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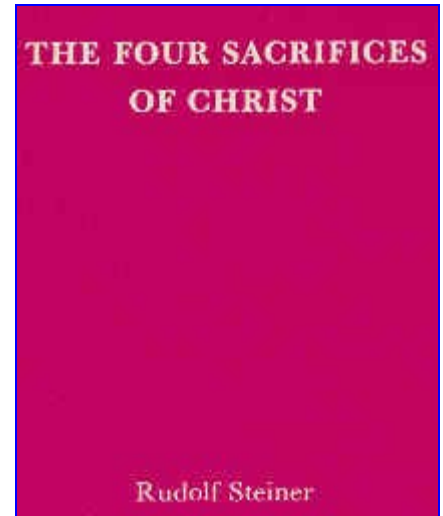
The Four Sacrifices of Christ
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152

by

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From the title one might expect to find Steiner talking about four sacrifices that Christ Jesus made in the Bible, but only one of the sacrifices is written in the Bible, and that is the one which Steiner calls the Deed of Golgotha. The other three sacrifices are written in our human bodies and souls. These first three occurred long before writing came into being, and only the second and third appears to us out of the ages, not in the form of writing, but in the form of striking images.

What is a sacrifice if not a selfless act? One undergoes or gives up something for another. Four times during the Earth epoch of human evolution, Christ has unselfishly undergone a courageous act for the benefit of humankind. We have been the recipient of these four unselfish deeds, and we are consciously aware of only the fourth and most recent deed, up until now.

We focus on the fourth deed — the Deed of Golgotha — because it is the one nearest to us and thus the one we know the most about. It is a deed of the utmost unselfishness: Christ became a man and sacrificed his life for us. The implications of this deed for humankind, rightly understood, reverberate through the spiritual and physical worlds, but human beings can learn the lesson of unselfishness through study of that deed as it is given to us in the Bible.

[page 1] We can search through the entire evolution of the world without finding a deeper understanding of selflessness than that offered by Christ's appearance upon earth. To know Christ is to go through the school of unselfishness (*italics added*), and to become acquainted with all those incentives to human development that fall gently into our souls, warming and animating every unselfish inclination within us, arousing it from passive to active soul life.

If we only know of the fourth and final deed of unselfishness of Christ, then it may be said that we have skipped the first three grades of the school of unselfishness. This is a lack which Steiner endeavors to fill by dint of this lecture. How are we different as a result of the first three deeds of unselfishness? Steiner tells us that although these three deeds occurred in the supersensible world, they directly effected human evolution, and each of us is different today because of these deeds of unselfishness.

Everyone knows that the average human being today is selfish in the areas of moral, intellectual, and emotional life. But what if our sensory apparatus had the same degree of selfishness? If they did, the mere act of seeing colors would cause us pain. We would be unable to enjoy the grandeur of a pastoral scene if the red colors were to cause stabbing pains in our eyes and the blue colors were to feel as though something were being sucked from us.

If this concept of selfless senses seems strange to you, consider the difference between a selfless helper and one who is selfish. The best helpers are those who are invisible and yet provide the things you need when you need them. Consider a waiter who brings you water when your glass is empty without your having to request it or without the waiter interrupting your conversation at the table. It just happens. This is a crude example, but it illustrates the boon that the first deed of Christ has brought us today with respect to our sensory apparatus. They now work smoothly without pain or interruption, merely passing to us what they have for us, like an expert waiter would.

[page 3] We have eyes in our body; through these eyes we see, but only because they are selfless and we do not feel them. We see things through them, but the eyes themselves are apart from our perception; it is the same with the other senses. Let us assume that our eyes were self-seeking. What would happen to men? We should approach the color blue, for example, and because our eyes would use up the color immediately within themselves instead of letting it pass through, we should feel a sort of suction in our eyes. If our eyes were as selfish as we are in our moral, intellectual and emotional life, and they wished to experience the effect of red in themselves, we should feel a sharp stab. If our eyes were self-seeking, all our impressions would give us sucking or stabbing pains. We should be painfully conscious of color and light without having to think of the seeing process. The eye is selflessly extinguished during perception.

We can now see that, but for that first deed of Christ, we would be treated by our senses the way we might be treated by a rude waiter who would constantly be bumping into us, slamming down plates, or tugging at us for money or making various other importunate requests that selfish servers might do. This would have been the legacy of Lucifer, but for the correction provided by the deed and sacrifice of Christ. An archangel offered up his soul powers and the Christ became ensouled in him, prefiguring what was to happen much later to Jesus of Nazareth during the events surrounding his Baptism by John.

[page 5] Through this means a force was released that acted within human evolution upon earth. Its effect was a quieting and harmonizing of our senses so that today we can use them and find them selfless. If we, understanding this, have become grateful to the world order, we shall say, looking back to these ancient times, that what makes it possible to us as sensory beings to enjoy without pain all the splendor of surrounding nature is Christ's first sacrifice.

To understand the second deed of Christ, it helps to know the basis of organic disease. The human organs comprise an enterprise and each organ must perform its proper function in harmony with the other organs for the enterprise to be successful or healthy. What happens in the case of disease in the human body is much like what happens in an enterprise in the business world when one or more employees of a company become selfish and strive to further themselves over the other employees. A displacement of resources and attention ensues and a disease develops in the enterprise. It begins to fail or to fall into ill health. Oftentimes a management consultant will be called in to instill harmony in the employees and thus restore the health of the organization.

In the human organization it was the agency of Lucifer and Ahriman that led the human body into disease due to its vital organs becoming selfish. One knows when that is occurring in one's body because the selfish organ begins to be a source of pain, e. g., stomach ache, kidney stones, gall stones, heart palpitations, pleurisy, liver complaint, etc.

[page 6] . . . think what it is like when injured by organic disease. Then man begins to suffer from the self-seeking of heart, lungs, stomach or other organs, and the time comes when man knows that he has a heart or a stomach, knows it by direct experience, because he has a pain. To be ill means that an organ has become selfish and is leading its own independent life within us. In ordinary normal conditions this is not the case. Then the single organs live selflessly within us. Our everyday constitution holds us up securely

in the physical world only when we do not feel that we have stomach, lungs, etc., but have them without feeling them, when they do not demand our attention but remain unselfish servants of the body.

Each food we eat has a certain affinity or dis-affinity to some organ of our body. If we still possessed selfish organs, we would be torn this way and that by these various attractions and repulsions. We would be unable to think straight if it had not been for the second deed of Christ during the first part of the Atlantean epoch.

[page 8] The Christ Being ensouled Himself again in an archangel, and what was accomplished by this deed shone down into the earth's atmosphere. Then that harmonizing and balancing of the vital organs took place that rendered them selfless.

We have seen the need for harmony and selflessness in the senses of our physical body and how the first deed achieved this. Next we saw the need for harmony in the organs of our living body and how the second deed achieved this. The next need for harmony arose in the human functions of thinking, feeling, and willing. Unless these three components of our volition are in harmony, we will be taken in one direction by our thinking, another by our feeling, and another by our willing. The disharmony wrought in our thinking, feeling, and willing by Lucifer and Ahriman needed a correction and brought about the third sacrifice of Christ near the end of the Atlantean epoch.

[page 10] Once more the Christ Being ensouled Himself in an archangel, and the power thus generated in the spiritual world made possible the harmonization of thinking, feeling, and willing. Truly, as the rays of the physical sun must act upon earth to prevent the withering of plant life, so must the Sun Spirit be reflected upon earth from supramundane spheres as I have just explained.

The fourth sacrifice of Christ came during the Earth Epoch of evolution about 2,000 years ago, and it is the one we all know most about. To begin this deed Christ became incarnated or ensouled into the body of Jesus of Nazareth as He was baptized in the Jordan by John. The events of this fourth deed we have ample records of, including four Gospels filled with the words of Christ Jesus as recorded by those who knew Him personally.

What traces of the first three deeds do we have? None of the first deed in the days of Lemuria before the Moon separated from Earth, so far as I know. Perhaps some exegete may be able to point to an ancient myth which records in metaphoric form the first deed of Christ to harmonize our senses. The second deed seems to have a trace left in the myth of Prometheus⁽¹⁾. Prometheus was one of the Titans, a gigantic race, who inhabited the earth before the creation of man. For his transgression of stealing fire, Prometheus was bound to a boulder and an eagle ate at his liver all day long. During the bitter cold of the mountain night, his liver became whole again. The pain from his liver, one of his vital organs, being pecked at all day, could point to the pain which humans had in their selfish organs before the second deed of Christ which was to bring harmony to our internal organs.

The third deed takes us from the fog of myth of the second deed to more recent historical times. It has a ritual associated with it in the time of classical Greece. It involves human beings of historical times who sat in the temple at Delphi and spoke as an oracle of Apollo. Citizens from lowly peasants to the highest kings came to the Oracle to ask advice before making important decisions. Unable on their own to reconcile their thinking, feeling, and willing which tore them in different directions, they asked for Apollo the Sun God to intercede for them and give them advice which would bring them to a harmonious decision in the urgent matter before them.

The words of the Oracle came from a priestess called the Pythia who sat on a spot where a gas exuded from the ground. She went into a trance, became a Sibyl, and answered in the words of Apollo the questions asked of her. Note that the name Pythia came from a dragon, Python, which Apollo had slain.

This is important because, in our time, two figures appear who are famous for slaying a dragon: St. George and Michael the Archangel. In the image of Michael we find the Archangel holding his foot on the squirming figure of a dragon or snake while poised with his sword to slay the beast forthwith. It is as though the squirming of the serpent represents the thinking, feeling, and willing of humankind which will be ever at odds unless and until the serpent is dispatched by an Archangel ensouled by Christ. The stories of Apollo, St. George, and Michael the Archangel can be seen as three re-tellings of the third deed of Christ.

The Oracle of Apollo was important to the ancient Greeks because it was a ritualized enactment of the third deed of Christ in ancient times, which was the latest of the three deeds and predated the fourth deed which was yet to come. Even though the fourth deed had not yet occurred, the Greeks knew of the coming of the fourth deed. The first passage below tells us what the Greeks said of the harmonization of man's thinking, feeling and willing, and the second tells us of their expectation for the Christ one day to become ensouled in man. First, Steiner tells us what the Greeks would have said about the third deed of Christ:

[page 11] "Thou Sun Spirit," so said those who knew something about it, "Thou hast ensouled Thyself in an etheric spirit form," for such is the form of those we call archangels today; "Thou has brought thinking, feeling and willing, which might otherwise rage through us in confusion, into order with Thy lyre, sounding upon it harmoniously the tones of the human soul!"

Steiner quotes what Justin Martyr said, "Heraclites, Socrates and Plato were also Christians, the only kind of Christian possible before the actual consummation of the Mystery of Golgotha." He tells us of the Greek sages' prophecy of the coming fourth sacrifice of Christ:

[page 12] "The great Sun Spirit, Who in the future will live as a man on earth, appears to us in Apollo as though ensouled in him in the form of an archangel."

Lastly, Steiner tells us of the fourth deed which happened exactly as the ancient Greek sages had predicted in their mystery wisdom.

[page 12] Then came the fourth, the earthly mystery, that of Golgotha. The same Christ Being Who had ensouled Himself three times in archangelic form incarnated through what we call the Baptism by John in the Jordan in the body of Jesus of Nazareth.

[page 13] . . . this averted another danger, that of the Luciferic and Ahrimanic influences upon the human ego or I. In the Lemurian age the sense organs would have been disordered through Lucifer; in the first Atlantean period the vital organs were threatened with disorder and disharmony, and in the late Atlantean era the soul organs, the organs that underlie thinking, feeling and willing. In the post-Atlantean period the human ego itself was endangered.

SUMMARY of FOUR DEEDS

The four deeds of Christ seem to me to be summarized in the last four passages of the Our Father, the one prayer given to us by Christ Jesus explicitly as a prayer. In each of the four deeds we hear the refrain, "Not I, but Christ in me." A refrain we must learn to say for "every step into the spiritual world shows us this." (Page 15)

1. Deed of Sensory Harmony — "Give us this day our daily bread." — allow us to absorb everything around us of the physical world through our senses in harmony with You.

2. Deed of Vital Organs Harmony — "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." — Help bring us into selfless harmony with those around us as You

have done with the vital organs within us.

3. Deed of Thinking, Feeling and Willing Harmony — "Lead us not into temptation." — Help us rein our forces of thinking, feeling and willing into harmony so that we will never be led astray by either our thinking, feeling, or willing into doing something harmful to ourselves or others.

4. Deed of Ego Harmony — "Deliver us from evil." — Help us to so use our own I in harmony with the forces of the cosmos for good.

About the fourth deed or Mystery of Golgotha, Steiner tells us that it had to happen at the time it did or the human ego itself would have been in danger.

[page 13, 14] Because the ego or I at this time was to take its place as a living factor in human evolution, an effort was made to establish harmony between this ego and the powers of the cosmos lest it become their plaything. This might have happened. The ego might have so developed that it could not keep a hold upon itself, and had it been delivered to these forces, everything that came from the soul would have been overpowered by all sorts of elemental forces that arise from wind, air or water. They would have driven the human being violently in all directions.

In one of his rare replies to his critics, Steiner gives a potent metaphor for us to grasp the reality of the spiritual forces which enter us human beings. To think otherwise, he says, would be to think that hunger creates the bread which arrives to satisfy it. It is a wisdom lost on the clever materialists of our time, up until now.

[page 16] I know that superficial critics may say, "You are a fool; you believe that spiritual powers come to you from without, whereas they simply rise from your own inner being." Let them think me a fool; I regard them as belonging to the clever men who cannot distinguish hunger from a piece of bread. I know how spiritual powers from without flow into human beings. The idea that hunger creates the bread that satisfies it — believed only by a crazy man — is as false as that the power of our own soul can create the forces needed for our spiritual activities. These forces must flow into us.

As evidence of these powers flowing into us, Steiner tells of a friend who died and appeared afterward as a guardian angel helping him and others in producing mystery plays.

[page 17] We felt well protected, and looked gratefully upward, realizing that what penetrated us and flowed over into our earthly activities was an expression of the watchfulness of a spiritual personality. But then when it came to conversation with this personality — one may call it a conversation since there was a certain reciprocal action — she asserted that she found the way to us easier the more we were permeated with the thought of Christ in the evolution of the earth. If I were to put into earthly words what she reiterated, I should say, expressing symbolically, of course, what is quite different in the spiritual world, "I find the way to you so easily because you are finding evermore the way to make spiritual science into an expression of the living Word of Christ."

The Christ impulse will become for us the living bridge between earthly life and life in superphysical worlds.

It would be easy for us if we could get hungry and bread would appear before our mouths, or if we reached a chasm and suddenly a bridge were to fill the gap for us to walk over. It would be magical and we could do all things with those powers out of selfishness which would bring disaster upon us and the world. Instead we must, as human beings in the flesh, grow or earn our daily bread, and we must build bridges with our hands and tools if we would span a chasm. But, if we recall that, in all things, it is "Not I, but Christ in me." which is our ever present help in need, we can ask for our daily bread and be assured

that it will come, and we can ask for a bridge to span the chasm between the physical and spiritual worlds and He will lay down His body and become that Living Bridge for us.

----- *Footnotes* -----

Footnote 1. January 11, 2006: Suggested to me by Edward Reaugh Smith in a private communication.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 1.](#)

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