

**A Jungian Psychological and Spiritual Passage**

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*Abstract: “ Between 1912 and 1917, Carl Jung underwent an intense period which involved a tremendous flooding of his consciousness. During this time, he wrote *The Seven Sermons to the Dead* which all except the sixth sermon, begin with questions or appeals to Jung from the dead. During these years, his hand writing changed to one that was used in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. His paintings were painted with pigments which he made. Even though he associated with astrologers, men of religion, oracles and ghosts he also, like others at that time who were interested in the psychological field, attempted to delve into his own unconscious in various ways. He eventually taught about the science of psychology that added spirituality to the mystery of the psyche.”*

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THE SEVEN SERMONS TO THE DEAD

“*The Seven Sermons to the Dead* were written somewhere between December 15, 1916 and February 16, 1917 in three evenings. Before the writing of these sermons, Jung’s children saw and felt ghostly entities in their house. Jung felt an ominous atmosphere all around him. One of his children dreamt a religiously colored and somewhat menacing dream involving both an angel and a devil.

Then on Sunday afternoon the front doorbell rang violently. The bell could be seen to move frantically but no one visible was responsible for the act. A crowd of “spirits” seemed to fill the room, the house and no one could even breathe normally in the spook-infested hallway. Jung cried out ‘For God’s sake, what in the world is this?’ The reply came in a chorus of ghostly voices: We have come back from Jerusalem where we found not what we sought.’

Jung wrote in German ‘Seven exhortations to the dead, written by Basilides in Alexandria, the city where east and west meet.’ Basilides was a famous Gnostic sage who taught in Alexandria in Hellenistic Egypt around the years A.D. 125-140. It was customary for authors of spiritually toned literature not to sign their own names to such

works but to ascribe them poetically to someone whom they considered to occupy a superior position. The sermons are written in the manner of 2<sup>nd</sup> Century Gnosticism “(Jung (1961) pgs. 190-191).

Jung stated that the visions and dreams from *The Red Book* and *Sermons* were responsible for the creative activity he accomplished throughout his life. The *Sermons* were included in the German edition of *Memories, Dreams and Reflections* (MDR), his autobiography, but omitted from the English edition due to the well-known suspicion of the European mind against the English-speaking people who tend to misconstrue anything that borders on the mystical and the occult. However, later there was a separate volume of *Sermons* published by Stuart & Watkins in London.

## WHO WERE Gnostics?

Gnostics were people who lived during the first three or four centuries of the so-called Christian era. They would have considered themselves to follow the traditions of the ancient cults of Egypt, Babylon, Greece and Rome. They shared an attitude of a *knowing* that arises in the heart in an intuitive and mysterious manner and is therefore called the knowledge of the heart. They believed that in different times in history there were people who embodied this special kind of *knowing*. Carl Jung seems to be one of these individuals.

Gnostics regarded religious law as necessary for a certain type of personality which requires rules for what today might be called the formation and strengthening of the psychological ego. To them, theology and ethics were stepping stones on the road to self-knowing. Textbooks of theology still refer to Gnostics as heretics.

Gnostics knew that human life does not fulfill its promise within the structures and establishments of society. Gnostics were looking for a transformation of the mind which gave a changed attitude toward the world.

## A CRISIS IN A PERSON’S LIFE LEADS TO THE INDIVIDUATION PROCESS

Jung restated an old Gnostic insight when he said that the extraverted human ego must first become thoroughly aware of its own alienation from its Self before it can begin to return to a state of closer union with the unconscious. This alienation is shown to the ego or the person during a crisis during an individual’s life that includes the collapse of hopes and expectations. Jung said that until we become aware of the inadequacy of our extraverted state and of its insufficiency in regard to our deeper spiritual needs, we shall not achieve even a measure of individuation through which a wider and more mature personality emerges. Jung believed that individuated individuals created a better society.

Jung agreed with a Swiss doctor named Philippus Aureolus Bombast von Hohenheim, known as Theophrastus Paracelsus, born November 10, 1493 and died September 24, 1541, who believed that illness was a spiritual phenomenon and that this illness was necessary in order to transform the psyche (the conscious and unconscious). He also believed that the *Shadow* or the unconscious, in its fifth layer, contained our highest spiritual potential (See Herrick, 2010, ASPSI, p. 19). For explanation of Jung’s five-layered unconscious). Our spiritual potential or soul talks to our Self through images and symbols. These symbols come from our past and our future to make us whole.

Before we work through our *Individuation* process, Jung believed that we are dominated by projections and compulsions. He stated that only fifty percent of the population had the moral fortitude to undertake individuation. Therefore, it was the therapist’s job to teach the others about psychology and this process. Jung was still in his mid-life crises state working on *The Red Book* (2009, Norton & Co.) when the dead decided to visit him. His first book *Transformation and Symbols of the Libido* had

caused a permanent split between him, Freud and much of the psychological world of which he had once become a distinguished part. However, after the publication he was considered a mystic rather than a contributing person to the science of psychology.

### THE SEVEN SERMONS TO THE DEAD

The dead have been to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is an archetype which stands for orthodoxy and the law. Alexandria, in contrast, was the home of the spiritual people. It has been said that these dead were Anabaptists who felt they had led exemplary lives and they were now dead, disappointed and disillusioned. They demanded that Jung teach them.

Below is an attempt to give you a very simplistic explanation of the seven sermons. All of the sermons except the 6<sup>th</sup>, begin with questions or appeals to Jung from the dead. They are usually specific and usually establish the theme of the sermon. The 6<sup>th</sup> seems unique in being volunteered not set out as a response to a specific question or to an appeal from the dead.

In Sermon #1, he speaks of the Pleroma which is present within us and all around us throughout the universe. The Pleroma is both the fullness and emptiness that surrounds us. He states that in order to distinguish qualities in life, we have been given pairs of opposites such as: the living/the dead, difference/sameness, light/dark, energy/matter, time/space, etc. We create these qualities through our thinking. (Please note: Pythagoras, a Greek philosopher and spiritual teacher who lived in 580 BC, known as the Father of Mathematics also created the fundamental laws of opposites. See Herrick (2009) p. 106).

In the Pleroma, the opposites cancel each other out but in us they do not. There is an overwhelming store of knowledge and power in the Pleroma between God, man and the cosmos. When we awaken to this knowledge our consciousness is expanded. Jung believes this desire for self-knowledge is just as much a natural desire as our desire for food or sex. Meanwhile, our life, he says, is death to our soul. Our soul is in our body considering it a prison or a grave until this awakening.

In Sermon #2, Jung stated that to recognize God as a form of psychological reality is important to the health of the soul. He says that God lives behind the sun, is very full and the opposite of God is the Devil who is empty and lives behind the night. In teaching that God is good and wonderful, Jung also believed that evil also existed at the deepest or highest level of reality. He believed that God was both good and bad. It is by using our will in resolving our conflicts, moving through good and bad, and all the other opposites in our world of thought and making decisions that our Self unfolds.

In Sermon #3, he continues speaking about God who is life itself, which cannot really be defined. In Sermon #4, he discusses gods and devils. He states that every star is a god and every space occupied by a star is the devil. He speaks of many gods, which eventually he turns into archetypes as he expands his Depth Psychology. He stated we needed to have confidence in the repetitions and cyclic patterns of recurrence which ensure slow but sure growth.

In Sermon #5, he teaches us about church and the social and communal implications of spiritual living. In the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> sermons he also discusses fundamental gender differences between the psyches of men and women. After the third century when Christianity became the dominant religion, it was no longer natural to follow desires of the flesh and then sometimes desires for God. Perhaps, because of this, Jung felt that the Christian religion repressed nature, one's sexuality and one's creative imagination.

In Sermon #6, he states that the world of the heavenly gods is manifest in spirituality and the world of the earthy gods appears in sexuality. He uses the symbols of a dove to indicate spirituality, a feminine quality, and says that sexuality, a masculine quality, comes to us like the serpent. The serpent is the thought of desire while the dove

is the desire of thought. This sermon also refers to the dead who are earthbound and have not found the way by which to cross over to the state of solitude.

Sermon #7 teaches us about “man who is a portal through which one enters from the outer world of the gods, demons and souls, into the inner world,” (Hoeller, 1982, p. xix) a microcosm. Taking the unconscious into account, allowing the inner world to come into being is one of our responsibilities in this life. This contact with the unconscious enhances the quality of consciousness and with it the life of the person.

### RECENT CONTACT WITH SPIRIT ENTITIES PROVES TO BE PROBLEMATIC

A 23 year-old female returned to me as a client in January of 2011. She had seen me while in high school due to a party she had held while her parents were away where there was alcohol and drug abuse and damage to their house. At this time in her life she had been brought back home from college to commute out her remaining year of schooling due to some drug abuse, which she stated was not problematic for her. Her parents did not agree with this. It was stated that she had lost many friends to car accidents and drug and alcohol overdoses since high school

She stated that she had been smoking pot which calms down her anxiety attacks which are so detrimental that she sometimes feels as if she isn't going to be able to catch her breath. Because of this anxiety she cannot sleep at night and many days she goes to class very tired. She also had been diagnosed with ADD during her high school years.

After three months of therapy, she still couldn't sleep at night and one day seems very assertive as she stated to me, “You do remember that I've lost 23 friends in three years, right?” “No, I had to admit that I hadn't ever remembered hearing the number of her friends who had died.

I then asked her if she believed in spirits returning after death or ghosts and she said that she did. I asked if she thought this was why she wasn't sleeping and she stated it was. We then discussed hallucinations and the different types which are: Auditory, Visual, Bodily Sensations, Touch, Smell, Taste, and Unformed Flashes of Color.

The client then told me that she had “Bodily Sensations” in this checklist. “It's weird. I randomly feel something grabbing my arm. I feel touched on my arm. I feel grabbed by my wrist. I feel something is hovering over me sometimes. I want to get a gun. We have a gun in the house but my parents won't give it to me. I know there's something in my room. I've awakened my parents many times and asked them to let me have the gun. I feel safer under the covers than out in the open. Even when it's really hot I have to have something covering me to fall asleep.”

I've discussed with her: Her belief in spirits, the definition of Hallucinations, *Sane Hallucinations* from William James and the different types of *After Death Communications* as reported by Bill and Judy Guggenheim in their book *Hello from Heaven*. Her homework recently was to draw what she feels happens to her in her bedroom and to imagine if it's one spirit or how many does she think are there? She also was to watch the movie *Ghost Town* to better understand why ghosts return or why they stay in this earthy realm. The client reported recently that she is sleeping much better now that she understands that spirits are really people.

### ANOTHER GHOST STORY – MAYBE?

Remembering the above client's story about wanting a gun, I had a friend recently tell me about her 91 year-old father who was found sleeping with a loaded shot gun after the recent death of his equally aged wife. When asked why he was sleeping with a loaded shot gun, he said that he is now hearing things in the night and he needs the gun to protect himself. Could it be that the spirit of his wife is still with him at night after 43 years of marriage? I think so but my friend looked much “glazed” when I mentioned this

and stated, “No, I just think he’s hearing things.” I replied, “Yes, I think he’s hearing “things” too.” But some people find it difficult to believe that spirits could be visiting.

I will remember my young client for a long time because I did not specifically question how many friends had died when she stated there had been “a lot.”

### MISSION STATEMENT OF ASPSI

Since the mission statement of the ASPSI is to discern, develop and disseminate knowledge of how paranormal phenomena may relate to and enhance the development of the human spirit and we have a section on our web site about “Life After Death” and another section entitled “Intriguing Evidence of Life After Death,” this author believes it would behoove us to perhaps study Jung’s *Seven Sermons to the Dead* or at least to add him to the list entitled “Testimonial of Respected Scientists and Scholars” on the ASPSI web site.

### BIOGRAPHY

Rev. Karen E. Herrick, PhD, has shared her clinical expertise for the past twenty-plus years in her private practice by lecturing throughout the United States on dysfunctional homes, grief, loss and dissociation. Karen completed her PhD from Union Institute & University in Cincinnati, Ohio with a specialization in Spiritual Psychology. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the Academy of Spirituality and Paranormal Studies Inc. ([www.aspsi.org](http://www.aspsi.org)). She is the author of the book *You’re Not Finished Yet* (2006). Please visit Karen’s web-site and blog on spiritual experiences at [www.karenherrick.com](http://www.karenherrick.com). Karen can be reached by phone, email and on Skype by appointment.

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