

Contemporary Mystic Christianity **Bible Self-Study Supplement**

Pythagoras, Master Initiate

The Mystery School at Krotona

Pythagoras (582 B.C.), a divine messenger, was sent to renew the altar fires of Greece at a time when observance of the ancient Wisdom had sunk to its lowest. Temples had been closed and esoteric truths forgotten. People were seeking knowledge along materialistic lines. When such is the condition of a nation, Guardians who work behind the scenes send forth emissaries of Light to rekindle the flame of spiritual aspiration.

Edward Schure wrote of Orpheus as the Initiate of Greece's dawn; Pythagoras, of its full daylight; Plato, of the setting sun. Correlating these three with Hebrew history, it is discovered that Orpheus belonged to the Mosiac period, Pythagoras to the Exilic, and Plato to the Apocryphal.

It is an esoteric axiom that when a higher Being descends to earth to give a new impetus to human evolution, great care is taken in the choice of that One's parentage. The best and purest are chosen so the holy child's formative years may be spent in an atmosphere of peace and harmony — an atmosphere obtainable only in homes where things of the spirit are given first place.

Pythagoras was the son of well-to-do parents whose home was on the island of Samos. They were devout worshippers of the Sun God Apollo and received a message from him through the Pythian Oracle foretelling the birth of a child and giving a prophecy regarding his remarkable career. They were instructed to proceed to the sacred shrine at Sidon in Phoenicia, and there the child was born.

At the end of a year the child was dedicated in the Temple to the service of Apollo. Pythagoras remembered this incident and later told his disciples of the venerable priest who had saluted his mother with the words: "O woman of Ionia, thy son will be great by knowledge, but remember that if the Greeks possess the science of the gods, the Science of God is to be found in Egypt."

The name Pythagoras was bestowed on the child as signifying one whose birth was predicted by the famous Pythoness at Delphi.

In Stanley's History of Philosophy occurs the following significant quotation: "That the soul of Pythagoras, being of the regime of Apollo (whether as a follower, or in some other way more near to him), was sent to men none can doubt, since it may be evidenced by the circumstances of his birth and the universal wisdom of his mind. The Greeks so much admired his wisdom that they considered it nothing less than divine, and thereupon fabled Apollo to be

his father. When young, a great report was spread about him which brought him fame in all nearby cities, calling him by a name which became a proverb—namely, the Samian Comet."

It is said that at the age of fifty-six he was of a still more comely and holy presence. To quote Laertius: "He was reported to have been of a most awful (sublime) aspect, so that his disciples considered him to be the Hyperborean Apollo." Hyperborea was the Greek Summerland of Spirit, the home of the Gods. To this sphere of eternal felicity the Sun God Apollo drove his golden chariot for rest and refreshment — a description of the glories which abound for Illumined Ones during the Sacred Season of the Winter Solstice. Apollo's return from Hyperborea was celebrated in the Spring with special rites at the Delphic Temple, while his greatest glory was revealed at the Summer Solstice.

By the time Pythagoras reached the age of eighteen his wisdom was so great that he was thought to be the offspring of deity, and his connection with Apollo became legend. A Samian poet dedicated these lines to him:

"Pythias, of all Samians most fair,
Jove-loved Pythagoras to Phoebus Bare."

About this period, and under pressure of political animosity against certain aspects of his spiritual teachings

which appeared to be in conflict with current usage, the youthful Sage was forced to leave his homeland. He journeyed to the shrine of Sidon, his birthplace, to continue his studies. Then, continuing his quest for light, he sought and obtained Initiation in the Temples of Egypt.

While he was thus occupied, war broke out between Egypt and Babylon, victory going to the Babylonians. Pythagoras was among the captives sent into Babylonian imprisonment. Still eagerly in quest of wisdom, he there contacted Chaldean Magi and, according to some historians, a certain Wise Man who bore the cryptic name of Nazaratus became his Teacher. This was none other than the illustrious Old Testament prophet, Ezekiel. The golden thread of Wisdom which bound the Illuminati of all ages into a continuous program of preparation for the Christ's coming is once more apparent!

It is claimed that Pythagoras also visited Palestine, which at that very time was being prepared by divine Hierarchs for the return of Hebrew exiles and in anticipation of the Christ Event. In Nazaratus Pythagoras was under the tutelage of one who was working in full foreknowledge of the Divine Coming, as the Book of Ezekiel clearly reveals.

After approximately twelve years spent under the guidance of the Magi in Babylon, Pythagoras returned to his early home in Samos. There he founded his first Wisdom

School that was largely devoted to bringing peace and harmony into the lives of the people. The famous "Semicircle of Pythagoras" dates from this era. A semicircle has a very real significance to esotericists. Due to some obscure psychological law, angelic spirits on inner planes always tend to arrange themselves in that formation facing a neophyte, so that the spiritual forces emanating from them come into focus on him. A knowledge of this fact probably gave rise to the Pythagorean semicircle. Evidently Pythagoras received no cooperation from the community, for after a time he abandoned his enterprise and founded another School in the more congenial atmosphere of sunny Italy. This was the beginning of the world-famous School at Krotona.

Pythagoras divided the work of his School into three grades or sections: namely, learning, knowledge and wisdom. As he defined them, learning consisted of that which was gained from teachers or books. Knowledge was what one knew at first-hand, the Gnosis of esoteric Christianity. Wisdom was the soul essence extracted from both learning and knowledge which had been incorporated into the ego itself. The world, said Pythagoras, is the living, pulsating body of a great Being. Initiation, or Liberation, is the prime essential, the aim and goal of all education.

Accordingly, there were four stages or Degrees of advancement in his School. The First Degree was Preparation. This included a severe novitiate of from three to five years, during which a student was under the vow of silence. It was a probationary period in physical purification and meditation. Pythagoras taught that self-control and numbers were the two fundamentals of all true spiritual development.

The Second Degree was Purification. The study of music as a regenerative factor was introduced in this Degree. Certain melodies were given to quell passion, soothe temper, allay envy, jealousy and hate. By the use of music, students were taught to free their minds from the encroaching ills of the day and thus prepare themselves for the spirit's work during night hours. And by song they liberated themselves from the influences of the night and strengthened themselves for tasks of the day.

Dietary cleanliness was another aspect of the Purification Degree. Pythagoras abstained from all animal food and paid homage only at altars unstained by blood. He particularly recommended that statesmen abstain from eating flesh if they would deal justly with their people.

There are many fascinating legends concerning Pythagoras' power over animals, whose life he described as being communal with man's own. Once, as he was

discussing this subject with a group of neophytes, an eagle flew overhead. He called it down to him, stroked its head for a while, then let it go.

The Third Degree was Perfection. At this stage of development a neophyte had passed into the deepest phases of esoteric work wherein glories of inner realms and of other worlds in space were opened to his vision. The work of this Degree was given at night. Pythagoras and his disciples assembled in a certain crypt and did not emerge until the coming of dawn.

The Fourth Degree was Epiphany, or vision from above. The scroll of memory was unrolled; secrets of past incarnations were revealed along with all their interweavings of karmic action and reaction. The disciple learned of causes underlying his existing evolutionary condition and was shown how to prepare himself for freer and more nearly perfect embodiments in the future.

Although the Sage lived to be almost one hundred years of age he bore no marks of age. He was always majestic and comely to look upon. Toward all he was gentle, kindly, patient and loving in his manner. "By his moderate and frugal diet he preserved his body in the same constant state, not sometimes sick, sometimes well, sometimes fat, sometimes lean. It appeared by his countenance that the same constancy was in his soul also. He was not subject to

joy or grief. No man ever saw him rejoice or mourn. He refrained wholly from derision, affectation, scoffs, and destructive speeches. He never punished anyone in anger, neither slave nor free person."

Pythagoras was the intimate friend and co-worker of the renowned philosopher Thales; also, of the famed Sage of Syros, Pherecydes, said by some to have been his teacher. The latter was an Initiate of the Phoenician Mysteries, the teachings of which he had carried over into Greece and there helped to embody them in the Orphic Mysteries.

It is said that while Pythagoras was visiting with Pherecydes, one Cylon, an aristocrat of Krotona, infuriated because he had been rejected as unworthy of admittance into the novitiate of Pythagoras' School, plotted the philosopher's downfall. He succeeded in arousing the populace against Pythagoreans — for men fear what they cannot comprehend. It is reported that the great Teacher and most of his pupils were slain in the uprising.

F. Marian Crawford wrote a fitting tribute to this Master Ego:

The godlike figure of Pythagoras belongs among the rulers of the South, as with the legends of his miracles and the reality of his wisdom, with his profound learning, his untiring activity and his unswerving belief

in the Soul's life to come, with his love of man and love of beauty, his faith, his hope and his Christlike charity, he represented in its best condition the higher type of the Aryan or Indo-Germanic people.

Pythagoras passed on to other labors in wider fields, but the philosophic systems he established on earth continued to flourish and grow. His work was incorporated into that of the Essene Brotherhood, whose communities were located along the banks of the Nile and in certain areas of the Holy Land. The Essenian Brotherhood was the specific channel for the inflow of spiritual forces having as their object the introduction of the archangelic Christ into Palestine. The Brotherhood constituted a School of Initiation; and its Initiates prepared the Way for the Christ's coming in a straight and undeviating line of descent down to the two Initiates, Mary and Joseph. Thus, His earthly parentage was assured. Parents of John the Baptist were also Essenian Initiates.

Now the Golden Bridge of Preparation was complete. It spanned the centuries from the beginning of the world to the consummation of the ages: the Advent of the Christ Archangel upon the planet earth.

Bless us, Divine Number, Thou who generatest gods and men: O Holy Tetraktys, Thou that containest the root and source of the eternally flowing creation! For the

Divine Number begins with the profound, pure unity, until it comes to the Holy Four, then it begets the Mother of all, the all-comprising, the all-bounding, the first-born, the never-swerving, the never-tiring Ten, the key-holder of all!

— Pythagorean Prayer

The extraordinary pronouncement of Justin Martyr is a fitting finale to this chapter on the Promise in Greece. Since it emanated from him it must be considered as Christian in every sense of the word, though many present-day adherents to the doctrine of Christianity might regard it as heretical.

Hereclites, Socrates, and Pluto (and Pythagoras belongs to the same company) were also Christians, the only kind of Christians possible before the actual consummation of the Mystery of Golgatha. Theologians of today no longer realize it, but in the first centuries of Christianity the Christian martyrs still knew that the old Greek sages, although they did not use the name of Christ, if asked about Apollo, would have answered out of their Mystery wisdoms that the great Sun spirit who in the future will live as a man on earth, appears to us in Apollo as though ensouled in him in the form of an Archangel.

— Rudolph Steiner

— ***Corinne Heline***