



**EGYPTIAN MYTHS
AND
MYSTERIES
BY
RUDOLF STEINER**

**TAKEN FROM A SERIES OF LECTURES
GIVEN IN 1908**

Egyptian Myths And Mysteries By Rudolf Steiner.

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diffused by the fine dust-particles. Then, as often happened, the preacher in the cathedral pulpit would say, "Even as the light is split into many colors, so is the single spiritual light, the divine force, divided among the crowds of souls and split into the diverse forces of the physical plane." Such words were often heard from the preacher. When perception and spiritual experience flowed together in this way, the cathedral was something complete.

As in the great temple buildings, so was it in everything artistic among the Greeks. The marble of their sculptures took on the appearance of life. The Greek expressed in the physical what lived in his spiritual. Among the Greeks the marriage of the spiritual with the physical was a fact.

The Roman went a step further in the conquest of the physical plane. The Greek had the capacity of embodying the soul-spiritual in his works of art, but he still felt himself as part of a whole, of the *polis*, the city-state. He did not yet feel himself as a personality. This was also the case in the earlier cultures. The Egyptian did not feel himself as a separate person, but as an Egyptian, as a member of his people. Thus in Greece we find that a man laid little worth on feeling himself to be a person, but it was his greatest pride to be a Spartan or an Athenian. To be a personality, to be something in the world through the self, was felt for the first time in Rome. That a personality could be something for itself was first true for the Roman. The Romans worked out the concept of the *citizen*, and it was among them that jurisprudence, the science of law, arose. This is correctly regarded as a Roman invention. Only modern jurists, who know nothing of these facts, have had the lack of judgment to assert that law, in this sense, existed earlier. It is nonsense to speak of oriental lawgivers, such as Hammurabi. There were no legal rules earlier; there were only **divine commands**.²¹ One would have to use harsh words if one were to speak objectively about this kind of science.

The concept of the citizen first became a real feeling in ancient Rome. By that time man had brought the spiritual into the physical world as far as his own individuality. The last Will and Testament was invented in ancient Rome. The will of the single personality had become so strong that even beyond death it could determine what should be done with its property, its own things. The single personal man was now the determining factor. With this deed man, in his own individuality, had brought the spiritual down to the physical plane. This was the lowest point of evolution.

Man stood at his highest in the Indian culture. At this highest point the Indian still moved in spiritual heights. In the second culture, the ancient Persian, man had already descended a little. In the third culture, the Egyptian, still more. In the fourth culture man descended entirely to the physical plane, into matter. There came a point when man stood at the parting of the ways. Either he could sink lower and lower, or he could achieve the possibility of working up again, of fighting his way back into the spiritual

²¹ Our best modern scholars agree with the views here expressed. See Wigmore, *Panorama of the World's Legal Systems* (Washington Law Book Company, 1936).

and how, in Persia, man already attempted to conquer the physical plane. Man descended ever further, and in the Greco-Latin time there occurred a marriage between spirit and matter, between the spiritual worlds and the physical plane. The more man approached the middle of this last epoch, the more he learned to love the physical world and take an interest in it. As this occurred, everything that we call experiences between death and a new birth also changed.

If we go back to the first part of the post-Atlantean period, we find that men took little interest in the physical world. The initiates of that time could withdraw into lofty worlds, into the Devachanic worlds, and they communicated their experiences to the others. In the man who, with all his thoughts and all his senses, felt himself withdrawn into the true world, into his real home, the effect was that he took little interest in the conditions of the physical plane. But when he rose into Devachan, after having barely connected himself with the physical world, he possessed in Devachan a comparatively clear consciousness. When such a man incarnated again in the Persian culture, he felt himself more connected with physical matter, and he lost some of the clarity of his consciousness in Devachan. In the Egypto-Chaldean time, when man began to feel some affection for the external physical world, his consciousness in Devachan already became clouded and shadowy. This consciousness was still of a nature higher than that of his consciousness in the physical world, but it declined steadily in degree and became ever darker up to the Greco-Latin time. During all this time the Devachanic consciousness became ever darker and more shadowy. It was not a dream consciousness; this was never the case. It was a consciousness of which man was fully aware. In the course of evolution it became darkened.

The mysteries existed principally in order to enable man again to illuminate his consciousness, rather than have only a shadowy consciousness in the spiritual world. Let us reflect that if there had been no mysteries there would have been no initiates, in which case man would have had an increasingly vague and shadowy consciousness in the spiritual worlds. Only through the fact that, parallel with the darkening of Devachanic consciousness, initiation into the mysteries continued, together with the acquisition of certain faculties with which selected persons could look into the spiritual worlds in full clarity — only through the fact that the initiates could speak of this in myths and sagas, was it possible for a ray of light to penetrate into the Devachanic consciousness between death and a new birth. But all those who had made themselves comfortable in the physical world experienced this fading away of consciousness in the spiritual world. It was no fairy tale but plain truth, that the initiates in the Eleusinian mysteries were able to have a special experience. The principle of initiation is that, even during his life, man can ascend to the spiritual worlds and learn what takes place there. The initiate of that time was actually able to learn directly from the shades in the spiritual world. The following is really the statement of an initiate: “Better a beggar on earth than a king in the **realm of shades.**”²² This statement is made out of the initiates’

²² These are the words of Achilles in Book XI of the *Odyssey*.

experience. We cannot take such things deeply enough, and we only understand them when we know the facts of the spiritual world.

Now let us bring into more concrete form what we touched upon abstractly yesterday.

Had nothing occurred other than man's descent into the physical world, consciousness between death and a new birth would have grown ever darker. Ultimately men would have entirely lost their connection with the spiritual world. Now, however singular it may appear to those who are only slightly infected with some form of materialism, what I am about to say is true. Had nothing else intervened in human evolution, mankind would have succumbed to spiritual death. But there is a possibility of illuminating the consciousness between death and a new birth, and this illumination can be achieved either through initiation or (to a lower degree) through man's participating in the spiritual world during this life, having experiences that do not die out with his bodies, but remain connected with the eternal core of his being, even in the spiritual world. This was the concern of the mysteries and of all spiritual development. It was the concern of the great initiates before Christ and, above all, of the Being whom we call Christ. All other initiates were in a certain sense forerunners of the Christ; they were harbingers who pointed to the coming of the Christ.

The advent of the Christ-figure will now be described. Let us imagine a man who has never heard anything of the Christ, who has never been able to absorb the mysteries of the Gospel of John, who has never been able to say, "I will imitate the life and work of the Christ; I will try to take his precepts into my own being." If we add that the Christ had never approached this man, he would not be able to take with him into the spiritual world the treasure that the man of today must take with him if he is to avoid the darkening of his consciousness. What man takes with him as a picture of Christ is a force that brightens the consciousness after death, that saves man from the fate that all men would have had if Christ had not appeared. If Christ had not appeared, the human essence would have been maintained, but the consciousness after death could not have been illuminated. This is what gives real meaning to the advent of the Christ, that something was embodied into the core of man's being that has a wide significance. The event of Golgotha preserves man from spiritual death if he makes it one with his own being.

We should not think that the other great leaders of mankind did not have a similar significance. There is no question of claiming some exclusive dogma for Christianity. That would be an offense against true Christianity, for anyone acquainted with the facts knows that Christianity was also taught in the ancient mysteries. Such words as those of Augustine are profoundly true: "What is called the Christian religion today existed already among the ancients and was present with the beginnings of the human race. But when Christ appeared in the flesh the true religion, which was already in existence, received the name of Christian." What is important is not the name, but that we rightly understand the significance of the Christ impulse. Christ was the figure that appeared at

the lowest point in evolution, but Buddha, Hermes, and the other great beings were in complete possession of the prophetic consciousness that the Christ would come, that he lived in them.

We can see this clearly when we study the figure of Buddha, and we must be quite clear as to what he was. What was Buddha, in reality? Here we must touch on something that can be said only among students of the science of the spirit. It is customary for people, even for theosophists, to conceive the mysteries of reincarnation in much too simple a way. One should not imagine that a soul that is embodied today in its three sheaths was embodied in the same way in a foregoing incarnation, and again in one before that, always according to the same scheme. The secrets are much more complicated.

Although H. P. Blavatsky took great pains to show her intimate pupils how complicated these secrets were, the matter is still not rightly understood today. People think simply that a soul goes into a body ever and again. But it is not so simple. Often we cannot fit a historical figure into such a scheme if we wish to understand it correctly. We must go about the matter in a much more complicated way.

Already in Atlantis we meet beings who were among men as our fellows are today, but whom man saw and learned to know when he was in the spiritual world, severed from the body. We have already pointed out how man learned to know Thor, Zeus, Wotan, Baldur as actual companions. By day he lived in the physical world, but in the other condition of consciousness he learned to know spiritual beings who were going through a stage of evolution different from his. In this primeval period of the earth man did not yet have so solid a body as today; there was as yet nothing like a bony skeleton. The Atlantean body could be seen with physical eyes only to a certain extent. But there were beings who descended only so far as to incarnate in an etheric body. Then there were beings who still embodied themselves at that time, when the air was permeated by water-vapors. When man still lived in the water-fog atmosphere, these incarnations were possible for them. Such a figure was the later Wotan, for example. He said to himself, "If man incarnates in this fluid matter, then I can also." Such a being assumed a human form and moved about in the physical world. But as the earth condensed and man took on ever denser forms, Wotan said, "No, I shall not go into this dense matter." Then he remained in invisible worlds, in worlds removed from the earth.

This was the general case with the divine spiritual beings. But from then on, they could do something else. They could enter into a sort of connection with men who approached them, who evolved upward from below. We may imagine it thus. Man's evolutionary course was such that he was approaching his lowest point of development. Up to this point the gods had proceeded in company with men. Now they took another path, which was invisible for men on the physical plane. But men who lived according to the directions of the initiates, thereby purifying their finer bodies, approached them in a certain way. A man who was incarnated in the flesh, if he purified himself, could do this in such a way that he could be overshadowed by such a being, who could not descend as far as the physical body. The physical body would have been too coarse for such a being.

The result for such a man was that the astral and etheric bodies were permeated by a higher being, which had no other human form for itself but could enter into another being and proclaim itself through this other being.

When we are familiar with this phenomenon, we shall not regard incarnation as such a simple matter. There can perfectly well be a person who is the reincarnation of an earlier man, who has developed himself so far and purified his three bodies to such an extent that he is now a vessel for a higher being. Buddha became such a vessel for Wotan. The same being who was called Wotan in the Germanic myths, appeared again as Buddha. Buddha and Wotan are even related linguistically.

So we can say that much of what was in the mysteries of the Atlantean time continued in what the Buddha was able to announce. This is in harmony with the fact that what the Buddha experienced is something that the gods had experienced in those spiritual spheres, and that men also had experienced when they were still in those spheres. As the teaching of Wotan thus appeared again, it was a doctrine that paid little attention to the physical plane, emphasizing that the physical plane is a place of woe, and that redemption from it is important. Much of the Wotan-being spoke in the Buddha. Hence it is that stragglers from Atlantis have shown the deepest understanding for the Buddha-teaching. Among the Asiatic population there are races that have remained at the Atlantean level, although externally they must, of course, move ahead with the earth evolution. Among the Mongolian peoples much of Atlantis has remained. They are stragglers from the old population of Atlantis. The stationary character in the Mongolian population is a heritage from Atlantis. Therefore the teachings of the Buddha are especially serviceable to such peoples, and Buddhism has made great strides among them.

The world moves onward, following its course. One who can look deeply into the evolution of the world does not make choices, does not say that he has more inclination for this or that. He says that what religion a people has is a spiritual necessity. The European population, because it has ensnared itself in the physical world, finds it impossible to feel its way into Buddhism, to identify itself with the innermost teachings of the Buddha. Buddhism could never become a religion for all of humanity. For him who can see, there is no sympathy or antipathy here, but only a judgment in accordance with the facts. It would be an error to wish to spread Christianity from a center in Asia, where other peoples are still settled, and Buddhism would be equally false for the European population. No religious view is right if it is not suited to the innermost needs of the time, and such a view will never be able to give a cultural impulse. These are things that we must grasp if we want to understand all the real connections.

But one should not believe that the historical appearance of the Buddha immediately reveals all that lies within it. If I were to expound all this, I would need several hours. As yet we are far from having unraveled the complications of the historical Buddha. Something still lived in the Buddha. This is not only a being who came over out of the

Atlantean time and incarnated in him who incidentally was also a human Buddha. In addition to this something else was contained in him, something of which he could say, "I cannot yet comprehend this. It is something that ensouls me, but I only participate in it." This is the Christ-being. This had already ensouled the great prophets. It was a well-known being in the more ancient mysteries, and everywhere and always men had pointed to him who was to come.

And he came! But again he came in such a way that he accommodated himself to the historical necessities that lie behind evolution. Without special preparation he could not incarnate himself in a physical body. It was still possible for him to incarnate in a sort of subconsciousness in the Buddha. But he could incarnate to live on the earth only if a physical body, and etheric body, and an astral body were specially prepared for him. The Christ had the greatest powers, but he could incarnate only if, through another being, a physical, an etheric, and an astral body had been completely cleansed and purified. Thus the incarnation of the Christ could occur only if another being appeared who had developed himself to this point. This was Jesus of Nazareth. He had proceeded so far in his evolution that he was able, during his life, to purify his physical, etheric, and astral bodies in such a way that it was possible for him, in the thirtieth year of his life, to abandon these bodies, yet to leave them capable of life, usable for a higher being.

Often, when I have stated that a high stage of development was necessary for Jesus to be able to sacrifice his bodies, people have made a strange objection: "But that is not a sacrifice; nothing could be more beautiful! One cannot speak of a sacrifice when it is a question of turning over his bodies to such a high Being!" Yes, it is beautiful, and the sacrifice is not great when one looks at it abstractly; but only try to do the deed. Everyone would like to make the sacrifice, but only let them try it. One must have extraordinary forces if one is to purify the bodies in such a way as to leave them while they are capable of life, and to attain these forces, many sacrifices are necessary. To be able to do this, Jesus of Nazareth had to be an extraordinarily high individuality. The Gospel of John indicates where Jesus abandoned his physical, etheric, and astral bodies and entered into the spiritual world, and where the Christ-being entered into the threefold corporeality. This happened at the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan. At this moment something significant occurred in the corporeality of Jesus of Nazareth. For the materialistic mind, what I now say is bound to be an abomination. Something special occurred in the physical body of Jesus of Nazareth. If we wish to understand what occurred at the moment of the baptism, when the Christ entered into Jesus, we must turn our attention to something that will appear singular, but is nevertheless true.

In the course of human evolution, the various organs have developed bit by bit, gradually working out their form. We have seen how, when the organs had reached the level of the hips, certain structures and functions appeared in man. Then, too, as the human individuality became more self-reliant, a hardening of the bony system set in. The more independent man became, the more his bony system hardened and the greater became the power of death. We must bear this in mind if we are to understand

the following in the right way. Whence comes it that man must die and the body must completely disintegrate? It comes from the fact that in the human body something can be burned, even down to the bones. Fire has power over the human bone-substance. Man has no power, at least no conscious power, over his bones. This power still lies outside man's abilities. In the moment when, at the baptism in Jordan, the Christ drew into the body of Jesus of Nazareth, in that moment the bony system of this being became something entirely different from what it is in other men. This was something that had never happened before and has not happened again to this day. With the Christ-being there entered into the Jesus-being something that had power over the forces that burn up the bones. Today the building up of the bones has not yet been placed within man's discretion. But this power reached right down into the bones. The conscious power of the Christ-being extended into the bones. This is part of the meaning of the baptism by John. Therewith something was implanted in the earth that can be called the supremacy over death, for death first appeared in the world with the bones. Through the fact that power over the bones entered the human body, the victory over death also came into the world. Here a deep mystery is expressed. Something in the highest degree holy entered into the bony system of Jesus of Nazareth through the Christ. Therefore it was not to be touched. For this reason the scripture had to be fulfilled: "A bone of him shall **not be broken.**"²³ That would have allowed human power to meddle in divine forces. Here we are gazing into a deep mystery of human evolution.

Here we come to a significant concept of esoteric Christianity, which can show us how this Christianity is permeated with the highest truths. We come to the remainder of what confronts us in the baptism. Through the fact that the Christ-being took possession of the three bodies in which the ego-being of Jesus formerly abode, a Being was bound up with the earth that had earlier had its dwelling-place on the sun. It had formerly been bound up with the earth until the moment when the sun departed from the earth. At that time the Christ also departed, and from then on he could exercise his power upon the earth only from outside, in the moment of the baptism, the high Christ-spirit again united himself in the full sense with the earth. Formerly he worked from outside, overshadowing the prophets and working in the mysteries. Now he was actually incarnated in a physical human body on the earth. If a being had been able to look down for thousands of years from a remote point in the universe, such a being as could see not only the physical earth but also its spiritual streams, its astral and etheric bodies, it would have seen significant events in the moment of the baptism by John, and in the moment when the blood flowed from Christ's wounds on Golgotha. The earth's astral body was profoundly changed thereby. At this moment it took up something different; it took on different colors. A new force was implanted in the earth. What earlier had worked from without, again became united with the earth, and thereby the attractive power between sun and earth will grow so strong that sun and earth will again unite, and man will unite with the sun-spirits. It was the Christ who gave the possibility that the earth can again unite with the sun and be in the bosom of the Godhead.

²³ The reference is to the Gospel of John, XIX:36.

This is the event that occurred, and its meaning. We had to expound this in order to understand what entered into the earth with the Christ. Through this we can grasp how, through union with the Christ, man can absorb something by which his consciousness will again be illuminated after death. If we keep this in mind we shall also be able to grasp how there is evolution for the period between death and a new birth. Now let us ask for whose sake all this took place.

At first, man lived in the bosom of the Godhead. Then he descended to the physical plane. Had he remained above, he would never have achieved his present consciousness of self. He would never have received an ego. Only in the physical body could he kindle the consciousness of self in its bright clarity. He had to encounter external objects and become able to distinguish himself from the objects; he had to descend into the physical world. Only for the sake of man's ego did it happen that man descended. In respect to his ego man stems from the gods. This ego descended out of the spiritual world; it was forged on the physical body so that it might become bright and clear. It is precisely the hardened matter of the human body that has given man his self-conscious ego, that has made it possible for him to attain knowledge. But it also chained him to the earth-mass, to the rock-mass.

Before he achieved his ego, man had physical body, etheric body, and astral body. As the ego gradually evolved in these three bodies, it transformed them. We must be quite clear that all man's higher members work on the physical body. The physical body is as it is because the etheric, astral, and ego work on it. In a certain way all the organs of the physical body are as they are because the higher members have also been altered. Through the domination of the astral body, the backward beings became the different animal forms — the birds, for example. Through the fact that the ego became ever more conscious of itself, it also altered the astral body. We have already said that men separated themselves into groups. What we call the apocalyptic beasts are types, in which this or that higher member has the upper hand. The ego gained predominance in the man-form. All the organs are adapted to man's higher members. When the ego entered into the astral body and wholly permeated it, certain organs took form in man and in the animals that branched off later. Thus, for example, a particular organ may stem from the fact that an ego made its entry upon the earth. On the moon, no ego was connected with the beings in human evolution. Certain organs are connected with this development: the gall and the liver. The gall is the physical expression of the astral body. It is not bound up with the ego, but the ego works on the astral body, and from this the forces work on the gall.

Now let us draw together the entire picture that the initiate made so clear to the Egyptian. The self-conscious man has been shackled to the earth-body. Imagine the man fettered to the earth-rock, fettered to the physical body — and in the course of evolution something arises that gnaws at his immortality. Think of the functions that have called forth the liver. They have arisen through the fact that the body was chained to the rocks of earth. The astral body gnaws at it.

This is the picture that was given to the pupil in Egypt and made its way into Greece as the saga of Prometheus. We must not lay rough hands upon such a myth. We must not rob the butterfly of the dust on its wings. We must leave the dust on its wings. We must leave the dew on the blossoms instead of twisting and torturing such pictures. We should not say that Prometheus means this or that. We should try to present the real occult facts, and then try to understand the pictures that have arisen out of the occult facts and have passed over into the consciousness of man.

The Egyptian initiate led his pupil up to the point where he could grasp man's ego-development. Such a picture was intended to shape his spirit. But the pupil was not to seize the facts with heavy hands. The picture was to stand bright and livingly before him, and the initiate did not wish to press dry banal concepts into the truths he could give. He wanted to present truth in pictures. Poetry has done much for the Prometheus saga, beautifying and ornamenting it. We should add nothing to the occult facts, but leave this delicate embellishment to the artist.

We must still point to something else. Man, when he arrived on earth, was not yet endowed with the ego. Before the ego was secreted into the astral body, other forces had possession of this body. Then the light-flowing astral body was permeated by the ego. Before the ego entered therein, the astral forces of divine-spiritual beings had been sent into man from outside. The astral body was also present, but illuminated by divine-spiritual beings. The astral body was pure and bright, and it flowed around what was present as the rudiments of the physical and etheric bodies. It flowed around and through these, and was quite pure. But egoism entered with the advent of the ego, and the astral body was darkened and lost its golden flow. This was lost more and more, until man had descended to the lowest point of the physical plane in the Greco-Latin time.

Then men had to consider how they could win back the pure flow of the astral body, and there arose in the Eleusinian mysteries what was known as the search for the original purity of the astral body. One aim of the Eleusinian mysteries, and also of the Egyptians, was to recapture the astral body in its pristine golden flow. The quest for the Golden Fleece was one of the probations of the Egyptian initiations, and this has been preserved for us in the wonderful saga of the voyage of Jason and the Argonauts. We have seen the development. When the form of the lower organs still resembled the boats of which we have spoken, the astral body in the water-earth still had a golden sheen. In the water-earth, man's astral body was permeated with golden light. The search for the astral body is portrayed in the voyage of the Argonauts. In a refined and subtle way we must bring the quest for the Golden Fleece into connection with the Egyptian myth.

External historical facts are linked with spiritual facts. One should not believe that this is mere symbol. The voyage of the Argonauts actually took place, just as the Trojan War actually took place. Outer events are the physiognomy for inner events; all these are

historical events. For the Greek neophyte the historical fact took place anew inwardly: the journey after the Golden Fleece, the achieving of the pure astral body.

This is what we wanted to bring before our souls today. On this basis we shall become acquainted with other things from the mysteries, and then we shall find how the Egyptian mysteries are connected with the life of today.



LECTURE 11

The Ancient Egyptian Doctrine of Evolution. The Cosmic View of the Organs and their Coarsening in Modern Times.

September 13, 1908

AT various points in this cycle of lectures we have tried to present the facts of post-Atlantean evolution, and we have indicated that in our time there is a kind of repetition or resurrection of the experiences that mankind went through during the Egypto-Chaldean culture. It has been stated that the Indian period will repeat itself in the seventh period, the Persian in the sixth, the Egyptian in our time, and that the fourth, the Greco-Latin, stands by itself, so to say. Now, connecting the Egyptian time and our own, we shall try to indicate how a certain recrudescence of outer and inner experiences is to be seen when we bring our time into connection with the Egyptian.

We have seen that in the spiritual worlds there exist mysterious forces, to which there correspond certain other forces in the physical world which effectuate the appearance of these repetitions. Thus do these resurrections of outer and inner experiences originate. In the middle between these stands the Greco-Latin period, during which the Christ appeared upon the earth and the Mystery of Golgotha took place. It was also pointed out that not only the external evolutionary relationships on the physical plane had changed, but that also the relationships in the spiritual world had become different. I have described how the soul was in the Egyptian time, when it looked upon the gigantic pyramids, how different it was when it reincarnated in the Greco-Latin period, and how different it is in our time. We have seen that not only does this occur, but that also for the period between death and a new birth, in kamaloka and Devachan, there takes place a sort of progress or transformation, so that the soul does not experience the same thing when it enters into kamaloka or Devachan from an Egyptian, a Greek, or a modern body. Externally the world of the physical plane alters, but progress also occurs in the spiritual world so that the soul always experiences something different there.

It is primarily from the standpoint of this "beyond" that today we shall consider the mighty event of the Christ's appearance on our earth. We shall approach in a much deeper way the question, What significance has the advent of the Christ on our earth? What significance has the Christ's appearance for the dead souls, for the life on the other side, the spiritual side, of existence? For this purpose we must explore many different things that affected souls in the Egyptian period both within and beyond the physical plane.

From our studies of the earlier great epochs of earth evolution we can derive that the Egypto-Chaldean period furnishes a mirroring in knowledge and experience of what

happened in the Lemurian time, of what happened on the earth during and after the departure of the moon. What men experienced then, they experienced again as a memory in what the Egyptian initiates gave them. The Egyptian initiate himself experienced during his initiation events that man otherwise experiences only when he passes through the portal of death. To be sure, the Egyptian initiate experienced this in a different way than does the ordinary person who dies. He experienced it differently and in a much fuller way. It will be well for us now, as a basis for these considerations, to describe the essence of Egyptian initiation in a few words. This initiation is essentially different from that of the time after Christ, for through his advent initiation was fundamentally altered.

We have seen that men had to descend further and further into the material world, gaining increasing interest in the physical world. In the same proportion, however, the experience in the spiritual world between death and a new birth became more pale and shadowy. The livelier man's consciousness became in the physical world, the more he enjoyed being there, the more he discovered the laws of the physical plane, the dimmer his consciousness in the spiritual world became. The consciousness in the spiritual world reached its low point in the Greco-Latin time. But even before man had fully descended into these depths of matter, it had become impossible for him, within the physical body, to experience completely what one must experience if, during the period between birth and death, one seeks to gain insight into the spiritual world.

The initiation event may be briefly described, and it is the same for initiations before and after Christ, although the conclusion is different. Initiation is nothing other than man's gaining the capacity of developing organs of vision in his higher bodies. Today man sees darkness when it is night; he is in the dark. This is because man has no organs of perception in his astral body. As the eyes and ears have formed themselves into physical organs of perception, so supersensible organs must be developed out of the higher members and assimilated into them. This occurs through certain exercises of concentration and meditation being given to the pupil. These exercises are performed after the pupil has first surveyed the knowledge of the spiritual worlds that can be given by the initiates. It has always been the case that the pupils had to learn what we today would call elementary theosophy. Much more strongly than today it was required that the pupils become acquainted with the truth in a regular progression. When there was enough theoretical preparation, and when the pupils were sufficiently mature, the exercises were given to them. These exercises have a definite purpose.

When in his daily life man lets the impressions of the senses work upon him, these impressions bring certain fruits for the ordinary life on the physical plane. These impressions pass over into the astral body, which in turn transmits them to the ego. But these impressions are such that man cannot hold them fast when, with his astral body and ego, he slips out of his physical and etheric bodies during the night. What man receives in this way from the physical plane does not penetrate into him so strongly that he can retain it as a permanent impression. But when a person performs the exercises of

meditation and concentration, these are so adjusted, in accordance with thousands of years of experience, that the astral body no longer loses the impressions, but retains them when it slips out of the physical body in the night. Through the exercises the astral body receives plastic impressions, which shape and member it as the physical organs have been membered. Thus the astral body is worked on for certain periods through these exercises. Thereby the supersensible organs of vision are imprinted on the astral body. It would be a long time, however, before man could use his organs of vision if they were imprinted only into his astral body. Something further must take place so that the astral body, when it returns into the etheric body, may stamp upon that body, like the impression of a seal, what has taken shape within itself. Only when what has taken shape in the astral body imprints itself upon the etheric body, only then does the illumination take place that makes it possible for the person to see the spiritual world as he sees the physical world today.

Here we can begin to grasp what kind of an impulse we have received through the appearance of Christ on earth. In the old initiations the astral body had the strength to work upon the etheric body only when the etheric body had been lifted out of the physical body. This was because at that time the etheric body, had it remained connected with the physical body, would have exerted so much resistance that it could not have received the imprint of what the astral body had formed within itself. In the ancient initiations, therefore, for a period of three and a half days, the candidate was put into a deathlike condition in which the physical body was deserted by the etheric body while this latter, freed from the physical, united itself with the astral body. The astral then stamped into the etheric all that had been built into the astral through the exercises. When the Hierophant again awakened the candidate, the latter was illuminated. He knew what took place in the spiritual world, for he had made a remarkable journey during the three and a half days. He had been led through the fields of the spiritual world. He had seen what went on there, and he knew from direct experience what another person could learn only through revelation. A person thus initiated could, out of his own experiences, give knowledge of the beings who were in the spiritual world, beyond the physical plane.

When man had not yet descended so far into the physical plane, he could learn what was experienced in the spiritual world. There the candidate became acquainted with the true form of Osiris, Isis, and Horus. The initiate saw the contents of the myths during this journey into the spiritual world. He could then transmit this to other persons when he had dressed it as myth or saga. He saw all this; he saw in what a special way the Osiris influences had shaped themselves when the moon had withdrawn from the earth; he saw how Horus issued from Isis and Osiris; he saw the four human types, the bull, the lion, the eagle, and the true man. He also saw what happened to man between death and a new birth. The Sphinx appeared to him as a real form; he experienced it. He could say, "Oh, I have seen the Sphinx, man as he was when he still had an animal-like form, and his etheric body — similar to the human — only projected out of this animal-like form!" The Sphinx was a real experience for the initiate. He even heard the question of the

Sphinx with its enigmatic content. He saw how the human body prepared itself out of the animality, at a time when the head was only an etheric form, the ether-head of the Sphinx. This was truth for the initiate, as were also the older forms of the gods, who had, so to speak, taken a different course of evolution.

It has recently been said that certain beings pursued a different path in evolution. The individuality of Wotan, for example, takes such a different course. Up to a certain stage it travels together with man, but then it does not descend so deeply. Man descends further into matter and only later will he again join these beings, who are completing their evolution in the earth-time. We have seen that a time came when Wotan no longer walked on our earth. Such beings, however, were not like Osiris and Isis. These latter were beings who had branched off still earlier, who completed their evolution on a higher level in full invisibility. These forms went through their special experiences.

Let us look back into the Lemurian period. At that time the etheric was not yet manlike in its form. In his etheric body man was still similar to the animals, and the gods who descended then had to accommodate themselves to the same animal forms in which man lived on the earth. If a being wishes to enter into a certain plane, it must fulfill the conditions of that plane. This is also the case here. The divine beings who were connected with the earth during the departure of the sun and moon, who were on the earth, had to take on a form that was possible at that time, an animal-like form. And since the Egyptian religious views present in a certain way a recapitulation of the Lemurian time, the Egyptian initiate looked upon the gods, Osiris and Isis for example, as having animal-like forms. He still saw the higher gods with animal heads. Therefore from an occult view it was quite correct when such forms were represented with the head of a hawk or a ram in accordance with what the initiates knew. The gods were portrayed in the forms they had when they walked the earth. The outer images could only resemble what the initiate saw, but they were faithfully reproduced. The various divine beings changed a good deal. The forms in Lemuria were different from those in Atlantis. In those times beings went through much more rapid changes than they do now. In addition, these forms were still filled with spirit. When one looks back on them one sees them in their three bodies, but illuminated and rayed through by the astral and etheric light. This was accurately portrayed in the pictures. Modern men may laugh over the forms that were represented, but they do not know how **realistic they were**.²⁴

There was one being who performed special services in that period of human evolution when, through the cosmic-tellurian powers, the combining intellect was being organized in man. At that time the physical brain was prepared in such a way that man was able to develop intelligence later. This capacity was implanted in man and reckoned as one of the deeds of the god Manu. What was worked into man as intelligence was connected with this. If today we examine a person in whom a well-formed ability for judging and combining is present, if we examine him clairvoyantly, we find a strong

²⁴ Fantastic speculation on the reason why the Egyptians worshipped animal-headed gods began in classical times. See Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, Sec. 72.

expression and reflection of this fact in a green glittering and shining of the astral body, of the astral aura. The capacity for combining shows itself in green colors in the aura, especially in those who have keen mathematical understanding. The ancient Egyptian initiates saw the god who implanted the faculty of intelligence in men, and in portraying him they **painted him green**²⁵ because they saw the green shimmering of his luminous astral and etheric form. Today this is still the color that glitters in the aura when the person's intelligence is stirred. Much time could be devoted to these connections if people really wanted to study this wonderful realism of the forms of the Egyptian gods. These representations of the divine forms, through the fact that they were so realistic and not at all arbitrary, had magical power; and one who could see more deeply would perceive that many mysteries were present in the coloring of these ancient forms. Here one can, see deep into the workings of human evolution.

We have seen how what the initiates saw was retained in the Sphinx. Of course, this was not retained in a photographic way, yet it was realistic. But the forms were always changing. The form of the Sphinx gives an image of how man once looked. His present form has been shaped by man himself. We know that through evolution on the earth various animal forms have been split off. What is an animal form? It is a form that has remained static, while man proceeded further in evolution. In these forms we see arrested stages of evolution, to the extent that these forms have become physical. In the spiritual something else has taken place. What man is spiritually has nothing to do with his physical forebears. Only the physical is connected with that. Man does not descend from the animals; the animal forms have remained unchanged. In man, however, the shape has been transformed to a certain level. The animals are previous physical human forms fallen into decadence. The situation is different in another realm of evolution. Not only have the physical forms of the animals remained unchanged, but also the rudiments of the etheric and astral forms as well. Just as the lion, at the time when it split off, looked quite different than now, so certain soul-spiritual forms degenerate in the course of time when they remain at a particular stage. It is a law of the spiritual world that anything that stands still on the same level of spirit or soul becomes more and more decadent.

If, for example, the Sphinx stands still, it degenerates and receives a form that is like a caricature of what it originally was. The Sphinx has been preserved in this way on the astral plane up to our own time. To those who, as initiates or in some other lawful manner, penetrate into the higher worlds, these decadent forms have little interest, being only decayed vagabonds in the spiritual world. But when, in exceptional cases, persons equipped with inferior clairvoyant gifts are led into the astral world, such decadent forms approach them. The true Sphinx approached Oedipus, but it has not died even yet. Up to today it has not died; it only approaches man in another form.

²⁵ For pictures of the Green Osiris, see the frontispieces in both volumes of Budge, *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection*, and in Volumes II, X, and XII of Maspero and Rappaport, *History of Egypt* (London, Grolier, 1901). See also text in Budge, Vol. II, p.355.

When persons who have remained standing at a certain stage of evolution, among the peasants perhaps, rest in the fields at midday in the hot glow of the summer sun, and fall asleep, they may have what could be called a latent sun-stroke. Through such an impact on the physical body, the astral and etheric are loosened from a part of the physical. Then such persons are translated to the astral plane and they see this last decadent offspring of the Sphinx. This apparition is called by different names. In certain regions it is called the midday woman. Many people in the country will recount that they have met the midday woman. She appears in many regions under many different names. She is a descendent of the ancient Sphinx, and as the ancient Sphinx put questions to the men who experienced her, so this midday woman also asks questions. You may hear it told how the midday woman asks endless questions of the men whom she meets. This torment by questions is a relic of the old Sphinx. The midday woman has grown out of the ancient Sphinx. This indicates how evolution proceeds beyond the physical world, how whole tribes of spiritual beings decline until at last they are mere shadows of what they were originally. Here we see another characteristic of the way in which things are connected in evolution. We have mentioned this so it may be seen how manifold evolution is.

Now, to understand everything correctly, we must give some thought to the fact that in the course of time man has organized the fourth member, the ego, into what he brought with him at the beginning of earth evolution as his physical, etheric, and astral bodies. I have shown how this ego permeates the astral body, claims it for itself so that it dominates it as higher spiritual beings formerly dominated it. It is a deed of the higher beings that this ego was implanted in the astral body. If evolution had proceeded further in accordance with the views of certain higher beings, it would have been a different evolution from what has actually taken place. However, certain beings remained unchanged. They had not become capable of collaborating in implanting the ego in the astral body.

When man appeared on the earth he consisted of the physical, etheric, and astral bodies, all of which he shaped further. Now he was endowed with egohood by certain sublime beings who had their dwellings mainly on the sun and moon. These beings collaborated, so to speak, on the ego. But there were certain other beings who, during the Saturn, Sun, and Moon evolutions, had not raised themselves so far that they could take part in this organizing of the ego. They could do only what they had learned on the moon. They had to limit themselves to working on the astral body, hence there was implanted in man's astral body something that did not belong to his noblest qualities, did not come from the higher sublime beings but from the retarded intruders who had remained behind. Had these beings done this on the moon, it would have been something lofty. But through the fact that they did this on earth as stragglers, they worked into the astral body something that placed it lower than it would have been otherwise. It became endowed with instincts and passions, and with egoism. We must heed this fact that man was influenced from two sides, that he received impacts in his astral body through which the latter became debased.

Such a thing does not influence the astral body alone. Man is so constituted that the astral body transmits such an influence to the etheric body, and this again to the physical body. The astral body is active in all parts, hence these spirits work on the etheric and physical through the astral body. Had these spiritual beings not been able to exercise such an influence, something would not have appeared in man at that time. This is an enhanced selfhood in man, an increased ego-feeling. What this caused in the etheric body was all that appeared as darkening of judgment, as the possibility of error. All that the astral body accomplished in the physical body is the basis of what appeared as illness. That is the spiritual cause of illnesses in man; among animals, becoming ill is something different. We see how illness has been transplanted into man; illness is connected with the causes we have indicated here. And since the physical and etheric bodies are connected with the facts of heredity, so the principle of illness proceeds through the hereditary line. Let us again emphasize, however, that we must distinguish between inner illnesses and external injuries. If a man is run over, that is something entirely different. Also, certain internal illnesses can be connected with external causes; for example, if one eats something that upsets the stomach, that is something external.

Before the above-mentioned beings gained influence over man in the course of evolution, he was so organized that he reacted far more powerfully than today toward evil pressing upon him from without. But in proportion to the influence that they gained over him, he lost the instincts he had possessed for what was not right. Formerly, man's whole organization was such that he had fine instincts as to what was not right for him. Substances that are taken into the stomach today and there cause illness were then rejected simply through instinct. Gazing backward in time we come to periods when man stood in a delicate relationship to the forces of his environment, reacting sensitively to the forces in his surroundings. In this respect man grew ever less sure, less capable of rejecting what was not serviceable to him.

This is connected with something else. As man grew more inward, something occurred in the world outside; what we know as the three other kingdoms of nature arose. The three kingdoms around us arose gradually. At first, only man was present. Then the animal kingdom was added; then the plant kingdom, and finally the mineral kingdom. If we were to look back on the primeval earth when the sun was still united with it, we would find a human being in and out of whom all the substances of the physical world moved. Man still lived in the womb of the gods: everything still agreed with him, so to say. Then he had to leave behind what was precipitated as the animal kingdom. Had he carried this with him, he would not have been able to develop further. He had to expel the animal kingdom, and later the plant kingdom. What exists outside in the animals and plants is nothing other than temperaments, passions, certain traits of men that they had to expel. And when man formed his bones he expelled the mineral world. After a certain length of time, man could look upon his environment and say, "Formerly I could endure you; formerly you went in and out of me as air now does. When I still lived in the water-earth I could endure you; I digested you. Now you are outside, and I can no longer endure you, no longer digest you." As man became enclosed in his skin, as he became a

self-contained separate being, he saw, in the same proportion, these kingdoms around him.

If these beings had not worked on man, something else would not have happened. As long as man is healthy, he will stand in a normal relationship to the outer world. When he has disturbed forces within him, these must be driven back by the powers that man has. If his powers are too weak for this, if he cannot provide the normal resistance, then something must be infused into him from outside. Something must be implanted into him to furnish the resistance that he still had at the time the forces from outside breathed in and out of him. It may be necessary, when a person is ill, that the forces of a metal, for example, should be injected into him. It is because man was in connection with metals earlier, in connection with plant juices and similar things, that we are justified in applying them as medicaments.

When the Egyptian initiates could look back over the whole course of world evolution, they knew precisely how the individual organs of the human body corresponded with the substances of the external world. They knew which plants and which metals had to be administered to the patient. A great treasure of occult wisdom in the domain of medicine will be raised to light one day, wisdom that mankind formerly possessed. Not only are many things bungled in medicine today, but often special healing powers are ascribed to this or that in a one-sided way. The true occultist will never be one-sided. How often must we reject efforts that would make a compromise with the science of the spirit! The latter cannot support a one-sided method: on the contrary, it seeks to establish diversified research. It is one-sided to say, "Away with all poisons!" People who say this do not know the true healing forces. Naturally many stupid things are done today, for the professionals in most cases cannot grasp all the relationships, and a certain tyranny in medical science excludes what can proceed from occultism. If there were no campaigns against the oldest methods of medicine, against the injection of metals, there could be a reform. With modern experimentation nothing is discovered that can hold its own against the traditional remedies, which only a lay ignorance can oppose as strongly as is often done. The ancient Egyptian initiates excelled in these secrets. They had an insight into the real relationships of evolution, and if today certain physicians speak in a condescending way of Egyptian medicine, you can soon tell from their tone that they know nothing about it. Here we touch upon something in the Egyptian initiation that should be known.

It was such things as these that went over into the folk-consciousness. Now we must reflect that the same souls that are in our bodies today were also incarnated in that ancient time. Let us remember that these souls saw all the images that the initiates made of what they knew through vision in the spiritual world. We know that what a soul takes into itself from incarnation to incarnation, ever and again bears fruits in one or another way. Even though man cannot remember it, it is still true that what lives in the soul today lives in it because it was deposited there earlier. The soul is formed both within and beyond the physical life. When it was between birth and death, when it was

between death and a new birth, Egyptian ideas were influential and modern ideas have proceeded from these. Today certain definite ideas are developing out of the Egyptian ideas. What is called Darwinism today did not arise because of external reasons. We are the same souls who, in Egypt, received the pictures of the animal forms of man's forebears. The old views have awakened again, but man has descended more deeply into the material world. He remembers that it was said to him, "Our ancestors were animal forms." But he does not remember that these forms were gods. This is the psychological basis for the emergence of Darwinism. The figures of the gods appear in materialistic form. Thus there is an intimate spiritual connection between the old and the new, between the third and the fifth cultural periods.

Now it is not the whole destiny of our time that man should see in material form what previously he saw in the spiritual. That would have been our fate had not the Christ-impulse entered into human evolution in the meantime. This was not significant only for life on the physical plane. Today we shall see what significance the events of Palestine had for the other side of life, where the souls of the Egyptians sojourned after death. Here on the physical plane occurred the things we have already discussed. But the three years of Christ's activity, like the event of Golgotha and the baptism in Jordan, were of significance equally to the souls incarnated on earth and to those who were in the condition between death and a new birth.

Let us recall the fact that the external physical expression for the ego is the blood. What works physically in the forces of the blood is the physical expression of the ego. In the course of evolution too strong a measure of egoism made its appearance, which means that the egohood impressed the blood too powerfully. This "surplus" of egoism had to be expelled again if spirituality was to be restored to mankind. On Golgotha the impulse was given for this expulsion of egoism. In the same moment when the Redeemer's blood flowed on Golgotha, still other events were taking place in the spiritual world. The Redeemer's blood flowed out in the material world, while the superfluity of egoism passed over into the spiritual world. The superfluous egoism had to vanish from the world, and the impulse for this was given on Golgotha. In place of egoism, universal human love entered into mankind.

But what was this event of Golgotha? What was this event of a three-and-a-half-day death on the physical plane? It was the enactment on the physical plane of what also had been experienced in spiritual development by one who was initiated. He was dead for three and a half days. One who had gone through this symbolical death could say to mankind, "There is a conquering of death. There is something eternal in the world." Death was conquered by the initiates, and they felt themselves to be victors over death. The event of Golgotha signifies that what had often taken place in the mysteries of ancient times became, for once, an historical event: the conquering of death through the spirit. This was taken out into the world on the physical plane. If we let this work upon our souls, we sense what happened with the Mystery of Golgotha as something new, but

also as an image of the ancient initiation. We feel this unique event entering into the world historically.

What was the consequence of this? What could the initiate do? Out of his own experiences he could say to his fellow men, "I know there is a spiritual world, that man can live in the spiritual world. I have lived in it for three and a half days and bring you tidings thence. I bring you the gifts of the spiritual world." These gifts were useful and healing to mankind.

On the other hand, one who had lived as an initiate in the physical world could bring nothing similar to the dead. To the dead he could only say, "All that happens on the physical plane is so ordered that man ought to be redeemed." Thus it was when, in the spiritual world, the ancient initiates held converse with the dead, to whom they could give only the teaching that "Life is suffering; only redemption will bring healing." Thus did Buddha still teach. Thus did the initiate teach both the living and the dead. But through the event of Golgotha death was conquered in the physical world, and this signified something for those who had died and were in the spiritual world. Those who take up Christ in their innermost parts illuminate again their shadowy life in Devachan. The more man experiences here of the Christ, the brighter it becomes over there in the spiritual world. After the blood had flowed from the wounds of the Redeemer — this is something that belongs to the mysteries of Christianity — the Christ-spirit descended to the dead. This is one of the deepest mysteries of mankind. Christ descended to the dead and said to them, "Over there something has happened, of which it cannot be said that what happens there is not so important as what happens here. What man brings with him into the spiritual realm as a consequence of this event is a gift that can be brought out of the physical world into the spiritual world." These are the tidings that Christ brought to the dead in the three and a half days. He descended to the dead in order to redeem them.

In the ancient initiation one could say that the fruits of the spiritual were reaped in the physical. Now an event occurred in the physical world that produced its fruits and did its work in the spiritual world. One can say that it was not in vain that man completed his descent to the physical plane. He completed it so that here in the physical world fruits could be produced for the spiritual world.

That these fruits could be produced came to pass through Christ, who was present among the living and among the dead, who gave an impulse so intense and so powerful that it shook the whole world.



LECTURE 12

The Christ Impulse as Conqueror of Matter.

September 14, 1908

IN order to complete the task that we have envisioned, we must now study the character of our own time in the same sense in which we have studied the four post-Atlantean epochs up to the appearance of Christianity. We have seen how, after the Atlantean catastrophe, there evolved the ancient Indian epoch, the ancient Persian epoch, and the Egypto-Chaldean epoch. In the description of the fourth epoch, the Greco-Latin, we have seen that in a certain connection man at that time worked his way into the physical plane and that this working into the physical world then reached its low point. Why is this time, which from one side we call the low point of human evolution, nevertheless so attractive, so sympathetic, for the modern observer? Because this low point became the point of departure for many significant events of the present cultural epoch. We have seen how, in this Greco-Latin culture, a marriage was achieved between spirit and matter in Greek art. We have seen how the Greek temple was a building where the god could dwell, and that man could say, "I have brought matter so far that for me it can be an expression of the spirit, so that in every detail I can feel something of this spirit." Thus it is with all Greek works of art. Thus it is with everything we have to say about the life of the Greeks. This world of artistic creations, into which the spirit was implanted, made matter so terribly attractive that among us in Middle Europe the great Goethe, in his *Faust* tragedy, sought to portray his own union with this epoch of culture.

If in the succeeding time the progress of culture had continued in the same direction, what would have been the result? We can make this clear through a simple sketch. In the Greco-Latin time man had descended to his lowest point, but in such a way that in no piece of matter was the spirit lost to him. In all the creations of this time, the spirit was incorporated in matter. When we look at the figure of a Greek god, we see everywhere how the Greek creative genius imprinted the spiritual on the external matter. The Greek had conquered matter, but the spirit had not been lost. The normal course of culture would have been that man should descend below this level, plunging down below matter so that the spirit would become the slave of matter. We need only turn an unprejudiced glance on our environment and we shall see that, on one side, this has actually happened. The expression of this descent is materialism. True, in no period has man mastered matter more than in our time, but only for the satisfaction of bodily needs. We need only consider with what primitive means the gigantic pyramids were built, and then compare this with the boldness and loftiness with which the Egyptian spirit moved among the mysteries of world-existence. We need only think of the deep sense in which, for the Egyptians, their pictures of the gods were images of what took place in the cosmos and on earth in the remote past. One who, at that time in Egypt,

could look into the spiritual world, lived in something that became invisible in the Atlantean time but was a fact of evolution in the Lemurian time. One who was not an initiate, who belonged to the common people, could still participate in these spiritual worlds with his whole feeling and his whole soul. Yet how primitive were the means with which these men had to work externally on the physical plane. Compare this with our own time. We need only read the innumerable eulogies that our contemporaries write about the enormous strides made in modern times. The science of the spirit makes no objection to this. Human achievements are increasing through the conquest of the elements. But let us look at the thing from another side.

Let us look back to far-distant times when men ground their corn between simple stones, yet could look up into tremendous heights of the spiritual life. The majority of men today have no inkling of the heights that were surveyed at that time. They have no inkling of what a Chaldean initiate experienced when, in his special manner, he saw the stars, animals, plants, and minerals in connection with man, when he recognized the healing forces. The Egyptian priests were men to whom the physicians of today could not hold a candle. The men of today cannot penetrate into these heights of the spiritual world. Only through the science of the spirit can an idea be formed of what the ancient Chaldean-Egyptian initiates saw. For example, what we are offered today by way of interpretation of the inscriptions, in which deep mysteries are contained, is only a caricature of the ancient significance. Thus we find that in ancient times man had little power over the tools and equipment for labor on the physical plane, but he had enormous forces in relation to the spiritual world.

Man is descending ever more deeply into matter, and more and more he devotes his spiritual powers to conquering the physical plane. Can we not say that the human spirit is becoming the slave of the physical plane? In a certain way man descends even below the physical plane. Man has devoted enormous spiritual force to inventing the steamship, the railway, and the telephone, but what does he use these for? What a mass of spirit is thus diverted from life for the higher worlds. The spiritual scientist understands this and does not criticize in our time, because he knows that it was necessary to conquer the physical plane. Yet it is true that the spirit has plunged down into the physical world. Is it important for the spirit that, instead of grinding our own corn in a quern, we should be able to call Hamburg by long-distance telephone and order what we want to be sent from America by steamer? Great spiritual force has been applied to building up such connections with America and many other foreign lands, but we may ask whether the aim of all this is not the satisfaction of the material life, of our bodily needs. Since everything in the world is limited, there is not much spiritual force left over whereby man may ascend to the spiritual world after he has devoted so much to the material. The spirit has become the slave of matter. The Greek incorporated the spirit in his works of art, but today the spirit has descended very far. We have proof of this in the many technical and mechanical arrangements of our industry, which serve only material needs. Now let us ask whether this process is completed and whether man has descended too far.

This would have been the case were it not for the occurrence that we discussed in the preceding lectures. At the low point of human evolution something was infused into mankind, through the Christ-impulse, that gave the stimulus to a new ascent. The entry of the Christ-impulse into human evolution forms the other side of culture thereafter. It showed the way to the overcoming of matter. It brought the force through which death can be overcome. Thereby it offered to humanity the possibility of again raising itself above the level of the physical plane. This mightiest impulse had to be given, this impulse which became so efficacious that matter could be overcome in the magnificent way that is described in the Gospel of John, in the Baptism in Jordan and the Mystery of Golgotha.

Christ Jesus, who was foretold by the prophets, gave the most powerful impulse of all human evolution. Man had to separate himself from the spiritual worlds in order to attach himself to them again with the Christ-being. But we cannot yet understand this if we do not penetrate still more deeply into the connections of human evolution as a whole.

We must point out that what we call the advent of the Christ on earth is an event that could occur only at the low point, when man had sunk so far. The Greco-Latin period stands in the middle of the seven post-Atlantean epochs. No other period would have been the right one. When man became a personality, God also had to become a personality in order to save him, to give him the possibility of rising again. We have seen that in his Roman citizenship the Roman first became conscious of his personality. Earlier, man still lived in the heights of the spiritual world; now he had descended entirely to the physical plane, and now he had to be led upward again through God himself. We must go more deeply into the third, the fifth, and the intermediate period. We shall not study Egyptian mythology in an academic way, but we must pick out the characteristic points in order to get deeper into the feeling-life of the ancient Egyptians. Then we may ask how this illuminates our own time. There is one thing here that must be weighed carefully.

We have seen how, in the Egyptian myths and mysteries, all the mighty pictures of the Sphinx, of Isis, of Osiris, were memories of ancient human conditions. All this was like a reflection of ancient events on earth. Man looked back into his primeval past and saw his origin. The initiate could experience again the spiritual existence of his forebears. We have seen how man grew out of an original group-soul condition. We could point out how these group-souls were preserved in the forms of the four apocalyptic beasts. Man grew out of this condition in such a way that he gradually refined his body and achieved the development of individuality. We can follow this historically. Let us read the *Germania* of **Tacitus**.²⁶ In the times described there, in the conditions of the

²⁶ The passage referred to is probably the following (pages 293 and 295 in the Loeb Classical Library Edition): "Sisters' children mean as much to their uncle as to their father; some tribes regard this blood-tie as even closer and more sacred than that between son and father . . . The more relations a man has and the larger the

Germanic regions in the first century after Christ as there portrayed, we see how the consciousness of the individual is still bound up with the community, how the clan spirit rules, how the Cherusker, for example, still feels himself as a member of his clan. This consciousness is still so strong that the individual seeks vengeance for another of the same group. It finds expression in the custom of the blood-feud. Thus a sort of group-soul condition prevailed. This condition was preserved into late post-Atlantean times, but only as an echo. In the last period of Atlantis the group-consciousness generally died out. It is only stragglers whom we have just described. In reality the men of that time no longer knew anything of the group-soul. In the Atlantean time, however, man did know of it. Then he did not yet say *I* of himself. This group-soul feeling changed into something else in the following generations.

Strange as it may seem, in ancient times memory had an entirely different meaning and power. What is memory today? Reflect on whether you can still recall the events of your earliest childhood. Probably you can remember very little, and beyond your childhood you cannot go at all. You will remember nothing of what lies before your birth. It was not like this in Atlantean times. Even in the first post-Atlantean time man could remember what his father, grandfather, and ancestors had experienced. There was no sense in saying that between birth and death there was an ego. The ego reached back for centuries in the memory. The ego reached as far as the blood flowed down, from the remotest ancestors to the descendants. At that time the group-ego was not to be thought of as extended in space over the contemporaries, but as proceeding upward in the generations. Therefore, the modern man will never understand what appears as an echo of this in the tales of the patriarchs: that Adam, Noah, and others grew to be so old. They counted their ancestors through several generations upward to their ego. The modern man no longer can form any conception of this. In those days there would have been no sense in giving a single man a name between birth and death. In the whole series of ancestors the memory continued upwards for centuries. As far as man could remember through the centuries, so far was he given his name. Adam was, so to say, the ego that flowed with the blood through the generations. Only when we are acquainted with these actual facts do we know how things really were. Man felt sheltered in this series of generations. This is what the Bible means when it says, "I and Father Abraham are one." When the adherent of the Old Testament said this, only then did he rightly feel himself as man within the line of ancestry. Among the first post-Atlanteans, even among the Egyptians, this consciousness was still present. Men felt the community of the blood, and this caused something special for the spiritual life.

When a man dies today he has a life in kamaloka, after which comes a relatively long life in Devachan. But this is already a result of the Christ-impulse. This was not the case in pre-Christian times; then a man felt himself connected with the times of his forefathers. Today a man must wean himself in kamaloka from the wishes and desires to which he

number of his connections by marriage, the more influence has he in his age; it does not pay to have no ties. It is incumbent to take up a father's feuds or a kinsman's not less than his friendship."

has accustomed himself in the physical world; the duration of this condition depends upon this. We cling to our life between birth and death; in ancient times man clung to much more than this. Man was connected with the physical plane in such a way that he felt himself as a member of the whole physical series of generations. Thus, in *kamaloka*, one did not merely have to work out the clinging to an individual physical existence, but one really had to traverse all that was connected with the generations, up to the remotest ancestor. One experienced this backwards. One result of this was the deep truth underlying the expression: "To feel oneself sheltered in Abraham's bosom." One felt that after death he went upward through the whole row of ancestors, and the road that one had to travel was called "the way to the fathers." Only when one had traversed this path could he ascend into the spiritual worlds and travel the way of the gods. At that time the soul traveled first the path of the fathers and then the path of the gods.

Now the various cultures did not come to abrupt ends. The essence of the Indian culture remained, although it underwent a change. It was preserved alongside the following cultures. In the continuation of the Indian culture that was contemporaneous with the Egyptian, something similar arose. Today we easily confuse what was later with what was earlier. Therefore it was emphasized that I was giving indications only out of the remotest periods. Among other things, the Indians now took up the view of the path of the fathers and the path of the gods.

As a man became more initiated, freed himself more from dependence on home and the fathers, became more homeless, the path of the gods became longer and the path of the fathers became shorter. One who clung closely to the fathers had a long father-path and a short god-path. In the terminology of the Orient, the way of the fathers was called *Pitriyana* and the way of the gods was called *Devayana*. When we speak of *Devachan*, we should understand that this is only a distorted form of the word *Devayana*, the path of the gods. An old Vedantist would simply laugh at us if we came to him with descriptions such as we give of *Devachan*. It is not so easy to find one's way into the oriental methods of thinking and contemplating. As to those who pretend to give out oriental truths, these truths often must be protected from just such people. Many a person today who accepts something as Indian teaching has no idea that he is receiving a confused doctrine. The modern science of the spirit does not claim to be an oriental-Indian teaching. In certain circles people love what comes from far away, perhaps from America, but the truth is at home everywhere. Antiquarian research belongs to scholars, but the science of the spirit is life. Its truth can be checked everywhere at any time. We must keep this before our minds.

What we have just mentioned was practice as well as theory among the ancient Egyptians. What was taught in the great mysteries was also practical., Something special was connected with this, as we shall learn as we penetrate further. The mysteries of the ancient Egyptians strove for something special. Today we may smile when we are told how the Pharaoh was at a certain time a kind of initiate, and how the Egyptian stood in relation to the Pharaoh and to his state institutions. For the modern European scholar it

is particularly comical when the Pharaoh gives himself the name, "Son of Horus," or even "Horus." It seems singular to us that a man should be venerated as a god; nothing more abstruse could be thought of. But the man of today does not understand the Pharaoh and his mission. He does not know what the Pharaoh-initiation really was. Today we see in a people, only a group of persons who can be counted. To the man of today a **people**²⁷ is a meaningless abstraction. The reality is simply a certain number of persons filling a certain area. But this is not a people for one who accepts the **standpoint of occultism**.²⁸ As a single member such as the finger belongs to the whole body, so do the single persons within the people belong to the folk-soul. They are as it were embedded in it, but the folk-soul is not physical; it is real only as an etheric form. It is an absolute reality; the initiate can commune with this soul. It is even much more real for him than are single individualities among the people, far more so than a single person. For the occultist spiritual experiences are entirely valid, and there the folk-soul is something thoroughly real. Let us examine briefly the connection between the folk-soul and the individuals.

If we think of the single individuals, the single egos, as little circles, for external physical observation they will be separate beings. But one who observes these single individualities spiritually sees them as though embedded in an etheric cloud, and this is the incorporation of the folk-soul. If the single person thinks, feels, and wills something, he radiates his feelings and thoughts into the common folk-soul. This is colored by his radiations, and the folk-soul becomes permeated by the thoughts and feelings of the single persons. When we look away from the physical man and observe only his etheric and astral bodies, and then observe the astral body of an entire people, we see that the astral body of the entire people receives its color-shadings from the single persons.

The Egyptian initiate knew this, but he also knew something further. When he observed this folk-substance, the ancient Egyptian asked himself what really lived in the folk-soul. What did he see therein? He saw in his folk-soul the re-embodiment of Isis. He saw how she had once wandered among men. Isis worked in the folk-soul. He saw in her the same influences as those that proceeded from the moon; these forces worked in the folk-soul. What the Egyptian saw as Osiris worked in the individual spiritual radiations; therein he recognized the Osiris-influence. But Isis he saw in the folk-soul.

Thus Osiris was not visible on the physical plane. He had died for the physical plane. Only when a man had died was Osiris again placed before his eyes. Therefore we read in the *Book of the Dead* how the Egyptian felt that he was united with Osiris in death, that he himself became an Osiris. Osiris and Isis worked together in the state and in the single person, as his members.

²⁷ The German word *Volk* has no convenient English equivalent. We shall translate it as *people* or *folk* in different contexts.

²⁸ Rudolf Steiner's fullest discussion of this subject appears in the cycle of lectures, *Mission of the Folk-Souls*, delivered at Oslo in 1910.

Now let us again consider the Pharaoh, remembering that this was a reality for him. Each Pharaoh received certain instructions before his initiation, to the end that he should not grasp this with his intellect only, but that it should become truth and reality for him. He had to be brought to the point where he could say to himself, "If I am to rule this people, I must sacrifice a portion of my spirituality, I must extinguish a part of my astral and etheric bodies. The Osiris and Isis principles must work in me. I must will nothing personally; if I say something, Osiris must speak; if I do something, Osiris must do it; if I move my hand, Osiris and Isis must be active. I must represent Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris."

Initiation is not erudition. But to be able to do something like this, to be able to make such a sacrifice, pertains to initiation. What the Pharaoh sacrificed of himself could be filled up with portions of the folk-soul. The part of himself that the Pharaoh relinquished was just what gave him power. For justified power does not arise through a man's raising his own personality; it arises through his taking into himself something that transcends the boundaries of personality, a higher spiritual power. The Pharaoh took such a power into himself, and this was externally portrayed through the Uraeus-serpent.

Again we have peered into a mystery. We have seen something much higher than the explanations that are given today when the Pharaohs are discussed.

If the Egyptian cherished such feelings, what would have to be his particular concern? It would be his particular concern that the folk-soul should become as strong as possible, rich in good forces, and that it should not be diminished. The Egyptian initiates could not reckon with, what man possessed through blood-relationship. But what the forefathers had accumulated as spiritual riches, was to become the property of the individual soul. This is indicated for us in the judging of the dead, where the man is brought before the forty-two assessors of the dead. There his deeds are weighed. Who are the forty-two judges of the dead? They are the **ancestors**.²⁹ It was believed that each man's life was interwoven with the lives of forty-two ancestors. Therefore he had to answer to them as to whether he actually had taken up what they had offered to him spiritually. In this way, what was contained in the Egyptian mystery-teachings was something that was to become practical for life, but which could also be turned to good account for the time beyond death, for the life between death and a new birth. In the Egyptian epoch man was already entangled in the physical world. But at the same time he had to look up to his ancestors in the other world, and cultivate in the physical world what he had inherited from them. Through this interest he was fettered to the physical plane, since he had to continue working on what his fathers had created.

Now we must reflect that the souls of today are reincarnations of the ancient Egyptian souls. For the souls of today, who experienced it in their Egyptian incarnation, what is

²⁹ A full description of these 42 gods is to be found in Budge, *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection*, Volume I, pp. 316-317. For a fairly good picture, see pages 344-45 of the same work.

the significance of what happened at that time? All that the soul experienced at that time between death and a new birth has been woven into the soul, weaves within it, and has arisen again in our fifth period, which brings the fruits of the third period. These fruits appear in the inclinations and ideas of modern times, which have their causes in the ancient Egyptian world. Nowadays all the ideas emerge which at that time were laid down in the soul as germs. Therefore it is easy to see that man's modern conquests on the physical plane are nothing more than a coarser version of the transfer of interest to the physical plane that was present in ancient Egypt, only people are now even more deeply ensnared in matter. In the mummifying of the dead we have already seen a cause of the materialistic views that we now experience on the physical plane.

Let us imagine a soul of that time. Let us imagine a soul that then lived as a pupil of one of the ancient initiates. Such a pupil's spiritual gaze had been directed to the cosmos through actual perception. The way Osiris and Isis lived in the moon had become spiritual perception for him. Everything was permeated by divine-spiritual beings. He had taken this into his soul. He is again incarnated in the fourth and fifth periods. In the fifth period such a person experiences all this again. It comes back to him as a memory. What happens to it now? The pupil had gazed up at all that lived in the world of the stars. This sight comes to life again in a certain person of the fifth period. He remembers what he saw and heard at that time. He cannot recognize it again, because it has taken on a material coloring. It is no longer the spiritual that he sees, but the material-mechanical relationships emerge again and he recreates the thoughts in materialistic form as memory. Where he had previously seen divine beings, Isis and Osiris, now he sees only abstract forces without any spiritual bond. The spiritual relationships appear to him in thought-form. Everything arises again, but in material form.

Let us apply this to a particular soul which at that time acquired insight into the great cosmic connections, and let us imagine that there arises again before this soul what it had seen spiritually in ancient Egypt. This appears again in this soul in the fifth post-Atlantean period, and we have the soul of Copernicus. Thus did the Copernican system arise, as a memory-tableau of spiritual experiences in ancient Egypt. The case is the same with Kepler's system. These men gave birth to their great laws out of their memories, out of what they had experienced in the Egyptian time. Now let us think how such a thing arises in the soul as a faint memory, and let us think also how what such a spirit truly thinks was, in ancient Egypt, experienced by him in spiritual form. What can such a spirit say to us? That it seems to him as though he looked back into ancient Egypt. It is as though he stated all this in a new form when such a spirit says, "But now, a year and a half after the first dawning, a few months after the first full daylight, a few weeks after the pure sun had risen over these most wonderful contemplations, nothing holds me back any longer. I shall revel in holy fire. I shall scorn the sons of men with the simple confession that I am stealing the sacred vessels of the Egyptians to build with them an habitation for my God, far removed from the borders of Egypt." Is this not like an actual memory, which corresponds to the truth? This is Kepler's saying, and in his works we also find the following: "The ancient memory is knocking at my heart."

Wonderful are the connections of things in human evolution. Many such enigmatic sayings take on light and meaning when one senses the spiritual connections. Life becomes great and powerful, and we feel our way into a mighty whole when we understand that the single person is only an individual form of the spiritual that permeates the world.

I have already pointed out that what has arisen in our time as Darwinism is a coarser materialistic version of what the Egyptians portrayed as their gods in animal form. I was also able to show that if one understands Paracelsus correctly, his medical lore is a recrudescence of what was taught in the temples of ancient Egypt. Let us contemplate such a spirit as Paracelsus. We find a remarkable statement by him. One who has steeped himself in Paracelsus knows what a lofty spirit lived in him. He made a remarkable statement, saying that he had learned much in many ways; least of all in the academies, but much from old traditions and from the common people during his journeys through many lands. It is impossible here to give examples of the deep truths that are still present among the common people but are no longer understood, although Paracelsus could still turn them to account. He said that he had found one book containing deep medical truths. What book was it? The Bible! Thereby he meant not only the Old Testament, but also the New. One need only be able to read the Bible to find therein what Paracelsus found. What became of the medicine of Paracelsus? It is true that it is a memory of the ancient Egyptian methods of healing. But through the fact that he absorbed the mysteries of Christianity, the upward impulse, his works are saturated with spiritual wisdom, they are filled with Christ. This is the path into the future. This is what everyone must do who, in modern times, will pave the way back out of the fall into matter. We must not under-value the great material progress, but there is also the possibility of letting the spiritual flow into it.

One who studies what material science can offer today, who plunges into material science and is not too lazy to steep himself in it, such a man acts wisely also in relation to the science of the spirit. Much can be learned from the purely materialistic investigators. What is found there we can permeate with the pure spirit, which the science of the spirit offers. If thus we permeate everything with the spiritual, then this is properly understood Christianity. It is a slander of the science of the spirit when men say that it is a fantastic view of the world. It can stand firmly on the ground of reality, and it would be only a most elementary beginning in the science of the spirit if one were to concentrate on a schematic representation of the higher worlds. It is not important that the student should simply know the things, learning the concepts by heart. This is not all that counts. The important thing is that the teachings about the higher worlds should become fruitful in men, that the true spiritual-scientific teachings should be introduced into everything, into the everyday life.

It is not so important that one should preach about universal brotherly love. It is best to speak of that as little as possible. Speaking in such phrases is like saying to the stove, "Dear stove, it is your duty to warm this room. Fulfill your duty!" So it is with teachings

that are given through such phrases. The important thing is the means. The stove remains cold if I simply tell it that it should be warm. It gets warm when it has fuel. People also remain cold when they are admonished. But what is fuel for the modern man? The specific facts of spiritual teaching are **fuel for man**.³⁰ One should not be so lazy as to remain content with "Universal brotherhood." People must be given fuel. Then brotherhood will arise of itself. As the plants stretch out their blossoms to the sun, so must we all look up to the sun of the spiritual life.

The important thing is that the matters we have examined here should not be accepted merely as theoretical doctrines, but that they should become a force in our souls. For every man, in every position in practical life, they can give impulses for what he must create. People who look today at the science of the spirit with a certain scorn feel themselves superior to its "fantastic" teachings. They find "unprovable assertions" therein and say that one should cleave to the facts. If the spiritual scientist were made pusillanimous rather than bold through his life in the science of the spirit, it would be easy for him to lose his sureness and energy when he sees how just those persons who should understand the science of the spirit are the ones who utterly fail to grasp it.

Our times easily look down on what the Egyptians recognized as their gods. The latter are said to be meaningless abstractions. But modern man is far more superstitious. He clings to entirely different gods, who are authorities for him. Because he does not actually bend the knee before them, he does not notice what superstitions he cherishes.

My dear friends, when we have thus been together again we should always be mindful that when we disperse we should not take with us only a number of truths, but we should take away a collective impression, a feeling, that can properly take the form of an impulse of will, an impulse to carry the science of the spirit into life and to allow nothing to disturb our confidence in it.

Let us place a picture before our soul. One often hears it said, "Oh, these seekers for the spirit! They assemble in their lodges and pursue all kinds of fantastic rubbish. A man of really modern views can have no part in that." The adherents of the science of the spirit sometimes seem to be a sort of pariah class, regarded as uneducated and untrained. Should we be discouraged because of this? No. We shall place a picture before our souls and arouse the feelings that are connected with it. We can recall something similar in past times; how something similar occurred in ancient Rome. We can see how, in ancient Rome, primitive Christianity spread among a despised class of people. We look with legitimate delight today on such things as the Coliseum constructed by imperial Rome. But we can also look at the people who then regarded themselves as the choicest of their time; we can see how they sat in the Circus and watched while the Christians were burned in the arena and incense was kindled to quench the stink of the burning bodies.

³⁰ This thought is more fully expounded in Rudolf Steiner's booklet, *Anthroposophical Ethics*, comprising three lectures delivered in 1912 in Norrköping.

Now let us look at those despised ones. They lived in the catacombs, in underground passages. There the spreading Christianity had to hide. There they erected the first Christian altars on the graves of their dead. There below they had their wonderful symbols and shrines. A strange feeling seizes us today when we walk through the catacombs, through that despised underground Rome. The Christians knew what awaited them. That first germ of the Christ-impulse on earth, confined to the catacombs, was despised. But what remains of imperial Rome? It has disappeared from the earth, while what then lived in the catacombs has been exalted.

Let us hope that those who today wish to make themselves the bearers of a spiritual world-view may preserve the confidence of the first Christians. The representatives of the science of the spirit may be despised by contemporary academic learning, but they know they are working for what will bloom and thrive in the future. Let them learn to endure all the vexations of the present day. We are working into the future. This we may feel confidently and without arrogance, firm against the misunderstandings of our time.

With such feelings let us try to give permanence to what has passed before our souls. Let us take it away with us as a force, and let us continue to work together fraternally in the right direction.

