to the conclusion that in every case where a message was found couched in words or sentiments *unworthy* of Mahatmas it was produced either by *element a Is* or *my own falsification*. Believing the latter, no honest man or woman ought for one moment to permit *me*, *such a FRAUD*, to remain any longer in the Society. It is not a piece of repentance and a promise that I shall do so no longer that you need, but to *kick me out*—if you really think so. You believe, you say, in the Masters, and at the same time you can credit the idea that *They* should permit or even know

of it and still *use me!* Why, if They are the exalted Beings you rightly suppose Them to be, how could They permit or tolerate for one moment such a deception and fraud? Ah, poor Theosophists—little *you do* know the occult laws I see. And here and others *are* right. Before you volunteer to serve the Masters you should *learn Their philosophy*, for otherwise you shall always sin grievously, though unconsciously and involuntarily, against Them and those who serve Them, *soul and body and spirit*. Do you suppose for one moment that what you write to me now I did not know for years? Do you think that any person even endowed with simple sagacity, let alone occult powers, could ever fail to perceive each time *suspicion* when there was one, especially when it generated in the minds of honest, sincere people, unaccustomed to and incapable of hypocrisy? It is just that which killed me, which tortured and broke my heart inch by inch for years, for I had to bear it *in silence* and had no right to explain things unless permitted by Masters, and *They commanded me to remain silent*. To find myself day after day facing those I loved and respected best between the two horns of the dilemma—either to appear cruel, selfish, unfeeling by refusing to satisfy their hearts' desire, or, by consenting to it, to run the chance (9 out of 10) that they shall immediately feel suspicions lurking in their minds, for the Master's answers and notes ("the red and blue spook-like messages," as — truly calls them) were *sure* in their eyes—again 9 times out of 10—to be of that spook character. Why? Was it *fraud*? *Certainly not*. Was it written by and produced by elemental? NEVER. It was delivered and the *physical* phenomena are produced by elementals used for the purpose, but what have they, those *senseless* beings, to do with the intelligent portions of the smallest and most foolish message? Simply this, as *this morning before the receipt of your letter*, at 6 o'clock, I was permitted and told by Master to make you understand at last—you—and all the sincere, truly devoted Theosophists: *as you sow, so you will reap. ...*

It is ALL YOU, Theosophists, who have dragged down in your minds the ideals of our MASTERS, you who have unconsciously and with the best of intentions and full sincerity of good purpose DESECRATED Them by thinking for one moment and believing that THEY would trouble

Themselves with your business matters, sons to be born, daughters to be married, houses to be built, etc., etc. And yet, all those who have received such communications being nearly *all* sincere (those who were *not* have been dealt with according to other special laws), you had a *right*, knowing of the existence of Beings who you thought could easily help you, to seek help from Them, to address Them, once that a monotheist addresses his *personal* God, desecrating the GREAT UNKNOWN a million of times *above* the Masters—by asking Him (or It) to help him with a good crop, to slay his enemy, and send him a son or daughter; and having such a right in the absolute sense, They could not spurn you off and refuse answering you, if not Themselves, then by ordering a Chela to satisfy the addressers to the best of his or hers [the chela's] ability. How many a time was I—no Mahatma—shocked and startled, burning with shame when shown notes from Chelas exhibiting mistakes in science, grammar, and thoughts expressed in such language that it perverted entirely the meaning originally intended, and having sometimes expressions that in Thibetan, Sanscrit, or any other Asiatic language had quite a different sense. As in one instance I will give.

In answer to Mr. 's letter referring to some apparent contradiction in *His*. The Chela who was made to precipitate Mahatma K. H.'s reply put, "I had to exercise all my *ingenuity* to reconcile the two things." Now the term "ingenuity" used for and meaning candor, fairness, an obsolete word in this sense and never used now, but one meaning this perfectly, as even I find in Webster, was misconstrued by Massey, Hume, and I believe even to mean "cunning," "cleverness," "acuteness" to form a new combination so as to prove there was no contradiction. Hence: the Mahatma was made apparently to confess most unblushingly to ingenuity, to using *craft* to reconcile things like an acute "tricky lawyer," etc., etc. Now had /been commissioned to write or precipitate the letter I would have translated the Master's thought by using the word "ingenuousness," "openness of heart, frankness, fairness, freedom from reserve and dissimulation," as Webster gives it, and opprobrium thrown on Mahatma K.H.'s character would have been avoided. It is not who would have used "*carbolic acid*" instead of "*carbonic acid*,"

etc. It is very rarely that Mahatma K. H. *dictated verbatim*, and when He did there remained the few sublime passages found in Mr. Sinnett's letters from Him. The rest—he would say—write so-and-so, and the Chela wrote often without knowing a word of English, as I am now made to write Hebrew and Greek and Latin, etc. Therefore the only thing I can be reproached with—a reproach I am ever ready to bear tho' I have not *deserved* it, having been simply the obedient and blind tool of our occult laws and regulations—is of having concealed that which the laws and regulations of my pledges did not permit me so far to reveal. I owned myself several times mistaken in policy, and now am punished for it with daily and hourly crucifixion.

Pick up stones, Theosophists; pick them up, brothers and kind sisters, and stone me to death with them for such mistakes.

Two or three times, perhaps more, letters were precipitated *in my presence* by a Chela who could not speak English and who took ideas and expressions out of my head. The phenomena in *truth* and *solemn reality* were greater at those times than ever. Yet they often appeared the most suspicious, and / *had to hold my tongue*, to see suspicion creeping into the minds of those I loved best and respected, unable to justify myself or say one word! What I suffered *Master alone knew*. Think only (a case with Solovioff's at —) I sick in my bed: a letter of his, *an old letter* received in London and torn up by me, *rematerialized* in my own sight, I looking at the thing. Five or six lines in the *Russian language* in Mahatma K.H.'s *handwriting* in blue, the words *taken from my head*, the letter old and crumpled travelling slowly *alone* (even I could not see the astral hand of the Chela performing the operation) across the bedroom, then slipping into and among Solovioff's papers who was writing in the little drawing-room correcting my manuscript, Olcott standing closely by him and having just handled the papers, looking over them with Solovioff, the latter finding it, and like a flash I see in his head *in Russian* the thought "The old impostor (meaning Olcott) must have put it there"!—and such things by hundreds.

Well—this will do. I have told you the truth, the whole truth, and *nothing but the truth*, so far as I am allowed to give it. Many are the

things I have *no* right to explain if I *had to be hung for it*. Now think for one moment. Suppose — receives an order from his Master to precipitate a letter to the — family, only a general idea being given to him about what he has to write. Paper and envelope are *materialized before* him, and he has only to form and shape the ideas into *his* English and precipitate them. What shall the result be? Why *his* English, his ethics and philosophy—his style all round. “A *fraud*, a *transparent FRAUD!*” people would cry out, and if any one happened to *see such a paper before him* or in his possession *after it was formed*, what should be the consequences?

Another instance—I cannot help it, it is so suggestive. A man, *now dead*, implored me for three days to ask Master’s advice on some business matter, for he was going to become a bankrupt and dishonor his family. A *serious* thing. He gave me a letter for Master “to send on.” I went into the back parlor and he went down stairs to wait for the answer.

Now to *send on* a letter two or three processes are used: (1) To put the envelope sealed on my forehead, and then, warning the Master to be ready for a communication, have the contents reflected by my brain carried off to His perception by the *current formed by Him*. This, if the letter is in a language I know; otherwise, if in an unknown tongue, (2) to unseal it, read it *physically* with my eyes, without understanding even the words, *and that which my eyes see* is carried off to Master’s perception and reflected in it in His *own* language, after which, to be sure, no mistake is made. I have to burn the letter with a stone I have (matches and common fire would never do), and the ashes caught by the current become more minute than atoms would be, and are *re-materialized* at any distance where Master was.

Well, I put the letter on the forehead *opened*, for it was in a language of which I know not one word, and when Master had seized its contents I was ordered to burn and send it on. It so happened that I had to go in my bedroom and get the stone there from a drawer it was locked in. That minute I was away, the addresser, impatient and anxious, had silently approached the door, entered the drawing-room,

not seeing me there, and seen his own letter opened on the table. He was *horror-struck*, he told me later, *disgusted*, ready to commit suicide, for he was a bankrupt not only in fortune, but all his *hopes*, his *faith*, his heart’s creed were crushed and gone. I returned, burnt the letter, and an hour after gave him the answer, also in his language. He read it with dull staring eyes, but thinking, as he told me, that if there were no Masters / *was* a Mahatma, did what he was told, and his fortune and honor were saved. Three days later he came to me and frankly told me all—did not conceal his doubts for the sake of *gratitude*, as others did—and was rewarded. By order of the Master I showed him *how* it was done and he understood it. Now had he not told me, and had his business gone wrong, *advice* notwithstanding, would not he have died believing me the *greatest imposter* on earth? So it goes.

It is my *heart’s desire to be rid forever* of any phenomena but my own mental and personal communication with Masters. I shall no more have anything to do whatever with letters or phenomenal occurrences. This I swear on Masters’ Holy Names, and may write a circular letter to that effect.

Please read the present to all, even to ____ FINIS all, and now Theosophists who will come and ask me to tell them so and so *from Masters, may the Karma fall on their heads*. I AM FREE. Master has *just promised me this blessing* !!

H. P. B.

Lucifer, July, 1890

MODERN APOSTLES AND PSEUDO-MESSIAHS

THERE has probably never been a period within our recollection more given to the production of "great missions" and missionaries than the present. The movement began, apparently, about a hundred years ago. Before that, it would have been unsafe to make such claims as are common in the present day. But the revelators of that earlier time were few and far between compared to those who are to be found now, for they are legion. The influence of one or two was powerful; of others, whose beliefs were dangerously akin to a common form of lunacy—next to nothing. All will recognize a wide difference between Anne Lee, whose followers flourish at the present time, and Joanna South-cote, whose hallucination long ago, and in her own day, excited smiles from rational people. The venerable Shaker lady, the "Woman" of Revelation XII, taught some truths amid confused ideas as to their practical working. At least, in a rather loose age, she held up an ideal of pure living which must always appeal to the spiritual nature and aspirations of man.

Then followed a period of moral decadence in the messianic perceptions and works. The polygamy taught and practised by Joseph Smith and Brigham Young has been one of the strangest features of any modern revelation or so-called religion. Zeal and martyrdom were both illustrated in these leaders of the blind—the one without knowledge, and the other worse than useless. It was a prophecy of more lawless prophets, and more disastrous folio wings.

With the spread of the spiritualistic cult, the Messiah craze has vastly increased, and men and women alike have been involved in its whirlpools. Given, a strong desire to reform somehow the religious or social aspect of the world, a personal hatred of certain of its aspects,

and a belief in visions and messages, and the result was sure; the "Messiah" arose with a universal panacea for the ills of mankind. If he (very often she) did not make the claim, it was made for him. Carried away by the magnetic force, the eloquence, the courage, the single idea of the apostle *pro tern*, numbers, for very varied reasons, accepted him or her as the revelator of the hour and of all time.

With burning indignation at the enthrallment of womanhood in marriage, Victoria Woodhull arose to proclaim freedom. The concentrated forces within and around her withstood insult, calumny, and threats. What her exact utterances were, or what she meant herself, it is not easy now to discover. If she indeed preached free love, she only preached woman's damnation. If she merely tore down social veils, and rifled whited sepulchres, she did the human race a service. Man has fallen to so material a level that it is impossible to suppress sexual passion—but its exaltation is manifestly his ruin. Some saw in her teachings a way of liberty dear to their own sympathies and desires, and their weakness and follies have for ever dealt a death-blow to any real or imagined doctrine of free love, upheld no matter by whom. Victoria Woodhull grew silent, and the latest interpretations of the Garden of Eden and the fall of man, with which she has broken the silence, do not approach anywhere near in truth and lucidity to Laurence Oli-phat's inspirational catches at the meaning of some of those ancient allegories in the book of Genesis. Blind as he was to the key of human life in the philosophy of reincarnation, with its impregnable logic, he gave some vivid side-glimpses of truth in his *Scientific Religion*.

Yet Victoria Woodhull should have her due. She was a power in the land, and after her appearance, which stirred up thought in the sluggish, it became more possible to speak and write on the social question, and its vast issues. So much plain-spoken and acted folly created a hearing for a little wisdom.

After this, in the spiritualistic field, many lesser lights stood forth. Some openly advocated sexual freedom, and were surrounded by influences of the most dangerous order. The peace and happiness of many a home have been wrecked by these teachings, never more to return. They wrecked the weak and unwary, who reaped hours of

agony, and whom the world falsely regarded as wicked. The crusade at last against these more open dangers of spiritualism became fierce, but although publicly denounced— an Oneida Creek never could become popular!—the disguised poison creeps about in underhand channels, and is one of the first snares the mediumistic inquirer into Spiritualism has to beware of. “Affinities” were to redeem the world; meanwhile they have become a by-word. There is an unwritten history in Spiritualism which none of its clever advocates will ever record. Some of its latest Messiahs and their claims are ignored, and their names hardly mentioned, but we hear nothing of the hot-house process by which their abnormal condition was produced. Certain of these have been, verily, the victims of their belief—persons whose courage and faith in a more righteous cause would have won them lasting victory. And certain of these are mad vortices in which the inexperienced are at last engulfed. The apotheosis of passion, from the bitter fruit of which man has everlasting need to be redeemed, is the surest sign of moral degradation. Liberty to love according to the impulse of the senses, is the most profound slavery. From the beginning nature has hedged that pathway with disease and death. Wretched as are countless marriages, vile as are the man-made laws which place marriage on the lowest plane, the salvation of free-love is the whisper of the snake anew in the ear of the modern Eve.

No one denies that there are aspects of Spiritualism which have been useful in some ways. With this, however, we have nothing to do. We are pointing now to the way in which it has accentuated a common illusion.

The claim to final appropriation of the prophesied year 1881, the two witnesses, and the woman clothed with the sun, are so varied and diverse that there is safety in numbers. A true understanding of Kabbalistic allegory, and the symbolic galleries and chambers of the Great Pyramid, would at once disperse these ideas, and enlighten these illuminations. To distinguish the white rays of truth from influx from the astral sphere, requires a training which ordinary sensitives, whether avowed spiritualists or not, do not possess. Ignorance emboldens, and the weak will always worship the bold.

Some of these apostles denounce alike Spiritualism and Theosophy; some accept the latter, but weave it anew into a version of their own; and some have apparently arisen, independently of any other cult, through the force of their own or somebody else’s conviction.

No one can doubt the poetical nature of the inspiration of Thomas Lake Harris. He had an intellectual head and a heart for poetry. Had he kept clear of great claims, he would have ranked at least as a man of literary ability, and a reformer with whom other reformers would wish to shake hands. His poem on *Womanhood* must echo in every thoughtful heart. But the assumption of personal privilege and authority over others, “affinity” theories, have stranded him on a barren shore.

There is an avowed re-incarnation of Buddha in the United States, and an avowed re-incarnation of Christ. Both have followers; both have been interviewed and said their best. They and others like unto them have had signs, illuminations, knowledge not common to men, and events pointing in a marked way to this their final destiny. There has even been a whisper here and there of supernatural births. But they lacked the clear-seeing eye which could reduce these facts to their right order, and interpret them aright. Kings and potentates appear, and dreamers of dreams, but there is never a prophet or Daniel in their midst. And the result is sorry to behold, for each seems to be putting the crown upon his own head.

If Theosophy had done nothing else, it would have made a demand on human gratitude in placing the truth and falsehood of these psychic experiences, unfoldments, or delusions as the case might be, plainly before the people, and explaining their *rationale*. It showed a plane of manhood, and proved it unassailably to a number of persons, which transcends any powers or capacities of the inspirational psychic who may imagine himself or herself to be a messenger to the world at large. It placed personal purity on a level which barred out nine-tenths of these claimants from all thought of their presumed inheritance, and showed that such a condition of purity, far transcending any popular idea of such virtue, was the absolute and all-essential basis of spiritual insight and attainment. It swept the ground from under the feet of those poor men and women who had been listening to the so-called messages from the angels, that they were the chosen of heaven, and

were to accomplish world-wide missions. The Joan of Arcs, the Christs, the Buddhas, the Michaels, were fain to see truths they had not dreamed of, and gifts they had never possessed, exercised in silence and with potent force by men whose names were unknown even to history, and recognised only by hidden disciples, or their peers. Something higher was placed before the sight of these eager reformers than fame: it was truth. Something higher than the most purified union between even one man and one woman in the most spiritual of sympathies, was shown; it was the immortal union of the soul of man with God. Wherever Theosophy spreads, there it is impossible for the deluded to mislead, or the deluded to follow. It opens a new path, a forgotten philosophy which has lived through the ages, a knowledge of the psychic nature of man, which reveals alike the true status of the Catholic saint, and the spiritualistic medium the Church condemns. It gathers reformers together, throws light on their way, and teaches them how to work towards a desirable end with most effect, but forbids any to assume a crown or sceptre, and no less delivers from a futile crown of thorns. Mesmerisms and astral influences fall back, and the sky grows clear enough for higher light. It hushes the "Lo here! and lo there!" and declares the Christ, like the kingdom of heaven, to be within. It guards and applies every aspiration and capacity to serve humanity in any man, and shows him how. It overthrows the giddy pedestal, and safely cares for the human being on solid ground. Hence, in this way, and in all other ways, it is the truest deliverer and saviour of our time.

To enumerate the various "Messiahs" and their beliefs and works would fill volumes. It is needless. When claims conflict, all, on the face of it, cannot be true. Some have taught less error than others. It is almost the only distinction. And some have had fine powers imperilled and paralyzed by leadings they did not understand.

Of one thing, rationally-minded people, apart from Theosophists, may be sure. And that is, service for humanity is its all-sufficient reward; and that empty jars are the most resonant of sound. To know a very little of the philosophy of life, of man's power to redeem wrongs and to teach others, to perceive how to thread the tangled maze of existence on this globe, and to accomplish aught of lasting and *spiritual*

benefit, is to annihilate all desire or thought of posing as a heaven-sent saviour of the people. For a very little self-knowledge is a leveller indeed, and more democratic than the most ultra-radical can desire. The best practical reformers of the outside abuses we have known, such as slavery, deprivation of the rights of woman, legal tyrannies, oppressions of the poor, have never dreamed of posing as Messiahs. Honor, worthless as it is, followed them unsought, for a tree is known by its fruits, and to this day "their works do follow them." To the soul spending itself for others those grand words of the poet may be addressed evermore:

Take comfort—thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies;

There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee—thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind!

With the advent of Theosophy, the Messiah-craze surely has had its day, and sees its doom. For if it teaches, or has taught, one thing more plainly than another, it is that the "first shall be last, and the last first." And in the face of genuine spiritual growth, and true illumination, the Theosophist grows in power to most truly befriend and help his fellows, while he becomes the most humble, the most silent, the most guarded of men.

Saviours to their race, in a sense, have lived and will live. Rarely has one been known. Rare has been the occasion when thus to be known has been either expedient or possible. Therefore, fools alone will rush in "where angels fear to tread."

SPECTATOR

Lucifer, November, 1890

AFRICAN MAGIC

BY TAU-TRIADELTA

BEFORE we enter into the subject of the occult art as practised on the West Coast of Africa, it will be well to clear the ground by first considering for a moment what we mean by the much-abused term "Magic."

There are many definitions of this word; and, in bygone ages, it was simply used to designate anything and everything which was "not understood of the vulgar." It will be sufficient for our purpose to define it as the knowledge of certain natural laws which are not merely unknown but absolutely unsuspected by the scientists of Europe and America.

It is a recognized fact that no law of Nature can be—even for a single moment—abrogated. When, therefore, this appears to us to be the case—when, for instance, such a universally known law as that of the attraction of gravitation seems to be annihilated, we must recognize the fact that there may be other laws at present unknown to Western science which have the power of overriding and suspending for the time being the action of the known law.

The knowledge of these hidden laws is what we understand by the term occult science, or magic. *And there is no other magic than this*, and never has been, at any period of the world's history. All the so-called "miracles" of ancient times can be and are reproduced at the present day by magists when occasion requires. An act of magic is a pure scientific feat, and must not be confounded with legerdemain or trickery of any kind.

There are several schools of magism, all proceeding and operating on entirely different lines. The principal of these, and on whose

philosophy all others are founded, are the Hindu, the Thibetan, the Egyptian (including the Arab) and the Obeeyan or Voodoo. The last named is entirely and fundamentally opposed to the other three: it having its root and foundation in necromancy or "black magic," while the others all operate either by means of what is known to experts as "white magic," or in other cases by "psychologizing" the spectator. And, a whole crowd of spectators can be psychologized and made at the will of the operator to see and feel whatever things he chooses, all the time being in full possession of their ordinary faculties. Thus, perhaps a couple of travelling fakirs give their performance in your own compound or in the garden of your bungalow. They erect a small tent and tell you to choose any animal which you wish to see emerge therefrom. Many different animals are named in rotation by the bystanders, and in every case the desired quadruped, be he tiger or terrier dog, comes out of the opening in the canvas and slowly marches off until he disappears round some adjacent corner. Well, this is done simply by "psychologizing," as are all the other great Indian feats, such as "the basket trick," "the mango tree," throwing a rope in the air and climbing up it, pulling it up and disappearing in space, and the thousand and one other similar performances which are "familiar as household words" to almost every Anglo-Indian.

The difference between these schools and that of the Voodoo or Obeeyah is very great, because in them there is a deception or want of reality in the performance. The spectator does not *really* see what he fancies he^s sees: his mind is simply impressed by the operator and the effect is produced. But in African magic, on the contrary, there is no will impression: the observer does really and actually see what is taking place. The force employed by the African necromancers is not psychological action but demonoso-phy.

White magists have frequently dominated and employed inferior spirits to do their bidding, as well as invoked the aid of powerful and beneficent ones to carry out their purposes. But this is an entirely different thing: The spirits which are naturally maleficent become the slaves of the magist, and he controls them and compels them to carry out his beneficent plans. The necromancer, or votary of black magic, is, on the contrary, the slave of the evil spirit to whom he has given

himself up.

While the philosophy of the magist demands a life of the greatest purity and the practice of every virtue, while he must utterly subdue and have in perfect control all his desires and appetites, mental and physical, and must become simply an embodied intellect, absolutely purged from all human weakness and pusillanimity, the necromancer must outrage and degrade human nature in every way conceivable. The very least of the crimes necessary for him (or her) to commit to attain the power sought is actual murder, by which the human victim essential to the sacrifice is provided. The human mind can scarcely realise or even imagine one tithe of the horrors and atrocities actually performed by the Obee-yah women.

Yet, though the price is awful, horrible, unutterable, the power is real. There is no possibility of mistake about that. Every petty king on the West Coast has his "rain-maker." It is the fashion among travellers, and the business of the missionaries, to ridicule and deny the powers of these people. But they do possess and do actually use the power of causing storms of rain, wind, and lightning. When one considers that however ignorant and brutal a savage may be, yet that he has an immense amount of natural cunning, and his very ignorance makes him believe nothing that cannot be proved to him, no "rain-maker" could live for one year unless he gave repeated instances of his powers when required by the king. Failure would simply mean death. And the hypothesis that they only work their conjurations when the weather is on the point of change is only an invention of the missionaries. The native chiefs are, like all savages, able to detect an approaching change of weather many hours before it takes place. And is it at all likely that they would send for the rain-maker and give him sufficient cattle to last him for twelve months, besides wives and other luxuries, if there were the slightest appearance of approaching rain?

I remember well my first experience of these wizards. For weeks and weeks there had been no rain, although it was the rainy season. The mealies were all dying for want of water; the cattle were being slaughtered in all directions; women and children had died by scores, and the fighting men were beginning to do the same, being themselves scarcely more than skeletons. Day after day, the sun glared down on

the parched earth, without one intervening cloud, like a globe of glowing copper, and all Nature languished in that awful furnace. Suddenly the king ordered the great war drum to be beaten, and the warriors all gathered hurriedly. He announced the arrival of two celebrated rain-makers, who would forthwith proceed to relieve the prevailing distress. The elder of the two was a stunted, bow-legged little man, with wool which would have been white had it not been messed up with grease, filth and feathers. The second was rather a fine specimen of the Soosoo race, but with a very sinister expression. A large ring being formed by the squatting negroes, who came—for some unknown reason—all armed to the teeth, the king being in the centre, and the rain-makers in front of him, they commenced their incantations. The zenith and the horizon were eagerly examined from time to time, but not a vestige of a cloud appeared. Presently the elder man rolled on the ground in convulsions, apparently epileptic, and his comrade started to his feet pointing with both hands to the copper-colored sky. All eyes followed his gesture, and looked at the spot to which his hands pointed, but nothing was visible. Motionless as a stone statue he stood with gaze rivetted on the sky. In about the space of a minute a darker shade was observable in the copper tint, in another minute it grew darker and darker, and, in a few more seconds developed into a black cloud, which soon overspread the heavens. In a moment, a vivid flash was seen, and the deluge that fell from that cloud, which had now spread completely overhead, was something to be remembered. For two days and nights that torrent poured down, and seemed as if it would wash everything out of the ground.

After the king had dismissed the rain-makers, and they had deposited the cattle and presents under guard, I entered the hut in which they were lodged, and spent the night with them, discussing the magical art. The hut was about fourteen feet in diameter, strongly built of posts driven firmly into the ground, and having a strong thatched conical roof. I eventually persuaded them to give me one or two examples of their skill. They began singing, or rather crooning, a long invocation, after a few minutes of which the younger man appeared to rise in the air about three feet from the ground and remain there unsuspending, and floating about. There was a brilliant light in the hut

from a large fire in the centre, so that the smallest detail could be distinctly observed. I got up and went to feel the man in the air, and there was no doubt about his levitation. He then floated close to the wall and passed through it to the outside. I made a dash for the doorway, which was on the opposite side of the hut, and looked round for him. I saw a luminous figure which appeared like a man rubbed with phosphorised oil; but I was glad to rapidly take shelter from the torrents of rain. When I re-entered the hut, there was only the old man present. I examined the logs carefully; but there was no aperture whatever. The old man continued his chant, and in another moment his comrade re-appeared floating in the air. He sat down on the ground, and I saw his black skin glistening with rain, and the few rags he wore were as wet as if he had been dipped in a river.

The next feat was performed by the old man, and consisted in several instantaneous disappearances and reappearances. The curious point about this was that the old man also was dripping wet.

Following this was a very interesting exhibition. By the old man's directions we arranged ourselves round the fire at the three points of an imaginary triangle. The men waved their hands over the fire in rhythm with their chant when dozens of tic-polongas, the most deadly serpent in Africa, slowly crawled out from the burning embers, and interlacing themselves together whirled in a mad dance on their tails round the fire, making all the while a continuous hissing. At the word of command they all sprang into the fire and disappeared. The young man then came round to me, and, kneeling down, opened his mouth, out of which the head of a tic-polonga was quickly protruded. He snatched it out, pulling a serpent nearly three feet long out of his throat, and threw it also into the fire. In rapid succession he drew seven serpents from his throat, and consigned them all to the same fiery end.

But I wanted to know what they could do in the way of evocation of spirits. The incantation this time lasted nearly twenty minutes, when, rising slowly from the fire, appeared a human figure, a man of great age, a white man too, but absolutely nude. I put several questions to him, but obtained no reply. I arose and walked round the fire, and particularly noticed a livid scar on his back. I could get no satisfactory

explanation of who he was, but they seemed rather afraid of him, and had evidently—from the remarks they interchanged—expected to see a black man.

After the appearance of this white man, I could not persuade them that night to attempt anything more, although the next night I had no difficulty with them. A most impressive feat, which they on a subsequent occasion performed, was the old custom of the priests of Baal. Commencing a lugubrious chant they slowly began circling around the fire (which said fire always is an essential part of the proceedings), keeping a certain amount of rhythm in both their movements and cadences. Presently, the movement grew faster and faster till they whirled round like dancing dervishes. There were two distinct movements; all the time during which they were gyrating round the circle, they were rapidly spinning on their own axes. With the rapidity of their evolutions their voices were raised higher and higher until the din was terrific. Then, by a simultaneous movement, each began slashing his naked body on arms, chest, and thighs, until they were streaming with blood and covered with deep gashes. Then the old man stopped his erratic course, and sitting down on the ground narrowly watched the younger one with apparent solicitude. The young man continued his frantic exertions until exhausted Nature could bear no more, and he fell panting and helpless on the ground. The old man took both the knives and anointed the blades with some evil smelling grease from a calabash, and then stroked the young man's body all over with the blade which had done the injuries, and finished the operation by rubbing him vigorously with the palms of the hands smeared with the unguent.

In a few minutes time the young man arose, and there was not the slightest trace of wound or scar in his ebony skin. He then performed the same good offices on the old man with the same effect. Within ten minutes afterwards they were both laid on their mats in a sweet and quiet sleep. In this performance there were many invocations, gestures, the circular fire, and other things which satisfied me that some portion, at all events, of the magical processes of West Africa had been handed down from the days when Baal was an actual God, and mighty in the land.

Lucifer, August, 1896

FRAGMENTS

IDOLATRY

THE outward form of idolatry is but a veil, concealing the one Truth like the veil of the Saitic Goddess. Only that truth, being for the few, escapes the majority. To the pious profane, the veil recovers a celestial locality thickly peopled with divine beings, dwarfs and giants, good and wicked powers, all of whom are no better than human caricatures. Yet, while for the great majority the space behind the veil is really impenetrable—if it would but confess the real state of its mind—those, endowed with the “third eye” (the eye of Shiva), discern in the Cimmerian darkness and chaos a light in whose intense radiance all shape born of human conception disappears, leaving the all-informing divine PRESENCE, to be felt—not seen; *sensed*[^]—*never* expressed.

A charming allegory translated from an old Sanskrit manuscript illustrates this idea admirably:

Toward the close of the Pralaya (the intermediate period between two “creations” or evolutions of our phenomenal universe), the great It, the One that rests in infinity and ever *is*, dropped its reflection, which expanded in limitless Space, and felt a desire to make itself cognizable by the creatures evolved from its shadow. The reflection assumed the shape of a Maharaja (great King). Divising means for mankind to learn of his existence, the Maharaja built out of the qualities inherent in him a palace, in which he concealed himself, satisfied that people should perceive the outward form of his dwelling. But when they looked up to the place where stood the palace, whose one corner stretched into the right, and the other into the left infinitude—the little men *saw nothing*; the palace was mistaken by them for empty space, and being so vast remained invisible to their eyes. Then the Maharaja resorted to another expedient. He determined to manifest himself to the little creatures whom he pitied—*not as a whole but only in*

his parts. He destroyed the palace built by him from his manifesting qualities, brick by brick, and began throwing the bricks down upon the earth one after the other. Each brick was transformed into an idol, the red ones becoming Gods and the grey ones Goddesses; into these the Devatas and Devatis—the qualities and the attributes of the Unseen—entered and animated them.

This allegory shows polytheism in its true light and that it rests on the One Unity, as does all the rest. Between the *Dii majores* and the *Dii minores* there is in reality no difference. The former are the direct, the latter the broken or refracted, rays of one and the same Luminary. What are Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, but the triple Ray that emanates directly from the Light of the World? The three Gods with their Goddesses are the three dual representations of Purusha the Spirit, and Prakriti—matter; the six are synthesized by Svayambhuva the self-existent, unmani-fested Deity. They are only the symbols personifying the Unseen Presence in every phenomenon of nature.

AVATARAS

“The seven [regions]¹ of Bhumi, hang by golden threads [beams or rays] from the Spiritual central Sun [or ‘God’]. Higher than all, a watcher for each [region]. The Suras come down this [beam]. They cross the six and reach the Seventh [our earth]. They are our mother earth’s [Bhumi] supporters [or guardians]. The eighth watches over the [seven] watchers.”

Suras are in the Vedas deities, or beings, connected with the Sun; in their occult meaning they are the seven chief watchers or guardians of our planetary system. They are positively identical with the “Seven Spirits of the Stars.” The Suras are connected in practical Occultism with the Seven Yogic powers. One of these, Laghima (n) or “the faculty of assuming levity,” is illustrated in a Purana as rising and descending along a sunbeam to the solar orb with its mysteries; *e.g.*, Khatvanga, in *Vishnu Purana* (Book IV). “It must be equally easy to the Adept to travel a ray downwards,” remarks Fitzedward Hall (p. 311). And why not, if the action is understood in its right and correct sense?

Eight great Gods are often reckoned, as there are eight points of

¹ In every ancient cosmography the universe and the earth are div/ded into seven parts or regions.

the compass, four cardinal and four intermediate points over which preside also inferior Lokapalas or the “doubles” of the greater Gods. Yet, in many instances where the number eight is given it is only a kind of exoteric shell. Every globe, however, is divided into seven regions, as $7 \times 7 = 49$ is the mystic number *par excellence*.

To make it clearer: in each of the seven Root Races, and in every one of the seven regions into which the Occult Doctrine divides our globe, there appears from the dawn of Humanity the “Watcher” assigned to it in the eternity of the *JEon*. He comes first in his own “form,” then each time as an Avatara.

INITIATIONS

In a secret work upon the Mysteries and the rites of Initiation, in which very rough but correct prints are given of the sacramental postures, and of the trials to which the postulant was subjected, the following details are found :

(1) The neophyte—representing the Sun, as “*Sahasrakirana*” “he of the thousand rays”—is shown kneeling before the “Hierophant.” The latter is in the act of cutting off *seven lakhs* of the neophyte’s long hair,² and in the following—(2)—illustration, the postulant’s bright crown of golden beams is thrown off, and replaced by a wreath of sharp ligneous spines, symbolizing the loss.³ This was enacted in India. In trans-Himalayan regions it was the same.

In order to become a “Perfect One,” the Sakridagamin (“he who will receive new birth,” ///,) had, among other trials, to descend into Patala, the “nether world,” after which process only he could hope to become an “Anagamin”—“one who will be reborn no more.” The

² See Judges xvi, again, where Samson, the symbolical personification of the Sun, the Jewish Hercules, speaks of his seven locks which, when cut off, will deprive him of his (physical) strength, i.e., kill the material man, leaving only the spiritual. But the Bible fails to explain, or rather, conceals purposely, the esoteric truth, that the seven locks symbolize the septenary physical or terrestrial man, thus cut off and separated from the spiritual. To this day the High Lamas cut of during public consecrations a lock of the hair of the candidates for the religious life, repeating a formula to the effect that the six others will follow, when the “*upasaka*” is READY. The lock of hair or tonsure of the Roman Catholic priests is a relic of the same mystery-idea.

³ No need of explaining that Sanjna—pure spiritual conscience—is the inner perception of the neophyte (or chela) and Initiate; the scorching of it by the too ardent beams of the Sun being symbolical of the terrestrial passions. Hence the seven locks are symbolical of the seven cardinal sins, and as to the seven cardinal virtues—to be gained by the Sakridagamin (the candidate “for new birth”), they could be attained by him only through severe trial and suffering.

full Initiate had the option of either entering this second Path by appearing at will in the world of men under a human form, or he could choose to first rest in the world of Gods (the Devachan of the Initiates), and then only be reborn on this our earth. Thus, the next stage shows the postulant preparing for this journey.

(3) Every kind of temptation—we have no right to enumerate these or speak of them—was being placed on his way. If he came out victorious over these, then the further Initiation was proceeded with; if he fell—it was delayed, often entirely lost for him. These rites lasted seven days.

ON CYCLES AND MODERN FALLACIES

The Hermetic axiom has been made good by astronomy and geology. Science has become convinced now that the milliards of the heavenly hosts—suns, stars, planets, the systems in and beyond the Milky Way—have all had a common origin, our earth included. Nevertheless that a regular evolution, incessant and daily, is still going on. That “cosmic life-times have begun at different epochs and proceed at different rates of change. Some began so far back in eternity or have proceeded at so rapid a rate, that their careers are brought to a conclusion in the passing age. Some are even now awakening into existence; and it is probable that worlds are beginning and ending continually. Hence cosmic existence, like the kingdoms of organic life, presents a simultaneous panorama of a completed cycle of being. A taxonomic arrangement of the various grades of animal existence presents a succession of forms which we find repeated in the embryonic history of a single individual, and again in the succession of geological types; so the taxonomy of the heavens is both a cosmic embryology and a cosmic palaeontology.” {*WorldLife*, p. 539.)

So much for cycles again in modern orthodox science. It was the knowledge of all these truths—scientifically demonstrated and made public now, but in those days of antiquity occult and known to Initiates alone—that led to the formation of various cycles into a regular system. The grand Manvantaric system was divided into other great cycles; and these in their turn into smaller cycles, regular wheels of time, in Eternity. Yet no one outside of the sacred precincts ever had the key

to the correct reading and interpretation of cyclic notation, and therefore even the ancient classics disagreed on many points. Thus, Orpheus is said to have ascribed to the “Great” Cycle 120,000 years’ duration, and Cas-sandrus 136,000, according to Censorinus (*De Natal Die*, Chron. and Astron. Fragments). Analogy is the law, and is the surest guide in occult sciences, as it ought to be in the natural philosophy made public. It is perhaps mere vanity that prevents modern science from accepting the enormous periods of time insisted upon by the ancients, as elapsed since the first civilizations. The miserable little fragment torn out from the Book of the Universal History of Mankind, now called so proudly “*Our History*,” forces historians to dwarf every period in order to wedge it in within the narrow limits primarily constructed by theology. Hence the most liberal among them hesitate to accept the figures given by ancient historians. Bunsen, the eminent Egyptologist, rejects the period of 48,863 years before Alexander, to which Diogenes Laertius carries back the records of the priests, but he is evidently more embarrassed with the ten thousand of astronomical observations, and remarks that “if they were actual observations, they *must have* extended over 10,000 years” (p. 14. “We learn, however,” he adds, “from one of their own old chronological works . . . that the genuine Egyptian traditions concerning the mythological period, treated of *myriads* of years.” *Egypte*, i. p. 15.)

We must notice and try to explain some of these great and smaller cycles and their symbols. Let us begin with the cycle of Mahayuga, personified by Shesha—the great serpent called “the couch of Vishnu,” because that God is Time and Duration personified in the most philosophical and often poetical way.

It is said that Vishnu appears on it at the beginning of every Manvantara as “the Lord of Creation.” Shesha is the great Serpent-Cycle, represented as swallowing its own tail—thence the emblem of Time within Eternity. Time, says Locke (*On the Human Understanding*)—Time is “duration set forth by measures,” and Shesha sets forth evolution by symbolizing its periodical stages. On him Vishnu sleeps during the intervals of rest (*pralayas*) between “creations”; the blue God—blue because he is space and the depth of infinity—awakens only when Shesha bends his thousand heads,

preparing to again bear up the Universe which is supported on them. The *Vishnu Purana* describes him thus: “Below the seven Patalas is the form of Vishnu, proceeding from the quality of darkness, which is Shesha, the excellences of which neither Daityas nor Danavas can fully enumerate. This being is called Ananta [the infinite] by the spirits of Siddha (Yoga Wisdom, sons of Dharma, or true religion), and is worshipped by sages and by gods. He has a thousand heads, which are embellished with the pure and visible mystic sign [Syastika]; and the thousand jewels in his crests (*phana*) give light to all the regions . . . In one hand he holds a plough⁴ and in the other a pestle . . . From his mouths, at the end of the Kalpa, proceeds the venomous fire that, impersonated as Rudra [Shiva, the ‘destroyer’] . . . devours the three worlds.” (ii. 211.)

Thence Shesha is the cycle of the great Manvantara, and also the spirit of vitality as of destruction, since Vishnu, as the preserving or conservative force, and Shiva as the destroying potency, are both aspects of Brahma. Shesha is said to have taught the sage Garga—one of the oldest astronomers in India, whom, nevertheless, Bentley places only 548 B c.—the secret sciences, the mysteries of the heavenly bodies, of astrology, astronomy and various omens. Shesha is so great and mighty, that it is more than likely he will some day, in far off future ages, render the same service to our modern astronomers. Nothing like “Time” and cyclic changes to cure sceptics of their blindness.

But Occult truths have to contend with a far more blind foe than science can ever be to them, namely, the Christian theologians and bigots. These claim unblushingly the number of years lived by their Patriarchs some four thousand years ago, and pretend to prove that they have interpreted “the symbolic predictions of scripture” and have “traced the historic fulfilment of two of the most important of them”—handling Biblical chronology as reverently as though it had never been a rehash of Chaldaean records and cyclic figures, to hide the true meaning under exoteric fables! They speak of “that history that unrolls

⁴ An emblem referring to the “ploughing” and sowing the renewed earth (in its new Round) with fresh seeds of life.

before our eyes a record extending over six thousand years” from the moment of creation; and maintain that there are “very few of the prophetic periods whose fulfilment cannot be traced in some parts of the scrolls.” (*The Approaching End of the Age.*)

Moreover they have two methods and two chronologies to show those events verified—the Roman Catholic and the Protestant. The first relies on the calculations of Kepler and Dr. Sepp; the latter on Clinton, who gives the year of the Nativity as A.M. 4138; the former holds to the old calculation of 4320 by lunar, and 4004 by solar years.