

# **Contemporary Mystic Christianity**

## **Bible Self-Study Supplement**

### **The Parable of Jotham**

### **The Story of Jephthah**

*Judges 9:8-16*

*The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us.*

*But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?*

*And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us.*

*But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?*

*Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us.*

*And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth, God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?*

*Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou and reign over us.*

*And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust*

*in my shadow, and if not, let fire come out of the  
bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.*

This parable of Jotham, considered by scholars to be one of the most beautiful songs of Old Testament literature, both conceals and reveals truths concerning man's spiritual evolution which have long been known and practiced by those who were ready for the development it brings. These truths have been secreted in legend and fable and thus passed down through the centuries for those who were able to lift the veil and discover the occult gems concealed there.

The olive tree as used throughout the Bible symbolizes regeneration, typified astrologically and alchemically by Neptune, the planet of supreme spiritual power.

The fig tree symbolizes generation, typified astrologically and alchemically by the Moon, the planet of fecundation.

The bramble symbolizes degeneration, typified astrologically and alchemically by Mars, the planet connected with the misuse of the sacred creative fire within man.

By the process of generation carried on at a propitious time under the guidance of the Angels, man was treading the path to God, following the highway of evolution as

originally planned. From this path he strayed into the byway of degeneration, led by the Lucifer spirits. To escape from this bypath he had to have the aid of beings more highly advanced than himself before he could regain his original place in God's divine plan. This was the reason for the great sacrifice of the glorious Archangel, the Christ.

When man realizes these truths, he becomes the candidate of the Masonic legend, traveling toward the east in search of Light. This brings him to the path of regeneration, where the Lords of Mercury stand ready to further his Quest.

The ancient alchemists in describing this development connected the Angels from the Moon with the element salt, the Lucifer spirits from Mars with the element sulphur, and the Lords of Mercury with the metal known as mercury. They referred also to a mysterious substance, Azoth, by which they meant the sublimated essence of spiritual power, which modern occultists assert is ruled by the planet of divinity, Neptune.

The spinal cord, the home of the coiled and sleeping spinal serpent fire, was to the alchemists of medieval days the crucible in which gross matter was transmuted into gold. This cord is divided into three parts, one coming under the rulership of the Moon, another governed by the Lucifers and the third by the Mercurians. The great power of

Neptune plays through the spinal fire flowing up the central spinal canal as man begins his spiritual redemption. The raising of this fire to the head is the great work of everyone who follows the Christ on the Way of Attainment — a process described in many ways in the book of Christian Initiation, the Bible, when one has eyes to see and a heart prepared by pure living to receive.

In Jotham's parable, the vine symbolizes aspiration or idealism; it is the vision without which nothing is accomplished and without which the people must perish as Isaiah tells us. Those who put their dependence in the bramble, or the life of the senses, are trusting only in a shadow which must ever prove fleeting, transitory and painful. It is the fire of the bramble which destroys the cedars of Lebanon, these precious cedars of which Solomon's Temple must be built, eternal in the heavens.

When the spinal spirit fire is gradually lifted to the head by pure and regenerate thoughts, words and deeds, it touches and sets into vibration the pineal and pituitary glands, the spiritual organs in the head. This fire then radiates through the entire body, and produces that auric splendor which is usually pictured about the body of Saints and Initiates. Such a one has become the living stone. This was the development of Peter when he was designated by the Master as the rock upon which the church is founded, a

statement which applies not merely to the apostolic succession as traced through the orthodox church, but to every Initiate who comes into a knowledge of the Truth of his own being. "Thou art the Christ" is spoken to every redeemed and liberated human ego. Upon this rock the entire universe is built.

Abimelech generally, as used in the Old Testament, has reference to man's animal propensities and the unregenerate personal will. Jotham represents man's higher or true (divine) self; his Parable, as interpreted, is an allegorical picture of the Path of Discipleship. The remaining portion of the ninth chapter of judges gives the outworking of this Parable in human affairs. Abimelech in the Parable is represented by the brambles who "beat down the city and sowed it with salt."

Zebul represents the fig that refuses to leave its old place to accept new responsibilities, thus typifying the set and rigid conventions of the old regime. Gaal is the vine that aspires, but not in the best way. He endeavors to kill out evil rather than to transmute it into good, and so loses his own life. Zebul compromises with dishonor rather than let go of old conventions and is also eventually destroyed. Abimelech is overcome, conquered by a woman, the feminine, represented by the olive.

The influence of the negative, sinister forces upon life, as represented by Abimelech, Zebul and Gaal, is further evidenced in the tenth chapter of Judges, followed by the story of Jephthah's spiritual victories in the eleventh and twelfth chapters.

## **The Story of Jephthah**

*Judges 10:6-7*

*And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the Lord and served not him.*

*And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon.*

This reiterates yet again the age-long battle between the new and the old, in the sense of progress against reaction, good against evil. But in any crisis in the lives of nations or of individuals, under spiritual guidance the right leadership always appears. In this crucial time in the history of Israel the requisite qualifications are discovered in Jephthah.

*Judges 10:17,18*

*Then the children of Ammon were gathered together,*

*and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpeh.*

*And the people and princes of Gilead said one to another, What man is he that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.*

*Judges 11:1-3*

*Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah.*

*And Gileads wife bare him sons: and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of a strange woman.*

*Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and they went out with him.*

Jephthah, driven into outlawry by the hate of his brothers and the misfortune of his birth, is chosen to be the savior of Israel. Many strong souls are born into a condition of great hardship where they endure suffering and injustice, thus liquidating early in life the karma carried over from previous incarnations and freeing themselves for a new great work in the present. It was so with Jephthah.

## The Degree of Renunciation in the Story of Jephthah

*Judges 11:29-39*

*Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon.*

*And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, if thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,*

*Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.*

*So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the Lord delivered them into his hands.*

*And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come: to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.*

*And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.*

*And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought*



*me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.*

*And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; for as much as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee on thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon.*

*And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.*

*And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains.*

*And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man.*

The Book of Judges consists entirely of a series of stories illustrating the different degrees of progress on the Path that leads toward spiritual illumination. As repeatedly stated, the Bible as a whole is a great book of Initiation, and every character portrayed within it represents the neophyte at some particular step of his development. It is well for the student to always bear this in mind. The Bible is not merely a history of men and women who lived

thousands of years ago, but it is the esoteric story of every ego's evolution and the cosmic textbook of life. It was in this light that the early Christian Saints, or Initiates, studied it, and were inspired to supreme reverence and complete reliance upon it as the guide of their daily lives.

In this particular story, Jephthah represents the neophyte who has definitely set his feet upon the Path where the first task which confronts him — and a most difficult task it is — is the conquest of the children of Ammon, or the lower propensities within himself. The Bible carries many and varied versions of this stage in spiritual unfoldment.

The children of Israel again represent the spiritual power latent within every man. This power is aroused into life and activity when the higher self takes command. Outside coercion is no longer needed, for obedience is actuated from within. "The Lord, the judge (the Law within), be judge this day between the children of Israel (spiritual powers) and the children of Ammon (lower propensities)." Always in the beginning the king of the children of Ammon "harkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him."

After the supreme conquest represented in the life of Christ Jesus by the Temptation, an experience which comes to every neophyte in different form but in perfect relationship to his place upon the Path, there is still a

deeper and more important work to begin. This is given in the words of Jephthah: "Whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's and I will offer it up for a burnt offering."

The Hebrew name "Jephthah" signifies "one whom God sets free." The story of Jephthah is the history of that ever-familiar battle between the Ammonites (carnal mind) and the Israelites (spiritual consciousness). When Jephthah, the victorious aspirant, returns in peace from the children of Ammon, the power of the lower man has been subjugated by the spiritual will. But the strength of his self-mastery must be tested, or judged, through the willingness to sacrifice the best beloved, be it person, place or thing. Here the Way becomes very steep and it is at this point that many have turned away, finding, as in the instance of some of the early disciples, that "His sayings were too hard." It is principally for this reason that few ever come into the realization of that great soul ecstasy instanced in the Song of Deborah, or the closeness of divine communion that was Jephthah's as he "uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh."

True Initiation is always concerned with the feminine principle, which becomes, as it were, a powerful magnet in the consciousness of the illumined one and awakens the

high ecstasy of cosmic knowing. "When the True Light awakeneth within man, Sophia (celestial wisdom) appeareth in her virgin's attire before the soul."

The illumined mystic, Jacob Boehme, who attained this spiritual height, thus recounts his experience: "I will set down here a short description how it is when the bride thus embraceth the bridegroom, for the consideration of the reader who hath perhaps not yet been in the wedding chamber." He then gives the words of the bride:

Without me thou art but a dark house, wherein is nothing but anguish, misery, and horrible torment. I cannot espouse myself with thy earthly flesh, for I am a heavenly queen, and my kingdom is not of this world. My dear love and bridegroom, do but yield thyself up unto my will; and I will not forsake thee in this earthly life in thy danger. Afford thou the essence of fire and I will afford the essence of light and the increase; "Be thou the fire and I will be the water, and thus we will perform that in this world for which God hath appointed us, and serve Him in His temple, which we ourselves are."

Jephthah symbolizes one who had "found the bride" by walking in the way of purification, humility and sacrifice. It is the exercise of these virtues which places the neophyte in touch with forces which make for inner spiritual growth. Writes Jacob Boehme: "Beloved reader, count not this an

uncertain fiction, it is the true grand sum and substance of all the holy scriptures. As the author of a certainty knoweth, it being the way he himself hath gone."

The supreme test always concerns the best beloved or the most cherished possession, which must be weighed in the balance against the pearl of great price, namely, the Illumination of the seer. Hence it is that the value of the impersonal life is necessarily stressed as one of the most important virtues to be evolved in the early training of discipleship.

Jephthah's daughter represents the great feminine principle within man that manifests as the life of the lower senses when unawakened, but when awakened becomes the great heart force which consecrates as the power of the Initiate. The burnt offering typifies self-sacrifice. Many persons take up the esoteric work and live comfortably and happily for years, gaining only an intellectual conception of the meaning and purpose of life. But the moment the call from within sounds to go upon the path of real spiritual attainment, in that moment the shadow of the cross looms before them, and they must learn to walk in its way before they can win the Crown, or liberation from the prison house of the body and the consciousness of the Seer.

In the sacrifices involved in the lifting of this feminine principle, represented here by the daughter of Jephthah,

man himself is changed mentally and spiritually; and there are certain definite physiological changes also which must take place within the physical body. These are well known to those who have reached this place upon the Path.

In verse thirty-five, Jephthah voices the lament of many at this stage of their development: "Alas, my daughter! thou has brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me." This step involves the complete surrender of the personal will; the personal life must become the impersonal. The aspirant may no longer desire earthly possessions for himself; he only asks to be a channel through which the spiritual power may flow to be used to succor others; that is, if he is strong enough to be able to say with Jephthah: "For I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back."

Verse thirty-seven represents the spiritual aspiration of the neophyte who is brave enough to dare all to win the pearl of great price, and the sorrow of the awakened ego for the conditions of the earth and its humanity through the fall of the feminine pole in all mankind.

Virginity here means purity, and the "two months" symbolize the work toward the attainment of polarity or equilibrium of the two poles of man's spiritual nature. "The mountains" signify the high place of spiritual consciousness.

Verse thirty-nine states that Jephthah is victorious in overcoming his lower nature, as Abraham was at the offering up of his beloved son, Isaac. This corresponds to the trial in the Garden of Gethsemane in the New Testament. "Not my will but Thine be done."

Angelus Silesius, the poet-mystic, was speaking of this place of temptation on the Path when he said:

"The cross on Golotha thou lookest to in vain  
Unless within thyself it be set up again."

The sacrificial way to cosmic knowing has been given in various guises. to all peoples of every nation and age. The legend of Jephthah's daughter has its parallel, for example, in the famous Grecian story of Iphegenia who was sacrificed in accordance with a vow made by her father to propitiate Diana, the goddess of purity and chastity, a story which also has points similar to that of the sacrifice of Isaac as related in the Book of Genesis. These legends all have a common spiritual origin and purpose. As Iphegenia was laid upon the altar she was snatched away by the goddess herself and in her place was discovered a hind, while Iphegenia was wafted on high to become a temple maiden in the service of the pure and chaste Diana.

"To die" and "to be initiated" come from the same word in Greek. Only as the aspirant is strong enough to renounce

all does he gain all. The greatest of all Masters taught this truth to His followers for an time in the words: "He that keepeth his life shall lose, it, but he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it" — find it unto eternal life.

## **Shibboleth — A Mystic Power Mantram**

*Judges 12:5,6*

*And the Gileadites took the passage of the Jordan before the Ephraimites; and it was so, that when these Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth, and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him and slew him at the passes of Jordan and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.*

Shibboleth is an ancient Sanscrit mantram or word of power. Among the Masons of the inner or esoteric fraternity Shibboleth is still used with a special significance. The word means in Hebrew a sheaf of wheat at the water ford. The letter S in Hebrew is Shin, and stands for the Fire Principle in nature. The letter H is Heth, which is feminine, typifying water, or the emotional nature. Thus those who learn to use their life forces rightly, manifest the power of H. The Hebrew letters were used to signify specific mysteries in the Rosicrucian books attributed to Father Christian Rose Cross



and his first disciples. Most famous of these was the Book M, written by Father C R C, on the secret forces of nature. The letter M is another of the feminine Mystery Letters, symbolizing in particular the Divine Feminine, as, for example, the Virgin Mary, Myrrha the mother of Adonis, or Ishtar of the Babylonians.

The River Jordan, in esoteric interpretations, indicates the spinal canal. Whatever knowledge the ancient Hebrews had of man's anatomy, they did have the interior vision with which to see the etheric correspondences of all parts of the body. While these etheric counterparts are by no means exact likenesses of the exterior body, the correspondences are unmistakable. Blood, for example, when seen with the etheric sight resembles a stream of luminous gas; the nerves are radiations of electrical forces, the various organs are vortices of light and flame, and so on. From the eyes emanate streamers of white light, the brain shines with splendor and currents of fire ascend along the spinal column. Therefore esoteric anatomy was known to ancient seers long before modern science had developed the subject exoterically.

If a map of Palestine is examined, it will be at once apparent why the Jordan was taken to represent the spinal fluid which to etheric vision is seen as fire or gas. As previously stated in the process of transmutation, the spinal

canal with its priceless fluids becomes the channel for intense spiritual forces. These forces are stimulated into activity by the downpour of the spiritual energies of the Invisible Sun and by the magnetic aura of the Earth itself. When these downpouring powers impinge upon the individual's own altar of fire, the fire leaps up, and all animal desires are forever consumed.

Thus the neophyte is saved from the maelstrom of the animal nature, symbolically portrayed by the ability to pronounce Shibboleth correctly. Those unable to pronounce the word, perished as victims of their own evil doing. "Forty and two thousand failed in the crossing that day". The digits four and two total six, the number ascribed by early Christians to sex, or sin. However, six also represents the life principle which, though misused in "sin", Sibboleth may be lifted up to become an active power in transmutation, Shibboleth.

All occult ritual is created according to the laws of harmony and rhythm, involving the intoning of a Word of Power, and, therefore, in Masonry also we find this legend, dealing as it does with the subject of a lost or substitute Word.

*"And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then dies Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead".*

— ***Corinne Heline***