

MYSTIC LIGHT

Letter to the Angel of the Church in Sardis *Conclusion*

Letter to the Angel of the Church in Philadelphia *Part 1*

THE INTRODUCTION of the personal into the sphere of the objective mission causes the obstruction of the spiritual light which streams down for the purpose of fulfilling the task.¹ The “light sheath” [spiritual aura—Ed] ceases to radiate its beams and becomes darkened. This is the darkening which is called in the Apocalypse, “defiling the garment of the name.” “Walking in white raiment” is, on the contrary, the state of being illumined by the light of the Spirit, so that the man whose activity is objectively directed outward stands before the world presenting his impersonal spiritual side. And strictly speaking, he does not merely stand, he pursues a path laid down by Christ in the sense of the promise of the Letter: “But thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.” (Rev. 3:4).

The condition here described is the fulfillment of the special task of the age of the consciousness soul, for the important thing for this epoch is that the consciousness soul should set up a right relationship with the Manas-principle—the spirit-self [Human Spirit]. The consciousness soul, like the other members of the soul, is developed by taking as ideal and model, not itself, but a higher member of the human entity. Development consists in progress in the direction of the *future*, and the future



Illuminated Manuscript, Folio 5r, early fourteenth century, Cloisters, New York City

The Seven Churches and the Seven Angels

towards which the consciousness soul must strive is Manas, or the “name”. The ideal which hovers before the consciousness soul is to have such an objectivity towards the world that all worldly things become of equal value, not in the sense of a dull indifference and the exclusion of the life of the heart (as often in the modern conception of a “scientific outlook”), but, on the contrary, in the sense of a capacity to make, when necessary, a personal, heartfelt concern of everything in the world. In this objectivity, the life of the heart grows wide enough to absorb every detail of world happenings because the great purpose of these world happenings has become a matter of the heart. This is the ideal which gleams before a healthy, progressive consciousness soul as a goal worth striving for. The efforts made in this direction lead ever nearer to the spirit self, the

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Manas, and in this way, progress is achieved in the evolution of the consciousness soul.

The attainment of conscious relationship with the Manas is what the Apocalypse describes as being “clothed in white raiment” and “walking with Christ.” It is given as a promise in the Letter to the Angel of the Church in Sardis, for this Letter is addressed to the Being to whom belongs the mission of the consciousness soul, and to the men especially associated with it; just as, for instance, the preceding Letter is addressed to the Being representing the intellectual soul, and to the “Church” associated with it.

But when that provisional Manas stage is reached (for the perfected Manas stage cannot be realized until the Jupiter period), this is what takes place. The name, that is, the part of the astral body illumined by the spirit-self, is projected into the life [vital] body, just as a seal is stamped on wax. The “name” is written in the “book of life.” This transference of the illuminated part of the astral body into the life of the ether body is an effect of the Christ impulse. The Christ impulse changes the “light” of the astral into the “life” of the etheric. But the result of this change is that the part of the ether body thus impregnated does not fall prey to dissolution after physical death: it becomes immortal. The person’s “name” is never “blotted out of the book of life” (Rev. 3:5). But the words contain another significance. They also refer to the uninterrupted *memory* of the “name” retained by the individual being from incarnation to incarnation: A man whose ether body bears within it the “name” of the earlier incarnation possesses together with it the memory of the spiritual quintessence of that incarnation. His “name” remains ineffaceably written in the “book of life,” which book he then also learns spiritually to read. This “reading in the book of life” is the faculty of memory rendered possible by the Christ, the faculty by which man is enabled to draw vast stores of wisdom from past experiences out of his ether body and to turn them to account as ripe fruit for the benefit of mankind and the world.

In this way, the problem of Death—which, in the Egypto-Chaldean age, contained, as it were, a tragic sting—will be liberated during the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch through human freedom by “a few

names which have not defiled their garments.” By this means also, for this section of humanity, the experience of a new stage of freedom will become possible. The freedom-consciousness will be so strengthened that, with his “name written in the book of life” through Christ, man will become capable of sustaining *the consciousness of the reality of the Father* without injury to his independence and freedom. For the consciousness of the reality of the Father—that is, not the mere recognizing of the Father-principle, but the perceiving and feeling of His actual spiritual cosmic activity and significance—cannot be borne by man unless he falls, crushed, to the earth, unless his “name is written in the book of life” by Christ, and “confessed before the Father and His angels.” For simultaneously with the process of the “sealing” in the ether body, *another* process takes place: while the “name” (that is, the part of the astral body which has become Manas) is projected *downward* into the ether body, at the same time—also through the Christ—the wisdom-content of that “name” is projected *upwards* into the sphere of the Father. The writing of the name which shall not be blotted out of the book of life takes place at the same time as the confessing of the name before the Father and His angels. Thereby man’s freedom is raised into a new and higher sphere, and the combined process, taking place in two directions, is that of Initiation—the realization of a higher grade of freedom, and so also of responsibility. The promise of the Letter: “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels” (Rev. 3:5) proclaims a sublime prospect for the Fifth Post-Atlantean culture-epoch; for it affirms that the destiny, the trials, and the history of this epoch will be such that will itself make the ascent to true Initiation possible. That which formerly could be replaced only by way of the closed Mystery community is now, in the Fifth Post-Atlantean culture-epoch, accessible in any situation of life by way of the karmic path of the “Angel in Sardis”; that is, by the open way of the spirit of the age. In this age, life itself will become an occult school for all who have not “defiled the garment” of their “name” by compro-

mise.

...[D]uring the epoch of the consciousness soul, a part of the path to a definite stage of Initiation will be open to mankind. It is this consciousness which gives the concluding sentence of the Letter to the Church in Sardis a still deeper meaning than that of the preceding Letters; namely, the exhortation: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

THE LETTER TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA

The important point in the Fifth Post-Atlantean culture community is to resume the struggle with 'Death' which had been taken up during the Third, the Egypto-Chaldean culture-epoch. This, we have seen, is essential in order to overcome the abstract and the mechanical by winning freedom from the bonds of materialism and selfishness. Similarly for the Sixth Post Atlantean culture community it will be important to have the reality of *suffering* as the center of consciousness, just as in the Second Post-Atlantean, the ancient Persian culture-epoch, it was the center of destiny. For as the Fifth culture-epoch is a repetition of the Third, so will the Sixth be a repetition of the Second. However, this "repetition" does not mean that the external factors of the ancient Persian destiny will be repeated, but that there will be an inner recurrence of the struggle with the "problem" of the ancient Persian culture-epoch. And this will take place in such a way that the "repetition" will be related to the spirit of ancient Persia as the spirit-self (Manas) is related to the sentient (or astral) body. This means that all which at that time influenced man from the outer world will now go forth from man into the outer world as creative activity. Thus, for instance, the Light God, who as the glorious revelation of the sun exercised a powerful influence on souls from heaven, will also exercise influence in the Sixth cultural epoch. This influence will no longer be poured from heaven; the Sun influence will radiate from man himself, and will then work through man's activities. Zarathustra's Ormuzd will be just as surely the center of all spiritual life as He was in the days of ancient Persia; but He will no longer shine from the sun, He will shine from the hearts of men. For since



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The Angel of Revelation

Left arm earthward, its hand holding the tablets of Old Testament law, right arm raised heavenward toward the light of the ascended Christ's love, the Angel, like a Christian colossus, feet ablaze, straddles and inspires St. John the Evangelist, who writes before the apocalyptic horsemen.

then He has followed the path which leads to the hearts of men. He became man and suffered human death. His path led Him through death to resurrection; not only, however, to the resurrection which overcomes death in the human body, but to the resurrection which overcomes death in the *soul*. The fact of Christ's resurrection in the human soul was the *event of Pentecost*. And this event is the primal phenomenon of the Sixth culture-epoch, which is called in the Apocalypse, "the Church in Philadelphia." For the community of Pentecost was now no longer a circle gathered round Christ Jesus, but rather a circle from out of which Christ revealed Himself to the outer world. And the language through which He revealed Himself was such that

men of all nationalities could understand it.

Now, these are the two main characteristics of the Philadelphian spiritual culture: the immanence of the Christ in human consciousness; and the cosmopolitan community resulting from this consciousness. In such a sense then the Sixth culture-epoch may be called the "Pentecost epoch." This name for it acquires all the more significance because the consciousness which gives rise to the culture represented by that epoch must stand the test of "keeping the word" and "not denying the name of Christ" (Rev. 3:8); that is to say, its concern is with the word of Christ and with relationship to His being as these become realities in the Pentecost event. What was given on that occasion, however, as a gracious dispensation, so to speak, must now be earned or submitted to in order that the culture-epoch of the spirit-self may be realized. And to understand what is meant by "keeping My word" and "not denying My name," we must study the path which leads from the consciousness soul to the spirit-self (Manas).

As we saw in the *Studies of the New Testament* [Rays: May/June 1999 to March/April 2000] in connection with the seven stages of the Passion of Christ Jesus, the Christ impulse finds no place either in the human organism or in the world. The human organism is brimful of all sorts of substances, biological forces, and egoisms; human civilization—in the field of commerce, politics, and abstract intellectuality—is absorbed in profit, power, and pleasure. Indeed, in this age of the consciousness soul, human life tends more and more to eliminate all elements of true Christianity from its domain. Natural Science, for instance, has already made a clean sweep of Christianity from its sphere of influence, and commerce and politics are busily engaged in expelling it from theirs. The banishment of Christianity from all departments of life goes on and on, the "realities" of the physical world range themselves in stronger and stronger opposition to Christianity, to that love-filled light of wisdom which is as essential to the human soul as sunlight and warmth is to a plant.

From the point of view of Christianity, the world of men is hollow and cold, but in itself it is overfull and stifling. Yes, the "realities" of the physical

world of men are gradually developing in such a way that Christianity has no more value or position in that world than *words* have. What Christian truth is there which *can* become reality in the life of the present day, become reality, that is, without safeguarding itself on every side by compromise? In the *word* alone can the Christ impulse become actual reality among men of today. It has the same opportunity to live in the world, unadulterated and unfalsified by compromise, as the word has. And now is the time of great testing. The vast and mighty masses of the realities of the *Chastel Merveil* [forces antagonistic to the pursuit of the Grail, the good] of the present age are opposed by the word alone, by nothing else at all. For against the organized anti-Christian millions, opposing millions of organized Christians cannot and must not be arrayed. Anti-Christianity cannot and must not be fought with its own weapons. Power, numbers, organization—all are opposed by the word alone, borne by the human voice. And the test consists in this: that in spite of all, we must never say, "These are only words; they are not realities," but just because they can be words only, the *whole* reality of the Christ impulse must be experienced in them! Because the immense mass of anti-Christian and un-Christian forces fills our entire lifesphere, we must let all the power of thought, all the life of heart, all the feeling of truth indwell the word and oppose the hostile world with that other world which can be experienced in the *word*! This *can* be done if we are really conscious of the fact that in the beginning the Word was with God; that *all* things were made by the Word, and that the Word which was once divine with God is now human, with man. Then, when man is united with his whole soul to Him who became man and spoke words, as man, to Him who instills divine forces into the human word—then man will know that the spirit-filled word of experienced and recognized spiritual truth can hold its own against the whole massive stronghold of the 'realities' of human physical existence.

This position between a world which it seems can live only in the word and exercise influence only through the word, and a world whose rapacious power is eager to show that it can stifle and swallow up all free spiritual life—this position between two



Fresco, detail from *The Last Judgment*, Giotto (1266-1337), Scrovegni Chapel, Padua, Italy

Christ in Majesty

worlds, in fidelity to that world which, at first sight, appears to possess no other power or influence than the word uttered by the human voice—is the position meant in the Apocalypse by the “keeping my word of patience.” For this is the very path which the soul must follow in order to make the transition from the consciousness soul to the spirit-self. The path consists in an immense strengthening of consciousness in the consciousness soul, and, at the same time, of a definite orientation towards the spirit-self. Now, that strengthening of consciousness is attained, on the one hand, by resisting the world of ‘facts’; and on the other hand, by not being misled by the idea that nothing ‘weak’ and ‘insignificant’ as the word—the “mere word”—could be chosen to outweigh this world of facts. For consciousness is not strengthened by physical facts opposing physical facts, but by the *consciousness of truth*, finding, in accordance with its *content*, the strength within itself to see through the lies and illusions of the world of facts, and to face them, unwavering and not deceived. In thus arraying the “little strength” which it still possesses against a power which is still colossal, consciousness joins forces with the “little strength” in the world because it represents *truth*, and turns away from the “colossal power” in the world because it is a lie with nothing

left to it but to convince by its magnitude.

When we understand the test applied to the consciousness of the consciousness soul which has declared for the spirit-self, the words of the Letter to the Church in Philadelphia acquire amazing significance: “I know thy works; behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a *little strength*, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name” (Rev. 3:8).

So that which originally was “*only word*,” recognized as truth by the human consciousness, becomes the “open door” to a world; i.e., the faculty of *constant, conscious*, and *reciprocal* converse with the spiritual world, the ocean in which the physical world floats like an ice floe. But in order that this may happen, the consciousness must not only side with the “little strength” against the “great” and “keep the word,” it must also “not deny the name” of Christ.

This means that it is not enough to be faithful as a mere idealist to a universal world of ideas or the like, but to be faithful to a world of which the center is a Sun dispensing radiance and warmth like the physical sun, a world at whose center shines not an idea, but the Christ-sun, radiating warmth and light. For it is only so that converse with the spiritual world can become converse with *actual entities* (human and hierarchic). Then it is no longer merely a knowledge of truths and interdependences. When this converse is held in a light which renders visible the ‘countenances’ of spiritual beings, and renders audible their individual ‘voices,’ then it becomes a real converse with real individual beings. And the light which causes the individual in the spiritual world to stand out clearly from the universal ocean of impersonal morality and truth is to be obtained not by “keeping the word” alone, but also by “not denying the name of Christ.” This signifies that the “keeping of the word” described above not only means that ideals are to be held aright in the face of external realities, it also has the special meaning that the ideals arising from knowledge are to be filled and permeated by the moral life of the Christ impulse. □