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According to Matthew, GA# 123 — The Gospel of Christ's Humanity

by

Rudolf Steiner

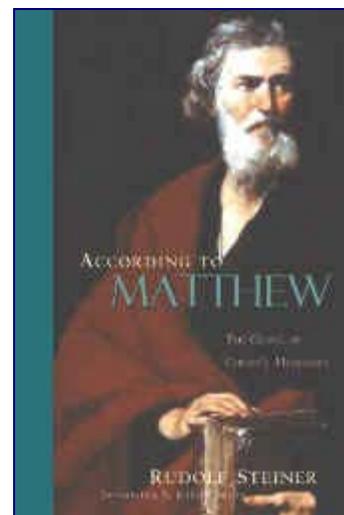
(formerly "The Gospel of St. Matthew" [\(1\)](#))

Translated by Osmond and Kirkcaddy

Twelve Lectures in Berne in 1910

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A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©1998



In *The Gospel of St. Luke* Steiner does a detailed comparison of the two Gospels of Luke and Matthew, showing how the

apparent contradictory stories of Jesus reveal a deeper truth of two Jesuses, the Matthew Jesus descended from the kingly Solomon line and the Luke Jesus descended from the priestly Nathaniel line. Steiner begins this book with a comparison of the four Gospels as summarized in the Table below:

Here's what Steiner says about the other three Gospels:

[page 22] The Gospel of St. John reveals to us the magnitude of the *wisdom* of Christ Jesus; the Gospel of St. Luke, the power of his *love*. When we study the Gospel of St. Mark, the picture will primarily be one of *might*, of the creative Powers permeating the universe in all their glory.

But the Gospel of Matthew is different — it is filled with the elements of the other three Gospels as shown in the Table. These three Gospels focus individually on warmth, splendor, and hope, and, although Matthew covers all three elements, its primary focus is on the humanness of Christ Jesus as a person one can approach, can "stand on a level with."

[page 22] In a certain respect the Gospel of Matthew is like a commentary on the other Gospels. It clarifies to some extent what otherwise is often beyond the reach of human understanding and once we realize this, great illumination is shed upon the nature of the other Gospels.

Epoch/Gospel	4/Matthew	6/Luke	5/Mark	7/John
Deals with	Physical/Etheric	Astral/Ego	Sun Spirit	Logos — Soul of Sun Spirit
Reveals	Commentary	Love	Might	Wisdom



In its focus on humanity, this Gospel leads us to view the birth of Jesus through the eyes of the three Magi following their Star. To set the stage for this event, Steiner takes us back to Zarathustra's time some 6,000 years before Christ. The historical "Zarathustra" who lived 600 years before Christ, Steiner calls Zarathas. This incarnation of Zarathustra's Ego founded the mystery school that taught the men of wisdom who came to be called variously "Kings" or "Magi" during the time of Jesus's birth.



At the time of the original Zarathustra, the Eurasian world was divided into two modes of thought, and each one had a different basis for dealing with the fall of humanity from the spiritual plane of existence into the physical plane. The southerners in the region now known as India held that the physical world was an illusion or *maya*, and for them the real world, the spiritual world, could only be reached by contemplation. The northerners, who lived in the regions north of India into Siberia, took a different view: they still possessed the old clairvoyance which enabled them to see into the spiritual world directly. They balanced their spiritual perception with their material perception to create a new intellectual thinking. The northern-most people were nomads, wanderers living off the land, depending on their spiritual perceptions to lead them to the next place to live — these were called Turanians. The more southern of the northern peoples, who lived in the area East and South of the Caspian Sea, were called Iranians. They desired to settle in one place and to apply their knowledge of spiritual forces to the transformation of Nature. In these two people we can see the primordial model of the cowman and the farmer as it was played out in the American West in recent times.

In the legend of Djemjid, the King of the North received a golden dagger from his God and went to the South where the first primitive inventions of humankind were formed to create what we know as civilization today. Zarathustra called attention to the aura of the sun, calling it the God of the golden dagger, Ahura Mazdao, the Great Aura.

[page 32] He opened out the path along which people were ultimately to realize that the outer sunlight is only the external body of a sublime spiritual Being whom he called Ahura Mazdao, the

'great' Aura, in contrast to the 'little' aura of man.

Zarathustra said that this being would one day descend to Earth, to become united with Earth, and thus directed his people's attention to the Being who later came to be called Christ. Zarathustra also directed his followers's attention to two principles proceeding from Time — a good principle of Light and an evil principle of Darkness. How evil proceeds from good is an age-old question of humanity. It is often stated thus: "How can a good God allow evil to exist?" The first answer to this question came from the ancient Persian infused by Zarathustra's thought:

[page 38] So in the thought of ancient Persia, Evil is not absolute Evil but, rather Good manifesting out of its appropriate time, something that once, in an earlier period, was good but is no longer so.

The producing of leaves is a naturally good thing for a plant to do, but the new leaves must eventually evolve into, to be replaced by flowers, or the plant will never reproduce. [See ARJ: *Spiritual Hierarchies and the Physical World*] The good of producing leaves becomes an evil if it continues to the exclusion of producing the flowers of reproduction. [See ARJ: *Christianity as a Mystical Fact*] In specific human terms, the good of making money (what we call "greenbacks" or "lettuce" in the USA because of its similarity to leaves) becomes an evil precisely when its sole purpose is to use the money to make more money. So the secret of evolution, time in flow, can be stated as appropriate development in appropriate time.

Zarathustra gave one pupil his teachings about Time, Moses, and another pupil his teaching about Space, Hermes. These teachings were transmitted by reincarnation into Moses of Zarathustra's etheric body, and into Hermes of Zarathustra's astral body. Thus it happened that Hermes became the first scientist as he studied the "secrets of those things existing contemporaneously in Space." Hermes was invested with the Sun Wisdom and Moses with the Earth Wisdom.

[page 65] This is the secret of the Hebrew people. Whereas in the Turanians the forces inherited from ancient times produced organs of external clairvoyance, in the Hebrew people these forces turned inwards, organising the inner constitution of the body. Hence the Hebrews were the people destined to feel and to experience inwardly what during the Atlantean age men had seen outspread behind the single physical objects. Jahve or Jehovah — the name consciously uttered and proclaimed by the Hebrew people — was the 'Great Spirit' revealed to ancient clairvoyance behind all things and beings and now concentrated into a unity.

This next quote I have included because in it Steiner provides a justification for Matherne's Rule No. 6: All Meanings Are True (AMAT). My premise for AMAT has been that all meanings are true for the person who holds the meaning. With this understanding I have found it possible to reply to the most disagreeable person, "Yes, what you say is true." Here is Steiner talking about the sojourn into the spiritual world of one who undergoes initiation.

[page 120] The reason why this sojourn in the Great World dazzles and bewilders is that in the material world of the senses man is accustomed to altogether different conditions. In the world of the senses he is accustomed to consider everything from a *single* viewpoint; and if he comes across something that does not tally exactly with the opinions he has formed from this one viewpoint, he regards it as false. This is quite suitable for life on the physical plane but if he were to attempt to pass out into the Macrocosm through Initiation still holding the opinion that there should be conformity in this sense, he would never find his bearings. His mode of life in the world of the senses is such that he places himself at a particular point and from this point — as though it were his snail-house — he judges everything. But when he undergoes Initiation his consciousness passes out into the Great World. — Let us suppose a man were to pass outwards in one particular direction; he would experience only what lies in this direction, and everything else, being unnoticed, would remain unknown to him. In point of fact, however, man cannot pass out into the Macrocosm in one direction only; he must necessarily pass out in all directions, for the process is one of expansion, of spreading into the Macrocosm and the possibility of having one single standpoint ceases altogether.

Thus AMAT can be understood as a compass that points in all directions at once, which is the direction of travel when one expands in all directions at once, whether it be during sleep, initiation, or death.

Since the compass points in all directions in the spiritual world, and there are an infinite number of directions, the result of penetrating the Macrocosm will be a labyrinth for one who is not ready. "Man is protected by the sleeping state from penetrating consciously into the Macrocosm without due preparation." [page 122] In fact, the number of important directions in the Macrocosm is twelve and they are indicated

by the twelve signs of the zodiac. The danger from expansion is getting lost, whereas the danger from contraction into one's physical and etheric bodies is megalomania or *inflation of the ego* as psychotherapists call it. This overpowering by mystical experiences is seen often in mental patients who claim to be Napoleon or Jesus Christ.

[page 123] Unless there has been proper preparation, the Ego descends into the sphere of the physical and etheric bodies unpurified, and a man is so overpowered that the resulting mystical experiences preclude inner truth, inasmuch as deceptive pictures arise before him.

The expansion into the Macrocosm is one of the main themes of the Gospel of Matthew Steiner tells us:

[page 130] Our attention is drawn to the fact that Christ Jesus had been living hitherto in the physical body which afterwards hung on the Cross. He had been concentrated in one point of space and now expanded into the Cosmos. Those who would seek for Him now could not find Him in this physical body but would have to seek Him with clairvoyant vision in the spirit which pervades space.

What had formerly required three-and-a-half days and external help from a guide was accomplished by Christ alone. He had rebuilt the Temple in three days, and indicated to all that He must no longer be sought in the physical sheath in which He had been confined, but must now be sought in the cosmic space of the spiritual world. In the following passage from St. Matthew translated by Steiner, the cosmic space appears in the metaphor of "clouds":

[page 130] 'Hereafter ye shall see at the right hand of Divine Power the Being who is now born as the prototype of the evolution of humanity and He will appear to you out of the clouds.'

In the next section of the book Steiner takes us through the path of Initiation through the ten Sephirot of the Kabbalah, from Malkhut to Keter. The process begins with Malkhut, and then from the bottom of the Table, proceeds upward in the three stages of Mineral, Plant, and Animal for each of the astral, etheric and physical bodies. The I or Ego of humanity may be considered the highest of the members of the body comprising a human, but, being the newest, it is the lowest stage, "the rudiments of the highest perfection attainable by man." [page 137] Thus we begin with Malkhut, the Kingdom, or Ego and proceed to the astral body as the next most recently acquired body. Hod is the astral body or 'spirit revealing itself outwardly', Netzah is the denser or impermeable astral body, and Yesod is an intermediate stage.

Bodies\Kingdoms	Mineral	Plant	Animal
Physical	Binah	Hokmah	Keter [Crown]
Etheric	Geburah	Tipheret	Gedulah [Hesed]
Astral	Netzah	Yesod	Hod

The oldest body is the physical body which has been worked on by divine spiritual beings for millions upon millions of years. Between the recent astral body and the ancient physical body lies the intermediate etheric body which balances and buffers the forces of the neophyte astral body. The etheric body is older, much more godlike, and is encountered in the second stage of Initiation. First one encounters Gedulah, which is that greatness bringing its inner richness to expression. Geburah is similar but conveys the impression of a kind of aggressiveness. Tipheret is called Goodness and Beauty, for the reason that it is like a balance between Geburah and Gedulah, an inner richness without the aggressiveness.

At the next stage of Initiation, Beings of Wisdom are encountered and this quality of wisdom is called Binah in its densest form, and in its less dense form, Hokhmah. The final stage is Keter in which "divine-spiritual Beings of the greatest sublimity" are encountered. This stage is known as the Crown. So the process of Initiation begins with the physical Kingdom of Malkhut and proceeds to the divine-spiritual world of Keter.

[page 142] It was the Essenes who first taught of the coming of One who would bring down for the 'I', for the Ego living in Malkhut, what is above in the 'Kingdoms of Heaven.'

Thus it can be understood that before the Christ event, "In your own Ego you search in vain for the Kingdoms of Heaven." [page 147] And after the Christ event the situation became as Christ Jesus said: "The time has come when in their own Egos men will find the Spirit when they seek the Kingdoms of Heaven." [page 147]

In Lecture Nine beginning on page 160, Steiner gives his translations of the Beatitudes. His translations of the of "meek" and "poor in spirit" help infuse the familiar passages with new life. [For the sake of brevity, I have paraphrased slightly several of the Beatitudes from Steiner's words.]

Beatitude 1.) From now onwards, not only those who through the old clairvoyance are rich in the things of the spirit are blessed; but those too who are beggars for the spirit, are blessed; for when the path has been opened for them by Christ the Kingdoms of Heaven flow into their Ego. [page 160]

Beatitude 2.) Those who suffer can now be blessed not only through reaching a spiritual world and in a clairvoyant condition allowing the forces of that world to stream upon them; now, if they can find the path to Christ, to the new truth, they can find *within themselves* consolation for all suffering. [page 161]

Beatitude 3.) The time has come for man to receive into his Ego the power to curb and tame the passions and emotions of the astral body. Blessed are those who have become meek through the power of their own Ego; for it is they who will inherit the Earth! [page 161]

In *The Christian Mystery* [page 268] Steiner gives a passage from Mabel Collin's book *Light on the Path* which explains "meek" as meaning having a gentle voice, one without power to wound another: "Before the voice can speak in the presence of the Masters, it must have lost the power to wound."

Beatitude 4.) If a man desires to experience the Christ within himself, he must develop in his Sentient Soul a longing as strong as the instinctive longing he otherwise feels in his body and calls hunger and thirst. What man can develop through the Christ-power within him has always been referred to as 'thirst after righteousness.' And when he fills his Sentient Soul with the Christ-power, he can find within himself the possibility of satisfying his thirst after righteousness. [page 162]

Beatitude 5.) When he takes the Christ-power into himself he can unfold in the Intellectual or Mind-Soul those qualities which pass from like to like, which are not besought from Heaven but which go forth from and return again to the same being. 'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall attain mercy.' What streams forth streams back again. [page 163]

Beatitude 6.) A man who takes the Christ-power into himself will find the way to his God when he pours his 'I' into the Spiritual Soul. In experiencing Christ in his Ego at the level of the Spiritual Soul, he will find his God. 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.' [page 164]

[page 164] The further Beatitudes relate to the development of the higher members of man's being: Spirit-Self, Life-Spirit, Spirit-Man. Therefore the words do no more than indicate what man will experience in the future and what only a few chosen ones are able to experience at the present time.

Beatitude 7.) Blessed are they who draw to themselves the Spirit-Self as the first purely spiritual member of their being; for they will be called the children of God. [page 164]

Beatitude 8.) What men of the future, having received Christ into themselves in the fullest sense, will call the 'Life-Spirit' is now within the reach of a few individuals only. But because they are chosen individuals, the others are unable to understand them and they are persecuted. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for in themselves they find the Kingdoms of Heaven. [page 164]

Beatitude 9.) And the last Beatitude concerns the closest, most intimate disciples only; it refers to the ninth member of Man's being: Spirit-Man. — 'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you . . . for my sake.' [page 165]

[page 165] And so these wonderful utterances relating to the nine members of man's being show how the 'I', when filled with Christ, works in the different members and brings them blessedness.

To understand the next important point that Steiner makes, one must come to understand the meaning of the words "Son of Man". The Greek words did not have the restricted meaning that we take to mean the son of a father, but rather had the more general meaning that "signifies the successor of a living being, an entity that evolves from a living being like the blossom or flower of a plant on which hitherto there have been leaves only." [page 189] This blossoming flower of one's 'Son of Man' reaches up to the spiritual world to the Spirit-Self, Life-Spirit, and Spirit-Man that together stream down towards one.

[page 192-193] Christ Jesus asks: What is it that must come to men through my impulse? — It is the life-giving, Spirit principle from above! Thus a distinction must be made between the Son of Man who has grown upwards from below and the Son of god, the Son of the living God, who comes down from above. But the difficulty of this question for the disciples will be apparent to you when you realize that they were the very first to receive what the simplest of men since the time of Christ Jesus have received through the Gospels. It was only the living forces of Christ Jesus that enabled the disciples to assimilate all this teaching.

This is an extremely powerful and important insight as it impacts on the importance of having a living teacher in our schools and universities. Sometime before reading this book, I got a glimpse of this insight in my own experience. I was reading a complicated post I'd written to a fellow researcher on the Internet to my wife Del. She was following me as I read the post just fine until I reached a sentence that gave me an idea on a better way to explain the concept. I continued reading without a pause, but Del stopped me at the end of the sentence to say that she didn't understand what I'd just said. I re-read the sentence to her and she understood the meaning. I noted the episode and pondered on it awhile. What if, when we read something we understand to another person, they receive the concepts directly from our thoughts and our words merely serve the purpose of helping us to sequentially cover all the concepts we wish to convey? If that were so, that would explain why as soon as I thought about something other than what the words I was saying were conveying, Del stopped me because she didn't understand! The impact of this, were it so, is that words are conveniences for the speaker, sort of loci in which are stored the concepts that the speaker wishes to convey, but the words are *not* the conveyors of the concepts, the speakers thoughts are.

That would mean that listening in person to a living person's thoughts, one would be much better able to assimilate the thoughts.

It would also mean that the lesson plans that a teacher prepares serves the purpose of teaching the teacher the concepts so that when she teaches the class the next day, as she speaks the words about the concepts, the concepts are flowing directly into the minds of the students that are actively listening to her words.

If my hypothesis is correct, you dear Reader, who have the only access to my written words, have a much more difficult job of understanding me than Maureen Bayhi, Brian Kelley, and the occasional other listeners that I first share my ideas with using the spoken word. Plus there's my editor, Del Matherne, who not only hears the spoken word, but reads these reviews for comments and proofs for typographical errors. To the extent that you are able to understand these words, you owe a debt of gratitude to these listeners and first-time readers of my words. If I may hazard to add a tenth beatitude: Blessed are they who have a living teacher! [Note: several other examples of this process are given in my Essay [Teaching & Learning in the College Classroom](#).]

One word on quantum jumps by Rudolf Steiner. He gave these lectures in 1910, only ten years after Max Planck first described his unit of action called Planck's constant that led to the concept of the quantum jump. Here's how Steiner wrote about his jumps:

[page 199] At the transitions of Saturn-evolution to Sun-evolution, of Sun-evolution to Moon-evolution, of Moon-evolution to Earth-evolution, everything material passed away. The spiritual remained and it was the spiritual that brought about the jumps. In small things and in great it is the same.

Note that the Saturn-evolution involved a volume of space as big as the entire solar system is today, and yet a jump occurred, and the same spiritual jump occurs in the small when an electron moves from an inner to an outer orbit in an electron shell of a single atom. This is what physicists have come to call a "quantum jump". The process that Steiner describes below is also reminiscent of what neuro-physiologists refer to as a synaptic jump — a gap in the connection between a dendritic spine and an axon on a neuron that is responsible for the operation of all the nervous system components of our body, and therefore for our very life processes in the physical world.

[page 200] As evolution advances, the past curls inwards like a vortex and the new phase emerges as a second vortex, unfolding from within outwards and leading on further. But the new phase is not actually joined to the old; between the end of the old phase and the beginning of the new there is a little 'jump' or 'gap' and only then does the process of evolution continue. In the above figure we have two inter-twining vortices and between them is a little gap. This is the zodiacal sign of Cancer, symbolizing the process of growing out into the Macrocosm and the birth of a new shoot in some phase of evolution.

It is no wonder that when a man first set foot on the Moon on July 20, 1969, the Sun was in the place in the zodiac known as Cancer, because a new phase of evolution in the history of humankind had begun.

The five members of human nature, etheric body, astral body, sentient soul, intellectual soul, and consciousness-soul, developed during the five civilization-epochs were meant to be imbued with content so that when the time comes, they may be permeated by the Christ impulse. If not, they will be like the five foolish virgins who had "no oil in their lamps." [page 224]

In the parable of "Caesar's coin" Steiner leads us to understand the deep meaning of Christ Jesus when He says, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto to God what is God's."

[page 224] He asked for a coin and pointed to the image of the Caesar upon it. This was done in order to make the people realise that the coin gives expression to something quite apart from the metal itself, namely, the fact of being subject to a particular

rulership, a particular ruler. 'What in this coin pertains to Caesar, render unto Caesar' — and that lies in the image, not in the metal. 'But learn' — so He wished to imply — 'learn also to regard man as the bearer and temple of the living God. Regard a man exactly as you regard a coin; learn to perceive in a man the image of God and then you will know that he belongs to God.'

If one has fully absorbed the teachings of the Gospel of St. Matthew, has reached up with one's Son of Man to receive the Spirit-Self, Life-Spirit, and Spirit-Man streaming down, the hour when the power comes that makes one an Initiate, "a participant in the Kingdoms of Heaven"[page 202], cannot be predicted because it is dependent on the karma of the individual. That hour will assuredly come, but it will come at the least expected moment, like a thief in the night.

----- *Footnotes* -----

Footnote 1. The title and book cover are from the latest Edition of these lectures which has a different pagination from the earlier edition I reviewed. As a result the [page *nnn*] fronting each text citation will not match those of the new edition. The translation will be different as well.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 1.](#)



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