

neighbors to see us four Europeans - for that was the time of the two Coulombs - bathing along with a half dozen dark-skinned Hindus, and splashing about and laughing together, exactly as though we did not believe we belonged to a superior race. I taught my "chum" to swim, or rather to flounder about after a fashion, and also dear Damodar, who was up to a certain point one of the greatest cowards I ever saw in the water.

He would shiver and tremble if the water was half-knee high, and you may believe that neither H. P. B. nor I spared him our sarcasms. I remember well how all that changed.

"Fie!" said I. "A pretty adept you will make when you dare not even wet your knee."

He said nothing then, but the next day when we went bathing *he plunged in and swam across the stream*: having taken my taunt as meant, and decided that he should swim or die.

That's the way for people to grow into adepts. TRY, is the first, last, and eternal law of self-evolution. Fail fifty, five hundred times, if you must, but try on and try ever, and you will succeed at the end. "I cannot" never built a man or a planet.

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Reproduced from "Old Diary Leaves", Henry S. Olcott, Second Series, TPH, Adyar, 476 pp., see pp. 396-397.

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President Donald Trump, right, shakes hands with Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, during a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in Osaka, Japan, June 28, 2019.

Read and practice [A Prayer for Our Planetary Community](#).

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mystics passing through a discipline as rigorous as that of the Hindu devotee. Their efforts never tended so much to develop the successful practice of thaumaturgy, necromancy or sorcery - such as they are now accused of - as to evolve the higher faculties of the inner man, the Spiritual Ego. The school held that a number of spiritual beings, denizens of spheres quite independent of the earth and of the human cycle, were mediators between the "Gods" and men, and even between man and the Supreme Soul. To put it in plainer language, the soul of man became, owing to the help of the Planetary Spirits, "recipient of the soul of the world" as Emerson puts it. Apollonius of Tyana asserted his possession of such a power in these words (quoted by Professor Wilder in his *New Platonism*):

"I can see the present and the future in a clear mirror. The sage [Adept] need not wait for the vapours of the earth and the corruption of the air to foresee plagues and fevers; he must know them later than God, but earlier than the people. The *theoi* or gods see the future; common men, the present; sages, that which is about to take place. My peculiar abstemious mode of living produces such an acuteness of the senses, or creates some other faculty, so that the greatest and most remarkable things may be performed."¹

Professor A. Wilder's comment thereupon is remarkable:

"This is what may be termed *spiritual photography*. The soul is the camera in which facts and events, "future, past, and present, are alike fixed; and the mind becomes conscious of them. Beyond our everyday world of limits, all is as one day or state - the past and future comprised in the present. Probably this is the 'great day', the 'last day', the 'day of the Lord', of the Bible writers - the day into which everyone passes by death or *ecstasis*. Then the soul is freed from the constraint of the body, and its nobler part is united to higher nature and becomes partaker in the wisdom and foreknowledge of the higher beings."²

How far the system practised by the Neo-Platonists was identical with that of the old and the modern Vedantins may be inferred from what Dr. A. Wilder says of the Alexandrian Theosophists.

"The anterior idea of the New Platonists was that of a single Supreme Essence... All the old philosophies contained the doctrine that *θεοί, theoi*, gods or disposers, angels, demons, and other spiritual agencies, emanated from the Supreme Being. Ammonius accepted the doctrine of the Books of Hermes, that from the Divine All proceeded the Divine Wisdom or Amun; that from Wisdom proceeded the Demiurge or Creator; and from the Creator, the subordinate spiritual beings; the world and its people being the last. The first is contained in the second, the first and second in the third, and so on through the entire series."³

This is a perfect echo of the belief of the Vedantins, and it proceeds directly from the secret teachings of the East. The same author says:

¹ *New Platonism and Alchemy*, p. 15.

² *Loc. cit.*

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 9, 10.

“Akin to this is the doctrine of the Jewish Kabala, which was taught by the Pharsi or Pharisees, who probably borrowed it, as their sectarian designation would seem to indicate, from the Magians of Persia. It is substantially embodied in the following synopsis.”

“The Divine Being is the All, the Source of all existence, the Infinite; and He cannot be known. The Universe reveals Him, and subsists by Him. At the beginning, His effulgence went forth everywhere.⁴ Eventually He retired within Himself, and so formed around Him a vacant space. Into this He transmitted His first Emanation, a Ray, containing in it the generative and conceptive power, and hence the name IE, or Jah. This, in its turn, produced the *tikkun*, the *pattern* or idea of form; and in this emanation, which also contained the male and female, or generative and conceptive potencies, were the three primitive forces of Light, Spirit and Life. This Tikkun is united to the Ray, or first emanation, and pervaded by it: and by that union is also in perpetual communication with the infinite source. It is the pattern, the primitive man, the Adam-Kadmon, the *macrocosm* of Pythagoras and other philosophers. From it proceeded the *Sephiroth*. ... From the ten Sephiroth in turn emanated the four worlds, each proceeding out of the one immediately above it, and the lower one enveloping its superior. These worlds become less pure as they descend in the scale, the lowest of all being the material world.”⁵

This veiled enunciation of the Secret Teaching will be clear to our readers by this time. These worlds are:

“...*Aziluth* is peopled by the purest emanations [the First, almost spiritual, Race of the human beings that were to inhabit the Fourth]; the second, *Beriah*, by a lower order, the servants of the former [the second Race]; the third, *Yetzirah*, by the cherubim and seraphim, the Elohim and B’ni Elohim [‘Sons of Gods’ or Elohim, our Third Race]. The fourth world, *Asiah*, is inhabited by the Klippoth, of whom Belial is chief [the Atlantean Sorcerers].”⁶

These worlds are all the earthly duplicates of their heavenly prototypes, the mortal and temporary reflections and shadows of the more durable, if not eternal, races dwelling in other, to us, invisible worlds. The souls of the men of our Fifth Race derive their elements from these four worlds - Root-Races - that preceded ours: namely, our intellect, Manas, the fifth principle, our passions and mental and corporeal appetites. A conflict having arisen, called “war in heaven”, among our prototypical worlds, war came to pass, aeons later, between the Atlanteans⁷ of *Asiah*, and those of the third Root-Race, the Bney ha-Elohim or the “Sons of God”⁸, and then evil and wickedness were intensified. Mankind (in the last sub-race of the third Root-Race) having

“...sinned in their first parent [a physiological allegory, truly!], from whose soul every human soul is an emanation”,

⁴ This Divine Effulgence and Essence is the light of the Logos; only the Vedantin would not use the pronoun “He”, but would say “It”. [H.P.B.]

⁵ *Loc. cit.*, note, p. 10.

⁶ *Loc. cit.*, note.

⁷ See [Esoteric Buddhism](#), by A.P. Sinnett, Fifth Edition, 1885. [Reprinted by Wizards Bookshelf, in 1973 & 1981 with index.]

⁸ See [Isis Unveiled, Vol. I](#), pp. 589-595. The “Sons of God” and their war with the giants and magicians.

says the *Zohar*, men were “exiled” into more material bodies to

“...expiate the sin and become proficient in goodness”.

To accomplish the cycle of necessity, rather, explains the doctrine; to progress on their task of evolution, from which task none of us can be freed, neither by death nor suicide, for each of us have to pass through the “Valley of Thorns” before he emerges into the plains of divine light and rest. And thus men will continue to be born in new bodies

“...till they become sufficiently pure to enter a higher form of existence.”

This means only that Mankind, from the First down to the last, or Seventh Race, is composed of one and the same company of actors, who have descended from higher spheres to perform their artistic tour on this our planet, Earth. Starting as pure spirits on our downward journey around the world (verily!) with the knowledge of truth - now feebly echoed in the Occult Doctrines - inherent in us, cyclic law brings us down to the reversed apex of matter, which is lost down here on earth and the bottom of which we have already struck; and then, the same law of spiritual gravity will make us slowly ascend to still higher, still purer spheres than those we started from.

Foresight, prophecy, oracular powers! Illusive fancies of man’s dwarfed perceptions, which see actual images in reflections and shadows, and mistake past actualities for prophetic images of a future that has no room in Eternity. Our macrocosm and its smallest microcosm, man, are both repeating the same play of universal and individual events at each station, as on every stage on which Karma leads them to enact their respective dramas of life. False prophets could have no existence had there been no true prophets. And so there were, and many of both classes, and in all ages. Only, none of these ever saw anything but that which had already come to pass, and had been before prototypically enacted in higher spheres - if the event foretold related to national or public weal or woe - or in some preceding life, if it concerned only an individual, for every such event is stamped as an indelible record of the Past and Future, which are only, after all, the ever Present in Eternity. The “worlds” and the purifications spoken of in the *Zohar* and other Kabalistic books, relate to our globe and races no more and no less than they relate to other globes and other races that have preceded our own in the great cycle. It was such fundamental truths as these that were performed in allegorical plays and images during the Mysteries, the last Act of which, the Epilogue for the Mystae, was the *anastasis* or “continued existence”, as also the “Soul transformation”.

Hence, the author of *New Platonism and Alchemy* shows us that all such Eclectic doctrines were strongly reflected in the Epistles of Paul, and were

“...inculcated more or less among the churches. Hence such passages as these; ‘Ye were dead in errors and sins; ye walked according to the aeon of this world, according to the *archon* that has the domination of the air.’ ‘We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the dominations, against potencies, against the lords of darkness, and against the mischievousness of spirits in the empyrean regions.’ [*Eph.* vi, 12.] But Paul was evidently hostile to the effort to blend his gospel with the gnostic ideas of the Hebrew-Egyptian school, as seems to have been attempted at Ephesus; and accordingly wrote to Timothy, his favorite disciple, ‘Keep safe the precious charge intrusted to thee; and reject the new doctrines and the antagonistic

principles of the gnosis falsely so-called, of which some have made profession and gone astray from the faith'.⁹

But as the Gnosis is the Science pertaining to our Higher Self, as blind faith is a matter of temperament and emotionalism, and as Paul's doctrine was still newer and his interpretations far more thickly veiled, to keep the inner truths hidden far away from the Gnostic, preference has been given to the former by every earnest seeker after truth.

Besides this, the great Teachers who professed the so-called "false Gnosis" were very numerous in the days of the Apostles, and were as great as any converted Rabbi could be. If Porphyry, the Jew Malek, went against Theurgy on account of old traditional recollections, there were other teachers who practised it. Plotinus, Iamblichus, Proclus, were all thaumaturgists, and the latter.

"...elaborated the entire theosophy and theurgy of his predecessors into a complete system."¹⁰

As to Ammonius,

"Countenanced by Clement and Athenagoras in the church, and by learned men of the Synagogue, the Academy and the Grove, he fulfilled his labour by teaching a common doctrine for all."¹¹

Thus it is not Judaism and Christianity that remodeled the ancient Pagan Wisdom, but rather the latter that put its heathen curb, quietly and insensibly, on the new faith; and this, moreover, was still further influenced by the Eclectic Theosophical system, the direct emanation of the Wisdom-Religion. All that is grand and noble in Christian theology comes from Neo-Platonism. It is too well-known now to need much repetition that Ammonius Saccas, the God-taught (*theodidaktos*) and the lover of the truth (*philalethes*), in establishing his school, made a direct attempt to benefit the world by teaching those portions of the Secret Science that were permitted by its direct guardians to be revealed in those days.¹² The modern movement of our own Theosophical Society was begun on the same principles; for the Neo-Platonic school of Ammonius aimed, as we do, at the reconciliation of all sects and peoples, under the once common faith of the Golden Age, trying to induce the nations to lay aside their contentions - in religious matters at any rate - by proving to them that their various beliefs are all the more or less legitimate children of one common parent, the Wisdom-Religion.

Nor was the Eclectic Theosophical system - as some writers inspired by Rome would make the world believe - developed only during the third century of our era; but it belongs to a much earlier age, as has been shown by Diogenes Laertius. He trace it to the beginning of the dynasty of the Ptolemies; to the great seer and prophet, the Egyptian Priest Pot-Amun, of the temple of the God of that name - for Amun is the God of Wisdom. Unto that day the

⁹ [I Tim, 6, 20-21] *New Platonism and Alchemy*, p. 10, note.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹² No orthodox Christian has ever equaled, far less surpassed, in the practice of true Christ-like virtues and ethics, or in the beauty of his moral nature, Ammonius, the Alexandrian pervert from Christianity (he was born from Christian parents).

communication between the Adepts of Upper India and Bactria and the Philosophers of the West had never ceased.

“Under Philadelphus ... the Hellenic teachers became rivals of the College of Rabbis of Babylon. The Buddhistic, Vedantic and Magian systems were expounded along with the philosophies of Greece. ...Aristobulus, the Jew, declared that the ethics of Aristotle were derived from the Law of Moses [!]; and Philo, after him, attempted to interpret the Pentateuch in accordance with the doctrines of Pythagoras and the Academy. In Josephus it is said that, in the book of the *Genesis*, Moses wrote philosophically - that is, in the figurative style; and the Essenes of Carmel were reproduced in the Therapeutae of Egypt, who, in turn, were declared by Eusebius to be identical with the Christians, though they actually existed long before the Christian Era. Indeed, in its turn, Christianity also was taught at Alexandria, and underwent an analogous metamorphosis. Pantaeus, Athenagoras and Clement were thoroughly instructed in the Platonic philosophy, and comprehended its essential unity with the oriental systems.”¹³

Ammonius, though the son of Christian parents, was a *lover* of the truth, a true Philaletheian foremost of all. He set his heart upon the work of reconciling the different systems into a harmonious whole, for he had already perceived the tendency of Christianity to raise itself on the hecatomb which it had constructed out of all other creeds and faiths. What says history?

The ecclesiastical historian, Mosheim, declares that

“ ‘Ammonius, conceiving that not only the philosophers of Greece, but also all those of the different barbarous nations, were perfectly in unison with each other with regard to every essential point, made it his business so to temper and expound the tenets of all these various sects, as to make it appear they had all of them originated from one and the same source, and all tended to one and the same end.’ Again, Mosheim says that Ammonius taught that ‘the religion of the multitude went hand in hand with philosophy, and with her had shared the fate of being by degrees corrupted and obscured with mere human conceits, superstition and lies; that it ought, therefore, to be brought back to its original purity by purging it of this dross and expounding it upon philosophical principles; and that the whole which Christ had in view was to reinstate and restore to its primitive integrity the Wisdom of the ancients. ...’¹⁴

Now what was that “Wisdom of the Ancients” that the Founder of Christianity “had in view”? The system taught by Ammonius in his Eclectic Theosophical School was made of the crumbs permitted to be gathered from the antediluvian lore; those Neo-Platonic teachings are described in the *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia* as follows:

“He [Ammonius] adopted the doctrines which were received in Egypt concerning the Universe and the Deity, considered as constituting one great whole, concerning the eternity of the world, the nature of souls, the empire of Providence [Karma] and the government of the world by demons [*daimons* or spirits, archangels]. He also established a system of moral discipline which allowed the people in general to live according to the laws of their country and the dictates of nature; but required the wise to exalt their minds by contemplation, and to

¹³ Op. cit., pp. 3, 4.

¹⁴ [*Eccles. Hist. Cent. II, Pt. II, ch. i, § 8, 9.*]

mortify the body¹⁵, so that they might be capable of enjoying the presence and assistance of the demons [including their own *daimon* or Seventh Principle], and ascending after death to the presence of the Supreme [Soul] Parent. In order to reconcile the popular religions, and particularly the Christian, with this new system, he made the whole history of the heathen gods an allegory, maintaining that they were only celestial ministers¹⁶ entitled to an inferior kind of worship; and he acknowledged that Jesus Christ was an excellent man and the friend of God, but alleged that it was not his design entirely to abolish the worship of demons¹⁷, and that his only intention was to purify the ancient religion.”¹⁸

No more could be declared except for those Philaletheians who were initiated, “persons duly instructed and disciplined” to whom Ammonius communicated his more important doctrines,

“...imposing on them the obligations of secrecy, as was done before him by Zoroaster and Pythagoras, and in the Mysteries [where an oath was required from the neophytes or catechumens not to divulge what they had learned]. ...The great Pythagoras divided his teachings into exoteric and esoteric.”¹⁹

Has not Jesus done the same, since He declared to His disciples that to them it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, whereas to the multitudes it was not given, and therefore he spoke in parables which had a twofold meaning?

Dr. A. Wilder proceeds:

“Thus Ammonius found his work ready to his hand. His deep spiritual intuition, his extensive learning, his familiarity with the Christian fathers, Pantaenus, Clement and Athenagoras, and with the most erudite philosophers of the time, all fitted him for the labour which he performed so thoroughly. ...The results of his ministration are perceptible at the present day in every country of the Christian world; every prominent system of doctrine now bearing the marks of his plastic hand. Every ancient philosophy has had its votaries among the moderns; and even Judaism, oldest of them all, has taken upon itself changes which were suggested by the ‘God-taught’ Alexandrian.”²⁰

The Neo-Platonic School of Alexandria founded by Ammonius - the prototype proposed for the Theosophical Society - taught Theurgy and Magic, as much as they were taught in the days of Pythagoras, and by others far earlier than his period. For Proclus says that the

¹⁵ “Mortification” is here meant in the moral, not the physical sense; to restrain every lust and passion, and live on the simplest diet possible.

¹⁶ This is the Neo-Platonic teaching adopted as a doctrine in the Roman Catholic Church, with its worship of the Seven Spirits.

¹⁷ The Church has made of it the worship of devils. “Daimon” is Spirit, and relates to our divine Spirit, the seventh Principle and to the Dhyani-Chohans. Jesus prohibited going to the temple or church “as Pharisees do” but commanded that man should retire for prayer (communion with his God) into a private closet. Is it Jesus who would have countenanced, in the face of the starving millions, the building of the most gorgeous churches?

¹⁸ *New Platonism*, p. 5.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

²⁰ *Loc. cit.*

doctrines of Orpheus, who was an Indian and came from India, were the origin of the systems afterwards promulgated.

“What Orpheus delivered in hidden allegories, Pythagoras learned when he was initiated into the Orphic mysteries; and Plato next received a perfect knowledge of them from Orphic and Pythagorean writings.”²¹

The Philaletheians had their division into neophytes (*chelas*) and Initiates, or Masters; and the eclectic system was characterised by three distinct features, which are purely Vedantic; a Supreme Essence, One and Universal; the eternity and indivisibility of the human spirit; and Theurgy, which is Mantricism. So also, as we have seen, they had their secret or Esoteric teachings like any other mystic school. Nor were they allowed to reveal anything of their secret tenets, any more than were the Initiates of the Mysteries. Only the penalties incurred by the revealers of the secrets of the latter were far more terrible, and this prohibition has survived to this day, not only in India, but even among the Jewish Kabalists in Asia.²²

One of the reasons for such secrecy may be the undoubtedly serious difficulties and hardships of chelaship, and the dangers attending Initiation. The modern candidate has, like his predecessor of old, to either conquer or die; when, which is still worse, he does not lose his reason. There is no danger to him who is true and sincere, and, especially, unselfish. For he is thus prepared beforehand to meet any temptation.

“He, who fully recognised the power of his immortal spirit, and never doubted for one moment its omnipotent protection, had naught to fear. But woe to the candidate in whom the slightest physical fear - sickly child of matter - made him lose sight and faith in his own invulnerability. He who was not wholly confident of his moral fitness to accept the burden of these tremendous secrets was doomed.”²³

²¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

²² The *Talmud* [*Mishnah 'Hagiga*, 14 b.] gives the story of the four Tannaim, who are made, in allegorical terms, to enter into *the garden of delights*; i.e., to be initiated into the occult and final science.

“According to the teaching of our holy masters the names of the four who entered the garden of delight, are: Ben Asai, Ben Zoma, Acher, and Rabbi A'qibah. ...

“Ben Asai looked and - his sight.

“Ben Zoma looked and - lost his reason.

“Acher made depredations in the plantation [mixed up the whole and failed]. But A'qibah, who had entered in peace, came out of it in peace, for the saint, whose name be blessed, has said, ‘This old man is worthy of serving us with glory’.”

“The learned commentators of the *Talmud*, the Rabbis of the synagogue, explain that the *garden of delight*, in which those four personages are made to enter, is but that mysterious science, the most terrible of sciences *for weak intellects, which it leads directly to insanity*”, says A. Franck, in his *La Kabbale*. It is not the pure at heart and he who studies but with a view to perfecting himself and so more easily acquiring the promised immortality, who need have any fear; but rather he who makes of the science of sciences a sinful pretext for worldly motives, who should tremble. *The latter will never withstand the kabalistic evocations of the supreme initiation.* - *Isis Unveiled*, II, 119.

²³ [*Isis Unveiled*, II, 119.](#)

There were no such dangers in Neo-Platonic Initiations. The selfish and unworthy failed in their object, and in the failure was the punishment. The chief aim was “reunion of the part with the *all*”. This All was One, with numberless names. Whether called *Diu*, the “bright Lord of Heaven” by the sryan; *Iao* by the Chaldaean and Kabalist; *Iabe* by the Samaritan; *Tiu* or *Tuisto* by the Northman; *Duw* by the Briton; *Zeus* by the Thracian or *Jupiter* by the Roman - it was *the* Being, the *Facit*, One and Supreme²⁴, the unborn and the inexhaustible source of every emanation, the fountain of life and light eternal, a Ray of which every one of us carries in him on this earth. The knowledge of this Mystery had reached the Neo-Platonists from India through Pythagoras, and still later through Apollonius of Tyana and the rules and methods for producing ecstasy had come from the same lore of the divine Vidya, the Gnosis. For sryavarta, the bright focus into which had been poured in the beginning of time the flames of Divine Wisdom, had become the centre from which radiated the “tongues of fire” into every portion of the globe. What was Samadhi but that

“Sublime ecstasy, in which state things divine and the mysteries of Nature are revealed to us”,

of which Porphyry speaks?

“The efflux from the Divine Being was imparted to the human spirit in unreserved abundance, accomplishing for the soul a union with the divine, and enabling it while in the body to be partaker of the life which is not in the body”,

he explains elsewhere. [*New Platonism*, p. 13.]

Thus under the title of Magic was taught every Science, physical and metaphysical, natural or deemed supernatural by those who are ignorant of the omnipresence and universality of Nature.

“Divine Magic makes of man a God; human magic creates a new fiend.”

We wrote in *Isis Unveiled* [I, 18]:

“In the oldest documents now in our possession - the *Vedas* and the older *Laws of Manu* - we find many magical rites practiced and permitted by the Brahmans.²⁵ Tibet, Japan and China, teach in the present age that which was taught by the oldest Chaldaeans. The clergy of these respective countries prove moreover what they teach, namely: that the practice of moral and physical purity, and of certain austerities, develops the vital soul-power of self-illumination. Affording to man the control over his own immortal spirit, it gives him truly magical powers over the elementary spirits inferior to himself. In the West we find magic of as high an antiquity as in the East. The Druids of Great Britain practiced it in the silent crypts of their deep caves; and Pliny devotes many a chapter to the ‘wisdom’²⁶ of the leaders of the Celts. The Semothees - the Druids of the Gauls - expounded the physical as well as the spiritual sciences. They taught the secrets of the universe, the harmonious progress of the heavenly bodies, the formation of the earth, and above all - the immortality of the soul.²⁷ Into their

²⁴ See *New Platonism*, p. 9.

²⁵ See the Code published by Sir William Jones, chap. vi, xi.

²⁶ Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, xxx, 1; xxix, 12, etc.

²⁷ Pomponius Mela [*De situ orbis*] ascribes to them the knowledge of the highest sciences.

sacred groves - natural academies built by the hand of the Invisible Architect - the initiates assembled at the still hour of midnight to learn about what man once was, and what he will be.²⁸ They needed no artificial illumination, nor life-drawing gas, to light up their temples, for the chaste goddess of night beamed her most silvery rays on their oak-crowned heads; and their white-robed sacred bards knew how to converse with the solitary queen of the starry vault²⁹.”

During the palmy days of Neo-Platonism these Bards were no more, for their cycle had run its course, and the last of the Druids had perished at Bibractis and Alesia. But the Neo-Platonic school was for a long time successful, powerful and prosperous. Still, while adopting Aryan Wisdom in its doctrines, the school failed to follow the wisdom of the Brahmans in practice. It showed its moral and intellectual superiority too openly, caring too much for the great and powerful of this earth. While the Brahmans and their great Yogis - experts in matters of philosophy, metaphysics, astronomy, morals and religion - preserved their dignity under the sway of the most powerful princes, remained aloof from the world and would not condescend to visit them or ask for the slightest favour³⁰, the Emperors Alexander Severus, and Julian, and the greatest among the aristocracy of the land, embraced the tenets of the Neo-Platonists, who mixed freely with the world. The system flourished for several centuries and comprised within the ranks of its followers the ablest and most learned among the men of the time; Hypatia, the teacher of the Bishop Synesius, was one of the ornaments of the School until the fatal and shameful day when she was murdered by the Christian mob at the instigation of Bishop Cyril of Alexandria. The school was finally removed to Athens, and closed by order of the Emperor Justinian.

How accurate is Dr. Wilder’s remark that

“Modern writers have commented upon the peculiar views of the New Platonists upon these [metaphysical] subjects, seldom representing them correctly, even if this was desired or intended.”³¹

The few speculations on the sublunary, material, and spiritual universes that they did put into writing - Ammonius never having himself written a line, after the wont of reformers - could not enable posterity to judge them rightly, even had not the early Christian Vandals, the later crusaders, and the fanatics of the Middle Ages, destroyed three parts of that which remained of the Alexandrian Library and its later schools.

Professor Draper shows that Cardinal Jimenez alone

²⁸ Caesar, *Commentaries*, vi, 14.

²⁹ Pliny, *op. cit.*, xvi, 95; xxx, 4.

³⁰ “The care which they took in educating youth, in familiarizing it with generous and virtuous sentiments, did them peculiar honour, and their maxims and discourses, as recorded by historians, prove that they were expert in matters of philosophy, metaphysics, astronomy, morality and religion”, says a modern writer. “If kings or princes desired the advice or the blessings of the holy men, they were either obliged to go themselves, or to send messengers. To these men no secret power of either plant or mineral was unknown. They had fathomed nature to its depths, while psychology and physiology were to them open books, and the result was that science that is now termed, so superciliously, *magic*.”

³¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 9

“Delivered to the flames, in the squares of Granada, eighty thousand Arabic manuscripts, many of them translations of classical authors.”³²


In the Vatican Library, whole passages in the most rare and precious treatises of the Ancients were found erased and blotted out, “for the sake of interlining them with absurd psalmodies!” Moreover it is well known that over thirty-six volumes written by Porphyry were burnt and otherwise destroyed by the “Fathers”. Most of the little that is known of the doctrines of the Eclectics is found in the writings of Plotinus and of those same Church Fathers.

Says the author of *New Platonism and Alchemy*:

“What Plato was to Socrates, and the Apostle John to the head of the Christian faith, Plotinus became to the God-taught Ammonius. To Plotinus, Origenes, and Longinus we are indebted for what is known of the Philaletheian system. They were duly instructed, initiated and intrusted with the interior doctrines.”³³

This accounts marvellously for Origen’s calling people “idiots” who believe in the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve fables³⁴; as also for the fact that so few of the writings of that Church Father have passed to posterity. Between the secrecy imposed, the vows of silence and that which was maliciously destroyed by every foul means, it is indeed miraculous that even so much of the Philaletheian tenets has reached the world.

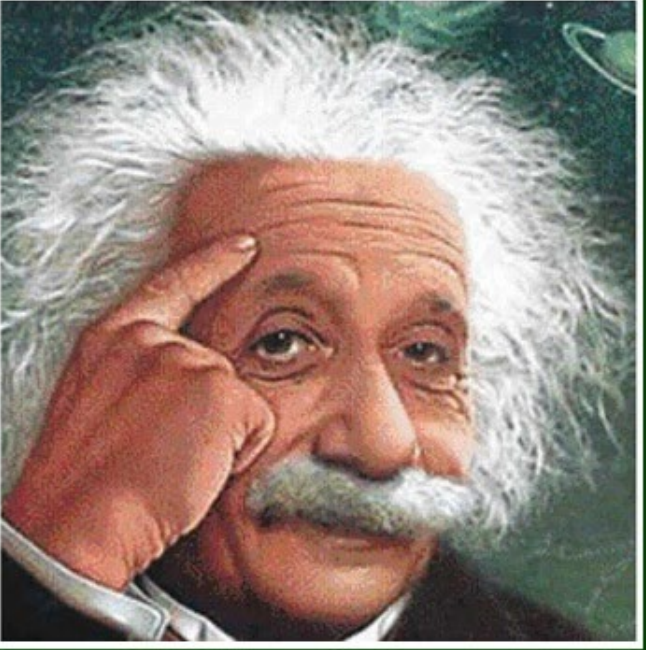
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³² *The History of the Conflict*, etc., p. 104.

³³ Wilder, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

³⁴ [See p. 37 of volume XIV, “Collected Writings” of HPB.]



Independent Lodge of Theosophists

“A group or branch, however small, cannot be a theosophical Society - unless all the members in it are magnetically bound to each other, by the same way of thinking at least in some one direction ...”.

H. P. Blavatsky

Image reproduced from the original manuscript of Letter C (100) in “Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett”, TUP, Pasadena, California, USA, p. 222:

A group or branch however small, cannot be a theosophical Society - unless all the members in it are magnetically bound to each other, by the same way of thinking at least in some one direction

(The founders of the Independent Lodge obtained from the British Library a complete copy of the original of Letter 100)

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Join **E-THEOSOPHY** group on **Google Groups**, and study a little bit of theosophy every day: <https://groups.google.com/g/e-theosophy>.

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Here and Now
The Inner Spirit of Christmas



The last days of the year have a decisive importance in Theosophy. Material aspects of the celebrations are of limited importance, and should be kept simple.

In all of December the spirit of Christmas can be felt as the daily life of our civilization is surrounded by an invitation to altruism. The approaching winter teaches renunciation and simplicity. For those who have the eyes to see, there is a luminous feeling behind the appearances.

The roots of Christmas are pagan. The celebration teaches us the law of universal brotherhood and the ideal of mutual respect among all beings and all nations. It celebrates the rebirth of light and the renewal of life which take place after every cycle of outward manifestation.

(CCA)

[An initial version of the above text was published at the November 2015 edition of "The Aquarian Theosophist", front page. It had no indication as to the name of the author.]

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Read the article [If Christ Comes Back This Christmas.](#)

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The Influence of the Higher Self

One Must Dissipate the Clouds that Obstruct the Light of Supreme Spirit

Alex Rambla Beltrán

I would like to bring here a few lines written by H.P.Blavatsky, for us to reflect:

“The senses of the sleeper receive occasional shocks, and are awakened into mechanical action; what he hears and sees are, as has been said, a distorted reflection of the thoughts of the Ego. The latter is highly spiritual, and is linked very closely with the higher principles, Buddhi and Atma. These higher principles are entirely inactive on our plane, and the higher Ego (*Manas*) itself is more or less dormant during the waking of the physical man. This is especially the case with persons of very materialistic mind. So dormant are the Spiritual faculties, because the Ego is so trammled by matter, that *It* can hardly give all its attention to the man’s actions, even should the latter commit sins for which that Ego - when reunited with its *lower* Manas - will have to suffer conjointly in the future. It is, as I said, the impressions projected into the physical man by this Ego which constitute what we call ‘conscience’; and in proportion as the Personality, the lower Soul (or *Manas*), unites itself to its higher consciousness, or EGO, does the action of the latter upon the life of mortal man become more marked.” [1]

This excerpt shows us that materialism blocks the spiritual faculties of human beings. The voice of the conscience is more perceptible to those who have a greater contact with their higher self.

This invites us to become purer individuals, more oriented towards “heaven”. It will be necessary to develop right thoughts, right emotions and right actions in order to reduce the paralysis of the higher self.

One must dissipate the clouds that obstruct the light of supreme spirit. Silence can help this more than concepts. By calming one’s mind, it is possible to better come into contact with that which is essential.

NOTE:

[1] “Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge”, The Theosophy Company, Los Angeles, California, USA, 1923, pp. 62-63.

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Read more:

* [The Practice of Divine Presence.](#)

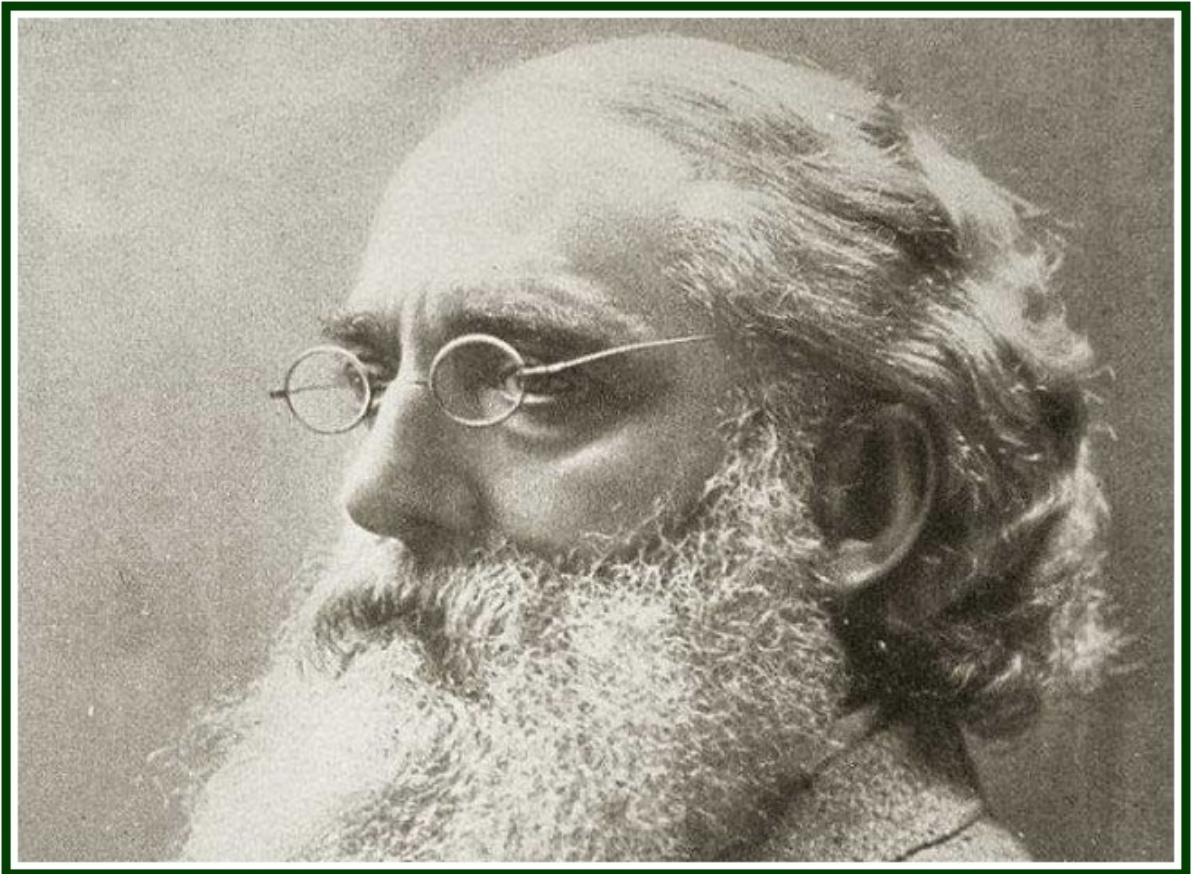
* [The Mahatmas and Christianity.](#)

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Asceticism and Theosophy

Have You Fulfilled Your Obligations and Pledges?

H.S. Olcott



Nobody even dreams how hard is the task of self-conquest, the subjugation of passion and appetite, the liberation of the flesh-primioned Higher Self, until he has tried.

No delusion is more common among aspirants to the higher knowledge than that the end can be attained with reasonable certainty by physiological restraint. The prevalent idea is that maceration of the body, regulation of the diet, a protracted course of devotions, and the filling of the mind from books, will bring the postulant to the threshold of gñanam, if not across it. This was the ruling motive of the desert recluses of early Christianity, of the pillar, forest and cave hermits of all nations; while to this day it rules equally the Roman Catholic monk and nun, the Mohammedan fakir, and the Hindu ascetic. The tortures self-inflicted by the last named surpass Western belief. This is the lower, or Hatha, Yoga and its gymnastic practices

are sometimes horrible and revolting. They have been kept up for centuries, and the tortures are the same now as they were in ancient days - and equally fruitless. The faculties of such ascetics - as it is said in the Lalita-Vistara - are “wriggling in the grasp of the crocodile of their carnal wants”. Some of their penances are thus enumerated:

“Stupid men, who seek to purify their persons by divers modes of austerity and inculcate the same. Some abstain from fish and flesh meat. Some abstain from spirits and the water of chaff. Some indulge in tubers, fruits, mosses, Kusà grass, leaves, cow’s dejecta [One of an early group of our Indian chelas (!) did this before he joined the T.S.], frumenty, curds, clarified butter and unbaked cakes. Seated at one place in silence, with their legs bent under them, some attempt greatness. Some eat once in a day and night, some once on alternate days, and some at intervals of four, five, or six days. Some wear many clothes, some go naked. Some have long hair, nails, beard, and matted hair, and wear bark. Some carry on them [various talismans enumerated], and by these means they hope to attain to immortality, and pride themselves upon their holiness. By inhaling smoke or fire, by gazing at the sun, by performing the five fires [*i.e.* lying uncovered under a burning sun, and having fires built all about them], resting on one foot, or with an arm perpetually uplifted, or moving about on the knees, some attempt to accomplish their penance They all follow the wrong road; they fancy that to be the true support which is untrue; they hold evil to be good, and the impure to be pure.” [*vide* for full details, Rajendralala Mitra’s “Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali”, and his “Buddha Gaya” pp. 24 *et seq.*] Readers of my own writings may recollect my once meeting at Marble Rocks, on the Nerbudda River, a Hatha Yogi who had spent fifty-seven years in austerities, including a *pradakshana*, or circumambulation, once in each three years, of that historic stream, and yet who asked me - me, an American, not worthy to wipe the feet of a true Raja Yogi - how to control the mind! I told him - the poor fool - how to do it, as I shall tell my present readers, and if they wish the corroboration, they have only to read the teachings of every great spiritual leader the tree of humanity has ever germinated.

Nobody even dreams how hard is the task of self-conquest, the subjugation of passion and appetite, the liberation of the flesh-primed Higher Self, until he has tried. Every such struggle is a tragedy, full of the most painful interest, and provocative of sympathy in the hearts of good men and “angels”. That is what Jesus meant when he said there was more joy in heaven over one sinner that repented than over ninety and nine just men that needed no repentance. And yet how bitterly uncharitable is the world - the world of concealed sinners and respectable, undetected hypocrites, usually - over the failure of a poor soul to scale the spiritual mountains in consequence of lack of reserved power of will at a critical moment. How these undetected ones patronisingly condemn the vanquished, who at least have done what many of them have not, made a brave fight for the divine prize. How they strut about in fancied impregnability, like the street-praying Pharisee of Jerusalem, thanking fortune that their private sins are still hidden, and redoubling their prayers, postures, canting moralities, and asceticism in diet, to deceive their neighbour and themselves!

“And the devil did grin, for his darling sin.
Is pride that apes humility.”

Shakespeare made a man like that say:

“And thus I clothe my villainy with old odd ends, stolen out of holy writ, and seem a saint when most I play the devil.”

The whole burden of Jesus' preaching was to show that so long as the heart and mind were unpurged, all external forms and ceremonies were but whitewash to a sepulchre. This was also the teaching of his glorious predecessor, the Buddha, who specifically sketched in infinite detail and condemned the forms of hypocrisy, spiritual pride, and self-delusion. He had begun his training for the future struggle with Mara under the Bodhi tree, by learning and himself practising all the systems of Hatha Yoga, and discovering their futility as helps to salvation. The pure heart and clean mind alone permit one to attain salvation. This was his doctrine. So, likewise, is it taught in the Aryan Mahabharata [Sec. CXCIX, *Vana Parva*] which says:

“Those high souled persons that do not commit sins in word, deed, heart and soul, are said to undergo ascetic austerities, and not they that suffer their bodies to be wasted by fasts and penances. He that hath no feeling of kindness for relatives cannot be free from sin, even if his body be pure. That hard-heartedness of his is the enemy of his asceticism. Asceticism, again, is not mere abstinence from the pleasures of the world. He that is always pure and decked with virtues, he that practices kindness all his life, is a *Muni*, even though he lead a domestic life.”

The Theosophical Society is a sort of battle-field of self-slain spiritual fighters; a long line of supposed chelas can be seen as toppled over like so many bricks in a row. Some of them who did not take their failures quietly and candidly trace them to the real cause, their miscalculation of their moral strength, have turned to rend H.P.B., and those higher than she. I was reading the *Path* the other day and came across a grand article of hers on “The Theosophical Mahatmas”. It was called out by a silly pronunciamento by a hysterical woman in America and another individual who had failed to become adepts, and turned “with bleeding feet and prostrate spirit” to Jesus! How the goaded lioness scorned them; how clearly she defined what would and what would not bring the aspirant into spiritual proximity with the Hidden Sages! To the discontented in general she puts the question:

“Have *you* fulfilled your obligations and pledges? Have you, who would lay all the blame upon the Society and the Masters - the embodiments of charity, tolerance, justice and universal love - have you *led the life* requisite, and fulfilled the conditions of candidature? Let him who feels in his heart and conscience that he has never failed once seriously, never doubted his Master's wisdom, never sought other Masters in his impatience to become an occultist with powers, never betrayed his Theosophical duty in *thought or deed* - let him rise and protest. During the eleven years [this was written in 1886] of the existence of the Theosophical Society, I have known, out of the seventy-two regularly accepted chelas on probation and the hundreds of *lay* candidates, only *three* who have not hitherto failed, and one only who had full success. And what about the Society in general, outside India. Who, among the thousands of members does *lead the life*? Shall anyone say because he is a strict vegetarian - *elephants and cows are that* - or happens to lead a celibate life, after a stormy youth in the other direction, that he is a Theosophist according to the Masters' hearts? As it is not the cowl that makes the monk, so no long hair, with a poetical vacancy on the brow, are enough to make one a follower of the *divine* wisdom.” And she depicts the Society's membership as it is to the in-looking eye: “backbiting, slander, uncharitableness, criticism, incessant war-cry, and din of mutual rebukes.”

I got a stinging rebuke once in Bombay from a Master, when I hesitated to admit to membership an earnest man who had been persecuted, even sent to prison, by Christian bigots, on a pretext. I was bidden to look through my whole body of colleagues and see how,

despite their wealth of good intention, nine-tenths of them were secret sinners through weak moral fibre. It was a life lesson to me, and ever since then I have abstained from thinking the worse of my associates, many no weaker or more imperfect than myself, who if they could not climb the mountain were at least, like myself, earnestly struggling and stumbling onward. Years ago - when we first came to Bombay - I was told by H.P.B. that several of the Mahatmas being met together, caused to drift by them in the astral light the psychical reflections of all the then Indian members of the Theosophical Society.[1] She asked me to guess which one's image was brightest. I mentioned a young Parsi of Bombay, then a pre-eminently active and devoted member. She said, laughing, that on the contrary he was not bright at all, the morally brightest being a poor Bengali gentleman who had become a drunkard. The Parsi afterwards deserted us and became an active opponent, the Bengali reformed and is now a pious ascetic. She explained then that many vicious habits and sensual gratifications often affect the physical self, without leaving deep permanent scars on the inner-self. In such cases the spiritual nature is so vigorous as to throw off these external blotches after a brief struggle. But if encouraged and persisted in, evil habits at last overcome the soul's resisting power, and the whole man becomes corrupted. Some Tantrikas, Indian and European, have preached the accursed doctrine that the occult postulant can best kill out desire by gratifying and exhausting it. To deliberately gratify lust, or pride, or avarice, or ambition, or hatred, or anger - *all equally perilous* to the psychic - is quite another matter from falling now and then, through no pre-arrangement and simply because of moral weakness in a particular crisis, into one of those sins. From the latter, recovery is always possible, and may be comparatively easy where the average moral fibre is strong; but deliberate vicious indulgence leads inevitably to moral degradation and a fall into the depths. Says "The Voice of the Silence":

"Do not believe that lust can be killed out if gratified or satiated, for this is an abomination inspired by Mara. It is by feeding vice that it expands and waxes strong, like to the worm that fattens on the blossom's heart."

I recall to mind one more instance. Long ago, in the early Society days a certain Theosophist imposed upon himself the rule of celibacy and wished to be taken as a chela. He held out for a while, but then failed: the fleshly appetite was too strong. The person dropped out of active Society work for a considerable time, in fact, for years, but at last, gathering himself together, he made a new attempt. He was told that fifty failures did not destroy one's chance, success was possible at the eleventh hour. We read in "The Voice of the Silence" (p. 63) the following word of encouragement:

"Prepare, and be forewarned in time. If thou hast tried and failed, O dauntless fighter, yet lose not courage: fight on and to the charge return again, and yet again."

This young F.T.S. returned again to the conflict, was victorious, and today is one of the most active and respected members of our Society.

Some Western readers have seen the Mahabharata story of the fall of the mighty Rishi Visvamitra through carnal passion. This adept of adepts, this Yogi had a spiritual power so tremendous by centuries of ascetic practices as to make Indra quake upon his celestial throne and cause him to desire his humiliation, so the god took counsel of Menaka, first of the Apsaras (celestial choristers), how it might be effected. The beautiful, "slender-waisted" Menaka, according to the plan, presented herself before Visvamitra in his hermit retreat, in all her seductive loveliness, but bashfully seemed afraid of him and pretended to run away. But

the complaisant Maruta, the wind-god, suddenly sent a breeze that stripped her off her raiment and exposed her charms, like another Phryne, to the astonished gaze of the Rishi. In an instant, the sexual desire, long easily suppressed from lack of temptation, flamed up, and he called her to him, took her to wife, and a daughter - the most loveable Sakuntala - was the fruit of the union.

“Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall”, was the warning of the Nazarene.

NOTE:

[1] Everything in physical nature is reflected, as in a mirror, in reversed images, in the Astral Light. (HSO)

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The above article is reproduced from “The Theosophist” magazine, India, February 1892 edition, pp. 257-261. Original title: “Asceticism”.

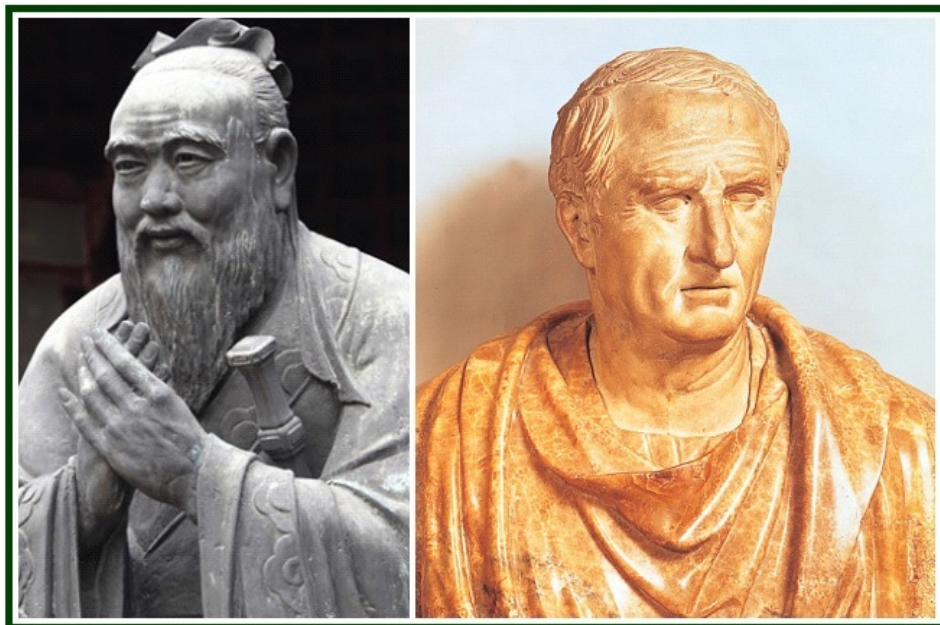
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Read more:

* [Pascal’s Sphere.](#)

* [The Center of Pascal’s Sphere.](#)

* [Freedom From Mind Manipulation.](#)



* [Helena Blavatsky’s Self-Criticism.](#)

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Don't Ask Who Is Born at Christmas **A Moment of Reconciliation With All Beings**



Christmas' season brings about a reunion that occurs on the plane of the soul, in the territory of justice and goodness. The celebration provokes a rediscovery of the past, a new vision of persons and feelings, a re-examination of the sacred future.

How was our vision of the times to come, one year ago? And how is it going to be within another twelve months? Christmas expands the emotional consciousness. It widens ones thoughts, it demands ethics and awakens spirituality. The celebration of the unity among all beings occurs above all in honest souls, because only they can live deeply enough to experience union. Love never part ways with sincerity, and no lie can understand universal friendship.

Christmas is a state of mind, and does not start in the second half of December. One must get ready in advance for the door that leads to the New Year. The preparations are an essential part of the celebration. Christmas must be experienced slowly, starting long before its formal moment occurs. The end of the 12 months' cycle puts us in touch with eternal time.

From this magic corner in the street of Duration, we can see past and future pages of life's evolution.

[Click to see the full article](#)

Thoughts Along the Road

By Accepting the Void One Paves the Way to Right Thought and Right Action



John Cassian, a traditional image (not historical).
Cassian lived between the years 360 and 435 of Christian Era.

John Cassian and Our Diet

* **H**ow can one live and eat in a balanced way, without being defeated by the excesses of gluttony?

* John Cassian spent a long time living among and learning from the Desert Fathers and Sages. And Cassian wrote:

* “The weakness of the flesh does not impede the purity of the heart, provided that we seek food according to the needs of health, and not according to its desire.” [1]

* Physical gluttony prevents both emotional balance and intellectual lucidity.

* However, there is also an emotional gluttony and a mental one, and Cassian says fasting must take place on the three levels of reality. Abstaining from absorbing wrong emotions and

thoughts, according to him, is even more important than renouncing physical gluttony. He recommends a fasting of the soul. [2]

* Enduring happiness results from the adoption of a divine goal, pursued with moderation and persistence. Self-observation, inner peace, the right kind of meal, silence, and other factors are all parts of the journey to good sense.

There Is Nothing Like the Eternal Void of Plenitude

* Concentration allows you to use your time properly. As long as your mind lacks concentration, time and energy are wasted and nothing useful is accomplished.

* Each one has all the necessary means to attain concentration.

* We must control our minds so as to exclude ideas and feelings which are unnecessary or contradict our main goals. This is the first phase of the process. The exclusion of topics that produce inconsistency precedes and prepares one-pointedness.

* It is easier to obtain concentration if one has a clear goal. The enduring effort to attain a noble object brings about the ability to eliminate the noise of inner contradiction, for all efforts point to the same direction.

* However, life includes confusing moments, during which clarity is scarce. This is undeniable. We may have a correct and valuable abstract goal and at the same time lack clarity about short term objects which will effectively help us attain the main and central one.

* In such occasions, instead of pretending that everything is OK, the goal must be clarity itself. The practice of detachment and the exclusion of confusing possibilities are the first priorities, until the short term clarity is restored.

* Silence is your friend. Don't waste time with noisy roads leading nowhere. If you do not know what to do, stay put and calmly go to your inner sources. Disentangle your thoughts and feelings from hurry, from worry and any short term speculation. Identify illusions - and firmly abandon them.

* Quietness is a sacred source of clarity. Don't fight the presence of nothingness in your life: nothingness is good. Painful losses are valuable lessons. A blank page is excellent. Pure void is a door to eternity, and from it plenitude emerges.

* In the wordless perception of the totality of life, inner renewal occurs and right action is born.

(CCA)

NOTES:

[1] From the book "Institutions Cénobitiques", Jean Cassien (John Cassian), Traduction et Notes par Jean-Claude Guy, Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2020, 530 pp., see p. 201.

