

Discipleship

THE FIVE FOLLOWERS

THE Sea of Galilee, always closely associated with Christ's Ministry, is most interestingly situated. Almost circular in shape, in early Christian times it was surrounded by twelve towns, all prominent in the life and activity of the Master. The size of these towns was such that the outskirts of one merged into the borders of the next. Toward the north, where the River Jordan flows into the Sea of Galilee, lay Capernaum, Bethsaida and Magdala. From Capernaum came four of the most illustrious of the Disciples. Of these Andrew and Peter were the first to give allegiance to the Master.

ANDREW

Andrew was the first called but he never came first in point of leadership. Deeply humble and of a quiet, retiring nature, Andrew revealed his true greatness when he yielded first place to his famous brother and remained content to shine in Peter's glory. Andrew and John seem to have worked together in an intimate companionship. A fragment from a very ancient canon of the New Testament indicates that Andrew assisted John in writing his Gospel. He has been called the patron saint of personal workers.

Eusebius reports that Andrew met death in



St Andrew

The Fellowship Degree

Part 1

Greece, by command of Aegeas, who complained that all the people were deserting temple worship to follow the miracles of the new way as proclaimed by this Disciple. A demand was made that Andrew recall the people to worship the ancient religion by pouring out a libation to the gods. This Andrew refused to do. Then it was commanded that the Disciple should impart to

Aegeas secrets of his magic art, else he should hang upon the cross which was the emblem of his faith. Andrew replied, "If thou wouldst know the truths of discipleship then thou must live the life in order to learn what thou art inquiring after. Torture cannot draw from me these sacred things."

When Andrew was placed upon the cross he said, a beautiful smile making radiant his face, "I rejoice to hang upon the cross of Christ which has been adorned with His limbs as if with pearls."

As he prayed he became joyous and exultant. A great light from heaven shone like lightning upon him, surrounding him with such splendor that mortal eyes could not look upon him.

When he was taken from the cross Maximilia, the wife of the ruler, anointed the body with costly spices and laid it in her own tomb. This holy woman, having been illumined by the love of Christ, lived quietly with the Christians.

THOMAS

Diophanes and Rhea were prosperous innkeepers in the Syrian city of Antioch. Ten years after

The second and third of this four-part study, begun in the November-December 2002 Rays, considers the five disciples belonging to the second or Fellowship degree of Discipleship.

Tiberias became Emperor, twins—a boy Thomas and a girl Lysias—were born to this couple. When Thomas was fourteen an incident occurred which, he said, largely determined his destiny. Three Magi, returning home from a visit to Jerusalem, spent two days at the inn. The lad was deeply impressed with the story they told of the great Star and of the Babe born in a manger. This infant, the Wise Men declared to Thomas, was to become King of Light.

*Perplex in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.*

These lines of Tennyson are appropriate to Thomas, the doubting Disciple, of whom it has been said, “Doubts were simply minor chords in a life which produced thrilling organ music.”

Thomas was pessimistic and despondent; he was also fearless, loyal and constant once his doubts were allayed. He was a literalist in the early days of his discipleship. Later, after the wondrous experiences which came to the inner Group in the interim between the Resurrection and the Ascension, all his gloomy questionings were swept away. His doubting was transformed into a glorious realization—a certainty, born of first-hand knowledge, which lifted him into spiritual status next to Peter and John. On that Octave Easter Sunday when Thomas exclaimed adoringly to the Risen Christ, “My Lord and my God,” his dedication was complete.

After Pentecost Thomas went into India carrying the message of the Christ. There remains, in modern times, on the coast of Malabar, a sect calling themselves the Followers of St. Thomas. This Disciple was known as a true master builder and is, therefore, denominated the patron saint of architects. His symbol is the Mason’s Square. The Masonic Lodge of Kilwinning, Scotland, was dedicated to him. Like John, Thomas is an apostle of Gnosis, for he typifies the intellectualist so frequently found in Hellenistic society.

The following legend is in harmony with occult investigation. When Thomas was in India, King Gundaphorus discovered that he was a builder and gave him a large sum of money to use in building a winter palace. At this time the famine among the poor was most grievous, so Thomas spent all the

king’s money to alleviate their condition. When the king returned to his province and discovered that no building had been begun yet all the money had been spent, he cast Thomas into prison with the threat that he should be flayed alive. Before this sentence could be carried out the only brother of the king expired quite suddenly, then reappeared before King Gundaphorus saying the Angels had shown him a glorious palace in heaven which Thomas had builded by his deeds of love and service to his fellow men on earth. The king, giving heed to his brother’s message, released Thomas from prison and thereafter subscribed to his good works.

The incidents described in this legend are based on first-hand knowledge. All are building in inner realms the conditions and environment they will know after death, and one’s heaven accurately reflects the life lived on earth. “I myself am heaven and hell.” Love and service poured out on earth becomes beauty and fruitfulness in heaven. Selfishness and egotism here are duplicated there as lack and suffering. Exact and just is the working of the Law of Cause and Effect on all planes of being.

In this apocryphal history of Thomas is found, perhaps, the earliest reference to the theme of the Interior Palace, celebrated in medieval times as the Castle of the Holy Grail. It is significant that a late German legend relates that when the Grail disappeared in Europe it was taken to India and hidden from the eyes of men in the high Himalayas. Again, it is written that Parsifal had a twin brother, Feirfeis, “in the East,” and that he who last took the Grail set out to find this brother—a reference to the oriental Christian communities of the middle and far East, all of which area was included in the name India in ancient times. The ministry of Thomas included Persia and the Bosphorus region as well as India proper. It was in India that Thomas went to a martyr’s death.

In the course of his ministry Thomas performed many miraculous works accounted as sorceries by his enemies. He was imprisoned under sentence of death, but was so popular with the people that the authorities feared they might attempt his rescue, so sent him into the mountains under a guard of five soldiers. Two walked on either side of him and one went ahead. Taking note of their position Thomas exclaimed, “O the hidden mysteries of Life! Behold,

four have laid hold of me because I consist of four elements, and one leads me since I belong to the One toward whom I am always going.”

As Thomas prayed the four struck at him at once. The numerological symbolism here is very beautiful. Four represents the personality and one the Spirit. The four strike him, for only the personality is destructible. Spirit, the One, is immortal.

The disciples of Thomas wrapped his body in fine linen shawls and laid it in a tomb. As they sat watching he reappeared before them in his spirit-body and said, “I am not there. Why do you sit watching? I have gone up to receive the things I hope for and after a time you too shall be brought beside me.”

It is an arresting commentary on St. Thomas, that in the apocryphal history he is described as having become the very image of Christ. So much so that when the Master Jesus, in the body of the Resurrection, appeared in India (a legend which has not received the attention it deserves) the two could not be told apart. That James, the Master’s kinsman, should have borne Him so close a resemblance is in no way remarkable. But Thomas seems to have grown into His likeness through the putting on of the Christed spirit.

Truly illumined individuals down through the ages have recognized the fundamental unity underlying spiritual concepts of East and West. This unity of doctrine has been expressed by Wise Ones in many ways, both in parable and legend, in every century. The method of approach varies in accordance with racial and environmental differences, but the Truth is One.

The Supreme Master demonstrated this fact when he came to the East bringing a message that has been paramount in the West. The West at present finds its center in doing, the East in being. The course of wisdom is an equitable exchange of values between the two. The West must learn to spiritualize its activities and the East to activate its latent spiritual power.



Tempera on wood, 1308-11, Duccio di Buoninsegna, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena

The Doubting Thomas

The disciple who had to see and touch is no stranger to many students of Rosicrucian Christianity, who typically want proof (reasons) before they believe.

The occult writer, Dr. Rudolf Steiner, stresses the importance of this amalgamation in his book, *The East in the Light of the West*. He points out that these “two worlds must unite themselves in love,” and adds that “we shall eventually come to recognize that there is a light of the West, which shines in order to make that which originates in the East more luminous than it is through its own power.” He concludes that when any man reaches the place where he can know both paths, their fundamental unity is clearly recognizable.

The well-known divine, Dr. E. Stanley Jones, in his book, *The Christ of the Indian Road*—which is almost a religious classic—also points to the same Oneness of Spirit between East and West. And Nicholas Roerich, inspired painter-poet-philosopher, whose universalism of spirit led to his being called the Walt Whitman of painting, dedicates his cultural and artistic genius in service to this unity. He has predicted that the divine Feminine, the Madonna influence, will create a bridge between the two worlds, and that their spiritual fusion will give to the world a spiritual power and aesthetic culture more transcendently beautiful than anything previously known. □

—Corinne Heline