



THE SECRET DOCTRINE OF THE TAROT

By Paul F. Case

CHAPTER XI

WHAT object was represented by the ancient sign for Yod? Occultists give different answers to this question. Some say the letter was a picture of the forefinger, extended as a sign of command. Others hold that it was a phallic symbol. A third notion is that the character was not intended to represent any object at all, because it was the sign of Spirit, which transcends all forms. Those who believe this tell us also that the other letters of the Hebrew alphabet are all produced by different combinations of Yod. In "The Tarot of the Bohemians," Papus develops this theory with characteristic ingenuity.

"The synthetic study of nature," says he, "had led the ancients to conclude that one law only existed, and ruled all natural productions. This law, the basis of analogy, placed the Unity-principle at the origin of all things, and regarded them as the reflections at various degrees of this Unity-principle. Thus, the Yod, which alone forms all the other letters, and therefore all the words and all the phrases of the alphabet, was justly used as the image and representation of this Unity-principle, of which the profane had no knowledge"

This doctrine is very plausible, and seems to agree with many ideas that are unquestionably connected with Yod by Kabbalistic authorities. The main objection to it is that only in the square Hebrew, which is by no means the original alphabet of Israel, is this letter the small, comma-shaped dot that a fanciful mind might suppose to be the structural unit, so to speak, from which all the other signs were developed. A very brief examination of the com-

parative tables in Taylor's "The Alphabet," or in the article, "Alphabet," in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, will be sufficient to convince the reader of this. It will be evident also that the earlier forms of this letter give no support to the opinions which make it a phallic symbol or a picture of the extended forefinger. It is, in fact, now generally conceded that the pictograph used in the ancient Aramaic and Phoenician alphabets probably represented the object designated by the letter-name, which means "a hand."

With the implicits of the word "hand," therefore, I shall begin my interpretation of the letter. By making this my starting-point I seek to avoid the danger of reading into the symbol meanings which have no true connection with its original significance. I hope to be able to show that this restriction entails no loss of genuine doctrine. My task, then, is to trace the occult meanings of Yod given in the *Sepher Yetzirah*, and other Hebrew theosophical works, to the ideas that all men associate with the human hand.

By way of introduction, let me quote the words of one whose knowledge of life is literally the work of her own and her teachers' hands. In an essay, "The Hand of the World," published some time ago in "The American Magazine," Helen Keller writes:

"All our earthly well-being hangs upon the living hand of the world. Society is founded upon it. Its life-beats throb in our institutions. Every industry, every process, is wrought by hand, or by a superhand—a machine whose mighty arm and cunning fingers the human hand invents and wields. The hand embodies its skill, projects and multiplies itself, in wondrous tools, and with them it spins and weaves, plows and reaps, converts clay into walls, and roofs our habitations with trees of the forest. It compels Titans of steel to heave incredible burdens, and commands the service of nimble lackeys which neither groan nor become exhausted. Communication between mind and mind, between writer and reader, is made possible by marvelous extensions of the might of the hand, by elaborate reduplications of many-mentioned fingers. I have touched one of

those great printing-presses in which a river of paper flows over the types, is cut, folded, and piled with swift precision. Between my thoughts and the words which you read on this page a thousand hands have intervened; a hundred shafts of steel have rocked to and fro, to and fro, in industrious rhythm.

“The hand of the world! Think how it sends forth the waters where it will to form canals between the seas, and binds the same seas with thought incorporate in arms of stone! What is the telegraph cable but the quick hand of the world extended between the nations, now menacing, now clasped in brotherhood? What are our ships and railways but the feet of man made swift and strong by his hands? The hand captures the winds, the sun, and the lightnings, and despatches them upon errands of commerce. Before its irresistible blows mountains are beaten small as dust. Huge derricks—prehensile power magnified in digits of steel—rear factories and palaces, lay stone upon stone in our stately monuments, and raise cathedral spires.”

The hand, then, is the supporter of life, the instrument of progress, and the executive that realizes our aims. What could be more natural than to choose it as a symbol for the Supreme Spirit? In all parts of the world, in every age, God has been thought of as the Great Hand that designs, builds, preserves, and destroys the visible universe. The Persians carved hands at the ends of the rays proceeding from the solar orb that was their chief symbol of the Deity; the Mexican god of earthquakes was Huemac, “strong-hand;” the Zapotecs worshipped before the image of a hand carved from precious stone; and the Mayas typified their peaceful teacher-god, Quetzalcoatl, as a working hand. The artists of the early Christian centuries depicted God the Father as a hand emerging from a cloud; and to this day, in Hindu temples, the transforming power of Spirit, personified as Shiva, is represented by the same emblem.

Kabbalists, therefore, adopt the instinctive symbolism of all mankind when they make Yod, the hand, the sign of Divine Royalty, and of the principle and origin of all things.

In this connection, let me quote a passage from the "Lesser Holy Assembly," which, in a few short sentences, combines ideas familiar to Christian, Persian, and Hindu thinkers. "This beginning, which is called Father," we read in the eighth chapter, "is comprehended in Yod, which depends from the Holy Influence. Yod, therefore, is the most concealed of all the letters. For Yod is the beginning and end of all things." Christian thought is distinguished for its development of the idea of God as Father of men, and this was the aspect of God that Christian artists represented by a hand; the hands at the ends of the sun-rays in Persian sculptures indicated the idea that all manifestations of working power in this world are forms of the influx of the universal energy, or "Holy Influence," specialized for this planet in the light and heat of the sun; and the hand of Shiva, creator and destroyer, is, for Hindus, the sign of that which Christians call the "Alpha and Omega," the beginning and end of all things.

In the Kabbalah, as in other versions of the Ancient Wisdom, that beginningless beginning is conceived to be a bottomless, eternal Will. Hence the Sepher Yetzirah assigns to Yod the path called "Intelligence of Will." What makes man, as the Bible says, "a little lower than God," is his ability to see the manner in which the Universal Will expresses itself through nature, his power to reason out new lines of future action by inference from his observation of existing conditions, and, more than anything else, his possession, in the hand, of a tool by means of which he can apply his knowledge. His hands enable man to share in the divine government of the universe. This participation in the Great Work is what Jesus called "entering the kingdom of God." To enter the kingdom, he said, we must do the will of the Father, and this implies that God reveals His purposes to those who have learned how to watch what goes on around them. Jesus knew that man can find out what God wants in the world. The central thought in his doctrine is that the works of our hands ought to be devoted to the realization of our share of the great enterprise ini-

tiated by the Grand Architect. The whole plan of that stupendous undertaking is beyond our comprehension, but we shall be able to find out whatever we need to know for the successful accomplishment of our personal share in each day's work.

As we learned from our study of the Hierophant, God is our Teacher. He speaks to us in that Inner Voice which instructs those who listen to it. What we learn is the free gift of the Spirit. Thus the Kabbalah says that Intelligence of Will has its origin in Chesed, the Sephirah of Mercy. The Divine Benevolence, or self-givingness, is nowhere more clearly shown than in this direct communication of the Father's wisdom and knowledge to His children.

The more we listen, the more we learn, and throughout the course of our instruction one point is emphasized: the aim of creation is the realization of the symmetry, perfection, and nice adaptability of form to use which constitutes true Beauty. Sacred books repeat this again and again. It is a doctrine which accords with all that is highest and holiest in human thought. In it we find the best guide to right action.

Is what I am doing something that will make the world more beautiful? If you can answer that question in the affirmative, you may be sure that you are doing the right thing. Your standard of beauty must be high. It must look for the realization of perfection. It must foresee the time when here on earth we shall have a society in which every member is perfectly adjusted to every other member, and in which the conditions of environment will nowhere oppose themselves as obstacles to our wills. Such a society would be one in which every person was fully conscious of his true place in life, was fully aware that his personality was a center for the direct manifestation of the limitless power and wisdom of Spirit. It would be a society of Masters, in whose environment nothing could be any hindrance to their eternal progress.

That the books of the Ancient Wisdom teach the possibility of making this planet the *abode* of such a race of per-

fect human beings is well understood by advanced occultists. To many, at first, this ideal may seem to be a very distant goal; but the existence of men and women who have already reached the stage of development required of the persons who would form such a social order is declared without reservation by those who know, and there are numbers of persons now living who have first-hand knowledge that this declaration is true. In various parts of the world today are living persons who have been liberated from all bondage, and they are the leaven that shall work in the meal of humanity until the whole race has been transformed into their likeness.

These liberated souls have attained to union with the Supreme Spirit. No description of their state is possible in ordinary language, because it transcends the experience of the senses, and our common speech is based upon sensation. The Hindus describe the condition of the liberated soul as "Bliss-Absolute," and medieval Christian mystics wrote of it in terms that show why Kabbalists make Yod the sign of "coition." Here the physical fact veils a spiritual mystery. It represents the union of the personal soul, which is personified in religious allegories as the Woman, with her Lord, who is the Christ, or Supreme Purusha. In that ecstatic blending of the personal with the universal we receive our highest and holiest intimations of the Divine Will.

In the occult sciences, moreover, the term "coition," and its synonym, "copulation," have a special technical significance apart from their mystical meaning. In astrology "coition" and "conjunction" are identical; in alchemy "copulation" designates the union of the philosophical male and female, the fixed and the volatile, after their separation and purification. This union is what is sometimes called the "Chymical Marriage." It joins the volatile and the fixed in the sublimated First Matter. The latter, in spiritual alchemy, is the secret crystal, or transparent jewel of conscious self-identification with the Supreme Purusha

At that marriage, symbolized in the New Testament by

the story of the wedding at Cana, the water of the purified subjective mind is changed into the wine of complete realization. That which is merely the power to dissolve, reflect, and hold in suspension has added to it somewhat that is derived from a higher nature. It is water still, but it has been infused with the masculine principle which Greek mythology personifies as Dionysos, the deity of the vine. There is a wealth of suggestion in this allegory, and every reader of these pages will find it profitable to meditate upon it. I cannot here develop it further, because other aspects of the meaning of Yod have, at this time, a greater claim upon our attention.

In the zodiac, this letter corresponds to Virgo. As this sign is the nocturnal house of Mercury, it may be said to represent the negative aspect of the principle symbolized in the major trumps by the Magician, as contrasted with the positive aspect, which the Tarot illustrates by the Lovers, who correspond to Gemini, the diurnal throne of the same planet. In many respects the Hermit is the exact opposite of the youth who is the central figure of the sixth card; but we shall discover presently that both the sage and the young man are symbols of the same principle that is represented by the Magician.

That principle, it will be remembered, is the specialization of the Supreme Creative Energy represented by the Fool. Now, the Fool stands for Aleph, which has a numerical value of 1, and since the numerical value of Yod is 10, which may be reduced to 1, it is evident that Yod and Aleph are alike in essence. Again, we know that the number 10 is the extension of 4, and that it is the reduction of the extension of 7. Hence we may also seek for sidelights upon the meaning of Yod in the secret doctrines implied by Daleth (4) and Zain (7). In other words, the picture of the Hermit ought to be a development of ideas implied by the Fool, the Empress, and the Lovers.

The numbers printed on the cards just named are 0, III, and VI. Their sum, IX, is the number of the card assigned to Yod. Again, we should remember that the ex-

tension of Eight is Thirty-six, or Three plus Six. In Tarot numerals, it denotes the combination of the generative, self-extensive power of III, or the Empress, with the reciprocal activity of the spiritual and material natures, presented to us in the symbolism of VI, or the Lovers. As VIII is the number of Strength, and its extension is reducible to IX, we see that the Hermit should represent a development of the ideas which we considered in the preceding chapter. He should show us, that is, the immediate consequence of the mastery of the fire of nature by the purified subjective mind. Finally, the sum of all these numbers of the major trumps that are connected with the Hermit (0, III, VI, and VIII) is 17, and as this reduces to 8, it brings us back at once to the proposition just stated, that the Hermit is the direct consequence of what is typified by Strength.

The Hermit is what the Hindus call an "Apta." He is an initiate and a prophet. His gift of prophecy is the logical result of his knowledge of natural laws. It is by no means miraculous. If a man perceives a great truth, and knows how, by concentration and meditation, to make his perception the starting-point for a subjective process of deductive reasoning, he cannot help prophesying. For the subjective power of deduction is perfect, and it works out every premise to the smallest details of logical application. Give a man accurate knowledge of the existing conditions in the life of a person or a nation, and if that man is an initiate, he will be able to foretell the inevitable outcome of persistence in any given course of personal or national conduct.

From the most ancient times this gift of prophecy has been identified in the occultism of numbers with Nine, because Nine, as the final term of the integral series, represents that completeness of spiritual development required of the true prophet. For although prophecy is a gift of the Spirit, the natural talent for prediction requires a long course of special training before it can be exercised in its full perfection. The schools of the prophets mentioned in the Bible were devoted to giving such training to young men who had the natural gift of rapid subconscious deduc-

tion, and the traditions and methods of those ancient associations of initiates have been kept alive to this day by a body of illuminated men and women who are best known to Theosophists, perhaps, as the Great White Lodge.

In his "Mystic Thesaurus," Whitehead points out that 9 is the ultimate power of one place, 99 the ultimate power of two places, 999 of three places, and so on. Hence, says he, "The Infinite Cosmos may be represented by a series of nines of infinite places. The Number of the Infinite is therefore 999,999,999." The Infinite, in one sense, may be thought of as that which eternally reproduces itself, and this continual self-reproduction is one of the most striking properties of the number Nine. Multiply any number by Nine, and the result will be a number that gives Nine as the sum of the digits composing it, when that sum is reduced to its lowest terms. The extension of Nine, moreover, is 45, which reduces to Nine. Each of these peculiarities of the number is a mathematical symbol of the truth that whenever the Perfect enters into manifestation it must be supposed to complete its work, and manifest itself perfectly. The undertakings of Omnipotence cannot fail, and the complete expression of the Supreme Spirit must be that Spirit itself.

Some of the properties of Nine are remarkable for their close resemblance to those of Zero. Multiply any number by Zero, and the result is always Zero. We have just seen that the same thing happens when a number is multiplied by Nine. Again, the reduction of any composite number, say, 2304057026, is the same if we substitute nines for zeroes. The sum of the digits in this example is 29. If we put nines in place of zeroes, the total becomes 56. In their final reduction both 29 and 56 are represented by the number 2. Again, divide by Nine any number composed of digits whose sum is not reducible to Nine, and the remainder will always be a digit that expresses the reduction of the original dividend. For example, 56 divided by 9 leaves a remainder of 2, which is the ultimate reduction of 56. Thus to divide by Nine any number which is not a multiple of Nine is

analogous to dividing the same number by Zero. What is left is always the essence of the original number. That these analogies were known to the inventors of the Tarot will be evident to anybody who will compare Fool with the Hermit.

In his "Kabbalah of Numbers" Sepharial says that Nine signifies regeneration, new birth, spirituality, sense-extension, telaesthesia, clairvoyance, clairaudiance, prediction. He also calls it a number of obscurity, exile, and mystery. These meanings, it is clear, have direct reference to the state of the liberated personality after it has passed the great initiation.

They correspond exactly to the implicits of the titles of the ninth key, which is sometimes called "The Sage," sometimes "The Capuchin," but most often "The Hermit," which is the oldest and best designation. The word "hermit" has an interesting history. It is derived from the Greek for "a desert," which, in turn, comes from a Greek adjective meaning "desolate, lonely, solitary," akin to another Greek root meaning "secretly," softly, gently, quietly. Philologists trace these Greek words to a Sanskrit original which means "to stop, rest, be content."

The direct correspondence to the occult significance of Nine is evident. To stop, or rest, indicates the completion of a task. To be content is to know the bliss of realization. Nor should we overlook the side-light of gentleness and repose suggested by the Greek derivation. That for which the Hermit stands is calm, effortless, and free from all trace of violence. Before all else it implies peace.

The Hermit is a yogi. He has gone into the desert, and there, like Moses, Jesus, Paul and other initiates, he has heard the Voice of the One Teacher. The chains of illusion bind him no longer. He is free from desire. Above all else, he knows the Divine Will. He does not seek, for he has found the treasure of treasures, the pearl of great price. He is beyond the necessity for action; and none of the aims and ambitions that drive the ordinary man to action have any influence over him. He stands for more than the mere

cessation of endeavor. He represents complete realization. He knows to the full his identity with the Supreme Spirit. He has attained Nirvana, has entered the kingdom of heaven.

A hermit voluntarily separates himself from the world. His pursuits are not those of this life. To the average man his pleasures would bring no happiness. The multitude scoff at his opinions. Men avoid him, for in his presence they feel ill at ease. Thus he is lonely, often friendless, and without fixed abode. Yet he is contented and happy, while other men are miserable.

In a higher sense, the Hermit is "He who dwells alone, apart from all others. He is the first, and He is also the last, for besides Him there is none other." He is the perfect Intelligence of Will, the Pure Consciousness of the Supreme Spirit, knowing as a whole, and in every detail, exactly what it purposes to accomplish in the Great Work. The illumination of a sage is merely a personal expression of the universal self-knowledge of the I AM. A hermit who finds God finds that he is one with the Father. He realizes, better than I can ever hope to put it into words, that his illumination is not something that he has won, as a prize, or a reward for his personal efforts. He sees that it is the free expression of the boundless grace of Spirit. For this is the very heart of illumination: to know that there is but one Thinker of all thoughts, one Actor of all activities. That One is alone, unaccompanied, unattended, unique. He is the Supreme Purusha. His solitude is that of superiority. He stands, without a second, upon the heights.

Again, as implying isolation, the title of this card reminds us that isolation, **Kaivalya**, is a Sanskrit term having a special technical sense of the yoga philosophy. Vivekananda writes:

"Isolation, that is the goal; when it is attained, the soul will find that it was alone all the time, and it required no one to make it happy. As long as we require someone else to make us happy we are slaves. When the Purusha finds that It is free, and does not require anything to complete

itself, that this nature is quite unnecessary, then freedom is attained. Then comes this Kaivalya. When the soul realizes that it depends on nothing in the universe, from gods to the lowest atom, that is called Kaivalya (isolation) and perfection. It is attained when this mixture of purity and impurity called mind has been made as pure as the Purusha itself; then the Sattva, the mind, reflects only the unqualified essence of purity, which is the Purusha." (Raja Yoga, p. 206.)

The Tarot picture that corresponds to these ideas needs little explanation. Every detail of the symbolism confirms and rounds out the impressions we have already received from our study of the letter, the number, and the title.

The time is night. On a snow-capped mountain stands a bearded old man, wrapped in a long cloak, with the cowl drawn over his head. In his right hand he holds aloft a lantern, wherein the light is in the form of a six-pointed star. This light he shelters from the wind with a fold of his garment. In his left hand he carries a staff, curiously shaped, with a knob at the top which resembles a serpent's head. The sage gazes intently downward, as if watching the path by which he has climbed, and he seems to be lighting the way for other travelers.

In almost every particular, this card is the antithesis of the one that bears the Zero sign. The Fool, clad in bright raiment, stands on a height, it is true; but from that height he sees another beyond, and the rising sun behind him implies the beginning of a process of manifestation. The Sage, in a plain robe of gray, has reached the height toward which the Fool was looking, and in the darkness that suggests the end of labor, he looks down in retrospection.

No contrast could be more complete, but the Fool and the Hermit, nevertheless, represents two aspects of a single reality, even as Zero and Nine are symbols having practically the same mathematical properties. For if we may conceive Spirit as the beginning of all things, as the eternal youth playing all the parts in the drama of manifestation (for sport, as Manu tells us), so may we also think of It as

the end of all, as the Ancient of Days who, as He who is older than all, is the First Experiencer, and is, in consequence, the Light-bearer for all creatures.

The lantern, sheltered from the wind, is a familiar symbol for the perfect concentration of the mind in yoga. Its light, a six-pointed star, has a deep meaning for students of Oriental philosophy as well as for Kabbalists. As I understand it, the particular significance of the symbol as used in this picture is that the light of true illumination results from the perfect balance and blending of the activities of the objective and subjective minds. It is, in brief, the logical outcome of the subjective process of deduction, starting from a reasonable premise formulated as the result of objective experience and inference.

As drawn in my revised version, the staff of the Hermit combines ideas suggested by the Tarots of Court de Gebelin and Oswald Wirth. Like the older of these two, it has two curves, and the handle is shaped like a serpent's head; and it follows Wirth's version in being a jointed rod, having seven points, including the tip and the handle. It symbolizes the spinal cord, the seven centers, or chakras, and the serpent-force. The Hermit holds it in his left hand, because he who has reached the heights has no longer any need of actively employing the force it represents.

This key, then, may be interpreted (among other things) as a symbol for success in yoga. It signifies liberation from the bondage of sense-life. It has been written: "One so freed from the bondage of the senses transcends all material relations, and becoming all supreme light, regains his own Self. It is beyond mortality, beyond fear. It is Truth. Truth is only another name for the Absolute."

They who enjoy this experience do not raise themselves, although prior to it they seem to themselves to be climbing the steep path of hard and tedious practice. In reality, as Paul said, they are "caught up." Through the illumination of highly developed men the Universal Mind knows itself. For One Life is manifest in all that lives, and One Mind enters into all experiences.

To be continued.