

Biblical Symbolism – I: The Holy Tabernacle

T108 The Inner Teachings 5th June 1940 Pembroke Hall, London

Invocation:

Father–Mother God, great eternal Spirit, we pray that each one present may open his* consciousness to Thy love. May each become aware through his aspirations, of the land of light and truth, and may this eternal truth grow stronger in each mind and heart. O Great Spirit, we pray that this sanctuary may be full of love and that true communion of spirit may be Thy blessing to all. We send forth a prayer for the blessing and protection and guidance of all men in danger, fear or sorrow. May Thy light sustain them, Thy healing power comfort and assure them, and may this light penetrate into the mists of the astral planes and bring light and joy to those who are lost.

Amen.

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

Brethren, as we prayed, we caught a vision of the Master Christ entering the places of the disquieted, and there came to us from our Master an assurance that the sorrowing are being comforted. This, I feel, is a message to you tonight from the Master, he who wept over Jerusalem, whose heart overflows with compassion and understanding for men. In him let us place our confidence and our thankfulness. This message of Christ is not for the modern world only; God has always been revealing the same truth to the children of earth in different ways, in different symbols, through the many religions, but it is the same star of truth, God's gift to mankind. The divine mind which God has given to all men is as a splendid blazing star with many facets, its many rays of truth all coming from the one central truth. This truth lies in you and in all men; it lies within the divine or the Christ mind, which is the gift of God to man.

There have been many misrepresentations, many embroideries hung upon the robes of truth, and because of this the simplicity of truth and the law governing spiritual and material life has been lost. A man must ransack and probe and bring his intuition to bear ere he can uncover truth. The ancient mystery schools taught many a method of unveiling this truth. These stories, their verity veiled in symbolism, have been interpreted in so material a form that the intelligent man brushes them aside.

In the world today there is no law, apparently, and no order. All is chaos and confusion, from the lowest strata of society to the highest. Social and religious problems remain unanswered, masses of people cry 'Where is God? Is there a God? If there is a God of Love, why does He permit these things to happen?' Man has yet to see that the edifice of modern civilisation is rotten and crumbling, because it is not built upon the sure foundation of spiritual law. The foundation of the structure is as of shifting sands, full of untruth, unworthiness, material, greedy and selfish. The edifice itself is built upon greed, each man crying out for himself. Each man must look to himself, it seems, for if not he and his loved ones will perish.

Many a man sees the weakness in this structure of civilisation, and such men will be used when humanity has learnt its lesson and when it cries out for peace. The edifice of civilisation will then be built upon the sure foundation of ancient truths, the Ancient Wisdom, which taught men that the divine mind must rule the earth. God, within the tabernacle of man, must

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be the ruler and master of human life. God's will is that man shall live not for himself but for the evolution of the spirit of man. Man must not concentrate upon the accumulation of material and mental acquirements, or position for himself—no. He must live in the consciousness that by his side is a brother who needs his help, for they are companions along life's pathway.

Most of you have read the story of the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt, and have heard of the murmurings and the discontent as they wandered in the wilderness. You know how Moses built a tabernacle as a shrine for his God. The God which is revealed in the Old Testament, however, is an anthropomorphic God, venerable, dignified, sitting upon a judgement seat, and condemning with severity the sins of His people. The truth contained in this story has been veiled. If we dig and dig as the masons were taught, we shall find a jewel of great price. What of this jewel then?

Let us first understand that Moses was an Egyptian initiate, long trained in the inner schools of the pure Egyptian mysteries; he had gained tremendous occult power, as was evidenced in the plagues which he caused to fall upon the Egyptians (we shall deal with these in a separate lecture). Moses, through the power of God, led his chosen people, those who were in his charge—shall we call them his neophytes, or his students of the mysteries?—out of the 'house of bondage', in other words the house of materialism. They sought the Promised Land. This story bears application to each one present. You also have been led forth from your bondage (of the material plane) and thought you entered the Promised Land. You had found a teacher, you had found spiritual truth and beauty and thought everything henceforth was going to be flowing with milk and honey. The old life was done with—oh, what a glorious prospect! But you had forgotten a journey lay ahead. You thought you had but to step forth from the material life and all would be well, and then you found yourself in the wilderness. How many have experienced that? We who speak from the spirit world (perhaps from the Promised Land), have also wandered in the wilderness, and sometimes when we come back to share your wilderness we feel your sorrow and disappointment and we hear murmurings and discontent. But by your wanderings you are learning patience, gaining faith and confidence in the divine mind, and you will surely be led forth into the Promised Land. You will get there; there is no doubt about that. Therefore, when tempted to grumble, remember the Hebrews and their wanderings. A symbolical story, but also historical; esoteric truth lies hidden in many such stories and legends of past days not only of the East. You will find it in your own history books if you read with your inner mind open. These stories of the sufferings and trials of races and civilisations are all pictures which have a personal and moral application.

In the spirit world pictures telling of civilisations and races are thrown upon a screen in the halls of learning. Those gathered therein are thus shown the errors and mistakes, and their outworking, and, as you know, in the past when people could neither read nor write they learnt from pictures that revealed simple and great truth. In the wonderful stone carvings in many of your abbeys and cathedrals (I am thinking particularly of St Alban's for I know that well) are figures carved in stone: beautiful work teaching those who gazed upon them long ago some vital spiritual lesson.

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The tabernacle which Moses built in the wilderness was symbolical of, or depicted, the nature of man and his material, astral and spiritual bodies. There was the great altar upon which incense was burnt, and a curtained recess beyond, which held the Holy of Holies. Only the priest was allowed into the Holy of Holies, only the one who had received illumination. The holy place is symbolical of the creative centres in the human body. The middle chamber where was the burning incense, is symbolical of the human larynx; the fumes of the incense symbolised the aspiration and prayers ascending from the larynx. Remember that the throat centre is considered sacred and holy. One of the lessons of the early mystery schools was to guard the tongue, and also to use speech accurately and with power because it is holy. What a difference there would be in human life today if men spoke with reserve, with accuracy and with wisdom. What power and light could be sent forth by the Word. That is the incense which rises to heaven and is acceptable in the sight of God. Again only the initiate, only he who had passed through the earlier tests and who was pure and wise, could enter the Holy of Holies, the place of illumination.

Much gold and silver was used in the decoration of the temple. The gold, holy and pure, represented the Sun, not only the physical sun which is the life-giver on earth, but the spiritual Sun which is the life-giver of the spirit, the divine mind. The silver represented the moon, and also stood for the Mother and for the soul of man. Silver was the indrawing power, and gold the radiating power—these two forces scientifically known as force and energy. Here were symbols to those who could understand of great cosmic forces at work in the world, powers that were also part of our human life. The twelve loaves of shewbread had also their significance, as the twelve months of the year, the twelve signs of the zodiac. The seven-branched candlesticks were symbolical of the seven planes of spiritual life surrounding the earth, the seven bodies of man, the seven sacred centres or windows of his soul—a perfect representation of deep significance for the candidate, and it is notable that the tabernacle was movable—as the tribe marched it could lead them onwards towards the Promised Land.

Many things are left unsaid tonight, but we would like, if we can, to continue this subject. We perhaps can learn a great deal, unearth the sacred jewel of truth which lies buried, and get perhaps a deeper understanding of our own lives, and how we might use our precious seconds and minutes and hours and days. Do we squander them in vain questionings and murmurings against God because He does not do what the earth mind thinks He should? Or do we strive to lift the veil of the tabernacle and see behind the veil the glories that await us as we journey onwards?

Q. Have the seven candlesticks any other symbolism besides what you have mentioned?

A. They symbolise the seven bodies of man, the seven lights of the soul, the seven holy planets, the seven great angels round the throne, the seven rays of harmony, the seven harmonics, the seven rays of colour merged in the one white light. Many aspects of spiritual truth are contained in these seven-branched candlesticks.

Q. What about the jewels in the temple?

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A. Some consider that the twelve jewels represent the twelve great soul qualities. They may also represent the signs of the zodiac. The four curtains represent the four elements. The tabernacle contains the significance of the lesser and the great mysteries, the symbolism of the microcosm and the macrocosm, of God and His universe.

From the story of Moses has been drawn much of the teaching of later days; Christianity and the New Testament has been largely written around the symbols represented in the tabernacle. These same deep truths were incorporated in religions preceding Christianity and in Greece. Sometimes their purity was dulled. Then came Jesus, and he expressed the same truth purely and simply: 'Love one another' he said. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and thy neighbour as thyself.' Such wonderful, simple and profound teachings were the jewels from the tabernacle, and are the key of that story of the Exodus, of the flight from bondage into the Promised Land. The Revelation of John tells much the same story under a different symbolic form. The same cosmic truths are there presented. He that hath ears let him hear and he will know truth.

The central truth of all is that man is made in God's own image; he contains within himself all the powers and the glories of the universe. There is no separation between God and man, God in man, God in all life, but to live to the very fullest, to find the real happiness, the perfect way of life, the life of man must become dedicated. The divine mind of man was symbolised in Atlantean and in ancient American days by the crown of feathers—an illumination of the brain of man by the divine mind. The crown of gold set with jewels, referred to in the Bible so often, symbolises the same thing. The crown—the illumination of the mind. The 'casting down of the crown' (in Revelation)* indicates that man does not keep the knowledge and illumination to himself. 'Without God I am nothing—all the good in me is of God, the divine light, the divine mind', and so that which has come as the result of work and service is cast down at the feet of God. All belongs to God—it is His.

[*Revelation 4 : 10]

Benediction:

Ere we depart we call upon the beloved angels of peace and love and joy to be ever present. Keep your vision upon the light which ever guides all true aspirants to the Promised Land. Have no fear, the clouds are passing. Peace cometh. Thanks be to our Father—Mother God for all the love and the virtues which He has bestowed upon His children.

Amen.

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Throat chakra, chakra, astrology, akashic, history