

Good Friday

John 19: 1-27

As the “still” week really enters into stillness, the bearing of Jesus changes. His fiery fighting will is no longer evident. When between midnight and sunrise the band of soldiers lays hand upon Him Whom Judas has kissed, He does not oppose them. Rather, he opposes Peter who wants to fight for Him. Then he is seized by rough hands, dragged through the city, from one end to the other. He is apparently delivered, helpless, to those who scourge Him, press the crown of thorns on His brow, spit upon Him and strike Him in the face. The witnesses of the tragedy are overcome with anguish as He Who has no physical strength is forced to carry the heavy cross and is nailed upon it by the executioners with pitiless cruelty. What has become of the fighting power which blazed in Him during the week? Has He abandoned the battle against the blindness and wickedness of men? No - the fight which was waged on the human level on the previous days is now carried on in a higher sphere, and so takes on still more powerful dimensions. The Christ is not fighting against flesh and blood, but against the invisible demonic powers from whose tyranny He will deliver mankind.

He fights against the Luciferic powers, the glittering beings of deceptive light, who want to estrange man from the earth, and likewise against the Ahrimanic powers who want to harden and fetter man to death matter. As Christ seems to lay down the weapons, He is really following the satanic powers into their hiding – places in order to overcome them there.

Ahriman displays his power over men most triumphantly when he approaches in the form of death. In humanity's evolution up to the "turning-point of time", death which had formerly been a friend of man had taken on more and more the features of Ahriman. The dark power knew how to use man's destiny of death to make it his sharpest weapon. The power of death is not only that we must die: it becomes really manifest only after death. When we have laid aside our earthly body it must then be proved whether we can still maintain a connection with what takes place on Earth among those whom we belong. Here lies death's actual power – that it can wrest us from earthly things and thrust us out into the unbridgeable exile of life on the other side. The Ahrimanic power of death uses the Earth to mock at man. During earthly life it binds him to the world of matter; it makes all sorts of promises of earthly fulfillment, which are no longer kept after death. The more a man is attached to the things of "this side" during life, the more inexorably he is affected by "other-sidedness" after death. Only those people who have gained a firm foothold in the life of the Spirit during life on Earth can after death remain helpfully united with those who are still living on Earth. After death we have only as much spiritual command over matter as we have gained upon Earth.

When on Maundy Thursday Christ dispenses the Holy Supper to the disciples in the peace of the Coenaculum, there seems to be no conflict. And yet what a wonderful victory over the spirit of dead matter is shown when the Christ takes in His hand the earthly substances of bread and wine, and makes them luminous through the sun-force of His heart. He wrests the terrestrial creature from the powers of darkness and makes it the body and blood of His Being of Light. As He is

able during His life to ensoul the earthly elements so that these become radiant, He will have all the more power to do so after death.

In Gethsemane the fight against the power of death enters a decisive phase. Here in the quiet grove of the Mount of Olives, where He has so often been with His disciples for intimate teaching, He must now withstand the most dangerous attack of the enemy in utmost loneliness. The Community which He has just established in the Upper Room for the future well-being of humanity does not bring help and benefit to Himself. The consciousness of the disciples has not grown to the greatness of the moment. Judas has gone out into the night of betrayal, but the others, too, leave their Master in the lurch. They are absorbed in the twilight of their sleep in Gethsemane, out of which Peter will deny Christ.

It is not inner weakness and fear of death with which Christ has to wrestle in Gethsemane. One could not misunderstand more tragically the whole Passion of Christ than by thinking that Jesus prayed in Gethsemane that He might still be spared from death. Not fear of death, but death itself assails Him. Death, already apprehensive of losing control over Him, appears before Him to lay hold of Him. The Destroying Angel wants to possess Him. The secret of the conflict in Gethsemane lies in the fact that death wants to outwit Jesus. It wants to wrest Him away too soon, before He has ended His work and filled the last vestige of the earthly vessel with His Spirit.

For three years the Fire of divine Ego-hood has burned in the body and soul of Jesus. The human vessel – from within outwards – has thus already been consumed almost to ashes. What still has to be suffered and completed demands

so much strength from the earthly sheaths that there is a real danger of premature death. Ahriman lies in wait and hopes to make use of this moment. Luke, the physician, describes with precise words what happens, when he says “And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly”. In the clinical sense of the term, the death-struggle had already come. When St. Luke adds, “and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground”, he adds exact symptoms of the agony of death.

But Christ is victorious and death is repulsed. With the mightiest force of prayer ever known on Earth He wrestles to remain in the body. It is an echo of this fight when He speaks on the Cross the words that seem to betray a weakness: “I thirst”. He still remains, even immediately before He breathes out His soul, true to the Earth. It is not His will to pass into the spiritual world simply through dying. It is His will to remain united with the Earth when He goes through death and it is this that will be His conquest over death. He wrestles to enter still more deeply into the earthly world of matter which He bears in Himself through His physical body. There is still a last remnant to be ensouled. This, too, He will not abandon to the Prince of this World, who has begun to count on the material realm of the earthly as being in his possession once and for all.

The drama returns to human scenes and conditions. On the morning of Good Friday Christ confronts the whole of humanity, as represented by the three figures of Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod. Then the way leads up to Golgotha. Nails are driven by the soldiers into the hands and feet of the Christ, and it seems as though He allows everything to come about quite passively. In fact through the medicine of bitter pain, His inmost Being has gained the ultimate power of spirit

over matter, so that Death can no longer claim Him. The Ahrimanic death-powers realize this, and appear for their last effort, furious that their might has been of no avail. When the sun is darkened during the sultry midday hours of Good Friday, it is as though the demon of the sun were straining to the utmost against the God of the sun. And when the earth is shaken by the earthquake, all the demons of the earth seem to storm forward in and endeavour to help the satanic death-power to victory. Anti-Christ moves the earthly elements and even the forces of the heavens. However, death can strip nothing from the sovereignty of Christ's spirit, from His authority over all earth existence. It is in accord with His own will that the cosmic powers rise up in the hour of Golgotha. He has said to the officers in Gethsemane, "But this is the hour and the power of darkness" (Luke 22, 23).

In the midst of the darkness a Mystery was manifested on Golgotha which may be mentioned only with great reserve. The Body which hung on the Cross began to radiate light. In many country districts of Europe, in a field or at the roadside, one can find crucifixes with a gilded figure on a black wood cross. A momentous secret of Good Friday is living here in the naïve wisdom of folklore. A mysterious brilliance broke through the dreadful noonday light. The Sun of Christ revealed itself as the physical sun suffered eclipse. A ray of Easter already wove itself into the darkness of Good Friday.

The last of the Seven Words from the Cross, "It is finished," does not refer to the sufferings which have been surmounted, but to the complete conquest over the power of death which has been achieved. Whereas death casts into the banishment of "the other side" the soul of a man whom it has mocked during his

lifetime with the power of earthly matter, the Christ, in dying, goes directly to the Earth. The blood streams from His wounds; His soul goes with it into the body of the Earth. When blood streams out from a dying man, the blood and the soul go different ways; here the soul goes with the blood. Later, the body is lowered into the grave; the Earth opens in an earthquake and takes into itself the body of Christ. When a human body given up by the soul is lowered into the grave, body and soul go different ways. Christ's soul goes the same way, to the Earth. That is the great cosmic sacrifice of Love which Christ is able to accomplish for the whole of earth-existence, because death can no longer hinder Him. The Earth receives the body and the blood of Christ, the great Communion, and therewith the medicine for the spiritualizing of all material existence is incorporated into Earth existence – “the medicine that maketh whole”.

Holy Saturday

John 19: 28-42

«The body of Christ has been laid in the tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. Saturnine heaviness hangs in the air and the meaning of Saturn's day is fulfilled. It has been the custom of the Sabbath, as Saturn's day, for the adherents of the Old Covenant to observe it as a strictly ordained day of death-like rest. Today is the Sabbath of all Sabbaths. It is as though a fighter had gone into a dark cavern to overcome a dragon. Will he return victoriously to the light of day? In the dark midday hour of the previous day, when Christ on the Cross bowed His head and expired, the veil of the Temple “was rent in twain”. Vistas were opened into the

interior of the world. Archetypal pictures formed themselves in the Saturnine twilight. Table and Cross summarize the events of the last two days. Now the Tomb is added as a third archetypal symbol. From times immemorial tombs also served as altars; all divine worship proceeded originally from the worship of the dead. People went to the tombs when they wanted to commune with the gods. The souls of the departed were intermediaries between men and the gods, for since the souls of the dead could appear at the tombs, other dwellers in the spiritual world could also be met there. This was so in far-distant ages, when Death was still the brother of Sleep and as yet had no terrifying power over mankind. Men were not so hopelessly bound to the substance of the earthly body during physical life. So after death they were not so separated from the plane of Earth. The communion of the earthly world with the spiritual world still happened like breathing in and breathing out.

In the course of millennia Man entered deeper and deeper into embodiment. The more he united with earthly substance, the less was it possible for him to remain in connection with the earth after death. The gap between "here and "there" became increasingly difficult to bridge. Existence after death became, as is said in the First Epistle of St. Peter, a prison. Humanity was in danger of being deprived of immortality, of consciousness enduring beyond death. In the realm of the dead the souls were spellbound in a state of numbness. When the Egyptians mummified their dead and prayed before the embalmed bodies, they expressed their urgent desire to hold fast to ancient conditions. It was an attempt, despite the ever-widening gulf, to unite the souls of men with the bodily remains of earthly life. But the downward trend of destiny could not be checked, and as the pre-Christian centuries advanced, dread of death took hold of mankind. The

Greek world is filled with horror of the realm of the death; in the Old Testament the idea of immortality fades away altogether. A great religious current arose without a certainty of immortal life, and the belief of living on in one's descendants took its place.

Yet in the pre-Christian centuries souls did not live nearly so heavily in the body as they do today. Hence those living on Earth felt the tragic fate brought on by death as an oppressive burden. Though people still went to the tombs, the souls no longer came, and the Gods were absent from the altars. The feeling of anxiety in pre-Christian times derived far less from external conditions than from distress of soul. The Earth seemed a dried up land that had had no rain for a long time. Death became a terrifying spectre. This feeling lay at the root of the expectation of the Messiah which inspired all the peoples of pre-Christian times.

It was now between Holy Saturday and Easter. The body had been taken from the cross and laid in the grave. Providence ordained that cross and grave should stand on a spot which thousands of years before had been experienced as the centre of the Earth. Between the rocky hill of Golgotha, which is a continuation of the lunar Mount Moriah, and the grave with its surrounding garden on Mount Zion, there was formerly a primary fissure in the Earth's surface. Ancient Humanity saw in this the grave of Adam: here for the first time mankind was overcome by death. And so from very ancient times this primeval gorge, which splits Jerusalem into two parts, was believed to be the gate of the Underworld. In this place the cross was erected yesterday and there to-day the sepulcher stands.

When now we try once more to find the inner aspect of events, it is as though the veil were rent before another sphere. The realm of the shades opens. In the Saturnine darkness of this sphere an unexpected light is kindled. He who died upon the Cross has entered the Kingdom of the Dead. One has come Who is not subject to the magic compulsion of death, One who is free of all that dulls and deadens. He carries through death the full Glory of His Genius; and while on Earth the dark Sabbath of the grave prevails, in the realm of the dead the Sun rises. This is the meaning of Christ Descent into Hell. In the kingdom of the departed a glimmer of hope lit up. The spell of death was loosened, and the prospect opened towards a future victory of the human soul over the spell of the underworld. While it was still Holy Saturday on Earth, it was already Easter in the Kingdom of the Dead.

At the moment of Christ's death on Good Friday the earthquake began and it was still rumbling in the early hours of Easter morning. It did not cease fully all through Holy Saturday, though the powers of nature may have adapted themselves to the spell of the silence of the grave which belongs to this day. Rudolf Steiner has imparted from his spiritual investigations a certain fact which may be hard to accept, but which could be verified from a knowledge of the geological secrets which lie in the soil of Jerusalem. As a cosmic climax to the Mystery of Golgotha, the earthquake tore open again the original fissure which had been filled up in the time of Solomon. And thus the whole Earth became the grave of the Christ. The Earth took deep into herself the Host that was administered to her. When with the words of the Creed as it is used in the Christian Community, we express the event of Holy Saturday, "He was lowered into the grave of the Earth", we touch upon the cosmic aspect of the Mystery of Golgotha. It was the physical body and

the physical blood of the human being, Jesus of Nazareth, which was the medicine received by the Earth. The sacramental stream which has gone through humanity henceforward is linked to Easter.

It has been a right and valid principle that in all parts of the Christian Church altars have been formed in the likeness of a tomb. Also the altars of the renewed Sacrament in the Christian Community have the form of a tomb. And when the members of the congregation are assembled round them, the principle of Holy Saturday is always present. We are the ones waiting round the sacred sepulchre, and at the Table and Tomb of the Lord our dead can also draw near again. Those who have inwardly united themselves in life with the renewed Sacrament, can assuredly after death find their way to this Tomb more easily than to their own graves. Souls no longer have any intensive relation to the cast-off body. But when we are assembled round the altar, they can be in our midst, and thereby strengthen our relationship to the spiritual world. The new altars are surrounded with the same play of archetypal pictures as was once the grave in the precincts of the garden on Mount Zion. The gulf is closed between this world and the other. The Easter garden begins to bloom in which our soul, like Mary Magdalene, can behold the Risen One as the Gardener of a New World. The darkness of Saturn is lit up from within by the Sun of Easter.»

Easter Joy

Matthew 28: 1-15, Mark 16: 1-14, Luke 24: 1-12, John 20: 1-10

“The Easter message is the heart and fountainhead of the Christian faith. The saying of Paul: ‘If Christ did not rise again, then...the power of our faith in your hearts is an illusion’ (1 Cor. 15:14) justifies a description of Christianity simply as the religion of the Risen Christ. Christian devotion has ultimately no other purpose than this: to cherish community with the Risen Christ. Christ is not to be sought either in the past or in the future, but in the immediate present. His sphere is not ‘beyond;’ he is near to us in this world in which we live.

Where is the sphere into which we must enter in order to feel and experience the nearness of the Risen Christ? Every year, during the Easter season, the hymn-like texts spoken at the altars of the Christian Community point to this sphere, and suggest at once its tremendous magnitude. A jubilant breath pervades the prayers of Easter, expressing itself twice, as with inward necessity, in the word ‘rejoice’. Who rejoices? Who is made to rejoice by the Easter mysteries? In the 1st place the text says, ‘the airy regions of the earth rejoice exceedingly,’ and soon after, ‘Christ has invaded man’s rejoicing pulse of life.’ 1st, the breathing soul-sphere of the whole planet rejoices, that renewed cosmic sphere of the sunlit clouds, air and wind into which the earth grows in spring; then, the inward life of man, touched by the Risen Christ, rejoices too. We recognize the wide span of the soul at Easter; it comprises the outward and the inward world, macrocosm and microcosm.

The Four-Fold Easter Gospel

The artistic fourfoldness of the gospels meets us nowhere so vividly as in the Easter stories; here, the gospels are more differentiated in their special quality and coloring than anywhere else. They become four separate books, each with its individual character; and the synoptic harmony of the four, with all their differences and apparent contradictions, makes the universal totality of 'the gospel in the four gospels' appear with greatest clarity.

The composition of the Easter story in the Gospel of Matthew has a special grandeur. The 1st gospel completely surpasses the others in poetic design. A double drama, full of tension, frames the Easter scenes themselves. The cosmic drama of the earthquake prepares and attunes our soul from the beginning for the power and magnitude of the event. Only Matthew's Gospel mentions the shocks of the earthquake which beginning with the afternoon of Good Friday, tore open the ground of the earth, and continued reverberating until the morning of Easter Sunday. The cosmic drama at the beginning is followed by a human drama at the end, the deception of the priests at the sepulcher of Joseph of Arimathea. The high priests have posted watchers because they are afraid of fraud; but now they themselves attempt a fraud, by inducing the watchers through bribes to make false statements. Then the story proceeds in terse and dramatic stages. The Easter scenes themselves begin at the tomb. This forms a prelude, which is also contained in the other 3 gospels. Afterwards, we are taken at once to the summit of a high mountain. The angel at the tomb has asked the women to tell the disciples that the Risen Christ will go before them into Galilee; and now we also are immediately in Galilee. Together with the disciples we are transported to a height from which the world can be surveyed as if we were on the summit of that marvelous mountain where once the 3 most intimate disciples

saw the Christ in his transfigured glory: on the summit of Tabor, the mountain of mountains, which rises in the sunny landscape of Galilee. Here, the Risen One speaks to his disciples: 'Now all creative power in heaven and on the earth has been given me,' and he sends his disciples as apostles into all the kingdoms of the world.

In Mark, the framework of the external dramatic events is missing; an inward dramatic quality takes its place. After the meeting with the angel at the tomb, we see the women return to the room where the disciples are united. It is the Cenacle, the room of the washing of the feet and the last supper, the sacred, time-honored place on Mount Zion; the center of the spiritual history of humanity from the times immemorial. In this room the events of Easter continue. Here the Risen One enters the circle of the disciples and, speaking to them, conquers their hardened hearts. Having been at 1st without understanding for the Easter message, and even for the words of the Risen Christ, they can now become bearers of the cosmic impulse which has come into the world through the Resurrection. And now they experience how the Christ is raised before their eyes into heavenly heights. Although they remain in the house; a 1st glimpse of the Ascension moves them within the 4 walls of the room.

Now we begin to see the deeper symbolism in the Easter stories, which belong together: Matthew leads to the top of the mountain, Mark leads into the house. In contrast to the dramatic study of Matthew, a great and wonderful inwardness lives in the Gospel of Luke. The transition from outside to inside which takes place in passing from the 1st to the 2nd gospel is further deepened. This transition dominates the story of the 2 disciples who walk to Emmaus, which follows the

scene at the tomb. For these disciples, too, the real meeting with the Risen One, by which they recognize him, occurs only at the moment when they have entered the house at the end of the way and have sat down at the tables at twilight, in the stillness of the house. The theme of the transition from outside to inside is continued here; at a quick pace we return with the 2 disciples on the same evening to Jerusalem, and enter with them into the Cenacle, where the other disciples are assembled; and we are made witness of the Risen One appearing suddenly in the midst of the disciples and taking food and drink before their eyes, in order to unite himself with them in the sacred meal. In Like, as in Mark, the interior of the house is the scene of the real Easter meeting, following the prelude at the tomb; but the scenes of the inward drama in Luke have more soul & are more richly differentiated.

John presents us with every great wealth of Easter scenes. Even the prelude at the tomb develops into a whole drama. Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb; no angel is there to mitigate the shock which she feels at the sight of the empty tomb. She walks back all the way to find the disciples. Two of the disciples, seized with great anxiety, run through the whole city until they come to the tomb, but they also find it empty; no spiritual figure appears to them; they have to leave, taking with them an apparently insoluble riddle; in silence they return to the Cenacle. Mary Magdalene is left alone at the tomb. Only now, when she stands at the tomb for the 2nd time, her soul is opened up for the presence of spiritual beings who are there; and the 1st meeting with the angels grows into the 1st meeting with the Risen One himself who appears to her as the gardener and once more, but now changed with increasing content, the transition from outside to inside takes place. We find ourselves again within the room of the Last Supper,

and share in the experience of how the Risen One manifests himself to the disciples. The following scenes develop with such rich detail that we begin to recognize how the Easter fellowship of the disciples with the Risen One extends beyond Easter Sunday, and fills the whole season. One week after, Thomas, the doubter, is permitted to convince himself through physical touch of the fact of the bodily resurrection. But the sequence in John is not yet at an end; the steps which have led us from outside to inside are reversed. The gospel leads us again outward. The interior scenes are followed by a series of scenes which take place under the open sky of galilee. All of a sudden, the disciples are transported to the Sea of Galilee. During the night, they draw in the miraculous draught of fishes; and in the cool of the morning, on the shores of the blue lake; the radiant figure of the Risen One appears to them. A holy meal unites them with him. Then he addresses three times his earnest question to Peter; eventually he gives to the disciples their apostolic charge, pointing into the far distant future with mysterious words.

We can now discern an important aspect in the wonderful composition of the gospels as a whole. In the scenes which follow the prelude at the tomb, we are led, in the sequence of Matthew to John, through three archetypal settings: on the mountain, in the house, and on the sea. Apparently physical landscape is described, but in fact we are shown regions of the soul which we have to traverse in order to meet the Risen One. The Gospel, taken in its entirety in the 4 gospels, has given the 1st pictorial hint of his sphere.

The angels at the tomb

Most Bible readers take it that the Easter stories in all 4 gospels agree in describing 1st the meeting with the angels at the tomb. But this is not so.

The Gospel of Matthew says that the women come to the grave & in the early light of dawn receive a severe shock, for the earthquake, which seemed to have subsided for a whole day, breaks out afresh. They have to make their way among trembling rocks. Then a flash of lightning tears away the curtain, as it were, from the world of the senses. When they reach the grave, a spirit-form shines before them in overwhelming brilliance. 'When the Sabbath was over, in the early morning light of the 1st day of the week, Mary of Magdala & the other Mary came to see the tomb. And see, there was a great earthquake, the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, came & rolled the stone away & sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning, & his garment was shining white like snow.' (Matt. 28:1). When the lightning has struck the watchers to the ground, the angel speaks to the women. The 1st premonition of Easter is given them, & they receive a message enjoining the disciples to go to Galilee.

In the light of the supersensory conception of the world which is the basis of the gospels, the earthquake is described, not as a natural process, but as the activity of supersensory powers & beings. Through the souls of the women we, too, see a powerful being from the angelic hierarchies taking part. An angel who resembles the powers of lightning & of snow descends from heaven to roll away the stone. It is important to note that the women perceive the angel while they are still outside the tomb. The vision that overtakes them is mingled with the physical

perception that the entry to the tomb is exposed by the rolling away of the stone which has covered it. The supersensory experiences which the gospels recount are never arbitrary, but have a firm psychological basis. Even in the gospels people do not have supersensory experiences without some cause. In every case a specific emotion is active in the soul which releases the vision. According to the description in the Gospel of Matthew an overwhelming shock brought it about that suddenly, as the rock split, not only the outer event but also the supersensory being, the angel of the earthquake, was perceived.

In the Gospel of Mark the account of the meeting of the women with the angel is different, both in its inner aspect, & in the circumstances of its place & time. on their way to the tomb the women are full of anxiety as to how they will be able to get into the closed sepulcher. But as they reach the end of their journey they are greatly supposed to find that the stone has been rolled away, & that the entrance to the tomb is open. The problem that has worried them has been solved, but such a solution must prepare them for still further & perhaps greater surprises. Mark's comment, 'for the stone was very large', makes us share in the women's breathless astonishment. They go inside the tomb, & there a bright light streams towards them out of the darkness. On their right they see an angelic form in a long white garment. The angel, who is described as a young man, speaks to them of the Resurrection, & gives them the message for the disciples about Galilee.

This experience of the angel does not occur as in the Gospel of Matthew, before they enter the tomb, but inside it, & happens also at a somewhat later point of time. While Matthew describes the angelic being as 'the angel of the Lord' which in Hebrew world read 'the angel of Yahweh', Mark speaks of a 'young man' who

sits to the right of the tomb. This is an entirely different situation & it is also a different condition which releases the vision. This time it is not fear but astonishment. Here is the 1st apparent contradiction between the 3 gospels.

In the Gospel of Luke things progress still further before the experience occurs that leads out of the sphere of the sense-perception into the supersensory. The description of the external situation is carried to the point to which it had been taken by St. Mark. The women come to the grave; they find the stone rolled away from the entrance & go inside. They search for the dead body of Jesus. And the longer they search, the more anxious & disturbed they become because they cannot find him. Only when their anxiety has reached its climax are their eyes opened to the spiritual beings who are there. 'And while they stood there, completely at a loss, suddenly 2 men were standing before them in raiment which shone like continuous lightning. They were overcome by terror & they bowed their faces to the ground' (Luke 24:4)

In this case the women have penetrated many paces deeper into the tomb than in the account given by Mark, & have already been there for some time. now it is not fear of the earthquake, nor astonishment over the open tomb, but their anxiety over the empty grave which releases the vision. The feeling which goes beyond sense-perception is quite different & belongs to a more advanced consciousness. This time, surprisingly, it is 2 angel beings who reveal themselves to the women, & instead of being called 'angel of the Lord' or 'young man' they are now called '2 men in white raiment'.

By this time it is obvious that there is nothing haphazard in these discrepancies between the several gospels, but that the advance from 1 gospel to the next follows a specific law. The meetings with the angels undergo such an orderly transformation, a metamorphosis so significant, that the differences in the gospels, taken as a whole, draw attention to a special secret.

This becomes specially clear when we come to the Gospel of John. Here, Mary Magdalene comes alone to the tomb. She enters & finds it empty. Thus the eternal course of events is once more taken up at the point reached in the preceding gospel. The feelings that had been stirred in the soul of Mary Magdalene by the earthquake, the open tomb & the empty grave are not described. The 4th Gospel is concerned with experiences which take place later. Mary Magdalene leaves the tomb without having met with an angel. She goes all the way back through the city to the disciples. Now Peter & John run to the tomb, & with her they peer into the empty grave. Although there is no direct mention of this in the gospel, it is in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel of John to suppose that the disciples saw something of the cosmic aspect of the empty grave. On the site of the tomb the earthquake had reopened a deep cleft which formed part of the ancient chasm in the ground of Jerusalem which had been leveled by Solomon. Thus the disciples not only look into the empty grave, they look into a gloomy chasm. They have a unique experience of the mystical stage called 'standing before the abyss.' Bewildered, they go away again, & Mary Magdalene remains there alone. Some time elapses. Then Mary Magdalene weeps. The tears that she now sheds are due neither to fright, nor to astonishment or anxiety. She weeps because she is wholly absorbed in love for him who has been torn away from her. Much more has happened than that Jesus

has died. All the miraculous & inexplicable events since midday on Good Friday awaken dreamlike perceptions, whereby the greatness of him who has passed through death stands before the soul of Mary Magdalene as never before. The more she feels his greatness, the greater is her love. This love opens the eyes of her soul. While her physical sight is blinded by tears, her weeping awakens spiritual sight, & she perceives 2 figures. But these are not the same as those described by Luke. She sees 2 angels in white garments, 1 at the head & 1 at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been laid. Although there is still no trace of the beloved body, yet now, through her spiritual experience, she is conscious of the exact spot where he had lain. The 2 angels say to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' in that moment, as she collects herself to answer them, the experience moves forward to a new stage. She turns round, & there, in Joseph of Arimathea's garden, she sees a figure facing the tomb. She does not recognize him as Jesus. He who stands outside appears to her in the form of a gardener. And her 1st impulse is to ask him if he can tell her whither the body of Jesus has vanished. Then Jesus speaks to her in the very same words which earlier the angels had used, 'Woman, why are you weeping?'

We should not think that either the angel or the Risen One speaks in human language. What is heard inwardly by the soul is reproduced by the gospel in human words. It is only by silencing the human words that we can hope to enter into the inner hearing from which they come. In the Gospel of John it is out of the inner hearing of the question put by the angels that the new spiritual meeting arises whereby Mary Magdalene becomes the 1st bearer of the real Easter perception. The figure out there facing the tomb takes, as it were, the words from the angels' mouths.

Again, the figure that Mary Magdalene sees as a continuation of her perception of the angels is clearly that of a man. When the gospel says that she thought it was the gardener, this does not mean that she was deceived. Jesus does not appear to her as a gardener. The medieval painters, by representing the Risen Christ as a gardener, have adequately reproduced the imagination which passed before Mary Magdalene's soul. The Risen One is really the gardener of a new garden, the planter & cultivator of a new life on earth.

The sight of the gardener brings new hope to her loving soul. Perhaps he who appears before her can restore to her the lost one. Only a few moments ago, love of Christ had caused her tears to flow. Now that same love lights up her soul. At that moment she feels herself called by name, & at last understands that it is the Christ who stands before her in the Easter garden. She has really found again him who had been wrested from her. She puts out her hands to embrace him. But the stern warning meets her 'Do not touch me!' the Easter mystery is not yet consummated. What happens at the tomb takes place only in the forcourt. The complete manifestation of the Risen One in his spirit-body is 1st experienced only when the outdoor scenes have come to an end, & the indoor scenes within the circle of the disciples have begun.

The Gospel of John carries further the metamorphosis of the Easter prelude at the tomb. The significant transformations & the amplifications in the meeting with the angels of the 1st 3 gospels here reach their climax. After the terror of the earthquake, the amazement at the open tomb, the anxiety over the empty grave, it is now tears of love which open the eyes of Mary Magdalene's soul for the

angels. Then the meeting with the gardener forms the transition from the angelic forecourt to the actual temple of Easter.