

# Rays of the One Light

## Week 34

### How Should We Meet Our Tests?

Truth is one and eternal. Realize oneness with it in your deathless Self, within.

The following commentary is based on the teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda.

Last week we considered Satan's temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, after his baptism by John. We discussed the question, Does Satan exist?

All of us experience temptation of one kind or another in our lives—some of us, frequently; others, only occasionally. Whether temptation comes to us from our own subconscious, or from outside ourselves, is secondary to the fact that it does come, and that we must deal with it. More important, then, is the question, *How* to deal with it—in fact, how to deal with tests of any kind?

Martin Luther flung an ink pot at the devil, who had appeared to test him. A dark stain on the wall of Luther's cell is pointed out to tourists in support of this story. Unfortunately, our trials are not often so summarily dismissed. As a fellow monk once said to Swami Kriyananda, speaking of Satan, "If only I could get my *hands* on him!"

Jesus during his temptations in the wilderness overcame them, and thereby set an example for all time, by clinging the more determinedly to God. As Paramhansa Yogananda used to say, "Darkness cannot be driven out of a room with a stick. Once you turn on the light, however, the darkness will vanish as though it had never been." Jesus manifested this principle. The Bible tells us therefore that at last, "*The devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*"

In the Bhagavad Gita the point is clarified further by the added explanation that there are three qualities in human nature: *sattvic*, or spiritually elevating; *rajasic*, or ego-activating; and *tamasic*, or spiritually darkening. It is this triune aspect of human nature that the third Chapter refers to with the words:

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*As fire is hidden by smoke, as a mirror is dulled by rust, and as an embryo is enclosed in the womb, so is the indwelling Self enveloped by desire.*

Yogananda explained that each of these examples describes one of the qualities, or *gunas*. *Sattva guna*, that which elevates our consciousness, can be freed of any identity with ego by a little puff of meditation and right affirmation. *Rajo guna*, which embroils the ego in restless activity, can be worked off with a little more, and a little longer, effort. *Tamo guna*, embracing as it does such mental states as laziness and stupidity, can only be outgrown in time, since it inhibits even the *desire* for self-improvement.

The example Jesus gave us was intended more for those in whom *sattva guna* is predominant. But if you yourself find elements in your consciousness that resist even the effort to cling to God in prayer and meditation, don't despair. Patience, as it has been well said, is the fastest path to God. As long as your efforts take you steadfastly in the right direction, you will come out right in time. Remember Yogananda's words: "A saint is a sinner who never gave up."

If, however, your nature impels you, even against your will, to move in the wrong direction—toward egoic desires, and away from God—strive at least to detach yourself mentally from your wrong actions, which are induced by habit. The time will come when their own stored-up energy will tire and diminish. At that time, if you have not contributed to that energy by your consenting will, you will find it possible at last to redirect your energies more constructively.

Thus, through holy scripture, God has spoken to mankind.

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