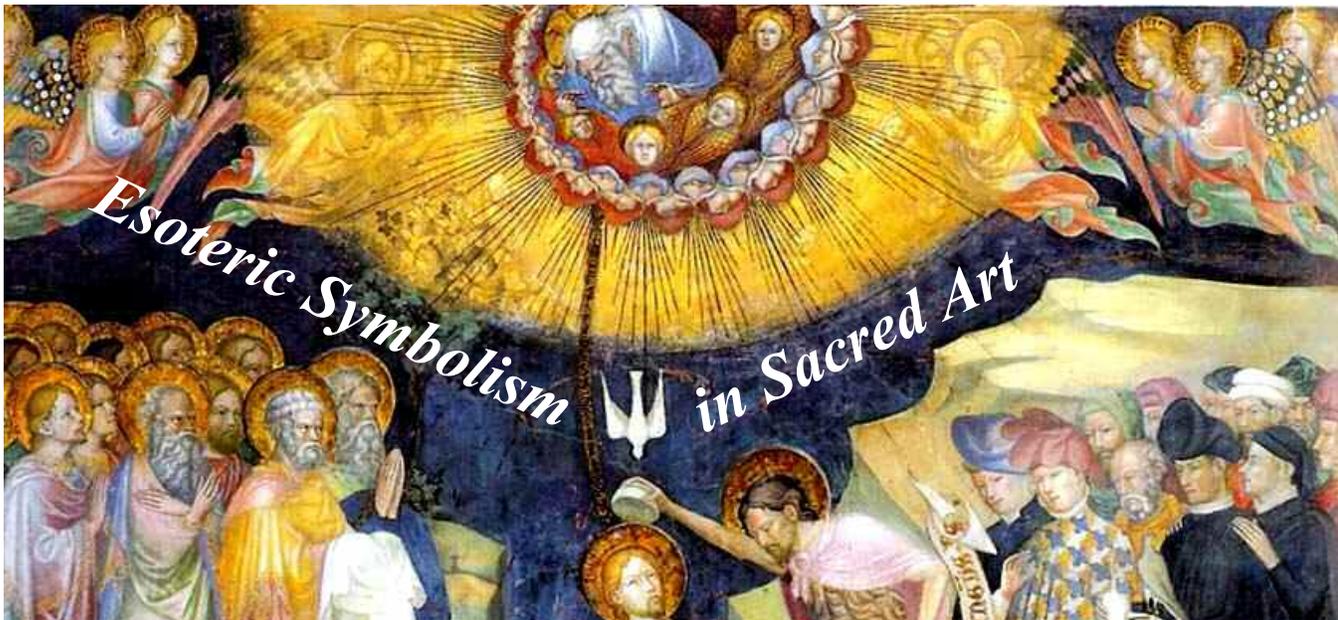


RELIGION AND ART



Fresco, detail, Lorenzo and Jacopo Salimbeni, c. 1420, Oratory of SanGiovanni Battista

Father God looks upon the baptism of His Son from a golden glory of petal-faced Spirits and ranks of celestial Beings.

WHEN WE EXAMINE the sacred art of all times and peoples we find much symbology; yet seers know that this seemingly arbitrary symbolism has a real spiritual meaning—even, it may be said, a real existence, in the higher planes of Nature.

It is taught in esotericism that the aureoles, halos, nimbuses, wings, wands, flames, and draperies shown in sacred art are not merely symbolic of spiritual qualities as Church writers believe, but represent an objective spiritual reality. They depict living thought forms.

Modern as well as ancient mystics and occultists see much the same phenomena in the spiritual world. Clara Clemens Gabrilowitz, Mark Twain's daughter, has written that she held mental conversations with

the Angels Gabriel and Michael; and she comments that she saw small fluttering wings of light near the head of the Angel Gabriel, rainbow colored, bright and luminous.



Detail from *The Assumption of the Virgin*, oil on canvas, Perugino

The six wings on this cherub symbolize emanations of spiritual force. In the desire world, only the head remains of the previous life's body.

A century ago Dr. Babbitt, and others who were investigating body magnetism, developed a degree of clairvoyant vision, and with this vision, and also by means of experiments in the laboratory, were aware of lines of force in and about the body, attended by changing spectra of colors. Some of these colorful magnetic formations belong almost wholly to the physical etheric organism; others pertain almost wholly to the mental and emotional aura.

These are not, therefore, mere artistic conventions, or an

intellectual code. Christian occultists recognize among the various halos painted and described by mystics one which is termed the “Golden Wedding Garment,” [in this case not the soul body or *soma psuchicon*]*—it belongs to the human Spirit and goes with it from life to life, changing from glory to glory with each succeeding reincarnation. Among Christian artists it is specifically termed “The Glory”, and it is said to signify the Presence of the Holy Spirit of God. It was known to the Biblical Israelites as the Shekinah, which manifested in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness and later in Solomon’s Temple .*

The aureole of light was known to the ancient Babylonians and most ancient peoples as a sign that what seemed to be a human being was really a god. The Christian regards this aureole as the sign of sanctity. Again, both Babylonians and Persians represented all Spirits with wings to indicate their non-material being and ethereal functions. The Egyptians put wings on good Spirits only, which is reasonable inasmuch as the higher Spirits have powerful and brilliant auric emanations, while those of lower beings are small and stunted or missing altogether. Since the higher Spirits not only have more powerful emanations but also more of them, the higher the rank of the celestial Hierarchy, the more wings they typically bear. In a medieval painting the Christ is pictured with twelve wings, which may be taken as symbolical of the twelve Apostles, or the twelve tribes of Israel, or the twelve zodiacal constellations around the Solar Logos; but we know that the great Archangel in the Sun is truly ablaze with emanations of cosmic power.

Among the Greeks two messenger gods received special attention: Hermes, the messenger of Zeus,



Generally, **glory** describes the light radiating from evolved beings and man’s occult members. Technically, it is the **aureola**, which surrounds the entire form, and the **nimbus** (see below). The almond-shaped aureola of the resurrected Christ (above) is called a **mandorla** or **vesica piscis** (fish bladder).



Nimbus is the term used to describe the circle or other form of etheric, desire or mental light around the head of evolved beings: (1) Common form for Christ, (2) Greek form for God the Father, (3) Common form for a saint, (4) Square nimbus for a living person.

and Iris, the messenger of Juno, Queen of Heaven. Iris was the goddess (Angel) of the rainbow and she is shown in Greek art speeding through space bearing a child in her arms while her wings stream out behind her. Hermes, too, is a winged god who is commonly shown with winged helmet or cap, winged sandals, and winged staff entwined by serpents. They may be taken as symbols, indeed, but the clairvoyant knows that their equivalent is present in mental space and in esoteric development.

Like the Angels in sacred art, human beings who have reached a certain development have a flame burning above the brow. It is the sign of the uplifted spinal spirit fire, also called the serpent fire, but it represents as well the Ego itself, which Max Heindel says is a Fire, with its throne in the head and its crown of rainbow light above the head, for this fiery presence is truly “God with Us”, the awakened Ego, who, like the Angels, wields a sword or scepter of spiritual force which emanates from the hands, or from the mouth as speech, or from the eyes in beams of light from the clear-seeing Intelligence within.

The wings of Hermes represent the mental sheath of the developed Ego who is able to rise out of the body consciously in Initiation—a power unfolded by mankind under the direction of the Mercurians (*Cosmo*, p. 274). Again, Max Heindel says (p. 275): “Mercury, now being in obscurity, is exercising very little influence on us,

but it is emerging from a planetary rest and as time goes on its influence will be more and more in evidence....the coming race will have much help from the Mercurians and the people of still later Epochs and Revolutions will have even more.” □

—Janice Lorimer

Courtesy of The Light of Christ Monastery, Borrego Springs, CA