

THE STABLE AND THE MANGER

BY ALVIN BOYD KUHN, Ph. D.

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"So Hannah conceived, and at the turn of the year she bore a son."--I Samuel I, 20.

"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bride- groom cometh!" --Matthew XXV, 6.

"Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, all is bright."--Franz Gruber.

(1936)

THE STABLE AND THE MANGER

Of what significance it may be to modern Christianity to be confronted with the evidence that it has never known the inner meaning of its own Bible must be determined in the near future by the historical sequel. That such a bold assertion can be made and supported is hardly less astonishing than will be the revelation of the hitherto unknown meaning of the Christmas story in the Gospels of the New Testament. The mind of the student, awakened by the disclosure of a recondite sense in this particular portion of scripture, will speculate in wonder as to how completely the true signification of other fundamental structures in the Bible and theology may likewise have been missed. Nor can consideration fail to be given to the general implications of such a revelation, in particular to the ludicrousness of a situation involving nearly half the world - and that half vaunting its superiority in intelligence--in the plight of being found utterly ignorant of the meaning of the Book which for sixteen centuries has stood as its spiritual light and guide. The spectacle of a civilization dominated for long ages by a volume the vital message of which is now shown never to have been interpreted at all, must strike the mind of all thoughtful persons with reflections of the most challenging nature. How orthodox exegesis missed the true import of its own scriptures, how its revered Bible could wield the influence of social humanization claimed for it when it was never basically understood, how the stream of western history may have been polluted by the coloration of a false rendering, and how the coming epoch may be affected by the recovery of priceless wisdom so long obscured, must be the themes of earnest cogitation in the wake of the interpretations advanced in this and other lectures in this series. The fact that the Christmas scenario has numberless times been enacted in the churches of Christendom with not a soul ever dreaming of its cosmic and racial reference, should lay heavy siege to the citadel of orthodox complacency.

The abortion of primal wisdom in Christian scriptures is easily traceable through the developments of history to its perceptible causes. It came as a result of the decay of esoteric study from the third century forward, and the concomitant ignorance as to the specialized methodology employed by the ancients in sacred writing. In archaic times knowledge was put forth in strange language indeed. It was not written in plain terms to be most directly apprehended. It was embodied in a form that would at once conceal and reveal its meaning, for it was meant to be grasped by one group of people, the initiated, and missed by another,

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the uninstructed. Therefore it was worked over into forms of a cryptic symbolism, for the interpretation of which certain keys were requisite. It was elaborated into myth, allegory, parable, fable, legend, astrological depiction and even numerological figurations. Paul declares the Abraham story in the Old Testament to be an allegory. The most intelligent parties in the Christian Church for some two and a half centuries took the entire Bible as allegory. Many schools, sects and brotherhoods, both before and after the beginning of the Christian era studied biblical writings as parables of man's spiritual life. Notable among these groups were the Essenes, about whom we take this sentence from the Encyclopedia Britannica in the article under their name: "The sacred books were preserved and read with great reverence, though not without an allegorical interpretation." A mass of further evidence could be adduced to confirm the claims in this respect.

This recondite methodology of the ancient scriptural poets has caught and deceived modern scholarship. For when taken as factual occurrence and objective history, the "fabulous representation" of ancient books appears ridiculous, in spite of the fact that zealous pietism from the third century forward strove to make its conversion of myth into history as plausible and possible. Modern estimate of ancient intelligence has been based on the view that the writers of the old books believed in their myths as veridical fact! Do we not have the secret here of the moderns' mean opinion of ancient intelligence? It has been assumed that antiquity was so childish as to believe its own myths! But the childishness is all on our part, for such a baseless ascription. These seers and sages of an early age were more deeply instructed in the profound truths of our life than we yet are! But they consigned their wisdom to books--when it was entrusted to writing at all--under the forms of a disguise. And not in sixteen centuries has the western mind been astute enough to penetrate this veil and unmask the marvels of truth and knowledge lying beneath. Right here is found the reason why Christian theology has failed to solve the cabalistic enigma of the meaning of its own doctrinal material. For it approached ancient archaic literature with a preconception of its arrant inferiority, which precluded the imputation to it of merit or profundity. Nor did it rest until it had reduced the body of arcane writing to veritable nonsense, forcing upon the myths and upon their subtle devisers an alleged sense that was a frightful travesty of their true but hidden connotation. And it is easily demonstrable that certain weird manifestations cropping out in the life of medieval Christendom, and having repercussions down to this present, were engendered as the outcome of the general obfuscation of western mentality by the perversion of its heritage of spiritual wisdom to a jargon of incomprehensible theological absurdity.

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Humanity is sensitive to the lightest breeze of philosophy. Nothing rules the world so decisively as ideas. Corrupted truth must exact its grave toll of befuddlement and misery. The magnificent old wisdom was lost to medieval life save only where surreptitiously nursed by secret esoteric movements of one type or another. The world was forced to struggle on amid spiritual "shoals and quicksands," deprived of the true light of knowledge that met life's problem. Mankind has been starving for long centuries; it is almost strangling for want of it now. The religion that should have been our sustaining power has been made repellent to intellect and almost equally disappointing to piety. History has practically discredited the Manual of faith. The institution of religion is in sorry case, being held in contempt or treated with indifference by more than sixty per cent of western people. The youth of the age is in outspoken revolt against its claims to their loyalty. As a result our very culture is in jeopardy, for religion is vital to culture. The Bible, still revered as the Word of God, Holy Writ, holds a place of influence only because of the tradition of its sanctity and authority, but with a grip seriously weakened by the onslaughts of a discerning scholarly criticism. To the student enlightened by a true rendering of the meaning of the myths, the exhibition of unwitting asininity made by the efforts of medieval and modern Christian exegetists to interpret their own scripture is a sorry one indeed. For the most part such exegesis is nothing but a wretched caricature of the ideas hidden behind the mask. Our undertaking in this lecture should make evident how utterly they have missed the profound sense and reference of it. They have not even brought the meaning into the same world to which it properly applies. For they have kept it upon the plane of external objectivity as history, when it was designed to bear upon man's interior subjective spiritual experience only. Bible stories are in no sense a record of what happened to a man or a people as historical occurrence. As such they would have little significance for mankind. They would be the experience of people not ourselves, and would not bear a relation to our life. But they are a record, under pictorial forms, of that which is ever occurring as a reality of the present in all lives. They mean nothing as outward events; but they mean everything as picturizations of that which is our living experience at all times. The actors are not old kings, priests and warriors; the one actor in every portrayal, in every scene, is the human soul. The Bible is the drama of our history here and now; and it is not apprehended in its full force and applicability until every reader discerns himself to be the central figure in it! The Bible is about the mystery of human life. Instead of relating to the incidents of a remote epoch in temporal history, it deals with the reality of the living present in the life of every soul on earth. How widely it has been wrested away from this primary relevance and

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turned over into the domain of inconsequential personal or national history, will perhaps be vividly seen as the original significance is brought to light. A new renaissance of human enlightenment may be the happy consequence of the rehabilitation of the structural integrity of the bibles of sage antiquity.

It is confidently believed that this lecture will go far to vindicate these statements. It should demonstrate that the Bible material is allegory. It should disclose the unsuspected profundity and sublimity of Bible meaning, rebuking the literalists and the sceptics as well. It should establish the recognition that the Bible is a collection of ancient texts embodying far more important wisdom and data, and dealing with a more fundamental cosmic and human science, than ever the

Church has known. The lecture should in itself furnish a measure of clear insight into the methodology of Bible construction and give hints as to the technique of interpretation.

A brief passage from Plutarch will serve well to introduce the exposition.

"But in his (Plato's) *Book of Laws*, when he was now grown old, he affirmed, not in riddles and emblems, but in plain and proper words, that the world is not moved by one soul, but perhaps by a great many, but *not by fewer than two*; the one of which is beneficent, and the other contrary to it, and the author of things contrary. He also leaves a certain third nature in the midst between, which is neither without soul nor without reason, nor void of a self-moving power, but rests upon both of the preceding principles, but yet so as to affect, desire and pursue the better of them."

We have quoted this statement to link our preceding material with what follows. For, incidentally, Plutarch first confirms our assertions as to the cryptic character of ancient religious and philosophical writing. He testifies to the fact of Plato's having used, until late in life, the methodology of writing "in riddles and emblems." Then he proceeds to lay down in the simplest of words the basic formula of the nature and constitution of man on which our exegesis rests. He says that our nature is comprised of two opposing principles, mediated by a third. Man is compounded of two elements, which are spirit and matter. Man consists of soul and body, spiritual consciousness and a physical vehicle. Between the two stands the conscious mind sharing, as Plutarch intimates, the capabilities of both the super-conscious soul and the sub-conscious "soul" of the body. This mind, being the principle called *Manas* in Sanscrit, is the mediator between the god, or higher self in man, and the

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lower sensory life. The Priest as intercessory between "god" (properly not God) and (animal) man in all religions is typical of this bridge of intercommunication in human nature. For in Rome, the Emperor, as head of the national religion, was the Pontifex Maximus, or Chief "Bridge-Builder." Plato analyzes human nature as compounded of *dianoia*, or the dianoetic consciousness, the high spirit, and *doxa*, sense, as the upper and lower constituents. Paul classes the two as the carnal mind of the creature and the spiritual mind of the indwelling deity. Between the two natures, from the beginning of the community of interest in the human being, and for the continuance of it until the final amalgamation of the two in "one new man," there is enmity, according to Paul. A reconciliation is finally effected through the mediatorial offices of the Christ, the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek (King of Righteousness). As "the summits of secondary natures are most proximate to the bases of superior orders,"--to use the quaint phrase of Proclus in Thomas Taylor's translations--we find here at last the ground for an understanding of the Biblical figuration of the mutual bruising of head and heel in the *Genesis* myth. The bruising would take place *at the point of contact*, where the lower portion of the upper man would come into friction with the highest portion of the lower. The warfare between soul and sense would be fought on the border-line between the two natures in man, and precisely there is where the Egyptian books state that the great (spiritual) Battle of Armageddon is fought--on the "horizon," the line between heaven and earth, or spirit and matter.

Precisely on this intermediate line, sharing the proclivities of the lower and the capabilities of the upper, "cultivating the crops on both sides of the horizon" (*Book of the Dead*) stands the conscious mind of the human. This is the soul in man. It is not his highest spirit, but it is the ray or fragment of that spirit that is projected downwards and linked with the animal sensorium and the thinking mind. It is the Christ that is crucified on the cross of matter in us. Being the resultant of the energies of spirit unified with those of sense, it becomes the "one new man" of St. Paul's description, born of the wedlock of the two. It is thus *born out of the blending of the two natures in man. It is the Christ coming to his new birth* in our experience and in our nature. Paul states that he groans and travails with the Christians until "Christ be formed within you." Our life of combined spirit and flesh on earth is to give birth to the Christ consciousness in us. This is the radical fundamentum in all religion. This Christ Selfhood in us is generated by the friction between the two natures! It is born out of the struggle between soul and body, it is engendered by the tension between the two poles of being, positive and negative, or spirit and matter, in the constitution of man. This transac-

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tion is the outcome of an operative principle in our lives that is of greater weight than has been suspected in philosophy. It was the Greek philosopher Heraclitus who announced its place in the scheme of life in the clearest terms. He wrote: "War is the father of all things." All things are the resultant of the struggle of two opposite forces, which are everywhere ultimately spirit and matter. At the point of conflict between the two values are brought to conscious recognition. Life itself becomes conscious only on the horizon line between these two elements. It is the function of matter to bring spirit to an awareness of itself. Spirit is consciousness, but it is not self-consciousness until, by the mystery of life, it is made aware of itself by material limitation. In humanity the Christ nature is to be made conscious of its own divine selfhood. It is to be brought by human experience from merely potential divinity to divinity actualized, that is, made aware of its deific being. It is the struggle to inform matter with its living energies, the struggle against the inertia of matter, that calls forth the latent faculties of spirit to self-recognition. Matter causes soul to exert its unused powers, and so evolves them through exercise. Thus spirit comes to know itself.

To bring the two factors into relation to each other on a basis of affective reciprocity, evolution had to equate their forces as the two opposite poles in the life of man. It had to establish them in a condition of stable equilibrium. With this fact in mind, can we fail to thrill with wonder at the sagacity and knowledge of the ancient Egyptians when we find them describing our phase of life on earth as "the pool of equipoise"? But no less should be our wonder at the wisdom that devised the zodiac, for the sign of Libra, the Scales, was introduced for the purpose of depicting our life here as being a weighing in the scales of the Balance. But theology has never told us positively that the two pans of the Balance are spirit and matter! Nor has it impressed us with the highest suggestion of philosophy, that our destinies are being hourly determined by the preponderance of spirituality or sensuality in our make-up. On the horizon-line of our life, spirit and matter are established in equilibration. Says Heraclitus: "The world is an invisible harmony, divided into itself and again united." This is a reference to the great law which alternately unites the two forces in manifestation and separates them in dissolution or death, when both retire into a state of inanition called in the East *pralaya*. The philosopher declares that life shows antitheses

everywhere. "The harmonious structure of the world depends upon opposite tension, like that of the bow and the lyre." Stability, or what appears such to us, is gained by nature only by the mutual annulment of two contrary powers. Are not the stars held in their fixed courses at the point where centripetal and centrifugal energies exactly countervail?

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An atom, the stable ingredient of matter, is itself the fixation of energy at a given locale as the result of opposing positive and negative electricities. It is the law. "In his present state man has a divided existence, the life of the soul, or the fire of reason; and the life of the senses of the imprisoning body." And to show that the two were conjoined in man Heraclitus has told us that "man is a portion of cosmic fire, imprisoned in a body of earth and water." The Promethean "fire" of soul is linked by chemical affinities with the watery nature of the body. Our own Emerson has voiced this esoteric knowledge in the passage: "Man stands at the point betwixt the inner spirit and the outer matter."

All values in life on any plane are born as the result of the union of male and female natures, be it in physics, chemistry, psychology or spiritual love. Knowledge itself is born of the union of subject and object in an equation. "Know" comes from the Egyptian ANKH, meaning "life" and "tie." Hence knowing is an act involving the *tying* together of two things, subject and object, in a *living* relation. Again there is a birth at the borderline where spirit, or conscious subject, and matter or known object, meet in equipoise. A poet has said that "heaven and earth have kissed each other." And he might have gone farther and said that they had wooed, won and married each other, in the body and mind of man. The Holy Spirit and the virgin Maria (matter) came together to give birth to the Christos. This is all that the legend of Joseph and Mary could ever possibly have meant in scriptural allegory. For Joseph is the original Egyptian- Hebrew name for the divine counterpart, and Mary is the personification of the universal mother, matter. Matter ever has mothered the rebirth of spiritual consciousness. This is the function of matter as mother ("mother" being *mater* in Latin) to which Paul refers when he says: "For the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain until now," laboring to bring forth "the Sons of God," who are elsewhere "the sons of mind." The Christly principle of intellect was being gestated in the womb of mother nature, and the evolutionary office of matter was to bring it to birth in the fullness of time. Nature, which had created the animal, was next to create man, the human, whose mark of differentiation from the beast was the faculty of mind.

The wedding of the two cosmic elements and the birth of their Son, the Christos, could take place only where the two parents could have vital communion with each other. It could therefore occur only where spirit could impregnate matter with its virile power, only where it could stamp its image upon plastic substance. This opportunity was provided by life only at one place on this planet,--in the physical body of man. Only here do soul and flesh have affective intercourse, for only here is there the condition of exact equilibration demanded.

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It may safely be assumed that if spirit and matter are equally balanced in relation to each other, it must be at a point in the gamut of being midway between the spiritual summit and the material

base of the order of life. Sure enough, it is found in the middle of the fourth plane from the bottom. Life had projected its energies outward and downward from its heart, built up the body of matter and then lifted itself up through three kingdoms, the mineral, vegetable and animal, and prepared the fleshly habitation for mankind. In the middle of the fourth plane the energies latent in matter, in their rise through the kingdoms, were met by the wave of a new emanation of spirit descending from the peak. The rationale of this procedure on the part of Life is complex and involved. Suffice it to say for the moment that obviously if a higher and a lower force are to meet and unite at the point midway between their status of being, they must so meet as the result of the ascent of the one and the descent of the other. Nature could not well arrange such a meeting in any other way. That nature *has* so arranged the matter is one of the bits of knowledge furnished us by the ancient wisdom. When God or Life at the beginning of each period of its activity bifurcates into the polarization of spirit and matter, the two forms of being move toward each other, meet in the middle ground, so to say, effect their conjunction and interplay, and at the end of the cycle retire into latency again. For the earth evolution that point of middle distance between the two is the body and life of man. Here is where the "marriage" takes place and the Son, the Christ, is born. And when the two forces meet at this point, they counteract each other's energies and bring each other to a *standstill*. Spirit descending came to a stop in the arms of matter, for the inertia of matter stilled the vibrations of spirit. Likewise matter ascending came to a pause in the arms of spirit. The two found themselves interlocked in each other's arms. Their forces exactly counterbalanced, they neutralized their opposing powers, and each found itself at a stand.

It is necessary to state here that life energy which formed matter had descended as far down as the first (counting from below) or mineral plane. But since neither the mineral nor the vegetable nor the animal forms could furnish the principle of mind or spirit a fit vehicle of expression of its higher type of life, this principle of combined intelligence and spirituality could descend only as far as the human, or the fourth kingdom. The nadir point of the cycle of purely material force is therefore the material kingdom, while the nadir of mind and spirit is the human kingdom. The energy of *physis* or nature had descended as far as the mineral kingdom, reversed its direction there and returned on its ascent through the three lower planes and a part of the fourth. Here it was met by the descending current of soul force seeking embodiment.

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Souls can go no lower than the human estate. Physical energy turned to return at the lowest of seven planes; spiritual energy turned to return at the fourth in a series of seven, which is the human. The physical power had organized matter as substance into the organic forms of the mineral, the vegetable and the animal beings. The highest animal forms were to become the embodiments of the *spiritus* that would place them in the category of humans. This incarnation was effected at the *locus* where the two currents had become entangled in each other's grasp. For here was the situation demanded by Heraclitus' theorem of the war of opposing powers in life. This "pool of equipoise" came in the place occupied by man.

Life eternally swings through the rounds of great cycles. It comes into and goes out of manifestation or embodiment in material form in an endless periodicity. It follows an everlasting rhythm. It swings downward through the grades of being from pure "spiriticity" to dense

materiality, and back again. When spiritual force is overcome by the density of the matter which it ensouls, its outgoing is checked. It has started as pure spiritual impulse; it ends when its energies become crystallized in material form. It has been turned, as it were, from spirit into matter. For matter has caught and fixed the impulse in stable form. On its downward arc the wave loses characterization as spirit to win definition as matter. The "light" of spirit has been dimmed and almost extinguished by the "darkness" of matter. Spirit is then buried deepest in the night of material obscurity. At the lowest point of its enfeeblement it could be said to stand at the "winter solstice" of the evolutionary year.

The point of importance is that during this solstitial period, when the two forces are holding each other in a condition of equilibration, we have just those cosmic and evolutionary conditions requisite for the birth and growth of the soul, the Christ. The Messiah is born in the winter or material solstice of evolution, in the "pool" or point of stagnation. For here the soul is weighed and tested in the opposing values of spirit and matter, the scales of the cosmic balance! This is one of those great truths which were lost when the Mystery Schools, the temples and the Platonic Academies were summarily closed by a fanaticism bred of ignorance. It is the great truth essential for the interpretation of the Nativity symbolism. The Christ would be born at the December solstice or the Christmas time--of evolution. He would come to life, be quickened from his apparent death in matter, just when the two arms of the balance are poised in equilibrium, in the wintry death of the soul in matter.

All this cosmic procedure was seen by the ancients to be typed by the (apparent) round of the sun through the solar year. It must be under-

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stood that these early myth-makers regarded the great "Lord of Day" as at once the essence, the embodiment and the symbol of deity. The sun is the Christos of the planetary system, as the soul is the Christos of the individual life. The soul is itself of kindred essence with the sun. The intellectual soul is the sun in man. Proclus gives us one of the mightiest items of knowledge we can possess when he says: "The light of the sun is the pure energy of *intellect*." The human soul is a further extended, and therefore diminished, ray of the same deific life that burns at the unimaginable radiance of solar glory. And not only is there this identity of nature between sun and soul, but the cyclic evolution of the one is an exact miniature or duplication of that of the other. The sun in its apparent passage from the high glory of summer to its enfeebled power in the solstice of winter exactly symbolizes, because it repeats, the experience of the soul in its alternating swing from the heights of spiritual purity in disembodiment--its summer--to the depths of diminished shining in the lowest arc of its immersion in a body, its night, its winter. In the parallel, the time that the sun is in its winter solstice, when for some two weeks it is held unchangeably in the grip of darkness, exactly corresponds to the period in the evolutionary arc when spirit and matter are, in the life of man, held in immovable relation to each other. From September to December the sun loses more and more of its light (for us). This arc of the year cycle represents the downward descent of the soul into incarnation. The light of soul and of sun alike are poised in a balance with the enemy power, darkness. But it is right at this point of equipoise that the new sun has its birth. It is born at the winter solstice; figuratively, yet actually at midnight of the shortest day, December 22. (Three days were always added by the symbolizers

to typify the three "days" or ages in the tomb of matter. As the new moon is born after the three dark days of the cycle, so custom fixed an interval of three days before the consummation of the birth. Thus we have the 25th of December, as well as the 25th of March, as two of the great solar festival dates.) In similar manner the soul, that went down to "death" in body, came to its rebirth or quickening into a new cycle of growth, beginning at the evolutionary solstice, when held in stable relation with flesh or matter.

We have risked over-statement of these correspondences in order that no phase of the symbolism might be wanting from the picture that forms the background of the meaning of the Christ's birth in a stable. Indeed this elaboration should by now have disclosed the secret of the hidden meaning. We are at any rate ready for the denouement. With what astonishment or with what incredulity it may fall upon minds accustomed to regard the Bible as objective history, we can not pause to consider.

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But the truth is obvious that the "stable" of the nativity story is nothing but a hieroglyph used by the astute ancients to convey cryptically the real meaning of the word "stabilization"! The Christ, as we have fully shown, was born, and must be born out of the situation where spirit and matter, soul and body, are "stabilized" in relation to each other. He is born in the "stable" condition of the two forces. He comes to birth when the two are "stabled" (in the sense of stabilized) in each other's embrace. He is born in the evolutionary solstice, when his two parents are locked in stable equilibration, or equipoise.

We hasten to assert that our claims for this interpretation of the symbol do not rest alone upon this play upon words. There are other aspects of the typology that more solidly reinforce the legitimacy of the rendering.

A stable (from the Latin and Greek root *sta--* "to stand") is a place, generally, where animals come in to stand for the night. The very sense of "stabled" is that the beasts can stand, stop, stay still in stalls, in a static or inactive state, or station. This again is no merely ludicrous play with words, but a disclosure of a very basic item of philosophy that lurks in our very language. The selection of the "stable" for this phase of the allegory was based upon knowledge of evolution possessed by the wise men of old. They knew that the animal (evolution) had come to a *stand* at the point where the soul could be linked with it, and this was during the incarnation of the soul in the animal body, when in "stable" relation with it. And incarnation, as hinted, was symbolized as the "dark night of the soul." So, in evolutionary terms, the animal evolution had been *stabled for the night*. And the Christ might then be born in conjunction with the animal body.

Again, a stable is a provision made for the welfare of animals by humans. In the evolutionary reference the state of stabilization was achieved for the animals through the benevolent sacrificial agency of the higher race of beings, the humans. The brute kingdom is elevated by the grace of mankind, as mankind in turn is exalted by the grace of the gods. The animals were stabilized by the beneficent influence of humanity, descending into the stable from above, as the animals entered it for the night or solstice from below. Even Jesus had enforced this meaning upon our attention when he said to his disciples: "Ye are from below; I am from above." From

opposite directions both parties had entered the "stable" for the night, the animals coming under human care. The human influence touched them as they stood in the stalls. Reading it in two senses the animal race was "stalled" in the evolutionary stable, where men came to stand with them, to birth the Christos.

This significance is likewise evident in the frame of the Prodigal Son

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allegory. The nadir of the soul's descent was the place where he had reached the animal's level, when he "did eat of the husks that the swine did eat." A Chinese variant of this typology has the son thrown out into the pig-yard. The Gospel version has the Son of God born in the stable with the animals. Later the Christ spirit must cleanse this habitation, the stable of the animal body, from the filth of the animal nature; and this is the meaning of the cleansing of the Augean stables by Hercules, a Greek Jesus type.

Somewhat inadvertently we have arrived by the road of this allegorism, at the gate of the interpretation of another hitherto unsolved problem of Bible symbology. As "history, " Joshua's command to the sun and moon to *stand still* until he, a Hebrew name for Jesus, the Christ, could gain the victory at Ajalon, is unacceptable to reason. But as allegory it reflects the same deep sense and the identical reference as the "stable" figure. For here, too, we note the "standing still" of two forces. And when we know that sun and moon respectively typify just the two factors active in the birth of Christ, soul and body, we are assured on the authority of another Biblical figuration that the Christ is born as the result of the stabilization of the two.

Looking again at the various features of the solstice, we give attention to another facet of the phenomenon. For a period of roughly two weeks there is no *movement* in the relative gain or loss of light and darkness. There is no movement in nature, so to say. The battle is at an even balance of defeat and victory. The antagonistic powers are in equilibration, stabilized. Let us turn now to note how vividly this motionlessness of the two at their solstice has been woven into some of the allegorical depiction.

Practically every archaic scripture has represented the Christmas ("*mas*" is from the Egyptian *mes*, "to be born") event as occurring at midnight of the solstice, December 22 (25). But not merely the time, but also the *condition* of midnight was accentuated. Christ was born in the *stillness* of midnight!

"The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing."

"O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!"

But perhaps the most reverential expression the West has ever voiced is embodied in the sentiment with which on Christmas eve, at midnight, the Christian peoples bow in singing.

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"Holy Night, *Silent* Night!"

For the Christ is born in the motionlessness, the midnight pause, of evolution.

Ancient emblemism dramatized this silence and stillness in many a legend. Fortunately one of these scenes has been preserved for us in a writing the claims of which to a place in the Bible itself are indisputably strong. Indeed it may have been its open presentation of the birth of Jesus as purely spiritual drama that weighted against the document's inclusion in the accredited canon of the New Testament. In one of the best of the New Testament "apocryphal" books, the *Protevangelium*, a Gospel ascribed to James, we have a vivid dramatization of the midnight quietude, rather the ceasing of all motion, in nature at the moment of the Christ's birth. Because of its importance in this interpretation we do not apologize for quoting it in full. It is the whole of Chapter XIII.

1. And leaving her (Mary) and his sons in the cave, Joseph went forth to seek a Hebrew midwife in the village of Bethlehem.
2. But as I was going (said Joseph) I looked up into the air, and I saw the clouds astonished, and the fowls of the air stopping in the midst of their flight.
3. And I looked down towards the earth, and I saw a table spread, and working people sitting around it, but their hands were upon the table and they did not move to eat.
4. They who had meat in their mouths did not eat.
5. They who had lifted their hands up to their heads did not draw them back;
6. And they who lifted them up to their mouths did not put anything in;
7. But all their faces were fixed upwards.
8. And I beheld the sheep dispersed, and yet the sheep stood still.
9. And the shepherd lifted up his hand to smite them, and his hand continued up.
10. And I looked into a river, and saw the kids with their mouths close to the water, and touching it, but they did not drink.

One must ask in reference to this astonishing chapter if we are not forced to take it as a scene from a Nativity stage production, in which

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the pictorializing faculty had been exercised in ingenuity to devise a scenic representation of the central fact of the sudden stoppage or fixation of all apparent movement between the symbols of soul and sense in the solstice season. Surely it would require a vast deal of specious subtlety to

explain it on any other ground. At any rate we have here the very basic datum of our exegesis actually dramatized in the birth narrative. That which may at first have seemed a mere fancy of our own brain, is now seen to be supported by vital considerations as well as by scripture itself.

But there is still further confirmation for the conception in another field, that of ancient symbological astronomy. Nature seems to have enacted much of the drama of human experience in the movements of the celestial orbs. Ancient discernment, coupled with the typological tendency, at any rate traced the spiritual phenomena of our lives in the constellations, the movements of which strangely appeared to write our history in the skies. Mortal man is indeed a reflection of the "Heavenly Man," who, Plato says, was "crucified in space." The planispheres on the ceilings of ancient temples portray the advent or birth of the Christ on earth in an astronomical delineation in collaboration with nature's disposition of the stars. The pictography shows the great star Sirius (the *Sothis*) of the Egyptians, the symbol of deity, since our own sun was believed to revolve around it, standing directly on the central meridian of the heavens, having reached that point precisely at midnight of December 24, in one of the earlier periods of the precession of the equinoxes. The Egyptians dated the end and beginning of the solar year from their observation of this position of Sirius. But the great Dog-Star was not alone the announcer and harbinger of the birth of the new cycle (itself symbol of the new Christ principle in the world). As it stood on the meridian at the moment of midnight, there was seen rising above the eastern horizon the constellation of the Virgin, pictured as holding in her left arm the infant Christ, and in her right a spike of wheat, figured by the great star Spica (Latin, "a head of wheat"). Here was the birth of the Christ astronomically dramatized, both in the child itself and under his principal ancient symbol, the wheat or bread. John even describes him as "that bread which came down from heaven," and Jesus himself said, "This loaf is my body. Take, eat." A legend of esoteric lore is to the effect that when the race of angelic spirits that were to endow humanity with the Christ nature came down to earth, they brought with them for their more suitable food, wheat, the grape and the bee, for honey. Honey, bread and wine have been, curiously enough, the three most prominent symbols of the divine life. "Bee" is stated by Massey to be derived from the Egyptian "*ba*," the soul.

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In many Bible narratives there are seemingly minor points mentioned, which have been ignored in the interpretation, but which, with the esoteric keys, are seen to be most relevant to the meaning. There are two such that pertain to the birth of the Messiah at the solstice. In the parable of the wise and foolish virgins it has hardly ever received comment that the critical hour of the bridegroom's coming is placed at midnight. "And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh;" The bridegroom of course is Christ, coming to earth for his marriage with the flesh.

The second such allusion to the solar solstice as the birth-time is found in *I Samuel* 1:20. Of Elkanah's two wives, Peninnah and Hannah, the latter was childless, and like Sarah in the Abraham allegory, yearned for a son. The Lord finally answered her prayers. "So Hannah conceived, and *at the turn of the year* she bore a son." When to the astrological symbolism there is added the consideration that Hannah is the same name as Anna, the legendary mother of the mother of Christ, at least there is presumptive evidence of the kindred nature of the stories.

Another instance of the midnight birth is seen in the Lord's smiting all the first-born in the land of Egypt "at midnight." Egypt being a recurrent glyph for this earth or the life in body on it, the smiting of the first-born may be taken as a reference to the sacrifice of the Christos, collectively, in the sheer fact in incarnation. The phrase "smitten to earth" is found in the context of the Bible; and Christ was described as "the first fruits." It seems, a bit less clearly than in most cases, to be a variant terminology for the sacrifice of God's first-born Son, the first emanation of his power, on the cross of matter. It is useless for orthodox protagonists to protest that such a mode of exegesis is both too subtle and too far-fetched for their acceptance. We must recognize that at least as much subtlety must be employed in the elucidation as was used in the construction of the myths. The presumption of naivete in the matter has thrown and held the West in spiritual unenlightenment for sixteen centuries. It is time we showed ourselves at least as canny as the despised pagans of yore.

An interesting sidelight is cast upon our understanding of a proper term in the Bible from the data of this lecture. The new cycle, the new Son of the Father God, is born, as we have seen, "at the turn of the year." It is at the point where the Prodigal Son turns from the old and dying phase of his nature to begin a new growth. It is where, from an animalish engrossment, he turns to return to his Father in spirit. Now the Hebrew term in the Bible that specifies this exact position is "Sinai." It is derived from the Egyptian *sheni* or *seni*, which means "*point of*

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turning and returning." This is of great value in indicating to us at last that the communion of Moses with the Eternal on Mt. Sinai is esoterically our communion with the god within our own natures right here on this earth. We are on Mt. Sinai now, because we are standing at that evolutionary point of turning where we are in stable relation with matter, the only condition under which soul and body *can* commune with each other.

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The cryptogram of the MANGER is neither so involved nor so abstruse as is that of the STABLE. The exposition of the latter has, to some extent, prepared the way for a briefer elucidation of the former. Yet it is hardly less striking when seen with clarity.

Having carried life under nature's impulsion up to the summit of the animal kingdom, evolution came to a stand awaiting the epiphany, or showing forth, of the higher life principle in the "sons of God," the Christos. Stabilized with man, the animal could go no further until lifted up by the impact upon its stolid nature of the higher force of intellect and spiritual will. Since all scriptures state that this principle "came down from heaven" as the Promethean "fire," and was a free gift from the gods above, who perpetrated the great sacrifice to descend with it into the animal life, little more need be understood in reference to the transaction than that it was for the animals, its beneficiaries, simply to accept and appropriate it. The animal was fed from above and his major obligation was merely to "take, eat." He was to eat, digest and assimilate the divine nature brought by the descending angel hosts. He was to feed henceforth upon divine food, until he had assimilated the nature of the benefactor, the Christ! In the language of scriptural typology, the Christ came to earth to be eaten by wild animals! A most suggestive passage from another

apocryphal Epistle, *Ignatius to the Romans*, represents the soul as saying: "Suffer me to be food to the wild beasts; by whom I shall attain unto God. For I am the wheat of God; and I shall be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ." The crushing of wheat, the emblem of divine life, into flour, which again was made into nourishment as bread, is the age-long symbol in scripture for the scattering and crucifying of the forces of deific Christhood in the incarnation, and its eventual reconstitution in the resurrection. But the plain implication of it all is that the son of God was to be eaten, absorbed by the animals. For the grinding of the wheat of God, God's body, into flour was to be done by the teeth of wild beasts! Is it necessary for us to lead the mind over the final step in the unfoldment of the interpretation by completing the analogue? In order that the Christ

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might be eaten by the animals, then, he was laid in a manger! "*Manger*" is the exact spelling of the French word "to eat." The manger is the place where animals eat. There the Christ had to be laid, to become, in this style of symbolism, the sacrificial offering. It means just that, no more, no less. It is a bit of the ancient drama, which so often has confused the unsuspecting moderns.

Lest it be thought, in sincerity, that the figure of the Christ's being fed to the animal part of man has been overdone in our interpretation, it is well that we present some of the Bible's own material corroborating the thesis. We are told more than once that we are to be fed with the manna *from heaven*, with "the bread which came down from heaven"; and that manna and bread are the Christ nature sent us by divine grace. In the Christian Creed it is the son of God "who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven . . . and was made man." But the full and final confirmation of the analogue is given by Jesus himself, who took a loaf, as the symbol of his divine selfhood, broke it for his disciples and gave a portion to each, saying: "Take, eat. This loaf is my body, broken for you . . . Unless ye *eat my body* and drink my blood ye have not eternal life in you." He who would not eat the body of Christ was declared to be without the hope of regeneration. In primitive times the Eucharist was a tribal festival in which the body of the god, in some form of representation, as in the Christian bread and wine, was consumed by the people. Always the Lord's body was eaten.

Lest, again, the figure of eating be thought too blunt and crass a symbol for the spiritual assimilation really hinted at, it is well to consider some phases of the analogy. After all there is really no less aptness in the use of the dramatic symbol than in the fact which it typifies. Is it any the less true or fitting to say that we eat the body of Christ, an element nourishing our spiritual being, than to say we eat physical food? In both cases there is a reduction of the food to fineness, a taking internally, an appropriation of kindred elements and a final conversion of the substance eaten into a similitude with the body eating it. There is a partaking and an eventual transubstantiation of the elements into the body of the eater. We eat and assimilate food on the plane of physical *chemistry*, no less literally do we partake of the spiritual nature of the Christ on the plane of spiritual *alchemy*. As carnal, we transmute physical elements to living substance; as spiritual we transubstantiate Christly elements into the constitution of our inchoate spiritual bodies. Man does not live by bread alone. We have not only a natural body, to be physically fed, but also a spiritual body which must be nourished no less. *Its* food is the living essence of a

divine being, the Christ. Food, as matter, is now known to be nothing but the vibrations of energy. But it is a vibration of a certain

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lower sort. The Christ body is likewise the vibration of a living energy. But *it* is a vibration of a far more exalted type. We have a physical body that eats lower vibrations; so we have a spiritual body that eats higher vibrations. When it begins to be seen that ancient symbolism can generally be brought down to a pertinence as direct as this, the habit of scorning the arcane methodology may at last lose vogue. The Christ was

"All meanly wrapped in swaddling clothes, And in a manger laid,"

to be eaten by the animals. The swathing bands about him are an allusion to the fleshly vestures, the "coats of skin," with which the soul clothes itself to make contact with the matter of each plane on and through which it descends to physical embodiment. The animals had come in for the night to be "stabled" with him, and found him there in the manger, their divine food.

A suggestion in line with the thesis here propounded, that Christ and beast came into the same "stable" condition to advance his evolutionary interests, is very opportunely picked up from a bit of Jewish Haggada. A parable runs to the effect that when Adam (a type here of the human, as above the animal) heard the sentence condemning him to eat of the herb of the field, he burst into tears and said: "Am I and my ass to eat out of the same manger?" This is an esoteric touch of the most significant nature. It points to a feature of the racial situation that we had not yet ventured to delineate. The animal is not the only party to be fed in the manger. The angelic spirits came to earth in need of a food which earth alone could give. Their next cycle of experience required a physical embodiment which could only be built up of elements drawn from the kingdom below their status. This was the animal kingdom. Body is as essential to soul as soul is to body. The two link together for a mutual interchange of elements. A plant and its soil exchange vital elements. Each contributes that which "lifts up" the other. In the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* the soul declares that it comes to this globe that it "may feed upon the bread of Seb, or the food of earth," Seb being the God of earth. Earth holds a type of food that the undeveloped gods must descend to partake of, else we would not be in the incarnate environment. God and animal are brought by evolution into the same stable and eat out of the same manger.

That the ass, as used here by Adam, is a cryptogram for the animal body (if its obvious reference to it as the animal part of man needs clarification), must be seen to be well supported by the fact of its allegorical employment in the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem in the New Testament Gospels. The Lord rides the animal on earth, for he dwells

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in the body and dominates it. This is the intent of the sign of Sagittarius, the Centaur, in the zodiac, and of many another figure of man and beast combined in mythology. But the faithful animal also bears man up to the very door of the Eternal City of spiritual blessedness. The lower and the higher selves are united in man, the beast and the god.

Another engaging implication of the material comes to light in connection with the word "solstice." It is of course from the Latin *sol*, the sun, and the root of *sto*, I stand. It hints again at the "standing still" of the sun in the nadir of the year. Now the sun was ever the universal symbol of the god in us, and the ancient alphabetical mark of divinity in Egypt was IU (Cf. Iu-em-hetep, the Egyptian Messiah), converted later into JU (Cf. the name Ju-piter, the Roman God the Father). If we substitute this earlier solar designation for "sol" along with the suffix "*stice*," we get an interesting result, the word Ju-stice. No less interesting is the result when the meaning is considered. For again we see the idea of a balance of forces in an equation. Justice is the outcome of weighing in a balance the opposing elements of right and wrong. Ju-ry, from the same root, has suggestive connections. It has never perhaps occurred to us that there are twelve men on a jury for the same reason that Jesus had twelve disciples, and that there are twelve months in the year, twelve hours in the day and the night, and other twelves. Ancient esoteric knowledge reveals that there are twelve powers to be evolved to full function, twelve stages of growth to be achieved, twelve levels of deity to be ascended by man in his total human career. In Egypt they were represented by the doors of twelve dungeons in which man was confined and from which in turn he must escape. Each door was guarded by a god, who held the key in his hand. Nor would he open the dungeon door until the man had learned how to pronounce his deific name. Name and nature being practically the same thing, the meaning was that the soul of man was confined in dungeons of limitation until he freed himself by actually acquiring the powers of the gods themselves, or equating his nature with theirs. Therefore the soul was not acquitted or absolved from captivity until all twelve gods had voted in his favor!

The alphabets of the primeval languages were devised with much hidden symbolism in letter formation. The tenth Hebrew letter, *yod*, is a tip of flame, slightly twisted as by a breath of air. This is to type the aboriginal fire of life as beginning to become motive under the influence of intellect, god's first emanation, which is symbolized by air. Every Hebrew letter indicates some form of activity of the divine flame, moving downward into matter, suffering various experiences there, and perhaps returning. The *yod* became in some other alphabets the tip of flame extended downwards to form the "I" and the numeral "1," as the first

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projection of the life of deity outward from the central point. The "J" is the "I," for deity separates into two aspects of itself, the male and female powers. "J" is masculine, "I" the vowel, feminine. Now "J" appears obviously to be a hieroglyphic of the descent of divinity to matter, and the turn to return, since the stem is curled part way up from the base! The letter thus embodies much of the whole signification of our lecture. In diagrams representing these aspects of evolution, a line drawn downward, then turned in a curve upward and culminating about where the end of the capital "J" falls (a little below the half-way point) and tipped by a small triangle (@insert glyph), representing the solar triad of spiritual forces, *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*, which was here conjoined to the ascending bodily powers, is in all likelihood the original thought back of the structure of the "J." The triangle has since given place to the dot, the original *yod*, which bears the same meaning, the divine flame of spirit.

There is more than merely conjectural or spacious support for our initial thesis of the Christ's birth at the point of counterpoise between two contending forces. Particularly is confirmation

found in the ancient nomenclature. The locale of this mortal life was in the old sacred books given a variety of names, very many of which betoken a double aspecting of the situation. The soul on earth was said in the Egyptian texts to be located in "the bight of Amenta." A bight is a place like a corner, closely bounded by two sides. Again it was localized "at the *angle* of the pool of fire," giving a two-sided boundary. We have already noted its designation as "the pool of equipoise." But more directly it was called the "Hall of Two Truths," as the Hall of Judgment. It was again named the "Pool of the Double Fire," guarded by the two Cherubim, "The Lions of the Double Force." Another designation was "The Pool beneath the two Divine Sycamores of Heaven and Earth," or spirit and matter. Even in our Book of *Revelation* there are the mounts of the "Two Olive Trees." The Christ was crucified between two thieves, and Moses communed with the Eternal on Mt. Sinai, the two-faced Janus portal of the year, and also from between the two Cherubim. The tabernacle that man was to erect for deity was to be built "half in light and half in shade," according to Jewish tradition. In Gideon's seeking a sign of Jehovah's power, not only was there to be dew on the fleece and none on the ground, but there was also to be dew on the ground and none on the fleece. And fleece, with wheat, was a prime Greek symbol of divinity. It, too, like wheat, was torn to shreds and later rewoven into a texture of service. All this is a hieroglyph of the history of the sons of God in incarnation.

A Church claiming to have been commissioned in the dense darkness of pagan ignorance to spread a light for the spiritual illumination of the

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nations, has for sixteen centuries celebrated each year the pageantry of the birth of deity in the stable, with the ox and the ass, and, as now we must see, has never once known the truth which all this drama portrayed. It has sedulously crushed down every attempt throughout its history to reconstruct the language of that symbology in which the archaic wisdom it *should* have passed on through the centuries was cryptically embalmed. It therefore has no other influence but itself to blame if now it sees its meaningless presentations-- the husk and shell only of ancient truth-- repudiated by hearts that yearn for the evidence of justice in the plan of things, and intellects that equally crave the food of wisdom and intelligence. Unable to tell its millions of trusting devotees what its inspired scriptures, the Book of Life, rationally meant, it has had to regiment their lives on the unsubstantial nutriment of "faith." But this is to ask them to stand against the buffetings of life without the authoritative support of any inner assurance, to stand without knowing why. It is to ask them to meet life with the expectation, but never the realization, of being spiritually fed. Knowing man's psychic needs, ancient sages designed that mankind should possess all the wisdom it could apprehend. It was provided and set forth in the books of superhuman knowledge of the early times. In spite of every disaster they have been preserved through every age to the present. They are still the revered Bibles of a divine wisdom. But by a weird irony of fate they have become for centuries the instruments of a mental bondage that will only begin to be realized in the blight of its deadly palsy as rays of the true buried light filter through to comprehension. The modern intelligence must soon be dumbfounded at the spectacle of a self-extolled religious culture revealed as guided, inspired, motivated by a Book the basic meaning of which has never for a moment been known, much less related to reality. The hope is to be expressed that the tonic effect of this dispiriting sight will be to inspire the age with a new confidence, that with the release of the precious arcane wisdom of the past the world will be quickly emancipated from its

tragic load of arrant superstition, that it may shake off the fetters of ignorance and with the help of the golden lore or ancient knowledge proceed more rapidly forward to the consummation of its divinity.

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