

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

The Shepherd Initiates

Luke 2:15-16

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

Who were these shepherds who were keeping watch by night? Sheep-raising was a principal industry of the time, and there were hundreds of shepherds scattered over the Judean hills who neither saw nor heard anything unusual on this particular night. The student of Mystic Christianity knows that these men to whom the Angel of the Lord came were Initiates of the Arian Religion, and as holy men possessed extended powers of vision. It was clairvoyantly that they saw the Angel messenger, and it was clairaudiently that they heard the heavenly chorus. The tidings of great joy which they brought proclaimed the new epoch which opened on that night for the world. It was indeed a Holy Night for humanity. It was the opening of the Way eventually to free man from the wheel of birth and

death. With the coming of the Christ Spirit, means were provided whereby whosoever wills may come and partake of the Water of Life freely.

David means "well beloved"; Bethlehem "the house of bread," or the feminine or heart principle manifesting in all things from atom to God. The desire nature must be purified and this love or heart principle expanded before the Christ can be born within us. The analogies of the Bible are perfectly correlated with our own lives. Thus, though Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth, seventy miles away, it was necessary in accordance with the law, that they journey to Bethlehem for the birth of their child; similarly, the great redeeming principle of love can be born in no other place than in Bethlehem, which is representative of the purified life.

Jesus was born in the manger where beasts fed. This place represents the lower desire nature, which must be regenerated before the Christ power can be born in the inn, which is the head. Thus every neophyte upon the way of Initiation must also leave Nazareth, the material life, and make the journey to Bethlehem, the purified impersonal life. Each one will find in the beginning that there is no room in the inn and that the birth must take place in a manger where beasts feed. This is the real significance of Christmas. It means little to Jesus that the Christian world

honors His birthday on Holy Night. He made His renunciation only that we might learn. to follow Him and find the way that leads to our own individual Holy Night. Sings Angelus Silesius:

*Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born,
And not be born within thy heart, thy soul will be
forlorn.*

The Rite of the Dedication The Journey of the Three Wise Men

Matthew 2:1,2

*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,
Saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.*

Matthew 2:7-11

Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again that I may come and worship him also.

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo,

the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The work of Matthew may well be termed the "Gospel of the Supreme Dedication," for it is the only one of the four Gospels which contains the story of the coming of the three Wise Men from the East.

An ancient commentary on Matthew says that the Star on its first appearance had the radiant form of a child bearing a cross. The three Initiates or Wise Men, on beholding the Star, arose and joyously set forth on the long and perilous journey across the desert that led to Jerusalem. Upon arriving there they inquired eagerly, "Where is He who is born King of the Jews?" At this question, Herod and all the city became interested. They inquired of the chief priests, saying, "Where shall the young King be born?" The priests answered, "In Bethlehem of Judea."

Following the guidance of the Star, they came unto the little town of Bethlehem, and there what had they "come

for to see?" Not a royal princeling born in a palace and surrounded by an assemblage of servitors, but only a fair Child, cradled in that lowly manger of a stable where were also cattle and other beasts.

Their humility, faith, and reverence proclaimed them truly Wise Men. They prostrated themselves before this beautiful Child and dedicated themselves to the service of this new King of the World. They then made offering of their treasures.

There is an ancient scroll which reads: "The kings of Tarshish and the Isles shall bring presents and the kings of Sheba shall offer gifts."

The three Wise Men represent the complete dedication of spirit (gold), soul (myrrh), and body (frankincense). After the Christ has been born within, the next step in the process of unfoldment must always be this dedication to the Master and His work, if the new-born Christ within is to grow to the full stature of manhood. The spirit is symbolized by gold, which possesses the highest vibratory power of all the metals; the body is represented by frankincense, which, being a vapor, is a fitting symbol of the spirit's most impermanent vehicle. The soul body is symbolized by myrrh, a plant grown in Arabia, rare and difficult to procure. It is extremely bitter to the taste but possesses an unusual and beautiful fragrance. It symbolizes

the soul-extract or essence of experience which the spirit garners in the body and which constitutes the whole purpose of life on the physical plane. It is in fact a synonym for the path of discipleship. The soul body of a saint emits a fragrance, a fact which has been the basis of many lovely legends in the Church.

It is said that Caspar, or Jaspar, was very aged, with a long white beard. He was king in Tarsus, the land of merchants, and his gift was gold. Melchior was middle-aged and a king of Arabia. His gift was frankincense. Balthazar, the dark king, was very young. He was from Seba, or Sheba, the land of precious spices and gums. His gift was myrrh. Caspar is mystically called the White Lord with the Diamond; Melchior, the Bright Lord with the Diamond; Balthazar, the Treasure Lord with the Ruby.

The path of transmutation for the neophyte, sometimes called Transfiguration, is outlined in the story of the Wise Men. By the process of transmutation all may become Wise Men, or King-Initiates, and greet the Star upon the mom of the Holy Birth.

In Cologne Cathedral is a shrine containing three skulls, bearing in rubies the names of the three Wise Men. The ruby has been called the stone of Christianity because it symbolizes the cleansed desire nature and the spiritualized mind, the chief work of the Christian Dispensation.

A legend tells us that Mary bestowed upon the Wise Men as a gift and memorial one of the linen bands that had been wrapped about the sweet, flower-like body of the Babe. They thanked her in great humbleness and joy, laid it away, and counted it among their most precious treasures, When they returned to their homes, they laid down their earthly wealth, distributed their goods to the poor, and in imitation of the poverty and humility of Him whom they revered and served, went about preaching the new Christian regime which the Birth had inaugurated.

And again the legend relates that when Thomas traveled into the Indies, he found these Wise Men there. They worked and labored with him, and while carrying the New Light, were finally put to death, receiving thereby, from the blessed Saviour, Christ Jesus, a crown of immortal life for the earthly diadems which they had renounced. Their remains were discovered long afterward by the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine, and brought to Constantinople. Thence they were taken to Milan and later deposited in the Cathedral at Cologne. in return for their gifts, the legend continues, the Master bestowed upon them possessions of a much greater value. For the golden cup, He gave charity and spiritual riches; for the bowl of incense, perfect faith; and for the myrrh, truth and meekness. These are the necessary qualifications of those who aspire to Initiation today. These, too, may be our gifts

when we learn to make this same pilgrimage and dedicate ourselves, body, soul, and spirit to furthering the work of His kingdom upon the earth.

In the interweaving of the most significant incidents culled from the various legends it is evident that the Magi were Initiates. As previously stated, the word Magi means "a worker of magic." It was during the activities of their conscious night life (termed symbolically a dream) that they were given instructions relative to the birth of the coming world Saviour. The Wise Men of all nations had long been preparing for this momentous event and the Holy Birth was hailed with deep joy in many lands. It was this knowledge that incited the animosity of Herod to such an extent that he ordered the slaughter of the innocents.

The Wise Men journeyed both day and night by the light of the mysterious Star, under the guidance of the glorious Archangel, the Christ. As they journeyed they saw the wonder in the heavens of the Virgin and the Child. In other words they were reading the sublime story in the Akashic Records. When they entered the stable the celestial beauty of the divine Mother and Child and the supernatural light or halo which surrounded them was identical with the pictures (visions) they had been studying in nature's Eternal Scrolls.

The Sacrament of Purification

Circumcision bears quite a different meaning from that associated with the rite. It is a sacred ceremony symbolizing the complete subjection of the lower man, hence is termed the Rite of Purification. Circumcision is a preparatory step for the higher Degree of the Baptism.

The Rite of Circumcision, in accordance with an ancient Law, was performed upon all male children upon the eighth day after birth. In the life of the Holy Child, this Rite like all others was presided over and accomplished through angelic ministrations. These bright messengers assisted the Blessed Mother to prepare the Child for the ceremony and during its performance they sang hosannahs of praise extolling the One who had come to earth as man's supreme exemplar and who now shed his blood in token of that high sacrifice which he was to undergo.

Other and more radiant angelic heralds descended, bearing fair ribbons of light upon which were inscribed the words: "Jesus is His name." As these words were intoned upon earth they were echoed and re-echoed in paeans of joy and thanksgiving to the highest expanse of heaven.

Mary, who was always in such perfect attunement with her blessed Son, experienced with Him all the physical agony of the Rite and at the same time she received with Him all the joy and homage of the Angels.

— ***Corinne Heline***