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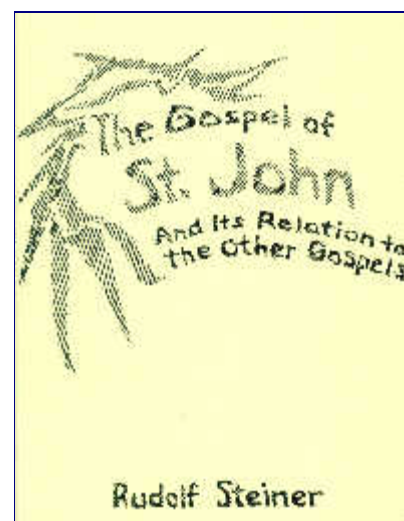
**The Gospel of St. John and Its Relation
to the Other Gospels, GA# 112**

by

Rudolf Steiner

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A Book Review by Bobby Matherne
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This is a book of answers, often for questions no one had thought to ask, up until now. Let us list these questions and the answers given by Steiner in his

fourteen lectures. It will provide a review, a guided tour behind the scenes of the events covered by the Gospel of St. John, a behind-the-scenes view of St. John as well as of his unique gospel. My bible has these words at the top of this gospel:

In contrast with the synoptic tradition, and relatively independent of it even in narrative order, this gospel is written from an alternative but no less theological perspective, particularly evident in the Introduction [1:1-18] and the many lengthy discourses of Jesus, especially those beginning "I am".

Question: Why is this gospel so different from the other three by Mark, Luke, and Matthew?

For a perspective on this Steiner takes us behind the scenes of ancient Hebrew initiation rites in which an initiate lives in the spiritual world, his etheric and astral bodies abroad whilst his physical body lies as though dead for four days. Someone who returns from this experience is known as a "true Israelite". Thus, when Christ meets Nathaniel, he says, "Behold an Israelite indeed" and refers to seeing him under the fig tree, which served the same purpose for Nathaniel as the *bodhi* tree did for Buddha, the place of his initiation. This causes Nathaniel to recognize the Christ nature of Jesus immediately.

When told that Lazarus was sick, Christ is not concerned, but says, "The sickness is not unto the death, but for the Glory of God." No clearer description of the state of an initiate could be found. Lazarus was laying as though dead and Christ was not concerned. He was tracking Lazarus in the spiritual world. When it was time to awaken him, then Christ says, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." So Christ led his disciples to the tomb of Lazarus, arriving at the proper time to act as the Guide to call Lazarus back from his initiation to a new life. Because his Guide had not been present when Lazarus began his initiation, his friends had buried him as dead. Christ had them roll back the stone, and gave the very same words that a Guide would give to call back an initiate from his spiritual journey, "Lazarus, come forth."

The reason this gospel is so different is that it was written by an initiate, one whose Guide was the Christ spirit. Here's how Steiner says it:

[page 94] Christ poured out His power upon Lazarus and Lazarus arose a new man. A

word in St. John's Gospel arrests our attention. It is said in the story of the miracle that the Lord 'loved' Lazarus. The same word is used for the disciple 'whom the Lord loved'. What does this mean? The Akashic records reveal this to us. Who was Lazarus after he had risen from the dead? He was none other than the writer of the Gospel of St. John, the Lazarus who was initiated by Christ. Christ poured into the soul of Lazarus the tidings of His own existence, so that the message of the fourth Gospel - the Gospel of St. John - might resound through the world as a description of Christ's own being.



It is the same disciple "whom Jesus loved" that the very end of this Gospel has Jesus say, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee? Follow thou me." And in 21:24 the writer of the Gospel of St. John says to his readers:

This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

Question: What is the enigmatic beginning of this Gospel all about: "In the Beginning was the Word?"

The answer to this question requires that one be familiar with Steiner's cosmic evolution: how the Solar System first existed as old Saturn, then splitting off into the old Sun which split into the old Moon and Sun, and finally the Earth splitting off from the Moon, which revolves around it as it revolves around the Sun. Christ is writing in Lazarus-John's hands of the Great Cosmic Evolution of the Earth and humankind in the very opening words of His Gospel. Here's Steiner's description:

[page 38]The sublime power which, during the evolution on Saturn, furnishes the germ of the human body form out of cosmic Chaos, is called by the writer of the Gospel of St. John the *Logos*. The element which appeared on the Sun and united itself to the first bodily form, he calls *Life*; it is what we call, accordingly, etheric or life body. The element added on the Moon, he calls *Light*; for this is the spiritual light, the astral light. . . . The essential nature of the Saturn evolution, as we have clearly understood it, we now express in the words of St. John:

'In the beginning was the Logos.'

We now pass to the Sun. When we express the fact that whatever originated on Saturn was further developed on the Sun, we say: The etheric body was added:

'And the Logos was the Life.'

On the Moon the astral being was added, both of a corporal and of a spiritual nature:

'In the enlivened Logos was Light.'

...

This Light that streamed down was spiritual Light. Men could not receive it; they could not comprehend it; their whole evolution was furthered by it, but they were unconscious of its presence.

'The Light shone in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not.'

Question: Why did Christ sacrifice for us?

Steiner gives the answer to us in form of an operational definition of the process of evolution:

[page 43] Evolution, however, consists in the acquisition of an increasing capacity for sacrifice, until a being is finally capable of offering up his own substance and being; indeed, of feeling it to be his highest bliss when he gives forth what he has developed as his own substance. Such sublime beings do indeed exist, who rise to a higher level of existence by offering up their own substance. The materialist will of course here again say: 'If beings are so advanced that they can sacrifice their own substance, how can they rise to a higher stage? If they offer up themselves, there is nothing left of them!' Thus the materialist, for he cannot understand that there is a spiritual existence, and that a being is preserved even if he gives forth all that he has gradually taken to himself.

Question: Why did Christ say, "The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother"?

Steiner says that the point had come in our evolution where we were to transcend the old family ties of blood relationships.

[page 66] In that impulse which we have called the Christ Impulse, lies the power which enables us, if we have united ourselves therewith, to establish a spiritual bond of brotherhood from man to man, in spite of the individuality of the Ego.

Question: Why did Christ request that freshly drawn water be poured into the jugs for conversion into wine?

Water freshly drawn was recently in contact with the Earth and its forces. The power of placing gems or crystals in water lies in this process. Steiner explains it thus:

[page 129] Water still connected with the forces of the earth is a very different thing from water used at a later moment. Relying upon the forces still inherent in freshly drawn water, an initiate of sufficiently high grade can operate through the forces now bound up with a spiritual relationship such as that of Christ with His mother, who had again become virgin. He carries on the work of the earth. The earth can change water into wine in the vine. Christ, who has approached the earth and has become the spirit of the earth, is Himself that spiritual force which works in the whole body of the earth. As Christ, He must be able to do what the earth does, what the earth does when it changes water into wine.

Question: Why did Oedipus not recognize his real father or mother when he later met them as an adult?

Steiner's answer is short and sweet, "The blood was silent." In this he is saying that the former close ties that resulted from consanguineous marriage was gone, having disappeared through generations of mixed marriages outside of the family tribe. The old magic that allowed Christ to create wine out of water at Cana was gone from Oedipus, and thus he could not recognize his father on the road and killed him. But the Oedipus story is actually a story of the initiation rite according to Steiner:

[page 143] In an initiation of this nature the etheric and astral bodies were withdrawn from the complex of physical, etheric, astral bodies and Ego. The Ego remained behind. It was for this reason that the candidate was without self-consciousness during the three and a half days of the initiation. His self-consciousness was extinguished, and another consciousness was infused into him from the higher spiritual worlds by the Priest-initiator, who placed his own Ego at the disposal of the candidate and acted as his guide in every sense. What actually happened then was expressed in a formula which will sound strange to you. They said: When a candidate was initiated in the old way, the maternal element went forth and the paternal element remained behind; that is to say, he killed the paternal element in him and united himself with the maternal element; in other words, he killed his father and wedded his mother.

Steiner goes on to explain that Judas of Kariot had likewise killed his father and married his mother, so we can see that "blood was silent" in Judas, a necessary condition for him to betray Jesus. The old wisdom was not enough for Judas, as it was not enough for Oedipus, but with the pouring out of the Christ spirit in the deed on the cross, a new wisdom is poured into the Earth and available for all humankind. "Legends and myths, especially those related to the oracle-sanctuaries, preserve for us the truths of ancient times far better than any external historical research," Steiner tells us.

Question: What is this new wisdom poured into the Earth?

In the flowing of the Blood of Christ into the Earth on Golgotha we see the excessive egoism in the human 'I' flowing into the Earth, draining away from humanity, preventing what would have else resulted in a spiritual hardening. And, Steiner adds:

[page 169] But every physical event has its spiritual counterpart. Inasmuch as the blood flowed from the Wounds on Golgotha, a corresponding spiritual event was taking place. It came about at that moment that rays of light streamed for the first time from the earth into universal space, where there had formerly been none; so that we have to picture to ourselves rays of light, created at that moment, streaming out from the earth into space.

Thus we are led to picture where Earth is on its way to becoming a radiating Sun itself at that point when the astral light, which has been visible since Golgotha to the seer, will one day become physical light, and the Earth will become a radiant body, a Sun itself.

Question: What is the true nature of death?

When Christ said, "I am come into the world, again I leave the world and go to the Father," He was identifying the true nature of death as the "Life-Father". He was overcoming the false image of death as suffering and replacing it with "the true form of the living God-Father". When one can heart-fully say the prayer He taught us thus, "Our Death, Which Art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom Come," then one will be on the radiant road to a new life:

[page 172] When men learn in the course of time to await the coming of death as Christ awaited it, it will prove itself in truth to be the seed of life. In proportion as men opening their hearts to the Christ-impulse offer up something of their own, they will contribute to the growth of a new sun and a new planetary system, and provide for the ever greater increase of the Sun of Life.

Question: Why did Paul not recognize Jesus as the Christ until after his death?

Paul was an Old Testament initiate and could see into the spiritual worlds. On the road to Damascus, Paul saw the light flowing from the Earth where it had not been flowing before, and knew that the Christ spirit that he had formerly seen in spiritual worlds had finally come to Earth in the body of Jesus of Nazareth

and had entered the Earth during the deed of Golgotha. Thus Paul hastened to bring the "good news" to the world of a new Life in Christ.

Question: Why is there this evil in the world?

[page 67] When the human being sees an evil, he must look into his own soul and ask himself: "How comes it that here, where I am faced with evil, I am not yet able to recognize the good in it?"

Steiner explains that a plant grows from a seed, into a sprout, begins creating leaf after leaf, flowers, and then creates seeds of new life. Were a plant to stop its evolution at the leafing stage, it would be stunted in its evolution. Lucifer and Ahriman were part of a group of beings who were similarly stunted in their evolution and were restricted to the earthly sphere of activity [which is like an abyss to a heavenly creature] where they have attempted to enchant us humans with our "leafing form", our physical bodies and physical environment. Lucifer and Ahriman would "sunder Heaven from the Earth" and forever make us forget our spiritual legacy, our divine origin, and our evolutionary path. We would remain Earth-bound, tied to the surface of the Earth, never to expand into the cosmic heavens in the time between death and rebirth, never to access new sources of strength. Steiner directs our attention to the most inert form of physicality we can think of, the mountain, and even there we can see death as a benefactor:

[page 184] Behold the mountain. The time will come when the volcanic activity of our earth will have swallowed up the mountain: death will have passed over it. Turn where we will, there is nothing in which death is not interwoven. Everything on earth is steeped in death. Thus death is a benefactor when it carries man out of an existence which would seclude him from the divine spiritual world. But it was essential that man should enter the world of the physical senses; for here alone could he gain his self-consciousness and human egoity. Were he to pass through death again and again, taking nothing with him from this kingdom of death, he would indeed return to the divine spiritual world but without consciousness, without egoity. He must carry that egoity with him into the spiritual world. Therefore he must fructify the kingdom of earth, with which death is interwoven, so that death may become the seed of a selfhood in eternity, in the spiritual world. But it is the Christ-impulse which has made it possible for death (which would otherwise mean annihilation) to be transformed into a seed of everlasting selfhood. The true form of death was presented to mankind for the first time on Golgotha. By His union with death, Christ, the image of the Father-Spirit, made His death on Golgotha the starting-point of a new life, and, as we saw yesterday, of a new Sun. Henceforth it is true that everything in the nature of the former apprenticeship of humanity can now be discarded, since man has won for himself an Ego for eternity, and can advance into the future with his rescued self, which will to an increasing extent become the fashioned image of the Christ-self.

If we come to understand these questions and answers as Rudolf Steiner did when he gave these lectures in 1909, we cannot help but to say in unison with him:

[page 189] Read the Gospel according to the Spirit!

Read the Gospel of St. John, which was written by Lazarus-John, the disciple who was initiated by the Christ Spirit, and wrote his Gospel in a pouring out of the Christ Spirit into its words.

Via, Veritas, and Vita: the Way, the Truth, and the Life

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