

Matter is Woven Light

How is it possible to exist with little or no physical nourishment? St. Matthew (6:31) reports Christ's words: "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ... for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." This must be one of the most difficult passages to come to terms with, for which of us really believes that we will be fed, clothed and watered without effort on our part? Indeed that effort is most often viewed as a virtue: the opposite mere slothfulness or parasitism.

Rudolf Steiner often speaks of "the Christ Impulse" and the importance of uniting with it. Many perhaps think they have done so, but the depth of what that means easily eludes us. It is clear from experience that an intellectual understanding alone is insufficient, or many would experience the truth of St. Matthew's report at first hand. Of course it must be said that to understand is an indispensable step forward, but it is only the start, not the conclusion. In his book *The Spiritual Significance of Forgiveness* Sergei Prokofieff recounts the story of a man who saw his family shot in front of him, yet was able to forgive those who perpetrated the deed. It is reported that at the end of that war he was in much better physical shape than his contemporaries despite only sharing the same very meagre diet. In forgiving *in extremis* it seems clear that he united with the Christ Impulse as a deed, not merely as a thought. One is reminded of Christ's words "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). As Rudolf Steiner put it, spiritual science must enter our will not only our thoughts. The Christ Impulse is not a thought alone, but obviously a form of divine will, and to unite with it is a deed wonderfully illustrated by Prokofieff's account. Doing so in such a real way throws light on the Sermon on the Mount more fully, for Christ was speaking not to the multitudes but to His chosen disciples. To be 'chosen' is open to all of us on Earth (regardless of race or nation) through such a deed of uniting, and then we may exist by virtue of the (holy) spirit rather than by sweat and toil. Does this mean, in Fezziwig's words, "no more work"? Far from it ...

We are so enmeshed in materialism at present, necessarily, that despite these reflections it seems incomprehensible that a physical body can live without food. Now Steiner pointed out that the problem with materialism is that it misunderstands matter, and in the last century this was remarkably illustrated by the problems of physics. In the 1920's things became so difficult that Einstein said "It was as if the ground had been pulled out from under one, with no firm foundation to be seen anywhere upon which to build", and the eminent physicist Wolfgang Pauli said "At the moment physics is again terribly confused. In any case it is too difficult for me, and I wish I had been a movie comedian or something of the sort and never had heard of physics". Indeed by 1931 the leading figures in physics met in Copenhagen and agreed that quantum physics explains nothing, and should not be expected to do so, but must content itself merely with calculating the probabilities of certain events. Physics had moved irrevocably from materialism to mathematism. It illustrated finely Steiner's assertion that materialism misunderstands matter, by its abandonment of materialism!

Einstein identified matter with energy on mathematical grounds, with the initially disastrous practical consequences exhibited by nuclear weapons, while earlier on we find Steiner explaining that the soul is woven love and matter is woven light (*Manifestations of Karma* lecture 10). Is this statement about light not a wonderful deepening of Einstein's mathematics? For what is 'energy', or 'matter'? Or light? Light has resolutely defied a physical understanding as it cannot be thought of exclusively as consisting of particles after Newton, nor of waves after Huygens. It cannot be thought materialistically, but (for physics) only in accordance with the Copenhagen prevarication. For light is etheric, and matter is not 'stuff' but the form of the weaving.

Steiner described how soul used to be taken in with the air, which underpinned the old yoga breathing, but that now it comes in with the light and other senses (*The Mission of the Archangel Michael* lecture 6). It is

important to recall that light is associated with all the senses, not just with vision (*The Evolution of Consciousness* lecture 7) . He also explained that normally we kill the light and air that we take in (*Christ and the Human Soul*, lecture 4), and In lecture 7 of *The East in the Light of the West* he says that the soul of the light is stopped by the human skin. But the Elohim stream to us in sunlight (*The Mission of Folk Souls* lecture 6). All this must be affected radically by a unification with the Christ Impulse, with the light of the world.

But if light is etheric, and life too, are they not deeply associated? If matter is woven light then so too is the living physical body. “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). Following Him means the kind of deep uniting with the will that we considered earlier, which also means a uniting of the etheric body with Christ. This must lead to quite a new relationship to light where what we take in is neither killed nor stopped but can weave in matter, and then the light itself can nourish us!

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