

An Easter Address

A215 Sunday Address 9th April 1950 St Mary Abbots Place, London Easter Sunday service

The date of this address is conjectural (see below), while the text is as issued in the magazine Angelus after it was given, apart from correction of errors

Text: from *Angelus*, April 1951; the printed text carries a headnote, 'Although Easter has passed this address is so attuned to the spring-tide that its publication is timely'.

Context: it is assumed that this text was published a year after the Easter at which it was given. Easter Day in 1951 was on 25th March, so publishing an Easter address in April would indeed have been after the actual day. In 1950, it fell on 9th April, and that is therefore the date assumed for this address. Most intriguingly, one of the readings, outlined in the text, was taken from the apocryphal *Acts of John*, generally dated to the second century CE. This text was a relatively recent discovery: a text found in Vienna was published by M R James in 1897 and came to the attention of the Theosophist scholar G R S Mead, who included a translation in *FRAGMENTS OF A FAITH FORGOTTEN* (1900). Gustav Holst, a friend of Mead, set to music a section of the work as *The Hymn of Jesus* in 1917. Whoever chose the reading for this service might be expected to have had it from the Theosophical sources, but in fact the footnote tells us it was read from Bernhard Pick's edition of 1909, under the title *THE APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS OF PAUL, PETER, JOHN, ANDREW AND THOMAS*. The section undoubtedly read was chapters 97 and 98, which are just as described here: a vision in which St John is taken from a cave by Jesus to look down on the physical cross and see instead a cross of light in the sky, which is the real cross, according to Jesus in the *Acts*. The *Acts of John* was condemned by the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 CE for its docetism (the teaching that Jesus did not die on the cross because his body was not fully of this world) and White Eagle thus makes a powerful statement by referring to it here, even if the choice of reading was Minesta's or Brother Faithful's. However, White Eagle is closer to St John the Evangelist in stressing the dual nature of Jesus Christ (and the reading of the *Acts of John* as docetist is probably a little severe, since the dual nature is one of its themes). There is a modern edition of the *Acts of John* by Richard I. Pervo (Polebridge Press, 2015), and the text is widely available online.

General Notes: this is one of White Eagle's most unusual and profound Easter addresses and goes into detail about whether or not Jesus died on the cross, into the meaning of the Earth Initiation, and into the purpose of life on Earth – both for Jesus and for ourselves. The teaching on the four great initiations is extensive. For the cross, see 'Context', above. White Eagle gives us a very subtle understanding of how Jesus could and could not simultaneously die on the cross. Somehow in this address the very release of Jesus from the bonds of flesh seems joyful, where elsewhere it is his survival that rather more brings the joy. White Eagle also, and quite unusually, gives an esoteric interpretation of the two thieves crucified alongside Jesus – as representing his higher and his lower mind. It also goes into unusual detail about the bringing together of John and Mary, mother of Jesus, and the words from the cross about the feeling of being forsaken. Unusually the address comes to quite a resounding climax at the end.

References: for the story from the *Acts of John* see 'Context', above and for the Easter story see, particularly of the four gospels, that of John (chapters 18 and 19; chapter 20 details the resurrection). The story of the two crucified alongside Jesus is nonetheless from Luke 23: 'Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise' is at verse 43. 'Father, forgive' is also from the Luke account (verse 34), but the story of Jesus commending the disciple thought to be John to his mother Mary and vice versa is from John 19 : 26-7. 'I thirst' is John 19 : 28, while 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' is Matthew 27 : 46. For the story of the disciples meeting the arisen Jesus on the road to Emmaus, see Luke 24 : 13-35. Reference to the 'I AM' is frequent in John's Gospel.

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White Eagle's Address:

We are going to speak about Eastertide, and would endeavour to illumine your mind and hearts concerning this most perfect initiation – because this is what the Passion of Jesus the Christ is intended to teach.

We have heard some people say they shrink from the thought of crucifixion. Many feel that they would like to banish from their minds all thought of pain and suffering. We would rather bring to your understanding the inner meaning of this object lesson. Do not dwell upon a picture of a man's body dying upon a cross, brethren, but rather think about something which in comparison is infinitely glorious, infinitely beautiful. Try to forget the physical aspect, because as you heard in one of our readings tonight, Jesus the Master came to his beloved disciple in the 'cave on the mount' – which means while the disciple was raised in consciousness, and turned away from worldly things into the cave of his innermost being. This record says that at the moment the Lord Jesus came to him and said, in effect: 'At this moment they are crucifying my body. They are piercing my body with a sword, they are giving me gall to drink – *but I am not there*'.*

In these few words you will get the true meaning of the crucifixion, or as we shall put it, of the earth initiation undergone by Jesus. Some of you here may not understand what we are talking about. Briefly we will explain that during man's life – not in his one short incarnation but his whole worldly journey through many incarnations – he has to learn to master the conditions of matter, to master the water, the air, the fire and the earth conditions. Some people think that matter is a substance which can only be contacted by one or other of man's five senses. May we remind you that matter has finer manifestations than those to which you are accustomed. Matter can exist on a higher realm of manifestation. The human spirit, which is the real man or woman, the real you, derives from a world of infinite beauty, light, truth and purity. But it needs the Spirit which is breathed forth from the great Spirit, the Father and the Mother God, to sustain it, to develop its own power. It comes down weakly as a babe in the beginning and can only develop power within its own being through a series of manifestations or incarnations through physical matter. The human spirit descends into matter for the sole purpose of developing this God-consciousness within itself – and not only this God-consciousness, but also God-power, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence: all these lie within the potentialities of the spirit of man. In God's great love and wisdom He sends His child, His son to be born upon the earth, to wear physical clothing, so that this son can through long contact with matter develop those same qualities within which will inevitably bring to him release from bondage. In the process of his growth and development of his God or Christ-qualities, man passes through a series of great initiations.

Each initiation represents an expansion of consciousness, a growth and an enlargement of the man's soul and spirit; it is also a release of the God-powers within the man. Man, then, successively passes through the initiations of water and air, of fire and earth, and through those degrees he learns how to control himself; and at the same time to give fullest expression to his emotions of mind and heart, the latter being the great centre of love. His last initiation is called the crucifixion. If you compare other ancient religions and Scripture with your

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Christian Scriptures you will discover that every saviour of humanity, every great being has in some form undergone this earth initiation we know as crucifixion.

As we said at the outset of this talk, we would not have you dwell upon the outer and the distressing side of the Easter story. We would have you dwell upon the heavenly side, as recorded by the disciple in the story we have heard read tonight. The real Jesus was not there when his body underwent crucifixion. There will still be many people who will insist that Jesus was crucified. Well, in a sense they are right, but in another they are wrong. We will explain what this means.

The soul of man, once having arrived at a degree of spiritual growth and development where it is able to rise above the limitations of the earthly mind and the earthly senses, can remain untouched by any ill which its enemies inflict. Surely this is very clearly brought out by the words of Jesus?

Children, you look upon suffering purely and simply from your own standpoint as something which you have got to go through. But you will probably agree with us that when you are in the very depths of despair and anguish, pain and suffering, if you make an effort to raise your consciousness to God, or to the Lord Christ, you lose your sense of suffering. A peace steals over you. You know then that you, the true you, the higher you, who are spirit born of the Spirit of the Father–Mother God, do not suffer. Only when you allow yourself to be drawn down into imprisonment do you wallow, and as you wallow in the mud of self-pity you suffer. But when you learn to rise above this condition of darkness, doubt, fear suspicion, hatred and jealousy – all these being qualities of the darkness – you reach a heaven of light, harmony and love. Then you know that no one has any power to touch you. You can only feel suffering when you allow yourself to sink down into earth conditions.

In a degree, every time you undergo this process you are going through a minor crucifixion. When you can rise above suffering you remain at peace, you are unperturbed, having no desire to fight for your rights, no desire to be anxious, fretful or fearful. You know, because you are in the blessed aura of Christ, that all is well, that people can do what they like, but that you are only concerned with your Father God.

The Easter festival, my children, can be joyful. A soul has been released into a world of light and beauty. The ancients celebrated this vernal equinox with thanksgiving, because life was rising again, the flowers were coming and the birds were singing to greet the new life released from the darkness of earth.

So, my children, we look to Easter thankfully and with rejoicing, heralding it as a time of release for the spirit. The Master by his Passion gave to the Christian world an undying example of his glorious release from bondage of the flesh. He allowed his enemies to take and crucify him. We want you to notice how the lower mind, the body self of the Master Jesus, gave a last struggle; as it always does with all humanity. For then the higher self is endeavouring to bring the soul to that place of revelation in heaven, the lower mind (which is a thief) steps in and tries to rob the soul of that great treasure which it is about to receive. Two thieves were crucified, one on either side of Jesus. You remember Jesus said to one,

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‘This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise!’ *Thou shalt be with me in Paradise*: that was to the higher mind of the man. The dying thief who scorned the Lord Jesus was a representation of the lower, the unworthy, the worldly mind which had to die, to be extinguished. But the other thief, representative of the higher mind (and even that is a robber, for the mind is always robbing the spirit), is taken with the Christ after the crucifixion into the heavenly home.

Remember also what Jesus said of his enemies, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do’, thus clearly showing that the first essential is forgiveness. Would those enemies of the spirit do such cruel things if they once knew the consequences? No indeed! No man could ever inflict cruelty upon another if he understood what he was doing. Christ called upon the great Eternal Light to forgive. Then later, seeing or being aware of the people around him, he called to John, the disciple of love, saying: ‘John, behold your mother’. This mother meant the symbol of the soul, of the intuition. Then to the mother he said: ‘Behold your son’. Afterwards, he told John to take his own mother home. A most beautiful symbology can be found in this theme which depicts a soul obedient to receive the spirit. Here is another illustration of the mystical marriage between the soul and the spirit – the Christ-spirit, the love-element in man. Then he said later: ‘I thirst’. Beloved, it was not the body of Jesus that was thirsting. It was the great spirit. What did they give him to quench his thirst? Gall, vinegar, representative of the bitterness of earthly things. This could not quench that thirst of the spirit.

Then comes the saying which has puzzled many. ‘My God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me!’ That was the cry of the lower self, feeling that its power and life was departing. It was not the Christ. ‘I am dying; thou art forsaking me! – the spiritual power is going, being withdrawn.’ In this manner the body cried out. Do you not see how clearly this crucifixion represents the two aspects of man: the spirit which is rising and going home to its Father; and the lower, the material self, struggling to retain its hold; and how we may witness the spirit in this earth initiation gaining power and so growing to full manhood, to perfection? This is a wonderful story.

So, my beloved children, we pray that you may receive illumination. Go into your innermost sanctuary. Seek there to raise your consciousness into those heavenly places, so that you may be strengthened by your daily life, by learning that the things of earth have no real power; so that you may gain this inner light and this inner strength. For through this last, this Earth initiation, the spirit of man gains the secret of eternal life. Through this Earth initiation the full power comes to man to control all earthly conditions. To overcome sickness. To overcome poverty. To overcome inharmony. To overcome death. The true meaning of the crucifixion is the overcoming of death. Jesus again demonstrated this when he rose in his body. Yes, in his earthly body! And went before his disciples and met them on the road to Emmaus and talked with them. The crucifixion had no real power. Earth had no power. What happened to the Master Jesus will happen to every soul in due time. For all will pass through their final crucifixion and be released for ever more from bondage. Then all will be light. All will be glory and joy. Man will then enter into the full consciousness of his sonship. He will become the perfected one, the perfect son of God.

An Easter Address

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We pray that you may think on these things and realise this divine 'I AM' presence within, which is the Christ light, the Christ-life. For the Son of God through you, through your personality and your life can minister to the sick, the sorrowful and the bereaved.

May the blessing of love be upon you. May the great hosts of heaven pour down upon you the blessing of eternal truth. May you know peace for evermore. Amen.

*From the Acts of John, from the Apocryphal Gospels of Peter, Paul and John.

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:

dual aspects, the living Christ, resurrection, death as release, initiations, Jesus in light body during crucifixion

