

Anthroposophical Society in New Hampshire

Easter Newsletter

2025



[Gian Lorenzo Bernini \(Italian, active 1598-1680\)](#)

The Risen Christ

Soul Calendar verse for Easter

When from the world's wide realms
The sun speaks to the human mind,
And joy from depths of soul
Unites with light in gazing,
Then thoughts from selfhood's sheath
Stream into far spread spaces,
And dimly bind
Man's being to the Spirit's life.

From: Easter by Friedrich Benesch, *Christ's Resurrection*

These two words have a most powerful content and form the basis of Christianity. Christmas is the first foundation: the Word became flesh, behind it stands the sacrifice of a divine being who leaves heaven and takes on life on earth. The second foundation is Easter: the death and resurrection of Christ. The third comes with Ascension and Whitsun and has an effect for the earth and mankind as a whole.

Looking at the pattern of Christianity, one can get the impression that from the orbit of the cosmos something contracts into a center where the great mystery takes place: death, burial, resurrection. This center will work out into the infinite widths of space in future. It is like one gigantic divine breath of life.

For the last two thousand years Christianity has taken these events for granted. For Christian hearts and souls the fact itself was not as important as the salvation and the pious, personal relationship of a Christian to his Savior. People asked, "What does it mean for myself, for my soul and for my existence?" To contemplate this being itself, apart from what it means for me, was neglected. Let us look at the resurrection selflessly and objectively, to see what happened.

We depend on pictures drawn in the Gospels in contemplating the resurrection. A peculiar characteristic meets us, when we accompany the central figure in our thought. Christ Jesus during Passion Week, is seen day by day, being led through the crowd on Good Friday. We do not even need artists and their countless representations of the crucifixion. Everybody can follow the Gospel events with an inner eye and hear him speak. Behind the pictures, currents of strength show a true esoteric event. Walking imaginatively with Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and the women as they take the body from the cross, we visualize the shroud, the spices and ointment, the corpse in repose, perhaps hands folded, inside the tomb.

Yet on Easter morning we hear, 'The grave is empty!' Or we can see, as John describes, the napkin that was about the head, not lying with the linen clothes, but folded in a place by itself. But the central figure is gone. Strange how the Gospels mirror the event of the resurrection in the circumference, veiling from our eyes what really happened. Matthew, Mark and Luke show the women on the way to the tomb. Careful reading is needed to see who these two or three women really are, for they are not the same in each case. In the thought and soul of every group the event is mirrored and yet remains veiled for us. In Matthew we find the guards become 'like dead men' on Easter morning. In John we see two disciples, and Peter the 'the other', the circle of people is there and what happens inside them reflects the fact that the grave is empty.

These people are not the only witnesses, the Gospels go beyond them in describing how the cosmos shares in the events. On Good Friday the darkening of the sun affects all earthly life, green plants turn grey, flowers lose their color, the sun is hidden, the earth is dark and from the third hour onward-the moment of death-an earthquake takes place. Mankind, cosmos and earth

participate. Even the hierarchies appear at the grave. According to Matthew, in a vision given to the women an 'angel of the Lord' rolls away the stone and sits upon it. Mark records that a 'young man', dressed in a white robe is sitting on the right side. In the empty tomb of Luke's Gospel the women behold two men in 'dazzling apparel' who speak to them. John tells of Mary Magdalene gazing into the dark chamber and seeing two angels where the body has lain, one at the head and one at the feet. Step by step, the divine world shares in the events. But still the resurrection cannot be seen. Except in John's Gospel we hear only, 'He is not here!' This is the *hagios topos*, the holy place, where he was laid, but is no longer---he is risen. It may be a Greek, a Latin, an Aramaic or a Hebrew 'He is risen', but the consciousness of the Angels, Archangels, Archai and the Spirit of Form who rolled away the stone, is filled with the deed of resurrection. The angels know of it and pass it over into the souls of the women who do not know how to comprehend it.

In every picture of Easter morning the challenging image of the empty grave stands at the center. Where is he? In the mind of Mary Magdalene this delicate question works its way to consciousness and suddenly he is there. The empty space is filled with real content from an unexpected direction. It is a purely spiritual touch, 'Mariam', and then 'Rabboni'. The 'I' of the woman is addressed and she tries to understand. The atmosphere is such that she supposes him to be the gardener---why the gardener? Someone who cares for life? At last she realizes that it is the Risen One. But he says, 'I have not yet ascended to the Father' (John 20:14-18). Resurrected but not yet ascended---a strange distinction. The Risen One is still like a seed, in the picture of the gardener who cares for life.

The day passes. Luke (24:13-35) tells of two men, Cleopas and his friend who walk in the evening from Jerusalem to Emmaus which lies a few mile to the north-west across the hills of Mizpah open toward the Mediterranean. At sunset Christ 'appeared in another form' (Mark 16:12) We must think of a continually changing presence. He is no longer the gardener, but he who walks *with* the two disciples. Pictures of the Old Testament arise as they walk and the prophecy of the Son of Man, who has to suffer, die and rise again begins to make sense. He was like a companion who can give meaning to the strange and unknown; he gives meaning and so transforms. The wonderful scene in the inn room follows, where they say, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.; They break bread and in that moment their eyes are opened and they recognize him fully.

Mary Magdalene recognized him when he spoke her name, the disciples in the moment of transubstantiation. The aura of the bread shone when he was present, but in the next moment he was gone. It is as if the resurrection still continues. Cleopas and his friend return to Jerusalem and to the disciples in the house of Mark gathered behind closed doors. In the late evening of Easter Sunday the vision becomes an absolute presence (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-23). 'Peace be with you!' He breathes on them and says: Receive the Holy Spirit, through me you will be able to share it. Something has been formed, but the process of resurrection has not ended.

Eight days later the disciples experience the opposite of Mary Magdalene when she is told not to touch (John 20:4-29). Christ speaks to Thomas, 'Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put

out your hand, and place it in my side'. If we do not take this difference seriously we shall misunderstand the Gospels. They describe the self-realization of the Risen One in a spiritual body which has an intensity that reaches to the human sense of touch. Here is a power going beyond the present moment, so that Thomas immediately says, 'My Lord and my God!' Authority has been given 'over all flesh'.

In the scene that follows at the Lake of Galilee in the early dawn (John 21:1-23), when the disciples recognize his presence at the coal fire, the destiny of Peter is challenged after the meal. "Do you love me?when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go" (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.). The words to Peter, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?' shows not only the power over flesh, but the power over human destiny, far into the future.

At length the remarkable time when the disciples live together with the Risen One comes to an end. Forty days are soon past. The Gospels leave no doubt that the way the Risen One lived with the disciples, the women and the people who surrounded him, was absolutely unique, beginning on Easter morning and ending on Ascension Day.

The resurrection is a process and the Gospels tell nothing about it: at first they leave the picture empty, they show what happened around it but the center remains hidden and how the resurrection took place is an enigma. Then they show the Risen One in his continually changing appearance.

Without its background the secret of the resurrection cannot be understood at all. Man's earthly condition is the condition of the resurrection. Only with the greatest spiritual effort can the power of matter to a certain degree be loosened-if this is desired but many people do not desire it. Man cannot master the substance of his body. But the resurrection is a bodily process. Incarnation in a human body is a continuous process, beginning at birth, deepening throughout life, loosening in death. We can understand why, after death, the connections with matter continue and mankind can be drawn into the realm of bodily decay, where after death he has no strength to keep his soul together. On the other hand, when, in death, the body no longer acts as a mirror then man is not able to remain awake and conscious within the spiritual world.

If we consider the whole picture of our embodiment, resulting from our cosmic condition and its threat to our spiritual existence, we can understand that this threat brings sorrow to mankind and challenges the gods. An immense sacrifice has been offered by Christ, incarnation as a human being like us with all the possibilities of weakness, temptation and change that are ours since the Fall. The mystery of Golgotha was a deed that entered the core of human existence and cancelled the Fall. The resurrection therefore is not only what happened on Easter morning. It began at the Baptism in the Jordan when Christ entered the man Jesus. The Christ is not obligated to let his consciousness be the reflection of a human body. Consider how *we* become conscious, how as

children we fall asleep, and awake to the body and the external world. The Christ enters in full consciousness and does not need physical support from the body. He bears wakefulness majestically in himself.

The first effect of this is that he feels immediately how vulnerable man's nature is. The Gospels call it an encounter with the Adversaries. Another effect is that this wide-awake, sun-filled 'I' immediately begins to eradicate the effects of the Fall on this body. The evangelists leave us in no doubt as to how it is done. The soul of the man Jesus is changed through the presence of the Christ, becoming bread for humanity, in the bountiful selflessness described as the feeding of the five thousand. As the divine spirit pervades the life forces they are no longer in danger of entering too deeply into matter, nor will they dissipate at death into cosmic space. His life forces become like the sun and radiate on Mount Tabor as the disciples see at the Transfiguration. The divine being enters even into man's skin and bones, until the pure formative forces are free and the genuine Form can begin to live. Matter is taken into the divine being, into this body in which a god dwells, and is completely transformed.

Matter has its own secrets. Nowadays one sees matter either as a crystal or as particle, as electro-magnetism. Material substance reveals its inner side, however, only when it is present in a human body and not as it appears in plants, animals and minerals. It reveals its true nature in man, its ability on the one hand to evolve crystalline forces, to reflect so that consciousness can arise, and on the other hand to transform inasmuch as it can be taken into the body and be discarded again. But where a spiritual authority enters and a divine being penetrates material substance it can dissolve matter. Today, we have difficulties in thinking of the resurrection of Christ because we believe so firmly in matter that it never occurs to us that the laws of nature-which are the expression of *hardening* processes-can also be reversed.

The Christ intervenes in the *soul* of Jesus and creates the opposite of egotism, selfishness and indulgence in materialism; namely, nourishing powers of love. Christ intervenes in the *life forces* of Jesus so that they become the opposite of that which binds them to matter. They become creative and sun-like. Finally, the divine being invades *matter* within the form of a human body and this form is made whole, matter itself is spiritualized into the new body. What falls away from this human body is only dust and ash.

Perhaps we can now reconstruct the whole event of the resurrection. As Christ separated from Jesus in death, a body was laid in the tomb that was quite different from the bodies of other people. Here the pure spiritual Form of man's physical body was re-constituted whole, and after being anointed with spices and shrouded according to Jewish ritual its material substance disintegrated very quickly. On the one hand it was transparent like crystal, on the other brittle like fine dust. Rudolf Steiner describes how after the corpse had lain in the tomb for three days, it had undergone an essential change. When the tomb was shaken by the earthquake, currents of air blew through the grave and the earth inhaled the dust that had fallen from the body, and the pure Form rose from the grave filled with that part of matter which reflects, which was able to be

transformed, and was free from dust and ashes. The old words of the Protestant Church, 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust' declare a certain hope that the spirit form rises from the grave.

The resurrected body that leaves the tomb empty and cannot be seen in the beginning has entirely new qualities, powers and abilities. Firstly, we have a body with a center of gravity, we must brace ourselves all the time against this center of gravity and maintain our balance on the ground we walk upon. Imagine a body whose center is not subject to the earth's gravity, and also not to a centrifugal flight into space, but sustains its own force, rises and falls of itself, hovers. Where he was wounded the body of Christ Jesus bears five spiritual centers of force. The soul entered these most deeply in pain. There are also the wounds from the crown of thorns and the scourging. These processes lead to spiritual densification through pain and the wounds become spiritual centers on which he moves. He is neither drawn to the center of the earth nor to the periphery of space. He holds himself within himself and the five centers of force light up as sources of spiritual power.

Secondly, we human beings with our heavy bodies are obliged to eat. Of the Resurrected One the opposite is true: a body that nourishes itself, from which streams of life flow, can give each piece of bread blessed on the altar an aura of spiritual nourishing life.

Thirdly to this is added an authority so great that he could densify his spiritual forces into a kind of perceptibility. Thus did the Risen One appear to the people who could see him.

The new Man has arrived! We should not only think of what this means to us but also try to make the event more comprehensible and real in itself. This can only be done if we are aware that our soul is continually in danger of losing itself in matter or withdrawing from the world and losing earthly consciousness. Let us look at Christ Jesus whole consciousness, which rests sun-like in itself and is not just the reflection of a body. It radiates! His soul no longer depends on an increased experience of self. Consider a melancholic or hysteric person in whom we see he need for self-assertion, the experience of he self, in extreme form. The soul of Jesus is he opposite where the Christ gives out enduring love and radiates substance.

The fact is that the Risen One existed, the divine Christ was able to take Jesus into himself. Just as one can say that Jesus, the man, embodies the Christ during the three years and that the Christ prepared the resurrection within him for three years, changing him step by step, so likewise one can say that on Easter morning the Christ took Jesus fully into himself so that now one being is present: the Risen One. But that may be too rigid, for he said, 'I am the resurrection and the life'. The image and concept of the Risen One together with the resurrection, show this unique event to be the source from which resurrection can rise again and again eternally. One can really say: Christ is the resurrection.

This became fact when after forty days he transformed the Risen One into the resurrection. This implies power over his own consciousness, over his own creating loving soul, over his self-

renewing resurrection body. This power and impulse of the resurrection poured out over the earth. Since then the resurrection has lived in the sphere around the earth. The risen Christ can consolidate himself at any moment and appear or work for one person in one way and for another in a different way. In St John's last appearance of the Risen One, impulses of destiny appear and as the Christ shows one disciple his way and another disciple quite a different way, so does he prepare for each individual his very own resurrection. A world-creating impulse goes out, that works in each individual human being uniquely.

FROM: Christ and Sophia: Anthroposophic Meditations on the Old Testament, New Testament and Apocalypse, The Mystery of Golgotha, the Risen One by Valentin Tomberg

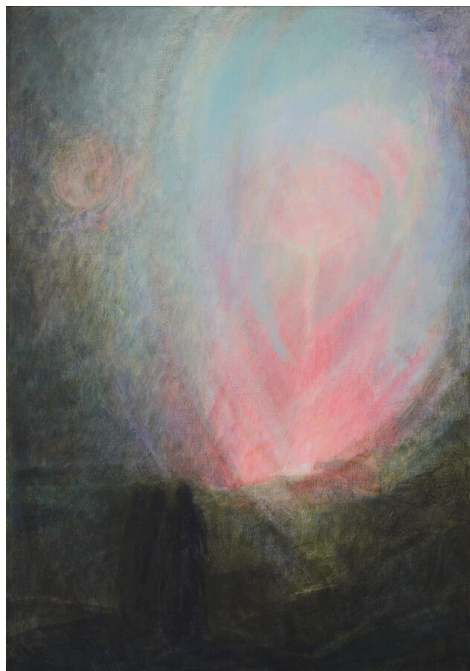
The Risen One was the being who united in himself the experiences of the heavens, earthly life and suffering, and the subterranean spheres. These three kinds of experience in him represented our nervous, rhythmic, and metabolic systems. For us, however, they are *systems*; they involve an unconscious, autonomic aspect, whereas the body of the risen Christ consisted solely of moral, conscious currents. His risen body had nothing mechanical or autonomic in it, because its Ahrimanic element had been overcome. Nonetheless, his body had not become merely a soul and thus alien to the realm of earthly activity, because His Luciferic element had been transformed. It was, in any case, as capable of activity and influence as the physical body of any living person. Likewise, it was at least as full of moral soul life as the spirit body of anyone who had died and entered the Devachan state. In the risen body, the gulf between life and death has been bridged; it is death become life. It bears inwardly the "tree of life" of the paradise legend; and those who "eat of its fruit" overcome the antithesis between life and death.

There is no other means of gaining an understanding of the resurrection body than by continuous, deep meditation. It is impossible to gain inwardly clear and factual knowledge of the resurrection body through concepts and conceptual relationships drawn from "ordinary" experience (that is, experience in the sphere that lies on *this* side of the threshold of resurrection). Thus a path of intimate spiritual concentration must be adopted—one that may have to be walked for many years before inner comprehension of the resurrection body shines out. We can begin with a passage that occurs in definite connection with this in John's Revelation: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (Revelation 3:14). In repeated meditative concentration, this sentence may do more toward understanding the resurrection body than any abstract definition. This passage will be found especially fruitful if it is concentrated into the word *amen*. Thus a start may be made from the human Saturn body, which consists entirely of the warmth of will, "the beginning of the creation of God." Again, the object of concentration may be the fact that only this saturnine body has been, from the beginning, a witness to the whole cosmic evolution. Finally—after having studied it with respect to *space* and *time*, its nature may be considered in detail in relation to the word *amen*, which expresses its being. The

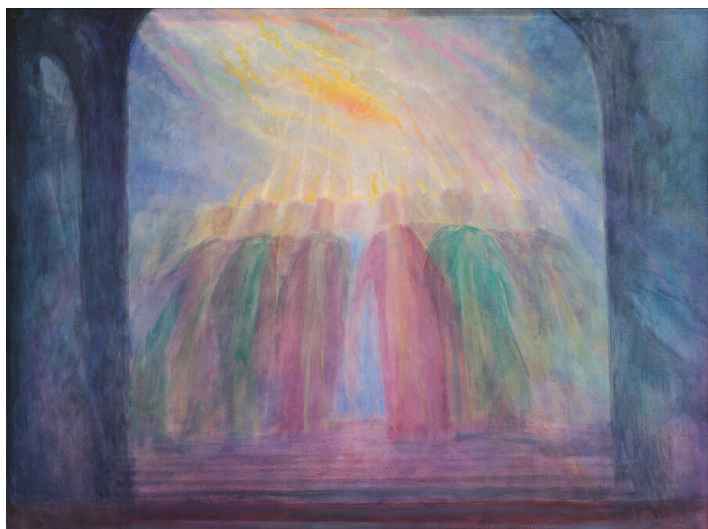
special point here is moral concentration of the word's phonetic sound. The individual sounds of which it consists can lead to inner recognition of the individual currents of the resurrection body. Thus, *a* sound leads to understanding the "risen head", or the current of relationship to the cosmic heights. The *m* sound reveals the "risen hands", or the current in cosmic space. The *e* sound leads to the inner life of the resurrection body, and the *n* sound reveals the force of its denial of evil-the strength of its resistance to evil-as shown in the descent into Hell.

The individual forces indicated by the individual sounds manifest with special power in particular situations of the life and work of Jesus Christ. The *n* force was especially revealed in the descent into hell, and likewise the *e* force was revealed in the passion, especially the night in Gethsemane. The *m* force showed itself particularly in the healings and miracles, and the Jordan baptism is the particular point at which the *a* force is clearly perceptible. Thus the word *amen* is the epitome of the work of Christ, just as the resurrection body is the epitome of the cosmic evolution. The significance of *amen* was known to the evangelists; John summarizes his Gospel by concluding with this word, which holds the contents of all those books that must still be written in order to give a complete description of Christ's work-books that have never been written because "even the world itself could not contain them."

This word thus forms a link in the body of work with what these meditations on the New Testament offer as a contribution to Christology. The next, and final chapter (of this book) will be devoted to the Pentecost, an event that is not just the fruit of events recorded in the Gospels, but also an introduction to the future events of the Apocalypse.



Ninetta Sombart: Three Women at the grave.



Whitsun Morning