

# THE ESSENTIAL PEKKA ERVAST

*An Introduction to Teachings  
of the Finnish Rosicrucian Theosophist*



*Foreword by Richard Smoley*  
Literary Society of the Finnish Rosy Cross

**The Essential Pekka Ervast**  
**An Introduction to Teachings**  
**of the Finnish Rosicrucian Theosophist**

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## Foreword by Richard Smoley

What is a Christian? Over the centuries, the answer to this question has evoked an enormous amount of quarreling, hatred, torture, and extermination. This all so grossly contradicts the message of the Gospels that it would be funny if it had not brought about such incalculable suffering.

My own answer to this question is simple: a Christian is someone who tries to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. That is all. Everything else—the creeds, dogmas, doctrines, proclamations of popes and Reformers alike—is purely discretionary. You can accept it or dispense with it as you like.

This answer would be unacceptable to many if not most theologians, although I believe it is in keeping with the thought of Leo Tolstoy, the great Russian novelist who turned his mind toward spirituality in his later life.

It is appropriate, I think, to mention these ideas in connection with this anthology of the great Finnish Rosicrucian and Theosophist Pekka Ervast, because Ervast found his early inspiration in the simple but profound Christianity expounded by Tolstoy. Furthermore, Ervast came to much the same conclusion as I have suggested above: “Christianity is about following Jesus and nothing else.”

In any event, anyone who earnestly tried to live every day by the teachings of Christ would for that very reason be far superior to the ordinary run of human beings.

Ervast’s approach to Christ’s teachings—notably those in the Sermon on the Mount—entails more than becoming a kind and decent human being. It also encompasses a method of inner transformation. And this method of transformation centers around what Ervast calls

the five commandments of the Sermon on the Mount. They can be summarized as follows:

1. Do not be angry with others.
2. Do not commit adultery in your heart.
3. Do not take an oath, but always speak the truth.
4. Do not resist evil.
5. Do not make war, but love all people.

One could point out certain historical details here. For example, the injunction against taking oaths reflects the teachings of Christ's contemporaries, the mysterious Jewish sect known as the Essenes. Flavius Josephus, a historian of the first century AD, writes about them, "Every word they speak is more binding than an oath; swearing they reject as something worse than perjury, for they say a man is already condemned if he cannot be believed without God being named."

For reasons I have discussed in my book *How God Became God: What Scholars Are Really Saying about God and the Bible*, such evidence suggests that Christ very likely studied with the Essenes at some point but broke with them before the time of his own preaching.

To return to Ervast: his understanding of these five commandments takes them beyond the bounds of moral strictures into the realm of inner transformation. And I believe that the directives of Christ have this dimension.

Let us take the famous injunction to turn the other cheek when struck. Such things do not happen often on a daily basis, but we can apply the teaching to everyday emotional triggers: having someone cut in front of you in line, zooming out in front of you in traffic, or any of the other petty annoyances suffered by the typical person in the developed world.

Generally when one experiences such aggravations, the immediate response is to react with anger: to curse, swear, abuse the offender, whether within or outside of their range of hearing. The old esoteric Christians called these impulses *passions*, or *pathē* in Greek (singular *pathos*). They are not passions in the sense in which that word is used in present everyday English. They could be better be characterized as *impulses*. They are highly reactive and indeed automatic. The individual

who tries to block their expression will probably not succeed the first time, or the second.

From a conventional point of view, we can see why it is good to block the immediate expression of negative reactions: they often lead to arguments and altercations. But the esoteric Christian view takes the matter further. The expression of automatic negative emotions expends energy—a certain subtle inner energy. Merely repressing the expression of these impulses may keep one free from quarrels, but it has the disadvantage of leaving this negative energy pent-up inside the system, which will ultimately lead to stress, neurosis, or, if enough of this energy builds up, an explosive act of violence. We do not have to search far in the news media to find examples—many of them appalling.

A more profitable way of applying Christ's injunction is, at the moment the impulse arises, *to avoid expressing it while feeling it fully*—by which I mean somatically. Some energy will certainly arise, experienced, perhaps, as a kind of burning sensation in the arms or torso. If you can consciously avoid the outburst while feeling this energy directly, it is no longer pent up in you and can be freed for more positive uses—some would even say for the construction of subtle bodies. Again, someone who tries this practice may not succeed the first or the second or the third time.

Ervast's approach to Christ's commandment is different but, I believe, equally valid: "We must not bury a desire for revenge or a wounded sense of justice within us, but take a completely new attitude towards evil. We must then understand Jesus' commandment, 'Do not be against evil,' in the following way: 'You call the man who tempts you evil; you call suffering and misery evil. If you call them evil in your heart, do not resist them, but submit to them. You will then learn to erase the word "evil" from your mind, learn to see the good in evil, and prepare yourselves to be able to overcome evil.'"

For Ervast, the occult purpose of Christ's commandment is this: "When we overcome ourselves and step outside our own personality, the eye opens in us to see the world as an ordered cosmos, in which the lives of human beings and all living beings are guided and directed from the unseen world."



Ervast tells us that the practice of these commandments will lead to the development of occult powers, for example, the opening of the third eye in the center of the forehead. I do not doubt this, but it may be easier to understand the point in more everyday terms.

People who meet advanced spiritual teachers are often amazed at their powers of perception: they sometimes appear able to read minds or tell a person some detail that that person had never mentioned to anyone else and may not even have known. It would be possible to attribute such powers to clairvoyance, but the explanation may be simpler: the advanced individual has, to one degree or another, freed himself from his own personal nonsense and reactivity. This alone not only frees up psychic energy but enables him to see others far more openly than is common.

It is an unfortunate fact that all of us, in our ordinary condition, are ridiculously, pathetically obvious. We go around unconsciously displaying our weaknesses as a military hero displays his medals: they are sitting out for all to see. Why do others not see them? Because they, like us, are blinded by their own illusions, their posturing, their self-image, their anxieties. Someone who has freed himself from these, even a little, will be able to see much more objectively and may start to look like a being with superhuman powers.

These are some thoughts that arise when contemplating Ervast's simple but profound Christianity, which (rightly, I believe) focuses on the Sermon on the Mount as the epitome of Christ's teaching. Ervast observes one thing about this passage that has eluded practically everyone else. You can look at any number of paintings of the Sermon on the Mount, and they will inevitably show Jesus preaching to a crowd. Bizarrely, Matthew's Gospel says the exact opposite: "Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him" (Matthew 5:1). Jesus has gone up the mountain to *get away* from the crowds: he is speaking only to his disciples.

We are then led to the conundrum of esoteric versus exoteric Christianity. It is commonly believed that there *is* no such thing as esoteric Christianity: everything is as plain as day. But as Ervast's explorations indicate, this is by no means the case. The Gospels, which, even in this

secular age, remain remarkably familiar to the public in the developed world, contain dimensions of meaning that go far beyond the surface.

This fact becomes still more evident when one confronts the texts in the original language (in the case of the New Testament, *koine* Greek). I cannot count the times I have looked at a biblical text in the original and exclaimed, “My God! Does it really say *that*?” Or “I can’t believe they translated it this way.” What I am saying applies to all the standard versions available in English. The newer ones are often far more disingenuous than the old ones in this respect.

Ervast indicates one crux of this sort in the Lord’s Prayer, where nearly all the standard versions say some equivalent of “Give us this day our daily bread.” But the Greek original does not say “daily bread.” It says *ton arton hemōn to epiouision*. The operative word here is *e-pi-ouision*, a rare word in the Greek whose meaning is rather vague. The roots are *e-pi-*, “above,” and *ousia*, “being.” Some have translated it as “our bread for tomorrow.” Ervast, following Jerome’s Latin Vulgate, renders it as “supersubstantial” and gives his own interpretation of it. In any case, we are almost certainly not dealing with ordinary bread in this passage.

Aside from these few incidental points, I see no reason to go into any more detail about Ervast’s thought, since he explains it himself so plainly and clearly. It is an extraordinary accomplishment to present a Christianity that is so simple, so deep, so subtle, and yet so transparently faithful to the sense of the Gospel.

I do not know if institutional Christianity has a future, but if it does, it will very likely be along the lines that Ervast sets out here.

Winfield, Illinois  
June 2024

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## Preface

Pekka Ervast (1875–1934) was a Finnish writer, thinker, Theosophist, mystic, and occultist. His profound spiritual experiences during childhood and youth inspired him to reflect on the meaning of life. He delved into the questions of what life and death are, the meaning of life, and the teachings of different religions and thinkers about these matters.

Before the turn of the twentieth century, Ervast became acquainted with Theosophy, including the works of H.P. Blavatsky (1831–91), a cofounder of the Theosophical Society. His own spiritual experiences, which he shared with great openness, convinced him of his mission in life. He was instrumental in the birth and spread of the Theosophical movement in Finland, where the national Section of Theosophical Society was officially founded in 1907. Ervast served as its general secretary from its inception until 1919, after which he established the Finnish Rosy Cross (*Ruusu-Risti* in Finnish) in 1920.

Ervast's influence on the spiritual landscape was profound and extensive, spanning over thirty years of prolific writing and speaking. His published works, which numbered around seventy during his lifetime, have since been expanded to over 140 volumes, a testament to the depth and breadth of his insights. His lectures and speeches, totaling over 1,300, have left an indelible mark on the minds of his listeners, reflecting the power and resonance of his words. Some of his notable works, such as *The Divine Seed* (2010), *From Death to Rebirth* (2017), *The Key to the Kalevala* (2018), *Spiritual Knowledge* (2018), *The Inner God and Happiness* (2018), and *The Unseen Ecclesia* (2021), continue to inspire and enlighten readers in English, serving as a lasting legacy of his intellectual and spiritual contributions.<sup>1</sup>

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1 A concise article on Ervast's main works and spiritual heritage is available at <https://urly.fi/3wct>.

Pekka Ervast's life's work was a testament to his unique perspective and deep understanding of Rosicrucian Theosophy. He focused on the esoteric teachings of Jesus Christ, shedding light on aspects that traditional churches often overlook. For Ervast, the essence of Christianity lay in Christ's ethical teachings as presented in the Sermon on the Mount. He viewed life as a profound school of reincarnation and karma and saw the ultimate goal of humanity as serving as helpers to one another.

Although this book's title is *The Essential Pekka Ervast*, summarizing Ervast's essential teachings in one book is difficult. This book contains some of his teachings that we think are central. We have omitted, for example, the teachings on the origin and development of humankind (e.g., the Manvantaras, the lost continents of Lemuria and Atlantis), and Ervast's teachings on the esoteric meaning of the *Kalevala*, the Finnish national epic. Moreover, this book only briefly discusses the stages of the afterlife, because a thorough presentation is provided in *From Death to Rebirth* (2017). The introductory texts to the chapters of this book written by the editors are indicated in italics.

We thank Väinö Vähäkallio, a student of religious studies and folklore, for summarizing the works of Ervast used in this book, which he did as a summer intern for this project. We also thank Jukka Lindfors for providing the book's layout and graphic designer Vesa Raappana for the cover and illustrations. Finally, we thank Richard Smoley for expert editing.

*Antti Savinainen, Matti Koskinen, and Rauno Rinkinen  
Kuopio, Iisalmi, and Kirkkonummi  
August 6, 2024*

## I The Constitution of the Human Being

*Theosophy and Anthroposophy talk about the invisible aspects of the human being, which could be collectively called the aura. Today, the concept of the aura is familiar to many people, even if they know nothing about Theosophical doctrines. It is an intuitive concept that everyone has probably experienced, for example, in the atmosphere of peace that can prevail around a person or the sense of holiness in a church or temple.*

*According to Theosophy, such sensations are related to the invisible aspects of the human being. In esoteric thought, the human whole is often conceived of as a trinity (body, soul, and spirit) or a fourfold being (physical body, etheric body, astral body, and the “I”), as Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), the founder of the Anthroposophical movement, stated. Pekka Ervast’s characterization utilizes the Theosophical scheme of seven principles.*

### Invisible Bodies

When talking about human nature, Theosophists refer to the “seven principles.” But what are these? Do Theosophists not accept the old psychological triad of will, knowledge, and feeling? Of course they do, but these categories do not encapsulate the whole essence of man. Theosophical principles cover both the spiritual and the corporeal aspects of human beings. The psychological triad —emotion, reason, and will—concerns only the soul. If you add the physical body, you get four principles. And what are emotion, reason, and will without the “I,” who feels, knows, and wills? Moreover, in analyzing the human structure, we must not forget the “I.”

But if emotion, reason, and will are modes of the “I,” why do Theosophists make them into different “principles”? They are not so in their present form of development—so far, they are only instinctive, self-conscious, natural forms of the “I”—but it will be otherwise in the future. Therein lies the great potential for human development: each of these principles will develop to such an extent that, independently of their subjectivity, they will become objective and enter into the same kind of relationship with the “I” as the physical body has today.

For the human, the “I” is always the center and base of one’s being. In Theosophical literature, these modes of the “I” are called by their Sanskrit names: will by *atma*, emotion by *buddhi*, and reason by *manas*. These names refer to future developments, for *atma* means the Self and spirit, *buddhi* means the faculty of knowledge and wisdom, and *manas* means the faculty of thought, mind, and reason. According to H.P. Blavatsky, *atma-buddhi-manas* (or just *atma*) is human’s “higher triangle,” the higher Self or the Christ-self, which remains hidden in the current phase of human development.

We usually understand by embodiment nothing but emotion, reason, and will. The physical body is the medium of feeling, knowing, and willing. The body mediates communication with the visible world. The relationship with this world is partly passive and partly active. The passive relationship is expressed in knowledge and cognition through the body’s senses and nervous system; the brain then processes impressions of the world. But feelings and thoughts give rise to a desire for action and for active relation to the world. This, too, is mediated by the body through the nervous system. The body is thus a living organism that mediates the soul functions of the “I.” But admirable and perfect as it is in its purpose, a little reflection proves to us that it is far from being all that we might expect it to be. Our body, for example, is the medium of knowledge but by no means yet of perfect knowledge.

When corporality is said to be the manifested activity of the soul—feeling, knowing, and willing—this refers not only to the physical body but also to the part present in this body as an invisible reality.

We can say of will that it operates in all the members of our body, but can we say the same of thought and feeling? Suppose we can say that emotion seems to operate in the heart, the chest, and the stomach. In that case, we must recognize that thought, imagination, and intellect generally operate exclusively in the brain. Scientists claim—and they are probably right—that consciousness is concentrated in the brain; this is true at least of bodily sensations, but when it comes to purely spiritual effects, such as great spiritual joy or a growing sense of soul, we are entitled to ask why our imagination places them in the chest and is not content to regard them as brain functions.

Most of our inner feelings are in the chest, involving the heart and blood circulation. The heart is a significant factor in emotional life, but would we go so far as to say that all emotional life is just a reflection of the various stimuli entering consciousness? In everyday experience, the person regards their spiritual and mental feelings as purely conscious phenomena.

The question is: are emotions and mental reactions always merely subjective reflections in the consciousness of various physiological processes in the body, or are these physiological processes merely parallel phenomena of the soul's affections? If physiological processes caused emotions, these bodily events would have to precede them, as in the case of sensations. What does experience show? For example, you hear the happy news about a close friend: you share her joy and enjoy her happiness for your own sake. A feeling of joy fills your chest; your heart beats more happily, and your blood flows faster through your veins. Can it be said that these bodily phenomena cause your joy? Not at all. The cause of your happiness was the news, the positive images in your consciousness evoked by the news. Consequently, the soul process in your consciousness came first; only then was the effect on your brain felt through your nervous system, heart, and blood circulation.

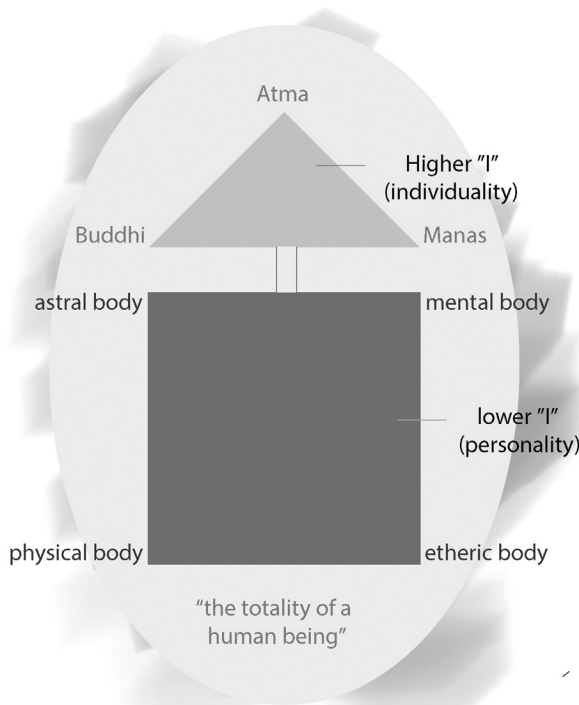
Now we are faced with a rather curious question: what are those thought images and emotions that can affect the heart and the bloodstream as well? Are they purely subjective phenomena, that is, objectively nonexistent?

Couldn't we say that thoughts and emotions are a force phenomenon? Since thoughts and emotions are forces, they must have a substantive platform. This platform is not visible or sensually perceptible; it is invisible to the physical eye. Thoughts and feelings are, therefore, bursts of force in invisible matter. There is invisible soul matter in the body. In other words, we are objective, real, even in our soul. We have a soul body, a vehicle for our thoughts and feelings. This is the *astral body* spoken of in Theosophy and indeed by all sages, though the names may vary.

Now we can understand what St. Paul means when he divides man into three parts: spirit, soul, and body (*pneuma, psyche, and soma* [1 Thessalonians 5:23]). The spirit is the "I," and the soul is the astral body and its feeling and thinking consciousness. Feeling and knowledge are manifested in the astral body and reflected in the physical; will has a more direct effect on the physical body and is manifested in it. It is possible to conceive that will, emotion, and knowledge can develop and at the same time produce effects in the physical body.

Now, we have six principles for man: atma, buddhi, manas, the central principle of the "I," the astral body, and the physical body. Where is the seventh principle? Some distinguish two aspects of the astral body: the "emotional body" and the "thought body," that is, the actual astral body and the mental body. Hence we have seven principles, with two aspects of the physical body: the "gross body" and the "etheric body." Then there would be eight principles. This is avoided if we do not consider the human "I" as a separate invisible body. Instead, we place it in the upper triad—atma, buddhi, and manas—and let it be reflected in the lower bodies. That is why the old traditions speak of the seven principles (figure 1).





**Figure 1.** The sevenfold nature of human beings.

Nevertheless, when we are born into the world, we do not immediately have all our principles at our disposal. Being born is about having one's own physical body. The child is not yet an individual etherically but is still in contact with the etheric body of the mother. Only when the child has teeth does nature disconnect the child from the etheric body of the mother. The child's astral body is, in turn, attached to the cosmic astral body. This means that the astral body is cosmic. Because the child is attached to cosmic forces, the child's emotional body is naturally pure.

The astral body is born between ages twelve and fourteen, depending on the onset of puberty. The astral body is not yet complete after separation from the cosmic body because it is still attached to the mental body, and the content of the "I" is still attached to the cosmic forces. The human being comes of age when she becomes her own

person, which happens at twenty-one. In the same way, this human “I” also awakens to daily activity and rational thought. This happens at different times for different people.

## **The Bearer of Life: The Etheric Body**

*The concept of an invisible double of the physical body, the etheric body, as the carrier of life forces appears in Theosophical and other esoteric teachings. The etheric body is an essential element in the understanding of death: according to spiritual teachings, a person is dead only when the connection between the physical body and the etheric body, the silver thread, is broken (see Ecclesiastes 12:6). Those who have had near-death experiences tell how they leave their bodies in a lucid state of consciousness and witness their resuscitation. These accounts are compatible with the Theosophical descriptions of the etheric body and the etheric realm. Modern medicine does not acknowledge the existence of the etheric body but probably considers it a relic of the vital energy theory that science has rejected.*

### **Four Types of Ether**

The etheric body is the invisible side of the physical body. The physical body is constructed and assembled from the materials of the physical world. Medieval alchemists maintained that the physical body has four elements: earth, water, air, and fire. Today, it is said to be made up of solid, liquid, and gaseous substances. The solids correspond to “earth,” the liquids to “water,” and the gases to “air.” “Fire” is an old-fashioned name for what Theosophy calls *ether*.

The etheric body animates the physical body. The etheric body enables breathing and makes the heart beat, blood circulate, and digestion work. The living forces of the cosmic solar system act on our physical bodies through the etheric body. Our etheric body connects us to the solar system, while our gross physical body connects us to life on earth. The gross, physical body is a microcosm in relation to the earth, and the etheric body is a microcosm in relation to the solar system. The etheric body allows us to live in this physical body.

What is the difference between a living and a dead physical body? The difference is that the etheric body, the twin of the physical body, has been permanently displaced from the dead body, and there is no longer any connecting link between the physical body and the etheric body. The subtle etheric currents, which connect the physical and etheric bodies like a silver thread and keep the physical body in contact with the etheric body, have been severed. On the other hand, even if the body appears dead, the body can come back to life if the silver thread is not broken.

Theosophical literature usually speaks of four ethers. The first type of ether is the *chemical ether* or the *fire ether*. It is related to digestion and growth. A child grows under the influence of this chemical ether. The second type of ether can be called the *magnetic ether*. Sexual maturity occurs when the magnetic ether begins to operate. This happens when the astral body detaches from cosmic forces. The third ether can be called the *light, sensation, or blood ether*. It is closely related to human blood. The fourth ether is called the *memory, mirror, or reflex ether*.

It is helpful to look at the correspondences between these tools and the physical body to get a clear idea of the awakening of the etheric body and its abilities. The etheric, astral, and mental bodies correspond to this physical body. When we understand these, we know the physical body in the occult sense. In the human personal "I," the mental body corresponds to blood in the physical body. The astral body corresponds to the nervous system in the physical body.

The etheric body corresponds to the glands in the physical body. The spleen, for example, has a specific function from an occult point of view. The Theosophical books show that the spleen transforms the so-called solar energy. The occult spleen transforms this solar energy into individual prana, the life force of the material world. This means that the etheric body receives the solar energy and converts it into a personal life force that animates the physical body. It should be added that the etheric body is responsible for the glands, blood, sensations, and the sympathetic nervous system. The correspondent of the gross physical body in the physical body is the skeleton.

Human memory is occultly an inner sense of vision: an inner ability to see spiritual things and an inner ability to draw them out. From an occult point of view, our memory is still attached to the cosmos; therefore, we have no control over it. Few people have mastered their memory. Not everyone can remember everything or go back in memory from the moment of birth to where they are.

Human memory is awakened when the reflex ether is activated. This fourth ether is still in a natural state, for we have not yet organized it, but if we do, we acquire what is called clairvoyance, the ability to read from nature's great notebook, the akasha. This ability is complete when the fourth ether is at our disposal. Then memory and clairvoyance awaken, our memory of the past awakens, and our past, with its embodiments and forms, is revealed to us. That is the practical memory of reincarnation. That is why occult events require such a long effort that they cannot be achieved in one ordinary life.

### *The Chakras in the Etheric Body*

*Chakras appear in many Theosophical sources and are nowadays found in the New Age literature. Chakras are also mentioned in some yoga systems. The word chakra means wheel, which in Theosophy is interpreted as a center of power in the human etheric body. The Western system of chakras can be traced back to the esoteric teachings of H. P. Blavatsky. Still, the current New Age type of chakra system, according to the American clairvoyant Kurt Leland (2016)<sup>2</sup>, only emerged in 1977.*

*Ervast discusses the role of the chakras on the spiritual path, that is, the path of initiation, in his book The Key to the Kalevala.*

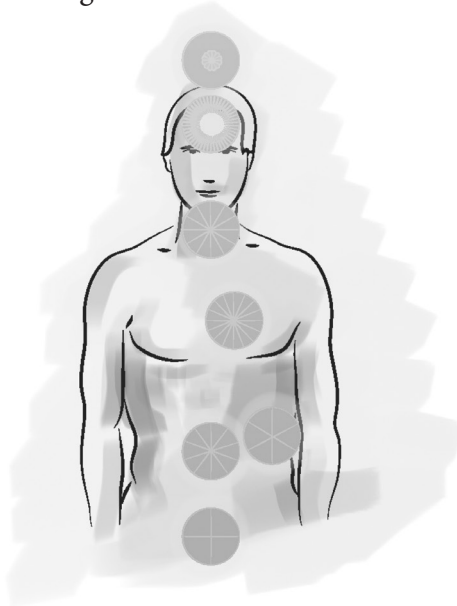
The chakras, also known as lotus flowers or power centers, are located in the etheric body. They are fine vortices in the etheric body whose function is to transmit the forces of the invisible world to the physical body. There are seven of these power centers, and they are located in different places on the surface of the etheric body: at the base of the spine, the navel, spleen, heart, neck, forehead, and inside the skull

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2 Leland, Kurt (2016). *Rainbow Body. A History of the Western Chakra System from Blavatsky to Brennan*. Lake Worth, FL: IBIS Press.

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(figure 2). In an ordinary person, they are not organized and do not rotate as they do in a sage.



**Figure 2.** The chakras of the etheric body, according to Ervast.

In the ordinary person, the navel chakra, or solar plexus, mediates the effects of the invisible world in the form of vague antipathy and sympathy, fear and doubt. The throat chakra mediates the sounds of the invisible world. If it is activated prematurely, a person loses sanity. Temporary activity of the chakra on the forehead (“third eye chakra”), on the other hand, causes visions.

Hidden within the human being is a creative force, the kundalini, which lies at the base of the spine. It affects a person’s sexuality. In other respects, the kundalini sleeps in a serpentine form; hence, it is called the serpent fire. The serpent fire is not something one should try to awaken oneself, but it will be awakened in due course by the Master of Wisdom or Jesus Christ himself.

### **The Human “I”**

*Evolution in Theosophy is understood as a spiritual process. Biological evolution as such is not denied, but it is thought to have a purpose aimed*

*at the development of consciousness or spirit. Thus the origin of man is not entirely to be found in biological evolution: the origin of the human "I" is divine. This "I" manifests itself as a personality with a higher "I" behind it. In the following treatment, higher "I" refers to (higher) manas, which survives from one incarnation to another and evolves in the school of life. The term higher Self is also used in Theosophy; this typically refers to atma, which is a universal divine principle, the truly immortal aspect of human beings.*

### ***The Birth of the "I"***

Theosophical literature explains that the human has two selves: the higher and the lower "I." In the manifested personality, there is a lower "I," but behind it, there is a higher "I" responsible for the personal "I"'s actions, feelings, and thoughts. A person is usually unaware of her higher "I," yet it may be looking after the person. The human "I," or personality, is like a shadow, a reflection of the higher "I."

Anyone who has read Theosophical literature knows that although humanity is the product of the animal kingdom, our human "I" does not come from the animal kingdom but from somewhere else. What distinguishes humans from the animal kingdom is precisely the human "I." It is not the result of the animal kingdom; rather, that "I" is born from a higher place and comes from God. The human "I" is not the result of biological evolution.

Animals also have an "I," called the *collective soul* in Theosophical literature. This means that if there is a group of similar animals, they all have one common Self and one soul. In addition, there are beings with "I"'s that are not human but are called *devas*, angelic beings. *Deva* is a collective name for human-like beings in the invisible world. One such deva is the leader of certain animal species and constitutes its Self. The deva transmits consciousness to that group of animals.

When it is time for an animal to be born as a human being, it has developed so much in the school of life that it awakens to self-consciousness. A strong upward yearning occurs in the animal. It wants to feel more love, to understand more than it could have understood before, and this longing is answered by life or divine consciousness.

This divine consciousness is waiting for an animal to awaken out of love and to yearn more than other members of the group soul.

When this happens, the Self descends upon that animal and awakens spiritual understanding. As it were, it lights up the star and the divine life. When the longing of the human self is awakened, a particular center of consciousness, the star in the divine world, responds, and a human “I” is born, which is separated from the group soul. Then, the human “I” and a channel between consciousness and material form arise from the group soul. However, an animal with a human “I” cannot be born as a human being in present humanity.

Ancient wisdom calls the manifestation of the “I” *karana sharira*, or causal body, and in modern occultism, it is called the *auric egg*. The “I” remains an auric egg through reincarnations. It is a miraculous Book of Life in which all experiences are collected. However, the human “I” is not inside that auric egg; the “I” itself cannot be captured in that way but is outside that egg. The “I” is a spiritual, formless thing, accompanied by the auric egg. We should not think that things are really in this form. When representing spiritual realities, we have to use physical metaphors.

### *The Awakening of the “I”*

A person wakes up spiritually when the “I” wakes up. When this occurs, one realizes that one is a spiritual being. Before this, the “I” was a vague concept. The individual speaks of the “I” but is unsure whether it is anything other than the outcome of the body’s activities. As long as the “I” is not awakened, one’s view is materialistic in practice and theory.

When the “I” awakens, one rejects materialism in both practice and theory and awakens a sense of presentiment, belief, and wonderful confidence that the human “I” is something special and will live after death. This is what we call the awakening of faith. In coming to faith, one becomes a microcosm. This means that something corresponding to the macrocosm has been awakened in the individual, who is a miniature of this larger world, grounded in cosmic consciousness.

When the “I” awakens, the atma-buddhi-manas awakens. At this point, these principles exist only as a possibility in the divine Self residing in God-consciousness, although they are not yet developed. A genuinely living principle of the atma-buddhi-manas will evolve, step by step, in the spiritual path.

When one first awakens into the “I,” it begins to function in the astral-mental body, corresponding to the real mental body on one side and the astral body on the other. But we remember then that the mental body is only the content of the soul, which is called the psychological or real “I.” When one awakens, the “I” affects the astral body, and manas, divine intellect, is created in the astral body. The individual projects divine intellect into the astral body, shaping the astral-mental instrument to reflect that divine intellect. One must purify one’s astral body and one’s whole emotional being in order to reflect the divine intellect. And that is what our “I” does as a rational being, as a thinking being in the world of emotions. That is how manas is created.

The inner and spiritual basis of higher logical thinking lies in our divine nature and the spiritual teachings we have received from the sages. When we purify and develop our thinking through their teachings, our intellect is freed from the shackles of prejudice, and we are filled with a sense of freedom. Thought becomes so clear and sharp that it sees the intellectual truth; the reason itself becomes a kind of measure of intellectual knowledge and truth. In other words, more and more of our emotional bodies become intellectualized, the astral body becomes more and more mentalized, and our emotions transform into reason.

With the awakening of faith, a new actor enters the scene. This new factor is *will*. Faith is the awakening of the inner, spiritual, and moral will. Therefore, the exercises by which we maintain faith as a living and growing force must aim to strengthen and develop the will. This is why we must learn to follow the commandments of Jesus [more on this in chapter 5], for example, in our daily life: all ethical commandments increase our will when we obey them. They give us power over ourselves, root out selfishness, and inspire understanding and love for all. Their ethical and ideal effect is apparent, but they have another function.



Truth, in the moral sense, is selfless, divine love. When we cultivate and develop the will by following the precepts of that love, the will is gradually freed from the shackles of habit and inclination. The will leads to action, and the physical body is the vehicle of action; it is, as it were, the embodied will. Therefore the education of the will mysteriously affects the physical body. It transforms living faith into secret knowledge by affecting the etheric body.

What can happen inside a person is that the consciousness becomes exalted, and they feel especially inspired. The person feels themselves rising in consciousness and the soul becoming richer, stronger, and more significant. The individual sees life from a completely different perspective than before—as rational, good, and purposeful. This is the experience of the higher “I,” for the higher “I” knows life and its purpose more accurately than the personality. In this “I,” one is indeed a different being than before. Every person who has experienced and lived this state of consciousness has felt this strange exaltation. Standing as judge and critic, they feel how the past life has passed them by up to this point.

In certain moments, one sees that one has chosen to be born here; one does not have to be highly evolved to experience this. This particular state of consciousness can dominate a person for a long time. But it may also fall out of consciousness and into oblivion, for the human form may encompass either higher or a lower “I.” Therefore, one must sharpen one’s powers of perception and thought and must monitor one’s feelings. In reality, one has only a single “I,” but it is either higher or lower in different situations. We can understand this truth even if we have not experienced it.

## II Perspectives on Reincarnation

*The doctrine of reincarnation appears in Eastern religions as the transmigration of souls, whereby a person can also be born as an animal in the next life. According to Theosophy, this is impossible because a human is in essence an eternal spiritual being. Hindu and Buddhist thought both take a pessimistic view of reincarnation in seeing the goal of humans as freeing themselves from the wheel of reincarnation. The Theosophical view of reincarnation is more optimistic, regarding the process as means of enabling the individual to grow toward perfection.*

### Reincarnation

The notion of *samsara* as a meaningless cycle of lives is the most comfortless idea in Eastern religions, and liberation from it would be the natural goal of human endeavor. Here in the West, on the other hand, there is no reason to view reincarnation in such terms. A proper understanding of rebirth does not lead to pessimism. The discoveries and inventions of the great scientific minds have opened our eyes to nature's marvelous and ingeniously arranged workings. This opens horizons for grasping the higher truths of life more comprehensively.

Reincarnation can only be understood from the perspective of evolution. When reincarnation is seen in the light of evolutionary theory, it takes on meaning and purpose. Life is not an empty transition from birth to death and from death to birth, but it is like going to school and moving from class to class. Indeed, the "school of life" is a common phrase among Theosophists. In reincarnating repeatedly, humans evolve and grow wiser, refined, and become more spiritual. This is a new, optimistic view of reincarnation.

Although life does have a purpose, people seem to remain the same today as they were yesterday. If we read the literature of any period and nation, people always appear the same, with their vices and virtues. Where, then, is this school of progress to be found?

Humanity is evolving at a languid pace. If we could go back hundreds of thousands and millions of years in history, the traces of the school of life would be clearly visible. Reincarnation is relatively fast, and the time between death and rebirth is measured in hundreds or at most thousands of years. But the school of life is more internal than external. The human body changes very slowly. For example, we now have five senses, but there must have been a time when we had only four.

Reincarnation is about the soul's inner development, not nature's slow evolution. The individual human "I" reincarnates, learns, and evolves. There are significant differences between individuals. It would be comfortless to believe that a human being who suffers, rejoices, loves, and hates is the result of blind chance or the creation of a judicial God. It is far more meaningful to suppose that the individual is a reincarnating and evolving being, in some respects still inexperienced and undeveloped, but with the same fantastic future ahead as others and with the same excellent destination in view.

Even if we were to argue that people are relatively equal morally because even the greatest evildoer has virtues and the most ethically exemplary person has weaknesses, we cannot ignore the intellectual differences between people. Compare the genius of great authors, such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Ralph Waldo Emerson, with the workings of an ordinary writer, or the statesmanship of Napoleon and Caesar with the leadership skills of an ordinary general. How can these differences be satisfactorily understood except in terms of reincarnation? All would be chaos, cruel oppression, and undeserved mercy unless the human is a being who goes to school and learns in it.

How does reincarnation explain differences in character, abilities, and inclinations? Why do some evolve slowly, others more quickly? What is the optimistic view here? Diversity occurs primarily because different aspects and qualities develop in people at various times.

In some individuals, intellectual abilities develop earlier; in others, artistic tendencies or moral qualities. Moreover, diversity occurs because people educate themselves (and one another slowly or quickly, lazily or diligently). We are not automatons in the school of life, but free, rational beings who take part in life's education.

There is no contradiction, even though we often find significant moral shortcomings in sophisticated and brilliant people, despite their ethical efforts, because a distinction must be made between ethical will and characteristics. The moral will of a genius is expressed in the fact that a genius faithfully carries out their life's work. It is always the hallmark of a genius that fate has entrusted them with an original, spiritual mission. A genius is faithful to their mission and life's work despite the obstacles and difficulties caused by circumstances and themselves.

For instance, Aleksis Kivi (1834–72) wrote the first significant novel, *Seven Brothers* (1870), in the Finnish language. His ethical will was expressed in his loyalty to his art. If, on the other hand, he had pursued a good worldly livelihood or had given himself up to a fierce struggle against the seductions of his own lower nature, he would have failed in his mission. The judgment of the world is harsh, but the gods know how to judge. A wealthy or morally “blameless” Aleksis Kivi would probably have achieved more glory and success in his lifetime, but the poet Aleksis Kivi is crowned with immortal glory because he did not succumb to the temptations of mammon or moral temptation but remained true to his conscience. In other words, he was faithful to his *dharma*.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, it is unwise to regard virtues and moral qualities as insignificant. Everything has its time. There are people whose mission in life is to practice and acquire virtues. A wealthy person with no special talents, artistic, or other spiritual life purpose is as if created to raise herself ethically. Of course, ethical self-education is part of every human being's life task, but life itself is our best advisor and also our

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3 Dharma means law, duty, obligation, virtue, and religion. One fulfills one's dharma by listening to one's conscience. Dharma shows what one must do in life to move forward morally.

best teacher, which, if necessary, will use strong means so that we do not have to be too hasty in cultivating many little virtues in ourselves.

The best ethical self-education is to seek the truth honestly and sincerely, with all the devotion of our soul and heart and with all the strength of our reason and understanding. We will also have been most successful in educating our children and one another if we have made them tireless, independent, and unprejudiced seekers of truth. Sooner or later, seekers of truth will always discover what they lack and what is wrong with them—even in a moral sense.

The perfect human is an individual who, despite individual quirks and interests, is more advanced in some respects than others. Naturally, there are traits—ethical traits in particular—in the absence of which one is not yet perfect, such as absolute love of truth, absolute sincerity, and honesty, as well as absolute unselfishness and purity of heart. The masters of the Great White Brotherhood are all perfect in truth and love, even though each one has a different artistic talent from the others.

It is clear that human individuality is preserved from one incarnation to the next; otherwise there could be no question of evolution. That is why a distinction is made between individuality and personality. The human “I,” the pure, ethically responsible core, is reborn, but every time the “I” takes on a new body, a new personality is born, which is, so to speak, an illusion because it is only a physical reflection of the real “I.” These are names taken from practical life, not metaphysical realities. The individual has only one single “I,” even though this “I” is a transcendental spiritual reality and does not fully manifest itself through the corporeal brain.

The brain does not contain the whole of the “I” or soul. The soul is bigger than the brain, and the brain is like a segment of a circle compared to the soul. One’s true “I” is the higher “I” and is also one’s only “I.” The personality manifested in each incarnation is the physical expression of the higher “I.” The body is a solid reality, but only a illusory reflection of the higher “I.”

In Eastern religions, there is a belief that the physical personality migrates from one body to another and is born as an animal. Here

there is an obvious contradiction between Theosophical teachings and some Buddhist texts, but the contradiction is only apparent. It is not that the Buddha's knowledge of life differed from that of the Theosophical Masters. The Buddha saw all his reincarnations, but everyone in search of truth is limited in their bodily expressions by time and environment, in their own thoughts and speech, and in their physical brain. In the Buddha's time there was no talk of evolution, only of *kar-ma*, the law of cause and effect, and the wheel of reincarnation. That is why the Buddha saw the whole drama of life in the light of karma and samsara. The Buddha taught that the *skandhas* are the karmic results of an incarnation, preserved as seeds for future incarnations. He did not speak of a human "I" that gradually evolves but preferred to remain silent. Perhaps he did not see the evolution of the human soul. Even today, one would hardly notice this purely through spiritual insights unless one understood how to look for it on the basis of logical reasons, given the still relatively low level of development of humankind.

### **The Reincarnating "I"**

*Ervast explains how, in death, a person gives up the physical body, followed gradually, through a process of purification, by the whole personality. This is followed by a merger of the purified personality with the higher "I," which contains the memories of past lives from a spiritual point of view.*

According to Theosophical teachings—that is, all the doctrines of wisdom—humans are reincarnating beings. How can we understand the reincarnating "I" if there is no other self but this one "I"? How can we understand the reincarnating "I" if we do not remember that we have lived before? As a rule, an ordinary person does not remember having lived before, having been on earth before, or past lives.

The content of the human soul is included in the term *personality*. It acquires experiences during life, and it grows and develops. But then we die: we have to give up the physical body, the form that has been the lifeblood of the human "I." Although we know of no other "I" than

the personality, whose form is the physical body, we still have to give it up. One must die and leave the physical body.

If we were to die without any human form, we would be left with nothing. But even if the physical body dies, the form of a spiritual being still remains. The human “I” also possesses an astral body, which resembles the physical body but lives on after death.

Nevertheless, even the existence of this astral body does not solve the question of the afterlife, for the astral body is not immortal either. The fact that the human being is inwardly the image of God makes it possible for a human “I” to live in a human form and for that “I” to live after death. Even if the astral body disappears, the human “I” retains its human form, because the human form always lives in the human consciousness.

When one lives after death on the astral plane, one must give up evil, lust, and desires. The afterlife usually begins with a person reliving their life in purgatory, reexperiencing and relinquishing the evil side.

Then the individual goes to heaven to relive life again, but now the higher side: all that was in it of love, goodness, and purity. The individual lives this life intensely, with great emotion and clarity of thought. In fact, they are living a physical life, but in a form of pure harmony. In heaven, the individual is a wonderful person, who loves everyone and is loved by others. All is happiness and bliss.

Everyone imagines and wishes that their physical life could be like this. One knows one is weak, but deep down, one wishes that one could be good and that one’s life could pass without suffering and evil. In heaven, one will live life again in this way. Heavenly life is a life formed by wonderful inner ideals, wherein the individual possesses the infinite ability to correct the errors of the past life. There is nothing unreal about this heavenly life; on the contrary, the individual is in contact with all of their loved ones. They relive life in all its wonderful aspects, corrected by thought and with their dreams fulfilled. It is as if the individual is unconsciously repairing the incarnation that has just passed.

This is not just figurative talk: it is the case that one sees one’s own past and previous incarnations and at the same time understands what

has been lacking in them. Some incarnations reflect a certain kind of imperfection, others another kind, accompanied by external misfortunes, and the individual corrects these imperfections. The individual is like an artist who has created a marble sculpture; after death, they look at their work of art with new eyes and sees its imperfections. Seeing that it does not correspond to their inner thoughts, the individual sets out to correct it.

An individual who has never known meditation will learn it in heaven. In a sense, the individual meditates when correcting some aspect of the past life, while at the same time creating something new. Individuals correct themselves when they learn to meditate on themselves in the previous physical life. If they have patiently developed the meditative faculty, in meditation they see themselves objectively, from the outside. If they see that in a certain situation, they cannot control their tongue, then in meditation, it is easy to see the root cause of that deficiency, and the individual says, "I must not do that from now on."

In heaven, everyone lives in a similar state of consciousness. Everyone is immersed in deep meditation while at the same time shaping the body for a new birth.

What happens in occult reality when a person in the heavenly realm relives and revises their past life? The higher side of the human soul merges with the higher consciousness: God, the Logos. The soul of the past life is raised to the higher "I" and becomes a page in the Book of Life. This Book of Life, formed leaf by leaf in the series of lives, is the causal body. In it is written the eternal and immortal contents of the soul. It could also be called a memory body, because it preserves the memory of previous incarnations. As humans are born on earth repeatedly, each incarnation forms a page in the Book of Life, that is, in the causal body. In this way, the individual gradually forms a higher "I," in which the memory of all previous incarnations is preserved.

The memory of past lives thus lies in the causal body, but it is a closed book to the personality. Under ordinary circumstances, we cannot read that book, for while living on earth, the human consciousness is turned away from it and takes in new influences from visible life. When the attention is concentrated on this visible world, the



individual knows nothing of the causal body. But when, after death, they reach that state in heaven where they read their past life, correct it, and form a new page out of it, then the memory may be awakened. The individual becomes aware of the other leaves of the Book of Life and can read their past lives.

For this reason, many spiritually advanced people can remember their past incarnations if they can merge with their Book of Life: their causal body, or higher “I.” This is rare in physical life, but after death, all people in heaven usually remember their past incarnations, because in heaven, one can read the Book of Life. They remember their past lives, compare them, and make plans for the future before being reincarnated into a new life and beginning to write a new page in the Book of Life.

## **Reincarnation Memory**

### *Awakening the Reincarnation Memory*

*The doctrine of reincarnation includes the possibility of remembering past lives or the spiritual lessons they taught. Human personality is already a manifestation of reincarnation memory, but it is not self-conscious remembering. According to Ervast, it is possible, under certain conditions, to revive these memories during life.*

The reincarnation memory lives in human nature, in being, in consciousness, in all that the individual brings into the world at birth. But such reincarnation memory is not self-conscious. How can a conscious reincarnation memory be awakened?

When trying to recall the past, people usually have to rely on certain laws that govern memory. One such law is the law of association. If a particular image is present in consciousness, it will call up from memory another image that was previously associated with it. In general, we know that if we want to recall something, we must recall at least one image that belongs to the same series.

This is a very important point and must be borne in mind with regard to all recollection, for the same law applies to reincarnation memory. It is not merely a matter of conjuring up images of past lives

in one's mind without further ado. After all, we cannot conjure up all memories even from our present life. It is even more impossible with regard to a past life, because one is not even the same personality now as previously.

Memory does not reside in our brains; memory is in the Book of Life; from this, we understand that instantaneous reincarnation memory is impossible. Past experiences cannot pass directly from one personality to the next. There is a state of self-consciousness into which one can go in order to remember past lives, but it is not personal consciousness. The states of consciousness of past personalities—to which the memory of reincarnation applies—do not exist in the present body. It is, therefore, impossible without further change to enter into the same state of personal consciousness in which the old personality existed.

Someone who wants to remember a past life must first ascend to the memory of God, to the Book of Life, and then descend to some past personality. One must ascend to a state of consciousness in which one is in heaven, in the afterlife between two births. Because the individual has had a prenatal state of consciousness in which they have studied the Book of Life, they can reach this state again.

We can classify reincarnation memory into different types. A person can have a powerful experience that plunges the human "I" into a postdeath state of consciousness, a heavenly state between births. Another possibility is that the human "I" does not abandon all its faculties at death: it leaves behind the physical and etheric bodies but not the astral body. When it is reborn, it retains the astral body—the emotional and thought body—of the former personality. The old personality's experiences, thoughts, and feelings live in the new body, the old experiences come to life again, and one remembers the past life. We may say that such a memory is called forth by life itself. Although such cases are rare, they are more common in children than is usually noticed.<sup>4</sup>

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4 This is supported by the research on children's past-life memories by Professor Ian Stevenson and his colleagues at the University of Virginia.

A third possible way of remembering a past life is to gradually lead the consciousness back to the postmortem state between births. It is a kind of evolutionary process, which entails going backward day by day. (One does not have to remember what happened at night.) One reenters youth and childhood but does not stop there. This does not happen all at once, because the success of this method depends upon repeating it again and again in small daily increments. This kind of memory training is not a one-day job but the result of prolonged practice.

But there is a fourth way of remembering, in which the memory of a reincarnation comes to life as if by itself. This process does not do violence to nature, but accelerates nature's work in humans and makes nature itself awaken the memory of reincarnation.

In what way can one attain this? One must first say to oneself: "I believe that reincarnation is a fact of nature, and I would like to have the memory of reincarnation awakened in myself, if that is the purpose of life. I do not wish to awaken it by force, but I wish to do what I can not to hinder the work of nature so that the memory of reincarnation may be awakened." Doubting the reality of reincarnation merely because one has no memory of past lives will obstruct those memories.

The human soul lives in the astral world, which is a world of oblivion. Although emotion is the first form of perception, the whole emotional life, the emotional essence, is based on forgetfulness. What then must happen in one's consciousness concerning the astral body in order to awaken the memory of reincarnation? What overcomes the astral body and the forgetfulness of emotional life? The only thing that can overcome it is the innermost and most secret essence of emotion, which is eternal, indestructible life. Everything else is forgotten and dies away.

There is, however, an emotion that can preserve something of its inner essence. It is the love of truth, goodness, perfection, and God; it is the innermost essence of love. The reincarnation memory awakens of its own accord when one has learned to love selflessly and altruistically while proceeding along the path of spiritual development.

## *Spiritual Reincarnation Memory*

When ordinary people hear about reincarnation and become excited about this worldview, we see that they first begin to wonder what they must have been in their past lives and when they lived. But it works completely differently when the reincarnation memory spiritually awakens.

The spiritual memory of reincarnation does not say to the person: “You lived then and there, and you were such and such a person.” Reincarnation memory as a spiritual memory does not work that way, although it may involve such a memory as a side effect. A psychic person can gain such information about their past, but that information is more likely to satisfy curiosity than real need.

For a human being as a spiritual being, it is not important to know what personality they used to be. What is important is to know how they have developed in each life, what path they have followed in the past, and how they have progressed in development during previous incarnations. Their former name is of secondary importance to their spiritual development and spiritual growth, although even this information is preserved in the great memory of nature: nothing is lost, for when it is useful or necessary for the individual’s work and useful to humankind, the reincarnation memory is awakened in this respect as well. Nonetheless, when this memory awakens spiritually, the details of former lives do not return to consciousness at the outset.

When a person wakes up in a spiritual state to read their Book of Life, the consciousness extends either to one page or to several pages at the same time. If it extends to only one page, the individual sees the spiritual result of that particular incarnation, but not their previous incarnations or what has happened in them. To be able to see a past personality with its details in the pages of the Book of Life, the consciousness would have to descend from that page to the corresponding personality. It would revive the old personality and immerse itself in it; then memory could read all that had happened in connection with that personality. This can happen and has happened in some cases.

Normally when the spiritual reincarnation memory is awakened, it does not recreate past personalities but reads the pages of the Book

of Life. Then one is confronted with the living results of one's previous incarnations, but as they are after mediation in the heavenly state. One does see what has been learned in previous incarnations, but not the details.

Let us say, for example, that an individual has been particularly greedy in a previous incarnation. Having lived in such an incarnation, they have suffered unspeakably after death, when they have had to free herself from greed. They have had to tear away all greed and lust from their heart and have had to live their life again in heaven, but that heaven is small and poor. For when someone has been greedy and selfish and has not helped other people, the content of that individual's heavenly life, the heavenly treasures they have gathered, are small, making their heaven small as well (although the individual may have been happy in it).

The bottom line, which one has learned in heaven and which will be written in the Book of Life, is that one should not be greedy, for happiness comes only by helping others and doing good. When this reincarnation memory is awakened, the individual will see in this Book of Life what they have learned and to what extent they have purified the personality. Then they can ask whether they can now put these things into practice in life. Although the individual is in the happy position of having this spiritual reincarnation memory awakened, it is not guaranteed that they will completely free from personal shortcomings.

It is exactly the same with all human desires. Let us say that somewhere in life, one has learned that worldly power and glory are trifles. One has sought and received glory, but after death sees what glory is meant to teach: honor is external; it is something that one can get from other people. People can give it to one another and take it away, and what people can give or take away means nothing. One might also see that one has been unchaste in a previous life and learns from this that there is no happiness or bliss in such a life: the only thing that can give happiness is love.

This is how a person's spiritual reincarnation memory is awakened. They see the achievements of past incarnations, learned from past

experiences. They may already have learned so much that they can see where bad tendencies come from and how the past can strengthen them. They see that if they no longer have these tendencies in this life and are neither greedy nor immoral, that too is due to the past. One has ascertained that there are no weaknesses in oneself; one knows that one is free of them, but it is something that was learned in the past.

This is an important lesson that one learns when the reincarnation memory is spiritually awakened. The individual sees that justice rules the world and that they have not received any of their own qualities as a gift: if one is in any respect purer and more excellent than others, one has acquired this excellence and purity through the greatest suffering. If one is deficient in some respect, it means that one has not yet suffered so much as to be entirely free from this defect. This is the purpose of the reincarnation memory. Such knowledge is much more important than knowing what kind of personality one may have been in the past. That is why nature does not give an individual memory of such things; life teaches something quite different.

The memory of rebirth is necessary for human spiritual development and growth, but not for personal vanity. Hence, when true reincarnation memory is awakened, one is not interested in the details of one's past lives but begins to have firm and serious confidence in spiritual development, in the great justice that reigns in the world, in the law of karma, and above all in the fact that no effort is wasted.

The awakening of the reincarnation memory is followed by the knowledge that each person wills to be born here, and no one is born against their will. Even though one has seen that there is so much suffering and evil in this life, one has nevertheless willed to be born here. We cannot blame God or fate for our being here. When the memory of the past is awakened in us, the spiritual knowledge of the future that awaits comes along with that memory.

The spiritual reincarnation memory cannot be awakened without a clear knowledge of one's past, destiny, and future. As the memory awakens, the individual also learns to know one or possibly more of the Masters and to follow in their footsteps. This must be accompanied

by an awakening of the knowledge of how far the person has come in the past. Those who know a Master clearly see the path, knowing that it is the path to follow and that the Master's instructions will lead there. They look into the past and see which steps they have taken, which they have yet to take, and what still awaits them in life. They see not only the final days of the present life but also the sufferings through which they have yet to pass and the great burdens that await in a future incarnation.

The individual sees the goal towards which this life of suffering leads and wants to lead. They see what particular quality, strength, or character they must develop and what that life of suffering will develop in them. They see that life will become hell for them, so they will first be timid and shy. But when they see the goal, they will be overcome with joy and gladness and will want to face that life and overcome its difficulties. Then the soul makes a remarkable promise: "I will serve Thee; I will fulfill the purpose which Thou hast set before me!"

What does it mean to want to serve? It is one's duty to will to serve God. For this to be real, for one to truly know how to serve God, one must learn to love God above all things and one's neighbor as oneself. But to learn to love in a totally selfless and altruistic way, when born into this life, one must forget the state of happiness in which these promises were made and what one was promised. It is a natural necessity to descend before birth from the higher astral plane into the Lethe of forgetfulness, because if one were to remember one's promise to serve God and love one's fellow humans, such knowledge and exhortation would live and remove one's freedom in realizing love and goodness. But when one forgets one's promise, one is tested by life.

Oblivion has yet another purpose. An individual who remembered the suffering that awaits might not be able to live. If they were to bring along the knowledge of all the sufferings, injustices, tortures, and difficulties that await in life, they would not have the strength to live and might even commit suicide as a child. The stream of forgetfulness must wipe out all such memory and knowledge from the consciousness so that the soul may be free to grow gradually from life to life.

## *Longing for Happiness and the Reincarnation Memory*

Every human believes that they must become happy, and that happiness appears to them as a kind of personal happiness. What is the happiness that one dreams of? The individual does not want to live alone; they must have a friend who understands them and with whom they can live. Then they would be happy and help each other.

There is a deep secret behind this belief in happiness. When a vision of the future is awakened and one looks to the past, one sees a remarkable incarnation, when one lived in what religions call paradise.

Each of us has been in an earthly paradise before, and when the spiritual reincarnation memory is awakened to the future and the past, one sees the life in which one has lived in paradise. It was a wonderful life, without sorrow or the pain of death. In that life, the individual loved another human being with complete selflessness and was able to see what it means to love in a human, holy, and pure way. There is never any misunderstanding or contradiction. The individual simply rejoices in being loved by another. They see the reality and the ideal. In looking back, they see the being who loved them, and they know they are indeed happy.

This knowledge is enlivened in the soul, so that the person knows, "I am happy! There is a person who loves me and whom I can love!" All the sufferings, aspirations, and desires that one experiences are due to the fact that everyone in their soul seeks that other person who loves them and whom they can love.

Often the person one seeks is born at a different time on earth, and one wanders alone within until the time comes for again meeting the sole true beloved. But by wandering inwardly alone, one is purified. During that time, one will be involved in many kinds of relationships with other people: a wife, a child, a brother, a sister, or a lover.

A person gets into those relationships, but it is like schooling for them, where they ask: "Are you my beloved?" In the end they will meet the one who really loves them and whom they can love back. This happens when they have learned to forget themselves, when they have been purified in order to be happy again. A person cannot be happy as long as there is sin and selfishness in them, while they still have



some chains weighing them down. But when one develops towards selflessness, truth, goodness, and love, one prepares oneself to receive happiness, for everyone will have happiness that cannot be described in words.

## **The Lower and Higher Memory of Nature**

An occultist exploring the spiritual world does not proceed without guidance but follows the advice of the experienced. The true occultist enters the Great White Brotherhood, which preserves this earth's innermost wisdom and knowledge in its purity. The occultist who lawfully explores the unseen world will encounter the spiritual world and the stages of the afterlife. But they will not stop there, for far stranger realms will open up for exploration. The individual comes into contact with the hidden memory of nature and there is confronted with the greatest wonder of nature.

Just as the human memory operates in the cerebrum and cerebellum of the brain, the occultist discovers that the memory of nature has a cerebrum and a cerebellum. From the inside, the earth and its life are like a brain.

The occultist who sets out to study the memory of nature in the invisible world first comes into contact with a reality that we can describe as a small brain. These small brains of nature are not confined to the surface of the earth but extend far beyond the atmosphere. They open up to the astonished gaze of the occultist as a perfect, colored gallery of light or mirrors, a remarkable living collection of paintings. These paintings depict everything that is happening or has ever happened on this earth. The spiritual researcher, astonished, asks where these pictures come from. They discover that these amazing natural brains, which take photo-perfect pictures of everything, work through living nature and nature's living creatures. The natural brain is in mineral, plant, animal, and human life.

Relatively little information about this visible world comes from mineral and plant life. Nature's brain receives many images of what is happening here through the animal world, but the clearest and most varied images come through humans. Animals do not perceive the

visible world in the same way that humans do. An animal's observations often look like caricatures, albeit sometimes they seem quite wonderful to the human eye. Humans, as the crown jewel of nature, are in a position to see objectively. All human beings, with minor exceptions, see the same way through their senses; therefore their impressions of this external world are fairly consistent. Still, each person gets a somewhat different impression of each different event.

When something happens in this visible world, nature photographs that event through all the brains and senses that follow it. If a thousand people look at it, it will be a thousand different images. Nature's brain objectively photographs all the details. The job of the occultist is to combine those images into one.

One cannot remember everything one sees daily, but everything is reflected in detail in the subconscious. What has mysteriously happened? The human cerebellum is in contact with nature's brain. Nature's brain accurately photographs all human observations, and the images remain in the etheric brain of nature, which in occult literature is called the *astral light*. The astral light contains the wondrous memory of nature and is objectively accurate and valid.

The images of the astral light are in the etheric world, and for the image to reach the everyday consciousness, it must first stimulate the etheric side of the brain so that the etheric side, in turn, will affect the physical brain. No image in the astral light can stimulate the etheric brain unless there is an invisible golden thread of experience linking them together. This does not mean that we experience everything we see clearly; even so, the images are somehow part of our experience.

Memory works in the daytime through the physical brain, while the invisible, inner side of the physical brain, the etheric brain, mediates the connection with nature's great memory. The cerebellum is connected to nature's etheric image collection. Since the emotional world is near nature's cerebellum—which we call the astral plane—all human emotions and thoughts lie behind all the images that nature photographs. These are trapped as a kind of seed in the images so that they can be renewed. Nature's memory is completely impartial, because it preserves both the bad and the good. It does not select; the evil is as well represented in nature's memory as the good.

As a result, the occultist is exposed to great dangers when entering the world of memory. Unless they can stand there impartial and strong, they will be in trouble as all manner of evil rushes around them. If there is any tendency to evil in their own being, it will draw to itself everything that tends in the same direction from the memory of nature. The individual is then in danger of losing all of their life force. Therefore, to enter into this nature's lower memory is one of the most dangerous occult acts.

But in nature, there is another side to this memory, like a big brain. It is nature's higher memory, and it is called the Book of Life, in which only what is good forever is written in gold letters. Nature's big brain is like the big brain of a individual human In our daily lives. We discard memories that would bother us, which is wise: a person who could not do so would soon go mad. Nature's higher memory, the Book of Life, the akashic chronicles, is like a sieve. Everything that cannot remain is sifted out through it. It does not retain anything bad, only the good results, and discards everything useless to it, for its goal is the perfect human.

The individual, educated in the school of life, learns to be good, strong, unselfish, and loving, and to work, sacrifice, serve beauty, and create art. The human individual learns all this while forgetting suffering and pain. Love and all of one's talents remain, but one need not remember the downsides of one's long history. They are forgotten, so that one may be free, happy, and blissful, like a new creature, and yet forever the same. That is why, in nature, there is the selective memory of akasha.

Even without the ability to read the Book of Life, one can have memories of the past. One can have visions, dreams, and impressions of one's past, but they come from within oneself. The astrally clairvoyant person can see a series of loose pictures from nature's wondrous collection of paintings; with this strange ability, the clairvoyant may think they can read anything from the past. But there is no guarantee that those pictures are reliable, because they have not been read from the Book of Life, which is the only legitimate way of approaching the past. A clairvoyant who believes they are the reading the akashic

records is in reality mostly reading reflections from the ether, which cannot be trusted. Only a high Master is qualified to read the akasha.

The way to the past is through the higher “I,” and the investigator must first ask permission from the higher “I” of the other person. Without permission, even a Master does not begin to explore another person’s past. Each person’s history is hidden in the Book of Life of the higher “I,” and the past must be recreated from it. The personal “I,” even if it is clairvoyant, cannot do this.

### **III Karma: The Law of Cause and Effect**

*The law of karma is one of the central teachings of Eastern religions, Theosophy, and Anthroposophy. The principle of karma as a law of cause and effect is easy to understand, but its operation is very difficult to predict in individual cases, since significant life events result from an individual's karmic balance sheet, which comprises the actions, words, and thoughts of numerous lifetimes. Moreover, everyone participates, at least to some extent, in the collective karma of one's family, nation, and the world.*

#### **The Law of Karma**

*Karma* means that every action has a consequence and that you “reap what you sow” [cf. Galatians 6:7]. The world is not run by a whimsical god or by chance; it is an ordered cosmos in which humans, for example, as reincarnating beings achieve spiritual ends. When the question is asked how the manifested life of the cosmos is ordered, one expressive word is used to describe this order: karma.

Karma is the law of causality, justice, and balance; karma is necessity and destiny. We can say that the lawfulness of nature, revealed by science, is an expression of karma. Same conditions—same consequences. Put water in the freezer, and the water freezes. Stick your finger in the fire; the fire burns. Nature does not ask for motives or motivations. The laws of nature are inexorable; they are the workings of karma in the elements and in the forces of nature. Science also studies the laws of the historical development of nations and social life; there too the action of karma is manifest.

But it is in the context of human life that karma is best discussed. In a more limited sense, karma is the law of cause and effect in human

life. The word *karma* means *action*. All life is action. One acts, and action produces a consequence; this is karma. And one's action is not limited to one's own deeds: one's thoughts, feelings, and words are actions as well; all of them give rise to consequences. Thoughts give rise to new thoughts and lead to new actions. Actions produce consequences, which are either suffered or enjoyed. Karma neither punishes nor rewards but only restores the harmony that has been disrupted.

Karma affects a person from birth to birth. Each incarnation is the result of the previous one and is the cause of the next. Some Theosophists, when faced with misfortune, say, "This is my karma," because in difficult moments a person who believes in the law of karma finds great consolation in this belief. They do not blame God or chance, because they know that in the past they themselves have created the causes of their misfortunes. Sometimes these causes may also be found in the present life. Then karma works faster: it is useless for us to look for causes far away if they can be found close by. Only events that we otherwise have no way of understanding point to the past. Likewise, happy and joyful surprises in life are also due to karma.

Karma does not necessarily have to be individual; it can be collective as well. Each person is born into a specific environment. Families and nations can have their own collective karma. The individual is born into and becomes part of this group karma. But it is also possible for someone to have such good individual karma that they rise above the group karma, at least to some extent.

Karma predetermines the conditions and environment into which a person is born; these are things no human being can change. Likewise, human karma determines the nature, talents, inclinations, and physical and spiritual weaknesses of the future personality. Karma also determines those accidents in life which come from outside and cannot be avoided. But the whole of one's life is otherwise free: karma has drawn the contours, but within these contours, one is free. One can even step outside the contours if one is free and independent enough. In actions, thoughts, and words, the individual, as a rational and responsible being, is free. Only the consequence of the act is unavoidable—not the act itself.

When someone does wrong and blames karma for it, they are really blaming themselves. No external power of karma forces them to do wrong. Nevertheless, the action is karmic in the sense that it is certainly a consequence of one's wrong thoughts. Even suicide is karma in a way. When the cup is filled with thoughts of suicide, it will eventually overflow into sudden insanity. Sometimes this cup has been filled in a previous life: then suicide is karma in an even darker sense. The same applies, of course, to other criminal acts.

Let us not trust too much in our own righteousness, because that leads to pharisaism and judging others. Let us do as Jesus instructs: let us watch and pray; let us always try to think, speak, and do what is right, pure, beautiful, and true. Then at least it will be possible for us to endure the moment of temptation, anxiety, or despair when it comes. We cannot change karma, but by dealing with it as free, rational beings, we take the sting out of it; thus, as it were, we overcome karma.

Karma operates in the world, and the world is infinite; karma is therefore omnipresent and independent of locality. Karma is the expression of God's wisdom and reason. God is also omnipresent; therefore, at least locally, there is no difference between God and karma. The essence of God is outside of place and time, whereas karma operates in place and time, everywhere and always.

God's wisdom operates in karma in that God has taken certain powers into his service and given them a mission. By the nature of the mission, these powers must be discerning and rational. When, for example, a person is born, the right environment, time, and parents must be sought; this is not done automatically, but through wise choice and discretion. This work is entrusted to rational beings: the guardians and executors of karma are an almost infinite number of spiritual beings of varying degrees, led by the Lords of Karma, or *Lipikas*. The wisdom and will of God are, as it were, personified in the Lords of Karma and their servants.

## **Karma in Action**

Karma is the law of causality that drives existence and causes us to weave our own destiny. But what would become of all our actions, efforts,

and development if there were not another law in life, called the law of grace? Especially in Christianity, this is the name given to the grace and love that are behind everything, calling and commanding us to move toward perfection. If we were to reap what we sow only as a result of the law of cause and effect, we would only ever reap the evil we sowed.

There is also a law of the spirit, inviting and demanding Providence, showing the ideal, and urging us to go forward on the path of life. Behind all this is the great power of grace and love.

In light of this view of life, let us look at two instances in the life of Jesus that make wise reference to these things. First, consider the story of the man born blind (John 9:1-4).<sup>5</sup> The disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.”

We can draw attention to the disciples’ question: “Who has committed this sin?” So it was clear to the disciples that nothing happens in the world without a reason. The law of cause and effect was clear to them. Their question was moral in nature. A person could not have been born blind unless there was a moral reason behind it. Therefore, they asked: what moral evil causes this man to be born blind?

In response, Jesus says: “Neither this man nor his parents.” And then he says, “This happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.” What, then, are those works of God? They are the same as what in Sanskrit is called *karma*. That was why this man was born blind for: so that karma would be revealed. That was his karma. He had done nothing, but karma is that wonderful law of life dictating that every human being who has lived on earth leaves behind karma, which will come out sometime later. The consequences reappear in some new personality, as a seed grows a flower or tree.

Here the Buddhists are very particular. They are clear that karma arises again—but not in the same personality. We have a slightly

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5 All quotes from the Bible are taken from the New International Version (NIV).



different point of view: humans, as reincarnating beings, retain a consciousness that goes from birth to birth. There is a shared consciousness, which is like a thread on which beads are strung. The beads are different reincarnations, which together form a great long chain. And this thread connects them all: the higher “I,” the human reality. This higher “I” goes from birth to birth and bears all the consequences, even if they are reflected in each new personality.

The higher “I” cannot suffer in the same way as the lower “I.” Still, the higher “I” can suffer in its own way. It can perhaps grieve without any searing pain. It doesn’t have the sense of pain that we can feel through our astral bodies. Its own essence is bliss and glory. It is happy in itself, and yet in some sense, it can grieve. Through personalities, it creates and bears suffering. The higher “I” sees perfection but does not immediately know how to realize its vision. The outer world can tempt the personality to wander away from what the higher “I” wants. Then the higher “I” mourns: “The angel weeps,” as the fairy tales say. The higher “I” looks at the ideal and suffers because it has not yet been able to create a personality that will obey. But gradually, it learns. When Jesus says that this man has not sinned, but the works of God, or karma, are manifested in him, he means, “This man, who was born blind, could not have sinned, but karma is manifested in him. The higher ‘I’ that now dwells in him has dwelt in a personality which has erred in such a way that it has now been born blind.”

There is another side to the story, for Jesus knew that the blind man’s karma had run its course. Even though the karma of his blindness had been completed, nature could do nothing about it. As a manifestation of God’s love, Jesus could give the man born blind his sight back in a way that really affected him: he became grateful for it. The man born blind was transformed. He understood existence and life and preached about God to others, telling them what great grace had been shown to him. Because of this, the works of God became visible in that blind man.

The fall of the Tower of Siloam (Luke 13:4-5) is another story of karma in the New Testament. Jesus said, “Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more

guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.” Let us now look at this event in terms of karma. What karma was fulfilled here? Why did Jesus say that they were no more guilty than anyone else?

There are usually two possibilities. The first is that we get to atone for our old karma. When people do something they regret, they are commonly not in their right mind; they are compelled by an instinctive force. That’s karma. It is said in everyday speech, “You can’t avoid your fate.” (We could, though we would have to be wiser than we are now.)

When we think of the fall of the Tower of Siloam, we realize that the people who happened to pass by the tower would very much regret doing so if they had the chance. We can then ask: was it by chance, or was it their karma? We can say that it was their karma: it was no accident that they went past that tower. Perhaps someone thought, “I’ll walk to that tower first, and then go home.” Then some spirit being from the spiritual world might have a suggestive effect and whisper, “Go there and there.” In some cases, the thought comes directly from the individual’s own higher “I,” which may have looked on and thought: “Even this life has not gone so well as to avoid that consequence of the past; it must happen now.” And then the higher “I” influences this individual so that they must go to the Tower of Siloam.

Another possibility is that we create new karma. Our life only partly consists of old karma, because we are also creating new karma. There may be some for whom the fall of the Tower of Siloam was not karma per se, but the creation of something new. They went there involuntarily. Their higher “I” led them there because it saw that it was good for them. They would have certain experiences in the afterlife that would have an impact in the life to come, so that if they were threatened with sudden danger, they would be saved.

This is how the higher “I” guides some people: the Tower of Siloam will fall both on those for whom it is karma and on those for whom it is like grace. They have received permission from their Master to begin something new and good.

## Karma and Disease

*Ervast presents some of the results of his spiritual research on the relationship between karma and disease. Ervast's descriptions were given in the early 1930s. Today, people live much longer, and there are effective treatments for many diseases. This is why, for example, tuberculosis has almost disappeared from Finland. It may be that the karmic causes of disease are more varied today than in Ervast's time. Of course no one can or should be blamed for having a disease, even if there is a karmic reason behind it. One cannot infer a person's moral or spiritual character from an illness.*

It is natural for people who think about reincarnation to look to the more distant past for the causes of serious illnesses. Many occult studies prove that karmic diseases have a cause in the psyche. This is the case, for example, with lung disease (tuberculosis), which has to do with the lungs and breathing. It is like a highly developed disease of moral origin. Its spiritual cause is (to describe it briefly) a kind of excessive, fanatical idealism, one that is out of balance with the material conditions of life. Such idealism is most often manifested in a religious way. Many people are prone to religious fervor, especially in their youth. This in itself is very beautiful.

But religious zeal can lead to a decision to fast and torture the body, even to contempt for the body. The physical body may then appear to be a den of sin when in fact it is not: desires and lusts reside in the astral body and cannot be overcome by the discipline of the physical body. Contempt for and torture of the physical body will plant the seed of lung disease.

In the Middle Ages, many people seeking sanctity despised and tortured their bodies. This had the eerie consequence of producing an epidemic of tuberculosis. If tuberculosis resides in a person as a seed and has not yet broken out, the disease can occur in this or a later incarnation unless the person comes to balance and realizes that the body is given as a gift and on loan. It must be wisely treated as a temple, a good companion and helper.

The karmic background of kidney disease or renal failure also has a spiritual cause. Looking back, we find that the person was too timid, shy, or modest in a previous life. They have forgotten that they are as spiritually valuable as any other human being; they are no worse before God than any other creature. Excessive sensitivity drains the life forces and sets off kidney disease in the coming incarnation. Then the individual may not be so timid; if they still are, they may learn to overcome their timidity.

An increasingly materialistic outlook on life characterized the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. Materialism was indeed enlightenment compared to the blind faith that mankind had had in the Middle Ages. A few philosophers at first opposed blind faith. They liberated themselves from it, and through them, a freer way of thinking spread to the people.

Hence the rise of materialism. Materialism is the natural reaction to blind faith. It was also a reaction to another cause that made people free themselves from blind faith: alcohol. In the Middle Ages, people drank a great deal of alcohol, especially wine. Alcohol has an inspiring and stimulating effect at first, but with continued use it has a dulling effect, thus blocking the higher inspiration.

The Age of Enlightenment awakened people's thinking and carried the karma of blocking the higher possibilities of inspiration. The natural consequence of this was materialism, with the resulting nervous diseases. These can lead to serious mental health problems if they worsen. We can see this historically in humanity, but also in the life of a person: nervous disease is a consequence of the practical and philosophical materialism of the past.

Cancer is a serious disease with two types of past causes. The first is that one has brutally used power over another; one has used psychological and physical violence against another person. The second cause is the use of sexual enchantment, even sex magic. Here too it is a question of using power over another human being. An individual has used sexual enchantment to make others fall in love with them and has acted cruelly towards these others. This may have happened in distant times, and one may have freed oneself from all use of sex magic, but karma has not yet been reconciled; this manifests itself as cancer.

Diabetes is a condition in which blood sugar levels are high for long periods of time because the pancreas does not produce enough insulin. A curious analogy emerges in diabetes: bitter is the opposite of sweet. A person has had difficult experiences in a past life that have caused them to become bitter in that life. The bitterness has remained latent in the human soul, which has sunk from the emotional body into the etheric body. From there, it has seeded itself into the physical body in such a way as to predispose a person to diabetes. We find, however, that often people with diabetes have a peculiarly trusting and happy disposition. Their disease is then the final karma of suffering, and the diabetes will not come back to them in the next life.

This and other examples of karmic disease show the close connection between the soul and the body, even though the effects may only show up in a later incarnation.

## **Overcoming Karma**

Especially in the beginning, when one is introduced to the concept of karma, one thinks that the chain of cause and effect is infinite. How is it possible to free oneself from karma when every action gives rise to consequences, and every consequence gives rise to another action? Isn't the cycle of cause and effect endless?

Here we see the Buddha's problem. He saw how the effects of karma pass from life to life, how all existence seems a hopeless cycle. Moreover, considering how life was almost exclusively sorrow and grief, suffering and pain, he naturally sought escape: salvation from the pain of physical existence. He saw no reconcilable feature in life, for he did not see people evolving, growing, and learning. He only saw how a few—himself among them—could free themselves from the wheel of karma and achieve salvation in nirvana by learning from their suffering and having compassion for the suffering of others.

The Buddha's observation was correct: only a few learned the lesson, and there was salvation in the lesson. He did see some people evolving, but in a negative direction, away from phenomenal life. He saw liberation from karma but not the overcoming of karma. One who seeks to be free from karma seeks to be free from suffering. But

one who strives to overcome karma gladly accepts suffering, knowing that it is the price of bliss and wisdom, whereby many sufferings are transformed into unsuspected joys. This is the difference between being free from karma and overcoming karma.

The Buddha's advice was: "Remove from yourself the cause that binds you to the wheel of samsara, and you are free." Because this cause was *tanha*, or the desire to live, the Buddha advised that the desire to live had to be overcome.

Can we look at life otherwise in the light of evolutionary doctrine? We are not afraid of suffering; we are only afraid of evil. Let us stop wanting evil, let us love and help each other, and we will overcome destiny and make existence a paradise of happiness. This is positive advice; this is an active understanding of life.

Both ways lead to the same goal: the end of karma. But Buddhist nirvana is bliss by virtue of not having to be physically born. The Theosophical overcoming of karma is bliss by virtue of the fact that a life of love and truth is always bliss, whatever form it takes.

In both cases, karma is our great teacher and the good law by which we grow wiser and evolve. When we err, we know karma guides us to the right path. When we do right, we know that our ability and desire to do right continue to grow. None of our efforts are wasted, for everything is recorded in the notebooks of karma.

If we have done something that results in suffering, then of course we cannot overcome karma except by suffering. Suffering is overcome if we suffer joyfully, not by complaining and thinking it is undeserved. If we do not blame other people, God, or existence but suffer with joyful submission, we grasp the secret of suffering and overcome suffering and evil karma. We have taken the sting out of karma; we are in such a relationship with it that our soul says to karma, "You can't do anything! No suffering frightens me. I am happy to bear any suffering." Karma then has no more power over us as something frightening. But when we are terrified and afraid of death, sorrows, and griefs, then karma too has a frightening mask, and all of life can seem gloomy and black.

If there is great suffering and adversity, it is helpful to keep our minds calm and joyful. Jesus Christ especially instructs us to be patient, gentle, and long-suffering and not to resist evil. This is the first, passive means of overcoming karma (although it is also active). When we set our own good mind against all suffering, we win. We must not resist suffering but win.

The second way, also spoken of by the wise, is to stop doing evil and creating evil karma. It is an infinitely simple remedy. Otherwise we cannot get rid of karma. We will not escape it if we just keep creating bad karma, thinking ugly, selfish thoughts, talking nonsense, and doing deeds that have bad consequences. If we stop doing those things, our negative karma will come to an end.

Many people seem to think: “What’s the use of living if you can’t do bad things? Everything becomes so tedious if you always have to be presentable, holy, and pure.” If they tried not to do evil and instead tried to do good, they would find that good thoughts, words, and deeds would inspire their consciousness. Life would become much richer, happier, and more satisfying.

There’s one thing to remember here, and people often get it wrong. For example, a devout Christian who has seen perfection decides: “From tomorrow, I will no longer think, speak, or do anything ugly.” They may keep themselves in check for a while, but on the very first day, they discover how harsh and unpleasant it is. As time goes on, the new life becomes hollow and empty. The individual realizes that they can’t be perfect by deciding to be so right away.

Spiritual balance is revealed in the fact that the person begins to grow. Then they really know how to examine themselves and soon learn that perfection is joy, and spiritual life is peace and happiness. True progress in the spiritual life is to walk the path of self-education. Even on that path, there are dark valleys, but when one walks the path of self-nurture, one walks peacefully through these valleys. One smiles and believes when walking on the path, even though darkness is all-encompassing. The individual will find that in the end truth and goodness in the soul will also prevail.

The power of people who live a spiritual life is that they never lose their confidence and faith. People must learn to stand and walk on their own two feet. We must educate ourselves and walk step by step on a positive path, learning to give up all that is bad and embrace all that is good. This passive self-education, which teaches us to renounce evil, is another indispensable means of overcoming karma.

There is a third point, which is also necessary: it is that we learn to know ourselves and have a proper understanding of what we are as human beings. It is not enough to think of ourselves as thinking, feeling, and willing beings living in the physical world. It doesn't matter much that we know our personality. We need to have a sense of who we are in the deepest sense of our material and spiritual nature.

Jesus Christ teaches that God is love. This means that we too are born of love. Our reality is love, divine love, which loves everyone. Why are we not love in this material reality? Because of our materiality, our manifested existence, which is our limitation. When we look at the human being, we see that our being is a dim light, and around it is gathered all kinds of things that are comparatively light or dark. This is our astral-mental aura. It is all around us, obscuring us and at the same time showing that we are not yet fully a child of light. Our whole emotional and volitional world is in that aura, composed not only of bright but also heavy colors. And then we have on loan the physical body, by means of which we are educated in this visible world.

We should bring love into this world. As we do, materiality in its many degrees of darkness will be illuminated, for love always brings with it the most beautiful, the brightest light, or reason. Pure reason, or divine wisdom, is the finest embodiment of that love, its finest expression.

The way to overcome karma is to become ourselves. We become love, which, when manifested, is wisdom. Without love, we cannot become light. All karma evaporates into the bright light that is the manifestation of love. Into it, all the forces that cause disturbance and suffering evaporate.

When one receives the kingdom of God and enters into an inner relationship with the spirit of life and truth, one is in the same position



as someone who has suddenly inherited infinite capital. How can one be anything but joyful and grateful for the payment of all one's debts? What are the sufferings for this individual? They are rich. Debt means nothing to them. Their soul is full of joy, happiness, bliss, and peace. All suffering, hardship, and humiliation are to them mere happiness.

## **Reincarnation and Karma**

*Reincarnation would be purposeless and random without the law of karma. Only together do these two laws of life constitute a rational and just worldview. It is worth mentioning that in the study of children's reincarnation memories, the law of karma is manifested in the fact that the events of the previous life, especially death, leave a visible or functional trace in the next incarnation. The difficulties of the previous life, which some have tried to escape through suicide, are also present in the new incarnation. In these exceptional cases, we can speak of the same reincarnating personality. The reincarnation interval in the cases studied is usually only a few years, whereas the Theosophical interval is posited as hundreds of years or even more than a thousand years.*

We are born into a certain environment and family, raised in a certain way, and have experienced a certain life in childhood and adolescence. As long as we had no choice, it was fate, karma, and a consequence of the past. At birth, our destiny is written on the stars in nature's own letters, and that destiny is the result of the past. It is our memory, and nature's memory for us. Karma is summed up in the horoscope.

There is no doubt that we can draw conclusions about the past from a person's horoscope. But is the current incarnation a direct result of the previous incarnation? That is perhaps what is often thought and believed. But it is a mistake. The human being is a mystery, far greater than the present personality. Therefore, their present personality does not reflect nearly all of their essence. Only a fraction of their personal qualities and potentialities are revealed in one lifetime.

Let us remember that we have both a higher "I" and a lower "I." Our higher "I" is somewhere outside our personality. Although it is outside our aura, it is the treasure trove of all that is good. That is why we say that there is much more good in every human being than is

revealed in the personality. Behind each one is a higher being, a higher “I,” which is the good and the Savior crucified in them. The mystical Christ has incarnated in us; it is the mystery of the divine incarnation. The mystical Christ is the good who is united with us and who is not our personality.

When a person really awakens to self-awareness, do they say it’s good for them? No, they know that their own personality is not good, but they hope that good will come through them. Although good, in a sense, is outside their personality, it is also their God: the innermost self and the higher “I.”

Closer to the personality is the lower “I,” our astral personality, or so-called subconscious. It is the evil in us, our secret tendency to evil, our disguised selfishness, our hidden lusts and desires that do not empty out into our personality. Nature remembers all the past evil in the subconscious, which is the reservoir of evil. As a manifested personal being, one is only a part of one’s own lower “I.” Thus one is both an angel and an animal: one’s physical personality has absorbed part of the animal and part of the angel.

The human mystery is thus vast and deep. If we imagine the reincarnating human being as a clock face, the hour hand corresponds to the reincarnating personality. The personal reincarnation always shows one hour only, never the whole face of the clock. Most of the face is hidden, lurking in the higher and lower “I”s.

As we have seen, a human being reincarnates, but the being is not completely embodied in one personality. So we cannot say that one incarnation is a direct consequence of another. If each reincarnation were a direct consequence of the previous one, if there were no karma outside the birth horoscope, we could easily draw all kinds of conclusions about reincarnation. For instance, an accomplished poet may think her aspiration was noble and beautiful in her last life, when she was a prose writer. It is natural for her to think, “I have sown the seeds in the last life for what I am now.” However, there is no guarantee of that. On the contrary, as a rule such an assumption is misleading.

Few individuals in this life immediately continue the work and aspiration of their previous incarnation. They self-consciously work for

millennia, treading the path of initiation. They are disciples, adepts, or aspirants to mastery. Such people no longer live in personality but in a higher “I,” for which personalities are only masks. They thus work with an eye to other things than the opinions of other people. Ordinary people think about the things of this world, how best to get on in this life, and what benefits their honor, wealth, and family. If we ask young people what their ideal is, most will say: “Happiness and success in this present life.” And they are right, because this is the only life they know, and for this life they eat and drink, marry, have children, earn an income, and pursue wealth, glory, and power.

It’s different for people who live in a higher “I.”

For them, honor, wealth, and happiness do not mean the same as for others. Their values in life are different. In the early stages, their joy in life lies in the fulfillment of duty, in conscientious work, and in loyal and self-sacrificing love for their loved ones, art, science, or religion. They are, in a word, people of character, nurturers of character and personality. All else in life is for them a hollow, insubstantial spectacle. The further they go along their path, the more mysterious their inner life becomes, the more incomprehensible their incentives and motives, and the stranger their happiness. Their god may say to them, “In this life, you must help ten different human souls on their way.” They have been given that task, and they are looking for those souls whom they must morally influence to such an impressive degree that these people will walk in the way. There will be no thanks, no reward, nothing but pain and tears—and maybe in five thousand years, joy! This is invisible work, and downright madness to the everyday person.

Only the self-conqueror, living in the higher “I,” can and must say: “That human soul, whom I love very much, whom I must escort to the gate, does not yet understand. She will turn her back on me; she will go her own way. For long millennia, I shall follow her from afar, waiting and loving her invisibly, but in five thousand years, her heart will turn to me again, and then I shall guide her steps to the gate of life.” That is the life of disciples and initiates.

Ordinary people live for the present, and their reincarnation is not a direct continuation of the previous one; for them, a new incarnation

is like a new, wonderful day. They get to experience life anew, their personality is new, and their powers are new. No ordinary person is born carrying the knowledge and burden of thousands of years. They are young, and everything is new and wonderful.

Providence has decreed that these individuals must, of their own free will, turn to the path of good once and for all. The good is eternal, and there is no forgetting the good. But since we cannot be good, we must forget. There is a great blessing in that, for if we remembered all the evil we have done and suffered—if in our present personality we were aware of all our karma and knew what evil we had done, how terrible and cruel we have been—we would face a person and know, “Once I murdered that one,” and, facing another, say, “That one murdered me.” What would be the result? The old feelings would be revived. The murdered person would feel fear and the desire for revenge, and the murderer’s anger would flare up again, because we are still small creatures.

It often happens that the murderer and the murdered meet and feel a mysterious attraction to each other, a love that is superficial at first, but which can deepen over time. Often people who have previously done harm to each other become sensually attracted to each other and marry. This is how life brings enemies together. Their marriage is a school for them, and nature asks: can you now learn to tolerate and love each other? For we must learn to love, once and for all, those who have wronged us and those whom we have wronged. This is especially difficult because we do not easily forgive the one we have wronged, who embodies the reproachful voice of our conscience. But before we reach the goal set for us, we must learn to love everyone.

If we want to draw conclusions about our past life based on our present one, another piece of advice is suitable for all: “Examine what is difficult in your present life, what in your destiny you curse, why you were born with some disgusting qualities, why you have met with some unfortunate events.” When we thus examine and recall the dark and heavy aspects of our lives, let us imagine: “As I look back into the distant past, I find that in my past life, I wanted this very thing, which now seems heavy. Then it was reflected to me as good. What, then,

could that life have been in which I have wanted what I now curse, and in which it has flashed before my eyes as a wonderful release?”

This advice teaches us how to draw implicit conclusions about past lives. It requires a careful study and knowledge of the present personality. A good aid to our own judgment in this respect is a birth horoscope prepared by a conscientious and skillful astrologer, which requires precise knowledge of the moment of birth.

However, it is not enough to examine ourselves according to the birth horoscope; we must also reflect on all the seemingly coincidental accidents and turns of fortune in our lives today and ask ourselves whether they are coincidences or part of our destiny. How can we judge this? When a blow of fate strikes us, we must calmly reflect and ask ourselves: “What is behind this? In what way did I deserve this?” If we are honest with ourselves, we can usually find a cause that is inwardly satisfying, even if we dare not say it to others, since they do not see the connection between cause and effect. Often we find that the cause is in some weakness or sin. Then the blow of fate is fully deserved, and we have no reason to be sorry. Our relatives and friends may complain, but we must control ourselves.

If, on the other hand, we clearly feel that we did not deserve that blow because we have always done the right thing and tried our best, we may soon become bitter, but then we must think: “What opportunity is nature offering now, what is life teaching us now, what special blessing is this for us now?” Then we must humble ourselves as Job did, realizing that this blow of fate may free us from some secret form of selfishness, perhaps bitterness. Bitterness must be overcome, and that is why we are tested by fate. “Will you become bitter?” When we can answer, “I will not,” we understand that love was behind the blow and that the chastisement came from the hand of Providence.

Protective intelligence underlies even the things that we call happy. When good fortune comes our way, we like to thank God for it, and rightly so, but in a way good fortune is a greater burden than misfortune. God then puts us to an even greater test, for in happiness, he asks, “Can you endure? Can you feel yourself an eternal being in the midst of happiness? Can you in your spirit give it up to serve others?”

What is happiness and success in life but a greater opportunity to help and serve?" Therefore it is a greater trial.

The most remarkable thing that can happen to us is that a miracle saves our lives. We put our lives in danger, exert our last strength, and then salvation comes as if by a miracle. Then we hear, as it were, a voice crying out our name. What is it? That is what we must ponder and study, and I think many will feel that they have been given the gift of life anew. Their fate could have been sudden death, but they survived, and the voice of God was heard: "Come back to your personal life, for I expect something from you." People saved from the danger of death no longer own their own lives. They have to consecrate their lives to humanity, they are the property of Providence, and their task is to educate themselves, seek the truth, and find God.

Karma does not act as a blind law of causality. We may reap what we have sown, but the time and place of reaping are determined by rational insight. Hand in hand with blind justice goes the motherly care of Providence. Providence is the will of cosmic life for good and its spiritual force of development. Providence is the love of the heavenly Father. The guiding hand of Providence is behind our birth horoscope. Its nurturing care selects the circumstances, the environment, the parents, and the resulting difficulties. The inner Self always wants the same thing as Providence. Its guiding principle is: let the Father's will be done. Therefore the human in their higher "I" has willed the burdens and cares of the present life.

## IV The Sermon on the Mount as Maxims of Life

*The cornerstone of the esoteric Christianity presented by Ervast is the Sermon on the Mount of Jesus (Matthew 5-7). Ervast discovered the Sermon on the Mount as a young seeker of truth while reading the writings of Leo Tolstoy. The commandments of the Sermon on the Mount are not laws given from without but instructions for inner self-education. The five precepts of the Sermon on the Mount can be summarized as follows:*

- 1. Do not be angry with others.*
- 2. Do not commit adultery in your heart.*
- 3. Do not take an oath, but always speak the truth.*
- 4. Do not resist evil.*
- 5. Do not make war, but love all people.*

### The Five Commandments of Jesus

To enter into the commandments of the Sermon on the Mount, we must first have received, through the parables of Jesus, an understanding of the kingdom of God as a kingdom of goodness within us, and have lived this new worldview according to the parables. In his parables, Jesus explains the two kingdoms of the world, the kingdom of good and the kingdom of evil, and his doctrine of the power of good, the angel, and the power of evil, the demon, within humans. Only when we have grasped all this and have acquired the mind of a child, so that our angel in heaven can look the Father in the face, can we begin to delve into the new commandments of the Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount begins with eight declarations or promises of beatitude. Jesus then gives his new commandments, which begin with the phrase: “You have heard it said to the elders, but I say to you . . .”

Why did Jesus give new commandments, and what did he mean by them? The answer to these questions can only be found if we put ourselves in the disciples' shoes. It is a question of our membership in the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of God is not of this world. At the outset, our citizenship in the kingdom of God is more theoretical than practical because our senses do not yet grasp it. We do not see the kingdom or its people. We are self-conscious citizens of that kingdom only when we see that it exists. Then we see that there really is a realm, the kingdom of our souls, where the powers of the spiritual world rule, though it is invisible to our physical eyes. And how can we see unless some new senses are awakened and developed in us which put us in touch with the kingdom of heaven?

This, of course, is Jesus' purpose. If we follow his commandments, we will become self-aware citizens in the new kingdom, and we will have the senses awakened in us that will enable us to recognize ourselves as members of it.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' five new commandments are mystical guides that are capable of awakening new senses in us. These commandments fall into two categories. The first three teach us to see other people as spiritual beings, and the last two teach us to see the kingdom of heaven itself as a new world.

Of course, Jesus' commandments should not be attempted in isolation. They are all to be carried out simultaneously, but in such a way that the emphasis is placed on one particular commandment in any given situation. And their observance must not be mechanical, like good manners, for they are the living spirit and always rise as ideals high above the physical world. The only thing we can do is to try to follow them.

### *The First Commandment*

“You have been taught this commandment given to the fathers: ‘You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is



answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell" (Matthew 5:21-22).

The old commandment "Thou shall not murder" applies to external life in the physical world and instructs us to behave in society. When we look at the world around us, we find that, apart from warfare, people as individuals have learned not to murder each other. Although murders do happen from time to time, they must be regarded as exceptions. In general, people do not go that far in their anger. Public opinion is definitely against murder, and as a result order prevails in society. A person who, for whatever reason, has killed another and considers their act to be just will not have peace of conscience. They know within that they have violated the law of life. The same laws of life operate in the soldier, even one who has killed at the command of others. Either his mind is filled with the horror of warfare, or his heart is dulled, his conception of good and evil is brutalized, and he loses some of his original human dignity.

When the wise men of old gave the commandment, they only revealed the law of life, which we must not break, but Jesus goes into the whole matter in his new commandment. He no longer speaks of the outward relationship of human being to one another. He no longer speaks of not killing, for this commandment must already be known and obeyed. He speaks to the disciples of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven and says: "If you want to become a self-conscious citizen in this wonderful world of souls, you must not get angry."

His command should not be taken superficially. It does not mean that a person should always suppress anger and not look angry. This would lead to outright hypocrisy. In truth and honesty, a person should show their anger, show what is in their heart, and not carry anger inside. Jesus' commandment is not about outward behavior but goes deeper than that. He is talking about the heart. He means that we should not get angry inside our hearts. His whole commandment is about life and not about form: "Do not be angry in your heart."

What is the secret meaning of the commandment not to be angry? Since the purpose of the commandments is to awaken new senses in us so that we become conscious citizens in the new world, what is the

purpose of this first commandment? It has a very strange meaning. It has to do with our secret forehead, our forehead chakra. When we get angry, offended, or resentful, we set our invisible instrument vibrating in a certain way and set certain forces in motion in our invisible soul body. These forces blind us so that we cannot see or understand the thoughts of others. But when we strive against being indignant, we become tolerant, rational, liberal, and understanding of other people's thoughts.

Before, we could be quite clear about our own thinking, our own worldview. We were ready to persecute the whole world for the truth, as believers often have done. But when we begin to remove anger and indignation from our hearts, our first achievement is that a new world opens up to us, the world of human thought. We learn to see that others have been thinking too. (Strange that we didn't realize that before!) And the more our hearts are purified, the more clearly we see that people think with understanding and reason. We learn to think from the point of view of each person.

Have you met someone who has worked and won in this respect? Anyone who comes to such a person tells them about themselves, reveals the deepest secrets of their soul, speaks the plain language of their own worldview. This person does this instinctively, sensing that they will receive the greatest sympathy and understanding. And they do.

Our first achievement is to understand people as people. And I need not speak of the second half of the achievement, that we begin to understand animals, plants, stones, the forces of nature, the whole world. Amazingly, we begin to see what people are thinking, even though they do not say a word to us.

### *The Second Commandment*

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28).

Again, the first reference is to the old commandment of Moses: do not commit adultery, by which Moses wanted to organize the external

conditions of the world: you can live happily in your society if you do not commit adultery. We must confess that humanity has not learned to obey this commandment of Moses, apparently because it seems too superficial to people of our time. They think there is nothing sacred about two people coming together and being blessed by a priest and witnessed by others. After a while, the excitement of the moment is over, happiness is gone, harmony is broken, and bitterness, misunderstanding, and contempt have crossed the threshold of the home. Then a new companion comes into the life of one of the partners and wins their heart, and the partner feels they truly love this new person. What must they do then? Continue an unhappy life with the spouse, or commit adultery?

The civilization of our time sympathizes with the feelings of suffering people and thinks that the first marriage was a mistake, that it was not a holy marriage, because the only holy foundation of marriage is mutual love. That is how the writers and poets of our time praise the love between two people, abhorring a marriage built on anything other than love. Hence we feel that Moses' commandment is superficial and outdated. Or perhaps we could turn it around and say it is still too modern? Perhaps we are so attached to old-fashioned forms that we cannot help committing adultery.

If we admit that this commandment is difficult to fulfill, how much more difficult is Jesus' new commandment? Yet he explicitly says that anyone who looks at a woman to lust after her is already committing adultery with her in his heart. It is not enough that the act is forbidden; this is a natural thing in itself—as natural as not killing. In its severity, judgment confronts much more delicate matters: the secret thoughts of the heart.

What is Jesus aiming at? What does he think is evil? Some have understood the commandment to mean that Jesus forbade natural sex, bringing children into the world, but this is a misunderstanding. The very fact that the commandment uses the word “adultery” shows that there is no question of forbidding marriage. Except for the few, of whom Jesus explicitly says that some have made the promise of celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, most aspirants fall

into a sense of powerless loneliness. This makes their spiritual progress hopelessly difficult unless they get help. One who is still young in the soul longs for a friend, because one's thirst for love is so pervasive that one longs for a companion in sexual life.

Only when the ordinary aspirant loves another person and enters into marriage, arranging their sex life naturally, can they begin to purify the heart according to Jesus' commandment. A young aspirant who wished to look ideal and think they wanted to be a saint would undoubtedly suffer the same fate as we know happened to the saints of old. They went into seclusion in the woods or mountains, they fled the natural human world, they dared not love a living, attractive person, but instead threw themselves into a much more dangerous solitude, conjuring up all sorts of attractive images from their own soul. In the end, they made themselves the most miserable sinners, even in their own eyes. And the reason for this secret defeat? They tried to attain sainthood before they knew how to love properly.

That is why Jesus' new commandment requires that the love and sex life of a disciple must be arranged in a human way. And Jesus demands that those relationships not be violated or broken. Thus he gives his firm commandment, which simultaneously teaches how the disciple can strive for purity of heart. One must beware not only of deeds but, above all, of lustful thoughts and feelings, but even in this respect, one must not be hypocritical. Better outward adultery than keeping filth in one's heart, because the thought will eventually lead to the deed.

What does Jesus occultly mean when he says to the disciples, "Your heart must be pure"? What does he want to develop in them? Again, we answer as above: he wants to open up a new sense, which will lead the disciple to a deeper understanding of people. Experience teaches us that if our emotions make us lust after another person, we do not understand them as a human being, or their feelings. It is said that those who are in love are blind. A semblance of understanding can exist between them if the love is mutual. But whether they understand each other as human beings is a matter of chance.

Only to the extent that we are pure of selfish and lustful feelings can we understand the emotional lives of others and give them our

heartfelt sympathy. We know from experience that when we are in the company of a person whose heart is free from lust, they understand our feelings and can analyze them, judge them, and show us what is good and what is not. We learn to understand not only the emotional life of the individual but also that of nature, and we gradually awaken in ourselves the ability to see the feelings of others without expressing them. In other words, we learn to see auras.

### *The Third Commandment*

“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one” (Matthew 5:33-37).

Here again is the old commandment found in the Law of Moses: do not swear falsely, but keep your oath to the Lord. This refers to external circumstances: “Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.” This commandment clearly presupposes two things: first, that when truth is to be spoken, one must swear by the name of God, and second, that in general, honesty is not required in speech.

Jesus gives his disciples very different advice. He is not aiming at the outward human, but at the inward human. Outward honesty is not even possible unless one is inwardly honest with one’s higher “I.”

In the pursuit of inner honesty, those who seek the kingdom of heaven become so careful about what they say that they are reluctant to use their tongue in vain, as Jesus says in another place: “But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken” (Matthew 12:36). A person who uses speech wrongly or in vain cannot distinguish between true and false. They do not understand the truth, but distance themselves from honesty even within themselves. On the other hand, the more

the individual learns to control their tongue and to use it to advise, teach, comfort, help, delight, and make beautiful, the more they will be able to be honest with themselves.

This is a necessary quality for a disciple, and a whole new understanding of life is based on it from the very beginning. The essential aspect of this quality, as Jesus commanded, is restraint of thought and tongue. This has a deep, occult significance. When we ask what new sense Jesus wants to awaken in us through this commandment, in what new way we will become self-conscious in the kingdom of heaven by learning to control our thought and speech, we receive the answer: “You will learn to see other people as they are. A new sense will open up in you, telling you what talents, inclinations, and qualities others have.” By obeying this command of Jesus, the disciple also comes into contact with certain forces of evolution at work in the world, which help them to understand the lines along which the evolution of living beings takes place.

In these three commandments, Jesus shows us how we can develop heavenly qualities in ourselves as well as the senses that will enable us to see other people and beings as spiritual realities. If we do not get angry, we learn to see the thoughts of others and their mental life. If we do not lust, we come to see and understand the emotions of others and their astral life. If we don't talk in vain and are not dishonest, we learn to understand the talents and inclinations of others, the powers of their etheric body.

Although Jesus speaks to the disciples, anyone can hear his words, for no one will be harmed by trying not to be angry, not to covet, and not to speak in vain. On the contrary, this is a great work of self-education, although it cannot be ultimately achieved unless one understands the new worldview Jesus presented in his parables.

### *The Fourth Commandment*

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces

you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you” (Matthew 5:38-42).

The emphasis here is on the words, “But I tell you, do not resist an evil person” (another translation could be: “Do not be against evil”). Evil can be either an evil person or evil in the form of suffering or sorrow. The word is ambiguous in this text.

The old commandment “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” reflects the legal concept that we try to implement in society. Someone who breaks the laws of the land is punished. We have a legal system for that, based on this old commandment.

By his commandment, Jesus did not mean that we should abolish all courts and judiciaries worldwide. Before we can do that, our understanding of justice must change. As long as we think it is right that the wrongdoer should be punished, it is better to punish than to offend the sense of justice of humankind. But Jesus’ commandment has a different purpose.

If we want to be disciples, if our goal differs from that of human beings in general, we must also follow a different set of laws. We must not bury a desire for revenge or a wounded sense of justice within us, but take a completely new attitude towards evil. We must then understand Jesus’ commandment, “Do not be against evil,” in the following way: “You call the man who harasses you evil; you call suffering and misery evil. If you call them evil in your heart, do not resist them, but submit to them. You will then learn to erase the word ‘evil’ from your mind, learn to see the good in evil, and prepare yourselves to be able to overcome evil.”

If we want to be disciples and enter the kingdom of heaven, we must not accept that anything is bad for us. On the contrary, all the circumstances, sufferings, illnesses, and people that we would be inclined to call evil are in fact good. But this seemingly small and simple change of mind requires firm faith and trust that Jesus’ advice is wise and that it indeed accords with the laws of life and the world.

We who believe that humans are reincarnating beings and that the law of karma governs everything in the world understand that there

is no external evil. We understand that what confronts us which we would like to call evil is good because of our past mistakes. When these come back to us as a result, we eliminate the evil we have done before. This consequence is not evil; the evil was our own act and mistake. The consequence of evil is not evil but good, for the consequence frees us from our own work, teaches us, and enlightens us. Just as it is pleasant and liberating to pay a debt that weighs on us, it is pleasant for a disciple to redeem evil deeds and past errors through sufferings and hardships.

And now let us ask: why does Jesus give us such advice? What is the occult purpose of this advice? What is the secret practice behind it? When we persevere in this way, when we overcome ourselves and step outside our own personality, the eye opens in us to see the world as an ordered cosmos, in which the lives of human beings and all living beings are guided and directed from the unseen world. Our eyes are opened to see that human life can only be understood and explained through reincarnation. The causes of the consequences of our present life are not to be found in the present life but in the past previous to birth. Karma's inexorable law of equilibrium implies that humans are reincarnating spiritual beings. As this vision of ours grows and develops, it becomes a memory of reincarnation. Memories of the past begin to flash before our eyes, first dimly, then with increasing clarity. We gain clarity about our own problems. We begin to understand how we have evolved to be how we are. The secret purpose of the fourth commandment is indeed long-lasting.

### *The Fifth Commandment*

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others?



Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:43-48).

Leo Tolstoy interpreted the fifth commandment to mean that Jesus forbids war. No doubt war is forbidden in the commandment. If there were a Christian state, it would probably not go to war. But a nation that has been Christian in this respect has not yet existed. I am firmly of the opinion that Jesus did not give this commandment indiscriminately. He does not speak to just anyone; he does not speak to large crowds, nations, or states. He speaks only to his own disciples, who want to follow him. All the commandments of the Sermon on the Mount are given to individuals. And the fifth commandment is, in a way, the highest and most remarkable.

The first four are negative: don't do this or that. But the fifth is positive, commanding outright: love everyone, even your enemies. This commandment includes the teachings of the previous ones and is, as it were, their complement and precursor. In another passage, Jesus sums up his wisdom in one sentence: “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (John 15:12). Jesus is referring to the old concept of life, in which the command to love was to love one's neighbor, but not one's enemies or people of another nation.

Surely all Christians know this: Christianity has always preached the brotherhood of all people. But we see little brotherhood practiced in the world because it is not clear that Christianity is about following Jesus and nothing else. Only the individual who longs deep in their soul for truth and seeks it in Christianity will follow Jesus. This individual, the future disciple of Jesus, will see the right quality and order of spiritual life. For them, love is natural. Their heart will not refuse to do good, to bless evil men, to love their enemies, and in general to love all that is evil to them.

If we ask for what purpose Jesus specifically instructs us to love in this way, what occult purpose it has, Jesus answers, “That you may be children of your heavenly Father.” Good works and love have a remarkable spiritual effect and consequence, namely, the vision of the heavenly Father. To see the great life of love, which is behind everything and carries everything in its arms, depends on loving and not

knowing any evil. At another point the Sermon on the Mount says: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matthew 5:8). Purity of heart simply means that a person does not know evil. They see no evil in the world or in other people; they turn all evil into good. And from them, from their heart, only love goes out. Their heart is pure, and then they see God.

To rise to this love, one must do much good, bless, and forgive. When it is said that a loving person does not know evil, it means that they see the good hiding behind the evil and focus their attention on it. How can they not know that selfishness and evil exist? How can they be a stranger to pain, suffering, and tears? If they know the good, it is the result of examining the evil. Those who wish to ascend to the heavenly heights in the invisible world must descend to the depths of hell in the same invisible world. To ascend to the kingdom of God and behold the high beings around his throne, the disciple must, as a purifying, uplifting, loving being, have descended into the abysses of the kingdom of darkness and illuminated the souls of people who curse themselves.

We have now gone through the five commandments of the Sermon on the Mount and have seen what wonderful indicators they are of one who, as a disciple, wishes to penetrate into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Just as the first three commandments open our inner senses to perceive other people as spiritual beings, the last two open our eyes to see into the secret world, understand its laws, and see and hear its dwellings.

Next we will explore the system of prayer and meditation given by Jesus to his disciples as an encouragement and help as they walk the path of the commandments.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

The Lord's Prayer, given to us by Jesus himself, is not given indiscriminately to just anyone, but to those disciples who are no longer in the same position as the great crowds of people who listened to Jesus' parables. Those to whom Jesus speaks of prayer have already adopted

the new worldview he presented in his parables and tried to follow his commands in the Sermon on the Mount.

The chamber that Jesus instructs us to enter when we pray is, first and foremost, within ourselves, within our consciousness. We have to close our senses so that the outside world cannot disturb us. When we can concentrate our full attention on our prayer, it makes no difference whether it takes place in a room or in the middle of a crowd. No one knows we are praying when we pray in our own hearts.

What, then, should we pray for? We understand this when we replace “prayer” with “meditation.” In fact, Jesus instructs us to engage in regular meditation. He is not content to say generally that we should meditate, but he also gives us detailed instructions on how to meditate and what to meditate on. In the Lord’s Prayer, he gives us a kind of meditation program, and he goes about it in the same way as all spiritual teachers.

Prayer as meditation is an indispensable feature of the spiritual life. If a person wants to follow a set plan in their moral life, obeying the commands given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, regular meditation is necessary for success. If the aspirant does not meditate regularly on the life they are to lead, they will not be able to keep their thoughts together in the daily routine of life or always remember the program of life they want to follow.

We know this from experience. If one regularly meditates on one’s own program of life every day, if one thinks every day of the virtue one seeks and of the commandment that one now above all wants to obey, one has a greater chance of keeping this resolution in the turmoil of life. To this end, meditation is indispensable in the early stages; in the later stages, it has a much deeper meaning.

The Lord’s Prayer is a meditation program divided into three parts. In the first part, one puts one’s spirit into a right relationship with the invisible world, with God, with good and evil. In the second part, one is placed in right relationship with the surrounding visible world and its life conditions, and in the third part, one is placed in the right relationship with the lower “I.”

The first part includes the verses, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it

is in heaven” (Matthew 6:9-13). There are two sides to this first part, positive and negative. When we sit down to meditate on the program, we must first remember our Father, who is our spirit in heaven. We should evoke the image that we are spiritual sons of God and that the divine love of our heavenly Father fills all space. Let his name be hallowed. We must confess in our spirit and in our heart that we are sons of the heavenly Father, of divine love. Above all, we must achieve this positive attitude in order to feel in our spirit that we are standing on a rock from which nothing can shake us. This is the positive aspect of the first part of the prayer.

Then we focus our meditation on the second or negative side: “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” With this thought, we acknowledge the existence of evil: darkness, selfishness, all the opposing forces that oppose the kingdom of God and impede the rule of the Father as divine love and divine reason. Therefore, as we meditate, we hope and will that the kingdom of God may draw near, and we add: “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” God’s will is always done in the invisible world we call the kingdom of heaven. There is no evil there: all evil is immediately overcome. But on earth, in the material world, there is a completely different law. Here the voice of the Father is not heard in glory in the hearts of men; on the contrary, the selfish will usually prevail, even though the divine will fights against it. We live in a world of contradictions, where often only the selfish and evil will prevail. Therefore in meditation, we hope within us: “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

At the same time, we think about the relationship to evil that a disciple must have. The disciple does not feel bad about suffering, understanding that evil does not exist to torment but to educate them. What the lower nature would call evil comes to them from the Father’s will, or karma, according to the laws of reason and love; therefore it is good. When the disciple sees good in evil, they overcome evil, and the mysteries are opened to them. We must not think that we become good in any way. We must only meditate: “Your kingdom come; your will be done. When your will is done through us, it will be done in the world.”

The second part of the Lord's prayer is, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Let us now look first at the first part of this double prayer. It refers, among other things, to the fact that the disciple is to retire to the chamber of the heart in the morning, close the doors of the senses, and meditate. In English, this phrase is translated "daily bread," and in his influential German version, Luther also translated it as "daily bread," causing great misunderstanding. But the Latin version does not speak of daily bread but of "our supersubstantial bread" (*panem nostrum supersubstantialem*). The program Jesus gives is about the "supersubstantial" bread necessary to keep the soul from starving. What is this bread? This is the most dangerous part of the meditation, for here the disciple prays, "Give us disciples today such experiences, sorrows, pains, sufferings, or joys as will remind us of the fact that we are your children."

We often see that the life of a spiritual person is outwardly difficult. It is said in the esoteric schools that when a disciple appeals to the higher "I," when they call upon the powers of the higher "I" and cry out that they now want to rise out of all ignorance, sin, and evil, they pray to the mighty powers of the world to release them from all the chains that weigh them down so that they may now let the evil that is due them from the past come upon them. As I have said, this meditation is dangerous. It is only fit for a disciple who has already said, "Your will, Father, and not mine."

We now turn to the second half of the second part of the prayer, which reads: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." By using the words "debt" and "debtor," Jesus refers to the established law of life that we humans incur debts whenever we do something evil or selfish. When we think of the law of karma, we understand Theosophically that if we do something wrong, it is as if we are in debt. And paying life's debts is not pleasing to our selfishness, for it is done by suffering. Any evil we do is paid for by suffering. That is the law of karma.

But Jesus says there is a way to be free from the constraints of nature, and he explains the way to the disciples: "As we have forgiven our debtors." When people do wrong or evil to us, they become indebted to

life because of us. Even if we do not take revenge on them in the external world, we still appeal to the justice of life if we are hurt, resentful, or indifferent inwardly. Then we claim revenge on them from nature. In this way, all human beings unwittingly demand revenge from life on those who wrong them. We are not even satisfied with this, but we organize our whole society to demand revenge and compensation. We fine and punish and imprison those who do wrong or evil.

Jesus' instruction is to forgive. Evil is only defeated when people stop being evil, demanding revenge or punishment, and forgive. Jesus instructs his disciples to keep this law of life of forgiveness in mind, at least in their meditation: because of us, no one need be indebted to life. That is how we act as an ethical force on earth. Such is the ethical power of disciples: by their very existence in the world, they make human hearts soft. This does not mean we should change societies by abolishing all legal institutions, for it has not been said that humanity can do without them. Here it is an esoteric command or advice to the disciples.

Now we come to the second part of the instruction, which says, "Forgive us our debts." We understand that this is not a question of an external God releasing us from the consequences of our actions, because an external God cannot do that. Only the inner God, only God in humans, can do that. That power is given to us as human beings. We humans can forgive each other our sins, not God. God does not change the world's inner laws.

What do we owe God? Our debt to God is quite different from our debt to the world. After all, debt can also be paid in a good and joyful way. This becomes clear if we think of an experience everyone has, at one time or another, had: religious ecstasy, exaltation, artistic inspiration, or the high and wonderful happiness of love.

At such a moment, you are actually promising something inside. Every human being has such a moment before being born on earth, when they are about to leave the heavenly resting place and, for a moment, ascend to their higher "I." Then they see what their dharma will be in the next life. They will see what they have attained in their spiritual development. They see what quality or virtue they should

especially acquire for themselves and which aspect is weak. The disciple sees this with wonderful inspiration and promises to try their best. And every time during physical life when one experiences the ecstasy of the spirit—when an influence flows directly from the higher “I” or angel into the personal consciousness—one renews the promise made before birth.

Though formally different, every human being has made such a promise and in this way is indebted to God. Jesus knew we could not fully fulfill our promise unless we were especially vigilant and self-conscious. We do not fulfill the promise we gave with voluntary joy, so he instructs us always to meditate: “Forgive us our debts, Father.” We ask the Father to forgive us for not being as good as we have promised, just as we forgive everyone for being bad to us.

Only the latter can possibly balance the scales. Then our inner divine consciousness will have a channel for itself. We create a channel for it when we forgive each other and give our love and our lives to each other. Then our angel, our higher “I,” our savior, our Father, and our God, can descend upon us and fill us with his joy and thus make us feel that we have been forgiven for our shortcomings.

The third part of our prayerful meditation concerns our lower “I” and our relationship with it. This part of the prayer reads, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Christianity usually understands *temptation* as meaning the same as *trial*. Yet the whole prayer is meaningless if we assume that God is an evil being who, for his own amusement, tests us and puts us through all kinds of adventures to see if we are good enough to endure.

Let us remember that God does not deliberately tempt anyone. Instead, life is structured to test us. Only thoughtless people might pray, “Lead us not into temptation,” meaning that this earthly life should be as easy and comfortable as possible. Jesus here invites us to reflect on our relationship with our lower “I.” When we imagine that there is spiritual evil outside ourselves or the human mind in general—that there is an evil separate from God, that is, evil in itself—we fall into the temptation Jesus warns the disciples about. It is precisely into this temptation that the Christian church has fallen. The church believes

in Satan and all kinds of evil outside of humans. This faith holds the church in its iron grip, and it cannot advance on its path until it throws off the shackles of its evil faith. Hence wisdom warns us: let us not believe that there is any evil outside ourselves. True, ethical evil exists only within ourselves.

Let us look at this evil in ourselves. It comes in two forms, as two kinds of tempters: ugly and beautiful. The first is a remnant of the animal state of mankind and is called the element of lust in contemporary Theosophical literature. It has its own faculty of thought and reason. All people who try to walk the mystical path will experience this strange tempter or seducer within them to the extent that they have any animal left in them. The animal in a human is the first, or lower, guardian of the threshold. It is always ugly, and the temptation is to think it is outside oneself. One must know that it is within one, even while recognizing that it is not one's own self.

The second tempter inside a human being is beautiful in form. It is the voice of self-love, self-sufficiency, self-satisfaction, and spiritual pride. One can become so intellectually brilliant that one sets oneself apart from the rest of the world and does not want to admit that there is any reason beyond human reason. One then does not open as a flower to the sunlight, does not open the soul to receive the divine light so that one's own small and dark intellect may be enlightened and one may see what the world is really like. Such an individual sets themselves up as a mere spectator, who judges the world as if they themselves had made and created it. This is so strange, mysterious, and exalted a temptation that one comes face-to-face with this second guardian of the threshold only after a comparatively long journey of spiritual knowledge.

The name of the other doorkeeper is Satan. The disciple who meets this guardian sees a wonderful creature: glorious and beautiful but proud, like Mephistopheles, described by the celebrated poet Goethe in *Faust*. Satan then makes a last-ditch effort to separate the disciple from God. At the same time, a heavenly being sent by God appears to the disciple, the savior Christ or Master, who overcomes the last doubt with his smile.



Now the disciple understands once and for all that this beautiful and wonderful angelic being is a servant: the most powerful and wonderful servant of God. Intelligence is indeed the most divine quality in us, but only when it truly serves God and not itself or its own purposes. When it does not set out to help and serve the devil in the human being, but God alone in his majesty and goodness, it is the most glorious and wonderful of angels.

The temptation is to think Satan is evil and, secondly, to think Satan is outside of us. It is a temptation because we must remember that Satan is within us and that Satan is the whitest of the white when he serves God.

Thus we have also understood the last verse of the prayer, which is contained in the words, "Deliver us from evil," for it is precisely these tempters who are evil. Evil is good when it is placed under God's control and as a servant of good.

## V Initiation in the Old and New Covenants

*According to Ervast, Jesus Christ changed humanity's history, especially the conditions of spiritual aspiration. Before Christ, the spiritual path was a way to escape from the visible world and reach communion with the Cosmic Christ in the invisible world. This can be pursued even today on the so-called Old Covenant path. The arhat ideal of early Buddhism represents such an aspiration: the aim of the arhat is to free oneself from karma and the cycle of reincarnation and enter nirvana. But on the path of the New Covenant, spiritual experiences are first achieved in the daytime consciousness. The ideal is to become a helper of humanity, not to achieve personal bliss. The paths of the new covenant and the old covenant converge when one reaches the Master initiation.*

### The Mystery of Initiation

We know from Theosophy that the Great White Brotherhood is an invisible congregation of holy humans, including people of infinitely high evolution. To know the members of that brotherhood, we ourselves should belong to it. Only brothers know each other. This brotherhood not only comprises people who are physical, corporeal beings but also those who live freely in another, invisible world. Their inner soul body is so organized and their glorified heavenly body so formed that they may hold meetings wherever the brethren physically reside.

Initiation is a threefold mystery: first, one is received into a brotherhood; second, initiation is a testimony and a stamp that knowledge has been acquired; and third, consciousness has expanded, and expansion of consciousness will continue to take place. One does not become a disciple of the Master unless one passes through an initiation. You have to be initiated into that brotherhood. The word *initiation* has

thus acquired an outstandingly high, deep, and mysterious meaning in Theosophy.

We understand that there can indeed be mysteries surrounding such an initiation. The first is that one is received into a brotherhood and becomes a member of the new circle. The second mystery concerns knowledge. We understand that one cannot become a member of such a brotherhood unless one has acquired, through self-education, a supersensible knowledge that ordinary people do not have. Those who are initiated into that Great White Brotherhood know secrets of life and death that the ordinary individual does not know at all. They know how to move in the world of the dead. They know how to study their lives in the visible and invisible worlds.

The third mystery is the expansion of consciousness. It is said that the consciousness of the masters and adepts of the Great White Brotherhood is so vast that it can encompass thousands of people whose spiritual lives they observe. It means that their consciousness lives in all of them, or all those people live in their consciousness. If a person becomes a disciple of the Master, they enter the Master's heart and live in it. All disciples enter the Master's heart, and the Master is aware of them all: every disciple has the image of the Master in their heart. It is like a mysterious, heavenly, miraculous marriage.

The expansion of consciousness also becomes clear to us from our own experience if we have had a so-called religious awakening. It is not only Theosophists who experience it but, even more so, people of faith. This awakening has expanded their consciousness. Before the awakening, consciousness was only concerned with various contradictory forces in the human soul, which pulled in different directions. In the awakening, the consciousness expands and sees the light which unites all these forces and its different parts. The individual now attains peace and unity in diversity. It is as if a new, peculiarly moral, will has been awakened in them. Conscience takes over. Such an experience makes it possible for one to understand that this consciousness may well expand into something divine.

How is initiation accessible? There are a lot of very mysterious brotherhoods here on earth. Masonic orders are the most innocent.

You can tell what is good about them and where they may have gone wrong. Aspirants may, therefore, exercise their own judgment upon them. Freemasons are quite modern, cultural people who are in no way intimidating. But one can seek out mysterious fraternities of which one knows absolutely nothing and one must take terrible oaths before becoming a member. This may prove to be a great mistake.

Let's think then of the person whose attention is fixed on that other mystery: the acquisition of knowledge, the attestation at the initiation that knowledge has been acquired. One also has new opportunities for acquiring and increasing knowledge; without that initiation, there would be no such opportunities. One is trying to discover how to develop these mysterious faculties, become clairvoyant, and learn to move in the invisible world.

One discovers that mysterious abilities exist, and one can have power and strength over others. The individual begins to seek that power, wanting knowledge. What usually happens to such a person? People who are successful in these endeavors try to develop abilities to see and move astrally. They move out of this physical body: the body sleeps, and they themselves go out. They are aware of the other world and explore things there, and they get to watch the lives of the deceased from a distance. People who are moving self-consciously in that other world can get in touch with a brotherhood, and they are initiated into this brotherhood in the astral world while the physical body is sleeping. But that is a great stumbling block for someone who has striven hard. Even if one does not realize it at first, one may at some point discover that this brotherhood is far from the Great White Brotherhood of perfect human beings. One has become a member of some mysterious brotherhood, which at the same time may be very dangerous to humankind.

What, then, happens to the person who thinks about the third aspect of the mystery of initiation, the expansion of consciousness? This is usually reflected in such a way that the individual wants glory and power over other people. Expansion of consciousness means power over other people's souls; an individual who gains that power gains glory. This is a secret feature in them, so they strive for it, and

consciousness expands by acquiring various faculties. One can become a magician. One can heal people and do other good things, but one can also do many bad things.

Why do these people stumble? The secret reason is impurity of motive. People have a personal motive when they strive: "I want this or that. I want power. I want knowledge. I want to become a member of some fraternity." The individual does conform to the demands made, but with a personal motive. Their aspiration is powerful, but there is a personal influence behind it. This is a weakness, and this is a very important point for us all to remember: we must examine ourselves and be very clearly aware of our own motives if we approach the sacred temple of the occult.

What about the real aspirant, the person who genuinely starts on the road to initiation? We could say that this person is without motive or personal incentive. They are not striving for anything; they want the truth, and God. Their desire, aspiration, and wish is to get out of themselves and a selfish personal life. Therefore their motive, if one can speak of such a thing, is to know the truth, become one with the truth, know about God, and become one with God. "I want no progress; I want no power; I want no glory; I want to be initiated into no brotherhood; the only one without whom I cannot be is God." One who can say this to oneself is at the beginning of the right path.

## **Initiation in the Old Covenant**

### *The Etheric Body and the Old Covenant Initiation*

In Old Covenant times, occult evolution required getting the etheric body out of the physical. We didn't know how to do it ourselves, but it was relatively easy: the teacher ordered us to do it at initiation. Initiation meant that the initiate could make all kinds of observations in the other, invisible world under the teacher's guidance. The initiate had an etheric body with them, so they were self-aware and kept a memory of their experiences. The usual time the initiate spent in the other world was three and a half days, after which the teacher awakened them.

Detachment from the etheric body became more difficult over time as humanity descended further into matter and the etheric body

became more strongly attached to the physical body. Even in ancient Indian culture, the hierophant, or initiator, had great power. Words alone were no longer enough: the hierophant had to touch the initiate with a wand. The force emanating from the hierophant released the initiate into the etheric body.

In the Egyptian culture, uncoupling from the etheric body became increasingly complex. The hierophant had to put the individual into a magnetic, hypnotic sleep. Not just anybody would do: the hierophant had to have knowledge and power. This is called the Egyptian initiation. There were other ways. The ancient Finns, Druids, and other peoples had a custom that when the etheric body of the disciple was to be removed, there had to be a magical chain and other evolved beings around, holding hands and singing so that the one in the middle went into a trance. There were many such cases in Europe thousands of years ago.

This was a wonderful, miraculous event in the life of a truth seeker, preceded by a long period of preparation and purification. All mysteries speak of preparation prior to initiation. The individual who was initiated attained knowledge. Before, they had to believe, but in initiation, they attained knowledge.

### *The First Three Initiations of the Old Covenant*

A long time ago, Mercury and Venus helped our planet. From there came the high beings who founded a secret school, the Great White Brotherhood. The old mystery schools spoke of four great initiations. The fifth initiation made an individual an adept, a perfect human, but before that, they had to pass through the four great initiations.

The watchword of the first great initiation of the Old Covenant is brotherly love in the visible world. The first great initiation is the Mercury initiation.

The second initiation is based on being able to distinguish—not only in this visible world but above all in the invisible world, that is to say, in the world of thought and emotion, in what we call the astral world—between good and evil, between pure and impure, between

beauty and ugliness, and personal love and true love. The second initiation relates to Venus, whose influence is truth, honesty, purity, and beauty in the realm of personal thoughts and feelings. Venus inspires one in that direction, and in the sign of Venus lives the ideal attained in the second great initiation, after which one must no longer be mistaken about the moral validity of one's own or others' feelings and thoughts.

The third initiation places one in a special relationship with the earth and visible life, for it puts the means of success in one's hand—not only in the external, transitory, or superficial sense but also in the real, internal sense. The third initiation always raises one to glory, if not in the external world (though this often follows), then at least in a smaller inner circle. Friends, neighbors, and relatives place this person in the seat of honor in their own spirit.

The third initiation is the so-called Mount of Glorification described in the Gospel. This initiation concerns the internal and external conditions of the earth. It is its hosanna cry, because the initiation of the individual is always the glory of the earth at the same time. Our globe will one day shine with its own light with extraordinary brightness, but this cannot happen until its human children shine on the mountain of glory. When people shine, the earth will shine.

The aura of our planet has indeed received a remarkable brilliance from those beings who have already helped it, above all from Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ transformed the whole aura of the earth. However, human history, good and bad, have been recorded in the earth's akashic and astral chronicles. A great deal of evil has occurred throughout history, the traces of which are still visible in the aura of the earth.

However, the earth does not have to carry terrible memories in its aura for eternity, because Jesus Christ has become the higher Self of the earth, and from him emanate purifying and redeeming powers which, little by little, wipe away from the earth's aura the memories of human beings' evil deeds and thoughts. Nevertheless, the earth will not become a spiritually shining star until humanity ascends the Mountain of Glorification. Therefore, this third initiation is the earth initiation.

## Initiation in the New Covenant

### *The Way Opened by Jesus Christ*

The way of the New Covenant, also known as the Western or Rosicrucian way, is linked to Jesus Christ and depends on his work of joining the life of our planet. Of course, the mystical, Cosmic Christ has always been behind everything. All the great religions, all the saviors, and great sages who have taught people have been under the influence of the mystical, Cosmic Christ. But there is another point to be noted. At the outset, this Cosmic Christ was not, so to speak, personified. The Cosmic Christ achieved personhood in Jesus Christ.

Then a new way opened up with Jesus Christ.

An individual who goes through regeneration realizes the Son of God in the context of Jesus Christ. They then have the same experience as Paul on the road to Damascus. Paul's life was completely changed because he saw the mystery of the Son of God: he saw what the Son of God is. He saw the Cosmic Christ, the mystery of the ages, the living God, the perfection of man, who has lived in the consciousness of God since the beginning of the world. Paul also saw that the Son of God had manifested personally in Jesus of Nazareth.

This new way is different from the old. It is not a question of any outward obligation to walk on the road and in this way to grow spiritually, to become more and more free, and to be saved. This new way of union is a question of the Son of God coming alive in me. Naturally, I must follow Jesus, live according to his advice, and strive to die to myself so that the Son of God, Christ, may live in me. Paul means this when he speaks of "Christ in us" (*Christus in nobis*). It should be noted that the higher "I" is not the same as Christ until the higher "I" receives Christ. The higher "I" cannot develop to its final goal merely by manas, or higher reason.

This whole road and way of life are directed towards everyday life; this is not a life in which one withdraws from the world. One seeks nothing more than that the new being, Christ, may become so alive in one that one too may be among the people who, with Christ, help the world.



One who has Christ in oneself cannot go astray. Christ in this individual is such a powerful victor that they go straight ahead and overcome themselves, if not in a moment, then gradually. Such a person pays no attention to the lower “I”; they step out of it. They do not have the struggles or battles of someone who does not know the Son of God.

We can also speak of initiations in this way of Christ, but they are smaller initiations, although they can include the same things that were called great initiations in the old way. In this way of Christ, there are not initiations in the sense of being some solemn ceremony by which one is initiated into some brotherhood. There are always dangers in the old way. There are, after all, different lodges in the invisible world. There is also the fact that some people always stop at a certain initiation, start working in a certain light, and can go astray. Therefore, one can go astray for a moment when, in the invisible world, by falling into fraternities with a special purpose. But one who walks in the way of Christ does not take any initiations in that way. This individual does not want to be in any brotherhoods, does not seek to attain initiations in any way, wanting only the Son of God, only God, the Christ whom one sees.

Jesus Christ made the mystery of initiation, which used to be accessible only to a select few, now open to all who want to receive Christ. All people who want to can seek initiation. This means they can go through several smaller initiations on their own before the great one, which will finally come to them from the divine and take them further down the road than the first great initiation used to take them. In other words, the first great initiation that opens up to them as they follow Christ reveals a mystery that was once given much later, but it also requires of the aspirants an effort that was once required only later.

Jesus Christ made the earth our starting point. As shown above, we used to have to start from Mercury and Venus. In the Old Covenant, the first, second, and third initiations form a preparatory or cleansing path in the New Covenant.

## *Lesser Initiations*

*In Ervast's interpretations, the nine lesser initiations are psychological transformations that affect the aspirant's sleep and deep sleep (secret) consciousnesses. These are required since to become a member of the kingdom of heaven, that is, the Great White Brotherhood, one must be "clad in the wedding garment," which means, among other things, that one can freely move and work in the various levels of the invisible world.*

*The nine lesser initiations are not initiations in the old sense since the aspirant will not become a member of any invisible brotherhood as in the Old Covenant. After the lesser initiations are passed, the first greater initiation occurs in daytime consciousness.*

Among Rosicrucians, lesser initiations are spoken of when describing the relatively long preparatory road that one follows with Christ to Calvary. These smaller or lesser ordinations were not spoken of before Christ. Then this way, which is now of a preparatory nature, consisted of three great initiations. These lesser initiations or great spiritual experiences are not initiations in the strict sense of the word but interior changes. There are nine of these experiences or changes.

Before Christ, our earth was, technically speaking, under Satan's power, but since Christ, Satan's power has been broken. This means that a secret school within our planet, called the School of Painful Effort, leads individuals into so-called white magic. But precisely because it leads to white magic—that is to say, to wisdom and power over the forces of nature and living beings—this school on our planet can simultaneously lure people into the illusion of so-called black magic. In particular, a person who is not a student in a secret school but absorbs the powerful influence of the earth and goes their own way falls into the illusions of black magic. On the other hand, one who attains the perfection that is possible on this planet has completely overcome black magic.

We cannot become perfect on this earth unless we overcome the temptations of black magic, or Satan. This spirit or ruler of our planet is so powerful and wise that he has been entrusted with the outward protection and care of a difficult school that could lead to black magic.

This wonderful angelic being, who is the spirit of our earth, was redeemed through Jesus Christ and gave power to Christ. Before, he was the protective wall of the Cosmic Christ so that no one could reach Christ until he broke Satan's wall; only then could an individual, in the invisible world, enter into the Fellowship of Christ. But through the work of Jesus Christ, a change has taken place. Satan is no longer a wall between Christ and humankind: the light of Christ has penetrated through the darkness and Satan's protective wall and into humankind. Thus Satan has relinquished his power over the earth, and Christ has this power in his hands.

This does not mean that individuals are mysteriously "redeemed." Each individual still needs to be redeemed for Christ to live in them. Now the light of Christ, the Holy Spirit, is with each individual, and Christ is knocking at the heart of each individual. The Cosmic Christ is so close to everyone that anyone can safely set out on the path that leads him or her into the Fellowship of Christ. The way through Satan's wall is no longer as difficult as it was before Christ, though it is a road that everyone must travel. It does not necessarily require special technical initiations: spiritual experiences and rebirth can achieve the same results.

This is the difference between the Old and the New Covenants.

Of course, an individual can still go the old way, pass through the initiations, and enter into the various degrees of the Brotherhood, but they do not necessarily have to do so if they simply invoke the Holy Spirit, who is in humanity as Christ comes forth. When one is filled with the Holy Spirit, one can come to Christ and walk with Christ to Calvary.

In the New Covenant, attainments are only internal, so they go in a different order for different people. Individuals can achieve their experiences in their own order, but until someone has achieved all nine, they are obviously not eligible for the kingdom of heaven; they are not a Christian in the true sense of the word. One must attain the nine great spiritual results before going with Christ to Golgotha, to the Mars initiation.

The nine experiences are naturally divided into three periods. First, there is the daytime, where we are awake and more or less self-aware. Second, there is the sleep state, where we sleep and dream. The third form of consciousness is that in which we are so sound asleep that we do not dream. Then our consciousness is in the third state, which is called the secret consciousness. (The old Indian classification speaks of a fourth state, behind dreamless sleep. Ordinary human consciousness cannot reach it at all.)

The influence of the Holy Spirit must not be limited to the daytime or waking consciousness but must also penetrate the dream and secret consciousnesses. We must accomplish enough on the preparatory path that the influence of the Holy Spirit is felt in our whole personality. Only then can we enter into Christ. This is our great and long catharsis, or purification. Before we can enter the way of the Holy Spirit, we must be seekers of truth, people who want knowledge of life and death. It is necessary to be reborn within one as a seeker of truth who would not want to live in vain or enter the grave without knowing anything about God. It is necessary to be a seeker of truth to approach the gate of life to the kingdom of heaven.

Walking in the way of the Holy Spirit is putting brotherly love into practice. Until we walk the road, we see the demands of love in our spirit, but we do not know how to put them into practice. When we have learned to love, we will enter heaven's kingdom. This may happen in one earthly life; for others, it will take many incarnations. In any case, the person understands that the path requires effort and a multifaceted self-education. Life helps this individual, but the gods only help those who do the work themselves. Therefore the aspirant begins to practice meditation, for one can get nowhere on the path of self-education unless one learns to control the thoughts. When the aspirant begins to grow by concentration of thought and meditation, they develop the first of the nine qualities required.

The first characteristic is that one starts to feel very lonely, often helpless, abandoned, and poor. Many religious people have experienced this. The aspirant must feel how alone they are. They will not find anything beautiful, good, or noble in themselves. The more they

exercise their thoughts and learn to meditate, the more they realize how sinful they are. The aspirant thinks of themselves as going backward, afraid that everyone will see how insignificant they are. They feel as if neither God nor the Master cares about them. Yet they have to keep pushing and not let anything paralyze their mind. They feel it to be their unshakable duty.

Alongside this is another spiritual experience, which is about other people. The aspirant learns to see that other people are not perfect either. The aspirant sees this so clearly that when they compare themselves with others, they might feel a sense of pride: "I am not inferior to others; on the contrary, I am in some respects better!"

This is the voice of the tempter. The aspirant must learn the lesson of brotherhood, which is the yardstick of truth on this road. Having one's eyes opened to see what other people are like must teach one not self-righteousness but humility. The aspirant must educate themselves to tolerance, feeling that the happiness of brotherhood lies in the fact that people are different. My love for people is shown by the fact that I love them as they are.

Therefore, humility is the second of the nine characteristics. It is absolutely essential in the way of the Holy Spirit. If, in examining ourselves, we find ourselves lacking in this respect, if we are hasty and vicious in our judgments, we must learn to be temperate, cordial, liberal, and forgiving. In this way, we will remain humble.

We need to develop a third important characteristic in daytime consciousness. It is freedom from the fear of suffering. We must not fear or run away from suffering. Suffering is karma, and very good karma at that. It is as if karma favors us if it throws great suffering, disappointment, or pain in our way; while we pay off old debts, we learn not to incur a new one. The aspirant knows there will be no suffering unless the law of life is broken. When suffering meets them, it is their karma. If they can share in the common karma of a people, they are a source of good cheer and peace, lightening the common burden and working for joy and happiness in the midst of common misery. The individual is involved in suffering but is not immersed in it, trying to lessen the distress of others.

Then there are the three characteristics that are intrinsic to sleep consciousness. When a person walks in the way of the Holy Spirit, their dream life changes, becoming more vivid. In dreams, the individual is now confronted with a new world and new circumstances and meets new, previously unknown people. Dreams often become prophetic; the dreamer sees ahead of time what is going to happen. It is as if the sleep consciousness has been endowed with a new sense. The dream life becomes, in a word, extraordinarily interesting.

The walker on the path of the Holy Spirit must not stop or be content with a varied yet happy and sublimely beautiful dream life so that they are happy to sleep and dream. The traveler must be aware that the power of the Holy Spirit is filling all their consciousness. The seeker asks what they should do in their sleep and what they should learn about sleep consciousness. They remember that the ethical principle of the path is brotherly love. With love as the yardstick, one asks: what qualities must I now develop in myself?

The first is to be tough on oneself. When one is dreaming, one must note whether, in a world of illusions, one can control oneself, refuse, and be brotherly, good, impartial, selfless, and pure. If not, one must learn to do so, for one must be hard on oneself in the dream life. It is not enough even to have gained power over oneself and easily refuse temptations in daytime. One must be equally strong and restrained in dreams. This can be learned when, while asleep, one wakes, conscious of the fact that one is asleep. In the daytime one must educate oneself to this purpose.

Another quality the wanderer will soon discover to be essential in sleep is protecting others from temptation. The aspirant must learn to be wise and firm in dealings with other living beings. It is not enough to avoid falling into temptation oneself; one must be so firm, strong, and noble that one can help others by example, word, and deed. Even though one has awakened to the fact that one is living in one's own dream world, one must learn to behave in a correct and brotherly way.

This is a comparatively difficult lesson for the wanderer. They must be firm with themselves and help others not to fall into temptation. In the visible world, one can only rarely prevent others from falling into

temptation; in this life, everything is healed by forgiveness. But in the other life, the dream world, one has to help others by being unshakably firm. In both worlds, one must help, but in the visible world, one helps by acts of love; in the invisible world, one helps also by speaking, advising, and rebuking. This ability is impossible to achieve unless the wanderer's heart is filled with a living desire to help.

The third quality that develops in the dream life of the wanderer, and is reflected in the visible world, is a calm state of mind, which does not panic but is always in control of the situation and radiates peace around it. Strangely, the wanderer becomes so self-conscious in their dream life that they no longer say, "This is my subjective dream." They become convinced that this is another world, another objective life that they are living alongside their visible life. The individual works, influences, and acts in this dream life, and there is much evidence of its objectivity. One's dream life is not confined to one's aura, but one is involved with other beings. It is a living life. One receives teachings and teaches others, all while realizing that the astral life is a symbol, although at the same time it is objective and real.

Finally, on the path of the Holy Spirit, the wanderer comes into contact with the secret consciousness. Three faculties or qualities must also be attained here. They are likely to make clear to the wanderer what objectivity in the astral sense is, what the consciousness is that exists outside the body. When the wanderer in this secret consciousness develops qualities in themselves, it is done objectively outside the body. The life of the secret consciousness is connected with that remarkable phenomenon that we call the dichotomy in the soul life of the wanderer. The wanderer is another person, another personality, outside the body.

The first property of the secret consciousness is reflected in the physical consciousness: one sees oneself as a being outside the physical self-personality, weighing its shortcomings and defects, virtues and abilities, calmly and objectively. It is as if one has a second self, which can objectively judge oneself in a way that has not been possible before.

As this dichotomy occurs in the daytime, the seeker begins to awaken to a degree of consciousness outside the physical body at night. Not, however, as before in sleep, when the individual was their own daytime personal "I," but as a completely new personality, stepping out of the body and becoming fully aware that they exist in spite of the physical body. The wanderer believes that they have solved the problem of immortality because they are able to leave the physical body and go as an angel to another world.

Another quality that must develop in the wanderer's secret consciousness and be reflected in their daily routine is an immense and gentle serenity, which has a calming and bonding effect on others. It is not just temperance but a positive force. In the secret consciousness, one is always confronted with things that, in our language, mean quarrels, disagreements, struggles, and wars. In the spirit world, one has to do remarkable work, eliminating the causes of war, strife, and fighting and promoting brotherhood. This is reflected in daily life so that the wanderer definitely knows harmony, love, and peace as a positive force in life, works for these things, and has a calming influence on people. This is a remarkable ability for the possessor of this secret consciousness, and with it comes a wide range of transcendental experiences.

The third characteristic of the secret consciousness, the ninth minor initiation, is that the wanderer has finally evolved into a glorious being, a shining angel whose essence is truth, love, purity, and peace. In the physical personality, it is reflected as a peaceful, beneficent force, but in another state of being, outside the body, the wanderer is dressed in shining wedding clothes and invited to the wedding of the king's son.

In cultivating the third ability, the wanderer learns a great and final lesson: they refuse black magic. Being outside the body, they are constantly in contact with the spirit of the earth, which is black inspiration. Although evil resides in humanity and the wanderer suffers no evil but that which is in themselves, evil exists objectively, because the spirit of the earth helps the souls developing here by placing them in the school of temptation. It is the so-called black inspiration of life on this earth. Outside the body, the wanderer falls under the power



of great temptation unless they have so educated themselves that they can overcome it without any doubt.

These smaller initiations may take several incarnations, for only when one has attained the nine qualities of a wayfarer of the Holy Spirit, renounced black magic, and unconditionally embraced goodness is one ready to enter the narrow gate into the kingdom of heaven and the Fellowship of Christ. Only then will their passage to Calvary begin.

### *Greater Initiations*

The fourth initiation of the Old Covenant is the Mars initiation, but this is the first in the New Covenant. This initiation leads one to the road to Calvary and ultimately to a painful death on the cross, whether that death is physically real or merely an inner martyrdom. After glory comes the sorrowful walk along the *via dolorosa*. It begins with unspeakable pain and infinite sorrow and ends with the sacrificial death of the personality.

The influence of Mars is quite peculiar. Mars is the god of war. But Mars also has its own occult school: a fine, high, spiritual school leading to remarkable achievements. Those who pass through that school and are consecrated by the red fire have solved the mystery of the sword. They have solved the secret of death and sacrifice. In the fourth great initiation, one learns to give oneself to the point of sacrificial death. That is why Mars corresponds to the fourth great initiation.

The next initiation (the second of the New Covenant and the fifth of the Old) is that of Jupiter, a sublime and beautiful initiation. Jupiter's secret school is a school of blessing-producing magicians. It is also called the "school of the sower." Those who belong to this school are the wise sages who use the earth's riches and knowledge's wealth, obey nature, and serve it. They are white magicians, adepts, masters, and perfect people. They possess the powers of nature, which they use for the benefit of others, sowing knowledge and wealth. That is why the Jupiter school corresponds to the fifth initiation.

This is followed by the Saturn initiation, which is an extension of the previous Master initiation. It is the "school of living stones." If the

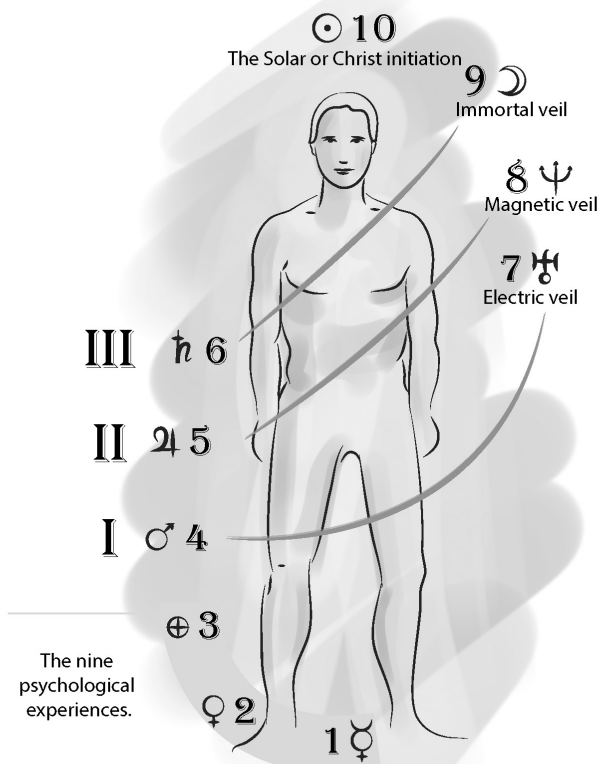
Master is young, the Saturn initiation makes them an elder in wisdom, a *Chohan* or Lord. Those who have undergone the Saturnian Initiation have power and wisdom, know everything, and are stern in their lofty height. Nothing can shake them. They are superhuman beings. It is as if they are no longer human and no longer understand people. They seem cold, sternly straight, and pure in their pristine glory. But this is an illusion; in reality, they are thoroughly gentle and human. There is simply no selfishness in them, no imperfection.

The Chohan who takes the next great initiation, the Uranus initiation, turns their attention to their own body. They must create an immortal body for themselves and conquer death. This is the last work of an adept and also of a human. The individual has indeed retained consciousness throughout their life. They remember their past reincarnations perfectly well; that memory they have attained long ago.

Overcoming death has nothing to do with the reincarnation memory. To overcome death is to discover the secret of one's own body and recreate it as an immortal magic body. This is the heavenly body of which St. Paul speaks and which the adept prepares for themselves from their own physical body, or rather from its twin, the etheric body. The Uranus initiation is like the creation of the electric body. It is not a direct body yet; it is like an electric veil. The etheric body is like being positively electrified.

In the Neptunian initiation, one creates a magnetic veil. At that time, the body proper is already forming a new etheric body that is not yet fully organized. (Only in the lunar initiation does the adept create an immortal body for themselves.) The Neptune initiation can also be called the Buddha initiation. The Moon initiation can be called the initiation of the heavenly Son, and the last Sun initiation can be called the initiation of the Father or Christ (the psychological experiences and initiations are shown schematically in figure 3).

In the solar initiation, the adept, like Jesus Christ, is so united with the Cosmic Christ that they are like the lord of the whole world. This is, of course, an indescribable height, which our imperfect language and insignificant knowledge cannot even begin to imagine.



**Figure 3:** The nine psychological experiences of the New Covenant and the initiations in the New and Old Covenant.

### *The Differences between the New and Old Covenants*

What is the clear sign of a new covenant? In Egyptian initiation, the initiate was outside the body, but the initiate of the New Covenant experiences everything in daytime consciousness in this physical world. They do not go outside the physical body.

The initiate does not even consider experiences that are made exclusively outside the physical body to be fully valid, although there may be experiences that can only be made outside the physical body, which then must be considered valid. In ancient initiations, knowledge of the afterlife and visions of the realm of the dead was gained in

the initiatory dream or trance. In the New Covenant, these must not occur outside the physical body but must be full daytime experiences. The experiences of a New Covenant initiate are such that they know what they see and experience. They are fully self-conscious in everything, and in this daytime consciousness, they must not interfere with any other states of consciousness but must come to the point where everything in them is completely calm, self-conscious, and clear. This is the first striking difference.

There is another important difference. The Old Covenant initiate's concept of life was the same as it had been before the initiation: fighting and killing. The initiate of the New Covenant does not have to fight or kill in that hopeless way, because the basic theme of their life is victory. They must not fight; they must win. They must not kill anything in themselves; they overcome their weaknesses and take the strength of these weaknesses as servants. Their concept of life is no longer based on the principle of fighting but on the principle of winning. Therefore, like Jesus Christ and Buddha, the initiate cannot accept war and violence, for killing does not gain victory. The weapon of the New Covenant is the word, the word of the sage. Not fighting, but victory through the power of the word. And that word is the greatest weapon in the world, for by the word, the worlds were created. By the power of the word, the new is created.

There is a third characteristic and distinction. The old sage was harsh and, at best, could laugh at any weakness, but the New Covenant sage is full of human love and understanding.

The individual who, while awakening, begins to seek the truth and wants to know what life is, one does not have to worry about where to find a teacher. One can find the teacher, the Master, Christ in oneself. That is a wonderful fact! The whole world and all existence can open up to one within oneself, which is the achievement of Christ's work.

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For a brief biography of Ervast, see “Pekka Ervast,”

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