

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

The Feast of Dedication

The month of December is a time of dedicatory preparation for the sacred time of the Nativity. Seven definite soul degrees are observed each year during this month in preparation for the supreme Event of the Winter Solstice, the Holy Night par excellence of the year.

The Feast of Dedication as given in the Talmud most beautifully and symbolically describes this preparation and its divine culmination on Christmas night. It reads:

"This festival is observed for eight days during the month of Kislev (December) and commemorates the dedication of the temple after it had been defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes, whose armies were overthrown by the valiant Maccabees. On the twenty-fifth of Kislev the Dedication Feast is inaugurated by the lighting of lamps or candles prepared expressly for this occasion. The first night we light one, and then an additional one each succeeding night of its continuance. We also celebrate it by hymns of thanksgiving and hallelujahs."

The Feast of Dedication was founded upon the prophecy of Haggai (Hag. 2:18), which predicts the coming of a new time from the fourth and twentieth day of the ninth month

(December 24), as the Sun passes from Kislew (December, Sagittarius, 9th month) into Thebet (January, Capricorn, 10th month)

Esther 3:1-3

After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him: but Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.

Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?

The word Haman signifies "a thorn" and his character typifies the power of evil. Wherever there is a Castle of the White Grail, there is always a concentration of the powers of evil or the Black Grail. Paracelsus writes that wherever a church is dedicated to Christ, the devil also builds an altar.

Mordecai represents the disciple who refused to succumb to the subtle forces of evil even though all the king's servants (the masses of mankind) bowed before Haman and did him reverence. The aspirant must learn to stand

alone, as did Mordecai, and not to be influenced by mass thought and action if he is to know spiritual success.

Esther 3:5-6

And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai; wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

It is always against those who have set their feet upon the Path (represented in the Book of Esther by the Jews) that the principal attacks of the evil forces are made

So long as we are satisfied to interpret the lovely story of Esther as one dealing with race hatreds, mass murders and a wholesale wreaking of vengeance, we lose entirely the high spiritual mystery around which the Book revolves. The following lines taken from Irving's works on the subject of biblical meanings will aid in its interpretation: "Every name in the Psalms, whether of persons or of places, hath a mystical meaning given to it in the Christian Scriptures. Jerusalem is not the Jerusalem that was, nor is Babylon the Babylon that was, and even David hath lost his personality in the everlasting David. Judah and Israel mean not now the cast-away root, but the branch that hath been grafted

in. The Jews previously referred to do not mean only the Jewish race, but those who have arrived at a higher phase of spiritual understanding, those who are being made ready to enter the Temple Eternal there to co-operate with the Brotherhood of Light. Hence they are the friends of Esther and Mordecai and have incurred the enmity of Haman, the evil one, or the powers of darkness. Therefore in biblical mysticism the Jews are always the "chosen people" in contradistinction to the Gentiles, or the unillumined.

An old proverb states that if you would know the greatness of the Creator you must study the Haggada. Much of the profound esotericism of the Book of Esther is indicated in the legends of the Haggada, as for example, the following:

In the first month, that is in the month of Nissan (April), they cast the lot before Haman. He cast the lot from day to day. At first he selected the first day of the week as the one for the destruction of the Jews, but then he said, "No, light was created upon that day which is to their merit. On the second day the heavens were created. On the third day the Garden of Eden with all the herbs and trees. On the fourth day the sun, moon and stars and all the hosts of heaven. On the fifth day the fowls of the heavens were created. On the sixth day Adam and Eve were created, and on the

seventh day, their Sabbath, the covenant between them and their God."

He then took chances with the months. In the month of Nissan (April) they were released from the servitude of Egypt. In the month of Iyar (May) the manna first descended from heaven. During the month of Sivan (June) they received the ten commandments. In Tammuz (July) the walls of Jerusalem were destroyed. The next month Ab (August) was the month in which the last of the generations doomed to wander through the wilderness for forty years had perished. It was also in this month that Moses had spoken with God and prayed Him, "Show me Thy glory."

The next month was Elul (September). It was In this month that Moses ascended for the third time the mount of God to receive the second tablet of stone. Also during this month the walls of Jerusalem were completed. And so was the wall finished on the twenty and fifth day of the month (Elul). Tishri (October) contained the Day of Atonement. Heshuan (November) the month In which this legend states that the waters of the flood were loosed upon the earth. During Kislev (December) the foundation of the temple was laid. In Thebet (January) Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem. Shebat (February) showed no evil action of these people deserving God's wrath. When he came to the month of Adar (March) however, he said, "Lo, I have thee

now, even as the fish of the sea." In this month Moses died and Haman thought it would prove unlucky for Israel. He forgot that Moses was born in Adar on the seventh day of the month.

Much inner knowledge concerning the spiritual powers which are focused by the Lords of Destiny upon the Earth through the twelvefold division of the calendar months is intimated in this legend. Wisdom consists in learning to attune oneself with these vibratory forces, thus becoming a channel for the fuller expression of their transcendent powers.

The prognosticators and astrologers formed a separate caste, or fraternity, in Babylon. Diodorus states, "They form a society in the State similar to the priests in Egypt." They were "famous in Astrology and very diligent in Augury." Their science was transmitted through the family. The same is true of the Persian Magi. "The religious service of the Persians is like a priestly order, transmitted from father to son."

"Companions" was the name bestowed upon the members of a particular spiritual community or society. An important part of their work consisted of the study and interpretation of the stars in their relation to the life of man.

Pliny narrates that in the name of Osthanes, the royal Magus of Xerxes, there existed a magic from the stars. The "lot" was cast by Haman from day to day and from month to month, by means of the stars, until "the twelfth month which is the month of Adar" was chosen. "I have deciphered the right hour in the stars by searching their traces in the celestial mansions."

Haman is derived from the holy word Haoma or Hom meaning the possession of life-giving power, which in Persia is always associated with priestly functions; hence it must be inferred that Haman possessed priestly powers.

Haman Agagite means fellow-comrade, the term used to denote a priest of the Fire. These fire-ministers pronounced magical formulas. Such formulas can be used either positively (in the service of others) or negatively (for self-aggrandizement), The one constitutes the path of White Magic, the other the path of Black Magic. Haman, in occult parlance, would be termed a follower of the Black Arts.

Esther 3:13

And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to take the sum of them for a prey.

The month of Adar (March), astrologically ruled by Pisces, the sign of sorrow, is the month of tears, signifying the time for payment of karmic debts long overdue, on the part of individuals and nations alike.

Esther 4:1,4

When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry;

So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away the sackcloth from him: but he received it not.

This speaks of the sorrow of the neophyte for the evil of the race and its accumulated causation which must be worked out in suffering and disaster. Esther, the illumined one, understands and shares the race pain. The deeper understanding of the workings of occult law carries the aspirant many times into the Garden of Gethsemane, not only for his own weaknesses and failures, but also for the blindness and unheeding ignorance of his fellows. It was for the latter that the great Heart of Love was tortured and which caused Him to shed sacred tears as He overlooked the city of Jerusalem.

Esther 4:8,11,16

Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people.

All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whomsoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.

Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.

"He that loseth his life shall keep it; he that keepeth his life shall lose it." This is an occult maxim as old as the first Temple of Wisdom ever founded upon the Earth for the enlightenment of man. The time comes when every aspirant must be willing and ready to lay down his life, if necessary, for the sake of his fellowman; he must count all things belonging to the finite world, including the physical

body, as of little value if their sacrifice can bring spiritual gain to others. If he cannot take this step, his progress is delayed by the necessity of returning to the world which he loved so much that he was unable to renounce it.

Esther is put to this test, and chapter five describes as openly as possible her preparations:

Esther 5:1-4

Now It came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house.

And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.

And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.

The golden sceptre is the spiritualized power of the Initiate that makes him more than man and causes the

unthinking multitudes to look upon his works as miracles. When Esther touched this sceptre she, too, came into possession of higher capacities than were hers before. This is accomplished by the disciple only through complete renunciation of self-interest in order to clothe himself in the royal apparel of Spirit. He may then enter into the inner court of the king's house.

When this has been done, no longer can there be any fear of death, of evil, of harm. The half of the kingdom, yea, more! — "all that the Father hath" is his! Renouncing all, the disciple gains all.

After this crucial step the supreme work is that of the transmutation of evil. A certain living vibrancy is awakened within the soul that enables one to work powerfully both on Earth and in the psychic realms to overcome all the manifestations of the powers of darkness. This is symbolized in the banquet prepared by Esther for Haman (evil) who is still planning the overthrow of Mordecai (good).

Esther 5:13,14

Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

Then said Zeresh his wife, and all his friends unto him, Lot a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and tomorrow speak thou unto the king, that Mordecai may be hanged

thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet.

And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made.

There must eventually come, in the consciousness of every aspirant, the final struggle which ends in the crucifixion of darkness or light.

The Esther legends, as recited by the Rabbis, state that when Esther presented herself unannounced before the king she was accompanied by hosts of Angels who clothed her with luminous beauty and that it was an Angel who raised the sceptre of the king. Statements such as these, while not historic, are by no means mere fantasy, but refer to true experiences in the soul world known to the victorious Temple aspirant.

The Rabbis also state that it was the Angels who caused the king to read the old annals which contained a record of how Mordecai had saved the king's life by exposing an assassin's plot. It was this record brought to the attention of the king that paved the way for Mordecai's election.

The second Targum gives this incident in detail as follows: "In the days when Mordecai sat at the gates of the royal house, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the royal eunuchs and helpers of the wardrobe, were wroth and wanted to lay

violent hands upon the king. They devised the plan of putting a poisonous snake in the golden cup from which Akhashverosh drank. This was revealed to Mordecai by the Holy Spirit. He told it to Esther who communicated it to the king in Mordecai's name. The event was recorded in the chronicles of the king."

Esther 6:8-11

Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head:

And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

Then the king said to Haman, Make haste and take the apparel and the horses, as thou said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the King's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.

Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

This ceremony, which is termed the Triumphal Entry in the formula of Initiation as recorded in the New Testament, dates far back in antiquity. Its significance is that of rejoicing over the "new born" — another Brother or Friend who has found the way that leads unto Life eternal. The king always delights to honor such an one. There is greater joy over the one lost lamb that is found than over the ninety and nine already in the fold.

Haman took the apparel and arrayed Mordecai in it. Evil, transmuted, becomes a transcendent power for a greater good. Therefore in this story of the soul's emancipation, it is only Haman who could place upon Mordecai the new shining raiment. Nor was Mordecai's (higher nature) elevation possible until after the death of Haman (the lower or animal soul).

Esther 7:9,10

And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified. Harbonah (wisdom) is one of the king's chamberlains (servitors).

All humanity is sold into the power of evil to be destroyed, to be slain and to perish, as described in the Book of Esther. But each aspirant who finds the way into the Temple becomes a powerful ally for the powers of good in the ultimate conquest and transmutation of the evil of the world, and the consequent liberation of mankind.

Again this feast in which Esther took part with Haman and the king represents a sacred Festival of the year, the Autumn Equinox, when the Sun is crucified upon the cross of the celestial equator and the heartbeat of the Earth is stilled momentarily as the Interior Light touches upon it.

At this time so fraught with a divine silence, the Temple doors open wide and the ritual of the Great Renunciation is observed by the less advanced, or participated in by those sufficiently illumined to share in these ceremonies.

The Feast of Tabernacles

"The Feast of Tabernacles is held in the autumn after the fruits of the field have been garnered in the storehouses," according to the words of the Bible: "The Feast of Tabernacles shalt thou hold for thyself seven days when thou hast gathered in the produce of thy threshing-floor and thy wine press." (Deut. 16:14)

The ancient Hebrew year began in the autumn. Its date was Tishri, the month corresponding to our October. The

Book of Deuteronomy admonishes, "Observe the New Moon and sanctify it." The Autumn Feast followed the first New Moon after the Autumnal Equinox, in much the same manner as our own official Easter Sunday follows the first Full Moon after the Vernal Equinox. As we have learned in previous chapters, there is always an esoteric and an exoteric aspect of the great religious festivals, the inner (esoteric) for the Elect, and outer (exoteric) for the uninstructed masses. The Feast of the New Moon in Tishri was a feast in which the primary emphasis was upon the esoteric work.

Like the Eleusinian Mysteries of Greece, the Festival of Tabernacles was held for seven days. The first day was observed as a holy Sabbath, a day of rest and worship. There were various convocations in the remaining six days both for the exoteric and esoteric following.

The New Year's Day was one of special solemnity as the Day of judgment, of which one writer states, "On New Year's Day are all men judged and the decree is sealed on the Day of Atonement." It is significant to note relative to this fact that Libra, the Sun sign of Tishri (October), is the sign of the scales, in which the soul is weighed by the Divine judge. It is also the exaltation sign of Saturn, the planetary agent of karmic retribution.

The Feast of Tishri has its counterpart in all the great religions of the world, for the Masters of Wisdom who guide human civilization have taught those in their charge to observe this holy season of the Autumn Equinox which is saturated with the golden Christ ethers.

A very lovely legend in connection with the sacrificial and transmutative aspects of this Sacred Season comes to us from the literature of the East: "In the spring time and early summer the dew drops fall, not only on the land but also upon the sea, and there sinking are devoured by the mollusks on the ocean floor. At Tishri, men diving to the bottom of the sea gather these shell fish, and opening them, remove the dew drops which have been changed to pearls, and these are sacrificed as an offering of thanksgiving to the greatest of all gods." The pearl is the symbol of the soul, or of the Kingdom of Heaven which is within the soul.

The month of Tishri, October, has been connected by the wise ones of all ages with events of great significance. An early legend says: "On the first day of the seventh month, Tishri, is the commemoration of the creation of the world. Then the comet is blown to announce to the people that a new year has begun its course and to warn them to examine their conduct and to make amends where amends are needed. Abraham and Jacob were born in Tishri and in

Tishri they died. On the first day of Tishri, Sarah, Rachel and Hannah, three barren women, were visited. On the first day of Tishri, Adam was created and on that same day did he eat of the forbidden fruit."

The Feast of Tabernacles begins on the fifteenth day of Tishri and during its continuance through seven days the Israelites are commanded to dwell in tabernacles or booths. This was designed to keep fresh in their memory the tents which formed their homes during the forty years sojourn in the wilderness. "Seven days unto the Lord", this Feast is biblically described.

"The Feast of Tabernacles is also the Feast of Ingathering when we thank God for the kindness shown us, and for the treasure with which He has blessed us. When the Eternal has provided man with his sustenance, in the long evenings which follow we should meditate and study His Bible and make this indeed a 'feast of the Lord.'"

"The children of Israel departed from Egypt in Nissan (April) and obtained immediately these booths which they made use of for forty years."

The wise leaders of humanity know that the spiritual forces focused through certain zodiacal signs are most propitious for the performance of certain acts; and this truth is frequently referred to in both the Old and the New

Testaments in deeds of prowess and valor which represent corresponding soul qualities.

As the Sun passes into Virgo the neophyte enters upon a time of probation in anticipation of the great Feast of the Renunciation at the Autumn Equinox.

The Talmud symbolically portrays this interval of probation in the following powers ascribed to the month of September (Elul): "This is the season when the Lord pardoned the Israelites who had worshipped the molten calf. He commanded Moses to reascend the mount for a second tablet, after he had destroyed the first. Thus say the sages: the Lord said unto Moses in the month. of Elul, 'Go up unto Me on the mountain', and Moses went up and received the second tablet at the end of forty days. Before he ascended he caused the trumpets to be sounded through the camp. Since that time it is customary to sound the shophar (cornet) in the synagogues, to warn the people that the day of judgment, New Year, is rapidly approaching, and with it the Day of Atonement. Therefore propitiatory prayers are said twice every day, morning and evening, from the second day of Elul until the eve of the Day of Atonement which period comprises the last forty days which Moses passed on Sinai, when God was reconciled to Israel and pardoned their transgressions with the molten calf."

In proportion as the modern disciple learns to relinquish his own personal and selfish interests does he become increasingly aware of the Work performed in the Rite of the great Renunciation and how to prepare himself to take part in it.

— ***Corinne Heline***