

# THE SHRINE *of* WISDOM

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## NANAK AND THE SIKH RELIGION\*

Nanak was one of those enlightened and inspired souls who, when the light of truth has become obscured and religion has been debased by the inordination of mankind, come into the world when the time is ripe, to re-present the essentials for ordinate and ideal life, and to point out again the luminous pathway to perfective union with the Divine.

The period preceding that in which Nanak lived was one of almost world-wide decline in the spheres of religion and thought. Materialism and formalism and other erroneous teachings and practices were very prevalent, and their injurious effects had acted like a blight wherever they had reached.

This decadent phase, however, was succeeded by one of considerable intellectual and moral activity, during which a number of reformatory movements arose both in the Occident and the Orient, such as the Renaissance and Reformation in Europe and similar revivals of thought and religion in other parts of the world, one of which was the Sikh religion.

The Sikh religion was founded by Nanak. It is monotheistic in character and represents the culminating stage of a reactionary and reformatory movement against degenerate beliefs and practices which had for some time been undermining the religious and social life of Northern India.

In the Punjab, where Nanak lived, polytheism, idolatry, formalism, caste-exclusiveness, and other errors were very common. The people, oppressed by foreigners and by their own rulers, were ignorant, poor, and both mentally and morally degraded.

\* This article is based upon the works of Macauliffe and Khazan Singh. Most of the quotations are from the former and the Editors are indebted to The Clarendon Press, Oxford, for permission to use them.

Shocked by these injurious and inordinate conditions, Nanak performed great and valuable work in correcting them by instituting changes of a fundamental character in the religious and mundane life—changes which concerned the most fundamental realities and principles of all, namely, the re-affirmation of the unity of God; of the basic universality of all religions, and of the essential oneness of mankind.

In thus emphasizing the principles of unity and universality he sought to remove the causes of superstition and idolatry in religion, and of injustice and discord in human relationships, to reinstate religion in its rightful place as the central ordinating and perfecting factor in human life and to instil the spirit of co-operation and harmony into all spheres of man's social activities.

#### THE LIFE OF NANAK

Nanak was born in the year 1469, at Talwandi, about thirty miles from Lahore in the Punjab district of North-east India. His father was Mehta Kalu Chand, a Hindu accountant and agriculturalist, who belonged to the Kshatri caste,\* and his mother was Bibi Tripta.

The name Nanak was given to the child by the family priest, because it belongs to both the Hindu and Arabian languages, for he prophesied that Nanak would become a spiritual teacher or *guru* to many Hindus and Muslims.

A temple is erected upon the spot where Nanak is said to have been born, in which a copy of the *Granth*, the Sikh scripture, is kept.

Several accounts of Nanak's life have been written, some of which have evidently been corrupted, for in them frequent discrepancies occur. One of the earliest—that of Paira Mokha—appears to have been written at the dictation of Bhai Bala, a follower and close companion of Nanak. The original manuscript of this has been lost, however. Amongst the lives is one of 588 folio pages.

Most of these works contain much that is of a legendary nature and relate numerous miracles—a common tendency in narratives of the lives of founders of religions.

\* The second of the four castes; the guardian and kingly caste.

Such legends and miraculous tales are not necessarily mere exaggerations. Although in some cases they may not be records of literal and historical facts, they represent mystical events and truths which could only be expressed in symbolic form.

After allowing, however, for whatever may be of an exaggerated and non-historical character in the record of the life of Nanak, there is abundant evidence that he was a great mystic, saint, and spiritual leader; a unifier of apparently contradictory teachings, a harmonizer of sectarian differences, a truly inspired reformer and reviver of religion and morals, and a real lover of mankind.

The childhood of Nanak was full of extraordinary incidents and showed promise of the great work he was to perform and of his future mystical attainments.

At the age of five he is said to have begun to talk of spiritual matters and to have concerned himself with the deeper meaning and purpose of life. When he was seven his parents took him to school, where he astonished the teacher by copying the Hindi alphabet from memory the day after it had been taught him, adding an acrostic upon the need of living the religious life. His knowledge of various subjects, even at this early age, greatly impressed all who knew him.

Noticing one day that Nanak was not attending to his lessons, the teacher asked him the reason for this lack of interest and received as answer an inquiry respecting the extent of the teacher's knowledge and the subjects he could teach. The teacher replied that he knew mathematics, book-keeping, and various other subjects of general value. Nanak then said, "I prefer the study of divine knowledge" and recited a hymn, part of which is here given.

"Burn worldly love, grind its ashes and make it into ink; turn thy mind into an excellent paper.

"Make the love of God thy pen and thy heart the writer: then, under the instruction of the Guru, write and meditate.

"Write the Lord's name, pen His praises, and write that He hath neither end nor limit.

"O sir! learn to write this account; where accounts are to be rendered this shall serve thee as a true mark."

The teacher, realizing the extraordinary gifts of his pupil, informed Nanak's father that the child already knew all that he

could teach him and declared that he would become a great and wise religious instructor.

Nanak was sent later to learn the Sanscrit and Parsian languages, both of which he speedily acquired and surprised the teachers by composing and reciting a hymn in each of the respective languages.

He had a very quiet and serious disposition and often became so absorbed in thought that he would hardly speak to anyone. He frequently went by himself into the forest near his home to meditate. So unusual were his character and ways that his parents could not understand him and became greatly troubled, thinking that something serious was wrong with him. They therefore sent for a physician, who, after examining him, found that the child had no physical ailment.

When the time came for Nanak to be invested with the *janeu* or sacred thread, according to the Hindu religious custom, at about the age of nine, and the priest arrived to perform the ceremony, the boy is stated to have said:

“Make mercy thy cotton, contentment thy thread, continence its knot, and truth its twist.

“That would make a sacred thread for the soul; if thou hast it, O Brahman, then put it on me.

“It will not break, or become soiled, or be burned, or lost.

“Blest the man, O Nanak, who goeth with such a thread on his neck.”

“Man dieth, the *janeu* falleth and the soul departeth without it.”

The priest then asked Nanak to say what a true *janeu* was, and Nanak said: “By adoring and praising the Name, honour and a true thread are obtained. In this way a sacred thread shall be put on which will not break and will be fit for entrance into God’s court.”

Finding that Nanak would not pay real interest to ordinary secular learning, Kalu Chand set him to tend the cattle on his farm, but the youth usually became absorbed in meditation and left the cattle to wander in the neighbours’ fields, yet on examination the crops were found to be uninjured.

He was then instructed to help with the cultivation of the farm, but the same thing occurred, whereupon his father rebuked him and called him idle. To this Nanak replied that he

was occupied in cultivating his own fields and uttered the following lines :

“My body is a field of which my mind is the ploughman, whose cultivation is righteousness, and modesty the water for its irrigation.

“I have sown it with the seeds of the sacred Word; contentment is its harrow and the garment of humility is its hedge.

“The seed will germinate into a good crop with love and righteousness, and fortunate is the house into which such a crop is brought.

“O father, mammon will not accompany us when we depart. It has infatuated the whole world, but there are few who understand its delusiveness.”

Asked if he would like to engage in shopkeeping, Nanak replied: “My shop is made of time and space; its goods are truth and self-control.”

At last, a post was found for Nanak as storekeeper to the Nawab Daulat Khan. An interesting story is told that, seeing the poverty of many of the people, he gave them food and clothes as well as other goods without payment, and when this became known he was accused of squandering his master's stores and detained until the accounts had been examined. A thorough inspection of the stores and books, however, showed that everything was in perfect order.

When he was about eighteen years old Nanak married Bibi Sulakhni. He had two sons, one of whom founded a sect of ascetics called Udasis.

On one occasion Nanak could not be found for three days, during which it is recorded that he had a Divine revelation in which God said unto him: “I am with thee. . . . Abide uncontaminated by the world. Practise the recitation of My Name, charity, worship, and meditation.”

The fundamental teachings which constitute the basis of the Sikh religion, and which he was commanded to preach, were then imparted to him:—

“There is but one God, Whose Name is True, the Creator, Who pervades the whole universe. He is without fear and enmity, immortal, unborn, self-existent, the remover of darkness and is merciful.

“The True One was in the beginning; the True One was in the primal age.

“The True One is, was, O Nanak, and the True One also shall be.”

About this time it was asserted that Nanak was mad and a priest was summoned to exorcise the so-called evil influence, to whom Nanak said:—

“Simpleton Nanak hath become mad for the Lord,

“And knoweth none other than God.

“When one is mad with the fear of God,

“And recognizeth none other than the One God,

“He is known as mad when he doeth this one thing—

“When he obeyeth the Master’s order—in what else is there wisdom;

“When man loveth the Lord and deemeth himself worthless,

“And the rest of the world good, he is called mad.”

Soon after this had happened Nanak left the service of the Nawab, despite several inducements offered to persuade him to remain in it, saying that he had entered the service of God and must fulfil his life’s mission.

This mission is declared in the following lines:—

“This is the object for which I came into this world,

“That the Lord has deputed me for the propagation of truth,

“Here and there ye should propagate the truth,

“And punish the oppressors and slanderers.

“For this very purpose I have taken birth in this world.”

When receiving the command in the divine revelation, Nanak said:—

“The faith can only be propagated in the world if Thou supportest me, O Lord.”

Nanak was then about the age of thirty, and from that time he began to travel about the land instructing the people in his doctrines, discussing religious and metaphysical truths with priests, philosophers, and ascetics, and performing many works of mercy and healing. Wherever he went many listened to his message, accepted his teachings and, following his religious precepts, found truth and salvation.

Nanak is reported to have travelled over most of India and to have visited several other countries, including Russia, Persia, and Arabia. While in the latter country he went to Mecca and

Medina, the sacred Muslim centres. His knowledge of languages was so great that he could preach to the people of different nationalities in their own tongues.

The teachings were chiefly presented in the form of hymns, chanted to the accompaniment of the rebeck, a three-stringed Arabian instrument, which was played by his disciple Mardana who accompanied him on most of his travels.

The teachings were expressed in a very simple manner, illustrated by a profusion of similes and metaphors, which, because of their symbolic character possessed a whole range of meanings and therefore could be interpreted by each individual according to his own grade of intelligence and specific requirements. Thus the least intelligent and learned were able to apprehend their more external significance, while those of greater intelligence and learning could penetrate to their inner and more mystical truth.

Efforts were made from time to time by Nanak's relatives and friends to induce him to give up his travels and to settle down to an ordinary life, but without avail, although in his later years he seems to have remained in the vicinity of his home. It is recorded that he was tempted by Kalijug (the Devil) to abandon his mission and offered the wealth of the world, the power of working miracles, and the sovereignty of the East and the West if he would do so. To this he replied:—

“May it not be that on beholding these things I would forget Thee O God, and not remember Thy Name?”

Kalijug gave him reverence, fell at his feet, and then departed.

Little seems to be known regarding any definite relationships of Nanak with individual leaders of religion and thought, but he probably met Kabir, Ravadas, Namdev and other Hindu mystics, as well as several Muslim leaders. Evidences of the influence of Brahmanical, Buddhistic, Zoroastrian, and Muslim teachings are very clear in his hymns and he must have discussed the doctrines of these religions with their exponents.

In order to show his freedom from partisanship and his identity with both Hindus and Muslims, Nanak often wore garments of both people. This gave him an unusual appearance and caused him to be questioned regarding the reason for doing so: What religious denomination did his head-dress denote,

and why did he not shave his head in the orthodox manner? To which he replied:—

“When man has shaved his mind he has shaved his head,  
“Without shaving his mind he findeth not the way. . . .

“Nanak having abandoned worldly pleasures, affections, and egotism,

“Has put on a hat of this fashion.”

Asked to what religious sect he belonged, he replied:—

“Under the instructions of my Guru (God), I remain His disciple. . . .

“I have settled in the silent city and abide therein.”

Asked to what sect the loin-cloth belonged, he said:—

“I restrain my senses and abide apart from the world. . . .

“I discard my low intelligence for the lofty wisdom of my Guru.

“In this way Nanak weareth a loin-cloth.”

Asked what sect his slippers denoted, he replied:—

“By associating with those who go the right way I have obtained great knowledge. . . .

“To those who put on their slippers while meditating on Him,

“O Nanak, mortal sin shall not attach.”

In his discussions with all classes of people and adherents of different sects, Nanak was enabled to reconcile a number of divergent teachings and to convince the holders of these views of the truth and importance of his teachings.

Amongst the many miraculous tales recorded about Nanak the following are worthy of notice:—

When he visited Mecca he was found sleeping with his feet turned to the sacred Kaaba stone before which devotions were performed and was accused of desecration thus:—“Infidel, how dare you dishonour God’s house by turning your feet towards it?” Nanak replied: “Turn them if you can in a direction where the house of God is not.” His feet were then dragged round, but the shrine moved round with them.

On another occasion a number of people had followed him into a jungle some distance from where food could be procured. Becoming hungry Nanak told them to eat the fruit of the ritha

tree which is bitter and unfit for food. On following his instructions, however, they found it was sweet and wholesome.

While on his travels Nanak arrived at a village where no one but a leper would give him shelter. The leper bemoaned his sad state and said that even the animals fled from him, and was told:—

“The body that forgetteth God’s word

“Screameth like a real leper.

“To make many complaints is to talk folly.

“Without our complaining everything is known to God,

“Who made our ears, our eyes, and our noses. . . .

“If a man depart with the brand of sin on his face,

“He will not be allowed to sit in God’s court,

“If he meet Thy favour, O God, he reciteth Thy Name.

“By attaching himself to it he is saved; he hath no other resource.”

Nanak then blessed the leper, who became cured of his disease.

Many and often very valuable presents were offered to Nanak in gratitude for the benefits that had been received from his ministrations, but he almost invariably declined them, exclaiming on one such occasion:—“Nanak is hungry for God and careth for nothing else.”

He was very fond of children and used to join in their games. A boy of seven years was once noticed to come and listen to the singing of hymns in the early morning. He was brought to Nanak, who asked him, “O boy, why comest thou so early in the morning to listen to hymns? This is the time for thee to eat, play, and sleep.” The boy replied, “Sir, one day my mother bade me light the fire. When I put on the wood I saw that the little sticks burned first and afterwards the big ones. From that time I have been afraid of early death. It is very doubtful whether we shall live to be old, and so I attend thy religious gatherings.” Nanak was much pleased on hearing this wisdom from the child’s lips, and said he spoke like an enlightened one.

The boy subsequently attained to an important office in the Sikh religious community.

The virtues of love, humility, and tolerance were very pronounced in Nanak’s character, but he had a great dislike for

## THE NORSE GOD THOR

In the Norse mythology Thor is the eldest son of Odin, the father and chief of the Asa Gods, and of the Goddess Jorth.

Thor is the God of fire, of thunder, and of lightning. His chief characteristics are the qualities of strength, activity, and valour, and he is said to be second in might only to Odin.

He is described as gigantic in size, as young, of a pleasant countenance, red-bearded, and as standing on the left of Odin with a sceptre in one hand and his hammer in the other.

The title Thor is probably derived from a root-word meaning thunder, but this is uncertain, for alternative derivations give the meanings of "breastplate" and "to spread out", each of which is significant in relation to his characteristics. In the poems he is sometimes referred to as the Warden of Earth, and his mother's name, Jorth, means Earth.

His wife is Sif, for whom the dwarfs forged golden hair, but he is stated to have two sons by the giantess Jarnsaxa: Mothi (wrath), and Magni (force or energy), who inherit his hammer after his death. His palace in Asgarth, which had 540 windows and was named Bilskirnir (serene or storm-stilling), was in Thruth-helm, the Place of Might.

Thor is said to possess three treasures: the first, Mjolner, his hammer, which he hurls at his enemies the Frost Giants and Mountain Giants, splitting their skulls asunder—hence the title "Hurler"—and invariably returning to his hand after accomplishing its work. It was regarded as of special significance in connection with marriages and other contracts. The second treasure is Megingjardir, a girdle of strength and power which when worn doubled his might. The third is a pair of iron gauntlets which he dons in order to grasp the hammer Mjolner.

Thus this Deity may be said to project his power swiftly before him without himself moving quickly, for he is the only member of the Asa Gods who has no horse. But this does not mean that he stays at home, for his journeys are almost as numerous as those of his father Odin. He is indeed a slower traveller, sometimes afoot, but more often drawn in a car by his two goats, Tanagniostr and Tanagrisnir. Unlike the other Asir, he does not ride over the bridge Bifrost each day to the judgement seat

under the ash tree Yggdrasil, but wades thither through four rivers—

Kormt and Ormt      and the Kerlaugs twain  
 Shall Thor each day wade through,  
 When dooms to give      he forth shall go  
 To the ash-tree Yggdrasil;  
 For heaven's bridge      burns all in flame,  
 And the sacred waters seethe.

Thor was known as the God of the ordinary people, in contrast to Odin as God of the warrior or ruling class. This represents Thor's special relation to the whole of the manifested world and mankind in general and of Odin's superiority as head of the Asir.

The Norse people held Thor in great reverence, and his likeness was carved on the chief seat in the houses and on the prows of ships as a symbol of good fortune and protection. His day (Thursday) was set aside for civil and peaceful affairs.

In his encounters with giants, Thor is often temporarily worsted. These incidents may be said to symbolize the immanence of the Divine powers which bring into action the cosmic principles, and, being Divine, he always achieves his object in the end.

The giants may be considered as Thor's agents, through whom he operates upon the objective cosmos, and his ultimate victory over them as the fulfilment of his Divine purpose in the ever-changing cosmic manifestation, by which the way is prepared for the perfective activities of Odin's second son Baldur, who symbolizes the Divine principle in man.

Certain of Thor's re-creative and ordinative powers are illustrated by the story of his journey to the land of the giants, on which he was accompanied in his goat-car by Loki. At the end of the first day's journey they slept at the cottage of a peasant who had a son, Thjalfi, and a daughter, Roskva. Thor killed his goats and cooked them for supper, spreading out their skins as receptacles for the bones, but Thjalfi broke one of the bones to get at the marrow.

In the morning Thor consecrated the goatskins with his hammer Mjolner, whereupon the goats resumed their normal form, except that the one with the broken bone was lame. The

God's rage at this was only appeased by the two children becoming his bondservants. Leaving his goats with the peasant, Thor journeyed eastwards with his companions to Jotunheim, the land of the giants, to the shores of a vast, deep sea, after crossing which they penetrated into a strange country, where they were soon in the heart of an immense forest which afforded them no food.

As darkness fell they came to a large hall in which they lay down to sleep, only to be awakened at midnight by a sound as of thunder, which caused them to move to a smaller chamber leading off the main hall, where Thor kept watch all night. At dawn they emerged to find a sleeping man of enormous bulk snoring loudly. The God donned his Belt of Prowess to increase his strength, but even then feared to use his hammer, and merely contented himself with asking the awakening giant his name.

It proved to be Skrymir, and the hall in which they had passed the night was his glove. The giant, who was well aware of Thor's identity, offered to carry the provisions of the whole party in his own wallet, and they strode on together all day until they threw themselves down under an oak tree and Skrymir fell fast asleep. Thor was unable to loosen a single knot of the wallet, which so enraged him that he struck the giant a mighty blow on the forehead with his hammer, but with so little effect that the giant merely thought a leaf had fallen upon him. A second blow of such a force that the hammer was buried to the handle in the giant's skull only produced a comment about a falling acorn, and a third on his cheek had no more effect.

When they resumed their journey Skrymir strode off northwards, telling Thor that his way lay east to the nearby city of Utgard, where the inhabitants were even bigger than he. The city indeed proved to be so immense that they could enter through the bars of the locked gates. The king, Utgard-Loki, contemptuously challenged his puny visitors to show in what they excelled, and Loki claimed to eat more quickly than any other. But before he had finished the meat his opponent, Logi, had consumed the bones and trough as well. Thjalfi claimed to be fleet of foot, but was far outpaced by his challenger, Hugi. Thor offered to out-drink all comers, but the cup handed to him was scarcely less full when he set it down after three

mighty draughts. He then agreed to a trial of strength, and was told to lift a cat from the ground, but his utmost exertions only lifted one of the cat's feet; and in a wrestling match with a very old woman, Elli, he was easily thrown.

In the morning, however, the king, who proved to be none other than Skrymir, when conducting his guests to the gates, vowed that he would never admit such mighty heroes into his city again, for he had had the greatest difficulty in protecting himself from Thor's hammer blows, and had only succeeded by interposing a rocky mountain, in which Thor's hammer had cleft three great glens. In the tests, although Loki, like hunger itself, consumed all set before him, yet Logi, "ardent flame", ate the trough as well. Hugi represented thought, with which even the swiftest runner could not compete. The bottom of the drinking-horn was placed in the sea, in which Thor's mighty draughts had caused the ebb tide; the cat was in reality the Midgard serpent which encompassed the whole earth; and the old woman was old age which none can overcome.

As a final counsel the king advised Thor never to return, for he would always be met with such illusions; and even as the enraged God raised his hammer to smite the king, the city and all its inhabitants disappeared, leaving nothing but a verdant plain.

In this story some of the symbolical elements already referred to in the article on Baldur will be recognized. Between the Divine realm of the Gods and Utgard, the "outer ward", or world of mundane existence, lies the vast deep sea of natural generation, which is crossed by Thor and his companions; and it is noteworthy that Loki, the God who rules over separative activity, takes a prominent part.

But the peasant's children, Thjalfi and Roskva, introduce a new factor. Roskva signifies "quick, lively, active", but no derivation has been suggested for the name Thjalfi, the result of whose ignorant activities is the laming of the goat, thus reducing Thor's speed in Utgard. This suggests that the carrying out of the Divine Will is slower in the mundane world, which is characterized by the process of time, and that the principle of natural regeneration, represented by the perpetual restoration to life of the goats after being eaten, affording Thor both sustenance and speed, is indispensable under finite conditions.

But the very factors which bring this limitation, in becoming the bond-servants of the God, work for the fulfilment of the Divine Purpose. This is an aspect of Providence, which utilizes the results of man's inordinations and errors for the greater perfection of himself and the cosmic scheme.

The life-giving property of the hammer Mjolner in relation to the dead goats shows why it was revered as consecrating marriages.

The name Skrymir probably means "juggler"; thus the giant refers to his kingdom as a place of illusion, or constant change. It is evident that this giant represents a material principle, for the blows to which he was subjected result in alterations to the solid earth, and the difficulty encountered by Thor in opening the giant's wallet, as also the lack of food afforded by the forest, suggest the characteristic slowness of matter to yield up its fruits. The giant's other name, Utgard-Loki, is significant, as implying separative activity in the outermost, a clear indication of the mundane world. His challenge to his guests to exert their faculties suggests an eagerness to receive the Divine operations; for the material realm, characterized by constant change, would be meaningless were it not for the constant Divine creative activities.

Loki's challenge to out-eat any opponent is characteristic of the acquisitive tendency to which the individual is prone in objective existence; while the "fire" which vanquishes him may be considered as burning desire, which tends to the ultimate destruction of that which has been inordinately acquired. Thjalfi represents the processes of nature, which may be mastered by "thought", while the significance of the sea which Thor attempts to drain has already been indicated. The old woman suggests the perpetual change and decay in the objective world, which being divinely decreed, for ever opposes fixity and so ensures the constant manifestation of fresh forms.

But the cat—the Midgard serpent—introduces a new idea. This monster, the progeny of Loki and the giantess Angrbotha, is said to encircle Midgard, the world of men, and is usually understood to represent the evil results of inordinate actions, but the facts that Loki is a god and the giantess suggests a vital cosmic principle, indicate that their progeny is a necessary part of the Divine scheme, and therefore perfectly ordinate in its

primary significance. It is also noteworthy that Thor is unable to slay the serpent and that the result of its death is the final climax of Ragnarok, signifying that nothing can be destroyed until its purpose has been fulfilled.

The serpent may be considered as symbolizing the totality of the limitations and bondage arising from the separative individual activities derived from Loki. It is reasonable, therefore, that Thor, who as an aspect of Divine perfective Life cannot be divorced from mundane existence, should return to the struggle with this monster, as is related in a second myth. The story as told in the Prose Edda differs from that of the older Poetic Edda, but the main idea is the same.

The latter relates how Tyr, the warlike God, tells Thor of a wondrous cauldron a mile deep which is in the possession of the Giant Hymir, and how they set out to obtain it. At the giant's dwelling they meet an old woman with nine hundred heads, who is apparently the giant's mother and is ill-disposed towards them. But his wife aids them by placing them beneath the shelf on which the cauldron rests. When the giant comes home his glance sunders into fragments the beam by which they sit and the cauldron is the only utensil left whole.

The next day Thor accompanies Hymir in a boat to fish. The giant pulls out two whales on his hook, and then the God, baiting his hook with the head of an ox, casts it into the ocean, where it is immediately seized by the Midgard serpent lurking in the depths. Swiftly pulling it to the surface, he smites it a mighty blow on the head with his hammer Mjolner, whereat

The monsters roared,	and the rocks resounded,
And all the earth	so old was shaken;
Then sank the fish	in the sea forthwith.

The Prose Edda adds that this was due to the giant cutting the line at the critical moment.

Filled with wrath, Thor returns to the giant's home where he accepts a challenge to prove his strength by breaking a cup. To his amazement when he crashes it against the stone wall the latter is shattered but the cup remains whole.

Then Hymir's wife whispers the secret that the only way is to break the cup on the giant's skull. Thus he is triumphant, and the cauldron becomes his by right; but Tyr is unable to lift it

from the ground, so Thor bears it to the home of the Gods on his own head.

In this story the cauldron would appear to have the same significance as the sea, which, as representative of generation, is under the sway of Thor as an aspect of Divine Power, but objectively it is in the domain of a principle of multiplicity. This appears to be the meaning of Hymir, both because his mother is nine hundred-headed, and because his glance breaks that upon which it rests into multiple fragments. The same idea is represented by the cup, which can only be broken by contact with the giant's skull.

It is significant that Thor does not slay the serpent, but draws it up to the surface of the water. Clearly it has some purpose to fulfil in the Cosmic Scheme. Spirit, however, may be said to strive perpetually to uplift all manifested things to the perfection worthy of their Divine Creator, and the accomplishment of this in the myth is symbolized by the winning of the cauldron and the breaking of the cup, whereby the Divine elevative life is distributed throughout the realms of multiplicity.

## SEED THOUGHTS

Always remember that thou art a man; that human nature is frail, and that thou mayest easily fall—and thou shalt never fall. But if, happening to forget what thou art, thou chancest to fall, be not discouraged: remember that thou mayest rise again; that it is in thy power to break the bonds which link thee to thine offence, and to subdue the obstacles which hinder thee from walking in the paths of virtue.

—*Confucius*

## THE DIVINE NAMES

BY DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE\*

*Chapter X**Concerning Omnipotent, Ancient of Days, and also concerning Eternity and Time*

Now it is time to celebrate in our discourse God of many Names as *Omnipotent* and as *Ancient of Days*. He is called Omnipotent because He is the All-powerful Foundation of all things, embracing and binding together the whole, firmly founding and establishing and uniting it in flawless completeness in Himself, and producing the whole from Himself as from an omnipotent Source, and attracting the whole to Himself as to the omnipotent All-receiving One; holding them all together as the Almighty Foundation of all and securing all the things embraced in one transcendent union, not permitting them to fall away from Himself nor, as being removed from that all-perfect Sanctuary, to be destroyed.

Again, God is called Omnipotent as sole Ruler of the universe, and as That Which all beings desire and love, and as placing upon all His freely-chosen yoke and sweet travail of the Divine, All-powerful and Indestructible Love of His Goodness.

And God is named Ancient of Days because He is both the Eternity and the Time of all things prior to days and eternity and time. And we must call Him Time, Day, Season, and Eternity in a Divine sense, as being unmoving and immovable with respect to every movement, and in His Eternal Movement remaining in Himself, and as being the Cause of eternity and time and days. Therefore in the sacred revelations of God in mystical visions He is represented as both ancient and young; the former Name signifying the Primary Nature of Him Who is from the Beginning, and the latter signifying that He does not grow old; while both names together teach that He permeates all things from the beginning to the end; or, as our divine Initiate says, each Name symbolizes the Priority of God: the name Ancient signifying that He is First in terms of time, and

\* For previous sections see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 96 to 106.

the name Young that He is First in terms of number, since unity and that which is near to unity are more primary than the numbers farther from unity.

But we must, I think, consider the meaning of the Names Time and Eternity in the Scriptures. For they do not give the name eternal only to things absolutely unoriginated and truly sempiternal and incorruptible, immortal, and immutable and the like. For example, they say "Be ye opened, ye eternal doors," with other similar passages. And often the name eternal is given to anything very ancient, and again, they call the whole duration of mundane time eternity, inasmuch as eternity is ancient and unchangeable and is the measure of universal being.

But the name time is given to the measure of generation and corruption and change and of that which partakes now of one and now of the other. Therefore the Scripture says that we who are here limited by time shall participate in Eternity when we reach the Eternity Which is imperishable and abides in sameness.

But sometimes the Scriptures speak of eternity as temporal and of time as eternal. We know, however, that more strictly and accurately they describe and reveal Eternity as characteristic of real Being, and time as characteristic of generated things. We must not therefore suppose that things called eternal are absolutely co-eternal with God Who is prior to eternity, but in strict accord with Holy Scripture we should regard the eternal and the temporal in their true meaning and consider things which participate partly in eternity and partly in time as having a middle place between that which has real Being and that which is subject to generation. But we must celebrate God both as Eternity and as Time and as *Ancient of Days*; as prior to time and above time and causing the appointed changes of seasons and times; and again as being before the ages, inasmuch as He is before eternity and above eternity. And His Kingdom is the Kingdom of all the Ages. Amen.

### Chapter XI

*Concerning Peace, and what is meant by Being Itself, Life Itself, Power Itself, and similar Names*

Come, let us praise with hymns of peace the Divine Peace

and Source of all unification. For This it is Which unifies all and engenders and brings about the concord of all things. Therefore all things aspire to It and It converts their divided multitude into the wholeness of union and blends the warring elements of the world into a harmonious fellowship. Indeed it is by participation in the Divine Peace that the higher of the unifying powers are united in themselves and to each other and to the one Source of universal peace. And they unite those below them to themselves and to one another and to the one All-perfect Principle and Cause of universal peace which, advancing indivisibly through the whole, regulates and completes and secures all things as though with bolts which fasten the separate parts together and do not allow them to be infinitely and boundlessly dispersed, to become disordered and unstable and apart from God, and to depart from their own unity, becoming intermingled in utter confusion.

Now concerning the Divine Peace and Silence which the holy Justus calls voicelessness and, in comparison with all known progression, rest, and concerning the manner in which It is silent and at rest, and how It is in Itself and enters into Itself and is wholly united in a transcendent manner with Its own Unity, and when entering into Itself and multiplying Itself does not forsake Its own union, but even whilst going forth to all things, remains entirely within Itself through the excess of Its all-transcendent union—concerning these things it is neither proper nor possible for any existing being to speak or conceive. But having spoken of This as unutterable and incomprehensible, inasmuch as It transcends all things, let us, so far as is possible to men and to us who are inferior to many good men, examine that which has been conceived and spoken concerning Its participations.

First it must be said that God is the Source of the Self-subsistent Peace and of all peace both universal and particular, and that He connects all things with one another in an unconfused union in which they are inseparable and indivisibly united and yet are all kept distinct, each in its own proper group, not losing their purity through being mixed with their contraries, nor blunting the edge of their unific purity and distinction. Let us therefore consider that unitive and simple nature of the peaceful Unity Which unites all things to Itself and to each

other and preserves them pure and unconfused yet interconnected in a perfectly harmonious combination. By virtue of this the Divine Intelligences are unified and are united to their own Intelligence and to the objects of their intellection, and ascend further to the unknown union with That Which abides above Intellect.

Souls, also, unifying their manifold reasoning activities and recollected in one intellectual wholeness, progress along an ordered path proper to themselves, through immaterial and impartible intuition, to that union which is above intuition, according to which the one indissoluble bond of all things is rooted in Its Divine Harmony and is harmonized with perfect concord, consent, and communion, since it is united without confusion and is inseparably secured. For the wholeness of that perfect Peace penetrates to all that is, by virtue of the pure and simple presence of Its unifying power, uniting all things, connecting the extremes through the intermediate parts and joining them together in one concord of friendship, and imparting even to the uttermost bounds of the universe the enjoyment of Itself, and making all things akin by the unities, the sameness, the unions and the unifications which It bestows, while the Divine Peace Itself abides indivisibly and manifests Itself in unity, permeating the whole universe without going out of Itself. For It goes forth to all things and imparts Itself to all things according to their natures, and overflows with the abundance of Its peaceful prolificness; and through the transcendence of Its Unity It remains whole and perfect in Itself in Absolute Unity.

*(To be continued)*

## JEWEL

We shall never learn to know ourselves except by endeavouring to know God, for beholding His greatness, we realize our littleness. His purity shows our turbidity, and by meditating on His humility we find how very far we are from being humble.

—*St. Teresa*

## THE ELEMENTS OF THEOLOGY \*

PROCLUS

## Proposition CXCVIII

*Every thing which participates of time and is always moved is measured by periods*

For since it is measured by time, the motion of it also participates of measure and bound, and proceeds according to number. But because it is always moved, and this always is not eternal, but temporal, it is necessary that it should move in periods. For motion indeed is a mutation from some things to others; and beings are terminated by multitude and magnitude. These, however, being bounded, there can neither be a mutation to infinity according to a right line, nor can that which is always moved make its transitions finitely. Hence, that which is always moved will proceed from the same to the same, and thus will proceed periodically.

## Proposition CXCIX

*Every mundane soul uses periods of its proper life, and restitutions to its former state*

For if it is measured by time it energizes transitively, and has a peculiar motion. But every thing which is moved and participates of time, if it is perpetual, moves in periods, periodically revolves, and is restored from the same things to the same. And every mundane soul having motion, and energizing according to time, will have periods of motions, and restitutions to its pristine state; for every period of perpetual natures is *apocatastatic*, or restorative to a former condition.

## Proposition CC

*Every period of soul is measured by time. But while the period of other souls is measured by a certain time, that of the first soul, since it is measured by time, is measured by the whole of time*

\* For previous sections, see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 65 to 106.

For if all motions have prior and posterior, so likewise have periods, and on this account they participate of time. That also which measures all the periods of souls is time. But if indeed there were the same periods of all souls, and they were about the same things, the time of all would be the same. If, however, the restitutions of different souls are different, the periodic time also which restores to a pristine state is different in different souls.

That the soul, therefore, which is primarily measured by time is measured by the whole of time, is evident. For if time is the measure of all motion, that which is primarily moved will entirely participate of time and will be measured by the whole of time. For if the whole of time did not measure its first participant, it would not measure anything else, according to the whole of itself.

From these things, however, it is evident that all souls are measured by certain measures which are more partial than the whole of time. For if these souls are more partial than the soul which primarily participates of time, neither can they adapt their periods to the whole of time. The multitude of their restitutions, however, will be parts of the one period, and of the one restitution of things to their pristine state which is effected by the soul that primarily participates of time. For a more partial participation pertains to a lesser power; but a more total to a greater power. Other souls, therefore, are not naturally adapted to receive the whole temporal measure according to one life, because they are allotted an order inferior to that of the soul which is first measured by time.

*(To be continued)*