

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

Birth and Early Life of the Master Jesus

The Gospel Record

The first evidence we have of the New Testament being a complete collection of inspired writings dates from about three hundred years after the time in which the Disciples lived, although separate books may be traced to much earlier dates. The principal apostolic writings are the four Gospels. A second collection was formed of the works of the other Disciples, and to these were added later the Acts, and the Epistles of Paul. The Epistles of John, James, Jude and the Book of Revelation were not included until a much later date. These composed the third collection.

Before the compilation of the Gospels, there were shorter memoirs of the life of Christ Jesus. There were also many other letters attributed to the Disciples, which are now considered apocryphal. One of these letters was a deeply esoteric treatise written by Matthew in Hebrew, of which the present Greek translation is a mere fragment. This work is often referred to by the early Church Fathers.

Papias, a disciple of Polycarp, who was one of the most advanced of the pupils of John, states that Matthew wrote his first Gospel in Hebrew, and that everyone translated it

as he was able. This was during the time that Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome; also founding a church there. Jerome says that this first Gospel was preserved in the library of the church in Caesarea. Different versions of the manuscript were made and passed from church to church.

The Syrian and Arabic copies of this Gospel of Matthew read: "Here ends the copy of the Gospel of Matthew, which he wrote in the land of Palestine, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in the Hebrew language, eight years after the ascension of Jesus the Messiah into heaven, and in the first year of the Roman Emperor, Claudius Caesar.

Jerome and Origen called this The Gospel to the Hebrews because it was written in the Hebrew language. It was referred to by early writers as The Gospel of the Twelve. Justyn Martyr, in A.D. 133, mentions this book as The Recollections of the Apostles and affirms that it contains much information not included in the present Gospels.

The fragments of the original Gospels owe their preservation to the earliest Christian communities, founded, in some instances, by various of the Twelve Disciples themselves, or their immediate disciples. The first instruction was by word of mouth, but in course of time the account of the words and deeds of Christ Jesus were written down, often in the form of Epistles, which passed

from one church to the other. Among these accounts was the "Memorabilia" to which Justyn Martyr refers.

The Gospels in their original form were not divided into chapters as now, but were composed of certain readings applicable to the Sabbath and certain feast days. Their readings were not mere repetitions of the Scriptures, however, as are the church readings of the present day. These early Christians had been instructed in the power of the Name of Christ Jesus, a kabbalistic doctrine of great antiquity. They knew the secret of the spoken word, and how to use it as an instrument of Spirit.

Various churches possessed different memoirs: Caesarea used that of Matthew; Jerusalem that of Peter and later of James the Just, also Luke and the Virgin Mary. The "Recollections of Peter" were first written in notes and used in these churches before Mark gathered them together to form his Gospel. From Antioch to Rome they celebrated the Mysteries connected with the Life of Christ Jesus.

The "Gospel of the Lord" was the basis of the work formulated by Luke. This Gospel was written during the time that he was a disciple of Paul, and during the active founding of the churches in Asia Minor. Luke was also a disciple of the Virgin Mary. "Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart," — words forming a part of his record of her. The Gospel of Luke contains the most

intimate and tender details of the life of Joseph, Mary and Jesus. These Luke had received directly from Mary.

Luke wrote his Gospel and the Book of Acts about 64 A. D. He was an educated Greek, learned both as physician and artist. He met Paul at Troas and became one of his most faithful disciples, acting as his amanuensis as Mark did for Peter. After the death of Paul he worked in Greece and Egypt. It is said that he kept with him constantly a picture of Christ Jesus and another of the Virgin and performed many works of healing and conversion by the aid of their magical properties. Tradition also has it that the Madonna was first painted by Luke, and it is claimed that this same picture is still extant and on view in the Vatican. Luke is supposed to have suffered martyrdom some time between 75 and 100 A.D.

Every student of the ancient wisdom knows that the Gospels contain formulas of Initiation. The early Christian teachers, Clement of Alexandria, head of the most celebrated of the early Christian Schools, and Origen, his first disciple and successor, often refer to the secret teachings of Christ Jesus as being reserved for the few — "milk for babes and meat for strong men," as Paul expresses it. Even Augustine has said: "That which is called the Christian religion existed among the ancients from the

beginning of the human race; at the coming of Christ Jesus, true religion began to be called Christianity."

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, and Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, both disciples of John, mention the "inner mysteries of Jesus," which were generally known and observed by those who were faithful and worthy during the first and second centuries after Christ Jesus. Origen writes: "The Scriptures have one meaning which is apparent to all men, and another which escapes the notice of most men. The spiritual meaning of the Scriptures is not known to all; to His own disciples did the Master open up all things."

The Christ came as the great Way-Shower for all mankind; consequently the events in His life embrace all the steps in the evolutionary progress of the masses, and also outline the definite stages of Initiation for the guidance of the few who choose to take the more direct path and to accomplish in a short time, as did the first disciples, that which humanity as a whole will not realize until ages hence.

In the Gospel of Matthew, the first of the four, the Christ is quoted as saying: "My secret is for Me and for the Children of my house." A similar statement is made by John: "No man cometh unto me except my Father calleth him," meaning that none are able to receive the Christ Mystery without a long period of preparation. This is most often unconsciously received. Generally it is through the

travail of sorrow and pain that the illumination comes which draws one to the sacred heart of the Christ. "Before the feet can stand in the presence of the Master, they must be washed in the blood of the heart," affirms a beautiful precept of instruction for all true aspirants.

The path is the same, though methods of attainment differ according to the development of nations, peoples and individuals. No two have exactly the same experience in the processes of Initiation. That is why the Gospel accounts vary at several points. These differences are usually explained as being due to either interpolations or mistranslations, and Bible opponents have used the apparent contradictions as evidence of the unreliability of the scriptural record. While there have been later and unwarranted additions to the original text, and there are instances of incorrect translations, it is important to stress the fact that a proper understanding of the Gospels in the light of esoteric knowledge will reconcile many apparent contradictions and reveal added truths pertaining to the many-sided phases of initiatory development.

Matthew begins his Gospel with the story of the birth of Jesus and the coming of the Wise Men; Mark, with the message of John the Baptist and the baptism of Christ Jesus; Luke with the annunciation of John and of Jesus; and John with the marriage in Cana of Galilee. Matthew and

Luke begin with the Birth; Matthew with the Wise Men and the Star; Luke with the Angels and the Shepherds; Mark with the Baptism; and John with the Marriage wherein water is turned into wine.

Matthew concludes his Gospel with the arrival of the two Marys at the tomb; they see one Angel and are told to meet the Master in Galilee. Mark concludes his Gospel with the coming of the two Marys and Salome to the tomb; they also contact only one Angel. Luke ends with the coming of the two Marys and Joanna; they find two Angels beside the tomb. John describes the coming of Mary Magdalene alone and she also encounters two Angels.

As previously stated, these statements mark, not inaccuracies, but different stages of development. An esoteric study of the Gospels reveals the fact that the events in the life of Christ Jesus, from the Annunciation to the Ascension, are the same steps of progress that lead every aspirant to the higher life. These steps may be enumerated thus:

1. Annunciation
2. Immaculate Conception
3. Birth
4. Flight into Egypt
5. Teaching in the Temple
6. Baptism

7. Temptation
8. Transfiguration
9. Gethsemane
10. Crucifixion
11. Resurrection
12. Ascension

These twelve steps bear an interesting astrological correlation. The first Bible was the Zodiac in which was embodied all spiritual truth. The zodiacal wheel of the heavens comprises twelve constellations or signs. The influence of the planets is stronger in some signs than in others. The sign in which a planet attains its greatest influence is the one in which it is said to be exalted. The exaltations are realized in their highest significance only through Initiation.

It is interesting to note that exaltation and resurrection were used as interchangeable terms by the early Church Fathers who understood the true relationship between man's spiritual development and the stars.

1. Annunciation The, Moon exalted in Taurus. The Feminine Principle (Moon)

2. Immaculate Conception is exalted in the feminine or formative sign of Taurus.

3. Birth Mars exalted in Capricorn. Transmutation of the desire nature awakens the Christ life within.

4. Flight into Egypt Saturn exalted in Libra. Saturn is the tempter or tester; Libra the trial or balance gate.

5. Teaching in the Temple: Mercury exalted in Virgo. The Temple is the body; Virgo is chastity; and Mercury is the wisdom which is attained only through purity.

6. Baptism: Jupiter exalted in Cancer. Cancer is the door of heaven and the passwords for entrance are: love, unity and fellowship. The baptism by water is symbolical of the baptism by spirit.

7. Temptation: Uranus exalted in Scorpio. The power of generation when

8. Transfiguration: misused leads to degeneration; rightly used, to regeneration. This is the most powerful of the exaltations in man's present development.

9. Gethsemane: Venus exalted in Pisces. Sorrow through the love life.

10. Crucifixion: the personal plane becomes joy through the impersonal life. Every ego knows the Garden and Golgotha through the love life. It is through sorrow that

passion becomes compassion and the love for one the love for the many.

11. Resurrection: Sun exalted in Aries. Lifting the spinal spirit fire to the head helps to build the celestial body in which man is resurrected from the tomb of the body of flesh.

12. Ascension: Neptune exalted in Cancer. The divinity of the Christ within man which raises him to the high superphysical realms where the spirit may enter the many mansions prepared by the Christ.

— ***Corinne Heline***