

INTERIM CHRISTIANITY - A MAP FOR BRIDGING THE GAP

I heard an interesting idea recently.. In fact it has come up two or three times for me, in different places within the last year....

I have heard Jacob Needleman and Eckhart Tolle both espouse this theory...

My sense is that what is being suggested also points directly to one of the great strengths of the Ceile De tradition - and indeed part of what it has to offer people today....

The theory is that the Teachings of Christ - as they are currently transmitted to us through the usual sources - are too *advanced* for almost all Christians - or indeed *any* unawake human beings - to actually be capable of following or embodying.

This is a challenging idea and requires consideration of the evidence before we either embrace or dismiss it. So, let's ask a few questions :-

How many of us are capable of the unconditional love asked of us by Christ?

How many of us are able to turn the other cheek?

How many of us really do love our neighbours?

I could go on.. but you get the picture..

I suspect that most Christians might say.. "Well, we do our best... and that's all we can do. We try... we fail... we ask forgiveness and we try again.."

And yet the Ceile De tradition teaches that this approach will rarely, if ever actually work. *There is a missing ingredient*. This trying is not what we would call "the work". In fact, this trying to be "good", that we see in many traditions, may even be doing our psyches harm.. We will constantly witness our failure and take an increasingly dim view of ourselves (and others) as a result. This insidious judgementalism, this *guilt* is poles apart from true remorse of conscience or humility... which surely serves to show us our true situation - but with a sense at least that there is a way out... that we *are* worthy..

So, if these images of the perfection of Christ represent the final attainment of the transformed soul.. how do we get there?

This is the part of the journey that is *entirely missing* in the Christianity of the pews. There is no method... only a huge and yawning *gap* between who we are and what we "should" be.. There is no "Map through the Gap". All we are offered is a vision of our sinfulness and the perfection of Heaven and the Saints. (How did they do it??) By Grace, we are told. There is nothing we can do but hope and pray we are chosen.

This was not the attitude of the early church.. nor is it the attitude of the Ceile De tradition. There are steps that can be taken to bridge the space between.

- Eckhart Tolle describes one of the steps across this yawning gap - he calls it "presence".

- Gurdjieffians, taking their lead partly from the teachings of the Philokalia, call it "self-inquiry" or "attention"...

- Buddhists call it "mindfulness"

But many people misunderstand these terms and become even more deeply lost in subjectivity, to the point of self-obsession... the disease of our times... so little wonder these terms - albeit authentic in themselves - are best-sellers today.

So - how can we access this place of presence, of beingness, "I am-ness" without becoming entirely lost in our own "all-about-me, me, me-ness.."?!

A Ceile De would say that the secret lies in moving ones awareness, one's *presence* or *beingness*, down from the mind and into the *heart*.

This is by no means a teaching unique to the Ceile De. It occurs throughout much of the teaching of Early Christianity, where methods are given to attain this "interim level". In this way we can begin to build bridges between our "missed-takes" and our true inheritance as Sons and Daughters of Man.

The lack of *clear method* is what hit us all between the eyes when we began to access the wisdoms of other world spiritualities. It is little wonder that westerners flocked in their thousands to inhabit these wisdoms from other traditions. I did it myself for the first fifteen years of my journey towards Truth. And yet, for every person who took up a method from elsewhere, there is one Christian who remains within the church... unable to leave what they love there ... sitting and waiting, like the *Sophias* that they are, for some Saviour to bring them to completion.

At some level, the Church knows all of this. It is suffering in that gap and many - Thomas Merton, Thomas Keating - to name but two prominent Benedictine writers, were and are raiding the riches of the Eastern traditions to help rebuild the broken bridge of Christianity.

My feeling - for years now - has been that Christ came to *fulfil*, but not to *replace* the wisdoms of the world that went before. He came (as he said himself) to offer us not a new religion, but a further teaching... Perhaps that teaching is about how to embody all the interim teachings given and realised since Man first began to ask "....How...?"

How do we dive into and drink those teachings in the Ceile De tradition? For us it's something about journeying away from the familiar... being put through the mill... finding out that, even though much of us has been destroyed... something, hitherto lost to us has survived and been revealed amongst the ashes of the dead... Opening up to that hidden light, as the bushel basket is toppled... and daring, finally *daring* to bring it all back home...

Then... and only then, can Thy Kingdom come...Thy will be done...

On Earth... The final accomplishment. *In us..*

What a thing to be able to achieve!

Many traditions say that in their own way.. It's the Hero's journey; it's the parable of searching for the Ox... And there *are* maps to bridge the gaps.... What a mercy that global institutions are too powerful and huge to know where they have filed them away...

Fionntulach

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