

Esoteric Bible Studies

BY CORINNE S. DUNKLEE

TEXT

14. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to His disciples after that He was risen from the dead.

15. So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

16. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

17. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.—*St. John, Chapter 21.*

INTERPRETATION

Christ Jesus did not repeat these words three times just for the sake of emphasis or merely for reiteration. This conversation which He had with Peter holds a mystic meaning just as do all the words of the Master. The numbers 3, 7, 9, 10, and 12 are the most important of all numbers for study and meditation if we would find the key to Bible mystery and Bible meaning. Three is the fundamental number upon which almost all religions have been founded.

There are three steps of attainment leading to emancipation, or to that goal where man shall know the truth that makes him free. Mr. S. R. Parchment expresses this same truth so beautifully in his book, "Steps to Self-Mastery": "From the cosmic point of view, the three steps leading up to the cross are the three Hierarchies of heaven which are at present most actively engaged in further-

ing the evolution of the four kingdoms of nature. These are the Lords of Individuality, the Lords of Form, and the Lords of Mind; respectively Libra, Scorpio, and Sagittarius. Masonically considered, they represent youth, manhood, and old age, or Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason; while from the mystical standpoint they symbolize the three steps of student, probationer, and disciple.

"When the student takes the first step, the Master casts a look upon him; when he stands upon the second step at the time of his admission to probationership and takes the solemn obligation to serve humanity by the sacrifice of the lower self to the higher, his aura is blended with that of the Teacher; at the point of discipleship he takes the third step when he treads upon the first rose. At this stage there must be no turning aside; if he stops by the way to pluck a flower, he will find that its fragrance is but a snare (lure), for under its petals is coiled a serpent. From this point he must brave the sharp thorns (on the stem) which winds around the Cross."

Christ Jesus in the quoted conversation with Peter issues a call to the student to enter upon the Path of Attainment through the way of pure living; to the probationer to dedicate himself wholly upon the altar of service; to the disciple to live so purely, serve so worthily, and love with a love so holy that he may come to realize and to demonstrate the inner meaning of the mystic prayer: "At night while our bodies are resting in sleep may we be found *consciously* working in the vineyard of Christ, for as spirits we need no rest."

The improvement of the understanding is for two ends: first, to increase our own knowledge, second, to enable us to impart that knowledge to others.