

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

Joel

The Prophet of the Locust Plague

Locusts signify the qualities of the sensual man.
— Swedenborg.

Many biblical scholars have considered the Book of Joel as among the finest examples of apocalyptic literature. Joel was one of the Judean prophets and his work was confined largely to the area in and near Jerusalem. His prophesying centers primarily in descriptions of the accumulated effects of evil forces generated by man through the ages. Such effects always come up for liquidation at the close of an age and before a new civilization, such as Joel sings of in his final chapter, can be ushered in.

Because this Book is non-historical in nature it is difficult to determine the date of its writing. At one time it was thought to be the earliest of the prophetic Books and was assigned to the reign of Joash in Judah, about 830 B.C. Modern scholars, however, regard it as a product of the fourth century B.C. because it mentions selling the children of Judah to the Grecians. (Joel 3:6) This reference to the Dispersion and the description of the walls of Jerusalem would seem to concur with Nehemiah's time.

Metaphysicians frequently comment upon the correspondences existing between biblical plagues and evil forces in human nature. On the physical plane these correspondences may seem to an unilluminated person mere figures of speech, allegories without any foundation in fact. Yet there are some individuals who have developed the faculty for seeing thought-forms created by man's evil emotions and imaginings, and for tracing them in their gradual condensation through the ethers until they appear upon the physical plane as plagues of various kinds. Microscopic entities, scientifically designated as microbes, are both visible and tangible to interior vision. Not infrequently persons having very slight development of their etheric senses see the astral larvae which swarm in the lower regions of the desire world.

It is no coincidence, therefore, that plagues accompany wars and mass injustices of every sort. Each type of evil produces a specific plague-form; the most frequent and general is, of course, the ordinary cold germ which is an expression of fear or hate. Whether of the body, mind, or soul, courage is its best antidote. Thought-forms generated by malicious gossip are wasp-like, while well meant but thoughtless gossip appears in the desire world as swarms of gnats and mosquito-like insects. These creatures have also been described as tiny grotesque and misshapen bird-forms, consisting of nothing more than a tuft of feathers

and a sharp bill that attacks the aura of a victim.

Swedenborg's statement that locusts signify the sensual in man is borne out by the vision of many a Seer. Locusts of inner planes do not always have the same form as those of the outer, but there is a definite similarity in type. The locusts so graphically described by Joel correlate with the fire force in man: with its misuse and the consequences thereof.

Joel 2:3-5

A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.

The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run.

Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.

Esoterically, the lament of Joel is for the fall of man, but not as something that occurred many thousand years ago. St. Paul said, "I die daily," and this is equally true of man's fall. Continued misuse of the creative fire force is largely responsible for the widespread evils in our civilization: "Be ye ashamed ... for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished."

Joel 1:17,19

The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered.

O Lord, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures or the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field.

Visible to the eyes of an Illumined One is an upward-burning flame within man's body. Trees and vegetation, such as the corn which grow upward with straight stalks, symbolize the path of the spirit fire that rises from the base of the spine to the apex of the skull. The field represents the feminine principle; its barrenness in average man is referred to in the words "The rivers are dried up."

Alchemists of the Middle Ages, who derived their science primarily from Egypt via the Arabs and the Jews, spoke not only of the "fire" necessary in all alchemical operations; they also spoke of a "Living Silver," a spiritual Water, symbolized as a Serpent of quicksilver. The planet Mercury rules the great cosmic feminine sign of Virgo, the Virgin; quicksilver, the metal mercury, is ruled by the same sign.

The Seer, too, beholds this "Living Silver" that makes the barren field fertile, thus enabling the Tree of Illumination, the Rose and the Lily, to develop and put forth blossoms therein provided the "heat" is the right temperature, neither

too low nor too high. If the flame is not warm enough the field will remain barren; if the flame is uncontrolled the operation will be ruined at the very start: "The flame hath burned all the trees in the field."

Astrologically, Joel represents the sign Virgo, sign of purity. The eternal Virgin of the Immaculate Conception is pictured in her highest aspect with a sheaf of wheat or an ear of corn. The Virgin with the sheaf of grain holds a much higher meaning than does the Virgin with Child. The latter symbolizes the birth of the Christ Consciousness within man, a development belonging to the Earth Period. The Virgin with the grain symbolizes androgynous power, equilibrium between the spiritualized masculine and feminine principles. This development belongs to a future and higher state of cosmic consciousness.

In order to progress toward that attainment, we are urged by all esoteric Teachers to give up the small hypocrisies of earthly life: "And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, 'slow to anger, and of great kindness.'" (Joel 12:13) Not a formal repentance, but a sincere transformation of one's life brings realization of God's precious promises, wherein "the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil" for He

"will restore ... the years that the locust hath eaten." (Joel 2:24,25)

From exile the Remnant returned, the nucleus of the Messianic race (esoterically, aspirants to Initiation), those for whom Joel particularly desired redemption after the locust plague: "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the — Lord shall be delivered: for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." (Joel 2:32)

Of the New Day and of the redeemed people, Joel sings: "And it shall come to pass in,that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills,shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth in the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim." (Joel 3:18) Shittim means acacia, the Tree of Life in esoteric Masonry. Concerning the biblical acacia, Albert Pike writes: "The genuine acacia is the thorny tamarisk, the same tree which grew up around the body of Osiris. It was a sacred tree among the Arabs, who made of it the idol Al-Uzza, which Mohammed destroyed. It is abundant as a bush in the Desert of Thur; and of it the 'crown of thorns' was composed, which was set on the forehead of Jesus of Nazareth. It is a fit type of immortality on account of its tenacity of life; for it has been

known, when planted as a door-post, to take root again and shoot out budding boughs above the threshold."

And so in man also there is the seemingly dead tree, the bony spinal column with etheric currents flowing through it which are slow and almost imperceptible to the senses in a neophyte. But when the "heat" of the Spiritual Sun is felt and the "Living Silver" arises — whether it be by a spontaneous process in nature, as in the Mystic, or by the scientific alchemical process of the esotericists' laboratory, as in the occultist, the "dead" acacia is dead no longer. It puts forth branches and blossoms "above the threshold" of the door. Then the neophyte becomes a man made in the likeness of the resurrected Christ, aureoled in golden glory. Such is the process of transmutation for both mystic and occultist; but to the occultist, and to the mystic Mason in particular, the acacia is the great symbol of the New Life, the supreme ideal of attainment.

— ***Corinne Heline***