

Studies in the Apocalypse *Weight, Measure, and Number* *In the Spiritual History of* *Mankind—Part 1*

THE SOURCE OF ST. JOHN'S REVELATION

INQUIRY AS TO THE SOURCES of the Revelation of St. John has long and often occupied the minds of those concerned with external material research. These sources have been sought in oral traditions, in the apocryphal writings of ancient Christendom, in the documents and traditions of the Judeo-Christian Gnosis, and even in abnormal and fantastic experiences based on atmospheric phenomena. But the content of the Apocalypse itself stands in rigid opposition to all these efforts, for in the text of it, the explanation recurs more than once that the writer of the Apocalypse "saw and heard" that which it contains "in the spirit."

The writer of the Apocalypse is never weary of pointing out in the most unequivocal way imaginable that the content of the Apocalypse has nothing to do with the spatial and temporal horizontality of tradition, hearsay, or plagiarism, but that it has come into existence simply and solely on the vertical path of revelation from the spiritual world.

A word of explanation and advice precedes Valentin Tomberg's studies of the Apocalypse, which will be featured in forthcoming issues of the Rays. This advice pertains not only to the entire content of the Rays, but to all printed documents, especially those that attempt to convey the fruits of insight into spiritual realms. To do justice to such communications, "they must not be taken as authority because they have been cast into print....the responsibility of the reader is to test these works through his own thinking and experiences, and to exercise his inner understanding with others when possible so that the work becomes—not dogma, but dialogue." Studies of the Apocalypse, ©1985 by Candeur Manuscripts, is reprinted by permission of Anthroposophic Press.



Panel from *St. John Altar*. 1518, Hans Burkghmair the Elder, Alte Pinakothek, Munich

St. John the Evangelist on Patmos

The line of descent of St. John's inspired Revelation was from God through Jesus Christ, "sent and signified by an angel." John both saw and heard; that is, he received communication from both the Desire World and the World of Thought.

Thus, for example, the text of the Apocalypse begins with a definite statement concerning its source, its authorship, and the way it has originated: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants...and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John" (Rev. 1:1). In these words is characterized in distinct and solemn manner the path by which the Apocalypse came into being. It is the path of the descent from God to Jesus Christ, from Jesus Christ

to the Angel of Revelation, from the Angel to John, and from John to the readers, hearers, and keepers (*hoi teruntes*) of “the words of this prophecy.”

Now it is not possible to have a serious conception of the origin of a document bearing on human spiritual life without taking a serious view of the *content* of that document itself. And it really would not be taking the content of the Apocalypse seriously if the very greatest effort had not been made at least to understand what the writer himself says concerning the origin of his work. It is certainly true that the very content of the Apocalypse challenges research into ways and means which will render an understanding of it possible, but these ways and means must not be in contradiction to the spirit and letter of the Apocalypse. To approach the question of the origin of the Apocalypse from *this* point of view, it will be necessary in the first place to overcome one obstacle which is sure to arise, either consciously or unconsciously, at the outset of such an enterprise.

The essence of this objection finds expression as follows: The Apocalypse tells of the future of man; now man is free. How can it be possible to give definite information concerning the future of mankind, since the structure of that future obviously depends upon man’s freedom? This objection disappears when we consider that the Apocalypse depicts two future paths, for it shows the stages of a path of ascent as well as of a path of descent. These paths are karmically determined. *Who* is to choose which path depends, however, on the freedom of each individual. And, indeed, the paths are already determined inasmuch as mankind has already lived through a long destiny. Today is not the first day of creation; a vast stretch of the karmic path lies behind mankind in the past.

The new fact of infinite importance which forms part of man’s destiny is that Christ has become the judge of that destiny. He has become the Lord of Karma. And having become this, He not only determines the future of mankind but is also the source of revelation concerning it. On the other hand, the future is determined by the past, and judgment on the karmic past—in so far as it still has consequences for the future—likewise lies in the hands of Christ. For this reason the “Seven

Letters” to the seven “Churches” refer not only to the future, but also to the past. In those Letters, judgment was given, not only on what was then the present times and on the three future culture-epochs (“Churches”), but also on the three culture-epochs of the past: the Old Indian, Old Persian, and Egypto-Chaldean.

However, before we begin to study the content of the Letters to the Seven Churches, we must obtain a more definite idea of the source of the Revelation of St. John. This, too, is in accordance with the writer’s intention, for in the opening sentences of the Apocalypse he not only indicates this source but in the first chapter he also shows the spiritual figure of Him who has called forth the Revelation (Rev. 1:12-16).

This figure was “one like unto a Son of man” bearing the signs of the cosmic planetary forces just as they would be realized in the man of the future (the “Son of man”) during the Jupiter period. For the archetype of the Jupiter man—the “Son of man” of the future—must be pictured thus: Arbitrariness will cease to be possible in his thought life. Streams of thought will flow down into his head just as hair grows “of itself.” And these thought-streams flowing from the cosmos will not be one-sided, they will have no distinct “coloring,” but will be, in a deep and true sense, “synthetic.” Just as white light is a combination of the seven colors, so the cosmic thinking of the future will be “white”—“white like wool, as white as snow” (Rev. 1:14).

The force of the I-initiative will not be manifested in the sphere of thought-life, which will be a pure revelation of the cosmos, rather, it will express itself in the illuminating and permeating of cosmic phenomena. The I-initiative will become a spiritual power of vision, filling things seen with its fire. Seeing will not be a passive acceptance of impressions from without, but an illumination and permeation radiating from within the phenomena of the external world: “His eyes were as a flame of fire” (Rev. 1:14).

The earth-bound will-life will also be different insofar as it will have forfeited the flow of its driving force. Instead, it will bind the glowing ardor of fire with metallic rigidity. Man will no longer be

impelled by the waves of the cosmic formative forces in his will life, he will stand on a stable foundation of conscious volition with the force of fire and the rigidity of metal. His “feet” will be “like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace,” and the waves of cosmic impulse and of creative formative forces will pass over from his earth-bound will life into his voice. The creative power of Nature, functioning today as an impelling force in man’s subconsciousness, will be raised into the power of speech in the future man. His voice will be “as the sound of many waters” (*Hos phone hydaton pollon*).

The feeling life of the man of the future will be such that, on the one hand, it will express the harmony of the stars in heaven and, on the other, it will be “sharpened” to the finest pitch of concentration on the creative word. The man of the future will hold “in his right hand seven stars,” and out of his mouth will go a “sharp, two-edged sword.” On the one hand, charity will flow as approval and understanding from the harmony of the seven stars, which are the spiritual beings of the seven “Churches” of mankind; while, on the other, truth will find a rigid and sharp instrument in the “sword of the word.” But, precisely as an instrument of truth, this “sword of the word” will be a two-edged one—it will function in such a way as to “strike” him who speaks as well as those who hear. The Word will proceed from a consciousness of the unity of mankind, from the “seven stars,” and therefore its judgment will apply as well to the speaker as to the rest of mankind.

The Mars force of the Word will indeed wage a war of annihilation against error and lies, but that annihilating conflict will produce an inward, as well as an outward, effect. Hence it will be free from any spirit of hostility. Thus the Word will be able to express the truth with inflexible decision and without the possibility of its being used as a one-sided offensive weapon.

But the complete picture of the man of the future is not restricted to the changes we have mentioned in thinking, willing, and feeling. The changes include not only the inner conditions of the above soul forces, but also their relations with one another. The relations of the soul forces of future man



Engraving, Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), Illustrations for the Apocalypse (1496-1498)

St John Sees the Seven Candlesticks

John sees a symbolic representation of the man of the future.

must necessarily change on account of the expansion of the Sun-force of the heart which will be raised into the head: “His countenance was as the sun shining in His strength,” while the formative and restricted force of the head will descend into the Sun-region of the heart: Man will be “girt about the paps with a golden girdle.” And the will-life will ensheath the whole man. In the realm of the earthly (or rather, of the natural, for in the Jupiter period the “earthly” will be different), it will become glowing metal. But, at the same time, it will flow down from the higher man to the periphery of his being. This centrifugal direction of the will, by which it becomes a kind of sheath, is expressed in the Apocalypse by the symbol of “a garment down to the foot”.

Thus at the beginning of the Apocalypse we are shown the figure of the man of the future, who sends the “Letters” to the Seven Churches. But He

Who reveals Himself in this figure is the “I am,” the “First and the Last” of Earth’s evolution, “He that liveth” in that sphere of Cosmic evolution in which Death holds sway (Rev. 1:17, 18). Christ Himself, whose esoteric name is for humanity, “I am,” speaks through this figure. He is the source of St. John’s Revelation.

THE LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES OF THE PAST

As Christ is the source of the Revelation of St. John, He is also the source of those positive soul currents which flow in mankind from the past to the future. For the influence of Christ was already in action during the Old Indian culture-epoch; the positive fundamental impulse of that ancient culture of Post Atlantean humanity proceeded from Him. This impulse lived on, it lived on below the surface in the souls of men, and those in whom its influence is particularly strong and determinant form a “community” which is called in the Apocalypse, “the Church of Ephesus.”

The purpose of the “Letter to the Church of Ephesus” is not merely to give judgment on a long-past civilization; its purpose is especially to appeal to the Old Indian impulse still active in the souls of the present day. For only thus is there a practical moral significance in the admonition: “Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first work.” Such an exhortation would be quite meaningless if it were directed only to a long-past civilization, a human endeavor long ago sunk into silence. It is, however, also addressed to a present and a future time—indeed, to an eternity, for the letter begins with the words: “Unto the Angel of the Church of Ephesus write.” These words express the fact that we are not here dealing with a definite group of men living in the past, or from that time in the present, but with that which was transcendent and comprehensive in the character of the message of the Old Indian culture. The messenger, the angel of that culture, is still active; for such a culture is not brought into being in order to fall into oblivion, but in order that the seed of revelation, the message of heaven which underlies it, would sprout, and grow down through the ages within the souls of men, passing through many metamorphoses brought about by co-operation

with newly added influences, until it expands into blossom and ripe fruit.

For this reason the mission of the essential message of the Old Indian culture has not even yet ended. All that was then inaugurated still lives on, and the messenger of that culture, the “Angel of the Church of the Church of Ephesus,” continues to be associated with the onward flowing current of the effects and the consequences of his original message. The Old Indian culture still persists as a *karmic* current, and the spirit of that culture is bound up with this karmic current, living on in the form of qualities and longings and memories in the souls of men. It also lives on in the potential limitations of men, and in their inclinations to repeat the earlier faults. And with it, the spirit of that culture is also linked in the consciousness of a shared responsibility.

What is it, then, of the Old Indian spiritual life which is still present in the souls of men today? What is it that still functions as karma from that age? To be able to answer this question we must recall some fundamental characteristics of the ancient Rishi culture, especially the fact that it was an all-embracing *revelation culture* from which sprang the basic impulse for the seven culture-epochs of the whole Post-Atlantean evolution. For the revelation of the Seven Rishis was not only the re-vivification of the wisdom of the seven Atlantean oracles, it was also the planting of the seven-hued wisdom for the seven epochs of the Post-Atlantean Age. It was the seven “vowels” of the Cosmic Word—the Logos—which, through the instrumentality of the Rishis, flowed into the souls of men, just as at Pentecost the twelve “consonants” of the Cosmic Word were revealed. And, as there can be no speech without vowels, so would human souls have been incapable of comprehending the Logos had there been no Rishi revelation in the Old Indian epoch. For the influence of the Rishi revelation is felt even to the present time, on the one hand in a definite longing within the souls of men, and on the other of “memories,” borne in the ether bodies of men, of the ways and means by which to satisfy that longing.

The longing which dwells in the depths of human souls as an echo of the Rishi culture

consists, above all, in the striving after a comprehensive “synthetic” wisdom valid for all men, a wisdom which would carry with it a harmonizing of one-sided tendencies, just as in the Old Indian epoch the revealed wisdom of the Rishis represented the harmonizing of the seven Atlantean oracles.

The longing which dwells in the souls of men corresponds to the light of the “seven stars” in heaven, which became the light of the “seven candlesticks” on earth. And this longing dwells within them for the very reason that the light which shines in the seven stars, the constellation of the Great Bear, once shone also in seven men, the Rishis, and for seven human groups which were associated in one community, just as the seven candlesticks were joined together in one light of wisdom. And it is to this longing that the first letter is addressed, for it speaks of Him “that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.” The letter to the Church of Ephesus proceeds from Him who can still the longing, from Him who is the actual content of the memory underlying that longing, because the Rishi revelation was a revelation of the comprehensive nature of Christ as the Cosmic Word.

But the future which the realization of this longing is to bring is not merely the lighting of the seven candles with the flame of the seven stars, but something which proceeds therefrom. For what once existed as revealed wisdom will be the actual life of the man of the future. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” These words express the positive future of the endeavor which moves courageously forward into the future from the reminiscent longing for the comprehensive wisdom of the past.

The “overcoming” in question here is the overcoming of the desire for the past. True, it is to live by a longing which proceeds from the past, but it must seek its satisfaction, not in the past, but in the future. The drift of the soul’s desire towards the

past must be permanently overcome, but the content of the longing must not only be fostered, but even must be strengthened to the pitch of energetic striving towards the future. Then it will be possible for wisdom to become life, for the wisdom originally revealed from heaven to live in man himself. This transformation indicates the future evolution of the “moral ether” in human nature, and this “moral ether” will be as full of light as was the original revelation of the wisdom of the Rishis. Moreover, it will not only give light, it will also function as the life-force functions. The “eating of the tree of life” will be an absorption into the human system of the power to bestow life.

The endeavor to master this life-giving force always existed, and is developed in two special directions: On the one hand, towards that asceticism of which the final expression is a kind of Indian yoga. The aim of this type of asceticism is to send the life-force contained in man’s pro-

The “eating of the tree of life” will be an absorption into the human system of the power to bestow life.

creative faculty upwards into the head so as to provide man’s spiritual life with the same creative life-force as that possessed by the procreative faculty. On the other hand, that endeavor took a second direction called by the writer of the Apocalypse “the deeds of the Nicolaitanes.” Here the aim was so consciously to descend into the physical that the instinctive forces of the physical body should be made to subserve, in an unnatural way, certain magic ends. As with the first direction, a distortion of the message of the Spirit took place because the spiritual force was not set in action by its own moral content but by the influx of a force drawn from another sphere of existence; so with the second direction a distortion of the mission of the human body took place because it was given a primary position through the sensualizing of the spirit.

Those who come forward as men sent by the spirit, and who yet do not represent the pure spirit but rather a spirit mingled with forces borrowed from the body, are not truly sent by the spirit (“apostles”) but only believe themselves to be so. Those, however, who allow the spirit to become

the prey of sensuality (the Nicolaitanes) represent the other error in the search for “the tree of life.” For the fruits of the tree of life do not consist in an activity of the spirit developed at the expense of the bodily forces, nor yet in the sensualizing of the spirit, but in the pure spiritual force increasing in strength in such a way that it works with the strength of a nature force. Moral ether does not exist as a “latent force” of the body, etc., it is a new force which will gradually be born in man out of the Christ impulse.

But the hindrances which offer opposition to the future birth of the true fruits of the tree of life are the efforts of the “liars” (who say they are apostles, i.e., sent by the spirit, but are not) and “Nicolaitanes.” These two errors are resisted by “the Angel of the Church of Ephesus.” Nevertheless, he had not remained entirely true to his mission, for he had “left his first love,” the original pure impulse of the Post-Atlantean human evolution. Now that original impulse was love for the mission of man on Earth. That love was a deep rooted readiness of

souls to incarnate truly and completely in order truly and completely to fulfill the task of earthly existence. This will—namely, the desire for complete earthly incarnation for the purpose of the complete fulfillment of the Earth mission—is the true quintessence of *Weight*. Everything which involves a conscious, sacrificial *descent* is an expression of spiritual ‘weight.’ Thus, for instance, any words which a man may utter have more weight if they penetrate not only to the astral body, but down to the ether body also. And a human deed has more weight if its moral content penetrates right down into physical reality than it has when it touches only the upper strata of earthly existence.

But now, seen from the physical side, there are two different phenomena of weight. One is the sacrificial ‘descent’ already mentioned, the other is the phenomenon of the Fall, the expulsion from the spiritual heights. The latter occurs as the karmic consequences of an unjustified attitude towards the spirit. True ‘weight’ then becomes heaviness, and the ‘descent,’ a downfall. (Continued) □

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