

The Higher Stages of the Passion— Cross-Bearing

IN THE PRECEDING Chapter [three previous *Rays* articles] we studied Foot-washing, Scourging and Crowning with Thorns as principles of the Christian Rosicrucian method, as karmic necessities, and as events of the spiritual history of the future. The subject was treated from the point of view (of course, it might be treated from many points of view) of the adjustment of relationship between above and below, right and left, frontal and dorsal. Now, in order to apply this method of study to the further stages of the Passion it is necessary to understand the inner connection between the first three and the fourth.* For the Cross-bearing results from the simultaneous experience of Foot-washing, Scourging and Crowning with Thorns.

As the *Cross* comprises all those Space-relationships of which we were speaking in connection with the first three stages of the Passion, so are those three stages comprehended in the stage of Cross-bearing. For the “Cross” which is to be carried is nothing other than the man himself. It is he who has formed within himself a cruciform system of currents: the currents of Foot-washing, Scourging and Crowning with Thorns. And this gives the man a new experience which is at the same time a further test. For up to this stage in his evolution, he had always felt himself enlightened, strengthened, carried by the Spirit.

Now a fundamental change takes place. He now experiences within himself a higher, spiritual man interpenetrating him in the form of the currents of the Cross. But this higher, spiritual man does not



Oil on wood panel, Marco Palmezzano, Pinacoteca, Vatican Museums

Christ Bearing the Cross

In its fullest sense, this phase of the Passion represents the human personality bearing both “the Radiant Cross of the higher man, and the dark Cross of the bodily organization.”

carry him as he had felt himself carried by the Spirit before. On the contrary, he feels that it is he who must carry the higher man within him. The ordinary lower man experiences within himself the higher, spiritual “brother,” and throughout the whole course of his spiritual destiny he hears the voice of the command: Thou shalt be thy brother’s keeper (guardian).

But this command means that the man must feel himself the sheath and bearer of the other. His

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experience is that he must surrender all the fruits of his toilsome work in acquiring knowledge on Earth and of his earthly deeds to the other who, however, does not give the fruits of his spiritual experience and his spiritual capacity to the lower man, but places it at the service of humanity. He also experiences that the higher man within him perpetually lays bare his inadequacies and imperfections. He experiences in fact that this man in the form of the Cross of Light causes the lower man to appear to his own consciousness as the earthly Cross of Darkness. The bodily organism now appears to be a wooden, dead organism which seems in the highest degree ill-adapted for the reception of the Spirit.

Thus the human, personal consciousness stands between two Crosses: the Radiant Cross of the higher man, and the dark Cross of the bodily organization, both of which must be carried. In this situation, an inner resentment arises in Man, a feeling of protest, which cannot fail to set in. This resentment may come to a point in either of two directions: in the direction of the higher man or in the direction of the human organism. Prompted by resentment, the personal consciousness may say to itself: "Am I my brother's keeper?" And an urge may make itself felt in the personal consciousness to cast off the Cross of the higher man within, that is, to "kill his brother."

On the other hand, the personal consciousness may acquire a deep aversion to itself, regarding itself as a Philistine in body, temperament and character. A self-hatred may spring up in the man, which may lead to murder, as surely as indignation against the higher man. For the temptation arises to cast off the Cross of earthly personality, which then appears eminently unprofitable, commonplace and cowardly.

Until we have had experience of these trials, we shall never understand in its full significance what went on in the depths, for instance, of the souls of the two great suicides of the nineteenth century—in the souls of Friedrich Nietzsche and of Otto Weininger. For Friedrich Nietzsche committed spiritual suicide by "killing" the higher, Christian man within him—that is, by casting off the shining Cross. And Otto Weininger could not endure him-

self as an earthly being—and laid the dark Cross down by actually committing self-murder.

These tragic figures are cited here not merely to show the earnestness of the Cross-bearing Trial, but also because an understanding of these catastrophes as a definite test which was not withstood is the chief service which we are bound to render to those who experience them. But the test which was *not* withstood by these men consisted essentially in developing the relationship to the bright Cross and the dark Cross, which is indicated in the words: "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

These "simple" words contain, in truth, a further fundamental principle of the Christian Rosicrucian method of Initiation. This method entails the unavoidable demand to strive to practically solve the problem "love of humanity—love of self." This must be striven for such that man protects the higher man—which lives for humanity—in as loving a manner as he cares for the lower man. This means that he carries the bright Cross not out of duty, but out of love, and that he strives to lighten the dark Cross through patient and unforced educative work, such as is possible only out of love. Man must not be loveless towards his own psychophysical organism, and, on the other hand, he must not feel his relationship with the higher man, who is oriented towards humanity, as a mere duty.

But the path leading to a balance between these two poles is the personal consciousness which stands between the two Crosses, learning to share the higher man's love of humanity so that his neighbor becomes as dear to him as his own being, and affirming his own being—that is, his earthly personality—because that is the only way in which he can manifest his love to his neighbor.

The neighbor—that is, he who stands nearest—is thus the school in which on the one hand he learns love of man and on the other preserves his own self-love for new reasons. For love is not a quantity; learning it at one point makes it possible to vibrate in unison with the radiation of the higher man within towards the universal; and, on the other hand, no one will be cold to his own being when he has received his neighbor unconditionally into the warmth of his heart.

Thus Man has to develop, waken and maintain

three kinds of love at the same time : the spiritual man's universal love of humanity, the love of one's neighbor, and the love of one's own earthly personality. When a man makes a reality of this that is, when he fills spirit, soul and body with love—there remains no room within him for hatred; however imperfect his love may be, yet his being has no room for hate.

As the Crowning with Thorns was the victory over Shame and Fear, so the Carrying of the Cross is the definite victory over Hatred in the form of resentment against what is higher, and aversion to what is commonplace. When hate has been overcome in the spirit of the principle : Love thy neighbor as thyself, then a cooperation in love between body, soul and spirit will have been achieved. A harmony of the three parts of the human being sets in—and this harmony is both the fruit of passing the Cross-bearing trial, and also the fulfillment of a fundamental demand of Christian Rosicrucian occultism. For the method of this occultism depends on the principle of harmony between spirit, soul and body.

Other spiritual currents set up either the spirit of asceticism—that is, the denial of the Body—or the principle of the supremacy of the earthly personality—that is, the denial of the Spirit—yet the personality must follow the Spirit if it is not to be entirely consigned to what is transitory.

The purity striven after on the path of Christian training does not consist in subjecting human nature, but in ennobling it. The more freely earnestness and courage flow into the human nature, the more clearly can it be learned that actually all human faculties may offer service to the great work of Goodness. And the freedom of the human being on this path consists in his learning to love his spiritual duty.

These experiences of Cross-bearing, with which a man may meet on the paths of spiritual training and destiny, confront mankind during that epoch of the future in which “white” humanity will stand in opposition to Ahrimanic humanity. By that time, however, this opposition by white humanity will be characterized not only by fidelity to truth, but by a realization of responsibility to the other part of mankind. That section of mankind which has fallen a prey to darkness will be borne by them as



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their Cross.

At the same time each individual will be inwardly penetrated by the cruciform rays of the spiritual man borne by all. For that “white” section of humanity will take upon itself, then, the task of the Angel—performing for Ahrimanic mankind a service similar to that which the Guardian Angel performs for Man today. On the other hand, it will bear within itself the higher man—taking the place of the Guardian Angel. But the higher man will so represent the Guardian Angel that he will not overshadow Man, but will be actually present within him as an incorporated being.

And as the result of this incorporation, the higher man will, to a certain extent, be given over to the personal man. He will entrust himself to the latter so that the latter will be his “keeper.” For mankind will always have to experience Cross-bearing in the history of the world and thereby will learn to overcome hatred and to establish the harmony of body, soul and spirit. (Continued) □

—Valentin Tomberg