

# The Lectures of Rudolf Steiner

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## The Three Paths of the Soul to Christ

GA 143

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The Path through the Gospels and The Path of Inner Experience

The Path of Initiation

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### The Path through the Gospels and The Path of Inner Experience

16 April 1912, Stockholm

I thank you from my heart for the kind words of the General Secretary of the Swedish section, Colonel Kinell, and in reply I wish to say that it is deeply satisfying, on my journey from Helsingfors, to be able for a few days to discuss again with you in Stockholm those things and truths which touch us all so closely. I offer you a hearty greeting, as warmly felt as the kind words of the General Secretary.

On these two more intimate evenings we shall have to speak of a question, an affair of mankind, which in a double connection penetrates extraordinarily deeply into our souls. First, because the Christ question is such that, for two thousand years now, not only has it occupied countless souls on earth, but from it have flowed for countless earth-souls spiritual life-blood, strength of soul, consolation and hope in suffering, strength and sureness in action. And not only that, but when we consider all that surrounds us as external exoteric culture, created through many centuries, then through deeper knowledge we see that all this would have been impossible had not the Christ impulse taken hold of a large part of humanity. This is one consideration which shows us what strong interest the Christ question must offer if we approach it with anthroposophical knowledge. This is only one side of the interest which we bring to this problem; the other side of our interest comes out of the particular soul and spiritual conditions of our present time, our epoch. We need only look about us in the world and try to understand the yearnings, the seeking of the human soul, and we shall be able to say to ourselves: "Ever more do human souls seek after something which, through the centuries, has been connected in men's souls with the name of Christ, and ever more do they come to the conviction that a renewing of the ways, a renewing of interest, a deepening of knowledge, is necessary if the needs of human souls (which will steadily increase with regard to Christ) are to be satisfied." If we find on the one side a thirsting for enlightenment about Christ, we find on the other side, among numerous souls of the present day, doubt and insecurity as to the means used up to this time. And therefore, because of the yearning for an answer and because of the doubt that the truth can be learned, this is one of the most burning questions of the present time.

It is thus obvious that a spiritual movement which penetrates more deeply into spiritual foundations has the task of throwing light on this question. Things are like this today, my dear friends, but in a relatively short time, truly in a very short time, they will be entirely different. If we somewhat unegotistically examine what, in relation to Christ, will be needed by those men who follow after our time, then we must say to ourselves that, although many men of the present can satisfy themselves with what there is, souls will feel themselves increasingly unsure and will thirst

increasingly for enlightenment. Thus in speaking of Christ today we speak of something which we foresee as *necessary* for the human beings of a very near future. Anthroposophy would not fulfil its task if it did not put itself in a position to create clarity on these points by means of its knowledge, as far as this is possible today.

As my point of departure I shall indicate the three paths along which the soul, in accordance with human evolution, can attain to Christ. If we mention three paths we must briefly describe the first path, which today is no longer a path, though it once was; which today need not be an esoteric path, as just in our time the anthroposophic path is, but which was a path for millions of souls through the centuries. This is the path through the so-called Christian documents, through the *Gospels*. For millions and millions of people this path was, and for many it still is, the only possible one. The second path along which the human soul may seek the Christ is that which can be called the path through *inner experience*, which especially in the present and in the near future numerous souls, out of their particular constitution and qualities, must pursue. The third path is that which, through the anthroposophical movement, one can at least begin to understand in our time, the path through *initiation*. Thus there are three paths to Christ: First, the path through the Gospels; second, the path through inner experience; and third, the path through initiation.

The first path, the path through the Gospels, need be only briefly characterized here. We all know that, in the course of the centuries, the Gospels became nourishment for the hearts and souls of innumerable people. We know also that the most enlightened, the most critical natures (and these are not the irreligious), begin to have no further relation to this Christ, because it is maintained today that external knowledge cannot know what historical facts really stand behind that which the Gospels relate. Had the Gospels been read by men of past centuries as today they are read by a scholar, by a man who has gone through the current scientific education, they would never have been able to exercise the powerful influence, the life-influence, which has flowed out of them. Now, if the Gospels were not read in past centuries as the educated man of today reads them, how were they read?

To ponder *a priori* on what may have taken place in Palestine at the beginning of our era, this would never have occurred to the Gospel-readers of earlier centuries, and still does not occur to many Gospel-readers of today. Those who begin to test, in the Gospels, what may have taken place before the eyes of the inhabitants of Palestine at the beginning of our era lose confidence in the historical character of the events of Palestine. The men of earlier times did not read in this way. They read in such a way that they allowed a picture to work on their souls; for instance, the picture of the Samaritan woman at the well, or of Christ imparting the Sermon on the Mount to his disciples. The question of external physical reality never occurred to them. How their hearts warmed, how their feelings swelled in the presence of these great and powerful pictures — this was to them the main thing. What formed itself in their hearts, what force, what life-meaning they gained through these pictures — this was the main thing. They felt that spiritual lifeblood and strength flowed to them from these pictures. When they let these pictures work on their souls, they felt strong; they felt that, without these pictures, they would be weak. And then they felt living, personal connections with what is recounted in the Gospels, and the question of historical reality occurred to them no further. The Gospels were themselves *reality*, they were present as force, and one did not need to ask whence they came; one knew that men had written them not with earthly means, but with impulses from the spiritual worlds. I do not assert that one must feel in this way today (what one must do depends on the development of mankind), but I assert that men felt in this way through centuries.

How could it be so? On this point spiritual science is now first able to instruct us. When we begin to understand the Gospels in the light of spiritual science, and try to penetrate into what flows down from spiritual worlds and is contained in the Gospels, then we stand before the Gospels in such a way

that we say: "We know from spiritual science, quite apart from the Gospels, all that has taken place in human evolution in connection with the Christ-impulse, and then we find what is contained in the Gospels, quite independently of them."

How, then, do we conceive the Gospels from the spiritual-scientific point of view? If I may use a simple comparison, let us assume that a man has attained enlightenment on some subject. With this enlightenment, he meets a second man and begins to talk with him. At first he will not suppose that the other knows anything of the subject which is so clear to him, but from the conversation he perceives that the other knows it quite as well as he. What must reasonably be assumed? The reasonable thing to assume is that the other has enlightened himself through the same or similar sources. So is it also with the Gospels. We can do this, no matter from what standpoint we approach the Gospels. A society could be formed of people who read the Gospels in the above described way; then there could also be people in this society who were determined opponents of the Gospels, and who would say that, when the Gospels were tested by the methods of science, it would be found that they were written much later than the events in Palestine could have occurred, and that their accounts contradict each other — in short, that these Gospels cannot be regarded as historical documents. Such people might be in such a society, and one could say: "Well, let us at first leave the Gospels in peace, but let us do some research in the spiritual worlds."

Then, if we did some genuine spiritual research, if we gained genuine super-sensible knowledge, we would find that in the course of human evolution there had once entered a strong impulse, which broke into human evolution as an impulse from the spiritual worlds, from which mighty things have proceeded for humanity; and we would see that at the beginning of our era, this impulse had taken hold of a man who was especially suited thereto. All this, and many other facts which fit into this knowledge and which can be won only through super-sensible research, all this we would have; and those who wished to know nothing of the Gospels would have this as well as others. Then one could approach the Gospels and say: "Well now, at first we did not trouble ourselves at all about these Gospels; yet it is remarkable that, when we read them carefully, we see that they contain what we found in spiritual fields independently of them. Now we recognize their value from an entirely different side."

Then we are clear that it could not be otherwise, that those who wrote the Gospels must have received their knowledge from the same source which is now opening itself to humanity through the spiritual movement. This is just what now confronts us, what will come more and more, what will make a valid basis for the valuation of the Gospel documents. If this is so, we must say that men will be able to find along other ways what can be known through these documents. And so this knowledge begins to be more and more sacred to us through the spiritual cognition of the present day. It already worked through the force of the Gospels. Because the Gospels are suffused with the holiest knowledge, with the spiritual impulses of humanity, they had an influence even where they were taken in naively. Spiritual knowledge works not only abstractly, not only in theory, but works as a life-force, as life-blood of the soul. And ever more and more will men recognize how consolation and strength flow from this knowledge.

## The Path of Inner Experience

But when we speak of the inner way to Christ, we encounter more and more things which can be understood and felt at the present time only when approached with the right spiritual-scientific understanding. We shall try to speak of the *inner Christ-experience* in such a way that it may be seen how, independently of all tradition, this may appear in every man. To this end we must, of course, regard the human being with the knowledge which we have found through spiritual science. If we steep ourselves in spiritual science, then we find even the most elementary knowledge becoming fruitful when we apply it to life. We find that we get away from the abstract charts of the seven

members of man when we contemplate the growing and becoming of man. The physical body has its especial development in the first seven years of life. We perceive further that in the second seven years of life, from the change of teeth until sexual maturity, the forces of the etheric body play in man. Then the forces of the astral body begin to play, and only later, about the 20th or 21st year, (depending on his whole organization and on the nature of the forces in him) begins what appears in man as the Ego, as the bearer of the Ego, with that force which it really has because of its organization for the whole life of man as the bearer of the Ego.

That the bearer of the Ego first becomes really capable of living in the 20th or 21st year is not often observed in our present time, because we are not yet inclined to pay attention to these things. What does it mean that the bearer of the Ego first becomes really active in the 20th or 21st year of life? Here we must observe, by occult means, the growing man and view the deeper forces of his organization. These forces continually change: from birth until the seventh year, from the seventh year until sexual maturity, from sexual maturity until the unfolding of the Ego. But they change in such a way that they cannot be tested by the methods of ordinary anatomy or physiology. By occult means, one can say that only around the 20th year does man develop his forces in such a way that a self-sufficing Ego-bearer now exists. Earlier this Ego-bearer is not yet formed; earlier the human corporeality, even the super-sensible, is not yet a proper Ego-bearer. So if we consider the members of man in the light of the great world-principle, we must say that, through the peculiarities of his organization, man is really ripe to develop an Ego out of himself only in his 20th or 21st year, not earlier.

With this fact another may be contrasted, namely that in the first years of life, in normal consciousness, we really dream ourselves, sleep ourselves into life, and that only after a certain point of time does life take such a course that our own memory begins. Of what happened before this time we may be told by our parents or elder brothers; after this point the man says "I am who I am." From the time when he says "*I have done this; I have thought that,*" the man dates his own Ego; what came before that loses itself in the twilight of the soul. Our memory reaches only to the point of time so described.

What do we have when we put these two facts together; that the real bearer of the human Ego is born in the 20th or 21st year, and that in our souls we describe ourselves as an Ego from the third or fourth year on? This means that in the present cycle of man's development he has an opinion, a feeling, about himself which does not correspond to his inner organization, as this has developed; for the *consciousness* of the Ego appears in the third or fourth year, but the *organization* for the Ego first appears in the 20th or 21st year. This fact is of fundamental importance for the understanding of man. When this fact is stated abstractly as an item of spiritual-scientific knowledge, no one gets particularly excited about it; but, because this fact is true, there are numerous experiences available which we all know well, but which we do not observe in the light of this fact. All that man can experience of cleavage between external organization and inner experience, of sorrow and pain in life because (by reason of his organization) certain things are impossible for him, of disharmony between what he wishes and what he can perform; the fact that he may have ideals which lead far beyond his organization: all this leads back to the fact that the *consciousness* of our Ego goes an entirely different way from that followed by the bearer of our Ego. In this respect we are two men; An external man who is organized to develop his egohood in the 20th or 21st year, and an inner soul-man who already in his fourth or fifth year, as to his soul-life, emancipates himself from his outer organization. Emancipation of the Ego-consciousness from the outer organization takes place in childhood. We go through something in our soul which proceeds independently of our outer organization and which can even come into sharp contradiction with our outer organization. We are

inclined, in regard to the inner consciousness of the Ego, to pay no attention to our organization, to what is below in our bodies. In our souls we develop in an entirely different way from that in which our bodies develop.

Thus the course of inner development of mankind is twofold. The development of our organization goes from the first to the seventh year, then from the seventh to the fourteenth, from the fourteenth to the twenty-first, in the above described way; but our inner development is such that we are entirely independent of the above, such that the consciousness of our Ego emancipates itself in tenderest childhood and makes its own way through life. But what is the consequence of this curious fact of human development? Only the occultist can tell us this.

If we survey all that the occultist can teach, we come to a curious fact. We come to see that sickness, frailty of the human organization, all that makes possible illness, age, and death, comes from our being really a duality. We die because we are organized in a certain way and in our organization pay no attention to our Ego-development. That with our Ego we go an independent path, not troubling ourselves about our organization, this is brought home to us when this organization, in sickness and death, places a hindrance before our Ego-development; we are reminded that our Ego-development proceeds quite separately from our organization. Whence comes really this curious fact of duality in human nature?

When we examine man in connection with reality, we see that, if at a certain time in the Earth evolution, namely in the Lemurian time, only progressive forces had intervened in human development, the youthful development of man would today proceed quite otherwise — namely so that it would keep even step with the Ego-development. At all times the soul-development would coincide exactly with the body-development. It would have been impossible for man to develop himself otherwise than in the way now set up as an ideal, for example, in my pamphlet *The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy*. (Anthroposophic Press, New York City) Had only progressive forces been active at that time, the singular result would have been that, in the first twenty years of life, man would have been much less self-reliant than he is now. This lack of self-reliance is not meant in a bad sense, but in such a way that each of you would approve of it completely. For example, human nature in the first seven years of life completely disposed to imitation. Since grown people, if only progressive forces had been active in the Lemurian time, would do nothing shameful, children between one and seven would be able to imitate nothing bad. In the second seven years of life the principle of authority would reign, whereas now it has come to be a curse of the land, a curse of the world, that persons between seven and fourteen want to be independent and are even educated to form independent opinions. The grown persons would have been the natural authorities for the children. From fourteen to twenty-one, man would have looked much less into himself, upon his own self; he would have turned more toward the outside. The force of ideals, the power of living himself into his life-dreams would have become immensely significant for him. Life-dreams would have sprung from his heart, and then full Ego-consciousness would have appeared in his 20th and 21st years.

Thus there would be in the first seven years a period of imitation, then in the second seven years a looking up to authority, then in the third seven years a springing forth of ideals, which would bring man to his full Ego-consciousness. The sum of those forces also working in evolution which are called the Luciferic forces have brought about a deviation from this path of development in the course of human evolution. Since the Lemurian time they have torn the Ego-consciousness away from the foundation of the organization. The fact that we already have the Ego-consciousness in tenderest childhood is to be traced to the Luciferic forces.

How did the Luciferic forces intervene? The Luciferic powers are beings who remained behind on the Moon, and who therefore have no understanding of the mission of the Earth, for that which should develop for the first time on the Earth for the Ego after the 21st year. They took man as he was on coming over from the Moon, and laid in him the germ of self-reliant soul-development. So that in the hastening of Ego-consciousness, in this peculiar cleavage in human nature, lie the Luciferic forces. Knowledge of such a fact is given for the first time by anthroposophy. It can be sensed by every man of sound feeling, for every man can sense that there is something in him which separates him from his full humanity. All that we call unjustified egoism in our nature, all withdrawing from the activities of men, all this stems from the Ego's not going along on the right path of the organization. Thus do we see man before us, if he can feel. If he says to himself: "I could be other than I am; I have something in me which is not in harmony with myself" — then he feels the strife within him of the progressive powers with the Luciferic powers. This fact had to occur in the course of human evolution; it was necessary because man would never have become really free without the Luciferic beings; he would have been always bound to his organization. What on the one hand brings man into conflict with his organization, gives him on the other hand the first possibility of being free. One thing, however, remains out of this duality of the organization for the ordinary human life; this shows itself in our feeling that the Ego has become incapable, out of its own powers, of transforming the organization.

When we survey the broad circumference of what has constituted and created man, we find the two forces described above; there are the organic forces of our human nature, which are intended to develop in seven-year periods, and there are the Luciferic forces. If there were nothing else in nature or in the spiritual life in the course of human development, it would follow that man could never, through his emancipated Ego, come into full harmony with his nature. Were there nothing else in the field of earth-existence, man could only become ever more estranged from his organization; his organization would become ever more infirm, more dried up; the cleavage would necessarily become always greater. If man only once reaches the point of intensely feeling this as spiritual-scientific knowledge, then he comes to a great moment in his life, when he can say: "Here I stand with my human organization which is given me by the progressive forces that work from seven years to seven years (he need not express this in precise words, he need only feel it dimly). But, because this organization has an opposing force, which develops itself independently, it becomes sick and infirm and finally dies." In the depths of his soul man feels this. Without knowing anything of anthroposophy, he need only have this feeling of a discrepancy between the inner Ego and the outer organization, and, if he steeped himself in this feeling, then — he knows not whence — there comes into his soul something of which he feels: "I myself, with the Ego which I can trace back, can do nothing against my organization, for which I am no match. But there comes something which I can take into my Ego as force, which I can take into my consciousness as conviction; directly from spiritual worlds comes something which does not reside in me, but which permeates my soul. From unknown worlds something can flow into my soul; if I take it up in my heart, if I suffuse my Ego with it, then it helps me directly from spiritual worlds." — This which comes from spiritual worlds may be called whatever we like; that is not important; only the feeling is important.

Let us assume that a man is today at odds with life and says to himself: "I must seek through the whole world to see if somewhere a force will spring up which will give me something through which I can come out of the conflict, something which will help me out." — In the nature of things this man could never find his way with the means of the old religious confessions; in the ancient ecclesiastical ideas he could never find anything which would give him this force that he seeks. But, in order to have a concrete example, let us assume that such a man went to one of the ancient holy religions, that he went, for example, to Buddhism and steeped himself in the extraordinary teachings of Buddhism. If the man felt, however, naturally and in its full strength the cleavage described above, he would feel — I do not say this would come out of a theory, but out of a dim feeling — he would feel

that in the personality, in the individuality of Gautama Buddha, something had lived which could appear in the world only on the basis of a long development. This individuality went through many incarnations, achieved higher and higher grades of evolution, and finally came so far that in the 29th year of his life as Gautama Buddha, he was able to rise from Bodhisatva to Buddha, was able to rise in such a way that he need never more return to a physical body. How did that which flows out from this individuality come into being? Every unprejudiced mind can feel what speaks out of the Buddha, can feel all that first came about and developed through the Bodhisatva in earth evolution after developing through many incarnations. In the most beautiful and comprehensive sense all this contains the forces which are found in the periphery of the earth, in the interplay of the forces of the organization and the Luciferic forces. Therefore, because it has gone from incarnation to incarnation, because it stems from the same forces from which the human forces stem, therefore that which flows from the Bodhisatva to the Buddha has such an effect that the unprejudiced mind does not feel anything that can call forth a full harmony between the Ego of man and his organization. The soul feels that there must be something which does not go from incarnation to incarnation, but which can stream into every human soul directly from the spiritual worlds. — When the soul feels that it must have a relation to what streams down from the heavens, then it is beginning to have an *inner experience* of the *Christ*. Then the soul can understand that in Christ Jesus something had to appear which was different from everything previously existing. This is the radical, fundamental difference, the difference in principle between the life of the Christ and that of the Buddha.

Buddha rose from a Bodhisatva to a Buddha with the forces which cause man to mount from incarnation to incarnation, as is the case with other great founders of religions. Into the life of Jesus of Nazareth something entered, something worked into the individuality of Jesus of Nazareth, over a period of three years, which streamed down directly out of the spiritual worlds, which had nothing to do with human evolution, which previously was not connected with a human life. We must keep this difference clearly in mind if we wish to understand why, in what the fourth post-Atlantean epoch called the Christ, there was something which was different from all other religious impulses, and why the other religions have always pointed mankind toward this Christ.

If we, in the post-Atlantean time, look back into the ancient sacred Indian culture, we see the seven holy Rishis, in whose souls there lived something of an immediate perception of the spiritual worlds. Had one of the seven holy Rishis been asked about the fundamental mood of his soul, he would have said: "We look up to the spiritual powers from whom all human development has proceeded. This reveals itself to us in seven rays, but above this is something else, something which lies above our sphere." Vishvakarman, this was the name later given to what the seven holy Rishis thus felt. The seven holy Rishis spoke of a power which had not developed with the earth.

Then came the Zarathustra culture. Zarathustra spoke, when he directed his gaze to the spirits of the sun, of something which should flow into human evolution directly through a streaming out of the spiritual worlds. "What we can give to men," so spake Zarathustra, "is not that which will one day, from the sun-distances, stream directly out of the spiritual worlds into mankind." What is spiritual in the sun, this is what the later Persian culture called Ahura-Mazdao.

In the Egyptian mysteries the Christ question was felt with a particularly tragic force. It was felt in the deepest way, if by deep we mean a form of human feeling in which there was an especially strong consciousness that humanity stems from what is spiritual. The Egyptian initiate said to himself: "Wherever we turn our gaze, we feel in what surrounds us the decline from the original spiritual. Nowhere in the outer world is the spiritual to be found in its immediacy and purity. Only when man steps through the gate of death does he descry that from which he springs. Man must first die (in relation to inner experience, not in relation to initiation); then he becomes united with the Osiris-principle (so did the ancient Egyptian name the Christ principle); in life this cannot be done,

that is the discrepancy. All that is in the periphery of the earth, this does not lead to Osiris; the soul must first have passed the portal of death to be united with Osiris. Then, in death, the soul becomes a piece of Osiris, it becomes itself a sort of Osiris. The world outside has become such that it dismembers Osiris through his enemy; that is, through all that belongs to the external world."

And the initiate of the Egyptian mysteries said: "Mankind, as it now is in our culture, is a sort of reminiscence of the old Moon-time. As the culture of the seven holy Rishis is a sort of reminiscence of the old Saturn-time, as the Zarathustra culture is a reminiscence of the old Sun-time, so is the Osiris-culture a reminiscence of the old Moon-time when the Moon and its beings first separated from the sun, on which, however, remained the beings from whom man took his origin. At that time there took place the separation of man from the good forces of his organization, from the source of his life-forces. But, through the yearning and privation for the spiritual which will endure, the time will come for men when Osiris will descend and show himself as something which must come as a new impetus which was not before on earth, because already in the old Moon-time it had separated itself from the earth."

All that to which the seven holy Rishis and Zarathustra pointed, and of which the Egyptians said that in their time men could not attain it during life, this was the force, the impulse, which for three years revealed itself in the body of Jesus of Nazareth. All great religions spoke of it; it revealed itself in Jesus of Nazareth, to whom all religions pointed. Thus not only Christians have spoken of Christ, but also the members of all ancient religions. Thus something entered into the course of human development which man needs and which is accessible to inner experience.

Let us assume that a man grows up on a lonely island. Those who have charge of his education tell him nothing of that happens in the world in regard to the name of Christ and to the Gospels; they give him only such culture as does not make use of the Gospels or the name of Christ, culture which may have come to birth under the influence of Christ, but divested of the name of Christ. What would happen in this case? In such a man the following mood would be bound to appear. He would say to himself one day: "Something lives in me which is in accord with my universal human organization; this I cannot at once grasp. For that in which my Ego-consciousness lives presents itself to me in such a way that I need something which cannot come to me through human culture, I need an impulse from the spiritual worlds, in order to make the Ego stronger again in its organization, from which it has emancipated itself." If such a person can only feel strongly that man needs, then something can come over him from which he will recognize that, directly from spiritual worlds, something must stream out which penetrates directly into his Ego. He does not know that this is called Christ; but he does know that in his consciousness he can suffuse himself with it, that in his Ego he can foster this which comes to him from the spiritual worlds. Then something will come to him of which he may say: "Granted, I can be ill, I can be weak, I can die; but from my own Ego I can make myself stronger, I can send into my organization something which gives me strength and force directly out of the spiritual worlds." It is indifferent what he calls this; if the man comes to this feeling, he is gripped by the Christ-impulse. That man is not gripped by the Christ-impulse who says he can have something from a teacher who has passed from incarnation to incarnation, but he who feels that directly from the spiritual world there can come impulses of force, of strength. Men can have this *inner experience*; without it men cannot live, without it men will not be able to live in the future. They can have this experience, because once, for three years, there lived objectively in Jesus of Nazareth this impulse which came directly out of the spiritual worlds. As it is true that a man can lay a seed in the earth, and that many other seeds can come from this one, so it is true that the Christ-impulse was once implanted into humanity, and that since that time there is something in humanity which was not there earlier.



This is why the Egyptian life was so tragic. Men felt that in their lives they could not come to Osiris; that they must first pass through the gate of death, to be united with him in inner experience. Of initiation we have still to speak. But since the time of the Mystery of Golgotha that is possible which earlier was not possible: that of his own motion, out of his single incarnation, man seeks his connection with the spiritual world. And this is because the impulse which was given through the Mystery of Golgotha can flash up in every soul, and can enter, since that time, into every man through inner experience. Not the Christ Who was on earth — the soul does not trouble itself about Him — but the Christ Who is attainable through inner experience. Since the Mystery of Golgotha it is possible, in the single incarnations, to win a connection with the spiritual. And because this is so, there happened in the one fact of Golgotha something which can shine out into humanity, which is not given through the achievements of the successive incarnations. Therefore it is impossible that Christ should show himself in a way which is a consequence of many incarnations, as happened to Buddha from his incarnations as Bodhisatva.

Tomorrow we shall see how the path to the Christ in human evolution can be found *for the future*.

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## The Path of Initiation

17 April 1912, Stockholm

If I may indicate in a few words the point at which yesterday's considerations culminated, I would like to say that out of them the possibility should come to light for every man, through a deepening of his being, through a trust in the spiritual worlds, of causing to rise within him a soul-mood, a soul-disposition, which will say to him: "Into man flow not only the things which are in the periphery of the earth, not only those things which stem from the evolution of the earth itself, but it is possible for man to tune his soul in such a way that he receives out of the spiritual worlds helping forces which flow into him, which produce an equilibrium between the single egoistic *I* and the totality of his organization — if that possibility offers itself which has flowed into the earth-mission." Whoever can attain this trust in this inflow from the spiritual worlds, no matter what he calls this inner event, this inner experience, has lived through the personal *Christ-experience inwardly*. The remainder of this matter will reveal itself to us if today we start by considering the third path to Christ, the path of *initiation*.

With the path through the Gospels, and the path through inner experience, we have the two paths to Christ which are accessible to every man: I say expressly — to every man. But to the path of initiation there belongs a certain preparation, as should be understandable to everyone. In our time this requires us to go deeply, in a real and not merely theoretical way, into the true, genuine spiritual science which, at least in our present time, must always be the point of departure, if we wish to understand what the way of initiation is. Regarding the essence of initiation it would be well to give a few introductory remarks in a certain direction. You see, initiation is the highest which man can achieve in the course of the Earth-evolution, for it leads man to a certain understanding, to a real insight into the secrets of the spiritual world. What occurs in the spiritual worlds is really the content, the object, of initiation, and a real knowledge, an immediate perception, of events in the spiritual worlds is attained on the path of initiation. When initiation is characterized in this way, something very special must strike everyone who lets this characterization work on his soul. This is really to say, fundamentally, that initiation is — allow me the expression — a super-religious way. The religions

which in the course of human epochs have spread over the surface of the earth, and which still prevail among men, all of these, in so far as they are great religions, and in so far as we study them at their points of origin, were originally founded upon initiation, by initiates. They have flowed out of what great initiates have been able to give to men. But the religions were given in such a form that, in their contents, men received what was suitable to the time in which they lived, to the race to which they belonged, even to the region of the earth in which they lived.

Now today we live in a very special epoch of human evolution, and it is just the task of spiritual science to understand that we live in a special time. The way in which among our contemporaries spiritual science can be brought forth and spread, this was nowhere possible in past times. Anthroposophy as such could not be publicly taught. Only in our time do we begin to teach anthroposophy. The religions were once the channels through which the secrets of initiation were to be allowed to flow into mankind; to be allowed to flow in a manner suitable at a given time to a given group of men. But today we are in a position to give through anthroposophy something which is not adapted to a single race, to a single region, to a single group of men, but which can bring to every man, no matter where he finds himself on earth, something of those secrets of existence, for knowledge of which souls are yearning and which souls must have if hearts are to be strong for work on earth. But this already shows that through anthroposophy something is to be given which takes a standpoint higher than the religious standpoints were, or still are where these religious standpoints continue to be accepted. In a certain way anthroposophy is that which must propagate the secrets of initiation in a universal human way, whereas in the various ancient religious systems of the earth the secrets of initiation were always announced in a special manner, in a different way, adapted to the particular human group.

What follows from this? It follows that we find the most varied religions spread out over the earth, all of which point back to this or that founder. We find first the Krishna religion, leading back to Krishna; second, the Buddha religion, leading back to Buddha; third, the ancient Hebrew religion, leading back to Moses; and we find Christianity, leading back to Jesus of Nazareth. The religions having all flowed out of initiation, we must be quite clear that we cannot today take the position taken by the philosophers of religion who consider themselves "enlightened." The philosophers of comparative religion have a secret outlook on religions; they regard them all either as false or as childish stages of human development. But we, as anthroposophists, since we learn to know that the religions are only different formulations of the truths of initiation, are in a position to grasp the true and not the false in the various religious systems. We do justice to all the religious systems in comparison with one another. We regard them as equally justified revelations of the great truths of initiation.

And from this follows something terribly important for practical feeling and practical activity. What is this important thing? That out of the anthroposophical mood will proceed complete understanding, hearty respect, and full recognition of the core of truth in all religions; and that those who, out of an anthroposophical attitude, reflect on the world and its course of development, will respect the truths of the various religious systems. There will be the highest esteem and respect. Yes, my dear friends, from the anthroposophical spiritual stream will result the following for the various religious confessions on earth: A man will go to the adherents of any religious system, and he will not think himself able to graft on to them, or inoculate them with, other confessions. Much rather will we go to them and, out of our own religious faith, discern what there is of *truth* in their faith. And a man who is born in a region where a particular religion holds sway will not, on account of this religion, intolerantly reject all other religions, but he will be able to approach them on the basis of what, as truth, is contained in the different religions. Let us take an example. Such an example can be grasped only by those who, in the depths of their soul, take seriously the anthroposophical attitude and all that must follow from a knowledge of the fundamental conditions of initiation. Let us assume that an

Occidental has grown up within Christianity. He will perhaps have learned to know Christianity through having taken into himself the great truths of the Gospels. Perhaps he has already attained also to what is called the path to Christ Jesus through inner experience; perhaps in his inner experience he has already experienced the Christ. Let us assume that he now becomes acquainted with another religion, Buddhism for example. From those who stand within the sacred truths and knowledge of Buddhism, he learns to know something which is an annoyance to the materialistic Occidental but which we anthroposophists can understand: He learns to know that the founder of this religion, after having lived through many incarnations on earth as a Bodhisatva, was reborn as the son of King Sudhodana; he learns to know that in the twenty-ninth year of his life as Bodhisatva he rose to Buddha, and that with this rising to Buddha there is given in this religion — since it stems from initiation — the *one* great truth which is valid not only for Buddhism but for all men, and which is acknowledged by every initiate and by all men who understand Buddhism; he learns to know that the adherent of Buddhism says justly: "When the Bodhisatva becomes Buddha in a human incarnation, then this incarnation which the Buddha has to go through on earth is the last. Then he does not come back again in a human body."

To one who stands within Buddhism it would be acutely painful, if it were asserted that the Buddha would return again in a fleshly body. Such an adherent of the Buddha would be deeply distressed, if anyone were to dispute this truth, saying that the Bodhisatva who became a Buddha could again at some time appear upon the earth in a physical body. But we anthroposophists recognize the truth in the religions; we take the position of seeking the truth of the various religions and not their error. So we go to those who understand Buddhism and we learn to know — or learn out of initiation to know — that it is true that that individuality who lived as Bodhisatva on earth and became a Buddha has since that time reached spiritual heights from which he need not again descend to this physical globe. From that moment on, if we stand on the ground of the doctrine of reincarnation, we shall no longer thrust upon the Buddhist the assertion that the Buddha could reappear in a physical body. Genuine knowledge will create an understanding for every form of religion proceeding out of initiation. We respect the religious forms which have been developed on earth, in that we recognize the truth which they have to give. Yes, my dear friends, I acknowledge as frankly and honestly as the strictest Buddhist this truth, that the Bodhisatva who was on earth and rose to Buddha reached therewith a height of human development which made it possible for him no longer to descend to earth. This is what we call having an understanding for the various forms of religion on the earth.

Let us take the opposite case: That an adherent of Buddhism should make his way to anthroposophical knowledge. Either out of a real knowledge of Christianity or out of the principle of initiation, he would allow it to become clear to him that in another region of the earth there is another form of religion, and that those who understand this religion are quite clear about the following: That there once lived a personality who really belonged to no nation, least of all to the Occident, and that from his thirtieth to his thirty-third year there lived in this personality that impulse, that force of the spiritual life, to which we pointed yesterday; to which, in their Vishvakarman, the seven holy Rishis also pointed; to which, in his Ahura-Mazdao, Zarathustra also pointed; to which, as their Osiris, the Egyptians also pointed; and which the fourth post-Atlantean cultural period named Christ. But that is not the point: The point is to recognize in Christ that which lived as an impulse for three years in the personality of Jesus of Nazareth, that which was not previously present on earth, that which descended from spiritual heights into the personality of Jesus of Nazareth, that which in this personality went through the Mystery of Golgotha, and that which as such a Christ-impulse is a once-appearing impulse for the earth and is not connected with any ordinary incarnation of mankind; that which was thus *once* present as Christ and can never return in any man, but will come, as the Bible says, in the clouds of heaven — meaning that as a spiritual revelation it will show itself to men. This is a Christian avowal.

Now, one who stands within Buddhism, imbued with theosophical earnestness and theosophical dignity, will have to recognize that he must pay attention to and respect this Christian avowal just as the Christian must respect his. The Buddhist who has risen to theosophy and takes it seriously will say: "Just as you as a Christian approach with trust the teaching that the Bodhisatva who became a Buddha will no more return to the earth, just as it seems to me fitting that you know that the Buddha cannot return, so I as a Buddhist acknowledge that what you call Christ cannot return in a physical incarnation, but as a once-appearing impulse lived only for three years in a physical human body." — If in anthroposophy we find the reciprocal understanding of the religions in such a way that the initiation-principle can penetrate into man's heart in such a way that one man shall not impose an alien opinion on others, then we produce an understanding which unites men over the whole earth, we establish peace between the single religions on earth.

In Christianity the founder of the religion is Jesus of Nazareth. The Christian initiation-principle is concerned with the religion's founder, Jesus of Nazareth, only as with a fact, as with a fact which can be examined by occultists as a fact. With the same love, with the same care, as are used in examining the life of Buddha or of another founder of a religion, the life of Jesus of Nazareth is examined by those who are acquainted with the principle of religion. How this life of Jesus of Nazareth appears from the standpoint of pure occultism you will find described in my pamphlet: *The Spiritual Guidance of Mankind*. But the true Christian initiation-principle concerns itself with recognizing Christ, with the way to Christ. And this Christian religious principle was preparing for many years what was just now described as a principle of peace for the whole earth, in that it clearly does not proceed from the founder of a religion as such, but from a fact which occurred once in the world.

That is the basic difference between Christianity and the other religions. What the initiation-principle which leads to Christ has as a task in the world is different from the cultures which have proceeded from the other religious principles. What the Christian initiation-principle has as a task within the world-mission proceeded from a fact, from an event, not from a personality. This will be understandable if we mention first some preliminary conditions. We can put forward a single sentence, a single statement, and we have then characterized, although externally, the starting point of esoteric Christianity, of Christian initiation: It is the death which was experienced in the uniting of Christ with Jesus of Nazareth. The fact of this death, which we call the Mystery of Golgotha, is what should be understood through the principle of Christian initiation. Now, a true understanding of this death can be won only if we make quite clear to ourselves the mission of death within our earth-evolution. Yesterday we pointed out that frailty, infirmity, illness, and death are connected with the lack of harmony between our Ego, permeated by the Luciferic principle, and our organization. Death, after all, is connected with the Luciferic principle, and that in a very special way. It would be an entirely false idea if we were to assume that Lucifer brought death. Lucifer did not bring death, he brought what we can call the possibility of error (also of moral error), the differentiation of men into races, and the possibility of freedom. Lucifer brought these things. If only what Lucifer brought had been efficacious in mankind, if nothing had been opposed to him, then this Luciferic principle would have led to the point where mankind would have fallen out, would have broken out, of the progressive divine evolution. Man would indeed have spiritualized himself, but in an entirely different direction from that to which the progressive divine evolution led. To retain mankind within this divine evolution, to prevent mankind's being lost for the divine evolution, a particular arrangement had to be set up: Man had to be continually reminded of what the consequences are if he misuses the possibility of error and of freedom. All illness, frailty, infirmity, and death are reminders that man would have to estrange himself from the progressive divine evolution if, in addition to having the Luciferic freedom, he were healthy and full of energy. Thus illness, infirmity, and death are not gifts of Lucifer, but gifts of the good, wisdom-filled divine powers, who have therewith set up a dike against the influences of Lucifer.

Thus we must say that all that confronts us in the world as continuous human tribulation coming from outside, as illness and death, is there in order that we men may remain fettered to earth-existence until we have an opportunity to make amends; in order that we may have an education which will adapt us to our organization. *We suffer in order that out of our suffering we may gain experience and find an equilibrium between our Lucifer-permeated Ego and our divinely-permeated organization.* Our organization falls away from us repeatedly, until we have completely imbued ourselves, in our Ego, with the laws of the evolution which is progressive in a divine sense. Every death is therefore a point of departure for something else. Man cannot die without taking with him that which gives him the possibility of sometime overcoming death in his successive incarnations. All our pains are there in order that out of suffering we may gain the experience of how we must adapt ourselves to our progressing divine organization. This question, however, cannot be discussed apart from its connection with all of evolution.

We can study such a thing especially well if we examine occultly the connections between man and the next lower kingdom, the animal kingdom. We know that in the course of evolution man has always inflicted pain on the animals, that he has killed the animals. One who learns to know the Karma of human life often finds it highly unjust that the animal, which does not reincarnate, should suffer, should bear pain, and even, in the case of the higher animals, should go through death with a certain consciousness. Should no Karmic compensation take place here? Naturally, the human being has to make a Karmic compensation in Kamaloka for the pain which he inflicts on animals, but I am not speaking of this now; I am speaking of the compensation for the animals. Let us make one thought clear: If we consider human evolution, we see how much pain man has strewn over the animal kingdom and how many animals he has killed. What do these pains and these deaths mean in the course of evolution?

Occult study shows us that every pain which is inflicted on a pain-feeling being other than man, every death, is a seed for the future. Animals, as they are willed by the progressive divine evolution, are not destined to have incarnations like man. But, if a change comes into this wisdom-filled world-plan, if man intervenes and does not leave the evolution of the animals to be as it would have been without man, what happens then? Now, you see, occult research teaches us that every pain, every death, inflicted by man on the animals, will return and arise again, not through reincarnation, but *because* pain and death have been inflicted on the animals. This pain and suffering call up animality again. These animals on which pain has been inflicted will arise again, though not in the same form; but that which feels pain in them, that comes again. It comes again in such a way that the sufferings of the animals are compensated, so that to every pain its complementary feeling is added. These pains, these sufferings, this death, these are the seed which man has sown; they return in such a way that to every pain its contrary feeling is added in the future. To use a concrete example: When Earth is replaced by Jupiter, the animals will not appear in their present form, but their pains and sufferings will awaken the forces for the feeling of pain. They will live in men, and will embody themselves as parasitic animals in men. Out of the sensations and feelings of these men, out of their pains, the compensation will be created. This is the occult truth, which can be stated objectively and unadorned even if it is not pleasant to the man of today. Man will one day suffer this, and the animals will have, in a certain well-being, in a pleasant feeling, the compensation for their pains. This already happens slowly and gradually in the course of present-day earth-life, no matter how strange this seems. Why are men plagued by beings which are really neither animals nor plants, but stand between the two, by bacilli and similar creatures, which feel a well-being when man suffers? They have brought this upon themselves in earlier incarnations through inflicting pain and death on animals. For the being, though not appearing in the same form, feels this across time and feels the compensation for its pains in the suffering which man must undergo. Thus all the pain and suffering

in the world are positively not without consequences. It is a seed from which proceeds what is caused by pain, suffering, and death. There can be no suffering, no pain, no death, without causing something which springs up later on.

Let us consider in this light the death on Golgotha, which followed from the uniting of Christ with Jesus of Nazareth. The first thing which becomes clear to anyone who goes through the requisite initiation is that this death on Golgotha was no ordinary death on earth, no ordinary human or other death. Persons who do not yet believe in the super-sensible can form no conception of this death on Golgotha. For even externally this Mystery of Golgotha has something very strange, something from which man has much to learn. This is that no historical writings tell of the Mystery of Golgotha, and the critics of the Gospels assert that the Gospels are in no way authoritative as historical documents. Principles of initiation are applied to that which was not written out of historical observation. What happened on Golgotha can still be perceived today by initiates, can still be seen today in the Akashic Record by people who undergo initiation. The writers of the Gospels also wrote only out of the Akashic Record; an event is described for which the original writers of the Gospels never thought of calling in the aid of perceptions on the physical plane. So strong was then the consciousness that one had to do here with something which stood in relation to the super-sensible worlds, and that the most important thing was to gain a relation to the super-sensible worlds. Out of the sense-world no right relation to these events can be won. What happened becomes clear through initiation. One could say that at the beginning of our era there lived a man, Jesus of Nazareth; that in the 30th year of his life he experienced a certain change through the reception of the Christ, and that after three years he was crucified. This would signify an event for the progressive history of mankind. If this were said, it would be the opposite of what the initiate learns to know; it would be an affair of men on earth, no matter how spiritualized it might become. With the initiation-principle, this is not the point.

Fundamentally, it might be said — but you must not misunderstand me — radically, it might be said that, at first glance, what happened on Golgotha was not an event which concerned men in so far as they are on the physical plane. At first glance! Not in the way in which it is related: A man once lived, Jesus of Nazareth, at the beginning of our era, who in the 30th year of his life experienced a certain change through the reception of the Christ, and was then crucified in his 33rd year — not so is the initiation-truth of Christianity told. It must be stated entirely differently.

It must be stated approximately thus: One who is to be initiated into the Christian principle learns the following: Before this Earth there was a Moon-condition. During this Moon-condition the Luciferic beings remained behind. These Luciferic beings developed further, alongside the progressive divine spiritual beings. In the Lemurian time Lucifer drew near to men, injected himself into the human earth-evolution, and brought about what was characterized yesterday. Thus Lucifer was inside the whole human development. Had human evolution continued in this way with Lucifer, it would gradually have happened that the mission of the Earth would not have reached its goal; man would have dried up, the human Ego would have separated from, would have broken out of, the divine spiritual evolution. On the old Moon a series, so to speak, of beings belonging to the super-sensible worlds learned that Lucifer had become rebellious, that he had taken up a position hostile to them. Thus the gods were compelled to see that Lucifer had become the adversary of the progressive divine development. — One can at first completely ignore all that concerns man in this. Let us consider all this as the affair of the gods and of their adversaries, the Luciferic beings, and let us consider mankind as a creation of the gods. This was the situation.

Now, there is a certain peculiarity in the spiritual, in the super-sensible, worlds. One thing is *not* present there which is present on the earth; death, in all its forms, is not found there. In the super-sensible worlds one transforms oneself, but one does not die. *Metamorphoses*, not birth and death,

are present there. For example, the group-souls which are in the super-sensible worlds do not die; they transform, metamorphose themselves. Birth and death do not exist there, where the effects of the physical world have never reached. Only where the traits of the physical world have already been transmitted to a certain extent to the beings of the spiritual world, there is something which may be regarded as analogous to death, as with the spirits of nature; but we cannot go into this today. In the real super-sensible world there is no birth or death, only transformation, metamorphosis.

For the divine spiritual beings who may be designated the creators of men, birth and death do not come into consideration. Lucifer also does not incarnate himself as a human being in the physical world. He works in man through man; uses men as his vehicle, as it were. Thus we have to do with the gods and with the Luciferic beings, who look down, so to speak, upon their creations. Had evolution continued in this way, had nothing happened in the world of the gods, then the intention of the gods for men would never have been fulfilled; Lucifer would have thwarted the plan of the gods. The gods had to make a sacrifice — that was their concern — they had to experience something which was related to their sphere in such a way that it really could not be experienced by gods if they remained in their own sphere: They had to send from their own ranks down to the physical plane a being who experienced something which otherwise gods in the spiritual worlds cannot experience. The gods had to send the Christ down to earth to do battle with the Luciferic principle. In the course of time, when the time was fulfilled, the gods, whom we group together under the name of the divine Father-world, sent down the Christ in order that he should learn to know the unending pains of men, which mean something entirely different for a god from what they mean for a man. Therewith the gods entered the earth-sphere to do battle with the Luciferic spirits. A god had to suffer death on the cross, the most disgraceful human death, as Paul especially emphasizes.

We were allowed, once in the Earth's development, to be witnesses — because we looked as through a window into the spiritual worlds — of an affair of the gods.

Previously — so says the initiation-principle — man was compelled under all circumstances to rise into the divine-spiritual worlds in order to take part in the initiation-principle. The initiation-principle stands before the whole of mankind in the Mystery of Golgotha, an event which is at the same time sensible on the physical plane (if men would only see it) and super-sensible, a true affair of the gods. This is the essential thing, that a god once went through death, as a counterpoise to Lucifer, and that men were allowed to look on. This is what the initiation-principle gives as Christian wisdom, and this is the real origin of the faith that to men, as men, something can flow as a force which can take them beyond the earth-sphere and beyond death; because once the gods settled their affair on earth and allowed men to look on. Therefore that which streams out from the Mystery of Golgotha is something universally human. And if every pain, every suffering, every death has its effect (even those inflicted by men on animals) so does *this* death also have its effect. This death was a seed sown by the gods; it was something which remained bound up with the earth, and has remained bound up with it ever since, remained bound up with it in such a way that every man, through trust, through love for the spiritual worlds, will find it. He does find it!

The initiate knows that this is so; the believing-trusting man feels that from the spiritual worlds help can come to him for his striving, if he can only develop enough belief and trust. This will develop itself in a very definite way.

There were those who were contemporaries of the Egyptian initiates. Through initiation these initiates had made quite clear to their pupils the whole tragedy of the conflict of the gods with Lucifer, by setting before men symbolically in their mysteries the Osiris-Set myth. Just yesterday we considered what feelings the Osiris-Set myth called forth in the Egyptians. There lived the divine-spiritual to which men wished to attain; this was called Osiris. But on earth the human being cannot

unite himself with Osiris; he must first go through the gate of death. On earth Osiris could not live; he was immediately dismembered; this was not the place for what was incarnated in Osiris. The last culture epoch before the Graeco-Latin looked up to Christ, to the Osiris-principle, as to a Beyond. Then came the Greek time, which was so deeply imbued with the feeling that it was better to be a beggar on earth than a king in the realm of shades. In the time in which this was still felt in Greece, in the time of the old heroes, men felt the whole discrepancy between the Ego, permeated by the Luciferic principle, and the progressive human organization. Men felt then that the fourth post-Atlantean culture period ran its course in such a way that they had to crowd in a great deal of what man can experience just here on earth. Thence the abnormal, the singular, in this period. In no other time do so many remarkable series of incarnations occur as in this fourth period. Men had to do a great deal here on earth, because they now looked more on this world than on the worlds beyond, as the third culture epoch had still done. The Greeks did not prize this incorporation into Osiris; they were more occupied with cramming as much as possible into the human incarnations, they wanted to get as much as possible out of the incarnation. Thence the remarkable fact that Pythagoras, the great initiator of a certain line of Greek culture, in an earlier incarnation had fought as a Trojan hero on the side of the Trojans. He himself says that he was a Trojan hero, mentioned in Homer, and that he recognized himself as an enemy of the Greeks because he recognized his shield. When Pythagoras says that he had been Euphorbos, anthroposophy teaches a full understanding of this assertion. The Greeks, even the greatest among them, laid especial value on what the single physical incarnations meant for them.

But the fourth post-Atlantean period had also to lead men to feel the spiritual worlds in their full significance, for in that time fell the *Mystery of Golgotha*. At the time when men in Greece were prizing the outer world most, there occurred in an unknown corner of the world the Mystery of Golgotha; on the earthly stage, where otherwise men carry out their human affairs, the gods carried out their own affairs.

Just as the Egyptian learned to look up to death when he thought of his Osiris, so man learned to know, in the fourth post-Atlantean period, how a contemporary religious form was present, in which lived the impulse which could bring to men the feeling that in this physical world something takes place which is really an affair of the gods; that there takes place the living refutation of that which the Greeks had until then believed — "Better to be a beggar on earth than a king in the realm of shades." For now the Greeks learned to know him who, as a king, had descended from the realm of the gods, and, as a beggar, had lived out his destiny on earth among men. That was the answer to the feeling of the fourth post-Atlantean period. But this is also that complex of feelings from which the rays for the future earth-development can proceed. The Egyptian had looked up to Osiris, who for him was the Christ, in order to unite himself with him after death; in the fourth post-Atlantean period man looked upon the Mystery of Golgotha as the contemporary act which taught men that in the physical world an event had taken place which was an affair of the gods.

We are living in the fifth post-Atlantean period. In our fifth post-Atlantean period men will add the great teachings of *Karma* to the other teaching, they will learn to *understand* their karma. In our fifth post-Atlantean period, human beings are experiencing the third act which follows consistently after the Osiris act and the act of the Mystery of Golgotha. They will learn to grasp the idea: "I am placed on earth through birth; my destiny is on earth; I experience joy and sorrow; I must understand that what I experience as joy and sorrow does not approach me in vain, that it is my Karma, and that it comes to me because it is my Karma, my great educator. I look upon that which was before my birth, which placed me in this incarnation, because this, my destiny, is necessary for my further development. Who sent me hither? Who will continue to place me on this earth, into my destiny, until I have discharged my Karma? I shall owe this to the Christ that men can ever more be called to suffer their destinies, until they have discharged their Karma on earth." Therefore Jesus of Nazareth,



out of whom Christ spoke, could not say to men; "Try to escape as fast as possible out of the physical body"...but he had to say to men: "I will place you into your destinies on this earth so long as you have not discharged your Karma. You must discharge your Karma." Men will learn as we approach the future that they were united with Christ before birth, that they have received from him the grace of discharging their old Karma in the incarnations.

Thus did the men of the fourth post-Atlantean period look up to Jesus of Nazareth as the bearer of the Christ. Thus will the men of our time learn that the Christ will reveal himself ever more supersensibly, and will govern more and more the threads of Karma in the affairs of the earth. They will learn to know that spiritual power as that destiny which the Greeks could not yet recognize, which will bring men to the point of discharging their Karma in the most fitting way in the successive incarnations. As to a judge, as to a lord of Karma, men will look up to the Christ in the succession of incarnations, when they experience their destiny. Thus men will stand in such a relation to their destiny that they will be stimulated increasingly to deepen their souls, until they can say to themselves: "This destiny is not allotted to me through an impersonal power, this destiny is allotted to me through that with which I feel myself related in my inmost being. In Karma itself I perceive what is related to my being. My Karma is dear to me because it makes me better and better." Thus one learns to love Karma, and then this is the impulse to know the Christ. Men first learned to love their Karma through the Mystery of Golgotha. And this will continue further and further, and men will learn more and more that under Lucifer's influence alone the earth would never have been able to reach its goal, that the evolution of mankind would have had to become more and more corrupt without the Christ.

But Christianity does not look upon the Christ as a personality, as the founder of an abstract religious system. In our present time the founder of a religion, in accordance with the demands of our time, only brings about discords. Not from a personality does the Christian initiation proceed, but from a fact, from an impersonal act of the gods which took place before the eyes of men. That is why this secret of Golgotha, this event which took place at the beginning of our era and from which went forth the seed of this unique death, the seed from which now grows man's love for his *destiny*, for his Karma, has been transmitted to mankind in a special way.

We have seen that the death which man inflicts on animals has a certain consequence. The death on Golgotha works as a seed in the human soul which feels its relation to the Christ. So was it with the Mystery of Golgotha: The One died, and just as a single seed is laid in the earth, in order that it die and spring up in the field, and that there be an increase of that which proceeded from the one seed, so the death of a god was realized on the cross. The seed was strewn on Golgotha, the soil was the human soul; what springs up are the relations of man to the super-sensible Christ, who will never more disappear from the evolution of the earth, who will always appear to men in the most varied ways. As men were able to see him physically in the time of the Mystery of Golgotha, so will they be able to raise themselves to see in the near future an etheric Christ-image; they will see the Christ as Paul saw him.

That which is contained in the Christian initiation was preserved in the symbol of the Holy Grail; it was brought into that community which imparts the *Christian initiation*. For those who receive the Christian initiation what is said here is not an abstract theory, not an hypothesis, but a fact of the super-sensible worlds. The cultivation of the Christian initiation was entrusted to those who were the guardians of the Holy Grail, and later to the fosterers of the community of the Rose Cross. What proceeds from the Christian initiation should, according to its whole nature, work impersonally. Everything personal should be excluded therefrom; for the personal has brought only quarrels and strife into humanity, and will do this increasingly in the future. Therefore it is a strict rule for those who, symbolically speaking, serve the Holy Grail or, speaking literally, serve the cultivation of the

Christian initiation, that none of those who have a leading part of the first order to play within the brotherhood of the Holy Grail or the community of the Rose Cross — neither they nor those who live in their surroundings — may speak of the secrets which they know and which work in them, before the passage of one hundred years after their deaths. There is no possibility of learning the complete truth about a leading personality of the first order until one hundred years have passed after his death.

This has been a strict law within the Rosicrucian community since its foundation. Exoterically, no one knows who is a leader in the Rosicrucian community until one hundred years have passed after his death. Then what he has given has already passed over into humanity, has become the objective property of mankind. Thus everything personal is excluded. Never will it be possible to point to a personality in an earthly body as a carrier of the Christian mystery. Only a hundred years after the death of such a personality would this be possible. This is a law which all the brothers of the Rose-Cross well observe. Never will a Rosicrucian brother point to a living personality as a leader of the first order in relation to that which, as Christian initiation, should flow into humanity. In ancient times one could point prophetically to those who would come: The prophets were preceded by their forerunners, their prophets, and these prophets pointed to the founders of religions who should come later; in the time of Jesus of Nazareth the contemporaries, for example the Baptist, pointed to him who was their contemporary; but the spiritual organization of mankind, after the Mystery of Golgotha, of necessity became altered in such wise that it can no longer be the prophet's way to point to a personality who will come or who is already present. On the contrary, a person who was a bearer of the Christian mystery, of that spiritual fact which is tested by the hearts of men, will first be pointed out a hundred years after he has passed from the physical plane through the gates of death.

All these things do not happen out of human caprice, but because they *must* happen. They must happen because humanity now stands before a time when love, peace, and understanding must spread in the process of the development of mankind. But they will spread only if we learn to take impersonally what is present, if we learn to champion the truth-containing element which has been given to mankind in the course of human evolution. Never more shall we, if as Occidentals we meet a Buddhist, seek to make him a Christian through persuasion or compulsion; for we believe that what has been given to him, and is the deepest thing in his religion, will surely lead him to the Christ. We believe above all things in his own truth; we will not injure the feelings of the Buddhist by saying it is not true that the founder of his religion, after he had lived among men as a Bodhisattva, has as a Buddha no expectation of further physical incarnations. Thereby we establish peace between the religious confessions. In this way, in the future the Christian will understand the Buddhist, and the Buddhist will understand the Christian. The Buddhist who will understand Christianity will say: "I understand that the Christian makes his religious principle something impersonal, an impersonal fact, the fact of the Mystery of Golgotha, an affair of the gods which man may watch and through which he may receive what can connect him with the divine." No reasonable Buddhist will come to the Christian and say that the Christ can be incarnated in a physical body. On the contrary he would see in this a transgression of the true religious principle. And so no new discord-producing confession with a religious leader of a personal sort will be brought into the world, but the *initiation principle itself* with its peace, its harmony, its way of producing understanding, will meet all religions with vivifying understanding, and will not wish to force the truth of one religion upon another. As the Oriental Buddhist would answer to the Occidental who said to him that the Buddha could appear in a fleshly body: "Then you do not understand the matter, you do not know what a Buddha is" so would the Buddhist who had grasped the true heart of Christianity, and who stood for spiritual knowledge in earnestness and dignity, reply to one who should speak to him of a Christ incarnated in the flesh: "You do not understand Christianity if you believe that the Christ comes again in a physical body; you understand Christianity just as little as one understands Buddhism who believes that the Buddha would appear in a fleshly body." What the Christian, if he is an anthroposophist, will always grant to

the Buddhist; this will the Buddhist, if he is an anthroposophist, always grant also to the Christian. And so with every adherent of every religious confession of the earth. Thus will anthroposophy bring the great and understanding union, the synthesis of the religious confessions on the earth.

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