

## *Meditation and Prayer*

*Receive the Godhead right into your willing  
And it comes down from off its cosmic throne.*

**T**HIS SAYING OF SCHILLER, that most haughty-minded poet, may stand as the motto above these last meditations on the training of the will. The Godhead rules *over* us, just as long as it does not rule *in* us. But then we rule with it. Out of this arises the royal attitude to life which we receive from these meditations. Meister Eckhart once said that he would fain “in eternity work God’s works with Him.” The proud feeling out of which such words are spoken can be experienced in every meditation which we here suggest for the will. Yes, into this end and into this resolve every meditation may die away. We can feel ourselves to be fellow-workers, and friends of the gods. But it is just this feeling which when we know our feeble strength, gives us due modesty.

Thus we give our answer to a question which is often put: “Is it mysticism, then, which you recommend?” Today people think that almost any sort of vague feeling is “mysticism.” But once mysticism was a serious way to find the Divine Ground of the World, by absorption within the soul, and to become one with Him. That is possible, if man is able to shut out the impressions of the senses. Then lofty feelings of happiness flood through his inward soul. The mystics of all times tell of this. But the divinity which man thus finds remains general. Unity, infinity, blessedness; these are the

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joys with which the songs of the mystics are filled among all peoples and in all centuries.

We are seeking in men not the soul but the ego. We are not seeking for this ego in obscure feelings, but we are striving for its illumination through the ego of Christ. We are not seeking for unity with the Ground of the World in blessedness, but for the filling of this ego with the divine cosmic will which is in Christ.

Another question is: “Where, then, is meditation spoken of in the New Testament? Christ speaks unequivocally and certainly about prayer only, and requires of His disciples only prayer.”

To this question, which proceeds from the kind of Christianity which has worked hitherto, we have three answers. Everyone knows the words that are spoken about Mary: “Mary kept all these words and pondered them in her heart.” What meditation is can scarcely be more exactly said. One keeps a saying in one’s soul and moves it about and moves oneself with it. A picture of this is the jewel which is moved about in the light of the sun, so that its peculiar qualities are revealed, and the sun becomes visible in it. If a man lets the saying of Christ: “I-am-the-light-of-the-world,” move thus in his soul, and moves himself by it, if he lets it be present in his soul as the jewel is in the eye that gazes on it, then he meditates. This very saying concerning Mary can be a help to meditation.

We have a second answer. According to Luther’s translation, Christ says in John’s gospel: “If you will remain in my sayings, you are my true disciples.” (*Authorized Version*: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.”) But the original text contains much more than this. Luther

has praised the Gospel of John as being the “unique, gentle, chief of Gospels.” But for the spiritual depths of this very John, a perception could not then be awakened. If we translate what stands there into our speech, we must say: “If you live in my word of life; then are you in truth my disciples.” More circumstantially still, but also more penetratingly, one might say, “If you have your abiding place in the divine, creative word, which is I, then are you in truth studious pupils of my ego.”

The more deeply one concerns oneself with the Gospel of John, especially with Christ’s words of farewell at the Last Supper, the more clearly it becomes apparent that Christ indicates as the way to heaven for His disciples His “Word,” which is in accordance with the revelation of the “Word” at the beginning of the Gospel. But this is not only a word which will be proclaimed by preaching, but the word which echoes and creates in the soul, the word in which He Himself lives and works. It is a creative word, not only a word which announces. To meditate means nothing other than to let the “Word” be there, and to be there for the Word; to let the Word create, and to transform oneself in the Word. That is the fulfillment of the last commandment which Christ gave to His disciples, to go the way which He pointed out, to let the Christ live on in the soul.

But how are we to regard the Lord’s Prayer, which Christ gave to His disciples as their new prayer? Our third answer depends exactly on this point. The Lord’s Prayer is decidedly a prayer for meditation. It is the ideal union of prayer and meditation. It is, in its whole nature, the direct training for that which stands before our souls as meditative prayer....It is really true that the earnest occupying of ourselves with the Lord’s Prayer leads us directly into meditation. Then first of all we have the feeling that we would not wish always to pray the whole Lord’s Prayer at once, let alone often and successively, but, quite on the contrary, to take rather one petition daily; yes, one of the three first



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Engraving, Gustave Doré, *Illustrations for Dante's Divine Comedy*

#### ***The Heaven of the Fixed Stars***

*“Men would be able to say less against meditation if they knew prayer better, the prayer above all which is truly prayer, in which all prayer seeks to end—adoration.” The Lord’s Prayer is a prayer for meditation.*

petitions for a whole day, for a whole week long. Lastly we are completely penetrated by this frame of mind: Could I but once feel the first petition as it sounded in the soul of Christ! Then we labor to let the soul become such that it can really speak this petition, we let the petition itself work to this end. Then we are in the midst of meditation....

Anyone who has read my sermons on the Lord’s Prayer will see that, in occupying ourselves with the fourth petition: “Give us today our daily bread,” we are led more and more to recognize that here we are praying, not so much for daily bread, as for the new man, who upon all sides stands rightly within practical life, who is armed with all the qualities necessary for everyday life. When I myself still knew little of what meditation is, this

particular petition compelled me twenty-five years ago to bring it before the children in this way in religious instruction. But also with the petition, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us": we shall soon notice in the second phrase of this petition, when we take it seriously, what sort of spiritual training this suggests. And that the first phrase, "Forgive us our trespasses," does not in the first instance call down divine forgiveness, but wishes to make it one's own, Luther pointed out.

The request, "Lead us not into temptation," would likewise become more comprehensible to men, would give opportunity for fewer dogmatic questions and would come nearer to men, if it was taken in a more meditative way, if we saw in it less the expression of a wish than the contemplation of a divine spiritual truth: the realization that we are led by God. Finally, the last petition, "Deliver us from evil." No one will believe that at his request it can be fulfilled between to-day and to-morrow. A cosmic goal is set before us and a divine will experienced, to which one says "Yes" with one's whole being.

Yes, the Lord's Prayer is a prayer of meditation. By its whole nature it leads from simple asking to meditation—so to a higher form of prayer. Even if Christ did not use our word "meditate," His will is clear, His teaching is plain.

Men would be able to say less against meditation if they knew prayer better, *the* prayer above all which is truly prayer, in which all prayer seeks to end—adoration. Of adoration as the end of cosmic history and as the life of heaven, the Apocalypse speaks sublimely.

If we would carry the training of the will further, an especially valuable and liberating exercise is connected with the next "sign" of Christ—the walking upon the sea. (John 6:16-21)

What happened to the disciples on that occasion? We must grasp this if our development of the will is to be effective. The people wished to make Christ a king. The disciples did not act with them. But neither could they be with Christ. When He withdrew from them upon the mountain, "Himself alone," that is a picture showing that He was lonely. Out of the folk-soul, out of the group-soul the

disciples had freed themselves. They had not yet found the new connection. In such times, fear and a feeling of loneliness, of deep inward unrest, falls upon the soul. Many a one may have experienced that, when he was obliged to break away from the views of his family and seek his way alone. He was like the disciples, who feel themselves tossed hither and thither in the stormy waves of life, and yet neither will nor can go back, but strive towards another shore which they do not yet see.

What appears in their souls may be summed up in one word, which includes again a great realm of need and of evil, the word *weakness*. Out of such weakness comes defective adherence to what one knows is true. Out of such weakness comes the feeling of loneliness. Out of such weakness comes that fear in many forms which rules among men, and torments souls more than is visible outwardly: fear of the future, fear of one's fellow men, especially of those who are stronger than we, fear of ourselves, and of that which lives deep in our souls, fear of sickness, or of events out of the usual, fear of death, and of one's fate after death, fear of all the unknown things that lie in wait around us....And only when one begins to be free from fear, does one see *how* the sickness of fear rages among men, and what disturbances, even of a bodily kind, it causes. Out of fear come the thousand shocks, small and great, conscious and unconscious, which make men ill and cripple their powers. Only if we know about this hidden need in men will we take the following exercise seriously enough.

But our question is first of all: How does one become free from fear? Is there a complete freedom from fear? We are not speaking of natural courage. In it is blindness, a feeling of madness, a feeling of bodily strength, a natural inclination, and so on. It is not secure against suddenly passing over into fear, when the eyes are opened to the real danger, or the natural powers on which it is based break down. I often think of the story of the two officers, one of whom said to the other in a time of danger, "But you are shaking, you are afraid!" To which the other replied: "If you were half as afraid as I am, you would have run away long ago." Two fundamentally different kinds of bravery.

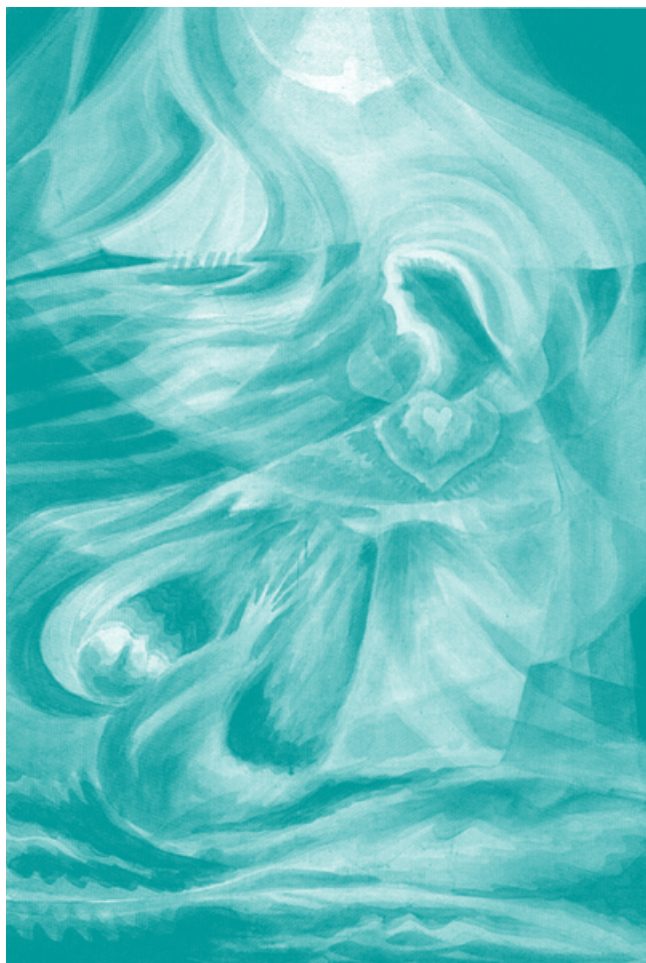
We can be free of fear under any circumstances only if we know we are quite safely protected, or if we have no concern for ourselves. Both are present if we have completely sacrificed our lower ego, and live for the higher ego. This ego and its existence is a concern of the divine world itself and not merely our personal concern. No one who has not experienced it can know the safety of this mood. "And were the world all devils o'er!"

People who feel that they are not miserably worthless, but rich in inward values, and yet in the greatest danger, live superior to every anxiety—these are the real fighters of this world. By such people the world can be lifted from its axis. All fear is melted away from them. They feel for the first time what freedom is. By this they learn the true nature of man, the nobility of the ego which does not pass away. How does one acquire such fearlessness?

The story of the walking upon the sea is told us for that purpose. "It is I, be not afraid." It is known that the Greek text says simply: "I am, be not afraid." According to the English idiom it could not be translated differently, but the Greek text leads us deeper into reality. We lose every fear, when we look upon the "I am" of Christ, Who is willing to enter into the ship of our life. We can lay aside every fear of our life at the very moment when we stake our all upon this "I am." Men may shatter us and mangle us; for the sake of this "I am" we live. Christ, whose "I am" sounds within us, may maintain Himself in us, if He will. Life, the true battle of life, begins when this spirit lives in us.

But in the training of our will it is not the main thing that we ourselves should become fearless. That is only the primary condition that we must procure again and again. From every corner of our being we can seek out and drive away fear. But now it is necessary to come face to face with a humanity which is ravaged by secret fear, which cannot come to life because of a thousand weaknesses, which by inward unrest destroys its strength, and so cannot make its strength available for life.

And so we see before us in our meditation men as they are tossed hither and thither upon the



Water color, 66 x 81 cm, 1990, Dennis Klocek. Courtesy of the artist

### ***Walking on Water***

*Above the physical boat in roiling waters (above, lower left) Peter's soul enters the desire world and is beset by his own inner turbulence as he reaches toward the stabilizing vision of his interior Christ (I AM). A mental counterpart of the boat plies serene waters in the ambiance of the Holy (Human) Spirit.*

stormy sea of life, like the disciples yonder in the boat; how in their anxiety and unrest they consume themselves, and weaken their lives, while trying to protect them. Such is the world. Such are men. And in the face of this we seek to live ourselves into the figure of Christ, Who walks upon the sea and Who says, "I am, fear not."

Let us here say plainly that we do not hold this to be an account of an outward event, but to be a vision of the disciples, seen with the spiritual senses which, after the distress of the night, unfold themselves towards morning in the disciples. The disciples saw a spiritual reality. They saw *the* spiritual reality. They saw the deep meaning of the appearance of Christ in the history of humanity.

Thus they saw their own future task in the world. Outwardly there was nothing to be perceived here upon the sea. But the spiritual happening, not a mere picture of the fancy, was so much the more real. The billowing sea was not only around them, but in their own souls. But to these souls came the new ego, came Christ.

When a man who takes his share in this world's battles gives the impression that Christ is saying through him "I am! be not afraid," then men feel a benefit which makes their inmost part attentive. Nietzsche has spoken of a tree which refreshes a whole landscape. Here one must speak of a light which shines upon men, and all are aware through it of another world. The "I am," if we continued to listen to them, would form this "I am" in us. We must really prove to men that we can walk upon the water. The unrest, the uncertainty, the stormy billows may be never so great; we are supported by a power from on high which bears us up. We have no firm ground under our feet, and yet we walk secure. For this cause there is the uncertainty of the morrow—that we may have a chance of walking upon the sea. The resolve to let oneself be led by the ego of Christ, which comes from the world above, is the resolve to walk upon the sea—what Peter in the Gospels could not yet do. If we look again and again into this picture and see how Christ comes to the disciples over the sea, we see ever more clearly how men in their callings and in their families are travelling in a rocking boat. We see what it means to unite ourselves with Christ's appearing. The story is not a "comfort" which we personally receive, but a cosmic strength which we should receive. In individual cases we do not need to think of the picture at all. It works in us—unknown to ourselves, perhaps also unknown to others—if only we admit this Christ into our souls, let Him be, here in our souls, "I am at peace with the world: this peace with the world can be with you also, because I give it to you!"

Again we stand between East and West. The *East* will not put out upon the sea of life, because of its restlessness. The *West* will put out upon the sea, and knows no rest. We are upon the sea, but we have rest—not being far from the sea, but upon the sea—in Him who walks upon the sea. □

## AMENDMENT

That all things should be mine,  
This makes His bounty most divine.  
But that they all more rich should be,  
And far more brightly shine,  
As used by me;  
It ravishes my soul to see the end,  
To which this work so wonderful doth tend.

That we should make the skies  
More glorious far before Thine eyes  
Than Thou didst make them, and even Thee  
Far more Thy works to prize,  
As used they be  
Than as they're made, is a stupendous work,  
Wherein Thy wisdom mightily doth lurk...

What bound may we assign,  
O God, to any work of Thine!  
Their endlessness discovers Thee  
In all to be divine;  
A Deity,  
That will forevermore exceed the end  
Of all that creature's wit can comprehend.

Am I a glorious spring  
Of joys and riches to my King?  
Are men made Gods? And may they see  
So wonderful a thing  
As God in me?  
And is my soul a mirror that must shine  
Even like the sun and be far more divine?

Thy Soul, O God, doth prize  
The seas, the earth, our souls, the skies;  
As we return the same to Thee  
They more delight Thine eyes,  
And sweeter be  
As unto Thee we offer up the same,  
Than as to us from Thee at first they came.

O how doth Sacred Love  
His gifts refine, exalt, improve!  
Our love to creatures makes them be  
In Thine esteem above  
Themselves to Thee!  
O here His goodness evermore admire!  
He made our souls to make His creatures higher.

—Thomas Traherne