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**Special Points Of Interest:**

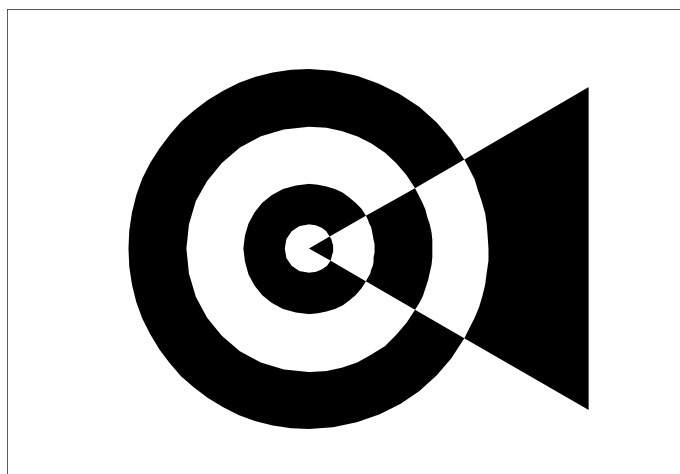
- Wisdom whose origin is outside time flows into temporality first as the Primordial Tradition.
- In the West, Perennial Wisdom has a history which includes the Greco-Roman world and its child, Christianity.
- A person's being is an instrument of knowing.
- Wisdom distilled and focused become metaphysics, the science of the sacred.
- Christianity is one channel through which Perennial Wisdom flows. Its sapiential teachings are a revelation of the future of humanity.

**PERENNIAL WISDOM  
THE PRIMORDIAL TRADITION**

We are used to thinking of wisdom as a form of ancient knowledge, but we may be less aware that wisdom is not only ancient but eternal and ever new. Its origins, outside of space and time, gave birth to a stream (or treasury) of wisdom that flows to us from the past, to the present, and into the future, while remaining “ever present” no matter the age in which we live. This is the underlying basis of the term *sophia perennis*, or Perennial Wisdom.

Teaching concerning Perennial Wisdom recognizes that there is a divine Reality that is the origin and source of the world of physical reality, and all life and consciousness. It sees that something identical (or similar) to this Reality is also found in the depths of the human soul. It places this Reality as the final end (or *teleos*) of all physical reality including human beings. Our quest is to gain knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground, and complete the great journey of all humanity and ultimately every human being.

This “original awareness” lies at the heart of the tradi-



*Perennial Wisdom exists outside space-time and initiates its flow through time and human history.*

tional lore of all primitive societies in every region of the world. In its fully developed form it is given highest expression in the great sacred traditions of the world's religions where it manifests through symbols and concepts unique to each faith and culture. As a “version” of the *sophia perennis* each faith, whether it formally knows it or not (and usually it does) has it as the “Common Factor” underlying its message to humanity.

The inexhaustible themes of perennial wisdom have been explicated over and over again through the centuries, finding new ways to reach

and guide humanity to its own highest destiny.

The Primordial Tradition, then, is active, and in the Semitic world is understood to be a living entity—what the Hebrew book of Proverbs knows as the person of the *Sophia* (Greek for Holy Wisdom, or the Hebrew, *hokhmah*) who consorts with the divine Reality to bring human beings into existence (Proverbs 7 and 8).

She is said to “dance” over the creation, joyfully creating and instructing humanity in the “way of Wisdom,” her ancient domain—never leaving our side until we hear and respond to answer her call.

# MEASURING THE CURRENTS OF PERENNIAL WISDOM

*During the past few decades for many attracted to the call of tradition, the meaning of tradition has become related more than anything else to that perennial wisdom which lies at the heart of every religion and which is none other than the Sophia whose possession the sapiential perspective in the West as well as the Orient has considered as the crowning achievement of human life. This eternal wisdom from which the idea of tradition cannot be divorced and which constitutes one of the main components of the concept of tradition is none other than the *sophia perennis* of the Western tradition, which the Hindus call the *sanatana dharma* and the Muslims *al-hikmat al-khalidah*...*

—Seyyed Hossein Nasr  
*Knowledge and the Sacred*

## The Flow into Time

While wisdom itself is expressed within temporality, it has flowed into time from its own eternal Origin or Source. When human beings first began to know Wisdom as a power or force is unknown, but that they did is certain.

Even the earliest art forms from the most primitive societies give evidence of an awareness of Spirit and its influence upon the human soul. It is clear that human beings have been led by Wisdom throughout the millennia of history.

## The Primordial Tradition

In some deep sense, then, the Primordial Tradition is the origin of human existence — Spirit driving human and material existence toward its ultimate goal. Later messages from heaven would arrive in the societies of earth, but first there was the impetus to manifest the divine Possibilities on the human plane through symbol and myth.

The Primordial Tradition, marks the beginning of the transmission of wisdom expressed later through the great sacred Traditions—those particular adaptations of wisdom to unique communities of human beings. First, however, it was preserved in ancient symbolic

form where for thousands of years it remained unadulterated by the tides of time and changes in custom and culture, serving as mnemonic devices that helped humanity to awaken and remember.

## Roots of the Western Tradition

The symbol systems established in the school of Pythagoras and in the spiritualities of the Orphic and



*We float like vessels on the great tides of Wisdom*

Dionysian mysteries, as well as the early writings and aphorisms of the pre-Socratic philosophers, give rise eventually to the sapiential doctrines and metaphysical traditions of the later Platonic world.

That world, which was to affect Christianity so deeply, was associated with Empedocles, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus and Proclus. These Greco-Alexandrian sages providentially provided doctrinal language for many of the sapiential schools of the later western traditions of

Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

## Early and Later Christianity

The Wisdom Tradition of Jesus was born and thrived within this milieu. His teaching, perhaps derived in part from an expanded awareness of the wider, Primordial Tradition within Hellenistic Judaism, gave rise to multiple movements in the years following his life. The sapiential dimensions of Christianity was fluid at first. Later it became codified in doctrinal formulations through the Patristic writings and those of Denys the Areopagite. In the Latin West, however, they were eclipsed by an over-emphasis on doctrinal purity and ecclesial conformity.

The flow of Perennial Wisdom expressed through Jesus bifurcated into *apophatic* and *cataphatic* streams. Early formulations held that the Mystery can never be entirely mapped or fully named (*apophatic*). Later formulations, however, attempted dogmatic assertions for the faith. Despite the ascendancy of *cataphatic* theology which sharply defined and delimited faith, the *apophatic* stream continues to flow into the present day expressing its deep mysteries through the mystics of Perennial Wisdom.

## PRAXIS: KNOWLEDGE AND BEING

*Knowledge is a function of being. When there is a change in the being of the knower, there is a corresponding change in the nature and amount of knowing.*  
—Aldous Huxley

This quote expresses a profound truth—that one’s being is the instrument of knowing, and if there is a change of being there will be a subsequent change in knowing. Thus knowledge grows and changes and has its own effect upon being—creating a circle (or cycle) of transformation

The primary illustration of this fact is found in develop-

mental psychology. We have come to realize that it is growth in the very structure of a developing child that will determine whether or not that child can know (and use) certain concepts. Whereas at one stage a particular mathematical concept will be totally inscrutable no matter how skillfully it is presented to the child, at subsequent stages of human maturation, that concept will be easily learned.

Supposing, then, that spiritual knowledge is the same. We often imagine that every Christian, for exam-

ple, can learn a particular truth no matter who they are. However, it is evident in both the teachings of Jesus and in the writings of St. Paul, that neither of them believed this was so. One had to become something in order to know certain things. One had to mature into adulthood in order to “eat the meat of divine Truth”—the Word or *Logos* of God. And yet it is that very truth in simpler, earlier forms which causes a person to grow and mature. Spiritual practice, therefore, demands that we pay special attention to our “nutritional” intake of truth as well as the development of our being.

*(Perennial Wisdom) is primarily concerned with the one, divine Reality substantial to the manifold world of things and lives and minds. But the nature of this one Reality is such that it cannot be directly and immediately apprehended except by those who have chosen to fulfil certain conditions, making themselves loving, pure in heart, and poor in spirit. Why should this be so? We do not know. It is just one of those facts which we have to accept...however implausible and unlikely they may seem.*

—Aldous Huxley  
**Perennial Philosophy**

## UNLOCKING THE CODE

*The whole meaning, importance and value of life are determined by the mystery behind it, by an infinity which cannot be rationalized but can only be expressed in myths and symbols.*

—Nicolas Berdyaeff

Perennial Wisdom has been transmitted to humanity by symbol and myth within the Primordial Tradition. This is the chief early means of affecting the transformation of humanity—the goal of Wisdom in its “play” with humanity.

When wisdom, encoded in symbol and myth, parable and story, touches the human heart it triggers change, unlocking the code implanted within. The ultimate effect of en-

coded Wisdom is to awaken the heart and move it towards its ultimate destiny, transformation through the alchemical processes of time and the



*Symbols and myths are codes used to unlock the mystery of human destiny*

world. It is, as if, our ultimate destiny lies buried in the depths of the field of the human heart (as Jesus will say in his parables), where like an “owner’s manual” this template is permanently stored. Hidden and inaccessible, until activated, it awaits Wisdom’s touch. Symbol, story, par-

able and myth are bell-like instruments that when struck will awaken this code, this implanted memory. Each “tells the primordial truth” in its own way, opening the door to the treasure inside, allowing the human person to unfold from within.

Symbols and myths from the Primordial Tradition, transmitted across time are forms of the divine energy which serve as activators. They come to life in new and unforeseen ways within the human person. This symbolic play is partially at least the purpose and destiny of our earthly existence. We are here to crack the code. As Bergson has said, “The universe is a machine for making gods.”



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THOSE IN SPIRITUAL  
DIRECTION, AND  
THOSE GIVING  
GUIDANCE AS  
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## CHRISTIANITY AS PERENNIAL WISDOM

The Greek Christian writer, under the pseudonym, Dionysius the Areopagite said,

*"God is light....The Universe, born of an irradiance, was a downward-spiraling burst of luminosity, and the light emanating from the Primal Being established every created being in its immutable place."*

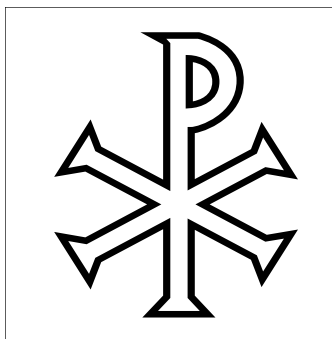
Beginning in the homeland of the Semitic world, the light of Christianity burst upon the Greco-Roman world where it reinterpreted the stream of *sophia perennis*. *Sophia* and *Logos* were united in a powerful new synthesis that brought together the two separate cultures and communities, the Greco-Roman and the Semitic worlds, creating a new and potent symbolism and pointing the way toward the full realization of ultimate human destiny.

Humanity is made for so much more than simple survival on this planet or the ponderous replication of its own species as an end in itself. In the revelation of *Logos-Sophia* made to humanity through the Christ, the early tradition said that "God became human in order that humans might become God (or divine)."

This is a bold and almost unimaginable proclamation and Christianity puts it at the heart of the faith. The doctrine of *theosis* (divinization or deification) is, therefore, a high wisdom that takes the

ultimate destiny of humanity with utter seriousness. In the perennial wisdom of the Christian Tradition what does this doctrine mean?

Here perhaps is the uniqueness of Christianity (as all Traditions in their own way express a uniqueness true to their own perspective and gift). The Christian faith sees that humans, at their essence, are beings in which the divine and the human must come together and reside in mutuality and balance. Divinization (*theosis*)



is the realization of that divine-human balance in which the fullness of what it means to be human joins and unifies with the fullness of divinity. This union is the goal toward which the transitional creature that we now are is moving, realized and made available on earth through the incarnation of *Logos-Sophia*.

The Christian revelation not only makes it clear what this union will be and how it will unfold in stages, but it also provides a **way** forward through spiritual practice by means of which such a union and transformation can occur.

The fullness of this realization, however, is not that the divine-human union resides alone, as an end in itself, but that in such union, oneness with the Source of All Things is ultimately possible. Humanity disclosed in its fullness is the worthy consort of Divine Reality itself. Lover and Beloved unite in some new way in which the fruitful product is not only the transformation of humanity, but of the cosmos itself.

This "dance with divinity" is eternal—timeless and unending. It involves an intensity of relationship and intimacy that can only be expressed through such teaching as the doctrine of *perichoreisis* (the ecstatic love and dance of all life within the Trinity).

Historically Jesus will mark the "turn" in which humanity as a race begins its return and ascent to its Origin and destiny. Nothing less than this will suffice the divine design, all of which had been mythologically prefigured in the Primordial Tradition where story and mythos revealed not only the yearning in the human heart for such an outcome, but also the divine design imprinted within the psyche and spirit of humanity. These teachings became codified in the Patristic period through the writings of the Orthodox fathers, and also in the corpus of the Dionysian texts.