

The Way of Discipleship

Living a spiritual life these days does not necessarily mean just an “upward” direction of attention; it involves a downward expression of spiritual energy as well. Rather than “flee the world and seek God,” it is: “let the light descend on earth.” In other words, how can we help to let the Plan of Love and Light *work out*? Thus, the outer world is not to be escaped from but to be gradually transformed into a new and better place. When this is striven for as a result of spiritual realization, then can we not speak of true spiritual work and spiritual living? Naturally, this can manifest in various different forms and need not necessarily be expressed solely in religious terms.

In fact, today many are entering a new dimension of consciousness – the realm of the higher, transpersonal Self, or the Soul. And, what is more important, they are finding there the true center of their being. This recognition is in itself a real “Copernican Revolution,” a breakthrough to a less “I”-centered view. Finding one’s center of life in that new dimension of consciousness, however, means much more than just having knowledge *about* it. It implies a gradual identification with that higher, true Self, and a conscious acting from that center rather than from the “little” self or personality.

Of course we will still have our lower, more familiar, personal self; and in our personality consciousness we are not constantly aware of our true spiritual center. But an interplay is being established between the two selves. The personality begins to invoke the higher Self and, in response, that higher Self begins to pervade and reorient the personality. After initial oscillation and even opposition, there gradually results a conscious cooperation between the two. Increasingly the personality will be infused by the Soul’s light, allowing it to radiate through. The person in the outer world then becomes the expression of, and channel for, spiritual energies and purposes.

Spiritual expression through humanity

Those who recognize this process of new orientation and Soul-infusion in themselves can more easily see it happen on a larger scale in evolving humanity. It sheds light on the critical nature and opportunity of our time. In fact we have been given the clear indication (by such thinkers as Teilhard de Chardin, Sir Julian Huxley, Sri Aurobindo and many others) that humanity is on the verge of taking a next important step in its evolution, a quantum leap in consciousness. Whether one calls it the spiritualization of society, the Soul-infusion of humanity, or the breakthrough to a new age does not matter. We should realize however that, as Aurobindo has written, “the key is not the ascent of man into heaven, but rather his ascent here into the Spirit, and also the descent of the Spirit into his normal humanity and the transformation of his earthly nature.”

Speaking practically, one can indeed discern today a growing network of men and women all over the world who embody a vital spirit and are becoming an increasingly potent force for transformation in human affairs. No matter in which field they are active, they are inclusive rather than separative; they seem to be in touch with the “soul of humanity,” working as they do from that inner center of union and synthesis that transcends outer divisions. Men and women who are aligned with this higher consciousness, in whatever nation, race, religion, place or position they may find themselves, inevitably become transmitters of a wider vision, dedicated to the well-being of humanity.

Whether they realize it consciously or not, individuals thus oriented actually become

“a point of light within a greater Light;
a strand of loving energy within the stream of Love divine;
a spark of sacrificial fire focused within the fiery Will of God.”

This is how that beautiful mantra, The Affirmation of the Disciple, puts it. Instead of being merely a *seeker* looking upward, one now becomes a *server* trying to channel healing energies in meeting the needs of others. There is an increasing identification with humanity and its needs, and with that higher spiritual Kingdom awaiting expression.

The great challenge of this time is the enhancement of this conscious interplay between life in the outer world of human existence and the deeper reality and vision found within. It involves the bringing together of the two worlds, the outer and the inner, and a recognition of the connecting energy stream in which we can work. It is not just the mystical vision or the theoretical concept of there being a Kingdom of God that is the decisive factor here, but our active cooperation and work on Earth. The spiritual goal held before us is “the *establishing* of the Kingdom of God.” This implies a *conscious cooperation with a great Stream of down-pouring spiritual energy*.

The newer esoteric teachings give much valuable information about the nature of this energy stream and its various currents. There are the energies of the “Seven Rays” of divine manifestation; the Forces of Enlightenment, of Restoration, of Reconstruction; there is the “increasing descent of the Christ energy” and there is the energy of the Will-to-Good.

It is said that working disciples – those who seek to express the higher vision – can avail themselves of all these energies. And the fact must be emphasized that all the work being done today towards bringing into expression the values and life of the Kingdom of God is done *within and through this great stream*. Even those active servers who may not be familiar with the technical concepts of discipleship, or the Spiritual Hierarchy, or the various currents in the energy stream, but who are engaged in bringing down to practical living expression what they have seen and realized as true in their peak moments, such workers are often aware of the energies that aid and stimulate them in their work. They are all workers in the great Stream, and one can be deeply impressed by the dedicated service of such people, who may be unaware of their discipleship.

Let us consider some of the practical meanings and dynamics of standing and working in this “Stream.”

Strength from within

Seeking to bring to expression the higher values, the new ideas, the laws and principles of the Kingdom of God, is not an easy task. Yet when standing in the Stream, we may find that our efforts are being strengthened from within. The effectiveness of such work is increased and will often be greater than anticipated.

We must not have too vague an idea about what such work may consist of. For example, it may be work at establishing right human relationships in the midst of turmoil. The law of right human relationships is one of the first laws of the Kingdom of God. Sincere workers in this field will find the special Christ energy behind them, and in connection with the work and teachings of the Christ it has been said that “all who seek right human relations will be gathered automatically to Him, whether they are in one of the great world religions or not.” (Alice A. Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*) Or one may be engaged in expressing the ideas of sharing and cooperation in the political-economic field, or in implementing the motive of service as basic to one’s business endeavor. However big the resistance in these fields may be, there are truly inspired workers here who have mainly the strength of their inner vision to support and guide them.

Yet another example is spreading the science of meditation to the increasingly interested public. Think of what it may mean if thousands of people begin to open their minds to the light and the life of the Soul! Thus the law of spiritual approach, another law of the Kingdom of God, will increasingly be recognized.

These forms of service will not have the great majority of humanity behind them, nor will they often reach the daily news headlines. For it is certainly the work of a relatively small minority. But “the strength of this minority consists in the fact that the work they attempt to do is in line with divine intention and purpose.” (*Ibid.*, p. 109) Sometimes, working at rather “subjective” projects may not appeal at all to the concrete mind, yet such effort may be like *sowing a seed* that later on will blossom into something most effective.

Not alone

Consciously taking a stand in the Stream and working there takes away any sense of futility and isolation. It gives a sense of meaning and of not standing alone. It is as if one were operating at the lower end of a funnel through which the energy invoked from above is channeled into humanity.

But in this stream we also *recognize other workers* impulsed by the same energies. This is the “horizontal” recognition. We recognize them not necessarily through their esoteric philosophy or through the teachings they adhere to, but rather through their inclusive attitudes and thinking, their unselfish motives and service, and through their inspired openness to the Plan of Love and Light. All such workers may be called “disciples” – whether they are conscious of it or not – as they discipline their lower lives so as to let the higher impressions, the inner Stream, work through.

Our recognition of these co-workers aligns our energies with theirs and strengthens the work. Conscious recognition of the labors of others calls into play the third law of the Kingdom of God, the law of group endeavor. The basic purpose of this law is the *elevation of the whole*. This can now be brought about more rapidly by group work in conscious alignment with the Stream.

The effectiveness of work in and with the great outpouring Stream of energies can of course be increased through a conscious understanding of these energies and their sources. Therefore, a more specific study of their use and of the right techniques for invoking them will be of the greatest value. This is one significant reason for training in modern discipleship.

Detachment from outer success

Although standing in the Stream carries high energy potential, we must not think that working in that energy stream will always mean great personal success or lead to quick results. It means, rather, strength to persist, strength to keep steady the spiritual focus of creative tension in spite of all circumstances. Sometimes a long period of sustained effort is necessary before any outer manifestation of that effort becomes apparent.

Today it seems that several things have become possible that were impossible only a few decades ago. Take for example the spreading of the practice of meditation, or the increasing acceptance of the concept of the transpersonal Self or Soul. What Alan Watts humorously called “the taboo of knowing who you are” already seems to be fading. Now people talk more openly about these things. There is also the growing recognition of the “larger whole” in such fields as medicine, healing and ecology. Here as elsewhere in human life the spiritual and holistic trend seems to be accelerating. In this sense many feel that there is now an increasing stimulation and opportunity – but also an urgency, because from the larger and higher point of view so much more is still needed!

Energies must “work out”

However necessary as we have seen it is for the spiritually oriented person to use detachment regarding immediate results, the energies that he or she uses eventually *work out into objective manifestation*. This may seem paradoxical, but surely the aim is not to dwell subjectively and happily in a higher light; it is not to float around in the higher spheres. The stimulation and energies

from above are to bring about changes in the objective world. This is one of the aims of “white magic,” the work of bringing the rhythms, the values, the goals of the inner Kingdom to bear upon all life in the outer world and daily existence. “Bring *down* on earth what you have seen in heaven.”

This urge toward outer manifestation is surely something the modern disciple experiences as impulsing his spiritual work. But he or she is also becoming better equipped for this attitude and task because of the influence of what has been referred to as the “Seventh Ray of Ritual and Order,” an influence closely related to the incoming Aquarian Age. (See Alice A. Bailey: *Esoteric Psychology, Vol. I*,¹ or, as an introduction, Michal J. Eastcott: *The Seven Rays of Energy*.²) One of the effects of this Seventh Ray is the increasing *practicality* of the modern spiritual person. The concern for ecology, for right human relationships, for a socially fair economy, and the focus on social activism are signs of this.

In the past Piscean age, this practicality hardly existed. The major emphasis of spiritually inclined people was very much on abstraction from outer life, on personal redemption and on achieving and holding the vision of the Kingdom of God rather than on bringing the vision into outer manifestation. This has led to a great uplift of consciousness, as well as awareness of what has been termed “a mismanaged world.” Now the task is to *materialize* the vision, and in order for the goals and principles of the Kingdom of God to manifest on Earth a great deal of order must be created.

Standing in the Stream or working for manifestation would make little sense for those who are still pure mystics, those who focus primarily on union with God, those who are only motivated by devotion, or those who are fully satisfied with mere subjective vision. Spiritual work today must lead to something practical. “Inner work that does not work out into objective activity upon the physical plane is wrongly oriented and inspired.” (Alice A. Bailey)

Thus the spiritually oriented server in the new age will necessarily be creative and will automatically become an *agent of change* in his or her environment.

Personal reactions and problems

There is deep inner joy in standing in the Stream and in cooperating in the great Work, yet we must not think it implies always feeling powerful and enlightened or always being in perfect shape. For the stimulation may also lead to personal reactions such as, for example, intense fatigue due to continued stress. Yet at the same time there may also be a remarkable tendency to persist and to work on where others would have easily given up. There is often an energy present by which obstacles are overcome.

Also, standing in the Stream does not mean that one always has bright and infallible knowledge in one’s concrete mind, or that one always feels sure of things. Of course, there may be a deep underlying inner conviction, but the struggle to concretize the truth is often unavoidable. This happens to even highly inspired authors who write their influential books only with great difficulty, rewriting and rewording large parts before they finally dare to publish the end result.

The stream of inspiration does not always mean an unimpeded flow of pure ideas through the mind to the brain. Sometimes adjustments have to be made to one’s own attitudes. One has to be fully open to the reception of newer and higher approaches to truth. It has even been said that we have to be “blasted wide open” so that we are no longer “held back by a sense of security in the old formulas and symbols of the lower concrete mind.” Sometimes it seems that the present trend of life is helping greatly to do just that. So is the input of the younger generation. It is the “establishment” part of our minds that is being blasted open today, and rightly so. One cannot be an agent of change

¹ Lucis Publishing Co., New York and Lucis Press Ltd., London.

² Sundial House, PO Box 181, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN3 9ZA U.K.

in the outer world without changing *oneself*. And change may mean insecurity. The only thing in us we can be sure of is the Stream of energy that puts us en rapport with the essence of life – the Stream that keeps us “connected.”

Two focal points of tension

So, through the insecurity of identification with our lower personal self and through the success of our meditation we learn to place our real focus on a higher level than that of the concrete mind; and we learn to work from that *inner point of spiritual tension*. Our “establishment” type of personality does not give us the real basis from which to work. This does not mean that we stop using the lower concrete mind, but that we use it as an instrument.

It seems that our point of concentration must be a dual one. First, there is the point of spiritual tension where we seek to preserve the subjective link or orientation. Second, there is our focused sphere of activity in the outer world in which we seek to carry out our work and service. These two points are of course related, just as we seek to relate in consciousness our subjective and objective life. The second point of focus should be in reality an externalization of the inner point of tension.

This relationship between the two points is always to be kept in mind, because in our intense outer activity we may lose sight of the inner focus; we can become identified with the form aspect of our work so easily. We all know the glamor of success – and over-sensitivity to lack of success or to the reactions of people – and we know the trap of too much involvement in outer activity, which is so prevalent today. All such “glamors” cut us off from the inner Reality and lock us up within our personality. Then we learn that “as long as a man is focused in his personality, the point of spiritual tension will evade him.” That is to say, he is – temporarily – “cut off” from the Stream.

So we see that glamor of the form, of activity and other distorting drives or emotions – ambition, fear, self-pity, etc. – can hinder the true work. It is as if they surround the worker with a fog through which he cannot see clearly and therefore gets into difficulties. Thus valuable workers are sometimes temporarily sidetracked. It must be expected that such negative reactions and weaknesses will be stimulated, as is everything, by the increasing influence of the higher energies. Hence the need for the dispelling of glamor and for training in the recognition of Reality.

Stepping down the energies to the need

When talking about the dynamics of standing and working in the Stream, there is one final point that needs mentioning. It may be one of the keys for all successful work with spiritual energy. It is the process of “stepping down” the energies. For the higher energies to really and creatively work out in the world and bring about their beneficent results, they have to be stepped down to the level of the need. This is like the process of transforming the high voltage energy of an electric power center to lower voltage electricity that can be used in our households. The higher energies contacted must be transformed in practical ways, translated into the right language, so that they address the need. This is extremely creative work. It means service, both to those who are in need of more life and light and love and to the Hierarchy of greater Beings who seek to impress the minds of men. It is impossible for the new ideas, the higher energies, to reach the average person directly. They require a stepping down, a creative transformation, and as long as we are working at this dynamic and creative process, we shall find ourselves working in the Stream.

Sometimes we may meet people who say, “In my environment there is not any interest in spiritual things.” Or, “It seems that in my country the time not ripe; people do not respond.” In such cases is not the task quite clear? There is *no* place that exists where one cannot learn to “step down” something of the higher values contacted and translate them into practical outer usefulness.

The basic requirement for working in the Stream and for stepping down its energies is to be wide open to the Plan, not only upwards (or inwards) but also horizontally to the need. This is not easy, as it necessarily implies the sharing of problems and pain. But if we refuse to share in the world karma and pain, will we not have put ourselves also outside the great tide of spiritual force now sweeping throughout the world in regenerating streams?

Working with increasing effectiveness in this Stream gives the high reward of sharing in a greater group endeavor and of helping sow the seeds of new life and *joy*.