



PENTECOST

This is a transcript of a talk which can be heard via audio at
<http://anthroposophynyc.org/asnyc-blogs/meeting-our-times/>

Today is Pentecost or Whitsun. The festival of the Word, of speech. It is a festival of a new language. So, instead of a written article I want to share some Pentecost thoughts through speaking.

In the heavens, we witness this relationship of Pentecost to the Word through the fact that the Sun stands in the stars of Taurus, the Bull, almost always at the time of the Pentecost festival. I say almost always because Pentecost is a moving festival, coming 50 days after Easter, as is Ascension which comes 40 days after Easter. They are determined by Easter. And Easter is the one Festival not fixed during the calendar year but based on cosmological timing. It remains connected to the greater rhythms of the cosmic planetary world. Easter occurs on the first Sunday, after the first full moon after spring equinox. Thus it varies from year to year, based on these relationships. So that means, except for a couple of possible dates, when the full moon and the following Sunday are within a couple of days of the spring equinox, that the Sun will be in the stars of the Bull by Pentecost. The Bull is that zodiacal region connected to larynx in the human organism, thus it is connected on a cosmic level to the Word, which manifests in our organism as the capacity for self expression through speech, the human bodily

manifestation of the Word. Looking out to the heavens from Earth as center, we follow the path of the Sun as a kind of planetary image of the “I AM” in the heavens in the stars of the Bull at Pentecost. But if we were to imagine ourselves on the Sun, we would look out to the Earth moving in the heavens and standing in the stars of the Scorpion at Pentecost. So we must also consider the opposite stars, the Scorpion, as the Sun and Earth move together through the stars in a deeply meaningful relationship to each other. And here we come also to a relationship to the Word, to speech, in that the Scorpion is connected to the organs of reproduction, through which human beings “create being”. One can notice the relationship of Scorpion to the larynx, the Word, in that it is at adolescence, when the astral body of the developing child unfolds, resulting in the change of voice in boys. So we have this archetypal relationship of Scorpio and Taurus to the Word, to self-expression through creation, and also to the astral body. We can also then go a bit deeper into this relationship. Scorpio is one of the constellations which are part of the five constellations of the so called “dark zodiac” stretching from Scorpion through Pisces.

Rudolf Steiner speaks of this distinction between the dark and light zodiacs in his lecture on the Mystic Lamb as those zodiacal regions that form the “ascending” and the “descending” zodiac. He writes: *We think of the forces which are now involved in the ascending line of evolution, collectively, as Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra — because they actually belong to these constellations. These seven constellations comprise the ascending forces. The descending forces are comprised, approximately speaking, in the five constellations of Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces. Thus forces rain down from the Zodiac and ascend again: seven constellations of ascending, five of descending forces. The ascending forces also correspond, in the human being, to the higher members of his being, to his higher, nobler attributes. The forces which are in the descending phase of evolution have first to pass through the human being and within him to attain to the stage at which they too can become ascending forces....For all and each of these forces there comes, at some point, the moment when from being descending forces they are transformed into ascending forces. All forces which eventually become ascending forces are at first descending forces. They descend, so to say, as far as the human being. In the human being they acquire the power to ascend.* (Influence of Spiritual Beings Upon Man: Lecture 2)

This Mystic Lamb lecture, which I highly recommend for a truly cosmic picture of the Christ, could be studied in depth as he goes on to speak about how it is out of the human ego that the remaining “dark zodiac” is to transform from descending to ascending forces. But for today, it is relevant to point out how he connects there the stars of Scorpion with the Spirit Self, which is born out of the transformed astral body, and this brings us to the Pentecost event. For here we have the great human struggle which Scorpion represents. It is a picture of the fallen nature of the human being, our astral nature, which must be transformed to achieve the development of the higher aspect of our spiritual development, the Spirit Self, or Manas, through the work of our “I”. You may know that the stars of Scorpion were once depicted as the Eagle, that great bird that soars above the Earth, able to see all from above. This is an image of the ancient human being who lived in the heights with a natural clairvoyance before losing it upon the enmeshment in earthly existence. Then the Eagle fell to the Scorpion, with its sting of Death. Death became a reality for humanity, an experience of separation, even banishment from the divine spiritual. The Scorpion is also often associated with the dragon which was flung down to the Earth and into human beings in the great war in heaven. In his work, Willi Sucher, presents a new imagination of the transformed Scorpion. It is not a return to the Eagle, but rather a different bird, the Dove, that image of the Holy Spirit, which appears at the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, when it is said

“the Spirit descended upon him like a dove and abode upon Him”. At Pentecost, the flames descended from above upon the disciples and abode upon them.

So here in this cosmological picture we see Taurus, in the ascending or light zodiac from which humanity “receives” from the cosmos, standing opposite (as the Sun sees the Earth) the Scorpion, in the descending or dark zodiac, which the human being out of the forces of the self, must work to transform into the Spirit Self, and to transform then even this constellation into the imagination of the Dove.

In this sense can Pentecost be the most challenging of festival events in that it is the festival of NOW, of our present challenges as human beings. It brings us to that greatest of current challenges which can be seen in our times, the relation of self and community. Which is then that challenge of transforming the lower self to come to a new experience of the true Self. This then leads to that process of HOW we accomplish this. And that is the challenge of the transformation of our astral or one could say, consciousness nature in order to make it into a vessel worthy and able to receive the Holy Spirit and manifest the Spirit Self, the true Self which will lead us into the future and into the capacity to truly create human community, new social forms. We are in the thick of this challenge in our world today but we also have the tools with which to achieve this, if we freely choose to use them.

Easter and Ascension leading up to Pentecost are of course also festivals of transformation by the Christ: Easter of the physical body and Ascension of the etheric body which point to future stages of our human becoming. It is interesting to notice that in historical time and in the cycle of the year, in the outer world, these events proceed starting from Easter on to Ascension to Whitsun, but as an inner path, for our own inner transformative work, they are the reverse. We progress inwardly from Whitsun in its relation to Spirit Self, to Ascension in relation to Life Spirit and ultimately to Easter in relation to Spirit Man, our highest stage.

Now if we look at the Pentecost event itself, it is described in the Book of Acts, written by Paul, the one who had the experience of the etheric Christ at Damascus. It is not written about in the Gospels, though its coming is promised there. In the Pentecost story we have various references to numbers. If we accept the bible as initiation language, encompassing not only historical events, but presenting them in initiation/imaginative language which speaks on a higher level, then it is important to always notice the use of numbers, as numbers in their qualitative reality point to higher truths. This can perhaps lead us to a deeper understanding of this event as a higher initiatory event on a spiritual level in relation to the Spirit Self and the descent of the Holy Spirit as flames of fire separating and coming to rest over the heads of the apostles. So we have the number 4 but taken to the tenth power in the 40 days from Easter to Ascension. And we have the number 5 taken to the tenth power in the 50 days from Easter to Pentecost. That extra zero represents not only quantity but a qualitative move upward into a higher level of meaning.

In the number 4 we have the number for the earthly human, living in the four qualities of space, as expressed in the 4 elements, and the 4 compass directions. Also in the fourfold human being: physical body, etheric body, astral body, ego, meaning that ego developed out of earthly existence. That ego could be described as the “mars” ego formed out of the first half of Earth evolution, the one which defines itself by what it is not, the one which allows us to separate as individuals and find freedom. In

the number 5, we have represented the new spiritual human being, the Son of Man, who has added the spirit self, the Higher Ego. The number 5 is the number of the human being as the Son of Man. The pentagram is the symbol of this human being, (the inverted pentagram is a symbol of black magic and that which seeks to destroy this higher human being). The numbers 4 and 5 raised to the 10th power, indicate a process taking place at a higher spiritual level, which is how the events described in 40 and 50 days respectively are meant to be understood, both as historical events of Christ's union with the earth, but also as initiatory events taking place on a higher plane.

If we look at the timing between these initiatory events by the Christ with the apostles, we have 40 days between Easter and Ascension during which the apostles were in the presence of the Risen One receiving into themselves what was given by Him. One must wonder what this experience must have been that it would so prepare the souls, the astral bodies, of the apostles for the power of the Holy Spirit to descend into them as a force at Pentecost. Was it a time of blissful teaching by the Risen One, or was it perhaps, like all initiatory paths, a time of catharsis (Grk: katharsis), of painful purification, of the dying of the old lesser ego, of the transformation of their astral bodies that they might be the pure vessel capable of the Pentecost event, the union of the Higher Self from which comes a new way of being in the world. During the 40 days was the Resurrected One, the cosmic Spirit Man, fashioning the vessel in the apostles to receive the Higher Self, to become the Son of Man?

Then we have the added 10 days between Ascension when the Christ left them and vanished from their sight, to the event of Pentecost (50 days), when they had remained together, as he asked of them, in silent waiting and prayer. Rudolf Steiner describes these 10 days as a time of deep sadness, grief and loss for the apostles. He describes it as *a sorrow such as cannot be compared with any other sorrow on earth*. It is, one could say, a kind of death experience for the apostles on a spiritual level of loss. And just as in the old initiations, after the time of katharsis and preparation, there is a mystical death, so now there is a kind of loss and experience of death for the apostles for 10 days. Just as for 3 days, a different level of initiatory time, they experienced the loss of Jesus after his crucifixion until the appearance to them after the Resurrection. It is interesting to think, as another question, how when the Risen One appears to them in the room after the Resurrection, that the John Gospel states "he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'". How might this be different than the Pentecost event? What is the difference between this receiving of the Holy Spirit from the Resurrected One and the indwelling of the power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost?

Yet Steiner goes on to point out about the nature of this experience of loss:

All real knowledge, all knowledge that can truly be called great is born from pain, from inner travail...And out of this pain, out of this infinite sorrow, there sprang what we call the Mystery of Pentecost...Having lost sight of the Christ in external clairvoyant vision [the 40 days with the Resurrected Christ], the disciples found it again in their inmost being...found it through sorrow, through pain. (May 17, 1923, Christiana)

Here we have the great inversion! In all ancient times the human being experienced the true Self, the Higher I AM, in the cosmos from without in the Sun sphere, through initiation by leaving the body. Even in the initiation of Lazarus, the first performed on Earth, in public, by the Christ, Lazarus was "called forth" by Christ as the hierophant from without. Pentecost inaugurates the new age, when human

beings through a personal path of self-guided catharsis come to an awakening of the Higher I AM in “their inmost being” as a force of transformative power, which is the force of love.

We can also view the 50 days and Pentecost from another perspective. The event of Pentecost coincided with the Hebrew Pentecost, called the Festival of Weeks, which was on the first day after seven full weeks (50 days) from the second day of Passover. It was the Festival of First Fruits (Shavouth) as well as the festival that marked the day that Jehovah gave the “law” to Moses on Mt Sinai. In the Christic Pentecost, we can see a fulfillment or even an evolutionary metamorphosis in the spiritual development of humanity. As the last or fulfillment verse of the Prologue to John’s Gospel states: *For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth through Jesus Christ.*” From the external law given on Mt Sinai we move to truth, which one finds out of one’s inner being through grace (Grk: charis), the grace of Christ, the true I AM. What is grace? Of course it is a word of profound depth, but one way to understand it is that the Greek word for grace is, “charis”, which means the free love from God. In ancient Greek, unlike in English, there were several words for love: eros - romantic love; philia – brotherly/family love; agape – divine love, or one could say love of the human for the divine. One other word for love is charis. Charis is higher than agape. In agape you have more the love of the human being for the divine or a spiritual love for another human. Charis is that love of the divine for the human being. This is the highest form of love. This is the love (or grace) and truth which conclude the prologue in John.

If we continue with numbers to raise our consciousness to an understanding of Pentecost, we can also now look at the number 12. In the verses preceding the Pentecost event, we again have the earthly historical event but raised to a higher level. It is written that there were gathered 120 disciples, 12 raised to the 10th power, meaning elevated in initiation language. And it says that “Mary, the mother of Jesus, was in their midst”, in the middle. So we have this picture of 12 to the 10th power, with the Mother of Jesus in the middle. In lecture 12 of his lectures on the Gospel of John, which Rudolf Steiner describes as the most spiritual of perspectives given by the writers of the gospels, he speaks of how John never uses the name Mary, but only “the mother of Jesus”. He goes into this use of the mother of Jesus and its meaning, and equates the Mother of Jesus, not Mary the physical mother, with the Virgin Sophia, which is the same as the purified astral body. It is this Virgin Sophia, the Mother of Jesus, who is “in their midst” at Pentecost. The story goes on to say that they were all together in one place, using the word which is translated as house, but in Greek has the more fluid meaning of “a shared, common place”, a community place. Into this community place, with the Virgin Sophia in their midst, came the Holy Spirit, the Universal Ego, the true I AM, which can then speak out of this purified astral body. This Holy Spirit came with a rushing of wind and flames that individualized (and individualized is a key word here) onto each of the disciples and “stayed upon each of them”. They then began to speak a new language “as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance.” This was a speaking, a language, which transcended earthly languages, for it goes on to describe how all who heard them had come from different cultures and languages, even naming the regions from which they came. Yet they all understood the apostles and were amazed.

This brings us back to the great challenge of Pentecost today, which is the great social question of our time: the individual in relation to the whole, the community. In this same lecture from the Gospel of John cycle, Steiner addresses this question: *a person thus illuminated, who has received the Holy Spirit*

into himself, speaks in a different manner. How does he speak? ...he is not expressing 'his' own opinion. His views do not come into consideration. His personal (earthly) ego has been eclipsed which means that...it has become impersonal and it is the Cosmic Universal Ego.

He continues this Pentecostal theme in a lecture on Whitsunday, 1910: *This Holy Spirit enables us to become free human souls. As the Spirit of Freedom, it streamed out through the first disciples...in the first Pentecostal festival....We can become free only when we find ourselves again in spirit and out of the spirit become master over the spirit within ourselves. Our true spirit is the universal human spirit, which we recognize as the Pentecostal power of the Holy Spirit..which we must bring to birth in ourselves and allow to become manifest....This will bring to life in our souls something which overleaps all boundaries separating the different parts of humanity.*

Today we face immense questions about the future of humanity, with division, polarization, failed understanding and communication creating the social problems of our time. Only by a social and personal catharsis which can allow for the true spirit of freedom, the true I AM, to eclipse our small personal egotism and the lower impulses of our nature, can a new community and new language of universal brotherhood be created. Only out of the spiritual recognition of the universal Human Being will the ideas and applications of a new approach to brotherhood in economics, to equality of human rights and to freedom in the cultural/spiritual life be accomplished. May we ever strive to serve this goal out of the Pentecostal spirit.

Jonathan Hilton
May 31st, 2020
astrosophy.com