

ANASTASIOS - MILANOS STRATIGOPOULOS

The last days of Jesus



SPIRITUALIST SOCIETY OF ATHENS
"THE DIVINE LIGHT"

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PROLOGUE TO THE GREEK EDITION

*“All the stars merge into One;
Darkness perishes in endless Light,
deaths become immortal birth,
Death turns into bright Sun!”
 (“Lyric Trilogy” part C – Religion,
Verse XXXIV, A.-M. Stratigopoulos)*

With the Divine Drama, – whose redeeming work does not concern, as a whole, the human race only but each individual person separately – the major representatives of each era occupied themselves and they will always occupy themselves and dance around it like butterflies, which are hunted by darkness, dance around the light.

Those gifted with a higher intellect and soul, they feel more the irradiation of this drama, whose great intensity makes it perceptible even to the simplest person. This irradiation of the Divine Sacrifice with its atmosphere, its spontaneous phosphorescence and its universal, psycho-spiritual dynamism, we see expressed in the work of the unforgettable poet and historian Anastasios – Milanos Stratigopoulos “The Last days of Jesus”, which we now publish.

This work was written in April 1933 and was published immediately in the newspaper “Patris” (during the Holy Week, each day, as it is organized into chapters). There are seven chapters, each corresponding to the evolution of the Divine Drama in the respective day of the Holy Week and they are titled: “The triumphal march towards the Sacrifice” (Palm Sunday), giving the meaning of the entrance to Jerusalem; “The Bridegroom of the supreme knowledge” (Good Monday); “Woman in the Religion of Sentiment” (Good Tuesday); “Towards the Tragic Hour” (Good Wednesday);

“In the garden of the Tragic agony” (Good Thursday); “Towards the darkness of Pain and Death” (Good Friday) and “The white vision of the Myrrh-Bearers” (Good Saturday).

The composite figure of the Author as a Poet and Historian speaks to the scholar of his work; and one sees the Historian elevated to the horizons of the Poet, staring with him at the divine Visions.

For information I note that – independent of the poetic, the historic, the critical and the multifaceted, in general, prose work of the Author, which, as much as it has remained unpublished, it will get published in its turn – the compilation and organization of the author’s works (published or not), having Religious content, is being completed and their publications will follow.

Halandri - Athens, 16 Jan. 1954

ALKAIOS-NIKITAS STRATIGOPOULOS

PROLOGUE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

Our gratitude to Anastasios – Milanos Stratigopoulos is twofold: first, for his masterpiece work portraying the last days of Jesus, from the entrance into Jerusalem to the martyrdom on the cross, with an unequaled lyricism and understanding of the mystical aspects behind the historical events.

Second, we are grateful for his inspiration and guidance – as a spirit this time, holding a highly esteemed position as a Leader in the Spiritual Kingdom – in helping us bring this translation to completion, so that many more people can be inspired from the Divine Drama.

It was very difficult to reproduce the lyricism and the powerful expressions of the author in this translation, as any translation looses from the original. However, we tried to retain the writing style of the author without losing the accuracy of his descriptions and his mystical insights.

Athens, April 2005

IOANNIS KONTODINAS



EL GRECO

Madonna and Child with St. Martina and St. Agnes. 1597 - 1599.

Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, USA.

Chapter I

Palm Sunday

THE TRIUMPHAL MARCH TOWARDS THE SACRIFICE

“Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.”
(Zechariah, IX.)

“For the soul which comes from heaven, the birth is death” said Empedocles five centuries earlier. And for the soul which goes to heaven, the death is birth. The more wonderful the spirit enclosed in the human flesh is, the greater its struggle to regain the awareness of its mission, to remember its age-old past, - whose fall by the everlasting necessity of motion, its submission to the laws of the earthly elements, put it into oblivion – to awaken anew the divine forces, which have been benumbed inside by the effect of the material body’s dark prison.

Jesus gave a tormenting struggle, in order to achieve this “remembering”, this “awakening” of the divine and move towards salvation within the path of his destiny, from the cradle of Bethlehem (or Nazareth, as many admit) to his glorious entrance in Jerusalem. He was to move from the darkness of “oblivion” to the light of “remembrance”, from the small earthly family of his parents and their brothers and, afterwards, through

his big family of men, which was shaken and remolded by his coming, towards the boundless state of the eternal forces, of which he also was a major and inseparable part.

He left Bethlehem at night and reached Jerusalem in the day, darkness and light, real and symbolic at the same time. He was born man, in order to die. He reached Jerusalem as God, in order to defeat death. The man was going to be crucified like a convict and to return to the elements, which had formed him: he had shed light and he was getting darkness in return. God was going to govern the world, which was created by him: he was born in the darkness and he was regaining the light.

With this double nature, with this double face – face of the everyday man, - anguish and bliss, pain and pleasure, weakness and strength, doubt and faith, Jesus descended one morning to the Jordan valley and took decisively the road to Jerusalem.

Soft sorrow spread on his pale face. Yet, his forehead radiated under his chestnut-blond hair, which was caressed by the spring breeze of the scented scrubs of Palestine. It was 10 of the month Nissan (April 2, 34 A.D.).

The grandeur of the divine esotericism, the pride of the self-consciousness, the irradiation of the right, the awareness of love, the intuition of the future, the knowledge of the victory and of the martyrdom, the vision of the triumph, the light of truth and the darkness of hatred – light and shadow, a strange mixture from courage and despair, an original wide-open page of a whole life, of an unheard-of teaching of three years, of a mysterious wisdom, of an original weaponless and triumphant revolution – Jesus, Seraph of love, Cherub of will, blazing leader in the top of the stairs of the hierarchy of the World's creative forces and man at the same time, subordinate, creator and creation, he was descending, covered in his silence and in his long, white garment from the Mount of Olives to the fatal city.

Peter, Andrew, Jacob, John, Phillip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, Jacob, Thaddeus, Simon the Cananite and Jude – a dozen of men, unsophisticated before, simple and humble now, famous and wise tomorrow – followed him, also speechless. They had started from Bethany, coming from Ephraim. They were descending through the trees and bushes of the Holy Mount, still without glory, alone, covered with agony from the information they had that “the death” had been decided, down there in the city which persecuted the prophets, in the beginning of March, a month earlier. And they were heading towards the peril, they were accompanying their Rabi to his death! This was horrifying. Their consciousness was revolting. Would they let him vanish? They were looking at each other in shame. So many men, and so many of their people around them, one signal was enough to turn them into a stormy sea and impose their will! But then they would turn their eyes to the white Vision which walked in front of them. They would look in his face and lower their heads. They understood well: He had to die!

They reached Bethphage, a small village at the slope of the mountain. From there they faced the gloomy walls of the City and its Shrine, the daylight shining upon its marbles and ornaments. But what was that veil spreading like a worshipping cloud, covering the valley and towering over the walls and the gates of the city, which was taken by the Romans and was secretly governed by the Sanhedrin?

A joyful smile blossomed at the lips of Judas (*) and the meaning of that smile was shortly explained to the eyes of the other followers. A crowd, a big crowd rushed like a big river from the gates of Jerusalem and it was now spreading like a turbulent sea towards the Descending ones. And this river, this sea was humming with an unspecified sound, a broad, unending sound, something like a cheer, not of fear but of joy, which, as it came closer became more and more meaningful.

Jesus stood up then and said:

“Go to the village across. There you will find a little donkey tied up. No man has ever sat on it. Untie the donkey and bring it to me. And if somebody questions you, tell him that the Lord needs it.

Shortly the humble animal move obediently, bringing its world-ruling rider to the biggest and most original triumph ever known to history of earth. Surrounded by his Court of fishermen of Galilee, the “King” moved forward. It did not take long for the sea of men of Jerusalem to surround him. Its vague and distant cheer from before was now becoming clear, loud, maddening, in an indescribable tempo of joyful momentum:

“Hosannah to the child of David! Glory to the Messiah! Blessed thee who cometh to us with the will of the Lord!”

The whole Palestine was at the streets of Jerusalem those days to celebrate Pascha: people from Judea, Judamea, Perea, Galilee – people who had many times seen and heard the great Preacher, and in whose consciousness his therapeutic vitality, kindness, courage and wisdom had spread its dominating force – this festive sea of men, hearing that the amazing prophet was coming, rushed into the streets, full of enthusiasm, love and faith to welcome him.

“Hosannah to the child of David! Blessed be the one who cometh!”

The slopes of the Holy Mountain echoed those cries, faithfully rendering the ovations of the colorful crowd. Among the people were old men, women and children. They would kneel down, reach out their hands, cover the ground with their clothes, step into the way of the triumphant Victor to take one blessing from him, to touch his clothes, to catch his eyesight from a close distance, his consoling, healing and saving eyesight. Most people were carrying palms, others were carrying flowers from the fields, others were cutting branches from the trees and the bushes, everybody would cover the

ground with what they had, so that God would walk upon.

So Jesus proceeded; he would necessarily stop at times and then go on again. However, the more joy, worship, fanaticism and faith would reach the apex of their intensity, the more the cloud of sorrow, which since morning of that day covered his divine figure, would become stronger and denser.

Around him was enthusiasm, joy, glorifying worship. Inside him, however, was a wave of unquenchable pain. A paradoxical and shocking antithesis between the thoughts of men and God: The vision of the distant, triumphant future – the world rule of the religion of consciousness, the immortality of the Word – in strong contrast to the eloquent future of the human ingratitude, the martyrdom, the temporary but defeating, nevertheless, necessity of death. It is to admire someone's strength to march to the glory of a self-created victory. However, it is to respect someone's strength to march, with full consciousness, to a death for consolidating this victory. At that moment, divine and human consciousness engaged in a wild and fierce battle within Jesus' soul. The heavens, with its shining light, and the abyss, with its darkness, were fighting in his innermost existence. A blessing and glorifying cheer around him, and over there, between the historical walls of the city, anywhere he looked and anywhere he went, the silent threat of hatred and death: the glory and the shame, the truth and the delusion, the triumph and Jerusalem. On that day, the holy City would choose the Easter lamb, the lamb of sacrifice; and he proceeded, offered itself to the city's choice...

He raised his eyes from the abyss of these thoughts. He looked at the joyful, colorful and loud crowd and then at the City of the Romans and Sanhedrin. He immediately lowered his head and cried deeply.

From the eastern gate, the frenzy of people's worship and the color of triumph getting stronger all the time, stepping upon a ground covered with textiles, branches and flowers, royalty in an unprecedented glorification, at the same time

deeper and deeper in sorrow, Jesus came into Jerusalem and proceeded to the streets and to his grand and cruel fate...



EL GRECO

Christ Driving the Traders from the Temple. c 1600.

Oil on canvas. National Gallery, London, UK.

Chapter II

Good Monday

THE BRIDEGROOM OF THE SUPREME KNOWLEDGE

The human end was coming close. The soul-eyes of Jesus saw this very clearly. However, the little time that remained until the end should not be wasted. He had to complete the gaps of his teaching, to uncover the last veil of the initiation, which still hid the supreme, divine truth from the eyes of his disciples and apostles. They were initiated by him to the truth of their earthly mission, a visual, more comprehensible truth. He now had to initiate them to the invisible truth, the truth which is inconceivable to the material eyes.

This truth, this invisible reality, only three of his disciples – the most chosen ones – Peter, John and Jacob, had realized, somehow like in a dream, on top of mountain Thabor one night – the night of the Transfiguration. Within the transparent shadow of that night, the three disciples had seen the Teacher's figure shining, translucent, like a clear channel. His face was shining like the sun and his clothes were shining as the light. And at his side appeared at once two more figures, shining as well.

They had seen this truth but they still did not know its deeper meaning. It had not yet become faith in their minds and indisputable reality in their eyes, as it was. The women, –

Martha, Mary of Lazarus and Mary Magdalene were initiated in this truth, as well. Lazarus was initiated, too. Nicodemus knew about this truth, as did the Essenes. Only his disciples were still ignorant of this truth. They believed in the resurrection of the dead and in the immortality of the soul but they still lacked the deeper, the true knowledge. And they had to obtain this knowledge, not only the humanistic, moral and social aspect of the preaching of the Lord, but also the metaphysical truth hiding inside this preaching. They had to know this truth so that they would become indomitable into their own preaching, when He would have returned to the heavenly Father.

To this purpose, Jesus, in order to postpone as much as he could that fatal moment, which the Pharisees struggled to hasten, and in order to shed light to any shadow remaining in the consciousness of the disciples for some of the fundamental laws of the “cosmic” universe, withdrew himself again to the serenity of Bethany, in the house of Simon. After his strenuous and hard struggle against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the materialistic “agnosticism” of the Sadducees – a struggle that still went on (didn’t just yesterday, the instruments of his enemies, scattered among the celebrating crowd that welcomed him during his triumphal entrance into Jerusalem, try to humiliate and expose him?) – after all these toils, he strongly felt the need for serenity and isolation among souls full of love, faith and devotion.

Such recollection and self-concentration in a place of serenity and trust is necessary to the deep and tender souls. Jesus went to that place to draw the strength he needed for the completion of his teaching. Simon’s house was his base, the Mount of Olives was his sanctuary. Among the dense trees of this mountain, he found the strength to communicate with the hierarchy of the invisible and creative forces of the world – the strength for praying; in there he had performed the deepest and most sweet conversations with his own people; in there he was about to reveal to them his last divine secret,

the secret he had communicated, explained and discussed with Nicodemus.

The view from the Mount of Olives is grandiose, inspiring great thoughts and higher contemplations. The gloomy mountains of Judaia and Moav, with their semi-azure and violet color, are framing the horizon. Far away in the distance a piece of the Dead Sea is visible, like a piece of shining metal. At the foothills of the Mountain spreads Jerusalem, the city of David with its big temple and the acropolis of Zion extending above its walls. All these wrapped inside soft veils of vapor – light breaths of life, which dreams inside the fiery embrace of the Sun of the East.

Inside this breathtaking environment, the Bridegroom of the supreme Knowledge always found refuge and he was now withdrawing himself, in order to transmit a spark from the sun, which illuminated his inner world. This sun, which gave its light to Krishna with the irradiation of the “solar word”, to Hermes Trismegistus with the revelation of the “mystery of resurrection”, to Moses with the revelation of the “One God”, to Orpheus and Rama, to Pythagoras, Plato and Socrates with the “vedhic”, the “dionysian”, the “delphic” and the “eleusinian” revelations, – this sun had revealed itself alone to Jesus. To the sanctuaries of his boundless consciousness, – not from the Essenes, not from the ancient knowledge that preceded, but through his direct communication with the Supreme Being, his Father, – there shone the light of the supreme, the metaphysical and real truth, a truth which is ignored by the crowd of people and reveals itself only to gods.

The divine Visionary stood on an elevation and around his feet stood the mystics of the religion of his Esotericism. From all the evangelists, only John gave some glimpse of this mystical teaching of Jesus in his scriptures:

“Up to this point, said the Teacher, I spoke to you with parables. It is now time to speak to you more clearly about my Father”. A solemn and sacred moment; a sacred awe was

flooding the hearts of the apostles. The heavens were about to open and reveal their secrets! And, indeed, the heavens opened and shined, not symbolically now, not only eloquently, not only from a need to decorate a great, social and moral philosophy, but in reality:

Grandiose circles of the planetary and cosmic life shined in front of their amazed spiritual eyes. The psychic (soul) life of the individual, the group life of Israel, the human evolution in general. The divine star of Jesus was setting, and before it went to give light to other worlds, it was sending its last, intense rays... With the soul wrapped up in ecstasy and the eyes fixed at his divine face, the apostles listened, listened...

The first judgment, what does it mean? What is the fate of the soul after the body's death? Its fate is according to the way it is synthesized and according to its deeds in the life on this earth. Man is composed of three bodies, the material, the psychic (soul) and the spiritual. The first body is mortal and perishable. The third, the spirit, is immortal and imperishable. The second, the soul, connects these two bodies and partakes in both their natures. The soul is a living organism. Its body is fluid and ethereal, it resembles the material body. However, the material body could not have the strength to live or move or have connectivity without the other two bodies.

If, therefore, man, during his earthly life, follows the urges of the material body and is subjected to its needs, the psychic body suffers the influence of the material body, becomes heavy and dense, loses its ethereal nature in such a degree, that after the death of the material body she (the ethereal nature) suffers a second death, in order to rid herself from the weight of the material elements attached to her by the way of her earthly life and hindering her evolution. On the contrary, if man has devoted himself to the needs of the spirit, his psychic body retains its ethereal nature, it evolves even during the earthly life and after the death of the material body and dashes effortlessly to environments corresponding to the

refinement of its composition. “Whatever is born out of flesh is flesh; whatever is born out of spirit is spirit. Protect yourselves, then, from your own selves, and avoid burdening your hearts, because the son of man can come suddenly, when you don’t expect him”.

Jesus talked afterwards about the earthly destination of humanity, about its ascension after a sequence of historical, evolutionary events, to the level of Truth, Justice and Love. He then spoke about the “destruction and restoration of the temple and the end of Israel”, the influence, that is, of his religion, the disappearance of the old world by his religion and the transformation of the nations, – an effort that would cost his apostles great labors and martyrdoms. Finally, he spoke about the “Last Judgment”:

This judgment is the end of the cosmic evolution of humanity, which will have acquired definite spirituality and spiritual nature. After millions of centuries, after a series of births and rebirths, incarnations and deaths, which constituted, constitute and will constitute humanity, people will once and for all enter into the spiritual sphere. Their psychic cover will not be heavy and shadowy any more, it will not have any material element on it, it will be bright and transparent, the true expression of the esotericism that now lives drugged inside the earthly man, it will have the power to communicate with the great concepts of All and its great purposes. The son of man will have then returned to his Father.

“Heaven and earth will come and go but my words will never go”. With these last words Jesus ended his revealing speech. In the doorsteps of his earthly death, he had completed his teaching. He was now calm and could return to his human nature. This nature, facing death, faltered, ached. He spoke words of sorrow, he made the people around him sad. Now, however, the people around him, the people who loved him and suffered because of his loss, knew that they would find him again in all his divine and spiritual nature, themselves

being spiritual and immortal...



EL GRECO

Mary Magdalen in Penitence with the Crucifix. c 1585 - 1590.

Oil on canvas. Museo del Cau Ferrat, Sitges, Spain.

Chapter III

Good Tuesday

THE WOMAN IN THE RELIGION OF SENTIMENT

*“Lord, a sinful woman, many, many,
turbid, heavy my wrongdoings. But, oh
Lord, how Your divinity speaks into my
heart!”*

(“Cassiani” - K. Palamas)

Love is forgiveness, forgiveness is goodness and goodness is conquest. The sentiment: First comes the world of the sentiment and then comes the world of the thinking. The beauty of the psychic “I” guides the beauty of the spiritual “I” and is the only certainty and power of the great missions.

With the Sentiment Jesus conquered the world and opened the gate of the “kingdom of heaven”. In its filled-with-light horizon – this high level, revealing God’s irradiation – the amazing Prophet of Galilee took his first steps, and then at the Synagogues, for the immense struggle and the victory of the Word. He first asked for the cleansing of the Heart and then for the triumph of the Logic. He drew his reformatory, creative, moral and spiritual powers from the world of the Sentiment: Purity with its broad meaning, faith, devotion, serenity, humility, simplicity, modesty – infinite, crystal clear and rejuvenating channels of the scented paradise of this world, the esoteric one, the closest to the supreme Throne of Perfection, yet

incomprehensible to the crowd. The world of the Sentiment is the Mount of Olives, the concentration, the contemplation, the prayer, the communication and the apocalypse of the great potentialities, which exist in a deadened state inside each human being and are being ignored by him.

Towards these fountains of his world Jesus first guided his own steps and then his first small group of people. From these fountains he watered and grew to gigantic proportions the multi-branched tree of the incomparable Religion of the ethical cleansing, the love, the forgiveness, his grandiose, aristocratic democracy. From his early child steps in Nazareth, to his last martyr steps in Golgotha.

He walked down towards the green oases of Kafarnaoum, Besthaida, Korazim, towards the fishermen's boats at the shores of the lake Genesareth, the lake of Tiberiad, everywhere where the children of Israel suffered under the dark clouds of the roman violence or the pharisaic perversion or the materialistic preaching of the Sadducees – slavery and terror and hypocrisy and denial and hatred and revenge and exploitation of the many for the few – and, looking like an out-worldly vision within his all-white, long essenaic garment, reached out his hand therapeutically to the ailing people, opened his lips to console the desperate, cast his enchanting look to the humble and “clean” and his redeeming compassion to those chained in sin, superstition and delusion. From the depths of oblivion, vice, and agnosticism he pulled towards his light the humble fishermen of the deserts. He said to Peter: “Follow me and in the future you will become fisherman of people”. He said to Jacob and John: “Come with me!” and they followed, as well. He said to the scared, the suppressed and the cowards: “Follow me and I will relieve you from your burden; my yoke is easy to carry, my burden is light”. He said to the sick and the dead to stand up healed and full of life. Finally, he gave his hand to the woman of sin and to the woman of social slavery and freed both of them from

the burden of their misfortune. By doing so, he awakened the consciences, he spread faith all around him and declared his grandiose and unprecedented Revolution.

Woman in the religion of Jesus is the symbol and the most important instrument of this Revolution. Her main characteristics, – love, forgiveness, goodness, – echoed in the heart of woman in the most lively and faithful manner. Created with the purpose of creating, tolerating, inspiring and feeling compassion, – this most beautiful incarnation of the thought of Creation, a living instrument in the hands of Fate and Nature for the fulfillment of the great destinies of the world, – but sidetracked from her destination, displaced from her role, expelled from the scene of high action under the cold influence of an atmosphere dark, materialistic, egotistic, – an atmosphere of instinct and violence, ignorance and superstition, – it was natural that she felt, to the depths of her soul, the three elements of the Great Revolution, this tri-colored irradiation of her divine creator, and that she devoted herself to this irradiation, without bounds, till death.

The widows, the sisters and the mothers, who saw their sick or dead people given back to them by Him; the slave women of the mosaic harem, who heard him calling them to set them free and position them next to man in right; the adulteresses, the scorned and accused ones, victims of a weakness of the moment, and the women of prostitution, victims of the man-beast or the need; all these stray, thunder-stricken from mishap, watered from darkness women, and the Woman, in general, woke up astounded in the sound of the unexpected calling of their resurrection. One sweet, indescribable voice, two eyes instilling unprecedented light into their souls, one figure, which shook with the radiant wave of its spirituality, were calling them to salvation!

They saw that life was opening now for them, that they had a right to hope, that they could walk up the road of their destination, that it was all lies what they heard from the others,

their family and social prison guards. They were now free! They looked into their depths and they recognized themselves...

Woman breathed, even the woman of sin. From the first awe she jumped into gratitude; from gratitude she jumped into comparative thinking; from this into ecstasy; and from ecstasy into faith and devotion; and then into sacrifice. She was not any more the prey of orphanhood, of pain and death. She was not the inanimate "thing", the instrument of her masters, the guest of life. She awakened to her salvation call from Him. She abandoned her prison and rushed and threw herself to His feet.

The call of His Forgiveness, the voice of His divinity "talked to her heart"; a shocking earthquake in her depths. And the Woman became the priestess of Love, the great Inspirator of the world's directions, the Myrrh-bearer of Resurrection, the apostle of the religion of Sentiment.

Aisa of Moses, the dynamic quality, that is, of intuition, insight and love, the somewhat bounded inside the limits of the person, this dynamic woman was awakened, regenerated and transformed. With the calling of FORGIVENESS, Aisa became Mary Magdalene, Cassiani and then Mary mother of God. Not the "stormy" Mary, mistress to the Roman aristocrats and rich merchants; not the mistress of Theophilus, the woman of the dark and moonless night, the impulse of debauchery, the sensual eros; not the biblical Eve but Mary, – Cassiani, of Jesus: the great Visionary of the Word and the Resurrection, Eve the foremother and form-giving.

The redeemed became redeemer; the inconsolable became consolatory; the slave became liberator of consciousness; the woman of the masters became consolation and inspiration and interpretation of the Lord.

The woman of the holy maternity of the crib of Bethlehem, by giving birth to the God of Sentiment, she also gave birth to the Woman of Bethany, the Magdals and the Byzantium, by

which the world was transformed and conquered.



EL GRECO

The Last Supper. c 1568.

Oil on panel. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.

Chapter IV

Good Wednesday

TOWARDS THE TRAGIC HOUR

The night of the 13th of the month Nissan of 34 contains the most touching scene of the history of Christianity: Inside a noble house in Jerusalem (probably of Joseph of Arimathea, secret friend of the Rabi), the Lord had given the order for the paschal table to be prepared. He knew that this was the last night of his earthly life, that the “pontifical family”¹ of Jerusalem had decided to arrest him in any case and put him to death, that members of this family had approached his disciples since that day and had tried to find out his whereabouts, the houses or the isolated places where he used to go, that someone of his disciples, vain, irritable and selfish had shown a favorable disposition towards the attempt of these spies – he knew all these and he wanted to dine with his beloved circle of people for the last time, to talk to them for the last time, to console them and be consoled for the tragic parting that would soon take place...

The Supper room was covered with the precious carpet. The table had the shape of a Π and around it was, according to the eastern custom, four wide sofas, where the Teacher and

1 This family had been established by Hanan (Annan), father-in-law of Kaiafas, who had received the office of bishop from Popius Soulpicius Cyrin the year 7 and who had lost this office the year 14, under Tiberius without, however, losing his great influence on the Council.

the Disciples sat, three on each sofa, approximately.

Jesus sat in the middle; on his right side, the two “sons of thunder” (as he himself called them): John and his brother Jacob; then the cousin of Jesus, Jacob of Alfaios; fourth was Bartholomew (previously Nathanael); fifth was Thomas (Taoum according to the Judes, Didymos according to the Greeks); sixth was Judas the Iskariot. On the left side of Jesus, Peter was first; then was his brother Andrew; third was the other Judas (Thaddaios of Levvaiois, as the Jews called him, from the words Thadd, which means breast and Lev, which means heart), the most faithful and devoted in the society; fourth was Simon the zealot (he was called like that because he belonged to that Jewish political party, which were sworn to fight till death to free Jerusalem from the Romans); fifth was Matthew the publican; sixth and last was Phillip. At the center of the table was the paschal lamb; on the right side of the lamb was a plate with bitter greens (symbolic of the remembrance of the bitter exile of the Jews) and on the left side a plate with sweet greens (symbolic of the sweet remembrance of the homeland). All in abundant quantities; also bread and wine in jugs and in a precious Chalice. Someone named Elias was serving them. They were 13 and with him 14 persons altogether.

All momentous, great events require great scene-painting detail and familiarity; however, it is the essence above all that is of interest.

That night, Jesus was an amazing vacillation: man and god, mystery and transparency, shadow and light, doubt and resolution, faint-heartedness and courage, turmoil and tranquility, bitterness and joy. He was coming closer to the tragic hour and he was in anguish, as a man, over the end and he was joyful, as God, for the triumph. Like during his entrance in Jerusalem, a cloud of sorrow covered his radiant figure. A variety of thoughts and sentiments, abyssal and ethereal, were crossing in raging momentum his spirit and his soul. The

last agony had started and, in its death rattle, his whole past, his life, his work, his great effort, the people, were passing with lightning speed in front of his inquiring and critical eyes. A pain and a doubt was the conclusion: before the volume of the still dark humanity, would these twelve weak and simplistic yet – alas! – men around him, which he had selected as his apostles, stand their ground? Wouldn't the violence of the Romans, the violence of the Judes, the reaction of the people, in general, crush them, sweep them off, obliterate them and along with them, his great Preaching for ever? Here was his life coming to its end; but would the sacrifice bare results? Would each of these Disciples around him bring his heavy and harsh work assigned to him into completion, even when this would perhaps require a sacrifice similar to his own?

Even at this moment, when his painful and bitter words had informed them that they were spending together his last hours, these men were forgetting about the immense horizon of their mission and, closed to themselves, were quarreling about who would be first! Jesus had reached the edge of the dark abyss, which scares the mortals and he had forgotten about his divine wings, with which he would overcome its chaos. However, the pettiness of the quarrel of his disciples awakened into him, intensely, the vigor of God, it bore into him the forgetfulness of man: He stood up, he turned into a servant, bent in front of them, washed their feet and initiated them in humility – this necessary force for victory. “As I, the lord and teacher, washed you the feet, so must you wash the feet of each other. As I did, so must you do. There is no servant greater than the lord and no apostle greater than the one who sent him”.

Again there was a change: the mortal nature was complaining and it was trying to suppress the divine nature, which was bringing it (the mortal nature) to attrition; man was trying to impose his rights, though without complete success now: man and god were, from this moment on, equally and simultaneously expressing themselves. All Jesus' words have,

from this moment on, the breath of both of these natures. For the last time God, leaving the earth, was reminding the trustees of his spiritual inheritance about the great Preaching; for the last time he was defining the moral and spiritual roads that they had to follow; he was giving his last directions. Man, on the other hand, knowing that this is the last time, that this supper is a farewell supper, was expressing these reminders, these definitions, these last directions, with phrases dipped in sorrow, in a manner polite, clear or semi-symbolic, human, revealing the constrained agitation, but agitation nevertheless, which was transmitted to them in a shocking manner.

Their eyes were in tears, sighs came out of their breasts when they heard him say that he wanted to dine with them because he knew this was the last time; that the bread he received and blessed had to remind them of his body, which was given to death for the salvation of men; that the wine given to them to drink, had to remind them of his blood, which was about to be shed for their moral cleansing; that they had to continue loving each other, as he, who was now leaving, had loved them!..

The bodies were eating, the souls were mourning and the spirits were revolting. Humility and love as a basis, and then the ascension towards the bliss, towards the “communion” of the earthly goods and the goods of the heavens, – the two mysteries of the earth and the spiritual world. This way and only with the power of these two mysteries the world would be conquered, a world for which he was sacrificing himself.

But how could he possibly know this? Ah, indeed, he knew it: just minutes ago he had told them that one of them would turn him over to death!.. And this someone, – he was asked by the two men sitting next to him, John and Peter – was Judas of the tribe of Isahar, the disciple holding the “glossokomon” (cashier) of the society... But why, giving this man, this someone, the soaked piece of bread, did he tell him the words “do as fast as you can what you have to do”?

Nobody understood those words. And yet, they demonstrated so clearly Jesus' assurance for his turning over and his death!..

And when Judas stood up and left without a word, the face and the voice of Jesus became gloomier, more sad and agitated.

The "abyss" was now opening alive and indisputable in front of his feet. In order to try to avoid it, he has to sacrifice God; he had to decisively walk towards its chaos, in order to save and glorify him... There was no other way...

But could he avoid this terrible abyss of torment and death? Man raised this question again, temptation appeared predominantly before His eyes. Why not? Indeed he could...

He turned his agitated eyes around, to the faces of his eleven devoted friends, who, as echoes of these now human thoughts of his, murmured these thoughts to each other. Simon the zealot was heading this secretive discussion, in favor of a decisive defense against violence, – a discussion which was dictated by the rebelling instinct of self-preservation of the threatened matter... And he said to them:

– Whoever has money let him give it now, whoever does not have any money let him sell his clothes, in order to buy arms... Because I tell you that my last moment has come...

Simon, Peter and the others, pleased then, they replied:

Yes, Lord: we have two knives for the time being; we will not let you perish...

They are enough, he replied to them.

And the small group of people left the table, walked out of the house of the "friend" to the deserted streets of the city and towards its eastern gate, under the bright, star-decorated sky of the last, tragic night...



EL GRECO

The Agony in the Garden. 1605 - 1610.

Oil on canvas. Szepmuveseti Muzeum, Budapest, Hungary.

Chapter V

Good Thursday

IN THE GARDEN OF THE TRAGIC AGONY

Peacefulness, deep peacefulness – as if the whisper of the bright stars can be heard, the stars which, with their turns, measure the circles of the human fate and the fate of the universe...

The Eleven Men walk on, wherever the will of the great Anguished Man leads them, and their steps are heard on the stone pavements of the alleys. He is silent and his followers are silent, too; they are sunk in thoughts. All over and around them, the bliss of the luminous, immortal night, which is filled with the scents of April, with the dreams of the reborn nature. And deep inside them, the pain and the worry of one dark night – growl of terror, horrible to the hearing of their souls! A drama of a contradiction full of lacerations!

From the hill of Zion (at the southern side of the city), where the house of the mystical Supper was, till the gate of the walls, which they now cross, in order to go to the garden of Gethsemane¹, the Rabbi has his lips sealed and his head bent down. They walk eastwards to the foothills of the Holy Mountain, through the gardens and vineyards of Ofel, in order

1 The Hebrew word “gethsemane” (from geth=press and seman=oil) means “oilpress”. At the Olive Mount there were many oil-presses, since there were many olive trees there and they gave plentiful fruit.

to cross the current of the Cedars, which David had crossed once upon a time after fleeing from his persecutors, and where the three kings, Ezekias, Asa and Iosias overthrew the idols set up by the mother of the second, Maahi. At that place, some time ago before this tragic night, some pseudo-prophet from Egypt, together with Filicus, the Roman, and a few supporters, revolted against the roman authority and he was crushed. How many times had Jesus taught and been to that place! Remembrances historical, personal, unlimited, crossing the agitated spirit of the disciples as they walked in silence behind the quiet Rabbi...

The time, the place which revived these memories – things and faces, Maria the Mother, Maria Magdalene, the exquisite friend, John, the incomparable friend – three loves, three divine and inspirational loves; the peacefulness of the night, the free outdoors, the broad sky, the premonition of danger and at the same time the awareness of the gigantic mission, which brought to life the duty to the human Entirety in front of His spiritual eyes; all these had a beneficial effect and somehow tamed the storm of that divine Heart: At the bank of the stream, before they crossed the bridge, Jesus stood. He looked around at the flowers and vineyards, whose drugged grace was made known to the human eye by the brightness of the stars and the moon and he sighed; at the same time he shone like he used to, when times were safe and quiet. Soft like musical tone, tremulous, unequalled emotive, the divine voice was heard again:

I am the vineyard and my father is the farmer.. I am the vineyard, you are the vines.

He said, he said many thing; he sang the divine concepts of the applied faith to the idea of world's evolution, the divine irradiation of love, the consolation and courage amidst the hatred and the persecutions of the people; he reconstructed the epic of his completed work and being atop the lyricism of the certainty of the triumphal future, he brought to life again,

in front of the eyes of the Eleven, the hope of the Paraclete and the Power, he shed light again to the mystery of man and the World.

The Spirit, being free at that moment from the weaknesses of the perishable matter, shone in all its dazzling strength for one more time; for the last time, the spiritual God was lightening and writing his High Testament with flaming letters at the hearts of its executors.

Jesus then, extended his hands, raised his eyes, left the people and communicated with the Supreme Cause: He engaged himself in a loud prayer to His Father. When he finished, he lowered his head. He wasn't seeing light, only shadow again; he had lost again the God of the faith and the power and he was facing again the ghostly, shadowy creature of the moment, of the agitation, of the doubt.

With an authoritative gesture he moved the small Group behind him towards the bridge and he crossed the current... He moved nervously but decisively towards the Garden, towards the last scene of the Drama of the Action and the first scene of the tragedy of the Passion...

The raging resistance of the carnal man against the violence exercised upon him by his enclosed Spiritual Dictator had begun:

The miserable construction of bones, blood, flesh and nerves, mad from desperation due to its death conviction, frenzied from the terror of danger, from the horror of attrition, from the fear of the unknown, from the narrow but intense love of life, had engaged in a furious, deadly attack against God, this hateful reason of its misfortune... The indescribable war of giants of the Persian symbolism, of the Indian pre-religion, of the Mosaic and Greek poetry – the cosmogonic war of titans of Ariman and Ormuz, of the Darkness and the Light, had started... horrible, awful, primeval, till death!... The human beast was attacking with fury, undisguised, unprotected,

against its paradoxical opponent – a demanding god, armored in his immortality. He was not going to succeed in killing the immortal – he knew that – but in keeping Him away only that night and thus sparing and saving himself. Pushing back and driving away God that night would mean the salvation of the human. Pushing back the Son of God would mean the salvation of the son of Joseph. The repulsion and the defeat of the king of heaven would mean the salvation and the victory of the king of Judea... The old mason of Nazaret was fighting a horrible battle against the mystic of the hessitic desert...

Only for that night. That night was decisive for the fate of the world. A few hours, a few moments, perhaps, and the outcome would be: either victory of God or victory of man. The former meant death with martyrdom; the latter meant life full of glory, honors and national freedom... The spirit of the people of Israel, under the figure of Jude of Issahar (who, at that moment, was probably heading the roman mob and the servants of the Temple to the Garden, in order to execute a plan, nation saving to his opinion), was watching in agony, under the starlight of the silent night, that war of giants and it was wishing for the victory of man; the spirit of humanity, on the other hand, was watching with the same agony and was wishing for the victory of God... Who would prevail?

The eyes of Jesus, his whole expression, was sometimes merging with the night and sometimes coming out shining from the darkness. It was more darkness than light, however, as he ascended with the Eleven the uphill of the garden – 150 meters higher than the current they had crossed. God was slowly succumbing before the raging attacks of the human animal. The blindness of this animal had erected, some time ago, the idol of Hamosh at that elevation and for this reason the place was named “mount of rage and repugnance”. The brightness of the later God, who had taught, loved and prayed there, cleansed it and renamed it to “Mount of prayer”; and the dynamism, afterwards, of the victorious God, who had bid the world farewell from that elevation after forty days from

that night, gave it the name “Mount of ascension”. The three names of the Garden of Gethsemane, where the little group came to after a short time.

The mystical agony was reaching its highest intensity. And yet – a strange thing – except for the deep, silent sorrow spread on the face of Jesus, nothing else revealed this agony. But as this grew stronger, the more necessary became the need of its expression. Superhuman dignity and tragic restlessness at the same time, which was pushing towards confession. The feeling of security was lost from his soul, where, one by one, the shiny pillars of the temple of his “Faith” were crushing down to rumbles: The eagerness for sacrifice, the contempt for human vanities and death, the irradiation of the beauty of the idea – all, all was crumbling inside him, all was dying away. The night was full of terrible ghosts; the universe was full of the howl of death... He was taken by horror and fear; he stepped back before the bottomless chasm that was opening in front of Him and it was calling Him with howls.

He told the eight disciples to stay and wait at the entrance of the Garden and, with John, Peter and Jacob, he moved away into the trees. And his mouth opened then and his torn out soul trusted its bitterness and its worries to them; and he asked them in a tactful manner not to leave his soul alone, he asked them to watch over for his safety. He was in danger; he was calling his trusted people to help:

“My soul is sad to death. Stay a while and be vigilant for me...”

He needed to say more, to say it all, to confess, to utterly open himself; but, by doing so, wouldn't he fall very low to the eyes of his friends and to his own eyes, especially he, the maker of consciousness, the mystic of the Consciousness? His amazing dignity gave him again the strength to get a hold of himself; but it was superhuman to bear inside him the whole weight and the momentum of that agony:

He pulled himself aside for a while, he pressed his face on the ground and succumbed to his human weakness:

“Oh! If this glass could pass by me and I did not have to drink it, my Father!”, he cried in agony.

His forehead sweated with blood. His heart gushed out tears. A sudden fear took over him again. He stood up and returned to his three trusted men. They were sleeping. So, they had left him alone in his agony? Undefended? They got tired while he was still alive! What would they do tomorrow, in their big battle, when he would not be around any more to support them? Alas! So, he would no longer live? Really? Was it necessary? He had to be lost? He woke them up, he reprimanded them. And, being more peaceful this time, he pulled himself aside again:

“If I must drink this glass, so be it my Father, thy will be done!”

He came back to them at once. They had fallen asleep again. All hope for his life was gone inside him. There was nobody to defend and save him! Weak hearts all around him. Full desperation of a man, which had as a result, however, the predominance again of God: He took the highest decision. He woke them up.

“Get up”, he told them. “It is time I give myself in into hands of sinners. There comes the one who turned me in...”

A noise of swords, steps, murmurings, lights of torches were heard and seen down at the entrance of the Garden of Agony.



EL GRECO

Christ Carrying the Cross. 1600 - 1605.

Oil on canvas. Prado, Madrid, Spain.

Chapter VI

Good Friday

TOWARDS THE DARKNESS OF PAIN AND DEATH

“Jesus the Nazarene, agitator of the society, conspirator against Caesar, pseudo-Messiah, as was proven by the witness of most people of his nation, lead him to the usual place of executions and for ridicule of his royal grandeur; crucify him between two thieves. Go ahead Lictor; send the crosses.”

(The decision of Pontius Pilate)

The sky spoke with the mouth of the Abyss; it decided the sacrifice. The blood had to be shed, the Pain had to triumph for the rising of the human creatures of the earthly circle of the cosmic evolution. The gigantic executors of the creative Will, the heavenly Elohim, took, temporarily, since the night of agony of the Garden, all the divine powers of the incarnated God, in order to give them back to him in a few hours, and they left the Convict Superhuman to walk towards the uplifting martyrdom – the seal of his reforming mission. They shielded him only with apathy and they left him inside the wild turmoil of the passions. The sky closed temporarily, in order to open again, brighter, with the key of the Pain...

From that moment on, Jesus remains apathetic; he keeps only the memory of his mission. He is the victim, which

was abandoned in the horrifying solitude, in the abyss of lacerations – the one full of howls of hatred, of the coldness of the interest, of the savageries of the soldiers, of the vulgarities of the Hebrew mob, of the spitefulness and calculations of the ephemeral rulers, and of the fruitless lamentations of love. The martyr-night is cold, and the dawning day is covered with shadowy veils...

The fear of the mortal flesh drove everybody away from him. Terrorized in front of the danger, the Disciples left him and found refuge in a secret cave in the valley of Josaphat. A couple of them left, in order to resist the will of Fate and organize the armed resistance for the liberation of the Lord and his cosmic glory. Vain attempt: "My kingdom is not of this world" his voice had told them; his voice had also commanded them, later, to put the knives back into their sheath and to use only one weapon: love. But since the hatred was howling all around them, since the dense human egotism was covering the world with its impenetrable sheath, would the life-giving fluid of his "love" be able to penetrate all this and reach the hearts of men? Fear, self-interest and violence ignore the omnipotence of the sacrifice.

Fearful and selfish – all abandoned him; and only three follow him, – three still reinforcing powers: the high intelligence of John, the devoted but weak heart of Peter, and the love of the Woman. And the man with the superhuman soul is walking towards the martyrdom in apathy, armed with the gnosis of his hessitic fortitude.

He is carried, dragged, pulled, tied like a terrible criminal, from Hannas to Kaiafas, from Kaiafas to Pontius with the naive soul, the intelligent spirit but the coward and selfish character; from Pontius to Herod Antipas, from him back to Pontius again. The cause of his destruction is essentially his teaching, which undermined the pharisaic authority; typically though (without this formality, an accusation could not be grounded) he is an enemy of the Caesar, since he called himself "king". Pontius

was shaken with this argument of the hateful Clergy and he signed the conviction.

And Jesus is delivered to the hands of his detestable roman executioners and to the vicious mob. He is beaten, cursed, spat upon, ridiculed, scourged, – undefended prey in the claws of tigers and wolves. And then he is dragged to the Agora of Jerusalem, underneath the Antonia acropolis, where the cross was waiting for him – this hideous, torturing invention of the Phoenicians. Two more crosses were waiting there: those of the two robbers, Gestas and Demas, who were going to be crucified with him and they were also driven at that place.

Jesus, being apathetic all the time, exhausted by the tortures and starved from the previous day, sleepless but always with dignity in his silence and with the eyes of his supernatural soul constantly fixed on the ideal for which he was suffering, after he came before the cross, he did the following gesture – a gesture analogous to this ideal: He kneeled and he kissed that wooden instrument of his martyrdom: He was sanctifying Pain as a liberating force of the soul, as an instrument of spiritualization of man. After the “mysteries” of the high Preaching of the three years, after the “mysteries” of the Supper and the Garden, the “mysteries” now of the martyrdom, – wonderful sequence, consistency and harmony of initiative degrees of a new colossal universe.

The soldiers, opening with great effort the way through the loud and sadistic crowd, which was waving like a turbulent sea around the Martyr, took the cross and placed it on his right shoulder.

Twenty eight armored men on horseback – the escort of the convicts – lined themselves up beneath the walls of the acropolis. They were headed by the centurion Logginus. The roman squad leader raised suddenly his sword and the horns sounded. The command for the historic course of the Pain was given; it started on the “Road of the Cross”, in the morning break towards the adverse end; there started the horrific road

of the 1321 steps to the rejuvenating death, the road of the five falls to the last restorative fall of the top of Golgotha...¹

Two soldiers grabbed him from his armpits and raised him. The centurion marched ahead. He was followed by four horsemen and, behind them, one trumpeter on horseback, who had to stand at each street corner and at each crossroad, blow the trumpet and read out loudly the convicting decision. There followed a group of armored men with shields and swords, on foot; behind them was an empty space and in that space was a person holding a white wooden board with the sign “Jesus of Nazareth, King of Jews”, written in three languages, Hellenic, Hebrew and Latin. Then came the great Martyr, surrounded by spear-bearing Romans; behind him were two Jews holding the edge of the cross with ropes, so that it does not drag onto the pavement and hinders the convict to walk. These two men, as well as a child, were also holding baskets full of hammers and nails. Behind them marched more soldiers; and after that, the infinite, the loud, the shameless with its horselaughs, the awful in its howls, the horrible in its ferocity crowd of Jerusalem of the year 34, – men, women, old, young, – one vicious mob, stigmatized, vulgar and atrocious, – a fateful people, who at that moment was signing the eternal curse of his self-conviction...

With the feet, the body, the pale face scored with blood, leaving blood traces on the road stones, sprinkling the ground with sweat and drops of blood, Jesus was walking on. With his left hand he lifted his long garment, which was hindering his feet to move, and with his right hand he was trying to lift up the weight of the cross. After eighty steps, he fell down – the first fall – exhausted by the weight. The escort suddenly stopped. The Martyr raised his hand for help. But nobody grabbed that hand: In his desperate and silent appeal, his executioners answered with a monstrous laughter, by beating him with ropes and piercing him with their spears! His head hit on a

1 So many steps took Jesus from the Praetorium to the top of Golgotha and so many times he fell down from exhaustion.

stone and the thorns of the crown, which they had placed on his head², penetrated the flesh deep into the bone! Hideous laughter, howls, whistles echoed around him. The turmoil of the human ferocity was circling his pain with its cruel waves. He derived courage from his Superhuman dweller; he derived strength from the invisible world of the Forces, with which he was in contact, easier now with his martyrdom, and he was able to stand up on his own and continue...

The pandemonium of rage of the mob was reaching its climax. And inside this hell, the lamentation, which suddenly sprung in despair out of some crossroad, was drowned:

It was the Mother wailing before the agony of her Child, leaning to the arms of Magdalene and John...

Thus, from fall to fall, from agony to agony, from humiliation to humiliation, with the consolation only given to him on the way by the sacrifice of Cyreneus and the offering of the women following him, after passing the dome of the Court Gate, the bridge of the Valley of the Corpses and the tomb of Prophet Ananias, Jesus reached the top of Golgotha...

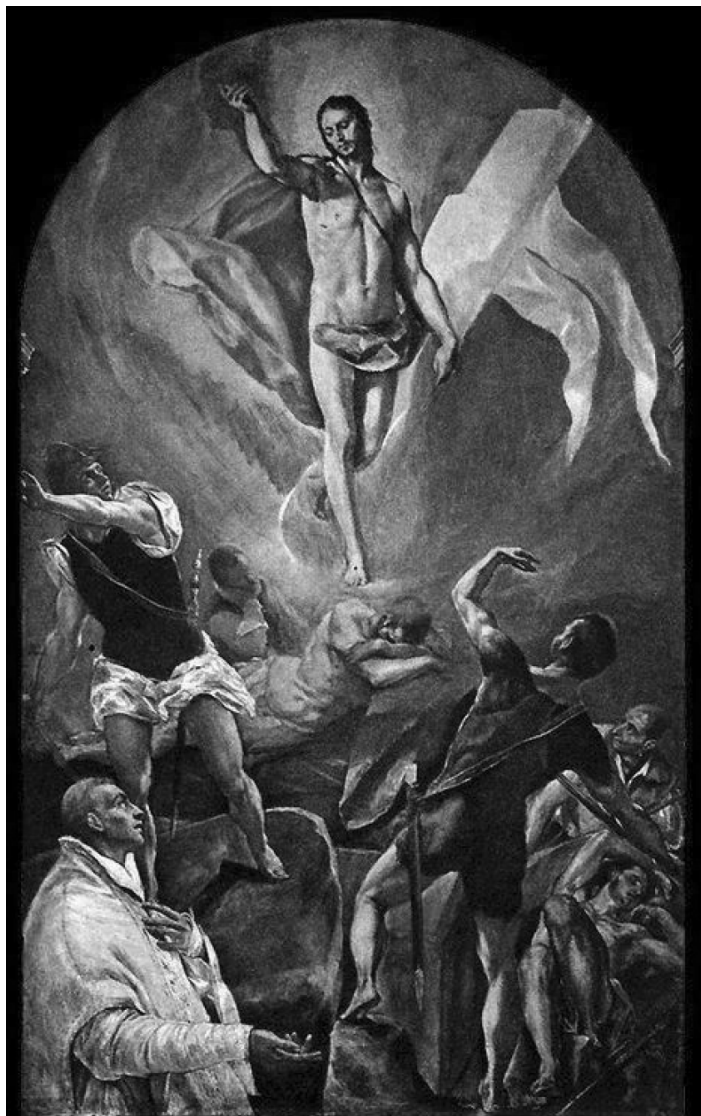
Darkness of turmoil was spread on top of that place; one last shining illuminated that darkness, – a blinding shining, incomparable, unprecedented, redeeming, restorative: The whole Religion of the Sentiment shone on that dark hill of the three crosses, of the hatred and of the death. The shining and the lightning of the forgiveness of Love: The dying man shouted loud with the voice of the living god: "Forgive them!"

Then, all was finished... The lamentation, the whistling of the air, the sound of the thunderbolt and the uproar of the earthquake put an end to the Great Tragedy...

But did the Great Tragedy end, really? Was the raging battle of the divine Love and the Death over? "Who is the

2 The thorny plant, by which the wreath of Jesus was made, has agile branches and thorns up to one finger long. The name of this plant is "Ziziphus Spina Hristi" or "Rhammus" or "Spina Alba".

winner?" Is it maybe these priests of hypocrisy and fraud, who are now descending, in triumph, the hill of agony, inside the stormy rage of the elements? Or is it the small group of those faithful women and men who are descending in deep sorrow, holding the corpse of the beloved Martyr?



EL GRECO

The Crucifixion. 1595 - 1600.

Oil on canvas. Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

Chapter VII

Good Saturday

THE WHITE VISION OF THE MYRRH-BEARERS

*“There are more things in heaven and
earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in
your philosophy.”*
(“Hamlet”, Shakespeare)

John, Nicodemus and Joseph from Arimathea took down from the cross the body of the Dead and they laid it on the knees of the Aching Mother, who was sitting on the rock of the Cross. Magdalene, Salome, Maria of Cleopas, Veroniki, Ioanna Houza, Sosanna and Anna, the niece of Joseph, washed, combed, perfumed, embalmed and shrouded the butchered Corpse; afterwards, on a litter covered by the mantle of John and carried by Nicodemus and Joseph from the front side and by John and Logginos from the rear side and under the light of the torches held by the escort soldiers of the Centurion, they took it forty steps lower, to the private tomb prepared by Joseph... The darkness of the night was spread, mournful and silent; the steps of the people attending the funeral, the moans of the Mother and the sobs of Magdalene, who was supporting her, were the only sounds disturbing this darkness...

In a little while, inside the flowers cut by the hands of Magdalene, sprinkled with myrrh from the hand of the Mother,

wrapped up in the clean sheet of his shroud, there rested on top of the shrine of the cave tomb the corpse of the Son of Mary and Joseph. One purple stone¹ closed the dark mouth of the abyss, which had swallowed the beloved figure of the Crucified and the devout group of people took the road to the city, silent and bowed under the weight of their heart-breaking desperation.

They met with Peter and the two Jacobs (the disciple and the brother of the Dead), who were lamenting bitterly, for they had not been present to the death and the funeral of the Rabi, and were walking down towards the grave; the group made them turn around and walk back with them; the men went to their homes and the women went to a small house near the fort of David, where Martha, who had come from Bethany, Samaritis and the widow of Naim were waiting for them.

It dawned Saturday, 15 of the month Nisan (7th of April) and the whole day passed with the silence of the mourn and the sobs of the desperation. Wild and cold solitude was spread in the hearts of the Women. Towards the night, Magdalene, Salome and the mother of Jacob, Maria, stepped out, driven by the soul-need to see again the grave, which had taken for ever their Beloved. The Romans of the mob of Logginos were guarding outside the tomb, sitting around fires. In the glimpse of the fire, the Women saw that the Stone was sealed with the seal of Sanhedrin by the Pharisees and the high priests on that day. Were they afraid even of the death of the miracle maker and they had taken precautions? No: they were afraid that the body may be stolen... The women returned to the city and bought perfumes, for they intended to go back to the Dead, at the dawn of the next day and so demonstrate to him their pious worship.

It was three in the morning of Saturday to Sunday (16 of

1 Dionysios Pyrros from Thessaly reports in his work "The life of Jesus" about this stone in the mouth of the tomb. This stone exists today and is found in the exterior ciborium of the Holy Grave.

the month Nisan, 8th of April of the year 34) when the Women headed off from the house of Maria, faithful to their decision. They did not go by the Court Gate, fearing that the guards would prohibit them. They went instead down to the lower gate from the acropolis of David, they followed the trench of Tyropeus, they exited the Gate of Pisces, they circled around the western part of the city and in the moment where the first smiles of dawn spread on top of the Mount of Olives, they reached the foothills of Golgotha and were heading down to the garden of the Monument.

Death nourishes love, sorrow transforms it into worship: holding her heart, which was fluttering like a wounded bird, Magdalene first came close to the Grave, far ahead from the others. The sad Mother was left far behind and she was running to catch up with them. The morning breeze was waving the veils of those women, who were holding in their embraces the jars with the precious myrrh as they run. This scene was extraordinary, composed by Pain and eternalized by Worship: the Woman, sanctified by the sorrow of Love, was becoming Myrrh-bearer of the Idea.

The door of the garden was open. Fearing, hesitating, not wanting to expose to foreign eyes, to the eyes of the Roman guards, their holy secret, they stood at the entrance. But the stormy Magdalene had dared to walk towards the Grave. And suddenly, a cry of shock, amazement, pain and terror at the same time, stirred the serenity of the dawn: A horrible earthquake took place; the guards were thrown over and faced the ground; the stone blocking the Grave had moved aside... Furious, Magdalene came close and took a look at the interior of the monument: the shrouds were thrown to the ground; the Dead was missing and in his place was a most beautiful creature with face bright as lightning and a garment transparent and white like the snow!..

This creature said something to the scared women: "he is not here: for he is risen... and go quickly, and tell his disciples

that he is risen from the dead; and behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him..." The mind is dazzled when the heart speaks with the tongue of pain: The myrrh-bearers listened to these words of the strange creature; but the Women felt only one thing: He was missing, He was lost; they had come to close their hearts in that corner and they encountered abyss and chaos... They rushed back to the city, running like crazy... Only Magdalene stood on the road; her knees were not holding; she fell down and gave in to the lamentation of anguish. Suddenly, behind her, one sweet voice asked her about her sorrow:

"They have taken away my Lord and I don't know where they took him" she replied in her sobs.

She turned around; she felt overpowered despite her will: She saw a vague figure in the morning light; she heard the figure's voice asking her:

"Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?"

It was probably someone from the land of Joseph asking her, some compassionate man, if she could judge from his voice. Who knows, maybe he could know... And she replied to him:

"Sir, if you thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away..."

The voice then, unspeakably sweet, a familiar voice, a voice dear and unforgettable, full with compassion and love, said again – called her with her name:

"Maria!"

She fixed her eyes on him; a swirl of joy overtook her, an emotion of bliss: She recognized him... It was Him! And as she dragged herself to touch him with reached out hands, her whole soul gushed out in one cry, one word:

"Rabboni!"

One commanding movement of that vision contained her and his voice, without losing its softness but serious now, said to her:

“Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father; and to my God and your God...”

From that moment on, the mystery of life and evolution offers itself to all people who have the strength and the will to study it. The certainty of Resurrection offers its real, double explanation: the ethical and the real:

From within the heart of the woman, there was revealed to humanity the mystagogy of love as the basis of its ethical and spiritual transformative uplift. However, it was not revealed as a vision in a dream but as reality in the eyes of the material body: The “astral” body of Jesus, which separated from the material body right after his heart stopped beating on the cross, as much subtle, as much thin it was, it still contained some quantity of material elements, which did not allow this body, according to the law of gravity of the bodies, to “ascend immediately to its father”. Some time had to pass, in order to get rid of these elements and achieve this. At the same time, it had to support the certainty of its resurrection, in other words the survival of the psycho-spiritual body of all beings because, without this certainty, his colossal work could not establish itself and conquer the world. His disciples would not have the strength, the courage, the enthusiasm to preach this work and the willingness to sacrifice themselves for establishing this work as a religion. To this higher cause, the spiritual body of Jesus vitalized with the required forces of the natural earthly elements (electric or magnetic vital elements) the psychic body and rendered the latter visible (this is a natural phenomenon, not a supernatural one, since everything is nature, visible or invisible). And he presented himself repetitively, – light and swift like the shadow in his first appearance to Magdalene, and then – the next five times – with stronger vigor of life,

naturalness and brightness, – an organic and alive body, almost similar to the earthly material body, which, through the action of yet other natural forces was decomposed and merged with the earthly elements that had created it.

It must be repeated that the beliefs on these “mysteries” of the very ancient people are not just poetic beauties and allegoric pictures. They are reality. “Resurrection” is the unknown in nature that becomes visible; it is the “phosphorescence within the limits of the visible” of the mystical continuation of existence after death of the material body. It is the affirmation of the material eyes for the visions and the premonitions of the spirit. It is not a matter of religious, philosophical or poetic dogmatism or phraseology; it is mainly a matter of scientific physiology. “Resurrection” is a real event, concerning of course only the psycho-spiritual body, not the physical one. But what about the disappearance of Jesus’ body then? This can also be explained, as we mentioned above, with natural causes. Bodies of great mystics had disappeared in the same manner in the past, well before the time of Jesus: the bodies of Moses, Pythagoras and Apollonius Tyaneus later.

But there is no need to digress much here. The fact is that the explanation of “resurrection” does not have a mystical aspect only but a physiological one, as well. It is not only preaching of faith of the religion of Christ and of other earlier religions, but a preaching of science. The Sadducees of the time of Jesus exist today, as well, in the form of the materialists and of those denying this scientific doctrinism. But has their denial inhibited and does it inhibit the invisible “natural” world to exist and to, slowly but surely, become more visible, more tangible through the discoveries and inventions? The hierarchy of the cosmogonical Forces of the Universe has under its supervision many other universes besides the visible one. A part of these universes was revealed to the amazed eyes of the Myrrh-bearers and to the disciples by the white vision of the Resurrection, in April of the year 34.

An impressive, lyrical and beautifully documented outburst of faith, this inspired work by the poet and historian Anastasios Milanos Stratigopoulos speaks about the Divine Drama.

The passions of the Holy Week, the agony before the martyrdom, the walk towards the crucifixion and the triumph of Life over Death unfold before our eyes and are examined deeply with the lyricism of the sentiment.

After reading this book, the mystery and magnitude of the sacrifice of the Savior, the mystical aura enveloping Jesus and the divine supernatural forces that protected him as the Myst of all mysts find their place in our heart, soul and spirit.

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