

Volker Schunck

Apocalypse Now

Christ: “I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.”

(Rev 2:17)

Apocalypse Now
Sermons to the end of the
world
Volker Schunck



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About me



I live in Dresden, Germany. First I was a merchant, then I studied theology for a few years. Through my engagement with Zen I became aware of the Christian mysticism. Meanwhile I go my own way. Faith is for me not only a world-view but a mode of being.

My Christian faith and my experiences in meditation influence my everyday life, in which I try to be attentive. My books arise from this spirit too.

Preface

We live in a time of breaks. The omnipresence of the internet, the imminent loss of personal freedom, elderly poverty and overpopulation, climate change, terrorism, the decay of any moral values, the loss of the own identity to sexuality and luxury, the God Loss of the modern human. That are only a few keywords which can scare us. For me these phenomena are a sign for that we are at the end of the end time. But there is no place for resignation and despondency. Just as little as for a senseless dance at the brim of the erupting volcano. I illuminate with my sermons our present situation and show that we in face of the breaks in our society not have to become desperate but can go hopefully into the future to change it actively with our actions. Thereby God stands in the center, who became in Jesus

Christ humanly and powerless. He offers us reconciliation.

God's presence for today!

Yours Volker

Apocalypse Now

I talked always in my books and my blog about God who shows us his human face. Through his Son Jesus Christ, his love, goodness and mercy come near to us. God wants reconciliation, neither death nor ruin of the individual human but his / her salvation. What I talked about seldomly is that Jesus was an apocalypticist. What does that mean? Jesus was someone who knew the gravity of the situation. “God is near. The realm of God has begun... Therefore turn back.” At that time the reaction of the bulk was: “We are still religious, so what do you want?” Today the reactions reach from “I also don’t believe in the easter bunny, why should I believe in God?” to “Faith is a private matter.” The times of a popular piety are over. Something like a Christian “groundwater level” which gives vitality and comfort in times of drought hardly exists.

We live in a society of shameless egoists, which are unable to sympathize with other humans. What a shame!, thousands of refugees are drowning because Europe cannot come to an agreement. How come that the rich always get richer and the poor always get poorer? A tax evader gets an amnesty, while welfare recipient always must be afraid that the government makes deduction of his / her small income because he / she misses an appointment with the labor bureau. But the super rich get tax reliefs by politics, because it is afraid that they could dislocate their production site into another country. Who wants to be honest today have to be willing to accept pauperization. The saying “honesty doesn’t pay” again makes sense. Of course you can’t all lump together, but unfortunately these generalizations are mostly right.

Jesus was an apocalypticist. His appearance has something of a shot across the bow, or when the father or the mother counts to three and at three it gets serious. Or when you startle because you have forgotten the appointment is today and you didn't tidy up your apartment and the doorbell is ringing. Beside God's goodness and love the message "God is near" not only means joyfulness but also comes along with fright and consternation. The holy God is near. Therefore turn back! Already Dietrich Bonhoeffer spoke about "cheap grace" ("billige Gnade"). Human, it's about your soul! God doesn't simply say: "No hard feelings!" "IS-Terrorist, it doesn't matter how many people you dismembered and killed - no hard feelings!" "Adolf Hitler, it doesn't matter how many Jews you killed - no hard feelings!" "You child abusers, murderers, egoists and tax evaders - no hard feelings!"

NO! There is a higher justice. You cannot live as if it was all about you and spurn the dignity of other humans. You cannot live as if there was no God. At the end you have to bear responsibility for your deeds. I don't know what that exactly means for the individual human. If the human facing God can come to his senses and can convert, or if there is a kind of purgatory where he / she gets cleaned and than is able to open his / her heart for God, I can't say. But however I don't believe in an eternal hell. But I also can't believe in an automatism of salvation (final reconciliation), which treats all humans equal - no matter if offender or victim. That would really too cheap. The evil or the devil has no place in heaven and becomes annihilated (Annihilatio). But all these last things are hidden for us and lay beyond our earthly lives.

As well the future of our planet is hidden. Physics assumes that the universe itself expands since the big bang like a balloon who is blown up and than, so in a few billion years, completely contracts again.

I'm not so optimistic, that our earth still exists such long. When I look at the world's problems (aging, overpopulation, pollution, climate change, poverty, hunger), the increasing God Loss of the people and the decline of any values in the last twenty years - the people's obsession by the hunger of power, the addiction to consumption and to sexuality are obvious - it seems to me as if we were at the end of the end time.

I don't want to aggrandize myself and I'm either not a prophet who can look into the future, but I don't believe that we as mankind have such as much time. What is, if it only were hundred years, in which the earth turns

around its axis? I can err like a doctor who make a wrong prediction to someone who has cancer: “You still have three month!” and the patient still live now, twenty years later.

It's high time! Turn back, believe in God and live like Christ.

Believing in God

I'm astonished that I still believe in God. In spite of everything: the suffering in this world, the exploitation of the little by the powerful, in spite of my doubts about an almighty God, who seemingly looks at the whole drama without acting, who looses things without intervening. Nevertheless, I still believe in him, against any doubt. Do I have therefore still hope, because God shows me through Jesus Christ his human heart?

God transformed in his boundless creativity, which actually is only surpasses by his endless love, the original chaos – in the beginning the earth was without form and void – into a Cosmos. “Cosmos” is Greek and means as much as “nice order” or “ornament”. God equipped the human with the same attributes which he has himself. With the ability to love

and to be free. That is the meaning of “God created the human in his own image”. But the human is not mature for his freedom. Love becomes to hate. Kain slays Abel. This sentence is programmatic for the history of mankind. He abuses the God-given freedom.

If God had just made the humans a little bit less free! Why God didn't equipped them with a “faith-gen”, that they believe automatically in him? But God doesn't want automat-humans but humans which are free. Which are free to love. But in their freedom they turn away from God.

“Here you go, than keep on groping in the darkness. Follow the temptations of the glitter world. What do I have of such humans like you! Just go on building your towers of Babel, even go on playing God and look what will become of it!”

So we would react, if someone refused our friendship. But God goes to extremes. Humanly spoken: God goes beyond himself. The eternal God takes shape in the human Jesus and goes at eye level to us humans.

How come, that they don't recognize God in and through Jesus? How come, that they strike him dead? Is it shame, because God shows them through Christ like in a mirror, how a real human looks like? Is it because of a self-righteous routine of a dusty piety, which mistakes its tradition with God?

God spreads out his arms in Christ, like the father in the parable of the lost son and offers his reconciliation to the humans. But the son, the daughter doesn't come home. Nobody returns ruefully – at the cross with you, you do-gooder!

The lost father. God's open arms – come home, you are welcome, I forgive you – how similar are they to the spread out arms of the crucified! The disarming gesture of the empty palm – just look, my hands are empty, I am unarmed – offers reconciliation to us.

We humans, - how scary - me too, are potentially deicides. But our anger at an assumed almighty uberfather (Freud) is of no avail in the face of the powerless gesture of the cross. Because God wants our life, he dies with Jesus at the cross. God's love is stronger than death. Space and time become to eternity. A human by flesh and blood finds his destination: his completion in God.

The way, which Jesus is gone, is the royal road, which leads us to completion. Humbleness, self-denial, follow-up, poverty, abandonment, abstinence, unconditional love, faithfulness sound less royal. Less modern but antique and

old-fashioned. But it is strange, when we follow Christ – not only superficially as when you click a follower-button – these words suddenly become alive and colored. So as if you made a rescue breathing to revitalize a dying. They get a new meaning with every breath on the way. Actually it is them, which give our new identity in Christ power and direction. That we find our fulfillment: our completion in God.

God's powerlessness

The vernacular says deridingly: Bad people becomes especially old. And vice versa: God takes the good people early to himself. But these two sayings, which actually are helpless attempts to explain the reality of death, so aren't right of course. We believe gladly those statistics, which claim, that people in the western industrialized countries increasingly can reckon with a higher life span.

A long life, blessing or curse? Is life much too long? would you like to ask, when you think of all the humans, which vegetate unworthy in retirement homes or when you think of the humans, who would like to die but cannot, because they are victims of an overbred hi-tech medicine, which unnatural protracts their lives. Yes indeed, life is holy, but can that be at cost of humanity? Doesn't play a medicine

“God”, which wants to “save” the life at cost of the patient in the same way as an euthanasia, which hands the hemlock cup to a patient?

And on the other hand: How many children and teenagers die too early, without their lives have been able to unfold fully? Thereby I don't only think of the high childhood mortality in the developing countries, but also of the lot of children, which are incurable come down with cancer or lose their lives in traffic. How many children become maltreated, abused and beaten to death! I hardly can endure – least of all understand – this whole insanity which calls itself life.

I cannot endure a God, who allows such life. But vice versa I cannot endure such life without God. The thought at it, that there is a God, who is almighty and has a look at the whole spectacle on earth without intervening – he only has to click with his

fingers and the whole suffering would end – for me is frightening!

A human, the human, Jesus, also died too early. How I had wished that he lived long. That he becomes 70 or 80 years old, that he can leave his traces deeply in the souls of humans. But this time is not granted to him. He eats and drinks like us. But Jesus doesn't live by bread alone but out of the heart of God. Therefore I can “understand” God through Jesus. Through Jesus I can endure the tension between God and the suffering in this world.

I look in Jesus into the gracious eyes of God. I don't see in his death at the cross an almighty God but a powerless God, who conciliatory offers his powerless, pierced hands to his torturers. In and through Jesus God reveals himself, whose love is stronger than death.

Sexuality and Freedom

Two quotes about "freedom" from the present:
The freedom I'll take me. - Anything's possible,
nothing's binding. The first slogan is from a
cigarette advertising. Smoking and being free.
How limited someone has to be, to create such
a slogan? It's the same as to say, eat how much
as you want, give free rein to your appetite and
you lose weight. That's impossible. That's clear
to the common sense. Just now after
Christmas a short view on the scale is enough.
The 2 or 3 kilos more are something like a
experiment on yourself to disprove this thesis
very fast.

Why has the cigarette advertising nevertheless
success? The attempt to compare freedom
with smoking isn't very new. Look at the
Marlboro-Man umpteen times ago. And right
now where smokers are discriminated by

society, smoking gets the touch of a struggle for freedom. Look, there behind the flybrake in the smoking area the last group of rebels is standing, which doesn't bow to the rules of a technocratic society. That's something.

I remember the angry looking old women in the sidewalk cafe and their pretended, self-righteous coughing to show that they were disturbed by the smell of my cigarette, although smoking was allowed outdoors. Besides I don't know any longtime smoker which hadn't dreamed about finishing smoking. At the latest when they notice the harmful sideeffects on their own body. Not to speak about the “breeze of freedom” (stink) which surrounds every strong smoker. Since a long time smoking is anything else but “sexy”.

The second slogan: Anything's possible, nothing's binding, sounds similarly to the first like freedom and tolerance. What free,

tolerant and modern people must that be, who uses such words. So you could think after first reading. I have this sentence from a swinger homepage. Couples or Singles meet in a club to give free rein to their sexual passion. The “new” morality, which rather reminds of the orgies of the old Rome than of progress, is insofar modern, because its correlate to the zeitgeist. With other words: Everything is allowed - when the other take part. That means in reverse that everybody who doesn't share our moral philosophy is narrow-minded and an intolerant moralist.

But how free is a human, whose life is determined by the sexual lust of the body?

What is that for a life, that longs addicted for the next sex like a drug addicted for the next shot? Sex becomes to an exclusive norm for my doing, and so it seems today, doesn't need any intimacy.

"Intimacy" is according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary:

1. the state of having a close personal relationship with somebody

- The old intimacy between them had gone for ever.

2. a thing that a person says or does to somebody that they know very well

3. (formal or law) sexual activity, especially an act of sexual intercourse

Singles or couples driven by lust and longing for recognition, post their sexual activities public onto the Net. Though intimacy and shame are inseparably connected with our identity as humans. If everything is shown to all, if everybody can have sex with everybody, if anything goes, the human reduces him/herself to his / her body and desires.

What is that for a relationship, when people sell their intimacy to curiosity and for “Likes”?
What is that for a broken personhood, when mind and soul are subordinated to the body and its desires, and not vice versa?

What is that for a love, which is unable to hold it's fire, when the other sometimes has no lust or doesn't like some sorts of sexual practices? “We still don't fit together”, they say. The search for fulfillment goes on. “The next one, please!”

They forgot or it is totally unknown that a fulfilled relationship is not expressed by having the same sexual preferences. Because the human is an identity, a soul or a personality, a fulfilled relationship primarily doesn't depend on having the same sexual preferences, but on being soul mates which swings mentally and emotionally together - that's called love.

Popular wisdom says: Sex is the most beautiful minor matter in the world. Just minor matter not the main thing. If a human makes sexuality to the main thing of his / her life, he / she loses him/herself as a human to an idle and his / her life pass by its fulfillment. Since Christ we know, that we are created as God's image.

The human is more than his body, more than lust and desire. Christ shows us the meaning of our lives, which finds its fulfillment in being one with God. To follow Christ means to find the way to freedom, because *he* really makes us free (Joh 8:36).

We are still here!

A year ago I had expected in a short text for 2015 that 2015 would become a "good year". Was this hope only positive wishful thinking? For me personally it was a good year. A friend of mine has experienced that quite differently: for him personally 2015 was a catastrophe year. Therefore he looks positive in the new year: "Worse, it can no longer become, only better."

How much has happened in 2015! The plane crash of the German Wings machine, that Islamist bombings of Isis in Paris and a few months ago on the satirical newspaper "Charlie Hebdo". Why so often so many became crazy and killed senseless innocent? The killers don't even stop before churches (e.g. in Charleston), where you think to be safe in the house of God.

Too much has happened. We can stand it any longer. We are tired to feel pity, tired of our tears. Many of us pull the blanket over their heads like children and hide themselves in their private luck. Outwardly a invulnerable smile to pretend everything's O.K. inwardly the fear that threatens to spread inside. How safe is the way to school for our children? Not another stroke of fate, I don't make it anymore, that breaks the camel's back!

I intentionally went this year more often than the years before to the Striezelmarkt, the largest Christmas market in Dresden. Especially after the attacks of Paris. Especially after the terror alert before the football match in Hanover, which has been canceled later. To show the terrorists: I'm not scared of you. Phhh... So what? Then kill me yet. Better a quick death than to die of cancer, or old and

deported in a nursing home. Those were my thoughts shortly after the Paris assassination.

How can we go confidently into the new year? The point is, it's just the other way around. We do not go into the new year, but the new year is coming towards us. "Tomorrow never waits." stands on the start screen of my ZTE smartphone. The future does not wait for us. Our lives go on and on. That is hard. But also a chance.

Can we still trust God? After all, we're still alive, "We are still here!" (Morpheus in "The Matrix"). So far God has gone with us. So far - and further - God will go with us. God, who comforts us like a mother, is also in the New Year with us.

Realm of Heaven

1 “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise.

3 For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them,

4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.

5 As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept.

6 But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’

7 Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps.

8 And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'

9 But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.'

10 And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut.

11 Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.'

12 But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

13 Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Who is who? in this parable. Are meant with the ten virgins the disciples of Jesus? That Jesus means: Be like the wise virgins here. Provide practically, have oil with you for hard times, when the night falls. And then, when the bridegroom is coming, they are so wise, you could although say “egoistic”, that they don't share with the foolish virgins.

Both contradict to what else we know by Jesus: Don't worry about tomorrow, don't build up stocks, but trust in everything to God. When you have something and your neighbour has nothing, share with him fifty-fifty. So simply to equate the virgins with Jesus' disciples goes wrong.

For are the ten virgins a symbol for the kingdom of heaven? This applies already more. The virgins which are untouched like white snow in which nobody has left his traces, and

wait for their bridegroom, but are also not “perfect”.

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins...” they say. Or you could say: “It happens to the kingdom of heaven like to the ten virgins...”

Without humans like you and me, who spins the blood-red thread of Christ's love into the presence, despite of their love is being dismissed by their contemporaries as spinnery, the kingdom of heaven can declare the national bankruptcy. It happens to it like to the foolish virgins. Because it is only a phantom, a lip service, not more than a “virtual role-playing game a la 'Settler of Quatar”.

Therefore don't game away the “kingdom of heaven” on earth, by living apart of God and your next. Don't dream about the “good old

days” in which Jesus lived incarnated among his disciples. Don't dream about day X when Jesus will finish all this misery. Be watchful.

The “heaven on earth” is presence and within your grasp. Then namely, when humans spin the blood-red thread of Christ's love into the presence, despite of their love is being dismissed by many as spinnery. Christ is near!

Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve: Christ is born into the darkness of this world. Mary and Joseph, a handful of shepherds, the sages from the Orient, maybe no one has understood the dimension of the birth of this little child. All human, rational wisdom must surrender here at the manger. Even more the mind or the brain is not at all capable of understanding what is happening here and who lies in the manger. This is as if you wanted to listen with your eyes and to see with your ears. That won't work. Faith in Christ is born in the heart. Our hearts understand what our minds cannot believe. Where our minds only see a helpless newborn and filth and poverty, our hearts see the essential.

Only who can (still) believe like a child can recognize God in the child in the manger.

Don't let yourselves be fooled by shine and glamor, by luxury and prosperity, by a flawless, clean skin and a pretty face. These are outward appearances, which get many Likes in a superficial Facebook and Instagram world, but which distract from the essential. The essential is invisible to the eyes. And this essential is exemplified by Christ, because God has taken shape in him.

Love, peace, goodness, justice are given a new meaning by Jesus and outshine everything what we have known so far. Love means for us “birds of a feather flock together”, for him “love your enemies”. Peace means for us armistice, for him “my peace I give you”. Goodness means for us “I do something for you, you do something for me” for him “if someone asks you for your shirt, give him also your coat”. Justice means to us “an eye for an

eye, a tooth for a tooth”, for him “I forgive you, don’t sin no more in the future”.

What had begun as the birth of a little boy in a dark backyard of history became after Jesus’ life, death and resurrection to a world religion. As an Olympic torch is passed from nation to nation, the fire of faith sets the hearts of many people around the world on fire. As the Universe is expanding continuously after the Big Bang, the message of God who wants himself to reconcile with the humans is spreading continuously.

But the physicists assume that after the Big Bang the Universe contracts itself again. What the scientists predict for the universe in a few billion years is already true today for the Christian faith. It is oppressive to see how the Christian faith becomes less important. I wish I had a patent, but I did not.

Perhaps the structures of the Church first must fall apart until the humans can ask new for God again. Perhaps we first must fail and break in personal crises until we are capable again to see the essential. Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps.

I remember the Sermon of the Mount. How careless Jesus simply trusted in God our Father. Whatever happens, we are in God's hand.

“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Mt 6:31-34)

Last days

So as if one turns up his coat collar against the cold wind, lights a candle with the last match. So we tighten our belts, concentrated on the essentials. Waiting and awaiting. In a time, which greedily hurtles towards the abyss. The end of time. End time. Dawned by the man from Nazareth.

The creation is pregnant in labour, waiting for redemption. As we wait for Christmas, we long for the day of his comeback. The Earth groans tired in its axis. The new morality is: "tolerance" and "everything is permitted". Because they have forgotten God, they go in circles and are wild desperate to squeeze every last drop of life out of their finitiness.

And we – close ranks. No, we cannot close our hearts, too urging the day of his return. Watch, pray, fast, heal and love, because his outlines

are already visible from afar. The end of time.
Fulfillment of our lives.

Another dimension

I'm standing in the dark hallway. I am 5 years old. I see through the gray glass of the door. I only see outlines. The light shines in the dark hallway and warm on my child's face. Soon it's time. Then the little bell sounds from inside. The Christ Child has arrived. Then I can enter. I'm waiting, excited and full of anticipation.

Seldom we experience "heaven on earth". Perhaps when we are in love and we float in "seventh heaven", or if fate loves us and we can know: Fate has a face and a name.

But mostly we stand in the dark hallway of this life, are ensnared in worries, illness and the businesses of this world. The light that shines from another dimension in our everyday life, we usually don't notice. We don't have time and the heads full of existence stuff, so that we do not realize what the bell was tolled.

Actually, even if we don't want to accept it and displace it, our lives dangle on a string. Always. If we get away with a hair's breadth again, because our guardian angels are on the ball, when a car carelessly drives past the Tram although people are dropping out, when we again cheat death after a long illness, then we remember how fragile our lives are. Perhaps all our work, race and running for life, that eludes us in its fullness, the greedier we grab for it, is only a running away from death. Why did Jesus not run away, when he realized what his enemies were plaining with him? And he was afraid.

But Jesus already experienced in this life the dimension of eternity. Jesus lived in the basic trust in God's presence. Live today and don't worry about the future. Even in the future is the omnipresent God, presence.

And Jesus knew that the human does not live by bread alone, what the human constitutes is not flesh and blood, but the human has an identity beyond all earthly needs.

When our “little bell sounds”, we can enter, Christ is there.

The freedom of the heart

Who or what is the human? Who or what am I? Do we ask this question consciously? Or are we driven in the drive of society? To ask this question is a good beginning. We are aware, when we try to concentrate us seriously: “Who am I?”, that this doesn’t work with a MP3-player on the head because it’s just hard to concentrate with loud music. When we are thinking about something, we say: “Be quiet for a moment!”, when someone is disturbing us, while we wanted to be alone in silence. But then, when we get a moment of rest, because we find somewhere a place to be alone, suddenly it’s unbelievable hard to concentrate to the question: “Who am I?” Because then we recognize what a fluttering thing our brains are. Constantly some thoughts and images are arising in our heads and we think: “I don’t have time, even so much to do, I can’t just sit

here doing nothing.” This way we are children of our time, driven from outside and from inside. We are at the mercy of the demands of society: “Am I too fat, too thin, am I good looking, do I have enough money, will I lose my job, what did the boss mean with his overtone, why didn’t show my man any reaction to my new dress, maybe he is cheating me, am I still attractive for him, because I have become older, am I still attractive at all?”

These are all thoughts and questions that arise in our minds and hearts and make us restless and distract us from the real question: “Who am I?”

When we are any longer in silence – I don’t mean that we have to meditate instead of 10 or 20 minutes, 30 minutes or 40 minutes, but I think that we have to deal for years with this

issue in order to come to a result, from afar looms an answer.

So how then is the result? Yes, the result might be something like this: There is no result. Nothing you can name with words. And now, because the question is broken, I'm aware that I cannot answer the question with the mind. Therefore not, because I am more than my mind. And more than my body. But on the way of silence something else has happened, when I get rid of myself, because I am "already dead" for myself, then I really live.

Another word for silence is emptiness. The more I get rid of myself, the more God can be something in me. That means John, when he says: "He must increase, but I must decrease." (Jn 3:30) That is the way to my actual, real being a human. The way of healing. That is the way, which Christ is gone.

“Who am I?” Christ says: “I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.” (Rev 2:17)

I believe: God in Creation

**I believe in God, emptiness and life,
who loves us.**

**One with the universe, he is not
absorbed by it.**

**Who is free, because his spirit blows
where he wants.**

One with Christ, we see his fullness.

I believe in Christ, God's real human, who
frees us.

One with God, he was light in darkness.

Who was crucified, because darkness hates
light.

One with God, he lives in his light.

I believe in God, spirit and life, who comforts
us.

One with God, we become real humans. Who is
in us, therefore we are light in darkness.

One with God, we live in his light.

To put this mystery “God” in words we say: God is emptiness. Emptiness is the largest, deepest and widest, what I can say of him at that moment. And this emptiness is a creative emptiness.

Would God not be, no life would be. In every moment God is creative and vivid. The pulse of the creative life of God is pulsing through the whole universe like through a big body. Even more: God’s creativity is the origin of our lives, of human and animal, stone and tree, our milky-way and far away galaxies, the origin of space and time, but God himself is without origin. Would God have an origin, we would say that God has a beginning. What has a beginning also has an end. God is eternal, that means God’s reality, although he pulses with his life through the temporal universe, is of his own kind (*sui generis*). That God is life,

could be easily misunderstood, when one think, God is life as we usually know it.

But do we really know life? To be born, eat and drink, grow up, take up a profession, having kids, grow old and die?! Therefore we say a lot more about God: God loves, us – and what he creates out of himself in his love. God's emptiness, God's creativity that arises in and out of this emptiness, that is new again and again, is his love.

Well, how do we know that this is so? We know that first through the one real human: Christ. For in him this love becomes visible and tangible for us humans. A human like you and me. He was so much one with God, that some of his contemporaries have seen God in him and through him.

To ask: how is this possible? How is such a human possible where we still know the

people? is obvious. But this is God's mystery, which we humans cannot understand. This is the mystery of Christ. Just this much: He was open and empty for God.

God's emptiness that is his always new arising love, is the space for the eternal possibilities of God. And therefore we say: God's emptiness is his fullness.

And this fullness has found space in Christ. But the fullness of God, the fullness of his love, has not enough space in one human. It is flowing over, out and out, so the humans have experienced God through Christ.

To experience God through Christ, means to be freed of regulations, laws and commandments which are man-made. To follow him means to follow him to freedom. To follow him into freedom means to become empty. To become empty of images of God

and images of humans, to become empty of worries and dreams regarding the past and the future.

In this space God's love can grow and bloom. Another word for God's love, which came through Christ in this world, is light. Light dispels the darkness. God's light is his life, his emptiness and his love. But God's light is not like sunlight or the light of a candle, but God's light is darkness. It glows within us, it comforts, gives us peace and makes us whole. It grows and flowers inside. God's light is his spirit, his emptiness, his love, his fullness.

I believe: God in Christ

I believe in God, emptiness and life, who loves us.

One with the universe, he is not absorbed by it. Who is free, because his spirit blows where he wants.

One with Christ, we see his fullness.

I believe in Christ, God's real human, who frees us.

One with God, he was light in darkness.

Who was crucified, because darkness hates light.

One with God, he lives in his light.

I believe in God, spirit and life, who comforts us.

One with God, we become real humans. Who is in us, therefore we are light in darkness.

One with God, we live in his light.

Because I believe in Christ, I can again believe in the humans. I can again believe in the humans, although I know myself. My weaknesses, my selfishness, my doubt, my unbelief. Sometimes I walk through my life like through dense fog, 'm hopeless where I should have to believe. But I have not to believe if I cannot. For since Christ I know that God is different from us humans. Around here: do something for me, then I do something for you. Stick to the religious precepts and commandments, than God loves you. But with this idea of God Jesus makes once and for all an end. Because Jesus knew: God is like a father to the humans, because he is our Creator, and he loves us unconditionally. Like Christ lived in the consciousness: I am one with the eternal God, so we are originally intended to be one with God. But we are just not aware of it. We are like the prodigal son in the parable of the same name, who equipped

with a great heritage, leaves his father and goes out into the colorful, enticing glittering world. Selfishly we live greedy our lives at the costs of others and at the costs of creation, hold for life what is impermanent and dead and take us our lives. What a crazy confusion: We take what we can get: money, power, success and sex, because we take having for being and thereby we mulct us of the real life that we can only live in unity with God.

Christ frees us to real life, in which he not only exemplifies this life to us, but is this life himself in his unity with God. Christ is selflessly empty for the fullness of God, and is thus only a real human, really himself, because God can be anything in him. He finds his identity in the fact that God is identical with him. At, in and through Jesus we learn who and what God is like.

To believe in Christ means to follow in his footsteps to freedom. One says: “The longest journey begins with a single step” and “the journey is the destination”. Once we have gone off the essential is already done. We remember: the Father’s heart loves us just as we are. Therefore, any ambitious or fearful effort, any attempt to please God in any way or to make it right for him, is not only pointless, but only makes obvious that we have not yet understood how God means it with us.

A human like Christ, who knows God like no other is perceived by most in this world as a spinner and troublemaker. Even the most pious believe him to be a blasphemer, because he leaves the worn out path of the Jewish religion and questions the existing laws and regulations. If people listen to his sermons and begin to believe him, someone like Jesus is dangerous for the existing system.

But his sermons are the least what the powerful have to fear. Those who are in power only perceive the apparent and hear only what they are able to hear. They think only in power categories and cling dried out to the religious status quo.

The ordinary people who have powerlessly nothing to lose look deeper. There is one who is different. One who is not crazy different, but one who is different in a good way. We notice this, because he does not only talk differently, but because he deals with us differently. Suddenly the whore experiences attention, the merciless tax collector grace, which is leprous becomes a Who and is healed by the love of Christ.

Christ, who not only preaches a new time, the newly dawning Kingdom of God, but also

embodies himself, exemplifies God's righteousness to the humans in flesh and blood. God's justice always consists of love and not formally to adhere to laws. It's God always all about the hearts of humans, but they misunderstood him. "Those who love God keep his commandments." they have turned into "Who keeps the commandments loves God." But you can formally hold even externally with a cold heart the commandments without that God means anything to you, to have a religious reputation among the people. And that seems to have been the case at the time of Jesus in the religious elite. Such a religious system that has a similiar hunger for power than the Roman occupying power, even if the religious leaders pretend to be pious, can only be described as darkness. How unbearable and threatening for the powerful must have been the occurrence of Christ.

Who makes his political deals in the darkness of dark backrooms for a long time, do not notice how much his life space decreases with the subtle progressive fossilization of his heart. He even believes the achieved status quo to be the will of God.

But who joins himself open and trusting with Jesus like his disciples, to whom Jesus is light in darkness. The traditionalists, however, try to preserve the original for life and death, because they cannot realize that the new, what is dawning in Jesus is precisely that what they are actually looking to preserve. With a good conscience and a right-believing heart they do not recognize the one who revealed God's heart to them, but for fear of him, who is threatening their Orthodox identity that only turns around themselves, they beat the savior Christ to the cross to hang on their false image

of God, because their false identities are still all what is left.

Therefore it is tragic that they just kill the one, who actually represents their salvation, because he exemplifies with his life how God means it to them. They should be able to jump over their own shadows. Because of fear they take the last possibility, wash their hands clean in the stream of misunderstood tradition, and murder the one who opens the door for them to God.

Naturally Christ's death was a big catastrophe for his friends. Those, who hoped to be freed by Jesus of the Roman occupying power, probably left him earlier, because they recognized, that that what Jesus meant with that speech of the new realm of God just was about something else than pagan power. But his real friends...

Actually, one has to marvel how it came to be that Christ after his only three years lasting public activity was not filed by the world's history after his death, because there were still other messiahs at the time of Jesus of which we know nothing anymore. You may marvel how it comes that a small group of simple no-names has developed into a world-church that tries to go in the footsteps of the carpenter.

And indeed, something happens that probably the fewest have expected, even they knew Jesus and his deeds and words. There, something wonderful happens. The human God brings Jesus, the human, out of death. He let him rise from the dead. This seemingly unbelievable cannot be proved. But for those who know Christ and those who know him, know God, it is almost a natural matter of course, that God doesn't leave in death the

human he loves, but raise him into the dimension of eternity.

It is told how the disciples have personal contact with Jesus after they found the grave empty, talk to him, even touch his wounds with their own hands, and how Jesus breaks the bread for the disciples who go to Emmaus, like before his death, who don't recognize him and that he suddenly disappears in front of them. What really has happened, if some story is only a clarification of what the disciples experienced inwardly after the death of Jesus, we do not know.

Anyway, that what has happened after Jesus' death, made of despondent and desperate people, those who have not only brought happily the name of Christ into the world, who even fearless let themselves killed for this name, but such who have completely been changed by God's Spirit – like Paul, who was a

persecutor of Christians and became a follower of Christ. That the matter of Jesus continues, is in God's hands. Even after Jesus' death God has not changed and remains faithfully to his humans.

Christ, who has gone up to heaven after his raising, now sits at the right hand of God, which means that he also can stand up as human for the humans by God after his death. On the other hand this means that the humanity of God is not only a three-year episode in world history that has passed after the death of Jesus, but God remains as Jesus has exemplified him to us.

Thereby it does little to the point, how the ancient imagery express real space. The ancient mythological idea "God in heaven above – the human on the earth below" is so deeply rooted in our hearts that even the Copernican turn is barely able to reach the

deep layers of our psychic imagery. So both may coexist: our knowledge of the astronomical facts, and our feeling that God is up there somewhere invisible in heaven.

What happened next? The disciples of Jesus concluded from the statements of Jesus that he would come back to earth again in their lifetime in order to take them to heaven. That are ideas which we hardly can understand today. But the Parousia of Christ did not happen and they had to settle down in the world as Christians, as such they were perceived and named by the world.

I believe: God in Humans

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One with God, we live in his light.

It is remarkable that we still have today in 2014 the mind and the energy to tell here and almost everywhere in the world that stories, that are handed down to us in the Bible about God and Jesus Christ. Why is that? The reason is that they not only report the past, what is perhaps still of interest to historians, but these ancient texts dealing with timeless issues that affect us people living today in our existence.

Who am I? Is there a God? How can I still live today in a world of materialism at all? Am I not more than my genes? What is life all about? Why isn't my hunger for life satisfied by what I buy? Why do I feel stressed and empty, like burned out?

Many of us are looking in the wrong places, some for a lifetime. Many try to numb their

inner emptiness through work and pleasure. We have lost the right measure. Many benumb themselves with the socially accepted drug alcohol. When Obama thought out loud about the legalization of Cannabis, he cited studies that have shown that the consumption of Cannabis is not worse than alcohol consumption, something like a murmur seemed to go through the world with the tenor, yes then Cannabis cannot be so bad. But that just shows how blunted we are to a drug which is widely accepted in society and is advertised publicly. Many young people have lost themselves in the drug Crystal, from which they might even hope to get mystical experiences, but at what cost?

In addition, we hardly see ourselves in a position to correct the distorted image of the reality that the television burns for hours every day in our heads, because we allow it.

We let us cheat: happy is who has money and can buy this or that. Benumbed and hypnotized we expose ourselves to these daily brainwashing and are incapacitated to perceive our own reality, our own needs and feelings. Instead, we suck other people's feelings from talk shows and soap operas with which we identify ourselves and live a replacement life by believing what there is played for us. We live, but what we think, feel and do has hardly anything to do with ourselves. Since it is no wonder that we hardly can know and understand ourselves. We have forgotten where we come from, who we are, and that we must die. Life is not a 24/7-sale-show.

It costs something to find our lives. Some first need to lose all their material possessions by a natural disaster to realize: Main thing, we are still alive. Yes, and then? Business as usual?

Or do we use the incurred loss and question our current concept of life? Do we now realize how much we have defined us through our possession?

And so any loss, whether the mentioned material, the loss of our job or that of a loved one, throws us back on ourselves and our own mortality. Some are beginning to ask for God. Some lose their belief in God or their belief is changing and deepening.

The crucifixion of Jesus must have been a traumatic experience of loss for the disciples of Jesus. And who him-/ herself has lost a him or her beloved one will be able to understand when they say: we have died with Christ. This feeling probably is acquainted with every mourner: being paralyzed from death and grief, as if oneself is buried down there. How surprising, how new this certainty of the disciples, no, Jesus is not dead and out of the

world, but Jesus is risen and lives forever in the presence of God. The same Holy Spirit of God who was in Jesus is in us now and leave us not in death, but let us resurrect with Christ. This is not easy to understand, even for those who believe in God. We know from our everyday language the phrase: the deceased lives on in his children. Perhaps this saying has its origin there.

Their experience of comfort, strength and vitality has reminded the disciples of the promises of Jesus again: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” (Matthew 18:20), “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth...” (John 14:16-17).

Yes, Jesus is alive in his disciples by God’s Spirit. That’s something different then to say that the deceased lives on in his children.

Because that only means that he lives on genetic or in his offspring's memory with what he has said and done. When we say Jesus lives by God's Spirit inside us, we mean a dimension that transcend our understanding, and in which we may take part. Those who go the Jesus-Way have experienced for centuries, that God's Spirit makes us similar to Christ.

At the beginning I asked, why we still have a mind and the energy to say 2000 year old Bible texts into the present. That depends on the same experience what have already made the disciples shortly after Jesus' resurrection, that God lives as Holy Spirit in us. These statements must sound absurd and adventurous for those who are not Christians. But they are really natural to whom, who is able to believe in God. He experiences God, where he is surprised by himself, where others hate him and he is unable to return the hate

and can only feel love and understanding for his opponent. Where he suddenly hears and sees himself saying and doing things, he would not have expected by himself, whether he intervenes with courage against discrimination, or he risks his life for a drowning child. Or we read the stories in the Bible that are written in the same spirit and we understand the context, we see daylight, and we are personally touched inwardly. These are all examples, which we can normally experience on a human level, but where we realize that God had a hand in it.

Many questions regarding the Holy Spirit of God could be asked like, if only Christians have the Holy Spirit (even so to ask seems wrong to me), because they say, that the Spirit of God drives that are children of God (Romans 8:14), or also so-called non-Christians?

I can't answer these questions and will not even try, because experience has shown that such attempts only lead to wild speculation, which bring nothing to anyone and harm rather than help. I just believe that the Spirit of God is free and blows where he wants. (see John 3:8)

However, I think it is much more important to make aware to those who follow the Jesus-Way – including myself – that now we are instead of Jesus, God's faces in this world. The humans do not need a religious zeal, no fundamentalist insistence on an absolute truth claim, but our humanity.

At all times the hope and certainty were burning in Christians, that they live on after their physical death together with Christ in the presence of God. The first Christians even imagined that they be turned alive at the

second coming of Christ and will be raptured with him in heaven.

The latter may seem hard to imagine, especially if you immerse in the picture language of Revelation, where it is described how Jesus comes riding up on a white horse from heaven high. Well, so one has imagined in antiquity, as the world goes down. And for centuries humans were strengthened and encouraged by these images during the persecutions of Christians.

The modern man may smile at such statements and mean very little to them. But it is obvious that the earth, which we spurn ecologically, sometime breaks apart. Since the invention of the atomic bomb and climate change the Apokalyse has come terrifyingly close. Therefore it is worthwhile to delve into the – sometimes difficult to understand – symbolic language of Revelation.

We should not fool ourselves, even if there has been great progresses in the Western world by the achievements of science and improved living conditions to prolong our life span, that we continue to live forever in this body. Most unfortunately, we are able to displace our death. We push the idea of death aside, live a superficial life without appreciating life properly. We get upset over little things and forget how precious life is. But even the most fulfilled and conscious lived life on this earth sometime comes to an end. With the same belief with which I believe in God, I believe that the human is more than his body and has a soul or identity that is hidden in him invisible to the human eye, and eternal. But it is more than a belief, it is a kind of certainty, of the same quality as I also believe in God. A certainty that goes beyond a purely intellectual “hold-as-true” of any biblical statements about life after death. This certainty is a kind of

experience of being that can hard be put into words. Just as if I am talking to a person, and I begin to see through his facade, and I suddenly have the feeling: Gosh, I know you. But not unmasking and compromising in a negative sense but realising in a positive sense: You and I are not so different, although we apparently we don't like in this each other here in this conversation, I feel who you really are. On another level we are even as humans one through Christ. All this is done non-verbally and in rare moments.

I know the people, and especially myself, and I know how multifaceted are the life and individual life stories, and I am wary to divide people into good and evil, in Christians or non-Christians, in redeemed and unredeemed. I know Buddhists and Muslims who are more convincing in their humanity than many Christians. Can it not be that they confess in

their own way and with their piety God, even if they, like the Buddhists, do not believe in God at all? And do not search those who mistake having with being in their own manner actually God, but only that they don't have yet understood that? We Christians should not make our hearts too tight and should not think to have a patent on truth.

Sometimes I guess something of God's greatness and the fact that, as I see him is just an eye-blink, as he really is. And if you try to put together all experiences of all humans, who belong to a religion or not, it seems to me that we cannot fathom God's depths. The different religions appear to me like facets of a diamond, which although gets warmed through and touched by the light of the sun cannot hold it and reflect the mutually complementary light of God, each in its own way, in a variety of colors.

Understanding the Revelation of John

I can't name a precise date, but the revelation accompanies me almost as long as I read the Bible on my way as a Christian. Starting with a children's Bible with many pictures and central stories from the Old and New Testament (without Revelation), my interest grew so that I already knew as a young teenager several Bible translations. Now it may even be a little more than forty years that I know the Revelation. In my opinion my intellectual understanding of this prophetic book has hardly changed. Certainly, meanwhile I can read the Revelation in Greek, know a few theological terms, but I can't say specifically if I understand it better than I did then.

The Revelation isn't any longer a hot potato in modern theology. One put it ad acta under the keyword "Jewish Apocalypticism". Already Luther couldn't do anything with it. What can you do with it? Is it an exact road map for the end of the world? I'm surprised that a scripture with the heading "Revelation" is such mysterious. But why have we to understand everything? Is that a problem of our modern age? No! I reckon that the Revelation never was easy to understand. But that is generally the case with prophetic sayings and scriptures. The Christians interpret the suffering servant of God in Isaiah 42 as a clear vision of Jesus, the Jews not.

How does prophecy happen? Are the prophetic texts something like a ticket to a part of coming world history, that happens only this way and once? Like a ticket which expires when the stage play is over?

What is, if the scientific research almost certainly can identify the antichrist, who bears the name of the number 666, as the Roman Emperor Nero, is this part of Revelation then fulfilled and completed, checked off and classified into world history?

Yes and no. The prophetic visions of the seer may be written down as comfort for the early Christians, which suffered under the persecution of the Roman Empire. So the Revelation may have been concretely fulfilled in a specific time in some parts. But its content concerns all Christians of all times. The antichrist who was called for the early persecuted Christians “Nero”, is called 1936-1945 for the persecuted Christians of the Confessing Church “Adolf Hitler”, for the persecuted Christians of the present in Syria “Isis”.

What we possibly believe and criticize to be fuzziness or a deficit of the Revelation actually is its strength. Just because concrete names and historical dates aren't mentioned in it, it is timeless. Its metaphorical language is ancient and archetypically. Therefore it touches us so deeply as hardly another biblical scripture, when we get involved with it. It hides itself in front of an intellectual understanding. The one who opens his / her heart to it, it comforts and move him / her to tears.

In different visions the curtain between the visible, material world and the invisible world is pushed aside. The visions are not abstract but totally concrete. It is shown an image to the seer which he shall write down. Surprisingly. Because it is just said: "You shall not make an image." But is a vision not something else as when you push away the curtain to look out of the window?

Sometimes the happening appears to be a dream. The seer tells how he is in the Spirit or how he wants to kneel down in front of the angel. The text flows like sand through the fingers. And with all images we still don't know exactly when the seen is "real", because what do we already know of God's invisible reality, or only symbol – or maybe even both, image of reality and symbol?

Images, numbers, places can be taken at face value, than there are still only the 144.000 chosen people or the number points to something greater, more general. Are the mentioned 1000 years "real-time" or only symbol for a period in God's realm "to whom are 1000 years like a day"? So you can think yourself "wound" about Talmudic riddles and agonize about their meaning without finding the answer. You think yourself away from the Revelation instead of understanding it.

Compared with the other books of the New Testament the Revelation doesn't fit so properly as prophetic book in the Canon of the New Testament. Therefore the acceptance in the Canon of the New Testament was controversial. The reason that it still made it, maybe was that it was supposed to be a scripture of the disciple John ("whom Jesus particularly loved") or as well as it contains much familiar by other biblical scriptures and gives answers to the future.

The Revelation has something of an epilogue in a novel, which no longer belongs to the main storyline, the essential already happened, but throws a different glance at the protagonists. We know the used images and motives from other parts not only the Old but also the New Testament. That is not surprisingly, because the apocalyptic of a Isaiah, a Daniel or a Joel was also known by

Jesus and common knowledge by his contemporaries.

In the center of the Revelation is Jesus Christ, who is the Alpha and the Omega (who is the first and the last), and to whom everything rotates about – like the wheel about its hub. He is the fixed star in the apocalyptic vastnesses and abysses of the Revelation. The Revelation isn't only a scripture to comfort the pursued Christians, but wants to awake the Christianity, which becomes tired and without passion. Listen, Christ is near! Remember what he has done for you: The Lamb of God! How holy and fragile are these descriptions of the Revelation, which I don't want to express furthermore with my own words.

If we understand the Revelation from its center Jesus Christ and if we let us touch through him, which sense does still make any interpretation of numbers or some

speculations about a possible date of the
apocalypse?

*We don't need to worry about our future.
Christ is near. That is all that counts.*