

## **St. Paul's Conversion/Initiation Experience In Light of the Easter Thought**

### **A Daily Meditation for Holy Week: Palm Sunday (Day I)**

By Bill Trusiewicz

Dear Friends

For the eight days of Holy week this Easter season let us examine St. Paul's conversion/initiation experience on the road to Damascus within the context of the Easter thought. Students of spiritual science are aware that Rudolf Steiner referred to this event in the life of St. Paul as the archetypal meeting with Christ in the etheric, as a template for our own experience of meeting Christ. As we will see such a study is well suited to the seasonal spirit of Sacrifice, Death, and Resurrection.

In examining the Damascus event we can realize that what Saul (who was later called Paul) experienced was an initiation that contained within it the form and substance of the Mystery of Golgotha itself. It was a microcosmic passion, crucifixion, and resurrection. How fitting then it is for us to examine St. Paul's conversion/initiation during the Easter season!

In the study that follows *our* Holy Week will *not* be marked out by the happenings of the last week of the life of Jesus Christ that Christian tradition commemorates but will concentrate on the actual passion (suffering) from the Garden of Gethsemane to the hill of Golgotha and will continue through to the Entombment and Resurrection. Before we begin, let us briefly recall the circumstances from the Biblical account.

While Saul (later called Paul) was on his way to Damascus having the authority of the chief priests to capture and imprison the Christians there, an occupation in which he had been engaged for some time, he was seized by a vision and fell to the ground. I won't describe his vision myself but will relay what has been written into scripture, of Paul's own words, probably penned by Luke the physician from the New Testament Acts of the Apostles.

Twenty three years after his conversion Paul was arrested and imprisoned for two years by the Jews. He appealed to Rome as a citizen to be freed from his accusers who believed him worthy of death. It was King Agrippa that gave him audience to speak in his own defense. The text quoted below is the part of what he spoke to King Agrippa that concerns us here:

At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking to me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks. And I said, who art

thou Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet: for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in which I will appear to you. (The Acts 26:13-16)

To penetrate to the spirit of this account let us begin with a question about Paul's account of his experience on the way to Damascus: What light is it that is more brilliant than the already quite bright Sun we are so familiar with? Let us consider: each day our Sun bathes the space around us so that our eye can meet a marvelous multifaceted, multi-formed natural world in vision: the mineral, plant, animal and human kingdoms appear to us. The Sun is our great benefactor, blessing us with sight and mobility through its light and warmth. Without it we would be blind and frozen immobile, unable to sustain biological life functions. This we know. Obviously, the light "brighter than the sun" is not merely a physical light but a moral light that lets us see to a depth normally unseen. If we have ever stood in that supernal light "above the brightness of the sun" that St. Paul experienced we will know what he saw. As aspiring students of mystery wisdom we won't be surprised to know what Saul saw and what he knew in the first moments of his conversion: *we are persecutors of Jesus Christ*. If we don't know this, if we are not convinced that this is what and who we are, then we are not ready to experience the further revelation of St. Paul. The mystery behind the saying *Know Thyself*, the central dictum of all mystery traditions, is only known by the light "above the brightness of the sun," which first illuminates our complicity with the dark forces of the double. In alchemical parlance this experience may be likened to "the blackness" or "nigredo," which is referred to as "the beginning of the work."

This nigredo experience brings us right to where we want to begin our Easter meditation: the blackness of the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus experienced a great darkness pressing in upon him, and which marks for us the beginning of what spiritually is the passion leading to the crucifixion. He was left quite alone in the garden as he prayed confronting an enormous blackness. At this point his closest disciples were not equal to the task or supporting him in his prayers. Rudolf Steiner tells us that Jesus confronted a panorama or tableau of agony that humanity would endure in the future as a result of events following the Mystery of Golgotha—a darkness that he would have to embrace, to acknowledge and allow because of the nature of the forces operating in human evolution. The darkness that Saul experienced on the road to Damascus was a microcosmic reflection of the darkness of Gethsemane we are referring to here. It was a tableau of the agony caused by Saul's antagonism towards the light and its future ramifications. It was also the required backdrop for the brilliance that was brighter than the sun—the experience that made Saul into Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles.

Since this is a serial post, I will end this first episode here and leave it for my readers to contemplate this all-important initial step towards transformation and I will return daily to carry this meditation forward to its conclusion on Easter Sunday.

Warmest wishes to all,

Bill

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## **St. Paul's Conversion/Initiation Experience In Light of the Easter Thought**

### **A Daily Meditation for Holy Week: Monday (Day II)**

By Bill Trusiewicz

Dear Friends,

Continuing on from our last post, we are exploring the Christ event as it precipitated for St. Paul as a way of deepening into the Easter mood. We noted earlier that St. Paul's conversion was a micro-cosmic repeat of the Mystery of Golgotha and was an initiation that contained within it the elements of the passion, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Last we examined the devastating blow that Saul experienced when Christ spoke to him out of a "light brighter than the sun." He said to him: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" We considered what that meant and realized that it pointed to an admission Saul had to make—that he was persecuting Jesus whom he now recognized as the Lord. That was his "nigredo" experience—"the blackness" which in alchemy is the "beginning of the work." He had to see his complicity with evil, his dark side.

Let us notice today in the text from the Acts of the Apostles how the spirit speaks to Saul, using his name twice: "Saul, Saul?" It appears that he is addressing two parts of Saul. It is as if he is first addressing what we might call his "day self," or his "everyday self" just to get his attention; and then with the second "Saul" he is calling to his "night self" to the depths of Saul, to *doreal business* with him.

By all outward accounts, according to his "daylight consciousness," Saul was a good person: zealous for the law, zealous for what most Jews considered the highest good. As far as he could see, he was engaged in good works; he was doing all the right things to promote the ideas of the greater spiritual community in which he played an important role.

Righteous Saul, now encompassed by the brilliance of Christ, immediately fell to the ground when hearing the spirit speak, and asked: “Who are you, Lord?” And the Lord spoke: “I am Jesus that you are persecuting.”

So we see that Saul is able to see himself, the good, zealous-for-the-law Saul, in a completely new light. His fall to the ground is a recognition of his lower nature, a coming to terms with what is earthy in him. As we noted earlier, this is part of the “blackness” or “nigredo” experience, another way to express the passion aspect of the Christian initiation that we all must face if we are going to meet Christ in the Etheric, if we are going to be partakers of his resurrection like Saul.

Notice how once Saul falls to the ground, he names the voice that comes out of the brilliant light, “Lord.” That is how it must be for us. Once we “fall to the ground” we can utter that word—“Lord,” as we should—submissively with warmth and gratitude. Before we recognize our complicity with “the underworld” our egos won’t let us; we can only utter this word grudgingly.

Here we are witnessing the birth of the higher ego in St. Paul. Once the “blackness” is acknowledged, a “candle” is lit in the human psyche, the candle by which at once our hearts may be warmed and our heads enlightened.

I’ll leave you, my dear friends, with these words to contemplate until I return for the next installment.

Easter blessings,

Bill

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## **St. Paul’s Conversion/Initiation Experience In Light of the Easter Thought**

### **A Daily Meditation for Holy Week: Tuesday (Day III)**

By Bill Trusiewicz

My dear Friends,

Continuing our Easter meditation we find St. Paul's initiation/conversion experience on the road to Damascus is a sort of mini replication of the events of the passion, crucifixion and the resurrection and a template for our own experience of meeting Christ in the Etheric

Last we saw Saul in the midst of his initiation having fallen to the ground after he heard the voice of the Lord out of the brilliant light. "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And Saul said: "Who are you, Lord?" And the Lord spoke: "I am Jesus that you are persecuting: it is hard for you to kick against the pricks."

According to Saul's everyday consciousness, it wasn't Jesus that he was persecuting. He was persecuting a bunch of unruly zealots who were a threat to the nation of Israel and to the ancient wisdom upon which it was founded. Saul was a learned man, a devout man, a Pharisee. Jesus was a false prophet who had led these zealots astray from the truth and he had been crucified. But something monumental is happening to Saul here. In the brilliant light there was a voice he recognized as "the Lord." As a devout Jew, Saul knew who "the Lord" was. But we see both recognition and confusion when he says: "Who are you, Lord." To which the Lord answers: "I AM Jesus..."

Let us try to imagine what those first two words from the resurrected Jesus Christ must have sounded like--"I am..?" Before his death Jesus had spoken those same words when Judas and the soldiers came to arrest him, when he and his close disciples were leaving the Garden of Gethsemane. In that case his "I am" had such power that those who came to arrest him all fell to the ground. Significant is the fact that, in this case, Saul was already on the ground when he heard the "I am." Saul knew well the story of Moses meeting with the "I am" on Mount Sinai. But, we shouldn't imagine here some outer force or power overwhelming him like it did Moses with lightning, thunder, thick cloud, and earth quakes. Remember, these two words were those that were not to be spoken aloud by devout Jews; they were too intimate, too private, and too holy to be spoken out loud.

How can we presume to speak of the profound inwardness being expressed here? Any idea of it must be inadequate; nevertheless we should try. Perhaps Saul heard those words as if spoken from the periphery, all around him and not from a specific point like every other sound he was wont to hear—utterly strange and yet uncannily familiar at the same time, resonating, as it were, inside and outside of him at the same time—saying "I AM". What a revolution must have been going inside of him when he heard those words? Perhaps it was like being swept off his feet and out to sea by a great wave and turbulence that appeared out of nowhere and then deposited on a sturdy rock ledge that he could feel beneath him but could not see for the violent waters. Whatever he experienced, there is little doubt that the words "I AM" shook him to the core of his being.

We *can* imagine the revolution happening in Saul as something of a Crucifixion. What used to be "I am" for Saul completely paled, even obliterated before this new "I AM." A sacrifice was taking place inside of him. It was as if the high priest was putting a whole burnt

offering into the fire—and it was he himself—the sort of thing thoughtful Saul had no doubt barely glimpsed numerous times on the threshold of sleep, witnessing it now in a flash of consciousness in his own fiery imagination. Perhaps, in that moment, he felt a kinship with his ancestor Isaac who had been put on an altar for an offering to Jahveh by Father Abraham. We can't doubt that something like this must have flashed through his mind, the devout Israelite that he was. Something that unites the outer and the inner, destroying the sense of self and other, in a flash of bliss that penetrates and annihilates even the most dense substance.

Let us ask ourselves as we “tune in” to the Etheric Christ during this Easter season, can we hear the voice that Saul heard, the profoundly inward “I am” as it resounds within us, within the cosmos and within the life-body of the Earth? As it resonates in the crystal, plant, animal, and human worlds united with the world of the gods? How precious our world becomes when we can?

With these words, my dear friends, I will leave you to contemplate the Easter Mystery further.

Warmest wishes,

Bill

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## **St. Paul's Conversion/Initiation Experience In Light of the Easter Thought**

### **A Daily Meditation for Holy Week: Wednesday (Day IV)**

By Bill Trusiewicz

My dear Friends,

In keeping with the Easter Thought, in our last meditation we sought to understand and feel what Saul felt when the words, “I am Jesus, that you are persecuting,” came to him out of the light that was more brilliant than the Sun. The great “I AM” was speaking to him with profoundly INWARD consequences. Today, let us consider the aspect of Jesus that comes to us as an OUTER reality.

What place does this outer-man Jesus have in what we often call the Christ Mystery? The usual emphasis on Jesus being God often obscures the *concrete physical reality* of Jesus.

Jesus can become altogether a sort of phantasm for us, an unreal person: someone not like us. It is natural to have this tenor of thought in the face the profound mystery of the incarnation. Think of it: here is Saul, having been knocked over by a voice coming from a light more brilliant than the Sun—and the light calls himself “Jesus.” Not exactly an everyday experience! Yes, this Jesus is surrounded by mystery after mystery. But let us imagine him as the real-life human being that he was, realizing that to our everyday consciousness we would meet him as a person not so different from ourselves. Consider how his friend Lazarus must have met him returning to Bethany after one of his long journeys on foot. We see a hard body, darkened by long walks in the sun, with sweat and dust glistening on his forehead, shoulders, arms, and neck. His hair is disheveled—his chest rising and falling with each breath, lips parted in a faint smile, eyes moving deliberately from here to there—flashing with both a dark intensity and with a near uncanny delight in all that he sees—so full as he was of love and faith. Gazing momentarily into the eyes of his friend Lazarus no doubt brought an especially intense spark into his eyes. They probably hugged and kissed each other as was the custom of men at that time.

Is it not incredibly beautiful to think about the incarnation—about Christ as a man? Looking at him we can’t help but discover what a marvelous thing it is after all—to be a human being. There is nothing more beautiful than a human being. Nothing. He reminds us of that.

For me, the German Romantic polymath and poet Novalis, is able to give tribute like no other to the human being. For an example: In his first *Hymn to the Night* he speaks of the stars, the stones, the plants and the beasts, who appreciate the “all-joyous light” of the waking day—“but more than all, *the lordly stranger with the meaning eyes, the swaying walk, and the sweetly closed, melodious lips.*”<sup>[1]</sup>

Or perhaps if we can silence ourselves to feel the moment when at the foot of the palace steps facing the open piazza of the Signoria in Florence, Italy, a colossal white marble statue was unveiled for the first time, was set free from the crate in which it was carried from the studio of Michelangelo for the eyes of Florentines and countless world citizens to see. The David—a symbol of human dignity previously unknown in sculptural art, a noble and magnificent human being—stood there with its living human surface of white marble gleaming in the moonlight and its eyes piercing the clear air with the intensity of an archangel. Such moments do speak of the beauty of the human being.

We should ask ourselves if we might still remember the beauty of the human being, like Novalis or Michelangelo did, were it not for this MAN Jesus?

All the more do we cringe when we see him being abused and tormented by the masses present at the Passion that was only a prelude to the crucifixion. Brutally beaten, scourged, whipped, mocked, spit at, forced to carry the heavy cross; we see the man Jesus as he struggled up the hill to Golgotha—the place of the skull.

We see how he willingly let them “grind him to powder” in the crucible which was the Passion—that he might so become “the bread of life” for us in resurrection. He came as seed and as “a grain of wheat that must fall to the ground and die—that it might bring forth much fruit.” By allowing himself to be so broken, and “ground to powder” he made himself to be food for us—the Bread of Life. And how this saying is so we will examine further in this series.

But as Saul discovered in his Damascus experience, we ALL need to “fall to the ground and die” and be “ground to powder” so that we can become the bread of life for each other—we together as the true communion of the saints. St. Paul certainly became “the bread of life” to countless people across the Middle East and Europe in the course of his several journeys there.

With that my dear friends I leave you to ponder further the passion that must accompany our own initiation and which must precede our own “resurrection.”

Warm Easter wishes,

Bill

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## **St. Paul’s Conversion/Initiation Experience In Light of the Easter Thought**

### **A Daily Meditation for Holy Week: Thursday (Day V)**

By Bill Trusiewicz

Dear Friends,

Over the last four days of holy week we have been considering how St. Paul’s experience of conversion/initiation was a micro-cosmic version of the events of—the passion, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have in mind the fact that this experience of St. Paul is an archetype of our own conversion/initiation: it contains not only the substance and form of the Mystery of Golgotha but it provides the substance and form of our own meeting with Christ. How appropriate then, for the Easter season, is it for us to internalize the outer facts of the events we consider each year at this time?



Let us review a part of the text we have been considering over the past four days. The verses are from The Acts 26: 12-15, in which Paul recounts his experience before King Agrippa.

“At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” It is hard for you to kick against the pricks. And I said, who art thou Lord? And he said, I am Jesus that you are persecuting.”

Today we will move on to the statement: “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.”

What does this statement mean? Firstly, it describes a method used with oxen in the Middle East to direct or prod them, in which a wooden instrument with a metal point was used. The animal was poked or prodded with a “prick.” Sometimes the ox would “kick against the pricks,” in which case it would cause more pain than otherwise.

What does this tell us about Saul? It tells us that Saul was, evidently, being directed or guided by the Lord and that instead of receiving the guidance he was “kicking against” it. We don’t know what specifically he is referring to, the text does not tell us. But it does seem to indicate that Saul was acting unconsciously, instinctively, kicking like an ox, while Christ was trying to guide him.

Considering this verse we might find it interesting and illuminating to briefly consider a far Eastern spiritual tradition that portrays an Ox, metaphorically, to describe the path to enlightenment. In Zen, the “Ten Ox Herding Pictures” indicate the technique of “taming the Ox,” in which the lower self is eventually brought into harmony with the higher self. (I am not using proper Zen terms here.) The animal depicts our unruly lower nature. We might say that we achieve freedom in our soul (lower “animal” self) when we discover and embrace our higher “I am,” (our “spirit” self) and allow it to transform our lower nature. This is clearly what is happening with Saul. We spoke already about the “I AM” that addressed him and his lower “I am” response. Now, what can we make of this comparison in terms of the Easter Thought?

The events of the Mystery of Golgotha are often described as an act of “propitiation” or of “atonement” for humanity on the part of Jesus Christ. What does this mean? It means that somehow it was an appeasement or satisfaction of what we might call antagonistic forces that are naturally active in the human drama of the unfolding of consciousness in spiritual evolution. We might call those forces “ox forces.” How was this appeasement accomplished? It was possible because the sufferings that Jesus Christ endured, that were so pronounced in the culminating events in Palestine to which we refer, were completely undeserved. He did not need to endure these sufferings and trials to tame his lower nature—his “ox.” He possessed a superior nature and lived purely by its dictates. What he

endured was the direct result of human beings' tendency to AVOID taming themselves. The example of purity and love, of unselfish service to others is offensive to the lower nature in human beings in general. What Christ suffered during what we call "holy week" was a projection (to use a Jungian term) of the guilt of human depravity. What humanity was "saying" in this case was: "We don't want to know how good we can be or should be; we are happy with our status—we want to remain as we are, as "untamed oxen;" even our religion sanctions it."

How then did Christ propitiate or appease this antagonism in humanity? By displaying a spirit far and above what is natural for human beings. He allowed this antagonistic spirit its way. He submitted himself to it in an unmitigated way: he did not resist it. During this season we should consider *the underlying spirit of the passion*. Everyone can see the severe abuse and suffering Christ endured—what we call "the passion." In a way, the suffering is not the point. The point is that he never condemned anyone; he never spoke a vindictive word or cast a disapproving glance as he suffered. He was "saying" to humanity: "I understand. I won't hold you accountable. You can heap all of your complaints on me. I am greater than this problem. I have come to clear all of this up. I am the door to a depth deeper than your anger, to a dimension that is pure and strong that "stands under" all of this antagonism in your life; I under-stand; I can hold it; I can handle it; I can pacify it. See me: I am at peace. I am the way. I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. Come to me and find rest for your souls. You can live free of antagonism." That is how propitiation or appeasement works!

With these words, my dear friends, I leave you again to ponder the great mystery we have before us. It is the Mystery of Easter and, if you will, it is the mystery of what is beginning to bud and flower, what is raised again to life each year on this troubled, beautiful planet we share.

Best Easter wishes,

Bill

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## **St. Paul's Conversion/Initiation Experience In Light of the Easter Thought**

### **A Daily Meditation for Holy Week: Good Friday (Day VI)**

By Bill Trusiewicz

Dear Friends,

Today is Good Friday, also called Black Friday, the day of the Crucifixion. We are reviewing St. Paul's conversion/initiation experience on the road to Damascus with an eye towards the theme of Easter, the time when Christians acknowledge the passion, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In a certain sense every individual conversion/initiation is a repeat of the culminating events of Holy Week, the last week of our Lord's life. So, looking at St. Paul's experience is a good opportunity to internalize all of the external events leading up to Golgotha and through to the morning after when Mary Magdalene sees the risen Christ at the sepulcher.

For this day's offering, let us move forward taking note of Saul's next question and Jesus' answer:

"Lord, what will you have me do? Arise; stand on your feet... Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened he saw no man: but they led him by the hand...And he was THREE DAYS without sight..."

This Black Friday it seems appropriate that we follow this exchange between Saul and Jesus, making it our focus because, in a certain way Saul's blindness for THREE DAYSmirrors Christ's death and the THREE DAYS it was prophesied that he would remain in "the bowels" of the earth.

It is a strange saying: "and when his eyes were opened *he saw no man...*" But it is not so obscure as to be incomprehensible. When the Bible refers to the "eyes being opened" it usually refers to a higher seeing having been imparted—not merely physically opening the eyes. In the context one understands that when Saul's "eyes were opened" it refers to his spiritual eyes. So, with his spiritual eyes opened, the fact that "he saw no man" is highly significant. Clearly Saul remained physically blind for three days due to the brightness of the light he had seen. But the others had seen this light and were not blinded—for they gave him a hand and led him to Damascus. The explanation, like the first, is spiritual. The light was a spiritual light and the blindness was a spiritual blindness that manifested on the physical plane for Saul but not for the others.

To further penetrate this text let us consider the other three days, the three days that Christ Jesus was in the so-called "bowels of the earth." Just after his death we know that his body was laid in a sepulcher and when Mary Magdalene and some of the holy women came back again on the morning after the Sabbath, they discovered that his body was gone.

There is, of course, a great mystery surrounding this period of three days; there is "a darkness," we might say, connected with it. There has been much speculation and spiritual research into this mystery. To illuminate the matter briefly, we could realize that there was a process that had to be undergone by the body of Jesus, involving the physical human

aspect, in relation to the cosmic, Christ aspect. Something had to occur that would allow the earthly elements of the human Jesus to be further transformed as a prototype for future human beings' transformation by the Christ principle. The physical body of Jesus had to undergo a spiritual/alchemical transformation in order to be elevated, in order to ascend to the Father.

During this period of three days something of the constitution of the human being was altered by Christ for all time. He did something that can work in all of us for all time. We might think of the change as having to do with altering the physicality of human beings so that the spiritual light of Christ might penetrate more deeply during life and that after death an element of the physical might be able to ascend to the Father.

Now back to Saul, who is in the process of becoming Paul. It was during the three days of Saul's blindness that the real transformation took place. The process was *initiated* when he encountered Jesus in the light and was *consummated* (as we shall see in a following post) after his three days of blindness. What happened during those three days?

As we noticed earlier, when Saul became blind, the writer of the account does not say that Saul could see nothing. He says that "he saw no man." Though the text doesn't say that he couldn't see at all, the context seems to indicate such. In the economics of holy writ what we see here is a veiled allusion to something less obvious. With these words, the writer is indicating that Saul's "seeing of men" was undergoing a transformation. Just as the three days Jesus Christ spent in the earth reconstituting the physical human archetype, Saul's seeing of the human being had to be altered. Saul had to learn to see the "light that lights every man that comes into the world," spoken of by the Beloved disciple in the Gospel of John. 1:9 His vision had to penetrate more deeply, through the veil of physicality, into what it is to be a human being—mirroring the process of physicality being transformed by Christ in his three days in the bowels of the Earth.

Dear reader isn't this the very indicator of transformation in the human being: that we see our fellow human beings differently? For a conversion/initiation experience to be true, to be authentic, we must be able to see the light that is in every human being.

I'll leave you today with the words of John the Beloved disciple that you can find in 1 John 2:10-11

"He who loves his brother abides in the light, and in it there is no cause for stumbling. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes."

With blessings of Easter,

Bill

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## **St. Paul's Conversion/Initiation Experience In Light of the Easter Thought**

### **A Daily Meditation for Holy Week: Silent Saturday (Day VII)**

By Bill Trusiewicz

Dear Friends,

As we are coming to the end of Holy Week and approaching Easter and the Resurrection it is essential that we are mindful of what happens immediately prior to this culminating event called by Rudolf Steiner "the turning point in time." We have been using St. Paul's experience on the road to Damascus to trace what our own inner experience must be in the process of becoming spiritually united with Christ, understanding that the events of The Passion and Easter are contained in it.

Since Easter is drawing close and the focus of our discussion is to internalize the events leading up to Easter, let us briefly review what the scripture says about what happened on this final day of Holy Week called Silent Saturday or what has been called The Entombment in mystery traditions, to discover its deeper meaning.

After the Crucifixion, according to Luke and the apostle John it was Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who "took Jesus body, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulcher that was hewn in stone, where never a man had been laid." [2] The moving of the body was done before the Sabbath to satisfy the law that forbids work on the Sabbath and during the Sabbath the body lay alone in state, "at rest" in the tomb hewn out of stone, while the Jews observed their day of rest.

Now back to Saul. We left off in the previous day's meditation with Saul's experience of three days of blindness and we compared this to Christ's three days in the "bowels of the earth." We saw how a certain transformative process needed to take place during the three days, in regard to the body of "the man" Jesus; and Saul, correspondingly, had to have his "vision of man" transformed during his three days of blindness. The scripture is silent about what happened to Saul during these three days although, as we saw yesterday, there was a veiled clue given in the words "he saw no man," which we discussed.

Today, having addressed the clue already, we will look more deeply into the mystery of Saul's three days of blindness. Let us set our sights on something for which the scripture

seems to give us no clue. The question is: What needed to happen to Saul during these three days, besides what we already discussed that would prepare him for his final commission? To answer this question we have the archetype in the events of Jesus' Entombment to guide us to an understanding of what Saul must have experienced during the three days before he was commissioned by Christ. His commission by Christ is extraordinarily important and relates to *the* Resurrection and *our* resurrection, which we will discuss tomorrow, so answering the question of what must happen first is vital.

To answer this question let us return to the Biblical account of the body of Jesus "at rest" in the tomb hewn out of stone. We have quite a striking picture here. A corpse "at rest" on the Sabbath—the day of rest! What does this signify? There is a great deal of "resting" in this picture. What was "at rest?" In the ancient mystery schools this picture of Jesus' body "at rest" corresponds to a step in the process of initiation also called "The Entombment." During this time the physical body of the candidate for initiation was subdued to near death so the etheric body could be imprinted by the astral body, which made it possible for the candidate to remember his or her spiritual experiences when outside of the body. So we can assume that something corresponding to that had to occur for St. Paul during his three days of blindness, a kind of "rest" corresponding to death so that he could be imprinted with the Christ Power and the Christ Will. How did this happen?

Before we answer this question let us briefly recall another picture. Remember Moses, when he asked the Lord to see his glory? What was it that he was told to do before he could see the Lord's glory? The Lord told him that he must "hide himself in the cleft of the rock" that he might be protected from the overwhelming brilliance that would kill him if he encountered it directly.

If we observe carefully we will see that these pictures correspond to one another. Before we can witness the Resurrection we must enter with Jesus into the tomb "cleft out of stone" where no man before had been laid. This is something new that was provided, not just for Jesus' body, but for humankind—a new place for us, a new cleft of rock in which to be hidden. This image of the cleft of stone appears to be a sort of glyph pointing to our "stony nature" and how to penetrate it, how to let light into what remains obscure in us otherwise and thus to hide us from what is otherwise dark and recalcitrant in us. We will explain further.

What does one meet in the tomb, on the Sabbath day? We know it is Jesus' body. But what is the further significance of his resting there in the "cleft of rock." Let us lay aside our ordinary human sentiment here and penetrate the meaning of this. From a completely objective standpoint, if we can see it, we will see the most profound rest imaginable. What is at rest? Yes, the physical body of Jesus, who called himself the *Lord of the Sabbath*, on the *Sabbath day*—was *lying still*.

Hold that thought for a moment and let us remember what Saul was learning with regard to antagonistic forces. He had been “kicking against the pricks” as the saying goes. His lower nature was rebelling against the prodding directives of the Son of God, in spite of which, Christ was able to enlighten Saul concerning his antagonistic nature. Saul saw that he was persecuting Jesus and he could feel the pain in the moment of revelation—the pain of “kicking against the pricks” was the agony of Jesus and those he was persecuting. Saul as an “ant-agonist” was acting out a scenario of agony. That is what we all experience as a result of our separation from the spirit, as a result of our distance from God’s purpose in our lives. We produce and experience agony for Christ, ourselves and others by “kicking against the pricks”

Now, to answer the question: what do we meet in the tomb on the Sabbath day? What is at rest there? I will let St. Paul answer with the following quoted texts all from a letter written by him to the Romans.[\[3\]](#)

“WE ARE BURIED with him by baptism into death...” “...OUR OLD MAN [the ox nature] IS CRUCIFIED with him that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth WE should not serve sin.” “HE THAT IS DEAD is free from sin.” “...RECKON YOURSELVES TO BE DEAD indeed to sin but alive to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

This “rest” of death is what corresponds to the ancient practice of the “temple sleep” that allowed the initiate to receive the imprint of experiences of the spiritual world. Saul received the imprint of the universal human being, of the Christ Power and Christ Will to replace his own power and his own will during his three days of blindness. What a rest it must have been for St. Paul! If we study the writings of Paul we see just how clear he is about this rest, about Christ who is the Lord of the Sabbath. No other writer in the New Testament expresses this so well. He was freed from his antagonistic nature and all the multiplied agony that goes with it. THAT is what comes to rest in the tomb. THAT is what we must find before we can see the glory of God, like Moses did; before we can see the resurrection. We must find the rest of death—death of our own power and our own will—in the tomb cleft out of rock that St. Paul found or we will never see the resurrection. We must hide our “old selves” in the “cleft of rock.” Christ has provided a place for us to be hidden—completely hidden from the antagonist in us. What greater rest could there ever be?

With that my dear friends, I leave you to contemplate with me the Easter Mystery until tomorrow.

Warmest wishes

Bill

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## **St. Paul's Conversion/Initiation Experience In Light of the Easter Thought**

### **A Daily Meditation for Holy Week: Easter Sunday (Day VIII)**

By Bill Trusiewicz

Dear Friends,

We come today, in our Easter meditation, to the culmination of St. Paul's conversion/initiation, which corresponds to Christ's resurrection from the dead. In the context of our series of reflections, what does the resurrection mean? And what is the meaning of Easter for the spiritually striving individual?

The resurrection that Jesus Christ accomplished on our behalf is a mystery that will take humanity millennia to puzzle out and appreciate adequately. It is not something that we can immediately relate to even if we have had a Damascus experience, as Rudolf Steiner termed it. It is something for the far distant future. Nevertheless, this does not at all diminish the value of what we CAN experience of resurrection in the here and now. The resurrection of Christ Jesus is one thing but St. Paul speaks of another type of resurrection that is reserved for those followers of Christ who are able to take hold of his healing presence in the etheric. It is called the "ex-resurrection from among the dead," which may be translated as the "out-resurrection." The word "exanastasis" occurs only once in scripture and is not recognizable apart from knowing the original language since it is rendered merely as "resurrection" in almost all translations. This important word appears only once in scripture, in Paul's letter to the Philippians chapter 3, verse 11: "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection (anastasis)...If by any means I might attain to the [out-] resurrection (exanastasis) of the dead." This is the only place in scripture that speaks directly to the believer's experience of resurrection. The subject that is often referred to in the New Testament is what Paul refers to as the "power of HIS resurrection." *OUR* resurrection is the ex-resurrection! It is something we can experience in the here and now. *What is this ex-resurrection?* To arrive at an answer let us resume our story of Saul

Once struck down by the bright light, Saul heard the voice of the Lord telling him that it was he, Jesus, whom he was persecuting. "And he, trembling and astonished said, Lord, what will you have me do? And the Lord said to him, Arise, and go into the city and it shall be told you what you must do."



In this directive is the key to understanding the out-resurrection. By these words we can realize that the Bible is not a sentimental book. It is very practical. With our ordinary thinking we might expect there to be “bells and whistles,” some kind of “rapture” experience of spiritual heights that corresponds to the “out-resurrection.” We can take some comfort for our everyday thinking with the knowledge that Paul DID experience the spiritual heights. In II Corinthians 12 he says that he “knew a man in Christ... (whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell—God knows). This man was caught up to the third Heaven.” Paul was referring to himself.

In any case, to understand the out-resurrection let us borrow some wisdom from Rudolf Steiner who describes the experience of meeting the so-called Greater Guardian of the Threshold. This term is taken from the very mystery traditions which culminated in the Christ event. For the initiate of the mysteries, for millennia before Christ, to gain access to the spiritual world one had to encounter a lesser and a greater guardian. The guardians were the judges of the souls of the dead and the initiated. A controlled near-death experience that lasted three days was used to gain access to the mysteries of the gods. In every detail these initiations were identical (as pre-figurations) to the Mystery event that occurred in Palestine with Jesus Christ.

According to Rudolf Steiner, and we can prove it for ourselves, The Greater Guardian of the threshold is Christ. When one is ready, when one has successfully progressed through the archetypal phases that we are seeking to demarcate in the experience of St. Paul we arrive at a meeting with the Greater Guardian. And it can all happen in a few moments and be sealed as it was for Saul within a few days or less.

What occurs at this meeting with Christ? What occurs is the “out-resurrection from among the dead.” We can clarify this phraseology simply by understanding that the dead are those who have not been “raised out by Christ.” Raised out from what? Raised *out from among the dead*. The dead meaning all those who have not been redeemed, who have not yet experienced the power of God to transform their lives. St. John points to this with the words: “He that has the Son has life and he that has not the Son has not life...” 1 John 5:1

But we must press on to understand, less abstractly, who we are referring to and what they have experienced. Who are “the dead” and who are the “living” or “the out-resurrected”? We began by using St. Paul as the prime example of the experience of conversion/initiation and one will finally understand why Rudolf Steiner repeatedly used Paul as the archetype of the spiritual meeting with Christ when we see this final point below.

The evidence that one has met Christ, the greater guardian of the threshold, and is sufficiently prepared to work with him, for him, and in him spiritually in the world is: **THAT WE ARE COMMISSIONED BY CHRIST PERSONALLY.** Christ meets us and shows us why we are here on Earth, what our unique tasks are, and he makes it possible for us to attain them. For Saul it was this: And the Lord said to him, “...ARISE, and stand upon your feet: for this

purpose I have appeared to you, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things you have seen, and of those things in which I will appear to you..." Saul's arising to take up the task he was given by Christ was his "ex-resurrection." In doing this he raised himself above the "dead" and entered into the realm of resurrection forces that have been streaming through the world since Christ's deed on Golgotha was accomplished—streaming through the world as a healing, resurrecting, force.

Let us carefully examine the words of the risen Christ to Saul because they are recorded in such a way that they can be applied directly to us—to our specific commission. He says: "...for this purpose I have appeared to you, to make you a minister and a witness both *of the things you have seen, and of those things in which I will appear to you ...*" We are not commissioned by our learning, by our knowledge, by our academic degrees or by our human wisdom. We are not commissioned by our talents or our gifts, or by a teacher, or pastor, or priest, or by any other authority at all. We are commissioned by Christ through "things we have seen" and "things that will appear to us," in which *he himself* has and will appear to us. Having this knowledge alone and acting upon it is to experience the out-resurrection—the meaning of Easter.

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In summation, what we can say about Passiontide and Easter? Winter has passed. It is the time of budding and sprouting, of flowers and grasses and the sweet fragrance of the fresh air of springtime that mingles with and overcomes the astringent smell of winter. What has happened to winter?

The stone has been rolled away from the sepulcher. "An angel as bright as lightning sitting on a stone spoke to Mary Magdalene and another Mary saying: 'Fear not, for I know you have come to seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said...go quickly, and tell the disciples that he is risen from the dead; and behold he goes before you into Galilee; there you shall see him.'" Matthew 28:

It is true. Winter has past. The Stone has been rolled away. He has risen! And he goes before us where we shall see him. And he speaks to us as he spoke to St. Paul. We are told: "...ARISE, and stand upon your feet: for this purpose I have appeared to you, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things you have seen, and of those things in which I will appear to you..."

And like St. Paul, in faithfulness to our commission, we will be partakers of the ex-resurrection from among the dead...bringing the fresh air and the fragrance of springtime to overcome the astringent smell, and the agony of the blight of spiritual winter in human souls. And as we do this we can speak as St. Paul spoke to the Ephesians saying: "Awaken, O

sleeper, arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light...” And to the Corinthians: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

My dear friends, I thank you for joining me in these reflections; that the substance of these few revelations abide and increase in us throughout the year, be our prayer.

And may all of the blessings of Easter be yours today,

Warmest wishes,

Bill

[\[1\]](#) Translation by George MacDonald

[\[2\]](#) Luke 23 and John 19

[\[3\]](#) Romans 6