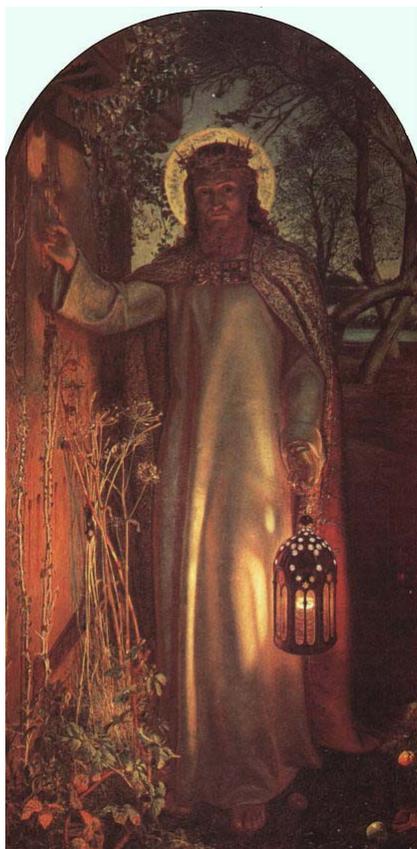


Let there be light!

One evening, a few months ago, I sat peacefully sewing the white cross onto our temple's new red Hierophant's cloak. My needle wove through the fabric, and my mind drifted into the calm, meditative state which is often induced by a repetitive task. As I sewed, in silence and solitude, with both my outer and inner vision focused on the white cross, my meditations deepened into a vivid experience of this cross, in its position directly over the heart, as the outward symbol of the Inner Light: that Light which shines within the heart of every human being: "The true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). To borrow the words of Saint Augustine¹, such a symbol is "the outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace". This shining cross of light can be borne astrally over our hearts, whether or not we wear the cloak of a senior Temple officer. The inner light which it symbolises, burning within each one of us, is the key to all magical and mystical work.



No lamp can burn steadily unaided. In days of old, a lamp would grow dim, flicker and eventually be extinguished, unless it received regular attention. The wick needed to be trimmed constantly, and the fuel had to be replenished. Some of you may recall the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Matthew 25: 1-13), who were supposed to keep their lamps burning in preparation for the coming of the Bridegroom. The foolish virgins did not attend to their lamps, and were in a state of darkness when the Bridegroom appeared, while the wise virgins, whose lamps were still burning, were permitted to enter the bridal chamber.

This parable is a profound metaphor for the spiritual life and the importance of attending to the inner light, ensuring that it burns with a bright, steady flame. In our case, the lamp is fuelled by regular prayer, meditation and ritual practice; however the most important fuels are devotion and passion, without which the rest is worthless. This fire which we must tend is none other than the heart-flame of Love and it is the portal through which we may enter the mysteries of the Light Divine; the burning letter Shin at the heart of all creation. As we read in the Gospel of Thomas (verse 24):

"His disciples said to him 'Show us the place where you are, since it is necessary for us to seek it.' He said to them 'Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear. There is light within a man of light, and he lights up the whole world. If he does not shine, he is darkness'."

These are deep mysteries, and the contemplation of them is an unending source of nourishment for the spiritual and magical life. However, as we all know, profound

mysteries and noble truths are of no practical value to us unless we can

bring them back from our mystical contemplations into our mundane lives. And, unless we are saints or Buddhas, what a sad gulf there usually is between our lofty aspirations to the numinous and their manifestation on Earth! All too often the flame of our inner light flickers unsteadily, blown about by every passing breeze, or indeed nearly extinguished by the major storms of life. Such is the sadness and pain of our earthly existence, but also its most glorious challenge! As the runner carries the Olympic torch blazing across the globe, so we need to journey with a bright, steady flame to sustain us in our commitment to the Great Work.

We talk a lot about “commitment to the Work”, but what exactly is commitment, and how can we achieve it? Too often, our “commitment” seems to be merely a lunar reflection of the current state of our emotions. We “feel” good about our work, so we perform our rituals with great regularity and spend many enjoyable hours in prayer and meditation. When we don’t “feel” good (or even “feel” extremely negative) towards the work, our practices tend to drop off and we experience intense inertia. This usually makes us feel even worse, as guilt is added to the uncomfortable psychological cocktail.

Now there is nothing wrong with feelings, and of course it is wonderful if we feel great about our work. But the point here is: should we allow feelings and emotions to govern our magical work to this extent? How far can we trust these as our guides? The answer is, I believe: not very far at all. We know from life-experience that feelings and emotions are

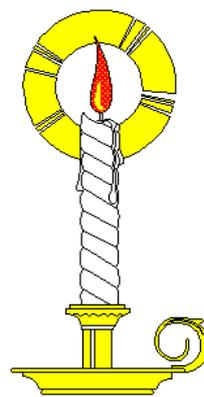
should we allow feelings and emotions to govern our magical work to this extent? How far can we trust these as our guides? The answer is, I believe: not very far at all.

often transitory and deceptive. As I write this, I am listening to Brahms and

contemplating the spiritual work which I value more than anything in the world. Consequently I am ecstatically uplifted. Unfortunately, I know from experience that this won’t continue for long – by bedtime I could easily be in a foul mood because I’ve developed a cold or received an annoying phonecall.

Now think back with me to boyfriends/ girlfriends from 5 or 10 years ago (or more, if you are as old as I am!). Do you remember the sleepless nights, the total obsession, the overwhelming desire for those exes? And the awful truth is that now we probably can’t even recall clearly how they looked! Whatever happened to all those intoxicating emotions which we felt when Paul, Karin or whoever was the very centre of our universe? I think you will agree that this example aptly demonstrates the transitory and unreliable nature of feelings; therefore is it wise to make feelings the yardstick in our magical work?

When emotional highs and lows threaten to tempt us from the spiritual path, maybe we should consider instead the more dependable qualities of persistence and endurance. Just as these are the qualities which are invaluable for maintaining a committed and stable relationship in the mundane world, so they are the very qualities which are essential in our relation to the Great Work. Many of you have seen the Calvin Coolidge quotation (unacknowledged in my copy) in the front of the large Regardie “brick”² :



“Nothing in the world can replace persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.”

Aleister Crowley

clearly showed
his understanding
of this precept in

his choice of Outer Order motto. *Perdurabo!* Not: “I will feel good about my work” but “*I will endure*”. As indeed he did: throughout a turbulent and often tragic life, nothing deflected him from the path of magical and spiritual development.

Because a temple is the sum of its individual magicians, there can be no truly focused and committed temple unless every single member has this persistence and determination. We each have a duty to fuel and nurture the inner flame and to “guard it until it blazes”³. This duty is to ourselves, to our Temple, and to the Order, both present and to come. We, the members of the S.R.C., are the present links in a great initiatory chain, and this is a responsibility which should not be underestimated. As we know, a chain is as strong as its weakest link.

Furthermore, we should remember that we will all become role-models for future initiates. New members of a society, whether sacred or secular, tend to observe the behaviour and attitudes of established members and imitate them. If we demonstrate dedication and commitment to the work, we are likely to produce dedicated and serious neophytes. If we are uncommitted or casual towards our work, then we cannot be surprised if we are unable to maintain members of quality. I am reminded of the words of Groucho Marx, who

Would I want to join a temple where the members were like me?

famously said “I don’t want to belong to any club that would have me as a member.” It’s a good idea to ask oneself this question every so often: *could a new initiate safely model him/herself on my example?* And also this one: *Would I want to join a temple where the members were like me?* It’s an interesting perspective, isn’t it?

It is up to us as
individuals,
whatever our

grade or office, to play our part in creating and maintaining the temple we aspire to become: a temple of focused, dedicated magicians, burning with a bright, steady flame of inner light within the sanctuary of each heart. However, if we nurture this light only to keep it within the walls of our own Temple, we have not truly fulfilled our collective task. “Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house” (Matthew 5:15). Although our members are few and our work of necessity secret, our temple should nevertheless shine as an astral beacon amid the darkness of the outside world, to lead those who are worthy of the Mysteries towards the place where they are guarded.

May such a temple be manifested this Vernal Equinox. *Iebi Aour!*

V.H. Sor. P.I.A.M.D., 5°=6° (P)

¹ *Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 AD), definition of the Sacraments.*

² *The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic – New Falcon Publications*

³ *The Gospel of Thomas, verse 10*

