

Anthroposophical Society in New Hampshire

Ascension and Whitsun Newsletter

2025



From Goethe's Cloud poems, dedicated to Sir Luke Howard who 'named' the clouds:

The Atmosphere

The world, it is so far and wide,
The heavens, too, are lofty and far-stretching.
My eyes they have to take it all in,
It is hard to grasp it with ones thoughts.

To find oneself in this boundlessness,
One has first to differentiate, and then to reunite,
Therefore, this winged song of mine
Thanks him who distinguished between the clouds.

There follows the poems about *Status*, *Cumulus*, *Cirrus*, *Nimbus*
And finishes with:

Not to be Forgotten

And when we have differentiated,
Then we have to bestow life again
To that which we have separated,
And take pleasure in its continued life.

Thus when the painter or the poet,
Well acquainted with Howard's distinctions,
Inspects the heavens
Early in the morning, late at night,

He lets their character emerge;
Yet, given to him by ethereal spheres
Is that which conciliates, which is gentle and evolves,
That he grasp it, feel it, form it.

From: Ascension by Friedrich Benesch, Floris Books

'That which conciliates, which is gentle and evolves'—Goethe has seen it. He has recognized that in the whole wonderful process of the clouds which Howard first separated into individual stages and types, characteristic features occur. But having taken it away, he has to return 'that which is gentle, which conciliates' to these characteristic features, for it is in the evolving that the concealed things work. He names that which conciliates—which can move to and fro, which stands between the lines, which occurs between human beings. With this we become aware of a further realm: that which happens *within* the human being.

....We become aware of a sphere of the world at work between all beings in complete unselfishness and we are led to the question: where is that space in the world which is inhabited by the Christ being? For the kingdoms of the world and their splendor were already occupied when he came to earth. The ruler of these kingdoms was prepared to put them at Christ's disposal only if Christ would recognize him. But Christ in his descent to earth was not looking for those realms. There was 'no room at the inn' for him—not directly with man. *In between* man and the animals there was room—in the stable. Later, when Christ rejected the tempter, the Gospel says: 'and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him' (Mark 1:12). He was *in between* the angels and the animals. There he performed the Mystery of Golgotha and entered into the earth. *He entered the being of the clouds of the earth after his Resurrection.*

Somehow we can say tentatively: in between stone and plant, where the roots of the forest live and thrust, there the Christ lives: in between stone and plant where the clouds form, weave, live and pass away, the Christ being lives. In between plant and animal in the world of the transient, interweaving blossoms, the Christ being weaves. Between earth and man, where the being of man works at the earth and the earth answers the activity of man, in the interaction of the earth's destiny and the being of man, lives the Christ.

In the inner being of man—'Christ in us'—where does he live there? In my thinking it is myself, in my emotions it is myself—where is there room for the Christ? In between these, where I can freely, of my own accord, bring my thinking, feeling and willing into a selfless inter-relationship permeated by Christ, there he can be with me. When the spiritual and the soul part of our being interacts with the physical-bodily part, then too he lives in us. This is the *realm of the heavens*. For not only on earth, between man and man, between element and element, between the spheres of nature is 'that which is gentle, which conciliates' possible, but also in heavenly worlds. For example there is activity between angels and archangels, and in what happens between the two lives the divine. The Father is the being of spiritual-physical existence. The being of the Spirit is pure world consciousness. But in between these two, between the Father and the Spirit, lives the Son. The kingdom of the heavens, which weaves to and fro between the hierarchies, through which the

Christ descended step by step until he finally reached the earth and found what had been prepared—that was his realm, into which he moved.

.....The first result of the Ascension is that Christ let knowledge and perception of himself shine out of this initially invisible, inaccessible cloud realm of consciousness. Ten days later, he sends the *spirit of knowledge*, the spirit of understanding, from the realm of the clouds. The first result is the pouring out of the Spirit to each individual human being. Thus we can gradually come to feel, in embryonic form, what it means that this being should encompass all humanity and that his spiritual mission becomes individualized in each person, in the life of the soul, of consciousness, in knowledge and a higher comprehension.

Through this man becomes aware also that this spirit consciousness which he experiences is only possible becomes the second gift of Ascension follows: *the being of Christ has entered the unconscious part of the soul, again in each individual human being*. Let us try and experience tentatively and with care what it means to the Christ-being to die into the deeper, unconscious being of every human being, to fragment himself so that he can then send to each single human being individual powers of knowledge from the realm of the spirit. This is an interrelationship *within man* himself, between his conscious and unconscious soul life.

.....Once aware of this realm, a man begins to behave differently toward himself as well as toward other human beings. The result of dealing with others and oneself is not only 'aggression and frustration'; a perception of the 'gentle' becomes possible, of 'what stands between'. A different relationship arises to our own physical body, to our soul, to our higher self. We can handle our thinking and feeling much more freely when we know: if I let everything swirl about uncontrolled, I am not on the path to Christ. But if I try to cultivate the 'intermediate', the free, conscious transition from one to the other, Christ then begins to work in me. The same is true of my relationships with other people in the to and fro of social intercourse—if the 'gentle' can take life. 'For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matt. 18:20).



El Greco—Whitsun morning

From: Whitsun by Friedrich Benesch, Floris Books
Whitsun Today

We have to come again to the archetypal image of Whitsun; on the one hand the festival of free individuality; on the other community in the realm of the Holy Spirit. Let us look once more at the inner struggle for self-recognition and self-training which brings about interaction between our

antisocial and our social selves. If my thought can lead me from self-assertiveness to the recognition of what man lives by, then my deepest thinking, my gratitude and devotion to the divine, to whom I owe my true ego, becomes effective in as much as Christ can begin to work in me. It has been said "Your deepest thinking will turn to devotion that longs to be immersed in the divine". Thus when in feeling, on the way to a true image of the other, I experienced him wrestling for his spiritual being and can connect this with my own deepest striving, I can comprehend not only that my true ego is given by Christ, but that the Christ being feels and experiences fully along with the other person and with myself in all our human becoming. And so 'What you have understood of the least of my brothers or sisters, that you have understood of me.'

Christ in me is the one fashioning me through myself; he is also in sympathy with me through myself and like-wise with every human being. And if in my will, my self and the other person become a mystery whose revelation I await in devoted enquiry, then again, the Christ being becomes the one who enquires of me; and enquiring combines his will with mine. Schiller once expressed it: 'Take the divine into your will/And it descends from its cosmic throne'.

In the mode of individualism then, what does it mean: 'Christ in me', 'Christ in us'? It means that precisely where man becomes most individualistic with his antisocial powers, the unique spiritual place is created in him where the Christ being can unite completely with the individual human 'I'. This is the flame on the head and in the heart of the individuality freed to itself through Christ. The sign of individualism becomes the sign of Christ in the 'I'. But the incomprehensible part is—and this is the mystery of the Christ-ego—that he remains the same undivided Christ Being. Insofar as he reveals this mystery in us, he sends us the Spirit which, as the Spirit of truth, enables us to experience a community that is above us and yet is common to us all.....In this 'community above us' is the rushing presence of the Holy Spirit. And so we can say, with Rudolf Steiner: 'Community above us—Christ in us.'

Community in the age of individualism;

Christ in us—community above us in all spiritual relationships;

Christ in us--community below us in all our relationships with created nature.

In these three kinds of relationship the individual stands in all reality as an evolving, becoming being. And in the age of the Consciousness soul it depends exclusively on himself how far he wants to participate in extending them. Only by doing so can he share, according to his particular capabilities, in the order of community that arises through insight and freedom.

And Whitsun will continually be new; or, as it was called by Rudolf Steiner—*Cosmic Whitsun*.