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THE TRUE NATURE of the SECOND COMING

Esoteric Studies

*Two lectures given to members of the Anthroposophical Society in
Carlsruhe, 25 January, 1910, and Stuttgart, 6 March, 1910.*

RUDOLF STEINER

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THE TRUE NATURE of the SECOND COMING

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Foreword

EARLY in the year 1910 Rudolf Steiner is believed to have spoken for the first time on the mystery of the true nature of the Second Coming. Throughout that year he gave a number of lectures on the subject and continued his teaching during the following year. The importance of these lectures cannot be exaggerated: their study is essential to an understanding of the meaning and purpose of the Anthroposophical Movement. In the whole body of teaching that was given out, the two lectures which are now reprinted in a new translation, under the title of *The True Nature of the Second Coming*, form an indispensable part. Many salient points appear, and explanations are made of the connections between past, present and future.

Rudolf Steiner's interpretation of that apocalyptic event described in the New Testament as the coming of the Son of Man "in the clouds with great power and glory" demands for its apprehension knowledge of his teaching on the evolution of man's consciousness, particularly on the development of the ego-consciousness in relation to the Christ Impulse. The Incarnation of the Christ took place in an epoch when the soul-faculties of men were best adapted to receive Him manifest in the flesh. But now new faculties of perception are awakening, and men will become capable of receiving Him in a different way. From the third decade of this century onwards, Rudolf Steiner said, the Christ would be visible in etheric form to those possessing these new faculties. At first He will be seen by a few, but during the next three thousand years by greater and yet greater numbers. In a lecture given at Basle on 1st October, 1911, Dr. Steiner

spoke of the fact that in the future the presence of Christ would be felt amongst those who were gathered together waiting in expectation to receive Him. And for those who are alone, he said, "many a one will experience, when sitting silent in his room, his heart sad and oppressed, not knowing which way to turn, that the etheric Christ will appear and will speak comforting words to him. The Christ will become a living Comforter to men!"

To attempt to master and to expound the content of this revelation given by Rudolf Steiner becomes the particular task of those who count themselves among his followers. He believed that the Christian evangel would develop further and further in time to come, bringing ever new gifts and revelations to the souls of men in their own evolutionary progress from one incarnation to another. And, speaking two years before his death, he said: "Anthroposophy would wish its destiny to be one with the destiny of Christianity."

When he gave his lecture-cycle on the Gospel of St. Matthew he described in detail the preparation that took place for the coming of Christ in a physical body, with an account of the special mission of Jeshu ben Pandira; in 1911, in the first of two lectures entitled *Jeshu ben Pandira*, he gave the explicit message that it is in order to prepare humanity for the Second Coming of Christ that Spiritual Science exists. "Everyone," he said, "who works at the task of Spiritual Science shares in making this preparation."

MILDRED KIRKCALDY

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The Event of Christ's Appearance in the Etheric World

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WHEN someone has concerned himself for a time with the conception of the world presented by Spiritual Science, and then allows the various ideas and thoughts and items of knowledge that he gains from it to work upon him, manifold questions arise, and he becomes more and more of a spiritual scientist by linking such questions—which are really questions of feeling, of the heart, of the character, in short, of life in general—with spiritual-scientific ideas. The nature of these ideas is such that they not only satisfy our theoretical, scientific curiosity but shed light upon the riddles of life, upon the mysteries of existence, and they bear fruit in the real sense only when we no longer merely reflect about and feel their import, value and meaning, but learn under their influence to look differently at the world around us. These ideas should warm us inwardly, should become impulses, forces of heart and soul within us. And this is increasingly so when the answers received to certain questions give rise to new questions, when those answers in turn become questions followed by new answers, and so on. In this way progress is made both in spiritual knowledge and in the spiritual life.

A fairly long time will still have to pass before it will be possible to speak of the more intimate aspects of spiritual life in

public lectures, but within our own Groups the time when this can be done should be coming nearer and nearer. It is therefore inevitable that new members may be taken aback or even shocked when they hear certain things; but, after all, we should make no progress in our work if we could not pass on to discuss more intimate questions of life on the basis of spiritual-scientific investigation and knowledge. Therefore—although misunderstandings may arise in those of you who have been concerned with the spiritual life for only a comparatively short time—we will consider certain of these more intimate facts of spiritual knowledge again to-day.

Without doubt an earnest question will arise in us when we think about the idea of *reincarnation*, of many earth-lives, not merely as an abstract theory, but when we ponder deeply on the meaning and implications of this fact of the spiritual life. The significant answer given by reincarnation will be followed by new questions and we may ask, for example: If the human being lives many times on earth, if he returns again and again in new incarnations, what is the deeper meaning of this?—The usual answer is that by passing many times through life we ascend higher and higher, experiencing the results and fruits of earlier earth-lives in later ones, and thus making progress. But that is still a rather general, abstract answer. It is only through more exact knowledge of the whole purpose of earthly life that we are able to fathom the significance of repeated incarnations.

If a man were to keep returning to an earth that did not change but remained essentially the same, there would not really be much to be learnt through successive incarnations. These incarnations are important because, as we pass through each of them, we can learn new things, have new experiences on the earth. Over short periods of time this is not so clearly perceptible, but if, as Spiritual Science enables us to do, we survey long periods, it becomes obvious that the epochs of our earth differ essentially from each other in character, and that we are continually passing through new experiences. But something else, too, must be

realised—that these changes in the life of the earth itself must be taken into account. If in a particular epoch of earthly existence we neglect the opportunity of experiencing and learning what that epoch has to offer, then, although we return in a subsequent incarnation, we have missed something, we have not assimilated what we ought to have assimilated in the previous epoch. The result is that in the next epoch we are unable to make proper use of our forces and faculties.

Speaking still in a quite general sense, it can be said that in our epoch something is possible on earth, indeed over almost the whole globe, that was not possible in the earlier incarnations, for example, of men now living. Strange as it may seem, there is a certain, indeed a great significance in this. It is possible in the present incarnation for certain numbers of people to come to Spiritual Science; that is, to assimilate the findings of spiritual investigation which are available in the domain of Spiritual Science to-day. The fact that a few human beings come together and receive the knowledge discovered by spiritual investigation may of course be regarded as of no importance, but people who hold this view do not understand the significance of reincarnation, nor that certain things can be learnt only during *one* particular incarnation. If they are not learnt, something has been missed and will be lacking in the following incarnations.

This above all must be realised: What we learn to-day in Spiritual Science becomes part of our soul, and we bring it with us when we descend again into the next incarnation.

Let us now try to grasp what this means for the soul. Reference will have to be made not only to a great deal that will already be known to you from other lectures and from your own reading, but to many facts of the spiritual life that are more or less new or still quite unfamiliar to you. It is necessary first to go back, as often before, to earlier epochs in the evolution of humanity and of the earth. We are living now in the fifth epoch following the great Atlantean catastrophe. This epoch was preceded by the fourth, the Greco-Latin epoch, when ideas and experiences of

paramount importance for life on earth originated among the Greek and Latin peoples. This fourth epoch was preceded by the Chaldean-Babylonian-Assyrian-Egyptian period, this by the original Persian and this in turn by the ancient Indian. In a still more distant past we come to the great Atlantean catastrophe by which an ancient continent extending over the area of the present Atlantic Ocean was destroyed. This continent of ancient Atlantis was gradually swept away and the solid earth on which we are now living received its present configuration. In still earlier epochs preceding the Atlantean catastrophe, we come to the civilisations and forms of culture developed on Atlantis by the Atlantean races. And these conditions were preceded by still earlier ones.

A survey of what is told by history—it does not, after all, go very far back—may easily give rise to the belief (although this is quite unfounded even for shorter periods) that conditions of existence on our earth were always the same as they are to-day. That is by no means so, for there have been fundamental changes—most marked of all in man's life of soul. The souls of those sitting here to-day were incarnated in bodies belonging to all these epochs of earth-evolution and they absorbed what it was possible to absorb in each of them. In each successive incarnation the soul has developed different faculties. Although during the Greco-Latin epoch the difference was perhaps not quite as extreme, in the epoch of ancient Persia and even more so in that of ancient India, our souls were entirely different from what they are to-day. They were equipped with faculties of another kind altogether in those olden times and lived under entirely different conditions. And now, in order that what follows may be thoroughly understood, we will visualise as clearly as possible the nature of our souls after the Atlantean catastrophe, when they were incarnated, let us say, in the bodies that could have existed on earth only at the time of the ancient Indian civilisation-epoch. It must not be imagined that this civilisation was to be found only in India itself—it was merely that in those days the Indian peoples

were of prime importance. The forms of civilisation differed all over the earth, but they bore the stamp of the instructions given for the ancient Indians by the Leaders of humanity.

When thinking of the nature of our souls in that epoch it must be realised at once that knowledge of the kind possessed by men of the modern age was then quite impossible. There was as yet no consciousness of the self, no ego-consciousness as clear and distinct as that of to-day. The fact that he was an ego hardly entered a man's consciousness. True, the ego, the "I", was already within man as a power, a force, but knowledge of the ego is not the same thing as its power or activity. Human beings lacked the inwardness belonging to their nature to-day, but instead of it they possessed faculties of quite another kind—faculties we have often referred to as those of ancient, shadowy clairvoyance.

When we study the human soul during waking life in those times we find that it did not really feel itself as an ego; an individual man felt himself to be a member of his race or tribe, of his folk. In the sense that the hand is a limb or member of the body, the single "I" or ego stood for the whole community of the racial stock and the folk. Man did not feel himself to be an individual "I" as he does to-day; he experienced the ego as the folk-ego, the tribal ego. During the day he did not really know that he was a man in the real sense. But when evening came and he went to sleep, his consciousness was not completely darkened, as it is to-day; the soul was able, during sleep, to be aware of spiritual facts—for example, of spiritual facts and happenings in its environment of which the dream to-day is a mere shadow, in most cases no longer representing their full reality. Men had such perceptions at that time and they knew: There is indeed a spiritual world. The spiritual world was a reality to them, not as the result of logical reasoning, not through anything needing proof, but because every night, even if in dim, dreamlike consciousness, they were actually within the spiritual world. But that was not the essential. As well as sleeping and waking life, there were also intermediate states during which man



neither completely asleep nor completely awake. In those states, ego-consciousness was diminished even more than by day, but on the other hand the perception of spiritual happenings, the dreamlike clairvoyance, was essentially stronger than at other times during the night. Thus there were intermediate states in which men had, it is true, no ego-consciousness, but were clairvoyant. In such states a man was as if transported, entirely unaware of his separate identity. He did not know: "I am a man". But he knew with certainty: "I am a member of a spiritual world, and I know that it is a reality for I behold it." Such were the experiences of human souls in the days of ancient India. And in the Atlantean epoch this consciousness, this life in the spiritual world, was even clearer; indeed very, very much clearer . . . We therefore look back to an age when our souls were endowed with a dim, dreamlike clairvoyance which has faded away by degrees in the course of the evolution of mankind.

If our souls had remained at the stage of this ancient clairvoyance, we could not have acquired the individual ego-consciousness that is ours to-day; it would not have been possible for us to realise: We are men. We were obliged, so to speak, to exchange our consciousness of the spiritual world for ego-consciousness, "I"-consciousness. In the future we shall have both at the same time; we shall all attain that state in which clairvoyance functions in the fullest sense while ego-consciousness is maintained intact—as can only occur to-day in one who has trodden the path of Initiation. In the future it will again be possible for everyone to gaze into the spiritual world and yet to feel himself a man, an ego.

Picture to yourselves once more what has taken place. The soul has passed from incarnation to incarnation; once it was clairvoyant, then later on the consciousness of becoming an ego grew clearer and clearer and it was increasingly possible for the soul to form its own judgments. As long as a man still has clairvoyant vision of the spiritual world and does not feel himself to be an ego, he cannot form judgments or reason with the intellect.

The latter faculty developed steadily but with every succeeding incarnation the old clairvoyance faded. The states in which man was able to gaze into the spiritual world became rarer; he penetrated more and more deeply into the physical plane, developed logical thinking and felt himself to be an ego.

We can therefore say that in very ancient times man was a spiritual being, for he lived in direct intercourse with other spiritual beings as their companion; he felt his kinship with beings to whom he can no longer look up to-day with normal senses. As well as the world immediately surrounding us there are, as we know, still other worlds, peopled by other spiritual beings. With his normal consciousness to-day man cannot see into these worlds, but in earlier times he lived in them, both during the night-consciousness of sleep and in the intermediate state of which we spoke. He lived within these worlds, in communion with these other beings. Normally, this is no longer possible for him to-day. He was, as it were, cast out of his home—the spiritual world—and with every new incarnation became more firmly established in this earthly world.

In the sanctuaries for the cultivation of the spiritual life, in domains of learning and in the sciences where such things were still known, account was taken of the fact that man had incarnated in these different epochs of earth-evolution. Men looked back to a very ancient epoch before the Atlantean catastrophe, when human beings lived in direct communion with the Gods or spiritual Beings, and when their inner life of feeling and sentient experience was naturally quite different. You can well imagine that this was so in an epoch when the soul was fully aware of being able to look up to the higher Beings, knowing itself to be a member of that higher world. In considering these facts we will remind ourselves that we can learn to speak and think to-day if we grow up among human beings, for such faculties can be acquired only through contact with men. If a child were to be put on some lonely island to-day and grew up without having

any contact with human beings, he would not develop the faculties of thinking and speaking.

This shows that the evolution of any being is to some extent dependent upon the species of beings among whom it grows up and lives. That this has an effect upon evolution can be observed in the case of animals. It is well known that if dogs are removed from conditions where they are in contact with human beings to places where they have no such contact, they forget how to bark: as a rule the descendants of such dogs cannot bark at all. Something does, then, depend upon the kind of beings among which a being grows up. You can therefore imagine that for the same souls to live among modern men on the physical plane is a different matter from their having lived at an earlier time among spiritual Beings in a spiritual world into which normal vision to-day does not penetrate. The impulses man developed when living among men and those he developed when living among Gods were quite different.

Higher knowledge has always recognised these things, has always looked back to that ancient time when men were in direct contact with divine-spiritual Beings. And the effect of this contact was that the soul felt itself a member of the divine-spiritual world. But this also engendered impulses and forces in the soul that were still of a divine-spiritual nature—divine-spiritual in quite another sense from that which applies to the forces of the soul to-day. When the soul felt itself a member of the higher world, there spoke out of this soul a will that also sprang from the divine-spiritual world—a will of which it might rightly be said that it was inspired, because the soul was living among Gods.

Higher knowledge speaks of this age when man was still united with the divine-spiritual Beings as the Golden Age, or *Krita Yuga*. It is an age of great antiquity, the most important period of which actually preceded the Atlantean catastrophe. Then came an age when men no longer felt their connection with the divine-spiritual world as strongly as during *Krita Yuga*, when

they no longer felt that their impulses were determined by their life with the Gods, when their vision of the spirit and the soul was already clouded. Nevertheless, there still remained in them a memory of their life with the spiritual Beings and the Gods.

This memory was particularly distinct in ancient India. It was very easy in those days to speak about spiritual things; one could have directed men's attention to the outer, physically perceptible world and yet regard it as *maya* or illusion, because men had not been having these physical perceptions for so very long. So it was in ancient India. Souls then living no longer beheld the Gods themselves, but they still beheld spiritual facts and happenings and spiritual Beings of lower ranks. Only a comparatively small number of men were still able to behold the sublime spiritual Beings, and even for these men the former living communion with the Gods was already much less intense. The will-impulses from the divine-spiritual world had already disappeared. Nevertheless, a glimpse into spiritual facts and happenings was still possible, at all events in certain states of consciousness: in sleep and in those intermediate states to which reference has been made.

The most important facts of this spiritual world, however, which in earlier times had been experienced as immediate reality, were now there in the form of a kind of knowledge of truth, as something that the soul still knew with certainty but which was now operative only in the form of knowledge, as a truth. Men still lived in the spiritual world, but in this later age the realisation of its existence was not as strong as it had formerly been. This period is called the Silver Age, or *Trita Yuga*.

Then came the epoch of those incarnations when man's vision was more and more shut off from the spiritual world, when his whole nature was directed to the outer sense-world and firmly consolidated in that world; inner ego-consciousness, consciousness of manhood, became more and more definite and distinct. This is the Bronze Age, or *Dvapara Yuga*. Man's knowledge of the spiritual world was no longer as sublime or direct as in earlier times, but something at least had remained in humanity. It was

as if in men of the present day who have reached a certain age there were to remain something of the jubilation of youth . . . this is past and over but it has been experienced and known and a man can speak of it as something with which he is familiar. Thus the souls of that age were still in some degree familiar with experiences leading to the spiritual worlds. That is the essential characteristic of Dvapara Yuga.

But then came another age, an age when even this degree of familiarity with the spiritual world ceased, when the doors of the spiritual world closed. Men's vision was more and more confined to the outer material world and to the intellect which elaborates the sense-impressions, so that the only remaining possibility was to reflect about the spiritual world—which is the most unsatisfactory way of acquiring knowledge of it. What men now actually knew from their own experience was the material-physical world. If they desired to know something about the spiritual world, this was possible only through reflection. It is the age when man was most lacking in spirituality and therefore established himself firmly in the material world. This was necessary in order that he might be able by degrees to develop consciousness of self to its highest point, for only through the sturdy resistance of the outer world could man learn to distinguish himself from the world and experience himself as an individual. This age is called Kali Yuga, or the Dark Age.

I emphasise that these designations—Krita Yuga, for example—can also be applied to longer epochs, for before the Golden Age man experienced and participated in still higher worlds; hence all those earlier ages could be embraced by this name. But if, so to speak, demands are kept moderate and one is satisfied with the range of spiritual experience described, the periods can be divided in the way indicated. Definite time-periods can be given for all such epochs. True, evolution progresses slowly and by degrees, but there are certain boundary-lines of which it can be said that prior to them such-and-such conditions of life and of consciousness predominated, and subsequently, others.

Accordingly, in the sense first spoken of, Kali Yuga began approximately in the year 3101 B.C. Thus we realise that our souls have appeared repeatedly on the earth in new incarnations, in the course of which man's vision has been more and more shut off from the spiritual world and therefore increasingly restricted to the outer world of the senses. We realise, too, that with every incarnation our souls enter into new conditions in which there are always new things to be learnt. What we can achieve in Kali Yuga is to establish and consolidate our ego-consciousness. This was not previously possible, for we had first to be endowed with the ego.

If in some incarnation souls have failed to take in what that particular epoch has to give, it is very difficult for the loss to be made good in later epochs. Such souls must wait a long time until the loss can in some respect be counterbalanced. But no reliance should be placed upon such a possibility.

We will therefore picture to ourselves that the result of the doors being closed against the spiritual world was of fundamental and essential importance. This was also the epoch of John the Baptist, of Christ Himself on earth. In that epoch, when 3,100 years of the Dark Age had already elapsed, a fact of salient importance was that all human beings then living had already been incarnated several times—once or twice at the very least—in the Dark Age. Ego-consciousness had been firmly established; memory of the spiritual world had faded away, and if men did not desire to lose their connection with the spiritual world entirely, it was essential for them to learn to experience within the ego the reality of the spiritual world. The ego must have developed to the stage where it could be certain—in its inmost core at least—that there is a spiritual world, that man belongs to this spiritual world, and that there are higher spiritual Beings. The ego must have made itself capable of feeling, of believing in, the spiritual world.

If in the days of Christ Jesus someone had voiced the truth in regard to the conditions then prevailing, he might have said: In

earlier times men could experience the kingdom of heaven while they were outside their ego in those spiritual distances reached when out of the body. Man had then to experience the kingdoms of heaven, the kingdoms of the spiritual world, far away from the ego. This is no longer possible, for man's nature has changed so greatly that these kingdoms must be experienced within the ego itself; the kingdoms of heaven have come so near to man that they work into his very ego. And it was this that was proclaimed by John the Baptist: The kingdoms of heaven are at hand!—that is to say, they have drawn near to the ego. Previously they were outside man, but now they are near and man must grasp them in the very core of his being, in the ego. And because in this Dark Age, in Kali Yuga, man could no longer go forth from the physical into the spiritual world, it was necessary for the Divine Being, Christ, to come down into the physical world . . . Christ's descent into a man of flesh, into Jesus of Nazareth, was necessary in order that through beholding the life and deeds of Christ on the physical plane it might become possible for men to be linked, in the physical body, with the kingdoms of heaven, with the spiritual world. And so Christ's sojourn on earth took place during a period in the middle of Kali Yuga, the Dark Age, when men who were not living in a state of dull insensibility but understood the nature of the times could realise: The descent of the God to men is necessary in order that a lost connection with the spiritual world may be established once again.

If at that time no human beings had been able to find a living link with Christ in their hearts and souls, the connection with the spiritual worlds would have been gradually lost; the kingdoms of heaven would not have been received into the egos of men. It might well have happened that if all human beings living at that crucial point of time had persisted in remaining in darkness, an event of such momentous significance would have passed them by unnoticed. The souls of men would have withered, gone to waste, decayed. True, even without Christ they would have continued to incarnate for some time still, but they would

not have been able to implant in the ego the power that would have enabled them to find the link with the kingdoms of heaven. The event of the Appearance of Christ on the earth might everywhere have passed unnoticed—as it did, for example, in Rome. It was alleged in Rome that a sect of sinful people were living in some out-of-the-way, sordid alley, that among them was a wicked spirit calling himself Jesus of Nazareth and inciting them by his preaching to all kinds of villainous deeds. At a certain period that was all that was known in Rome of Christ! And you may possibly also be aware that Tacitus, the great Roman historian, wrote in a similar vein about a hundred years after the events in Palestine.

Thus it was by no means universally realised that something of supreme importance had taken place: that the Divine Light had shone into the darkness of earth and that it was now possible for men to be brought safely through Kali Yuga. The possibility of further evolution for humanity was ensured because there were certain souls who understood what was at stake at that point of time and knew what it signified that Christ had been upon earth.

If you were to transfer yourselves in thought to that time, you would realise that it was quite possible to live without knowing anything at all of the advent of Christ Jesus on the physical plane—it was quite possible to live on earth without having any consciousness of this most momentous event.

Would it not also be possible to-day for something of infinite importance to take place without men being aware of it? Might not our contemporaries fail to have the slightest inkling of the most important happening in the world at the present time? It might well be so. For something of supreme importance is taking place, although it is perceptible only to the eyes of spirit. There is a great deal of talk about periods of transition; we ourselves are actually living in a very important one. And its importance lies in the fact that the Dark Age has run its course and a new age is beginning, when slowly and by degrees the souls of men will change and new faculties will be developed.

The fact that the vast majority of men are entirely unaware of this need not be a cause of surprise, for it was the same when the Christ Event took place at the beginning of our era. Kali Yuga came to an end in the year 1899 and we have now to live on into a new age. What is beginning is slowly preparing men for new faculties of soul.

The first indications of these new faculties will be noticeable in isolated souls comparatively soon now, and they will become more clearly apparent in the middle of the thirties of this century, approximately in the period between 1930 and 1940. The years 1933, 1935 and 1937 will be particularly important. Very special faculties will then reveal themselves in human beings as natural gifts. Great changes will take place during this period and biblical prophecies will be fulfilled. Everything will change for souls who are living on earth and also for those who are no longer in physical bodies. Whatever their realm of existence, souls are on the way to possessing entirely new faculties. Everything is changing—but the happening of supreme importance in our time is a deeply incisive transformation of the faculties of the human soul.

Kali Yuga is over and the souls of men are now beginning to develop new faculties. These faculties—because this is the purpose of the epoch—will of themselves draw forth from souls certain powers of clairvoyance which during Kali Yuga had necessarily to be submerged in the realm of the unconscious. A number of souls will experience the strange condition of having ego-consciousness but at the same time the feeling of living in a world essentially different from the world known to their ordinary consciousness. The experience will be shadowy, like a divination, as though an operation had been performed on one born blind. . . . Through what we call esoteric training these clairvoyant faculties will be attained in a far better form. But because human beings progress, they will appear in mankind in their very earliest beginnings, in their most elementary stages, through the natural process of evolution.

But it might very easily happen—indeed, far more easily now

than at any earlier time—that men would prove incapable of grasping this event of such supreme importance for humanity, incapable of realising that this denotes an actual glimpse into a spiritual world, although still shadowy and dim. There might, for example, be so much wickedness, so much materialism on the earth that the majority of men would show not the slightest understanding, and regard those who have this clairvoyance as lunatics, shutting them up in asylums together with those whose minds are obviously deranged. This point of time might pass men by without leaving a trace, although to-day we too are letting the call of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, and of Christ Himself, again resound: A new epoch is at hand when the souls of men must take a step upward into the kingdoms of heaven!

The great event might very easily pass without being understood by men. . . . If between the years 1930 and 1940 the materialists were to say triumphantly: True, there have been a number of fools but no sign whatever of the expected great event . . . this would not in the least disprove what has been said. But if the materialists were to win the day and mankind were to overlook these happenings altogether, it would be a dire misfortune. Even if men should prove incapable of perceiving them, great things will come to pass.

One is that it will be possible for men to acquire the new faculty of perception in the etheric world—a certain number to begin with, and they will be followed by more and more others, for mankind will have 2,500 years during which to develop these faculties in greater and greater perfection. This opportunity must not be missed. If it were, this would be a tragic misfortune and mankind would then be obliged to wait until a later epoch in order to retrieve the lost opportunity and subsequently to develop the new faculty. This faculty will consist in men being able to see in their environment something of the etheric world which hitherto they have not normally been able to see. Man now sees only the human physical body, but then he will be able to see

the etheric body at least as a shadowy picture and also to perceive the connection between deeper happenings in the etheric world. He will have pictures and premonitions of happenings in the spiritual world and find that in three or four days' time such happenings take place on the physical plane. He will see certain things in etheric pictures and know that to-morrow or in a few days' time this or that will happen.

The faculties of the human soul will be transformed. And what is associated with this? The Being we call the Christ was once on earth in the flesh at the beginning of our era. He will never come again in a physical body, for that was a unique event and will not be repeated. But He will come again in an etheric form in the period indicated. Men will learn to perceive Christ inasmuch as through this etheric sight they will grow towards Him. He does not now descend as far as the physical body but only as far as the etheric body; men must therefore grow to the stage where He can be perceived. For Christ spoke truly when He said: "I am with you always, even unto the end of the days of earth." He is present in our spiritual world . . . and those especially blessed can always see Him in this spiritual, etheric world.

A man who was convinced with particular intensity through such perception, was Paul—in the vision at Damascus. But this etheric sight will develop in individual human beings as a natural faculty. In days to come it will be more and more possible for men to experience what Paul experienced at Damascus.

We are now able to grasp quite a different aspect of Spiritual Science. We realise that it is a preparation for the actual event of the new Appearance of Christ. Christ will appear again inasmuch as with their etheric sight men will raise themselves to Him. When this is understood, Spiritual Science is disclosed as the means of preparing men to recognise the return of Christ, in order that it shall not be their misfortune to overlook this event but that they shall be mature enough to grasp the great happening of the Second Coming of Christ. Men will become capable of

seeing etheric bodies and among them, too, the etheric body of Christ; that is to say, they will grow into a world where Christ will be revealed to their newly wakened faculties.

It will then no longer be necessary to amass all kinds of documentary evidence to prove the existence of Christ; there will be eye-witnesses of the presence of the Living Christ, men who will know Him in His etheric body. And from this experience they will realise that this is the same Being who at the beginning of our era fulfilled the Mystery of Golgotha, that He is indeed the Christ. Just as Paul at Damascus was convinced at that time: This is Christ! . . . so there will be men whose experiences in the etheric world will convince them that in very truth Christ lives.

The supreme mystery of the age in which we are living is the Second Coming of Christ—that is its true nature. But the materialistic mind will in a certain sense appropriate this event. What has now been said—that all the data of genuine spiritual knowledge point to this age—will often be proclaimed in the years immediately ahead. But the materialistic mind corrupts everything-to-day, and what will happen is that this kind of thinking will be quite incapable of conceiving that the souls of men must advance to the stage of etheric sight and therewith to vision of Christ in the etheric body.

Materialistic thinking will conceive of this event as a descent of Christ in the flesh, as an incarnation in the flesh. A number of persons in their boundless arrogance will turn this to their own advantage and announce themselves to men as the reincarnated Christ. The near future may therefore bring false Christs, but anthroposophists should be so fully prepared for the spiritual life that they will not confuse the return of Christ in a spiritual body, perceptible only to higher vision, with a return in a physical body of flesh. This will be one of the most terrible temptations besetting mankind and to lead men past this temptation will be the task of those who learn through Spiritual Science to rise in the true sense to an understanding of the Spirit, who try not to drag spirit down into matter but to ascend into the spiritual

world themselves. Thus we may speak of the return of Christ and of the fact that we rise to Christ in the spiritual world through acquiring the faculty of etheric vision.

Christ is ever-present, but He is in the spiritual world. We can reach Him when we rise into that world. All anthroposophical teaching should be transformed within us into an indomitable will not to allow this event to pass unnoticed but in the time that remains to us gradually to educate human beings who will be capable of developing these new faculties and therewith *to unite anew with Christ*. Otherwise, before such an opportunity could again arise, humanity would have to wait for long, long ages . . . indeed, until a new incarnation of the earth. If this event of the return of Christ were to be overlooked, the vision of Christ in the etheric body would be restricted to those who are willing to fit themselves for such an experience through esoteric training. But the really momentous fact of these faculties being acquired by humanity in general, by all men, of this great event being understood by means of faculties developing naturally in all men . . . that would be impossible for long, long ages.

Obviously, therefore, there is something in our age that justifies the existence and the work of Spiritual Science in the world. Its aim is not merely to satisfy theoretical needs or scientific curiosity. To prepare men for this great event, to prepare them to take their rightful place in the epoch in which they live and with clarity of understanding and knowledge to perceive what is actually present but may pass men by without being brought to fruition—such is the aim of Spiritual Science.

It will be of the utmost importance to recognise and understand this event of Christ's Appearance, for it will be followed by other events. Just as other happenings preceded the Christ Event in Palestine, so will those who prophetically foretold His coming follow Him after the time referred to, after He Himself has become visible to mankind again in the etheric body. The preparers of His coming will be recognisable in a new form to men who have experienced the new Christ Event. Those who

lived on the earth as Moses, Abraham and the Prophets will be recognisable once again. And it will be known that just as Abraham preceded Christ as a preparer, he also takes over the mission, after Christ's coming, of being a helper in His work. Thus a man who does not sleep through the event of supreme importance in the immediate future gradually finds his way into fellowship with all those who, as the Patriarchs, preceded the Christ Event; he allies himself with them. The whole choir of those to whose level we shall thus be able to rise is again revealed. The one who led mankind downwards to the physical plane appears again after Christ and leads men upwards again, unites them again with the spiritual worlds.*

Looking far back into the past we come to that point of time in the evolution of humanity of which we say: from then onwards humanity descends farther and farther away from the spiritual world into the physical world. Although the following picture also has its material aspect, it can nevertheless be used here. In earlier times man was a companion of spiritual Beings and because his spirit lived in the spiritual world he was a *son of the Gods*. But the soul, descending ever more deeply into bodily incarnation, participated to a constantly increasing extent in the outer world. The son of the Gods within man took delight in the daughters of the earth, that is to say in those souls who were drawn to the physical world. This in turn means: the human spirit, in earlier times charged through and through with divine spirituality, sank down into physical materiality, became the spouse of the brain-bound intellect and by it was entangled in the web of the physical world of sense. And now the human spirit must re-ascend along the path by which the descent was once made and become again a son of the Gods. The human spirit which had become the son of man would perish in this physical world if this son of man were not to climb upwards again to the Divine Beings, to the light of the spiritual world, finding delight in times to come in the daughters of the Gods. It was necessary

* See the following lecture.



for the evolution of mankind that the sons of the Gods should unite with the daughters of men, with the souls who are fettered to the earth, in order that as the son of man the human spirit should learn to master the physical plane. But it is necessary that the human being of the future, the son of man, shall take delight in the daughters of the Gods, in the divine-spiritual light of wisdom with which he must unite in order then to grow upwards again into the world of the Gods.

The *will* of man must be fired by the divine wisdom, and the most powerful impulse for this will be if to those who have truly prepared themselves the sublime ether-form of Christ Jesus becomes perceptible. To a man in whom natural clairvoyance has developed this will be like a Second Coming of Christ Jesus, just as the etheric Christ appeared as a spiritual Being to Paul. Christ will appear again to men when they realise that they must use to this end the faculties with which evolution itself will equip the human soul.

Let us therefore use Spiritual Science not merely to satisfy our curiosity, but in such a way that it will make us worthier to fulfil the great tasks and missions devolving upon the human race.

Answer given by Dr. Steiner to questions asked in connection with the foregoing lecture.

When light has been thrown, as it has been to-day, upon mysteries of a more intimate kind, let us not treat them as thoughtlessly as certain subjects are wont to be treated to-day, but realise that Anthroposophy must be for us something altogether different from a theory. The teaching has, of course, to be given; for how would it be possible to rise to thoughts such as have been voiced to-day if they could not be received in the form of teaching? The essence of this teaching, however, is that it does not remain as such but is re-moulded in the soul into qualities of heart and character, into an entirely different attitude of mind,

making different men of us. The teaching should guide us how to make the right use of our incarnations so that in the course of them we can develop into something quite different.

I have tried not to say a word too much or too little and have therefore given only fleeting indications of matters of great moment. But what has been said is of significance not only for the souls who will be incarnated on the physical plane in the period from 1930 to 1940 but also for those who will then be in the spiritual world between death and a new birth; souls work down from the spiritual world into the world of the living, even though the latter may know nothing of it. Through the new Christ Event, this communion between souls who are incarnated here on the physical plane and souls already in the spiritual world will become an increasingly conscious communion. Active co-operation between human beings in incarnation and spiritual beings will then be possible; this should already have been indicated when it was said that the Prophets appear again among men on the earth.

You have therefore to conceive that when these great times arrive in the future there will be a more conscious mutual co-operation between men in the physical world and in the spiritual world. This is not possible to-day because of the absence of a common language. Here in the physical world the only words men use in their languages designate physical things and physical conditions. The world in which human beings live between death and a new birth is quite different from the world immediately surrounding us, and they speak a different language. The Dead can take in only what is spoken in the sense of Spiritual Science—nothing else. Therefore in Anthroposophy we are cultivating something that will be more and more intelligible to the Dead and we are speaking also for those who are living between death and a new birth.

Humanity is passing into an era when the strength of the influences from the spiritual world will steadily increase. The great events of the immediate future will be perceptible in all

worlds. Those, too, who are living between death and a new birth will have new experiences as the result of the new Christ Event in the etheric world. But if they had made no preparation in themselves while on earth, they would no more understand the event than would men incarnated on the earth, unless these had prepared themselves to respond in the right way. It is essential for all souls now incarnated—no matter whether they will then still be in physical incarnation or not—that through the assimilation of anthroposophical truths they should prepare themselves for these important future events. If they fail to receive into their earthly consciousness what Anthroposophy or Spiritual Science has to give, they will have to wait for a new incarnation in order to have the possibility here on earth of assimilating the corresponding teachings. For there are things that can be experienced and learnt only on the earth.

Hence it is said that in the spiritual world there is, for example, no possibility of knowing death—and it was necessary for a God to descend into the physical world in order that He might die. Knowledge of what the Mystery of Golgotha is can be acquired in no other world in the way that is possible in the physical world. We have been led down into the physical world in order to acquire something that can be acquired only there. And Christ came down to humanity because it was only in the physical world that He could reveal to men—could enable them to experience in the Mystery of Golgotha—something that, having let its fruits ripen in the spiritual world, carries those fruits onward. But the seeds must be laid down and spread abroad in the physical world.

Golden Age—Krita Yuga—about 20,000 years
Silver Age—Treta Yuga—about 15,000 years
Bronze Age—Dvapara Yuga—about 10,000 years
Dark Age—Kali Yuga—about 5,000 years
Our Age embraces a future 2,500 years

II

The Second Coming of Christ in the Etheric World

IN the process of human evolution a certain definite connection exists between the past and the future. Study of this connection sheds a great deal of light upon questions such as: What devolves upon us as men belonging to a particular epoch?

When we were together here some little time ago, many things were said about the past evolution of humanity, and to-day I will add something about the connection between the past and the immediate future. At the end of the lecture yesterday attention was called to a significant sign, telling us as it were from the heavens that humanity needs a spiritual impetus, something like a new impulse for the age.* Understanding of how this impulse must work is possible only when we study the last millennia prior to the founding of Christianity in a certain connection with the millennia after it, with the millennia, that is to say, in which we ourselves are living.

There is a law in accordance with which certain happenings are repeated in the process of man's evolution, and we spoke of them in the last lecture-course given here in Stuttgart.† To-day I want only to emphasise that when reference is made in Spiritual Science to these systematic repetitions in the course of human evolution it must not be imagined that they can be worked up

* *Mysteries of Cosmic Existence. Comets and the Moon.* Stuttgart, 5th March, 1910. See also footnote at end of present lecture, p. 48.

† *Universe, Earth and Man.* Eleven lectures, 4th-16th August, 1908.

by the intellect; they must be investigated in detail and confirmed by spiritual research. Attempts to construct new repetitions according to the pattern of others can lead one very far astray. There is, however, one repetition which does, in fact, resemble another, the form it takes being that happenings of crucial importance *before* the founding of Christianity come to pass again afterwards in a certain way.

The last three millennia prior to the founding of Christianity belong to an epoch in the history of human evolution called the Dark Age, the lesser Dark Age—Kali Yuga. Kali Yuga began in the year 3101 B.C. With it is connected everything we recognise nowadays as the great achievements of humanity, as the fundamental characteristics of present-day culture. Before this Dark Age, before Kali Yuga, all human thinking, all the powers of the human soul, were in a certain respect differently organised. The year 3101 B.C. is an approximate date, for in the process of development qualities of one kind passed over gradually into others; but before that time the last vestiges of ancient clairvoyance were still present. In the course of evolution the sequence of the ages is: Krita Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga, Kali Yuga. It is the last that is of particular interest to us to-day. The earlier ages take us back to old Atlantis. In very ancient times, vestiges of the ancient clairvoyance still survived and prior to the Dark Age man was directly conscious of the presence of a spiritual world because he was able to gaze into it. But this consciousness of the spiritual world withdrew more and more from man's vision and speaking generally we can say that the development then begins of those faculties of soul which on the one hand confine his power of judgment to the sense-perceptible world, while, on the other, they promote his *self-consciousness*; all these powers begin to operate in Kali Yuga. And whereas during this age man was not in a position to look into the spiritual worlds, the firm centre we call the *knowledge of self-consciousness* developed all the more strongly within him. But do not imagine that even now this knowledge of self-consciousness is already highly

developed; it has yet to reach many further stages. But it could never have been experienced by man if there had not been this "Dark Age".

Thus, during the three millennia prior to the founding of Christianity man was losing his connection with the spiritual world to an increasing extent and indeed had no direct perception of that connection.

On the occasion of my last visit here we heard how, at the conclusion of the first millennium of Kali Yuga, a kind of substitute was given for vision of the spiritual worlds. This substitute was made possible through the fact that a particular individual—Abraham—was chosen out because the special organisation of his physical brain enabled him to have consciousness of the spiritual world *without* the old faculties. That is why in Spiritual Science we call the first millennium of Kali Yuga the Abraham-epoch; it was the epoch when man did, it is true, lose the direct vision of the spiritual worlds, but when there unfolded in him something like a consciousness of the Divine which gradually made its way more and more deeply into his ego, with the result that he came to conceive of the Deity as related to human ego-consciousness. In the first millennium of Kali Yuga—which at its conclusion we can call the Abraham-epoch—the Deity is revealed as the *World-Ego*.

This Abraham-epoch was followed by the Moses-epoch, when the God Jahve, the World-Ego, was no longer revealed in the form of a mysterious guidance of human destinies, as a God of a single people; in the Moses-epoch this Deity was revealed, as we know, in the burning bush, as the God of the Elements. And it was a great advance when, through the teachings of Moses, the World-Ego as the Deity was experienced in such a way that men realised: the Elements of manifested existence, all that is seen with physical eyes—lightning, thunder, and so on—are emanations, deeds of the World-Ego, ultimately of the one World-Ego. We must, however, clearly understand in what way this denoted an advance.

Before the Abraham-epoch and before Kali Yuga, we find that through the direct vision of the spiritual worlds made possible by the remains of the old clairvoyance, men beheld the spiritual, as indeed was the case in all these ancient times. We should have to go infinitely far back to find anything else. Men actually beheld the spiritual during Dvapara Yuga, Treta Yuga, Krita Yuga, beheld it as a *multiplicity of Beings*. You know that when we rise into the spiritual worlds we find there the Hierarchies of spiritual Beings. They, naturally, are under a unified guidance, but this was beyond the grasp of consciousness in those ancient times. Men beheld the individual members of the Hierarchies, a multiplicity of Divine Beings. To grasp them as a unity was possible only for the Initiates. But now the World-Ego, grasped for the first time by man himself with the physical instrument of the brain—a faculty that had developed in a specially marked way in Abraham—confronted him, and he conceived the World-Ego as manifesting in the different kingdoms of Nature, in the Elements.

A further advance was made in the last millennium before the founding of Christianity, in the Solomon-epoch. Thus the three millennia before the founding of Christianity can be distinguished by calling the first millennium by the name of the individuality who appears then and works on into the second: the Abraham-epoch. From the beginning of Kali Yuga until Abraham men are being prepared to recognise the One God behind the manifestations of Nature. This possibility begins with Abraham. In the Moses-epoch the One God becomes the ruler of the manifestations of Nature and is sought for behind them. All this is then intensified in the Solomon-epoch, and we are led through this last epoch to that point in evolution where the same Divine Being whom the Abraham-epoch and the Moses-epoch, too, beheld in Jahve, where this same Divine Being takes on human form.

In contemplating this subject from the spiritual-scientific point of view it must be firmly realised that in this respect the Gospels

are right: Christ may not be distinguished from Jahve otherwise than that the light of the sun reflected by the moon is to be distinguished from the direct light of the sun. What is the light that floods a bright moonlit night? It is actual sunlight, only it is reflected back to us from the moon. So we can have this sunlight directly by day or rayed back by the moon on bright moonlit nights. What manifests thus in space also manifests in the following way: what was finally to appear in Christ as a Spirit-Sun was revealed beforehand in reflection. Jahve is the reflection which precedes Christ in *time*. Just as the moonlight reflects the sunlight, so was the Christ Being reflected for Abraham, Moses, Solomon. It was always the same Being. Then He Himself appeared as the Christ-Sun at the time of the founding of Christianity. The preparation for this great event was made in the Abraham-epoch, in the Moses-epoch, in the Solomon-epoch.

A repetition of these three pre-Christian ages takes place in the Christian era, but now in reverse order. The essential and fundamental trend of the Solomon-epoch is repeated in the first thousand years after Christ, in that the spirit of Solomon lives and is active as an impulse in the most outstanding minds of the first Christian millennium. And fundamentally speaking it was the wisdom of Solomon through which men endeavoured to grasp the nature and essence of the Christ Event. Then, following the Solomon-epoch, came the era that can be called the revival of the Moses-epoch . . . and in the second millennium after Christ the best minds of this era are permeated by the spirit of Moses. The spirit of Moses does indeed come to life again in a new form. In the pre-Christian age the spirit of Moses had been directed towards the outer world of physical Nature in order to find the Divine World-Ego as Jahve, the World-Ego manifesting in lightning and thunder, in the great revelation from the Elements of laws for men. Whereas the World-Ego streams into Moses from outside, is revealed from outside, in the second millennium after Christ the same Divine Being announces Himself *within* the soul. The experience which came to Moses as an outer happening

when he withdrew from his people in order to receive the Decalogue—this significant happening is repeated in the second Christian millennium in the form of a mighty revelation from within man.

Repetitions do not take the same form but what comes later manifests as a kind of polarity. It was from the Elements, from outer Nature, that the God revealed Himself to Moses; in the second millennium after Christ He reveals Himself from the deepest foundations of the human soul. And how could this be presented to us more impressively than in the story of a great, supremely gifted man of whose preaching it was said that he proclaimed mighty truths from the very depths of his soul! It can be taken for granted that this man was steeped through and through in what can be called Christian mysticism. Then, to the place where he is preaching comes a seemingly unimportant layman who at first listens to the sermons but then turns out to be one who need not be considered a layman but can become the instructor of the preacher—Tauler—and induces him, despite his renown, to suspend his sermons for a time because he does not feel inwardly imbued with what is living in the layman. And when Tauler, after having received the inspiration, ascends the pulpit again, the overwhelmingly powerful impression made by his sermon is described symbolically by saying that many of his listeners fell down as if dead—meaning that everything of a lower nature in them was killed.

This was a revelation of the World-Ego from within—working from within with a power as great as that of the revelation from the Elements to Moses in the second millennium before Christ. Thus we see a revival of the Moses-epoch inasmuch as the spirit of Moses illumined and imbued with life the whole of Christian mysticism, from Meister Eckhart down to the later Christian mystics. Verily the spirit of Moses was alive in the souls of the Christian mystics! This was in the second millennium after Christ when there was a revival of the whole character of the Moses-epoch. Just as in the first millennium of the Christian era

the repetition of the Solomon-epoch was responsible for bringing to expression the inner content of the Christian Mysteries—for example, the Christian teaching concerning the Hierarchies—the detailed wisdom concerning the higher worlds—so was the second Moses-epoch particularly responsible for the essential character of German mysticism: a deep, mystical consciousness of the One God who can be awakened and resurrected within the human soul. And the influence of this Moses-epoch has persisted in all the endeavours made since that time to fathom the nature of the World-Ego, the Undivided Godhead.

But the course of the evolution of humanity is such that from our time onwards a renaissance of the Abraham-epoch will take place as we pass slowly into the third millennium. In pre-Christian times the sequence is: Abraham-epoch, Moses-epoch, Solomon-epoch; in the Christian era the order is reversed: Solomon-epoch, Moses-epoch, Abraham-epoch. We are moving towards the Abraham-epoch, and this will inevitably bring momentous consequences in its train.

Let us recall what was of essential significance in the pre-Christian Abraham-epoch. It was the fact that the old clairvoyance had disappeared, that there had been bestowed upon man a consciousness of the Divine closely bound up with human faculties. Everything that humanity could acquire from this brain-bound consciousness of the Divine had by now been gradually exhausted and there is very little left to be gained through these faculties. But on the other hand, in the new Abraham-epoch exactly the opposite path is taken—the path which leads humanity away from vision confined to the physical and material, away from intellectual inferences based upon material data. We are moving along the path leading into the regions where men once dwelt in times before the Abraham-epoch. It is the path that will make states of natural clairvoyance possible for man, states in which natural clairvoyant forces will be in active operation.

During Kali Yuga itself, Initiation alone could lead into the spiritual worlds in the right way. Initiation does, of course, lead

to higher stages that will be accessible to men only in the very far distant future; but the first signs of a natural faculty of clairvoyance will become evident fairly soon, as the renewal of the Abraham-epoch approaches.

Thus, after men have acquired ego-consciousness, after they have come to know the ego as a firm inner centre, they are led out of themselves again in order to be able to look with an even deeper vision into the spiritual worlds. The ending of Kali Yuga has to do with this also. Having lasted for five thousand years, Kali Yuga ended in A.D. 1899. This was a year of crucial importance for the evolution of humanity. Naturally, it is again an approximate date, for things happen gradually. But just as the year 3101 B.C. can be indicated as the point of time when humanity was led down from the stage of the old clairvoyance to physical vision and intellectuality, so the year 1899 is the time when humanity received an impetus towards the first beginnings of a future clairvoyance. And it is the lot of mankind, already in this twentieth century before the next millennium—indeed for a few individuals in the first half of this century—to develop the first rudiments of a new faculty of clairvoyance that quite certainly will appear if men prove capable of understanding it. It must, however, be realised that there are two possibilities. It belongs to the very essence of the human soul that *natural* faculties of clairvoyance will arise in the future in a few people during the first half of the twentieth century and in more and more human beings during the next two thousand five hundred years, until finally there will be a sufficient number who, if they so desire, will have the new, natural clairvoyance. A distinction must, of course, be made between cultivated and natural clairvoyance.

But there are two possibilities. The one is that although men have indeed the aptitude for this clairvoyance, materialism may triumph in the next decades and humanity sink in its morass. True, even then there will be individuals here and there who assert that they see in the physical man something like a second

man; but if materialistic consciousness gets to the point of declaring Spiritual Science to be sheer craziness and stamping out all consciousness of the spiritual world, then these incipient faculties will not be understood. It will depend upon humanity itself whether what will then take place turns out to be for good or ill, because what ought to come about might pass unnoticed.

Or the other situation is possible, where Spiritual Science is not trampled underfoot. Then men will understand how to cultivate such faculties not only in the secret schools of initiation but also to foster them when, towards the middle of this century, they appear like delicate buds of the life of soul in individuals here and there. They will say, as if from a power that has awakened within them: I see as a reality something that is described in Anthroposophy as the second man within the physical man. But still other faculties will appear—for example, a faculty that a man will notice in himself. After he has performed some deed, there will appear before his soul a kind of dream-picture which he will know to be connected in some way with what he has done. And from Spiritual Science he will realise: When an after-image of my deed appears in this way, although it is essentially different from the deed itself, it reveals to me what the karmic effect of my deed will be in the future.

This understanding of karma will develop in certain individuals during the middle of our century. The explanation is that Kali Yuga has run its course and that from epoch to epoch new faculties appear in men. But if no understanding is developed, if this particular faculty is stamped out, if those who speak about faculties of this kind are put away as if they were insane, disaster is inevitable and humanity will sink in the morass of materialism. Everything will depend upon whether understanding is awakened for Spiritual Science, or whether Ahriman will succeed in suppressing its intentions. Then, of course, those who are choking in materialism may say scornfully: They were fine prophets who stated that a second man will be seen beside the physical man! Nothing will be apparent if the faculties for seeing it are crushed

out. But even if these faculties do not become evident in the middle of the twentieth century, this will be no proof that the rudiments of them are not within man, but only that the seed of the young buds has been crushed. The faculties that have been described to-day exist and can be developed, provided only that mankind is willing.

This stage of evolution therefore lies immediately ahead of us. We are, as it were, retracing the path of development. In Abraham, consciousness of the Divine was brought down into the brain; in passing into a new Abraham-epoch, consciousness of the Divine will in turn be brought out of the brain, and during the next two thousand five hundred years we shall find more and more human beings who possess knowledge of the great spiritual teachings of the cosmic secrets yielded by the mysteries of Initiation. Just as the spirit of Moses prevailed in the epoch that is now over, so in our time the spirit of Abraham begins to prevail, in order that after men have been led to consciousness of the Divine in the material world, they may now be led out of and beyond it. For it is an eternal cosmic law that each individuality has to perform a particular deed more than once, periodically—twice at all events, the one as the antithesis of the other. What Abraham brought down for men into the physical consciousness he will bear upwards again for them into the spiritual world.

Thus it is obvious that we are living at a vitally important time and that to disseminate Spiritual Science to-day is not a matter of preference but something that is demanded by our age. To prepare mankind for great moments in the process of evolution is among the tasks of spiritual investigation. Spiritual Science exists in order that men may know what it is that they are seeing. Anyone who is true to his age cannot but be mindful of the fact that spirit-knowledge *must* be brought into the world to prevent what is coming from passing by humanity unnoticed.

These things are connected with others. In certain other respects everything is renewed in similar repetitions. A time is approaching

when more and more of what existed in pre-Christian centuries will be renewed for humanity, but everything now will be steeped in what men have been able to acquire through the mighty Christ Event. We have heard that the great impulse experienced by Moses through the vision of the burning thorn-bush and lightning on Sinai was experienced again *inwardly*, in its Christianised form. For men such as Tauler and Eckhart knew with all certainty that when there dawned within them the power known to Moses as Jahve, that power was the Christ, no longer the reflected Christ but the Christ Himself, arising from the depth of the heart. What had been experienced by Moses was experienced by the Christian mystics in a *Christianised* form, in a form changed through the Christ Impulse. And what was experienced in the pre-Christian age of Abraham—that, too, will be experienced in a new and different form. And what will this be? All things, all events that come about normally in the evolution of humanity cast their lights in advance (instead of the trivial saying, "cast their shadows", I prefer to say, "cast their lights"). Thus in certain respects a light-indicative of future happenings was cast in advance by the event of Damascus, the conversion of Saul into Paul.

Let us be clear what this signified for Paul. Up to then he had acquired a thorough knowledge of the Hebraic secret doctrines. From these teachings he knew that some day an Individuality would descend to the earth, representing to humanity the One who conquers death. He knew: an Individuality will appear in the flesh, showing through his life that the spirit triumphs over death so completely that for this Individuality in his earthly incarnation death has no more significance than any other physical happening. Paul knew this. And he knew something else as well from the ancient Hebraic teachings, namely that when the Christ, the Messiah who was to come, had lived in the flesh, when He had resurrected and had won the victory over death, the spiritual sphere of the earth would be transformed and clairvoyance would undergo a change. Whereas before then a

clairvoyant would not have seen the Christ Being in the spiritual atmosphere of the earth, but only when he looked upwards to the Sun Spirit, Paul knew that through the Christ Impulse there would take place in earth-existence a change signifying that, having gained the victory over death the Christ would be found by clairvoyant vision in *the sphere of the earth*. When, therefore, a man was clairvoyant, he would behold the Christ in the earth-sphere as the living Spirit of the earth. But that of which Paul, while he was still Saul, could not be convinced was that the One who had lived in Palestine, had died on the Cross and was said by His disciples to have resurrected, was indeed the One to whom the ancient Hebraic doctrines referred.

The salient point is that Paul had not been convinced by what he had seen physically of the things narrated in the Gospels. Conviction that the Christ was the predicted Messiah first came to him when the light cast in advance revealed itself to him, when as though by Grace from above he became clairvoyant and, finding Christ in the sphere of the earth, was compelled to say to himself: He has been here in very truth and has risen! It was because Paul himself had beheld Christ in the spiritual sphere of the earth that he knew: Now He is here! And from that moment he was convinced regarding Christ Jesus.

The essence of what happened at Damascus, therefore, was that Paul had discovered Christ Jesus clairvoyantly in the sphere of the earth. Thus, if he had not, for example, heard tell of the deeds of Christ in Palestine, if he had not himself actually heard the stories told in the Gospels but had lived somewhat later, he might have experienced the Christ Event of Damascus only later: but even so he would have arrived at the same conviction. For this event revealed to him the reality of Christ's presence! He knew: He who is now revealed in the sphere of the earth is the One of whom the ancient Hebraic secret doctrine tells.

The Christ Event is not confined to one point of time only. In the case of Paul it came very early, in order that through him Christianity might pursue its course.

Now, as long as Kali Yuga lasted—this was until the year 1899—the evolution of humanity had not reached the stage at which Paul's experience could be repeated without more ado; human faculties were not mature enough for that. Hence there was one who experienced it through Grace; and others, too, experienced similar events through Grace. But we are living now in the age when there is to be a revolutionary change: the first rudiments of natural clairvoyance are developing. We are passing into the Abraham-epoch and are being led out into the spiritual world. This means that it will be possible for a certain number of human beings, and more and more in the next two thousand five hundred years, to experience a repetition of the event of Damascus. The great and momentous feature of the coming era will be that many human beings will experience this event. The Christ, now to be found in the spiritual sphere of the earth, will be perceptible to those faculties which, as we have said, will make their appearance. When men become able to see the etheric body, they will learn to see the etheric body of Christ Jesus, as did Paul. This is what is beginning as the characteristic trait of a new age, and between the years 1930-40-45 it will already become evident in the first forerunners of human beings possessed of these faculties. If men are alert they will experience this event of Damascus through direct spiritual vision and therewith clarity and truth concerning the Christ Event. A remarkable parallelism of happenings will come about.

During the next two decades men will be more and more inclined to abandon the texts of the Gospels because they will no longer understand them. Superficial scholars are everywhere at pains to "prove" that the Gospels are not historical records, that there can be no question of any historical Christ. The historical documents will lose their value and the number of people who deny Christ Jesus will steadily increase. Men who may still believe that these events can be substantiated by history are short-sighted. Those who mean well by Christianity will not reject understanding of the *spiritual* proof of the existence of Christ Jesus.



this spiritual proof will be provided through the cultivation of the faculties which enable men to behold the Christ as a real Presence in His etheric body. Those who place reliance only on documents may call themselves good Christians, but in point of fact they are destroying Christianity; however vociferously they proclaim the knowledge they have gleaned about Christianity from documentary records, they are destroying it because they are rejecting a spiritual teaching through which, in actual vision, the Christ will become a reality for men in our century.

When the Christian era began, men had been descending into the Dark Age for more than three thousand years, had been thrown back upon the faculties of their outer senses. At that time Christ could not have revealed Himself to the faculties necessary for the evolution of humanity in any other way than through physical incarnation. Because man's physical faculties had then reached the peak of their development, Christ was obliged to appear in a physical body. But no progress at all would be possible unless with higher faculties men were able to discover Christ as a reality in the higher worlds. Just as Christ had once to be discovered with purely physical faculties, men will find him with the newly developed faculties in that world where etheric bodies alone are to be seen. *There can be no second physical incarnation of Christ.* He came once in a physical body of flesh because it was at one period only that human faculties were dependent upon His presence in such a body. But now, with the higher faculties, men will be able to perceive the etheric body of Christ as an even greater reality.

The momentous event in store for us can be called: the *Reappearance of Christ Jesus* . . . a gradual reappearance, to begin with for a few and then for more and more human beings. It is an event that has significance not only for those who will then still be incarnated in bodies of flesh. A number of human beings living to-day will still be in incarnation at the time of the Christ Event . . . they will experience it in the way that has been described. Others will have passed through the gate of death. As

we once heard in a lecture here,* the Event of Golgotha was an event that affected not only the physical world; its influences reached into all the spiritual worlds. Christ's descent into the underworld was an actual fact and the effects of the Christ Event that is to take place in our century will also work—though not in the same form as on earth—into the world in which man lives between death and rebirth.

But there is one essential. The faculties by means of which men will be able, between death and rebirth, to behold the Christ Event, cannot be acquired in that world; they must be acquired on the physical plane and carried from there into the life between death and a new birth. There are faculties which must be acquired on the *earth*, for we have not been placed on the physical earth for nothing. It is an error to believe that there is no purpose in living on the earth. Faculties have to be acquired there that can be acquired in no other world—they are the faculties for understanding the Christ Event and the events that will follow it. Those human beings who now develop these faculties on the earth through the teachings of Spiritual Science will carry them through the gate of death. It is not through Initiation only, but through a clear-minded acceptance of spiritual-scientific knowledge, that the faculties are acquired which make it possible also to be aware of the Christ Event in the spiritual world between death and a new birth. But those who turn deaf ears to this knowledge must wait until a later incarnation to acquire the faculties that must be acquired here on earth in order that the Christ Event may be experienced in yonder world. Therefore let nobody imagine that the announcement of the Christ Event—an event which the teachings of Spiritual Science alone can make intelligible—will bear no fruit for him if he has already passed through the gate of death. It will indeed bear fruit.

Obviously, therefore, spiritual research prepares the way for a new Christ Event. But those who receive into themselves the

* This reference is to a lecture given 14th November, 1909: *The Tasks and Aims of Spiritual Science.*

essence of the teaching of the spirit as part of their whole life of soul, as a quickening, vital force, must then grow on to a spiritual understanding of these things, realising that through Spiritual Science they must learn to understand our newly dawning age thoroughly and fundamentally. We must come to realise that in the future the most important events must be sought, not on the physical plane but outside and beyond it, just as Christ must be sought in the spiritual world when He appears in His etheric form.

What has here been said will be repeated again and again in the coming decades. But there will be people who misunderstand it and who will say: So Christ is to come again! Because this view will be tinged with the belief that this is a *physical* return, such people will support all the false Messiahs who will appear. And in the middle of the twentieth century there will be plenty of them, making use of the materialistic beliefs, the materialistic thinking and feeling of men in order to proclaim themselves as Christ. There have always been false Messiahs. For example, in the South of France, before the Crusades, there appeared a false Messiah whom his followers regarded as a kind of Christ incarnate in a physical body. Before then a false Messiah had appeared in Spain, attracting a large number of followers. In North Africa, a man who announced himself as the Christ created a great sensation. In the seventeenth century a man who appeared in Smyrna, alleging himself to be the Christ, drew a vast crowd of followers; his name was Shabbathai Zewi. Pilgrims journeyed to him from Poland, Austria, Spain, Germany, France, from all over Europe and from wide provinces of Africa and Asia.

In past centuries this kind of happening was not so deplorable, for the demand to distinguish the true from the false had not yet been made of humanity. Only now are we living in the age when disaster might befall if men were not equal to the spiritual test. Those will be equal to it who know that human faculties develop to higher stages, that the faculties on account of which it was necessary for Christ to be seen physically were dependent upon a

physical manifestation at the time of the founding of Christianity but that no progress would be made if in this present century men were not to find Him again in a higher form. Those who are striving in the sense of Spiritual Science will have to prove that they are the ones able to distinguish the false Messiahs from the One Messiah who does not appear in the flesh, but appears as a *spiritual* Being to the newly awakened faculties of men.

The time will come when men will again see into the spiritual world and there behold the land whence flow the streams of true spiritual nourishment for everything that happens in the physical world. Again and again we have heard that it was once possible for men to look with clairvoyant vision into the spiritual world. Oriental writings also contain the tradition of an ancient spiritual land* into which men were once able to gaze and whence they could draw the supersensible influences that were available for the physical world. Many descriptions of this land, that was once within reach of men's vision but has withdrawn, are full of sadness. This land was indeed once accessible to men and will be so again now that Kali Yuga, the Dark Age, is over. Initiation has always led thither, and it was always possible for those who had achieved Initiation to guide their steps into that mysterious land which is said to have disappeared from the sphere of human

* Other direct references made by Dr. Steiner to the region of the spiritual world named "Shamballa" in ancient Tibetan writings:

- (1) Lecture—Course 17. *The Christ Impulse and the Development of Ego-Consciousness*. Lecture 5. Given at Berlin, 9th March, 1910. "... at one time it was possible for men to travel to a land where the Spiritual flowed into the Physical. It is the land from which at certain times the Initiates—and at all times the Bodhisattvas—draw fresh forces. The Eastern writings refer with deep sorrow to this land, asking: Where is it? We are told the names of places, paths are named; but the land itself is concealed, even from those most initiated among the Lamas of Tibet. Only to the highest Initiates is it accessible. But it is always stated that some day this land will return to earth..."
- (2) Lecture given at Munich, 15th March, 1910. *The Sermon on the Mount. The Land of Shamballa*.

See also: H. P. Blavatsky: *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, pp. 333 and 418 (3rd and revised edition, reprinted 1905).

experience. Deeply moving are the writings which tell of this ancient land, whither the Initiates repair ever and again in order to bring from there the new streams and impulses for everything that is to be imparted to mankind from century to century. Those who are connected with the spiritual world in this way resort again and again to *Shamballa*—the name of this mysterious land. It is the deep fount into which clairvoyant vision once reached; it withdrew during Kali Yuga and is spoken of as an ancient fairyland that will come again into the realm of man. Shamballa will be there again when Kali Yuga has run its course. Mankind will rise through normal human faculties into the land of Shamballa, the land whence the Initiates draw strength and wisdom for the missions they are to fulfil. Shamballa is a reality, was a reality, will be a reality again for humanity. And when Shamballa reveals itself again, one of the first visions to come to men will be that of Christ in His etheric form. Into the land declared by Oriental writings to have vanished there is no Leader other than Christ. It is Christ who will lead men to Shamballa.

We must inscribe into our souls what can come to pass for humanity if the omen* referred to in the lecture yesterday is

* Halley's Comet. The following passages are from the lecture to which Dr. Steiner is referring: *Mysteries of the Universe. Comets and the Moon*. "... Halley's Comet has a quite definite task and everything else that it brings with it is definitely related to this task. Halley's Comet—we are speaking of its spiritual aspect—has the task of impressing human nature as a whole in such a way that human nature and the human being always take a further step in respect of the development of the Ego when the Comet comes near to the Earth. It is the step in development which leads out the Ego to concepts connected with the physical plane. . . . When it is said that Halley's Comet may be an omen, that its influence, working alone, might make men superficial and lead out the Ego more and more on to the physical plane, and that precisely in our days this must be resisted—it is not said for the purpose of reviving an old superstition. The resistance can come about only by a spiritual view of the world like that of Anthroposophy taking the place of the trend of evolution brought about by Halley's Comet. . . ."

See also, Lecture-Course 17, *The Christ Impulse and the Development of Ego-Consciousness*. Lecture 5.

rightly understood. If men realise that they dare not allow themselves to sink more deeply into matter, that their path must be reversed, that a spiritual life must begin, then, at first for a few, and in the course of two thousand five hundred years for a greater and greater number of human beings, there will arise the experience of the land of Shamballa—woven of light, shone through with light, teeming with wisdom. Such is the event which for those who have the will to understand, for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see, must be described as denoting the most momentous turning-point in the evolution of humanity at the dawn of the Abraham-epoch in the Christian era. It is the event through which men's understanding of the Christ Impulse will be enhanced and intensified.

Strange as it may seem, wisdom will thereby lose nothing of its value. The more insight men achieve, the greater and mightier will Christ appear to them to be! When once their gaze can penetrate into Shamballa, they will be able to understand much of what is indeed contained in the Gospels but for the recognition of which they will need to experience a kind of event of Damascus. Thus at the time when men are more sceptical of the original records than they have ever been, the new form of belief in Christ Jesus will arise when we grow into the realm where He will first be encountered: the mysterious land of Shamballa.



References

Passages relating to the theme of the Second Coming will be found in the following printed volumes of lectures by Rudolf Steiner (in English translation):

The Christ Impulse and the Development of Ego-Consciousness. Lecture 4. From Jesus to Christ. Lectures 2, 3, 4 and 10.

The Etherisation of the Blood.

Jeshu ben Pandira.

Christ at the Time of the Mystery of Golgotha and Christ in the XXth Century.

Cosmic and Human Metamorphoses. Lectures 1 and 6.

The Effect of Occult Development upon the Bodies and Self of Man. Lecture 9.

Lectures available (in typescript only) in the Library at Rudolf Steiner House, 35 Park Road, London, N.W.1:

The Significance of repeated Lives on Earth. 27.1.10. (NSL 159).

The Christ Impulse in the Course of History. 17.9.11. (Z 207).

"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life", 4.3.11. (Z 294).

The Coming of the Christ, 21.9.11. (Z 142).

The Sermon on the Mount and the Return of Christ, 20.2.10. (Z 295).

Editorial note. The above lists of references are not complete but include the titles of most of the lectures where the subject is dealt with at some length.

All the printed books and lectures by Rudolf Steiner in German and in English translation, also other publications on Anthroposophy, can be obtained from:

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