

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

The Grecian Bible

Homer's Iliad and Odyssey

I am of the opinion that Hesiod and Homer lived four hundred years before my time and not more, and that these were they who framed a theogony for the Greeks and gave names to the gods and assigned to them honors and arts and declared their several forms. But the poets said to be before them were in my opinion after them.

— Herodotus.

Well can it be said that there can be no final translation of Homer. He is immortal. He belongs to all cycles and all ages, each succeeding generation bringing forth new interpretations of his writings commensurate with the events of its time. The Iliad and Odyssey are of that literature which is eternal, wherein every age finds a deeper and more significant meaning.

As is so often true of a high Initiate with a world mission, the personality of Homer is shrouded in legend and speculation. The date and place of his birth are unknown. Seven cities claim the honor of having been the scene of his nativity. Archeological and historical research favor the

Island of Chios (modern Khios) or the city of Smyrna because his works appear to be a blending of the dialects peculiar to these two places. The poet is thought to have lived between 1050 and 850 B.C. This corresponds to the Solomonic Era in Palestine, building of the first Temple being dated at approximately 900 B.C. Hesiod came after the Homeric Age.

Homer's works are the first great descriptive epics of European origin. His stupendous genius has been the source of inspiration for innumerable poets who came after him. Virgil's Aeneid was patterned after the Odyssey, as were the writings of Horace, Dante's Divine Comedy and Milton's Paradise Lost.

Homer is the highlight of that superbly brilliant age of art and literature which was Greece during the closing years of the second pre-Christian millennium. This was the last of the Mycenaean culture as it flowed down into Achean channels, flowering at last in the splendid civilization of classic Greece, a rebirth of the ancient Race Ego on a higher arc of the evolutionary spiral.

It has been said that Homer was blind. Without dismissing the possibility of this as an historical fact, it is yet pertinent to observe that in many initiatory traditions the Initiate is called "blind" whose sight is so centered in spiritual worlds as to render the material world virtually

non-existent. To the Initiate-philosopher, then as now, the material world is an illusion, a mirage; his wisdom consists in refusing to place a false valuation upon it. Homer came to the Grecian people as a teacher and his life centered so completely in spiritual verities that he lived, moved and had his being therein, thus becoming "blind" (oblivious) to eventualities of the mundane world.

Both the Iliad and the Odyssey are attributed to Homer and they are surely his in essence even though they may have been written down by later poets. In them is depicted a period in Grecian civilization ante-dating its recorded history, a magic time when Gods were the companions and friends, the known guides and directors, of men. As observed hitherto, the early Aryan peoples possessed a negative type of mass clairvoyance which bound them close to other planes; but with the passing of time, as they became more individualized, they lost to a corresponding degree the power of seeing into non-physical realms and of contacting disembodied beings.

The first Aryan civilization was under Group Soul guidance; that is, the people were, en masse, so amenable to super-vision that they could take direction from an exalted Being, an Archangel, esoterically termed a Race Spirit. The God Indra was the Race Spirit of the early East Indian peoples. Zeus, Father of Gods and men, performed a

similar role in the human drama of the ancient Greeks. Thus, in the Iliad he hovers in the air above opposing armies, exerting his influence where he can and frequently sending his emissaries, the rainbow-wreathed Iris and the winged Hermes, with instructions for their leaders.

All early Aryans were familiar with tales pertaining to the great battles and heroic deeds of their forebears, mighty people possessing supernatural powers. These were the first Aryan migrants from Atlantis, for whom sacred Temples were erected and to whom the original initiatory instructions were given. The great sagas and epics that have come down through the ages as the proud heritage of the Aryan nations are accounts of an actual historical migration interwoven with initiatory truths. Archeological research has discovered it is just such a combination of historical tradition with spiritual truth that is the subject matter of the two magnificent Homeric works. They have unearthed whole cities wherein the palaces and public buildings, the elaborate carvings, frescoes, paintings and jewelry evidence the high degree of civilization and culture against which events recorded in the Iliad and Odyssey move with vivid realism.

The Iliad is concerned largely with the war against Troy and the fate of the famous Helen. Both archeologists and scholars now agree that there actually was a Trojan war

and they date it at approximately 1200 B.C. Homer evidently incorporated the occurrences of this war in his story and endowed its participants with the noble traits and godlike powers characteristic of the more spiritual early Aryans. Many of his principal actors, such as Achilles and the noble Hector, are alleged to have been "sired" by Immortals; in other words, they are the product of initiatory wisdom as given by Immortals, styled Gods. Helen, over whom the controversy is waged, is also "born of Immortals."

Throughout Greek history Helen was revered in Sparta as a Goddess, and any word of disparagement spoken against her was believed to call down the curse of the Gods. Some even declared that she spent the period of the Trojan War in Egypt waiting for her husband to receive her and that no infidelity was involved.

Helen is a symbolic name used in many esoteric myths to describe the feminine principle in man. It is met with again in the Gnostic School of Simon Magus — the great Hellenistic Initiate of Samaria at the time of Christ who came into conflict with the narrower Judaic School after the death of the Master, as hinted in the Gospels. He created an elaborate initiatory legend in which Helen is the dominant figure. Some fragments of this Gnostic myth still remain.

Helen will also be recalled as representative of the Redemptive Feminine in Goethe's Faust.

Helen's "rise" and "fall" have reference to the manner in which the feminine, Love Power, is exercised in human affairs — whether in the direction of Aphrodite Urania, Queen of the Heavens, or Aphrodite Pandemos, her sensual aspect. Always a fierce battle must be waged and the great cities (states of consciousness) besieged until the conquest of the lower nature by the higher is assured. The broad principles of free will in connection with choice between good and evil, between the way of wisdom and the way of the senses, are ever in evidence. From the materialistic darkness that prevails on this planet today, it is clear that our early Aryan ancestors made the wrong choice. They chose Ares, "the curse of mankind," and have continued in his hire ever since.

Homer reveals this in the narrative prefacing the action of the Iliad: Hera, Athena and Aphrodite, the three great Goddesses of the Golden Age, offer a gift to Paris of Troy. Hera offers him riches and renown; Athena, wisdom; Aphrodite, the most beautiful woman in the world to be his wife. Paris chooses the gift of Aphrodite. But the most beautiful woman in the world is the wife of King Menelaus of Sparta. Since Paris cannot secure her otherwise he

abducts her, and this abduction results in the downfall and devastation of the city of Troy.

The beautiful Helen, with her supernatural gifts of prophecy and clairvoyance, represents humanity before its fall. The great war and its aftermath of darkness and confusion signifies the Fall and the loss of Eden — that is, man's loss of contact with spiritual realms and the long and weary period of searching to regain that heritage.

As the Iliad shows loss of the true Light, the Odyssey portrays the wanderings of the soul in search of the Light and its ultimate home-coming by way of the testings and trials relative to Initiation.

The scene of the Iliad is confined largely to the city of Troy and its environs. It begins with preparations for the battle, in which the Trojans, led by Hector, are to pit their strength against the Achaeans under Achilles. Ares and Athena support the cause of the Achaeans; Aphrodite and Hermes, that of the Trojans. This suggests to an esotericist that the latter worshipped a deity combining the qualities of Aphrodite and Hermes — the source of the Divine Hermaphrodite of the Mysteries, the Divine Son, the complete and perfected human being. The Race Spirit, Zeus, is neutral as he directs both battle lines. However, he shows great compassion and tenderness for the Trojans

upon the death of the noble Hector, an event which marks the defeat of Troy and brings the Iliad to a close.

The *Odyssey*, purporting to set forth the homecoming from war of the triumphant Odysseus, is an initiatory allegory of the experiences that befall one traveling on the Path of Initiation, from his first consecration to the final consummation of the Mystic Marriage, which is but faintly shadowed forth under its earthly equivalent.

I Hesiod, next in fame to Homer, lived about one hundred years after him. In his description of the four ages of man he gives some idea of how to date the Trojan War. He places it in the Bronze Age and archeologists claim that the civilization of which Troy was a part used that metal. The Dorian Invasion has reference to the Iron Age which followed, for the Dorians used iron. By the superiority of their iron weapons they were able to conquer both Greece and Crete. Thus suitably, the Iron Age falls in the Arian Age, during which Persian-Greco-Latin civilization was destined to run its course. This historical finding also corroborates the Hindu statement that the Kali Yuga (Iron Age) began after the death of Krishna, about 1200 B.C. At this time our planet reached the nadir of its material evolution. Hence, the Christ came at "the End of the Age" to begin His work as the Light of the World that would banish the darkness of materiality. Hesiod wrote:

If you will listen to another tale I will tell you, and do you ponder it in your mind, that from the same origin are sprung gods and mortal men. First of all the Immortals holding the mansions of Olympus made a golden race of speaking men. And as gods they were wont to live a life void of care, apart from and without labors and trouble, nor was wretched old age at all impending; but ever the same in hands and feet did they delight themselves in festivals, out of reach of all ills, and they died as if overcome by sleep. All blessings were theirs. Of its own will the fruitful field used to reap the labors of their hands, along in quietness with many good things rich in flocks and dear to the blessed gods.

Afterwards again the dwellers in Olympian mansions formed a second race of silver, . . . inferior, like unto the golden neither in shape nor mind . . . for a brief space they used to live, augering griefs through their imprudences, for they could not keep off rash insults one from the other, nor were they willing to worship the gods, nor to sacrifice at the holy altars of the blessed. Them indeed afterward Jove buried in his wrath, because they gave not due reverence to the blessed gods who occupy Olympus.

And yet a third race of speech-gifted men formed Father Jove of brass, not at all like unto the silver,

formidable and mighty by reason of their ashen spears, whose care was the mournful deed of Mars. Neither did they at all eat wheaten food only.... These had brazen arms and likewise brazen houses, and with brass they wrought.... They entered into the squalid abode of chilling Hades inglorious, for black death seized them and they quitted the bright sunlight,

When the earth had covered this race also, again Jove wrought yet another, a fourth.... And these baneful wars as well as the dire battle-din destroyed, a part fighting before seven-gated Thebes and part also in ships beyond the waste depths of the sea, when it led them to Troy for fair-haired Helen's sake. There indeed the end of death enshrouded them, but them, Jove, their sire, made to dwell at the confines of the earth and far from the Immortals.

Hesiod closes his work with a prophetic lamentation for the Iron Age:

Would that I had died before or been born afterwards! For now in truth is the Iron Age. Neither will they cease by day nor night from toil and wretchedness, the gods will give them severe cares, yet nevertheless even for these shall good be mingled with ills. But Jove will destroy this race of men endowed with speech, as immediately after having been born they became

silvery-templed, nor will sire be like-minded to son nor son to parent, nor guest to host, nor comrade to comrade, nor will brother be dear even as it was aforetime to brother. Quickly will they dishonor parents growing old, addressing them with harsh words. . . . One will sack the city of another, nor will there be any favor to the just, the trustworthy nor the good; rather will they honor man that doeth evil and is overbearing; the bad will injure the better man, speaking in perverse speeches and swearing false oaths ... baneful griefs shall remain and against evil there shall be no recourse.

The theme of the Odyssey has to do with the fortunes of Odysseus (Ulysses), King of Ithaca, a small and rugged island on the west coast of Greece. At the conclusion of the Trojan War Odysseus begins his homeward journey which, due to numerous obstacles encountered on the way, takes ten years. As heretofore stated, the Odyssey is only superficially an historical legend. Its primary purpose is to describe the difficulties besetting a soul as it journeys Godward. Thus intelligent and educated Greeks understood it, for Homer's twofold work constituted the Grecian Bible. Homer's epics and myths concerning all the Gods were interpreted allegorically by the philosophers; and thus interpreted, they became the basis of divine dramas in the Mystery Temples. Demeter, Dionysus and Persephone at Eleusis, Dionysus and Apollo at Delphi, have been

mentioned. All the other beautiful legends were woven into Mystery Rituals as corollaries to the main theme.

Ulysses himself represents an Enlightened One upon the Patti. Telemachus, his son, typifies the neophyte, one who desires to go upon the quest. Penelope, Ulysses' wife, is the Divine Feminine, the Love Principle, with which the spirit (Ulysses) longs to be united, this union being the culmination of its labors. During the long absence of Ulysses his castle is besieged by suitors, all vastly inferior to him, seeking the hand of Penelope in marriage. These suitors symbolize demands of the lower nature, and they persist in "wasting the substance" of Ulysses' house (the ideal).

Telemachus is "grieved and indignant over the wastefulness of the suitors;" in other words, he has awakened — and is ready to begin his search for the true Way. Athena (Wisdom or guidance from higher planes) pours about him a significant glory, the halo of dedication, and under her direction he sets out in search of his father. The suitors, angry over his departure, plot to encompass his death upon his return.

The first test that Telemachus meets is the necessity of keeping silent, of acquiring that tranquility of mind which enables him to discern how "Athena appeared and disappeared as elusively as the sea bird comes and goes."

Only one who had seen celestial visitants: with his own eyes could have written so clear a description of the apparitions of the Goddess.

Then Telemachus visits Nestor on the island of Pylos. Nestor is the objective mind to which a seeker is prone to turn in the first emergency he meets. But this "mortal mind" has no satisfactory solution to his problem. So he visits the beautiful castle of Menelaus, thinking "Surely the mansions of the Olympian Zeus must be like this." Menelaus, typifying Spirit, directs Telemachus forward upon his quest, telling him that his father is held captive upon Orygia, isle of enchantment, by the nymph Calypso.

Here we return to the journeyings of Ulysses.

Ulysses encounters the Cyclopes, the dread one-eyed monster, who imprisons him and his companions after devouring six of the latter. Cyclopes represents the Dweller on the Threshold, the phantom embodiment of accumulated wrongdoings of an ego's earth lives. Ulysses makes the Cyclopes drunk, blinds him and escapes with his men by hiding under a flock of sheep. Again, sheep point to the Arian Age since Aries is the sign of the sheep or ram.

After His Transfiguration the Christ Candidate was compelled to descend once more into the valley that his new powers might be tested. So with Ulysses, who must

still be tempted. He and his sailor companions now approach the Isle of Circe. He puts wax in the ears of the sailors so they cannot hear the seductive songs of the mermaids. Self-control is an important factor in Initiation, perhaps the most important. To become deaf (oblivious) to the outer world and to center one's consciousness upon the within is the only safeguard. This is the meaning of the sprig from the Tree of Life that Hermes gives to Ulysses, which renders him immune to the enticements of Circe.

He alone, however, is immune to the siren spell. The sailors succumbed and are transformed into swine — a story equivalent to the Gospel Parable of the Prodigal Son. This Parable belongs to every race because it pertains to an evolutionary experience common to all.

Having risen above temptation, Ulysses is immune to control by Circe, who now becomes his friend and counselor. Instead of the spiced wine of desire she gives him the barley and honey (wisdom and bliss) of the soul. She finally grants him his freedom, warning him that he can return home only by way of Hades. The ability to enter the realms of purgation and minister to its earthbound prisoners is an essential duty for a new Initiate. Proceeding to Hades, Ulysses' quest is blessed by Hercules the lion-hearted, who tells him: "To come here you must twice encounter death, while others do die but once." The first

death is Initiation, death to the personal life. It is of this death that Jacob Boehme says: "He who dies not before he dies will be ruined when he dies."

In Hades Ulysses meets his mother: "A longing rose in my heart to take in my arms the spirit of my mother, though she were dead. Thrice I stepped forward to Embrace her and thrice she slipped through my grasp like a shadow or a dream." His mother tells him of Penelope's grief: "Wearily for her the nights wane and the days pass in shedding tears. The father abides in the fields and Telemachus feasts at eternal banquets."

Ulysses must now tread the path that is as narrow and sharp as a razors edge. "On one side are great rocks which even winged things may never pass, not even doves who bear ambrosial food to Father Zeus. These ye must know the blessed gods call the Wandering Rocks." Lack of stability and perseverance are the principal impediments to attainment. The Rocks are Scylla and Charybdis.

Homer symbolically describes the perils of Initiation at this point: "One reaches with sharp peak into wide heaven, and a dark cloud encompasses it. No mortal may scale nor set foot on it. Here dwelleth Scylla, a dreadful monster, twelve feet dangling down, six necks and three rows of teeth full of black death. She searches with each head to carry off sailors as ships try to pass. On the other rock, a

great fig tree grows and beneath it mighty Charybdis sucks down black water. Thrice each day she sucks it down and spouts it forth."

Scylla as thus described is a colossal thought form of evil generated by mankind through centuries of wrongdoing. It is symbolized in Revelation as the Harlot of Babylon.

Charybdis is representative of evil resulting from misuse of the Law of Generation. It is to be noted that both of these horrible creatures are of feminine gender; this is because their evils stem from untransmuted emotional life. Six (the number of sex) sailors are snatched by Scylla and Charybdis as the boat passes through the narrow waters between them.

Next, upon the banks of the Island of Helios, the sailors steal some of the sacred kine of the God while Ulysses is deep in prayer; whereupon "Zeus at the command of the Sun God smites the swift ship and cleaves it in pieces." To eat (enjoy) instead of to transmute, results inevitably in self-destruction.

The lower nature seeks always to quench the ardor of an aspiring soul. The lure of the beautiful in terms of sense life (the nymph Calypso) is one of the most potent enticements employed by the tempting forces.

Having labored for three days under the guidance of "Hermes with the Golden Rod" at constructing a raft, Ulysses escapes from the enchanted island.

Ulysses now comes to the land of the Phoenicians and is kindly received by King Alcinous and his court. This gracious land is located "far beyond the world's covetousness." Its palaces are of gold and silver and its fruits never wither. Ulysses comes hither garbed in mist, the etheric body, for this country is located in the etheric realms. It is the Garden of Eden of the Bible, the First Heaven of esotericism. Entry into its realm is one of the first experiences of a neophyte.

Finally, "wrapped in sweet-smelling clothes" and guided by the Pleiades and Arcturus, his journey is accomplished. This means that the soul-power gained by overcoming subtle temptations radiates an aura about his body that propels him into wider experiences and larger accomplishments.

Ulysses, alone of all his company, reaches the harbor of his homeland, Ithaca, "Many are called but few are chosen." He is clad in a golden mist (the luminous soul body, fashioned by overcoming and transmutation), and is led by Athena (Wisdom) to the foot of a great olive tree (regeneration), where he dedicates the treasures given him

by King Alcinous, gifts of soul-light and soul-power acquired by ministering in the invisible worlds.

Athena touches Ulysses with her wand and "the fair flesh withered on his limbs, over his limbs was cast the skin of an old i man; his yellow hair wasted away, dimmed were his eyes erstwhile so fair. His shining garments were changed into a vile wrap and his torn garments dark with smoke" — a significant contrast between the "body celestial" and the "body terrestrial." Ulysses is wafted to Ithaca in a state of sweet sleep. In other words, he has now changed the luminous soul body wherein he was clothed for his heaven-world experiences for the dark and heavy physical body in which to continue his experiences upon earth.

Athena gives Ulysses a script and a staff, and the hide of a swift stag. This means that although one must return from the higher realms and assume the burdens and limitations of the physical body, he still retains the powers of an Initiate.

Telemachus also returns. Ulysses receives him joyously as a "Son of Light" and the two join forces to oust the suitors. In this work they must obtain the cooperation of Penelope, "a sweet light in the dark" — that is, the final transmutation of the lower nature must be accomplished under the supervision of the Divine Feminine, the illumined heart.

Penelope, arrayed in white and gold, greets Ulysses in her upper chamber (exaltation of consciousness). Although she does not recognize him she tells him how she thwarted her suitors by weaving a web in the day which she unraveled at night, assuring them that when it was completed she would choose a husband — for after his absence of twenty years, Penelope still longs for the return of Ulysses. Observe how the esoteric period of "twenty" and "forty" are continually repeated in all Mystery dramas.

Esoterically, the "web" is the garment of the soul, woven by the thoughts, emotions and actions of waking hours, which is unraveled (analyzed and evaluated) by the ego in retrospection during periods of sleep.

To test the wisdom of Penelope, Ulysses says: "In the inner court of the castle grew an olive tree. I built a chamber around it, I made it fair with works of silver and gold and purple." As he speaks her heart melts within her, for she understands. She replies forthwith: "Thy bed (soul-chamber) shall be ready whenever thy soul desires it."

Then comes the ancient woman who has been guarding the upper chamber. She is the wisdom that guards the exalted consciousness pertaining to the Mystic Marriage. She goes with them to the bridal hall as maidens with lighted torches in their hands lead the way.

"All was peace and gladness in the shadowy halls."

— ***Corinne Heline***