

The Will and Christ-Centered Meditations

WE NOW TURN to the training of the will. This has special importance for our time. In the will the ego works itself out. A strong will is a powerful protection against life which presses upon us from without, against weakness of the nerves within. The more life threatens us from without, so much the more powerfully must we learn to work from within. That is the help.

But now many things are in conspiracy to snatch away from man his will, which ought to be developing, especially in our time. On the one side, man's will is methodically mechanized in the great business enterprises. Apart from a few who stand at the head, men have but little room for the play of their own wills. On the other hand the will is systematically practiced upon by suggestion through the great unions and parties. The individual gives up his own view and his own will because he cannot hope to attain anything without these great unions, and limits himself to the choice between the different parties and groups. In these two dangers we again see the Ahrimanic and the Luciferic principles working devastatingly upon humanity.

On the other hand a time in which the will is present in a human-superman way in huge agglomerations is particularly suited to increase the will in the individual. He need only make the earnest resolve to undertake the struggle against the unspirituality of his time.

It is just in respect of the will that it is important

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to see exactly how far wills can be trained. In the Act of Consecration of Man it says: "To Thee, Divine Ground of the world—I turn my willing! May the power of this willing spring from feeling that unites itself with Christ, Who liveth in Thy life" It is in accordance with all the researches of modern psychology that only by way of the feeling can the will be called forth. One cannot simply pump will out of man. But one can, to continue the metaphor, let it rain until the kingdom of the earth overflows with springs. Thus have great agitators worked only upon feeling, and under certain circumstances have stopped and put on the brake when feeling is about to pass over into will—so that the will may break forth itself out of man so much the more elementally. An example is the famous speech of Anthony in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar.

It is to be expected that by our training of the feeling, the will of man will also be educated, and not only a purer will but a stronger will. But much remains to be said, especially in this connection. To anticipate, the will is trained by great aims, by great examples, by great hindrances.

Rudolf Steiner has often spoken of the Manichees. He described them as men who saw the real meaning of Christianity to be a sublime fight of light against darkness. They anticipated what only a later age would bring to completed development. Even as far as into the powers of a holy magic, they felt themselves to be the helpers of Christ against the might of the opponent of the Divine. They went straight against evil that they might wring from it the good, that they might transform evil itself into good. This divine alchemy was their Christianity. He who receives into

himself these impulses sees upon the horizon of the future a Christianity arising, in comparison with which our present-day Christianity seems little and narrow. Not redemption from evil, but redemption of evil. Not changing men from evil to good, but changing evil itself into good.

A beginning of such a Christianity must be made in our time. This is revealed clearly to us, if we do not otherwise see it, by the secondary occult phenomena of our times. There are in America “metaphysical high schools,” where Indian Yogis apply the old oriental wisdom about the schooling of the will to the preparation of men for activity in business. As the materialism of the West becomes dangerous when, as in Bolshevism, it is taken up by the forces of the East, which have quite different purposes, so the spiritualism of the East becomes thoroughly dangerous when it is taken up by the tendencies of western life, which are directed to the exploitation of the earth....[W]e must develop towards the earth a new frame of mind which raises the West out of the dust. And we have to gain a new spiritual knowledge that surpasses that of the East. It cannot be doubted that a higher training of the will also belongs to our task.

All this is indeed the real sense of the Christianity which is now nearing us. This Christianity does not end with Heaven, but goes with Heaven back to earth. It works upon the earth, but with the forces of Heaven.

This is the great fundamental change which is being accomplished in Christianity today. Many movements, which are today vainly seeking after it, will on this path find their innermost religious basis and strength, socialism for example.

The great model for this Christianity is Christ Himself. And we acquire the training of the will which we need when we look at the seven great acts by which the Gospel of John shows Christ's work among humanity being accomplished. We thus enter under the safest guidance into a holy magic to which belongs the future of Christianity.

In many ways such Christian magic is showing



Oil on canvas, Carl Bloch, (1834-1890), Chapel Fredricksborg Castle, Denmark

The Wedding at Cana

itself today, e.g. as prayer over the sick, as “spiritual healing,” as thought transference. We must come to an understanding of all these phenomena, most of which contain distortions of the truth, and must try to find courses of action which can rightly be put in their place....

To us here this story is transparently revealing for the meaning of the whole of Christ's earthly work. Let no one think that in religious records such sayings as these are merely historical: “This *beginning* of miracles did Jesus...and manifested forth His glory.” Certainly, one goes least astray if one takes such indications as hints, pointing to hidden depths of truth.

What was that meaning of Christ's earthly work? He brought heaven to earth. One could also say: He made heaven earth. In past times men have been told about heaven. They have been promised heaven after death. And in Christianity this way of speaking rules nearly everywhere today. Political

parties also promise men heaven, only it is a materialistic heaven upon earth. Christ went another way. He made heaven an earthly man, an earthly life, an earthly activity. In these three words we have also the three divisions of our studies in meditation: the “I ams,” the stages of passion, the act of healing.

This cannot be said more briefly or more expressively than by saying, “He changed water into wine.”

When the man of ancient times spoke of water, he did not think only of bathing or of sailing in a boat. He felt water to be religious. Water’s power of purification was to him divine and worthy of veneration. In baptism still lives a remembrance of how man can dip into a purifying, revelation-bringing element. All laws and regulations about washing and purification are connected with this fundamental feeling. Man had above him a higher world which, through the water which it sent down from the heavens, received him again and again into its purifying forces. Instead of bathing, ancient man thought of religious purification, instead of sailing, he thought of crossing the stream after death or in initiation. The latter, the crossing of the stream, was the esoteric of ancient religions, the former, the purification, its exoteric.

And so the old religious feeling lived with water. And when we notice what miserable remains—but still remains—of these feelings are alive in men today when they rejoice in water because of bathing and sailing, then we can perceive with our eyes what changes there have been.

Now let us look at the six stone water-pots, which “stood there after the manner of the purifying of the Jews.” In this stands the whole of antiquity. In this stands the old religious existence of men.

But the man of past ages felt wine, too, religiously. Innumerable cults are to be understood only in this connection. The worshippers of Dionysus felt in the wine the god. It was a god that made man strong for earth, glad upon the earth, which separated him, indeed, from the delicate feelings for the spiritual world, which still lived in him from ancient times, but it made him glad in the experiencing of his own personality. Because man

had to become a citizen of earth, he drank wine. In the juice of the grape the water of heaven is taken up into the earthly strength of the vine and becomes active as an earthly creature. Can one think of a more beautiful picture for that which Christ willed and was? In Him the revelation from above is born as earthly being, earthly life, earthly activity. It is not without meaning that Christ appointed for the service of God upon earth, for the Lord’s Supper, wine. He Himself was *the* wine. All earlier religion was water.

And so we may see humanity itself in the picture there described. They are gathered at a table. But they are in need. Christ came, and changed the water into wine.

How can this become for us a training of the will?

The decisive union of the will with Christ is just this—that we decide to change heaven, so far as it is accessible to us, into earth, to live it out as an earthly human being in a life upon earth, in activity upon earth. Protestantism has thought less of “good works,” and thinks that everything will come of itself, if it talks of faith. But this is faith in the full sense of the Bible: to unite oneself with Christ in a common will. “And his disciples believed in him.” Not that we should obey individual commandments, but that we should become fundamentally one with him in will—that is what decides the issue. This fundamental will is revealed in the first great act of Christ.

“Repent (change your minds), the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand,” runs the first announcement of Christ by John the Baptist. The fundamental changing of the mind consists in this, that one wills from heaven to earth and no loner away from the earth; that one wills heaven, but not for oneself, or one’s own blessedness, but for the sake of earth, that earth may be changed.

It is a basic mistake of even well-intentioned men that they do not hold themselves bound to bring their “heaven” to all men. They keep it hid. Or they reveal it to chosen friends at rare times. Then they are not yet Christians in the sense that their wills are like Christ’s will. Christ’s will consists in giving to other men that which one has experienced in some higher world, or can bring

down from it. One can feel oneself to be a thief if one keeps for oneself that which is given, "one thinks it robbery" (Phil. 2). In this point the fundamental feeling of men requires a great transformation if it is to become Christ-like. And our meditation will help towards this.

Only there are two restrictions. It would be quite wrong to babble at once about what has been given us. We must first transform it within ourselves and let it work upon us so that afterwards we may be able to give it away. No self-satisfaction must mingle with the giving, only pure willingness to give. There is something horrible in discovering upon a divine gift to humanity the mark of the mediator's vanity. A white garment and on it stains from impure hands. We must be silent, as long as it is better for us to be so. Christ himself often said to those he healed, "Go hence and tell no man!" This he did not simply to secure Himself against persecution. To others whom He healed He said, "Go and tell it to everyone!"

If one understands why Christ addressed the first saying to one and to another the second, one then understands an important secret of activity—to tell it to no one so long as one's self is immediately concerned in appropriating it, and to say it to every man when one has quite received it into oneself. That which is from heaven must come to men as if grown upon earth, like wine.

We can only point this out, and must leave it to our readers to think over life in its details, and shape it accordingly.

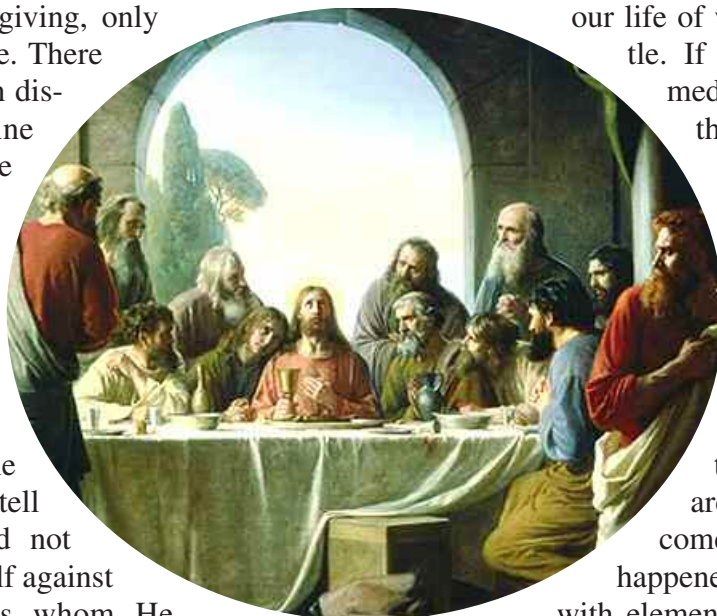
But, again, it is not meant that we should speak to everyone of our innermost secrets. People would not be helped by that, and we ourselves would be injured. Much that is divine is not to be spoken of, but to be radiated forth. It wants to be received into our being so that it may stream out from it to men in power, in being, in silent speech.

Also for man himself it is good that he may speak in this special way of divine things. He has the feeling that in such a way he speaks of the divine world more worthily, more truly, more fully humanly. He whose life has been touched by Christ will often have the feeling: I may speak of it only if I have first given to men *through my life* the feeling that they may hold what I say to be true. To speak of it may be only as the final word about a secret already revealed.

In all this lie possibilities and beauties for our life of which men know but little. If one sometimes lets the meditation pass in music into the thought how would it be, how must it be, if that which I have now borne within me were to shine through my whole being; if men could read it straight out of my being?—then would arise for us the world of which we are speaking here. It may come to pass, and it has often happened, that a man may see with elemental clarity into another's being, and feel that which lives in him and shines from him: That is Christ! This will be the way in which Christ in the future will be revealed to many people. "Thou sayest that I am!" In the other man himself the voice first speaks.

All this means turning water into wine. The divine revelation which we have received, first to transform it into earthly being, into earthly life, and let it thus transformed go forth from us once again.

The second restriction which exists is one which must be most carefully observed; it is the duty of considering the needs and the powers of reception of the men to whom we speak. The higher a man reaches, the more strict is this law. One kills a part of one's own higher man if one does not act in accordance with it. For this higher man lives in secret union with other men. Never ought that which is divine to be spoken of so that we our-



Oil on canvas. The Last Supper (detail), Carl Bloch, (1894-1890). Chapel Fredriksborg Castle, Denmark

selves feel important in so speaking, or have any impure secondary aim. It may be spoken of only when, and in order that the other may receive a blessing from it. Speech first becomes something divinely beautiful and great if one has quite understood this command. No man can be used to announce the tidings who has not the power to be silent until he may speak. Many would receive much more from the higher world if this were not a fact—that they cannot keep it for themselves. “Mine hour is not yet come,” says Christ at the Marriage at Cana. This does not mean that one may not often say to a man something which he cannot understand at the time, something which he will at first resist. But such occasions do not do away with the fundamental rule, but only make its fulfillment harder.

Here we must point out something concerning such rules. Only in them is union with Christ’s will completely possible. And the more we observe the true laws of life, the more we make meditation also active; and we shall notice this in each successive meditation. We ourselves should become wine. We receive the divine blessing as the vine receives the rain. We let it ripen beneath the divine sun, till nothing remains but good fruits. But it is these fruits which we give as gifts to men; not the rain which wets us; not the sun which burns us and does its work upon us; not the depths of the earth in which we are rooted; not the fruits which are still sour. All these mistakes are made. We bear in mind that Christ compared His disciples with vine branches, not with flowers, not with jewels, but with what is least noticeable, with vine branches. He Himself is the vine, and we, only branches which have to lead the sap to the fruit. Therefore it is not even the fruits which we ourselves bring that we should give, but the fruits which Christ in us brings.

To go still more thoroughly into the subject of our meditation—

There are the men: humanity is assembled at the world’s table. They are in want. Without Christ they must perish. There are all kinds of ways of perishing. But Christ is there to give the true wine to men. He brings heaven, and gives it to men as power on the earth and joy on the earth. In earlier

times men sought purification in the divine, now it becomes the giving of life through Christ. Not only revelation, but food. This ought to be our will—with Christ to bring down what is possible out of the divine world into men’s beings and men’s lives. We will work in the world like the vine which offers golden fruits to men. We shall give ourselves to men as divine wine. Quite a different feeling for life flows through a man if he can feel thus about the meaning of his own life.

In this meditation for the will, and in all those that follow, we leave it to the reader, still more than we did in the earlier meditations, to work out the details of the picture on which he meditates and to formulate for himself resolves of will. The will is the most individual part of us and must be quite free. We are giving, rather, brief glances at life and backgrounds for our mental outlook. But it is good to let the picture on which we meditate as exercise for the will act upon us in a threefold way: a great aim, a great example, a great resistance.

It is only another form of the same meditation which is part of the Act of Consecration of Man. At the words: “To Thee I turn my willing,” the priest pours the wine into the cup. At the words: “May the power of this willing spring from feeling, that unites itself with Christ, Who liveth in Thy life,” he pours the water into the wine. It is Christ, Who comes from the heights, as He unites Himself with the willing that has grown up on the earth.

Every right meditation is also a mingling of water and wine, or from another side, a changing of water and wine.

In the first miracle which Christ did, “and manifested forth His glory,” we have the first training of our will, drawing it upward from a small self-will to the great world-will. We stand again in the midst, between East and West. The *East* has indeed a divine will, but no will to change the world. The *West* has the will to change the world, but no divine will. Already over the first sign stands the prayer of all prayers: “Thy will be done *as* in the heavens, *so also* upon the earth!” We pray this prayer no longer merely passively and no longer merely personally. We take into us the basic will of Christ. We begin to *become* “Heaven’s” will.

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