

Contemporary Mystic Christianity **Bible Self-Study Supplement**

Obstacles Along The Way Of Attainment

Parable of the Unmerciful Servant — Matthew 18:23

Parable of the Young Ruler — Matthew 19:16-30

Parable of the Rich Fool — Luke 12:13-21

Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man — Luke 16:19-31

Parable of the Prodigal Son — Luke 15:11-32

Parable of the Lost Coin — Luke 15:8-10

Parable of the Lost Sheep — Luke 15:4-7

Parable of the Rejected Cornerstone — Matthew 21:42-45; Luke 20:17-18; Mark 12: 10-11

Parable of the Cruel Vine Dressers — Matthew 21:33-41; Mark 12:1-9; Luke 20:9-16

Parable of Children at Play — Luke 7:31-35

Parable of the Empty House — Matthew 12:43-45

Parable of the Uncompleted Work — Luke 14:28-30

Parable of the Great Renunciation — Luke 14:31-33

Parable of the Bond Servant — Luke 17: 7-10

Parable of the Barren Fig Tree — Luke 13:1-9

Parable of the Tares — Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Parable of the Last Judgment — Matthew 25:31-46

In the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, Christ enunciates principles of the social code belonging to the Aquarian Age in which compassion, mercy, and the spirit of

charity and true brotherliness are manifested. In sharp contrast with the beauty of this picture is shown the hard, arbitrary and inhuman approach of our own time.

Those who have glimpsed the high concepts of this dawning New Age have been scorned by sceptics and materialists as Utopian idealists and dreamers. Aquarian idealism, however, is actually based on the teachings of the Christ who looked far beyond His own day and, in the midst of a hostile world, dared to proclaim truths belonging to a new and a brighter tomorrow.

Parable of the Young Ruler

In the Parable of the Young Ruler we are taught that the tests and temptations of life are individual, because the path which leads unto Eternal Life is different for each. The Sufi mystics have said that there are as many paths to God as there are souls to seek Him, that every soul is itself a path — an ancient truism which the Bible illustrates in the story of the young ruler who came to Christ Jesus.

Matthew 19:16-30

*And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life
And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God; but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness.

Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

The young man saith unto him, These things have I kept from my youth up; What lack I yet?

Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me.

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who can then be saved?

But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

And Jesus said unto them. Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the

Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands. for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

This incident does not mean, as many have concluded, that the possession of material wealth is in itself a wrong, but that it becomes so only when misused or given undue importance in the consciousness of its possessor. Each neophyte discovers that he retains some particular besetting sin — pride, envy, arrogance, lust, ambition, greed for power and position, love of wealth, or the joy of amassing it. Any one of these may be the particular weakness that must be overcome and eradicated as the chief barrier to attainment. In the incident of the young ruler it was the love of his material possessions; hence the Master, knowing this, presented him with that which would be his most difficult task, "Go sell all that thou hast and give to the poor."

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me" is an important commandment and the one most often

disregarded. The kingdom and its fruits must occupy the paramount place in the life of the aspirant. To one who succeeds in this quest, the Master has given the promise that he shall receive an hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life.

To another possessing vast earthly wealth, but who regarded himself only as a steward to dispense it for the benefit of man and to the greatest glory of the Christ, another test dealing with some weakness not yet overcome would be necessary.

The command to forsake houses, land, and family for the Master's sake simply means that the love of the Christ and the service of His Kingdom must needs be kept as the first dedication. Neither personality nor possession may interfere if Life Eternal is to be won. It is this which makes the way so difficult and causes the Christ to say: "So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many be called, but few chosen."

In the Parable of the Rich Fool the Master gives expression to a truth almost entirely neglected in our civilization, but which must be made a prime essential in the education of the new generation if it is to pioneer a brighter and a better world.

Take heed, He admonished, and keep yourselves from all covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

This teaching reverses the educational methods of the modern world. For all too long the scale of measurement has been set to "things" rather than to character. Such superficial values can only be productive of a transitory good. In consequence of this substitution of the false for the true there is upheaval, chaos and world tumult. Humanity must return to an appreciation of eternal values before an enduring civilization can be established.

He that layeth up treasures for himself is not rich toward God. The great choice is between the mundane and the spiritual. The Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man paints in vivid colors the striking contrast in the world between the rich and the poor.

The first scene of this soul drama is laid in Palestine and depicts the ease and wealth of the rich man as opposed to the abject poverty of the beggar Lazarus who comes daily to beg for crumbs from his table.

The second scene is laid in the after-death state where the condition of the two men is reversed. Lazarus now enjoys the bliss of heaven; the rich man is undergoing the pangs of remorse in Purgatory in consequence of the

thoughtless and self-centered life which was his while living upon earth.

The great lesson of this Parable is in its teaching that man is building for his after-earth life in the manner of his daily living here and now. It also suggests the purpose of suffering and sorrow in human evolution, shows how sorrow and joy balance one another in human experience. Fiona MacLeod (the pseudonym of the famous English writer William Sharp, drawn, it is said, from memory of a previous feminine incarnation) writes: "In Paradise there are no tears shed, although in the remotest part of it there is a grey pool, the weeping of all the world, fed everlastingly by the myriad eyes that every moment are somewhere wet with sorrow or vain regret. And those who go there stoop and touch their eyes with that grey water and it becomes a balm to them and they go upon their way healed. Their songs thereafter are the sweetest that are sung in the ways of Paradise."

Sorrow is the great solvent and equalizes all things, so says the Great Teacher of all mankind. Most frequently it is sorrow's lessons that awaken the "young soul" and set his feet upon the Shining Way whereon are evolved the compassion, the humility, and the power to serve selflessly, which are the soul signatures of true discipleship.

Parable of the Prodigal Son

The Prodigal Son is perhaps the most familiar of all the Parables. It has been termed the "*Evangelium in Evangelio*," the Pearl of the Parables. Christ gave this Parable together with two of a similar nature upon receiving the reproach of the Pharisees because of His intimate and tender association with outcasts, winebibbers and sinners.

This beautiful trilogy, made up of The Prodigal Son, The Lost Coin and The Lost Sheep, has been interestingly described as representing not three separate and distinct stories but three united and continuous chapters in the soul drama of man. They are interblended like the three primary colors which merge in white light. The story of the Lost Coin represents the lower red ray, the story of the Lost Sheep typifies the yellow ray, and the Lost Boy the blue ray. Together they unite and are dissolved in the luminous radiance of the White Light of Spirit.

None can ever sink so low into degeneracy but that he can be lifted and transformed through the love of Christ. These three Parables beautifully exemplify His words: "I came to seek and to save that which is lost."

The Parable of the Prodigal Son contains the whole story of our human evolution. Within every individual are the two natures of contrary tendency, as Faust laments, represented in this Parable as the two sons. The Higher Self never fails. As the Father says, "Thou art ever with me; all

that I have is thine." The younger son represents the lower nature, which in our present stage of evolution has taken a journey into a far country and there wasted its substance (life force) in riotous living. In that far country of materiality we all feed upon the husks with the swine. We wander as prodigal sons in the material world, far from the light of the Spirit, until, surfeited with the things of the world, we hear within the "still, small voice" which called Elijah and which is calling within the heart of every man and woman in the world today. This voice is never heard until the soul realizes with Paul that "things that are seen are temporal, but things that are unseen are eternal." It is then we realize the mighty famine that there is in the land. The spirit longs for its eternal home, and heeding the call within retraces its steps toward the Father's house. It has sorrowed enough, and in utter humility it confesses, in the words of the prodigal: "I am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." It is then that he is given the prodigal's joyous welcome as described by Luke.

Since the story of the prodigal son is the story of all mankind, it is found in varied forms in many religions. In a curious old book by Lamspring, a medieval alchemist, we find this passage: "When the son entered his Father's house, the Father took him to his heart and swallowed him out of excessive joy."

Albert Pike, in his Christian interpretation of the First Degree of the Masonic Blue Lodge, relates a similar story. It tells of Man who, after the fall, went wandering blindly in the darkness of war, famine, and pestilence, with feet naked and bleeding, until sorrow and suffering at length began to work a repentance and reformation in his heart. This brought him at last into the light of the Worshipful Master, the power of the Spirit within.

The work of the Earth Period is the redemption of the fallen nature within man, exemplified by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden story, and variously described throughout the different books of the Bible. The transmutation of the lower nature and the blending of the higher with the lower (the two sons of this Parable), correspond to the Marriage of the Bride and the Lamb of the Book of Revelation, and represent the perfected state which humanity will have attained at the end of the Earth Period. (The purpose of evolution is to raise even the lowest, and to make those who are spiritually dead alive again.)

The Parable of the Prodigal Son portrays the path of involution, by which egos descended from the World of Virgin Spirit to the physical world, where the awakening of the spirit turns involution to evolution. The divine powers within lead us beyond the plane of alternating life and

death, and again we come to know the Eternal Life of the World of God. Hence the great rejoicing mentioned in the Parable over the return of one who has completed the earth-round and again entered his heavenly home, to be reunited with that higher self which has never at any time been absent from the bosom of the Father.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son also refers to the journey of the ego through its many embodiments upon the physical plane, as the Spirit makes its pilgrimage through matter. The nadir of materiality having been reached, the inherent divinity calls out to it to return to the Father's house, to know the joy of conscious communion with God. Then, as neophytes, we enter the straight path of Initiation, and to our amazement the Father meets us from afar off, for the great eternal love of God is ever waiting to gird about our incompleteness with His presence, our restlessness with His rest.

Parable of the Lost Sheep

In the Parable of the Lost Sheep the digits of the numbers ninety and nine total eighteen or nine, the number of all mankind. All must be eventually saved. No one can be permanently "lost," for each is part of God.

The one whom the Great Teacher bends down to help is the brave and dauntless aspirant to Initiation. Such a one

always has the help and protection of the Masters of Wisdom, who have travelled this same way themselves. There is always much rejoicing in Heaven when any neophyte makes the grade which earns for him the blessed privilege of the consciously eternal life.

The Parable of the Rejected Corner Stone is symbolic of the Christian Mysteries, the highest initiatory rites which have ever been brought to earth. "The same is the head of the Comer." Its companion Parable is that of The Cruel Vinedressers, which depicts the coming of the great Christ Spirit and of the Initiate Messengers who preceded Him to prepare the way for Him.

The reception and treatment accorded these exalted Ones has its reflection in world conditions today. If humanity continues to fail in measuring up to their high teachings, the vineyard (earth) will be let out to other husbandmen, meaning another and more advanced life wave.

In the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders, Christ likens human life to a house builded either upon the sands of shifting emotions or upon the rock of spiritual understanding. In one instance the foundation is unstable, the goal of life correspondingly uncertain and insecure. The life (or house) built upon the rock of Spirit remains firm and steadfast and, though "the floods came and the winds blew,

it fell not." The builder of such a house affirms with St. Paul, None of these things (of the outer world) move me."

Those who have builded their houses upon the sands) the Master likens to children at play; as children who sit in the market place and pipe to one another, so He describes them. This picture remains an apt simile of the superficial, frivolous lives of the unthinking multitudes even of the present age.

The aspirant of the Mosaic Dispensation was admonished that "he that putteth his hand to the plow and turns back is not worthy of the Kingdom."

The same instruction is given by the Saviour in the Parable of the Empty House: again a grave warning against attempting to turn back to the life of the world after entering upon the Path.

After the rhythms of mind and body have been attuned to spirit vibrations, if one descends again into material living, the result is often both a physical and a mental derangement. The Master spoke truly when He said: "The last state of that man becometh worse than the first."

The chief requisite for discipleship, and also the principal obstacle to its successful attainment, the Supreme Teacher

shows in the Parable of the Unfinished Work and the Great Renunciation,

Luke 14:26-27

If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

And whomsoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, he cannot be my disciple.

The Master's words do not mean that we must hate our own beloved in a literal sense. He has reference to the living of the impersonal life. One's own become even dearer, but the affections are no longer circumscribed. All the world becomes one's home and every human being in it a brother.

The Path of Discipleship has been fittingly compared with the church steeple, narrowing toward the summit where the cross stands alone against the sky. This marks the supreme testing place of the aspirant. "This man began to build and was not able to finish," is said of many neophytes at this place.

The Master's words are explicit and allow of no compromise: "So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

The Parable of the Bond Servant is a challenge to the endurance, the loyalty and the unswerving allegiance of the disciple. In this Parable he is told that he is not to expect material compensations and worldly recognition for spiritual work. He will not sail into heaven on flowery beds of ease, as the old hymn goes, nor be attended by the adulation of thronging multitudes.

His compensations will be spiritual ones and recognition of his worth will be made upon the inner planes. Ridicule and persecution may follow his outer life as it did that of his Master. Will he be content with this? Again the challenge of renunciation, the challenge of discipleship, flames clear and high: "We have done that which it was our duty to do."

The Teaching of Regeneration

In the Parables of Regeneration are given the highest teachings of discipleship and the final testing upon the Path. Foremost among these is the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree.

Matthew 21:17-21

And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.

And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it,

and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done.

It is a modern mystic who says: "Every city mentioned in the Bible is to be found in the heart of man, and every period of time mentioned in the Bible is now." The name Bethany means a house of dates or figs. Both fruits esoterically mean fructification, increase, and also symbolize the feminine principle of humanity. It becomes the Christ principle in man when his lower nature has been purified and his human or concrete mind spiritualized. It was in Bethany that our Saviour performed many of His wonderful works of loving service, and it was while lodging there that He raised Lazarus from the old life into the new, thus beginning an advanced epoch for our human life wave.

When He returned to the city He hungered — not for physical food, for He said, I have food that ye know not of." But He hungered to help humanity, to assist it in the

process of purification, and to raise the feminine principle which lies fallen within the nature of each and all.

The fig tree symbolizes the power of generation. The Lord of Love and Life would never have cursed any form of life, for He is a part of all that lives. He was speaking here to His Disciples, of the misuse of the power of generation and of its ultimate results. Generation is but a temporary phase of our present state of evolution. We know that the organs of generation will eventually atrophy, and that even now the male organ is separating from the body. When the seven spiritual centers awaken within the body, the heart and larynx will be the organs of generation. It was for this divine consummation of human power that Christ Jesus hungered as He went out of the city unto Bethany.

In the Parables of the Tares and of the Last judgment, the Great Teacher is recapitulating all the experiences of an earth life and pointing to the impress made upon the soul which determines the path of progression or retrogression when through death it enters the inner planes.

The Last judgment is the record of the life just ended, which has been impressed upon the individual Book of Life, the "seed atom" of the heart. In some Parables Christ has given definite steps of occult development. In others He has contrasted the Way of Evolution (for the masses) and the Way of Initiation (for the few), and again He shows what

the attainments of Initiation are. In these closing Parables He stresses the fact that the most important of all teachings for all time is that teaching which we live in our daily intercourse with our fellow men. No amount of spiritual instruction will avail to give us the Kingdom unless It we practice in our daily lives the precepts which the Masters have implanted in our minds. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Sheep and goats belong astrologically to the Christian Mysteries. Capricorn (goat) is the Birth sign of the Master and Aries (sheep) the Resurrection sign. Christ's first Ministry occurred during the last quarter of the Arian Age. The second Ministry will perhaps take place in the Capricorn Age. Syrian sheep were white (Aries) and goats black (Capricorn). It is the profundity and mystery of Capricorn which has been often associated with the darkness of evil and black death.

— ***Corinne Heline***