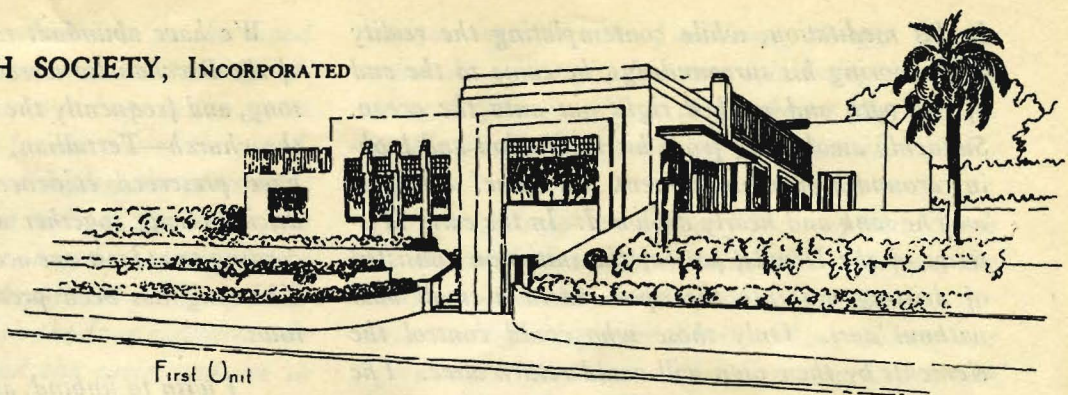




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BIBLE COURSE SERIES

BY MANLY P. HALL

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# THE STUDENTS MONTHLY LETTER

Letter No. 9

## THE SECRET DOCTRINE IN THE BIBLE

Dear Friend:

*There is abundant evidence that the early Christian church fraternized with the pagan systems of its day. It is only in more recent times that ecclesiastics have hurled their anathemas at nonconformists. The Emperor Hadrian writing to his brother-in-law Servianus, says: "Those who worship Serapis are likewise Christians; even those who style themselves the bishops of Christ are devoted to Serapis. The very patriarch himself, when he comes to Egypt, is forced by some to adore Serapis, by others to worship Christ... There is but one God to them all. Him do the Christians, him do the Jews, him do the Gentiles, all alike worship.*

*Severus Alexander, another Roman Emperor, daily paid his devotion to Christ and Abraham, and at the same time spent huge sums of money decorating the temples of Serapis and Isis "with statues, couches, and all things pertaining to their mysteries." From these statements it is obvious that the founders of the Christian faith had a religious tolerance entirely beyond the comprehension of their modern successors.*

### JESUS WALKING ON THE WATER

*The miracle of Jesus walking on the water is to be found in John 6:19-20. His disciples had entered*

*a ship to reach Capernaum. Jesus was not with them. A great wind arose which threatened the ship, and in the midst of the storm they saw Jesus walking towards them on the sea. They were greatly terrified. "But he said unto them, It is I; be not afraid."*

*By the troubled sea we are to understand life with its storms and trials. In the midst of the sea, the little ship of disciples represents humanity. The ship is in danger of foundering and the disciples are afraid. Then in the midst of the sea, walking peacefully upon the waters, appears the form of Jesus, the symbol of Truth that quiets the sea of life. When peace and wisdom are in the heart of man, the sea can no longer be troubled. There are no more storms and man himself, like Peter when he held his faith, can walk likewise upon the waters.*

*There are many accounts in the religions of the world of gods, priests, and heroes who walked upon the waters. In every case the meaning is the same. It is faith quieting the storms of life. It is wisdom walking safely over the illusion. In one of the Eastern myths or legends, it is written that the great Buddhist sage Bodhidharma walked across the China Sea on a leaf. There is also the story of the old Buddhist monk who walked along the shore.*

*In his meditation, while contemplating the reality and ignoring his surroundings, he came to the end of the path and walked right out onto the ocean. Suddenly awakening from his meditation and looking around him in amazement, fear came. Straightway he sank and nearly drowned. In the early Mysteries of the Druids, part of the initiation consisted of drifting out into the open sea in a small boat without oars. Only those who could control the elements by their own will could return alive. The successful neophyte appeared in the midst of the storm standing in his little boat, the waves opened on each side of him, and he rode peacefully to the shore as a sign that his fitness for initiation in the secret rites had been proved.*

*All of these are symbolic stories. The sea represents emotion. Only those who master emotion are capable of illumination. The Master walking on the water represents the higher nature of each man, firm and courageous, quelling the tempest of life. This is one of the noblest and most inspiring of the biblical allegories.*

## THE LAST SUPPER

*The most complete account of the Last Supper and the words attributed to Jesus on this occasion are to be found in John 13 to 17 inclusive. Additional details are to be found in Luke 22. During the Last Supper Christ as a "priest after the order of Melchizedek" performs the eucharistic ceremony of the communion of bread and wine.*

*In the Dionysiac rites of the Greeks, the god himself represented life in its two primary aspects—spiritual and physical. The spiritual was inspirational; the physical, nutritional—these mysteries represented by wine and bread. The Greeks claimed that by the blood of the god was to be understood the light of the spirit, or a participation in spiritual ecstasy; and by the body of the god, physical sustenance. There is a great mystery concealed in this symbolism, the mystery of the god whose blood is life, and whose body is the world. The Christian sacrament of communion seems to have received great inspiration from these Bacchic rites.*

*We have abundant records that the early rituals of the Bacchanalia were accompanied by music and song, and frequently the dance. The early fathers of the church—Tertullian, Cyril, and St. Augustine—have preserved evidence that the Master and his disciples sang together at the Last Supper, and according to at least one account, they danced together. The song has been preserved for us and is as follows:*

*I wish to unbind, and I wish to be unbound.  
 I wish to save, and I wish to be saved.  
 I wish to beget, and I wish to be begotten.  
 I wish to sing; dance ye all with joy.  
 I wish to weep; be ye all struck with grief.  
 I wish to adorn, and I wish to be adorned.  
 I am the lamp for you who see me.  
 I am the gate for you who knock.  
 Ye who see what I do, do not tell what I am doing.  
 I have enacted all in this discourse.  
 And I have not been in any way deceived.*

*Many Bible students are not aware that certain quotations attributed to Jesus have survived that are not to be found in the gospels. This is proved by a statement in Acts 20:35: "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." According to St. Clement, Christ was asked upon one occasion when his kingdom would be established upon the earth, and Christ answered: "It will only come when two and two make one, when the outside resembles the inside, and when there is neither male nor female."*

*St. Ignatius in his epistle to the Smyrneans amplifies the text of Luke 24:39. The King James version reads: "Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." St. Ignatius makes Christ say: "Take hold on me, and touch me, and see that I am not an incorporeal demon."*

*The astronomical implication of the last supper is evident. In the first century of the Christian era, the vernal equinox occurred in the sign of the ram, that is the sun was annually born in that sign. For this reason Christ is called the Lamb of God. His picture with the lamb in his arms, on the walls of*

the Roman catacombs, is referred to as the Good Shepherd in ecclesiastical literature, and was originally symbolized by the Christian bishops as the AGNUS DEI, the Lamb of God slain for the sins of the world. Seated in the midst of his disciples, the Messiah is therefore the sun-god, in the midst of the zodiac, the twelve signs of which have long been attributed to these disciples. For example, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are associated with the four creatures, the lion, the bull, the man, and the eagle, and are so represented on early Christian sarcophagi. The analogy between the disciples and the zodiac was derived from the Latins and Greeks who distributed their twelve principal gods among the twelve zodiacal constellations.

The Passover is the annual passing over of the sun from the southern to the northern hemispheres according to primitive ideas concerning astronomy. The sacrifice of the lamb at this period was practised by the pagan Greeks who regarded the vernal equinox as the annual rebirth of the savior god. The ceremony of Easter is the perpetuation of pagan equinoctial rites.

The place of Judas Iscariot in this mystery drama has never been clearly set forth. The word Iscariot means a man of cities, but this does not clarify the problem to any great degree. Judas betrayed his Lord for thirty pieces of silver, but a clue to the facts is to be discovered by carefully comparing the various accounts of Judas contained in the New Testament books. In Luke 17:12, Judas is called the "son of perdition." In John 13:27, it is written "Satan entered into him." In Matthew 27:5, Judas after betraying Christ "cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself." Acts 1:25 tells us: "Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." Acts 1:18 states that Judas "purchased a field with the reward of iniquity"; it further adds that he died as a result of a fall.

To these somewhat contradictory remarks we learn that the gospel writers were not very sure what did happen to Judas. It appears that Judas is the Egyptian Typhon, Job's Satan, and Scandinavia's Loki. He is the personification of the adversary. He is introduced into the drama as a symbol of the

intrinsic imperfection of all living things. In the zodiac he is Scorpio by some calculations; and by others, Capricorn. He is the backbiter, the destroyer. He is still preserved in the church as the "devil's advocate."

If the gods gathered in any place or time, Satan was also with them. In the Christian mysteries, the disciples were the members of Christ, just as the various zodiacal signs are distributed over the curious figure in the almanac. This figure represents the world or the universe, and to the ancients, the zodiac revealed through its twelve parts the twelve members of the world. Of this twelve-fold body, one part is traitor to the rest.

Böehme calls this traitor the "will of the abyss" or the "relapsed Adam." He also refers to it as "self-will," that is the ego complex in man. This ego complex is the center or nucleus of selfishness, self-purpose, and self-mind. This is the traitor, the slayer of the real. To express it more simply, we each have a personal will rooted in the complex of selfness or "I am." Judas is disappointed and embittered because Jesus was not going to become a physical king over the Jews; that is, that the Divine Purpose was not going to achieve a personal advantage. Therefore, self-will revolts against Divine Will, the personal betrays the universal. This is the life of every man, for thus betrayed the universal is doomed to die upon the cross of matter. It is truth sacrificed to personal advantage. Judas would exploit wisdom. Judas is the exploiter, whereas Christ represents Universal Will and Universal Purpose. In every man there is a struggle between the universal and the personal, therefore, it is said of Judas that Satan entered into him. Satan is the old serpent who tempted primitive man to egoism through the famous apple allegory in the Garden of Eden.

Judas is called the man of the cities because egoism is a symbol of temporal power and a desire for temporal power. First Satan tempts Jesus from the mountain top, promising him the cities of the earth; that is, man is tempted to sacrifice his spiritual advantages for material purposes. Then Satan enters into Judas whose name means cities and causes his betrayal. The thirty pieces of silver represent the material advantages for which Judas betrayed his

Lord. The money is finally used however to buy a potter's field to bury the nameless dead, thus completing and rounding out the allegory, and providing ample inference for the interpretation.

### THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

Matt. 26:36-57 describe the ordeal of Gethsemane. In no part of the New Testament is it more clearly indicated that Jesus did not regard himself as identical with God the Father. The identity of the three persons of the Trinity was determined by a series of church councils which had little regard for the letter of the gospels. The prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane is given in Matt. 26:39: "O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." From these words it is clearly revealed that Jesus did not possess power over the Father, or power with the Father, but rather besought the Father for mercy. Here also Jesus resists his destiny, but, finally, acknowledges the supremacy of the Father's will. Matt. 26:42: "O, my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."

According to the old doctrines of the Gnostics Jesus was over-shadowed by the Messiah or Sotar. When the ministry was finished, the Sotar retired into the higher aeons and left Jesus to suffer and die alone. They give us this as the true interpretation of the words of Jesus upon the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." Matt. 27:46.

Mohammed whose contact with Christianity was through Nestorian monks in the Arabian deserts had definite opinions on the fate of Jesus. "They devised a stratagem against him, but God devised a stratagem against them, and God is the best deviser of stratagems." In another place the Prophet of Islam says: "The malice of his (Jesus) enemies aspersed his reputation, and conspired against his life, but their intention only was guilty—a phantom or criminal was substituted on the cross, and the innocent Jesus was translated into the seventh heaven." Koran 153, v. 53, and 104, v. 156.

The Egyptian Basilides, a disciple of Matthias, says that Peter told him that Cerinthus was cruci-

fied in the place of Christ, that Christ himself did not die, but ascended to the higher aeons.

It is evident that the last days of Jesus are a great mystery. The Manichaeans and other initiated sects of the Near East insist that a sublime secret is concealed within the account of the passion. Indeed, as St. Paul has said, the crucifixion is a stumbling block. Paul could not know that this stumbling block would remain to the twentieth century.

### CHRIST BEFORE PILATE

The earliest reference to Jesus in secular history occurs in Pliny's famous letter to Trajan, and in the ANNALS of Tacitus, both works belonging to the second century A. D. Our present descriptions of Jesus are derived principally from works attributed to Pontius Pilate and Publius Lentulus. Both of these descriptions are regarded as comparatively late forgeries, probably originating between the 11th and 14th centuries. Pontius Pilate appears to have been the procurator of Judea from A. D. 27 to A. D. 37. The Roman officials kept a complete record of the various cases which appeared before them. There is no entry that can be regarded as coinciding with the account given in the gospels. The Roman law in Judea was very exact in the matter of penalties for various crimes and misdemeanors. Crucifixion was reserved for crimes of great physical violence such as highway robbery and murder. The penalties for civil offenses and religious misdemeanors was death by stoning or the sword.

In the Archiepiscopal Palace at Bourges was long preserved the pretended order for the execution of Jesus. It read as follows: "Jesus of Nazareth, of the Jewish tribe of Juda, convicted of imposture and rebellion against the divine authorities of Tiberius Augustus, Emperor of the Romans, having for this sacrilege been condemned to die on the cross by sentence of the judge, Pontius Pilate, on the prosecution of our lord Herod, lieutenant of the Emperor of Judaea shall be taken tomorrow morning, the 23rd day of the Ides of March, to the usual place of punishment, under the escort of a company of the Praetorian Guard. The so-called King of the Jews

shall be taken out by the Strumean Gate. All the public officers and the subjects of the Emperor are directed to lend their aid to the execution of this sentence. "(Signed) CAPEL. Jerusalem, the 23rd day of the Ides of March, year of Rome 783."

According to this document the crucifixion occurred in A. D. 30. If, as Eusebius states, the ministry of Jesus lasted nearly 4 years, the ministry began A. D. 26. All of this is very confusing and leads to the inevitable conclusion that the entire subject has been obscured by misunderstanding and imposture.

There is also great controversy over the character of Pilate. According to Philo and Josephus, Pilate was a man of violent and obstinate disposition who terrorized the countryside and sought above all other things to destroy the laws and privileges of the Jews. He promoted civil strife, his spies were constantly bringing in reports of treason, and he was in every way contrary to the Pilate of the gospels, who is depicted as a gentle soul of compassionate nature who washed his hands of the entire matter.

In metaphysical symbolism, Christ before Pilate signifies the conflict between spiritual and temporal power. It signifies also that the temporal has dominion over the spiritual in the physical world, but that the spiritual rises triumphantly over the material in the superphysical world. Strangely enough, Pilate sees no wrong in the man and returns him to the Jews. That is, Jesus is finally condemned by ecclesiastical law. This is strangely reminiscent of religion as a whole. It is not the materialist but the theologian who destroys his own faith.

## CRUCIFIXION

There is a rare manuscript of the apostle Barnabas which was for some time in the possession of Cranmer in which it is definitely stated that Christ was not crucified. He was carried into the third heaven by the four angels, Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, and Uriel. Judas died in his place.

It is impossible at this late time to determine with certainty how much of the gospel story is to be accepted literally, and how much is to be under-

stood as a mystery "in the Spirit." We must remind all sincere Bible students of the words of Synesius, Bishop of Alexandria: "Therefore, as a bishop of the church, I will continue to disseminate the fables of the church, but in my private capacity I shall remain a philosopher to the end."

It was the honest conviction of the Patristic Fathers that the deeper mysteries of the Christian dispensation were beyond the understanding of the laity. In order, therefore, not to "cast pearls before swine," they devised a cycle of fables which have come to be accepted as literal historical facts. From various causes the same general condition has arisen in most religions. Spiritual matters can not be understood by those not spiritually enlightened. Again, enlightenment can not be bestowed; it must be evolved. To be serviceable, a religion must be comprehensible to the mass of its followers. The result is inevitably a compromise with truth. In serving the uninformed many, theology leaves the enlightened few without adequate spiritual food.

Jacobus de Voragine in his GOLDEN LEGEND compiled the extravagant legends of medieval theology. His monumental work loaded with absurdity and superstition became a textbook for the pious who doubted not one jot or tittle of it. It is exceedingly difficult critically and yet sympathetically to discover the golden thread of truth in the tangled skeins of tradition. There is no virtue in perpetuating the false, nor is there any virtue in discarding entirely that which may contain vital and significant truth. We must search for meaning, but we must not manufacture meaning. We may desire to discern the mystery, but our desire must not become the parent of false interpretation.

The crucifixion of Christ is the real foundation of Christianity. Christ was the first martyr of the church, and by his death bestowed permanence upon the teachings of his disciples. The crucifixion is the blood of atonement. Theologians insist that the blood of Christ spilled upon Golgotha purifies all who believe on him, and by a unique virtue cleanses all men of original sin. This is, indeed, a strange foundation for a faith and is peculiar to Christendom alone of all great religions. Gradually the cross has come to be regarded as the proper symbol of Christ,

and the crucifix a constant reminder of what Christians like to call "the drama of the ages."

Yet frankly and honestly this entire belief and all the consequences that have been built upon it, have been footed on a most insecure foundation. There is no absolute proof the crucifixion did not take place, nor is there any absolute proof that it did take place. The principal and almost sole foundations of the crucifixion account are in the gospels, and the immense literature derived from the gospels. It follows therefore that until the gospels themselves are authenticated and their true authorship determined, no account peculiar to them can be regarded as historically established.

Nor do we desire to be regarded as merely quibbling, ~~making much out of little~~. The truth is there is less actually known historically about the founding of Christianity than any other great historical event in the last three thousand years. That the gospels contain at least mistaken information is now proved beyond doubt, and it is impossible to state with certainty where such errors end.

For two thousand years the New Testament has been taken on faith, and upon the personal convictions of individuals not in a position to prove what they believe. No one will deny the sincerity and devotion of those hundreds of millions who have accepted Christianity. Nor is it of great spiritual significance whether their belief is based upon fact or fable if they have lived well and have been induced into courses of tolerance, honesty, gentleness, and wisdom. All other factors are of secondary importance.

Where history impinges upon the moral life, however, has been in the matter of tolerance. It is the tolerance aspect which makes facts necessary. I think most will agree that the Christian church has not had a distinguished record for tolerance. Intolerance is based upon a small certainty about things unknown. Yet intolerance can be the destroyer of religions and nations, hence the necessity for the statement of doubt and the moderation of theological enthusiasm.

An examination of the crucifixion from a philosophical standpoint inclines the mind towards the belief the account is allegorical rather than literal.

At least the significance is allegorical. The crucifixion myth occurs too frequently in the history of ancient religions. We become convinced that it has some esoteric significance. We are certainly spiritually enriched by such a conclusion. We transform history into living fact when we perceive eternal truths shadowed forth through presumably historical circumstances.

The crucifixion is believed to have taken place on a small hill outside of Jerusalem now called Gordon's Calvary. The rock formations on the side of the hill cause it to resemble a great skull, thus explaining the name of Calvary or Golgotha, both of which refer to a skull. Jerusalem is what is called a walking city, that is, it gradually has changed location over a long period of time. Its present boundaries were not those of two thousand years ago. According to the Roman church, the original site of Calvary is enclosed within the area of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The presumed location of the original cross is marked by a gold ornament set in the floor. A short distance off on each side are two other inlays, one of black and one of white. These mark the places where stood the crosses of the two thieves, the white inlay signifying the repentant thief.

According to the gospel account, Jesus was crucified directly over the burial place of Adam. This is mystically set forth on certain crucifixes by the addition of a small skull and crossbones near the foot of the cross. After Noah had removed the body of Adam from the ark, he buried it on Golgotha. Accounts like this contribute to the realization that we are dealing with spiritual allegories rather than historical facts.

Christ was fastened to the cross by three nails, the feet being crossed. The cabalists explain that the fourth nail of the crucifixion was stolen by a magician. The three remaining nails survive in symbolism to this day as the British mark of the broad arrows. There has been a definite schism in the Christian church over the problem of whether or not there should be three or four nails.

The crucifixion depicts the Messiah, the guiltless one, dying between two thieves who were not nailed to their crosses but were tied thereon by ropes.

When the mother of Constantine claimed to have found the true cross with its nails, the Emperor Constantine used one of them as a bit for his horse. A second nail is believed to have been melted into the crown of Hungary, the famous "iron crown." This is most extraordinary inasmuch as nails were not known in Syria at that time, and if spikes of any kind were used they must have been wooden pegs.

Why is the crucifixion present in more than a dozen ancient religions? Why was Prometheus crucified on Mt. Caucasus with a vulture gnawing at his liver? And Christ on Mt. Calvary with the spear of Longinus thrust into his right side? Prometheus brought the fire of God, wisdom, to men. Christ brought "light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." The mystery is explained when we understand the words attributed to St. Paul: "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

In the mystical theosophy of the Gnostics and other early Christian sects it was taught that mind consisted of two parts by nature called by the Platonists intelligible and intellectual, and by modern philosophers abstract and concrete thought. The Orientals teach that the two parts of the mind are symbolized by the two lobes of the brain. Abstract and concrete mind are the two thieves, Gestas and Demas. Christ as pure knowledge or Truth is, therefore, represented as crucified in equilibrium between the two extremities of thought. This further points up the teaching of Pythagoras that virtue is always in moderation or in a middle distance between extremes. The lower mind does not repent, but the higher mind becoming aware of Truth is promised by the Messiah that it shall be with him in paradise.

The natural function of mind is the estimation of phenomena. The mind looking outwardly through the brain observes and contemplates the mysteries of the physical universe, or of the body. The lower mind is the instrument of habit, appetite, emotion, sensation, and self-preservation. The higher mind accepts to itself philosophy, religion, and the arts, and contemplates the more refined elements of material existence. It is this higher mind which by discipline can be lifted up into a recognition of Divine Truth. Mind can never grasp Reality, but

it can recognize dimly the significance of Reality. Truth can never be reduced to thought, but thought may contemplate Truth from afar, honoring even though understanding is impossible.

If by Christ, then, we represent Truth which is the first-born of Reality, the eternal Messiah, the universal Savior, we have perceived the substance behind the shadow. As long as we are satisfied with a merely literal explanation, pinning our hope of salvation upon the historical circumstance, we have not gone far in the understanding of spiritual mysteries.

Truth manifesting the material universe is hopelessly obscured by the inadequate vehicles of its manifestation. Perfection manifesting through the imperfect appears by very necessity to be imperfect itself. Wisdom is exploited into scheming; thought is misused; the energies of life are dissipated; and the Divine Plan is indeed crucified in man and in nature. The finest part of life is reduced to servitude to the material and man, a son of the Infinite, dedicates himself only to the finite. Yet this truth which is crushed to earth in the life of each person does not utterly die. Like a seed planted in the earth, it remains dead until aspiration brings it to life. The true resurrection is the lifting up of Truth in the individual; the resurrection of the eternal in the temporal; the resurrection of virtue always latent in man. This latent power manifests forth in all its glory when study and experience have released the individual from bondage to appetite and desire.

## THE EMPTY TOMB

In the 20th chapter of John is described the visit of Mary Magdalene to the tomb of Jesus. Joseph of Arimathæa besought Pilate that he might take the body of Jesus and prepare it for burial. It was this same Joseph, according to the Glastonbury legend, who later travelled across Europe bearing with him the wreath of thorns. Reaching England, Joseph of Arimathæa built the Abbey of Glastonbury and planted the wreath of thorns which took root and became the celebrated Glastonbury thorns. He is believed also to have carried with him the

Holy Grail, and in the past years several excavations have been carried on at Glastonbury in the hope that the cup might be rediscovered.

According to the gospel account, Mary Magdalene found the tomb empty and the great stone rolled away. From this occurrence the story of the Holy Sepulchre had its origin. The supposed tomb of Christ now stands in the center of a great rotunda in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The tomb itself is a small cube-like room ornately decorated with the tributes of fifteen centuries. The sarcophagus itself runs along one wall of the crypt resembling a low stone bench. In the middle of the crypt is the stone upon which the angel sat—at least, so the guides tell us.

For centuries the Holy Sepulchre was in the hands of Islam and Christians were forbidden the right of pilgrimage. The result was the crusades in which the knights and nobles of the kingdoms and principalities of Europe went forth against the Saracens to wrest the tomb of the Lord from the hands of the infidel.

The truth of the matter was that Europe was gradually emerging from a feudal state to national existence. Feudal lords and robber barons fought against the nationalization of countries. Therefore, by a cunningly devised stratagem, these lusty warriors were induced to undertake crusades in Palestine. Many of them died at the siege of Acre; sickness and time took the lives of others; and those who did return discovered that during their absence their powers and privileges had been removed and Europe had emerged from feudalism into the beginnings of constitutional governments.

In Freemasonry the Knights Templars or York Rite are still defenders of the Holy Sepulchre. But the literalism of the medieval world has passed. Mysticism has given a new meaning to the old quest. It is now realized that the Holy Sepulchre is not truly in Jerusalem but is the very body of man himself. It is within this body which Plato calls the

"sepulchre of the soul" that the divine man lies buried. It is also from this mortal fabric as from a tomb that the immortal man rises up and releases itself as in the mystery of the resurrection. It is now the duty of each man to roll away the stone, that is, to illuminate himself, to rescue his own higher nature from bondage to animal appetites and desire.

The resurrection myth is common to all great religious systems. It is an essential part of religious idealism and derives its authority from the highest and most sublime initiation rituals of Greece, India and Egypt.

The crusades served a most valuable purpose in addition to disrupting the feudal system. Europe became for the first time aware that civilization extended beyond the boundaries of Christendom.

The returning knights described the glory and honor of the Saracen. They had found Islam not a fire-belching dragon, but a world of culture, literature, art, and science. They had found Saladin not only the Emperor of the East, but a wise and generous foe. Many of the nobles brought back with them wives from among the Saracens. This fact is preserved in the heraldry of Europe by the addition of a lunar crescent to the arms of a noble family. With the returning crusaders, science returned to Europe.

So dangerous did this knowledge become to the preferment of European politics, that the Knights Templars were slaughtered, Jacques de Molay burned at the stake, the lands of the Templars confiscated, and themselves accused of practising heretical rites. But all things work together for good. The search for the Holy Sepulchre resulted in the resurrection of Europe.

Sincerely yours,

*Manly P. Hall*