

# The Way of Initiation: Ancient and Modern



Pekka Ervast

Foreword by Tim Wyatt  
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*PEKKA ERVAST*

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ANCIENT AND MODERN



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## INTRODUCTION

This is a deeply Christian book but not in the way the vast majority of Christians regard their religion. Pekka Ervast presents us with alternative types of Christianity – cosmic mystical and esoteric – which pre-dates the appearance of Jesus. His central message is one of redemption via the Christ spirit which he vehemently asserts has finally the power to heal and rejuvenate a wounded world. Indeed, he insists that this spirit is the only way of achieving this.

He portrays the story of Christ as a powerfully divine and symbolic process of release from materiality and the lower self. And yet he is not uncritical of the Christianity of his day, accusing it of ‘spiritual laziness’.

This book is based on lectures Ervast delivered in the immediate aftermath of World War I as people attempted to explain or rationalise the carnage and slaughter of what was history’s first fully mechanised armed conflict. Although very different from today, the *Zeitgeist* of a century ago does bear some striking similarities to the modern world characterised by decadence, decline and decay.

Ervast’s recipe for spiritual redemption remains as relevant today as it did back then. He has left us with a highly readable and relevant legacy in which spiritual aspirants can progressively triumph over the mundanities, obstacles and absurdities of everyday life.

He belonged to that important second generation of theosophists who successfully coaxed out and reinterpreted core ideas from the voluminous, influential but sometimes obscure writings of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky – especially her magnum opus *The Secret Doctrine*. He closely weaves core theosophical themes such as cycles, reincarnation and karma into this compelling narrative.

Employing the same occult cosmogony and anthropology as Blavatsky, Ervast presents us with a cogent yet concise history of human spiritual evolution and unfolding consciousness. He asserts that humanity's long evolution began not here on Earth but in a previous moon-based system. He charts the progress of root-races and the immense changes to humans' physical makeup and ascent of consciousness during the third, the Lemurian and the fourth, the Atlantean periods.

During the current fifth Indo-Aryan era Ervast details how shifts in consciousness have constantly morphed, always impacting on the way individuals achieve initiation and admittance to other worlds.

He demonstrates the stark differences in initiation during the times of what he calls the Old Covenant which preceded Jesus and the New Covenant which now prevails. In the old days initiates were fierce, unforgiving warriors fuelled by blood-lust while those of the modern era display more benign and refined characteristics. Like writers before him, Ervast stresses that all spiritual progress involves intense struggle and strife, always beset with painful obstacles. The spiritual seeker must choose to be 'a homeless wanderer'.

The path to initiation and redemption is always a lonely one, says Ervast, and can only be achieved by embracing the Christ principle. He offers a systematic and highly practical pathway to recognise and embrace that principle in order to forge a divine connection with the higher self. He describes Christ as the higher self of the Earth spirit.

Another key message for the aspirant is that any kind of spiritual ascendancy necessarily involves abandoning and then severing connections with the lower self along with its temptations, entanglements and entrapments.

Ervast also delves into the nature, purpose and use of two of those mysterious forces mentioned in oriental esoteric literature – *kundalini* and *prana*. He warns of the immense dangers of kundalini, the serpent-power associated with sex, being prematurely released.

However, he does conclude: 'Sexual power is now the Holy Spirit in us.'

There is a deep honesty and integrity embedded in Ervast's words. It is clear that he was a man of integrity, conviction and dedication, focused on his mission to communicate ageless truths to a world hungry to hear them – a timeless wisdom which can never be subsumed by the transitory and fashionable ideas of any era. He was one of a long line of messengers appointed to re-purpose and transmit the secret doctrine of the ages at times when needed.

The success of his endeavours can be measured by the fact that his words still ring clear and true despite a century of the most profound change the world has ever seen. This book is practical rather than theoretical and displays both a passion and urgency to transcend the immediate material world and connect with the universal spirit of godhead.

Tim Wyatt, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2025, Bingley, West Yorkshire, England

## I. MAN, KNOW THYSELF!

The phrase ‘know thyself’ is familiar to all of us from ancient cultures. The Greek philosopher Socrates always told his students: *gnōthi se auton* – know thyself! And even if in our everyday lives we do not regard the phrase in such a philosophical sense, even if we do not remember it and think about it, we can still say that our daily existence in society is built on that phrase. This is because from a practical viewpoint it is necessary for us to know ourselves, at least to some extent, and to know our abilities and skills so that we can participate in life and get along. Alongside true self-knowledge, there is always some recognition from the world. But even if that self-knowledge is based to some extent on appreciation from the world, we can also see people who know themselves before the world knows them. And this rule must hold: one must know oneself before the world does. One must be aware of this and create an understanding of the world accordingly. Self-knowledge thus becomes manifest in practical life.

Jesus refers to self-knowledge in the Gospel when he takes the example of the king. ‘Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?’ (Luke 14:31). Jesus is suggesting that self-knowledge is essential in everyday life. However, as Socrates says and as it has been understood in all ancient cultures, self-knowledge has not meant this practical self-awareness but has run much deeper. It has been self-knowledge which we always put into a ‘human’ context: ‘*human*, know thyself’! It is not, therefore, the kind of self-knowledge that we could apply to a profession: carpenter, know thyself – writer, know thyself, etc. This is a philosophical quality, distinct

***Pekka Ervast*** (1875–1934) was a pioneer of the Finnish theosophical movement and the founder of the Finnish Rosy Cross. In this book, Ervast offers unique perspectives on spiritual evolution, which is called the way of initiation in the theosophical circles. He begins by discussing the required conditions for a true spiritual path. Ervast emphasises that, 'One cannot advance on any occult way unless one has first gone through the initiation of compassion'.

The aim of esoteric teaching has always remained the same, but the methods have changed as human consciousness has evolved. Ervast talks about the initiation ceremonies in ancient Egypt as an example of the Old Covenant method. He goes on to describe how Jesus Christ opened a new way of initiation, the New Covenant, and how this changed our relationship with our higher self – the Mystical Christ – and the invisible world.

