

THE ESOTERIC CHARACTER OF THE GOSPELS

On the real meaning of "Christ"

According to original and genuine Theosophy – i.e. the writings and teachings of the Masters of the Wisdom and the one They called Their “Direct Agent” and Messenger, H.P. Blavatsky – Christ is not a being or an entity of any kind. And contrary to the teachings of later versions of "Theosophy," Christ is not another name for Maitreya, nor the “Master of the Masters” nor the so-called “World Teacher.” There is no such thing as the “Second Coming” or “Reappearance” of Christ. Christ never had a *first* coming and has never *appeared*, nor *can* ever appear.

Why? Because Christ – from the Greek “Christos” – is simply a symbolic term and name for the purely impersonal and universal Divine Principle of Spirit which is present in everything in the Universe.

The Master K.H. once wrote to A.P. Sinnett: “Let these unfortunate deluded Christians know that the real *Christ* of every Christian is the *Vach*, the “mystical Voice,” while the man *Jeshu* was but a mortal like any of us, an adept more by his inherent purity and ignorance of real Evil, than by what he had learned with his initiated Rabbis and the already (at that period) fast degenerating Egyptian Hierophants and priests.”

And HPB has said:

“Take Paul, read the little of the original that is left of him in the writings attributed to this brave, honest, sincere man, and see whether any one can find a word therein to show that Paul meant by the word Christ anything more than the abstract ideal of the personal divinity indwelling in man. For Paul, Christ is not a person, but an embodied idea. “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation,” *he is reborn*, as after initiation, for the Lord is spirit – the spirit of man. Paul was the only one of the apostles who had understood the secret ideas underlying the teachings of Jesus, although he had never met him.”

[*Isis Unveiled* Vol. 2, p. 574]

“Christos is neither the Christ of the Churches, nor yet the Jesus of the Gospels; it is only an *impersonal Principle*.”

[*The Kabbalah and the Kabbalists*]

“Note well, “Christos” with the Gnostics meant the impersonal principal, the Atman of the Universe, and the Atma within every man’s soul – not Jesus.”

[*The Secret Doctrine* Vol. 1, p. 132]

“No true theosophist will accept any more a *carnalised* Christ . . . than an anthropomorphic God, and still less a ‘Pastor’ in the person of a Pope . . .”

[*On Pseudo-Theosophy*]

“. . . “the coming of Christ,” means *the presence of CHRISTOS* in a regenerated world, and not at all the actual coming in body of “Christ” Jesus; this Christ is to be sought neither in the wilderness nor “in the inner chambers,” nor in the sanctuary of any temple or church built by man; for Christ – the true esoteric SAVIOUR – is no man, but the DIVINE PRINCIPLE in every human being. He who strives to resurrect the Spirit *crucified in him by his own terrestrial passions*, and buried deep in the “sepulchre” of his sinful flesh; he who has the strength to roll back *the stone of matter* from the door of his own *inner* sanctuary, he *has the risen Christ in him.*”

[*The Esoteric Character of the Gospels*]

“The Christ of esoteric science is the *Christos* of Spirit – an impersonal principle entirely distinct from any carnalised Christ or Jesus.”

[*Footnote in response to the Abbe Roca’s “Esotericism of Christian Dogma”*]

“Theosophy . . . hushes the “Lo here! and lo there!” and declares the Christ, like the kingdom of heaven, to be within. . . . With the advent of Theosophy, the Messiah-craze surely has had its day, and sees its doom.”

[*Modern Apostles and Pseudo-Messiahs*]

“I write in every letter that a divine Christ (or *Christos*) has never existed *under a human form* outside the imagination of blasphemers who have carnalized a *universal and entirely impersonal principle.*”

[*Reply to the Mistaken Conceptions of the Abbe Roca concerning my Observations on Christian Esotericism*]

“In *carnalizing* the central figure of the New Testament, in imposing the dogma of the Word *made flesh*, the Latin Church sets up a doctrine diametrically opposed to the tenets of Buddhist and Hindu Esotericism and the Greek Gnosis. Therefore, there will always be an abyss between the East and the West, as long as neither of these dogmas yields. Almost 2,000 years of bloody persecution against *Heretics* and *Infidels* by the Church looms before the Oriental nations to prevent them from renouncing their philosophic doctrines in favour of that which degrades the *Christos* principle. . . .

“The true Christians died with the last of the Gnostics, and the Christians of our day are but the usurpers of a name they no longer understand. As long as this is the case, Orientals cannot agree with Occidentals; no blending of religious ideas would be possible between them. . . .

“It is said that after the *Kalki-Avatar* (“He who is expected” on the White Horse, in the *Apocalypse*) the Golden Age will begin and every man will become his own *guru* (spiritual teacher or “Shepherd”) because the divine *Logos*, whatever name it may be given [“Whether it be Krishna, Buddha, Sosiosh, Horus or Christos, it is a universal *principle*”] will reign in each regenerated mortal. There can be no question, then, of a common “Shepherd” unless that Shepherd be entirely metaphorical. Moreover, the Christians, by localizing and isolating this

great Principle, and denying it to any other man except Jesus of Nazareth (or the *Nazar*) carnalize the Christos of the Gnostics; that alone prevents them having any point in common with the disciples of the Archaic Wisdom.

“Western Theosophists accept the *Christos* as did the Gnostics of the centuries that preceded Christianity, as do the Vedantins their Krishna: they distinguish the corporeal man from the divine Principle, which, in the case of the Avatar, animates him. Their Krishna, the historical hero, is mortal, but the divine Principle (Vishnu) which animates him, is immortal and eternal; Krishna – the man and his name – remains terrestrial at his death; he does not become Vishnu; Vishnu absorbs only that part of himself which had animated the Avatar, as it animates so many others. . . .

“The Church of Rome was Gnostic – just as much as the Marcionites were – until the beginning and even the middle of the second century; Marcion, the famous Gnostic, did not separate from it until the year 136, and Tatian left it still later. And why did they leave it? Because they had become heretics, the Church pretends; but the history of these cults contributed by esoteric manuscripts gives us an entirely different version. These famous Gnostics, they tell us, separated themselves from the Church because they could not agree to accept a Christ *made flesh*, and thus began the process of carnalizing the Christ-principle. It was then also that the metaphysical allegory experienced its first transformation – that allegory which was the fundamental doctrine of all the Gnostic fraternities. . . .

“Once united to his Atman-Christos, the Ego, by that very act, loses the great illusion called *ego-ism*, and perceives at last the fullness of truth; that *Ego* knows that it has never lived *outside* the great All, and that it is inseparable from it. Such is Nirvana, which, for it, is but the return to its primitive condition or state. Imprisoned in its *oubliette* of flesh and matter, it had lost even the conception or memory of that condition, but once the light of Spirit has revealed to it the illusion of the senses, it places no more trust in earthly things, for it has learned to scorn them; the Son is now united to the Father; thenceforth the soul is one with Spirit! And when a man has reached this point in the Gnosis, or Theosophy, what has he then to do with the dogmas of any Church?”

[Notes on Abbe Roca’s “Esotericism of Christian Dogma”]

FROM “THE ESOTERIC CHARACTER OF THE GOSPELS” ARTICLE

"Whether Heathen or Christian by birth, they [i.e. Theosophists] refuse to materialize and thus degrade that which is the purest and grandest ideal - the symbol of symbols - namely, the immortal Divine Spirit in man, whether it be called Horus, Krishna, Buddha, or Christ. None of them has ever yet said: "I am the Christ" for those born in the West feel themselves so far, only *Chrestians*, however much they may strive to become *Christians* in Spirit. It is to those, who in their great conceit and pride refuse to win the right to such appellation by

first leading the life of *Chrestos*; to those who haughtily proclaim themselves *Christians* (the glorified, the anointed) by sole virtue of baptism when but a few days old - that the above-quoted words of Jesus apply most forcibly."

"The earliest Christian author, Justin Martyr, calls, in his first *Apology*, his co-religionists *Chrestians* - not Christians."

"Clemens Alexandrinus, in the second century, founds a serious argument on this paranomasia (lib. iii, cap. xvii, p. 53 *et circa*), that all who believed in *Chrest* (i.e., 'a good man') both are, and are called Chrestians, that is, good men" (*Stromata*, lib. ii; Higgins' *Anacalypsis*). And Lactantius (lib. iv, cap. vii) says that it is only through *ignorance* that people call themselves Christians instead of Chrestians: "*qui propter ignorantium errorem cum immutata litera Chrestum solent dicere.*"

"Paul was a Gnostic himself, i.e., a "Son of Wisdom," and an initiate into the true *mysteries of Christos*, though he may have thundered (or he was made to appear to do so) against some Gnostic sects, of which, in his day, there were many. But his Christos was not Jesus of Nazareth, nor any living man, as shown so ably in Mr. Gerald Massey's lecture, "Paul, the Gnostic Opponent of Peter." He was an Initiate, a true "Master-Builder" or adept, as described in *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II, pp. 90-91."

"The first key that one has to use to unravel the dark secrets involved in the mystic name of Christ, is the key which unlocked the door to the ancient mysteries of the primitive Aryans, Sabaeans, and Egyptians. The Gnosis supplanted by the Christian scheme was universal. It was the echo of the primordial wisdom-religion which had once been the heirloom of the whole of mankind; and, therefore, one may truly say that, in its purely metaphysical aspect, the Spirit of Christ (the divine *logos*) was present in humanity from the beginning of it. . . . We may learn from the Gospel *according to Luke*, that the "worthy" were those who had been initiated into the mysteries of the Gnosis, and who were "accounted worthy" to attain that "resurrection from the dead" *in this life*, . . . "those who knew that they could die no more, being equal to the angels as sons of God and sons of the Resurrection." In other words, they were the great adepts of *whatever religion*; and the words apply to all those who, without being Initiates, strive and succeed, through personal efforts to *live the life* and to attain the naturally ensuing spiritual illumination in blending their personality - the "Son" with the "Father," their individual divine Spirit, *the God within* them. This "resurrection" can never be monopolized by the Christians, but is the spiritual birth-right of every human being endowed with soul and spirit, whatever his religion may be. Such individual is a *Christ-man*. On the other hand, those who choose to ignore the Christ (principle) within themselves, must die *unregenerate heathens* - baptism, sacraments, lip-prayers, and belief in dogmas notwithstanding.

"In order to follow this explanation, the reader must bear in mind the real archaic meaning of the paranomasia involved in the two terms *Chrestos* and *Christos*. The former means certainly more than merely a "good," an "excellent

man," while the latter was never applied to any one living man, but to every Initiate at the moment of *his second birth and resurrection*. He who finds Christos within himself and recognizes the latter as his only "way," becomes a follower and an *Apostle of Christ*, though he may have never been baptized, nor even have met a "Christian," still less call himself one."

"The word Chrestos existed ages before Christianity was heard of. It is found used, from the fifth century B.C. by Herodotus, by Aeschylus, and other classical Greek writers, the meaning of it being applied to both things and persons. . . . It is not what the early Fathers, who had an object to achieve, may affirm or deny, that is the important point, but rather what is now the evidence for the real significance given to the two terms *Chrestos* and *Christos* by the ancients in the pre-Christian ages. For the latter had no object to achieve, therefore nothing to conceal or disfigure, and their evidence is naturally the more reliable of the two. This evidence can be obtained by first studying the meaning given to these words by the classics, and then their correct significance searched for in mystic symbology.

"Now *Chrestos*, as already said, is a term applied in various senses. It qualifies both Deity and Man. It is used in the former sense in the Gospels, as in *Luke* (vi, 35), where it means "kind" and "merciful," . . . in *I Peter*, ii, 3, where it is said, "Kind is the Lord," . . . On the other hand it is explained by Clemens Alexandrinus as simply meaning a good man; i.e., "All who believe in *Chrest* (a good man) both *are*, and *are called Chrestians*, that is, good men" (*Strom.* lib. ii). The reticence of Clemens, whose Christianity . . . was no more than a graft upon the congenial stock of his original Platonism, is quite natural. He was an Initiate, a new Platonist, before he became a Christian, which fact, however much he may have fallen off from his earlier views, could not exonerate him from his pledge of secrecy. And as a Theosophist and a *Gnostic*, one who *knew*, Clemens must have known that *Christos* was "the WAY," while *Chrestos* was the lonely traveller journeying on to reach the ultimate goal through that "Path," which goal was *Christos*, the glorified Spirit of "TRUTH," the reunion with which makes the soul (the Son) ONE with the (Father) Spirit. That Paul knew it is certain, for his own expressions prove it. For what do the words . . . "I am again in travail until *Christ be formed in you*" mean, but what we give in its esoteric rendering, i.e., "until you find *the Christos* within yourselves as your only 'way.'" (*Vide Galatians* iv, 19 and 20.)

"Thus Jesus, whether of Nazareth or Lud, was a Chrestos, as undeniably as that he never was entitled to the appellation of *Christos*, during his life-time and before his last trial."

"Reference is made here to the Rabbinical tradition in the Babylonian Gemara, called *Sepher Toldos Jeshu*, about Jesus being the son of one named Pandira, and having lived a century earlier than the era called Christian, namely, during the reign of the Jewish king Alexander Jannaeus and his wife Salome, who reigned from the year 106 to 79 B.C. Accused by the Jews of having learned the magic art in Egypt, and of having stolen from the Holy of Holies the

Incommunicable Name, Jehoshua (Jesus) was put to death by the Sanhedrin at Lud. He was stoned and then crucified on a tree, on the eve of Passover."

"Christos, or the "Christ-condition," was ever the synonym of the "Mahatmic-condition," i.e., the union of the man with the divine principle in him. As Paul says (*Ephes. iii, 17*): . . . "That you may find Christos in your *inner* man through *knowledge*," not faith, as translated; for *Pistis* is "knowledge," . . .

"During the Mysteries . . . it is the *Chrestos, neophyte*, (as man), etc., who had to descend into the crypts of Initiation and trials; and finally, during the "Sleep of Siloam" or the final *trance* condition, during the hours of which the new Initiate has the last and final mysteries of being divulged to him. Hades, Sheol, or Patala, are all one. The same takes place in the East now, as took place 2000 years ago in the west, during the MYSTERIES."

"Christos is the crown of glory of the suffering Chrestos of the mysteries, as of the candidate to the final UNION, of whatever race and creed. To the true follower of the SPIRIT OF TRUTH, it matters little, therefore, whether Jesus, as man and Chrestos, lived during the era called Christian, or before, or never lived at all. The Adepts, who lived and died for humanity, have existed in many and all the ages, and many were the good and holy men in antiquity who bore the surname or title of Chrestos before Jesus of Nazareth, otherwise Jesus (or Jehoshua) Ben Pandira, was born. Therefore, one may be permitted to conclude, with good reason, that Jesus, or Jehoshua, was like Socrates, like Phocion, like Theodorus, and so many others surnamed *Chrestos*, i.e., the "good, and excellent," the gentle, and the holy Initiate, who showed the "way" to the Christos condition, became himself "the Way" in the hearts of his enthusiastic admirers. The Christians, as all the "Hero-worshippers," have tried to throw into the background all the other Chrestoi, who have appeared to them as rivals of *their* Man-God. But if the voice of the MYSTERIES has become silent for many ages in the West, if Eleusis, Memphis, Antium, Delphi, and Cresa have long ago been made the tombs of a Science once as colossal in the West as it is yet in the East, there are successors now being prepared for them. We are in 1887 and the nineteenth century is close to its death. The twentieth century has strange developments in store for humanity, and may even be the last of its name."

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