

Contemporary Mystic Christianity
Bible Self-Study Supplement

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The Immaculate Conception of Mary
The Annunciation to Joachim and Hanna

Many Bible students confuse the terms Miraculous Conception and Immaculate Conception. Technically, the Miraculous Conception refers to the supposed conception of the child Jesus without the agency of a mortal father, by the direct power of God; whereas the Immaculate Conception refers to the pure and immaculate conception of Mary herself by her holy parents, Joachim and Hanna.

The great difficulty in all such stories lies in the fact that certain truths pertaining to the spiritual world are interpreted materialistically, as if they had reference to the objective material world, and confusion results. What the Church calls the Immaculate Conception of Mary, therefore, is to the occultist identical in nature with the so-called "Miraculous" Conception of Jesus by Mary; and the term Immaculate Conception as used in these studies is to be understood in this light. Jesus was born a man among men. He became the Christ in a special way.

Preparations for the advent of a great spiritual Teacher, or Saviour, begin generations before the time appointed for his

appearance. Thus in the case of Jesus we read that "the mother of Hanna was the daughter of noble parents who were Levites belonging to the priesthood. Her mother was Faustina of the house of Israel and she beheld in a dream-vision the glorious fulfillment of her line. 'The seventh daughter of my daughter, Hanna, the wife of Joachim, shall bring forth the blessed Moon.'"

"Hanna," the ancient legends aver, "is to be more highly esteemed than gold and silver. She is more beautiful than the Sun and the Moon. No woman can be compared to her for grace, beauty and majesty ... she is more honorable than every other woman, because she gave birth to the blessed Virgin Mary

"The marriage of Hanna and Joachim was pure and holy for in it was mingled the power of the Holy Ghost. Their marriage was sweeter than musk and Aspalathus, for they begot Mary, who became the Mother of the Great Light."

"From holy gardens sprang Joachim and Hanna. In the name of Hanna were many nations included. The peoples of Israel in their various families and tribes were linked unto her and honor and majesty were ascribed unto them because of her."

Thus it was with Joachim also, for all the peoples of Israel in their various families and tribes were reckoned in him for

a testimony and a memorial.

Many interesting details concerning Mary's ancestry were recorded by some of the illumined Mystics of the Church from which we quote the following excerpt among others:

Often the married couples practiced continence for long periods of time, particularly during the holy seasons for their highest ideal was to rear saintly children who in turn would contribute in bringing salvation to the world.

These people lived in small rural communities and did not follow the regular materialistic business pursuits but tilled the land, tended sheep and produced orchards and gardens. They were punctilious in Temple observances and on the journeys to and from Jerusalem gave kindly aid and all assistance possible to the ill and poverty-stricken. Anna and Joachim, two who were destined for the high honor of becoming parents to the blessed Virgin, belonged to this line of pure and holy servitors of the Most High.

It will be noted that the reference to the mode of life ascribed to the forbears of Mary is identical with that of the Essenes which is outlined in detail further on in this volume where mention is made of the fact that Mary and her parents were members of this pure and holy sect.

The parents of Hanna were wealthy, and her home was a large and beautiful country estate located near Nazareth. It was also here amid these lovely surroundings that Mary, the blessed Virgin, was born.

Ancient narratives recount that Joachim was a High Priest, a nobleman, and also exceedingly wealthy, and that he performed many deeds of worth and service for the poor and unfortunate. The esotericist perceives that both Joachim and Hanna (or Anna) were Initiates of high degree in the Essenian Mysteries of Israel, and that they understood the importance of the interval of preparation prior to the human incarnation of an Illumined One.

Thus Joachim retired into the desert to prepare himself for the advent of Mary, and there he spent his time in fasting and prayer. Hanna also sought the solitude of the beautiful gardens surrounding their home, where she passed the hours in prayer and meditation. It was while she was thus employed, arrayed in her "golden wedding garment" or in other words, attuned to Initiate consciousness, that the angel Gabriel appeared to her and said: "Peace be unto thee, O woman. Fear not, for thou hast found mercy with the Lord, and behold, thou shalt conceive and bring forth a daughter and thou shalt call her name Mary; from her shall spring the Light of Creation and Him for whom the worlds wait."

To Joachim also the Angel of the Annunciation appeared at his retreat in the desert, saying, "Rise up, O Son of David, and go to thy house ... the Lord hath been gracious unto thy wife Hanna."

And when Joachim returned to the city, he found Hanna waiting for him beside the Golden Gate — a mystical reference to the exaltation of soul in which they dwelt during this sacred interval of preparation. Together, Joachim and Anna gave fervent thanks for the long-desired answer to their prayer, and with deep reverence and humility they dedicated the expected child to Temple service. Filled with a holy ecstasy, a cloud of heavenly light enfolded them until they, too, became luminous with a rare shining. Never before had two human beings attained unto such a supernal state. They were encircled with multitudes of angels singing and rejoicing.

The influence of the holy child permeated all her mother's aura. Wherever Hanna entered, she was preceded by a great light. Strange fires fell from her fingers, and when she came into a room where any lay ill or where strife reigned, the sick arose healed, and disputations were forgotten in a pervading harmony. So potent to bless were the mighty auric emanations of the blessed Virgin when she was as yet scarce upon the threshold of the world of mortal men!

The Nativity of the Blessed Mary

It was in the early days of September that the happy prospective mother, the holy Anna, was informed interiorly that the great Spirit to take embodiment through her, was drawing near the confines of earth. These dedicated parents spent their time in prayer and exalted meditation, sustaining the physical body with light repasts of bread, fruit and water. Conscious of being surrounded with angelic messengers, Anna often gave expression to such fervent canticles of love and adoration that those who were near her were filled with delight and amazement. She appeared literally transported into the higher realms of knowing.

Upon the birth night as the mother knelt in prayer before her shrine, a light, radiant and supernatural, enveloped her and filled the furthest recesses of the room with its splendor, for she was then holding against her heart the blessed form of the child. Angels chorused in triumph and proclaimed that the chosen one should bear the name of Mary.

Great was the rejoicing at the birth of this holy infant Mary. The High Priest Joachim and Hanna gave a feast, and on the child's behalf the father made bounteous gifts to the poor. And as Joachim and Hanna were watching in adoration they saw the angelic hosts, with vast radiations of light which streamed from wing-shaped auras, and heard their triumphant chant of the new day which was dawning

with the birth of Mary: "The Angels of heaven and earth salute thee for the new life which you bring forth!"

We perceive in the angelic salutation not alone a reference to the coming of Mary's sainted Son but a reference to the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, whereby the entire human race will one day learn to build pure and sinless bodies for its incarnation and thus win eventual emancipation from the shackles of disease and death.

Like all master-souls who come consciously into incarnation for a specific purpose, Mary was in complete possession of all her faculties from birth. With the beginning of her earth life she recognized the angelic messengers who surrounded her and from whom she received guidance and instruction. From earliest infancy Mary bore the soul signature of love and compassion. In self-obedience, humility, selfless service and the eagerness to ameliorate the suffering and sorrow that she found in the world about her, she was preparing the way for the Coming One. When Anna was taken to the Temple in Jerusalem for the Feast of Purification she was again inspired to dedicate her daughter to the Temple service and it was here that she pledged to return with Mary to make her full and complete consecration to the Lord at the expiration of a period of three years.

The Dedication of Mary to the Temple

When Mary was a year old, her father, Joachim, also dedicated her to serve in the Temple. Meanwhile, she was prepared for her Temple service at home: "And Hanna said unto her husband, Joachim, 'Build thou a chamber for Mary our daughter, so that she may abide therein until she hath grown somewhat and we can carry her up to Jerusalem where she may dwell before the Lord, even as we have promised Him.'"

Then Joachim built for his daughter a beautiful sanctuary chamber, decorated with rare and costly fabrics, and containing an imposing shrine. Here she lived during the tender years in a heaven-world atmosphere, surrounded by peace and beauty, and companioned by Angels. She was taught by her Initiate-parents, who understood from their own angelic Teachers the high destiny awaiting their daughter.

When Mary was three years of age her parents chose seven maidens, neophytes in the holy Mysteries, to accompany the Virgin to Jerusalem, where she was presented at the Temple and received with praise and thanksgiving, and the High Priest made prophecy: "The Lord God of Israel shall bless thy name, Mary, for in thee He hath revealed the redemption of the people."

When Mary arrived before the portals of the Temple, she heard a Voice from Heaven bidding her welcome, and her entire being flamed with radiance.

Prior to leaving the home of her parents in Nazareth, several Temple priests had come to examine her as to her worthiness for Temple residence. They were greatly surprised and almost overawed by the young girl's wisdom together with her extreme humility and sweetness of manner. Similarly, when she entered the Temple everyone was unanimous in acclaiming her a wise and gifted child.

Accompanied by her parents and the long Processional of maidens bearing flowers and chanting the Psalms, Mary arrive in the Women's Court. Standing before the fifteen steps leading to the Nicanor Gate, Joachim and Anna formally dedicate their treasured child to heaven. Mary climbed the steps alone and entered within where she was greeted by the ten resident Temple maidens and the holy Woman, Anne the prophetess, whose work it was to supervise and direct the lives of those Young Temple neophytes.

Mary's Teachers did not include only those in physical embodiment; she had been in conscious contact with Angels from birth. It was after her Temple entrance that she came into the exalted consciousness wherein she received illumination from the blessed Lord Himself.

In the sanctity of her little room overlooking the Inner Temple containing the Holy of Holies, Mary knew the divine ecstasy of bands of Angels with their triumphant chorusing and the sublime wonder of the Love that had been accorded her by the blessed Lord.

Mary was constant in prayer, and grew in grace and understanding of God, the All-Good. The Priests looked upon her with veneration, and cast lots to discover which of them was worthy to become her Teacher in the deeper mysteries of the Law. The lot fell upon Zadok a man ripe in both years and wisdom. The High Priest blessed Zadok, and said: "Behold the Lord hath prepared for you a daughter, that is to say, Mary; guard ye her diligently and teach her to go in and to come forth from the Temple of the Lord."

"To go in and to go out of the Temple" is, as commonly known among esotericists, a phrase which has reference to the liberation of the ego from the body in Initiation, a process which makes it possible for the individual to visit the Temple "not made with hands," namely, the inner planes of life and being

St. Jerome gives us the following index as to Mary's character and her daily Temple routine.

From the morning of the third hour (6-9) she gave herself to prayer, from the third to the ninth (9-3) to

external work, from the ninth to the twelfth (3-6) she again Prayed.

She was always first at the holy vigils, the most learned in the wisdom of God's Law, the most lovely in humility, the most skillful in the Psalms of David, the most marvelous in charity, the purest of the pure and the most outstanding in every virtue. She was steady and persevering and each day she spent better than the last. No one ever saw or heard her angry. Every word that she said was so full of grace that it was clear that God was speaking in her. . . . She praised God without ceasing and when one greeted her she replied, "Thanks be to God."

The esotericist understands that Mary's Temple service was a time of probationary discipline in preparation for the high Initiations to follow, the highest ever to be given upon this earth to an ego clothed in a feminine body. This required a long and difficult process of sensitization even for one possessing such great spiritual attainment as did Mary. The divine Lady referred to this arduous discipline in her revelation to St. Elizabeth of Schonau in the following words: "My daughter, you think I had all these graces without trouble, but it is not so. I assure you that I received from God no grace, no gift, no virtue without great labor,

continual prayer, ardent desire, profound devotion, many tears and much affliction."

The supreme purpose of initiatory discipline and Temple training can never be expressed more beautifully and completely than in the Lady's further words to St. Elizabeth which are here appended.

The Lord did with me what a musician does with his harp. The musician sets and tunes all the strings so that they give forth a sweet and harmonious melody, and then he sings while playing on it. Thus God brought into harmony with His will my soul and heart and mind and all the senses and actions of my body. And being trained in this manner by His wisdom, I used to be carried by the angels to the bosom of God the Father, and there I received such consolation and joy, such bliss and well-being, such love and sweetness, that I no longer remembered that I had ever been born in this world. Besides I was in such close intimacy with God and His angels that it seemed to me as though I had always existed in that true glory. Then, when I had stayed there as long as pleased God the Father, He gave me back to the angels, and they carried me back to the spot where I had begun to pray. When I found myself on earth again and recalled where I had been, this memory inflamed me with such a love of God that I embraced

and kissed the ground and stones, the trees and other created things, out of love for Him who had created them. And it seemed to me that I should be the handmaid of all the Temple-women, and I wished to be subjected to all creatures, out of love for their supreme Father. And I frequently had this experience.

Once when I was thinking that I never wanted to be deprived of God's grace, I arose and went to read in the Scriptures, desiring something to console my soul. When I opened the book, the first thing I saw was this passage of Isaias: 'Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son.' As I understood from this that the Son of God was going to choose a virgin to be His Mother, I immediately resolved in my heart, out of reverence for that virgin, to remain a virgin myself and to offer myself to her as a handmaid and always to serve her and never to leave her even if I had to travel all over the world with her.

The initiatory pattern is always the same, the aspirant after being lifted to the heights must be tested and tried in the depths. Gethsemane inevitably follows the Transfiguration.

Little Mary after these periods of exaltation would invariably be subjected to the most severe tests of her entire life in the endeavor to break her poise, calm and unbroken contact with the Divine Light within. One of the

most bitter forms of persecution was that of her girl Temple companions who, incited by Mary's rare virtues, were moved to extremes of envy and jealousy. They tried by all means of falsification to have her dismissed in disgrace from the Temple. And to try her inner strength even further, it was in these crucial times that her Angels would hide their faces and she would find herself all alone in her extremity. Although she sorrowed grievously, her pain and her prayer were for those who erred and not for herself. Never once was trial severe enough to break her faith or overshadow her trust. Both of her parents passed in death during this time and Mary was permitted to see in spirit and bless their translations.

When the holy maid had been proved immune to all evil, her mystical experiences increased, her spiritual faculties were enlarged and in the tender ministry of her guiding angels she was prepared for the next soul adventure.

— ***Corinne Heline***