

READERS' QUESTIONS

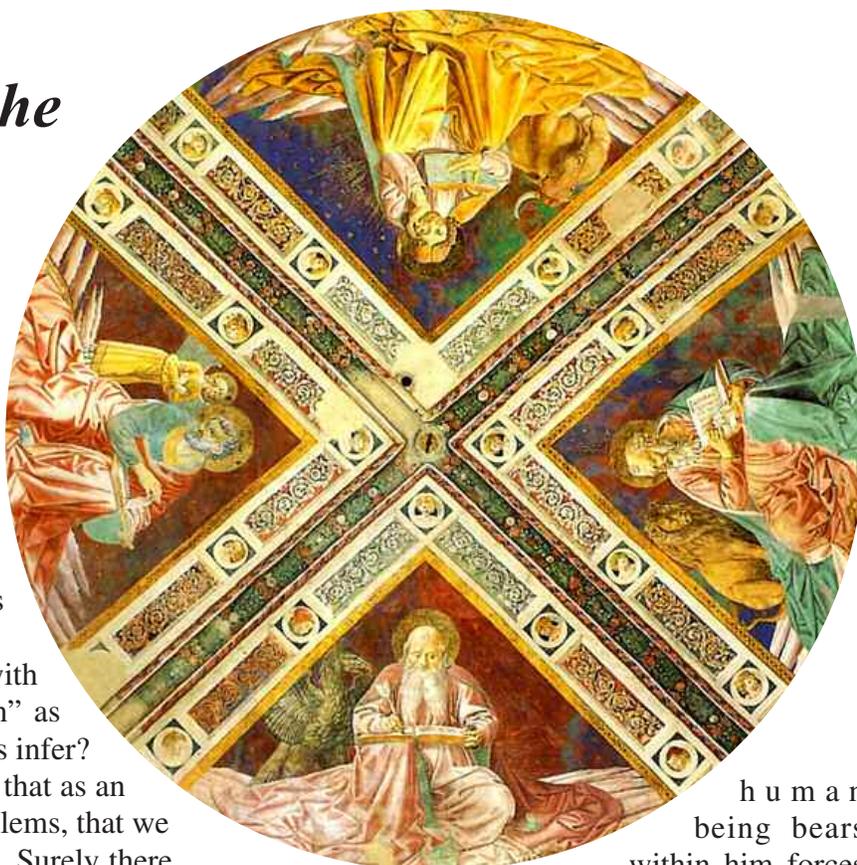
Significance of the Four Gospel Symbols

QUESTION: In one of his writings Mr. Heindel indicated that originally the Gospels had a symbol: a man's face for Matthew; a lion for Mark; a bull for Luke; and an eagle for John. What is the significance for each?

My pondering has produced that with the teachings in Matthew we "begin" as humanity, but then what do the others infer? I think I also understand about John, that as an astrological eagle we rise above problems, that we see or perceive an overall dimension. Surely there are additional and deeper teachings implied. Please—what?

ANSWER: The four zodiacal icons associated with the four canonical Christian Gospels collectively constitute one of the oldest and most compact symbols in occultism. They originate in earlier epochs of human development and find their most cogent form in the Egyptian Sphinx, a composite of bull, lion, eagle and human aspects. And it is generic Man who is the answer to the riddle posed Oedipus by the Sphinx. For it is spiritual Man, Man made in the image of his Creator, who is the answer to all Earth riddles.

Of the "four living creatures" that appeared to Ezekiel (Chapter 1), *each* "had the likeness of a man," even though each had four faces, only one of which was a "human face." The others were of a lion, an ox, and an eagle. We must conclude, and spiritual science confirms, that the composite



The Four Evangelists, Benozzo Gozzoli (c. 1421-1497), fresco, vault of choir chapel, Santi Agostino, San Gimignano, Tuscany

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being bears
within him forces

whose physical manifestation or condensation can be identified in these creaturely forms.

The "four beasts" seen by John the Apocalypticist (4:6-8) are an echo of Ezekiel's vision. Both seers are viewing the four creative Group Spirits of early humanity. In pre-Lemurian times the physical human hovered as a shadowy, tenuous form in the periphery of the earth.

During the Lemurian Age what worked on the human structure, as if from the inner part of the earth to the surface, is related to that which subsequently worked constructively on our ruminating animals, and is comprised esoterically in the symbol of the Bull.

Later, those forces which are summed up esoterically under the name of the Lion began to influence human development. A third creative stream poured in upon man from cosmic space and is characterized by the name of Eagle.

The external physical form of man is a harmonic synthesis of the Eagle, Bull, and Lion outpourings, streams from angelic hierarchies raying forth substance of their spiritual being. The real Man, Archetypal Man, is the product of Saturn (Eagle), Sun (Lion), Moon (Bull) and Earth (Man) evolutions. Thus the Sphinx represents the riddle of man's development. Contemplating this fourfold being clairvoyant consciousness is inwardly drawn to acknowledge, "That am I myself."

The four Gospels have retained traces of the formative origins of human development, as seen through the various initiation experiences of their respective authors. Matthew knew particularly the "Man Mystery" initiation as exemplified in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, which was closely akin to the wisdom of Egypt. Thus only he mentions Jesus' journey to Egypt as a child.

Luke also had in former incarnations achieved initiations leading to the Bull Spirit through the Egyptian Mysteries, though his Gospel does not mention the Flight to Egypt. His "Bull knowledge" is more internal.

The author of the Gospel of St. Mark describes only what occurred after the Baptism by John. The initiation this Evangelist had undergone was the one that led to a knowledge of the higher worlds as given through the Leo Spirit. Therefore ancient tradition links him with the symbol of the Lion.

He who wrote the John Gospel was initiated by Christ Jesus Himself, so he was able to foretell something of the efficacy of the Christ-Impulse for the far distant future. This Evangelist was one of the Eagle initiates who had advanced to a later evolutionary stage. The initiation contemporary for that time was set down by the author of the Mark Gospel. The Christ activity pertaining to future times, actively transcending earthbound matters, is described in St. John, which explains why tradition connects him with the symbol of the Eagle.

When the scientist of spirit investigates earlier human evolution he sees how four group-souls, four archetypes, have developed out of the common involving macrocosmic god-man. Through the light of the Holy Spirit this fourfold wisdom is expressed in the four Gospels.

The Matthew Gospel with its Aquarius/Man symbol should not be viewed as the most exalted representative of the human archetype. Rather is there a fifth—not Man but the Son of Man, the new Adam, the essence of the four, the quintessence, the One Who rules the seven planetary stars (Revelation 1:12) when He fully appears to man in His true form. □

OCCULT INTERPRETATION OF CAIN AND ABEL

QUESTION: Is the Bible account of the slaying of Abel by Cain true, or is it just an allegory?

ANSWER: The story of Cain and Abel as recorded in the Bible is allegorical. In the light of occult understanding Cain is a symbolical name representing 'that part of humanity who have the creative instinct highly developed and who have therefore become the craftsmen of the world. Accordingly, Cain represents those who are working out their own salvation by mastery of the forces and material resources of nature. Cain also represents those individuals who acquire conscious knowledge of spiritual realities by means of the positive development of their own inner potential spiritual powers.

Abel symbolizes that part of humanity who live by faith, that is to say, those who acquire their knowledge of spiritual realities from intuition and from the teachings of those highly advanced Leaders and Teachers who have charge of the various phases of the evolution of mankind

The reference to Cain killing Abel also symbolically expresses the fact that the development of materialism on the part of the human race has gradually extinguished the spiritual perception of the invisible realms which primitive man possessed in earlier ages before he had involved so far away from the spirit world.

This inner spiritual perception is typified by Abel. A later product, namely, faith, symbolized by Seth, manifested itself after Abel was killed; that is, the faith fostered by the orthodox church has for many ages taken the place of the inner spiritual, intuitive understanding possessed by the sons of Seth. □