

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

## **The Baptism – Bringing to Sight**

As the day was dawning at the Full Moon of May, enlightenment came to Gautama. Five wondrous dreams (visions) had been his during the night, forewarning him that his Illumination was at hand. Before sunrise he seated himself at the foot of the Bodhi Tree, vowing he would remain there until he gained full insight. Holy legends say that Angels surrounded him and sang songs of rejoicing — or there is always great joy among Gods and Angels when an Emancipated One joins their ranks.

Again Mara, the tempter, appeared with his demonic retinue of fears, hopes, wishes, desires and loves. The elements were teeming with them, Fire, water, air and earth seemed to rise against Gautama, but he remained unmoved. Beautiful handmaidens of Mara hovered about him, but he heeded them not, being impervious to desire. "Behold these women with faces like the moon and mouths like the new lotus, with sweet, ravishing Vol s and teeth like silver and snow," lured Mara. Finding the Prince immune to enticements, the evil spirits departed.

Freed from all impure elements, Gautama came to the end of his quest. He beheld the mysteries of birth and death. He read the Akashic records, comprehending the

chain of cause and effect. All former existences were made clear to him, and he knew the reason for pain and the way of its annihilation. He had become the Buddha.

Two paths opened before him: one ascended into the perpetual bliss of Nirvana; the other descended again to earth for the sharing of his light with mankind. Mara appeared once more, urging him to seek the joy of liberation and to abandon the world to its fate. But Angels surround him, entreating his return. Mara was again repulsed as the angelic pleas became victorious.

### **Calling of the Disciples**

He returned to seek the five disciples who had deserted him and were then living near Benares. They became the first monks of his fast growing community, which had extended far during the forty-four years of his wandering, teaching and ministering.

### **Sermon on the Eightfold Path**

His initial sermon was given within the precincts of the deer park in Benares. Buddhist sacred art pictures him in this park with his five disciples and a group of gazelles about him. Here he enunciated for the first time the principles underlying the noble Eightfold Path.

An axiom as ancient as the first School of Initiation ever to flourish upon the earth is couched in the words: "If any man will do His will, he shall know the Doctrine."

There is nowhere a more complete formula for "living the life" than the Buddha's Eightfold Path. The Path of Liberation, taught the Buddha, has eight broad divisions, not one of which can be omitted. They are:

1. Right Contemplation: Contemplation of that which is right and good through control of the mind and lifting it into union with the spirit.

2. Right Mindfulness: Praying without ceasing, consecrating every thought to the highest truth. To paraphrase St. Paul, whatever is true, pure and lovely, think on these things.

3. Right Effort: The first and most important effort is self-conquest. "He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city."

4. Right Livelihood: Hurt no living thing, neither man or our "little animal brothers;" gain thy livelihood only through helpfulness.

5. Right, Conduct: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you — a teaching common to all inspired prophets.

6. Right Speech: Ask: is it good? Is it true? Is it necessary? To have power to go "whereunto it is sent," every word must be true to the best of our understanding, appropriate to the occasion, and ensouled with love.

7. Right Aspirations: Aspirations crystallize into thoughts, for "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." If one's aspirations are high, his life, both objective and subjective, will be transformed.

8. Right Views: The more whole-heartedly one's life, including one's thoughts, purposes, words and deeds, is dedicated to righteousness, the more perfect will be his alignment with Truth. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

As he sent forth his disciples the Buddha said: "I am delivered from all fetters, both human and divine. Go ye now and wander, out of compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, and the welfare of both gods and men. Let not two of you go the same way. Preach the doctrine which is glorious in its beginning, glorious in its progress, and glorious in its end. In spirit and in letter proclaim a consummate, perfect and pure life of holiness."

His first feminine disciple was his maternal aunt who had stood in the place of a mother to him, his own mother

having died seven days after his birth. She was also first to take vows as a nun in the House of Retreat for women.

At this time India's paramount problem was to remedy the almost hopeless condition of the masses. Their faces reflected dejection and despair. It was seeing their misery that wrung the heart of the compassionate young Prince and caused him to renounce wealth, family, friends and position in order to find a new light to bring to them. It is significant that his system contained the germ of true democracy in that it cut across castes, nurturing the spirit of self-respect in the low while it engendered compassion in the high.

The two great religions of India are Brahmanism and Buddhism. There is no basic antagonism between them despite the fact that Buddha denied the infallibility of the Vedas. It is difficult in retrospect to perceive any occasion for hostility on the part of the older religion toward the younger. The only explanation is that, like every great religion, as it retreated farther and farther from its primal source with the passage of centuries, Brahmanism deteriorated into occultism and formalism. From the beginning it was a religion of caste because it came with the Chosen People out of Atlantis, when it was essential that Aryan blood should not be mixed with the blood of less advanced Atlantean peoples. Each Race Spirit seeks to hold

its people separated in order to preserve the racial type in its purity. The Aryans conquered the aboriginal population of India and immediately built barriers to preserve their racial integrity. This they succeeded in doing.

With the advent of the Arian Age, however, and a powerfully increased Christ Impulse, came a change. The narrowness of the race spirit was curbed that all mankind might become a unity once more. The caste system, which doomed millions to an existence lacking in physical necessities and spiritual enlightenment, received its first lethal blow in the universalism of Buddha's teachings. He was a light shining out of the darkness for millions of wandering, weary souls. His very presence in the land was a personification of the words spoken by the Christ five hundred years later: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Not that the, Buddha taught an entirely original doctrine, but he taught it to all classes. Brahmanism. held the citadel against it in India, but the powerful missionary impulse of Buddhism carried it in triumph to foreign countries. Today Buddhism has more believers than any other religion in the world; it is the accepted faith of four hundred million people, about one-fourth the population of the entire globe. It is an Aryan religion, its inspiration came through Aryan

minds, and it was carried over the earth by Aryan peoples. Nevertheless, it is not for Aryans only, but for all mankind. It has offered a knowledge of the laws of rebirth and marked clearly the path leading to liberation from the "wheel of life."

Buddhism bears a striking resemblance to Christianity, and undoubtedly it had a direct influence upon Greek thought in Alexandria during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. It must also have been known to Alexandrian Christians whose contribution was vital to the nascent Christian Church. In his *Refutation of All Heresies*, Hippolytus mentions the Cult of the Gymnosophists from India, proving that Indian teachers had their adherents in the Western World during the formative centuries of the Church.

The Buddha himself wrote no books; but spirits and men, say legends, hung upon the words of his mouth. Even the Devas bowed before his wisdom.

About 267 B. C. the Emperor Asoka of India did for Buddhism what Constantine was to do later for Christianity. He made it the State religion.

The first definite step toward the crystallization of Buddhism occurred at the beginning of the Christian Era. Two sects arose known as Hinayana, the Lesser Vehicle, and

Mabayona, the Greater Vehicle, both mystical. The Lesser is the philosophical school; the Greater is the popular Buddhism embraced by the masses. This division is comparable to the split between Gnostics and orthodox Catholics during the early period of Christianity.

Spiritual Law times all events wisely. Gautama's work was powered by the Christ Impulse at the peak of the Arian Age and his teachings were universal in accordance therewith. But when the esoteric light was burning low, the Master Jesus came and the Christ Light was kindled anew.

It is a significant aspect of Buddhism that women are not excluded. Many are mentioned who, having attained to Liberation, chose instead the course of the Bodhisattva, remaining among the sorrowing of earth to render loving and compassionate service. Thus the Goddess Tara is represented as a Bodhisattva, her tiara adorned with an image of a Dhyani-Buddha. She holds the blue lotus in her left hand and is said to guard disciples on the Path of Emancipation. Prajnaparamita, another benign Goddess, personifies transcendental knowledge. Seated upon a lotus, she makes the gesture of teaching while holding in her hand a pink lotus upon which rests the book bearing her name.

Likewise, the ancient Egyptian Osiris, Isis and Horus became Gods. This corresponds with the Christian



canonization of saints, called "raising to the altar" — obviously the same process which ancients knew as deification and which Romans practiced in deifying their emperors. The ancients understood the difference between a saint and the Supreme Being just as moderns do; they simply used the word "God" where Christians say "Saints." The term "God," like the English word "Spirit," had many meanings and was applied to, many different classes of superphysical Beings.

In harmony with the Messianic tradition of esoteric Christianity, which links together in one chain of causation all the messengers who preceded the Christ, is the Buddhist teaching that through aeons of time innumerable Buddhas co-exist, ruling over "Lands of Buddha." These "Lands of Buddha" comprise millions of worlds, including archetypal worlds on the inner planes, which are illumined by their radiance; for it is written that spirits and Devas listened to the words of the Buddha. So it is said in Christian teachings that the Master Jesus instructed spirits and Angels.

Among the ever-existing Bodhisattvas is the Lord Maitreya, to be the tenth avatar of Vishnu. Legend states that the Buddha left his woven golden robe for Maitreya as his successor. The esotericist understands this to mean that by following the Buddha's Way the soul weaves a golden

"wedding garment," that glorious aureole of light in which it approaches union with the Supremely Beloved.

The circle of Bodhisattvas were mirrors of the Cosmic Christ; they served to reflect His Light upon earth prior to His Incarnation in Palestine. The circle did not include earthly teachers until, in the Lemurian period of the human race, certain advanced individuals were chosen for special preparation that they might be Bodhisattvas of future ages.

In Atlantis man's teachers were Elder Brothers of the human race from Venus. They were also rulers and were worshipped as Gods. Meanwhile, each new race formed among the Atlanteans by the inbreeding of special types was under the tutelage of an Archangel from the Sun who became its Race Spirit. Less advanced Archangels served as group spirits of the animal species.

When Aryana dawned, mankind came under the initiatory regime of Elder Brothers from Mercury. At this time the most developed of earthly Initiates were able to contact the Cosmic Christ through the Mysteries, so took over the task of leading and teaching their more backward brethren.

In the East and West great messengers have come forth from the Halls of Light bearing the Christ Truth. The condition of the world now is such that one must combine the wisdom of both East and West to catch the fullness of

Christian Wisdom Teachings. As early as the time of St. Jerome comparisons were made between the life and teachings of the two great world Messiahs, Christ and Buddha: preparation of their parents, prophecies regarding their birth, visitations of Angels and Wise Men, blessings by venerable Sages in the Temple, sad foreknowledge given their mothers, their disappearance when young that they might receive spiritual illumination and become conscious of their spiritual identity.

Also according to legend, the infant Gautama was baptized in the Temple, and he later declared that, though the Rite was unnecessary for him, he accepted it in deference to holy tradition. The Gospel parallel is found in Matthew 3:15: "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." When performed by illumined Initiate-Priests, the Baptismal Rite produces second sight or clairvoyance. Neither the Buddha nor Christ were under necessity for this Rite since they were already endowed with spiritual clear-seeing.

Both of them were tempted just before their Great Illumination, and Angels afterward ministered to them. At the beginning of their ministry, they called to themselves five disciples, Each had his beloved Disciple: for the Christ, John, son of his mother's sister; for the Buddha, Ananda, also a cousin.

Buddhist Scripture tells the story of the disciple who, like Peter, attempted to walk on the water to join his Master. Meditating deeply upon the Buddha, he proceeded safely until his thought lapsed for a moment from this lofty theme, then he began to sink beneath the waves. This is significant of the fact that walking on water has reference to Initiation by Water, a Rite having to do with stabilizing the emotions.

Again, there is a parallel in the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Accompanied by five hundred monks, the Buddha partook of a repast with the Guildmaster and his wife. After all had eaten their fill, the same amount of food remained as there had been at the beginning. In both narratives this "miracle" refers to an Initiate's ability to use a given nucleus from which to increase substance at will.

The parable of the man born blind appears in the Buddhist lore, together with its proper explanation as the fruitage of causes set into operation in previous incarnations.

Another record in Buddhist Scripture is the parable of the prodigal son — a theme common to all Mystery Teachings. It exemplifies the wanderings of the human spirit through the darkness of materiality until the ego finally awakens to its spiritual identity and returns to its Father's house.

On the night of the Buddha's transfiguration, light radiated from his body far out into space. Later, in discoursing upon the subject with his disciple Ananda, he stated: "On the night when one attains to perfect and supreme insight, and on the night when he passes finally away in that utter passing away which leaves nothing to remain (i. e. the last human embodiment, when the Wheel of Life and Death is broken), on these two occasions the skin becomes clear and exceeding bright."

The Supreme Master saw Nathaniel under a fig tree. The Bodhi tree under which Gautama attained Buddhahood was also a fig. The fig tree symbolizes the Tree of Life, or the attainment of immortality. Its sweet fruit (of spirit) is always enjoyed on the Buddhic (Christ) plane after the lower nature has been transmuted into spiritual consciousness.

One narrative tells of Ambapali, a famous and beautiful courtesan of Vesali. She drove to the great mango grove named after her to hear the Buddha discourse to his disciples, and then invited him to her abode. After sitting at his feet and hearing his words, she said: "Lord, I give this mansion to the order of monks with Buddha at its head." Legend states that she was later converted and became a follower of the Eightfold Path.

As Jesus had a Judas among his disciples, Buddha had a Devadatta. As the other disciples grew in spirituality Devadatta gained only in magical powers — and these, every esotericist knows, can always be turned to dark and sinister purposes.

The deaths of the two are not outwardly similar. It is said in many vulgar translations that "The Blessed One" died from overeating boar's flesh," but this cannot be taken literally. In the language of esotericism, eating of boar's flesh signifies the complete sublimation of the lower nature, which is "eaten up" so the Initiate may rise to higher states of consciousness. Therefore, this story is properly taken to mean that the great Buddha died to the lower world in order to be born to the higher.

Knowing that his last hours had come, he asked to be laid upon a couch in the Sala Grove. As in the stories of the passing of the Christ, the trees put forth leaves and a mass of blooms out of season, the flowers dropped and scattered themselves over his body. Christian legends say that the barren cross upon which the Christ body hung became alive, putting forth blossoms. Heavenly music sounded in the sky; sandalwood powder fell upon the Buddha's body. In angelic purity and sweetness he was ushered into the world; in angelic purity and sweetness he went out from it

as companion Sages watched his final release from the Wheel of Life.

He defined death to his disciples as freedom from the great evils of sensuality, personality, delusion and ignorance. The last words of the blessed Saint were: "Behold now, brethren, I exhort you, saying, Decay is inherent in all compounded things. Work out your salvation with diligence."

The Blessed One entered into the first stage of Meditation; from the second he passed into the third; and out of the third he passed into the fourth; and from the fourth he entered into the state of mind in which the infinity of space alone is present. Passing from consciousness of this infinity of space, he entered into that state of mind where only the infinity of thought is present. From the infinity of thought he entered into that condition where nothing at all is present; beyond this he went, into the state between consciousness and unconsciousness; then to the place where both sensation and ideas had wholly passed away — the World of God. Thus did he find release.

At the moment of his passing a mighty earthquake, terrible and awe-inspiring, shook the land, and all the thunders of heaven burst forth above it. Many of his disciples rose into a state of Illumination. They sang songs about the bliss of Initiation as their consciousness expanded

under the impact of the Master's ascension into Heaven, an event which opened to their vision, step by step, the reality of the continuity of life.

Those not free from passion and not ready for Illumination were inconsolable. They wept and moaned: "Too soon the Blessed One has passed. Too soon the Light has gone from the earth." But those who were free from passion restrained their grief. They remained calm and collected, as they said: "Impermanent are all compounded things. How is it possible that they should not be dissolved?"

Flame took the sacred body to itself in the last Rites. Neither soot nor ash remained, so pure his vehicle was. Then water from the sky, scented with sweet-smelling perfumes, extinguished the fire, leaving a white stillness. In the stillness was heard the holy songs of Devas rejoicing in the liberation of earth's Emancipated One.

— ***Corinne Heline***