

Lent and the Early Christian Brotherhoods

T222 The Inner Teachings 10th February 1953 St Mary Abbots Place, London

Invocation:

We seek Thy presence, O Great White Spirit. We seek the purification of love. O Lord, we worship Thee; we give thanks to Thee; we pray to Thee. May the heavenly blessing be upon this gathering. May every soul be touched by the Great White Light of the Cosmic Christ. May the great hosts of heavenly beings become very clear to all these earthly brethren. Thou knowest, O Lord, their search for truth, their search for understanding and love; we humbly pray that they may be receptive to the heavenly blessings.

Amen.

At our last meeting we talked about the heavenly hosts and about those who had passed from the body into the realms of light. We spoke also of the power that is within man* enabling him to liberate himself from the limitations of the mental and physical life. We explained the first necessity, that of becoming still within, tranquil in heart, and we took the simile of a glass of water, saying that if that glass be shaken it cannot reflect a true image. In the same way a breeze blowing over a lake causes the images within it to become distorted. Thus it is with the human receiver: the brow chakra [and] the heart chakra must be calm and still if a clear image is to be reflected. This applies not only to some object in the spirit life, but also to truth. To absorb heavenly truth you need to train yourselves in calmness of mind and spirit. We might say that a very active, disturbed mind makes it difficult for heavenly truth to be received.

*[*For editorial policy around gender issues see the introduction.]*

We are speaking of these things tonight because you are on the verge of the season called Lent. The Christian church still holds much of the Ancient Wisdom but the key to it appears lost. Not by all people however, for we dare to say that if man possessed this key again they would flock to hear that wisdom expounded. Truly it seems that only small groups of brothers can comprehend this ancient truth which is contained within the teachings of the Christian church.

Looking back down the ages it seems that at the beginning of the Christian church there were small groups like this, brotherhoods which met in secret to receive the wisdom from heaven. The masses,* however, were even then given a certain prepared doctrine which they had to accept and believe as a faith. Let us be just in our analysis and make it clear that only a handful of men and women thus gained admission to these heavenly groups and were blessed by receiving true contact with the source of light and truth. Souls cannot rush the gates of heaven. Those who desire spiritual contact have to prepare by undergoing strict training. Only a few prove ready for such discipline.

*[*A word of the time meaning the majority of people.]*

In those early days Christian groups were taught (as part of the Ancient Wisdom) the necessity for strict discipline and control of their emotional, mental and physical bodies. These brethren met continually and often spent the night in worship of the Great White Spirit.

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Call it what you will: it is the source of all life, it is the macrocosm, the infinite. Man, whoever he is, knows this truth because within his own self is a spark of that same divine intelligence and life. For this reason man has always a desire for God. This is why in the moment of crisis man always cries upon God. This is an instinct, an intuition. Therefore man has always been searching in various ways—often very peculiar ways!—for the source, for the origin of life. In search of truth he takes many paths, often going round in a circle back to the beginning. At last he finds, he recognises, he realises that the divine life dwells within his own heart.

This is the season of Lent. We think the term is derived from an ancient word meaning, ‘to lengthen’. Lent is the time when the days are beginning to lengthen [in the northern hemisphere], when spring is promised, and Christians look forward not so much to the crucifixion, which they know has to be endured, but to the arisen Christ. This is indeed a cause for hope, a glorious anticipation. Let us for a moment in vision see in the heavens not the crucified but the perfect body, the arisen Christ with outstretched arms glorious in the heart of the blazing Sun: the arisen Christ, Christ the Son, the Son of God, the Son of the Infinite Father–Mother, the Son of life. Let us contemplate that perfected human form. Why should Christ appear in a human form? Has it any meaning for man? Yes, it is not only a symbol, but a promise, a reflection of the spirit of man; inferring that man too is a son of God and that man also will arise to the full stature of manhood and Christhood. Before man can arrive at that stage he has to pass through the period called Lent, and during this period he has to sacrifice his desires. These are usually interpreted as physical luxuries, which a man denies himself as giving pleasure to his body and sense of taste, while he strives to devote himself to worship and to prayer.

Now the early Christian groups received instruction from the Great White Brotherhood through their own particular channel of reception and they were taught what you are hearing in these days. You are a small inner group of brothers and sisters looking for truth. The truth which you seek is not to be found in any book. The Ancient Wisdom is rarely printed for all to read. It is unfolded from within man’s soul. Help comes to you, as it once came to the early Christian brotherhoods, from the Lodge above, from that centre of light which is known as Shamballa. Above the earth are those evolved souls which have passed along the self-same way that you are now passing. They have absorbed and have unfolded truth within their own being, and by discipline and work, by service to humanity, have at last gained mastery over the lower self. We cannot tell you these things too often. We would not however, have you choose this path because you wish to gain these joys for yourself, but because you cannot follow any other path, because the love of God is burning within your heart. Once you feel such a love, adoration and worship for the divine life, you will receive into your being the power of that life and that Light. Render service accompanied by this love and knowledge and you will receive the treasures that are promised. You have then to learn how to interpret these jewels of spiritual truth in terms of everyday living in every detail of life. This means that the whole life should be disciplined. We do not always stress this fact. Occasionally we take the opportunity of reminding you that yours is the freewill choice. We do not say, ‘You must.’ We gently say, ‘It is the way, my brother, my sister.’ This discipline, this sacrifice, this overcoming of desire and the opening of the heart chakra in sweet gentle love to life, is really

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the only way. Do not concern yourself about other people, with some of whom you find it difficult to be in harmony. The way to overcome such little obstacles is really to set your mind and your thoughts upon the Lord God. These are the only words we can find to explain very simply the way of truth. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.'* Thou shalt hold the image of the Lord God ever before thee. Now when once the soul absorbs that spirit, that radiation from the cosmos, it becomes so imbued with love that the details of everyday life automatically fit in. For instance there comes a time when the aspirant foregoes his desire for coarse living, for coarse form of entertainment. In the degree that the physical, emotional, desire and mental bodies become purified, sensitised, do the carnal appetites fall away. In the old days the aspirant was taught very hard to fight the devil. We suggest that the better way is not to fight but to lose interest in the devil by worshipping and loving the good, the true and the beautiful. Although you have to live a balanced life, choose your path carefully and so learn discrimination and discernment. If you practise the art of prayer, worship and open your vision and imagination to the heavenly hosts and breathe into your vehicles the divine light, the sweet breath of heaven, you will become pure. Such purity is essential for the soul who would find God, the truth and perfect life.

[*Matthew 22 : 37]

So we find that the early Christian church or brotherhood—we prefer the latter word—taught the need for self-discipline, control of the physical appetites, of the emotions, of the mind and the strengthening of the spirit during the period of Lent. In Lent there are just over forty days. Now forty is an esoteric number, with an esoteric meaning. The Israelites wandered for forty 'days' in the wilderness looking for the Promised Land. This represents a period of gestation. A child before it is born lies some forty weeks in the womb. The number forty stands for a period of waiting, of growth, of development, while the soul who has set its feet upon the path finds itself wandering in the wilderness and has to undergo the hardships of self-discipline and self-control, has to undergo tests and trials on all planes of life.

Thus you see how the period of Lent originated. All the same we do not suggest that you limit the practice of self-discipline to any period, but see in Lent the meaning of the training and discipline of the candidate for the heavenly life.

We have already drawn your attention to the necessity for calm and tranquillity in the mind, heart and soul if you would be a reflector of that heavenly life. The soul has to follow a definite path of training and the initiations which we have referred to before are taken steadily through that whole period. The water initiation heralds the controlling, the disciplining of the emotions and desires. The air initiation is the disciplining of the mind and the control of the thoughts. The fire initiation is the disciplining of the great power which at a certain stage is released in man and the wise use of that power of love. Lastly there is the earth initiation where the soul learns to surrender everything to the Christ spirit, when the lower nature is completely crucified or overcome. Then we behold the arisen Christ, the soul that has freed itself from all material and physical limitations, the soul which is untouchable by the carnal or the fierce emotional desire-nature and also by the strong mental nature which is the slayer. Remember, my brethren, that the mind of earth is the slayer, inasmuch as it can be

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over-analytical, harshly critical and cruel. That mind has to be trained and disciplined through contact with the divine Love. Then intellect changes into divine Intelligence. Perhaps you know, dear ones, that all great souls are very simple; they appear to be childlike, but are full of love, gentleness and sweetness. The spirit of love giveth the Christ life. The glorious arisen Christ is born from the heart, not the intellect.

So it is well to contemplate these things and to decide which way you are going. Should you decide to tread the path leading to the glories of heaven remember you cannot compromise; either a thing is right or it is not right. Having decided, you must abide by your decision and obey the rules or the laws. This means daily watchfulness.

When Jesus said, 'Watch and pray,'* it means, watch your thoughts, speech and your daily life. Sometimes you drive yourself into tight corners. Your nervous system cannot support the conditions which you yourself have created. Then you say, 'It is beyond all endurance. Human nature cannot stand it.' No, but it has come about through your own fault. You will not like this plain speaking, but it is true. You have not been wise in organising your daily life. Your outer life should never be pushed and rushed around as you people permit it to be, but be very carefully planned. The well-planned life is a happy life. Of course it is possible for a life to become over-planned and over-rigid. Avoid this by opening the heart and living placidly, quietly, wisely, hour by hour. Do your best; angels in heaven cannot do more, but if you rush and tear about and get excited you are doing no good to yourself or to the world. By taking a slow, ordered path quietly, by not wasting any time but doing your best with the opportunities that are given to you, you are following the path. This is so important, this well-ordered quiet life. When you are tempted to rush about, pull yourself up, be still and you will see how very simply little problems can be solved by taking control of the conditions that you have indeed created for yourself.

*[*Matthew 26 : 41]*

We would like to emphasise the fact that what you are enduring today is paying off your karma of yesterday which has to be worked out. You are working it out by pain and suffering, but the future is in your hands. You can control your future during this period of Lent—not necessarily the few weeks before Easter—we are using the word in its universal sense. Here is your opportunity for training, for self-discipline, for control of thought, word and speech. Here is your chance for attunement of life to the purest and highest ideals of cleanliness and purity on every plane of life. You cannot compromise with occult truth. You must be strict and exact with yourself—not necessarily with other people—but with yourself.

Perhaps you all know how much better you could do the other person's job had you the chance. Nevertheless it does not happen to be your job, so concentrate upon your own job so that whatever you do is done to the very best of your ability. Give the other man an occasional word of encouragement. Tell him that he is doing well.

There can be no compromise: things are either right or wrong. Once you have seen the path of self-discipline, purity, loving service, gentleness and perfection, then quietly pursue that

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path. We do not speak of reward; nevertheless, the joy in that life is beyond all earthly understanding. We do not say mortify the flesh. We would rather say glorify the flesh by the Christ spirit within. There is no need for the former because the flesh is of God and the flesh must be glorified by God, by the spirit of the Son of God which is born in flesh.

Benediction:

O Glory of Life, the Great Spirit of Love, Wisdom, and Power, we yield ourselves to Thee; we surrender our lives to Thee; we open our hearts to Thee; and we thank Thee, O Lord, for this revelation of our true nature through the nature of Thy only begotten Son, the Christ. May this revelation remain with us, shine through us, and glorify this earth until all men arise and go on the journey to meet the Father of all.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

The search matches with either words and phrases, which appear in the text, or the following 'key' words and phrases, which are similar in meaning to those in the document:

Spiritual unfoldment, path, reflection, letting go, transformation

