



## “For He Is Risen”<sup>1</sup>

FOR OVER 4,000 YEARS mankind has generally assumed that a “human being” is composed of two entities — a dualism of mind and body — with each mind/body united in one organism during this earthly existence. While a person’s mind can imagine itself occupying the vast reaches of time and space, in reality the mind is integral with and limited to one’s body. The mind does not migrate outside the body, nor does it possess another’s body.

However, it also has generally been assumed that mind (soul, spirit, “divine spark”) leaves the body and this earth at death and returns to cosmic mind — to sacred, Self-Existent Being in the heavens. This “immortality of the soul” is grounded in the conviction that mind necessarily possesses or is possessed by Self-Existent Being and thus is an emanation from heaven that is destined to return to heaven. Variations of this view allow for the interim transmigration of the soul to other bodies or the reemanation and reincarnation of the soul in a new and different body. Meanwhile, it has long been thought that the old, profane body returns at death to the darkness of the underworld, from which it first originated.

These nearly universal assumptions have developed from the archaic view of a three-level universe.<sup>2</sup> In this view the heavens above are the place of “Self-Existent Being,” the chaotic underworld is the place of “Nonbeing,” and the earth between — in the time between — is the place of transitory “Becoming.” This view of the universe, ultimate reality and

human nature is so embedded in mankind’s consciousness that the implications seldom are considered. It now is time to unearth some of these implications.

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### Implications for a Heaven of “Self-Existent Being”

1. If we each possess a mind that, in turn, possesses or is possessed by Self-Existent Being, then we are creatures of *possession*.

2. Furthermore, to possess or be possessed is inseparable from *control*. If I possess a car, I have control over that car. If a piece of land is possessed by me, that land is

under my control. If mind possesses or is possessed by Self-Existent Being, then it is controlled by Self-Existent Being.

3. Still further, possession and control are inextricably linked to *predation*. In the previous examples, possession and control mean that it is I who ultimately dispose of my car or strip my land of its bounties. Likewise, Self-Existent Being not only dominates, controls and predetermines our existence; it finally terminates (predates) our minds through a return at death to “cosmic oneness.”

4. Finally, since there is no earthly existence for mankind without the uncreated reality of Self-Existent Being, then man (male and female) is enslaved to the *necessity* of such “Being” — with its possession, control and ultimate predation.

### Implications for an Underworld of “Nonbeing”

1. If we each possess a body that, in turn, possesses or is possessed by Nonbeing, then, again, we are creatures of *possession*.

2. If the body possesses or is possessed by Nonbeing, then it is *controlled* by Nonbeing.

3. It is Nonbeing that finally terminates (*predates*) our bodies through death and return to material dust.

4. Since there is no earthly existence for mankind without the uncreated reality of Nonbeing, then man is enslaved to the *necessity* of such “Nonbeing” — with its possession, control and ultimate predation.

### Implications for Earthly “Becoming”

In the archaic view of reality, mankind, as mind and body, not only is enslaved to the possession of “Self-Existent Being” and “Nonbeing.” In the here and now, man also lives under the dominion of other necessities. For thousands of years, it has been assumed that earthly existence is controlled by uncreated, divine “archetypes” or patterns of reality that issue from God or the gods. The most persistent presumption is that these archetypes indwell man as spirit, soul, reason or consciousness. Some prefer to think of these controlling powers, not only as archetypes, “ideas” or “forms,” but as the direct “powers” of Deity itself. Others reject the concept of dominating archetypes or “powers” and prefer to regard mankind’s earthly existence as under the control of impersonal law. In any case, life for mankind in this world remains enslaved to predetermined necessity.

Thus, the classical view of human nature unwittingly assumes that mankind is universally subject to enslaving control — by Self-Existent Being from above, by death and Nonbeing from below, and by indwelling archetypes, “powers” or laws while here on earth. Furthermore, this threefold possession and predation is regarded as an inescapable necessity. Mankind is inextricably bound to the necessity of Self-Existent

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Being, to the necessity of death, and to the necessity of earthly control. Whether he knows it or not, man is eternally enslaved.

In this classical view man can never be free. And if he is not free to determine his own existence, he cannot be truly responsible. How could a robot be held accountable for something it was predetermined to be or do?

Furthermore, if man is bound to the necessity of isolated, autonomous “self-existence,” he can never truly relate to anything or anyone else. He can never truly “receive,” “give,” “act” or “experience” with respect to others. He can never hope, trust or love, nor can his life have meaning, purpose or value.

Now, after more than 4,000 years of bondage to predatory “necessities,” postmodern man finally has become conscious of his enslavement. This consciousness has brought us all to a global crisis. In our common desperation many of us are blaming international authority, the government, the environment, the church, each other or ourselves. Some are convinced that mankind has reached a state of final hopelessness. They therefore have adopted the philosophy of nihilism, which contends that “nothing exists, is knowable, or can be communicated.” The only solution in this case is annihilation and oblivion. Others are resigned to the conclusion that reality exists in language — and in nothing else. In their frenzied extremity they have written inscrutable essays with such extended expressions as:

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    nOt nO  
nO nOt nO  
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Still others have abandoned all the conventions of traditional behavior and have sought fulfillment in various forms of insecurity — drugs, arrogant power plays, crime, violence, or other bizarre lifestyles.

## God’s Opportunity

However, man’s extremity remains God’s opportunity. Nearly 2,000 years ago, in the “fullness of time,” God acted in the Christ event to offer mankind an alternative to the classical necessities of archetypes, “powers” and laws, of death and Nonbeing, and of Self-Existent Being (Galatians 4:4).

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*God acted in the Christ event to offer mankind an alternative to the classical necessities of archetypes.*

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1. As the incarnate God, Jesus acted in egalitarian love and compassion to fulfill the obligations of law and to carry mankind beyond the necessity of law (Romans 7:4-6; Galatians 3:23-25). Christ’s myriad acts of healing the sick, forgiving sinners, feeding the hungry, comforting the distraught, uplifting the deprived and degraded, exorcising demons, and stilling tempests were all designed to show that mankind could — through

Christ — be delivered from bondage to such earthly necessities as archetypes, “powers” and laws (Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 2:15). By his life Christ showed that our lives could one day be transformed to fully transcend law — to go beyond the constraints of law. This dimension of the Christ event has long been discerned and accepted by Christians.

2. By humbling himself to death and descent into hell, Christ fulfilled the necessity of Nonbeing, carrying mankind beyond the bonds of death and nonexistence (John 3:14-17; Acts 2:27-32). This dimension of the Christ event likewise has been discerned and accepted by Christians.

3. By his embodied resurrection Christ has long intended to convey the truth of mankind’s deliverance from the ultimate necessity of “self-existence” (Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:9-14; Luke 24:1-43; John 20:1 – 21:14; 1 Corinthians 15:1-7, 12; Philippians 3:21). *Since resurrectional life embraces an acquired, created body, humanity itself cannot be self-existent.* The unapproachable, immovable, impassible nature of all self-existence — whether of mankind or of God himself — was forever terminated by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Christ’s embodied resurrection to endless life not only is the utter negation of autonomous, nonrelational “self-existence.” It also is the downfall of all archetypes and “powers.” This is so because, in classical thought, archetypes and emanations are entrapped or imprisoned by the living body. Unless they escape from the body at death, they are doomed to annihilation. This is why the Athenians adamantly opposed Paul’s declaration of the embodied resurrection of Jesus (Acts 17:18, 32). This also is why the truth of embodied resurrection has been so vehemently denied since then, why the deception of “self-existence” has so persistently prevailed, and why the risen Christ has so long been silenced and his advent return so misunderstood.

## The Good News

However, despite denial and rejection, resurrection remains the ultimate “good news.” That good news is now revealed. The good news of Jesus’ resurrection is that God acted as Christ to not only deliver mankind from the necessities of law and death but also from the necessity of autonomous self-existence. The Christ event is a transcendent act of liberation of both God and man from the eternal bondage of isolated, unapproachable, impassible self-existence.

The good news of the resurrection is also that God acted as Christ to deliver both himself and mankind to eternal freedom (Galatians 5:1). Through Christ we have all been delivered to the bright sunshine of relational existence — he with us, we with him, and we all with each other. Relationality is the ultimate truth of all reality — including human reality. In the resurrection both God and man have been transformed from self-existence to relational existence (John 14:19; Romans 6:5, 8). This is the fulfillment of the covenantal agreement that God made with mankind in bygone ages (Genesis 12:2, 3; 15:5, 6; 17:1-8; Romans 4:16-25).

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we no longer worship the  
God who “is” but the God who  
“acts.”*

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Furthermore, in the resurrection mankind has been carried beyond “self-being” to the transcendent reality of action. Because of the resurrection, we no longer worship the God who “is” but the God who “acts.” Through the resurrection, static “being” has been supplanted by dynamic experience. Because of the resurrection, we never again need to sing that childhood hymn, “O to *be* nothing, nothing, nothing” (italics supplied). We now can sing and exult that, together with each other and with the Risen God, we can *do* something. Resurrectional life is not a static, frozen rigor mortis. It is a dynamic, ongoing, experiential journey — a journey that is never finished, a journey that will never end (Romans 5:21). This is a fulfillment of God’s age-long promise of his living, active presence with us (Exodus 3:1 – 4:17; Matthew 1:23; 28:20).

But resurrectional life is not only a relational, dynamic experience. It also is creative. Resurrectional life is not limited to the past, to tradition, to convention. It goes beyond all necessity — of law, death and self-existence — by being creative. The embodied resurrection of Jesus declares that Creation does not depend on preexistent, uncreated matter that necessarily returns to the confinement of death and chaos. Rather, Creation is an unfettered *creatio de novo* — a “Creation of the new” (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). The new body of the resurrection never has to die and return again to the underworld.

Furthermore, resurrection confirms that Creation was not completed and terminated at some Genesis beginning but, rather, is a *creatio in aeternum* — a “Creation that will never end” (cf. John 5:17). The embodied resurrection of Christ testifies that Creation was not interrupted by the temptation, “Fall” and “original sin” of Adam, which supposedly condemned the “profane” body to the eternal “fallenness” of extinction and the mind to a cosmic return from emanation. Rather, Creation has continued unabated throughout the course of history. If man has fallen, he has fallen *upward*.

Finally, the resurrection is yet to disclose that mankind is destined to become co-creators with God and he with us. The transcendent humanity disclosed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the “first fruits” of all humanity (1 Corinthians 15:20-22, RSV). Jesus is the new Adam — the new “Son of the Earth” (1 Corinthians 15:45). He is the Progenitor of a transcendent human race to be transformed into his own image — his own likeness (1 Corinthians 15:49; Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2). Just as he is transcendent as the First Cause of all things, henceforth mankind is to be transcendentally human with him as the further cause of all further things.

## Conclusion

Therefore, the “good news” of the gospel is not that mankind has been rescued from some primitive temptation, “Fall” and “original sin.” Rather, by the Christ event mankind has been delivered from the primal necessities of law, death and self-existence. Furthermore, the

“good news” of the gospel is that mankind has been delivered to relational, experiential and creative “becoming.” The human race — adopted by God himself as Jesus Christ —

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has been exalted to co-creatorship with him in an unending, emerging universe (Romans 5:17; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 22:5; cf. John 5:17; Romans 6:4, 5, 8).

In this frantic hour of postmodern frustration, fear and despair, we now can discard the age-long deception of autonomous, nonrelational, self-existent being. Now by faith, and soon by sight (1 Peter 1:5, 7; 1 John 3:2), we can grasp the transformative presence<sup>4</sup> of the relational, creative, experiential, active and embodied Christ — for he is risen!

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## Endnotes

1. Matthew 28:6, KJV.
2. See “The Meaning of Christmas,” *Outlook* (Prequel 1995.12).
3. Mark C. Taylor, “nO nOt nO,” in Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, eds., *Derrida and Negative Theology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 168.
4. Rather than a nonrelational, *immediate* presence, in which we absorb the Transcendent (“God *in* us”) or are absorbed by the Transcendent (“us *in* God”), the evidence indicates that the Risen Christ *mediates* his presence *with* us in history. That is, he reaches us through our neighbors. We reach him through each other. We reach each other and our own objective selves through him. This relational “reaching” may therefore be referred to as Christ’s “intermediatorial” presence, which is defined by the gifts of faith, hope and compassionate love. See “The End of Human Alienation,” subhead “The True Resolution of Human Alienation,” *Outlook* (Prequel 1994.7).

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