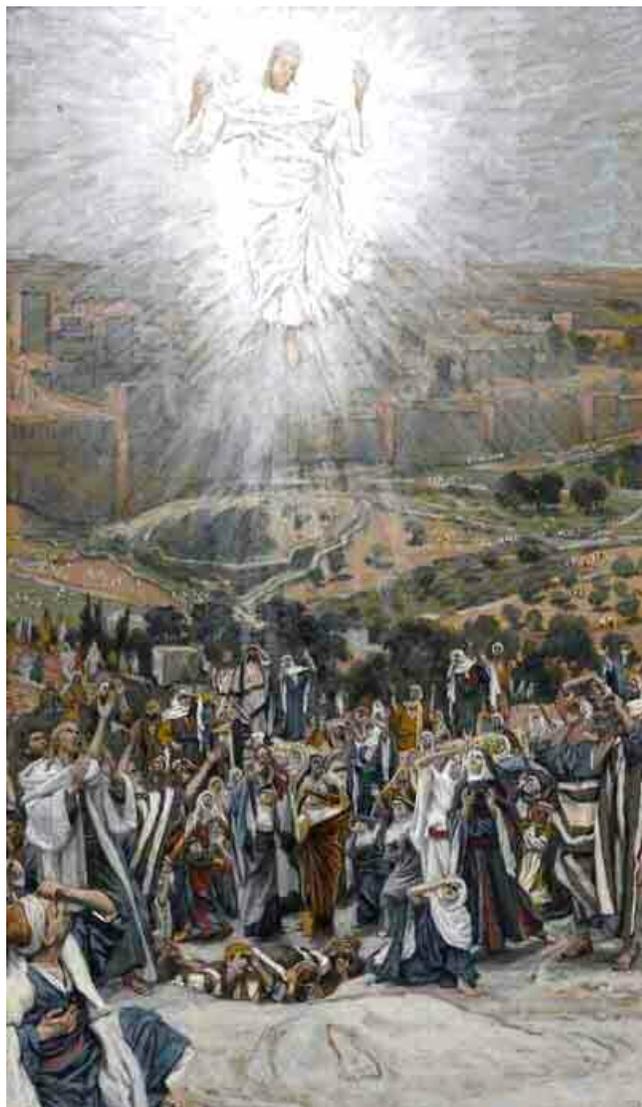


Sophia and the Event of Pentecost

THE ORGAN OF THE PENTECOSTAL REVELATION

In the study of the Mystery of Golgotha,[†] we have tried to express the spiritual fact that, as well as the written records of the Evangelists, there is an “unwritten Gospel”—the life tableau of Christ Jesus—which has remained, as it were, in the etheric aura of the Earth. This indestructible and ineffaceable Gospel is—and will be ever more and more in the future—the source of such knowledge of the Christ event, which took place nineteen hundred years ago, as can be acquired on the path of imaginative vision, of inspired knowledge, and of intuitive experience. But this “unwritten Gospel” is not only important for the present and the future, it has also had immense significance in the past. It became of importance, in fact, immediately after the Mystery of Golgotha took place. For during the forty days between the Mystery of Golgotha and the Ascension, the disciples experienced, in effect, the scenes of the life-tableau of Christ Jesus. The “teaching of the Risen One,” the instruction given to the disciples by Christ Jesus during the forty days after His resurrection, consisted of pictures which rose before their souls, each picture evoking another which represented a scene in the life and work of Christ Jesus *before* the Mystery of Golgotha, thus associating itself, as it were, with



Watercolor, J. James Tissot (1836-1902), Brooklyn Museum

The Ascension as seen from the Mount of Olives
Only by leaving the world as an individual physical presence (incarnate in Jesus) could Christ become universally present to all humanity through the the indwelling Holy Spirit.

the reconstructed pictures of the past. In this way, pairs of pictures kept rising before the souls of the disciples: one picture a revelation of the Risen One, and one taken from His life and work before the Mystery of Golgotha. And always the former was felt to be the higher meaning and the fulfillment, as it were, of the latter. Thus the Risen One

[†] See the three preceding issues of the Rays for the text of this study. This and a second article in the next issue of the Rays are excerpted from Valentin Tomberg's Studies of the New Testament, published by and reprinted here with the permission of the Anthroposophic Press, Hudson, NY 12534.

led the souls of His disciples through the scenes of His life-tableau, yet in such a way that each scene was, at the same time, experienced as an imaginative expression of a higher spiritual truth. It was, in fact, a course of instruction wherein they were taught the content of the "unwritten Gospel"

Then it came to pass that the teaching which they were receiving through the medium of the imagination ceased. The pictures vanished from the experience of the disciples, and the figure of the Risen One vanished also. This happened on Ascension Day. From that day began a sorrowful time for the disciples. They felt themselves forsaken and bereft. The world of pictures fraught with so much meaning was blotted out; their souls were plunged into darkness and silence. The grief of the disciples during this period is hardly to be compared with any pain experienced by Man in ordinary life. For it was not caused by any affliction or vexation, but by the absence of all which gave the soul life and meaning. In such circumstances, any *positive* suffering is actually an alleviation. Sharp pain is certainly an experience, but life which is merely an aching emptiness is no experience but a condition in which the soul realizes its own nothingness. The disciples' experience of the *death of the soul* preceded the Pentecost event and was the necessary preparation for it, because in that event was experienced the *resurrection of the soul*, an experience which could only follow on the soul's death.

But that painful preparation for the Pentecost event was alleviated by one fact; namely, that the pain of it was experienced by all the disciples and was consequently *shared*. The loneliness of the disciples was a spiritual experience; humanly, however, it was a bond uniting them into a group in the very deepest way. For shared grief is the strongest means of binding men together, and that particular grief which the disciples shared proved to be the bond required to unite the circle of disciples into the organ of the Pentecostal revelation. For the group of disciples had to be bound into unity in a special way in order that the revelation should be accomplished. This union must rest not only on a community of attitude, but also on a community experienced in the deepest depths of

sentient life. The sentient bodies of the disciples must be bound together like the twelve currents of the supersensible heart-organism of Man. The reason was to form the group of disciples into one organ, as it were, corresponding to the inner structure of the supersensible heart organ. For the experience of the resurrection of the soul must be experienced in the heart, but it must be experienced in a heart which could represent humanity. And such a heart had to be prepared, a heart of humanity consisting of a group of men whose sentient bodies were united through the suffering of a common grief, rather as the petals of a flower are united. Thus, at the time of the Pentecost event, the Twelve Apostles represented a twelve-petalled flower in which the individual "petals" arranged themselves around one central point. This point was represented by a Figure occupying the central position as the thirteenth in the midst of the circle. In ecclesiastical tradition this Figure is named and described as Mary, the Mother of Jesus; in the Gnostic esoteric tradition she was called the "Virgin Sophia." "Maria-Sophia" was the "Heart of the Heart"; that is, she represented the central point of the circle of Twelve, which, at the hour of the Pentecost event, was, as it were, the "heart of humanity." Knowledge of the central significance of Maria-Sophia in the circle of the Twelve when the event of Pentecost took place has always existed in the early post-Christian centuries, as well as in the later Middle Ages. This knowledge found expression even, for instance, in Art. Thus a miniature in the Syrian Codex (586 A.D.) preserved in the Laurentian Library in Florence, represents the Pentecost event, with Mary standing in the midst of the Twelve and the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, hovering over *her* head and pouring forth the stream of revelation directly upon her while, as a result thereof, tongues of fire shoot up over the heads of the Twelve. Maria-Sophia is represented in a bright purple robe (*maphorion*) over a blue tunic (*chiton*). The whole group is surrounded by a design of flowers in bloom, while above is the enclosing dome of an inverted chalice.

This picture, of the circle of the Twelve with Maria-Sophia in the center, leads us to a question which must be answered before the Pentecost

event can be understood; namely, the question of the nature of the Maria-Sophia and of her share in bringing about the Pentecostal revelation.

SOPHIA AND THE EVENT OF PENTECOST

...The first meeting with the reality of the Sophia-being in the present age occurs in human thinking which strives to comprehend the divine Trinity in its cosmic revelation as a unity of three different principles. For the recognition of the *Unity* of the Trinity revealed in the cosmos is an event in Man's thought-life which extends beyond the mere life of thought and points to a meeting on the far side of it—a meeting which, on the one hand, favorably determines the thought-life but, on the other, is not a creation of that thought-life. This meeting in the depths of the life of thought may be the first experience of the reality of the Sophia. For the Sophia is specially manifested in bringing about for Man's consciousness the harmony of all Spiritual Hierarchies by means of which the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit effectively reveal themselves. What is called "synthesis" in the practice of abstract thought becomes an experience of cognitive knowledge when the ascending thought-life comes into contact with the Sophia-being. The Sophia-being brings about a cognitive perception of the harmony in the spiritual—the divine-world; and this she does in a literal sense, for she is an *inspiring* Being with whom the ascending thought of Man can meet. For such a meeting, however, the consciousness must ascend, if only for a moment, two stages higher than the ordinary objective consciousness. This ascent is necessary because the Sophia-being is actually dumb both for the objective consciousness and for the imaginative [Desire World] consciousness. She is dumb in these spheres because she does not possess the force of Imagination—the faculty for the creation of imaginations. And the reason why she does not possess this faculty is that she has been robbed of it by Lucifer. This occurred at that period in the spiritual history of the Earth when the Fall of Man took place. Then Lucifer appropriated to himself the imaginations of Sophia by making use of them himself, instead of placing himself at her service. He made use of her imaginations for



Fresco, Guido Reni (1575-1642), Wing of Paul V, Sala delle Dame, Vatican

The Descent of the Holy Spirit

At the "heart of humanity," Mary is the center of a revelation of the Holy Spirit in this baroque representation of the Pentecost.

the purpose of creating a world which was to be built up of these imaginations.

But it was to be built of these imaginations in such a way that it would not be the harmony of the Divine World which was revealed by them, but the grandeur of Lucifer himself. Thus the imaginations of Sophia were changed by Lucifer into their opposite, and there arose a world of *lies*. This World of

Lies became the so-called “Luciferic Sphere” round about the Earth, a sphere of which the clouds form the outermost physical sense-expression. The Luciferic Sphere is the *false* Paradise, a false Spiritual World, from which originate those visions of egoistic bliss which appear so often in the religious life of the populace. The danger of that sphere does not only consist in its encouraging the egoism so deeply rooted in human nature, but rather that as it is actually built up out of the imaginations of Sophia—that is, the pictures of the comprehensive cosmic truth—it can have a tremendously corrupting effect on the faculties of knowledge which is not completely awake in its conscience. For cosmic falsehood is not merely wild fantasy, it is abused truth. And the truth of the imaginative revelation of Sophia was abused in the sense that it was first broken to pieces and then reconstructed in a different pattern. The shining wisdom of God was changed to the glittering garment of Lucifer.

In this way, “Isis-Sophia, the Wisdom of God” was killed for the lower worlds, for Sophia became a dumb being as regards the two lower spheres of existence. The creative force of Imagination was taken from her, and, as a result, she became a colorless, ineffective being condemned to inaction with respect to earthly happenings. The figure of the “mater dolorosa”, the mourning mother, best expressed the tragic condition of the Sophia-being. For the Sophia is a generous nature, inwardly filled full of the gifts of wisdom; but she can only bestow these gifts on a human consciousness which, itself, rises to her sphere. It is impossible for her to reach the lower worlds because of the loss of the imaginative force of which she was robbed by Lucifer.

The gifts which the Sophia bears within her are of quite a different type from those of other hierarchical beings. For she bears within her a concentrated inner wisdom which is not *only* light of the Godhead shining through her being, nor *only* the vista of the cosmic chronicle, the Akashic Record. No, the wisdom to which this Being owes her name is neither the direct revelation of a divinity of a higher order nor an epitome of cosmic memory, of the Akashic Record, as present before the gaze of the hierarchic beings; it is a remembrance of the

soul ascending from within. It is a wisdom which is a pure creativity of the soul, but at the same time such that the whole experience of the past Cosmos rises out of the inner being as the primal intention for the present Cosmos, as the “plan” of the present Cosmos. Hence the Sophia is, for mankind, the spiritual archetype of the soul, and that, not only in the sense of the tragic destiny of the soul growing more and more mute in the world, but also in the sense of that concentrated wisdom which is only possible in and through the soul.

But the tragic path of the Sophia has its counterpart in the human soul in that the human soul also has been deprived of the power of forming truth: the power of Imagination has become subjective fantasy with an inward leaning to the fantastic. Thus the capacity of the soul to make imaginations from within herself has lost its truth-value. The soul has grown dumb—swathed in a sheath of egoistic interests, overmastering the original Imagination-force.

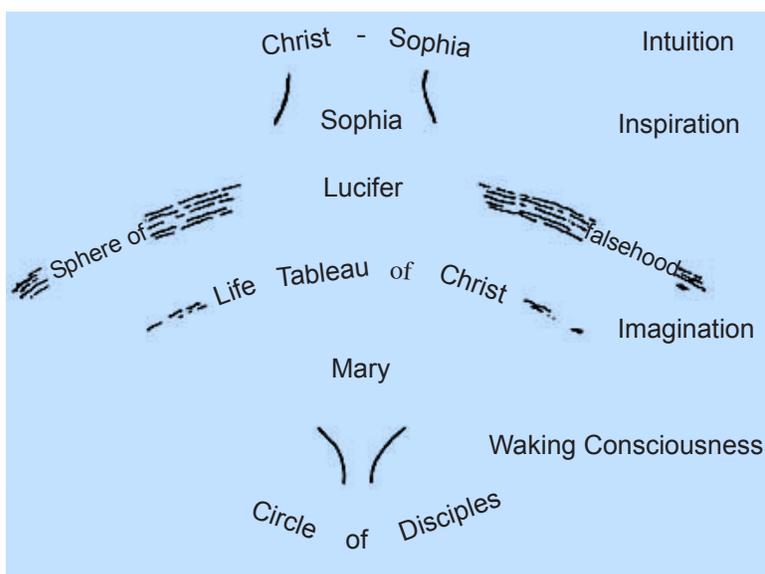
Thus there exists a similarity of destiny between the true soul-being of Man on Earth and of the Sophia-being in the Spiritual World. In earlier times Man was conscious of this similarity; and for this reason an astral body (sentient body) which was so purified from the sheath of egoistic interests that the true soul-being could come to expression was called the “Virgin Sophia”. In this sense, Mary, the Mother of Jesus was also a “Virgin Sophia”.

She had, as the outcome of extremely complicated influences and experiences coming from the Spiritual World, an astral body so purified that it could receive the revelations of the Sophia-being and pour them forth again as Inspirations of the soul. The possession of this faculty was the very reason why, at the time of Pentecostal revelation, the Virgin Mary occupied the central position within the circle of the Twelve. Without her, the revelation would have been only spiritual; there would have been twelve *prophets*, united with the Spirit in the same way as ancient prophecy was united with it. Through the co-operation of Mary, however, something more could happen: the *hearts* of the disciples beat in harmony with hers, and simultaneously the content of the Pentecostal

revelation was experienced by the disciples as a personal human conviction. And by *this* experience they became, not prophets, but, precisely, apostles. For there is an immense spiritual difference between prophecy and apostleship: a prophet was an impersonal proclaimer of spiritual revelation, but an apostle bore the revelation of the Spirit *within his soul*. And this was only possible because the spiritual revelation of the Pentecost event could become soul through the Virgin Mary, and could be transmitted by Mary as *soul* to the disciples.

What took shape in the human sphere on Earth became an organ for the expression of that which happened within the Spiritual World. For a tremendous thing occurred in the Spiritual World at the hour of the Pentecost event: the dumbness of the Sophia-being ceased, and she was again able to reveal herself by speech. Moreover, she was able so to reveal herself that not only could certain Initiates rise to her sphere so that she could inspire them there, but also she herself could effectively descend and pour her influence into the waking day-consciousness embodied in terrestrial men. It was not that the Sophia had been reached by a certain group of men. That had happened before. The point was that now, for the first time, she, on her side, could reach down to a group of terrestrial men. The importance of this fact was that, at the Pentecost event, the opposition of Lucifer was overcome for the first time since the Fall of Man. At the Pentecost event, the barrier which Lucifer had erected between the Sophia and the sphere of human waking consciousness was cleared from the path. Union with the sphere of earthly destiny, which had been in bondage to Lucifer, could be restored. And this was possible, because, on the one hand, there were present once more a number of imaginations which remained untouched by the influence of Lucifer, and, on the other, because Lucifer conducted the revelation of the Sophia, undistorted, through his sphere of falsehood by means of the dedication of his whole being.

The following diagram may be of service in promoting a clearer understanding of these matters:



Although it is not complete—for the whole process is still more complicated—the above sketch gives a picture of the co-operation of various forces at the time of the Pentecost event. It shows the relationship of the four regions of consciousness. In the Region of Waking Consciousness (below) is the circle of the Twelve with the open chalice in the midst of them—the chalice which represents the Virgin Mary.

Immediately above this group, in the Region of Imagination—at the boundary of Waking Consciousness—the Life-tableau which Christ left behind is shown. This tableau takes the place of the stolen imaginations of Sophia now appearing in the Sphere of Lucifer, above. It consists of Imaginations which, since they were also real physical events, are not susceptible to the Luciferic influence. At the same time, they are the “missing link” between the Region of Waking Consciousness and the Region of the Sophia’s Inspiration. And then, between the Region of the Sophia’s Inspiration and the imaginations of the Life-tableau of Christ, lies the Luciferic Sphere itself. At the time of the Pentecost event, however, this sphere became pervious to the Sophia-revelation descending from above. And this happened as the result of the inner conversion experienced by Lucifer at the Mystery of Golgotha. The penitent Lucifer became the humble bridge over the Sphere of Falsehood which he had himself created in the past. Thus the path of the Sophia-revelation led

through the Sphere of Lucifer, and indeed through the being of Lucifer himself. At the hour of the Pentecost event, Lucifer surrendered himself entirely to the Sophia-impulse; he became one with it, he led it through his own being down to the Life-tableau of Christ where it reached the souls of men. In reality there took place a union of the influence of Sophia with that of Lucifer. It is the united influence of these two beings which is called, in St. John's Gospel, the "Paraclete", the Comforter. The Paraclete is not merely the Holy Spirit as the third Hypostasis of the divine Trinity, but a revelation of this third Hypostasis, such as the combined influence of Sophia and Lucifer effected when Lucifer humbled himself in service to the impulse of Sophia. And Lucifer's attitude of service towards the impulse of Sophia resulted not only in Sophianic revelation reaching the souls of men in undisturbed form, but also in the fact that Lucifer radiated from *himself* the inspiring flame of its enthusiasm and joy. The Paraclete, the *Comforter*, could be manifested as an effective reality only because the Spirit who had brought about the isolation of souls now brought the enthusiasm for the reunion of souls. There is a hint of this fact in the "Acts of Apostles" when we are told that several of the bystanders received the impression that the Apostles were "full of new wine". The Dionysian enthusiasm which was actually present suggested to the bystanders that exaltation which was produced in the Bacchus-cult by the aid of wine.

It was, of course, a misunderstanding, but a misunderstanding which pointed to the significant fact that, among the Apostles, enthusiasm was evoked by the cooperation, of Lucifer.

Above the Sphere of Lucifer, to resume the explanation of the diagram, in the Region of Inspiration is shown the Sophia-being, represented as an inverted chalice. In the Region of Intuition she is united with the Christ, and by this union brings about in the Spiritual World that which she must also effect in the realm of terrestrial Man; namely, the realization of the words of Christ, "I in you, and you in Me." For the first purpose of the Mystery of Golgotha is this: that the Christ, Who at first stood *without* as the Master of the disciples,



Limbourg Brothers, *Très Riches Heures de Jean Duc de Berry*, 1413, Musée Condé, Chantilly

Pentecost

Mary's significance in the Whitsun gathering is shown by her halo, toward-center position, and her relatively larger stature.

should now pass *within*, into their innermost souls. The path which the Christ had to tread was to lead from a position without to an in-dwelling within. This took place at the Pentecost-event; it was then that Christ entered into the souls of the disciples. And this He did in such a way that He was, as it were, born a second time: through the Heavenly Mother, Sophia, He was born in the souls of the disciples. Thus the Ego of the disciples was filled with the Christ Who became the Kyrios, the common Ego, so to speak, of their group. This Ego was sheathed in the communal astral body of the Sophia; in their ether-body, however, they bore the combined experiences of the life-tableau of Christ; and, physically, they represented a circle formed to be the organ of the Pentecost revelation, having as its central point, Mary, whose esoteric name was the "Virgin Sophia." □