

Meditation: I Am the Resurrection

CHRIST'S WALKING on this earth must have been a marvellous self-recognition. He looked up to the light, and in the innermost being of light He found Himself—I am the Light of the world. He looked down to the earth, took up the bread and said again “That, I am.” Nothing greater than this recognition had ever happened in a man’s soul.

Christ expressed that which He now felt to be His own innermost being in the parable of the good shepherd. In it, without mentioning the word love, He spoke of devotion even unto death. To this corresponds the saying about the door to other men which can only be found in selfless love. According to His own saying, Christ spoke no word “of Himself,” but announced “that which the Father had given Him.” And so He has revealed to men the “Name of God.” In the Old Testament the greatest moment is that in which Jehovah met Moses in the loneliness of the desert, and in answer to the question, “What is thy name?” replied, “I am the I am; that is My name; by it shall I be thought of for ever and ever.” This “I am” is taken up by Christ and filled with all its rich content. The name of God is “revealed.”

All that we have discussed hitherto is nothing but an exposition of the first request in the Lord’s Prayer : “Hallowed be Thy name”—an exposition such as is given by the Gospels. Despite the countless times that the Lord’s Prayer has been prayed, this first request has hardly been at all living or



Auct. D. inf. 2.11, folio 40, verso, Bodleian Library, Oxford

St. John the Evangelist

The Beloved of Christ, author of the Fourth Gospel and Revelations, is shown in this medieval illumination with his iconic eagle and the cup whose poison did not harm him.

concrete to men. They scarcely get beyond a very ordinary feeling of holiness or reverence. Here the way is shown by which life may become the fulfillment of this request, as we become able everywhere, above and below, without and within, to read the name of God and to hallow it. By it man raises himself at the same time to the last and highest knowledge which is possible. All knowledge is ultimately knowledge of God. But knowledge of God is, in the sense of John’s Gospel, the true

This is the fifth in a series of articles taken from Friedrich Rittelmeyer’s Meditation, Guidance of the Inner Life, published by Floris Books, Edinburgh. Reprinted with permission.

“blessedness.” “This is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” And thus all human knowledge becomes deeper and truer the more it becomes like to the self-knowledge of Christ which we have described above.

In our time, when life, belying itself, has set itself strongly to the acquisition of knowledge, it does not help to redeem men to call them away from knowledge to that which, with grand words and confused thinking, one calls “Faith,” but it does help to redeem them if one carries knowledge itself onwards, raising it to its Johannine height, which is today still the utmost height, a far-off height, above all our present knowledge. For all physical and chemical knowledge, all biological and mathematical-astronomical knowledge leads only to a richer and deeper revelation of the “I am” which lives behind all phenomena. It is therefore the hallowing of the life of thought, of the striving of our present age for knowledge, towards which we are developing through these meditations on the “I ams”—in full harmony with the Gospel.

Up till now we have been looking into a new world of space with its four directions: upward, downward, outward, inward. The last three “I ams” help us similarly to build up a new time.¹

At the present time men have a strong feeling for the costliness of time, for its value in money, but little feeling for the holiness of time. For example, they do not know what it means to sit in the sacred stream of time and bathe in it as the Indians bathe in the Ganges. It was in old Persia that men first became clearly awake to space and time. While the Indians built themselves up and rejoiced and feared in the infiniteness of space and time, we find in Zarathustra sublime words about the god who reveals himself in space and time. We must win back these experiences in a new way.”

1. Note: incidentally, I hear that there are not seven but eight “I ams.” The saying, “Thou sayest that I am a king” (John 18:37) is added; but this saying, or rather, this answer belongs, as may be easily seen, to a different order of confession, and along with the answer, “I am the Messiah” (John 4: 26) and the answer “I am the Son of God” (Luke 22: 70), forms a group of confessions.

2. The Act of the Consecration of Man is the Communion Service of the Christian Community, a movement for the renewal of religious life through a living experience of Christ.



Fresco, Fra Angelico and Benozzo Gozzoli, Convento di San Marco, Florence

The Resurrection

All that we see around us is a grave out of which Christ is willing to arise. Men can come to a new Easter faith by the help of this saying: “I am the resurrection and the life.”

“Weaving in the widths of space and in the depths of time,” says the Act of Consecration of Man.²

The first thing which we allow to bring us a new future may be the saying, “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). In this saying we may once and for all immerse our future, as it were, baptizing it in it. Everywhere that future is precious in which Christ’s ego arises and guides a new life. All that we see around us is a grave out of which Christ is willing to arise. The men of today have no real future. If they think of the future of the earth, they represent to themselves an endless development to which, however, an end is appointed by the relentless approach of destruction by heat. And concerning themselves, men believe that death may well be the end of all, and that the only brave, honorable, and modest thing is to desire no further life; but if it should continue they hope to be a fair average representative of the majority, if they have behaved themselves fairly decently here upon earth.

Now that the old Easter faith has collapsed, men

will never come to a new Easter faith except by the help of this saying: "I am the resurrection and the life." They may make all sorts of spiritualistic guesses perhaps. But a belief in what lies beyond this life, which can endure and which in the fullest sense makes life fruitful, must be built up today from within, out of the ego in man, which through Christ experiences its resurrection from the dead.

It is of the greatest importance just here that we should work at ourselves in exactly the right way. With each "I am" we may represent to ourselves that we are wrapped in the greater Ego of Christ. It surrounds us like a cloak of light, full of purity and goodness. And our meditation consists in this, that we are ever saying yes to this ego. To say "yes" to Christ means in the Biblical sense "to believe." And our meditation is an active acquiring of this "belief."

We do not need to think of details about Christ—we may also do that, so long as by it we do not get away from that which is central. But we may also bring to activity a continuous assent in our soul for this Ego of Christ, as we first find it. Perhaps we shall be able at first to think only of the "historical Jesus," or of divinity in general. Then let us remain there in that until something more arises for us. But by experience we know that it is not at all good simply to assent to this higher ego. That easily becomes numb and wearisome. But one may take pains to assent ever more strongly, in an ever more living and exclusive way to experience this ego with one's whole person, and to let oneself be more and more penetrated by it.

One will thus gradually learn that there are degrees of this penetration of which one had not even a distant idea. So awake, so sure, so enduring, so spiritual, so living can the presence of a higher ego be in the soul, as if really a spirit were filling its temple. The power of meditation, or we might also say the power of reverence, awakes in us undreamed of things, when we practice them. This fact alone throws a remarkable light upon the talk of those who say that from pure reverence to God we ought not to "practice" in the religious sphere. At the very least this is the talk of inexperience. But in such talk there lies an unconscious crime against humanity.

If we exert ourselves, we need have no anxiety if

at first we do not seem to succeed in holding fast throughout our daily life the mood of meditation. Rudolf Steiner, who had most experience in this sphere, even advised that one should not try to hold fast the mood of meditation throughout our daily life....The clear, calm view of everyday events must on no account be lost, if a man would undertake his "higher development." Otherwise he would become an unskilled dreamer.

For the religious exercises also, which we here advise, it would be an error to imagine that one can hold fast throughout the whole day the high mood of the quarter-of-an-hour's meditation, that one should feel unhappy if one does not succeed, and that one should long for the quiet quarter-of-an-hour. It is much more important to meditate as strongly as possible, but then, after one has recapitulated it once more, and driven home the result of the meditation, to let it drop and give oneself up wholeheartedly to daily life—with the "I" which now lives in us. One thus delivers the meditation up to death—but also experiences its resurrection.

This does not mean that we could not often in the course of the day recall the highest that was alive in us. On the contrary, one might propose, at least every time the clock strikes the hour, consciously to recall to life the highest that was contained in our meditation. But this purpose is difficult to carry out. It is still better to return into the temple before every new piece of work which we begin, and to pass out to this work from thence. But even this can scarcely be done. We are not yet so strong and so well-trained inwardly that we are able to do that which will be a matter of course to men of later times. Our inner life is weak in comparison with the outer life which constantly oppresses us. We shall learn only gradually to live consciously out of the higher ego, which is formed in meditation.

It ought not even to vex us if we are disturbed in meditation itself, perhaps at its best moment. It is a proof of our inner training if we are always able to come calmly and peacefully out of our meditation when a summons from the outer world reaches us. If we cannot do this, then something in our meditation is not in order. Soon there develops in us ourselves the feeling that we are spoiling again the best that has come or shall come to us if at this

moment we do not remain quiet and joyful. Even when we stand before the door which leads to a higher experience, the calm of spirit which we have acquired by meditation, and which we ought to bring out of our meditation into daily life, should be more important and stronger for us than any particular thing which we were about to acquire. If we succeed in this, then our fellow men will receive only good through our meditation.

Here now we may answer the question: Can one meditate *too much*? Certainly one can. If so much time is devoted to meditation that one neglects one's duty for it, or if one thereby becomes a stranger to ordinary life, or falls into a dozing state, then there is no longer any profit in meditation, but it may become harmful to ourselves and others.

No one can be excused from guarding himself against these dangers. We can give no more than general hints here. One can only say: See whether you become more capable; see whether your mind becomes clearer and stronger. Life itself will tell you clearly enough whether you are upon the right way. In the physical life one cannot tell anyone how much he may eat, or how much he ought to eat; one can only advise him to develop such a keen perception of his bodily condition that this itself will tell him, and it will tell him clearly enough. So it is in the life of the soul.

Having made this restriction, we shall continue to say much more about meditation. And we are of the opinion that as long as thousands of people have still so much time to solve crossword puzzles; i.e., to meditate upon them, so long will there be hundreds to meditate upon an "I am." And as long as there are hundreds of thousands willing to hear that "all is quiet on the western front," so long will there be thousands willing to hear that new truth is coming from the Gospel.

When we meditate upon the saying about the resurrection, we are in the happy case of finding



Tempera on wood, Fra Angelico (c. 1400-1455), Museo di San Marco, Florence

The Resurrection of Lazarus

In meditation we can experience fully and really that out of the Ego of Christ flow resurrection and life. Out of this "I" a new world is born.

that the gospel itself offers us a complete meditation in the story of the raising of Lazarus. We ourselves are resting in the grave of the earth. We may feel our skeleton to be the vault in which we are entombed. We are he who is sick; but we are also he "whom the Lord loves," and Martha and Mary also are in our own soul. Doubt and sorrow—truly out of these two forces in the soul the two earthly philosophies of death, skepticism and pessimism, have arisen. Even the more conventional lament which adapts itself to the sorrowful circumstances without rightly feeling their meaning, is present in the story. It is represented by the weeping Jews.

One may become conscious of this saying of Christ, "I am the resurrection," in the morning as one awakes. And there may come to be people who will make it a law of their lives to awake at this saying of Christ as Lazarus awoke in the grave at Bethany—Christ passes us, calls to us and awakes us. If we experience this, the result is an indescribable sanctification of our awakening. The word which was first spoken to Martha: "I am the resurrection and

the life,” built itself like a new world around Lazarus, who lay there in the grave before the redeeming call came. So can the Ego of Christ enwrap us in meditation before the awakening word itself is spoken.

We then experience fully and really that out of this “I” resurrection and life flow. We feel most decidedly that out of this “I” a new world is born, which is different, quite different, from the world of death in which we live. This world is much brighter, more living, more spiritual, more irradiated by this “I.” It is not presumption, it is the real acceptance of this saying of Christ, of this deed of Christ, when we try to experience for ourselves this miracle of Lazarus in the very elementary way in which it is possible to experience it at first. Christ does not actually say only at Lazarus’ grave: “I am the resurrection and the life,” but He always says so; this is always said out of His personality when we have His living presence with us. It is *He*, not one of His sayings.

If we feel this, then we also know where our future lies. *He* is the future of humanity and the future of the world. Now for the first time we recognize clearly that men think quite wrongly of the future. They *hope* for the future or they *fear* the future. We ought to create the future, in all our thinking about the future the story of Lazarus can help us. Everywhere we see the grave, and the sickness unto death, in the world of nations as well as the physical world, in the fate of individuals as well as in a general survey of our times. Everywhere, in front of the grave, stands Christ. And we need only enter into His “I” with our hearing and our feeling, and then the new world comes forth from Him. This world does not come of itself, it comes out of the “I am” of Christ. But this “I am” desires to break into our “I am,” to break through it. And it can break into the old world only through our “I.” Thus our relationship to the future will become different—will become active and heroic.

Now we see how we must work, so that we may gain the right view of the future, in details, and also as a whole. It does not come of itself. And our

strongest inward impressions are not strong enough to do everything. We must bring our will into activity, for we can resolve to do so. But then we are only at the beginning. A woman once said to me: “If Christianity demands of me love of my enemy, then I give up Christianity on the spot.” But one gets an ever finer feeling for the fact that, as a Christian, one must never and in no way think of the future “as the heathen do,” that Christianity must be in our glance when we look at the world. Not that we should quote texts from the Bible on every occasion; not that we should “simply

commit the future to God” (that is Mohammedanism, but not Christianity), but that in us is present the *will of Christ who stood at the grave of Lazarus*. And the earth itself is everywhere the grave.

It is a very sacred feeling when in us a piece of the world is redeemed, because the light of Christ shines into the darkness of our future. One feels immediately how

much the “penetration by Christ” is advanced. Let one but notice constantly how a mighty new world springs up—there is no better way of putting it—out of the “I” of Christ, out of the inner center of His life, and one will experience concretely what the “New Jerusalem” is, and how the “New Jerusalem” comes into being. As in the atom there is the whole system of suns, so in our “I” the “New Jerusalem” is there.

Then two kinds of Christianity are no longer possible: A Christianity which looks for a world catastrophe, whereas in the inward parts, in the “I,” the great catastrophe, the great revolution is going on; and a Christianity which waits for a beyond, whereas this beyond is breaking into the here and now. But just as impossible for us, when we look again to the East and to the West, is a view of the world such as we find in the East, which desires to redeem men out of this world of death, whereas Christ is the resurrection within the “I,” and a view of the world such as we find in the West, which looks for the end of life in the destruction of the world by fire, whereas Christ is life proceeding out of the “I.” (Continued) □

**As
in the atom
there is the whole
system of suns, so
in our “I” the “New
Jerusalem” is
there.**