

Studies in the Apocalypse— The Letter to the Angel of the Church in Thyatira

IN THE LAST SECTION* we dealt not only with the true nature of *Weight*, *Measure*, and *Number*, but also with their “fall” in connection with the temporal missions and the eternal messages of the Old Indian, Old Persian, and Egypto-Chaldean cultures. Seen from the standpoint of human nature, these three great principles contain the meaning of man’s need to come to terms in his life [vital] body, sentient [desire] body, and sentient [emotional] soul with the three axioms of human destiny: *toil*, *suffering*, and *death*. For the three “curses of the Father,” which have overhung the destiny of man ever since his fall into sin, demand of him a spiritual and moral struggle in his life body, his sentient body, and his sentient soul. And indeed, human consciousness is obliged to evoke a sacrificial force in the life body in order to descend into the sphere of the active world of physical existence. “Weight,” as readiness for incarnation in the physical, is not to be found in the physical sphere itself, but in the etheric from which the physical is taken and molded. That which is experienced in the physical as the “toil” of earthly activity may be experienced in the etheric as love for the Earth mission, as true “Weight.” Similarly, in the sentient body, man is in a position to encounter consciously the “suffering” which he experiences in the life body. Here he can be conscious of its true content, can acquire a conscious relationship to it. And here he can experience it as the *mission in time*, as true “Measure,” whereas the life body is itself “time.” But it is only in the sentient soul that

man first meets with the whole tragedy of the problem of “death.” This is because it is only in the soul, and for the soul, that that external event and the pain of it becomes an inner karmic *question*; i.e., a question concerning the value and nature of the “Number” of individual beings. It is a question whether this number is an eradicable product of nature, or whether it is rooted in the eternity of the Godhead—hence ineradicable.

Thus the main problem of the Egypto-Chaldean age was *immortality*, as is clearly shown, for instance, in the *Gilgamesh* myth. The main problem of the Old Persian culture, on the other hand, was the objective *relationship between good and evil* in the world and in the *Zend-Avesta*. Preserved until this day are echoes which show us that the important thing in the Old Persian age was to feel the “cosmic year” as the measure of this relationship in the stream of time. Further, the main problem of the Old Indian culture was the *value of human activity* in the physical world. Thus, for example, the *Bhagavad Gita*, although of later origin, is entirely devoted to this problem.

During the fourth, the Greco-Latin culture-epoch, there was added to the three problems—the “value of the world of deeds”; the relationship between good and evil; and immortality—a fourth; namely, the problem of *freedom*. For as man meets with the first three problems in the life body, the sentient body, and the sentient soul, so he encounters the *problem of freedom* with the awakening of the intellectual soul. It is the intellectual soul which makes man conscious of being placed between that which he knows and wills and cannot do, and that which he does not will and yet does. We can hardly find a better formula for this

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situation than the one given by St. Paul: "For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not: but what I hate, that do I" (Romans 7:15). Man finds himself placed between the impotent understanding and the hidden will life when he experiences himself within his intellectual soul. His understanding sets before him the demands of the spirit, but gives him no power to fulfill them. His subconscious nature, however, functions through impulses which are dark to his consciousness. That which he has seen to be true and good he recognizes as a necessity, as "law," but that which functions with natural force within him he recognizes only as the result of deeds already accomplished, which also may be regarded as a "law" (Romans 7:16-21). Now if he follows the claims of the spirit, the "law," he must exercise constraint on his nature; if, on the contrary, he follows his natural impulses, he is guilty of betrayal of his own convictions and turns aside from reason, which is, nevertheless, his guiding star. It is this real inner contradiction which raises the problem of freedom in the soul of man. The question is: How may the light of insight become such that it can lay hold upon the impulses of nature and shine through them? That is, how is it possible for nature to follow the spirit *freely*, and for the spirit to rise over the soul, not as a ruler, but as a beneficent Sun?

Now, for the realization of freedom, the light of the intellect must become something more than mere light. It must receive power not only to illuminate, but also to *kindle* to deeds. The light must become fire, otherwise it will not be possible to make freedom a reality. On the other hand, the life of will must become, so to speak, a rigidified light: it must become "metal." For, as the metals which have materialized are light that has become rigid and heavy, so also the content of man's will life must become something which lends weight and solidity to the content of the higher man's knowledge. For this reason, the fourth letter, addressed to the Angel of the Church in Thyatira, sets the ideal, the archetype of freedom, at the very beginning: "These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass" (Rev. 2:18). Christ is the force which realizes the ideal of freedom; namely, the conver-

sion of light into fire, of will into metal.

But the path to the realization of the ideal of freedom lies in the love (*agape*) rendered possible by the Christ impulse. It is in the form of love that the reality of the Christ impulse can overcome the opposition of intellect and of those impulses which hamper the condition of freedom. For this reason, the "Angel of Thyatira" possesses not only the three necessary qualities by means of which man comes to terms with "toil," "suffering," and "death," but also a fourth, by means of which the realization of freedom becomes possible. For if the necessity of "toil" demands conscious service (*diakonia*), the necessity of "suffering" requires patience (*hypomone*), and the necessity of "death" needs faith (*pistis*). The angel of the fourth church possesses, besides these qualities, yet a fourth, namely, love. "I know thy works, and charity and service, and faith, and thy patience, and that thy last works are more than the first" (Rev. 2:19), says the letter to the fourth angel, pointing thereby to the fact of the Cross, for which the men of the Greco-Latin epoch must be ready. It is the Cross of "toil," suffering," and "death" which must be borne, and the dilemma appears in the manner of bearing the Cross in the spirit of service, patience, faith, and freedom in love. This Cross was erected gradually in the spiritual history of mankind. First, in the Old Indian epoch, *service* was learned by coming to terms with the necessity of *toil* through insight into the value of the world of deeds. Then *patience* was acquired in the course of the Old Persian epoch when the point was to recognize the objective relationship between good and evil in an age when men had to *suffer* the conflict between good and evil. In the Egypto-Chaldean culture-epoch, it was especially with *death* that man had to come to terms, and in reaching an understanding with immortality to attain to *faith*. Finally, in the Greco-Latin period, that dilemma was experienced of which St. Paul speaks, and from this experience arose the problem of *freedom* and the longing to realize it through the force of *love*. In the sense of the preceding studies, however, the Cross can also be represented as shown in Figure 1 (page 6).

Here the tests of Weight, Measure and Number lie in the karmic necessities of "toil," "suffering,"

and “death,” and the forces acquired by the passing of those tests constitute the soul forces of service, patience and faith. But freedom is the reality of the *true ego* of man, and that reality is revealed by the rays of the Sun force of love in man. Love is the essential revelation of the true ego.

The bearing of this Cross—“I will put upon you none other burden but that which ye have already; hold fast till I come” (Rev. 2:24, 25)—is the task of the “Church in Thyatira” and was the true mission of the Fourth Post-Atlantean culture-epoch.

But to that Cross was opposed another as the antithesis of the dilemma. This was the overcoming of “suffering” without toil, and the flight, before the tragedy of “death,” into the great unity. It was that spiritual tendency which was founded on the decadent Sibylline school, the spiritual tendency of the “woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess” (Rev. 2:29). The point connected with the Israelite queen Jezebel, who supported this tendency as an opponent of the prophets, was that the dilemma existing between reason and impulse should be

bridged by submission to the guidance of the dark Sibylline impulse. Men are thus “seduced” into accepting the Sibylline inspiration as the solution of the problem of freedom, and thus arriving at a condition in which the dilemma no longer exists because reason is excluded and nature alone allowed to speak. This condition developed later into what is known today as Mediumism. At that time it was not yet the modern “trance” condition, but it was well on the way in this direction. On the other hand, the effect of the spiritual passivity which was thus fostered was that men became even apathetic to “suffering” because they had chosen that path which involved no “toil.” And this apathy towards “suffering” was achieved not by genuine strength of patience, but by man electrifying himself so that he was fanaticized by a process called in the Apocalypse, “eating things sacrificed unto idols” (*phagein eidolo thyta*). By this means a man became so inwardly “electrified” that he was able to endure a great deal without suffering. The

“eating of things sacrificed unto idols” had actually a kind of narcotic effect—it anesthetized the suffering of the soul by making it insensitive.

This spiritual tendency helped men to overcome the karmic necessities of “toil” and “suffering,” and in the same way they helped themselves over the tragedy of “death” by endeavoring to feel the “great unity” of all natural and spiritual life. Through this they lost the sense of anything definite or individual and thus robbed death of its “sting.” Such men lived with the attitude that all lives in all, and leads through all to all; there is nothing to choose, and nothing to lose, for all paths lead to the same goal—the goal of union with the active totality of nature. This peculiar monism was essentially a denial of the reality and the significance of Number. By it the conflict

with “death” was avoided because individuality was not prized. This depreciation of

individuality, this detachment from all that is definite, is called in the Apocalypse, “committing fornication” (*porneusai*). It is a universal mar-

riage of all with all, whereas the idea of individuality, which is the idea of true Number, demands strict and definite organization. There only *one* way, leading to *one* ideal, is admissible.

Thus the cross of “Jezebel” [Figure 2, page 7] stands in opposition to the cross of the “Angel in Thyatira.” This cross is suggested in the Apocalypse by the following words: “Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to *teach* and to *seduce* my servants to commit fornication and to *eat* things sacrificed unto idols” (Rev. 2:20).

Now what is the karmic remedy for such a spiritual tendency? On the one hand, it is *time*; that is, the opportunity to learn that the Sibylline teaching which once stood so high is decadent. For the Sibylline teaching was, at one time, a true and unsullied source of spiritual revelation to mankind. That was in the days when the Gods stooped to nature. Later, however, the Gods withdrew to a

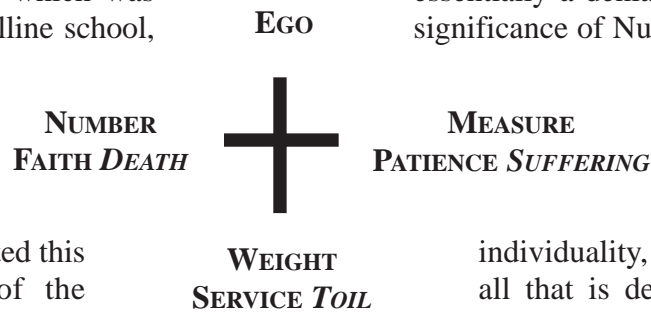


Figure 1

higher sphere, and the sphere from which the Sibyls drew their inspiration became a possession of demons. It was ranked with the spheres which, in the Apocalypse, are called collectively, “the depths of Satan” (*ta batha tou satana*). It was for this reason that Jezebel was given “time to repent of her fornication; and she repented not” (Rev. 2: 21).

But if the knowledge of the fact of the Sibylline decadence is not enough to turn the spiritual tendency of “Jezebel” in a different direction, then destiny must intervene—on the one hand, to put an end to the possibility of Sibylline revelation; and on the other, to give increased power to “suffering” and “death,” so as to heal the apathy towards these karmic necessities of humanity. To make the Sibylline revelation impossible, the vertical direction of that revelation (the line of teaching and seduction in the diagram, right) which runs from below upwards must become horizontal. Then the possibility of revelation from the subterranean sphere ceases—the Sibyl becomes a human being who can do nothing beyond the forces possessed by a human being, and has no knowledge of anything further than the memory of earlier Sibylline experiences which may be re-awakened.

In any case, this human being is then completely under the control of “suffering” and “death.” All these things are clearly expressed in the language of the Apocalypse. “Behold, I will cast her (Jezebel) into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death” (Rev. 2:22, 23). This destiny is the remedial treatment necessary for the karma of the spiritual tendency of Jezebel.

But the “diagnosis” on which that remedial treatment is based is given by the “searching of the reins [literally, *kidneys*—Ed.] and hearts” (Rev. 2: 23). For the two spiritual tendencies with which we are dealing—namely, that of “the Angel in Thyatira” and that of “Jezebel”—are distinguished precisely by the fact that in the first, freedom

through love is realized from the “heart”; whereas the Sibylline onslaught is made by the lower forces on the “reins.” Hence the two currents have two different karmic paths. The current of the “reins” must take the path of the loss of revelation and of submission to tribulation and death. The current of the “heart” must follow the path by which it will acquire power in the sphere of the group souls of the nations (*exusian epi ton ethnon*), and will break them up into fragments of separate consciousness units, “as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers” (Rev. 2:26, 27).

The “rod of iron” of the ego-consciousness will receive power to loosen the bonds uniting the group soul, and to shatter the structures

which originated *exclusively* in the group soul. And in place of these group soul elements “broken to shivers,” another principle of community-

forming will arise: the Morning star—Mercury (astronomically, Venus)—the star of the Manas-[Mind] influence in the spiritual history of the Earth. For there are two main influences which direct the path of the Earth—that of *Mars*, and that of *Mercury*.

The Mars influence is the influence of war; that is, of the cleavage of mankind, the splitting up of the community. The influence of Mercury, on the contrary, is community-forming and unifying. Now the “rod of iron” referred to in the letter is the legitimate internalization of the Mars impulse, which aims at the emancipation of personality from the group condition. But the personality grown independent and emancipated by means of the rod of iron (iron represents the influence of Mars on the things of Earth) will be once more united into a community through the Manas influence of the Mercury impulse (the impulse of the “morning-star”).

Thus, at the end of the letter to the “Church in Thyatira” stands the promise of the morning star, under whose sign those who have been loosed from blood relationships will be again united.

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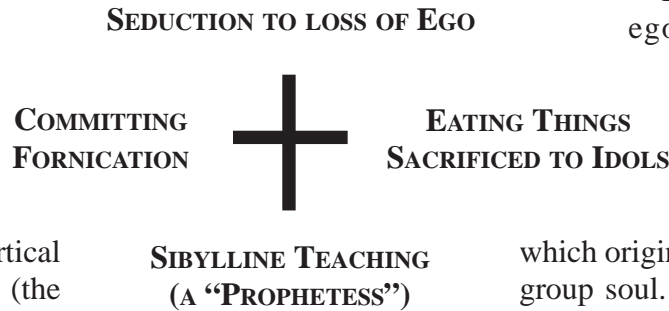


Figure 2