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The Art and Beauty of the Christ-Life

Easter always follows the first full moon after the spring equinox which occurred on 20th March this year, and so, as far as the Alice Bailey teachings are concerned, the Easter Festival was last month. However, ecclesiastical full moons are calculated in a slightly different way to that of modern astronomy with the spring equinox always falling on 21st March; and so from the Christian perspective, this is the first full moon after the equinox and therefore Easter time. Millions of people all over the world will therefore be thinking of the Christ's crucifixion and resurrection over this period, and that is surely a good enough reason for us to do so too.

Let's begin with a few moments of silence and then say together, the Great Invocation.

From the point of Light within the Mind of God
Let light stream forth into the minds of men.
Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.
May Christ return to Earth.

From the centre where the Will of God is known
Let purpose guide the little wills of men
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we call the race of men
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out.
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth

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The Easter Festival in Aries is also known as the Festival of the Risen, Living Christ, and it is a time when we can usefully dedicate our meditations and reflections to stimulating the idea of "Christ in us, the hope of glory", and prepare human consciousness for the reappearance of the World Teacher. At this time of the year, a strong emphasis has traditionally been placed on the crucifixion and it may be difficult to free ourselves from this ancient doctrinal thoughtform without spurning Christianity altogether, as so many people seem to be doing today. An emotional portrayal of the Christ seems to have a diminishing appeal for the modern mind as we move to a more intelligent approach to the world we live in. At the other extreme an overly mental and analytical approach distorts the true nature of the Christ as is demonstrated in the incomprehensible ramblings of some theological debates.

Although the mind can be the great revealer of truth, until it is calm and reflective, it well deserves its title of 'slayer of the real'. We have probably all experienced this

ourselves when, through the intensity of our effort to understand the hidden nature of things, we over-employ the concretizing mind and find ourselves knotting up over the seeming paradoxes and complexities of the Ageless Wisdom teachings. At such times the refreshing simplicity of Christ's message of Love is a wonderful remedy. Exasperations fall away as the mind is lifted into something so spiritually majestic that everything else respectfully bows before it and assumes its rightful place in the scheme of things. We are then able to stand united in this stream of liberating energy with all who are working for the Christ's return, attuned to the power that makes all things new.

Ironically, most in need of renewal today is the church itself, as we read in *Destiny of the Nations*: "the outstanding need of the Church is to relinquish theology, to let go all doctrine and dogma and to turn upon the world the light that is in Christ, and thus demonstrate the fact of Christ's eternal livingness, and the beauty and the love which it can reflect from its contact with Him."¹ These are truly inspiring words that summarize the nature of discipleship service – to simply reflect the beauty and love of Christ through contact with Him. It is a vital service too, as beauty and love have been emotionally distorted over the ages and lost some of their meaning. The word beauty goes back to a diminutive form of Old Latin related to the word bonus meaning 'good', and so for something to be truly beautiful, it also has to be 'good' in the spiritual sense. The word 'Good', in turn, can be traced back to prehistoric Germanic roots and the word, 'gath' meaning 'bring together' – the source of the English 'gather' and 'together'.² This leads us into the later philosophical ideas of Plato who endeavoured to combine his doctrine of Ideas with Pythagorean number theory, and identified the Good with the Monad, the One. He designated the Creator, the source of everything, as the 'Good', because through the scheme of evolution, He is 'bringing together' and gathering everything back into Himself. Therefore the evolutionary process could be defined simply yet accurately as 'the progression of good'.

From this perspective, the universe is made up of successive gradations of good, with matter at the lowest end of the scale, spirit at the highest, and beauty being the developing state of harmony between them – the area of resonance which we term the soul. The soul of anything is, therefore, by definition, beautiful: it is beauty itself, the point of tension between unity and diversity, the interface between the manifest and the unmanifest. As that which is lower in the evolutionary scheme approaches that which is higher, the resonance, and therefore the beauty, steadily increases until this mediating principle disappears having served its linking purpose, and the two levels are fused into one. At a fundamental level, beauty occurs when the parts that make up a form of any kind are integrated and resonating with one another. This harmony of motion creates a channel between the inner and outer worlds through which beauty enters as a flow of light, carrying the life of that which is greater into that which is lesser. Beauty is therefore a rejuvenating power – as a window into another world, it lifts the focus out of the ordinary towards a greater degree of good.

In art beauty serves as an inspirational force as it draws the mind and emotions to a point of creative tension in the spectator, stimulating a projection of the imagination through the form towards the world of forces that lie behind. This is similar to the way in which the esotericist consciously gathers his forces to a point of tension and projects them towards the abstract levels of the mental plane. It is all a part of the bridging process in which we incorporate increasingly enlightened aspects of ourselves into one unified

expression of the higher self. This self-transformation has obvious implications in education, where art can help redirect uncontrolled forces and delinquent elements by providing a vision that inspires the direction and dedication of one's resources to its achievement. Appreciation and participation in art therefore offers a creative and constructive approach to tackling many of the problems that plague society such as crime, drugs and other expressions of social malaise.

It is encouraging then, that the world of art reaches an increasingly wider public these days. But while it has broken away from the traditional representation of that which is to be seen in the external world, it often exhibits the artist's subconscious rather than superconscious mind – the latter being impersonal and expressive of the constructive energy of universal truth. Art often reflects the inner conflicts of the artist and the chaos of modern life in general, without reflecting any integrating principle. It may be initially liberating for those who feel dulled and constrained by traditional social norms and behaviour; but it can have a fragmenting effect on the viewer. In the effort to understand what is in fact the presentation of a series of enigmas, the spectator needs to beware of being hoodwinked and drawn into another's neurosis.

Doubt, anxiety and confusion seem commonplace in modern art and symptomatic of a severance with the divine circulatory flow which sustains the universe and brings harmony and beauty out of conflict. This impersonal, loving energy evinces the higher nature and order of things and needs to be emphasised in art, the experimentation of the past decades having served to break down crystallized attitudes and expectations. As Eleanor Merry, an artist of the last century pointed out, much of what is termed modern art is not so much art in itself, but rather "the search for art". What is now required is a reunification of true art and religion on a higher turn of the spiral – not, that is, the orthodox, doctrinal religion, but the truly religious spirit that is a channel for the higher life and universal truth. She wrote, "Painting cannot remain as a means of merely reproducing the appearance of Nature, nor as a means to symbolic representations of our reactions to her. We must lift it, as Goethe says, with Nature, to a pinnacle that is higher than that upon which Nature has placed herself and us. We must in painting see through the veil of Nature and represent her, not as she is, but as she would become."³

One way in which this may occur is through the redirection of art towards simplicity and greater development of colour. This is not to imply that art should become minimalist though, for that often emphasizes fragmentation and disconnectedness from the sense of universality. Colour, however, is the doorway to inner worlds – a veil that conceals the forces of the hidden dimensions, and experimentation in this area will bring revelation of the world of meaning. The basic laws of colour are to be found in the Laws of Fire which we are told will be gradually permitted exoteric publication in the future and which, when applied to the field of art, will cause pictures to glow or reveal the subjective essence within the objective form. Perhaps this will be, on a higher turn of the spiral, what we see in children's art, where the imaginative and spontaneous use of colour conveys such feelings of elation and joy. If these qualities were nurtured throughout the education process and intensified in step with the developing consciousness of the child, it is not hard to imagine that society would be revitalized. Freed from heavily materialistic and intellectual training, young minds might then be inspired by enlightened spiritual impulse, and painting could truly express a celebration of living colour.

Colour, of course, is something we immediately associate with beauty, and when it flourishes in all walks of life, it will indicate the growth of inner harmony within humanity. Mercury, the esoteric ruler of Aries and transmitter of the great fourth ray energy of harmony and beauty is destined to play a significant part in this transformation by leading humanity into mysteries which are presently hidden from the world. This redirection of creativity will steadily draw harmony out of discord and beauty out of ugliness. Paradoxically, Mercury is known as 'the star of conflict', but its frictional fires have an alchemical effect which will redeem and purify the soul of humanity. In *Esoteric Psychology*, Vol. II, we find techniques for integrating the personality prior to soul fusion – a graphic description of the fourth ray technique that seems to portray the current plight of the whole human family in its search of spiritual meaning:

"Midway I stand between the forces which oppose each other. Longing am I for harmony and peace, and for the beauty which results from unity. I see the two. I see naught else but forces ranged opposing, and I, the one, who stands within the circle at the centre. Peace I demand. My mind is bent upon it. Oneness with all I seek, yet form divides. War upon every side I find, and separation. Alone I stand and am. I know too much.'

The love of unity must dominate, and love of peace and harmony. Yet not that love, based on a longing for relief, for peace to self, for unity because it carries with it that which is pleasantness.

The word goes forth from soul to form. 'Both sides are one. There is no war, no difference and no isolation. The warring forces seem to war from the point at which you stand. Move on a pace. See truly with the opened eye of inner vision and you will find, not two but one; not war but peace; not isolation but a heart which rests upon the centre. Thus shall the beauty of the Lord shine forth. The hour is now.'"⁴

The quality of steadfastness, so necessary in controlling the energy of the fourth ray, enables the disciple to stand at the centre of his being and to form right relationships with the surrounding environment. Through the alignment that the fourth ray of harmony through conflict brings, Mercury, the star of the intuition, constantly shines overhead, facilitating the appropriate transmission of energy to all lives contacted. In this way the great alignment of hearts begins.

As this alignment is taking place, confusion and even panic are widespread, prior to the settling of the esoteric dust and a new clarity of vision through Mercury. We are told that this planet indicates that the line of least resistance for humanity is harmony through conflict, for it expresses fourth ray energy, which is buddhic, intuitional and expressive of the Christ. "Mercury, the 'Messenger of the Gods' (that is, of the Hierarchy of souls), carries always the message of love and sets up an unbreakable inter-relation between the two great planetary centres, that of the Hierarchy and that of Humanity."⁵ This must then facilitate the Christ's return as the path of the heart is laid out before Him by the efforts of all who are achieving spiritual alignment.

The current world crisis is serving to provoke a widespread spirit of inquiry as to the meaning and purpose of existence, both for the individual and for humanity as a whole. And this is enabling Mercury, as the great agent of the fourth ray of harmony through conflict, to bring about those "changes in mental perception [which] will eventually enable humanity to act as the mediating interpreter between the higher worlds and the three lower kingdoms in nature." For this is the great future of humanity

when it has fully integrated itself with the great Being that embodies the fourth kingdom of nature and Whose soul is governed by the Lord of Harmony, Beauty and Art.

While the fourth ray of harmony and conflict governs Aries, the constellation itself is a great expression of the first ray energy of Will, which initiates the whole process of evolution. At this time of the year, its driving energy brings a wonderful sense of livingness, encapsulated so magnificently by the risen Christ, and by Nature Herself as she dons the green of energetic activity. Here we are helped to awaken to the beauty that lies at the heart of creation and gather our forces into a corresponding state of dynamic equilibrium – to stand with massed intent, creating a path of return for the Christ, and to walk together in the progression of good, of beauty and of truth.

References: 1. *Destiny of the Nations*, p. 40, A. Bailey 2. *Bloomsbury Dictionary of Word Origins* 3. *Art, Its Occult Basis and Healing Value*, p 63. Eleanor C Merry 4. *Esoteric Psychology* Vol II, p. 363 A. Bailey 5. *Destiny of the Nations*, p, 139, A. Bailey