



THE HOLY LIGHT ACADEMY



STEPPING STONES ALONG THE PATH



Explanation of the Retrospection Exercise

The reason that we give our participants the Retrospection Exercise first is because this signifies the beginning of the unfoldment process into the Holy Light of Christ. During your Awakening process, you are beginning to realize the true nature of your past ways, your old thought patterns, negative tendencies, and temptations, all of which must now be closely viewed and scrutinized, as if under a microscope, to analyze them and sort them out. You can no longer be in denial of your past ways, but you must be willing to admit them to yourself, to realize you do not truly want to be bound by these erroneous elements any longer, hence, you move into a mental and emotional position, through retrospection, where you can release them, one at a time, to cast them into the Flame of Christ’s burning Light, which is now purging and cleansing you. Hence, you are preparing yourself for a virtuous way of life.

Therefore, as you practice the nightly Retrospection before bedtime, you can also review your new ways, to see how you are improving upon your walk on this journey into a more refined spiritual way of life. You are reviewing the good and the bad, for essentially you are observing your experiences in general, without negative criticism of yourself, but with self-acceptance. You do not want to fall into a sense of unworthiness or self-hatred, for Jesus said, “Love your neighbors as *yourself*,” and also, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto *you*.” This is not drawing attention to your ego, but allowing the true being that you are to be free. What you are in essence, the life-spark of God within, is not the negativity that you observe around you, in your personal atmosphere, or aura. You are not your thoughts or desires, you are not your actions or experiences, but these are as clothes you wear around your soul. Hence you must take on the Golden Wedding Garment of the Christ Light, and you can prepare for it now by shedding the old dirty garb, the old ways, old thought patterns, and erroneous actions. Take on the nature and reality of the Holy Light of Christ upon yourself.

We choose not to use the word “sin” for over countless centuries it has acquired too many negative connotations, and often hinders, if not traumatizes, gullible seekers on the path. When you hear phrases like “seven deadly sins,” this negative logic can be detrimental, so we urge you to ignore such notions. You are essentially observing errors or mistakes you made, but realize you learn from these; therefore, stumbling blocks become stepping stones.

The devotional aspect of this process is that by the Creator’s love, grace, and forgiveness upon you, the true purification process will begin in you, but you have to truly be sincere and contrite in your heart, not just have a mental recognition of your errors and misgivings either. Hence a sincere, prayerful attitude from the heart is required, during the Retrospection period, each night before you retire. As you review a day, sometimes it may be easier than other days, and yet sometimes you may have a major lesson to learn. Perhaps you became angry with someone, or judged him to harshly, or you said sharp words you now regret. This is the time to face these and

extinguish them in the Light. Then you decide that you will strive to not fall into these ruts again, for Jesus said, “Go, and sin no more.” –John 8:11

Also, as you develop a pattern of clearing the way from day to day through Retrospection, so that these negative elements will not accumulate and fester in your subconscious, then the process of the “life review” at your period of Transition from this earthly realm to the next higher realm will transpire much more smoothly. By then you will have undergone the purifying process continually up until the death of the body, which is only the threshold into the next world of existence, where you will then be ready to enter the Heavenly realm.

As the years unfold, as you practice the Retrospection regularly, this process of self-watchfulness will become an automatic response, and you will learn to catch yourself during the day as you fall into the various old patterns, mannerisms, or thought processes, etc. Often, you will catch yourself right after the fact, when a negative thought, emotion, or action emerges; therefore, that is when you deal with it on the spot. Eventually, you will learn to see it coming so that you can catch it before it manifests. Often these errors are triggered by negative emotions, and that is what you watch for. Then you can deal with each one right then and there, casting it out and accessing the new pattern of righteous living in its place. Then you will get to the point where it will appear as a mere thought or emotion, and you will be able to easily cast it aside and continue onward, walking into the Light of Christ that guides your way. For example, you may see someone and your impulse is to judge them for whatever reason, but instead you must refrain from this and decide that you will accept him as the God-being he truly is, no matter what the outer form shows.

Although you have begun applying Retrospection every night, it can become an ongoing process during the day, a very useful tool to apply any time you need it, not only at night when the day is spent. What we are saying is, that at this point when you have mastered this spiritual skill, it may not be necessary to commit to this every night. However, there may be times, if your day has been very strenuous and has dipped into a negative phase, then you will want to use it that night, or any night that you know its benefit will guide your way more clearly.

To support our explanation on the Retrospection exercise, we are going to share with you some excerpts from the book *Ancient and Modern Initiation*, by Max Heindel, who was the founder of the Rosicrucian Fellowship. We are going to take a particularly lengthy passage from Chapter Two, “The Brazen Altar and Laver.”

“Let us then commence to build within ourselves the Altar of sacrifice, first that we may offer upon it our wrongdoings and then expiate them in the crucible of remorse. This is done under the modern system of preparation for discipleship by an exercise performed in the evening and scientifically designed by the Hierophants of the Western Mystery School for the advancement of the aspirant on the path which leads to discipleship. Other schools have given a similar exercise, but this one differs in one particular point from the previous methods. After explaining the exercise we shall also give the reason for this great and cardinal difference. This special method has such a far-reaching effect that it enables one to learn now not only the lessons which one should ordinarily learn in this life, but also attain a development which otherwise could not be reached until future lives.

“After retiring for the night the body is relaxed. This is very important, for when any part of the body is tense, the blood does not circulate unimpeded; part of it is temporarily imprisoned under pressure... When perfect relaxation has been accomplished, the aspirant to the higher life begins to review the scenes of the day, but he does not start with the occurrences of the morning. The reason for this is that from the moment of birth

when the child draws its first complete breath, the air which is inspired into the lungs carries with it a picture of the outside world, and as the blood courses through the left ventricle of the heart, each scene of life is pictured upon a minute atom located there. Every breath brings with it new pictures, and thus there is engraved upon that little seed atom a record of every scene and act in our whole life from the first breath to the last dying gasp... But in the post-mortem existence this panorama of life is reenacted in reverse order for the purpose of showing first the effects and then the causes which generated them that the spirit may learn how the law of cause and effect operates in life.

“But let it be understood that no mere perfunctory review of the scenes of the day will avail. It is not enough when we come to a scene where we have grievously wronged somebody that we just say, ‘Well, I feel rather sorry that I did it. I wish I had not done it.’ At that time we are the sacrificial animal lying upon the Altar of Burnt Offerings, and unless we can feel in our hearts the divinely enkindled fire of remorse burn to the very marrow of our bones because of our wrongdoings during the day, we are not accomplishing anything.

“It is the feeling of remorse, of deep and sincere sorrow for what we have done, which eradicates the picture from the seed atom and leaves it clean and stainless, so that as under the ancient dispensation transgressors were justified when brought to the Altar of Burnt Offerings a sacrifice which was there burnt, so we in modern times by scientifically performing the evening exercise of retrospection wipe away the record of our sins. It is a forgoing conclusion that we cannot continue evening after evening to perform the living sacrifice without becoming better in consequence and ceasing, little by little, to do the things for which we are forced to blame ourselves when we have retired for the night. Thus, in addition to cleansing us from our faults, this exercise elevates us to a higher level of spirituality than we could otherwise reach in the present life.

“It is also noteworthy that when anyone had committed a grievous crime and fled to the sanctuary, he found safety in the shadow of the Altar of sacrifice, for there only the divinely enkindled fire could execute judgment. He escapes the hands of man by putting himself under the hand of God. Similarly, the aspirant who acknowledges his wrongdoing nightly by fleeing to the altar of living judgement thereby obtains sanctuary from the law of cause and effect, and though his sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow.”

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Let us explain a few points. There is the negative form of judgment, where you condemn yourself or others, which separates you further from God. Then there is righteous judgement, which is inspired by God, and this is where you observe your wrongdoings, without self-condemnation, and although you feel remorse, you do not hold it in yourself where it can only fester and become a painful wound, but you learn to let go of the particular error you committed, and receive God’s forgiveness who will wash you clean. It is God who judges you, with a righteous and loving judgment, and by grace He will cleanse and purify you. God knows that sometimes you will stumble and make mistakes, so he will be there to pick you up and forgive you.

It is also important to strive not to fall back into the rut of doing a particular wrong deed again. How can the process be complete when you continually return to the particular wrongdoing act or thought? You must learn to master your thoughts, emotions, actions, and speech, to where the temptation of them lessens and soon dissipates completely. Then you will feel the true freedom

of living the Way of God's Righteousness, free from the carnal mind of negative influences. However, this balanced state of being that you will find in yourself will begin to develop when you commit to the nightly Retrospection.

In the above excerpt, it explained that the feeling of remorse eradicates the picture or scene depicting your wrongdoing act. Let us clarify that the picture you see is a symbol of the actual act or thought, and the next step, which begins with remorse, is to release it completely into the sacrificial fire at the altar of God, to surrender it and surrender yourself to God for forgiveness and purification. The remorse opens your heart to this realization of wrongdoing and to the act of releasing it finally to God. Then He will guide you into the paths of righteousness, and protect you from further errors and misgivings, if you allow Him to do so, by letting him into your life and heart, to live your life for you, that you will no longer be following your own will and desires, but that you will be listening to and obeying God's Will, as if it were your own.

In fact, you can include the following words in your prayer that precedes your nightly Retrospection; "Not my will, O Father, but Thy Will be done."

Do not think that the process of remorse is so severe, for quite often certain errors are not as extreme; therefore, you must acknowledge them as simple mistakes not to be met again in the future, and then move onward. But when you have committed a grievous error, it does require a sorrowful heart and a genuine desire to be rid of it, for you have resolved to never fall into its dark ways again. This is when you have accepted and received true forgiveness. God will forgive you at all times, but you must forgive yourself also, and then give it up to Him so that you may accept what He is heartily willing to give you: his blessed love, peace, and joy which comes from his forgiveness. This is when real transformation begins.

Another important avenue of receiving God's blessings and forgiveness, in which you can also apply the Retrospection method, is through the partaking of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, through the Sacrament of Communion. However, we shall address this in a different installment.

On the path of Christian Mysticism, you can see the Master Jesus Christ as the Way-shower to God's Reality in your life, and you may seek forgiveness from him in the Retrospection practice.

The key to your guiding Light on the Mystical Path is in learning to listen to God's voice within, which can be done in meditation and also in the Retrospection practice as you seek further guidance. It is in seeking the Truth and finding it that you will be set free.

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