

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

Daniel in Babylon

Historically, the birth and lineage of Daniel are hidden in complete obscurity. His name means God is my judge. He typifies in his own person the characteristic attributes of Leo-Aquarius: bravery, moral courage, self-emancipation, self-control — qualities which describe the man of the Aquarian Age who will supplant Piscean Age man, the man of sorrows.

According to tradition Daniel was of the House of Judah (Leo). As one of the royal exiles taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, he resided at the royal court of Babylon and was instructed in the wisdom of the Chaldeans by priests of the magnificent Temple of Bel. This wisdom included astrology, astronomy and divination in general; also the arts of healing. Esoterically, his experiences in Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar parallel those of Joseph under Pharaoh. Both Joseph and Daniel symbolize the illumined mind; Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, the understanding, it achieves a new consciousness, out of which will arise of materiality which humanity must endure until, through spiritualized understanding, achieves a new consciousness, out of which will arise a new world of honor and peace. The kingdom of heaven must be found within.

When this is done, a corresponding condition will be reflected in outer conditions. No one ever enters a mundane heaven until he has established a state of heavenly consciousness within himself. This is a basic doctrine of all spiritual and metaphysical Schools and of all true teachers: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God . . . and all these things shall be added unto you." This attainment is exemplified in the lives of Joseph and Daniel.

Initiation by Fire

Occultly, the Book of Daniel is the story of Initiation by Fire. After the Exile this Fire Mystery was fostered only in the most esoteric Schools, whose Initiates were bound to silence under sacred oaths.

The two major tests of Initiation by Fire are the Fiery Furnace and the Lion's Den, both referring to similar processes. The lion has always been a symbol of cosmic Fire, that Fire-force which pulsates throughout the universe and is the hidden life of mineral, plant, animal and man. As long as this fire-force rages unrestrained, man himself is a fiery furnace. After it has been brought under control of the spiritual will, he is immune to "fire" and can pass through it unscathed. This he does repeatedly in his work as an Invisible Helper, even seeming to bear a charmed physical life. Once in control of this force, man enters upon a life of harmlessness and purity. He can pass unharmed through

"the lion's den" because he is under the protection of the Law of Unity and Love. Such an one is hailed as a "fiery Initiate;" he has become a "king of Fire" and in every realm denizens of fire know him and obey his will. It is only after passing through the experiences of the fiery Initiation that one comes to understand why the God in all religions has been represented by the Fire element.

Astrologically, Daniel represents the glory and brilliance of the Summer Solstice, the high and holy season when divine Fire Forces are rulers of earth.

The friends of Daniel symbolize specific powers evolved within the neophyte, powers awaiting evocation in every candidate as he gains control of fire-force centers within his own body. Centuries after the Book of Daniel was written, during the Dark Age of Europe and the era of ruthless inquisitorial domination by a reactionary religious hierarchy, these fire symbols appeared among Alchemists and Rosicrucians, for nowhere can the flames of persecution burn so fiercely as to destroy, the Initiates learned in the secret of cosmic Fire. They pass safely through the conflagrations prepared for them, reserving secret messages and codes for future generations.

"Now among these were the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mischael, and Azariah," the writer of Daniel states in the sixth verse of the first chapter. In Hebrew

Hananiah is interpreted a gift of the Lord (Law); Mischeal, who is like God; Azariah, help of the Lord (Law). The Chaldean name bestowed upon Daniel was Belteshazzar, meaning a keeper of the hidden treasures of Bel (Bel also means Lord). The Chaldean name Shadrach means inspiration of the Sun; Meshach, the worship of love (or Venus); Abednego, servant of the shining fire. Each of these last three, it will be observed, refers to the power of cosmic Fire in some one of its aspects.

The heart of every civilization has been Initiation, which simply means a greater degree of Illumination attained by a few of those more highly advanced than are the great masses. St. Paul aptly described the difference as milk for babes and meat for strong men.

Initiation has been given throughout the ages and in many grades and Degrees suitable to the races who received it. All forms of Initiation have been divided into four distinct types; Initiation by Water, by Fire, by Air and by Earth. The four elements are correlated with certain attributes and characteristics within man himself. The ancient Alchemist declared, "There are four great grades in our Labour: they are, the Ram (Aries, Fire)-Cancer (Water)-Libra (Air)-Capricorn (Earth)."

In the days of Atlantis and during the magnificent civilization of China, which was a bridge between Atlantis

and Aryana, Water Initiation was paramount. Man was then largely a prey of his emotions and by means of the Water Initiation he was taught to control and transmute them. With the birth of Aryana passion and desire came to the fore, and Initiation by Fire predominated. This continues today for man of our present Fifth Root Race is motivated more by desire than by reason. Hence, our Bible, the supreme textbook of life, deals almost entirely with Initiation by Fire.

This Initiation is divided into three main steps, or Degrees. These are termed alchemically, Calcination, Trawmutation, Sublimation.

During the coming Aquarian Age Initiation by Air will take first place, for man's mind will then be his foremost instrument of progress. Through the unfolding of its faculties 'the superman of that epoch will be developed. Air Initiation will enable him to possess "this mind . . . which was also in Christ Jesus," as described by Paul.

In still more remote periods of development the human race will receive its highest spiritual lessons through that last and most difficult of all Initiations, the Earth Initiation. This belongs to a distant future and its wonders can only be briefly touched upon by quoting the words of the Supreme Master when He said "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

The first step or Degree in the Fire Initiation is Calcination; that is, making a burnt offering. It means laying the personal self on the altar of sacrifice. This is symbolized by the offering burnt in the outer court of the Tabernacle. Dying to the personal self is one of the most difficult disciplines upon the Path. St. Paul made reference to this mystic death when he said that the seed must be placed in the ground and die. Were it can bring forth new life. It is only after the death of personality that new Initiate life can spring forth.

This mystic death is sometimes referred to alchemically as Putrefaction, wherein one's physical body may be seen lying in an open grave while above its head stands a glorious rainbow of promise. The unconquered personal self is often represented by a black raven or a fierce animal pursuing a beautiful maiden. But throughout the various steps of Calcination may be heard the voice of Mercurius (the higher self): "Happy is he who dies for Me, for he will be resurrected in Me." By this Degree of Calcination the meanings of death and Initiation are closely interwoven. Every initiatory formula ever known has included the Degree of death and resurrection, and its initiatory record extending down through the ages was gloriously climaxed in the life of our most Beloved Lord, the Christ.

The second step of Fire Initiation is the Degree of Transmutation. Through the Degree of Calcination the personal self is laid upon the altar of burnt offering; by the Degree of Transmutation that power which permeated the disciple's lower nature is transformed into soul power as permanent virtues. The cosmic Fire force within man, the furnace wherein this work is effected, is symbolized by a lion. This symbol is depicted in various postures, each of which is significant of a certain attainment in this Degree of Transmutation. Sometimes the lion is in bondage and led by a beautiful maiden who represents awakened and developed powers of the soul. One of the Tarot cards depicts the maiden closing the mouth of the lion. This denotes full control of the fire force by the soul. Again the lion is represented as battling with a serpent, the serpent typifying the spinal spirit fire. When Daniel had completely mastered the Degree of Transmutation he walked unharmed in the lion's den.

The color of the lion also typifies certain phases of development. It is sometimes red or green or golden. An ancient Sage declared that within the innermost parts of the green lion will be discovered the red star. The process of transmutation is a gradual one. After the red of the animal nature has been transmuted into the green of higher expression, there still remains the influence of the martial red star. It often requires long and difficult periods of

probation and testing before the effects of this influence can be completely transmuted into radiant powers of the soul as symbolized by the golden lion. It is significant that in the excavations at the site of the ancient Babylonian and Chaldean Temples the lion is found to be a prominent motif of decoration. Fire Initiation held first place in the Temples of these lands. The golden lion is sometimes crowned and sometimes shown with outspread wings. Both figures typify the highest phases of transmutation and proclaim the fact that the disciple is ready to take the third and final Degree of Initiation by Fire.

The Degree of Sublimation is the third Degree of the Initiation by Fire. In it every vestige of the personality must be lifted up and incorporated into the spirit. The viewpoint of the disciple is no longer human; he sees and understands all things in the light of spirit. It is literally true that he lives and moves and has his being in spiritual Law. That this Degree is difficult of realization, and that many lives must be spent in the process of its attainment, is plain to be seen. Alchemically, it represents the uniting of two lions, a red and a white, and through this union a stream of golden elixir pours from their mouths. This elixir is the same as that referred to by the Christ when He told the woman of Samaria that "whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."

In early times, when men lived in much closer attunement with spiritual realms than at present, it was necessary that a monarch become an Initiate before he was anointed king. It was the mystic meaning of the lion in this connection that led to its becoming the principal decorative motif of royal thrones. The most notable instance of such decoration was the throne of King Solomon, a magnificent golden dais reached by seven steps, a golden lion upon each end of each step. The number seven refers to the seven spiritual centers awakened by the play and interplay of the cosmic Fire-force (lion). The fourteen lions symbolized these centers manifesting in both their masculine and feminine aspects. This was also the significant meaning of the fourteen stations of the cross, an important part of initiatory work in the early Christian Church.

Alphidius, an ancient Sage, said, "You must know that when we dissolve we sublimate as well, and we calcinate without interruption." This reveals that the work of cleansing must go on even after a disciple has reached the high place of sublimation. He must ever be watchful that the personality does not desert spirit to renew its old life of separateness and limitation. St. Paul was passing through this Degree when he said, "I die daily." His disciples were striving for the same attainment when he admonished them that they must pray without ceasing.

In the Degree of Sublimation a disciple enters into the holy of holies, there to stand in the presence of Life Eternal. The ecstasy of soul accompanying this Degree is beyond all description. The difficulties and trials of the Path, the long years of renunciation and struggle, are resolved in the glories of spirit in the realm of golden splendor where the disciple now finds himself.

In an old alchemical treatise this Degree of Sublimation is represented pictorially by an androgynous (male-female) figure resting within an arc of gold. Beneath the picture are the words: "The soul rejoices because the body has agreed to recognize the soul's prerogative and to serve it well."

Perhaps the most illustrious example of this exaltation of spirit is found in the Song of Solomon. In the high note of his famous Song the personality has been completely subjugated and the power of spirit is supreme. The singer chants in his rapturous state: "My Beloved is mine, and I am his, he feedeth among the lilies." Herein is depicted the sublime culmination of the Sublimation Degree of Fire Initiation.

It is now needful to consider preparatory work demanded for the Fire Initiation even more than for Initiation by Water, Air or Earth. Because of the greater dangers of this Initiation its nature and powers have been concealed from most neophytes.

— ***Corinne Heline***