

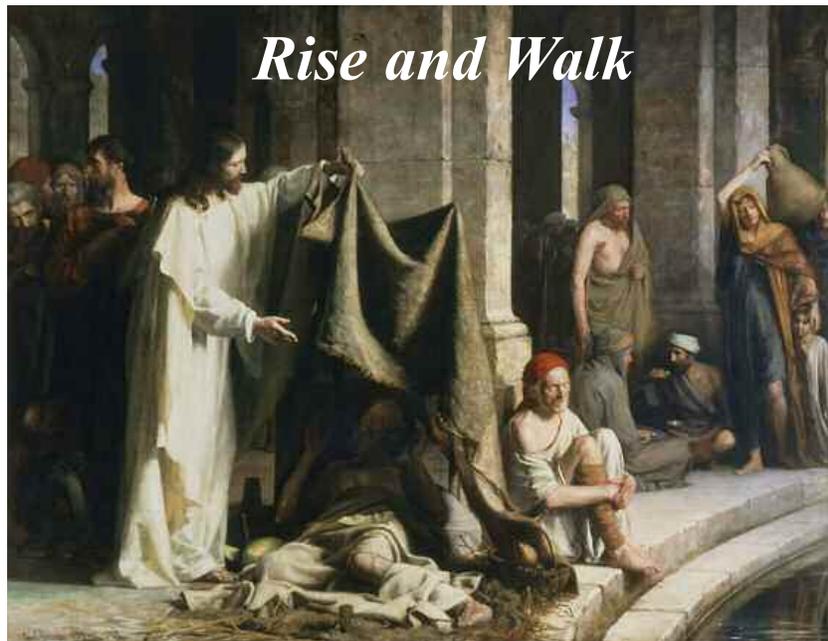
## MYSTIC LIGHT

### *Meditation:*

**P**ARALYSIS has a close connection with humanity's sinful being, which grows hardened in its earthly life. And Christ says expressly to the paralytic: "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come to thee." Here again one sees before one the nature of the old religions, as in a true picture, when one examines the description of the pool of Bethesda. The five porches were in ancient times connected with the five books of Moses, the Pentateuch. At all events, the men of the pre-Christian religions lived in fixed religious forms, as if in houses built for them. When they committed "sins"—in the house of the five senses, one might say—then there were washings and purifications, which freed them from their stains. Yet the strength of these healing powers diminished, just as there the power of the pool was now only small, and egoism entered into the nature of this religion just as there the sick selfishly strove against one another for the help afforded.

A new kind of help comes. "I say unto you!" Christ often says this significantly in the Gospel. Out of the pure ego breaks forth the power which was formerly in the divinely troubled water. One must "believe in" this ego; that is to say, one must act according to the impression which one receives

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Oil on canvas, Carl Bloch (1834-1890). Exhibited at Charlottenborg 1884. Ordered for Bethesda Chapel, Copenhagen.

### *The Healing at the Pool of Bethesda*

*The Christ Ego brings to the five porches of Bethesda, the five senses of the physical body, the power of raising upright, opposing the downward-drawing powers of earth, the selfishness that makes us sick: "Take up thy bed and walk."*

from it. Such faith in the "I am" is the power which fights victoriously with the earth-powers which draw us down, as well as with the powers of selfishness which entice us, with Satan as well as with the devil, with Ahriman, as well as with Lucifer.

One can find the two powers, and that which must be brought against them, in the words which Christ speaks to the impotent man: "Rise!"—that is the power of raising upright which proceeds from the Ego of Christ, and attacks the downward-drawing powers of earth; "Take up thy bed and walk!"—that is the power of the new union with earth which opposes the enticing power of selfishness. What must proceed from us to oppose "sin" is just this twofold strength. We must look upon the "sinner" not as the bad man, but as the sick man. Therefore we must not strike him down, but raise him out of the dust of the earth. And therefore we must not merely free him from his infirmity, but help him to

carry home his bed, to transform his fate into power. We must not reproach him, but must let the healing and helping powers act upon him. We must not merely proclaim forgiveness of sins, but we must let the powers of resurrection flow forth from us. Sin is **the** great paralysis of men. Whenever man allows to enter into himself the healing power which raises him up, it becomes the strength which helps him to carry the bed. We shall gradually come to recognize the entirely different relationship to "sin" which is expressed in these words.

And so we again stand between East and West. In the East all nature is felt to be sin, and they seek to release man entirely from his union with the earth. But in this they do not recognize the full seriousness of evil, which has ruined man's true nature and delivered him over to the deadly power

Christ. To know that the true warrior for the world is not here to beat down evil, but to raise things up out of evil, that is the first secret of Christ in the fight against the power of darkness. The second is this, not only to release the evil man from that under which he suffers, but to strengthen him by means of it, and so to redeem evil itself. Sins become destinies that teach; burdens become living power. "Rise! take up thy bed and walk." Not much is said about sin, yet divine power so lives in us, and brings to pass once more that which happens in the child, but now in a spiritual and moral sense—rising and learning to walk. That is the right struggle against sin.

When we look upon this power which wills to work through us, we become free from Pharisaism, from boasting and from reproaching others. The

***The essential being of the ancient religion, represented to the senses in the pool Bethesda, "house of mercy," helps humanity little now. Instead of the water comes "the word." But the word must sound forth from the ego, and this ego must live from Christ.***

of sickness. In the West they do not say that nature is sin, but rather they are inclined to conceive of all sin as natural and to excuse it, and so they deprive man of the seriousness of his position in the world. When from our own being there goes out the summons: "Rise, and walk in the power which thy past gives thee," when this echoes in our words and acts, then there lives in us a victorious relationship to evil. To him who lives in sexual error, as to the liar and the egoist and materialist, this summons: "Rise and walk," is the message of Christ.

Thus we see humanity in the spirit before us, as it is described to us there (John 5), as a multitude of blind, lame, deaf, withered, burdened with all kinds of diseases. We do not yet see them as a force consciously acting against God. For in most cases today men are not that, but a host of sick folk who cannot help themselves. They still live in old houses, which preceding ages have built for them. But the essential being of the ancient religion, represented to the senses in the pool Bethesda, "house of mercy," helps them little now. Instead of the water comes "the word." But the word must sound forth from the ego, and this ego must live from

more strongly evil comes against us, the greater is the demand made upon the power of the resurrection in us. That is a fundamentally different way of working upon evil from that of the law and the judge. Moses is no longer there, but Christ alone. In far distant centuries will come the whole great struggle against evil, when, upon the side of evil, black magic will be more called into action. In that which is said here lies the germ of self-training in white magic.

Christianity will take quite a different place in the world when this frame of mind enters into men. And he who allows the words which Christ spoke in connection with these healing words (John 5) to act upon himself, will form such a frame of mind more and more within himself.

It was in this way Christ Himself entered the worlds of evil. One need only look at such a story as that of Zacchaeus (Luke 19) to recognize the characteristic features of Christ's fight. In it no word at all is said about Zacchaeus' past. Everything takes place by revelation. But this revelation of His being cannot be resisted. Zacchaeus raises himself out of his past by an act in which he

transforms the past into a means of doing good. The same kind of thing is shown by Christ in the story of the woman taken in adultery, of the woman who was a sinner, of the prodigal son, and in many other stories. It may be a sublime setting free, to experience in a living way this method of Christ towards evil. Talk about sin is of secondary importance and often not necessary.

Where we see evil in the world, we may see always behind individual evils the huge world of evil, which must be fought, and may become conscious of our responsibility to share in this fight. Then we may, as we look to Christ, call to our remembrance the great watchword: the evil must be opposed through the two-fold power which from within raises men up and changes evil into life-force. And thus we stand rightly within the world-fight. In undreamed-of greatness we can win this character of will through meditation.

If we would bring heaven to earth (first “sign”), let us oppose ourselves to the world of sickness and change it into health (second “sign”), let us oppose ourselves to the world of sin and change it into the power of resurrection (third “sign”). Now we meet a new world: the world of need. (John 6:1-16)

It is good for our time that we have also this story of the feeding of the five thousand by Christ. For our brothers of the proletariat ask above all: “What word have you for our need?” They suffer from lack of the necessities of life, and look almost exclusively for some palliative for this need. That with which they reproach “Christians” is that they do not see this need, that when they do see it they do not take it seriously enough, that when they do take it seriously, the means by which they fight it are all too small. In respect of this, it is important to study such a story as that of the feeding of the five thousand. Christ sees the need.” Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? “He does not talk on the subject of how unimportant earthly goods are in comparison with heavenly goods. He does not blame the carelessness of the multitude which



*Die Bibel in Bildern, Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1789-1853)*

### ***Feeding of the Five Thousand***

*In this narrative we are less to think of a miraculous increase of bread than a life-force proceeding from Christ, through which men are fed, even as saints have demonstrated and all mankind shall experience.*

had not considered it necessary to provide themselves with food. He does not make His help subject to any condition. He *helps*. He sees men starving and gives them what they need, not merely what he thinks most necessary.

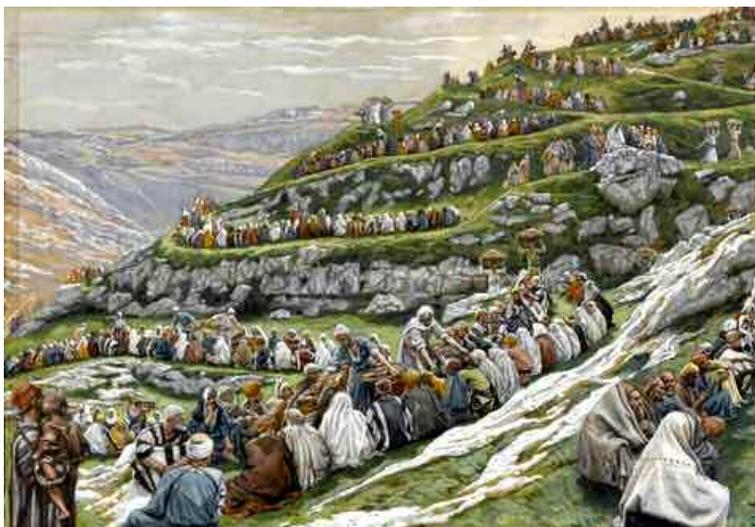
If men would look with the eyes of Christ upon the starving of men, the best thing would have been done for a solution of the social question. Or rather, the social question as it exists today would never have arisen. It is a reproach to Christianity that it has been so blind and weak amongst men. Is Christ’s view really what is essential for social need? We need only think of one fact, how rich and poor in the big cities have divided themselves into different districts. The rich could not live as they do if they had daily around them the need of the poor. They are obliged to create a protection for themselves so that they may not see what is there. Man can only be an egoist when he is voluntarily blind. In this lack of sincerity lies a deep consciousness of the solidarity of humanity. Every man, in some depths of his life, is so united to the others that he can only be “happy” when he consciously or unconsciously uses a violent means of

blinding himself.

Therefore this is a truly Christlike resolve: I will see the need where it is. This resolve is the confession of a frame of mind which will not be happy when it sees others unhappy. It raises itself above its own need, and lives with the common need. It finally abjures egoism and takes leave of every form of Christianity which separates the individual out of humanity for the sake of his own private blessedness. It feels instinctively—and this often makes a man shrink back—that one cannot rise to the full greatness of humanity's need if one sees it really; it feels that one must therefore be thankful if one does not see it all. For only thus one can live so as to help it.

As much as we have within us the world of Christ, "heaven," so much of the world's need will we be able to take upon ourselves. This is not, then, "felicity" as men think of it in a sentimental and bourgeois way, but a higher world, which can live of itself, which can give and distribute itself. We shall not feel the urgent necessity of meditation until we feel daily that we must strengthen the heaven within us, so that we may not succumb to earth and its need. Then we can attack need ever more strongly, and cope with it more thoroughly.

Now, what has Christ really offered to men as a help against this need? In this question we come to the actual difficulties of our story. All kinds of trivialities have been suggested as an explanation. For example, it has been said that the courageous faith in providence which Christ showed in making the people sit down, awakened in all who were present a feeling of brotherliness and a willingness to share, freed of all anxiety—and behold, there was enough. However little such an explanation may touch the kernel of the story, yet it may touch one side of the matter; and in any case, in the social life of men, one with another, there would usually be no need if egoism and narrowness of heart, blind care and anxiety, did not keep those hands closed which could give. In the Christian Community we have often found that in the cases of need, that which was required was already at hand, if one had only the courage to let "the morrow take thought



Watercolor, James J. Tissot (1836-1902), Brooklyn Museum

*The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes*

for the thing of itself.”

...[W]hat really happened then, wherein consisted the unusual thing which must have happened, since they afterwards wished to make Christ a king?...[W]e have not to think of a miraculous increase of bread, but of a life-force proceeding from Christ, through which men are fed. Repeatedly already we have come near to this secret, that man can not only get the life-force which he requires out of his food, but also immediately out of the cosmos. If this is possible to-day to only a limited extent, yet phenomena such as Theresa of Konnersreuth always point us to such facts.

It seems to us also that such a confession as the following must be taken quite seriously: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." (John 4:34) That Christ was not only fed Himself, but could feed others, even if only in an exceptional case, ought not for this reason to seem strange to us.

But through this we should come to a means of help which would be indignantly refused by the proletariat today. They would say: you point out to us, then, that there are spiritual things which ought to stay our hunger! And thus you simply conceal the fact that you want to keep your material goods for yourself. It is certainly true that earthly goods become less important and less essential when man can feed himself out of the spirit, but we must not stop short at this point, even for ourselves alone, if we want to live with our time and bring

help. We must press deeper into the story.

Christ saw the need. And because He saw it and felt it acutely, He awakened in Himself the powers through which it could be overcome. Let us first stop at this quite general fact. Man has in himself an immeasurable fullness of possibilities. He has in himself every means by which all the need of humanity can be overcome. He must only will it. He has the means in his thinking spirit. And he has them in his helpful being. The Universe is a great kingdom of healing medicine, in which all the means of healing are present. Man must find them. This trust, that Christ in us brings forth from Himself the means of healing every need, if we really take this need into ourselves—as certainly as the human body, when it is strong enough, brings forth out of itself the means of curing every sickness—this trust we must awaken in ourselves. That gives no panacea against bad housing, against the difficulties of work and of marriage. We cannot expect to find that immediately in meditation, but we have the source of inspiration, from which comes all that we require, and with it we have much more than we can yet see.

And so we may arouse and strengthen ourselves for our social duties in the world by saying to ourselves in meditation: represent to yourself humanity as it lies there upon the mountain. Imagine the thousand entreating eyes and starving souls. Resolve, at the sight of this picture, that you will never turn away your eyes from any need of humanity; that you will look honestly at that which takes place within humanity, even if it should be a grief to you. Resolve that you will receive this need into a soul which is ready to meet human need, which thinks of it, which fights against it. Strengthen yourself in the confidence that Christ in you finds in His own being the means of healing need. Bring it to your consciousness, that in this spirit you have the centre of inspiration, out of which alone true help can come. Transform need into love; not into blind momentary love, not into vain love of almsgiving, but into the healing spirit, which grows greater and stronger the more need surges round it—so, in your way, you will accomplish Christ's helping act upon the mountain, and find the highest which you can give to the need of

## The Testing

When in the dim beginning of the years  
God mixed in man the raptures and the tears  
And scattered through his brain the starry stuff,  
He said, "Behold! Yet this is not enough,  
For I must test his spirit to make sure  
That he can dare the vision and endure.

"I will withdraw my face,  
Veil me in shadow for a certain space,  
And leave behind only a broken clue,  
A crevice where the glory shimmers through,  
Some whisper from the sky,  
Some footprint in the road to track me by.

"I will leave man to make the grateful guess,  
Will leave him torn between the no and yes,  
Leave him unresting till he rest in me,  
Drawn upward by the choice that makes him free—  
Leave him in tragic loneliness to choose,  
With all in life to win or all to lose."

—Edwin Markham

mankind.

We can be certain that, even if no particular advice is given for such a meditation, we are doing the very best thing towards a solution of the social question....An undreamed-of power may enter from it into our attitude to social questions: alertness, enthusiasm, endurance. A fullness of living inspiration can be born from it. A change may even begin in Christianity itself, so that men are more seized by the spirit of Christ, and the fight against social evils is not left to individuals and their slender means, nor to interested groups and their outward remedies, but undertaken in the sense of Christ's fight for the world. Not that Christianity loses itself in any particular politico-economic form of present-day Socialism, and thus stunts itself, but that it becomes a living power of will in all that happens in the fight against the great need of humanity....We need an active Christianity which enters into outward things. Here it is. Christ Himself is in it; He will behold the need of humanity through our eyes, will move in our souls as the helper who overcomes need. (Continued) □