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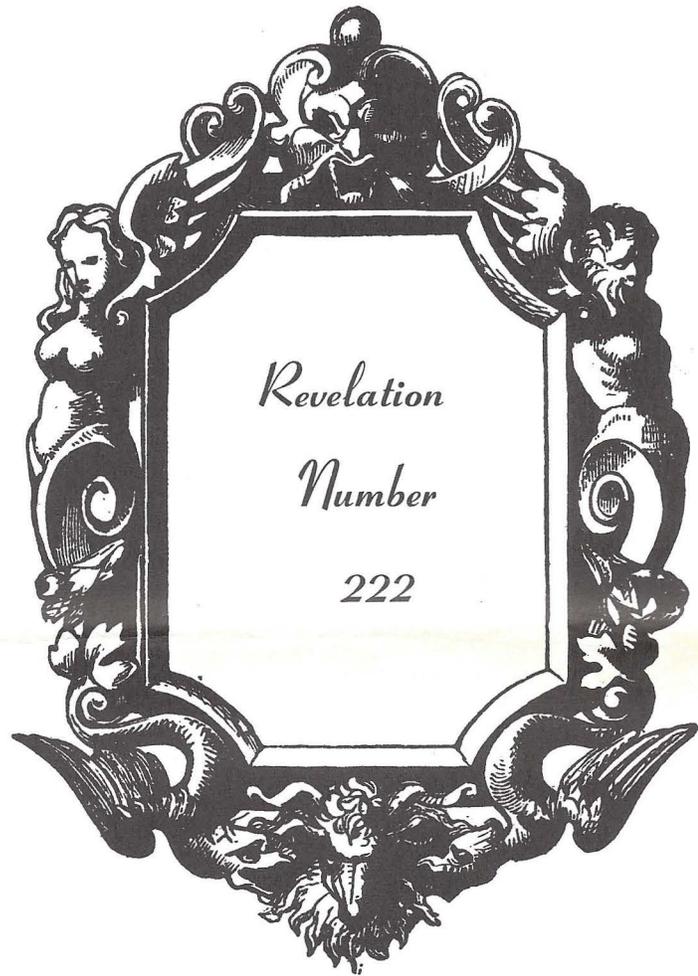
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Is
a
Mirror*



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BELOVED CENTURION:

As a Truth Student and a Companion on the Path of The Mayan Order, you know of course that everything about our work has to do with efforts to make your life more nearly what you would like it to be. And you have noticed, I am sure, that the more recent lessons have laid great stress on your life and self-analysis.

It is a very serious duty - perhaps of all duties, the most serious - to look into one's own character and conduct and analyze it accurately. It is difficult to read one's own heart and do it honestly, and be able to recognize one's faults. It is just human nature not to be able to see those things we do not want to see and do not want to recognize in our character, but, in order to make progress, we must be honest with ourselves. That is the first rule.

It is a good idea to use the following rules when you are endeavoring to determine what things you should cultivate in your life and which things you should discard. Think about on whose rules you are acting, in whose name you are acting and in whose strength. And think about how strong is your faith, how great is your humility and your ability for self-denial.

And never be content with what you see when you look in the mirror of your life. The old philosophy was "Know thyself", but the new philosophy is "Improve thyself", and that is the purpose of the lessons your Instructor brings to you. This one, which we have called "Life is a Mirror", is very important for you to study. May I urge you again to study these lessons carefully. Do not just read them, but examine each line and paragraph thoughtfully, and apply its message to your own short-comings or virtues.

You will find that when you resolve not to be useless, and have an honest desire to help other people, you will rapidly be starting the wheels of motion going in improving yourself. This is a law that never stops working. It is a strange truth, but it never fails.

I have talked with many people in my great experience in this work, and very often when talking about self-improvement, I have been asked, "How can working people find time for self-improvement?" My answer is always the same. A good purpose finds time or makes it. In spare moments, wonders can be worked. There is always some portion of the day that can produce great improvements. As a matter of fact, I have often noticed - and I am sure you have too - that those people who have most time at their disposal profit by it the least. And I firmly believe that a single hour of the day given to constructive activity or thought can bring about the desired results.

Can you imagine what would happen if every day at only one period during the day you would spend some time in an effort to weed out those things in your life that are bringing about destruction one way or another? In other words,

taking a little time to look into the mirror of your life and see what it reflects back to you. The only difference between looking in the mirror to see outward appearances and looking in the mirror of your life is that when you are looking in your life's mirror, you are looking within, which is, of course, that which determines what your life will be.

As you begin this study, repeat the following prayer, and not only now but at some time every day. It will help you to keep the images that you see something of which to be proud.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, since by my own attitudes I see my image reflected in people and things everywhere, help me to make and keep that image one of which I need not be ashamed. Amen.

The Creative Principle

Have you ever looked deeply underneath the words that tell us how God looked on all that He had made and saw that it was good, also the words that tell us how He created man - us - in His own image? In any case let us do so now and see if some very great and revealing principles do not become apparent. For the moment forget all about the old notion that God built the world with a hammer and saw, and see if the beautiful and natural truth does not reveal itself.

An old poem is supposed to be a baby's greeting to those who received and welcomed it into the world. Evidently with memories of another world fresh in its mind, it explains how it came to be, saying, "God thought about me, so I am here". Apparently that is exactly what happens when a new soul steps into the world or anything else is first manifested on the visible plane. The process need not be instantaneous, of course, and probably never is.

The Master gave us our best statement of the nature of God when he said that God is Spirit. Others have since applied an adjective that makes it even clearer, saying that God is Pure Spirit. Do not look for Him, then, in any other form save the one, as St. Paul told the Athenians on Mars Hill, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being". The only other word Jesus used for God was Father. God, then, is Spirit, and spirit is creative. Pause and think that over till the light shines through on it and makes its meaning plain.

Creativeness is one of the ways in which we are made in the divine image. We know from the things we ourselves make that bringing anything into being takes place in two general stages - thinking out a pattern, then in one way or another energizing it into visible and tangible form. This we do in our own image because we build our own natures into it. When the thing is finished it is our own interpretation of the thought picture we originally conceived, the idea we had.

Divine creation, of which human creativeness is a reflection, means that God, who is Pure Spirit, conceives a thing, a world, a person, a situation, a condition, a development, in thought, and sends out the power or energy to bring the idea to pass as an actual fact. Each created thing is an energized thought of God.

When God looks on anything He has made He sees it is good because it sprang from His own goodness and bears His likeness. Like a trademark on a manufactured article this suggests that no other maker would have fashioned the same thing in the same way. It is intended to represent a quality of workmanship. It means that the manufacturer has inspected it and pronounced it good.

This is true because when God looks at the world and life He is looking into a mirrored reflection of Himself. That is the crown of human dignity we wear and which we should strive to honor and preserve. Even though we splotch the image and exhibit it in a poor light, it is still the trace of the divine.

Concerning Ourselves

Let us now apply this more intensively to ourselves. Being reflections of God, we too are creators, and what we bring into being in our lives is also a reflection of ourselves. The form it takes comes from within us, so the personal worlds we build around ourselves are our own reflections in the mirror of life.

All that exists around us is God's energy operating in a pattern, and all the changes we make are our energy operating in what we make of what God gives us. We do not see things. We get the brain's reactions of form and color from light waves reported to it by the optic nerve. We do not hear things. We only get the brain's interpretation of atmospheric or electro-magnetic vibrations reported to it by the auditory nerve. If we were not there at the moment there would be nothing but the energy coming from the sun or the trembling of the air set in motion by this disturbance or that. All we get is a sensation which our own inner powers construct into what we call sight and sound, according to our own natures.

It is the same with the operation of all our other senses. Taste and smell are only our reactions to certain chemical substances. A slight electric shock will cause the tongue to taste something like vinegar. A slight blow across the closed eyes in the dark will produce the sensation of light. The feeling of touch is only the reaction of the skin nerves to pressure or resistance, which also could be imitated to make one seem to touch something that isn't there. All these things are created in our own image because they are fashioned in our own minds.

Wonderful though they are, these sense powers are very limited in scope. We see, hear, or otherwise perceive, only a fraction of possible sense experience. Much more that we experience is outside the range of our sensibilities. We know this because some of the animals have keener receptions and respond to stimuli past our limit. A dog can hear sounds quite beyond the reach of the human ear, as can be demonstrated by anyone who has a dog and a dog whistle. It will be a wonderful universe we look on when, freed from the limitations of sense, we first behold it as it is and discover how much we had never seen or heard before.

The world we see, then, is created within ourselves and bears our image, including our limitations. That makes the difference between what is seen by a color-blind person and one with natural vision when they look at the same thing. Sense can deceive us in many ways. Half submerge a stick in water and see.

This is also true in our emotional lives. Any two of us may react differently to the same stimulus, and a third might not react at all. Two people may love the same person, yet be actuated by it in very different ways. Even what we call reality, and think is so final, is not uniform, because we are not. Any external thing is only a reflection of our differing selves. We too are creators, and we make things in our own inward images.

The Mirror Itself

By now you can begin to see what St. Paul meant when he wrote to the Corinthians that now life is like seeing in a mirror darkly, but the time will come when we shall see face to face and know as we are known. The world and life are reflections of our own thinking and doing now, but as time passes we get the mirror cleaner and in better repair, and we work on our own natures till we get a better reflection. It is changed, as St. Paul also wrote, from glory to glory.

There is a story about a man who did not like the way he looked in the mirror. He thought it was the light, and put the mirror where the light was better. This did not help, so he decided the mirror was faulty and bought a new one, with no better result. The last thing that occurred to him was that the trouble might be with himself. The mirror only needed a better image to reflect. The cure was something that cost no money, and that he did not even have to go to the store to get. The real correction is possible for anyone anywhere.

It has so often been said that life is what we make it. Most of us have found that this is true, and the principle we are now considering is the reason why. The world is what we make it too. What we see, hear, and encounter, comes not only from our own reactions but also from our viewpoints and attitudes. In a sense the world is at our mercy. We see in it, think into it, and build into it our own natures and qualities. While we are doing this to the world we are also doing it to the people around us.

Of course a mirror can be of poor quality, or fogged, or set in a dark place. Our vision may not be so good or our reactions may not always be at their best. But in the case of the mirror of life this too rises from ourselves. We are sometimes like people who deliberately stand before distorting mirrors in a place of amusement. If we make life such a mirror and use it in this erratic way the law of reflection is not responsible. It takes right thinking and understanding as well as a good mirror for satisfactory results.

We look at life and the world around us and say we see sweetness or bitterness, beauty or ugliness, kindness or harshness, order or confusion, success or failure, happiness or unhappiness, goodness or badness. We should be careful about giving life and the world all the credit or all the blame. What we see is really a reflection of our own moods and viewpoints.

This gives us a sure way to audit our own pages in the judgement book and get the correct totals. Or it is like applying a fluoroscope and seeing by X-Ray what the status of our inner lives may be. Thus we have a sure basis on which to decide whether we like what we see, and what to do about it in either case.

As St. Paul said, some day we will be able to see ourselves in the mirror of life with no interference to make the image uncertain. The picture will be right because the subject is right. Since we are made in God's likeness, He is always trying to develop us to the point where the image will be plain. It is said that the ancient goldsmiths used to know the molten metal in the crucible was refined when they could see their own faces reflected on its surface.

Self-Improvement

In our best hours we are always trying to improve our surroundings, set a better stage for the drama of our lives, make our environments more favorable. The question of how to go about it always confronts us and confuses us. We see that our lives and their settings might be improved here and there, but what would be better and how could we bring it about? The answer is that our environments will change when we change ourselves.

We do not always improve a play by building a better stage or painting new scenery. We do it by rewriting the play and getting better actors, especially the one for the central characters - ourselves.

When a housewife has lived under the same roof a long time the condition and appearance of the place become pictures of her spirit and attitudes. This is not consciously and deliberately done. It comes about in the nature of things. A change of tenants may alter the whole appearance of a house without anything at all being done to its physical structure. Then another new presence may change it back again just by the touch of her personality on it.

A certain man inherited a farm from his conservative father. It was run-down, and things were out of repair. He took a little work in an agricultural school and introduced improved methods. He had experts come from the faculty and show him how to modernize the place. In a few seasons it looked so much better that his neighbors helped him arrange for extension courses, and soon the whole neighborhood looked better and was producing better. The change in the picture came from the thought life of a man. That is the way it happens.

This holds true even in one's physical appearance. If one's looks begin to show a lack of neatness and order you will find that the condition first affected his inner life, his thinking, his attitudes, and his motives. When he began to improve them the change promptly showed itself in his appearance and manners. We have all seen this happen again and again. Today's papers show two pictures of a certain man. One taken fourteen years ago is the picture of a typical anti-social. One taken a few days ago is that of a capable and scholarly gentleman, which is what he has made himself in that period of time. Of course, while the process is automatic, the direction is not. It works the other way too.

If a barn is painted, or a field weeded, or a desk cleared, or a house made pleasing, the mainspring was not in the actions that made them so. It was in the fact that someone had or acquired an inner life like that, a better concept of things, a more adequate pattern to energize into being.

We talk much and glibly about the effects on people of their environments. There are such effects, of course, but they are not the first ones. The first ones are the effects of people on their environments. When one is affected by his environment he is responsible because he has made the nature of the environment what it is by saturating it with his own nature.

The Secret of Reform

What we have been saying about individual improvement is also true of collective improvement, which is commonly called reform. The condition and status of any group from the family through all the groups up to the world life is the sum total of the convictions and performances of the people in them. Read the history of any nation in any period, and you will see that it grows out of the thinking, the beliefs, the convictions, and the desires of the generation concerned. The forces of destiny are born in the human mind and heart.

As long as Israel was a high-minded, idealistic people, its country made amazing progress, but that progress ceased with the righteous motivations that had inspired it. Of the walls so devotedly reared scarcely one stone was left upon another, and the people themselves were scattered and homeless. In the same way calamity came to Babylon, Greece, Rome, and the rest. Nations lose the golden keys to their progress when they begin to starve the spirit.

Let us hope that you who read this lesson are a civic-minded person, who believes in collective progress and the correction of collective conditions. There is a great opportunity here for you to raise a living memorial to your life in the form of better conditions and happier people around you. The first step is to realize that conditions are only the sum of the lives of the people, and that the lives of the people are determined by how they think and feel about things. Correct purpose and motive, and the rest follows. Any unit of society may thus be improved and even reformed without realizing what is happening to it.

For nineteen hundred years now we have been praying, "Thy kingdom come", and wondering why it doesn't come. It doesn't come because the human race has not yet furnished the necessary image for the glass to reflect. The kingdom has to begin in the hearts and minds of the people concerned. God could send it in some cataclysmic way, but He doesn't because motivation and choice are things a father naturally leaves to the children. Love and loyalty must make the choice. That way the result will not be wreckage but the prevention of it.

It was said of old that the kingdom was at hand, even then. It was, and still is. A harvest may be at hand, but if it is not reaped and stored it never becomes in hand. A road may be at hand, but if we do not start and travel it, it doesn't take us anywhere. A package of seeds may be at hand, but if we do not plant and tend them what can we expect?

Civic progress is the reflection of improved thinking and desire. Any group of society is a picture of what its people, taken together, really are. It follows a principle of distinction among species. No plant can produce what it is not in the nature of a plant to grow. The world is as helpless as any other mirror. It can reflect nothing but the image that is thrown upon it.

Dreamer of better days, here is your key to that baffling door. But remember that sometimes even the right key must be inserted and turned in exactly a certain way and with a certain pressure in a certain direction. Here is that certain way - build inner lives and you build people; build people and you build the community, the institution, the nation, and the world.

The Choice is Yours

Let us now notice an amazing and gratifying thing. The central meaning of all this is that you have the power to change your personal world, that part of the universe in which you live and with which you are in contact; and that by doing this you can help more or less but much toward changing the life of your age and the world life for the future. You may not have thought of that, and you may not be quite ready to believe it, but it is true.

That is because things work in reverse to what people ordinarily suppose. If your life depended on the world around you, you could not do much about it. Outer conditions are hard to change. There are so many of them, and they are stubborn. This makes the task too great for one person in one lifetime.

The wonderful thing is that it works the other way. You have the secret, not merely within your reach but within yourself. It is the fact that your world is a mirrored image of you. We all know what to do if we do not like the way we look in the glass. Let your part of the world see the right image there and it will try to produce one as good. The best way to work on the world is to work on that part of it we constitute, namely ourselves.

This is not mere fancy, but plain fact. You must have noticed that when you feel glum the world looks drab, when you are cheerful it looks sunny, and when you send out good will it is reflected back to you. It was the same world all the time. Only you were different. Did you not find also that the image reflected in things and conditions about you did not stop with you? It reached farther than you would have dreamed, farther perhaps than you will ever know; that is no fancy. It happens to us all every day.

You may say that this is only the appearance of things. If that is so, why does it reach out and affect others as it does - your family, the neighborhood, and more? A reflection in a mirror is no vision. It is a fact, and it can become of the most potent things in the world. Who of us has not striven hard,

perhaps to our great improvement, trying to look, act, and speak, like someone we have seen, or whose picture we have seen, or someone we have read about? Finding patterns to admire is one of the most transforming influences in human experience.

That means that enough people having the kingdom within themselves, where the Master said it is, would naturally bring about the time when it would exist in outside conditions too. That is really the way to pray, "Thy kingdom come". The fact would make a foundation without which the words would not be empty and powerless. God has already given us the kingdom to realize it. Realizing it is our part.

Never again think yourself unimportant when you have a power like that, when you actually have the ability to look at a personal world you have made what it is and a world at large you have helped to make, and to see that they are good. Lift your wand, Magician, and start setting up the great transformation.

Reality

Some may say that the trouble with all this is that it is not dealing with reality. What, then, is it dealing with, and what is reality? Look at the image in the mirror of glass, then look at the conditions of life which reflect your image, then examine yourself and them and see if they are not real. You know the conditions under which you live and the spirit in which you live there. Are they not all real? All this takes place under the eternal law of cause and effect. Are not causes and effects real?

The conditions under which you live and those under which former generations have lived are and have been conditions under which you and they either made or did not prevent. They were creatively planned and realized, or else they were just allowed to develop. Even those that were imagined were just as real to those who imagined them at the time as any others. The progress made and the better conditions created during your life and before it have grown from improved plans, ideals, and viewpoints, translated into action.

Look how different your home, garden, business, and personal affairs are from what they once were. The difference is very real, isn't it? But these differences have had reasons and causes. They have developed from your thoughts and dreams. They are new reflections of the new self you have been constantly becoming. A force is just as real as the result it accomplishes, and the force was real before the result. A plan, dream, or hope, is real before anything it brings into existence. Everything of every nature in the universe is real.

Think now of the difference between things as they are and what they can yet be made. Progress in the past has been great, but progress was never meant to stop with us. It will go on for you individually as you keep building on your part of the kingdom. That much of the new world order must come from your mind and heart. It will benefit you as much as it will others, and it will never lack reality. Our lives consist in taking intangible things and building them into actual ones.

Think of the self you were before you began pursuing some particular plan, hope, idea, or purpose. Think how much smaller your world was and how much more limited your own selfhood. Think how the roads that radiated from it have led you into larger conceptions of things, more understanding attitudes, and more satisfying living. Think how different is what you see around you now, and know that it is only your own reflection in the mirror. Once you saw it but darkly, but you find yourself seeing it more understandingly every day.

The Creator did not try to light a lamp in every spot on the earth. He just flooded it with His sunshine and that was all that was needed. Don't try to set everything right. Radiate rightness, and everything will be affected by it. Build a new world by building a new self, then that self will be your world. Envision what the world should be, and don't think you can't do anything about it. You can. Be yourself what you envision, and see what happens. When God does some great thing for us it is sometimes hard to realize at first that it really happened. But it did happen. And it is real. Make the most of these possibilities.

Affirmation

There moves before me a gleam,
and in its light I can see all
kinds of possibilities for bet-
ter things. I follow the gleam.

Blessings,

YOUR INSTRUCTOR