

SECOND EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS THE PSALM OF WHAT IS

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THE SETTING: July 31, 1960, I took 150 micrograms of LSD in my 21st session with the drug. I was at home, isolated in a little room on a couch with the sounds of my family nearby. The prior LSD sessions were strongly religious and aesthetic for me, with some visions of the Lord alluded to elsewhere.* For days before, I had engaged in a bitter struggle alone on a mountain to know the Will of God. Under LSD I knew, with trembling excitement, that the answer was coming, so I struggled to write the following in a scrawling hand across pages of paper. I heard it and felt its many meanings all at once, and could barely get it all down. It was a joyous, busy, trembling occasion without time to reflect on what was being written. It was given to me as follows:

Hail,
To all peoples,
I have found the Lord
Hidden,
In the most obvious place.

The Lord is
The What Is
That confronts us.
That obvious.

We have intercourse
With the What Is,
And intercourse is the Word,
For it takes place not only in the
world, in the eyes of others,
But it takes place within,
In the very secret darks

Of what we are.

In here
In what we are
We have intercourse
Man
and I.

Insofar as you love Me
And sum up in your pouch
All you are,
All your pride,
In your little pouch,
And give this,
Then I answer as the What Is.
Is the answer so obvious
That you do not see
It is the Lord?

*Van Dusen, W., "LSD and the Enlightenment of Zen." *Psychologia* (Kyoto, Japan), 1961, 4, pp. 11-16.

For I am the Lord What Is.
It is with Me you have intercourse.
And this intercourse is your life
And Mine
For I too suffer
In the darkness of your soul.
It is that kind of intercourse,
Life and death.

No man —
Sum up what you are
And give it to Me.
You live and breathe and move
In my will.
Your very thinking is My creation
Your very pride is My design,
It is my pleasure of myself
In the creation of what is.

In the secret recesses of yourself
Give me this
And I answer in the most obvious
way imaginable,
As the what is.
To find me
Give way to what is.
I am not far
To be sought,
Always with you
As I promised,
Constantly by your side,
Falling as you fall,
And rising as you rise
In this what is.

In this pit
My love.
For it is, after all,
Only I.
I make the pit
And the rising and falling
And the trembling you heré
And your ability to question me
That lover can say to lover,

In the bed of existence,
Is that you there?

When you are already carried into
the extreme
Where it can be only I.
And so all of existence
Is our playful, joyous and agonizing
intercourse,
Where the question of
Is that really you?
Is the issue.

Yet it is only you
and I.
In the whole bed of existence.
And I come to my lover and say,
See,
I made you,
In the bed of existence
You are my substance.
Fear not,
For I am yourself.
Are we not like lovers?

You want to know if it is really me.
And I show you your hands.
I made the whole world.
But, so much of a lover,
I don't mind being your mute hands
In your work.

And yet
I am the What Is.
I am creation
I am all there is,
In endless intercourse
With myself.
The intercourse of the What Is
Is creation.
And were it not for love,
There would be no creation.
Gentle love
Is the root of it all.

All people —	Hurt Me
It is I	and I hurt you.
Who rise and fall with you.	Yet, I am both of these.
Help Me.	Come,
For I am all there is	Your life is intercourse with Me.
For I am creation	
Your very abode,	Now,
Help me	Like gentle lovers
For I live here	In the bed called world
With you.	You
I am, after all,	and I . . .
Both the petitioner	You always have what pleases Me.
And the petitioned.
Lift Me	It is what
and I lift you	You are.

COMMENTS ON THE PSALM:

The first title, "Second Epistle to the Romans," was given in a somewhat joking vein. There is only one Epistle to the Romans. A second epistle would raise a question. We are the modern-day Romans glutted with wealth. This letter wasn't to be a warning, though; it was to advance the understanding of the modern-day Romans. The "Psalm" or song of "What Is" conveys more of its spirit and content. I thought of dropping the first title but was given to understand that it was to remain.

The *Hail to all Peoples* was very joyous, like a man gone mad with a happy discovery, running down streets shouting to all. The next few lines are a paradox. Where better to hide the eternal one than in everyday diversity? However it might disturb the religious minded, the next lines were meant literally. *The Lord is the What Is that confronts us*. This may sound like pantheism; but if one considers it is all the *What Ises* everywhere at all times, it won't seem too limited. In the total message of the Psalm, this meaning enlarges.

And *intercourse is the Word* illustrates the many levels of meaning that are alluded to all at once:

- 1) The Word treats of all things, even sexual intercourse.
- 2) When man reads the Word he has intercourse with the Lord.

3) Our situation is one of intercourse in all senses: rape, love, social knowing, all inter-coursing or going between.

4) This intercourse is in the social world and even within the nature of each individual. It appears that there is no aspect of life which is not the intercourse of man and God. Ultimately this intercourse takes place within God, man being something of an artifact.

In what we are, we have intercourse, man and I. Though all of the Psalm was given me, it is only at this point that it gradually becomes apparent that the Lord of Heaven and Earth speaks. His first and last emphasis in the poem is on the reality of what man and God are. I can only report, without fully understanding it, that the Lord views all the real as sacred. Perhaps He views Himself as the real and this respect for the real is faithfulness to Himself. Words and symbols are only pointers towards the real, and hence of lesser station. By real I gather He means things such as rocks and trees. But there are more meanings here than this. I suggest, but don't delimit. There is no mere exchange of words and ideas going on in this Psalm. The Lord points to His and man's actual nature.

For a long while I thought that the section telling man to sum up all pride in his pouch was a religious gesture for special occasions. If man would give all his pride to God, God would answer. Now it appears to me this is the everyday. We always act with all our pride. And the Lord always and constantly answers as the What Is. The reference to pouch always seems masculine to me, as though there is an allusion here to testicles and man's giving himself in ejaculation. Again sex appears sacred. Or the pouch is one's purse or where all one's valuables are. The giving of pride could be the conscious ejaculation that I of myself can do nothing. There is another mystery here, the implication that insofar as one lets go of pride, one can see the Lord's answer. Pride makes us tall against the background of the world. Without pride, the death of the little ego or self, the world What Is stands forth tall as all creation. Ejaculating pride, the Lord What Is stands forth. There is more here which I do not understand.

Is the answer so obvious is a good pun. Most would say the Lord's ways are obscure. But here they appear as the most obvious; in fact, obviousness itself. The dialogue is then between little me in my pride, and all there is. All there is does not fail to speak. But one must look for the dialogue between himself and events to see that it takes place. Otherwise, the What Is is reduced to inconsequential chance, and pride stands tall.

For I am the Lord What Is is similar to Exodus 3:14, "God

said to Moses, 'I am who I am.' The Lord sees himself as the only self-subsistent, and the Only Real. This is indicated many times in the Psalm. As Swedenborg said, "The Lord is the Very Real." It becomes apparent in this section that this intercourse of man and God is the life of both of them. The Lord so identifies with the struggles within man that He said: *For I too suffer in the darkness of your soul.* I take this darkness as the innermost and unknown within man. This intercourse is not all pleasant and easy, it means *life and death*. The author of this knows pain as well as joy.

No man — has at least two implications. The first was like a giant hand raised to confront and stop man that he might see his life as intercourse with God. The second meaning given at the time was that there is no man. This begins to become apparent in this stanza; for if we live, breathe, move, think and are prideful, all within the Lord's will, there is no room left for man. There is no man *per se*, he is an epiphenomenon within the will of God. In this there can be no personal pride. *Your very thinking is My creation, your very pride is My design.* This is worth meditating on. It is my impression the mind is freed when it sees it is of this design. Even my thoughts about how I think are designed. There is no burden for me to lift, then. The implication of *It is my pleasure of myself in the creation of what is* is that all creation, including man, is God's play.

In the next stanza, *falling as you fall* returns to the idea of a close relationship of man and the Divine. Throughout the Psalm it is said both that man can interact with God and that ultimately this is God's action within Himself. It seems clearly indicated that the way to God is to give up pride, like a sacrificial offering. Give way to what is. *I am not far to be sought* was in terms of the lost man struggling to find Him. Since man lives within His Will, the Lord is nowhere to be sought. *Always with you as I promised* was given with the feeling of an ancient promise given centuries ago that was being fulfilled. That God rises and falls with us implies that we should consider our companion in this What Is. And this returns again to the idea of intercourse, love. *In this pit my love* conveys the seriousness of this relationship. It is ultimate or total. The bed of existence again points back to intercourse. In this stanza the issue is seen to reduce to — with whom do I have intercourse in this bed of existence? The question becomes foolish, for by the time the man is addressing all of creation, it no longer matters what name it is called. It is already the One.

Yet it is only you and I has the implication that for each person, all others and all else is the What Is that speaks. So it is

only *you and I* in the whole bed of existence. The cry *Is that really you?* is a painful, agonizing one of the total man to the Lord Himself. Yet the Lord answers kindly and tenderly that there is nothing to fear, *for I am yourself.* Yet there is separation again: *Are we not like lovers?* This ultimate understanding, that God and man are one, is touched and then left again. It is more than man can grasp. The play of lovers goes on.

Over and over the Lord creeps in on human identity. Here He identifies Himself as the maker of the man's hands. It is a simple mystery that I did not make my hands nor do I really know how they are moved. If the Lord is one's mute hands — how close?

In the next stanza the Divine again identifies Itself as the whole of creation. Since He is the man and the Divine, He is in intercourse with Himself. *Gentle love is the root of it all.*

The section beginning *All People* — was given in a plaintive cry. It was as though we live within His house and He depends on us to help keep it in order. There was the image of the whole earth as a house we share. It was shocking to hear His dependency and my responsibility. Yet, in the next to the last paragraph it again becomes apparent He is both sides of the coin — the petitioner and the petitioned.

The last stanza was like gentle love itself. It was said with great reassurance that, whatever one's situation, one has what pleases the Lord. The greatest gift that could be given is one's real nature, since this is the Divine Itself. The last line comes to the deepest theme. Here *What Is* is turned around to *is what* because it is man that is spoken of. It is implied that man exists within God and is the same life.

Many signs were given me after this, but they were for me. One of them might interest the reader. I saw the arm of God coming down out of Heaven, clasping in a tight grip the arm of man reaching up from earth. Both had green sleeves all decorated in the loveliest design of thistles, representing the sacredness of life's trials. The Divine and the human were identical except for their position. And they were clasped as though each held equally to the other. God draws man to heaven and man draws God to earth equally. I have hesitated to report this because of its very nature and because I don't want the sacred to be exposed to doubt and criticism. For myself, I begin to see the dialogue with the What Is in the everyday. And it is a great pleasure to begin to feel that I am not alone in this bed of existence. My cry is heard even when silent.