

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

Jonah's Initiation: The Mystic Three Days

"Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." The Zohar states: "He (God) had His dwelling in the Great Sea, and was a fish therein." Rescued from certain death by the miraculous fish — for it was not meant that Jonah should die — the prophet abides in the fish's belly for three days and three nights. This refers to an earth experience, for in early geological eras the earth was covered with water and mist. Assisted by the Hierophant, an entranced candidate recapitulates the past evolution of the race and his own part therein, thus releasing from within the depths of his own soul titanic forces which he must learn to master.

The foregoing experiences embrace periods known occultly as the first three of the Seven Days of Creation, vast evolutionary epochs with which the Book of Genesis begins. The present Earth Period is the Fourth Day. A candidate for Initiation reviews the work of the preceding three Days and is awakened upon the sunrise of the fourth, veritably born anew.

In all initiatory legends there is a huge and terrible dragon which figures as the tempter, or the adversary of

Heaven. This monster is generally a sea creature, for the sea is emblematic of the astral world under its feminine aspect. Thus Hercules, the Grecian Christ-hero, passed through an experience similar to that of Jonah, spending three days within the body of a sea monster referred to as the "belly of Hell." Like Jonah, Hercules escaped unharmed.

Jonah 2:1-2,4-7,10

Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly,

And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.

I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

And I went down to the bottom of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.

'When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

The word fish is a form of the Hebrew word ish, meaning Man. Nineveh was the Fish City.

Part of the initiatory work takes place within the earth: "The earth with her bars was about me forever: yet bast thou brought up my life from corruption." After such an experience a successful candidate knows that physical life is transitory while spiritual life is deathless and eternal.

According to the Gospel of Luke, the blessed Lord Christ once declared: "This is an evil generation, they seek a sign, and there shall be no sign given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet." (Luke 11:29) Matthew (12:40) elucidates this further: "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" — a reference to the three days of trance in ancient Initiation rituals. During this time the ego wandered in the spiritual world and investigated living records in the Memory of Nature. The Christ taught a new method, a new process of Initiation that eliminated the three days of trance. The "sign of Jonas" has reference to the ancient method; "the Son of Man" to the new process.

When it was written that after three days Jonah left the body of the fish to return to land it meant esoterically that his Initiation was complete in that Degree. Now purified of formerly unrecognized failings, and strengthened by an

extension of his mental and spiritual faculties, Jonah was ready to perform the work whereto he had been called. Still deeply grieving, he proceeds to Nineveh and warns the people of impending calamity.

Astrologically, the Book of Jonah exemplifies the Piscean nature. Its theme is twofold: first, rebellion; later, compassion. The Piscean Dispensation, from the Crucifixion of the Christ until now, has swung between two extremes, with compassion slowly but surely overcoming rebellion. In the work of this age a candidate must learn, as did Jonah, to judge true judgments based on principle, not on appearances. This is illustrated in Jonah's story when, after warning the Ninevites, he "went out and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. And the Lord prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." (Jonah 4:5-8)

It was shown in the Book of Joel that the plague of locusts signified humanity's voracious evil appetites, and that moral forces are always correlated with definite thought forms which gradually take on objective physical reality. The gourd is a true symbol of Jonah's Illumination acquired by his experience in the belly of the Great Fish, while the "worm" that destroys the beautiful plant of spirituality is a destructive thought-form.

Elijah sat under the juniper tree; Zaccheus climbed up into the sycamore tree; Deborah prophesied under a palm tree; Moses spoke with God, in the Burning Bush; and Jonah's gourd cast a shadow over his head. All instances of this nature relate to inner development having to do with lifting the Kundalini fire. At this juncture on the Path the tests are always most subtle and difficult to recognize, for it is by his virtues that a candidate is tempted. The Dweller on the Threshold now assumes human form, appearing no more in the likeness of symbolic and more or less natural animal figures. Appearing as an Angel of Light, its subtle temptations are presented in all the delicate and seductive imagery wherewith the astral world teems.

The essence of evil in such alluring temptations, evil which appears good and holy to a candidate, is the invisible work that destroys the heart of the gourd and causes it to wither. Because of his own personal weaknesses, a

candidate often finds that a "worm (lack of essential qualities) has smitten his gourd and it withers. His initiatory work must then be done over. In despair, he voices the lament of Jonah: "It is better for me to die than to live."

As does every true candidate, Jonah is "traveling toward the East." After delivering his message to Nineveh, he builds a booth and sits under it to watch what may happen to the city. Every city possesses a "pattern" that hovers over it like a cloud; like clouds, it may take diverse forms. One having ability to observe and study such archetypal forms can await and "see what would become of the city." In the case of Nineveh the hovering form of tragedy was changed by the people's sincere repentance. The pattern having been altered, the forces of destruction were dissipated by bands of Archangelic ministers and the city was spared.

All prophecy can be conditioned by the will of the human factor concerned, be it an individual, a group, a nation or a race. God's will does not punish; it enlightens. It is always possible to alter the lines of causation by sincere repentance and reformation.

In common with all Initiates, Jonah was not yet above temptation despite his high attainment. Next the subtle test of personal pride rose up to assail him. He was humiliated because the Angel of the Lord had failed to verify his

prophecy after all his suffering and sacrifice, and his great reluctance about making the prophecy. He invoked the Angel angrily, saying, "O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? ... I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.... Therefore, I beseech thee, take my life from me; for it is better to die than to live." Thus entered the "worm" to destroy the "gourd" of Jonah's Illumination.

Overcoming pride belongs to the Air Initiation. Not until Jonah had passed this testing did he come into a realization of the unity of all life.

The Vision of Unity

The principal work of the Piscean Dispensation has been to discover the Kingdom of Heaven within. By the experience of mortality man learns that mundane things will eventually fail him through a "vehement east wind." At length he comes to realize — through sorrow, loss and disillusionment — that only by going within can his soul find an abiding solace and support. Only through the Christ enthroned "thin is he able to contact the Christ without. All too long has the human race been content with an exoteric religion.

The purpose of current world-wide chaos and confusion (the loosing of the waters of the great Deep) is, even as it was in the days of Nineveh, to teach a man to look within himself for the realities of life. He must meet the same experiences life after life until this lesson is learned. Rebellion is the keynote of unenlightened men. Once lessons of this world have been mastered through enlightenment, that keynote becomes Compassion. Then, despite failures and disappointments, his heart is filled with a great ecstasy because he has glimpsed a vision of infinite unity. In the exaltation of his newly awakened divine compassion, he shares the realization voiced by the Angel of the Lord: "And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand, and their left hand; and also much cattle?" (Jonah 4:11)

Cod was present in Nineveh as He was in Jerusalem. Man's little brothers of the animal world, represented in the term cattle, embody a spark of the Divine and so are a part of Him. When Jonah came into the blessed consciousness of the oneness of all life he was qualified to go forth as a true messenger of the New Day of Christ, the keynotes of which are the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

As before stated, the Book of Jonah is centered primarily in Initiation by Water. It was given to prepare humanity for

the First Coming of Christ Jesus as a Messiah incarnate among men. It outlines the Way of for the Aquarian-Leo Dispensation.

The Book of Daniel, which we will consider in our next chapter, is centered primarily in Initiation by Fire. It was given to prepare humanity for the Second Coming of Christ Jesus and outlines the Path of Initiation for the Aquarian-Leo Dispensation.

The Savior, in His own divine Godhood, taught the blending of these two mighty forces of Water and Fire in the Rite of Baptism. The works which He performed during the three glorious years of His ministry attest, to the insuperable power of this blending. He came as the great Way Shower and this blending marks the Christed Way.

— ***Corinne Heline***