

The Higher Stages of the Passion—

Entombment and Resurrection

THE MEETING with the Greater Guardian of the Threshold has just as definite consequences as the meeting with the First Guardian of the Threshold (or rather, with the Guardian of the First Threshold).^{*} Just as Man received a “charge” from the First Guardian—to prove himself a “Threshold-keeper”—so also will Man be charged by the Great Guardian with a definite task. Here, too, there is a conscious participation in the task of the Guardian, and indeed, one makes one’s own the aims for which the Greater Guardian stands in world history and terrestrial evolution.

Now these aims for Earth and the men of Earth may be summed up in the words of the Gospel : “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” One thing which these words mean is that the Christ is leading Man and the Earth by inner guidance. He does not guide as, for example, the laws of Nature are wont to, enforcing their consequences by external necessity. He works within Man by the power of inner conviction. In place of the “old law”, the “new law” acquires more and more force. But the new law can only acquire force when the Christ-impulse itself enters into individual beings, and in this way, then, permeates them from within. The promise, “I am with you,” is, therefore, a necessity arising from the nature of the

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Tempera on wood, 1438-40. Fra Angelico. Alte Pinakothek, Munich

The Entombment

“The occultist knows: Earth is a grave...Entombment is the repetition of Cross-bearing at a higher level. What is learned by it is to bear no longer the Cross of individual human karma, but the Cross of Earth’s karma.”

Christ-impulse itself. It is in the nature of the Christ-impulse not to forsake the Earth but working from within to draw it upwards.

The Christ-impulse, in this sense, becomes a spiritual necessity of the man who has experienced the meeting with the Greater Guardian of the Threshold. He resolves to stand by Mankind and the Earth to the end—and to stand by them in such a way that within Earth’s karmic relations, he will devote his force to furthering the positive bent of the Earth’s karma. But the karma of Earth is Death. Death is the only reality to be found in that which is purely earthly. In the fields of Death is everything sown, and, at first, it is Death who reaps it all. He who really knows this cannot feel otherwise

than that the Earth is one great grave.

The poets may sing as they will of Spring and its blossoms but the occultist knows: Earth is a grave. This knowledge does not make him gloomy, however, because he does not hate this grave; he enters consciously into as direct a union with the Earth-life as the naive man does unconsciously. And this “conscious union with the Earth” is precisely the stage of the spiritual path which is called Entombment.

Hence, Entombment is the repetition of Cross-bearing at a higher level. What is learned by it is to bear no longer the Cross of individual human karma, but the Cross of Earth’s karma. This represents an enormous difference not only in the scope of the Trial, but also in its nature. For the human Cross is erected vertically while the Earth-cross lies in the horizontal plane. It forms a cruciform grave in which Man must lay himself. He does this in faith and in the hope that by the surrender of his whole being the gates will be opened through which the power of cosmic Grace will perform the miracle of setting the Earth-cross once more erect. He yields himself to the grave in the hope of Resurrection.

Entombment is not only a spiritual experience occurring once, but also especially a condition in which man, over and over again—in a thousand cases—has to decide for entombment. He has to make up his mind with respect to deeds which, in the given situation, must be unsuccessful; he lays them in the tomb of earthly happenings in the hope that at some time in the future they will “rise again” as results. Thus, for instance, Rudolf Steiner’s activity for a Threefold Commonwealth was an entombment, one among many others, but one where we have become generally conscious that it was so. Gradually, however, it will dawn upon our consciousness that other things in the life and work



Fresco (c. 1340), Andrea Da Florentia, Spanish Chapel, Santa Maria Novella, Florence

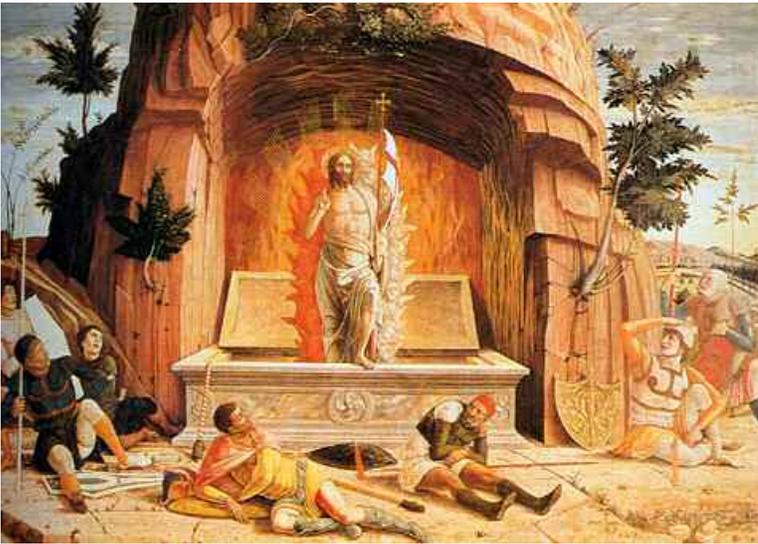
Through his shed blood, Christ Jesus unites with Earth’s destiny. His sacrificial death becomes a cosmic deed, enabling Him to rejuvenate the planet and give spiritual impetus to those souls held captive to the accumulated effects of sin and material consciousness.

of Rudolf Steiner were also entombments.

At this stage—in this situation—the important thing is to learn to be a sower on the fields of death. And the man must also learn to resolve on deeds which can bear fruit only in the distant future. What is required, therefore, is a courage which no failure can daunt because it is acting and working for karma and not for mere success.

And this working for karma, this activity for the future, is, again, a fundamental condition required of the Christian occultist. He who aims at success, who wishes to “make the world different,” not on karmic lines, but directly, by himself may accomplish much that is useful, but he cannot be taken seriously as an occultist. For the seriousness of occultism is the seriousness of death. And its force is not the urge-to-deeds of vital optimism, but of certainty in karmic knowledge, more especially in knowledge of the karma resulting from the Mystery of Golgotha. For on this karma is based the certainty that all which is sown on the field of death will one day rise again.

A man with an awakened spiritual conscience, and a Christian occultist must be such a one, dare not act, in the present age, as if the Mystery of Golgotha had never taken place. He must, or rather, he cannot do otherwise than strive to unite



San Zeno Altarpiece, tempera on wood, Andrea Mantegna (c. 1431-1506), Musée Municipal, Tours, France

The Resurrection of Christ

The Christed soul emerges from the dark regions of "cosmic midnight."

his efforts with the karmic current of the Mystery of Golgotha. And this striving involves the necessity, in experience and in effective action, not only of Footwashing, Scourging, Thorn-crowning, Cross-bearing and Crucifixion, but also of Entombment.

The "Imitation of Christ" on the path of Initiation and karma is not only the subject of Thomas à Kempis' beautiful book of devotion, it is also the basic principle of Christian Rosicrucian occultism—in the present as well as in the past and in all the future.

There is only one "narrow way" leading to the redemption of Resurrection. The other paths appertain to the "broad way" leading to Death; that is, to becoming a component part of the being of Ahriman, who is the Lord of Death. He is of course not the lord over death, but precisely the Lord of Death. That is to say, there is no annihilation; death in the Ahrimanic sense will be entrance into the realm of Ahriman. He who attains to Resurrection will be lord over death. The Lord of Death will show himself as lord over the hardening of the individual, the rigidifying of the personal.

Thus in the far future, Entombment will occur as a karmic event in the shape of the rigidifying of the section of humanity which has become the prey of Ahriman. Men will have become hardened parts of the hardened Earth, which will be, as it were, their common grave. The Earth will become

one great tomb; but when this happens, then also will the last, supreme act of mercy be performed by the Lord over Death—the Earth as a planet will be destroyed and will crumble to dust. It will fall a victim to the other death, which is not induration, but decomposition, the crumbling of the rigid. It will be subjected to the death which is the emancipation vouchsafed by the Lord over Death. And the Earth will pass into death, to rise again as Jupiter. Then the Ahrimanic section of mankind will be given another chance; to make a fresh start on the path to the Spirit. At the Venus-stage this chance will again be accorded. And finally, on Vulcan.

RESURRECTION

Resurrection is so closely connected with Entombment that these two stages can hardly be studied separately, for the courage needed for the trials of Entombment is an expression of the hope of Resurrection. And this hope is itself founded on knowledge of the Mystery of Golgotha, on the knowledge that the Mystery of Golgotha is not only the Truth, but also the Way and the Life. It is indeed the Way of the whole positive karmic future of mankind, and the Life which proves itself stronger than the rigidifying principle of death.

The experiences which we must consider in connection with this highest stage are the Mysteries of Death and the Mysteries of the Father. At this stage a man learns to know the twofold form of death and its power: the power of rigidification and the power of dissolution; and at the same time the experience of the Mystery of the Father in the sphere of death. Indeed, it was experienced in such a way that the recognition of the highest Life in death, the highest Light in darkness, and the highest Companionship in complete loneliness arises from it. For the soul plunges into that region which Rudolf Steiner, in the Mystery-drama, calls "Cosmic Midnight" and emerges from it again, enriched by a new experience.

This emerging of the soul from the dark regions of Cosmic Midnight is "resurrection" as it is experienced on the path of Initiation. It is especially a

matter of the experience of the human Ego, in rare cases even of the astral body, and, exceptionally in the spiritual history of mankind, Resurrection has been experienced even in the ether-body.

The process in its entirety, however, has been lived through by Christ Jesus alone in Whom Resurrection was complete even as far as the physical body. And again, the depth of its significance to the Initiated depends on the scope and the degree of consciousness of the Resurrection-experience; and that not only with respect to the stage of Initiation, but also, and especially, in the possibilities of its spiritual efficacy. For if the experience of Crucifixion yields both the greatest certainty of knowledge concerning the mystery of human existence, and also an inward justification for arranging this knowledge in the form of teaching for the guidance of others, the stages of Entombment and Resurrection produce effective spiritual forces which render possible the fulfillment of still higher tasks than guidance by proclamation.

The possibility of giving impulse to all that is good in Man by means of silent spiritual influence is the fruit of the experience of plunging into Cosmic Midnight. For in that midnight sphere—dark both for the outer and the inner eye, silent both for the outer and the inner ear—there occurs the permeation of the soul by the “dark lightning” and “silent thunder” of cosmic judgment. What is experienced there can be represented by Man—who is bound to employ a physical brain—in no other way than in the form of complete paradoxes; even for himself he must translate it into concrete and logical thinking. Therefore this translation is not, as a rule, attempted.

It is not knowledge, enriching the day-consciousness, which the soul brings with it on emerging again from Cosmic Midnight to the sphere of Earth; it is the force stirred in it when the soul is flashed and thundered through by the Father-forces of cosmic judgment. The soul brings with it a portion of primeval force from the cosmic, creative depths of being, and that force enables her to develop an influence in the moral and spiritual activity of Earth which is equivalent to the “spiritual karmic guidance of mankind.”

At this point we must close our study of the

I saw an ox and lion yoked as pair—
a casket shouldered on their backs they carried,
beheld how just before my door they tarried
and heard an eagle rushing down the air.

The silver tasseled pall of black which lay
upon the oaken shrine of death outspread,
he tore away, revealing in its stead
the egohood of him who passed away.

‘Tis I! Twelve times I heard the eagle ply
his massive beak to drive the nails with might.
I felt them pierce the wood. The blows were sure.

I prayed: *In Christo morimur*,*
and found the power for resurrection's flight,
and soared into the universe on high.

—Albert Steffan

Stages of the Passion. But before doing so, a summary of the stages of Cross-bearing, Crucifixion, Entombment, and Resurrection may be given, similar to that at the end of the previous chapter on Foot-washing, Scourging and Crowning with Thorns. But this time the summary can only be properly made in the form of a picture. That picture is the Rose-Cross, epitomizing not only the higher stages of the Passion but actually the complete “Passion”; that is, the whole path of Christian Initiation. For it is the symbol of the “narrow way” of Sacrifice and the forces of Resurrection which come into flower on this way.

Death and Resurrection are the two fundamental themes of the Christian spiritual way, and in the symbol of the Rose-Cross the two are united. Thus may the black Cross with the glowing red Roses sum up all that we have here said concerning Christian Initiation, and may it stand, if only for a moment, before the inner eye of the reader's soul as a token of the solemn Spirit-world, and at the same time as the author's Easter Greeting to his readers. □

—Valentin Tomberg

**Christian Rosenkreutz formulated the following motto for Rosicrucian meditation:*

Ex Deo nascimur—*Out of God we are born.*

In Christo morimur—*In Christ we die.*

Per spiritum sanctum reviviscimus—*Through the Holy Spirit we shall be re-awakened (or born again).*