

Spiritual Science



Deep Dive Article

Interpreting the Bible

Source: Background to the Gospel of St. Mark, GA142

When we read the Bible to-day we are reading something that in comparison with the original wording has been sifted not once but two or three times, and it is not the best but the worst that has remained.

The Son of God and the Son of Man. The Sacrifice of Orpheus

16 January 1911, Berlin

The verses in St. Mark's Gospel which we were endeavouring to elucidate in the last lecture are followed by remarkable words in many ways similar to those found in the other Gospels, although their full significance can best be studied in that of St. Mark. The words are to the effect that after the Baptism and the experiences in the 'wilderness', Christ Jesus went into the synagogue and taught the people there.

The sentence is usually translated: 'And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.' — To a man of the present age, however orthodox a believer in the Bible, this sentence conveys little more than that His teaching was powerful and impressive — unlike that of the scribes. But in the Greek text the sentence translated 'as one that had authority and not as the scribes', is:

ἦν γὰρ διδάσχων αὐτούς ὡς ἐξουσίῃν ἔχων, καὶ οὐχ ὡς οἱ γραμματεῖς

(ēn gar didamaskōn autous hōs exusiān echōn, kai ouch hōs hoi grammateis)

If we try to grasp the meaning of this significant passage we shall be led a step further towards understanding the secrets of Christ's mission. I have already called your attention to the fact that like other genuinely inspired writings, the Gospels are not easy to understand and that to grasp their

real meaning we must bring together all the thoughts and ideas about the spiritual world acquired in the course of many years. Such ideas alone can give us insight into what is meant when it is said in the Gospel that He taught in the synagogue as one of the *Exousiai*, as a Power and Revelation, and not as those who are here called: γραμματῖς (scribes).

Order	Hierarchy	Name (AKA)	Tasks
1 st Order	1	Seraphim (Spirits of Love)	To receive the ideas of the Holy Trinity
	2	Cherubim (Spirits of Harmony)	To ponder over those ideas
	3	Thrones (Spirits of Will, Ophanim*)	To transform the ideas into action
2 nd Order	4	Kyriotetes (Spirits of Wisdom, Dominion)	To carry out what the 1 st Order has initiated
	5	Dynamis (Spirits of Motion, Might, Virtues)	Continual movement and metamorphosis in our planet of air, water, and vegetation
	6	Exusiai (Spirits of Form, Elohim, Powers)	The creation of the solar system and Mankind

3 rd Order	7	Archai (Spirits of Personality, Principalities, Spirits of Time or Epoch Spirits)	To engender a future type of Human Being who can be entirely self-directing and independent
	8	Archangels (Spirits of Fire, National Spirits or Folk Spirits)	To serve as national spirits, folk souls or folk spirits
	9	Angels (Angeloi, messengers of the divine-spiritual world)	To help and guide Human Beings while on the Earth plane
* Sections of the Book of Enoch (61:10, 71:7) portray Ophanim as a class of celestial beings who (along with the Cherubim and Seraphim) never sleep, but guard the throne of God.			

To understand a passage such as this we must remind ourselves of what we have learnt about the higher, supersensible worlds. We have learnt that man, as he lives in our world, is the lowest member of a hierarchical Order, that his place is at the lowest step of the ladder of this Order. Immediately above him in the supersensible world, at the first level, are the Beings called in Christian esotericism, *Angeloi*, Angels. They are the supersensible Beings of the rank immediately above man, who influence his life. Above them come the *Archangeloi* or Archangels, then the *Archai* or Spirits of Personality; then the *Exousiai*, *Dynameis* and *Kyriotetes*, and finally the *Thrones*, *Cherubim* and *Seraphim*.

Thus above man there are nine ranks of hierarchical Beings. And we shall now try to picture how these different supersensible Beings intervene in human life.

The *Angeloi* are the Beings who as messengers of the spiritual world to the individual man in his life on Earth, are nearest of all to him. They exercise a perpetual influence upon the destinies of individuals on the physical plane. The *Archangeloi* are spiritual Beings whose activities embrace a wider sphere. They are the Beings whom we may call 'Folk-Spirits', who regulate and guide the affairs of whole groups of peoples. When a man of the present day speaks of a 'Folk-Spirit' he thinks, purely in terms of number, of so many thousands of individuals who happen to

populate the same territory. But in Spiritual Science we mean by a Folk-Spirit the actual Folk-Individuality, not such and such a number of people but a real individuality just as we speak of an individuality in the case of a single man. The spiritual guidance of a whole Folk lies in the hands of the Archangelos. All these higher Beings are supersensible entities having their own spheres of activity. The Archai, Spirits of Personality or the 'Primal Beginnings', are again different from the Archangeloi or Folk-Spirits. If we speak of the French, the German, the English Folk-Spirit and so on, this points to different regions of the Earth. But there is something that is common to all men to-day, at least to all Western peoples, and affords them a basis for mutual understanding. In contrast to the single Folk-Spirit we speak here of the Time-Spirit: there is a Time-Spirit in the period of the Reformation, another in our own day. The Time-Spirits, the Archai, rank above the individual Folk-Spirits, and are the leaders of successive epochs.

At a still higher level we come to the Exousiai. They are supersensible Beings of an essentially different order. To form an idea of how the Beings of these still higher Hierarchies differ from the Angeloi, Archangeloi and Archai, let us remind ourselves that there is no essential difference between a member of one Folk and a member of a different Folk as regards his outer, physical make-up and what he eats and drinks. It cannot be said that, except as regards soul and spirit, the peoples differ essentially from each other. The guiding spiritual Beings (the Time-Spirits) of the successive epochs are concerned with things of the soul and spirit only. Man does not, however, consist only of soul and spirit. It is the human astral body that is essentially influenced by whatever is of the nature of soul and spirit. There are also denser members of man's being which do not differ greatly from each other as far as the activities of the Angeloi, Archangeloi and Archai are concerned. But creative influences are exercised upon these denser members of man's nature by spiritual Beings belonging to ranks from that of the Exousiai upwards. Language and current modes of thought belong to the sphere of the Folk-Spirits and the Time-Spirits — Archangeloi and Archai. But men are also influenced by the light and air and climate of a particular region. One type of human being thrives below the Equator, another in the regions nearer to the North Pole. We shall not agree with a German professor of philosophy whose view, presented in a very widely read book, was that civilisations of essential importance would have to develop in the Temperate Zone because the human beings responsible for such culture would freeze at the North Pole and scorch at the South Pole! But we can certainly speak of the different effects of food upon human beings living in different climates. External

conditions are by no means without influence upon the character of a people — for example, whether they live in mountain valleys or on plains. We see there how the forces of nature penetrate into and affect the whole of man's constitution. Knowing from Spiritual Science that supersensible Beings are active in all the forces of nature and work upon men through these forces, we can make a distinction between Archai and Exousiai, and say: The Angeloi, Archangeloi and Archai influence man through what concerns the soul and spirit only — language, current modes of thought, ideas, and so on, but they do not work through the forces of nature; their operations do not directly affect the etheric body or the physical body, which are the lower members of man's organism.

On the other hand, spiritual Beings from the rank of the Exousiai upwards work not only upon man but also in the forces of outer nature; they are the 'Directors' as it were of air and light, of the different ways in which foodstuffs are produced in the kingdoms of nature. They are the Beings who hold sway in these kingdoms of nature. The phenomena of thunder and lightning, rain and sunshine, how one kind of foodstuff grows in one region, other kinds in another, in short the whole ordering of earthly conditions we ascribe to spiritual Beings of the Hierarchies higher than the Angeloi, Archangeloi and Archai. We see the effects of the activity of the Exousiai, for example, in the light that works upon us as well as upon the plants, not only in the invisible effects which are the manifestations of the Time-Spirits.

Let us now consider what it is that civilisation gives to men, what they have to learn in order to make progress. Every individual has at his disposal what is yielded by his own epoch, but also, to a certain extent, the fruits of earlier epochs. Now it is only what derives from the lowest Hierarchies up to and including the Time-Spirits that can be preserved as history and be taught and studied as such. What streams directly from the kingdoms of nature cannot be preserved in tradition. Nevertheless, men whose powers of knowledge enable them to penetrate into the supersensible worlds can pass beyond the Time-Spirits to still higher forms of revelation. Such revelations are recognised as belonging to a realm higher than that of the Time-Spirits, as having greater weight than anything deriving from the Time-Spirits, and as affecting men in a very special way. Every rational human being should ask himself now and then whether his soul is affected more profoundly by what can be learnt from the traditions of the several peoples and Time-Spirits of historical epochs, or by a glorious sunrise, which is a direct manifestation of nature and of the supersensible worlds. Individuals may well become conscious that a

sunrise in all its glory can stir the soul infinitely more deeply than all the science, the learning and the art of the ages. Suppose we have been deeply moved by the works in the Italian Galleries of Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael and others, and later on climb some Swiss mountain and contemplate the spectacle there presented, we shall be vividly conscious of what nature can reveal. We shall ask: Who is the greater artist: Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, or the Powers who have painted the sunrise to be seen from the Rigi? — And the answer can only be that wonderful as are the achievements of men, what comes before us as a revelation of divine-spiritual Powers is far greater.

Now when the spiritual leaders of mankind, the Initiates, appear before the world, their teachings are not based upon or drawn from tradition but flow from original sources, and their revelations are like the revelations of nature herself. What is merely repeated by others can never have an effect as powerful as that of a sunrise. Compared with what tradition has handed down of the teachings of Moses or Zarathustra and what the Time-Spirits and Folk-Spirits have communicated through forms of external culture, the effect made by nature herself is far the greater. It was only when the revelations of Moses and Zarathustra sprang from immediate experience of the supersensible worlds that their effect was as powerful as that of the revelations of nature. The wonderful thing about these original revelations to mankind is that they are like the revelations of nature herself. We should remember here that the Exousiai are the lowest Hierarchy of Beings who work in the forces and powers of nature.

What, then, was experienced by those who were gathered in the synagogue when Christ Jesus came among them? Hitherto they had been taught by the 'Scribes', by men who were cognisant of what the Time-Spirits and Folk-Spirits had communicated. To such teaching the people were accustomed. But now there came One who did not teach as the Scribes taught, whose words seemed like a revelation from the realm of the supersensible powers in nature, in thunder, or in lightning. Knowing that the higher the rank of the Hierarchies the greater are their powers, we can understand in all their depth these words in the Gospel of St. Mark.

If we can feel the supersensible reality behind the creations of men such as Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci and others of their calibre, we can still glimpse in the relatively small number of pictures that have come down to us, something of the original inspiration. Great works of art, works of spiritual genius, are always echoes of what was originally revealed. And if

we can perceive something of what Raphael, for example, expressed in his pictures, or form a living idea of the work of Zarathustra, we shall be able to hear something of what comes from the Exousiai.

But in the teachings given in the synagogues by the Scribes, that is to say, by men whose knowledge stemmed from the Folk-Spirits and Time-Spirits, there was nothing that could even faintly echo direct revelations of nature. Hence these words in St. Mark's Gospel are an indication that in men living in those days an inkling was beginning to dawn that something entirely *new* was speaking to them; that through this man who came among them something revealed itself which was like a power of nature herself, like one of the supersensible Powers behind the phenomena of nature. Men began gradually to divine what it was that had entered into Jesus of Nazareth and was symbolised in the Baptism by John. The people in the synagogue were very near the truth when they said: When he speaks it is as though the Exousiai were speaking, not merely the Archai, the Time-Spirits, or the Folk-Spirits.

It is only through knowledge of Spiritual Science that we shall be able again to instil a full and living content and meaning into the barren abstractions abounding in modern translations of the New Testament, and to realise what is involved when efforts are made to penetrate to the core of the Gospels. Generations must pass before there can be any prospect of fathoming, even approximately, the deep meanings which our own times can dimly surmise. Actual investigation of a great deal in the Gospels will be possible only in the future.



Fundamentally, what the writer of St. Mark's Gospel wished to present was an elaboration of the teaching of Paul, one of the first to recognise the nature and essential being of the Christ through direct supersensible perception. We must understand what Paul actually taught and what he experienced through the revelation that came to him on the road to Damascus. Although the event is described in the Bible as a sudden revelation, those conversant with the real facts know that this kind of illumination can come at any moment to one who is striving to reach the spiritual world and that as a result of his experiences he becomes a changed man. And in the case of St. Paul it is abundantly evident that through the revelation at Damascus this was what happened.

Even a superficial study of the Gospels and of the Pauline Epistles will make it clear that St. Paul regards the Event of Golgotha as the central point of the whole evolution of humanity and that he links this Event directly with what is described in the Bible as the creation of Adam, the first man. St. Paul's teaching is to somewhat the following effect: The being we must call the spiritual man, the real man, of whom in the world of maya there is only an illusory image, came down in ancient Lemurian times to this world of illusion, facing the experiences he was to undergo in the flesh during successive incarnations. He became man in the form

assumed throughout the Lemurian and Atlantean epochs and in post-Atlantean times until the coming of Christ. Then came the Event of Golgotha.

Paul was unshakably convinced after his vision near Damascus that in the Event of Golgotha something occurred that was exactly comparable with the descent of man into the flesh. For therewith the impulse was given gradually to overcome those forms of earthly existence into which man had entered through Adam. Hence Paul calls the Being who appeared in the Christ, the 'new Adam', whom every man can draw to himself through union with Christ.

Thus from Lemurian on into pre-Christian times we have to see the gradual descent of man into matter — whether we call him Adam or by some other name. Then he was given the power and the impulse to ascend again so that he might eventually return, enriched by the fruits of earthly existence, to the original, spiritual state that had been his before he descended into matter.

Now if we are to understand the essential meaning of evolution, we must not ask: Could man not have been spared this descent into matter? Why was it necessary for him to pass through different incarnations in order to re-ascend into the state that was his at the beginning? Such questions could spring only from complete misunderstanding of the spiritual meaning of evolution. For man takes with him from Earth-existence all the fruits of his experiences and is enriched with the content of his incarnations — a content that was not previously his.

Think, hypothetically, of a man descending and passing through his first incarnation: there he learns certain things. In his second incarnation he learns more; and so on through all the incarnations. Their course, to begin with, is one of descent: man becomes more and more deeply entangled in the physical world. Then he begins an ascent and can rise to the extent to which he receives the Christ Impulse into himself. One day he will find his way again into the spiritual world; but he will then take with him whatever he was able to acquire on the Earth.

And so Paul sees in the Christ the central point of the whole process of man's earthly evolution, the power that gives him the impulse to rise into the supersensible world enriched with all the experiences of life on the Earth.

But from this standpoint, how does Paul regard the sacrifice on Golgotha, the actual Crucifixion? It is not easy to relate to our modern ideas the way in which St. Paul — and also the writer of St. Mark's Gospel — understood the sacrifice on Golgotha, this most essential fact of human evolution. Before this can be attempted we must familiarise ourselves with the thought that man as he stands before us is a Microcosm, and we must study all the implications of this fact.

Two periods of development, each very different from the other, are apparent in man's life between birth and death in every incarnation. In various ways I have already called attention to the difference between the two periods — for our study of Spiritual Science is more systematic than people usually imagine. One of these periods lies between birth and the point at which an individual's memory begins. If you follow your memories back, you reach a certain point beyond which they cease. You were already in existence then and may have heard from your parents or relatives about your doings; hence you have some knowledge of them but you yourself remember nothing beyond a certain point of time. Normal remembrance breaks off at this point, the most favourable age for which is somewhere about the third year of life. Before that point of time a child is highly impressionable. Just think how much is taken in during the first, second and third years of life; yet modern man has no remembrance at all of *how* the impressions were made. — Then follows the period through which the thread of memory runs continuously.

We must pay careful attention to these two periods of development for they are very important in man's life as a whole. We must observe the development of the human being closely and accurately and avoid the prejudiced views of modern science. The facts of science confirm what I have to say, but we should not attach too much weight to biased views that deviate widely from the truth. Close observation of man's development makes it evident that his life as an individual in society is conditioned by whatever forms part of the thread of memory which begins, approximately, in the third year. Within the span of this thread of memory lies every principle by which we consciously direct our life; it embraces whatever rules of conduct we consciously accept as worthy to be followed. Our Ego has no consciousness of what lies before this point; of that, nothing finds its way into the thread of our conscious life.

Thus before our conscious life begins there are certain years during which our relation with the surrounding world is quite different from what it is later.

The difference is radical. Penetrating observation of a child before the period back to which memory extends when he is older, would show that in those first years he feels himself to be within the universal, macrocosmic, spiritual life. He does not separate or isolate himself from that life but feels part and parcel of the whole environment. He even speaks of himself as others do. He does not say: 'I want', but, 'John wants'. It is only later that he learns to speak of himself as 'I'. Modern child psychologists pick holes in this explanation but the truth is not controverted by their arguments which are just evidences of their lack of insight. In his earliest years a child still feels part of the world around him; it is only at the point from which his memories begin that he gradually detaches himself from his environment as an independent being.

It can therefore be said that the principles a man may accept for the guidance of his life and the whole content of his consciousness belong to the second phase of development beginning at the point of time referred to. In the first phase he has a quite different relation to the environment; he feels much more closely connected with it. The only way to understand this thoroughly is to imagine what would happen if the form of consciousness which has produced this feeling of direct connection with the surrounding world in early childhood were to remain in later years. If that were the case human life would take a very different course. Man would not feel so isolated; even in later years he would feel himself to be an integral part, a member, of the Macrocosm, the Great World. As things are he loses his feeling of oneness with the Great World and believes himself to be isolated from it. In ordinary life this isolation comes into a man's consciousness in an abstract form only, for instance, in his egoisms, or in a tendency to shut himself off more and more within his own skin. The view that man's life is enclosed within his skin is complete nonsense. Whenever he exhales he becomes part of the outer world for the breath previously indrawn is now outside. Man's picture of himself is pure maya but his form of consciousness makes this inevitable. Human beings nowadays are neither particularly inclined nor indeed mature enough to understand karma. If, for instance, anyone gets his windows broken he is apt to take this as an offence directed against himself, and he is annoyed by it because he feels himself to be an isolated being. But were he to believe in karma he would feel related to the whole Macrocosm and would know that in point of fact it is we ourselves who have broken the windows. For in truth we are interwoven with the whole Cosmos and it is sheer

nonsense to imagine that we are enclosed by our skin. But it is only in very early childhood that this feeling of oneness with the Cosmos exists; in later life it is lost at the point to which memory reaches.

It was not always so. In earlier times, by no means very long ago, the consciousness belonging to early childhood extended, in some degree at least, into the later years of a man's life. This was in the times of the ancient clairvoyance; and with it went a very different kind of thinking and a different way of expressing facts. This is an aspect of human evolution about which the student of Spiritual Science must be quite clear.

When a male child is born nowadays he is simply regarded as the son of his father and mother: and if he has no birth or baptismal certificate bearing the names of his parents to identify him as a citizen, nothing is officially known about him and in certain circumstances his very existence is questioned. To the modern mind a human being is simply the physical offspring of his father and his mother.

This was not how people thought in a past not so very far distant. Scholars and researchers to-day do not, however, know that in earlier times not only was men's thinking different but the content and implications of the words and designations used were different. Hence interpretations of ancient legends do not convey their real meaning. We are told, for instance, of Orpheus, a Greek singer^[1]. I refer to him because he belongs to the period several centuries before the rise of Christianity. We may think of him as the one responsible for the organisation of the Greek Mysteries. This fourth post-Atlantean epoch of which he was an important figure in the opening stage, was a preparation for the Christ Event and what humanity was to receive through it. Thus in Greece Orpheus was the great Preparer.

If a man of the modern age were to encounter a figure such as Orpheus, he would simply say: he is the son of such-and-such a father and such-and-such a mother — and science might possibly look for inherited characteristics. There is, for example, a bulky tome in which all the hereditary characteristics of Goethe's families are set forth in an endeavour to present him as the sum-total of those characteristics. That is by no means how people thought in the days of Orpheus. The man of flesh and his physical attributes were not what really mattered to them. The essential qualities were those that enabled Orpheus to be the leader and organiser of pre-Christian Greek culture — certainly not the physical brain or nervous system. The essential thing was the fact that he had within him — in his

own field of experience — a quality derived from the supersensible world and united with the material-physical element provided by his personality. The eyes of the Greeks were directed, not to the physical figure of Orpheus descending from father and mother, perhaps also from grandfather and grandmother; this figure was more or less unessential, being merely the outer expression, the sheath. The essential element was what had descended from a supersensible source and had united with a material entity on the physical plane. Hence a Greek would have said to himself: When Orpheus is before me, the fact that he descends from a father and a mother need hardly be taken into account; what is of importance is that his soul-qualities, which have made him what he is, stem from the supersensible, from a supersensible reality which has never hitherto had anything to do with the physical plane; a physical-material element has here been able to unite with the supersensible reality in his personality. — And because the Greeks regarded a purely supersensible quality as the hallmark of Orpheus, they said he was the offspring of a Muse, the son of Calliope^[2], not of a physical mother but of a supersensible reality which had never had any previous connection with the physical and material.

But as the son of Calliope and nothing more than that, Orpheus could have given expression only to manifestations of the supersensible world. In keeping with the nature of the age in which he lived, it was also his mission to give expression to what would be of service to physical life in that epoch. Hence he was not only a mouthpiece for the Muse, for Calliope, as in much earlier times the Rishis were merely mouthpieces for supersensible Powers, but his own life gave expression to the supersensible in such a way that the physical world also was important to his life. His teaching was connected with and suited to the climate of Greece, to what was part of outer nature in Greece — and so Orpheus was made the son of Oeagrus, the Thracian River-God^[3].

This shows us that to the Greeks what mattered most in their view was what was living in Orpheus' soul. In those days men were characterised by the quality of their souls, by their spiritual value, not, as in later times, by saying: he is the son of so-and-so, or, he comes from such and such a town. It is very interesting to see how deeply involved the Greeks felt in the destiny of a man such as Orpheus, who descended on the one side from a Muse and on the other from a Thracian River-God. Unlike the ancient prophets, Orpheus was subject not only to supersensible influences but to material influences as well — to all the influences exercised by the physical-material world.

Now we know that man consists of several members: the physical body, the etheric body, the astral body and the Ego, the 'I'. A man such as Orpheus, descended from a Muse — you now know what that means — was still able to see into the spiritual world; but on the other hand, his capacity for experiencing the spiritual world was weakened by the life he led on the physical plane as the son of his father, the Thracian River-God.

The Leaders in the second and third post-Atlantean culture-epochs who became mouthpieces for utterances of the spiritual worlds were able to perceive their own etheric body separated from the physical. In the civilisations where ancient clairvoyance prevailed — and it was the same even among the Celts — when a man was to be made aware of something he was called upon to communicate to his fellow-men, it was revealed to him in this way: his etheric body emerged from the physical body and became the bearer of forces which streamed down into it. If those who proclaimed the utterances of the spiritual worlds were men, their etheric bodies were female and they consequently saw in female form whatever communicated messages to them from the spiritual worlds.

Now it was also the purpose of the legend to show that although Orpheus was in direct contact with the spiritual Powers, as the son of a Thracian River-God there was always the possibility that he would be unable to retain what was revealed to him through his own etheric body. The more thoroughly he made himself at home in the physical world and lived his life as a son of his country, the more did his power of clairvoyance recede. The story relates that Eurydice, the transmitter of his revelations, his soul-bride, was torn away from him through the bite of an adder — a picture of his human failings — and carried off to the underworld. He could win her back only by passing through an Initiation. — Whenever we are told of a journey into the underworld, an Initiation is meant. — In order to win back his bride, Orpheus must pass through an Initiation. But he was already too closely enmeshed in the physical world. He had indeed acquired the capacity to make his way into the underworld, but on his return, when his eyes again encountered the sunlight, Eurydice vanished from his sight. Why was this? It was because on seeing the sunlight he did something that was forbidden him: he turned and looked back. That is to say, he disobeyed a strict command given him by the God of the underworld, namely, that physical man, living on the physical plane, must not look back beyond the point of time I have indicated, to the period of the macrocosmic experiences of childhood; if these experiences were to penetrate into the consciousness normal in later life, they would give rise to clairvoyance in its ancient form. Hence the command of the God of the

underworld that no man may seek to penetrate the mysteries of childhood, to remember where the Threshold is fixed. — But this was what Orpheus did, and he consequently lost the faculty of clairvoyance.

Something of great delicacy and subtlety in connection with Orpheus is set before us in this story of the loss of Eurydice. One consequence is that man is sacrificed to the physical world. With a nature still deeply rooted in the spiritual he is also, partially, the sort of being which it is his destiny to become on the physical plane. And so all the forces of the physical plane press in upon him and he loses Eurydice, his own innocent soul — which it is the fate of modern man also to lose. These forces tear Orpheus to pieces; in a sense, he is sacrificed.

What is it, then, that Orpheus experienced as representative of the transition between the third and fourth epochs of post-Atlantean culture? In the first place he experienced the stage of consciousness which the child leaves behind — the connection with the Macrocosm. This does not pass over into his conscious life and therefore in his essential being man is torn to pieces and killed by life on the physical plane which in the real sense begins at the point of which we have been speaking.

And now keep in mind this man living on the physical plane; he is normally able to remember back only to a certain point of time; beyond this lie the three years of earliest childhood. With this thread of memory he is so enmeshed in the physical plane that, in his own being, he cannot endure it and he is torn to pieces. Thus it is with the true spirit of man today — here is a proof of how deeply he is enmeshed in matter. This is the spirit which in Pauline Christianity is called the 'Son of Man'. Here is a concept which you must grasp — the concept of the Son of Man who can be found in a human being onwards from the point in his life to which his later memory extends, and includes everything he has acquired from the civilisation around him. Keep this 'man' in your mind, and then picture to yourselves what he might become if there were added to him all that presses in upon him from the Macrocosm in the first three years of his childhood. This could be a foundation only, because at that stage the developed human 'I' is not yet present. But if it did merge into the consciousness of a developed 'I', we should witness a happening comparable with what took place at the Baptism in the Jordan at the moment when the Spirit descended from above into Jesus of Nazareth: the three innocent years of early childhood merged with the rest of the human being. That is the immediate fact. And the consequence was that this innocent childhood-life, as it sought to develop on the physical Earth, could

evolve for three years only — as is indeed always the case — and then met its end on Golgotha. It could not merge with what man becomes at the point in time from which in later life his memory normally begins.

Think what it would be like if; in one man, we saw mingled together all the interconnections with the Macrocosm which show themselves dimly and indistinctly in the early years of childhood but which cannot really light up in the child because he is as yet without Ego-consciousness. Think further, and picture to yourselves how, if the reality did dawn in this way in a later consciousness, something would take shape which has its origin, not in man's own nature but in the depth of those cosmic worlds out of which we are born. If you think of all this you will get an idea of the meaning of the words spoken in connection with the event portrayed as the descent of the Dove: 'This is my beloved Son; this day have I begotten him.' That means: Here the Christ is incarnated, begotten, in Jesus of Nazareth, born in him at the moment of the Baptism by John. In the Christ there was present, in its highest form, the consciousness otherwise belonging only to the early years of childhood; now, mingling with it, there was feeling of oneness with the Cosmos which a child would feel if it could be fully aware of its experiences during the first three years. In that case there would be still another meaning in the words: 'I and the Father' — that is, the cosmic Father — 'are one'.

If you ponder deeply about these things you will get an inkling of what was experienced by St. Paul as a first, basic element in the revelation near Damascus and finds expression in the beautiful words: 'Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.' Among many meanings of this saying there is the one indicated by St. Paul: Not I, but Christ in me — the Christ, that is, who has a macrocosmic consciousness such as a child would have if it could somehow combine the consciousness belonging to the first three years with the Ego-consciousness of later life. In the normal man of to-day these two forms of consciousness are separate: indeed they must be separate, for they are incompatible. Nor were they any more compatible in Christ Jesus Himself; after those three years, death was bound to supervene and to occur in the circumstances as they actually were in Palestine. These circumstances were not matters of chance but came about because these two lived within each other: the Son of God (which is man from the moment of his birth until the development of the Ego-consciousness) and the Son of Man (which is what he is after Ego-consciousness has been attained). The events which then culminated in the happenings in Palestine were the outcome of the living together of the Son of God and the Son of Man.

Kyrios, The Lord of the Soul

12 December 1910, Berlin

In several lecture-courses given over the years in the different Groups and attended by many of the friends here to-day, we have endeavoured to study the Gospels of St. John, St. Luke and St. Matthew and the great event in Palestine, the Mystery of Golgotha, from three different points of view.

One result of these studies should have been to establish in our souls a growing realisation of the greatness of this unique event. We have understood that the reason why there are four Gospels is that their authors, writing as inspired occultists, each wished to describe the great event from a special angle, just as a photograph of an object is taken from a particular side. By combining the pictures, each taken from a different angle, an idea of the reality can be obtained. Each of the Evangelists makes it possible for us to study one aspect in particular of the great event in Palestine.

The Gospel of St. John gives us insight into the great events in Palestine by opening out a vista of the highest human goals and at the same time of the sublime realities of the spiritual worlds.

The Gospel of St. Luke unveils the mysteries connected with the personality of Jesus of Nazareth, with the Solomon Jesus and the Nathan Jesus, until the moment when the Christ descends into him.

The Gospel of St. Matthew, as those of you who heard the lectures will know and others will be able to read, shows how the bodily nature in which the Christ was to incarnate for three years was prepared by mysterious processes connected with the racial stock of the ancient Hebrew people.

In a certain respect the Gospel of St. Mark can lead us to supreme heights in our study of Christianity and give us insight into many matters communicated by the other Gospels but in a less dramatic way. And so this evening I will take the opportunity of saying something in reference to the Gospel of St. Mark.

We must realise how necessary it is to study many subjects with which superficial modern thought has no inclination to concern itself. If we are to understand the Gospel of St. Mark in its depths we must acquaint ourselves to some extent with the very different character of the language in which men expressed themselves at the time when Christ Jesus was on the Earth. Let me try to convey to you what I mean by using contrasts as it were of light and shadow.

We make use of language to express what we want to say and to reveal what lives in our souls. It is in the way in which language is used as a means of expressing the inner life of soul that the several epochs in the evolution of humanity differ radically from one another. If we go back to the ancient Hebrew epoch and to the wonderful modes of expression used in the temple-language, we find that there was a quite different way of clothing the secrets of the soul in words — a way undreamed of nowadays. In the old Hebrew language only the consonants were written, the vowels being inserted afterwards; and when a word was uttered the echoes of a whole world reverberated in it — not, as is the case to-day, some more or less abstract concept. The reason why the vowels were not written was that they were an indication of the speaker's inmost being, whereas the consonants were intended to depict external objects or conditions. For example, whenever an ancient Hebrew wrote the letter B — or what corresponded to our present B — it always evoked in him a sense of warmth and a picture of some outer condition, in this case something in which one could be enclosed, as in a shelter or a house. The sound B could not be uttered without this feeling as an accompaniment. Again, the sound A (ah) could not be uttered without conveying the impression or image of something inwardly powerful, of a radiating force. The content of the soul thus projected into words streamed out into space and into other souls. Language was therefore much more alive, much more related to the secrets of existence than is the case nowadays.

This is one side — the light side I wanted to convey. But there is also the other side — the shadow side — constituted by the fact that in the use of our language we have to a great extent become utterly shallow. Our language expresses only abstractions, generalisations. People no longer have any feeling about this but it could not be otherwise in times when language is used, even for literary purposes, before writers have any spiritual content to convey, when enormous masses of printed matter circulate everywhere, when everyone feels that he must write something and nothing is considered unsuitable as subject-matter. When our Society was founded I discovered that certain authors were attaching themselves

to it simply out of curiosity, in the hope of finding material for their novels. Why, they thought, should they not find characters among the Members who could be portrayed in their stories? So it behoves us to realise that our language nowadays has become abstract, commonplace and vacuous and there is neither a sense of its holiness nor, as was once the case, a feeling of responsibility towards its use. That is why it is so extraordinarily difficult to put into modern words the great facts proclaimed by the Gospels. People cannot understand that our modern language is empty when compared, for example, with the fulness of meaning implicit in a word of the ancient Greek language. When we read the Bible to-day we are reading something that in comparison with the original wording has been sifted not once but two or three times, and it is not the best but the worst that has remained. It does, of course, seem natural to quote from modern versions of the Bible, but we go astray most disastrously of all when we quote the Gospel of St. Mark in its modern rendering.

You know that at the very beginning of the Gospel of St. Mark, in Weizsacker's supposedly excellent translation — although as might be guessed from the high reputation it enjoys to-day, it is anything but excellent! — these words are found:

"As it is written in the prophet Isaiah: Behold I send my messenger before you who shall prepare the way before you. Listen how the voice is heard in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

[The words in the English Authorised Version are: 'As it is written in the Prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.']

When we read a passage like this it would be self-deception to pretend that we understand it; if we are honest we shall admit that it is utterly incomprehensible to us. The passage is either of no significance or it says something we cannot understand. The first thing to do, then, is to assemble concepts enabling us to grasp the meaning of this saying of Isaiah. Isaiah was referring to the event which was to be of supreme significance for the evolution of humanity. What has already been said gives some indication of what Isaiah was foretelling in these words.

In ancient days man was endowed with a kind of clairvoyance and through the forces of his soul was able to rise into the divine-spiritual world. When this happened he was not using his Ego, his 'I', at the stage of development it had then reached; he was using his astral body which contained the powers of seership, whereas the forces rooted in the Ego were only gradually being awakened by perception of the physical world. The 'I' uses physical instruments, but in earlier times, if a man were seeking revelation, he used his astral body, seeing and perceiving through it. The process of evolution itself consisted in the transition from use of the astral body to use of the 'I'. The Christ Impulse was to be the most powerful factor in the development of the 'I'. If the words of St. Paul: 'Not I but Christ in me' are fulfilled in the 'I', then the 'I' is able to grow into the spiritual world through its own forces, whereas formerly this was possible only for the astral body.

This, then, is how evolution proceeded: Man once used his astral body as an organ of perception, but the astral body became less and less able to serve that purpose. When the time of Christ's coming was drawing near, it was losing its power to see into the spiritual world. Man could no longer be united with that world through his astral body and the 'I' was not yet strong enough to reveal it. That was the state of things when the time of Christ's coming was approaching.

In the course of human evolution the important steps which are eventually to take place have always to be prepared in advance. This was so in the case of the Christ Impulse too; but there was necessarily a period of transition. There could be no sudden change from the time when man felt his astral body becoming unreceptive to the spiritual world, becoming barren and desolate, to a time when the 'I' was kindled into activity through the Christ Impulse. What happened was that as the result of a certain influence from the spiritual world a few human beings were able to experience in the astral body something of what was later to be seen and known by the 'I'. Egohood was prepared for, anticipated as it were in the astral body. It was through the 'I' and its development that man became Earth-Man in the real sense. The astral body properly belonged to the evolutionary period of the Old Moon, when the *Angels* were at the human stage. Man is at the human stage on the Earth. On the Old Moon it was appropriate for man to use his astral body. Everything else was merely preparation for the development of the 'I'. The earliest stages of Earth-evolution proper were a recapitulation of the Old Moon-evolution, for man could never become fully man in the astral body; on the Old Moon it was only the Angels who could reach the human stage in the astral body. And

just as the Christ lived in earthly man in order to inspire his 'I', so there were Angels who, having reached the human stage on the Old Moon, prophetically inspired man's astral body as a preparation for Egohood. A time was to come in human evolution on the Earth when man would be ready for the development of the 'I'. On the Old Moon the Angels had developed to the highest stage, but as we have heard, only in the astral body. Now, in order that man might be prepared for Egohood, it was necessary that in exceptional conditions, and through grace, certain individuals should be inspired to work on the Earth as Angels; although they were men, the reality was that Angels were working in and through them.



The Portal of Initiation - Mystery Drama by Rudolf Steiner

This is a concept of great importance, without which there can be no understanding of human evolution in line with that of occultism. It is easy enough to say simply that everything is maya, but that is a mere abstraction. We must be able to say: Yes, a man is standing in front of me, but he is maya — indeed who knows if he is really a man? Perhaps what seems to be a human figure is only the outer sheath; perhaps some quite

other being is using this sheath in order to accomplish a task that is beyond man's capacity. — I have given an indication of this in *The Portal of Initiation*.

Such an event in the history of humanity actually took place when the Individuality who had lived in Elijah was reborn as John the Baptist. An Angel entered into the soul of John the Baptist in that incarnation, using his bodily nature and also his soul to accomplish what no human being could have accomplished. In John the Baptist there lived an Angel whose mission was to herald in advance the Egohood that was to be present in its fulness in Jesus of Nazareth. It is of the greatest importance to realise that John the Baptist was maya and that an Angel, a Messenger, was living in him. This is indeed what the Greek says: Lo, I send my Messenger. The Messenger is an Angel. But nobody pays attention to what is actually said here. A deep mystery, enacted in the Baptist and foretold by Isaiah, is indicated. Isaiah foretold that the future John the Baptist would be maya — in reality he was to be the vehicle for the Angel, the Messenger who was to proclaim what man will become if he takes the Christ Impulse into himself. Angels announce in advance what man will later become. The passage in question might therefore be translated: Lo, the bestower of Egohood sends his Messenger (Angel) before you to whom Egohood is to be given.

Let us now see if we can discover the meaning of the third sentence. We must first try to picture the conditions prevailing in man's inner life when the astral body had gradually lost the power to send out its forces like feelers and to see clairvoyantly into the divine-spiritual world. Formerly, when the astral body was activated, man was able to look into that world, but this faculty was disappearing and darkness spreading within him. He had once been able to expand his astral body over all the beings of the spiritual world, but now he was inwardly desolate, inwardly isolated — the Greek word is ἔρημος. At that time the human soul lived in isolation, in desolation. This is what the Greek text tells us: Lo, a voice seems to speak in the desolation of the soul — call it 'wilderness' of the soul if you like — when the astral body can no longer expand into the divine-spiritual world. Hear the cry in the wilderness, in the desolation of the soul!

What is it that is being proclaimed in advance? First of all we must be clear about the meaning of the word *Kyrios*, when it was used in Hebrew but also still in Greek in reference to manifestations of the soul and spirit. To translate it simply as 'the Lord', with the usual connotation, is sheer nonsense. In ancient times everyone using the word *Kyrios* knew perfectly well that its meaning was connected with the development of man's soul-

life and its mysteries. In the astral body, as we know, are the forces of thinking, feeling and willing; the soul thinks, feels and wills. These are the three forces working in the soul but they are actually its servants. In earlier times man was under their domination and he obeyed them, but as his evolution progressed these forces were to become the servants of the Kyrios, the Ruler, the Lord — in short, of the 'I'. Used in relation to the soul, the word Kyrios actually meant the 'I'. At this stage it would no longer be true to say: 'The Divine-Spiritual thinks, feels and wills in me', but rather: 'I think, I feel, I will.' The passage should be rendered more or less as follows. — Prepare yourselves, you human souls, to move along those paths that will awaken the Kyrios, the powerful 'I' within you; listen to the cry in the solitude of the soul. Make ready the path (or way) of the 'I', the Lord of the soul. Open the way for his forces so that he may no longer be the slave but the Ruler of thinking, feeling and willing. Lo, the power that is the 'I' sends his Angel before you, the Angel who is to give you the possibility of understanding the cry in the solitude of the astral soul. Prepare the paths of the 'I', open the way for the forces of the 'I'. — Such is the meaning of these significant words of the prophet Isaiah; they point to the greatest of all events in the evolution of humanity. You will now understand the sense in which he speaks about the future John the Baptist, indicating how man's soul in its solitude longs for the coming of its Lord and Ruler, the 'I'. Such is the real meaning of this passage and in this sense it is to be understood.

Why was John the Baptist able to be the bearer of the Angel? It was because he had received a particular form of Initiation. Initiations are not all identical in character and individuals who have a definite mission to fulfil must undergo a special form of Initiation. Now the writing of the stars in the heavens is so ordered as to reveal the nature and facts of happenings in the spiritual world. Thus a man may receive the Sun-Initiation, which means that he is initiated into the mysteries of the spiritual world of Ahura Mazdao — the spiritual world of which the Sun is the outer expression. But there are twelve forms of the Sun-Initiation, each of which differs from the other eleven. A man will receive a particular form of Initiation according to the mission he is to fulfil for humanity. His Initiation, though still a Sun-Initiation, may be of such a kind that the forces stream in as they do when the Sun is standing, for instance, in the constellation of Cancer; and these forces will be very different in the case of an Initiation connected with the Sun in Libra. These are the expressions used to indicate specialised Initiations. Individuals chosen for a mission as lofty as that of John the Baptist must receive Initiation in the form that can give the strength

necessary for the fulfilment of their mission. And so in order that he might become the bearer of the Angel, John the Baptist received the Sun-Initiation originating from the constellation of Aquarius. The Sun in Aquarius is the symbol for the form of Initiation received by John the Baptist in order that he might become the bearer of the Angel. He received the Sun-forces which flow when the Sun is standing in Aquarius — the Waterman. The sign was the symbol indicating that John the Baptist had received this particular Initiation. In actual fact the name Aquarius, or Waterman, was given to the zodiacal sign because those who had received that Initiation acquired the faculty which enabled John the Baptist, for example, to achieve what he did. When men were plunged under water, their etheric bodies were momentarily loosened and in that condition it was possible for them to perceive what action was of the greatest importance at that particular time. Baptism in the Jordan revealed to those who underwent it the momentous significance of that period in history. It was to this end that John had received the baptismal Initiation and because this was connected with the rays of the Sun streaming from its position in a particular constellation, the constellation too was known symbolically as the Waterman. The name of the constellation was derived from the human faculty connected with it, and not vice versa.

Nowadays many learned ignoramuses try to explain spiritual happenings of this character by bringing Heaven down to Earth, saying that such things are simply indications of the movement of the Sun through the Zodiac. These learned gentlemen, who fundamentally know nothing, explain events in humanity by reference to the heavens. In the case of John the Baptist, actually the opposite was true: the zodiacal sign was used to express something that had occurred on Earth and was then transferred to the Heavens.

John the Baptist could therefore rightly say: 'I baptise you with water.' This was the same as saying to his intimate disciples, as he might well have done, that he had received the Aquarius Initiation. The movement of the Sun through the Zodiac as seen with physical eyes is in the direction from Leo to Virgo; the spiritual movement is from Aquarius to Pisces. Consequently John the Baptist was able to proclaim something that would work as the forces of the Sun in Pisces and not in Aquarius; also that the Being who was to come would give a higher kind of Baptism than he himself was able to give. The spiritual Sun progresses from Aquarius to Pisces and when this happens the Aquarius Baptism becomes a Baptism with spiritual water — Pisces, the Fishes. Hence the ancient symbol of fishes for the Being who was the bearer of the Christ. Just as John,

through very special influences, had received the Aquarius Initiation, so all the mysteries enacted around and in Jesus of Nazareth belonged to a Pisces Initiation. The Sun had moved forward, spiritually, from one zodiacal constellation to another, indicating that Jesus of Nazareth had passed through a Pisces Initiation.

All this is hinted at in St. Mark's Gospel but such things have to be presented in pictures. Christ Jesus draws to Himself those who are seeking that of which Pisces is the symbol. Hence His first disciples are all of them fishermen. The indication of the Sun's progression into Pisces is clear when we read the words of John the Baptist: 'I have baptised you with water, but He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.' And as Christ passes along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, that is to say, when the Sun has moved so far that its counterpart could be seen rising in Pisces, the fishermen known as Simon and Simon's brother, James and James's brother, are inspired to follow Him.

How can we understand all this? We shall not understand it unless we go more deeply into the linguistic expressions used in those times. Our modern way of expressing ourselves is slovenly and banal. Thus when a human being is standing in front of us, we say: Here is a man — similarly when there are two or three. But what is there in front of us is only maya; if we see a being with two legs and a human face the only way of expressing what we see in our modern language is to say: That is a man. But what does occultism take this 'man' to be? In the form in which he stands before us he is nothing but maya — approximately as real as a rainbow in the sky. A rainbow is a reality only as long as the necessary conditions of rain and sunshine are present; as soon as the relation between sunshine and rain changes, the rainbow vanishes. It is exactly the same in the case of a man. He is only a confluence of forces of the Macrocosm; we must look for forces in the heavens, in the Macrocosm. For the occultist, what we assume on Earth to be a man is simply nothingness. The truth is that forces are streaming from above downwards and from below upwards, and they intersect. And just as a particular combination of rain and sun produces a rainbow, so do forces streaming together from above and from below out of the Macrocosm create a phenomenon, an illusory image, which we take to be a man. But the man we see before us is really nothing but maya. Where we think we see a man there are intersecting cosmic forces. You must take this quite seriously. The man as he stands before us is merely a shadow of many forces. But the being who manifests in the man may well be at a different place altogether from the point where the man with his two legs is standing.

Now think of three human beings. One is a peasant in ancient Persia, working his plough in the Persian countryside. He looks like a man, but in reality he is a soul whose forces are sustained by some world from above or from below, and if we are to have real knowledge of him we must ascend to the realm of these forces. The second man is possibly some kind of official in ancient Persia. He too is formed from another world through intersecting forces and again, if we are to know him in the real sense, we must ascend to the realm of those forces. Finally, think of a third Persian, or one of whom we should have to say even more emphatically: he is a veritable illusion, a phantom. To discover the truth about him we should have to ascend to the Sun to find the forces sustaining this phantom figure. There above, among the mysteries of the Sun, we should find what we might call the Golden Star — Zarathustra. Rays are sent down and on the Earth there lives the being we call Zarathustra, though his essential being is not there at all.

The important thing is to realise that in ancient times men were well aware of the significance of names. Names were not given as they are today but according to what was really living in a human being, apart altogether from the outer appearance. An old man at the time of Christ would have understood very well what was meant if someone had pointed to John the Baptist, saying: There is the Angel of God! The outer appearance would have been disregarded as a secondary consideration and attention paid only to the inner reality. — And now suppose the same mode of expression had been used in connection with Christ Jesus. What would have been said of Him in times when such things were understood? Nobody would have so much as dreamed of giving the appellation Christ Jesus to the body of flesh moving about the land; the body was regarded merely as the sign that what was streaming down spiritually from the Sun had gathered together at this particular point. And when this body — the body of Jesus — moved from one place to another it was simply that the Sun-force was being made visible. This Sun-force was able of itself to move from place to place, independently of a physical body. Occasionally, Christ Jesus was said to be 'in the house', that is to say, in the flesh; but the Being in the flesh also moved about without a body. In the Gospel of St. John, above all, the Evangelist often writes exactly as if the Sun-force were present in a body of flesh when in reality the Christ is moving from place to place purely in the spirit.

That is why it is so important for the deeds of Christ Jesus always to be brought into relationship with the physical Sun — which is the outward expression for the spiritual world when gathered together at the point

where the physical body is present. For example, when Christ Jesus performs an act of healing, it is the Sun-force that heals, but the Sun must be in the right position in the heavens. Thus: 'At even, when the sun did set they brought unto Him all that were diseased ...' and so on. It was important to indicate that this healing force can flow down only when the physical Sun has set and is working in a purely spiritual way. Again when Christ Jesus needs special power in order to do His works, He must draw it from the spiritual Sun, not from the physically visible Sun. 'And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out ...' The path of the Sun and the power of the Sun are expressly indicated, furthermore that it is the Sun-force that is working, that Jesus is simply the external sign and that this path taken by the Sun-force could also become visible to the naked eye. Wherever St. Mark's Gospel speaks of the Christ, what is meant is the Sun-force which, in that epoch of Earth-evolution, worked with special strength upon the land called Palestine. Moreover the Sun-force, gathered into a focus, was moving from place to place, and the body of Jesus was the outward sign making the movement of the Sun-force visible to physical sight. The paths of Jesus in Palestine were the paths of the Sun-force that had come down to the Earth. If you trace the paths of Jesus to form a kind of chart you will have before you the indication of a cosmic happening — the Sun-force had penetrated into the land of Palestine. It is a macrocosmic process — that is the essential point. This is made especially evident by the writer of St. Mark's Gospel, who was well aware that a body which was the bearer of a principle such as the Christ-Principle must be entirely subservient to it. The Gospel therefore directs attention to the world so gloriously proclaimed by Zarathustra — the world which lies behind the material world and influences the life of man. Through Christ Jesus it was again made clear how the forces of this spiritual world work into the Earth. Hence in the body — the body of the Nathan Jesus as we have heard [See Lecture-Course on the Gospel of St. Luke, lectures IV–VII.] — which was influenced in a particular way by the Zarathustra-Individuality, it was inevitable that a kind of repetition should take place of happenings connected with Zarathustra.

We know some of the beautiful legends about Zarathustra. Almost immediately after his birth occurred the first miracle, that known as the 'Zarathustra smile'. The second miracle was when Duransurun, the King ruling the district where Zarathustra was born, determined to murder the child about whom retrograde Magi had made certain statements. But when the King was on the point of stabbing the child his arm was paralysed. Finding that he could not use his dagger to do away with the child, he

ordered him to be taken out into the wilderness and left among the wild beasts. This is the expression used to indicate that already in earliest childhood Zarathustra was destined to see what everyone is bound to see if his gaze has not been cleansed of impurities. Instead of the majestic Group-Souls and the higher spiritual Beings, he sees the emanations of his untamed fantasies. This is what is meant when we are told that Zarathustra was left in the wilderness among the wild beasts, but remained unharmed. This was the third miracle; the fourth was again connected with wild beasts. And always it was the good spirits of Ahura Mazdao who ministered to him.

These miracles are to some extent repeated in St. Mark's Gospel. 'And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness' (the word really means solitude). 'And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.'

It is made clear to us here that the body was being prepared to become a focus of macrocosmic processes. What had happened to Zarathustra had to be repeated in the encounter with the wild beasts. The body became the bearer of macrocosmic processes.

In its very first lines the Gospel of St. Mark presents us with a vista of majestic grandeur and my aim in this lecture has been to show you how this Gospel acquires new life and power if only the words are understood in their right sense — not in that of our commonplace modern speech but in the sense of ancient language, when whole worlds lay behind each word. Our modern language needs to be recast in many ways before it is possible to discover what the words of ancient languages contained. When we say that man lives on the Earth and develops his 'I', or that he was present on the Old Moon when it was the Angels who reached their human stage — all this must be borne in mind when we read: Behold, I send my Angel before men. These words cannot be understood without the preliminary knowledge communicated by Spiritual Science.

If people were really honest to-day they would admit that the words at the beginning of St. Mark's Gospel are unintelligible to them. But instead they adopt an arrogant attitude and maintain that Spiritual Science is so much fantasy and puts all kinds of complications into what would otherwise be quite simple. But the fact of the matter is that people to-day have no real knowledge; they no longer recognise the principle adopted, for instance, in ancient Persia, when the sacred records were re-written from

epoch to epoch in order to be clothed in a new form suited to every period. In this way the divine Word was recast in the form of the Zend Avesta, then again recast, and what we have to-day is its latest form. The Persian scriptures were, in fact, re-written seven times. One of the tasks of Anthroposophy is to teach men how necessary it is that records in which sacred mysteries are clothed in words should be re-written from epoch to epoch. For if we want to preserve the sublime language of the ancient writings we should not attempt in our re-writing to adhere pedantically to the old words; we should rather try to translate them into words that are immediately intelligible in the present age. An attempt to do this was made in the summer in the lecture-course on *Genesis*, and you will have realised then how many of the words must be re-cast. The lecture today may have given you some idea of how the same principle applies to the Gospel of St. Mark.



Notes

1. △ Orpheus, ancient Greek legendary hero endowed with superhuman musical skills. He became the patron of a religious movement based on sacred writings said to be his own.

Traditionally, Orpheus was the son of a Muse (probably Calliope, the patron of epic poetry) and Oeagrus, a king of Thrace (other versions give Apollo). According to some legends, Apollo gave Orpheus his first lyre. Orpheus's singing and playing were so beautiful that animals and even trees and rocks moved about him in dance.

2. △ Calliope, also spelled Kalliope, in Greek mythology, according to Hesiod's Theogony, foremost of the nine Muses; she was later called the patron of epic poetry.
3. △ In Greek mythology, Oeagrus was a king of Thrace. He and the muse Calliope were the parents of Orpheus and Linus. He is also connected with Pieria, further west, or to the vicinity of the River Hebrus to the east; the latter was said to be called 'Oeagria', in his honor.



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