

# **Christ and the Spiritual World: The Search for the Holy Grail**

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## **FIFTH LECTURE:**

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I have spoken to you about the Sibyls, pointing out how they appear as shadows of the Greek philosophers in Ionia. Through centuries they conjured up from their chaotic soul-life a mixture of deep wisdom and sheer spiritual chaos, and they exerted much more influence on the spiritual life of Southern Europe and its neighbouring regions than external history is willing to recognise. I wanted to indicate that this peculiar outpouring from the souls of the Sibyls points to a certain power of the human soul which in ancient times, and even in the third post-Atlantean epoch, had some good significance. But as one culture-epoch succeeds another in the course of human history, changes occur. The forces which the Sibyls employed to produce, at times, sheer nonsense, were good, legitimate forces in the third post-Atlantean epoch, when Astrology was studied and the wisdom of the stars worked into the souls of men, harmonising the forces which later emerged chaotically as Sibyllism.

You can gather from this that forces which prevail anywhere in the world — including those which prevailed in the souls of the Sibyls — should never be called good or bad in themselves; it depends on when and where they appear. The forces that appeared in the souls of the Sibyls were good and legitimate, but they were not adapted to the fourth post-Atlantean epoch; for the forces that were then intended to prevail in human souls were not those that come from subconscious depths, but those that speak to the soul through the clarity of the Ego. Yesterday we heard how the Hebrew prophets strove to suppress the Sibylline forces and to bring out the forces that speak through the clarity of the Ego. This indeed was the essential characteristic of the old Hebrew school of prophecy — to press back the chaotic Sibylline forces and to bring out those which can speak through the Ego.

The fulfilment of this task given to the Hebrew prophets — we could call it a task of bringing the Sibylline forces into the right path of evolution — came about through the Christ Impulse. When the Christ Impulse entered into the evolution of humanity in the way known to us, one result was that the chaotic forces of the Sibyls were

thrust back for a time, as when a stream disappears below ground and reappears later on. These forces were indeed to reappear in another form, a form purified by the Christ Impulse, after the Christ Impulse had entered into the aura of the earth. Just as in human life, after we have been using our soul-forces throughout the day, we have to let them sink into nightly unconsciousness, so that they may reawaken in the morning, so it was necessary that the Sibylline forces, legitimate as they had been during the third post-Atlantean epoch, should flow for a while below the surface, unnoticed, in order to reappear — slowly, as we shall hear.

The forces — legitimate human forces — which emerged so chaotically in the Sibyls were cleansed, so to speak, by the Christ Impulse, but then they sank below the surface of the soul. Human beings in their ordinary consciousness remained entirely unaware that the Christ continued to work on these forces; but so it was.

From the standpoint of Spiritual Science, it is a superb drama to watch this impact of the Christ Impulse; to see how, from the Council of Nicaea onwards, human beings in their normal consciousness quarrel ardently about dogmas, while what was most important for Christianity takes its course in the subconscious depths of the soul. The Christ Impulse does not work where there is strife, but below the surface, and human wisdom will have to uncover a great deal that we may think strange, if we look at it superficially. Much will have to be revealed as a symptom of the Christ Impulse working below the surface. Then we shall understand that essential developments in the historical configuration of Christianity in the West could not come about through the quarrels of Bishops, but sprang from decisions which were reached below the surface of the soul and rose into consciousness like dreams, so that men were aware only of these dreamlike apprehensions and could not discern what was going on in the depths. I will mention only one symptom of this. There are events that reflect, as though through dreams, the activity which the Christ was undertaking in the depths of the soul in order to bring human soul-forces into a right alignment with the course of Western history.

Many of you will perhaps guess something of what I mean if we observe that on October 28, 312, when Constantine the Great, the son of Constantine Chlorus, was making war against Maxentius on the outskirts of Rome, a decision was taken which proved to be of the highest importance for the configuration of Christianity throughout the West. This battle in front of Rome was not determined by military orders, or by the conscious acumen of the leaders, but by dreams and Sibylline omens! We are told — and this is the significant thing — that when Constantine was moving against the gates of Rome, Maxentius had a dream which said to him: “Do not remain in the place where you are now.” Under the influence of this dream, reinforced by an appeal to the Sibylline Books, Maxentius committed the greatest folly — looked at externally — that he could have committed. He left Rome and fought the battle — with an army four times the size of Constantine's — not within

the protection of the walls of Rome, but outside them. For the message received from the Sibylline Books ran thus: "If you fight against Constantine outside the gates of Rome, you will destroy Rome's greatest enemy." A truly oracular utterance! Maxentius obeyed it and with faith and courage went outside the gates. As on an earlier occasion another Sibylline oracle had guided Croesus, so was Maxentius guided by this one. He destroyed the enemy of Rome — himself.

Constantine had a different dream. It said to him: "Carry in front of your troops the monogram of Christ!" He did so and he won the battle. A decisive event for the configuration of Europe, brought about by dreams and Sibylline sayings! There we gain a glimpse of what was going on below the surface in the soul-life of Europe. Truly, like a stream which has disappeared into mountain cavities, so that it is no longer to be seen up above and one may form the strangest conjectures about it, so the Christ Impulse works on below the surface — works, at first, as occult, i.e. hidden, reality.

My dear friends, allow me at this point to confess to you that when in my occult researches I tried to follow this stream, I often lost trace of it; I had to search for places where it reappeared. I could suppose that the stream of the Christ Impulse had reappeared slowly, and that even today it has not fully reappeared but can only give evidence of itself. But where and how did it come to the surface? That is the question. Where did it lay hold of souls sufficiently to make an impression on their consciousness?

If you follow up the various expositions in my books and lecture-courses, and if you feel about it as I do, you will find, especially in the older ones, that what I have said in connection with the name of the Holy Grail is one of the least satisfying parts. That is how I feel and I hope that others have felt it too. It is not that I have said anything that could not be upheld, but simply that when I spoke of this, I felt unsatisfied. I had to give out what could be told with confidence, but often, when I tried to trace the further course of this stream — when I tried to unravel the further occult development of Christianity in the West — then before my soul rose the admonition: "You must first read the name of Parsifal in its right place."

I had to experience the fact that occult researches are guided in a remarkable way. So that we may not be enticed into speculation, or into realms where we can very easily be borne away from occult truth on the wings of fantasy, we have to be guided slowly and by stages, if at last our research is to bring to light the truth which can of itself impart a kind of conviction of its rightness. So I often had to be content with waiting for an answer to the injunction: "Search out where the name of Parsifal stands!" I had quite understood something you all know from the Parsifal saga — after Parsifal returns, in a certain sense cured of his errors, and again finds the way

to the Holy Grail, he is told that his name will appear shining upon the Holy Vessel. But where is the Holy Vessel — where is it to be found? That was the question.

In occult researches of this kind one is often held back, delayed, so that one may not do too much in a day or a year and be driven on to speculate about the truth. Landmarks appear. For me they appeared in the course of really a good many years, during which I sought an answer to the question — Where will you find the name of Parsifal written on the Holy Grail?

I knew that many meanings can be attached to the Holy Vessel in which the Host, the holy bread or wafer, is placed. And on the Holy Vessel itself “Parsifal” was to shine. I was aware also of the deep significance of a passage such as that in St. Mark's Gospel, Chapter 4, verses 11 and 12, 33 and 34, where we are told that the Lord often spoke in parables and only gradually clarified their meaning. In occult investigation, too, one is, led gradually, step by step, and very often only in connection with karmic guidance, and on encountering something that seems to have to do with a certain matter, one very often does not know what will be made of it in one's own soul under the influence of forces coming from the spiritual world. Often one does not know in the least whether something drawn from the depths of the occult world will have a bearing on some problem that one has been following up for years. Thus I did not know how to proceed when I once asked the Norwegian Folk Spirit, the Northern Folk Spirit, about Parsifal and he said: “Learn to understand the saying that through *my* powers there flowed into the northern Parsifal saga ‘**Ganganda greida**’” — “circulating cordial”, or something like that! [Another possible rendering is “journeying viaticum.” (See [note](#) at the end of the lectures.)] I had no idea what to make of this. It was the same when I was coming out of St. Peter's in Rome under the strong impression made on me by Michelangelo's work that you find on the right-hand side as you enter — the Mother with Jesus, the Mother who looks so young, with Jesus dead already on her knees. And under the after-effect of looking at this work of art (this was a leading of the kind I mean), there came to me, not as a vision but as a true Imagination from the spiritual world, a picture which is inscribed in the Akashic record, showing how Parsifal, after he has gone away for the first time from the Castle of the Grail, where he had failed to ask about the mysteries which prevail there, meets in the forest a young woman who is holding her bridegroom in her lap and weeping over him. But I knew that whether it is the mother or the bride whose bridegroom is dead (Christ is often called the Bridegroom), the picture had a meaning, and that the connection thus established — without my having done anything about it — had a meaning also.

I could tell you of many indications of this kind that came to me during my search for an answer to the question: Where can I find the name of Parsifal inscribed on the Holy Grail? For it had to be there, as the saga itself tells us; and now we need to recall the most important features of the saga.

We know that Parsifal's mother, Herzeleide, bore him in great suffering and with dream-like visions of a quite peculiar character; we know that she wished to shield him from knightly exercises and the code of knightly virtue; that she arranged for the management of her property and withdrew into solitude. She wanted to bring up her child so that he would remain a stranger to the impulses that were certainly present in him; for he was not to be exposed to the dangers that had surrounded his father. But we know also that from an early age the child began to notice everything glorious in Nature; from his mother's teaching he really learnt nothing except that there was a ruling God, and he conceived a wish to serve this God. But he knew nothing of what this God was, and when one day he met some knights he took them for God and knelt before them. When he confessed to his mother that he had seen the knights and wanted to be a knight himself, she put on him a fool's garments and sent him forth. He met with many adventures, and later on — people may call this sentimental but it is of the deepest significance — the mother died of a broken heart because of her son's disappearance: he had not turned back to give her any farewell greeting but had gone forth to experience knightly adventures.

We know that after many wanderings, during which he learnt much about knightly ways and knightly honour, and distinguished himself, he came to the Castle of the Grail. On other occasions I have mentioned that the best literary account of Parsifal's arrival at the Castle is to be found in Chrestien de Troyes. There we are shown how, after often mistaking the way, Parsifal comes to a lonely place and finds two men: one is steering a little boat and the other is fishing from it. They direct him to the Fisher-King, and presently he encounters the Fisher-King in the Grail Castle. The Fisher-King is old and feeble and has to rest on a couch.

While conversing with Parsifal, the Fisher-King hands him a sword, a gift from his niece. Then there appears first in the room a page carrying a spear; the spear is bleeding and the blood runs down over the page's hand; and then a maiden with the Holy Grail, which is a kind of dish. But such glory streams forth from it that all the lights in the hall are outshone by the light of the Holy Grail, just as the stars are overpowered by the light of sun and moon. And then we learn how in the Holy Grail there is something with which the Fisher-King's aged father is nourished in a separate room. He has no need of the sumptuously appointed meal of which the Fisher-King and Parsifal partake. These two nourish themselves with earthly food. But each time a Dew course — as we should say nowadays — is served, the Holy Grail withdraws into the room of the Fisher-King's aged father, whose only nourishment comes from that which is within the Holy Grail.

Parsifal, to whom it had been intimated on his way from Gurnemanz that he ought not to ask too many questions, does not inquire why the lance bleeds or what the vessel of the Grail signifies — naturally he did not know their names. He then

goes to bed for the night, in the same room (according to Chrestien de Troyes) where all this has happened. He was intending to ask questions in the morning, but when morning came he found the whole Castle empty — nobody was there. He called out for someone — nobody was there. He got dressed, and downstairs he found his horse ready. He thought the whole company had ridden out to hunt and wanted to ride after them in order to ask about the miracle of the Grail. But when he was crossing the drawbridge it rose up so quickly that his horse had to make a leap in order not to be thrown into the Castle moat. And he found no trace of the company he had encountered in the Castle on the previous day.

Then Chrestien de Troyes tells us how Parsifal rides on and in a lonely part of the wood comes upon a woman with her husband on her knees, and weeping for him. It is she, according to Chrestien de Troyes, who first indicates to him how he should have asked questions, so as to experience the effect of his questions on the great Mysteries that had been shown to him. We then hear that he went on, often wandering from the right road, until exactly on a Good Friday he came to a hermit, named Trevericent. The hermit tells him how he is being cursed because he has wasted the opportunity of bringing about something like a redemption for the Fisher-King by asking questions about the miracles in the castle. And then he is given many and various teachings.

Now when I tried to accompany Parsifal to the hermit, a saying was disclosed to me — a saying which in the words I have to use for it, in accordance with spiritual-scientific investigation, is nowhere recorded — but I am able to give you the full truth of it. It was spoken — and it made a deep impression on me — by the old hermit to Parsifal, after he had made him acquainted, as far as he could, with the Mystery of Golgotha, of which Parsifal knew little, although he had arrived there on a Good Friday. The old hermit then uttered this saying (I shall use words that are current among us today and are perfectly faithful to the sense of the utterance): “Think of what happened on the occasion of the Mystery of Golgotha! Raise your eyes to the Christ hanging on the Cross, at the moment when He said, ‘From this hour on, there is your mother’; and John left her not. But you” — said the old hermit to Parsifal — “you have left your mother, Herzeleide. It was on your account that she passed from this world.”

The complete connection was not understood by Parsifal, but the words were spoken with the spiritual intention that they should work in his soul as a picture, so that from this picture of John, who did not forsake his mother, he might discern the karmic debt he had incurred by his having deserted his own mother. This was to produce an after — effect in his soul.

We hear then that Parsifal stayed a short while longer with the hermit and then set out again to find the Holy Grail. And it so happens that he finds the Grail shortly

or directly before the death of the old Amfortas, the Fisher-King. Then it is that the Knights of the Holy Grail, the Knights of that holy Order, come to him with the words: “Thy name shines in the Grail! Thou art the future Ruler, the King of the Grail, for thy name shines out from the holy Vessel!”

Parsifal becomes the Grail King. And so the name, Parsifal, stands on the holy, gold-gleaming Vessel, in which is the Host. It stands there.

And now, as my concern was to find the Vessel, I was at first misled by a certain circumstance. In occult research — I say this in all humility, with no wish to make an arrogant claim — it has always seemed to me necessary, when a serious problem is involved, to take account not only of what is given directly from occult sources, but also of what external research has brought to light. And in following up a problem it seems to me specially good to make a really conscientious study of what external scholarship has to say, so that one keeps one's feet on the earth and does not get lost in cloud-cuckoo-land. But in the present instance it was exoteric scholarship (this was some time ago) that led me astray. For I gathered from it that when Wolfram von Eschenbach began to write his Parsifal poem, he had — according to his own statement — made use of Chrestien de Troyes and of a certain Kyot. External research has never been able to trace this Kyot and regards him as having been invented by Wolfram von Eschenbach, as though Wolfram von Eschenbach had wanted to attribute to a further source his own extensive additions to Chrestien de Troyes. Exoteric learning is prepared to admit, at most, that Kyot was a copyist of the works of Chrestien de Troyes, and that Wolfram von Eschenbach had put the whole thing together in a rather fanciful way.

So you see in what direction external research goes. It is bound to draw one away, more or less, from the path that leads to Kyot. At the same time, when I had been to a certain extent led astray by external research, something else was borne in upon me (this was another of the karmic readings). I have often spoken of it — in my book [\*Occult Science\*](#) and in lecture-courses — and should now like to put it as follows.

The first three post-Atlantean epochs, which occur before the Mystery of Golgotha, reappear in a certain sense after the fourth epoch, so that the third epoch reappears in our epoch, the fifth; the second epoch will recur in the sixth, and the first epoch, the epoch of the Holy Rishis, will recur in the seventh, as I have often described. It became clearer and clearer to me — as the outcome of many years of research — that in our epoch there is really something like a resurrection of the Astrology of the third epoch, but permeated now with the Christ Impulse. Today we must search among the stars in a way different from the old ways, but the stellar script must once more become something that speaks to us. And now observe — these thoughts about a revival of the stellar script linked themselves in a remarkable

way to the secret of Parsifal, so that I could no longer avoid the belief that the two were connected with each other. And then a picture rose before my soul: a picture shown to me while I was trying to accompany Parsifal in the spirit on his way back to the Grail Castle after his meeting with the hermit Trevericent. This meeting with the hermit is recounted by Chrestien de Troyes in a particularly beautiful and touching way. I should like to read you a little of this, telling how Parsifal comes to the hermit:

Er gibt dem Ross den Lauf  
Und seufst aus tiefstem Herzen auf.  
Weil er vor Gott sich schuldig fühlt  
Und Reue in der Brust ihm wühlt.  
Mit Weinen kommt er durch den Wald,  
Doch vor der Klause macht er halt,  
Steigt ab von seinem Pferde,  
Legt seine Wehr zur Erde —  
Und fand in einem Kirchlein klein  
Den frommen Mann. In seiner Pein  
Er vor ihm auf die Knie sinkt,  
Das Nass, das ihm vom Auge blinkt,  
Rollt endlos nieder auf sein Kinn,  
Als er in kindlich schlichtem Sinn  
Die Hände vor ihm faltet.  
“Der Ihr des Trostes waltet,  
Mein reuiges Geständnis hört:  
Fünf Jahre war ich wahnbetört,  
Dass ohne Glauben ich gelebt  
Und nach dem Bösen nur gestrebt.”  
“Sag mir, warum du das getan  
Und bitte Gott, dass er dich nah'n  
Dereinst noch lässt der Sel'gen Schar.”  
“Beim Fischerkönig einst ich war;  
Ich sah den Speer, auf dessen Stahl  
Es blutig tropft. Ich sah den Gral  
Und unterliess die Frage.  
Was dieses Blut besage,  
Und was der Gral bedeute.  
Seit diesem Tag bis heute  
War ich in schwere Seelennot.  
Weit besser ware mir der Tod!  
Und da vergass ich unsern Herrn  
Und blieb von seiner Gnade fern.”



“So sage mir, wie man dich nennt.”  
“Als Perceval man mich erkennt.”  
Da seufzt der Greis aus tiefster Brust,  
Der Name ist ihm wohl bewusst.  
Er spricht: “Dem Leid hat dich vermählt,  
Was ohne Wissen du gefehlt.”

[Quoted from Eduard Wechsler's  
*Die Sage vom Heiligen Gral*  
(Halle, 1898).]

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He roused the steed to start  
And sighed from out his deepest heart,  
For guilt to God doth rack his breast,  
Remorseful feelings give no rest.  
With weeping comes he through the wood  
Yet halts where hermitage has stood.  
Makes ready to dismount,  
Lays weapons on the ground —  
And finds within a chapel cell  
The pious man. 'Fore him he fell  
Upon his knees in woeful plight,  
The tear that blinked before his sight  
Now rolls at last down to his chin  
As he with simple childlike mien  
Doth fold his hands together  
That he may solace gather.  
“Hear ye my sad confession:  
Five years I bore delusion  
While without faith my life I led  
And only strove towards the bad.”  
“Say me wherefore thou this hast done  
And pray to God that He ere long  
Will draw thee near the holy Bond.”  
“I once by Fisher-King did stand.  
I saw the spear upon whose steel  
Hung drops of blood. I saw the Grail  
Yet did forbear to put the word  
What signified this blood,  
This Grail, what signified —  
'Twere better had I died!”  
Until this day indeed

My soul's in direst need.  
Our Lord I thought of never more  
And from His Grace I stayed afar.”  
“Now tell me what thy name may be.”  
“As Parsifal men speak of me.”  
Then sighs the aged man with groan,  
The name to him is full well-known.  
“What thou unwittingly hast left undone  
Has brought this sorrow as thy doom.”

[Translation by M. Cotterell.]

Then come the conversations between Parsifal and the hermit of which I have spoken already. And when I sought to accompany Parsifal in spirit during his return to the Grail, it was often as though there shone forth in the soul how he traveled by day and by night, how he devoted himself to nature by day and to the stars by night, as if the stellar script had spoken to his unconscious self and as if this was a prophecy of that which the holy company of Knights who came from the Grail to meet him had said: “Thy name shines forth in radiance from the Grail.” But Parsifal, quite clearly, did not know what to make of the message of the stars, for it remained in his unconscious being, and therefore one cannot so very well interpret it, however much one may try to immerse oneself in it through spiritual research.

Then I tried once more to get back to Kyot, and behold — a particular thing said about him by Wolfram von Eschenbach made a deep impression on me and I felt I had to relate it to the ‘ganganda greida’. The connection seemed inevitable. I had to relate it also to the image of the woman holding her dead bridegroom on her lap. And then, when I was not in the least looking for it, I came upon a saying by Kyot: “er jach, ez hiez ein dinc der gral” — “he said, a thing was called the Grail.” Now exoteric research itself tells us how Kyot came to these words — “er jach, ez hiez ein dinc der gral.” He acquired a book by Flegetanis in Spain — an astrological book. No doubt about it, one may say: Kyot is the man who stimulated by Flegetanis — whom he calls Flegetanis and in whom lives a certain knowledge of the stellar script — Kyot is the man who, stimulated by this revived astrology, sees the thing called the Grail. Then I knew that Kyot is not to be given up; I knew that he discloses an important clue if one is searching in the sense of Spiritual Science: he at least has seen the Grail.

Where, then, is the Grail, which today must be found in such a way that the name of Parsifal stands upon it? Where can it be found? Now in the course of my researches it had been shown to me that the name — that is the first thing — must be sought for in the stellar script. And then, on a day which I must regard as specially significant for me, I was shown *where* the gold-gleaming vessel in its reality is to be found, so that through it — through its symbolical expression in the stellar script —

we are led to the secret of the Grail. And then I saw in the stellar script something that anyone can see — only he will not immediately discern the secret. For one day, while I was following with inner sight the gold-gleaming sickle of the moon, as it appeared in the heavens, with the dark moon like a great disc dimly visible within it ... so that with physical sight one saw the gold-gleaming moon — ganganda greida, the journeying viaticum — and within it the large Host, the dark disc. This is not to be seen if one merely glances superficially at the moon, but it is evident if one looks closely — and there, in wonderful letters of the occult script, was the name Parsifal!

That, to begin with, was the stellar script. For in fact, if this *reading* of the stellar script is seen in the right light, it yields for our hearts and minds something — though perhaps not all — of the Parsifal secret, the secret of the Holy Grail. What I have still to say, briefly, on this subject I will give you tomorrow.