

The Mystery of Golgotha— The Defeat of the Ahrimanic; The Risen One

AHRIMAN'S "HOPE"[†] (or, more correctly, what Ahriman reckoned on—for he has no soul-life) before the Mystery of Golgotha was that he might karmically "inherit" the whole Luciferic territory. For all that is Luciferic necessarily leads, if it is carried through to a certain degree, to what is Ahrimanic. The hatred of the Luciferic for all that is Ahrimanic is essentially the hatred of its own karmic future. But such a hatred constitutes one of the strongest of bonds. And this does not apply to spiritual beings only, but to mankind and the nations of Earth. Even on Earth, those men and groups of men are the most hated who serve to illustrate what the karmic future of the others will be.

And this bond grows ever closer and closer, until the Luciferic has slipped over into the realm of the Ahrimanic and has been swallowed up by it. Devouring of all that is or has become Luciferic would mean not only the success of Ahriman's plan, but also the fulfillment of that towards which his nature urges him. For Ahriman would be only a kind of spiritual machine if he could not constantly devour other beings and forces as a sort of substitute for the soul-life which he lacks. That Ahriman can have any kind of living experience at all—to fill the void within him—he owes to his ability to exercise that devouring activity.

But now, by reason of Lucifer's inward conver-

sion, not only has a limit been set to this activity of Ahriman's, but also the boundaries of the region in which he can practice the devouring have begun to contract. For new Luciferic beings continually attach themselves to the standpoint of Lucifer and thus diminish the effective sphere of Ahriman's activity. Hence it is a fact that *cosmically*, Ahriman is already conquered in principle. But seen from the terrestrial point of view it is otherwise. There the decision does not lie with the Luciferic spirits, but with Man on whose freedom it now depends whether or not Ahriman will be overcome in the terrestrial (that is, the physical-elemental) sphere also.

Ahriman, however, cannot be overcome by *attacking* the Ahrimanic element, nor by endeavoring to convert it inwardly. The Ahrimanic influence can neither be coerced by force nor inwardly transformed. The point is, to recognize the Ahrimanic element as such, and not to be afraid of it. A courageous glance of recognition is the spear which keeps Ahriman within bounds in the outer world, and the courage of self-knowledge is the force which renders the Ahrimanic Double powerless in the human subconsciousness. For as regards Ahriman, the point is that he should not be granted power over the soul, and that all his attacks are, with the weapon of recognition, ruined through the uncompromising courage of Man.

Stability, rocklike firmness, is what is needed—neither to attack nor to wish to flee from the Ahrimanic onslaught. For the Ahrimanic element is powerless unless it can influence Man either by fear or by bribery. And in this condition of powerlessness, it receives no nourishment and disappears

[†] This is the third and final part of Valentin Tomberg's study of the Mystery of Golgotha. Reprinted with permission of the Anthroposophic Press, Hudson NY 12534. Refer to the July/August '00 Rays for an explanation of Ahriman.

from the region whence it cannot exercise its power. Ahriman will be defeated because he will not be given nourishment. His power in the universe looks overwhelming, enormously great, but it is a mere illusion, designed either to buy or to frighten. It is an *objective* illusion—that is, an illusion made up of real external phenomena—but one which immediately shows itself as such when it is confronted with courageous recognition and incorruptibility (that is, refusal to compromise, for all compromise is a consequence of bribery).

This has been shown as a fact of cosmic experience in that spiritual event belonging to the Mystery of Golgotha which is traditionally called Christ Jesus' "Descent into Hell". For just as the agony on the Cross resulted in the inward conversion of Lucifer, so the *kind* of death which Christ Jesus suffered brought about the disclosure of the secret of Ahriman. It was, as it were, an unmasking, a laying bare of the disguise, of Ahriman's power both for the Spiritual World and for those men who stand in a right relationship to the Spiritual World. And this was so because Christ Jesus died in a different way from any other man. For when a man dies he has before him, for about three days, his life-tableau. This is what he sees during that period, and it hides from his eyes the *abyss*, the Kingdom of Ahriman in the Subterranean Spheres.

As, by the goodness of the Gods, the man was protected from seeing before his birth the Luciferic sphere, so at the moment of death he is protected by the same divine goodness from seeing the sphere of Ahriman. And as before birth the Luciferic temptation to remain in the Spiritual World is warded off by the sight of the karmic tableau of the man's upcoming life, so is the soul preserved from the confusion and perplexity which the vision of the Ahrimanic sphere would call forth by the tableau of the past life unfolded before it like a screen.

But Christ Jesus at His death *renounced* the vision of the tableau; He gave it up to humanity, and it became the content of what the disciples later "remembered" in the light of the Pentecost-flame. It was also that which the Evangelists contemplated from different points of view, the vision from which they wrote their records. The normal life-tableau is given over to the Gods, the Angels,



Detail, Illumination, twelfth century bible, Harleian manuscripts, British Museum

The life-tableau of Christ Jesus was given to humanity—first to the Apostles and Evangelists, the “eye-witnesses and ministers of the word,” and the Initiates. Since then it has been the common karmic property of mankind; it is the unwritten “fifth Gospel” which may be read in the aura of the Earth.

Archangels and Archai, by the man who has beheld it. The life-tableau of Christ Jesus was given over not to the Gods, but to *humanity*—in the first place to the Apostles, the “eye-witnesses and ministers of the word,” and the Initiates. Since then it has been the common karmic property of mankind; it is the unwritten “fifth Gospel” which may be read in the aura of the Earth. A time will come, however, and it will be on the day on which death comes to the Earth, when the whole of mankind will have the vision of this tableau; and the contemplation of it will be the beginning of the “Last judgment.”

Thus Christ Jesus, as representative of mankind, presented humanity with the tableau of His life as showing the path of Man to the Spirit. But in doing

so, He renounced for Himself the screen which conceals the Subterranean Spheres, the spheres of "hell." It is recorded that at the hour of His death "the veil of the temple was rent in twain." This is an expression of the fact that a new karmic balance was established between Good and Evil. When the curtain was lifted from "Hell," then also the curtain (the "veil") was lifted from the "Holy of Holies." But now the consequence of this new karmic relationship is that when the mystery of Good and the secret of Evil have both become accessible to the experiential knowledge of mankind, Goodness gains by being known, but Evil loses when it is recognized as such. For this is the essential difference between Good and Evil: *Good gains by being recognized, but Evil loses when it is recognized.*

That Christ Jesus should renounce the "Veil of Hell" and, instead of beholding the life-tableau, should descend with his whole being into the darkness of the Subterranean Spheres, was the most sublime act of cognitive courage. That "Descent into Hell" was an event that no human speech can characterize. There is nothing more unsettling than the disappearance of Christ Jesus into the darkness of the Lower Spheres out of sight of the Beings who were watching from the Spiritual World. A breathless expectation was maintained in the Spiritual World. The World of the Hierarchies became silent and breathless in expectation of either the most triumphant victory, or the most disastrous catastrophe...During those days only one thought, only one question filled the whole World of the Hierarchies: Will He come back? Will He emerge from the abyss?

And, again, all human speech is powerless to reproduce even the faintest reflection of cosmic exultation when the risen Christ appeared out of the darkness of the abyss in the sphere of twilight...Then was the cosmic Easter celebrated in the spheres of Heaven, and that cosmic festival is, and will continue to be for all time, the archetype and model of all human festivals on Earth.

By that event it was proved, cosmically and historically, that even in his own kingdom Ahriman is powerless in face of the cognizant courage of Christ—the courage which He pours into the souls



Woodcut from "The Great Passion," 1510, Albrecht Dürer (1571-1628)

Christ in Limbo

When Christ descended into the Earth He liberated captive souls in limbo (Adam and Eve and Old Testament patriarchs are usually represented in Eastern Orthodox iconography) and "harrowed hell"—overcoming Death and Hades, associated with the numbing materializing powers of Ahriman.

of those who are in spiritual union with Him and His work. By the same means, too, the road has been laid and trodden for the cognizance of the secrets of the Subterranean Spheres. From that time the Ahrimanic secret of the Interior of the Earth has been accessible to experiential knowledge. But not only to knowledge did the Earth's Interior become accessible; it had become accessible also to the influence of the forces of the Christ-impulse. The "Gardener," who appeared to the woman made clairvoyant by grief, was not a "gardener" from her point of view only. He was, in a deeper sense, *really* a Gardener. For He now acquired the power to make the soil of Earth productive for the fruits of Goodness. And from that time forth the highest Initiates of mankind have likewise become "gar-

deners”—that is, they carry out a work for the well-being of humanity which not only concerns mankind directly, but also reaches indirectly by way of Nature and the soil of Earth.

Christ Jesus’ “Descent into Hell” was the deed which overcame Ahriman—not by superiority of power (that was not the question), but by exposing the extent of Ahriman’s *real* power over the alert and uncompromising consciousness. Since the time Christ Jesus trod that path, it has been a proven fact that Ahriman’s work in the world is hopeless—so long as men are willing to recognize and resist it.

Such an attitude will exist in the future among those beings who do not fall prey to Ahriman, and by it Ahriman will be “shackled”; he will no longer have a point of attack for his activity and will thus become ineffective—passive. There will no longer be a motive for the kindling of activity even in his consciousness, and (during the future Venus-existence) it will sink into a kind of sleep. True, this will not be the end of Ahriman’s destiny; but, for the purpose of this Study, his “falling asleep” may be regarded as the last stage of man’s conflict with him. For then Ahriman enters the realm of the karma which is fulfilled in him; he who has always tried to lull the consciousness of Man into a spiritual sleep and whose whole work was based on the hope that Man would not be on the alert, will now himself succumb to a sleep during which the things that happen to him will be the karmic counterpart of what he had intended to do with the beings who became his prey.

Thus the fate of the Ahrimanic element is in principle already sealed through the Descent into Hell and the Resurrection: the Prince of this World is defeated.

The Risen One

The Risen One was a Being who united in Himself experience of the Heavens, of life and suf-



J. James Tissot, Brooklyn Museum of Art

Jesus Appears to the Holy Women

The artist depicts what only Matthew describes (28:1-10). Christ first appeared to Mary Magdalene, who thought he was the gardener (John 20:11-17). The Garden of the etheric world is made more accessible and the garden of the earth has been made more fruitful for good works through the revivifying blood of Christ Jesus.

fering on Earth, and of the Subterranean Spheres. These three experiences represented in Him what is present in us as the nerve-system, the rhythmic system, and the metabolic system. But with us they are “systems”; that is, they contain an unconscious, automatic element, whereas the “body” of the risen Christ consisted solely of moral, conscious currents. His risen body had nothing mechanical, nothing automatic in it, for the Ahrimanic element was overcome in it. Yet his body had not become merely soul and thus alien in nature to the sphere of earthly activity, for the Luciferic element was transformed in it. It was at least as capable of activity and influence as the physical body of a living man, and likewise, at least as full of moral soul life as the spirit-body of a dead man in the devachan [mental world] state. For in the risen body, the gulf between life and death is definitely bridged; it is death become life. It bears within itself the “tree of life” of which the Paradise legend speaks; and those who “eat of its fruit” will have overcome the antithesis between life and death.

There is no other way of approaching to an understanding of the resurrection-body than by

continuous and profound Meditation. For it is impossible to obtain an inwardly clear and correct knowledge of the resurrection-body with concepts and concept-relationships drawn from “ordinary” experience; that is, from experience within the sphere which lies on *this* side of the threshold of resurrection. Therefore the path of intimate spiritual concentration must be adopted, a path which may have to be trodden for many years before an inward comprehension of the resurrec-

tion-body shines forth. And a beginning may be made from a passage which occurs in definite connection with it in the Revelation of St. John: “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” (Rev. 3:14)

In repeated meditative concentration, this sentence may do more for the understanding of the resurrection-body than many abstract definitions. And the passage will be found especially fruitful if it is concentrated into the word *AMEN*. Then a start may be made from the human Saturn

body consisting entirely of warmth of will, which is “the beginning of the creation of God.” Again, the object of concentration may be the fact that this Saturnine body alone has been, from the very beginning of the world, a witness of the whole cosmic evolution. Finally, after having studied it with respect to *space* and *time*, its nature may be considered in detail in relation to the word *AMEN*, which gives expression to its being. Here the special point is the moral concentration in the phonetic sound of the word. For the individual sounds of which it consists can lead to the inner recognition of the individual currents of the resurrection-body. Thus, the *A* sound leads to the understanding of the “risen head”—that is, of the current of relationship

to the cosmic heights. The *M* sound reveals the “risen hands”—that is, the current in cosmic space. The *E* sound leads to the inner life of the resurrection body, and the *N* sound reveals the force of its denial of Evil, the strength of its resistance to Evil, as shown in the Descent into Hell.

The individual forces indicated by the individual sounds manifest with special power in particular situations of the life and work of Christ Jesus: as the *N* force was specially revealed in the

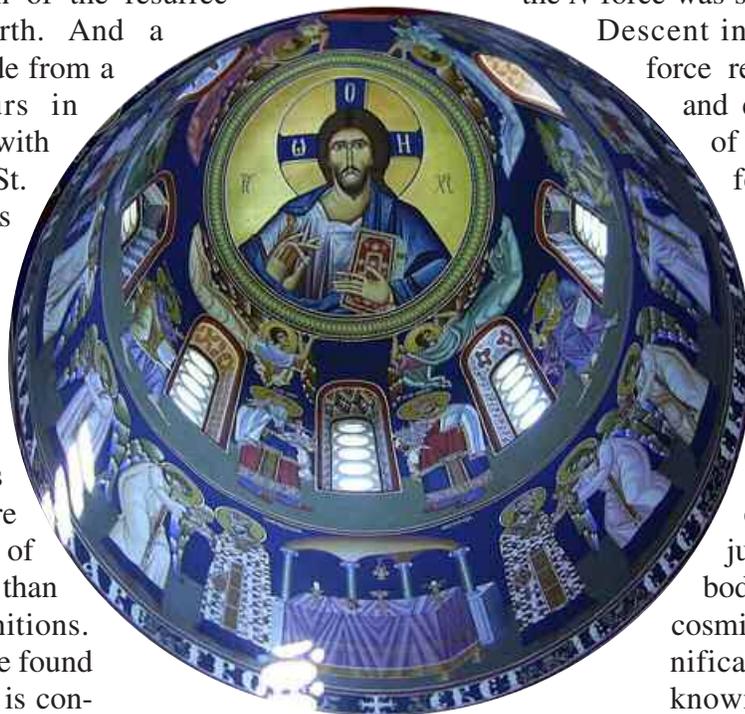
Descent into Hell, so was the *E* force revealed in the Passion and especially on the night of Gethsemane. The *M* force showed itself particularly in the healings and miracles; and the particular point at which the *A* force is clearly perceptible, is the Jordan Baptism.

Thus the word *AMEN* is the epitome of the work of Christ, just as the resurrection-body is the epitome of the cosmic evolution. This significance of *AMEN* was known to the Evangelists, and St. John summarizes his Gospel by concluding with this word, which comprises

the contents of all those books which must still be written in order to give a complete description of the work of Christ—books, which, however, never have been written because “even the world itself could not contain them.”

This word therefore forms a link in the chain of epitome with what has been offered in these Studies of the New Testament as a contribution to Christology. For the next, and last, chapter* will be devoted to the Pentecost-event, an event which is not only the fruit of the happenings recorded in the Gospels, but also forms an introduction to the future events of the Apocalypse. □

*Tomberg’s study of the Pentecost will constitute a series of three articles beginning with the next issue of the Rays.



A pantocratic Christ crowns the summit of the believer’s sight and consciousness—in glory, in power and in prospective judgment.

Fresco, Monastery Kaona, Serbia