

The World Mother

As Symbol and Fact

BY

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IT will be best for me to begin with a definite statement as to what I personally know with regard to the World-Mother, dealing with the facts as they are, and with the way in which they concern us and the work which we have to do – leaving aside for the time all the myths which have gathered around Her.

The World-Mother, then, is a mighty Being who is at the head of a great department of the organization and government of the world. She is in truth a mighty Angel, having under Her a vast host of subordinate Angels, whom She keeps perpetually employed in the work which is especially committed to Her. That work has so many and such wonderful ramifications that it is not easy to give even the most general idea of it in a few sentences. Let it suffice for the moment to say that in a very real sense all the women of the world are [Page1] under Her charge, and most especially so at the time of their greatest trial, when they are exercising the supreme function given to them by God, and thus becoming mothers in very deed.

Many stories are told, more especially among the peasantry, of women who have seen the World-Mother standing beside them in those terrible hours, and many who have not been privileged to see have yet felt the help and the strength which She outpours. Why should it be the peasants who see, and not the more intellectual people? Just because those who have intellectual development have so often thrown themselves into that part of their consciousness that they have largely lost the impressionability of the others, who live closer to Nature. Nevertheless, sometimes those more developed people see also. I was myself told by a member of the English nobility that under similar circumstances she saw standing beside her bed a great Angel, who marvellously poured a kind of unconsciousness into her, a dulling of the pain at certain times.

This is perhaps Her greatest and most impressive function; but She has yet another [2] which brings Her into the very closest connection with humanity, for She has made it a part of Her work to try to mitigate the suffering of the world, to act as the Consoler, the Comforter, the Helper of all who are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness or any other adversity. To those to whom this train of ideas is unfamiliar I would recommend the perusal of a touching story entitled "Consolatrix Afflictorum" in Monsignor R. H.

Benson's book *The Light Invisible*, and also a little volume, *The Call of the Mother*, by the Lady Emily Lutyens.

All students of Theosophy are aware of the existence of the mighty and glorious Hierarchy which is the inner and spiritual Government of the world. One who wishes to understand something of the organization of this Government would do well to consult a very clear and useful diagram which appears in Mr. C. Jinarajadasa's *First Principles of Theosophy* (Fig. 118). From that diagram we see that while the Spiritual King, the Lord of the World, stands supreme above all, and the Lord Buddha stands next to Him as the spiritual Head of the Second Ray, the other five Rays [3] (though each is directed by its own special Ruler or Chohan) are all under the management of a high Official called the Mahachohan. We see then that the Lord Vaivasvata Manu, the Lord Maitreya Bodhisattva and our Lord the Mahachohan stand at a certain definite level as the representatives, as far as work on these lower planes is concerned, of the Three Aspects of the Solar Logos; and we know of no other Great Ones who stand at this level except some who, having held high office in the past, are now working elsewhere.

The grades of the Hierarchy being thus clearly laid down, and the arrangement of the different rays and their Leaders or Chohans tabulated, it will at once be seen that the work of the World-Mother could not be entered upon such a list, for the work does not belong to anyone Ray, but deals in a protective way with women-folk on all Rays. Furthermore, the list there given to us indicates the lines of activity of what we may call the human part of the Hierarchy only. But it will be remembered that the Lord Maitreya is the Teacher of Angels as well as of men, and just in the same way the great Lord of the World is the [4] Spiritual King not only of the human evolution, but also of the Angelic kingdom on this planet as well. We know that there is an Angelic side of the Hierarchy, but we have not as yet any information which would enable us to compile a similar table for that.

We know that just as Adepts have divided the world into parishes, so that all nations have some sort of Adept guidance, so also has each nation its presiding Deva or Angel. We know furthermore that the Angels take a very great part in the direction of evolution – that they also preside over certain districts, and that there is an elaborate scheme of lesser and greater Devas, coming down even to the local spirit who acts as guardian to a wood, a valley, a lake. But our knowledge along all these lines is limited and fragmentary, and the political geography of the world from the point of view of the Angelic Hosts has yet to be written. It is probably rash therefore to attempt any comparison between highly-advanced people of two evolutions; but I think we shall not be far wrong if we regard the World-Mother, Our Lady of Light, as being [5] of equal dignity with the Chohans who are Heads of the Rays.

I am afraid that in most English-speaking countries the principal difficulty that we shall find in our way in endeavouring to explain the office and work of the World-Mother will be the extraordinarily bitter and unreasoning prejudice of the average Protestant against the Catholic doctrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We shall inevitably be accused of trying to introduce Mariolatry, of secretly attempting to influence our readers in the direction of the teaching of the Roman Church; for there is a vast amount of misconception connected with this subject. The Roman and Greek Churches hold the name of the Blessed Virgin in deep reverence, although many of their members know little of the real meaning of the beautiful and poetic symbolism connected with that name. The Church of England has curtailed somewhat the reverence paid to Her, while those Christians who do not belong to her communion usually remark that it is idolatrous to worship a woman – an attitude of mind which is merely the result of narrowness and ignorance. [6]

If we want really to understand the truth in these matters, we must begin by freeing our minds altogether from prejudice; and the first point to realize is that no one ever has worshipped a woman (or a man either) in the sense in which the rabid Protestant means the word. He is incapable of comprehending – he does not want to comprehend – the Catholic attitude towards Our Lady or the saints. We who are Theosophical students, however, must adopt a fairer position than that, and try to discover what the Catholic position really is before we condemn it. Let us quote from The Catholic Encyclopedia (article "Worship") what may be taken as an approved and authoritative statement of the Roman view on the subject:

There are several degrees of worship; if it is addressed directly to God, it is superior, absolute, supreme worship, or worship of adoration, or, according to the consecrated theological term, a worship of *latria*.^{*} [* This word is an amphibrach. Accentuate the second syllable pronouncing it exactly like the English word "try".] This sovereign worship is due to God alone; addressed to a creature, it would become idolatry.

When worship is addressed only indirectly to God – that is, when its object is the veneration of martyrs, of angels, or of saints, it is a subordinate worship, dependent on the first, and relative, in so far as it honours the creatures of God for their [7] peculiar relations with Him. It is designated by theologians as the worship of *dulia*,^{*} [* Again an amphibrach. Accentuate the second syllable, pronouncing it like the English "lie".] The first syllable is pronounced like the English word "do".] a term denoting servitude, and implying, when used to signify Our worship of distinguished servants of God, that their service to Him is their title to our veneration.

As the Blessed Virgin has a separate and absolutely super-eminent rank among the saints, the worship paid to her is called hyperdulia.

That seems to me to make the whole matter admirably clear, and to present a correct and defensible attitude. Much confusion has arisen from the translation of those three Greek words, with their delicate shades of meaning, by the one English word "worship". I think that this mistake, coupled with the blank ignorance of most people of the niceties of theological distinctions, and their fatal readiness to believe ill of those from whom they differ, has been responsible for much of the misunderstanding and the consequent hatred. I suggest that among ourselves and in our literature we make the distinction clearly by translating only latreia* [* Here the true Greek spelling is given; the Encyclopedia uses the medieval Latin.] as worship; douleia* [* Here the true Greek spelling is given; the Encyclopedia uses the medieval Latin.] might be rendered as reverence or [8] veneration, and hyperdouleia* [* Here the true Greek spelling is given; the Encyclopedia uses the medieval Latin.] as deep reverence. But the point for us to bear in mind is that no instructed person has ever, anywhere or at any time, confused such reverence as may duly and properly be offered to all great and holy beings with that higher worship which may be given to God alone. Let there be no mistake about that fact.

Much nonsense has been talked about idolatry, chiefly by people who are too anxious to force their own beliefs upon others to have either time or inclination to try to understand the point of view of wiser and more tolerant thinkers. If they knew enough of etymology to be aware that the word idol means an image or representation, they might perhaps ask themselves of what this thing is an image, and whether it is not that reality behind which these much-maligned savages are worshipping, instead of the wood and stone about which missionaries prate so glibly.

The image, the picture, the cross, the lingam of the Saivite, the sacred book of the Sikh – all these things are symbols; not in [9] themselves objects of worship, but reverenced by those who understand, precisely because they are intended to remind us of some aspect of God, and to turn our thoughts to Him. In India these aspects are called by many different names, and the missionary makes haste to revile the Hindu as a polytheist; yet the coolie who works in his garden could tell him that there is but one God, and that all these are but aspects of Him, lines of approach to Him, divided and materialized in order to bring infinity a little nearer to the grasp of out very finite minds.

There is great need for charity and understanding, for a kindly and sympathetic attitude towards those who are travelling along another road to the feet of the God in whom all alike believe – the loving Father of whom the Christ tells us, the one true God who said through another of His manifestations: "All true worship comes to Me, through whatsoever name it may be offered"; and again: "By whatsoever path men approach Me, along that path do I meet them; for the paths by which men come from every side are Mine." [10]

There is nothing but God; and for whomsoever we feel reverence, adoration, love, it is to the God manifesting through him (however partially) that that reverence, adoration or love is offered. "Many sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also will I bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

Having thus endeavoured to rise above the miasma of ignorance and bigotry into the purer air of justice and comprehension, let us in that spirit approach the consideration of the beautiful and wonderful manifestation of the divine power and love which is enshrined within the name of the World-Mother.

I do not think that anyone with our Western education finds it easy to understand the wealth of symbolism which is used in Oriental religions; and people forget that Christianity is an Oriental religion, just as much as Buddhism, Hinduism or Zoroastrianism. The Christ took a Jewish body – an Oriental body; and those to whom He spoke had the Oriental methods of thought, and not ours at all. They have a wonderful and most elaborate method of symbolism in all these religions, and they [11] take great delight in their symbols; they weave them in and out and combine them, and treat them lovingly in poetry and in art. But our tendency is towards what we call practicality, and we are apt to materialize all these ideas, and often greatly degrade them in consequence.

Let us never forget that our religion comes from the East, and that if we want to understand it, we must look at it first of all as an Oriental would look at it, and not apply our modern scientific theories until we are able to see how they fit in. They can be made to fit in, but unless we know how, we are likely to make shipwreck of the whole thing, and we run a serious risk of assuming that the people who hold the allegory know nothing whatever, and are hopelessly wrong. They are not wrong at all. Those beautiful old myths convey the meaning, without necessarily putting the cold scientific facts before those who have not developed their minds sufficiently to grasp them in that form. That was well understood in the early Church.

There is always much more behind these quaint and poetical thoughts of the men of old [12] than most people believe. It is foolish to be filled with ignorant prejudice; it is better by far to try to understand. Whatever in religion anywhere has been artistic and helpful to man has always behind it a real truth. It is for us to disinter that truth; it is for us to clear away the crust of the ages and to let the truth shine forth.

That is true with regard to the beautiful Christian glyph of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There are three distinct ideas involved in the ordinary thought of Her:

1. The story of the mother of the disciple Jesus; what She was and what She afterwards became.
2. The sea of virgin matter, the Great Deep, the water over the face of which the Spirit of God moved.
3. The feminine Aspect of the Deity.

These ideas have in the course of centuries been confused, degraded, materialized, until in the form in which the story is now presented, it has become impossible for any thinking man. But that is not so if we analyze it and understand its real meaning, if we separate the myth and the symbol from the chronicle of the living person. [13]

The Roman Church teaches her children of the Virgin Birth of Jesus and of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Herself from Her mother St. Anne. The first of these events is contrary to the laws of Nature (which are the laws of God, the expression of His will) and therefore cannot possibly have happened. The second is, I think, usually supposed (by those at least who have not made a special study of theology) to mean that Our Lady was conceived, like Her divine Son, by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost; but on referring to authorized Roman Catholic publications I see that this is not so, for the teaching is that She was conceived in the ordinary manner, like the rest of mankind, Her parents being St. Joachim and St. Anne. It is explained that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception means only that the mythical primal curse of what they call original sin (supposed to have been inherited from Adam) was not imposed by God upon the embryo of Our Lady.

I wish to be absolutely fair in my statement of this remarkable doctrine; but I must admit that it seems to me an unnecessary and even fantastic theological invention. I have never [14] found the slightest historical evidence for the grotesque story of Adam and Eve and the apple; and I believe that the whole

theory of original sin is simply a clumsy way of stating the fact that man brings over with him from his previous birth a certain amount of karma. If one tries to interpret it along that line, perhaps this doctrine of the Immaculate Conception might be taken as amounting to a statement that Our Lady had already worked out all evil karma and consequently entered upon Her life in Palestine practically karma-less. On that subject I have no information.

To present these ideas as actual occurrences in the life of a Jewish lady is an error; they could not have been so, therefore they were not so. But if we understand them as symbols of a certain stage in the process of creation, of the evolution of a solar system, they fall quite naturally into place, and are seen to be beautiful and significant. Divested of them, the life-story is coherent and credible.

The same Church represents the Festival of the Assumption as commemorating the carrying up of a physical body into the heaven-world – once more a manifest impossibility; [15] but when we realize that this is but a poetic description of the entry of a triumphant Adept into the Angelic kingdom, we see at once the appropriateness of much that has been written about it, and of the wonderful paintings which it has inspired.

Let us then first of all consider the last physical life of Our Lady of Light, and the consequences which followed it and led up later on to Her acceptance of the Office which She at present holds.

THE MOTHER OF JESUS

It must be understood that the disciple Jesus was born precisely as other men are born. This strange doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, an attempt to explain which we have just made, the story of the overshadowing of the Blessed Virgin by the Holy Ghost, and of the Virgin Birth – all that group of ideas refers to the myth, to the symbol; it has a real meaning and a beautiful interpretation, as I shall presently try to show, but it is not concerned with the physical body of the disciple Jesus. The mother of that physical [16] body was a Jewish lady of noble birth, but, if tradition is to be believed, of no great wealth. We need not think of Joseph (who, remember, was also of the seed of David) as a carpenter, because that is part of the symbolism, and not of the history. In that symbolism Joseph is the guardian

of the Blessed Virgin – of the soul in man. He represents the mind; and because the mind is not the creator of the soul, but only its furnisher and its decorator, Joseph is not a mason, like the Great Architect of the Universe, but a carpenter. We need not think of Our Lord as working in a carpenter's shop; that is simply an instance of the confusion and materialization introduced by those who do not understand the symbolism.

The mother of Jesus, then, was a noble-woman of Judaea, a descendant of the royal house of David. Truly She who was chosen for so high an honour must have been pure and true and of flawless character – a great saint; for none but such could have given birth to so pure, so wonderful, so glorious a body. A saintly and a godly life She led; one of terrible suffering (which She bore with marvellous patience and nobility of soul) yet with [17] wondrous consolations. We know but little of its details; we glimpse it only occasionally in the scant contemporary narrative; but it was a life which it will do us good to imagine to ourselves, an example for which we may well thank God. It carried Her far along the upward path – far enough to make possible a curious and beautiful later development, which I must now explain.

Students of the inner life know that when man has reached the end of the purely human part of his evolution – when the next step will lift him into the superhuman condition of the Adept – into a kingdom as definitely above humanity as man is above the animal kingdom –

When he has wrought the purpose through

Of that which made him man –

several lines of growth lie open before him, and it is left to him to choose which he will take. Occasionally, too, there are conditions under which this choice may be to some extent anticipated. This is not the place to discuss the alternative; let it suffice here to say that one of the possibilities is to become a great [18] Angel or messenger of God – to join the Deva evolution, as an Indian would put it. And this was the line which the Lady Mary chose, when She reached the level at which human birth was no longer necessary for Her.

Vast numbers of Angels have never been human because their evolution has come along another line, but there are Angels who have been men, who at a certain stage of this development have chosen to follow the Angel line; and a very glorious, magnificent and helpful line it is. So She, who, two thousand years ago, bore the body of Jesus in order that it might later on be taken by the Christ, is now a mighty Spirit.

Much beautiful enthusiasm and devotion has all through the centuries been poured out at Her feet; thousands upon thousands of monks and nuns, thousands upon thousands of suffering men and women, have come before Her and poured out their sorrows, and have prayed to Her that She in turn would present their petition to Her Son. This last prayer is a misconception, because He who is the Eternal Son of God and at the same the Christ within everyone of us, needs none to [19] intercede with Him for us. He knows before we speak far better than we what is best for us. We are in Him, and through Him were we made, and without Him was not anything made which was made, neither we nor the smallest speck of dust in all the universe. "Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands and feet."

One does not pray to great Angels for intercession if one understands, because one knows that He, in whom all Angels live and move and have their being, is already doing for every one of us very best that can be done. But just as one may ask help from a human friend in the flesh – as, for example, one may ask of him the encouragement of his thought – so may one ask aid from the same human friend when he has cast aside his robe of flesh; and in the same way one may ask the same kind of help from these great Spirits at their higher level.

There is nothing unreasonable or unscientific in this. I myself have often had letters from people who know that I have studied these matters, telling me that at such-and-such a time they would be going through some [20] difficulty – a surgical operation perhaps, or some other specially trying experience – and asking me to think of them at that moment, and to send them helpful thought. Naturally I always do it. And as I know there can be no effect without a cause, and in exactly the same way there can be no due cause which does not produce its effect, I know that if I (or if any of you) take the trouble to fix our thought upon anyone in sorrow or difficulty, and try to send him helpful ideas, try to put before him something which will strengthen him in his troubles, we may be perfectly sure that that thought-force does produce its effect, that it goes and reacts upon that person. To what extent it will help him depends on his receptivity, upon the strength of the thought, and upon various other circumstances; but that some effect will be produced we may be absolutely sure. And so when we send a request for kindly, helpful, strengthening thought to one of these great ones – whether it be a saint now in the flesh, or one who has laid aside that flesh, or one of the great Angels – assuredly that help will come to us, and will strengthen us. [21]

That is the case with the World-Mother; yet there are those who would have us believe that all that splendid good feeling, all that love and uttermost devotion, have run to waste and been useless. Incredible as it appears to us who are used to wider and saner thought, I really think that in their curious ignorance the more rabid enemies of the Church actually believe this. They even go further still, and say that it is wrong, wicked and blasphemous for a man to feel that love and devotion towards Her! It sounds like madness, but I am afraid it is true that there are such people. Of course the truth is that no devotion, no love, no good feeling has ever been wrong, to whomsoever it has been sent. It may have been wrongly directed. Devotion and affection have often been lavished on unworthy objects, but it has not been a wrong act on the part of the lavisher – only a lack of discrimination; always it has been good for him that he should pour himself out in love, and develop his soul thereby.

Remember that if we love any person, it is the God within that person that we are loving; the God within us recognizes the God within [22] him; deep calleth unto deep, and the recognition of the Godhead is bliss. The lover often sees in the beloved qualities which no one else can discern; but those good qualities are there in latency, because the Spirit of God is within everyone of us; and the earnest belief and strong affection of the lover tend to call those latent qualities into manifestation. He who idealizes another tends to make that other what he thinks him to be.

Could we suppose then that all the wonderful and beautiful devotion addressed to the World-Mother has been wasted? Any man who thinks so must understand the divine economy very poorly. No true and holy feeling has ever been wasted since time began, or ever will be; for God, who knows us all, so arranges that the least touch of devotion, the least feeling of comprehension, the least thought of worship, shall always be received, shall always work out to its fullest possibility, and shall always bring its response from Him. . In this case in His loving-kindness He has appointed the Mother of Jesus as a mighty Angel to receive those prayers – to be a channel for them, to accept that devotion, and to forward [23] it to Him. Therefore the reverence offered to Her, and the love poured out at Her feet have never for one moment been wasted; they have brought their result, they have done their work.

Century after century the richest treasures of art have drawn their inspiration from the beauty of Her divine motherhood; Her glories have been hymned in the measured tones of the most magnificent music; Her wisdom has inspired the great doctors and teachers of the Church, for She is the Heart of Wisdom, the Mother of fair love, of patience and perseverance and of holy hope – She who kept all the sayings of Jesus in Her heart.

If we try to understand it, we shall see how very far grander is that reality than the barren conception that all high thought, all worship, all praise not directed through a particular Name must inevitably go astray. Why should God limit Himself by our mistakes as to names? He looks at the heart; not at the words. The words are conditioned by outer circumstances – by the birthplace of the speaker, for example. We are Christians because we happen to be born in England, or America, or some other Christian land – not because we [24] have examined and compared all religions, and deliberately chosen Christianity. We are Christians because it was the faith amidst which we found ourselves, and so we accepted it.

Did it ever occur to you that if we had been born as natives of India we should have been Hindus or Muhammadans just as naturally, and should have poured out our devotion to God under the name of Shiva, Krishna; Allah, instead of the name of Christ? If we had been born in Ceylon or Burma we should have been ardent Buddhists. What do these local considerations matter to God? It is under His law of perfect justice, under His scheme of evolution, that one of His creatures is born in England and another in India or Ceylon, according to his needs and his deserts. When devotion is poured out by any man, God receives it through the channel which He has appointed for that man, and so every one alike is satisfied, and justice is done. It would be a gross and glaring injustice if any honest devotion should be thrown aside or rejected. Never has the least mite of it been rejected. God's ways are other than ours, and His [25] grasp of these things is wider and greater than ours. As Faber wrote:

For we make His love too narrow

By false limits of our own,

And we magnify His strictness

With a zeal He will not own.

The stories that we hear about the World-Mother may well have a basis of fact. We hear of Her appearing in various places to various people – to Joan of Arc, for example. It is exceedingly probable that She did – that this great Angel did so show Herself or Himself (for there is nothing that we can call sex at such a height as that). There is no antecedent improbability in this, and it is most unlikely that all the people who testify to these apparitions were deluded or hypnotized, or under some strange error. All students know that earnest thought upon any subject produces strong thought-forms, which are very near the edge of visibility; many thousands of such thought-forms have been made of the Lady of Light, and we may be sure that She has never failed to respond, and most thoroughly and effectually to fill them. It is certain that, out of all these, some would under [26] favourable circumstances become physically visible; and even when they remain astral, sensitive people are often able to see them. The terrible and unexampled strain and stress of the war made many people sensitive to psychic impressions who were never so before. Thus it happens that we hear many stories of apparitions just now, and visions or manifestations of the World-Mother take a prominent place among them.

It is said, too, that wonderful cures have been produced at Lourdes and other places by faith in Her. Probably they have. There is nothing in the least unscientific, there is nothing outside reason and common sense in supposing that. We know perfectly well that a strong down-pouring of mesmeric force will produce certain cures; we have no knowledge as to the limit of such power, but it is well to remember that all these things have truth behind them.

Such then is She, the Lady of Light, who has sent forth through our President that wonderful Call to the women of the world. In *The Brotherhood of Angels and of Men*, Geoffrey Hodson writes of Her: [27]

She labours ever for the cause of human motherhood, and even now is bending all Her mighty strength and calling all Her Angel court to labour for the upliftment of motherhood throughout the world. Through Her Angel messengers She Herself is present at every human birth – unseen and unknown, it is true, but if men would open their eyes She would be revealed. She sends this message through the Brotherhood to men:

"In the Name of Him whom long ago I bore, I come to your aid. I have taken every woman to my heart, to hold there a part of her, that through it I may help her in her time of need. Uplift the women of your race till all are seen as Queens, and to such Queens let every man be as a King, that each may honour each, seeing the other's royalty. Let every home, however small, become a court, every son a knight,

every child a page. Let all treat all with chivalry, honouring in each their royal parentage, their kingly birth; for there is royal blood in every man; all are the children of the King."

It remains now for us to consider how we can avail ourselves of this privilege of serving Her which She offers to us; and also to treat of the symbolic aspects of the World-Mother.

THE WORK OF TODAY

We have to turn now to modern history and to consider the work of the World-Mother today, and the opportunity which She has recently offered to us of taking a certain part [28] in it. It is now some three years since She first spoke to some of us of this matter; in fact, I believe that it was to me that the honour fell of introducing the subject to the notice of a select group of our brethren, in consequence of an audience which the World-Mother was so gracious as to accord to me.

In Her capacity as guardian of womankind She naturally works in especially close collaboration with the agents of the Lipika, the Lords of Karma, whose business it is to find suitable births for the vast host of egos waiting to come into incarnation. This is often a matter of considerable difficulty, requiring the most delicate adjustment in reconciling conflicting claims, for of course the karma operates in both directions. If it be the karma of the incoming ego to have such-and-such parents, who will give him (or withhold from him) the opportunities which he has earned, so is it also the karma of those parents to have such-and-such a child, who may obviously affect their lives very seriously, and bring to them much joy or much sorrow.

At this particular point of history the Manu of our Fifth Root-Race is working towards [29] the development of a new sub-race, the sixth, which is to possess a number of new characteristics, considerably in advance of those commonly exhibited by the average man of the present day. How is He working to bring His new sub-race into existence?

Remember, there is no miracle about the thing. The new sub-race is not created by a single stroke; it must grow up by slow degrees from that which already exists. I suppose that, if the Lord Vaivasvata chose so to do, He might seize upon a number of people and say: "You shall be the new sub-race"; and He might arrange some changes in their bodies and brains which would make it possible. But Nature does not work in that way; and when we say: "Nature does not work in that way", we mean: "That is not how the Will of the Logos acts." All change is gradual, and we can see why that must be so.

We are living entities, all of us, and therefore we can be changed fundamentally only very slowly. You can take what you call the inanimate matter – of course it is not really inanimate – you can take metal and you can melt it and you can mould it into any shape [30] comparatively quickly. But if you are a gardener, and you want to train a plant or a tree into a certain shape, you cannot seize it and change its shape all at once, as you did with the metal. If you did, you would probably destroy the tree. You have gradually to persuade it to grow in this direction or in that. It is the same with all living organisms.

I know that all organisms are living, but some are more alive than others.

It is certainly the same with ourselves. We have within us the possibility of unfolding all the characteristics which are needed for this new sub-race. I have no doubt we have, everyone of us – at least I hope we have. So it is also with your children. They have within them the necessary capacity, but they do need development, and the development must be gradual, if you are to preserve the unity and the sanity of the living being. And so the method of the Manu and of His lieutenants (for there are thousands upon thousands of Devas and men working under Him) is that of gradual development.

Sometimes you hear us speak of promising children or young people. What do we mean [31] by that? At least at this particular time, what we mean is that there are children who are already showing some of the characteristics of that new sub-race. Not all of them; it would be an exceedingly rare thing to find a child showing all the characteristics of the new sub-race. If there were such an one, he would grow up into Adeptship perhaps, or at least Arhatship; but such manifestations are as yet very rare. You might find a child born among you who showed twenty-five per cent of the characteristics of the new sub-race. Even then you are very fortunate, for even that is very unusual, and it is worth while giving – nay, it is a solemn duty to give – every opportunity for growth in the right direction.

So it comes that Our Lady the World-Mother is just now much preoccupied with this matter of providing suitable incarnations for well-developed egos, and it is by no means an easy task. Many thousands of advanced egos are ready for incarnation and anxious to take it, in order that they may help in the work of the World-Teacher; but the difficulty of finding suitable bodies is very great. For example, [32] we have the case of those who died in the great war, who laid down their lives on the field of battle in defence of truth and righteousness.

The war was indeed a terrible thing; on the part of its aggressors it was perhaps the greatest crime in human history; but since it had to be, Those who direct evolution utilized it as a means for sorting out Their material, for winnowing the wheat from the chaff. All the noblest men of its generation took part in it in one way or other; it was a tremendous test which was applied to them. They rose to the emergency, they passed the test, they seized the opportunity. Therefore they earned wonderfully good karma, therefore they won for themselves an amount of progress which under more ordinary conditions they could not have obtained in a dozen incarnations. They gained for themselves the boon of birth in the sixth sub-race.

They were of all types and at all levels – some refined and artistic, some rough and rude; but they all had this one great quality in common, that they were ready to make the supreme sacrifice, ready to risk their lives for [33] an ideal. The change into the new sub-race will not suddenly polish them all; it cannot alter their main characteristics. They are heroes, but they have not necessarily become saints, nor highly refined and cultured men. But the sixth sub-race will not be composed entirely of Adepts, as some people seem to suppose! We cannot all be priests, physicians, artists: we shall need carpenters, blacksmiths, agriculturists then, as we do now. That new race will contain men of all classes, just as does our present sub-race out of which it evolves. We shall be at various levels of advancement, then as now; but I hope and believe that we shall all have certain great qualities in common which only a few have had in the fifth sub-race. We shall be far more liberal, less prejudiced, freer in thought and action, more brotherly and compassionate. The Rev. T. W. Chignell well expressed this:

See what triumphs are before us

As the years and ages move!

Error banished by true knowledge,

Coldness by the breath of love.

Till of men a nobler pattern

Sun and earth at length behold –

Broader-minded, broader-hearted,

Tender, manly, reverent, bold. [34]

So there will eventually be a place for all. But here and now decent bodies are needed for this vast host, and as far as possible among new and progressive peoples; where are they to be found in sufficient numbers? The private soldiers are gradually, though slowly being accommodated; the officers present a serious problem. In consequence of foolish and wasteful ostentation, an evil tradition is growing up in the Western world that men and women cannot afford to marry, and that large families are too expensive to be practically possible. Not understanding the wonderful opportunity which their sex gives them, women desire to be free from the restraints of marriage in order that they may ape the lives and actions of men, instead of taking advantage of their peculiar privileges. Such a line of thought and action is obviously disastrous to the future of the race, for it means that many of the better class parents take no part in its perpetuation, but leave it entirely in the hands of the more undesirable and undeveloped egos.

From the occult standpoint the greatest glory of a woman is not to become a leader in [35] society, nor is it to take a high university degree and live in a flat in scornful isolation, but to provide vehicles for the egos that are to come into incarnation, and to preside over a home in which her children can be properly and happily trained to live their life and to do their appointed work in the world. And that function of hers is regarded not as something to hide and to put away, something of which one should be half-ashamed; it is the greatest glory of the feminine incarnation, the great opportunity which women have and men have not. Men have other opportunities, but that really wonderful privilege of

motherhood is not theirs. It is the women who do this great work for the helping of the world, for the continuance of the race; and they do it at a cost of suffering of which we who are men can have no idea.

It is just because this is so – because of the great work done and the terrible suffering which it entails – that there is this special department of the government of the world; and the duty of its officials is to look after every woman in the time of her suffering and give her such help and strength as her [36] karma allows. The World-Mother has at Her command vast hosts of Angelic beings, and at the birth of every child one of these is always present as Her representative; so that we may quite truly say that in and through that representative, the World-Mother Herself is present at the bedside of every suffering mother. Her ministrations are extended to all alike; She makes no distinction between rich and poor, between saint and sinner, between the married and the unmarried; She is the very embodiment of the divine pity and compassion, and it is sufficient for Her that a child-body is coming into the world, that a mother needs the service which it is Her joy to provide.

What the World-Mother wishes is to achieve the spiritualization of the whole idea of motherhood and of marriage, and those of us who wish to serve Her must endeavour to use in that direction whatever influence we may have. Some of us perhaps can deliver lectures; others can write articles. She is by no means satisfied with the general position of public opinion in Europe on this subject. She says that motherhood is not really understood at [37] all by most people in Western countries; it is not regarded, as it should be, as a high and wondrous privilege, but is rather considered as almost degrading. She fully sympathizes with those women who quite truly and properly rebel against the idea of being slaves to the lusts of men, but says that nevertheless the general view on the subject is not at all what it should be.

She asserts that people marry for all sorts of wrong and material reasons – sometimes merely through lust and desire, sometimes for reasons of expediency, such as to unite two estates which happen to adjoin, sometimes to obtain position and title, and sometimes merely for money. She maintains that the only real reason for marriage is when a true and spiritual love of great intensity exists between the two parties, because it IS only under that condition that they can provide suitable vehicles for highly developed egos. Hindu ideas on these points are usually very far better, but even there they are not put thoroughly into practice.

Just now She considers it of vital importance to try to convert the Western world to the more spiritual point of view, because it is [38] chiefly from parents of the fifth sub-race that the children of the sixth must be born. In many ways it seems that a new age is opening before us – that there are signs of the dawn of a new day. That age, that day should be the woman's age and the woman's day; for, as one of

our Masters long ago pointed out, it is not until the woman takes her rightful place in the world that she can bear bodies fit for the Buddha or the Christ. In a note at the end of *The Paradoxes of the Highest Science*, by Eliphas Levi, we find the following:

The authors of *The Perfect Way* are right; woman must not be considered as only an appanage of man, since she was not made for his mere benefit or pleasure any more than he for hers: but the two must be realized as equal powers though unlike individualities.

Until the age of seven the skeletons of girls do not differ in any way from those of boys, and the osteologist would be puzzled to discriminate them. Woman's mission is to become the mother of future occultists – of those who will be born without sin.

On the elevation of woman the world's redemption and salvation hinge. And not till woman bursts the bonds of her sexual slavery, to which she has ever been subjected, will the world obtain an inkling of what she really is arid of her proper place in the economy of nature. Old India, the India of the Rishis, made the first sounding with her plummet-line in this ocean of Truth, but the [39] post-Mahabaratean India, with all her profundity of learning, has neglected and forgotten it.

The light that will come to it and to the world at large, when the latter shall discover and really appreciate the truths that underlie this vast problem of sex, will be like "the light that never shone on sea or land," and has to come to man through the Theosophical Society. That light will lead on and up to the true spiritual intuition. Then the world will have a race of Buddhas and Christs, for the world will have discovered that individuals have it in their own power to procreate Buddha-like children or demons. When that knowledge comes, all dogmatic religions, and with these the demons, will die out. – E. O.* [* E. O. signifies 'Eminent Occultist'. It was a pseudonym given by Mr. Sinnett to the Master Kuthumi.]

In connection with these ideas Our Lady the World-Mother naturally attaches the greatest importance to the upbringing of children. The requirements of the present time force Her to seek for prospective

parents principally among the cultured classes; but ladies in high society so often shirk their responsibilities, and leave their children almost entirely to nurses – nurses who are probably quite kind and good to them, but are usually lower in the social scale than the parents, and consequently surround the children with thoughts and feelings of a less refined character [40] than the father and mother would give them. I have heard a lady say: "I am engaged all day in philanthropic work; I have no time to think about my children, but I employ a most excellent nurse." She apparently did not grasp the obvious fact that if the Logos had intended to confide the care of those children to that most excellent nurse, they would have been born as the nurse's offspring, and not as hers!

In India the conditions are different, for every one marries as a matter of course; but even in the higher castes there is often a lamentable lack of supervision, and the surroundings provided are very unfavourable for the production of sound and healthy bodies. This is a very serious matter, earnestly to be commended to all students of occultism, who should assuredly do everything in their power to bring about a more satisfactory state of affairs.

It is the earnest desire of the World-Mother that every woman in her time of trial should have the best possible surroundings – that she should be enfolded in deep and true affection, that she should be filled with the holiest and noblest thoughts so that none but the highest [41] influences may be brought to bear upon the child who is to be born, so that he may have the best possible chance of a favourable start in life. Nothing but the purest and best physical magnetism should await him, and it is imperatively necessary that the most scrupulous physical cleanliness should be observed in all particulars. Only by the strictest attention to the rules of hygiene can such favourable conditions be obtained as will permit of the birth of a noble and healthy body fit for the habitation of an advanced ego.

It would indeed be well that women in all countries should band themselves together in an endeavour to spread abroad among their sisters accurate information on this most important subject. Every woman should fully realize the magnificent opportunities which the feminine incarnation gives her; every woman should be taught the absolute necessity for proper conditions before, during and after her pregnancy. Not only the most perfect cleanliness and the most careful attention should surround the baby body, but also it should be encompassed by perfect astral and [42] mental conditions, by love and trust, by happiness and holiness. In this way the work of the World-Mother would be immensely facilitated and the future of the race would be assured.

Of course I do not say that it is the absolute duty of every woman to marry, any more than it is for every man. There are souls who need to learn the lesson of the celibate life, who in a given incarnation can do better work under its conditions. This is a matter in the decision of which every individual must be left

entirely free; for an unsuitable or loveless marriage is obviously far worse than no marriage at all. But it should be fully recognized that the wedded life is a noble state, a high and honourable vocation, and that it offers magnificent opportunities for the most valuable altruistic work.

It is to help in promoting such recognition that we are just now drawing special attention to the existence of this great and splendid Being who holds the office of the Universal Mother, and to the fact that She needs many recruits for Her world-wide band of helpers, many channels through which Her wonderful [43] love and compassion can be outpoured upon the world which owes so much to Her care.

For the love her heart o'er flowing,

'Mid the Angels, splendid, glowing,

Now she reigneth, evermore

Giving from her endless store.

Of the afflicted chief Consoler,

Of a thousand hearts Controller,

Queen of heaven, the ocean's Star

She hath shed her rays afar.

Another point in which the World-Mother naturally takes the very keenest interest is that of the education of children. Just as She maintains that the whole attitude of Western civilization to the question of wifehood and motherhood is mistaken, so does She also warn us that we have entirely missed the mark in our clumsy attempts to educate the future generation. The Latin word educere means to lead out, and the primary object of all education should be to develop the latent capacities of the child – to discover what he can do well, and then to help him to learn how to do it. But we are only now beginning to understand this, and for centuries the method of those to whom we have entrusted the training of the young has been to repress [44] all individuality and to force them all into the same mould, to fill their brains with vast masses of undigested and largely useless facts, instead of explaining to them the real intention of life, and showing them how best to fulfil it.

We are placed in this world that we may learn to live our lives therein with credit to ourselves and with benefit to our fellow-men, yet hardly any effort is made by our schoolmasters to instruct our children as to how this is to be done. The way in which each man spends this incarnation will affect his future progress through the ages, will help or hinder his growth as a soul; yet on this most important of all subjects, how little help is given to him by those who undertake to prepare him for it!

Putting aside for the moment the admirable methods adopted by the Kindergarten and the Montessori systems for the development of very young children it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the only training at present available for those a little older which is moving at all in the right direction is that given by the Boy-Scout and the Girl-Guide movements, or by the Round Table. The [45] motto of the latter body: "Live pure, speak true, right wrong, and follow the King," covers all that is most important in life. And the Scout's promise to do his duty to God and the King, and to help other people at all times, is only another presentation of the same idea, elaborated a little further in the Scout Law which instructs him to be honourable, loyal, useful, courteous, thrifty, clean in thought, word and deed, and a friend to all – to animals as well as to men.

This is the true education – the education which makes life worth while; if a boy has this training, it matters little whether he passes examinations or takes University degrees. The examination is one of the greatest curses of modern life; in many cases and in many countries a boy is debarred even from applying for a situation in Government service, or for any position worth having – not, mark you, unless he can show some aptitude for the work which he will have to do in that situation, but – unless he has passed a wickedly severe examination in a number of subjects which have no connection whatever with practical life. To prepare for that examination often [46] means years of unnatural and unhealthy life of

mental overstrain, of lack of proper exercise and sleep, of confinement indoors, of weary work by insufficient artificial light, of all that is most undesirable for a growing physical body.

One of our Masters, in giving us minute directions for the training of a young person whom He had committed to our care, said: "Five hours a day, carefully distributed and with frequent intervals for relaxation, is the utmost that should ever be devoted to mental work by a growing boy or girl; what cannot be learnt in that time should be left unlearnt." The World-Mother, speaking recently on this subject of education, said: "I do not object to book-learning; a certain amount of it is good, and even necessary for successful work; but I do object to the imposition of incessant strain and slavery upon a young life which ought to be full of happiness. The harm done by that far outweighs any possible hypothetical benefit which might be derived from the cramming of the brain with alleged facts."

Every year these examinations are becoming more and more difficult, more and more [47] soul-destroying. It will soon be necessary for sensible, far-seeing parents to make a determined strike against this disastrous system, and to say: "You may keep your college degrees; we do not want them; the price exacted is too high, and the result too meagre." This can be done, however, only when Governments relax their unnecessary restrictions, or when a large band of practical common-sense employers join together and agree to accept applicants who show capability, eagerness and aptitude for their work, without reference to the labels with which they happen to be ticketed.

Also the World-Mother strongly urges that the spiritual view of parentage, love, marriage, motherhood and the relation of the sexes generally should be tactfully and delicately but quite clearly impressed upon children, so that they may learn such facts of life as are necessary for them in the right way instead of in the wrong, from the highest point of view and not from the lowest.

If, then, we wish to join the glorious band of those who work for the World-Mother, there are several lines of activity open to us. [48] By lecturing, by writing, or by using private influence among friends, we may try our best to promote and to expound the great idea of the spiritualization of love and marriage, to put before all, young and old, the highest ideals in these matters, urging them to accept nothing less. Or we may try to assist in the instruction of women in the hygiene of childbirth, and in the necessity of both spiritual and physical preparation for it; or again, in the provision of suitable conditions for poor women both before and after the time of parturition. Yet again, we may devote ourselves to anyone of the branches of work connected with the furthering of the right sort of education for children of various ages. We should bear in mind the great function of the World-Mother as Consolatrix Afflictorum, the Consoler of the Afflicted; so that any help whatever that we can give to a neighbour in distress may be given in Her name, thereby drawing down upon the sufferer Her benign influence and blessing.

Now at last let us turn to a brief consideration of the symbolism which through all the ages has been associated with the knowledge [49] and with the cult of the World-Mother; for the attempt to mingle this symbolism with the facts already described has been responsible for much of the confusion which has surrounded the central idea and often seem to make it incredible.

THE VIRGIN MATTER

God in the Absolute is eternally One; but God in manifestation is twain – life and substance, spirit and matter – or, as science would say, force and matter. When Christ, alone-born of the Father, springs from His bosom, and looks back upon that which remains, He sees as it were a veil thrown over it – a veil to which the philosophers of ancient India gave the name of Mulaprakriti, the root of matter; not matter as we know it, but the potential essence of matter; not space, but the within of space; that from which all proceeds, the containing element of Deity, of which space is a manifestation.

But that veil of matter also is God; it is just as much part of God as is the Spirit which acts upon it. The Spirit of God moved [50] upon the face of the waters of space; but the waters of space are divine in their making just as much as the Spirit that moves upon them, because there is nothing but God anywhere. That is the original substance underlying that whereof all things are made. That in ancient philosophy is the Great Deep, and then, because it surrounds and contains all things, so is it the heavenly wisdom which encircles and embraces all. For that in speech the philosophers used always the feminine pronoun; they speak of that Great Deep – of the eternal wisdom – as "She". She is thus the soul, macrocosmic and microcosmic, for what is true above is also true below.

These ideas are somewhat complex and foreign to our modern thought, but if we want to understand an Oriental religion we must give ourselves the trouble to grasp this Oriental way of looking at things. And so we realize how it is that She, this other aspect of the Deity, is spoken of as Mother, Daughter and Spouse of God. Daughter, because She also comes forth from the same Eternal Father; Spouse, because through the action of the Holy Ghost upon the virgin matter the [51] birth of the Christ into the world takes place; Mother, because through matter alone is that evolution possible which brings the Christ-spirit to birth in man.

Above and beyond the Solar Trinity, of which we usually think, there is the First Trinity of all, formed when out of what seems to us nothing there came the First Manifestation. For in that First and highest of all Trinities God the Father is the Absolute – what we may with all reverence call the Static Mode of the Deity. From that leaps forth the Christ, the Second Aspect truly of the Godhead and yet the First Manifestation, for God the Father is "seen of none".

Then through the interaction of the Deity in His next Aspect – that of the Holy Ghost, who represents the Dynamic Mode of the Deity (Will in action) – from that essence, that root of all matter, come all the worlds and all the further manifestations at lower levels, of whatever kind they may be, including even the Holy Trinity of our own solar system.

The Mother-Aspect of Deity thus manifests as the aether of space – not the ether which conveys vibrations of light to our eyes, for [52] that is a physical thing; but the aether of space which in Occult Chemistry* [* Occult Chemistry, by Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater: Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, is now out of print.] we call koilon, without which no evolution could be, and yet it is virgin and unaffected after all the evolution has passed.

Into that koilon or finer aether, the Christ, the energizing Logos or Word of God, breathes the breath of life, and in breathing it He makes those bubbles of which all that we call matter is built; (because matter is not the koilon, but the absence of koilon); and so when He draws in that mighty Breath the bubbles cease to be. The aether is absolutely unchanged; it is as it was before – virgin – after the birth of matter from it; it is quite unstirred by all that has happened; and because of this, Our Lady of Light is hailed as Virgin, though Mother of All.

She is thus the essence of the great sea of matter, and so She is symbolized as Aphrodite, the Sea-Queen, and as Mary, the Star of the Sea, and in pictures She is always dressed in the blue of the sea and of the sky. Because it is only by means of our passage through [53] matter that we evolve, She is also to us Isis the Initiator, the Virgin-Mother of whom the Christ in us is born, the causal body, the vehicle of the soul in man, the Mother of God in whom the divine Spirit unfolds itself within us; for the symbol of the womb is the same as the Cup of the Holy Grail. She is represented as Eve, descending into matter and generation; as Mary Magdalene while in unnatural union with matter, and then when She rises clear of matter, once more as Mary the Queen of heaven, assumed into life eternal.

While we are in the lower stage of our evolution, and subject to the dominion of matter, She is to us truly the Mater Dolorosa – the sorrowful Mother, or the Mother of Sorrows, because all our sorrows and troubles come to us through our contact with matter; but as soon as we conquer matter, so soon as for us the triangle can never again be obscured by the square, then She is for us Our Lady of Victory, the glory of the Church triumphant, the Woman clothed with the sun, and having the moon under Her feet, and around Her head a crown of twelve stars. [54]

If we look at it along this line of symbolism, the doctrine of the final drawing up of the root of matter into the Absolute, so that God may be all in all, is what is typified by the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The great festivals of the Christian Church are all meant to show its members stage by stage what it is that happens in the work of the Great Architect of the Universe, in the evolution of the cosmos as well as in the development of man. In studying these mysteries we must never forget the rule of the philosophers of old: "As above, so below." So that whatever we see taking place in that mighty world-evolution we shall also find repeated at this far lower level in the growth of man; and conversely, if we are able to study the methods of the unfoldment of the God in man down here, we shall find that study of invaluable assistance in helping us towards a comprehension of that infinitely more glorious development which is God's will for the universe as a whole. And, learning thus, we must not fail to put the lesson into practice. As a poet has written: [55]

I must become Queen Mary,

And birth to God must give,

If I in heavenly blessedness

For evermore would live.

Note also, for the better understanding of the symbolism, that Christ the Spirit, being deific in nature, ascends by His own power and volition, even as of His own will He sprang forth in the beginning from the bosom of the Father; but Mary the soul is assumed, drawn up by the will of Him who is at the same time Her Father and Her Son; for the first Adam (said St. Paul) was made a living soul, but the last Adam, the Christ, is Himself a quickening or life-giving Spirit. So in following Adam, who typifies the mind, all die; but in Christ all are made alive.

THE FEMININE ASPECT OF THE DEITY

We must realize also that our highest conception of Deity combines all that is best of the characteristics of the two sexes. God, containing everything within Himself, cannot be spoken of as exclusively male or female. He cannot but have many aspects, and in the Christian religion there has been a great [56] tendency to forget that cardinal fact of manifold manifestation. In the perfection of the Godhead all that is most beautiful, all that is most glorious in human character is shown forth. In that character we have two sets of qualities, some of which we attach in our thought chiefly to the male or the more positive side of man, and others which we attach more generally in our thought to the feminine side. For example, strength, wisdom, scientific direction, and that destroying power which is symbolized in the Hindu religion by Shiva – all that we usually regarded as masculine. But love, beauty, gentleness, harmony, tenderness, we consider as more especially feminine.

Yet all these characteristics are equally envisaged for us in the Deity, and it is natural that men should have separated those two aspects of Him, and should have thought of Him as Father-Mother. In all the great religions of the world until quite recently those two aspects have been brought out; so that their followers recognized not only gods but also goddesses. In India we have Parvati, Lakshmi, Uma, Sarasvati; in Greece we had [57] Hera, Aphrodite, Demeter, Pallas Athene; in Egypt, Isis and Nephthys; in China Kwan-yin; in Rome, Juno, Venus, Minerva, Ceres, Diana, Bellona. In yet other religions we find Astarte or Ashtaroth, the Queen of heaven. Images of Isis with the Infant Horus in her arms are exactly like those of the Blessed Virgin carrying the Infant Jesus; indeed, it is said that the old Egyptian statues are still in use in several Christian churches to-day.

Ignorant Christians accuse those old religions of polytheism – of the worship of many gods. That is simply a misunderstanding of what is meant. All instructed people have always known that there is but One God; but they have also known that that One God manifests Himself in divers manners, and in every respect as much and as fully through the feminine as through the masculine body through what is called the negative side of life as well as through the positive.

We who have been brought up in the Christian ideas sometimes find it a little difficult to realize that we have narrowed down the teaching of the Christ so much that in many [58] cases what we now hold is only a travesty of what He originally taught. We have been brought up, as far as religion goes, non-philosophically. We have never learnt to appreciate the value of comparative religion and comparative mythology. Those who have been studying it for many years find that it throws a flood of light on many points which are otherwise incomprehensible. We see that if all be God, and if there be nothing but God, then matter is God as well as spirit, and there is a feminine and a passive side or aspect to the Deity as well as a masculine side, and yet that God is One, and there is no duplication of any sort in Him.

All that is, is God; but we may see Him through many differently coloured glasses and from many different points of view. We may see Him as the mighty Spirit informing all things; but those things which are informed – those forms – they are no less God, for there is nothing but God. And so we see what we may call the feminine side of the Godhead; and just as the masculine side of the Deity has many manifestations, so has the feminine side many manifestations. So in those earlier days [59] there were many gods and goddesses, each representing an aspect, and the gods had their priests, and the Goddesses their priestesses, who took just as important a part in religion as did the priests. But in the last great religions, Christianity and Muhammadanism (both coming forth from Judaism, which ignored the feminine side), the World-Teacher has not chosen to make that division prominent; therefore in Christianity and in Muhammadanism we have the priest only; and the forces which are poured down through the services of the Church, although they include all the qualities, are yet so arranged, so directed, as to run through the male form only – at present at least.

In ancient Egypt we divided those forces, because that was the will of the World-Teacher when He founded the Egyptian religion, so some of them ran through the manifestation of Osiris, and some through the manifestation of Isis. Therefore some of them were administered by the priests of Amen-Ra, the Sun-God, and others by the priestesses of Isis. And Isis was in every way as deeply honoured, and considered as high in every [60] respect as any of the male aspects. She was the great beneficent Goddess and Mother, whose influence and love pervaded all heaven and earth.

It is time that those who are Christians learnt to understand the symbolism of their Church – learnt to see how many-sided it is, so that each idea which is put before us calls up a host of useful and elevating thoughts, and not one only. Reference has already been made to that other line of symbols in which the different stages in the earth-life of the Christ typify the four great Initiations, and His Ascension represents the fifth. Into that line also the story of Our Lady Mary enters, for in it Her Nativity represents the first appearance of matter in connection with the ego at his individualization, while the Annunciation stands for what is commonly called conversion, that which turns the man in the right direction, and makes the birth of the Christ within him a necessary result, when the long gestation period shall be over. In the same scheme the Assumption means the full and final drawing up of the ego or soul into the Monad. [61]

If we take the other form of the symbology, that which refers to the descent of the Christ into matter at His Birth, Her Nativity is the formation of Mulaprakriti by the leaping forth of the Second Person, as before mentioned, while the Annunciation is the First descent of the Holy Ghost into matter. The Holy Spirit descends and overshadows the maria, the seas of virgin matter; the Spirit of God moved over the face of the deep, and so the Annunciation is that First Descent which in other phraseology we call the First Outpouring, which brings the chemical elements into existence. But only after a long period of gestation is the matter prepared for the Second Outpouring which comes from the Second Person of the Trinity, and Christ is born in matter (as on Christmas Day). Later still comes the Third Outpouring, when each man individually receives into himself the divine spark, the Monad, and so the soul or ego in man is born. But that is at a much later stage.

In older faiths, as we have said, there were several presentations of the Feminine Aspect. For the Romans, Venus typified it as love, [62] Minerva as wisdom, Ceres as the earth-mother, Bellona as the defender. Our Lady the World-Mother does not exactly correspond to any of these, or rather perhaps, She includes several of them raised to a higher plane of thought. The nearest approximation in antiquity to our conception of Her is probably the figure of Kwan-yin, the Mother of Mercy and Knowledge, in Northern Buddhism, as promulgated in China and Tibet. Our Lady is essentially Mary the Mother, the type of love, devotion and pity; the heavenly Wisdom indeed, but most of all Consolatrix Afflictorum, the consoler, comforter, helper of all who are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness or any other adversity. For not only is She a channel through which love and devotion pass to Christ, Her Son and King, but She is in turn a channel for the outpouring of His love in response.

So that, both from the point of view of symbolism and from that of fact, the Christian has good reason to keep the festivals of Our Blessed Lady, and to rejoice in and be thankful for the wisdom and the love that have provided for us this line of approach – [63] thankful to Christ who gives this, and to Our Lady through whom it is given. So we all may join in the world-wide chorus of praise; and repeat the words of the Angel Gabriel: "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art Thou among women."

Ave Maria! Thou whose name,
All but adoring love may claim,
Yet may we reach Thy shrine;
For He, Thy Son, our Leader, vows
To crown all lowly, lofty brows
With love and joy like Thine.