

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

The Calling of the Remnant

When the Proclamation of Cyrus (538 B.C.) set the Exiles free to return to their native land, not all desired to do so; nor did that Remnant called forth by the prophets return immediately or at one time. Three large migrations took place during the Persian Period. In addition there was a continuous stream of immigrants travelling in small groups or singly, with much visiting to and fro between Jerusalem and Babylon by those who were undecided as to which city they would chose for a permanent home. Consequently, a sizable Hebrew colony continued to flourish in Babylon far into rabbinic times; for even after Constantine the Great had closed those Palestinian Schools that created the Jerusalem Talmud, the work continued in Babylon until the middle of the sixth century A.D., when the Babylonian Talmud was brought to completion. Thus, Babylon and the Field of Ardath remained active in Hebrew thought for fully a thousand years, from the sixth century B.C. to the sixth century A. D. — a millennium, or Day of the Lord.

The summons to return to Jerusalem was not a call easy to answer. it meant putting duty before pleasure and responsibility before ease. It was a call of self-renunciation. The material interests of the Exiles had become rooted in

Babylon, city of plenty. To leave meant giving up things of this world, a sacrifice possible only to those who lived by the light of spirit. It is not surprising that so few were willing to make the sacrifice. They were the Remnant proclaimed by the prophets because they emancipated themselves from all the worldly self holds dear and took the long, hard march to the wastes of Judea.

The leader of this group was Zerubbabel, grandson of King Jehoiakim and heir to the throne of David, now appointed by Cyrus as governor of the province to be occupied by the Exiles. Cyrus gave to him the Temple vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away. With him went Joshua, high priest and grandson of Seraiah, last of the high priests prior to the Captivity.

The cornerstone of the new Temple was laid in 535 B.C. The building was completed under Darius in 516 B.C. Enemies hindered and thwarted the work in every possible way, as related in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were the spiritual Teachers raised up for this period so they are called the Prophets of the Restoration.

Ezra — The Scribe of God

II Esdras 14:43-48

As for me, I spake in the day, and I held not my tongue

by night.

In forty days they wrote two hundred and four books. And it came to pass, when the forty days were fulfilled, that the Highest spake, saying, The first that thou hast written publish openly, that the worthy and unworthy may read it;

But keep the seventy last, that thou mayest deliver them only to such as be wise among the people.

For in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the stream of knowledge.

And I did so.

The Book of Ezra is an account of the attempt to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. It should be studied conjointly with the two apocryphal Books of Esdras which relate to the same events. Paralleling the historical account of the restoration of the Temple is an exposition of the efforts of Illumined Ones to build soul bodies, temples not made with hands.

Ezra 1:1-6

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven

hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Who is there among you of all his people I his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (he is the God), which is in Jerusalem.

And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with the silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.

And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered.

After the sacred Books had been collected together and the esoteric doctrine had been prepared and transmitted to chosen disciples, preparations for the return to Jerusalem were begun. "Then stood up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jesus the son of Josedech ... the prophets of the Lord being with them and helping them." (I Esdras 6:2)

Jesus of the foregoing is the Joshua of the Biblical Book of Ezra.

Ezra states that forty-two thousand captives set out on the March from Babylon to Jerusalem. This call to leave a life of ease and pleasure and to undertake a perilous journey as directed by spirit is the call to the Path that leads to Initiation. Accordingly, "the way from Babylon to Jerusalem" contains some of the most sublime symbolism in higher Masonic degrees.

Four and one-half months were consumed in the journey. Four is spirit and five the personality. Four and one-half represent a fluctuation between the claims of spirit and of personality which besets every traveler on the Path.

The returning captives' first view of Jerusalem presented a sharp contrast to the luxuriant date and palm gardens they were accustomed to seeing in Babylon. They beheld nothing but a great mass of ruins upon the hill once graced by Solomon's Temple. However, for those wise enough to comprehend the situation, Olivet, one of the earth's most powerful magnetic centers, rose calm and majestic above them like a benediction from the past and a mighty prophecy of future glories.

Ezra 3:4-7

They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written,

and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required;

And afterward offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the Lord that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the Lord.

From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid.

They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.

The Rite of the Restoration

Ezra 3:10,11

And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the song of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.

And they sang together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord,

because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

The Exiles arrived in Jerusalem for the first Rite of the Restoration in the Sacred Season of the Autumn Equinox. The foundation stones of Solomon's Temple remained intact, so Master-workmen cleared away the debris and "set the altar on his bases." Here the people kept the Feast of the Tabernacle upon the occasion of their first assembly. Every morning and evening from this time forward Rites of Preparation were observed on Mount Moriah. These were never again abandoned until the Supreme Sacrificial Rite had been accomplished.

These observances signify deeds of daily living by which threads of the golden wedding garment are woven. It is not how much a man knows but how he lives that determines his progress in building a soul body.

Preparations being sufficiently completed by the second year after the return, Zerubbabel and Joshua began rebuilding the Temple. Once again workmen-Seers "came from Tyre; priests in their apparel of purple and fine linen," and "Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals" surrounded the holy place. Once again David's sacred consecrational hymn was heard:

Praise ye the Lord
O give thanks unto the Lord,
For he is good:
For his mercy endureth forever.

In the ethers above voices of Angels and Archangels joined in a mighty chorus of rejoicing, singing praises for that which was now in the progress of fulfillment.

All men's bodies are builded by the powers of rhythm and harmony, the Word of God which produces the manifold creations of the universe. The Spirit of God sets each archetype vibrating in harmony with the music of the spheres before it leaves the heaven worlds on its pilgrimage through matter. This vibration is its keynote and it sounds forth continuously as its evolution unfolds. Each of man's elements, from his divine Spirit to his physical body, is attuned to an archetypal keynote; thus his seven vehicles, together with the Virgin Spirit, constitute a complete octave. The Virgin Spirit, however, is not a "vehicle;" it is the divine man, uncontaminated by materiality, as he exists in the Mind of God.

When each of man's seven vehicles emits a tone in perfect attunement with the Virgin Spirit's keynote, no inharmony or ill health manifests in his life. Disease is caused by dissonance between the various bodies, and such dissonance is the result of unnatural living — that is,

negative thinking, improper eating and living a selfish, separative life. A soul body, at present the etheric garment of an individualized spirit, cannot be built until all discordant and negative conditions are corrected.

At the conclusion of our period of evolution the perfected soul body will consist of the amalgamated essence of all the other bodies, and it will sound a symphony of their exquisitely harmonized and blended notes. The purpose of sacred music, including the music of all Temples of Initiation, is to raise the vibratory rate of man's bodies and to intensify the powers of his soul. Hence, the elaborate biblical descriptions of musicians and musical instruments for the Tabernacle and the Temple. This also accounts for music being an important part of the service in the early Church, its founders having been Initiates who understood and made use of the occult powers of music.

Ezra 4:1-2

Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel,

Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you; for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him, since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assur which brought us hither.

The power of evil always manifests wherever the forces of good are active. A lodge of the Brothers of the Shadow is ever to be found near a Temple of the White Brotherhood. It has been said, and truly, that the subtlest temptations are not those addressed to our weaknesses but those which appeal to our virtues. Discrimination is our only weapon for meeting these temptations, as evil frequently masquerades in the robes of altruism.

The adversaries of Judah and Benjamin were primarily the nearby inhabitants of Samaria. These people were remnants of some of the ancient Israelites and of a number of foreign peoples, all having merged during the course of several generations since the Assyrian Captivity. The harassment and annoyance of the Samaritans typify esoterically the urgings and subtle testings of mortal nature. Thus marvelously is the biblical path of human regeneration interwoven with historical occurrences; each factor composes half of the picture and each is incomplete without the other.

The Samaritans delayed the restoration of the Temple for about eighteen years. They sent letters to Cambyses, son of Cyrus, to Darius and to Artaxerxes: "Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building. And hired counsellors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus the

king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia." Evil overcomes good "until the second year of Darius of Persia." Then for a time the work went forward again. But with Artaxerxes' accession to the throne the builders were again obstructed:

Ezra 4:11-13

This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king: Thy servants the men on this side of the river, and at such a time.

Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations.

Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings.

Artaxerxes was an usurper and fearful of any act which might be prejudicial to his popularity, so he ordered the work stopped by force.

During these troubled years spiritual light burned low, high enthusiasm waned, and many lost sight altogether of their call to service. But, as hitherto observed, there is always a teacher awaiting those who search and a messenger of glad tidings is ever near for those who remain

true to the Quest. So now, suddenly piercing the clouds of darkness and despair like a ray of heaven's own light, came the prophet Haggai.

— ***Corinne Heline***