

The Esoteric Meaning OF THE Seven Sacraments.

BY
PRINCESS KARADJA.

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this study to the Memory of my late Friend,

MR. CARL MICHELSEN,
OF COPENHAGEN.

He has had illuminations upon the same subject as myself,
and we have frequently—independently of each other—
arrived at similar conclusions.

PRINCESS KARADJA.

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ACCORDING to the Orthodox definition, the Sacraments are "Ordained means of Grace, necessary to salvation, instruments of Eternal Life, which—through outward and visible signs—transfer to the Faithful inward and spiritual Grace."

How is it that these divinely-appointed ordinances of Grace, which ought to bind together the Members of the Church, have turned into veritable apples of discord?

The reason is very simple.

The Sacraments have gradually lost their original signification, and have degenerated into mere ritual functions. As they repeatedly failed to transfer the immense benefits which they were appointed to transmit, these glaring failures gave birth to grave doubts concerning their efficacy.

At the Reformation five of the Sacraments were simply discarded as "not necessary to Salvation." Luther went so far as to style the Sacrament of Confirmation a "FIRMELUNG," which word signifies FRAUD or CHEAT. If he had had the slightest notion of the Inner Meaning of the Sacraments, he would not have handled the pruning-knife with such deplorable alacrity.

One thing is certain: no Reformation could have occurred if the Church of Rome had retained possession of the Sacred Gnosis. Knowledge of the esoteric signification of the Mysteries was in ancient times called "the Power of the Keys" (*potestas clavicum*). This power has long ago ceased to be the appanage of Orthodox Christianity.

During the first centuries of the Christian era this knowledge remained in the hands of different Secret Societies, which were on this account terribly persecuted by the Orthodox Priesthood. In our days the Church has lost the faculty of inflicting bodily injury to those who do not share her views, but the "*Odium Theologicum*" still subsists Christians are still requested to "detest, abhor, and condemn" certain opinions, which are declared to be "wicked heresies."

Luther styled those who denied the efficacy of Baptism administered to unconscious infants, "Demons possessed by worse demons"!!! Such vehemence of language meets scant approbation in our days. The Spirit of Intolerance is gradually vanishing, and it is to be hoped that, in coming ages, men and women will be judged according to their *acts*, and not according to their more or less strict adherence to certain forms of *belief*.

It is a remarkable fact, that nearly all the Sectarials who have been persecuted on account of their heterodox opinions were men of a deeply religious turn of mind.

Numerous records prove conclusively that disregard of external ordinances can by no means be considered as a token of impiety.

The Messalians, who had a very low esteem of the Sacraments, were a Sect of Mystics, who devoted themselves wholly to prayer.

Ireneus informs us that the Gnostics declared all outward and material Sacraments to be unnecessary: their chief aim was enlightenment; the illumination of the soul was all that their hearts desired.

Can such a frame of mind fairly be described as denoting particular "wickedness"? The Gnostics did in no way despise Divine Grace. It seems strange that men, who apparently were eager to conquer Life Eternal, should manifest contempt for the Ordained Means of Salvation: there must be some cause for such an anomaly.

The reason is this:—The Gnostics, as well as the Mystics, refuse to be fed on husks. We do not despise the husk, as long as it serves to hide and protect the living kernel; but if that kernel is once removed, then the husk has, in our eyes, no value whatever. We do not object to outward signs, unless these signs FAIL to transfer the Inward Grace promised. We consider external ordinances, void of spiritual signification, to be acts of superstition, unworthy of a cultured mind.

These, our views, prove no contempt for the Holy Sacraments! On the contrary. It is just because we

feel the deepest veneration for the ordained means of Grace that we intensely object to their promiscuous distribution unto unworthy recipients.

This, our mental attitude, is in strict harmony with the views of the Primitive Church. It is expressly stated that the Outward signs confer Inward Grace TO THE FAITHFUL. These words of reservation imply that if the Sacraments are administered to those who are *not* faithful, then they remain mere outward signs, unaccompanied by any vestige of spiritual Grace.

On this point there has been a general defection from the Original Faith. The Church of Rome has laid down the principle that the Sacraments are, *in their own nature*, vehicles of Grace, which—from the mere fact of their administration—convey Christ to the Soul.

The Council of Trent anathematizes all who deny that the Sacraments confer Grace *ex opere operato*. The ritual function is supposed to act as a charm or incantation, which brings with it magical results. The present state of Christian Communities affords abundant evidence of the fact, that this doctrine is simply a melancholy fallacy, apt to engender feelings of false security within the hearts of men.

All the Reformed Churches hold that Grace is NOT inseparably tied to the reception of the Sacraments. The glaring absence of all practical results makes this admission indispensable. But it is a dangerous ad-

mission! It inevitably generates the question: "If they fail to confer Grace, what is, then, the practical use of all these ritual functions"?

The Catholic Church is **THEORETICALLY** right. If the Sacraments were administered as they **OUGHT** to be,—in spirit and in truth,—then they inevitably **DO** operate in a magical transformation of Man. The *ex opere operato* is true if the recipient absorbs the living kernel; it is **NOT** true if he is merely fed on the valueless husks.

The correct number of the Sacraments has been the subject of considerable litigation.

The Church of Rome insists upon the number **SEVEN**, though it has long ago ceased to be aware of the reason **WHY** there ought to be seven Sacraments, neither more nor less.

These Sacraments are :

- I. **BAPTISM.**
- II. **CONFIRMATION.**
- III. **EUCCHARIST.**
- IV. **PENANCE.**
- V. **EXTREME UNCTION.**
- VI. **HOLY ORDERS.**
- VII. **MARRIAGE.**

They have invariably been mentioned in this order. There is something very remarkable about that fact.

It proves conclusively that the Fathers, who thus established the sequence, were INITIATES, and conscious of the reason WHY the Sacraments ought to be mentioned in this order, and no other. It is exceedingly unlikely that they should by chance have discovered the order, which is esoterically correct.

From the human point of view, the progression seems very strange. Goethe suggested that Marriage ought to be the first Sacrament, and come before Baptism, as the birth of the child ought to come after the wedding.

The Church of England, which has not entirely rejected the five minor Sacraments, places the Extreme Unction last in the row. This seems, of course, very logical If the Sacraments are simply outward ceremonies, without hidden meaning, then there is no apparent reason for placing Holy Orders and Marriage at the end.

But human logic and Divine Wisdom are sometimes at variance. There *are* powerful reasons why Extreme Unction should be the fifth Sacrament and Marriage the last. These reasons will presently be mentioned; but, first of all, it is necessary to point out that the Church of Rome,—though it has the great merit of having kept the sequence of the Sacraments intact,—has severed the connecting link between them. One single individual can no longer be the recipient of them all. The man who has received the sixth Sacrament—Holy

Orders—is, *ipso facto*, for ever excluded from the seventh—Marriage.

The seven Sacraments are links in an invisible chain connecting Heaven and Earth: each link is indispensable; none can be left out with impunity. If the links in a chain are disconnected, then they are transformed into useless encumbrances. The Church of Rome has carefully preserved the seven links, but only imaginary benefits can be derived from them in their present condition. The mere fact of having faithfully preserved them is, however, very much to its credit. The Reformers threw overboard all the Mysteries that they failed to grasp, and played sad havoc with the "Divinely-appointed Ordinances of Grace."

Bishop Cranmer was much mistaken when he declared that there was no ground in Antiquity for considering the number of the Sacraments to have been SEVEN.

Systematic knowledge of the progressive phases of Evolution was the Great Arcanum, imparted in all the Ancient Mysteries. The Seven Sacraments are rungs in the Mystic Ladder that Jacob beheld in his vision.

That ladder was well known to the Initiates of Egypt, Greece, Mexico, India, and Persia. The Egyptian Saviour, the Virgin-born Horus, was known by the title TEP-F-XET, that is, "Lord of the Ladder." The Ladder meets us in the Cave of Mithra and in

the Well of Life in the Great Pyramid, and the number of the rungs is invariably SEVEN.*

As none of the Reformers had the slightest notion of the Inner Meaning of the Sacraments, they kept TWO, and rejected FIVE!

In the Lutheran Catechism these latter are not even mentioned. The Anglican Church is less radical: it accentuates the importance of Baptism and Holy Supper, but admits the others as "Minor Sacraments"! Imagine a ladder on which the first and third rung are alone left intact! There is something almost tragical in such a mutilated ladder: the two rungs left, fail to bridge the yawning gulf.

But a ladder on which two rungs are "essential" and five rungs "of minor importance" is a distinctly queer thing

On the Roman ladder all the rungs are, happily, intact, but, alas! it lies flat on the ground! As long as it remains in that position it cannot be used as a method of ascension. May the Spirit of Truth illuminate the Leaders of the Church and engender

* Rev. J. Oliver states that the ladder with the seven steps was used in the Indian Mysteries to designate the approach of the soul to perfection.

The ascent to the summit of the Paradisical Mount of God by means of a pyramid consisting of seven steps was an old notion entertained—before the vision of Jacob—by the Mexican savages. (*Humboldt, "Researches in America," Vol. I., p. 86*)

within their hearts the Good-will, so that the Ladder may soon be raised heavenwards!

After these introductory remarks, it is time to examine the original Meaning of the Sacraments.

The word SACRAMENTUM is the Latin translation of the Greek word *μυστήριον* (Mystery).

In ancient times it simply signified the sign and symbol of a Divine Secret.

What could this Secret be?

Knowledge of the Great Central Truth hidden in all the ancient Mysteries—the Truth which is the essence of all religions worthy of the name. REGENERATION is the precious kernel everywhere embedded deep in the husk of empty ceremonies.

Regeneration is a word with which all Christians are familiar, but few people realize what it really means. It has degenerated into a current term of the religious vocabulary—a term more or less void of sense.

Originally the entire drama of Salvation was condensed in this unique word—REGENERATION.

Let us carefully examine all that this term implies!

Man is a potential God. Regeneration is the process by which latent possibilities are transformed into glorious actualities.

The Human personality,—as well as the Deity,—is a Trinity, composed of **THOUGHT, FEELING, and WILL.**

When the dark thoughts of unregenerate Man join impure feelings they breed a will tainted from its very birth by the germ of disease and death.

Salvation can only come through the destruction of this evil will,—the offspring of earth,—and the substitution of a **GOOD-WILL**, the Child of Heaven.

Whenever the Inner Christos is born in the heart of man the Invisible Choir sings: “Peace and **GOOD-WILL** to Earth”! Good-will is the Saviour, the Redeeming Agency, through which we obtain ultimate peace.

Through the Generation of the Good-will within the Human Soul the Emanuel, or **GOD-WITH-US**, is incarnated.

In the present state of Humanity the **BRAIN** has not the faculty of procreating something that is immortal; but the **HEART**, when it is purified, is ever fit to give birth to the Divine Babe.

The Heart must gradually re-become **VIRGIN**: then only can it be fertilized by a Divine Thought and produce an Immaculate Offspring.

The Human Brain, like Joseph, is only fit to be a Foster-Father. It is his duty to tend, guard and protect the Heavenly-begotten Seed deposited in the bosom of Mary, that is, within the Pure Heart. The rational faculties in Man are unable to procreate a Will

that is absolutely GOOD: their mission is to support that Will, once it is begotten, through the Grace of the Holy Ghost.

This is, in a few words, the Inner Meaning of the Great Mysteries of Incarnation and Immaculate Conception, which have been the subject of such endless controversy when applied to historical personages.

The Incarnation is the first step on the Heavenly Ladder; the Atonement is the last.

The Seven Sacraments are the divinely-appointed means through which man ascends the intermediate rungs:—

BAPTISM corresponds to the Birth of the Christos within the Soul.

CONFIRMATION, to the gradual growth of the Divine Child.

EUCCHARIST, to His coming into the reception of His Heritage.

PENANCE, to the struggle of the New and the Old Adam.

EXTREME UNCTION, to the final death of the latter.

HOLY ORDERS, to the Consecration of the Victorious Christos as King, Priest, and Prophet.

MARRIAGE, to the *unio mystica*, the indissoluble union of the Redeemer and the Redeemed, that is, Divine Spirit and Human Soul.

We will now examine the seven rungs on the Heavenly Ladder one by one.

The first Sacrament is BAPTISM.

The Council of Trent anathematizes all who deny that Baptism is necessary to Salvation.

No true Mystic would dream of denying this necessity. But we DO maintain that the validity of the Ordinance entirely depends on an intelligent faith on the part of the recipient.

The Lord, in His commission to the Apostles, associates TEACHING with BAPTISM, and limits the administration of the Sacraments to those who were TAUGHT. The Apostles baptized none but believers.

If the Ordinance is not connected with a moral and spiritual change, then it is only a meaningless ceremony. As a matter of fact and experience, the vast majority of the baptized never undergo the momentous change called REGENERATION; they remain practically unregenerate. Millions of Baptized infants grow up to Manhood with no profit whatever from their Baptism.

It is stated by the Church that the performance of this Ceremony confers "a special mark upon the Soul, whereby Christians are discerned from non-Christians."

Can this claim be substantiated? Can it be truthfully asserted that all the unconscious infants to whom this Sacrament is administered are, in any respect, different from pagan babies? Has empty formalism

the power of transforming people into "adopted children of God"?

The Ceremony of Baptism is declared to be "the seed-time of spiritual growth, the moment when the Spirit of God breathes into the nostrils the Breath of Life Eternal." What an amazing statement! Is the Creator, then, a Step-Father unto all the other nations of the earth? Is He wicked enough to neglect sowing the blessed Seed of Immortality in the Heart of the Truth-seeking "Heathen" who loves, honours, and obeys Deity under the Name revealed to his forefathers? Surely the Holy Ghost leads the Evolution of EVERY Soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, under whatever conditions that Soul happens to be incarnated! Religion is not a geographical question! An immoral Christian is no nearer the Heart of God than a virtuous Jew, Mussulman, Hindoo, or Parsee. No special "covenant" ensures to the former undeserved prerogatives.

Baptism is a Rite ordained for our deliverance from SIN. How could such an immense result be obtained without the conscious Co-operation of the Recipient? The entire renewal of the moral nature cannot take place within the infant. Not the slightest "change of disposition" can be noted after the performance of the Ceremony.

The glaring absence of all practical results compelled the Church to declare that "all baptized persons, though not PERSONALLY SANCTIFIED, have a RELATIVE HOLI-

NESS (!!!) because they are members of the Church, which is Holy" (see Harold Browne's "Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles," page 617.)

The Invisible Church is, indeed, Holy ! but of THAT Church unregenerate men and women are NOT members. There are no withered branches on the True Vine : their fruitless condition proves conclusively that they are NOT in spiritual union with Christ.

The Ceremony of Baptism, performed upon unconscious infants, confers upon them the dubious benefit of nominal immatriculation into one of the hundred quarrelling sects into which official Christianity is split up—that is all !

There is hardly a criminal in Europe who has not been baptized—unless, by chance, he be a Jew. The very scum of Earth is admitted to nominal reception of the Sacrament, which is stated to consist in "the enlisting into the Army of Christ" !

One thing is certain : the Primitive Church ever identified Baptism with Regeneration. Through this Sacrament regenerating Grace was not merely PROMISED, but actually BESTOWED.

Over-estimation of husk and shell is fatal to spiritual life.

I heard a few years ago an anecdote, which clearly illustrates to what strange mental aberrations IGNORANCE and FANATICISM can lead even good and well-intentioned men.

A certain Catholic Missionary in China rejoiced the hearts of his Superiors by sending home glowing reports concerning the splendid success which had crowned his efforts:—thousands of Chinese had from his hands received the Holy Sacrament of Baptism; funds were urgently needed to carry on this magnificent work. Considerable sums were sent out to the energetic Missionary, who soon reported a large number of fresh conversions. It was deemed necessary to send out another Priest to assist tending this huge flock. On his arrival the new-comer begged to be introduced to the Christian Community.

With some embarrassment, his worthy Colleague explained **THAT THEY WERE ALL DEAD.**

ALL ! ! ? ? Why? Had there been an epidemic or a massacre?

Oh, no! The reason was quite simple, yet somewhat startling Female Infanticide is very common in China. The good Priest, who loathed the thought of all these poor little heathen babies going to hell, had had the bright idea of purchasing the right to baptize them **FOR A PENNY A HEAD!!!** Before they were drowned the poor little mites had solemnly been admitted into the Holy Catholic Church and assured an eternity of bliss.

The Salvation of an immortal soul at a penny a head is certainly wonderfully good value for the money invested.

What a strange conception such fanatics must have of a God whose attributes are **JUSTICE** and **MERCY** ! How is it possible that a **SANE** man can believe that the expenditure or non-expenditure of a base coin can have the power of affecting for all Eternity the fate of a human soul !!!

Augustine held that all unbaptized infants would perish everlastingly. It is stated in Scripture: "We are saved by the laver of regeneration" (Tit. iii. 5). These words do not at all imply that the myriads who are not "saved" shall perish.

The fate from which we are "saved" through **REGENERATION** is compulsory **RE-INCARNATION**. The Heavenly Father's educational methods are full of wisdom. Those children who fail to learn their lesson properly are not punished "everlastingly." Nay! they are simply obliged to perform the same task over and over again, under more and more painful conditions, until they have finally grasped the signification of the word **DUTY**. The first lesson to be learned on this planet consists in absolute submission to the Divine Will. Each soul which murmurs in its darkest hours "Thy Will be done"! is regenerated. The most difficult part of its education is accomplished: it has ascended on to the first rung of the Ladder, and the eager hands of invisible Helpers are ever ready to assist its ascension, until the Soul is made "perfect" and has become ripe for Immortality.

Sponsors are not a human institution, but a Divine Ordinance.

The New-born Christos needs aid and protection : He has to "grow in wisdom and stature" (Luke ii. 52) : Two Guardian Angels, or "Guides," are specially attached to Him and attend to His welfare. The Regenerated Soul is never abandoned to its own resources, but tenderly guarded and led by Invisible Protectors, until it has attained "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13). Then only the Sponsors are relieved of their charge. The Soul which has been admitted unto personal Communion with the Saviour has no further need of "Guides."

Amongst us this magnificent Institution has degenerated into mere farce. The Godfather and Godmother are supposed to guarantee that the baptized infant will faithfully keep the Covenant entered upon on its behalf without its knowledge and consent : they promise to see that the Child will really be brought up as a Christian. Do they keep this pledge ?

In the majority of cases, the Sponsors never give an atom of religious instruction to their God-children, and most parents would resent any attempt in that direction as an intrusion. All that is required of the Sponsors is to give a more or less handsome present to the Baby.

What has this institution, in its present condition, to do with RELIGION ?

The Church, having, unfortunately, rejected the Doctrine of Re-incarnation, found itself on the horns of a dilemma: SALVATION and DAMNATION became the only two alternatives left. As Baptism was the means through which damnation could be escaped, and as the number of men and women who were really regenerate was very small, it was deemed necessary to try to purchase Heaven at a reduced price, so as to "save" all the multitudes who were not in the least disposed to yield up their own will. The consequence was—promiscuous distribution of the Sacrament.

Imagine the state of a School in which the unfortunate youngsters had the option between two awful alternatives:—either to enter without due preparation an examination much above their mental capacity, or else be expelled in utter disgrace and be ruined for life. This is the only option offered to humanity by Orthodox Creeds.

The Church,—which teaches that performance of empty ceremonies has the faculty of procuring celestial benefits,—resembles a schoolmaster who tells his pupils that they can succeed in passing their examination by cheating!

Such educational methods cannot fail to produce dire results: they lead to neglect of that which is essential, viz.: the Development of the Divine Germ.

Regeneration is absolutely indispensable to Salvation,

but the administration of H₂O and empty formula are void of any value whatsoever.

We now come to the second Sacrament.

CONFIRMATION is the completion of BAPTISM.

The Church declares that both can be received but once in a lifetime, as they "imprint a character, or mark, upon the Soul which can never be effaced."

This statement is absolutely true if the Sacrament of Confirmation is accompanied—*as it ought to be*—by the actual bestowal of spiritual gifts. This was invariably the case in New Testament times.

The Gifts of the Holy Ghost, as described in the twelfth Chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, are not in the least "miraculous": they constitute the natural budding and blooming of the Divine Germ hidden in the Soul. Spiritual faculties which lie dormant in carnal Man are brought into vigorous action through the Sacrament of Confirmation: there is no more miracle in that than in the fact that the ACORN gradually develops into an OAK. The acorn remains hidden in the soil—a potential but unmanifested tree—until the day when the combined life-giving influences of moisture and heat compel the seed to evolve and fill its destination.

The MOISTURE and HEAT indispensable to vegetable life are the physical counterparts of the "Water and

Spirit," or Psyche and Pneuma, the two great agents of Regeneration mentioned by Christ in His well-known reply to Nicodemus (John iii. 5): "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of **WATER** and of the **SPIRIT**, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."

The symbolical **WATER** bestowed in the Sacrament of Baptism causes the Divine Seed within the heart of Man to germinate.

The mysterious imposition of hands performed in the Sacrament of Confirmation is the Magnetic Force indispensable to the proper growth of the germ.

As long as the seed remains hidden in the soil it still belongs to the dominion of **EARTH**. A superior element—**WATER**—descends from above, to assist its evolution, and, thanks to this aid, the seed emerges from its obscure prison and rises upwards towards the Realm of **AIR**.

The Ascension of Man from Earth to Heaven takes place in a similar manner. The germination of Divine Manhood occurs, unperceived by all mortal eyes, deep in the bosom; but there dawns a day when the Inner Christos, the Great Light hidden beneath the bushel of matter, breaks through the hard crust that imprisons Him, and emerges in radiant consciousness on the higher planes of life: a new world unveils to Him its glory Regenerate Man **SEES** and **HEARS** and **FEELS** with entirely new senses that He did not possess at an earlier stage of evolution.

The gifts of the Holy Ghost are not in the least supernatural; they constitute the glorious heritage reserved for *super-man*.

It would be miraculous for an acorn to produce a multitude of leaves below the surface of the soil; it is its nature to do so once it has emerged above ground.

Unregenerate Man is in darkness: his consciousness is imprisoned in matter; the five senses are the only peep-holes through which impressions from the outer world can reach him. But deep in the centre of his nature lies hidden the rudiment of a *sixth* sense—that of spiritual perception.

There has been considerable speculation within the Church concerning the "Gifts of the Spirit," described in 1 Cor. xiii. 1-11. It is generally believed that these gifts were only distributed during the first centuries of the Christian Era. One of them in particular is supposed to have vanished, and that is the mysterious "gift of tongues." Even the memory of what this gift originally meant has been obliterated from out the Christian Communities.

"The Speaking in tongues" is generally supposed to consist in the more or less involuntary utterance of incoherent sounds, void of any apparent sense. This interpretation,—which is completely erroneous,—has repeatedly prompted religious maniacs to pour out torrents of incomprehensible sounds.

No wonder that the gift of tongues is generally con-

sidered by the Church to be of small value, unless it be accompanied by the gift of interpretation, which is generally, however, granted separately.

One thing is certain: the faculty of understanding NONSENSE has never yet been distributed by the Holy Ghost! Utterance of sounds void of sense and imaginary comprehension of their meaning are feats belonging to the realm of mental acrobatics; they ought to be reserved for the Pentecost of the Lunatic Asylum.

It is sad to think that modern nations are so utterly ignorant of the true nature of the gifts of the Holy Ghost that they identify the ravings of unsound minds with the magnificent faculty of "Speaking in Mysteries."

The real gift of tongues is of immense value: it is the power of veiling eternal verities in the more or less transparent garb of ALLEGORY.

Knowledge of celestial truths cannot be projected into a human brain if they utterly transcend the comprehension of the Recipient. The thoughts of Heaven must be expressed in the language of Earth: if not, the message cannot be correctly transmitted. All our poets possess, more or less, the gift of speaking in tongues: their brain is a sort of receiving-apparatus for thought-waves, which they sometimes fail to comprehend, yet register faithfully. It is the glorious mission of the Inspired Artist to express sublime truths, of which he has, perhaps, never himself grasped the Hidden

Meaning. Goethe was an Initiate, yet it is doubtful whether he ever understood the wealth of wisdom which is embedded in the mystic ballad of the "King of Thule." "Tannhauser" and "Lohengrin" are Divine Revelations in the fullest sense of the term, as they contain truths from the celestial spheres—truths of which Wagner had probably very incomplete knowledge. Ibsen often sneered at critics who perceived in his works depths to which the conscious thought of the Author never had plunged. The great Norwegian poet possessed the gift of tongues: he lacked that of interpretation.

This latter gift of the Holy Ghost gives more joy than any other: it consists in INSTANT perception of the Inner Meaning of Allegories, Metaphors, Fables, and Parables. It is a magnificent gift, and St. Paul was justified in saying "that it gave edification." The faculty of speaking in tongues has been distributed since time immemorial amongst all the nations of Earth, as it is one of the favourite modes of manifestation of the Holy Ghost. It was particularly abundant in the Middle Ages, and meets us constantly in modern times. But this gift is only discerned by those who have "from the self-same Spirit" received the still greater gift of INTERPRETATION. To one is given the faculty of putting forth riddles, to another that of expounding them, but the "same God worketh in all."

It is indeed an admirable working method! The literal meaning of allegories is generally of such childish simplicity that it can be grasped and remembered by the most unintelligent mind. Behind this plain surface lie hidden worlds of beauty which remain unrevealed for ages until the hour appointed by God. Then the Veil is lifted away; the gift of Interpretation is bestowed upon some servant, so "that the Church may receive edifying" (1 Cor. xiv. 5); then the Mystery hidden all through the Centuries is suddenly revealed.

The late Anna Kingsford possessed, in a remarkable degree, the faculty of Interpretation; so did my venerable friend, Mr. Michelsen. The Power of understanding Hidden Verities was the special gift granted unto me when I received, in 1904, the Holy Sacrament of Confirmation.

The bestowal of spiritual gifts INVARIABLY accompanies the actual reception of the Second Sacrament. The wonder, mystery, and miracle of the Apostolic times were not *accidental*, but are *essential*, to the Divinely-instituted Church of God.

Those Christians who have received no special gift
ARE NOT YET CONFIRMED.

If you went to a nurseryman and asked for young oaks, what would you think if he exhibited to you a

collection of stale acorns? You would stare at him in amazement, and say: "Sir! I want TREES!" Imagine your feelings if he replied: "In New Testament times acorns possessed the extraordinary and miraculous faculty of being transformed into oaks: that was 'for the benefit of others'! These acorns are oaks 'in an abiding and ordinary state.' To remain undeveloped is quite compatible with the welfare of the plant."

Would you not, in silence, turn your back on that nurseryman and think: "You are either a *knave* or a *fool*! If those acorns had been submitted to proper treatment, the great miracle of growth would have occurred NOW, as well as two thousand years ago!"

Great will be the confusion of the tens of thousands of so-called Christian Priests,—who IMAGINE that they have received the Holy Sacrament of Ordination,—when, on the Day of Judgment, they bring forth their flocks of 350 millions of so-called "Christians," who IMAGINE that they have been admitted into the True Church of Christ by the administration of water and empty words on their unconscious heads.

At the sight of this colossal SHAM the Spirit of Truth will sternly say: "I know ye not: he only is a Christian who leads the Christ-life." Thousands upon thousands of so-called Pagans are members of the Invisible Church: they may possibly never upon this earth have heard even the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, but the

Divine Seed in their own heart has reached glorious maturity; Angelic hands have baptized them with tears they have shed in silence; Invisible Sponsors have led their spiritual evolution; and to-day these despised "heathen" are Sons and Daughters of God.

The Church declares the Holy Supper to have been instituted by Jesus Christ. It is, however, an undeniable fact that the Mystery of Holy Communion was celebrated in different countries several thousands of years before the Incarnation of Jesus. The magnificent discoveries of Modern Archæology have proved this conclusively.

In Egypt, Mexico, India, and Greece we find traces of this Sacrament. Communion with bread and wine played an important part in all the ancient Mysteries. The notion of a heavenly food,—through the consumption of which Man was Deified,—is of very ancient descent.

In one of the Vedic hymns the worshipper exclaims: "We have drunk the *Soma*, we have become immortal, we have entered the Light, we have known the Gods!"

The Egyptian "Book of the Dead,"—which is the Manual used at the Great Initiation,—speaks of "the food of the Gods behind the Shrine." The Neophyte exclaims: "My bread is white; my drink is red: I eat them under the trees I know, the branches beautiful."

The two trees alluded to were the **VINE** and the **FIG-TREE**, symbols of Our Lord and Our Lady. The Ritual further speaks of the "Divine food that giveth Power." The Neophyte says: "I obtain power from the bread of the Gods: I obtain power as I eat it beneath the foliage of the Tree of my Lady." And, further on: "To me is given splendour, joy, and peace of heart in the place of **BREAD** and **WINE**."

In one of the Ancient Sacred Writings of the Early Eastern Church, "The Book of Adam and Eve," translated from the Ethiopic by Rev. S. C. Malan, we meet the following startling passages:—

"Adam and Eve made an oblation of bread on the Altar. God said: 'This oblation ye have offered me I shall make it my flesh,' and the Holy Ghost came down on that oblation."

Later on it is stated: "Shem, son of Noah, prepared Bread and Wine, and said: '**KEEP THIS MYSTERY SECRET.**'"

Further on we find it related that Melchizedek, King of Salem, took 12 stones and offered on them a sacrifice of bread and wine, and that he gave Abraham the Holy Eucharist, a cup of wine and a morsel of bread, and Melchisedek said: "Take 12 stones, and make thereof an altar, and offer upon it Bread and Wine."

In the presence of all this evidence, it is impossible to maintain that the Holy Communion was **ORIGINALLY** instituted by Jesus of Nazareth: Jesus was the High-

Hierophant of the Essenes. In this capacity He administered to His disciples the Holy Eucharist—a Sacrament to which evolved Souls had been admitted for many centuries.*

Jesus was a Manifested Ray of the Great Invisible Spiritual Sun, the Source of all Illumination. The Seven Sacraments are means of Grace ordained by the Pre-existent Christ, the Divine Being with which the Man, Jesus, was at-oned. Through the consciousness of His Unity with that Central Self, Jesus was able to say: "Before Abraham was I am!"

The Holy Eucharist was NOT instituted by the historical personage we reverence under the name of Jesus of Nazareth, but by the Divine Being of whom that historical personage was a temporary Manifestation.

At first sight, it appears as if this distinction were of small importance. Such is not the case!

If the HISTORICAL JESUS is the originator of the Sacraments, then no one can have received them prior to the Christian Era. All those who have in previous ages ascended the Heavenly Ladder would, in that case, be outside the fold. Why this injustice? Surely God has no step-children? Are we not told that "the Heavenly Father giveth the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him"? (Luke xi. 13) All men and women who loved and obeyed God long ere Jesus was incarnated, belong to the Holy Invisible Church, just as well as

* See note on page 55.

those born at a later period and under different climes. Time and space has nothing to do with Salvation! Religion is an ever-present reality, not a thing of the future or of the past! The Spirit of Christ, which has overshadowed this planet since its first formation, leads the evolution of ALL its children.

According to the Catholic Church, SALVATION is the great thing to be desired above all, the ultimate goal, to which we must aspire. But what is salvation if not an immortalization of SELF? The worship of Self is the very Root of Evil Selfishness—the great bar to Divine Communion—is not eradicated by life-long endeavours to conquer spiritual advantages for one's own personality. To sacrifice the joys of Earth in order to purchase the joys of Heaven is simply a commercial transaction. The prodigal who squanders his immortal birthright "by riotous living" is a spiritual *spendthrift*. The saintly person, who denies himself legitimate joys in the hope of reaping posthumous benefits, is a spiritual *miser*. In the eyes of the Supreme, those two extreme types of manhood are, more or less, on the same ethical level.

The Christian who still hopes for personal advantages in recompense of his virtues is not yet sufficiently evolved to be worthy of receiving the Eucharist.

This Sacrament is based upon the great principle of UNITY: no one can partake of it worthily in spirit and

in truth unless he be keenly conscious of his solidarity with the entire human race.

God desires the redemption of ALL humanity—not merely the salvation of separate individuals. It is the proud prerogative of Regenerate Man to co-operate with Deity in the accomplishment of this grand labour of love.

When we have patiently toiled our way upwards to the Gates of Heaven, then we must crush our great yearning to enter and return to the lower planes of life in order to try to bring back to Our Father the Sons and Daughters who are still far away from Home.

The mystic expression “to rest beneath the Altar” (Rev. vi. 9), which has puzzled so many Christians, refers to this great spiritual fact. No one who REALLY has been admitted to the Sacrament of the Altar would wish to enjoy heavenly bliss as long as millions of his fellow-creatures still suffer: **THOSE WHO ARE LAST MUST ENTER FIRST.**

Those souls who are admitted unto true Communion with Deity gladly sacrifice their spiritual prerogatives in order to assist in executing God's plan of Redemption. “They rest for a little season, until their fellow-servants be fulfilled” (Rev. vi. 11). Upon the Mystic Ladder that Jacob beheld in his vision Angels ASCENDED and DESCENDED. This expression is very significant: **THE ANGELS DID NOT REMAIN AT THE TOP**; their mission is to *serve* those beings who are less evolved. Each

Soul which has ascended into the Divine Presence re-descends of its own free accord as a **MESSENGER**. But **GOOD-WILL** and **PEACE** ever walk hand in hand. Those who labour for others enjoy rest in the Lord: they "rest beneath the Altar," sustained by the Food of Heaven, the Celestial "**MEAT**" ever granted to those who do the will of the Father (John iv. 34). The will of the Father is "that not one of those little ones shall perish." We cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven until we have done His will and brought home the sheep that have gone astray (Matt. vii. 21).

May the Church of Rome, which claims to have the Monopoly of Salvation, remember that!

In the Sacrament of the Altar each vigorous young Tree which has grown up from the Divine Seed deposited in the Heart of "every man that cometh into the world" (John i. 9) yields up his right to a separate existence, and is transformed into a tiny twig upon the Great Tree of Life.

The **WINE** and **BREAD** are nutritious elements which sustain temporal life in separate individuals: the Blood of Christ is the life-giving Sap which supplies nourishment to all the Members of the Invisible Church. "In Him we live and move and have our being."

Wine and Bread belong to the Realm of perishable Matter: the Mystic Blood and Flesh of Christ belong to the Realm of Immortal Substance. Through the Holy Eucharist the regenerated Soul acquires the

(capacity of assimilating food directly from the Celestial Sphere. The scant spiritual nourishment contained in Creeds, Dogmas, and Ritualistic Ceremonies is trans-substantiated into an everlasting draught from the well of Absolute Truth.

The overwhelming magnitude of the Grace conferred in the Sacrament of the Altar inevitably produces within the Soul a crushing feeling of unworthiness: it becomes keenly conscious of the necessity of the Sacrament of PENANCE.

If a beggar is suddenly admitted unto the table of a King, he may, in the first flush of emotion, forget his humble station, and simply rejoice at all the glory he beholds, but there inevitably comes a moment when he feels ashamed of his rags. While he was still on the path their wretched condition did not strike him, but the undeserved honour conferred upon him makes him yearn intensely for clean garments.

True reception of the Holy Communion has the effect of making the Soul keenly conscious of SIN. The vision of ideal Manhood, in all its immaculate beauty, compels the Soul mournfully to recognize all its own infirmities.

Each thought, word, or deed in our past life is photographed in our aura, and the moment when these astral records are presented to our gaze is TERRIBLE, even

for those who have led pure lives, according to earthly standards. This is the "Fiery Ordeal," mystically called "the valley of the shadow of death." All men and women inevitably have to traverse it when they leave the physical body, but those who are admitted to the great Initiation pass the Burning Furnace while they are still in the flesh. Plunged in a death-like trance, they behold all the inexorable past in the merciless light of eternal verity and in an agony of shame: "they begin to say to the mountains 'Fall on us,' and to the hills 'Cover us!'"

During the Fiery Ordeal the Soul is brought face to face with the "Accuser," the terrible being mentioned repeatedly in Scripture. The Accuser is graphically represented in the shape of a Crocodile-headed Sphinx on the Ancient Egyptian drawing which represents the Judgment of Osiris. The Accuser presides at the Ceremony when the Heart is weighed in the balance against the symbol of Divine Law. None of us could weigh down the Scale representing JUSTICE, unless GRACE placed itself at our side and supplied all that is lacking.

No Man can pass victorious through the Fiery Ordeal unless he is at-oned with the Saviour. We would all succumb unless the Sacrament of Holy Communion ever preceded that of Penance. "The Blood of Christ wipes away all sin." That old familiar sentence is verily true.

Intense consciousness of sin transforms Man into his own Judge, and that Judge is the sternest of all. The culprit feels that there are acts in his life that he cannot pardon himself, even if he obtained the pardon of God and his fellow-creatures. The penalty of sin is death In the agony of remorse, the Repentant Soul begs to be wiped away from amongst the living.

At this stage of evolution the Soul receives the **EXTREME UNCTION**.

The Church of Rome never administers this Sacrament until all hope of recovery has vanished: it is given, *in extremis*, to all nominal members of the Church,—men, women, and children,—often after consciousness has left. A ceremony performed upon a senseless body can, of course, in no way affect the welfare of a soul which has just divested itself of its garments of clay; yet this ceremony *is* impressive, and seems to have a soothing influence upon distressed relatives. They apparently believe that the anointing has a magical effect, and will be of great help to the Soul in Purgatory. Even those who consider the ceremony to be a mere act of superstition would not care to deprive mourners of this illusion But it is an illusion, and hardly anything else!

Loving prayers do assist a Soul in the dark hour of death; but ritual functions, performed by a stranger

who attends the death-bed simply because it is his professional duty to do so, can only be of scant benefit to the departed.

The OIL or CHRISMA, with which the dying man is anointed, is a symbol of PEACE; but Peace and Good-will are inseparable companions. If GOOD-WILL was not generated during earth-life, there can be no PEACE in the Beyond. The Soul *will* suffer, and *must* suffer, not because a wrathful Deity claims vengeance, but because PAIN is the great cleansing Agent: the Soul will suffer neither more nor less than is absolutely necessary for its purification. Those who attempt to avoid pain resemble naughty children who decline to be washed. It is not desirable to abbreviate the pangs of Purgatory: the flames must not be extinguished until all the dross in us is consumed and only noble metal left.

As a rule, the painful process of purification takes place after death, but those souls who are eager to ascend the Ladder have the faculty of entering the burning furnace while they are still in the flesh. The voluntary descent into Hades for $3\frac{1}{2}$ days was the Central part of the Ancient Mysteries: each Initiate had to cross the Chamber of Fiery Ordeal. The Sacrament of Extreme Unction was not conferred on poor wrecks of humanity who drifted against their will towards the dark shores: the Chrisma was administered to those strong souls who, of their own free will, left the flesh-pots of Egypt and went into the desert to be

confronted with the **LAST ENEMY**, which must be conquered before Victory is complete. But they had no fear of Death, for they walked hand in hand with God.

The Soul which has ascended to the fifth rung on the Heavenly Ladder never looks back with regret: it has no longer the slightest wish to remain on the lower planes of life; it accepts with equal submission **LIFE** or **DEATH**. Why cling desperately to the possession of a physical body when there is a possibility to conquer a glorious body? "The **GOLDEN FLEECE**" is only granted to those who gladly yield up their "coats of skin"; but that garment was given them to hide sin, and we can only entirely dispense with it when there is nothing in our nature left that needs hiding.

The $3\frac{1}{2}$ days spent in the Pastos, or voluntary tomb, is the indispensable preparation to the sixth Sacrament—that of **PRIESTHOOD**. Jonas was swallowed $3\frac{1}{2}$ days by the "Monster of the Deep" before he began to preach

The Soul must die away from Earth before it receives the Sacrament of **ORDINATION**.

The Church of Rome declares that no position on Earth is as exalted as that of the **PRIEST**. According to St. Chrysostom, the dignity of the Priest is far loftier than that of Emperors and Kings. St. Bernard declares that his power is greater than that of the Angels and Arch-Angels.

These proud claims are absolutely justified if ad-

vanced in behalf of the half-deified being who, after having ascended the Ladder of Evolution, has finally been ordained by the Great Leader of the Invisible Church. The true recipient of the Sacrament of Holy Orders emulates in his person the functions of KING, PRIEST, and PROPHET.

No higher position can be conceived. But the proud affirmation of absolute superiority appears slightly ludicrous when applied to the vast number of gentlemen who have simply selected the clerical profession in order to obtain a more or less comfortable living.

The Priesthood—such as it is established by the official churches all over the world—has nothing to do with the Sixth Sacrament. It is simply a stupendous machinery, put in motion by conflicting forces.

It is the professional duty of the clergy to expound the Scriptures to the multitude. How can this duty be properly fulfilled by men who only grasp the LITERAL sense, and are absolutely ignorant of the ESOTERIC meaning? There are, of course, individual members of the clergy who are true channels of grace, through whom spiritual life is actually transmitted to the congregation, but many perform the “Magnum Opus” *à rebours*. They transform BREAD into STONE, that is, pure religion into adulterated and indigestible theology.

To reserve the sixth Sacrament exclusively to members of the male sex is an undeserved insult to

womanhood. We must evolve into a nation of Priests and Priestesses. Now that the great truth that God is not only **FATHER** but also **MOTHER** is beginning to be openly preached from our pulpits, **SEX** can no longer be a bar sinister, excluding half humanity from the reception of the sixth Sacrament.

The mission of the Priest is to offer up sacrifice. The only sacrifice acceptable to God is the immolation of **SELF**. Whoever is willing to give up all that he *has* and all that he *is* for love of the Redeemer is a Priest or a Priestess in the kingdom of the Messiah.

The Priest is a **KING** because he has legitimate dominion over multitudes of less evolved beings and is responsible for their spiritual welfare.

He is a **PROPHET**, because he is appointed to hand down the riches of Heaven, to which he has free access, unto those who are beneath him on the ladder. One of his hands must be lifted up to **RECEIVE**, the other one stretched down to **BESTOW**. That is the mystic attitude which meets us so frequently on drawings and monuments, intended to transmit to coming ages the Ancient Wisdom. "Solve et Coagula," the famous occult formula, corresponds to the power to loose and to bind, granted by Christ to the Apostles when He conferred upon them the sixth Sacrament.

That power is bestowed only upon those souls who have actually ascended the Ladder and passed victoriously through all the phases of Re-generation. The

true Priest has the glorious mission of liberating his fellow-creatures. The intolerable chains forged by Ignorance and Fanaticism snap asunder at the magic touch of the shining sword in his hand. That all-powerful weapon is—**THE WORD OF GOD**. A WORD not shrouded in the venerable garb of antiquity, and emerging from the pages of a justly revered Book, but a **LIVING WORD**, emanating from a heart filled by the Holy Ghost.

The true Priest is a Mediator between God and Man. Unto him alone is granted access into the Holiest of Holies. In rare and solemn hours of deep contemplation his enraptured Soul is lifted beyond the Veil, and he enjoys the **BEATIFIC VISION**. He sees no longer "in a glass dimly," but face to face. These rare moments—sacred beyond expression—are the preludes to the Ineffable Joy, which is reserved for the Soul on the last rung of the Heavenly Ladder.

But the Priest is not yet entitled to remain perpetually in the Sanctuary. He has still many duties to perform. The six days of toil are approaching their end; a period of intense activity precedes the coming of the Great Sabbath. On the sixth rung the Soul is **BETROTHED** to the Divine Bridegroom; it is not yet **WEDDED**. It has fugitive glimpses of the Beloved, but has not yet conquered the right to remain for ever in His presence.

But when it has received the Seventh Sacrament,

then the Soul enjoys ETERNAL REST. It enters into the peace that passeth all understanding. "It will go out no more"—that is, it will never more re-incarnate. The Prodigal Son has definitely returned home; he has for ever left "the far country," where it was his fate to be "fed on husks." And, behold!—the very minute he "arose," and began to ascend the Ladder, his father descended and ran to meet him on the third rung, and brought him the "meat" of heaven. And when the prodigal said "Father, I have sinned!"—then he received the white robe, and finally the mystic RING, the symbol of the Seventh Sacrament, MARRIAGE, the indissoluble union of the Redeemer and the Redeemed.

Of the Unio Mystica I dare not speak. It is a subject too holy to be treated publicly without profanation. What bride would describe to strangers the rapture of the first embrace? The Soul, which has enjoyed "the kiss of the Heavenly Sophia" (Divine Wisdom)—to use Jacob Boehme's expression—will divulge nothing concerning the Sacrament of Marriage.

One thing is certain; it was *not* instituted in order to legalize the physical union of man and woman. That union is, under present conditions, indispensable for the propagation of the human race. It is highly important for the welfare of the child that the knot uniting its parents should be solidly tied. But the link is not, by its own nature, unseverable.

The great argument, "What God united let no man

put asunder," cannot reasonably be applied to the countless unfortunate alliances which meet us every day. God unites no ill-assorted couples! The mere fact that a member of the clerical profession presided at the nuptial ceremony does *not* imply that the union met with the approbation of Deity. It certainly ever lacked Divine sanction if the motive that brought the two consorts together was not unselfish love.

Marriage is the contracting of a very important partnership, entailing grave responsibilities, which ought to be strictly and honourably kept. But if the continuation of the partnership is found to be impossible, I fail to see the necessity of prolonging it, to the detriment of all parties concerned. The tie between husband and wife is of a **LEGAL**, not of a **SACERDOTAL**, nature. The Seventh Sacrament was not instituted in order to unite for ever two imperfect beings on the physical plane. "The Great Mystery" of which St. Paul speaks in his Epistle to the Ephesians (v. 32) refers to the at-onement of God and Man, *not* to matrimonial affairs. May those who consider Marriage to be a Sacrament meditate upon this problem: "Which is worse profanation, to administer it to unworthy recipients, or to dissolve unhallowed unions?"

Ritualists may retort that the views expressed in this paper are simply subjective and lack all objective value.

I am in a position to prove that these views are

identical with those held in the first Christian era, at a period when the Fathers were still in possession of the TRUE GNOSIS.

I beg to quote St. Clement of Alexandria, the great contemporary of Tertullian. We find the following sentence in his "Paedagog," Lib. I:—"BEING BAPTISED, WE ARE ILLUMINATED; BEING ILLUMINATED, WE ARE ADOPTED; BEING ADOPTED, WE ARE PERFECTED; BEING PERFECT, WE ARE RENDERED IMMORTAL."

These words describe with extreme lucidity the ascension of the mystic ladder, step by step. No corroboration of my statements could be more effective than that of one of the Canonised Saints of the Church of Rome.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem also extols the virtue of the Sacraments in the following words: "Liberty to the captive, remission of sin, regeneration of the Soul, garment of light, holy seal indissoluble, chariot to heaven, delight of Paradise."

Is it probable that he would have used these glowing words concerning the frigid ceremonies administered in our days to countless millions of unregenerate individuals?

May the Christian Community compare the magnificent evolution of the Soul, as described by St. Clement, with the miserable results obtained through the indiscriminate distribution of the Holy Sacraments unto spiritually ignorant multitudes.

The Divinely-ordained Means of Grace are misused to such an extent that they have almost ceased to be instruments of life eternal.

BAPTISM—the Sacrament of Repentance and Regeneration—is administered to unconscious infants.

CONFIRMATION—the Sacrament of Interior Illumination—is conferred upon unripe youths and maidens.

The **EUCCHARIST**—the Sacrament of Divine Communion—is granted wholesale to men and women steeped in vice.

PENANCE—the awful Ordeal of Inner Judgment—is transformed into a yearly function, a more or less superficial whitewashing.

EXTREME UNCTION—the utter yielding up of the Will, the Sacrament which claims the most intense personal effort—is performed upon poor wrecks of humanity too feeble to have a will and often entirely unconscious.

HOLY ORDERS—the Sacrament conferring upon Manhood the highest dignity which can be conceived—is granted to all those gentlemen who choose the clerical profession.

MARRIAGE—the most stupendous of all the Sacraments—is supposed to be instituted in order to legalize the amours of Jack and Jane

What is this if not "CORRUPT FOLLOWING OF THE APOSTLES"? The sad fact that the Sacraments are

NOT properly administered is proved every day by their utter failure to produce the blessed results promised.

Admission of this fact has far-reaching consequences.

The very **EXISTENCE** of the Christian Church, in its present condition, is hinged upon this question: "**ARE THE SACRAMENTS PROPERLY ADMINISTERED,—YES, OR NO**"?

If we arrive at the reluctant conclusion that such is *not* the case, then the inevitable consequence is recognition of the fact, that there exists at present no **VISIBLE** Christian Church on this Globe. Millions of good men and women belong to the Invisible Church; but the enormous ecclesiastical Machinery,—put in motion sixteen hundred years ago at the bidding of the iniquitous Emperor Constantine,—has very little to do with the pure Religion taught by Jesus Christ.

The problem: "**IS CHRISTIANITY A FAILURE?**"—which has been so difficult to solve truthfully with a negative answer—is a thing of the past No thing can be declared to be a failure until it has been properly tried!

CHRISTIANITY HAS HARDLY BEGUN YET!

But when it shall once be established,—then a New Heaven will for ever smile down on a New Earth!

PRINCESS KARADJA.

NOTE.

In the Apocrypha, "*Life and confession of Asenath*"—which shows indisputable elements of Essene lore—it is stated that Asenath, the daughter of Potiphar and wife of Joseph, did spend eight days in fasting and penance.

Then the Archangel Michael appeared to her and announced to her that henceforth she should be reborn, while eating the blessed bread of life and drinking the cup filled with Immortality. When she had anointed herself with the blessed oil of incorruption her name would be written in the book of life, never to be effaced. She was further told to put on her bridal gown, "prepared from the beginning of the world."

Michael then disappeared in a fiery chariot drawn by lightning-like horses.

I have quoted this strange fragment, as it evidently refers to the Great Initiation and the various phases of Evolution through which the Human Soul has to pass.

EXTRACTS FROM PRESS OPINIONS
CONCERNING
PRINCESS KARADJA'S POEM
"TOWARDS THE LIGHT."

Times.—"This poem was originally written in Swedish, and went through six editions, and has been translated into German, Dutch, and Danish. The present English verse-translation is by the Author herself."

English Mail.—"The translation into English vernacular does this talented lady great credit, and, had she not acquainted the English readers with the fact that it is a mere translation of her former work, it would easily have been accepted as a piece of original English verse, so rich is the language and so melodious its tone."

Pall Mall Gazette.—" . . . a noble message from the Great Beyond."

Aberdeen Daily Journal.—"This poem is a powerful meditation on the theme: 'Whatsoever a man sows that shall he reap.'"

Universe.—"The poetess has a wonderful mastery of blank verse and an excellent ear for English rhythm."

Occult Review.—"This poem has met with a very considerable success. There are incidents powerfully described. . . . The poem is in blank verse of considerable vigour. It is interesting both as a psychic experience and as a description of after-death conditions and is thoroughly readable."

Catholic Watchman.—" . . . this work contains a certain number of truths, taught by the Catholic Church."

Nottingham Guardian.—" . . . a deeply impressive work . . ."

East and West, Bombay.—"This poem is both a psychic problem and an inspiring message. . . . It is so remarkable that it requires no story of a wondrous birth to account for its extraordinary success. That treacherous medium, blank verse, is handled with an ease and accuracy rare enough among native writers of the language, and remarkable in one whose thoughts are habitually expressed in another tongue. The poem is on the theme of Eternal Hope. It is at once a warning and a promise. No theologian has better defined the unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, but no sermon, taking the Founder of the Christian Faith as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, ever contained less of dogmatic theology," etc.

Light.—"The story is told in a dramatic and moving language. There are a chain of circumstances powerfully described. The poem in the original Swedish has a delightfully musical flow, and much of this is preserved in the translation made by the Princess herself, on the success of which she is to be highly congratulated."

Theosophical Review.—"This mystic poem contains a serious statement of an after-life experience. . . . The various steps of penance and repentance are graphically described."

St. Helena Guardian.—"After going through the story one cannot help to be impressed with the awful beauty of the Justice. . . ."

Freemason.—"This mystic poem is already in its second thousand, and is likely to be widely circulated and read as its characteristics become more known. . . . The events are graphically described and contain many a lesson as well as solemn warnings."

Glasgow Times.—"A remarkable inspiration. . . . The poem is an interesting one, and well deserves success in the English translation, equal to that which it received in the original Swedish. The theme is based upon the autobiography of a man who, after having enjoyed all earthly pleasures, is disgusted with life and commits suicide. His soul, however, is as living as ever. It is the narrative of his spirit-life which forms the main interest in the poem, and his subsequent redemption through sorrow, mercy, and love to Divine forgiveness. This difficult—one might say daring—conception is beautifully worked out by Princess Karadja with an originality, a simplicity, and a religious sympathy which will appeal to the general reader as well as to the Metaphysician. From start to finish the poem maintains a high level of excellence."

Tasmanian News.—"A wonderful poem. . . . There is found therein some of the highest flights; and this impression, strong as it is, is strengthened fully twofold when it is reflected that it is in blank verse and translated from a somewhat unusual language—Swedish. No odes to nature, no love chants, or any of the usual topics are to be found in this slim volume—no, nothing of this sort, but a most weird, whimsical, impressive, and thoughtful poem in blank verse, the most difficult medium of all. The lines have to have a harmonious beat, the pendulum has to swing evenly—it must have, as Viscount Morley puts it, 'aerial freedom and space, radiant purity of light and depth, variety of colour, penetrating and subtle sweetness of music, spontaneity of imagination, and clean-cut sureness of touch.' These qualifications are found in the volume before us. The poem proves conclusively that its author is a highly educated woman. It glows with poetry of the 'gem order'—if such a term may be allowed. Beautiful thoughts are enwrapped in beautiful language."

Evening Post, New Zealand.—"But for a certain freedom in the metre, the author's mastery of the English language is such that few would suspect this poem to be the work of a foreigner. . . . It is a striking piece of imaginative work. . . . There is undeniable force in the poem, and we can well understand that it has made a deep impression."

The Harbinger of Light.—"It is seldom that a work absolutely unknown in Australia should obtain at once such a first-rate importance as Princess Karadja's poem. So warmly was it welcomed, that many of those fortunate enough to obtain copies read and re-read its glowing pages, affirming that new beauties revealed themselves with each successive perusal. . . . Towards the Light is a 'gem of purest ray serene.'"

Light.—"Her Majesty Queen Alexandra has graciously intimated her pleasure in accepting a presentation copy."