

Contemporary Mystic Christianity **Bible Self-Study Supplement**

Isis — the Madonna of Egypt

Earlier than any priesthood, older than any organized cult, was the Wise Woman, typified as Isis in later times. She was the Egyptian sibyl and was saluted as the Divine Mother, the Watcher, the Robed One, the Nurse, the Appeaser of the Soul. A priest was her favorite child. She personified Heaven and the Sun was her offspring, as in the chant of Isis: "The fruit which I have brought forth is the Sun."

From the earliest times the sky was regarded as feminine and was personified in both Nut and Hathor, great Goddesses of the first four dynasties. The night sky was often depicted on coffins as a feminine figure with outstretched arms, having upon her body two yellow discs representative of the Sun and the Moon.

In Western Wisdom Teachings, which retain the esoteric instruction of Christ and His Disciples, in a like manner the Holy Ghost is looked upon as feminine, the appeaser or comforter of the soul, a power which must always accompany the Christing of an Initiate. In esoteric Judaism it is Shekinah, the Spirit of Wisdom which spoke through the prophets. The Amon-Ra Cult laid great emphasis on the feminine in its rituals, and priestesses were called "the

singing women of Amon." Doubtless, this helped to mold the imagination of the young Pharaoh, Amenhotep IV, and led him to exalt the feminine in all walks of life under his new Aton regime.

The purest power of all religion is focused in music, rhythm and harmony. The WORD, or Creative Fiat, common to every book of Genesis, is not merely a spoken command; it is a song. The high mission of the Christ was revealed to His Disciples on the Eucharist night in song. Essenes: and Therapeutae appointed definite times for celebrating certain Mysteries with an all-night Ceremonial of sacred song and dance. Prophets wooed the Spirit of Prophecy (Wisdom, Shekinah) with song. In the Temple of Amon-Ra the beautiful solar litany was chanted by the "singing women," special hymns and chants being dedicated to the new and full Moon, to sunrise and sunset, always accompanied by appropriate dances in imitation of the movements of the heavenly bodies. A stringed instrument, the sistrum, was used to drive evil spirits from the sanctuary.

The Osiris force in Egyptian life reached its culmination from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-sixth Dynasties. During this period all the Mysteries of Egypt came to a focus in the Egyptian Trinity of Osiris, Isis and Horus. The Book of the Dead shows, however, that the Osiris Cult extended far back into earliest ages, for the Osiride portions of the text

are among its earliest records. These are concerned with the heavenly realms over which Osiris presided, and judgment of the deceased took place under his direction. They may be said to be complementary to St. John's vision on the Isle of Patmos. Osiris, corresponding to the planetary Christ of esoteric Christianity, shines in the center of our earth globe as a ray of that Cosmic Christ which is behind the disc of the Sun, and the Two are One. Plutarch wrote: "That (vestment) of Osiris has no shadow nor variation, but is one, simple, the image of light.

Abydos was the sacred burial ground of all Egypt and became one of the important shrine-cities of Osiris in his role of Osiris-Khentamentiu. There, according to tradition, his sacred head was buried; and there each year (as early as the Twelfth Dynasty) a passion play was enacted commemorating the death and resurrection of the God. Osiris was slain by Set (Typhon) to the sound of lamentation and weeping, then arose from death to the sound of the gladsome chant: "We have found him, let us rejoice together!" It is interesting to observe that the Phoenix was sacred to Osiris and that early Christians called the Christ "our Phoenix."

The main sanctuary of Osiris, however, was at Tattu, or Busiris, where his backbone was supposedly buried. The jointed pillar sacred to him represents the spinal column,

which is most important in all initiatory work as the channel through which the Spirit Fire, the Kundalini of the Indian Mysteries, ascends from the lower parts of the body to the head.

In Set-Typhon-Egypt's evil one, whose purpose was the destruction of Osiris and all his works — are certain Luciferic and Ahrimanic forces familiar to Christians under the collective title of "the devil." In the story Typhon murders his brother Osiris and scatters the latter's dismembered body in various parts of the world. This allegorizes the loss of the Christ Light by reason of which man no longer recognizes his unity in God, so suffers, in his psychic dismemberment, sickness and disease, hatred, fear and sorrow. Isis, the wife of Osiris (the Divine Feminine in the heart,), roams the world in search of the body of Osiris, refusing to be comforted. She discovers the body in a pillar of the King's palace at Byblos in Phoenicia. The coffin had become lodged in an acacia tree which had grown up around it; then the tree had been cut down to form a pillar for the King's palace. The King graciously gave her the coffin which she carried back to Egypt. Typhon again found the body, dismembered it, and scattered the parts over all the land. Isis was able to find all but the phallus, which had been eaten by a fish. By her knowledge of magic, Isis now restored the body to life.

One of the titles of Osiris was "He that Dwelleth in the Acacia," and a sprig of acacia is symbolic of immortality or resurrection in Masonic Mysteries to this day. "The Valley of the Acacia" was a poetic term for death. In springtime the acacia tree is a mass of little yellow stars, brilliant as a sunburst.

The Virgin Isis bore a divine son, Horus. He came as the Savior of the world, with the promise that he should prepare the earth and its people for a return of the Golden Age. He was to make them worthy of meeting the beloved Osiris face to face in celestial spheres.

In Horus we have the Egyptian Messiah, prototype of the Master Jesus, son of the Virgin Mary, in Christian belief. One of Horus' symbols is the Sun on the morning horizon, and he is represented as a child with a finger to his lips. Amulets of Horus the child as the Great Overcomer, standing upon crocodiles and grasping serpents or other noxious animals in his hands, was a favorite among Egyptians down to Ptolemaic times. The young Horus seated upon a full-blown lotus blossom, symbol of attainment, was also deeply revered and used widely on amulets for the home.

The dark Nephthys was sister (shadow double) of Isis. She represented the feminine in man as linked with the senses rather than with spirit. Similarly, in the New

Testament appear the Mary who was a Magdalen and Mary, the Divine Virgin. In the Old Testament and embodying the same truth are the two wives of the Chaldean Seer Abraham: Sarah, the mother of Isaac (laughter, meaning harmony and peace), and Hagar, the mother of Ishmael (the red or hairy one, the unbridled lower nature).

Later Dynasties, notably the Twenty-sixth, produced a distinctive literature represented in such works as The Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys and Festival Songs of Isis and Nephthys — these having reference to conflict between the senses and the spirit according to the dedication of the feminine love nature. In the Old Testament Lamentations of Jeremiah and Song of Solomon bear a like connotation. It is significant that Nephthys was wife of the Earth God, Set.

The continuous conflict between Horus and Set is the conflict between truth and error, light and darkness, as all mankind must know it.

The Occult Science Of The Egyptians

With a general knowledge of the great Gods of Egypt and their spiritual significance, it is possible to approach the Egyptian Bible, Book of the Dead, in a proper spirit of reverence. but something more is needed to make personal application of the profound wisdom which permeates its

every text. This great book can be more than a mere literary curiosity surviving from a dead civilization, not only as foreshadowing Christianity but as a help in living and to the individual spirit after death.

It is a handbook on the Path of Initiation for modern Christians as it was for ancient Egyptians.

To arrive at a usable knowledge of the meaning and purpose of ancient texts, however, one must understand their occult terminology in synonyms referable to modern systems of occult and metaphysical thought. Gerald Massey, the Egyptologist, has determined the terms descriptive of the various human powers or faculties to be as follows:

(1) Ka: the body. In esoteric Christianity this refers to the etheric double.

(2) Ba: soul or breast. In esoteric Christianity, the cardiac plexus or Heart Center; the "Golden Wedding Garment."

(3) Khaba: the shade. In esoteric Christianity, the Desire Body.

(4) Akhu: the intelligence. In esoteric Christianity, the twofold Mind.

(5) Seb: the ancestral soul. In esoteric Christianity, the feminine potencies of soul, called the Life Spirit.

(6) Putah: the intellectual father. In esoteric Christianity, the masculine potencies of soul, called the Divine Spirit.

(7) Atmu: the divine or eternal soul. In esoteric Christianity, the Virgin Spirit or True Man; the "divine hermaphrodite," biune in nature, of whom the other six powers are the lower illusory and separated reflections.

Perhaps a more satisfactory correlation is found in Mr. G. R. S. Mead's *Thrice Great Hermes*, where nine potencies of the human organism are enumerated.

(1) Khat: the physical body.

(2) Ba: the soul.

(3) Ab: the heart.

(4) Ka: the etheric double.

(5) Khu: the intelligence.

(6) Sekhem: the power.

(7) Khaibit: the shadow.

(8) Sahu: the spiritual body.

(9) Ren: the Name.

The fundamental work of all religions is to purify and transmute the dense physical body by means of the

illuminated spirit. Until the spirit is awakened within the self, evolution proceeds slowly under the outside guidance of Group or Race Spirits. But when the human ego is once fully awakened by initiatory work under the Elder Brothers from Mercury (figured in Hermes Trismegistus), it assumes charge of its own development, undertaking all necessary disciplines by which the personality is transformed into a perfect instrument for self-expression. It then extracts, by means of the personality, the "essence" of all experience, which feeds the spirit and nourishes it to divine omnipotence. A careful study of elaborate ceremonials given in the Book of the Dead reveals that the ultimate objective of Egyptian theosophy was to awaken the spirit of man and to accomplish complete transmutation of personality into spirit. Underlying this process was an intricate cosmogony, with seven or nine circles or spheres of consciousness which may be correlated with the nine great Gods of Egypt. These spheres covered the whole extent of nature — as represented by Isis and as pervaded by her wisdom, which enfolds the human spirit and nourishes it to the status of godhood.

The purpose of Initiation is to "take heaven by storm," as it were; to come quickly into a realization of the continuity of life and of its ultimate goal.

As pertaining to the continuity of life, the Book of the Dead was of importance to everyone; therefore, it was the custom to place a copy in the coffin of the deceased at the time of burial. As pertaining to Initiation, however, it was the constant and daily companion of every neophyte, and was more appropriately called The Book of the Coming Forth by Day.

Either in the natural course of transition by, death or through the experience of Initiation, the spirit must pass through the dark netherlands of disembodied souls, variously described as Purgatory by Christians, Hades by Greeks, Land of Amenti by Egyptians. This strange land was characterized by immense fire pits and waterfalls and was inhabited by monsters of terrifying aspect. Only the pure in heart, those who had been just and righteous on earth, were able to pass through the perils unscathed.

Beyond the dark sphere and across the Lily Lake, lay the Elysian Fields, where dwelt Osiris and his exalted companions. Herein uninterrupted blessing awaited an emancipated spirit.

It is to be observed that throughout these texts and in all inner-world experiences, the deceased is identified with Osiris. Osiris is the Way Shower. If Osiris was immortal, the newly dead knew himself to be immortal; if Osiris had not risen from the dead, neither could he arise. In like manner,

a Christian knows that he lives because Christ lives, and that he can conquer death because Christ conquered death. In the words of Paul: "If in this life only we have hope of Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

Only those who had lived according to the highest precepts were accounted worthy to be ferried across the Lake of Lilies and so to enter the celestial abode. The Egyptian code of morals approached as closely as any ancient code to the Christian ideal outlined in the Sermon on the Mount, that supreme teaching upon which the government of the new Aquarian Age will be established.

In order to cross the heavenly lake a person had to have a clean, pure moral character, as attested by ability to repeat the following sacred code: he had abhorred fraud, deceit, robbery, violence, adultery, unchastity, wantonness and manslaughter; he defrauded not his neighbor in the market nor sought to enrich himself at the expense of another; he had judged not hastily, swore not at all, behaved not insolently nor multiplied his speech overmuch.

A clear distinction was drawn between the dense physical vehicle and the finer bodies. The physical or corruptible body was symbolized as a dead fish, and was designated the Khat. To the Ka or etheric double belonged many of the most important ceremonials. At the time of transition the life essences of the physical body are super-imposed upon

the etheric double. Therefore, the Egyptians stated an occult fact when they said that the Ka can live without the Khat but the Khat cannot exist apart from the Ka. The etheric double is the life or vital body which molds the dense body and is the channel for vital energy without which the dense body could not exist.

It was the Ka which introduced the dead to the Ba, and it was for the Ka that offerings of food and drink were placed in tombs. The whole motive of tomb decoration, says Sir Flinder Petrie, was to provide a home for the Ka.

Clairvoyance was common among Egyptians. This faculty enabled them to see the etheric doubles of persons and all living creatures.

The Ba is soul-essence extracted by the spirit from life-experiences in a body. It becomes a permanent part of the spirit, for by it the spirit grows and evolves toward godhood. The Khaibit (shadow) is described as an important part of the personality, though incapable of existence apart from the physical body; hence, it is an etheric emanation belonging to the body that is cast off at death. The Sahu is the mummified body, which was preserved to serve as an archetypal pattern for a new body to be used by the reincarnating ego in its next earthy life. The Sekhern refers to the forces of mind when attuned to spirit, The Sekhern is referred to in a wall inscription in the

pyramid of Pepi.' "Thy Ba is with thee in thy Sahu; thy Sekhern is with thee and behind thee."

The hieroglyph of the Ren is that of a man with a finger to his lips, denoting the inner or heart memory by which one receives experiences of past incarnations and recognizes his name, the connecting link that binds the many personalities to the one spirit. The awakened one sings: "May my Ren be given to me in the great abode and may I remember my Ren in the house of Fire on the night of the counting of the years."

Ab, the heart, was held in utmost veneration and was the object of an elaborate ceremonial to be described later.

The Khu is the spirit or shining one which is free from all taint of mortality. It is the celestial light in contradistinction to the terrestrial. The Khu accompanies the deceased to the judgment Hall of Osiris. If a man is judged favorably, it accompanies him into the heavenly abodes; if the decree is unfavorable, the Khu goes into a higher realm to await reunion at a later time. The Ritual Song proclaims: "My Khu shall be as an amulet for my body, and as one watcheth to protect my soul and to defend it and to converse with it." This is the conscious communion an Initiate learns to establish between his lower and his higher self. The Khu is symbolized by the sacred ibis.

The foregoing makes it clear that sacred characters appearing in the after-death drama of the Book of the Dead are comparable to actors in the medieval morality play, Everyman, wherein such roles as Pride, Fellowship, Kinsman, Good Deeds, Knowledge, and so on represented aspects of man's life, while behind the scenes stood Death.

"Let my Heart be with Me in the House of Hearts"

Osiris as judge of the soul compares with the Christian concept of the Christ as judge of the quick and the dead. In Egyptian theosophy as in modern Oriental systems, the heart is the seat of superconsciousness. It is written that Ra's "Secret Name" was hidden in his breast; but Isis, by strategy and with the aid of a serpent, secured possession of it, the Name passing from Ra's breast to her own. Then, because she knew the Name, she was able to restore life to the dismembered body of Osiris. Egyptians recognized two names: the most secret name which was never used publicly and the "little name" by which an individual was known generally.

Ra's Secret Name, therefore, was the very essence of his power, the power Isis secured for herself. The Mystery of the Divine Feminine is expressed in the famous saying, "No mortal man hath ever me unveiled" — which reveals one of the most ancient aspects of religion: that of the sibyl as representative of the Divine Feminine in nature, the wisdom

principle, the appeaser of the soul; i.e. the Comforter. In Western Wisdom Teaching this principle resides in the heart. It is said that at its apex lies one indestructible atom whereon is inscribed a record of every thought, emotion, word and deed of an individual's incarnations. Thus, it is the Book of the Recording Angel, its record determining one's after-death status. The judgment Hall of Osiris was the House of Hearts, and into that great hall the spirit of the deceased or the spirit of the neophyte had to come.

In the awe-inspiring judgment Hall, encircling a table laden with offerings of fruit and flowers, sat the twelve judges, each upon his throne and holding his scepter of power. A balance, in which the heart was to be weighed, was set in the center of the room and Anubis, God of the underworld, assiduously watched the pointer of the balance. On one side of the balance was placed the heart of the aspirant, and upon the other an ostrich feather representing the karmic summation of the physical life just ended. During this weighing of the heart, the spirit under probation chanted:

"My heart, my mother; my heart, my mother; my heart whereby I came into being!

May there be no parting of thee from me in the presence of him that keepeth the balance!"

Facing Anubis on the left was the shining Khai, the Guardian Angel; and on the right stood the great Thoth-Hermes, the "just judge" and "the Scribe of the Gods."

When the beam of the balance rested horizontally, the aspirant was not yielded up to "the Devourer," but was ushered into the presence of Osiris to receive his portion of celestial glories.

Thoth announced the outcome: "Hear ye this judgment. The heart of Osiris in very truth hath been weighed and his heart-soul hath borne testimony on his behalf. His heart hath been found right by the trial in the Great Balance. There hath not been found any wickedness in him. He hath not committed any evil act and he hath not set his mouth in motion with words of evil whilst he was upon earth."

The spirit was then led by Horus before Osiris, the Lord of Eternity. Osiris was seated upon a tomb-shaped coffer while behind him stood Isis and Nephthys. Nearby, upon the petals of a great lotus flower, were the four sons of Horus.

Horus asked that the new arrival be included among the deified, who were known as "the followers of Horus" and who lived always in the presence of Osiris.

The spirit pleaded for itself: "My heart weepeth over itself before Osiris. It hath made supplication for me. I have

given unto him and I have dedicated unto him the thoughts of my heart." Obviously this was more than a mere ritual for after-death use; dedication of the thoughts of the heart is a matter of day-by-day living. "Let it not be said against me, He hath committed acts which are opposed to what is right and true. Homage to thee, O my heart. Speak ye for me words of good import to Ra." The spirit sang the song of giving the heart to Osiris: "Let my heart be with me and let it rest in me or I shall not eat the cakes of Osiris on the eastern side of the Lake of Flowers nor have a boat to sail up the river with Thee."

The heart of a deceased was sometimes left in the mummified body or was sometimes placed in a separate receptacle in the tomb. The following chant served as protection against the misfortune of losing it: "Let my heart be with me in the House of Hearts. Let my heart-case be with me in the House of Hearts." The real intent of the chant, however, was to concentrate attention upon the great cardiac plexus, the avenue of entrance for forces from the World of Life Spirit, the universal, all-pervading Christ-realm.

The ceremonial ended upon the triumphant note "I am master of my heart."

Thousands of years later the same note is sounded in words of the biblical Wisdom-King: "He that ruleth his spirit

(is better) than he that taketh a city." And in the words of David: "Your heart shall live forever."

— ***Corinne Heline***