

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

The Philosopher's Stone

in the Gospels and in Alchemy



Izvor Collection



P R O S V E T A

Translated from the French
Original title: « LA PIERRE PHILOSOPHALE
des Évangiles aux traités alchimiques »

Original edition:

© 2003, Éditions Prosveta S.A., ISBN 978-2-85566-876-5

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Prosveta S.A – CS30012 – 83601 Fréjus CEDEX (France)

ISSN 0763-2738

ISBN 978-2-85566-950-2

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P R O S V E T A

Chapter One

On the interpretation of the Scriptures

I

‘The letter kills, but the spirit gives life’

You have noticed that when I want to clarify an important point for you about the spiritual life, I often refer to the Bible, especially the Gospels. When I do so, however, I am fully aware that some of you are thinking, ‘But why does he attach so much importance to what’s written in these wretched Gospels, when it’s been shown time and again that they’ve been tampered with, doctored and mutilated and are even contradictory? Why does he continue to base his teaching on these texts?’ This kind of thinking proves you haven’t understood me properly. I don’t attach absolute value to the letter of the Gospels, but I use them as a starting point for bringing to light the eternal truths taught by Jesus.

Here is an image. A starry sky is one of the greatest wonders in nature, but there are different ways of looking at the stars. You can take along a map of the heavens and an astronomy book that will reveal in detail everything known about the stars and planets: their names, the distances between them, what they are each made of, how they are born, how they live and die, the physical laws governing the

solar system, and so on. This is all certainly very useful and interesting for our understanding of the universe, but what does it contribute to our soul and spirit?

I have read books on astronomy, I have listened to astronomers present their research, and often I have been very impressed. But how different this is from the experience I have had of contemplating a starry sky, with no desire other than to dissolve in its immensity! A sense of peace stole over me little by little, lifting me higher; my only wish was to tear myself from the earth, to go far into space and make contact with the spiritual entities that manifest physically as stars. Once projected into these regions, I felt nothing was more important than to unite with the cosmic Spirit and allow it to penetrate me, to bring me to a true understanding of things, an understanding which permeated my every cell.¹

When we are faced with the immensity and splendour of the heavens, we sometimes feel lost. But losing ourselves in contemplation of the sky is not a goal; we must go further, for the starry sky is also a book, one that speaks not just to our intellect. The knowledge it imparts to us is imprinted within us and can transform our lives. This is true knowledge: we are illumined by a light that surpasses us, a light that orientates our thoughts, our feelings and our actions.

Astronomers observe the night sky, but most of them confine themselves to its material reality.

Unaware that there are intelligent beings inhabiting and working on these celestial bodies, they reduce everything to mechanical laws, so their soul and spirit gain little from their studies. They are like mountaineers whose only goal in scaling a summit is athletic achievement or the study of rocks or atmospheric variations. They forget to look at the mountain and commune with its beauty, its purity and its power.

Contemplating a starry sky, like climbing a mountain, should give human beings the solution to all their problems, because it opens the doors to the heavens within them. Those who become accustomed to looking at the stars with love – who meditate on cosmic harmony, on these lights that have come such a great distance in time and space – travel in thought through the spiritual realms that also lie within themselves. Understand that this is how I read the sacred books, in particular the Bible: as if I were standing before a sky whose stars illuminate and penetrate my whole life.

The Bible has played an enormous role in the formation of the human spirit. It has been read and reread. It has been translated into all the languages of the world, and it is even said that more copies of this book have been printed than of any other. Many people who own a Bible either read it very little or not at all but keep it as a sort of talisman. And many who do read it confess they don't really understand these texts and sometimes feel discouraged.

Over the centuries, Christians have simply read the Bible without questioning. In some homes there were no other books. Many people have actually learned to read using the Bible and have made it their daily sustenance. But now this text is becoming more and more foreign to current ways of thinking. So many people – Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox – have confided to me that, in spite of their best efforts, reading the Bible does little for them. So what did readers in the old days understand that today's men and women no longer do?

Some say we understand the Bible by reading and re-reading it, and we must also prepare for this reading with prayer and fasting. Others advocate studying the written commentaries. This advice certainly has something to recommend it, but it's not where the real answer lies. And, in many cases, commentators who have set out to study the Bible from a scientific perspective have even minimized its value. Their analyses have mostly brought to light errors in transcription, omissions and contradictions, and instead of finding inspiration and enlightenment they have only amassed material for endless discussion and controversy. Scientific methods are always useful, of course, but their efficacy is uneven, depending on the area of study. The mysteries of the soul escape them, and they grasp only an infinitesimal part of reality.

It is certainly interesting to think about when a certain part of the Old or New Testament may have been written, whether there was one author or

several, and to examine the vocabulary and compare it to that of related languages. But this approach, which consists of analysing, digging and dissecting, often leaves nothing more than dust and ashes in its wake. Understanding the sacred books, whether it's the Vedas, the Zend-Avesta or the Koran, requires discipline of a different kind.

The first rule is to put yourself in a receptive state, to allow the images and sensations evoked by your reading to work on your subconscious. In this way, the more you read the Bible, the more you will feel a clarity developing in you. Otherwise, you will only succeed in moving further from the meaning. Eventually you will even adopt an attitude of indifference and scepticism, as if it all merited no more than the slightest curiosity. You will tell yourself it's always interesting to discover what the human brain is capable of, since those who invented God, the soul, the spirit and other worlds have demonstrated such originality and imagination! But with an attitude like that, you will not nourish your inner life.

Everything that is said in the sacred books is correct, not according to the criteria of the intellect perhaps, which always keeps to the letter of the text, but correct where the soul and spirit are concerned. This is the meaning of St. Paul's words in his *Second Letter to the Corinthians*: '*The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*'

The truths expressed in the Bible have been lived by exceptional souls. If we are to understand these

truths, we must strive to follow these souls to the realms they themselves managed to reach, in other words to see things as they saw them. Are we able to interpret the parables of Jesus any better simply because we've studied the grammar of an ancient language, the history of a people or the archaeology? No, if we are to interpret his parables, a different kind of science is needed, the science of symbols, which can only be acquired by exercising the faculties of the soul and spirit.

We cannot understand the sacred texts unless our being can vibrate at the same wavelength as those who wrote them. Their language, their true language, remains foreign to us. We must feel what they felt, live what they lived; in other words, we must rise to their level of consciousness. That's when the light will truly shine out!²

But this higher level of consciousness can only be achieved if we improve our way of life, if we become more mindful and respectful of the laws of the spiritual world. So many people believe they can project themselves onto higher planes without changing anything in the way they live and think! No, they can indulge all they like in all kinds of wild imaginings, but they will never get beyond the 'letter' and will fail to understand.

It is thanks to their life of discipline that the patriarchs and prophets, who were initiates, were able to elevate themselves to the divine world. We too must adopt a disciplined life, if we are to rise as they did to the place where they had their

revelations, for there is no other way. So if you want to read the Bible, begin by asking yourself what you need to improve in your life, and don't worry about understanding everything immediately. There are so many difficult texts! *Genesis*, for example, or the book of *Revelations*... But read without troubling yourself, and try to elevate yourself through thought, by praying to the Holy Spirit to come and bring you its light.

On several occasions I have read you the passage from the *Gospel According to John* known as the Sacerdotal Prayer: *'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.'* Perhaps this passage can't be understood intellectually, but because it comes from the soul and spirit of Christ it speaks to our own soul and spirit and exercises its power over them. Once these words have touched our soul and spirit, our entire being, including our physical body, feels their vibrations. *'I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word... The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me,*

may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.'

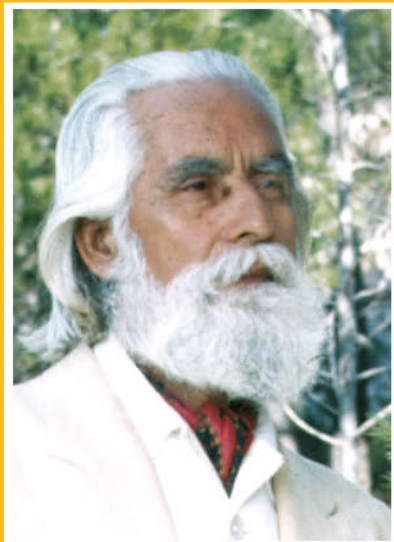
Yes, when these vibrations from the world of the soul and spirit are felt in our whole being, something that has lain dormant in us awakens and is set in motion. The Biblical texts, often criticized by scholars for their style, are like currents of energy which have the power to reawaken souls, to satisfy their hunger and heal them. The Sacerdotal Prayer is one of the most authentic, true and profound passages we can read. And too bad for those who limit themselves to a critical analysis of it!

During the last supper with his disciples, Jesus said, '*... Now I am going to him who sent me... I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.*'³ With these words, Jesus was drawing his disciples' attention to the essential role of the spirit. Yes, the spirit, not the letter! So immerse yourself in the words of the Gospels, meditate on them, exalting their essence within you and linking yourself with the entities of heaven. The day you succeed in experiencing these great truths as living, active realities within you, your entire inner being will be purified, enlightened and regenerated by them.

Notes

1. See *The Path of Silence*, Izvor 229, chap. 13: 'The revelations of a starry sky'.

2. See '*Et il me montra un fleuve d'eau de la vie*', Part VIII, chap. 3: 'L'ascension des montagnes spirituelles'.
3. See *Truth, Fruit of Wisdom and Love*, Izvor 234, chap. 7: 'The blue ray of truth'.



The distinguished philosopher and spiritual Master, Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov (1900-1986), was born in Bulgaria. In 1937 he moved to France, where he lived and taught for almost fifty years until his death. One of the most striking aspects of the Master's teaching is the enormous variety of ways in which he presents the one central theme of man and his growth in perfection. Whatever the question under discussion, it is invariably dealt with in terms of how man can better conduct his life.

The Gospels can be understood and interpreted in the light of alchemical science. On the face of it, they are simply giving an account of the life of one man, Jesus, born two thousand years ago in Palestine, but while they recount the different stages of his life, from birth to death and resurrection, they are in fact also describing alchemical processes.

In spite of being an object of condemnation by the clergy, since the Middle Ages alchemy has profoundly permeated Christian mysticism and esotericism. And if you study the sculptures both on the outside and the inside of cathedrals such as the Notre-Dame in Paris or the Notre-Dame in Chartres, you will discover that the builders of these cathedrals possessed alchemical knowledge, to which architecture and sculpture bear ample witness.

ISBN 978-2-85566-950-2



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