

Spiritual Background to Organisational Life

Version 4. Tom Ravetz, August, 2015

Like his relationship to his work partner, man's relationship to God derives from the work they do together. Rather than shutting out the world to delve into each other's depths the way adolescent lovers do, God and men find joy together in doing a common task.

Harvey Cox, *The Secular City*, quoted in *The Go-Between God*, p. 37

Introduction

Christ, who says of himself: "I am the Alpha and the Omega" — World-origin and World-purpose — says that those who love him will keep his commands (John 14). Rudolf Steiner translated this as 'bear my purposes in himself'. To love Christ doesn't mean to follow the letter of an outer law, but to identify with his purpose, which is the purpose of the whole of creation. Then we may do 'greater things' than he did in his earthly life (John 14:12). We advance from being receivers of the blessing of creation bestowed on us, to being co-creators. This happens not through command or necessity, but through love.

Love is the foundation of the world. It overflows out of the fullness of God in creation and cascades down through all the ranks of heavenly beings to find its fulfilment in us. (John 1, Colossians 1)

There is a growing awareness in many fields that everything is connected. Traditionally a tension has been seen between two ways of thinking about causality: either there is just the blind working of chance and natural law, or else everything is 'planned' by God in a great cosmic blueprint. The assault on the old idea of providence is irresistible in the face of radical evil, the wastefulness of natural processes, and innocent suffering (see *Free from Dogma*, Chapters 1 & 6). There is an alternative view of providence — what we could call future providence. Here, the Holy Spirit works to integrate everything into the 'plan' which is constantly reforming in line with what *is*, and with the purposes of creation. This idea has the power to transform our lives: if we interpret our experience in this way, we realise that everything that happens to us can become part of the 'plan' through our choices. 'All things work together for the good for those that love God.' [Romans 8:28] The film *The Adjustment Bureau*, whilst set in the Hollywood idiom of romantic love as the fulfilment of every drama, shows in a lively, dramatic way, how the 'plan' is rewritten anew when human beings exercise their choice to love in freedom with sufficient conviction.

In this picture of the world, the adversary powers serve the world-purpose; without them, the world in which we live, with its fine balance of creative and destructive potential would not be possible. This would mean that our experience of wrestling for the creative middle would not be possible. Only by wrestling in this way, finding freedom and losing it ever and again, can we advance to spiritual maturity.

This way of looking at the world chimes in with our concrete experience of our lives. However, the realisation of our freedom is so disturbing that we often choose to take refuge in abstractions rather be empowered by such thoughts. We are constantly tempted to attend not to our choices, but to those of others, noticing only how they put boundaries on our freedom, rather than noticing the endless possibilities that we have within those boundaries.

In whatever context we try to exercise our freedom to be creative, we have to recognise that we are involved in communities which exercise a massive constraint on our freedom whilst at the same time offering a multiplier of our possibilities.

How often do we find ourselves thinking: If only we could get on with the matter at hand, and not have to deal with all these weaknesses, ambitions, politics etc. If the whole world is a system with the potential for allowing human beings to develop towards the choice freely to become creative, then this must be true of every subsystem within that world. That means that it is never a mistake to be engaged in understanding what is going on around *how* we do something, even if it can seem to be a distraction from *what* we are doing. Goethe said: Das Was bedenke, mehr bedenke Wie – think *what* you do, but think more of *how*.

The Spirit of Enquiry

This liberating potential doesn't force itself on us. We have to develop a spirit of enquiry to understand the evidence that we confront in our experiences. If we choose not to do this, we will most likely feel ourselves to be victims of what happens to us, instead of co-creators of the reality that we are experiencing.

Noticing this is the starting point of enquiry. We have experiences and we notice a habit of interpreting them in a particular way. We can then look for alternative explanations. For purely conceptual work, we only need to investigate whether these make more sense of our experiences. When it is a question of interpreting our experiences in life, we will need to apply other criteria, for example whether they make us better able to work to our purpose, to make free and creative decisions, and to be loving to our fellow human beings.

The starting point for this paper will be a survey of Steiner's teaching on the heavenly hierarchies, the ranks of angelic beings. Steiner didn't intend his work in this area to make us other-worldly; it was to be intensely practical, in line with his statement: 'Matter is never without spirit. Spirit is never without matter'. Rudolf Steiner stated that Anthroposophy has the task of recovering the ancient understanding of the Hierarchies:

It is the task of modern Spiritual Science, or anthroposophy, to form once more the bond which must unite the physical to the spiritual, the bond between the earth and the spiritual Hierarchies.
[TSH, Lecture I]

However, this is not out of some antiquarian interest, but because this knowledge gives us concepts better to understand our experiences as well as showing us new ways in which we can become creative.

Rudolf Steiner added greatly to the traditional teaching about the Hierarchies in the images he gave of their role in Creation. In his vision, the totality of the Hierarchies makes up the Creative Word through whom the love of God overflows in creation. The many images he brings can serve to make our conception of creation more concrete. We may notice, even before we start to interpret external evidence, that the descriptions give rise to wonder in us. Socrates said, 'Wonder is the beginning of wisdom.'

Understanding these creator-spirits helps us to understand the world around us. Moreover, it unlocks the beings who are work through us in what we create. This is particularly relevant in organisational life. If we imagine that when we create institutions, we are not merely fulfilling technically correct norms, but channelling the work of creator-spirits who have accompanied us on our journey since the beginning of the world, we may find that we are more aligned with what we are creating. We will develop ways of looking that are more fitted to the reality we're dealing with.

The Hierarchies

There is a long tradition in Christianity and other religions of distinguishing between ranks of Angelic beings. In the writings grouped under the name of Dionysius the Areopogite, the various names and functions that are hinted at throughout the Bible are grouped together. It becomes clear that there is a system of

beings in three ranks of respectively three kinds of being. The first Hierarchy lives in the contemplation of the Trinity. The third Hierarchy is concerned with human beings and their destinies on the earth; the second Hierarchy has the function of a dynamic middle and mediator between the two. Living with these descriptions can lead us to see the limitation of the old image of the Hierarchies as a pyramid. Dante's idea of the 'heavenly rose', in which the layers of petals surround the Godhead in varying degrees of closeness can be a useful complement to the image of a ladder. Steiner describes how each rank of the Hierarchies opens itself for the purposes of those above or within it, and sends its purpose through those below or outside it. Each rank has a consciousness that can encompass a greater sphere of activity, for which it is accountable to the next rank. Each in its differentiated way channels the being of the Trinity into its area.

One of the key insights that we can gain from studying Rudolf Steiner's work is that the Hierarchies are themselves evolving. As a totality, they make up what Arius perceived as the Created Word – a being far greater than us, and yet of the same order of being, namely created.¹ Through lengthy epochs of time, they progress from one rank to the next. The adversary spirits are beings who have not progressed in the regular way. This helps us to realise that within the nine ranks there is a great differentiation; there are angels who have advanced almost to the rank of archangel, for example.

Each of the three ranks of the Hierarchies particularly reflects the working of one person of the Trinity. In Rudolf Steiner's description, the First Hierarchy bestows **being** from the realm of the Father; the Second engenders **life** from the realm of the Son; the Third reflects **light** from the realm of the Spirit.

There is an ancient legend of the Jews that the angelic beings came and worshipped Adam after he had been created. This reflects the fact that the human being has an immense importance in the work of creation. We could say that the world is a system that gives human beings the unique combination of freedom and potential through which they may choose to advance to the status of co-creators. This system embraces many cycles of time and the selfless work of the beings of the Hierarchies; it involves too what Rudolf Steiner sometimes refers to as the sacrifice of those beings who, as 'evil' beings, provide the resistance within which the dynamics of creative freedom can unfold.

In this paper I have used Adam Bittleston's book, *Our Spiritual Companions* [OSC] for brief descriptions of the working of the beings of the Hierarchies. Adam turns his gaze in three directions: the working of these beings in creation, both in the sense of the created world and in the act of creation; their work in the individual human being; and their work in human organisations, when he touches on with questions of leadership. I am particularly interested in using these descriptions as tools to enrich and deepen our understanding of organisational life. What becomes apparent is the principle of 'as in the large, so in the small'—the principle of microcosm and macrocosm.² It is fascinating to discover that Plato already found a threefold principle at work in social life, which he saw as evidence for the reality of threefold man.

¹ For more background to this, see *Free from Dogma*

² Microcosm and macrocosm are two aspects of a theory developed by ancient Greek philosophers to describe human beings and their place in the universe. These early thinkers viewed the individual human being as a little world (mikros kosmos) whose composition and structure correspond to that of the universe, or great world (makros kosmos, or megas kosmos). Kosmos at this time meant "order" in a general sense and implied a harmonious, and therefore beautiful, arrangement of parts in any organic system; hence it also referred to order in human societies, reflected in good govern-

In the Republic (Book 4), Plato united the microcosmic theme with the pre-Socratic tendency to view cosmology in political terms when he discussed his model of an ideal city-state in order to explore the nature of the human soul. The structure of each is tripartite and hierarchical. The class of philosopher-kings corresponds to reason (located in the head), the warrior class corresponds to irascibility (located in the breast), and the worker class corresponds to appetite (located in the belly). If the city or the soul is to function in harmony, the lower parts must obey the higher, and the higher must guide prudently. This organic notion of the body politic exerted an extraordinary appeal. St. Paul of Tarsus used it to describe the church as the mystical body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12, et al.)

See <http://science.jrank.org/pages/7865/Microcosm-Macrocosm.html>

This means that whatever is that when we create an organisation we are creating a world. All the beings of the Hierarchies will be at work, whether we choose to notice this or not. Being aware of their work means first that we can become better at describing what *is*. Second, it means that we can consciously access and channel their working in what we go on to create.

The Foundation Stone Meditation

For the foundation of the Anthroposophical Society in 1923, Rudolf Steiner gave a meditation, usually called the Foundation-Stone Meditation. This stood over against the physical foundation-stone that had been laid in the foundations of the First Goetheanum in 1913. The lectures that he held at the conference around the Foundation make it clear that this meditation is the foundation of a spiritual building that is to be created through the members of the Society. The first part of the meditation reveals the threefold nature of the human being as a creature of the divine hierarchies, who have created him to be free.

The meditation ends with the words:

That good may become
What we found from our hearts
And lead from our heads
With clear purpose.

The 'founding' expressed in the second line here need not only refer to the historic foundation of the Society in Dornach. It can also be understood relating to what we [will go on to] found, working out of what was inaugurated in 1923. Then, the time of the Foundation has the same quality as the 'turning point of time'

ment. Comparisons between society and the human being, as well as society and the universe, were varieties of microcosmic theory. These analogies enjoyed a long life, first in the Mediterranean region during antiquity and later throughout Europe during the Middle Ages. The ideas were commonplace during the Renaissance and early modern times but lost their plausibility when a mechanistic model of the universe became dominant in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Read more: Microcosm and Macrocosm - Origins, Plato, The Body Politic, Hellenism And Late Antiquity, Jewish And Muslim Theories In The Middle Ages <http://science.jrank.org/pages/7865/Microcosm-Macrocosm.html#ixzz1DfVBiop2>

that the verse refers to. It is not *chronos*-time, the time of minutes and hours; it is *kairos*-time, the time of the 'moment' that may last thousands of years.

In this sense, the Foundation Stone Meditation enables us to become conscious of the foundations of all that we create. It gives us the possibility of channelling the forces that are at work in us, so that they can become a gift for the world.

Jesus refers to his body as a temple. This has relevance today and always: everybody, every organisation that has a higher purpose than merely existing is a temple, a place where the creative, transforming love of God can manifest and transform the earthly world. The Foundation Stone Meditation takes us on a path to self-knowledge, which leads us to experience ourselves in a threefold way, through our thinking, feeling and willing. These dimensions of our being can become transparent for the working of the beings of the Hierarchies.

The Third Hierarchy – the Hierarchy of the Holy Spirit

For the cosmic thoughts of spirit,
light imploring, reign in cosmic being;
Archai, Archangeloi, Angeloi
Let from the depths demand
What will be heard in the heights...

Foundation Stone

The Creator Spirit works from the inside of the process not only by startling his creatures into awareness and recognition and luring them towards ever higher degrees of consciousness and personhood, but also by creating the necessity for choice in one situation after another. And that choice arises always from the contrast between the actual and the potential, between things as they are and things as they might be. It is as though his ceaselessly repeated word to every detail of his creation is: 'Choose! I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life. Stay as you are and drop out; change, however painfully, and move towards life.' ...

From within the depths of its being he urges every creature again and again to take one more step in the direction of higher consciousness and personhood; again and again he creates for every creature the occasion for spontaneity and the necessity for choice, and at every turn he uses self-interest with a contrary principle of sacrifice, of existence for the other.

The Go-between God, pp. 33-36

This Hierarchy has to do with human beings in their relationships to their true being, to other human beings, and to groups. Their realm is the realm of freedom and of choice. Rudolf Steiner tells us that the relationship with our Guardian Angel changes when we become fully adult; he will no longer obtrude on our consciousness without our consciously asking him – this is how seriously the spiritual world takes our freedom.

The Angels

The Angels are accountable for individuals.

Through a whole series of incarnations, they accept the task of watching over a particular soul. But their field of vision is not limited to the thoughts and feelings of this one soul ... they look on beings, and the relationship of beings. Into their own souls there sound and sing the voices of the higher Hierarchies,

giving them purposefulness and hope. Each night they encounter the soul of the one who is their special concern, and seek to remind him of his own deepest purposes. [OSC, 20]

The angels are at work in the individual choice to identify with his / her own purpose as the element of life that lifts him or her beyond the narrow horizon of daily life. Within an organisation, there is a continual negotiation between individual freedom and the direction individuals freely give themselves when they work to the purpose of the organisations. Group Relations gives us tools to observe the tendency of systems to bring together contrasting pairs – man / woman, black / white, colonial / colonised, young / old. In terms of the Hierarchies, the Angels bring us into connection with other groups (Archangelic realm), giving us to opportunities to understand the reality of humanity-embracing, unconditional love (realm of the Archai).

Rudolf Steiner's teaching on karma, which is intimately bound up with the working of the Hierarchies, makes it possible to form hypotheses about why a particular individual has the encounters that he or she has, which confront him with the particular choices he or she faces. For example, if a particular kind of thing happens to me over and over again, I can attain greater freedom if I see in its gesture not simply the mechanical outcome of my upbringing, but the result of a choice. Karma, as Rudolf Steiner describes it, tells me that even those aspects of reality that I am not co-creating in the here and now are in fact the result of my choices.

The Archangels

The Archangels are responsible for groupings of human beings, including nations and peoples. We can imagine that as soon as a group of people starts to work towards a purpose, an Archangelic being is attracted towards it (this may be an Angel who is advancing to the rank of an Archangel, or a full Archangel, depending on the size of the group and the quality of the purpose). This can be perceived in the moments of sensing when the conversation takes on a different quality of quietness, and we feel that we are overshadowed. Sometimes one can feel the rush of air from the Angel stretching his wings.

the Angels, through their great selflessness, are always bringing to humanity impulses from the realm of the Archangels and from still higher spirits. [OSC, 35]

We can be fairly sure that our Angels are always doing this, and doing it harmoniously, because there is no rivalry amongst the ranks of the Angels. If we experience such rivalry, we can pause to wonder whether the organisation and its angelic being is one that is truly serving yet higher ranks of beings, or whether it is turning away from the stream of onward-moving world evolution. We may of course discover that it is not our own true self, borne by our angel, but another part of our being that is rebelling against what it is framing as the constraints of organisational life.

This all shows that we are subject to a field of forces in which our freedom can unfold. The negotiation of freedom and directedness can go into two extremes:

- We choose to allow the organisation to crush our freedom. This is exemplified in this quotation from Ray Kroc, founder of MacDonaldis:

We have found out... that we cannot trust some people who are nonconformists... We will make conformists out of them... The organization cannot trust the individual; the individual must trust the organization.³

³ See http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Health/FoundingFathers_FFN.html

- We choose to live in the illusion that we are free and need not negotiate our relationship to the organisation's purpose

Awareness of the negotiation between our Angel and the Archangelic being of the organisation can help us to find the creative middle between these two tendencies.

How can a man bear authority within a community, and serve its true spirit, when he is a fallen being, not fully master of himself? ... what is a king, if the spirit of his country cannot speak through him? [OSC, 39]

Almost everyone belongs to a community or communities, for which they share responsibility. Every teacher, doctor or priest (to take a few examples) has a task which goes beyond his capacities; ... Inwardly we are to become kings, sources of real community; we cannot accomplish this by our own powers, but only by accepting something that is given to us from the spiritual world. [OSC, 41]

We experience the Archangels in any system in encounters across organizational, national and ethnic boundaries. There is a lot more to be said here about the tendency of every sub-group in any system to take on qualities of identity defined in opposition to other groups. This has to do with the phenomenon of retrograde Angels and Archangels.

The Archai – Spirits of Personality

The Archai are responsible for epochs; their accountability is planetary.

Just as there are spiritual beings, the Archangels, who are concerned with leading souls into the right national community for them, and with inspiring the history of that nation, so there are spiritual beings who lead human souls into successive civilisations, and who so shape those civilizations that they will provide the right experiences for those who incarnate in them. These spirits are called in Greek Archai, a word which can be rendered Princes or Principalities; the basic sense is that they are the first among many, bearers of the purposes that lived at the beginnings of things. Rudolf Steiner spoke of them as Spirits of Personality. They form successive civilizations in such a way that man develops towards personality on earth, feeling himself in ancient times only as part of a tribal community, passing through stages in which he has a status given to him from outside, towards the awakening of a freedom in which he chooses the purposes and tasks of his life for himself. [OSC, 53]

It was necessary that humanity should find itself within a world that seems empty of moral quality, regulated only by some mathematical principle, or perhaps only by chance. In this universe man has to seek in his own deepest being for a purpose for his existence. Through the presence of the small seed of love within him his perceptions and ideas begin to change. He meets once more living and perceptive spirits of kinds other than his own, who have also purposes; and his can grow into harmony with theirs. [OSC, 63]

When I work to realise my purpose in an organisation with whose purpose I can identify, my Angel has guided me to the relevant Archangel.

The Archai seek the eternal within the temporal. This is part of their great preparation for the task which lies before them when our present universe has passed away. They will then rise to the rank of world creators and bring forth from the invisible, in accord with the purposes of still greater powers, a new heaven and a new earth. [OSC, 63]

In the organisation, the Archangelic being unites the individuals' purposes mediated by the Angels and opens them for world purpose embodied by Archai.

We experience them in systems in the encounter between historical movements eg the colonial and colonised.

The Second Hierarchy: the Hierarchy of the Son

For the will of Christ reigns in the earthly sphere

Granting grace to souls in cosmic rhythms:

Kyriotetes, Dynamis, Exusiai

Let from the east inflame

What through the west takes form;

Foundation Stone

The Second Hierarchy forms the middle of the system of the Hierarchies, and it exercises mediating, middle functions. Looking from the human perspective 'upwards', it receives what human beings join in creating in their organisations in a particular epoch (Angels, Archangels, Archai), and brings it into relationship with the forces of Will, Truth and Love that cascade down from the First Hierarchy.

The Second Hierarchy has to do with what makes life possible – both individual life and organizational life. The pictures grow more complex, because it becomes clear that the individual decision to identify with the aim of the organisation, which we have located in the realm of the Angels, rests on their relationship with the higher Hierarchies, which bestow life (Second Hierarchy) and being (First Hierarchy) upon them.

In the individual, the second Hierarchy is responsible for inner form, movement and giving meaning to experience. All of this is the working of Christ bestowing blessing through the Second Hierarchy.

In the organisation, we create forms as a container for the life that human beings unfold (the working of third Hierarchy). The Spirits of Movement are the spirits behind the life that we create.

The Exousiai - the Spirits of Form

Rudolf Steiner identifies the Exousia with the Elohim, the creator-spirits of the Hebrew Bible. In creating, they set boundaries between heaven and earth, light and dark, earth and dry land. They create the earth as a container for all the life that will unfold, and the learning that will emerge.

The Six Days' design is, as it were, the great scene on which there can be many encounters, many ways of working together, many conflicts and tensions. [The Exousiai] lead from the primeval light, through the differentiation of waters and of the solid earth, through the unfolding of the heavens, to the forms of sea creatures and birds, and to those of animals and man. [OSC, 69]

In the system we are channelling the Exousiai when we create boundaries, deciding what is inside and outside the system. Experience in Group Relations shows that the stronger the boundaries, the more movement and learning can be contained (Spirits of Movement and Spirits of Wisdom)

At the beginning of Genesis we are being raised into the consciousness of Exousiai, the Spirits of Form. Their living, shining thoughts are bringing into being the forms which will in time come to be embodied, though imperfectly, in particular earthly things... The forms express the purposes of many beings higher than the Exousiai themselves, and will shelter [or be a container for - TR] the experience of many beings less than them. [OSC, 69]

The Exousiai create the earth as a container for human beings in communities to work to purposes that reflect the world purpose.

Joseph Beuys spoke about the problem of “senile forms”. All forms tend to become sclerotic. The Sixties represented a move in an oscillation that swings from the tendency to regulate every detail of life to the illusion of needing no forms at all.

Dynameis - the Spirits of Movement

The container created by the Spirits of Form is a vessel in which life can unfold. This life must stay in movement between the extremes of the various dynamics that exist in any system. These dynamics always move between the extremes represented by Lucifer and Ahriman – beings of the Hierarchies who have made a sacrifice in order to fulfil a role in the world system. What is ‘evil’ is what has fallen out of the movement and become frozen. The leader’s role is to see that every oscillation can stay in dynamic movement, within the container. Steiner said that the co-ordinator’s role in The Christian Community was to see: “that something happens.” – that is, that the movement always continues.

Just as I move between extremes in my soul, negotiating fear and courage, generosity and caution, for example, organisational life oscillates between extremes. In any group, there will be a spectrum of views that can be mapped along any continuum that one examines. Whilst every human being can move around his habitual position, these positions themselves represent a potential dynamic within the system. The task of the leader is to ensure that all the positions are in conversation. In this sense, unquestioning agreement is as bad a sign as complete breakdown in communication. We will not all convert each other to our own point of view, but in the tension of our difference, we can sense truths that no-one could have found individually. The only ‘sin’ of this kind of encounter is to deny that a conversation partner belongs in the group at all. This is a boundary transgression and offends the Spirits of Form, who have made the boundary.

The personal experience of the Spirits of Movement in organisational life comes when we take up our agency in accountability to the system’s purpose; we know too the opposite, when we freeze, trying to ‘do the right thing’ – ie clinging to the illusory security of making the Spirits of Form into god.

Adam Bittleston connects our experience in this realm with two qualities of soul:

Among the qualities in the soul which can become basic characteristics of the life-body there are two which have great significance in the encounter with pain and evil. They are courage and compassion; and for long ages Spirits of Movement have fostered them in man. It is not difficult to see how man is ennobled by these qualities; but it is not always understood that they could not arise in him, were pain not present in the world. We need courage to face pain, and compassion to share in the pain of others. And a still greater courage is wanted in order to meet the presence and activity of evil in the right way.

Courage and compassion both run counter to man’s natural and indeed necessary inclinations. We want to avoid pain; were this not so, pain would be ineffective as a warning about harm that threatens our bodies. But courage accepts the likelihood of pain, for the sake of a purpose that is to be achieved. And compassion impels us to share sufferings which it would be possible to avoid. It is natural too for man to wish for a world in which evil was not present. But his service of great purposes would have less meaning, if he did not have to meet enemies on the way. He need not hate these enemies; to them too compassion can extend, when we begin to recognize the origin of evil in suffering, and that to live in evil is a kind of suffering too. For evil is obsession, which means a state of siege. The soul may find, for instance, that impulses of jealousy assail it from every side,

and that it is unable to move on into any other mood. Hatred for another person can infect all our seeing, all our doing. It is easy to blame someone who is caught in such feelings. But it is much more useful to have compassion for him. [OSC 83]

Kyriotetes - the Spirits of Wisdom

In creation, the Spirits of Wisdom are at work in the seemingly endless wisdom present in the lawfulness of nature, what is rightly called 'intelligent design', even though the phrase is used in a context that has no understanding of the work of the Spirit from the future. This can be seen in the collar-bone, which has the maximum strength with the minimum of weight. We could say that the Kyriotetes wrote the DNA for the human being. This makes possible the intensely complex negotiations that go on between and within the organs of the body.

In organisations, we have to write the 'DNA' for negotiations between the organs of the organisation consciously, channelling the Spirits of Wisdom. They are present in the capacity of the system to sense its lawfulness. This means the wise disposition of resources; making good agreements and creating institutions that endure.

The Spirits of Wisdom inspire us in finding right forms and accumulating the know-how that gives the system direction. This know-how becomes the DNA for future decisions. This embodied wisdom is part of what human beings can offer 'back' to the spiritual hierarchies. Wisdom cascades from above, and it develops from below.

Adam Bittleston brings an aspect of the leader's task in relation to the Spirits of Wisdom:

Leaders in community, who carry out in some ways the functions of kings or priests, should help individual people with whom they are concerned to find their right places in the whole body; to be, as Paul describes, contented eyes, or hands, or feet. A really selfless wisdom is needed for this. No man should claim this as his own; it can only grow, as a grace bestowed on him. But there is a teaching to which he can turn, directed to those willing to seek this grace. It is the Sermon on the Mount, as we find it in Matthew's Gospel. [OSC, 95]¹

Many difficulties in understanding the Sermon on the Mount can be overcome, if it is remembered that it is spoken to those preparing themselves for such responsibilities, and not simply to Christians in general. Every word needs to be tested, both in its immediate context and the great context of human responsibility. How many readers of the Gospels in modern languages must have been discouraged by the words: 'You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect'. [6: 35] The Greek word rendered 'perfect' is *teleios* which has also the meanings 'complete' and 'fit for its purpose'; it is the quality a sacrificial animal must have, of being free from blemish. The context here shows that what is meant is not that the disciples should be free from blemish in the sense of having no faults—for they are to be taught very soon to acknowledge their faults, in the Lord's Prayer — but that the love and understanding they give to their congregations should not be partial, preferring one kind of people to other kinds but going out to all. This is a responsibility which belongs to the vocation they are accepting. One might almost call it a professional responsibility; just as we expect a doctor or a nurse to give equal care to a disagreeable patient or a judge not to favour his friends.

There is much else in the Sermon on the Mount that can be seen in this light. The Magi can rightly be called 'wise men'; but it cannot be said without reserve of the disciples that they are either wise or good. None the less the very first sentences of the Sermon on the Mount describe them and give Christ's blessing on them, as beggars for the spirit and people who hunger and thirst for justice. But they

are not to seek justice for themselves by retaliation, while they are guiding a community; as a teacher or a mental nurse, for example, may not simply permit himself to hit back at a child or a patient. He must think first of what is needed by the one who has injured him.

Wisdom teaches that everyone is to be included, that everyone has a necessary place in a community. It is very easy to see this in principle, very difficult to carry it out effectively in practice. We are caught up in countless likes and dislikes. But the task itself teaches us. [OSC 96]

Adam was not familiar with systems thinking. If he had been, I believe that he would have used it to describe how the Spirits of Wisdom work through conscious and unconscious motives, through 'mistakes' and 'coincidences' to arrange it that the right people and resources are available in just the right moment so that we can make the choices we need to make.

The First Hierarchy: the Hierarchy of the Father

For the Father Spirit of the heights reigns

Creating being in the cosmic depths:

Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones

Let resound from the heights

What in the depths its echo finds;

The Foundation Stone

Colet sums up the description of the First Hierarchy by Dionysius in the words: 'Power cleanses, clear truth makes serene, finished love makes perfect'. The power is that of the Thrones, the clear truth that of the Cherubim, the finished love that of the Seraphim. He does not mean that they have power, or truth, or love as their own separate possession; they share, more than any other beings, in the power and truth and love of God. [OSC 103]

Substance, truth and fire of love manifest the working of the Father, creating being through the first Hierarchy. This allows us to develop more detailed hypotheses about fundamental religious concepts. Many people today reject the idea of a Creator-God, in part at least because of the abstract language adopted by the Church since the Fourth Century, with the doctrine of Creation out of nothing. However, many modern people have an inkling of what Schleiermacher calls the 'feeling for the infinite', and even the 'feeling of absolute dependency'. When modern people say: I know there is something more, they are echoing the abstraction of Creation out of nothing. Interpreting the givenness of our being as the result of the sacrificial deeds of beings gives our spirituality more substance, and may inspire us to sacrificial love.

In the organisation, the work of the first Hierarchy manifests in the reality of its earthly substance and the very fact of being that gives everything its foundation. Truth is connected to alignment to the world's purpose. The fundamental building block of organisational life is human beings' capacity to love what they do.

The Thrones - Spirits of Will

The Thrones are the foundation of the embodied world. Their sacrifice of their substance, and holding themselves back from further intervention, give reality its 'being-ness'. 'Why is there something and not nothing?' – This question, which cannot be answered in abstract terms, finds an answer in the images of the sacrificial deeds that underlie creation itself. This unwavering reality of being is the foundation for our individual and organisational life. Seeing the substance of the world and being itself as gift can lead us to a new ethics based not on command but on reverence:

It is as if the material world put a great question to us: 'How will you use me?' If one believes that there is no questioner, one may become a destroyer. A great awe can grow up in anyone who believes that he is indeed being questioned by what seem to be the lifeless things in the world. He may come to say: mighty and noble are the spiritual beings who stand behind the animal and behind the growing plant—but I would have to seek even further, and feel an even deeper reverence, were I to seek the beings whose patience and sacrifice make possible the realm of lifeless things. [OSC 100]

The Cherubim - Spirits of Truth

Before the First Hierarchy, man has to face what the ultimate purification of his being means. He must face the complete rejection of every trace of untruthfulness. In the Garden of Eden, and again by the river in the New Jerusalem, the Tree of Life stands: but no-one may come to it who 'loves and practises falsehood.' In Genesis it is said 'At the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life'. We do not lie only by misrepresenting external facts, but because in our words the true essences of things are not brought to life. [OSC 103]

Individually this is connected to our personal accountability to our own purpose, and our honesty with ourselves about our motives. In organisational life the same qualities apply. Is there true transparency? Are the values in the mission statement really the values of the organisation? There is a motto: 'The purpose of a system is what it does'. This reflects that sad reality that stated aims are not always the true aims. Ultimately everything and everyone needs to be accountable.

Seraphim - Spirits of Love

Closest to the Trinity, they suffuse all the ranks of the Hierarchies with creative, self-bestowing love.

As individuals we experience this when we access our love as our deepest motivation. Successful organisations meet the yearning of human beings to work – which is to say, to give themselves in creative, self-bestowing love.

Summary

The highest is the most intimate thing of all: love. This love cascades down through all the Hierarchies until it becomes the reality of my love for my work, aligned with my purpose, in harmony with the work of others, in line with the spirit of the age. This love can only be effective within a context of never-ceasing movement within a safe container, developing continuously towards greater wisdom. Then it can create new being in line with the truth; it can be an image of the love of God to his creation.

The Holy Spirit working through my Angel beckons me to choose life, development and self-giving love instead of stasis, decline and selfishness. He does this by reminding me that everything that I encounter is the reality that I have chosen to co-create. And that the 'I' that I truly am has been shaped and endowed by the Logos through many cycles of time to arrive at this point of wondrous privilege and potential: the point at which it is given into my hands to decide how I choose to see reality around me, and what I choose to co-create in the future.

Creation is an overflow of the divine love, endlessly abundant and generous. Its purpose is to beckon creatures to increase the glory by attaining the power to create by exercising their choice to love. By creating organisations, we are not only making optimal places for human creativity to unfold. We may channel the forces of the Logos to create new worlds.

The following that Jesus wanted was not that of man drawn by personal devotion to himself, or of those who were concerned about their own salvation, but of those who would share with him in his devotion to the finding and doing of the Father's will. To Jew and gentile alike this was so utterly incredible that they simply could not take it in... It never occurred to them that he could possibly think of religion as not involving concern for God's favour and the soul's salvation, or of these not being the blessings promised to God's elect.

Leonard Hodgson, *Sex and Christian Freedom*, quoted in *The Go-Between God*, p. 37

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ⁱ Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.

He said:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 6: 1-11