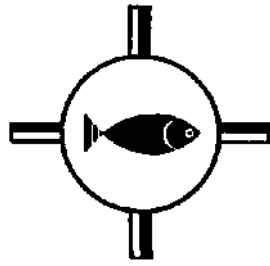


# LIBERAL CATHOLIC INSTITUTE OF STUDIES



## Unit 5

THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH : LITURGY

## Paper 1

THE LIFE WITHIN THE FORM

PART 1

by

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**CHAPTER I THE MASTER**

The Head and Inspiration of the Liberal Catholic Church is the Christ. The Christ is the central figure in all the services of the church. He is the true Officiant: the true Priest: the real Administrant of all the Sacraments; the Clergy, Bishops and Priests alike are only His ministers while the body of members constitutes the indispensable ingredient of the church visible and invisible, the Priesthood of the Laity.

The Communicants receive the Sacrament at the hands of the clergy while the Grace so bestowed is given by our Lord.

Many ask the question: "Who and what and where is the Christ?"

This is a fair question and one which must be answered satisfactorily for every individual who is sincerely interested in the work of the Church. It is only logical, that before we can wholeheartedly take part in any work such as that carried on by the Church, we must have some logical basis upon which we act. Since it is stated that the Christ is the Head and Central Figure of the Church, it is proper that we pursue this subject further.

The Master. We state that He is a Living Christ. The historical Christ forms a part of our work, but we do not limit our thought to the events which are historically recorded in the Bible.

The next indication you may notice is that members kneel or genuflect when entering their seats or passing in front of the Altar. This again is an expression of our conviction that the presence of our Lord is here and is not just an historical character however great He is represented. Every Catholic regardless of the denomination to which he belongs - gives outer recognition to the fact of the Presence by kneeling, or genuflecting, as we have just described, and by a quiet and respectful deportment when inside the Church. The proper attitude is to conduct oneself quietly and reverently when in, or, around the premises, of a Church - regardless of the kind of Church it is. It is a place set aside for a high purpose and it is dedicated to the welfare and upliftment of mankind. Therefore, it is worthy of our respect and consideration.

It is apparent to many new comers in the church that much consideration is given to ritual. The pageantry and display sometimes repels and seems out of all proportion to the idea of a Living Christ. But, a deeper and conscientious study and investigation will uncover and unfold the real beauties behind the rituals - and the student will then be able to become a conscious participant in a drama which is beautiful and uplifting beyond mere belief, or disinterested observation. The Liberal Catholic Church has developed a science of the Sacraments and has unveiled much which remained hidden for many hundreds of years. Thus - with this knowledge - the inquirer does not follow blindly the pageantry and glitter as in some of the Churches. To follow without reason and knowledge or to engage in practises and formalities which have no real meaning is superstition.

The Presence of the Christ is not a superstition. It is a Reality and one which gives life and meaning to much which has been carried on for centuries upon centuries within the Church. This Presence has given hope. It has given strength and courage to millions upon millions of struggling souls seeking to find some surcease from the suffering in their lives. No learned man, however brilliant, can prove to those millions that their lives have not been lightened and their hearts made glad. It would be an error to deny the value of a remedy in the face of perfectly

obvious relief - and often a cure. The sensible course to follow in such instances is to seek to discover the Cause. This Cause, we maintain, is the Grace of our Lord Christ, Who is the Living Presence we worship and reverence.

As we progress through this Course of Study, we shall explore in minute detail all of the elements which enter into the expressions of the Grace of our Lord. We will answer all of the questions; and give our point of view. The questioner may not be satisfied with our answers, but the point which we wish to make is that we will not deliberately evade any aspect. We shall be limited only by our ability to describe and visualize, and the intelligence and comprehension of the student.

With mutual tolerance and sincerity, much can be accomplished.

To return to the question: "Who and what and where is the Christ?"

Article 2 of the Official Summary of Doctrine says as follows:

God manifests in his universe as a Trinity, called in the Christian religion Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three Persons in one God, co-equal and co-eternal; the Father the cause of all, and Son the Word who was made flesh and dwelt among us, the Holy Spirit the life-giver, the inspirer and sanctifier.

Article 4 states as follows:

Christ ever lives as a mighty spiritual presence in the world, guiding and sustaining his people. The divinity which was manifest in him is gradually being unfolded in every man, until each shall come "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. 4:13).

These two articles are part of the 'Official' Doctrines of the Church. Members of the Church are free to interpret these and the other five articles of the Summary of Doctrine as they choose. Regardless of how much any one member's views may differ with the majority, no formal or official effort will be made to force that member to conform to the opinions of the majority, or with any other view which may be held. The basic tenet of belief in the Church is that everyone shall have freedom of thought and interpretation. The Church is opposed to any attempt at coercion. Everyone has a perfect right to his own views.

In order that the student may have some idea as to the philosophical background and the underlying thought of the above doctrines, we quote from the Official Statement of Principles (page 5): "The mediaeval Schoolmen who systematized theology in the Western Church followed the method of Aristotle, but the earliest among the Church Fathers of philosophic bent were Platonist, and the Liberal Catholic Church, whilst not undervaluing the clarity and precision of the scholastic theology, has much in common with the Platonic and Neo-Platonic school of Christian tradition. It holds that a theology can only justify itself and be of permanent value in so far as it partakes of the character of a divine wisdom. That is to say, that while certain of its higher teachings remain within the category of revelation, because they are far beyond our grasp and attainment, others less remote are capable of re-verification, and even of development, by those who have unfolded within themselves the necessary spiritual faculties. - This method of approach to Truth has often been called Theosophy (divine wisdom) since the time of Ammonius Saccas in the third century, A.D. - It finds complete justification, of course, in scripture, and theosophy has constantly appeared in the religious thought of both East and West, denoting not only mysticism but also an eclectic philosophy underlying religion, which

accepts as Truth that which commends itself universally to religious experiences, wherever it is to be found and under whatever form."

With these extensive quotations from the official views of the Church, we shall now proceed to elaborate the predominant thought arising from these conclusions.

Christian theologians have assumed that the Second Person of the Trinity: the Son, and the Christ are one and the same. Some have even gone further and said that Christ is God. The Liberal Catholic Church makes a distinction between the Son and the Christ. Article 4 - which we quoted - says that "Christ ever lives as a mighty, spiritual Presence in the world." Article quotes St. John: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

Jesus is quoted as saying: "I and the Father are one." Yet later, Jesus said: "At that day, ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me and I in you." These statements of Jesus indicate something more of a mystical relationship, rather than the relationship of the Son to the Father.

While the Liberal Catholic Church makes a distinction between the Son and the Christ, it makes a distinction at the same time between the Master Jesus and the Christ. There is, however, a trinity of manifestation in the Son: the Christ and the Master Jesus. We may liken this trinity to that which exists in man. Man, as body, soul and spirit manifests as a triplicity. I am of the opinion that this correspondence exists in the Son as Spirit, the Christ as Soul and the Master Jesus as body. In the triple manifestation of Jesus, the Christ in Palestine we find a reflection of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. The Father corresponding to the Son; the Son corresponding to the Christ; and the Holy Spirit corresponding to the Master Jesus. This correspondence is still further carried out in the "theosophical" attributes of the Trinity as Will, Love-Wisdom and Activity. The Son would be Will, the Christ would be Love-Wisdom and the Master Jesus Activity.

There are three other aspects of the Christ. They are: The Cosmic Christ, The Mystical Christ and the Historical Christ. Here again we have the same correspondence. The Cosmic Christ is the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity. The Mystical Christ is "a mighty spiritual Presence in the world," and the Master Jesus, whose life in Palestine forms the basis for the Historical Christ. We shall elaborate in some detail the last three mentioned distinctions made above.

## THE COSMIC CHRIST

To those who are accustomed to thinking of Jesus the Christ as the Incarnation of God, namely, that Jesus was God Incarnate, the idea of several Christs may be rather startling. It is not so strange when we study more deeply into the matter. When we limit ourselves to the literal teachings of the Bible - and the interpretation of the Bible by theologians - we preclude any deeper meaning and understanding. Students of comparative religion soon discover that every religion has its Christ or Son of God.

St. John speaks of "The Word Who was made flesh and dwelt among us." In the sense that St. John is speaking of the Word as being the Son of God, he means that the Word is the Logos: the thought of God. The word logos means: "the word, or form, which expresses a thought," it also means "the thought." Obviously, the thought of God could not be embodied in its entirety in so limited a manifestation as we find recorded of Jesus in Palestine.

However great and far-reaching the spiritual implications may be involved in the life of Jesus, we cannot concede that God or Universal Life in this apparently limitless universe could have been housed completely in the frail human form of the Master Jesus. Therefore it is both logical and sensible to assume that the Master Jesus was a fragment - or, if you prefer - a lesser manifestation of the Word, the Logos of the Universe. Jesus said the Father in Me doeth the works. He made a distinction, yet for hundreds of years theologians have refused to take Him at His word. They persist in saying that Jesus was the bodily Incarnation of God. They have wrangled for centuries over just how much of God was manifested, but never agreed upon the question. There are - and have been - innumerable sects which worship Jesus in varying degrees. Liberal Catholics find no difficulty in making a distinction between Jesus and the Christ and carrying the distinction still higher, between the Christ and the Word, or the Second Person of the Trinity. In fact, the understanding becomes deeper and the meaning far more beautiful when we start with the limited form, in which the word of the Christ was carried out through the Master Jesus, and the Limitless glory of the Son of God, or the Word which was with God. The Word which was made flesh and dwelt among us, becomes far greater than the narrow view of some theologians held for centuries.

The difficulty with many thinkers and philosophers, and especially so with theologians, is that they tend to fix thought-patterns at a certain level. Somewhere, I read that religion was the frozen thought of men. This very well describes the prevalent religious thought. A much greater purpose exists for religion when we think of it as a way of living. To think of religion in this way opens our minds to new revelations of truth. We are ever progressing toward a great realization and understanding of the world around us and the Life of God - which is just another way of speaking of: "the world around us."

When we think of the distinctions made between the various aspects of the Christ and to distinguish between the Master Jesus and the Christ, no difficulties should arise. Naturally, if we limit our thought and forever after hold it to concepts which were limited at the time they were conceived, we will always be troubled by any new or different version which we encounter.

With a limited mind, it is impossible to conclude that men can determine, at any time, the whole truth. We see such a conclusion disputed every day. All men change their minds, and as a race, we are discovering new aspects of truth every minute of the day. Religious ideas are constantly being outmoded. Religious truths are as Truth itself, forever the same, but we are gaining new views of these truths.

Liberal Catholics are, as we have stated, encouraged to keep an open mind: to form their own opinion. It is enough to utilize the ideas of others, as far as possible, and this applies to the "Official" doctrines of the Church, but who can say that at any moment we may discover something new which will modify our whole outlook, and point of view. That which the Church holds as true and acceptable is based upon principles which have stood the test of thousands upon thousands of years. Still, our concept of these principles changes as time passes. No one, however great, can form a mental picture of every aspect of the whole universe and when we attempt to define the doctrine of the Church, we are greatly limited. We can do no more than give a pattern for thought by which we may grow to a greater understanding. That which seems reasonable to us we should accept, and that which is unreasonable we should reject.

Regarding the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, the Church says "Officially": "The Word Who was made flesh and dwelt among us . . ." and that He was " 'Alone-born' of the Father"; and that "He is co-equal and co-eternal" with the Father. There are no other "Official"

declarations excepting such as may be found in the Liturgy of the Church. There is, however, a large amount of writing which elaborates upon these official statements. The most detailed are found perhaps in the Science of the Sacraments. (C.W. Leadbeater).

The general consensus of opinion of the majority of the writers and interpreters of the Doctrine of the Church is that the three Persons of the Trinity are not in any sense personal as we understand the term. They are not persons distinguished one from the other as we would distinguish three different people, but rather They manifest as basic Principles. The word 'person' comes from the Latin word *persona* which means a mask, that which covers something. Therefore, the Three Persons of the Trinity are the mask of the One Life of the Universe. They are three expressions of the One Existence. Three combined are the whole of the Manifested Universe. Therefore, They are "co-equal and co-eternal." The change in the traditional phrase "the only begotten Son of the Father" to the phrase "alone-born of the Father" was done to distinguish between the many sons of God - you and I and all others who are the begotten sons - and the Son of the Trinity Who alone was born, or came into being, directly from the Father without any intermediate action. Obviously, Jesus was not the only begotten Son.

The cosmic Christ is, as we understand the meaning of the term, the "Son" of the Trinity. As a Principle, the Cosmic Christ becomes the Universal Christ. Also, as a Principle, He or It (It is generally used to designate the One Existence) manifests through many forms of life. Throughout the Universe, there are many, many unit expressions which are predominantly expressions of the Universal Christ. Every scheme of existence, whether it be a galaxy (or island universe) or solar systems or planets, have one INDIVIDUAL form of life which is to that system or unit: THE CHRIST. This same Principle is embodied in every single unit of life regardless of how minute it may be or how vast in size. The Christ is in every atom, every electron and, of course, in every human being. In expression in the individual unit of life, the Christ manifests as a Principle, and the form is dependent upon this Principle for its very existence. This must not be misconstrued as a form, of Pantheism.

Every Christ (principle) in each system of life, whether a galaxy, a solar system or a planet is the representative of the Christ next above Him. For example, the "Christ" of our planet is the Representative and channel for the Christ of our solar system. All these many Units of representation are in perfect alignment with each other and this alignment extends all the way back to the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, where the first Impulse which distinguishes Itself from the Father, has its origin.

Should we be able to grasp and hold in our limited minds (viewing this alignment from the side view, as it were), we would probably see something in the beginning which appeared to us as motion but without any form. Only at intervals would we be aware that there was Something there. Emerging from this we would sense vague wisps of matter having no tangible form whatever. Gradually - as we followed the line we would become aware of these vague wisps of matter taking form, but highly nebulous in structure. Then, we would see the forms getting denser and denser as we passed from vast cloud formations of stars to individual groups of stars - and then the solar systems revolving around some great Central Star. Picking out one individual Star with its family of planets, we would be able to view the manifestation more closely. In each planet, we would see one certain blazing Light among several other Lights and this Light would be of a certain hue or color. It would be individual and distinct. Looking back - along the way we had traveled - we would find at each stage this same particular hue, but each progressive step would be marked by an enormous increase in brilliance until we arrived back at the Source where the Light would blend with all the others which also followed the same progression - and there we would find the One White Light: the Central Flame of the Universe.

Returning again to our planet, we would - in imagination - be able to view the world over long periods of time. Periodically, and following a certain rhythmic pulsation of all the other Lights in all the other worlds and systems, the Light of our planet would become focused in one certain human being. The focusing of the Light in this particular human being would cause him to flow with a light far beyond his own - and this would make him visible also to others around him, and in a particular manner. As we viewed these successive focusings, we would see a particular shade, or coloring, in each one which was not emphasized in any of the others. Thus: the whole panorama would be one of an amazingly beautiful display of color and form.

In the foregoing description we have something of a graphic description of what happened in Palestine two thousand years ago. The Master Jesus was one of the forms in which the Light was focused for a time. The particular shade which distinguished Him from those which preceded Him is revealed to us in the Christian religion. The others were the other great religions which were given to the world through other Teachers, such as Buddha, Zoroaster, Osiris and others.

There will be other focusings of the Light in centuries to come, but it is always the One Light which shines through all. We - from our point of view - think they are different but we are only able to see the one particular hue at the moment.

Therefore, if our vision extended all the way back to the Source - or the One Life or Light of the Universe - we would see that the Master Jesus was the Son of the Trinity, but in a greatly limited way.

We would see that all of us are the Son, but in a still more limited way than the Master Jesus. The Master was, and is, an individual just as you and I, but for a time - and due to His being much further along the path of evolution - (and because of His particular fitness to be the Vehicle) He voluntarily allowed Himself to be used as a physical channel for the Christ of our Planet, Who in turn, transmitted from on High the greater Impulses which originated with the Son.

Each Christ acts as a "step-down" stage, thus adapting the Higher Force to the lower stages.

## THE MYSTIC CHRIST

We have discussed the Cosmic Christ in a brief way, showing something of His individuality or "Person" in coming into manifestation. Every aspect of Life has a great multiplicity of expression. This resolves itself into a few basic expressions. Just as all color comes from pure white light, still there are prime colors and secondary ones. Then there are a great variety of shades produced by the blending of the prime and secondary colors.

The same differentiation exists in the three Major Aspects of God:

The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. We are limiting ourselves - at this time - to a discussion of the Son. We have segregated this discussion into the three Major Aspects of The Son or: The Second Person of the Trinity. These three aspects are: The Cosmic Christ, the Mystical Christ and the Historical Christ. The term "mystic" comes from words which relate to secret rites. The broad use of the term could be said to be that which is hidden or behind the



scenes. It is, therefore, true to say that the Mystic Christ is the hidden Christ. He is unseen though present. In a sense, He is the relationship between the Cosmic Christ and the Historical Christ.

We have described - in a limited way - the descent of the Second Person of The Trinity (the Cosmic Christ) into matter. We have shown this descent by representing Him as successive stages of light. We progressed this descent through stages which culminated with the Master Jesus. There we have the Historical Christ of which we shall speak later. It may be said that the method by which the Cosmic Christ came into expression was through the unseen aspect which we term the Mystic Christ. This should not be strange, or difficult, to reason when we are so often given to speak of a certain man or woman as having different temperaments. We say that a certain man is dynamic at one time and then receptive at another. We see a man struggling to make a place in the world and using every bit of strength and energy he can muster - yet, we see lurking behind this great energy, a soft idealistic quality which he shows to his wife and children for whom he is providing. We see great energy motivated by love. Then we see this man as the dispenser of the fruits of his labor. We see him establishing trust funds for his family and building a home for them. We see him making plans for his children as to how he will launch them into the world with the greatest advantage to themselves. We could call this man quite correctly "three persons" namely, the Executive, the loving Parent and the Provider or Administrator. In the last analysis, the aspect of a loving parent is merely a relationship between the Executive and the Administrator. His whole effort was to build up security and abundance upon which his family could draw for sustenance and advantages.

In an almost identical way, the Christ manifests. This should be qualified by the statement that the entire activity of the Christ is pivoted upon the basic activity as the Second Person of the Trinity. The Father and the Holy Spirit have aspects which are entirely distinctive to Them. Again, there is always the relationship between each distinction which - from our limited point of view - appears to be distinct. Just as in the flight of a jet, there is the take off which ceases the moment the plane is high enough in the air; then there follows the flight procedure which ceases when the plane lands. Each of these activities is distinct in itself, but all three are required in order to transport the plane and its cargo from one place to another. Therefore, the flight is the relationship between the take-off point and the landing point. It is merely incidental to the arrival, but the process absorbs the attention and experience of the whole crew. As it progresses, it is of vital importance to all concerned.

Just so the Mystic Christ is the relationship between the Cosmic Christ and the Historic Christ and we are vitally concerned with the process to the end that we may gain the fullest amount of expression from the Historic Christ.

The Mystic Christ is the Unseen Presence in every form. Just as the unseen love of the father for his family motivated the Executive and gave the rationale to the Administrator, so the Mystic Christ is the motivating power, and rationale for the Cosmic and the Historic Christ.

We do not feel the Cosmic Christ or the Historic Christ; we see them in action. But we do "feel" the Mystic Christ. His Presence abides with us at all times, and at moments when we lift our consciousness and stimulate our devotion, we are aware of His Presence though we do not see Him. The love which pours forth from us, for another, is His Love (not to be confused with personal attraction or emotion).

He comes in the silence and only when there is stillness within do we hear His Voice. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with Me." "Lo, I am always with you." He said.

Many have attended the Solemn Benediction Service of the Church and in the silence as the Benediction is given, have become aware of a sweetness, a gentleness, which could be clearly felt. There is the sense of having received His touch. This is followed by a welling up from within of a great love and a feeling of complete surrender to the Blessing which flows over and wells up from within the heart. In this stillness we bow our heads and receive His Blessing.

It is the Mystic Christ which makes the Reality of the Cosmic and the Historic Christ real to us. Without His Touch, we might not be able to carry in our hearts the memory of His Grace.

In the Eucharist we say "O Son of God, Who showest Thyself this day upon a thousand altars, and yet art one and indivisible . . ." It is through the Reality of the Mystic Christ that this is possible. Through this means the Cosmic Christ becomes manifest as the corporal Body of Christ. The Bread and Wine correspondent to the Historical Christ. The relationship and the unity of the Three are carried out through all the Sacraments. In fact, it is not possible to separate Them at any time. They are One and the same - but Three - as in the Holy Trinity; They are "co-equal and co-eternal."

#### THE HISTORICAL CHRIST

We conclude this chapter with a discussion on the aspect of the Christ which is familiar to most of us, the historical Christ. This aspect is centered almost entirely around the Hebrew Teacher known to the world as Jesus, the Christ.

In our preliminary discussion (see page 3) we draw a correspondence between the three Persons, or Aspects, of the Holy Trinity. We pointed out that there is also a triplicity in the life or manifestation of Jesus in Palestine. This triplicity was outlined as the Cosmic Christ, the Mystic Christ and the Historical Christ. The Cosmic Christ corresponds to the Father of the Holy Trinity, and the Mystic Christ to the Son, and the Historical Christ to the Master Jesus. In this latter, the identification is exact. The Historical Christ is the Master Jesus.

It should always be borne in mind that every manifestation is triple in aspect. There is the motive power (the energy), and there is the material (the substance), and there is the form which is composed of the substance activated by the energy (or motive power) or "Life" side. Placing the Master Jesus in aspect to the above correspondence, we can liken Him to the substance. The Mystic Christ is the form - that which holds together the substance - and the Cosmic Christ is the motive power, Life, or energy animating the substance and form.

It is well that we spend as much thought and meditation time as possible upon these phases and their aspects of Christianity for, in doing so, we will know something of their workings. We shall be in a position to judge for ourselves the truth of any conclusions - however learned they may be. It is well-known that narrative accounts of any event change radically with the passage of time. More especially this was true in past centuries where the facilities for preserving accurate accounts were not as adequate as they are today. Even in our own modern times, there is often great controversy about events which happened only a decade or so back. Historians are noted for their ability to disagree. No wonder that an accurate account of the life

of Jesus is unlikely to be found after 2,000 years. The first two centuries following His life are concerned with world events which held the attention of historians far more than the simple life of an obscure preacher in a subject kingdom. A parallel today would be the life of some unknown teacher in some remote colony. It is certain that we in America would probably never hear of it in our life time, and it is likely, too, that it would be some time before his fame spread far enough that the world at large would know anything about it. It is certain that with even modern methods of preserving records, there would most likely be some discrepancies in the accounts.

We have only the assertion of the theologians that the Gospel accounts were inspired by God and hence; infallible. Comparison between the four Gospels will readily disprove such a possibility. There are, of course, differences between them and any infallible accounts would be in perfect agreement. Nevertheless, this shortcoming does not in any way depreciate their true value as guides to conduct and Christian ethics. We have an enormously rich store to draw upon. The teaching of every religion is that there is a "Communion of Saints" that is, an elect group. In the Bible account, the Disciples of Jesus are pictured as such. The Bible records that Jesus said to them, "Unto you is given to know the mysteries of Heaven, but unto them (the people) I speak in parables."

The Liberal Catholic Church Summary of Doctrine #5, of The Statement of Principles, says: "There is a communion of saints, just men made perfect or holy ones, who help mankind, there is a ministry of angles." We shall discuss the ministry of Angels at a later time. At the beginning of this article of doctrine, it is stated: "The world is the theater of an ordered Plan . . ." This Plan is expressed and unfolded through the process of evolution, that is, an ordered progression from a lower form or state to a higher one; from the simple to the complex. Man is a part of this process and we see man ascending this ladder from the savage to the saint. He progresses up this ladder through the process of reincarnation and the law of cause and effect. ("As ye sow, so shall ye reap")

The Master Jesus is one Who had reached that point in evolution where He could become the most perfect channel for the Christ. He became an expression for a highly specialized presentation of the Idea of the Christ of our planet. This presentation is called Christianity. There are earlier presentations called by other names such as Buddhism, and the earlier great religions. Those presentations were given in such a way that they would be useful for the people of those earlier times. When the pure teachings became so hidden in the man-made conclusions (or theologies and dogmas), the Christ came again to the world to give the ancient truths again in a simple form. This He did through the Master Jesus in Palestine 2,000 years ago. History has repeated itself and an elaborate system of beliefs has grown up around those simple teachings, with a steady materialization of the spiritual aspects.

Oddly enough, the Bible omits any account of the life of Jesus from the age of twelve to the age of thirty years. This covers a period of eighteen years, and, in fact, there is hardly a complete account of the last three years of His life. Certainly information is meagre about the first twelve years. So - all in all - the Bible gives us very little information. We are left to our own resources to gather such information as we can. I think it is correct to say that only one historian makes any mention of Jesus, that is, any disinterested historian. This account is a brief mention by one Josephus in his account of the Jewish wars.

There are many traditions arising out of various secret schools and societies. Most of these agree that Jesus was a member of the Essenes, a highly secret group which existed at that time. Some accounts relate His travels being in connection with the Mysteries.

The teachings and traditions of these Mysteries as taught by Jesus are said to be preserved in the teachings of the Neo-Platonic School of the first two centuries. Notably that group which owes its inspiration to the Plotinus, an exponent of Plato's teachings. The men of this School were also called Gnostics, or Knowers and they were later expelled from the Church.

From that time onward, down to the present-day, the materialistic or somatic Christ has been the symbol of worship. The masses of people have rejected the deeper and more comprehensive teachings of the Mysteries which have centered largely around the Mystic Christ.

The Master - the Mighty Spiritual Presence in the world - is vast beyond full comprehension, yet ever near at hand, and may be discovered and known in His church. His Grace is bestowed through His Sacraments.

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Additional Reading:

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES & SUMMARY OF DOCTRINE - St. Alban Press - \$ .75

ESOTERIC CHRISTIANITY - LCIS Bookshop - \$ 3.50

Please add \$ .30 for postage and handling.

**CHAPTER II THE ANCIENT PATHS TO PURIFICATION, ILLUMINATION AND UNION**

Jesus told His disciples: ". . . for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known." (Matt. 10:26). From this we draw the conclusion that man is intended to know ". . . the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 13:11).

The Liberal Catholic Church is not dependent upon the original biblical promises for its conclusion that we may know even as we are known. The life of man in the world is a constant refutation of the idea that we are not to know God or understand His works. We are learning more and more every day. We are gaining knowledge in every direction. We are discovering new truths, as well as re-discovering those which have been buried in the past. We are also disproving the modern conclusion that the ancients were comparatively ignorant of the laws of nature.

To those who would follow the Christ, some assurance must be given that He can be found and known. This assurance the Liberal Catholic Church gives. It gives it not because of any authority, but out of a knowledge that He is a ". . . mighty spiritual Presence in the world guiding and sustaining His people." This knowledge, the Church maintains, may be that of every one who strives sincerely to find Him. The Church is a door through which one may enter to make this discovery. This glorious culmination of an age-long search will occur not in any external manner, no - not even in the Church which you have entered to discover Him - but within your own heart and soul. You will find that "The Kingdom of heaven is within."

The question may be raised as to just why the Church is so essential in this process if, after all, the Christ is within? The Church is not essential in the sense that everyone must enter a Church to make this discovery within himself. The essential fact is that the Church - by its very nature, if freed of all non-essential dogmas as dogmatic authorities - is more conducive to the process of making this discovery.

Some may ask: "What is more conducive than nature itself toward making this discovery? Surely, man cannot improve upon nature in beauty and purity." And it may be added that man could not find an environment more conducive than the open air and natural setting of nature. This, undoubtedly, is true, provided man can approach nature free from primitive impulse and unhampered by man-made distortions.

The value and place of a Church in this process (and in direct contrast to the open fields and woods) is that the church is a place set aside and dedicated to this purpose. There are many natural spots which we well know are not conducive to the inner discovery.

The Church is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Those who would make it an end are misinterpreting its purpose and actually are misusing its purpose. Such a process the Liberal Catholic Church seeks to avoid.

With these preliminary remarks, we enter upon a discussion of the Ancient Paths to Purification, Illumination and Union. The Statement of Principles of the Liberal Catholic Church states on page 11 thereof: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" ". (Prov. 24:18). In the early days of every Church, there are men of vision who, having first-hand knowledge of spiritual truth, are able to speak with the only authority that is worth anything, the authority of knowledge. Spiritual truths are capable of discovery at all times, or reverification by spiritually developed men. As a Church ceases to produce men of knowledge, so do its teachings become

narrowed down and hardened, its theology grows legalistic and mechanical and its priesthood, unable to impart knowledge by process of inner illumination, seeks to impose it by outer authority and persecutes those who resist its will. The Liberal Catholic Church aims at aiding its members to reach for themselves this certainty of inner knowledge - the true Genesis of which St. Clement of Alexandria wrote so fervently. The Ancient Paths of Purification, Illumination and Union, which in olden times brought the candidate to this certainty, are still open today. Those who approach by the traditional path may still hope to attain discipleship - or the direct communion with the Master - that should be the aim of every earnest Christian; for the "Way of the Cross" means the progressive unfoldment of the Christ-Spirit within man, and to this end are the Sacraments of His Holy Church appointed.

Broadly speaking, the three paths are really three stages in one path which could properly be called the Path of Purification. This is so because the whole process of Illumination - and its resultant Union - is one of purification. The Path is said to be the straight and narrow way " . . . which leadeth unto life." (Matt. 7:14). Actually, the whole system and scheme of Christian Ethics are for the purpose of preparing the pilgrim to enter at the "strait gate."

Man came from God and will one day return to the Father's House. The whole long road, from God back to God is also called the path of evolution. The travelers upon this path are not limited to man alone but to every form of life in the Universe. Man is only one stage in the long course of development. It is said that man is the epitome of the Universe in that in him is incorporated potentially the whole of Creation. Man is the first stage in the course where all potentialities come together in one unit. Prior to this time, the various parts are in a process of development. This is simply told in the Book of Genesis, in the 2nd chapter, 7th verse:

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

The process of "the Lord God forming" we still see going on today. Creation is still in process. The fact that God is said to have rested on the seventh day does not mean that He retired from the scene, but that He instituted, or set in motion, the process. The factor seven figures prominently in the whole process of creation. Briefly we link together "The Word" and the seven tones of the musical scale, the seven colors of the spectrum; the seven Archangels and many other references with which you are no doubt familiar. So the seven days, or rather six days of creation and the resting day of the seventh, have a much greater meaning than the simple idea that God created the world in one week of time such as we know time today. This is an interesting field of study and investigation but for the moment does not come under the subject we are discussing.

As we said, this process of creation is still going on. We see it in many of its apparently unlimited stages in the heavens unfolding through the nebulae. We see it in our own solar system in the progressive cooling of the planets. We have the story of our own planet written for us in the rocks and plants. Man himself is a book of his long past of development from the single cell creature to the complex mechanism which we know as our physical body.

Unfortunately, many think that the physical body is our real self. They very often conclude that the disintegration of the body marks the end of our individuality. The conclusion of this line of thinking is that if there is such a thing as immortality, it exists only in the parts of the physical body, as these parts later form parts in bodies yet to be created - such as a new-born baby.

Surely, we cannot conclude that everything stops with man. There must be a way beyond, a path which leads onward and upward to higher things. All that we may observe around us in the minerals, the vegetables and the animals shows a perfect continuity of development. We see these many lines of development culminating in man. In man we find reason and spiritual aspiration. It is not an idle dream which man has held for ages that there is a "beyond" that there is a better world beyond the one with which we are familiar.

This persistent and actually impelling thought which is inherent in man; one which must be starved, or turned aside, in order to remove it from Man's consideration, is actually the motivating power which drives him on and on to the fruition of his path. Man instinctively knows without being told that there is a Higher Power, and a world beyond. Though we cannot always see this way beyond, we sense it dimly. Its existence gives the rationale to every striving. It refutes the idea that the grave is the goal. It gives beauty to the thought expressed by the poet: "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen 3:19) was not spoken of the soul.

Man, reaching up into the clouds with one hand while he holds securely to the rungs of the ladder with the other, nevertheless reaches out to things beyond. When he reaches the top of the visible ladder, he enters the "strait gate" and puts his feet upon the Ancient Path: he embarks upon the narrow way: "which leadeth unto Life."

#### THE PATH OF PURIFICATION

The Ancient Path is that path which leads by conscious knowledge - or illumination - to union with the Master. The whole process is one of purification, namely, to free our natures of all blemishes, both moral and spiritual.

It is impossible to discuss the subject of purification without entering into a discussion of morals and ethics. Unfortunately, this introduces controversial elements. The morals and ethics of one are not necessarily those of another. That which is permissible in conduct on the part of one is viewed with alarm by another. This is true of the whole of human conduct. We may, however, assume that on the whole, civilized men are agreed upon the essentials of a moral code. There are some things we simply must not do, and there are others that we must, but between these two extremes lies a wide range of other permissible conduct.

Frequently, ministers are reminded in one way or another that they must be lenient with laymen because the layman is not expected to be "as good" as ministers. It would seem that ministers are just as susceptible to the lures of the world as laymen, in the balance of things. Generally speaking, they are not for the reason that they have developed a different set of values. The minister's pivot of action rests upon a different code and he is expected to set an example of self-restraint, control of emotions and appetites. Grossness of conduct is not compatible with the life and occupation of a minister. A layperson may use curses and, if any notice is taken of his language at all, the most that will be held against him is that he is uncouth and not a very cultured man. Not so the minister. He is henceforth held up as an example of all that is evil in man because he conducted himself in a manner not consistent with his calling.

The question of morals and ethics rests upon the objective, or goal of the individual or group. We do not expect the savage to have the same code as the Saint. So when we attempt to establish a code of morals and ethics for those who seek to travel upon the Ancient Path, they must immediately leave the code of the ordinary man behind and gauge their requirements by

the objective of the Path. The objective will establish the code and the application of it will be determined by our concept of the objective or goal. Let us liken the Path to the trail across the desert. The desert has a code of its own which places a high value upon water. This value is the result of experience and the lack of water. The standard of values is relative to the need, plus the supply.

It may be asked to what purpose is an outline made which consists of commonplace knowledge in discussing the Ancient Path of Purification. It is simply this: to remove, as far as possible, any arbitrary considerations. The closer we come to the ultimate stages of the path of growth and development, the more precise must become our conduct and discrimination. Truly the Path is a straight and narrow one. For instance, the great surgeon is never careless or slovenly in his surgical operations. He is caution personified; he is precision par excellence. He does not permit the slightest deviation on his part or that of his assistants. Just so must he who would attain perfection be precise in his every act, his every thought and his every emotion. There must not be any distortion of any kind.

It is difficult to conceive of the ultimate in refinement as required by the traveler on the Path. The finer implications are not always apparent until we remove the more ordinary faults. We cannot pause at this time to enter a lengthy discussion of a code of morals and ethics for the man on the Path. We are interested at this time only in the philosophical aspects. The subject of conduct will be discussed at greater length in future sections of this Course of Study. The Liberal Catholic Church concerns itself primarily with a process of self-realization. It is taken for granted that the aspirant will not attempt this self-realization unless he has already freed himself of the more commonplace undesirable habits of society. We know that not having already done this, he would not be interested in a higher life.

It is unavoidable - as we stated in the beginning of this discussion - to enter upon a discussion of morals and ethics when considering The Path of Purification. The Liberal Catholic concept of life - the panoramic view which (if he chooses to use it) is of a vastness far beyond that of the average man on the street - will, of itself, call for a stricter and higher standard of morals and impel him to adopt a code of ethics actually beyond the average. He will often find himself at times in more or less conflict with the accepted standards and codes!! Furthermore, he will find it difficult to explain to his friends and acquaintances just what the differences are!!

It is well that we spend a little time discussing the relative points of these views. At the outset, it is essential that a clear understanding and recognition is given to the relative aims (or goal) of the two. There is no better exposition that I know of which gives a "bird's-eye-view" so clearly as Sir Edwin Arnold's "Light of Asia." This little book is a complete story of The Path. It contrasts the many problems involved in graphic form. Consider what the Buddha had to say regarding His Fourth Truth.

The Fourth Truth is The Way. It openeth wide  
Plain for all feet to tread, easy and near,  
The Noble Eightfold Path; it goeth straight  
To peace and refuge. Hear!



Manifold tracks lead to yon sister-peaks  
Around whose snows the gilded clouds are curled;  
By steep or gentle slopes the climber comes  
Where breaks that other world.

Strong limbs may dare the rugged road which storms,  
Soaring and perilous, the mountain's breast;  
The weak must wind from slower ledge to ledge,  
With many a place to rest.

So is the Eightfold Path which brings to peace;  
By lower or by upper heights it goes.  
The firm soul hastes, the feeble tarries. All  
Will reach the sunlit snows.

So the Ancient Path, wending its way from time immemorial, down through the old, old world of the East, across the mountains of Persia into the Holy Land and through the old cities of Bethlehem and Jerusalem continues its way westward. It ever keeps pace with the wanderings and travels of men. It is never out of his reach - always within one step of his weary feet. By this Path the Liberal Catholic Church teaches: "All God's sons will one day reach His Feet." While the Lord Buddha said: ". . . Will reach the sunlit snows."

Moving westward into our modern time, the Ancient Path continues to beckon those who would reach that point ". . . Where breaks that other world." The Liberal Catholic Church is a stage upon that Way. On its Altars is that Beautiful Life which said: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

There are no barriers between us and that Way; that Life is here and pouring forth its strength and power every minute of time. That Truth is here, unchanging, immutable - and though unseen by our feeble sight, is shining forth - touching the hearts of all who enter here.

The Ancient Path is not Eastern. Neither will it become Western - as we of the West embrace it more and more. It belongs to no certain race, or time. It is ageless, eternal, without beginning and without an end. In reality, it is the Life-stream of God; all other paths being but branches of the main stream. The quickest and most direct way to God is along this Path. Yet - in time - it becomes like the mighty Mississippi, the "Father of Waters" as that great river was named by the Indians and in the end it empties into the sea of eternity into which all the other Paths of all the other worlds empty their streams of humanities.

Thus it is easy to see how varying may be the concepts of those who live along the banks of the many streams of life. There are those who live close to some small mountain stream which eventually empties into some subsidiary river. There are those who live by this river which - in time - empties into the "Father of Waters." Those who live by the side of the mountain stream - or maybe a stagnant, backwoods creek, will not have the experience of life that those who live by the river. They will see nothing of the stream of boats which ply back and forth.

Such are the differences of the paths which men travel. The code and the standards of the seafarer and the mountaineer and backwoodsman are widely different. The little skiffs which the river-man uses will not compare with the big boats of the sailor. Each is adapted to its own place and usage.

Those who consciously - and with determination - enter The Path must be prepared to deal with greater problems than ever before. They must be prepared, figuratively speaking of course, to navigate the wide spaces of the ocean, out of sight of land. They must be able to endure and survive the great storms which they are sure to encounter.

The Path of Purification is no child's play. It is not tread with simple, Sunday School directions and maps. Every man is - in a sense - his own guide and law-maker. He is left to make decisions - for himself - just as the young man, or woman, is free to decide many things upon entering college; many things which their counsellors and teachers decided for them during the time they spent in the lower grades. Just so must they accept this responsibility. They must have developed the capacity to acquire and assimilate knowledge. It will not be drilled into them. Further, they will not be allowed to dawdle along the Way. The Path moves along in deadly seriousness, ruthlessly casting aside all non-essentials. So must the traveler, ere he takes more than a step or two. The Way is God's; how it is traveled lies with man.

We return to a discussion of the relative points of view of the man on the street and the man on the Path. For the most part, the man on the street (as we term the man who is making no conscious effort to hasten or direct his evolution), is totally unaware of the fact that there is any other course for him to follow. He assumes that the world with which he is familiar is the only one in existence. He may have some vague idea or concept of a life after death, shall we say, but generally he is so centered in his own affairs of life that these affairs absorb his whole attention.

Not so the man on the Path: first, he is endeavoring to learn to work as a unit in some group. He is learning to think as much of the welfare of the other members of his group as he thinks of his own. Then, too, he is not only interested in affairs which are of concern to the whole world, but he is consciously trying to do his part to contribute to the world's welfare.

He recognizes the facts of his limitations - but he knows that the man on the Path is a citizen of the world - not just the citizen of one country. He knows that the interests of all the other nations are also his interests.

The man on the Path learns that he must never interfere in the life of another. He stands ready at all times to give assistance WHEN ASKED to give it, but not even in thought will he intrude into the affairs of another. Thus he never forgets that a citizen of another country has as much right to his opinions and way of living as he does in his own. Therefore, to engage in any kind of missionary work in order to "convert" a man of another faith to his own belief is inconsistent with the Ideals of the Path.

The man on the Path has as his Ideal a standard of culture which surpasses, and actually transcends, the standard of the man on the street. There must not be the slightest distortion of act, emotion or thought at any time. He must walk the narrow line between a stiff-artificiality-of-manner and a free-and-easy manner of naturalness. He will never go to extremes in dress or carry a particular pet idea so far that he annoys another with his idiosyncrasy. He is ever ready to bend in favor of conventions when necessary, but rigid if called upon to compromise with the Principles of Truth as he understands them. He must endeavor to be the very essence of grace and gentleness at all times.

The man on the Path should assiduously avoid the slightest element of snobbery in manner or thought. The snobbery of manner will be easily avoided IF he avoids snobbery of thought. It is so easy to contemplate our superior knowledge and thus to indulge in mental

snobbery without anyone being aware of our inmost thoughts. However, such practices will inevitably be revealed in the outer life of the individual by an air of exclusiveness which makes others uncomfortable and even unhappy. Psychologically, such a practice springs from an inferiority complex. The man is subconsciously, or consciously, aware of his shortcomings and lifts his confidence by assuming a mentally superior attitude.

Such an attitude on the part of the man on the Path is extremely dangerous - if not fatal - to any progress. The Path exists entirely for the benefit of all mankind; in fact, for all forms of life. Hence, any tendency to feel, or to be exclusive, is directly opposed to the course we are to follow.

The Path - by its very nature - makes it exclusive in relation to the normal course of humanity, but at the same time, it has as its ideal the inclusiveness of every form of life; ever seeking the life-source of every form, with the intent to become one with that Indwelling Life, and thus becoming the Life within the form.

We repeat: the Path of Purification is no child's play. The task of reaching perfection through the process of Purification - Illumination - and finally Union with the Perfect Life is the most difficult and sometimes dangerous task we can undertake. It is difficult because we are pulling away from the mass-thought stream of men. We are seeking to acquire bodily, emotional and mental habits which are not even suspected by the man on the street. Yet - at the same time - we must live in the world and travel its highways. We must live among men and at the same time - cultivate the group spirit. This is almost a complete contradiction when judged by the man on the street. He simply cannot understand how one can rise above the attraction of the herd, the pack, or the crowds and yet, simultaneously, acquire a feeling of oneness with all men and all forms of life. Nevertheless - it must be done.

To reach perfection, we must waste our time no longer wishing we were better or different; we must, on the contrary, set about at once making ourselves better and different from that which we have been. Every minute that we delay means that the effort will be progressively harder when we do undertake the task. Having once glimpsed the Path, we endanger our welfare by failing to embark upon it.

The Path has long ago been perceived by our Higher Selves - our Soul - but now that we have strengthened the vision of our lower self and perceived the Path, the Soul will not tolerate any hesitation or refusal to enter the destined Road. The Soul is not interested in the things of the world only as means to an end and this end is the Path toward human perfection. The Soul will either break or abandon the lower self if it refuses to be guided - once it is capable of perceiving the Path. Therefore, it is dangerous to hesitate. Still greater is the danger if once having set our feet upon the Path we hesitate and waste our time and energy. The reaction is swift and sometimes violent. There is an ancient saying to the effect that once having entered the Path - to hesitate is similar to a fall backwards headlong into an abyss.

The danger ahead cannot be too strongly emphasized. There is, of course, no need to harbor a feeling of fear - in fact, fear should be entirely eliminated but the utmost in caution must be exercised. There is nothing to fear excepting our own weakness. To eliminate fear, we must build strength. We must be strong in purpose and will. The danger lies in our own self-sufficiency without the knowledge and ability to sustain it. Overconfidence may lead us into pitfalls from which we may spend years - or even many lifetimes - extricating ourselves from the bonds which surround us.

We must never tempt fate, however powerful we may feel, however confident we may be of being able to master every circumstance. Such an attitude is one of pride and, of course, is unworthy of the man on the path.

Self-pride is perhaps the most dangerous of all attitudes because it is not only detrimental to the welfare of the group - but it blinds the neophyte to everything else but his own brilliance. The bright light of wisdom cannot be seen by one who is absorbed in his own radiance.

Self-pride is not necessarily limited to our own personalities. It often is extended to include the members of our family. It even extends to the Nation to which we belong as a citizen. It extends even into the race of which we are a part. Pride - in any form - is exclusive in its nature. In giving expression to it, we very often think of it as being inclusive. This is only partly true, because the inclusiveness extends only to the limits of the group which we are including; beyond these limits all else is excluded.

Church members are quite frequently given to this form of self-pride. Just as we are given to making excuses for our own individual shortcomings, so we are inclined to overlook certain deficiencies in other members of our Church simply because they have our point of view and "understand things the way we do." This is an attitude quite evident in almost every church or religious organization or society. An attitude of exclusiveness, to the point of discrimination at levels where this should not happen. Looking beyond our own group, we frown - with haughty superiority - at the lack of understanding in those outside our group.

We see many denominations of the Christian religion. We find them grouped into groups called "Catholics" and "Protestants." There are some thirty (30) odd Catholic Churches and several hundred Protestant Organizations. It is to be expected that the number of protestants would be greater for it is much easier to discover the many points of differences than it is to agree on the similarities and points of agreement. The word "catholic" meaning universal has more of a tendency to be inclusive than does the practice of protesting.

The man on the Path will find his greatest progress lying in a direction which tends to unite peoples rather than to set them apart. The protestant constantly seeks to find points - and paths - of divergence. He must be forever protesting and must diligently guard his course in order that it does not bend back into unity with that from which he has departed. He moves in a constantly outward-bending orbit.

Ever seeking to knit closer and closer his group, the catholic (and I use this terms in its literal meaning and not applied to any certain denomination of the "one Catholic and Apostolic Church") quite frequently mistakes self-pride for his catholicity. He draws his border lines closer and closer around his world, gradually eliminating all those who do not follow the strict letter of his interpretations. He becomes the very opposite of the protestant. He becomes more and more rigid in his determination to hold on to the forms and ideas which he now has. His only protest is against those who would depart from custom and belief in any way, as he knows it.

Such extreme views are not for the man on the Path. He must forever walk the razor-edge path of the middle way. "Straight and narrow" is the way. Constantly he must press forward and not be swayed right or left. The "Way" must absorb his attention and not the Path itself. This way must be as straight and direct as he can make it. The more he adheres to the Path, the greater is the danger of self-pride. From the type of pride which we have just

described, we often pass to that which is known as spiritual pride. Out of this type of pride has grown that monstrous philosophy of eternal damnation.

There are many stories (fiction, of course) which tell of Jesus returning to earth disguised and unknown. Inevitably, He is rejected by those who are supposed to be His followers. There is a moral to these stories which is barely emphasized - if at all. It is that Jesus actually exists (according to the views of His followers) as a means to bring pressure upon those who are not inclined to agree with the point of view of the theologians. It is only natural that they would reject Him, should He appear in any other form than that in which they have pictured Him. He is of no use to them unless He conforms to their patterns of thought.

This form of spiritual pride, as we stated, really seeks to place the disciple above the Master. His people would murder Him over and over again should He persist in going against their ideas of what He should be. Thus, is His crucifixion a continuous ordeal. He must lean against the pull to make Him conform to man-made images, yet, at the same time, seek to lift man's thought nearer the Truth.

Suspended between heaven and earth and pinned to the cross of man's materiality, Christ forever pleads to the Higher Power: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He forever submits to the scorn of those filled with spiritual pride because He does not appear in the form they would have Him appear. He receives the taunts: "Come down from the cross!" knowing that should He yield, the Path would be broken and men would wander in darkness - seeking the Way, the Truth and the Light. Yielding to the Higher Law, He says:

"Father, into Thy Hands, I commit My Spirit."

The man on the Path who would purify his nature in preparation for the Path of Illumination must free himself from every element which sets him apart from his brothers. This does not mean that he must share their evil ways - or descend into the life they live - but he must know that only as they are lifted out of their ways will he, himself be free. He must - as does the Christ - remain suspended between heaven and earth, in order that others may find the Way.

Thus - the man on the Path meets the temptations of ambitions, of pride, of self-righteousness - at every turn. Every accomplishment which is his, makes his perception more keen. Each advancement seems to widen the gulf between himself and others. Such tends to elevate his self-esteem - causing him to show forth a pride in his spirit.

Man's progress lies in his insight into life: his knowledge and his understanding of Truth. That which blinds him to this insight, which limits his understanding to the greatest degree, is pride in his own sufficiency.

How can a cup contain more when it is already filled? In like manner, how can a man learn more who is satisfied with the learning he already has? How can he reach out for higher knowledge when he is fully convinced that there is no greater knowledge than that which he now has?

So - he must overcome all of these limitations before he can reach the next stage: The Path of Illumination.

## Additional Reading:

The Light of Asia - Sir Edwin Arnold - \$ 1.25

The Choicemaker - Eliz. Boyden Howed & Sheila Moon - \$ 3.95

available from LCIS BOOKSHOP.

Please add \$ .35 for postage and handling.

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**CHAPTER III THE PATH OF ILLUMINATION**

Before entering into a discussion of the second stage of the Ancient Paths, it may be well to recall that these paths are not a creation of the Liberal Catholic Church but have existed for all times. Further, the Church does not claim to be the sole discoverer of these Paths. It is merely following the traditional emphasis as has the historical Church since its inception. The three stages are explicit in the words of Jesus on many occasions. For example, He said: "If a man love Me, he will keep my words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 15:23). Much time could be given to an elaboration of this quotation from the Bible, but in quietly meditating upon its meaning we shall soon discover the tremendous sweep of ideas included in it. We have the Path of Purification in the words: "he will keep My words" and the Path of Illumination in the words: "If a man love Me" and the Path of Union in the words: "And We will come unto him and make our abode with him."

The historical Church teaches in its theology: "The doctrine of the three ways, purgative, illuminative and unitive, is traditional in mystical theology in the East and West, from very early times. They are really three stages of spiritual growth, corresponding to the quite natural division of souls into beginners, proficients and the fully developed, and the labels affixed to them denote the outstanding, not the only feature of the part of the spiritual course. They are not rigidly divided one from the other, and a soul may be in a true sense all three at once. Thus the way of union, for example, includes the fierce purgation of the dark night of the spirit and many grades of illumination that perfect the soul as a follower of Christ." (Fr: The Catholic Encyclopedic Dictionary - Attwater).

The Liberal Catholic Church ever moves against a backdrop of tradition; of a theology which is the result of centuries of thought and study. In addition, it is overshadowed by the vast amount of knowledge and tradition of a religious thought which had its beginnings in the dimmest ages of human history, and had developed quite independently of any Christian influence. This body of knowledge is found in the East among the Asiatic peoples. It dominates the lives and thoughts of that great Mother of Religions: India.

These teachings and traditions came into the Liberal Catholic Church through its close affiliation with prominent members of the Theosophical Society and this affiliation has been so close that the Church is sometimes called "a theosophical church." Such a term is incorrect in the manner in which it is used. No apologies are made - or implied - which would in any way belittle such a term as used in its true meaning. A theosophical Church simple means: "a church of the knowledge of things divine." The word "theology" has its root in the same Greek word theos which means God.

The Official Statement of Principles of the Liberal Catholic Church which is quoted on page seven states that the teachings of the Church, its theology "partakes of the character of a theosophy." Therefore, it is interesting to find that the Roman Catholic Church's theology teaches the Ancient Paths as "traditional in mystical theology in the East and West".

These Paths as interpreted by Liberal Catholic students have far greater scope and travel away beyond the mental boundaries of the theologians of the historical church. This is easy to see when we consider that they assume that man is limited to only one life on this earth as against the Liberal Catholic belief that man lives literally thousands of lives on this earth; that, in

reality, the Path extends all the way back to the Source of all life, and continues on into the future until it again returns to that same Source.

Actually, the three stages are occurring simultaneously as the individual progresses along the path of evolution. This fact is taken notice of in the earlier quotation from the Catholic Dictionary. Still - the Path, as viewed along its entire length - is divided into three definite stages. There is the long period of complete purification during which every trace of any inclination to identify the self with the material world is entirely eliminated.

This means that every atom and every electron of our being - regardless of its nature - must become polarized upon the Unseen instead of the Seen. The incorporeal instead of the corporeal.

The long stage of illumination is that period during which the individual is increasing in awareness of his oneness with God; of his inherent Divinity.

The final stage, or Union, is that period in which God is revealed in Man: the Word becomes flesh and dwells among us.

In our discussions on purification, we approach the subject from the standpoint of the cultured individual; one who has long since passed from the stage where the individual is almost entirely concerned with the things of the everyday world. We did not think it necessary to dwell upon the ethics of children, so to speak, but rather from the point of view of the adult. The same will hold true of illumination. We shall not concern ourselves with that more or less primitive feeling which comes to one who has experienced that emotion which he calls "being saved."

There are millions upon millions of people who are positive in their own minds that they have "been saved" and are thus purged of all sin and its consequences. It is a matter of an actual experience with them. No amount of reason will convince them that anything else has happened. They have "met their Saviour" and "He has lifted them up." There is no question but that this is a form of illumination. Certainly no one of common sense would seek to dissuade them of the reality of the experience and thus destroy something which is the most beautiful thing in the world to them. I say "one of common sense" because unless this experience can be replaced with one of greater lifting power and beauty, it would be nothing short of cruelty to disturb the beauty which is theirs.

In time the "saved" individual will again become hungry for spiritual food. The nourishment which was received will - in time - be assimilated by the Soul, and it will again become hungry. Then the individual will go forth into the world seeking more and more as it grows in strength and virility.

There will come a time when the emotional stimulus of "being saved" will not appeal to them. Then they will seek the further experiences which can only be perceived at more advanced stages of the Path. The hunger for additional unfoldment motives, etc.

One of the meanings of the word illumination is: "Enlightenment, spiritual or mental." This meaning is the one with which we are concerned. The Path of Illumination is that stage of the Path of Evolution which is reached when the individual seeker after knowledge and truth begins to receive spiritual or mental enlightenment.



This enlightenment may come in many ways. It may appear in many forms. For example, the artist and the poet like to portray the beauties of nature - a mountain, perhaps - or a tree. They may attempt to capture the grandeur of a sunset or a storm. Whatever meaning these works of nature convey to them constitutes an illumination both spiritual and mental.

The story-teller, the philosopher, the dreamer, all of them are trying to convey to others some insight - spiritual or mental - which they possess. The child, setting forth for the first time to discover the wonders of his little world, hurries back to his mother's side bubbling over with news of his great discovery: a tiny flower, a pretty rock or his story of the brilliant flash of a bird's wing in the shrubs. The child had received illumination as to the wonders of life.

Men ponder and deliberate for endless hours upon the mysteries of life. They arrive at weighty conclusions and sometimes assume that they have solved the great riddles. Great scientists work out complex mathematical formulas which are said to hold the key to the Universe. To them these formulas are illuminations. They reveal the workings of nature and give man some understanding of nature's forms. Who can draw the line between the discoveries of the little child and the complicated formulas of the scientist? Who can say that the great philosophies and complex theologies are more illuminative than the security which a baby feels in its mother's arms?

Our understanding - our perception - of God and His kingdom is always the limit of our insight, spiritual and mental, and (limited though it may be) it is illumination, because it reveals something of God and His Nature and Plan of Existence.

Jesus' disciples were deeply concerned because men other than themselves went about healing the sick but Jesus considered only the good which they were doing. So it is with illumination. It is not so much by what means it comes - but that it does come.

Sacramental Grace is an example of spiritual insight. We - by mental insight - perceive the possible goodness inherent in the Sacraments and we partake of them. We then receive some measure of upliftment, some lightening of the burden we are carrying. This is a form of illumination: we spiritually perceive that which is over and above the commonplace. We have experienced something which is beyond formula - test tubes or scales. Nevertheless, it is real. It is something alive, vibrant and sustaining. Sometimes it is unwise to dissect the experience which we have had through the receiving of Sacramental Grace. It is like taking a beautiful flower apart. We destroy the beauty.

The botanist who takes the flower apart in order to catalogue the parts and discover their various purposes, destroys something which he cannot catalogue: the beauty and fragrance of the flower. Neither can he catalogue the quickening of the pulse of the one who responds to the beauty and fragrance of that flower. Still, in his destruction of one means of spiritual and mental insight, he discovers another in the exactness of the structure, and the marvellous arrangement which gives the flower its individual uniqueness. He gains illumination and thus sees something of the wonders of God and His works.

The point we are attempting to make is that we should never draw the line as to the possibilities which await us as we seek to "discover" God. Nor should we at any time feel ourselves to be so superior in our own knowledge and perception that we are likely to belittle the knowledge and perception of another.

We should remember - at all times - that every man sees and hears and understands exactly the amount that he is capable of perceiving. It may seem to us that he is stubborn and unwilling to look at things the way we do, but the truth is that he is unable to see through our eyes or - possibly - he may have greater knowledge which we would not understand.

God does not condemn men because they are unable to understand. He places them in various schools of life which will teach them how to see and perceive and thus gain the understanding which they lack. To them it may seem that they are condemned to a life of struggle and hardship but the truth is that they could not gain understanding in any other manner.

We see this working out in life, for example, when a man is unjustly accused and sent to prison. He learns how it feels to be in such a position. He experiences the anguish and frustration of trying to explain and justify in his efforts to gain his freedom. Why should this happen to him, some ask. Perhaps he was an unjust judge in some past life and he must learn at first hand the consequences which he had brought upon others in the past.

The same is true of every apparently unwarranted position. The law of cause and effect cannot bring to us that which we have not earned. It would be impossible for us to experience that which does not belong to us. We know that the laws of nature are immutable. This being so, then how could we, as creatures of nature, be subjected to the workings of these laws unless they follow the same pattern of exactness? Thus - the gaining of an understanding of these truths, gives us illumination; we acquire enlightenment - both spiritual and mental.

Many people are under the false impression that supersensory perception is the only means of gaining illumination. They believe that only through visions of higher worlds and greater Beings than ourselves do we gain this so valuable possession. As we have tried to bring out, nothing could be further from the truth. It does not matter how much we see, if we do not have understanding of what we see, we are merely onlookers and have not received illumination.

It is a waste of time and effort to crowd and strain our inner senses without a corresponding development of our strength of character and understanding. More than this, it is dangerous and can easily bring disaster upon us. Thus from a supposed state of illumination we become blinded wrecks upon the tossing sea of life.

Illumination is a quality more than it is a condition. It is as we stated: an enlightenment - spiritual and mental. It is perception and understanding - knowledge and wisdom - love and adoration - in brief, it is a glimpse of the Divine.

Man's restless wandering over the face of the earth; his "soaring into the sky and his descent into the seas and beneath the ground," are all but a part of his effort to gain insight into the workings of God's Plan. However he may justify his effort, whatever his declared motive may be - deep down in his heart is an inexpressible hunger for that which is ever beyond his mortal self to reach. Hence he is driven, coaxed and drawn, to strive even harder and harder to break through the bonds of mortal life, to reach into the everlasting life of the Spirit.

Each tiny step, each infinitesimal gain is marked by illumination.

Every effort arising from his deep urge to find: first, the direct path which leads back to his natural home, then: ultimately that Union which lies at the end of the road, produces: Illumination. The Prodigal Son has returned. Yet - even while he is yet a great way off - his Father

will see him and have compassion. So, as in the story of the Prodigal Son, "he that was dead is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

The Liberal Catholic Church - in contrast - recognizes that all religions are paths to illumination and hence are a means of attaining union with the Father of all.

It must constantly be held in mind, when studying Liberal Catholic thought whether official or unofficial, that there is rarely - if ever - a finality of thought. This may be puzzling or even disappointing to some because they are looking for authorities. The true Liberal Catholic will refrain from giving any teachings which have a tone of finality for the reason that he knows (of his own experience) that Truth is ever unfolding before our eyes and that what seems to be the whole truth be a moment ago, will have enlarged thus revealing new and different aspects which were entirely unsuspected. The true Liberal Catholic will struggle to avoid closing his mind and concluding that he has reached the ultimate understanding on any subject.

The world in which we live is an objective world. There are sharp lines of demarcation because of this quality. Everything we look upon tends to assume an appearance of individuality or separateness. This is because our tendency is to turn outward, to unfold. This principle governs all forms of the objective world; everything becomes objective, that is: reaches outward. Hence we are inclined to come to a conclusion once we have reached an objective.

Truth is subjective or that which is underneath. So, in this sense, it is the opposite of facts which are objective. Nevertheless, neither could or would exist as such without the other. It would also be erroneous to conclude that facts are false - for facts can exist only because Truth is present - and Truth remains out of sight. Truth and fact are two expressions of the One Life. It is like Spirit and matter, or the negative and positive poles of electricity, neither can exist without the other. Action, or expression, is the result of bringing the two opposites into some essential relationship. Such a condition is productive of illumination and it may be either objective or subjective in its nature, depending upon the emphasis given.

So with these principles in mind the Liberal Catholic is constantly anticipating revelation and he would not dare to close his mind for he would instantly shut out any further revelation.

It is easy to contrast such an attitude with the conventional Christian attitude. All orthodox dogmas are given as conclusions or finalities. One birth, one life and one death. One Saviour and only one opportunity to be saved. One life hereafter and no end to it, but a fixed-continuing-existence, either good or bad, depending upon the acceptance or rejection of certain conclusions. Thought continues to move in an ever-narrowing circle which ultimately chokes the life out of the individual and the organization.

It may seem inconsistent that the Liberal Catholic Church should adopt such an attitude toward conclusions and, at the same time, veil its deepest thought in forms and rituals which are very rigid. Many never seem to grasp the significance of this fact.

In the first place, the forms are basically methods of reaching states of awareness or illumination. Just as it is not possible to make certain chemical combinations - except by maintaining certain ratios of elements - so it is not possible to attain certain experiences except by adhering to rigid forms. The individual is under no compulsion (either morally or ethically) to take part in the rituals but he may or may not - just as he chooses. Hence the results accruing to him will be in accord with his understanding and to the extent to which he enters in to the rituals.

It should be clearly understood that the rituals are means to an end and not the end in itself. They are - literally - forms of magic. The results attained are possible because of the aid and direction of supernormal forces and beings. Hence, in order to accomplish the greatest amount of "magic" it is absolutely necessary to follow the prescribed formulas.

Perhaps it is well, right at this point, to emphasize that when we use the word "Magic" we are not referring to any practice, or action, which is outside the realm of natural laws. We mean that the effects which take place follow natural laws which are not apparent to the untrained observer normally. To one who is not trained it would be the same as one who knew nothing of geology trying to climb a mountain. The geologist would observe an almost unlimited number of things of which the uninformed would be totally unaware.

To elaborate: the geologist would view a certain curvature in a stratum of mineral and he would know that pressure was being exerted at that moment by some force down deep in the earth. He would not feel the force, nor would he see it pressing upon the area involved but he would know by the fact of the curvature that such a force was taking place. Again, he would observe certain conditions of the soil and he would know whether it was "alive" or in a state of decay. He would know whether certain rocks were "growing" or crumbling. None of these things would be observable as action to him but he would know that if he had a wider consciousness and a greater awareness (or if his time-sense were different) he would be able to actually observe the action taking place. The fact of the action is magic in exactly the same sense that our rituals are magic. Both are the result of unseen force.

The scientist, as previously stated, attains illumination in the field in which he is working. Unfortunately his code does not permit the recognition of anything which he cannot contact directly or analyze. Everything outside his range of experience must remain either hypothetical or theoretical - or have no existence at all. However, more and more scientists are beginning to recognize that much may exist without their having the faintest suspicion of its existence. This is a wide step for minds given entirely to detailed thought. Yet by this attitude the scientist is making tremendous strides in his own field. He is approaching a state of constant revelation as is the Liberal Catholic who given up the traditional method of basing everything upon fixed conclusions. Both the scientist and the religionist are attaining illumination. Some day, possibly not too far distant, they will walk hand-in-hand and experience much which is now beyond even our imagination. The scientist needs only to look within himself - and - the religionist needs only to live his religion. Thus they will attain the illumination which leads to Union.

Additional Reading:

THE SPECTRUM OF CONCIIOUSNESS - Ken Weber - \$ 5.75  
available from LCIS BOOKSHOP.  
Please add \$ .35 for postage and handling.

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**CHAPTER IV THE PATH OF UNION**

We come at last to the third stage of the Ancient Path. While Union may be considered a final stage, it is not the last. The Path has many stages, each one of which is divided into three parts. Broadly speaking, these parts are, as we have been discussing:

**PURIFICATION - ILLUMINATION - UNION.**

Again we consider the substance of the idea of the Path. The word substance means 'that which underlies all outward manifestations'. It 'is the real, the unchanging essence, or nature.' So we should look behind the idea which is called "The Path." The objective reality of the Path is something which might even appear to be alien to the subjective truth - or substance - of it. Actually, all life - all creation - is "on the Path." Many students will hug closely to themselves the conclusion that they are on the Path while they note that some other less fortunate, less evolved person is not. Let us digress for a moment with this thought in order to arrive at one point of view regarding the Path. Again, considering the substance, the rationale, in other words: the whole purpose of a path at all is that we are traveling and have a destination! Naturally, our mode of travel will determine how quickly we shall arrive at our destination - while the direction we are traveling will determine what our destination is to be.

Students who are attempting to understand Truth and live it are well aware that this Path must be traveled in strict accord with the highest code of ethics and morals that can be understood. To look down on someone - because he has not yet advanced to the point where we find ourselves - is to miss the whole substance of the idea. It not only misses the idea of a Path entirely, but acts as a hindrance to the one who indulges in such retrospection. Perhaps it is unavoidable to notice differences in individuals but a sense of being superior strikes at the very heart of the entire philosophy of the Path. There is no "better or worse" - there is no "high or low" - no "here or there" - no "just starting" or "just ending" - there is only God and His Universe. So it is wrong to set oneself apart from his brother man in thought. Such is the substance of the Path, the underlying purpose: the essence.

The foregoing is the substance of the idea that the objective reality of the Path may appear to be alien to the subjective truth. The Path itself may lead through moments of great elevation when the traveler is placed high upon a pinnacle, but shortly thereafter he may very probably find himself traveling at a lower level as he goes forward up and down hill, over high mountains and deep valleys, through wind-swept passes and vicious swamps, moving ever onward - restless and hungry for the world of the Spirit which is his real home.

Each stage is marked by three parts: Purification, Illumination and Union. Every separate instant of our lives has this trinity of sequence. All objective action - whether it takes place in the objective or subjective worlds, has the same sequential characteristic.

The Path, in this light, becomes a process by which we attain, by which we arrive at our destination which is the real objective - rather than the Path, itself. So it is easy to see that by the slightest deviation from the substance of the Path, we are going to meet hindrances and obstacles.

We must elaborate more fully upon the thought that every moment of our lives is divided into the three parts: Purification, Illumination and Union.

Every action is the culmination of one movement and the beginning of another. It is like climbing a ladder. We lift one foot from the rung while we are placing the other foot on the rung above. Action, as such, has no meaning unless it is related to a corresponding action, either the beginning of one or the ending of another. Just so, every instant of our lives marks the ending of one instant and the beginning of another. In other words:

Preparation = Purification; Anticipation = Illumination; and finally, Realization = Union.

It matters not how fine we break this up into its component parts. We shall always find the parts regrouping themselves into the three basic parts as outlined above. This is even more significant when we consider that the Universe is triple in nature. God, the Creator of the Universe is a Triplidity. It is utterly impossible to have a world - a manifested Universe - without the Trinity. There are always the two - with the relation between - namely, the parents and the offspring. Every principle that we know of and have understanding of, has three parts. Time itself - which seems to be all-enduring - is composed of the past, the present and the future.

In setting forth this recapitulation, before entering into a full discussion of the Path of Union, we seek to gain a more balanced view of the overall picture before us. Too frequently we become completely absorbed with one or the other of the parts. Rarely do we find individuals who are seeking to balance the parts into a harmonious relationship. There are those who attempt to live only the moment by deliberately casting aside any idea of objectivity. This is not a balanced attitude. It is true that we can only live one moment at a time, but we have to pass through each moment before we can arrive at the next one - or be free of the one which has passed. We do not need to try to live the moment in its strict, literal meaning for we cannot do anything else but live it. We may seek to avoid dwelling in thought upon either the past or the future - but, actually, we are always living the moment.

There are those who prolong any one of the three parts unnecessarily. That is, there are some who become so intent upon purification that they lose sight entirely of the next step which is illumination. They become so absorbed in purifying their bodies and environment that they do not have time to be illuminated.

The same is true of the other two parts. Some become so obsessed with what they "see" that they overlook entirely the purpose of the things they see. Then, too, there are those who are so busy settling down after they have "arrived" that they have no time to make room for those who are just beginning to come in - or are moving out for the next stage. Each of these eccentrics is frequently intolerant of the others. They feel convinced that their way is the best way.

The true student is always aware of the whole process and is balancing each part carefully and accurately with the other. A man climbing a ladder does not overlook the idea of where to place his foot, or to remove his other foot from the lower rung until he is sure that the first step has been secured. He will make sure that the higher rung is safe - able to hold his entire weight - while he lifts his body up from the rung beneath him. The same is exactly true when traveling the Path.

In the objective world it is necessary to view matters in a sequential manner, that is, we must consider one thing at a time. It is the very nature of such a world. True, we may have a panoramic view of a whole section of this world, but we must focus our attention upon one part

at a time. The same is not true of the subjective world. There we can take in the substance and comprehend it all at one time without breaking it up into parts.

It is very important that we have some comprehensive understanding of this phase for without such understanding we shall continually be confused by the rapidly changing world about us. It may not appear to be a rapid change but it is shifting every instant of time.

To return to our illustration of the geologist and the stratum of rock, it is truth that the surface of the earth is moving through its motion is imperceptible excepting to the reasoning power of the geologist. It would be evident to us if we had placed a marker at a certain point and then placed another marker at a later time so that we could measure the distance it had moved. This can be done in some cases, but generally speaking, the movement is so slow (when gauged by our sense and standard of time) that the memory of our race would have died out before we could have any recollection or record of the placing of the first marker.

Nevertheless, with the slow shifting of the earth's surface, it is affecting our lives every second of time. Shifting stresses in the earth's "skin" produce climatic changes. This produces physiological and psychological changes in us. "Stresses" occur in our lives and so we are affected. There is a still greater effect although the cause is less apparent except to the trained eye. This is produced by the shifting of the relative positions of the heavenly bodies: the stars and the planets wheeling through the vast spaces around our earth.

Scientists have calculated the effect these bodies are having upon our earth. It is not difficult to comprehend when we consider that all of them are delicately balanced in position with all of the others. Any shift would instantly affect every other one - regardless of how remote it may be. It is a scientific fact that a leaf or a pin falling to the earth is felt - in some measure - by every star in the universe. "Not a sparrow shall fall on the ground without your Father" said Jesus. (Matt. 10:29).

As we have been exploring these ideas, we have been living in two worlds: the objective world and the subjective world. We have been focussing our minds upon the objective and comprehending what we observed with our subjective nature. The latter is unseen by us. We can actually observe the workings of our minds but we cannot observe our subjective nature or our comprehending ability. Only through outer action or expression are we able to gauge our understanding or comprehension. Thus even though we may deny that we actually do live in two worlds, we must express in both of them in order to form any pattern of denial. We must have some comprehension of that which we deny before we can intelligently deny it. Anything less is mere foolishness.

Anyone can say he does not believe, or to put it another way, people may say that they disbelieve but actually they must have a full knowledge of that which they are denying before they can honestly refute it. Someone has said that it takes as much knowledge to say No as it does to say Yes.

To deny the truth of an assertion without having any knowledge regarding the matter is as we said: foolishness. We are attempting to cause you to think not only in an objective manner, but to carry a subjective pattern of thought at the same time. Thus you will comprehend the Path and not just view it in its successive stages.

The Path of Union is actually that stage which could properly be termed "The Path of Comprehension," for that is literally what takes place at this stage of the Path.

There are many misconceptions regarding Union as it is meant in connection with the Path. There are a great many different understandings, and this is exactly contrary to the meaning and purpose of the word itself and the idea back of the word as it is used to convey a "word-picture" to those seeking The Way.

The principal misconception is that Union means fusion of one personality with that of another or group of individuals. This concept is frequently strengthened by aligning it with such phrases from the Bible as: "I and My Father are One" and ". . . Christ in you, the hope of glory." The word union comes from the Latin which means "one." The word fusion is also from the Latin and it means "to pour together." There is considerable difference between the two ideas. To become one as in the meaning of the word union is to bring together two, or more, without destroying the respective individualities - as in the case of a union of States such as our own United States. We have here a political Union without destroying the individual State in any way. In the case of fusion, or pouring together, the original individuality is lost, being completely merged with one or more other individualities, and a new unit emerges as the result of the fusion, such as in the combining of two chemical elements to produce a third. Such a condition is not contemplated on the Path of Union.

To return to our original premise that the "Path of Union" and the "Path of Comprehension" are synonymous: let us look at the word comprehension and compare it with union. The word comprehension is also derived from the Latin signifying the quality of putting together. Thus a comprehensive view would be one which would include all aspects of a subject. Therefore, to relate the two meanings of "one" and "putting together" we have a state of affairs which brings together ideas and individuals into one purpose, the Path being merely the route or course by which the state of oneness is attained.

To comprehend an idea or a person is to bring about a union or oneness. It may be limited to one single idea or purpose but such a state of affairs cannot be reached unless there is comprehension.

Many students of occultism (occultism is simply the doctrine or practice "ism" of hidden things) consider the "Path of Union" entirely in the light of union with the life of some higher Being or Individuality - such as in the case of a Master and His disciple. Obviously, the term has a far greater meaning. To attempt to limit thought to the one idea is to crystalize the whole process of evolution, or striving toward the higher life into one idea.

The subject of Master and pupil is a matter for future discussion so we shall not attempt to discuss it at this time. It is one of a highly specialized nature and, of course, cannot be covered in a paragraph or two. The Liberal Catholic Church does not emphasize the relationship although it is often implied in many of its writings. There are many students of divine wisdom and the occult or hidden sciences who make considerable mention of the relationship between "Master and pupil" simply because the school of thought to which they adhere is based upon some idea or method of attainment which has its culmination in this relationship.

The Liberal Catholic Church does not deny that those called "Masters" do exist. In fact it is included in its Official Summary of Doctrine the concept that man is on his way to the attainment of Mastership, or Perfected Man. In Article 4 attention is drawn to St. Paul's statement that we are to come "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Eph. IV:13). Then, in the concluding sentence of Article 5 it says: "There is a 'communion of Saints' or Holy Ones, who help mankind; also a ministry of angels" and preceding



this statement in the philosophical conclusion that: "As he (man) helps those below him, so also is he helped by those who stand above him on the ladder of lives, receiving thus a 'free gift of grace'." Thus, the "perfect man" of whom St. Paul speaks is synonymous in our conclusions with the "Holy Ones" or "Those who stand above him" (man).

The Path of Union climbs ever higher and higher, touching one great assimilation point after another. It is an aspect of the one Path, as well as a stage in the course of development. The animal arrives at an assimilation point in due course, and as in the case of a dog, a horse or an elephant becoming attached to its master, union is attained when both man and animal and the use to which they may be put—and the animal understanding the purposes of the man and his willingness to cooperate and his attachment to the man. There is here a bringing together or: comprehension of purposes.

The larger picture of the Path of Union comprehends or brings together far more than just the relationship which exists between individuals - however exalted they may be. It includes the working out of worlds and universes. Here again we find the word "Union." The word universe literally means union in diversity or, to state it correctly, according to the word-meaning it means: "to turn into one, combined into one whole." The word university means "many schools in one." Any state - or condition - or union is dependent upon comprehension. It is utterly impossible to accomplish it without bringing together many (several) into one.

So it is easy to see that the very substance or essence of the idea is to be all-inclusive, or universal. The spirit of it is synthesis: a putting together. The highest moral and ethical concept within our reach lies in the idea of the brotherhood of man. The principle underlying this concept lies in the "Golden Rule," as set forth by the Christ: "Do unto others as ye would have them do unto you."

In studying ideas and concepts, it is always well to make the effort to arrive at some understanding of the substance of it, or that which lies underneath. Accomplishing this, you will be able to follow through with your own momentum. It is like learning the principle underlying a mathematical formula. Understanding the principle, the working of the formula is automatic. Liberal Catholics are taught to think for themselves, to arrive at their own conclusions, and not to be moved from them unless they are proven to be untenable. Authority is nothing more than that unless it finds a response in the hearts and minds of those looking to it for guidance.

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Additional Reading:

THE CHRIST LIFE FROM NATIVITY TO ASCENSION - Geoffrey Hodson - \$ 5.50  
available from LCIS Bookshop.  
Please add \$ .35 for postage and handling.

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**CHAPTER V THE PATH OF LIFE**

The two previous chapters detailed - to some extent - that which we are now going to discuss under the general idea of "a plan of life." The Master, The Ancient Path are - in reality - elaborations of The Plan. The Master, great as He is (which is inconceivably far above our own level) is, nevertheless, on "the Way"; is traveling the same road which we shall someday travel.

Many have been taught, and are now being taught to think of the Master as being synonymous with God, the One Life of the universe. So it is not always pleasing to them to have Christ pictured in any lesser degree in the scheme of things. However, Liberal Catholics are privileged to think as they please and grant to others that which they expect for themselves. This is, after all, the Golden Rule.

This view is sometimes taken as being irreligious for the reason that it postulates a different set of values from those of other denominations. This, however, is not true. On the contrary the rules are usually more strict and self-imposed while we have found that with a greater and wider understanding we become more religious! This we have demonstrated since we are more meticulous about the rubric of the ritual and have in some instances restored practices which had long ago been discarded by the older churches. In those matters we are perhaps more "fundamentalist" in type than are some of our fellow-Christians who are proud to be titled "Fundamentalists." It is merely a difference in values.

The popular tendency among Christian Churches is to cling tenaciously to accepted interpretations of Scripture rather than to cling to forms. They will change a form much more readily than they will give up an opinion. The Liberal Catholic has a different view. He knows that opinions and conclusions are constantly changing but he is taught that forms must follow a given set of laws which are not changeable. This latter view is more scientific. It has the tendency to prompt investigation, to expand the understanding and to give a wider perspective of life as a whole. It avoids the tendency to narrow the thought down to one, narrow, little groove. However, there are disadvantages since it tends to emphasize the mechanistic tendency to eliminate the emotional side. This side is of equal importance for we must progress equally as much with the feelings as we do with the mind.

The importance of this is recognized when we study the many bodily ills of men which are the result of improperly developed or unstable emotions. We see the results of narrow-mindedness or mental instability in the environments which are developed and in which the physical body and emotional nature must live and express. So Liberal Catholics have equal cause for concern as do other Churchmembers, though for different causes.

It is frequently overlooked that the purpose behind all life and form is to develop perfection. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:48). This command by our Lord Christ surely was not given lightly, or with any idea of introducing an impossible task for us. Obviously, He meant just what He said. It is upon this pattern of perfection that the Liberal Catholic Church builds its whole plan: which gives it a basis for its very existence, and supplies the incentive for its effort. We are, literally, striving to bring out perfection.

The student must adopt the same basis for future study and effort or the whole scheme will appear as nonsense. There seems to be no other rule quite so immutable. Everything hinges upon it, for without this foundation there is absolutely no point to our existence. We must be moving from some point towards another point. We must be "steadily becoming" or we shall find ourselves quite as steadily falling back. Life simply does not permit a static point or vacuum.

You may ask: "Then what is perfection if not a fixed point or a static condition?" Your question is entirely consistent and logical. Yes - "What is perfection? Where is it to be found and when will it be attained?" That becomes a burning question with every student. Indeed, every artist, that is, every individual who is seeking to create is ever face-to-face with this driving query. No picture, to the artist, is ever perfect. He is always struggling to eliminate flaws which he is forever discovering. This is unavoidable. It is because his perception is forever changing with ever greater and greater rapidity as his inner self is developed and expanded. Only a very few Master Artists have been produced because mankind can perceive but a small part of beauty. Man's perception is in keeping with his understanding of life, his knowledge of the infinite, and of the eternal. Then you ask: "How may one reach perfection?"

Here we become humble before life. Here we humbly seek the Way, the Truth, and the Life, for we begin to perceive the magnitude of that perfection - as such - is far beyond our widest concepts. We no longer are sure that we have the ability to comprehend the whole of life, but learn that we can only understand but the simplest elements.

We can understand something of the tremendous value of water in our lives, for instance, but we are utterly unable to comprehend just why and how the processes of nature function to bring water into existence. We know its parts and what its proportions are and can even create water, but just why it follows such a perfect pattern of expression, we do not know or even suspect.

Then how can we begin to grasp the ultimate of perfection and conclude that it is static or otherwise? It simply merges into a state beyond our comprehension. However, this does not limit us to darkness forever. We are commanded to become perfect and whether we elect to follow this command or not, Life will see that we undertake the task. Life has a plan for our attainment and it may safely be assumed that since the ultimate is perfection that the plan itself is also perfect. This does not mean that all the parts are working in perfect order but that it would be impossible for it to work at all unless it was following perfection.

When we speak of the "parts" as not working perfectly, we refer to the whole scheme of evolution. Broadly speaking, from nebulous mist which we mentioned earlier, to the great galaxies of stars or island universes, all of these systems follow a certain set of laws - but the whole mechanism is only progressively becoming perfect as it becomes refined in the process. Such an idea can be traced by starting with the single-cell and watching it compound until we have the body of man.

Man's body is not perfect as a unit. Neither are all of the parts in a state of perfection, but functionally they are following laws which are perfect. Eventually, in the course of evolution we will develop perfect physical bodies, but obviously that is in the far distant future.

The same holds true for all the other parts of our natures. Eventually we must develop perfect emotions - then perfect minds. At this point we enter an entirely new kingdom: that of the Soul or Ego. Beginning here we must develop perfect intuition and other higher qualities which are for the time entirely beyond our understanding. We shall touch on these qualities at

some later time and only mention them at this time in order to indicate the scope of the process of attaining perfection.

God of One Life of this vast universe is perfect. Anything less than God is imperfect. Then you may say: "Since God is perfect and we are on the way to perfection, it would appear that we are on the way to God." True, but we may logically ask: "Where is God and how do we reach Him?"

We can only assert (without having more than a very limited understanding) that God is everywhere, omnipresent. How do we conclude this, you may ask and our reply is: "Where can we go that God is not there?" This is a fairly commonplace line of reasoning but one which many use without in any way attempting to comprehend the ideas. When we say that God is everywhere, what does this include? It must include the invisible as well as the visible world. We cannot see it. We cannot hear it. We cannot touch it. Not one of our known five senses is capable of responding to it. Then how do we know that there is an unseen world?

To carry this idea still further, let us attempt to enter this unseen world and explore it, but first we must have some reasonable idea that it really does exist. Possibly the most well-known example is the radio. Here we see sound going into a microphone and then we hear it coming out of the radio loudspeaker. Now we have postulated an error right in the beginning.

Overlooking the figure of speech that we "see" sound entering a microphone and attacking the erroneous one which is quite easily made, the truth is that sound does not enter the microphone at all. Sound only makes its impression upon the sensitive diaphragm or other element of the instrument and this reacts upon an electrical current which causes the current to assume a similar pattern in its own way of doing it, and not according to the laws of sound, and it - in turn - impresses its pattern upon another device known as a transformer and it reproduces the pattern of sound in its own way and hands it on to an electronic valve known as a "tube." From this point on, to the radio stations radiating antenna, there is a repetition of the process in various stages similar to those we have mentioned. However, at no time is this process audible to our ears unless modified in some way to bring it within range of our hearing ability. Passing on to the antenna, the sound is launched into space and - eventually - reaches our radio receiver. I say eventually for there is a time factor, but it travels at the speed of light which is approximately eight times around the earth in one second.

Here we have something very strange. We know that the speed of sound waves is variable, depending upon the medium upon which it is traveling: ranging from one-fifth mile to four miles per second.

This relative velocity in movement is an analogy of that which takes place when spiritual truths are conveyed to our minds and through our brains to find their place in books and/or the spoken word. The analogy is correct except that the process is in reverse-motion. In the first instance, in the case of sound, we have a relatively slower frequency being stepped up by means of radio waves, while with spiritual truths we have a stepping-down process by means of the mind and the brain. However, there is action taking place in the unseen world in both instances. The phenomena which we have observed could not take place without the unseen processes.

There is one point in the above comparison which is exact in every respect. It is also the meeting point, as it were, of the "seen" and the "unseen." It is the factor of time. In the case of the transmission of sound waves by means of radio-waves, we have a relatively slow moving process which would (even at its fastest rate of travel) require one and one-half hours of time to

travel around the circumference of the earth, whereas the faster moving wave travels the same distance eight times in one second of time. The further we penetrate into the unseen the more rapid time travels. The time factor is the point of ingress - the door through which we enter that other world. Always and at every instance, there is a translation, or conversion of time, when moving from one world to another.

Consider thoughts: we all have had moments in which we were "lost in thought." We sit for a moment or two and across our mental vision will pass a sequence of events which - if taking place in the world around us - would require years of "time" to occur, according to this world's measurement. The same holds true of "higher" thought, so-called. We grasp in an instant the concept of creation, of good and evil, which - if we had to experience it in order to gain an understanding, would require thousands upon thousands of years and hundreds of lives to attain.

Thought-power is so potent because of its time factor. Hours and years of effort can be compressed in an instant of thought. Released suddenly in this world, it actually has an explosive effect. Frequently we see a person suddenly spring into action saying: "I just thought of something!" Just as frequently we have seen the thought-energy dissipated as the individual subsides with the realization that the time factor has already entered in and that it is either too late to do something about his idea, or that the time has not yet come. Over and over this occurs. We should dwell upon this thought with the idea of so directing and balancing our thought processes that the time factor of the seen and unseen worlds will mesh harmoniously. Then when the thought occurs to us we will be in step, as it were, and the action will not be a wasted explosion but energy properly controlled and utilized.

The same is true of all of our higher abilities: spiritual insight and understanding - intuition and such other faculties possessed by us. We have many such but have not as yet begun to use them to any great degree. As in the case of our physical selves, we spend long hours, even years, learning to control and direct our physical bodies, so we must work as steadily with our other abilities. We must train the mind. We must train the emotions: teach them to respond to only the higher and more beautiful expressions. We must train the intuition and we will know without having to think. The higher faculty will be able to pass on to a well-trained and obedient mind the essence of that which the mind can only acquire in detail. This must be passed thru the emotions and then penetrate the brain before we, in our consciousness of this world, will even know anything about it. Here the physical body must be strong and healthy otherwise the truth which started on a really very long journey will be given a distorted or weak appearance. The translation or conversion of one frequency to another will introduce distortion.

The subject of frequency conversion is one of ever increasing interest as its ramifications increase. In the field of electronics it is of constant concern. Without going further into this phase the matter of frequency conversion is one of the basic principles in modern radio. It is enough to say that it was not until something of the nature of this principle was discovered did long distance radio reception become consistently possible.

To apply the principle in our own lives and to discover something of its basic nature, let us consider again: thought and concepts. We have shown how it may take years of effort to put into effect an instant of thought. The same is true of concepts. For example, Newton's law of gravitation originally appeared to him as a concept. He grasped - in an instant - the import of a law which required enormous effort to bring into expression such as the mind could understand. This was a clear case of frequency conversion. Remember that "frequency" is related to time: is an expression of time. It really has no other aspect; it is the "frequency" with which certain

vibrations, or wave-forms, appear. Clearly the concept converted, or slowed down, in this case to a frequency which was within the range of the mind.

Consider the artist who has an inspiration regarding a picture. He conceives an idea which he wishes to portray in picture form. The idea appears to him in a flash, sometimes even so fast or - if he does not happen to be properly adjusted to its frequency - it may give him only the barest hint, and he must endeavor to tune in on it to "recover" the image. He may have merely a haunting impression of it so he goes to work to recreate it. He then proceeds to convert its natural period of frequency to one which our eyes can take in and then convert into a higher one to which our mind and emotions can respond. Then, depending upon the receptivity of our higher nature, we grasp something of the beauty and real meaning of the picture. We "understand" its meaning.

The laws underlying this process are identical with those with which electronic engineers work in the creating and building of radio receivers, radar and such other apparatus. The only difference is that we are dealing with a different set of elements and operating in a different spectrum of the band of vibrations. We are working with frequencies so rapid that we have no instruments with which to record them or even calculate them. Science can only suppose that they exist. In many fields they can be nothing more than hypothetical. Their reality is so intangible that not even a working-theory, according to scientific standards, can be devised.

Scientists, such as the late Dr. Rhine of Duke University are delving into the human mind and psychological aspects of man's nature, and have emerged with certain tabulated effects which show clear evidence of some laws, but they have not yet discovered the equations necessary to formulate these laws. Many scientists are not even willing to admit their possibilities.

Enormous fields of research in the field of frequencies which govern the human mind are constantly unfolding and probing into the emotions and the intuition. The subject of para-psychology is evidence of this. Science is already well on its way to discovering the emotional and mental natures of man, but on the horizon is appearing the intuition to entice pioneer minds. The aquarian age is showing increasing signs of "knowing" the answers to certain things without having to spend time "acquiring" the knowledge. We sometimes call it instinct or "native intelligence," but it is actually much more than this.

Again we come to the matter of time, when moving on into another world, or set of vibrations, for that is what distinguishes one world from another. We are simply moving from one "spectrum of vibration" which we know as the world of "Abstract Thought" to a higher one which we call the "Intuitional." The relative time factor again enters in. The same "time" required to develop an abstract thought - or concept - is very much slower than that of the intuitional world. Thus it appears that the individual simply knows the subject without having gone through any process of "knowing."

Many men have attempted and no doubt many are still at work trying to devise instruments which will contact those other worlds which form the unseen parts of our natures. Such instruments are ineffective - not even as much as opera glasses are able to bring the moon closer to our view. The properties of the emotional nature are naturally responsive to vibratory rates so much greater than any we are capable of producing with elements which belong to the physical world. Therefore, we cannot record emotions except as the frequency is converted into physical action by the animal body of man. A sudden surge of emotional power will produce certain glandular reactions because the glands are the physical contact points of the emotions,

and then we have physical effects in our bodies which we can record. We see this in the "lie detector" and similar apparatus. The more easily distinguished ones are associated with emotions, since emotions are slower than thought and thus closer to the physical world. Much progress may be gleaned by reading through such periodicals as "The Journal of Parapsychology" or the "Journal of the Society for Psychical Research".

One significant phenomena is that of the long-time effect of thought upon the physical body. Emotions will leave a more permanent affect, or stamp, and such will take place more quickly. This is not so with thought. The reason is that thought, being much more rapid - and "out of phase" - or focus, with the physical that it takes a longer period of time to make its impression. This is easily noted in one who is a slow thinker. The expression which passes across the face, or the involuntary muscular reactions are very slow. The dawning light of comprehension rises very slowly in the eye.

Contrast this with the trained thinker. His face is alive with rapidly changing expressions. Many are highly elusive, giving only the faintest indication of his thoughts. The lights and shadows rise and fall and play in his eyes, giving an impression of rapid motion, and such it is. The highly-trained thinker has "attuned" his physical mechanism and emotional nature to respond to the higher impulses of thought so there is less energy loss than in the slower mentality.

With this statement we pass into an entirely different phase of the inner worlds, but one which is in mathematical proportions to the other. This is the phase which we know in dynamics as "energy conversion." The relative efficiency with which frequency conversion takes place is proportional to the efficiency of energy conversion. To apply this phase in our lives we have to consider the economy with which we convert the substances of the physical world to energy for use of our physical bodies. We must also consider the material of the emotional and mental worlds, since man lives on all three levels at one time. The overall rate of efficiency of the three worlds, when synchronized in action determines or rather indicates the level of evolution to which the individual has attained. This rate of efficiency is shown by the moral and ethical concepts of the individual.

It may be thought that we are entering into a very highly technical aspect of the subject. This is true but it is not true that the subject is too technical for the layman to understand. There may be the tendency to feel that unfamiliar terms prevent understanding, but a little close application will solve this problem.

There is no purpose in setting down in conventional forms, ideas which have already appeared in familiar patterns. This is poor economy, and an improper conversion of energy. There is a tendency on the part of students to repeat - over and over - the same word-patterns and thought-paterns of accepted outstanding writers and investigators. Every time this is done, the dissipation of energy weakens the whole thought. By the "whole thought" I mean the entire thought of the idea, itself. For instance, the idea of reincarnation: unwarranted repetition of the ideas on reincarnation - in an effort to be original but failing to do so - would dissipate the strength of the idea itself. This would be the wrong conversion of energy. It matters not how sincere the individual may be, the net result (or net loss) is the same. So we should seek to avoid this tendency to be mere phonographs but instead launch forth into new aspects, new applications, thus constructively utilizing the energy inherent in the idea and it then grows in strength.

The subject of energy conversion - as in frequency conversion - is an ever present one. To students of The Path and those who are endeavoring to travel The Path, the economy of the use of energy is a constant consideration. No individual may be trusted with great power or allowed to be the dispenser of great energy unless he can be trusted to use his abilities wisely and for the general good. He starts acquiring this ability (actually) from the moment his individual evolution begins - but he does not consciously begin the cultivation of the ability until he knows what he is doing and why he is doing it. Then he becomes a responsible individual and one who may be trusted with limited power, under close supervision. Later as he advances upon The Path he will be allowed to, or perhaps I should say he will be expected to assume more responsibility for his own individual development, thus permitting greater range in the utilization of energy.

We should realize that what appears to be unlimited power is not unlimited at all. It merely appears to be because our comprehension is unable to grasp the enormous store from which power is drawn. However, our scheme of existence is as definitely limited as are our bodies. There is a limit to it and the store must be replenished from time to time. The intervals of rest, from our point of view, are unimaginably far apart in time but in proportion to the size of our World - and the scope of its influence - the intervals are no greater than the different periods in our own individual scheme of existence. There are relative intervals such as a day, or a lifetime, or the interval between earth lives. Then there are the "ages" - the "geological periods" - those enormous periods of time which in the Eastern Schools are Manvantaras and Pralayas, or Day of Brahma, which is said to be 4,320,000,000 years duration.

Thus: in the light of such ideas, it is not getting too technical to talk of energy conversion. Instead, it is of the greatest importance. Scientists and physicists think of it in terms of economy. They know that nature is very prudent and yet - at the same time apparently - very lavish. We see this in the plant kingdom where enormous quantities of seeds are disseminated. It is also found in the lower forms of cell-life, in mollusks and fish. Wherever the hazards against the survival of the species are greatest, there nature is lavish in creating the life-forms. Actually this is being economical because there are only certain times and certain cycles when nature can propagate, so she must take advantage of it and this she does, hoping for an adequate survival to carry on the species.

We are able to get another view of the prudence of nature when we observe the delicacy with which she balances forces, as for instance, in the law of gravity. Then, too, we may study the balance of forces within an atom, forces so infinitesimal, so perfectly balanced that man must apply unimaginable quantities of energy to disrupt it.

This constant contrast which is all around us can teach us much as in the case of a thunderstorm: the unbelievable quantity of energy released in a single thunderclap appears as pure waste to the hydro-electrical engineer who builds great dams and uses great rivers in order to get really a pitifully small amount of energy to drive his large turbines, when compared to the quantities which nature tosses around the sky in one single thunderstorm. Then there is the energy flung in wide sweeps of the tornado as it rips through whole cities and forests, destroying everything in its path. It all seems so inconsistent, yet we know that the whole of life operates upon some pattern of economy. Otherwise there would be no stability whatsoever. There would be no law in the sense that we understand it. We could never be sure that the Sun would rise as it does regularly age after age.



Therefore, it behoves us to seek to gain some comprehension of the lavish side, the destructive side of life as well as we seek to understand the prudent and economical side; in other words, the building side.

We are inclined to regard the destroying side as evil because it seems to be against our natural tendency. This is because life has so constructed us that we are primarily builders. We are charged with developing forms of putting things together. We must stop to consider that the things which we put together would never remain intact unless there was the destroying side (or the force to pull apart.) There would be no counter-force to which the adhesive force could take exception. In other words, there would be no point in trying to hold together if there was no reason to fall apart. The two forces must be considered together and never separately, for one has no existence without the other.

What reason is there to be good if we have no reason to be bad? Why should we develop if there is no disintegrating force at work? Of what value would light be without darkness? All of these contrasts, and many more, would be meaningless unless they were just that: contrasts, no life without death - no death without life!

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