

Daily Meditation 01/12/2023

Dorothee Soelle: From Christolatry to Mysticism

Good morning.

In today's meditation, Dorothee Soelle is encouraging us to move beyond Christolatry, that is, putting Christ on a pedestal, to authentic mysticism, which is being with Christ or being in Christ, and Christ in us. Christological panentheism is Christ in us and us in Christ.

The key word is *in*, not *of*, not *outside*, not *external*, but profoundly internal: Christ becomes our deepest self. As Paul put it, "I do not live, but Christ lives in me."

This is language that the Buddhists also use that the Buddha lives within us, in our deepest recesses, and comes alive in us when we make the decisions we make: decisions to prefer peace over war, kindness over violence, forgiveness over carrying grudges and projecting, truth over falsity.

I would say mammal brain over reptilian brains, because the reptilian brain is so much about being number one. Mammal brain is about kinship, family in the biggest sense of that word: family, healthy family absorbs diversity and differences and respects it.

So she talks about the mystical expression that this phrase "we are in Christ" is all about, and how this attitude and this awareness of being in Christ is very different from putting Christ up on a pedestal. And she cites Kierkegaard: "Those who esteem Christ are one kind of people, and those who follow Christ are another."

So we can put Christ so much on a pedestal, project all our energy on that pedestal, that we don't put our energy into actually following his teachings.

I do think that that happens a lot in Christian history. The Nicene Creed, for example, from the fourth century, came about because the Emperor Constantine wanted to put order into his empire. And in that Nicene Creed is so little, if nothing, about the teachings of Jesus, whether the Beatitudes, or Matthew 25 -- "do to the least and you do it to me." The entire parable about compassion, and so many other parables about compassion, the Good Samaritan, the prodigal son, none of that is in the creed. What's in the creed is about how Christ is born and dies, and then there is a church and so forth and certain beliefs.

Now, one can live with that, but it's what's missing that's dangerous. The teachings of Jesus, the reason he died, is missing. That he died because he stepped on the toes of empire, the powers that be, questioning the status quo, questioning Herod and the empire that he represented, providing an alternative kingdom, what he called the kingdom, a *basileia*, community, that would live with different values, values of love and compassion and justice and truth.

So, this invitation from Dorothee Soelle and Kierkegaard to perhaps esteem Christ a little less, but follow him a little more generously and truthfully: this is a rich and important meditation for our time, isn't it?

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.