

*The labours of Hercules are  
degrees of Initiation*



From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (COMMENTARY ON THE PISTIS-SOPHIA – 1) XIII pp. 7-8.

[PS 1] It came to pass when Jesus had risen from the dead and passed eleven years (1) speaking with his Disciples, and teaching them only up to the Regions (2) of the First Precepts (3) and of the First Mystery, the Mystery within the Veil, within the First Precept, to wit, the Four-and-Twentieth Mystery, and below these (Precepts) which are in *the Second Space* of the *First Mystery*, which is before all Mysteries, the *Father in the likeness of a Dove* (4), that Jesus said to his Disciples: “I am come from that First Mystery, *which also is the Last* (5), the Four-and-Twentieth Mystery.” Now the Disciples knew not this Mystery, nor did they understand it, because (as they supposed) there was not anything within that Mystery . . .

(1) The number eleven gives the key to the situation. The eleventh trial or degree of initiation has been safely passed through and the twelfth and last which, if the candidate was successful would crown the whole *work*, was now being entered upon. Hercules was to enter upon his twelfth labour, and the sun of the twelfth sign of the Zodiac. Even the popular adage “at the eleventh hour,” is an echo of this mystery. In the second volume of the *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*,<sup>1</sup> Éliphas Lévi gives the *Nychthēmeron* of Apollonius of Tyana. *Nychthēmeron* means the space of a day and a night or twenty-four hours. Each grade of initiation had two degrees, in all twenty-four. This explains “the First Mystery, which is the Four-and-Twentieth” of the text. Readers of the Abbé Constant’s work, who are ignorant of Greek, should be warned that the French below the Greek is not even the vaguest possible paraphrase, but simply Lévi’s idea about the text. He is, however, right in saying that “these twelve symbolical hours, which may be compared with the signs of the Zodiac and the labours of Hercules, represent the cycle of degrees of Initiation.”<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> pp. 386 *et seq.* [English translation by A.E. Waite as: *Transcendental Magic*, N.Y.C., Samuel Weiser, 1972]

<sup>2</sup> See *The Secret Doctrine*, I p. 450.