

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

Jonah

Prophet of the Piscean Initiation

That which is occult hath a fish for a symbol, for the fish is hidden in darkness and silence; he knoweth the secret places of the earth and the springs of the hollow sea.

— An Ancient Maxim.

There is no Book in the Bible which has been treated more unintelligently than the Book of Jonah, and none which deals more clearly with the sublime truths of Initiation. Its symbolism is open and unmistakable. The name Jonah means dove, a word signifying in all Temple Teaching the powers of the Initiate; while "fish" signifies the esoteric or hidden truth: "He knoweth the secret places of the earth and the springs of the hollow sea." It is generally known that early Christians used the fish, dove and ship to represent their inner Teachings in a way as significant to the instructed Elect as it was meaningless to the uninstructed multitude.

Early biblical scholars placed the Book of Jonah in the time of Jeroboam II, therefore contemporary with the prophets Joel and Hosea. Later research places this Book as among the last of the prophetic messages, dating probably

from the Restoration but possibly even later. This is more nearly correct according to occult knowledge.

Occultly considered, the story of Jonah and the whale is an allegory of the process of Initiation as known to us in our present Piscean or Christian Dispensation, the Age of the Fish. It was this knowledge which caused early Christians to inscribe the symbol of two fishes in so many places upon the walls of the catacombs in Rome. Many of those who inscribed this sign upon the walls had passed through an experience similar to that of Jonah — Trial by Water, one of the most difficult for a neophyte to come through in safety because it means unloosing the anarchistic forces of the subconscious in which primitive impulses are confined. By his own will a neophyte opens the doors of the great Deep. He must be prepared for the up-rushing powers of subconscious evil formerly held in confinement by the beneficent protection of his Guardian Angel, who now withdraws his hand.

A Guardian Angel, personification of the Race Spirit, stands in the relationship of a parent to individual egos comprising the race. So long as one is content to be led in childlike obedience by this racial Oversoul, there is no conflict between his conscious and subconscious. When, however, he takes his evolution into his own hands, as is done in Initiation, he severs the bond ("cable tow")

between himself and the Race Spirit. The Angel then relinquishes its guardianship over the gates of the individual's "hell," leaving, it free to rise into the full light of consciousness. Not infrequently a neophyte is unable to cope with these blind forces of his own subconscious and he becomes mentally or morally unbalanced or the victim, of serious social maladjustment. Schools of Initiation were instituted that neophytes might have help when they stand most in need of it, and in such wise as not to hinder their development into completely self-reliant individuals. Blessed are those who have learned the lesson of selflessness before that need arrives, for Love casteth out fear and enables a candidate to overcome through transmutation those dark powers dwelling under the Threshold.

The Test of Selflessness

"He that loseth his life ... shall find it," is an ancient occult maxim, old even when the Master Jesus addressed it to His Disciples. The test preceding Initiation is often, the seeming forfeit of physical life. It is only when a candidate has become utterly selfless, when he is willing to renounce his all — even his very life if this is required of him — for Truth's sake, that he is found worthy to receive greater Illumination.

The Book of Jonah is a symbolical interpretation of the many tests, trials and temptations, and the final attainment of a neophyte who aspires to Initiation by the Way of the Cross.

Jonah 1:1-3

Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before me.

But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare hereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

In all biblical passages where we read "the word of the Lord came" to such an one, or the "presence of the Lord" appeared, we must interpret it as referring to The Angel of the Lord, the representative of the Race Spirit who is, as it were, that Spirit's plenipotentiary, deputed to receive honors due the Lord Himself. These opening verses show us that Jonah had progressed so far upon the Path as to be in intimate association with inner plane angelic messengers, and that he was able to leave and re-enter his body at will. He was therefore chosen by the Lords of Destiny to carry a message to Nineveh. This indicates that as a messenger he

was closely associated with the angelic Hierarchy whose work is with races and peoples.

But Jonah did not wish to assume the unpleasant responsibility of announcing impending tragedy to the Ninevites; besides, he felt that the evil might possibly be averted through divine intervention. Here is a trial even more subtle than a test of one's pride. It is axiomatic that an advanced candidate is tested through his virtues rather than through his faults, through his strength instead of through his weakness. Jonah, the meek and gentle dove of God, was tried through his very sweetness, and it became his stumbling block. By his faith and love he had attained to an exalted Degree of Initiate consciousness, but he had not yet learned the ultimate lesson that would make him "as one of the Elohim." That the Angel of the Lord teaches him this lesson is shown in the allegory.

Attempting to flee from the Lord's presence, the story continues, Jonah took ship at Joppa with Tarshish as his destination, thinking thus to escape from the Angel especially adored by peoples of his own country.

Moses was also tried through his virtue, that of humility, when the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in the Burning Bush and instructed him concerning his mission to the Israelites. Although bowed down with self-depreciation, Moses accepted the commission, whereas Jonah fled from

his. The latter's dread of bearing evil tidings, and his faith that the Lord would be merciful, were good; but he failed to understand that he himself was the chosen agent of the Lord's mercy, that by his carrying the Lord's message to Nineveh that city would be saved. If he had failed in his mission Nineveh would have been lost. In order to achieve the salvation of the city the Angel of the Lord was forced to pursue Jonah and to purify him further through various soul trials.

Jonah 1:4

But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

In all occult symbology the ship represents the soul body, wherein man learns to pass through the etheric realms. "Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship and he lay, and was fast asleep" (apart from his body). Esoterically, this has a significance of great practical value to any neophyte beginning to be conscious of withdrawal from the body when falling asleep. The rocking motion of waves is not unlike the primary sensations of withdrawal. This is doubtless the origin of the ship symbol.

The Jonah story proceeds. The sailors, realizing an evil destiny hung over their ship, believed it must be an avenging spirit in pursuit of some guilty person among

them. "So the shipmaster came to him, and said, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God And they said, Come, let us cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah."

At this point Jonah passes the test of selflessness, the lack of which had lain hidden under his cloak of sweetness and faith. He himself suggests that he be cast overboard that the sea might be stilled and the lives of others on board be saved. "So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from her raging."

Water is the great symbol of Piscean religion. Its herald, John the Baptist, came baptizing with water. One of the important acts of the Master Himself, as recounted in the Gospels, was to assist His Disciple Peter to successfully undergo Initiation by Water. In its negative aspect, water signifies the abyss. Ancients considered the sign Pisces as a signifier of sorrow, violence and bloodshed, all forces of the abyss.

The most important step in Jonah's preparation for his greater work was to pass this "water test" which has to do with mastery of the emotions.

Only a disciple who has accomplished this difficult attainment can still the waters of a physical ship.

— ***Corinne Heline***