

The Last Enemy to Be Conquered

WE HAVE NOW REACHED the crowning point of our exercises for the will—Christ at the grave of Lazarus. From death He wrests life. This is the summing up of all struggles. From sickness, health must be won; from sin, resurrection; from need, love; from weakness, faith; from darkness, light. From behind all these worlds, death gazes at us, as the end of all. If life is wrested from it, that is as if “heaven” were brought to earth. With this, the new power of willing began for us, therefore this seventh deed of Christ is really the summing up and the climax of Christ’s work.

Christ at the grave of Lazarus. To-day there are still many people who do not know what to make of the “miracle” of an awakening of the dead. Let them first give heed to the little details of the story (John 11): How Christ is deeply moved with sorrow for His friend, and yet immediately attacks death; how the gravity of the hour appals Him, and yet He does not for a moment recoil; how He receives into His soul the mood of the mourners, and at the same time speaks in words which bear within them great cosmic decisions; how He feels the individual event strongly, and yet with high resolve looks into the eyes of the enemy of the human race; how He carries His friend in His soul, and yet is full of light from the Father; how He leads everything step by step towards the final decision; how He, in the full power of the con-

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Tempera on wood panel, Luca di Tommè (1355-1389), Vatican Picture Gallery

The Raising of Lazarus

Speaking the Word of power, for in Him is life, Christ echoes the act of Genesis Jehovah and Lazarus inspires new life. To protect at birth and death, Jews swaddled the physical body.

queror, opposes Himself to death. All this is already a picture which works on us so powerfully that it awakens the last and best powers of our will—whatever attitude one may take up to the story. One must not allow oneself to be weakened in the study of this picture by having in one’s mind the esoteric conception that here an initiation is taking place which leads over from the old mysteries into the new time. For Lazarus was dead and would have remained dead, had Christ not come. It is a triumph of Christ’s power of life which we are permitted to witness.

If we look at Christ as He stands before us in the story, it is as if a prisoner in our souls hears the voice of his liberator; as if the Gospel were continued in

us; as if the call, "Lazarus, come forth!" sounded into the grave of our own being, and deep within it something which we ourselves did not know was there seeks to arise. An overwhelming love for Christ, for this Christ, can then stir in our souls. We feel that He is quite different from that which we had till now thought Him to be; more of a conqueror, more mighty in His strength, more majestic. This man or none—so our soul tells us—is the victor over death, the liberator of men who live "in darkness and in the shadow of death," the king of humanity. We feel in every limb to what battle between Christ and the powers of the enemy we are called by Him. We feel—this is *the* battle for man.

When we build up before us this picture for our meditation in its great principal features, we see in Lazarus man himself lying in the grave. It is indeed the end of the individual life, it is the end of humanity—if Christ is not there. The sickness under which humanity suffers leads to death—and yet does not lead to death. The stone lies upon the grave. In this stone we see the picture of matter. Novalis uttered the remarkable saying, "The earth has hardened into stone out of fear for men." That the world seems to us so heavy, so dark, so impenetrably material, comes about because man has himself sunk down into matter. In Egypt once, as man sank more and more into this material earthly existence, they raised the stone upwards, as a prayer. Upon the same stone Mount Sinai furnished from its spurs, the stone with which the Egyptians raised their massive buildings, Moses wrote the divine commandment. But the Mosaic law itself lay like a stone upon mankind. "Who will take away the stone from the door of this grave?" That was humanity's question. All this, when we have brought it to life with feeling in our consciousness, lives in the picture we are studying. Round about this grave is mourning, the mourning of the world. We have already seen how doubt, Martha, and sorrow, Mary, are the two guardians of the world-grave.

Then Christ appears. We see Him as we have before described Him. From the heights of the worlds to the depths of the earth sounds the call: "Lazarus, come forth!" *He* says that, who can say

of Himself, "I am the resurrection and the life!" We ourselves arise out of the earthly grave. We unite ourselves to Him. We now stand with Him over against the grave. With Him we feel: Death ought not to be! Death in all its thousand forms must be vanquished! Into every corner of our being we fill ourselves with this divine willing! We shall be resurrection! We shall be awakeners!

At the end of our three series of studies we have again come to the resurrection. That is in accordance with the spirit of John's Gospel. That is in accordance with the will of Christ Himself. "There shall be no more death." "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

It will certainly come once again that man will be able to awaken the dead. If already, the bringing of air, the outward stimulation of movement, the shaking of the body can call a man back to life, why should not the power of the spirit be able to do it—the power of the life which streams towards him? Certainly it will be possible only in exceptional cases. But can one not see the beginnings there already? It can happen that joy may send to the dying a power which fills them with new life. It can happen that in crises which are already determined towards death the victory is won by the spiritual strength of a man. It can happen that a sick person, who according to all medical rules ought to be dead, can be kept alive, or can keep himself alive, by inward forces of health. That is not much. But were we so to enter the sick-room, the room of the dying, that we were filled to overflowing with life, if Christ's power of resurrection itself were within us, then we should experience wonderful things. We should often have the impression that death was flying before his victor, whom he had recognized. But even if his prey could not be torn from him outwardly, he would withdraw as victor with worthless booty, and triumphal music would fill the room.

We may leave to the future that which man will yet experience in this way. But our meditation will strengthen in us the consciousness that man may not give up his arms in front of death, but must stand upright before death, must dare in the face of death, if he is to be man in the full sense of the word.

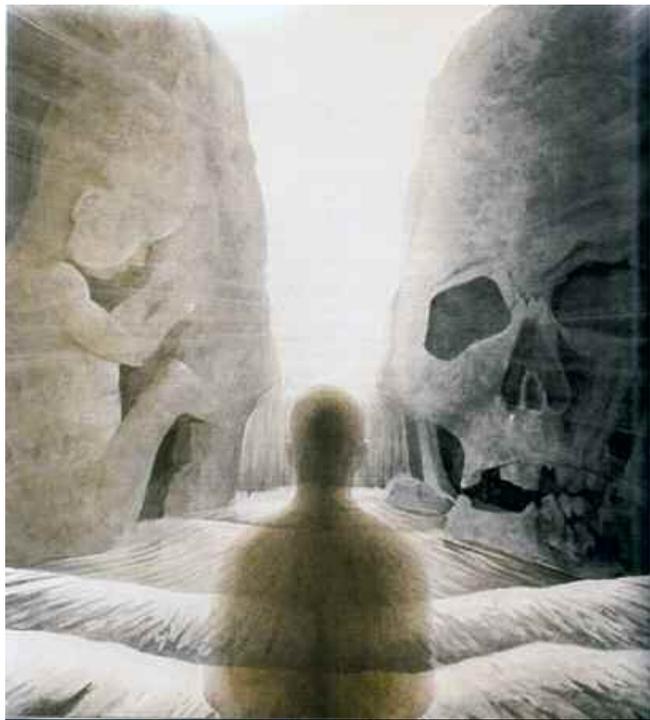
What we are first able to do, certainly able to do, is to beat down death within ourselves. Let us not believe that this has already happened when we have a general hope beyond the grave. It becomes possible, however, if we call death again and again to be our companion. That which many painters of earlier times, that which Boecklin represents in his portrait of himself, that we should have death beside us and make him our inspirer, that is the way to release ourselves from him—and him from us.

“Death is the means in nature’s hands by which it may have the most possible of life.” This saying of Goethe is beyond Buddha’s power to say, because it is only possible upon Christian ground. It was spoken of the thousandfold dying of nature. It must yet be recognized in its meaning for the inward life. When the last remnant of life has been wrung from death, then death can really enter into its rest. Death wishes to be the “friend” of man, not only when upon the death-bed he puts an end to the sorrows of life.

Mighty feelings of triumph are developed in man by death. He gives us concentrated power of life. The enemy, Death, becomes our friend in Life. To him who knows himself ready at any moment to pass over, quite freely, into the other world as soon as destiny calls, and who goes over the earth feeling: “During the next hour, the bullet of a murderer may hit me. Then, not because a human will, but because a divine will enters into my life, I would throw aside my body, and go freely into the other world: “to him death has become a “free death” in a higher sense than Nietzsche meant. For him victory resounds throughout his life. For him death and the transitoriness of this world are only the means of gaining true life. He returns unconquerable to the earth, with an exalted feeling of freedom.

All this slumbers in the depths of our meditation. We cannot gain these heights in life more certainly than when we unite ourselves with the victor’s will that makes Lazarus a John. We see inwardly into Christ, Who afterwards Himself broke through death.

But still more rests in our meditation. When Christ says, “Let the dead bury the dead, but go



Oscho International Foundation, Swami Prem Siddhena

To wrest the most from life, we seek to live beyond appearances, keeping in mind the light behind both birth and death.

thou and proclaim the kingdom of God,” one sees clearly that He felt the living around Him to be dead. The saying concerning the kingdom of God is a call to life which sounds into the kingdom of the dead. We do not exist simply to continue to exist personally after death, but chiefly to conquer death. Deceitful appearances of life conceal death everywhere. Painted in the colors of life the dead go about in the world. All this death, which we see in countless forms upon the earth, calls for life. When we fill ourselves to the brim with the streams of life, when we go into the world as life itself embodied, then we shall rightly see this death in its thousand changes of dress, and go to meet it as the call to life.

Again we may look at East and West in order to awake to the greatness of our calling. In the East they saw death with sublime clearness. In all the bloom of life lurks the germ of destruction. This view of the awakened East is deeper than the view of the West. But the will of the West is more in the right than the will of the East.

In the East they wish to escape from the earth whose ruler is death. In the West they wish not themselves, but death, to be taken from the earth.

But death is attacked by completely inadequate means. They fight with rejuvenating methods and hygiene. They fight feebly with all kinds of attempts to turn death aside. They will not face death, or they push him away as long as they can. To see what the East sees, to will what the West wills, but to be able to do what East and West cannot do: that is our mission.

It is an awakening of the dead also when in life we summon ourselves again to see in every man his spiritual being, when we look through the form, the bearing, the words of a man to his real ego. Even for this is required more spiritual power and unwearied will to life than we can usually summon up in our lives. In our meditation we shall grow into this will and into this power. We shall then experience that men feel for the first time that they are being rightly treated by us.

We have reached a further height when we go with awakening power through nature. We see in it not death, but the spirit; not the earthly kind, but the divine image; not what passes away, but a message from higher kingdoms. Every plant can be so regarded. We shall not reach this by a single resolve. In one single walk we can guess at it. But we can strengthen ourselves for this and exercise ourselves in it, if at times we call plants also into our meditation—look at a rose, a lily spiritually, and listen for the revelation which comes to us in them. If we then go out into nature, it will often be as if a rejoicing over redemption passed through the world, as if the world around us would become such as lives in the spiritual world, as if we ourselves walked in Paradise. Christ is the awakener of the dead. We ought to have the courage to be this with Him as strongly as we can.

There is one sphere especially in which we must not let death have any influence—that of our departed. Now we stand before a question which is most often put: What can we do for our dead in meditation?...

Here some introductory remarks only will be



Fresco, Fra Angelico (1395-1455), Museo di San Marco, Florence

Christ in Limbo

Christ the Awakener, the Overcomer, gives power to the living and the dead. Limbo, depicted as a subterranean rock fortress, suggests the dense physical dimension from which the Christed etheric forces liberate the Spirit.

made. One should always draw near to one's dead in a mood of solemn restfulness, not with restless wishes or in an egotistical mood, but in thankfulness that they have existed. This will best come about if one remembers the hours when one was with them in quiet human friendliness. The basic feeling ought to be: live peacefully there looking upwards. I shall fight my way through upon earth. From me shall naught come to thee but love, which bears thee up from below when thou art living towards the light above. Only as good shall this love be around thee. I will tell thee not of my troubles, but of the joys which I have experienced, of the spiritual good that has come to me. Such love is like a bridge of light which we build to the dead, upon which we can come to them and they to us.

First of all, a feeling of community with them will arise. We shall feel ourselves near to them in

the night, when the noise of the day within us and around us is silent. We shall wake in the morning with the feeling as if we had been united with them and had walked with them in high places. Then we shall sometimes have the feeling of their nearness during the day. Perhaps when we turn our attention to this feeling, it will have already gone away. But the feeling that they help us is such a wonderful enrichment of our life that even a few presentiments of this kind change it wholly. We learn to know a depth, a nearness and beauty of fellowship of which we had previously been unconscious. An unheard-of future for humanity arises before our sight, in which life is passed in a working together of the living with the dead, and of the dead with the living.

The opposite of this occurs in spiritualistic seances, sultry, ghostly, and demonic. The mediums do not reach our dead, because they themselves pass into a lower condition of soul life, into a half-conscious or unconscious twilight condition, while our dead live in brighter fullness of life. Thus the mediums come only into the kingdom where are the sheaths which our dead have laid aside. Therefore they bring from thence only absurd phrases which tell us nothing, mixed perhaps with memories of the past life, and vague imaginings. If we really reached our dead through these mediums, these egotistical questions and wishes for the dead would be only a severe disturbance and injury to them in the tasks they now have. There is indeed a way of questioning the dead, but it is to send them our questions in perfect quietude, as we go to sleep in the evening and to seek to feel on awakening in the morning the answer that is in our souls. All this should be in that pure sphere we have described above: "I am the door."

If we should succeed in feeling that death is nothing in respect of our friends who have gone, and that we live on with them as with people who have not gone away, but have gone before us, so that we bear them in a pure world of life within our souls, then we shall have the impression that by this attitude we are helping them. Even when we can find no special relationship to them in details, yet if we let their form, their look, their voice, their

Viewpoints

Man feels his own pain.

God feels everyone's pain.

Man is selfish.

God is love.

Man sees the body.

God sees the Spirit.

Man sees the mortal.

God sees the immortal.

Man sees effects without cause.

God sees the hidden causes.

Man sees chance.

God sees conscious purpose.

Man sees actions contrary to cosmic law.

God sees souls blind to the cosmic law.

Man sees evil.

God sees ignorance.

Man sees actions which have not yet come to fruition.

God sees the cosmic records which bind men to their debts.

Man sees injustice.

God sees justice.

Man remembers the past.

God looks toward the future.

Man sees achievement.

God sees potential.

Man wanders blindly.

God has a purpose.

Man seeks pleasure.

God seeks evolution.

Man sees himself as man.

God sees men as gods.

Man says, "I'm blind."

God says, "Open your eyes and see."

—Elsa Glover

best selves live and work in our remembrance, we shall have the experience of a higher form of fellowship. We make no distinction between living and dead. We know living who are dead, and dead who are alive. Since we often feel the existence of the dead more purely and strongly than the existence of the living, we give to them actually the possibility of sharing our life. We awake the dead. Our meditation helps us to this. □