
THE CHRISTOLOGY OF RUDOLF STEINER

By

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SUMMARY

My original contribution to knowledge in this thesis is the systematic presentation of Rudolf Steiner's Christology. In the first part of the thesis, I have offered three lenses through which the theological academy can approach Steiner's ideas. These lenses give insights into Rudolf Steiner's scholarly, theological and systematic methods. While developing this project, it became evident that one of the significant hindrances to reading Steiner's theological and Christological content is that he did not order his works on Christology. This thesis approaches this task from two aspects: first, by discussing Steiner and his methods, and second, by ordering and systematising Steiner's christological insights. This thesis argues that Steiner's theological approach is best understood as an 'analytic-mystical' theology and that this can stand alongside new approaches to theology emerging in the twenty-first century. Throughout the thesis I use autobiographical narratives as a method to allow the reader to reflect upon the relevance of Steiner's insights through my life narratives and memories. My review of secondary literature is placed throughout the thesis to highlight where Steiner's ideas meet contemporary and other theological consideration.

Chapter one provides the spiritual biographical lens where I present Steiner's academic and intellectual development through an analytical philosophical approach to mystical or metaphysical theology. This approach answers the question: who was Rudolf Steiner, and how can a reader approach his work? Acknowledging that Steiner was not a theologian who explicitly constructed a theological model, I have, in chapter two, developed a second lens through which I approach his theological work. I have defined both his hermeneutical key and conceptual theological model. Presenting the systematic aspect of his Christology will be the focus of chapter three as the third lens to consider. In chapter four, I apply Steiner's esoteric insights and methods to the connection he offers between Christianity and reincarnation and how this might influence christological doctrine.

Part two offers three chapters on the pre-earthly work of Christ, the incarnation, and eschatological aspects, including soteriology and the pleroma of Christ. Throughout the thesis, there is an attempt to balance the terminology and language used by Rudolf Steiner in his theosophical and anthroposophical imagery with theological and scientific language usages. I have used christological language and grammar that is readable by both the academy and a person of faith more generally. This process has been a journey of choosing between complex anthroposophical detail, theological and scientific thought and reformulation, all of which add to the complexity and length of the thesis.

DECLARATION

I declare that I completed this thesis's writing, editing and proofreading. Research and academic integrity are confirmed. I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed

11 February 2023

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GLOSSARY OF ANTHROPOSOPHICAL TERMS

These definitions are elaborated and abridged from several volumes of Rudolf Steiner’s works.¹

Term	Definition
Age	The seven cultural stages of an Epoch, each lasting 2160 years
Anthroposophy	Wisdom and knowledge of the human being. Robert Zimmermann used it at the technical high school in Vienna, where Steiner studied in 1879. When Steiner left the Theosophical Society in 1913, he used this term for the knowledge derived from his spiritual science.
Astral Body	One of the four members of the human being involved in awareness, self-awareness, feelings and intentions. It can be connected to the concept of ‘soul’ in that it reveals the feelings and intentions of a person’s higher self or ego. It can be compared to the Pauline concept of ‘Psyche’.
Causal Body	An extract of the ether and astral bodies, which human beings carry from earth life to earth life, enriching it more and more.
Christ Impulse	The effects of the Mystery of Golgotha that a human being can access and develop in their own life of virtue. It has worked throughout the history of our evolution.
Desire Body	A differentiation in the gesture of the causal body. The growth of desire to return to earth and incarnate again forms the causal body into the spirit-germ of our following life that seeks incarnation.
Ego/ego/ the ‘I’	<p>One of the four members of the human being. The self of a person. The immortal and inalienable core of a human being. Through reincarnation, the ‘I’ travels from one life on earth to another and can be identified as an ‘entelechy’, from which intelligence is derived. The word individual, meaning indivisible, is another definition. It can be compared to the concept of ‘Pneuma’.</p> <p>There is a clear distinction between the higher ‘I’, which remains in the spiritual world during an incarnation, and the lower ‘I’, which is the mirror image or ‘ego’ of this higher ‘I’. The higher ‘I’ is seen to be related to Christ, who is our ‘true I’.</p>
Epoch	A process of development such as Lemuria, Atlantis and our Post-Atlantean epoch. Each epoch consists of seven cultural ages.

¹ Henk Van Oort, *Anthroposophy: A-Z: A Glossary of Terms Relating to Rudolf Steiner's Spiritual Philosophy* (Rudolf Steiner Press, 2011); Rudolf Steiner, *Foundations of Esotericism*, vol. 93a (Rudolf Steiner Press, 2019), 284-87; *Concerning the Astral World and Devachan*, vol. 88 (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: SteinerBooks, 2018), 206-07.

Etheric Body	One of the four members of the human being is also called the life body. It holds growth, nutrition, thought and memory processes and functions. It can be compared to the Pauline concept of Soma.
Goetheanum	The building is in Dornach, near Basel, Switzerland. Centre of the Anthroposophical Society. Construction of the first wooden Goetheanum, or 'House of the Word', was begun in 1913. It was destroyed by fire on New Year's Eve 1922/23. Steiner presented his model for the new concrete Goetheanum in 1924, which embodies organic architectural principles.
Initiation	The process of special training which gave a pupil special higher knowledge. As a result of passing tests the pupil entered into a definite relation with the cosmic processes and events. Initiation was facilitated by teachers/initiates of a mystery school/tradition.
Man	Translation of the German word 'Mensch' meaning 'human being'. In this thesis, 'human being' will be used.
Mystery of Golgotha	Possibly coined by Steiner to describe the event of Christ's death and resurrection. Also used to describe several events of Christ's work in evolution.
Mystery Schools (Pre-Christian)	Mystery centres fulfilled the functions churches, places of learning and schools of art. They were the source of all the knowledge which flowed into the masses of people, and the impulses determining their activities. The teachers were known as initiates.
Physical Body	One of the four members of the human being. The physically visible body consists of minerals and organs.
Spiritual Science	Rudolf Steiner's research methods of the spiritual world. It gives rise to knowledge of the spirit, which Steiner called anthroposophy.

PART ONE – WHO WAS RUDOLF STEINER?

The focal point through which the whole of earthly evolution has gained its meaning, its true inner content, is The Mystery of Golgotha.²

Rudolf Steiner

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction - Considering Steiner's Teachings as Christian Theology

In preparing to write this thesis, it became clear that Rudolf Steiner's thoughts on theology, biblical studies and Christology are not well represented in theological literature and awareness.

The first and most often repeated reason for this lack of consideration of Steiner's contribution to these fields is indicated by the widespread surprise that Steiner had Christian content in his teachings. If Steiner is known today, it is most likely for Waldorf schools and biodynamic farming. Some will see that he was a teacher of spirituality, but very few will see the centrality of Christ in his teaching. The fact that he produced volumes of biblical commentary and developed theological reflections is a complete surprise. Discovering that he did has tended to elicit good-willed curiosity to learn these teachings. I present Rudolf Steiner's Christology in part two of this thesis to address this first observation. Thirty-eight volumes³ produced between 1902 and 1914 will be used as the main body of his work to represent the development of his christological ideas in three systematic categories: pre-existence in chapter five, the incarnation in chapter six, and eschatology in chapter seven. While the content of these volumes cannot be represented fully in the space of this work, there are several concise presentations in written books and individual lectures that I will review throughout the thesis to represent Steiner's thinking. Further to these works, three other published works in German add to the same period of his life.⁴

² *Michael's Mission: Revealing the Essential Secrets of Human Nature*, vol. 194 (Forest Row, East Sussex: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2015), 48.

³ See Appendix 1 for the chronological list.

⁴ Rudolf Steiner, *Das Johannes-Evangelium Und Die Anderen Evangelien*, vol. 117a (Basel: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 2018); *Antike Mysterien Und Christentum*, vol. 87 (Basel: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 2019); *Über Das Wesen Des Christentums*, vol. 68a (Basel: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 2020).

What lenses can be used to view Steiner's approach to the Bible and theological themes that could qualify it as scholarly, theological, and systematic? Part one of this thesis will focus on three lenses to address the questions: who was Rudolf Steiner, and how can an approach to his work be found? The first lens seeks to analyse the development of his ideas and academic work by means of a focus on his developing epistemology (section two of this first chapter). Steiner was not a theologian who explicitly constructed a theological model. With this in mind, I will employ a second lens through which I will approach his theological work by identifying his hermeneutical key and conceptual theological model (section two of chapter two). Steiner never declared a theological key or conceptual theological model per se, and I offer my findings from reading Steiner over thirty-five years. Presenting the systematic aspect of his Christology in chapter three will be the third lens to consider in preparation for offering his Christology in part two of this thesis.

Throughout the thesis I will use autobiographical narratives as a method to allow the reader to reflect upon the relevance of Steiner's insights through my life narratives and memories. My journey towards defining these three lenses stems from my first experience of the liturgy of The Christian Community, the church founded under Steiner's direction in 1922. Having grown up Roman Catholic in South Africa, I was safely entrenched in the notion that the Roman Catholic Church was the correct version of everything and that all else was sinful and heretical. My Irish Catholic mother was convinced I would go to hell when as a fourteen-year-old, I, without her permission, attended the Eucharist of the Anglican Church with a friend from school. The emotional impact of her reaction was formative. Later, to balance the effects of two years of military conscription straight out of school at age eighteen, I joined the Redemptorist order⁵ and attended the novitiate formation house in Cape Town just before my twenty-first birthday. During this time, I found my inner connection to the Mass, and through religious-mystical experiences, I lived in it as a reality. However, I left the Catholic monastic religious life after a short year. Then, at twenty-three, while attending a training seminar at the Camphill⁶ curative village I was working at in Johannesburg, I explored Rudolf Steiner's teaching for the first time. During this time, I attended the Eucharist of The Christian Community. I immediately recognised the form of the Mass, and my outrage that 'they' could assume the right to revise it in such fashion overcame me. After some time, I calmed and noticed something else at work behind the words that shone through in the quality and manner of the liturgy. This 'light' quality caught my attention and drew me into further study and involvement. Steiner's body of knowledge, cosmology and philosophy, which I have

⁵ Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (CSSR) founded by St Alphonsus Liguori in 1732.

⁶ Similar to the work of Jean Vanier in the L'Arche Communities, Camphill is an international organisation founded on the principles of Steiner's social order and pedagogical ideas.

come to know through my studies, form the framework for understanding his work as academic, theological and systematic.

The second observation is that in theological literature and biblical studies Steiner is, at best, ignored and generally not even known for his theology. Although, when pushed, there is an acknowledgment that his teachings are considered to be either ‘theosophical mystical musings’⁷ or gnostic⁸ and heretical. In chapter two, I will reflect on Steiner’s historical context amongst scientists, philosophers, and theologians of his times to show that he developed his spiritual insights by engaging with the science and philosophy of his times and not just through isolated mystical musings. My review of secondary literature is placed throughout the thesis to highlight where Steiner’s ideas meet contemporary and other theological consideration. I will also create the second lens of his hermeneutical key and conceptual model of theology, through which I will present part two of this thesis on his Christology. Then in chapter three, I will show several current shifts in academic thinking towards gnostic and esoteric thought as the third lens of an emerging doctrine of the spiritual senses. This third lens offers an opportunity to read Steiner’s Christology as a spiritual quest for the historical Jesus, best described as a spiritual experience substantiating the historical documentation.

In dealing with heretical teachings, I will take the approach of discerning between doctrines and practices that the Church declared heretical, which Steiner would also consider incorrect, and those requiring reconsideration. One example of the second type is Steiner’s apparent agreement with the Nestorian heresy of the two distinct natures of Christ being two loosely united persons. That valid perception of its heretical context creates a reluctance for serious theological consideration of Steiner’s work. In the thesis, I will argue that a more careful examination of Steiner’s views may contribute to revising some earlier church teachings. For example, Steiner suggested that some gnostic teachings were rejected not so much because they were false but rather from a desire to marginalise certain practices that led people away from this earthly life. While this may have been necessary for a phase in the evolution of consciousness, Steiner suggests it is now time for Christianity to reintegrate the truth of the teachings and keep the misleading philosophies and practices aside. In chapter four, I will present Steiner’s teachings on Christianity and reincarnation, which may further contribute to dialogue and revisions in Christology.

⁷ Paul L Gavriluk and Sarah Coakley, *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 19.

⁸ Wayne Hudson, "Rudolf Steiner: Multiple Bodies," in *The Gnostic World* (Routledge, 2018), 510-15.

The final initial observation, which is my own, is that his attitude towards his contemporaries was overly critical. It seemed he did not approve of anything other than his view. This approach to other philosophers and theologians was already stated clearly in his published doctoral thesis *Truth and Knowledge*:

Only through epistemology can we learn the value and significance of all insight gained through the other sciences. Thus it provides the foundation for all scientific effort. It is obvious that it can fulfil its proper function only by making no presupposition itself, as far as this is possible, about the human faculty of knowledge. This is generally accepted. Nevertheless, when the better-known systems of epistemology are more closely examined it becomes apparent that a whole series of presuppositions are made at the beginning, which cast doubt on the rest of the argument.⁹

In reading Steiner, it becomes evident that he expresses what he considers the incorrect presuppositions of an author and is categorical in his assessment of them. I suggest this led to some marginalisation by his contemporaries, but it is also similar to the method of analytic philosophy. In part one of chapter two, I will present this dynamic in further detail about his contemporaries in science, philosophy and theology. A case in point is Edmund Husserl, with whom Steiner shared similar influences in Vienna in the Brentano School of philosophy in the 1880s. Although Steiner only audited classes with Franz Brentano between 1879 and 1883, Husserl studied with him from 1884 -1886. Steiner left Vienna in 1888 to work on the Goethe archive in Weimar. They may not have had much to do with each other in Vienna, but the school of Brentano influenced both in different ways. Husserl became known as the principal founder of the school of phenomenology. Much of his writing on the dangers of solipsism in phenomenology was developed after Steiner's death in 1925. He wrote on the need to suspend or place in 'brackets' our operative knowledge of our philosophy.¹⁰

The irony is that both Husserl and Steiner worked on the emerging methods of phenomenology but seemed to ignore or not access each other's work. From 1916 Husserl worked in Freiburg, a mere seventy kilometres from Basel, where Steiner located the centre of the anthroposophical movement. However, in Steiner's 1914 work *The Riddles of Philosophy*, Husserl is not even mentioned. Steiner began to write this work in 1899 and republished it towards the end of his life with no inclusion of Husserl. In a lecture in 1920, after connecting Husserl with Brentano and saying they were both well-schooled Aristotelian and Thomist philosophers, he made a comment that

⁹ Rudolf Steiner, *Truth and Knowledge: Introduction to "Philosophy of Spiritual Activity"*, vol. 3 (New York: Steiner Books, 1981 2nd Ed.), 27.

¹⁰ Andrew J Welburn, *Rudolf Steiner's Philosophy and the Crisis of Contemporary Thought* (Floris Books, 2004), 99.

I have to confess when I wrote my new edition of "Riddles of Philosophy" and tried to process these newer directions a little, I was always faced with the question: What should one actually do with Husserl? - It is actually the case, if you try so hard to consider his work, to somehow get him, to get hold of it, you can't get it done; nothing comes out of it. I noticed as much as Husserl basically pushes (lit. stuffs) all his essences and so on into his words, as well as entirely depending on the secondary nuances of his word content and how he cannot get a real insight into even the simplest facts of consciousness.¹¹

While this approach to the teachings of others isolated him from his peers, both philosophers responded to Kant's limitation of knowledge posited in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Husserl searched within philosophical ponderings for his solution to the transcendental epoché. Steiner followed the esoteric tradition of developing organs of spiritual perception which were critical to developing his conceptual model. Marek B Marjorek observes this difference:

There is also a significant difference between the two approaches, which may explain why Husserl's transcendental epoché did not achieve the same results as Steiner's meditation exercises, and in particular why Husserl's phenomenology did not have the same depth and breadth of insight into the reality of the spiritual world as Steiner's anthroposophy developed. For Steiner it was clear that the "exclusion" of the world and the cutting of the inner ligaments to it is only a first and preliminary step on the way to the world of the spirit. What must follow such a *via negativa* is firstly a *via positiva*, which consists in strengthening the soul through specific exercises, and secondly providing the soul with an internal structure, the development of the organs of supernatural perception. Without such internal structuring and differentiation, the soul is able to free itself from the connection to the body and to the world of the physical senses, but it is unable to perceive anything in the spiritual world. Rather, it is in a state that is familiar to us from the experience of deep sleep, in which the soul is also separated from the body, but is just passed out. It seems to me that Husserl's lack of insight into the need for such an inner structuring of the soul, through specific and rigorous exercises, prevented the 'hidden purpose' of his transcendental epoché from being achieved.¹²

Steiner generally could have presented more careful assessments of the views of his peers like this. If he refers to them, it is often to illustrate their inner inconsistencies. Nevertheless, I argue that his critical attitude to the thinking of others – while isolating him and causing others to distance themselves from his work – was in fact part of his methodology. Steiner's spiritual scientific methods were based on thinking and thought being spiritual perceptions. To discern the spiritual phenomena, a person needs to develop this critical rigour in their thinking, not to confuse one's perception and the thought of another. This way is not an isolated path and has a long tradition, albeit mostly forgotten or an underdeveloped doctrine, of the spiritual senses in Western

¹¹ Rudolf Steiner, *Fachwissenschaft Und Anthroposophie*, vol. 73a (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 2005), 501.

¹² Marek B Majorek, "Origins of Consciousness and Conscious (Free) Intention from the Viewpoint of Rudolf Steiner's Spiritual Science (Anthroposophy) in Relation to Husserl's Transcendental Reduction," in *Phenomenology of Life from the Animal Soul to the Human Mind* (Springer, 2007), 275.

Christianity.¹³ I will present a fuller exposition of the spiritual senses' development and relevance to understanding Steiner's conceptual model in section two of chapter three. I will develop an argument for their place in theological research and systematic theology in chapter four.

Admittedly, the above are all good reasons to approach his work with doubt, caution and a critical mind. Steiner was aware of these objections and criticisms of his work and tried various ways to address them. First, in 1916, he published an edited lecture transcript with a foreword and afterword specifically addressing the oppositions.¹⁴ Steiner posits his spiritual science and anthroposophy in a tradition of German idealism. He suggests that: "one who believes... that our spiritual science has something to do with the ancient Gnosis quite ignores the fact that with the view of the world taken by natural science, something new entered into the mental evolution of mankind, and as a result of this new element, spiritual science is to be something new for the investigation of the spiritual worlds".¹⁵ Both natural and spiritual science need to be something new compared to medieval science and gnosis. Through the lecture, he suggests that the spiritual senses must be developed alongside the physical senses, and that continued engagement with the natural scientific findings of our times is an essential element of this development. It should not be misunderstood just because it is new. Anthroposophy is offered as an extension of what is already known and not a replacement of already established knowledge:

Can it really be a heresy when spiritual science, out of its fundamental basis, out of the observation of that which, as spirit, holds sway through the whole progress of the earth with regard to human and other evolution, arrives at saying, "the whole existence of the earth would have no meaning in the universe if the Mystery of Golgotha had not taken place within the earthly sphere?"¹⁶

The second example of Steiner's response to objections and criticisms of his work is in 1922 when an anthroposophical college course in Berlin, published as *Reimagining Academic Studies*,¹⁷ was organised by academics and influential speakers who were trying to find a renewed way for academic study. Each day was dedicated to a theme, and Steiner was asked to give an introduction before other scholars spoke. One of the days was dedicated to theology, which Steiner admitted that he hadn't wanted to address, but the course leaders had placed it on the agenda. The main speakers were the theologians who were undergoing the foundation of The Christian Community, which had as its task the renewal of religion under the guidance of Steiner. In light of the growing criticism of

¹³ Gavriilyuk and Coakley, *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity*.

¹⁴ Rudolf Steiner, *The Mission of Spiritual Science and of Its Building at Dornach Switzerland*, vol. 35 (London: Rudolf steiner Publishing Co., 1916).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 37-38.

¹⁷ *Reimagining Academic Studies; Science, Philosophy, Education, Social Science, Theology, Theory of Language*, vol. 81 (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: SteinerBooks, 2015).

his teaching, Steiner was cautious about how far he should go to speak of the relationship of anthroposophy to theology. However, in seeing the three professional lectures on theology using the word ‘downfall’ in their lecture titles, a journalist stated he thought the day would challenge theologians. Steiner heard the journalist’s words suggesting he wanted to confront theology and theologians, which he did not. Steiner did hold back on some themes he might have spoken about but addressed the need for a spiritual scientific method of study in theology, which I have called *contemplative phenomenology* in this thesis, to balance the developing natural scientific methods of his day.¹⁸

Steiner was well respected in academia until he joined the Theosophical Society. Within a short time, he was the head of the German section with the licence to teach his own insights. His work became esoteric, and all written works from then on are esoteric, with most of his publications being uncorrected transcripts of lectures on a large cross-section of subjects presented from an esoteric or metaphysical standpoint. This shift to an esoteric viewpoint created further difficulties for academics (who had once been his peers) to assess the content of Steiner’s work. I will now present a broader context of his academic and scholarly work as the first lens suggested above through which his Christology can be approached.

1.2 Steiner’s Development of Ideas and Academic Scholarship

Many accounts of Rudolf Steiner’s life have been written,¹⁹ including his autobiography.²⁰ Several of these track the journey of his epistemological development, while others have been written to present a fuller account of his life.²¹ In addition, several of Steiner’s collected works have been republished with extended critical introductions and translators’ annotations which give insights into each cycle’s biographical and historical context. While becoming better known to regular readers of Steiner’s works, these volumes provide a good understanding for this section of my thesis. In particular, three commentators, Marie Steiner-von Sivers, Christopher Bamford and Andrew Welburn, reflect on the context of the lectures and the uncorrected published transcripts.

¹⁸ Ibid., 145-46.

¹⁹ Peter Selg, *Rudolf Steiner: Life and Work*, 7 vols., vol. 1-7 (Great Barrington, MA: Steiner Books, 2014).

²⁰ Rudolf Steiner, *Autobiography: Chapters in the Course of My Life, 1861-1907*, vol. 28 (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: SteinerBooks, 2005).

²¹ Emil Bock, *The Life and Times of Rudolf Steiner*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Floris books, 2008); Hal J Ginges, "The Act of Knowing: Rudolf Steiner and the Neo-Kantian Tradition" (2012); Friedrich Hiebel, *The Epistles of Paul and Rudolf Steiner's Philosophy of Freedom* (St. George Publications, 1980); Hudson, "Rudolf Steiner: Multiple Bodies."; Friedrich Rittelmeyer and DS Osmond, *Rudolf Steiner Enters My Life* (Edinburgh: Floris books, 2013); Jonael Schickler and Fraser Watts, *Metaphysics as Christology: An Odyssey of the Self from Kant and Hegel to Steiner* (Routledge, 2017); Richard Seddon, *Philosophy as an Approach to the Spirit: An Introduction to the Fundamental Works of Rudolf Steiner* (Temple Lodge Publishing, 2005); Welburn, *Rudolf Steiner's Philosophy and the Crisis of Contemporary Thought*; Colin Wilson, *Rudolf Steiner: The Man and His Vision* (Aeon Books, 1985); Gary Lachman, *Rudolf Steiner: An Introduction to His Life and Work* (Penguin, 2007).

However, biographies written for academic reference, such as Jennifer M. Gidley's,²² tend to omit the centrality of Christ in the development of his work.

Four stages of Steiner's life are relevant to this study of his Christology: first the early realisations until about 1900; second his christological development through the influence of the Theosophical Society and esoteric exploration; third the First World War; and finally, in the post-war years when he presented his mature philosophical approach, called Anthroposophy. As in any intellectual biography, seed ideas in each earlier stage become richer and more grounded as he grows older.

Two themes run through these four stages: his spiritual scientific method arising out of developing his spiritual perception and his Christology, which transformed through his spiritual experiences of Christ. From a young age, Steiner realised that he could experience spiritual phenomena and described a path of developing spiritual senses through his journey with epistemology. Steiner grew up in a Roman Catholic family and was developing his capacity for spiritual experience through thinking when, just before the end of the nineteenth century, he had a spiritual experience of Christ which completely changed his relationship to Christianity. This became the impetus for imbuing his philosophy with the mystical truth of the incarnation of Christ and its relevance for human evolution. In this thesis, I will focus on key events of his life that provide the academic and scholarly lens for his method and Christology.

1.2.1 Early Realisations

Steiner underwent his philosophical formation in the first part of his life, before his work on biblical criticism and christological exposition had begun. The idea expressed by Eduard Schweizer that everyone's theology, or philosophy, is a result of the influences in their life shows itself exceptionally well in this part of Steiner's life.²³ It is important to see Steiner's life in two parts. The first is his academic progress before 1900, and then the further unfolding of his theosophical and esoteric teachings. The watershed moment was his publication of *Christianity as Mystical Fact* in 1902.²⁴

The first part of Steiner's life was focused on developing his epistemology in response to his experience of the limitations of knowledge presented in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. His

²² Jennifer M Gidley, "A Biography of Rudolf Steiner," in *Encyclopedia of the Sciences of Learning*, ed. Norbert M. Seel (New York, NY: Springer US : Imprint: Springer, 2012), 3188-91.

²³ Eduard Schweizer, *Jesus Christ : The Man from Nazareth and the Exalted Lord*, ed. Hulitt Gloer (London: London : SCM, 1989).

²⁴ Rudolf Steiner, *Christianity as Mystical Fact: And the Mysteries of Antiquity*, vol. 8 (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: Steiner Books, Anthroposophic Press, 2006).

experiences of spiritual perception fuelled his disagreement with Kant. Steiner was dissatisfied with the severe limitations Kant placed on our knowledge, significantly limiting our ability to know God, freedom and morality. From an early age, the young Steiner had been aware that he could perceive in the spirit when his aunt, who had died in a distant town, appeared to him in his home at the time of her death, asking him for help. He said of this experience that “a new soul life began in the boy, one in which not only the outer trees and mountains spoke to him, but also the worlds that lay behind them. From this moment on, the boy began to live with the spirits of nature”.²⁵ At seven, he refers to becoming aware of his dissatisfaction with the conventional limits to knowledge. During primary school, he discovered geometry and, through an expansion of geometric thinking, found that it is possible to grasp something purely in the spirit through thought. He worked through Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* at sixteen. His summary of his journey and endeavours towards spiritual perception provides a methodology for his readers so that they can substantiate his findings through their own experience:

I worked to develop a judgement about the relationship between human thinking and the creation of natural phenomena. Two things influenced my feelings toward these efforts in thinking. First, I wanted to develop my own thinking so that each thought would be completely clear and surveyable, unbiased by any arbitrary feeling. Second, I wanted to establish a harmony within myself, between such thinking and religious instruction. We had excellent textbooks in this particular field... I lived in these teachings with great intensity. But my relationship to them was conditioned by the fact that, to me, the spiritual world was a part of human ideation. Thus these teachings deeply affected me precisely because they proved to me how the human spirit finds a path into the suprasensory through knowledge. My reverence for the spiritual – this I know with full certainty – was not in the least diminished through my relation to knowledge.

On the other hand, the question concerning the scope of the human power of thought occupied me constantly. I felt that thinking could be developed into a power that truly includes the things and processes of the world. “Subject matter” that remains beyond thinking, as something merely “reflected upon”, was an unbearable idea to me. I told myself again and again that what is in the thing must enter into one’s thoughts.²⁶

The inner development in Steiner’s epistemology comes from this internal struggle. Each of his philosophical steps is revealed through his published works in these years.²⁷ Richard Seddon writes that “the possibility of interweaving the conclusions of several works into a single train of thought arises from the fact that each contains the germs from which the next develops”.²⁸

²⁵ *Autobiography: Chapters in the Course of My Life, 1861-1907*, 28, xvi.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁷ See Appendix 2 for the chronological list.

²⁸ Seddon, *Philosophy as an Approach to the Spirit: An Introduction to the Fundamental Works of Rudolf Steiner*, 1.

After a fall out between his father and the local school teacher in 1867 Steiner was initially taught at home. His family moved in 1869 and Steiner's formal education began in the local rural village school in Neudorfl near Wiener-Neustadt in present day Austria. In 1872 he transferred to the grammar school in Wiener-Neustadt and followed many subjects outside school including geometry, trigonometry differential equations and calculus. At age 14 he began tutoring other students as a means to earning money. Between 1879 and 1883 he attended the Technical College in Vienna and then moved to Weimar after completing his studies. It was only in May 1891 that Steiner defended his doctorate before the faculty of philosophy at "Rostock University, which included my dissertation that attempted to show how human consciousness can comprehend itself."²⁹ His promotion to Doctor took place October 26, 1891. His thesis was titled 'The Fundamentals of a Theory of Knowledge with Special Reference to Fichte's Scientific Teaching'.³⁰

Wayne Hudson states that Steiner's philosophical influences in his early years are "Goethe's scientific studies and the spiritual philosophy of thinking advanced by the German Idealists Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel".³¹ A critical moment in his journey was when Steiner was asked in 1882, through the offices of Karl Julius Schröer by Joseph Kurschner, to move to Weimar to edit Goethe's scientific works, which had just been released into the public domain. *Goethean Science*³² is the result of this work. During this period, Steiner formed his understanding that the artistic processes are complementary to the scientific processes of knowledge. "Goethe always conceived art in this way. It was for him *one* of the revelations of the primal law of the world; science for him was the *other* one. For him art and science sprang from one source".³³ In 1887 Steiner wrote his *Theory of Knowledge Implicit in Goethe's World Conception*.³⁴ In Weimar in 1892, Steiner also published his doctoral thesis as *Truth and Science*³⁵ and continued working on *Philosophy of Freedom*³⁶ which was published in 1893. These three books are a summation of his epistemology based on the transformation of thinking into an organ for spiritual perception. In 1897 he moved to Berlin, became an editor of the *Magazin für Literature*, and became very active in the political, theatrical

²⁹ Steiner, *Autobiography: Chapters in the Course of My Life, 1861-1907*, 28, 101.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 293.

³¹ Hudson, "Rudolf Steiner: Multiple Bodies," 510.

³² Rudolf Steiner, *Goethean Science*, vol. 1 (Spring Valley, New York: Mercury Press, 1988). This comprises five volumes in the German edition.

³³ *Ibid.*, 93.

³⁴ *A Theory of Knowledge Implicit in Goethe's World Conception*, vol. 2 (Spring Valley, New York: Anthroposophic Press Inc., 1978).

³⁵ *Truth and Knowledge: Introduction to "Philosophy of Spiritual Activity"*, 3.

³⁶ *The Philosophy of Freedom (the Philosophy of Spiritual Activity): The Basis for a Modern World Conception: Some Results of Introspective Observation Following the Methods of Natural Science*, vol. 4 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1964).

and artistic world. He also published *Goethe's World View*,³⁷ bringing his epistemological development based on Goethe's phenomenology to an initial fulfilment.³⁸

Two further spiritual experiences before 1900 reveal that he could see, understand, and develop concepts for his spiritual experiences. The first was during his student years when he discovered while reading Schelling that: "within everyone dwells a secret capacity to draw back from the stream of time – out of the self clothed in all that comes to us from outside – into our innermost being and there, in the immutable form of the Eternal, to look into ourselves".³⁹ That year he started to write *The Philosophy of Freedom: the Basis for a Modern World Conception*.⁴⁰

The second event comes towards the end of the century, where he recalls that he "stood spiritually before the Mystery of Golgotha in a deep and solemn celebration of knowledge".⁴¹ He describes this as a spiritual crisis, as his only prior reference to Christianity was from various Christian creeds. At that time in his life, Steiner's work seemed to be taking an anti-Christian direction and leaning towards ethical individualism. Now he had to search for a Christian language, an authentic Christianity based on his spiritual experiences, which he would add to his philosophical development. The lectures *Antike Mysterien und Christentum*⁴² and the published book *Christianity as a Mystical Fact* place Christianity in relation to pre-Christian mystery streams, while explaining the critical development that Christ undertook through history. In this book, Steiner suggests that Christ established a public act previously fulfilled in mystery schools through secret instruction and preparation towards initiation.⁴³ This act of Christ gave all people access to experiencing Christ and the Mystery of Golgotha as preparation for initiation. The public enactment of the mysteries by Christ pre-empted the development of thinking and individuation. The textual representations of this act provide a mythical mysteriosophy (a system of doctrine concerning religious mysteries) for every person to follow the path to understanding. Considered in this light, the Gospels provide four layers to the experience of Christ. First, there is the historical aspect which includes the narratives in the Gospels; second, understanding Christ as an objective spiritual being at work throughout history and evolution; third, the Gospels are initiation stories, or myths and

³⁷ *Goethe's World View*, vol. 6 (Spring Valley, New York: Mercury Press, 1985).

³⁸ See Appendix 2 for the chronological list.

³⁹ Steiner, *Autobiography: Chapters in the Course of My Life, 1861-1907*, 28, xvii.

⁴⁰ *The Philosophy of Freedom (the Philosophy of Spiritual Activity): The Basis for a Modern World Conception: Some Results of Introspective Observation Following the Methods of Natural Science*, 4.

⁴¹ *Autobiography: Chapters in the Course of My Life, 1861-1907*, 28, 188.

⁴² *Antike Mysterien Und Christentum*, 87.

⁴³ For further explanation of these terms see the glossary in this thesis. Further reading on this subject: *Human Questions and Cosmic Answers: Man and His Relation to the Planets*, vol. 213 (London: Anthroposophical Publishing Company, 1960); *The Stages of Higher Knowledge: Imagination, Inspiration, Intuition*, vol. 12 (Spring Valley, New York: Anthroposophic Press, Inc., 1967); *World History and the Mysteries: In the Light of Anthroposophy*, vol. 233 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2013).

fourth, people and faith communities utilise these stories or myths for their personal ennoblement or deification.

Steiner explains how his spiritual experience revealed that these pre-Christian mystery schools offered a mystical initiation experience. Then, for the first time in history, these mysteries were fulfilled on the earthly plane in the personality of Jesus. This event changed the nature of mystery experience relevant to the emerging consciousness of humanity in our times. This thesis offers the content and direction of Steiner's journey in developing his Christian-inspired philosophy.

In chapters 57 and 58 of his autobiography,⁴⁴ Steiner tells of two further realisations that influence his path. The first is the unity between spirit and matter in nature and the human being:

I wanted to draw the insight of spirit nature out of the experience of nature. I wanted to speak of a living, divine reality, whose substance is both spiritual and natural and exists within this world. In the traditionally preserved creeds, this divine reality had become a world "beyond", because spirit existing within this world was not acknowledged and thus separated from the world of human perception. Spirit became immersed in an increasing darkness in human consciousness. It was far from a rejection of divine spirit, but rather a plea for its restoration to this world.⁴⁵

The second realisation was that Hegel was "only a thinker; the spiritual world for him [Hegel] was within thought... I sensed his lack of feeling for the world of spirit, which to me was directly perceptible. It is a world that can be discovered *behind* thinking once thinking has been intensified into a definite experience whose 'body' is thinking, within which the soul receives universal spirit into itself".⁴⁶ In this way, Steiner develops Hegel's idea that "the history of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of freedom; a progress whose development according to the necessity of its nature, it is our business to investigate".⁴⁷

1.2.2 Theosophical and Mystical Esoteric Christology

In 1888 Steiner met well-known occultists in the Theosophical Society. However, it was in 1900 that Count and Countess Brockdorf invited him to lecture at the theosophical library in Berlin. In 1902 Steiner was made the head of the German section of the Theosophical Society on the condition that he could develop his own teachings. He uses these years to explore further his mystical understanding of Christ and Christianity, focusing on bridging concepts and language between the eastern esoteric jargon and the western esoteric Christian framework. By 1912 he

⁴⁴ *Autobiography: Chapters in the Course of My Life, 1861-1907*, 28, 185-92; *ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁴⁷ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and John Sibree, *The Philosophy of History* (Courier Corporation, 2004).

parted ways with the theosophists and suggested his philosophy be called Anthroposophy in August of that year. In 1913 Annie Besant, the leader of the Theosophical Society, expelled the German section from the international movement. The centrality of Christ in the development of Steiner's realisations was the catalyst to this shift.⁴⁸ The Theosophical Society was, through the order of 'The Star of the East', introducing the young Jiddu Krishnamurti as the return of the 'World Teacher', the reincarnation of Christ, which did not meet with his experience of Christ working from the spiritual world. Beyond that, Steiner found that Annie Besant "after a time branched off more and more in the direction of an authoritative cult... The questionable manner of her leadership of the society and her propagation of the Order of the 'Star of the East' led to the break with Rudolf Steiner."⁴⁹

The use of anthroposophy and spiritual science was not a sudden step in his work and by no means without precedent.⁵⁰ In the choosing of this name, one can see the influence of the German idealists Fichte, Schelling and Hegel upon his thinking. The term anthroposophy is used by several philosophers, from Cornelius Agrippa to Welsh philosopher Thomas Vaughan, and in the hundred years before Steiner uses the word anthroposophy, other philosophers such as Troxler and Robert Zimmerman, who published his book under that name in 1882, also use the term. Steiner knew of Zimmerman and credited him for the name.⁵¹

In *The Riddles of Philosophy*,⁵² Steiner includes Giordano Bruno, Spinoza, and Leibniz in their search for the monad activity that lies behind the phenomena,⁵³ and later Friedrich Schleiermacher amongst those who, as Kant's successors, "strove to restore knowledge to its full rights again, in that they attempted to settle *through* knowledge the highest needs of man [*sic*]"⁵⁴ Ernst Boldt, a contemporary of Steiner, argues that Steiner's philosophical lineage is broader than Fichte, Schelling and Hegel:

The reformation... spread out in two branches, the one exoteric and the other esoteric. The exoteric direction is marked by all that is associated with those early theological differences which arose among the Lutherans, and the followers of Zwingli, and the Calvinists, and which, in due time, have also crystalized into Confessions of Faith, into dogma in the Protestant Church, and by way of Kant, Feuerbach, and Strauss, have led to Jatho, Traub, Harnack, Frenssen and Drews, finally reaching the Nature-Religion of Haeckel, and culminating in the German Monisten-Bund of Oswald. The esoteric path, on

⁴⁸ Steiner, *Autobiography: Chapters in the Course of My Life, 1861-1907*, 28, 201-22, 325-26.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 326.

⁵⁰ *The Mission of Spiritual Science and of Its Building at Dornach Switzerland*, 35.

⁵¹ Stephen Keith Sagarin, "'Good Spirit, Lover of Truth:' Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education " <https://ssagarin.blogspot.com/2014/07/anthroposophy-and-waldorf-education.html> (accessed April 5, 2020).

⁵² Rudolf Steiner, *The Riddles of Philosophy*, vol. 18 (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: SteinerBooks, 2009).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 63-75.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 122.

the other hand, leads by way of the mystics and the Classical Writers; by way of Valentin Weigel, Jacob Boehme, and Angelus Silesius, Lessing, Herder, Goethe and Schiller, Fichte, Schleiermacher, and Novalis, to find it is borne, by natural development, in the German Spiritual Science propounded by Rudolf Steiner.⁵⁵

Reading the list of names and confining the influence to German idealism alone is far too narrow a lens. While it might suit a particular point of view, it is important to see the influence of the romantic philosophers. They bring self-awareness and emotional literacy as part of understanding the world. Through subjective feeling and intuition, we participate in the object of our knowledge. While this philosophical stream is a subset of the Idealists, they emphasise overcoming the objectivity created by reason and analysis. Steiner was very much in agreement with this line of thought, yet found a path that bridged the two worlds of idealism and romanticism.

A significant event not to be overlooked during this phase is meeting and working with Marie von Sivers. She became his second wife in 1914 and played a pivotal role in many aspects of his work, including founding a printing press to publish his lectures, developing his artistic work and carrying his legacy through to her death in 1948. In 1900 she reportedly attended one of his lectures. In October of 1901, Steiner began delivering his lectures *Antike Mysterien und Christentum*. On November 17, 1901, she wrote to Steiner and asked:

Would it be possible to create a spiritual movement based on European tradition and the impetus of Christ? Rudolf Steiner later reported: With this, I was given the opportunity to act in a way that I had only previously imagined. The question had been put to me, and now, according to spiritual laws, I could begin to answer it.⁵⁶

Marie von Sivers' question gave him a direction with his Christology in a western esoteric language. Shortly after that, in 1902, Marie von Sivers was installed as the first secretary of the German Theosophical Society. At the same time, Steiner was made the first general secretary, thus beginning a close collaboration throughout the rest of his life. Peter Staudenmaier explains the influence of the Theosophists on Steiner's philosophical development: "Unlike the India-based Theosophists around Besant, Steiner emphasized the priority of Western spiritual traditions, particularly Christian ones. At the same time, he drew heavily on the work of Blavatsky and other principal Theosophical thinkers, while adding elements from his own idiosyncratic reception of Rosicrucianism and further strands of European esotericism."⁵⁷ In 1907, at the theosophical congress in Munich, Steiner introduced art, Rosicrucianism and Christianity into theosophical

⁵⁵ Ernst Boldt, *From Luther to Steiner* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1923), 40.

⁵⁶ Lía Tummer, *Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy for Beginners*, vol. 109 (Writers & Readers Publishing, 2001), 99-100.

⁵⁷ Peter Staudenmaier, "Anthroposophie in Deutschland: Theosophische Weltanschauung Und Gesellschaftliche Praxis 1884–1945," *Aries* 10, no. 1 (2010): 107-16.

consideration.⁵⁸ At this conference, Steiner decorates the conference hall with artistic representations of seven stages within the Book of Revelation, placing the books of John the Evangelist as a central symbol in the development of his work. After this conference, Steiner begins earnestly presenting a mystical and esoteric understanding of the Bible. Thirty-eight books, comprising a tenth of his published works, were published between 1902 and 1914.⁵⁹ These are the works that will be used to systemise his Christology in chapters five to seven of this thesis.

1.2.3 The War Years

In 1913 Steiner moved to Dornach, a small village outside Basel in Switzerland, and in September, he laid the foundation stone for the Goetheanum and started working on the building.⁶⁰ He lives and works from here until the end of his life. In 1914, at the start of the First World War, Steiner focused on developing a spirituality of the arts. He notes that during the grievous times of the war, through the increased suffering and death in the air, his spiritual research had become difficult. In October 1914, he had planned to write a fifth mystery play⁶¹ to complete his multi-part dramatic work on spiritual development. He was also to deliver a two-week lecture course on *Inner Reading and Inner Hearing*⁶² in Munich. Neither of these happened. Instead, he gave a short four-lecture introduction on the same theme in Dornach. While describing how inner reading and inner hearing reveal the methods of the spiritual researcher, declaring that he was ready to go to another level in his work, he also declared

...I am amazed that some people think that the strenuous effort required to speak about spiritual-scientific subjects of the highest importance could be mustered in times like the present. The time will come when people will understand that it is just not possible to speak the highest truths into the storm.⁶³

The war changed the direction of Steiner's approach from initially being an esoteric school of meditative practices to further developing the arts as part of his research method and presentation of spiritual truths. This change does not mean he lost sight of the meditative work with symbols, but broadened and deepened its effect through art and social engagement. Three gestures informed the work during the war years.

⁵⁸ Rudolf Steiner, *Rosicrucianism Renewed: The Theosophical Congress of Whitsun 1907*, vol. 284 (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: SteinerBooks, 2007).

⁵⁹ See Appendix 1 for the chronological list.

⁶⁰ As set out in the Glossary above: The building in Dornach, near Basel, Switzerland. Centre of the Anthroposophical Society. Building of the first, wooden Goetheanum, or 'House of the Word', was begun in 1913. It was destroyed by fire on New Year's Eve 1922/23. Steiner presented his model for the new, concrete Goetheanum in 1924, which embodies organic architectural principles.

⁶¹ The first four plays had been written and performed between 1910 and 1913.

⁶² Rudolf Steiner, *Inner Reading and Inner Hearing and How to Achieve Existence in the World of Ideas*, vol. 156 (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: SteinerBooks, 2008).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 3.

The first was the further development of the arts into anthroposophy in practice rather than theory-based meditation and study groups. Steiner had been given complete autonomy with the Theosophical Society to bring his teachings, which included transforming its culture to incorporate the arts, Rosicrucian content, and esoteric or mystical Christian understanding of evolution. This turn to the arts expressed itself at the Munich conference in 1907, published as *Rosicrucianism Renewed*.⁶⁴ In Dornach during the war, the Goetheanum became a ‘complete-art-work’ or *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

The second gesture is that he tried to develop an international art community of collaboration throughout the war years as an intentional antidote to the destruction and mistrust caused between nations. Steiner conceived that working and living with people from so many countries required immense selflessness, devotion and willingness to sacrifice.⁶⁵

The third gesture was a renewed endeavour to understand the spiritual influences in history reflected in many lecture series, especially in 1917. Through these experiences and changing socio-spiritual conditions after the war, he further expanded his approach through a renewed engagement in social initiatives. He concluded the lectures on *Artistic Sensitivity* in 1915 by focusing on the necessity of connecting culture to the Christ impulse:

A religious feeling is on the rise in this time of great suffering and pain; a religious idea in the abstract form of the idea of God. However, we almost cannot speak at all of a similar deepening of the sense for Christ... our age is at a point where human souls feel a need to seek a connection with the spiritual world again, but also it is hard for us to be led to what we call the Christ impulse and the Mystery of Golgotha... Spiritual science must gradually build for us the steps that will lead to permanent understanding of the Mystery of Golgotha. This Mystery of Golgotha is what gives meaning to the earth. And understanding the meaning of the earth must be the greatest task toward which spiritual science continues ever to strive.⁶⁶

Art, selflessness and social renewal became a critical part of his methods, which led to observing three key directions in his enquiry: the evolution of consciousness; contemplative phenomenology; and a spiritual quest for the historical Jesus. Chapter two will follow these inner paths of questioning, which lead to my formulation of his hermeneutical key and his conceptual model of theology.

Two other lecture cycles stand out concerning his Christology. First, in the collected lectures held in the second winter of the war in Berlin, Dornach, Basel and Bern, called *Unifying Humanity*

⁶⁴ *Rosicrucianism Renewed: The Theosophical Congress of Whitsun 1907*, 284.

⁶⁵ *Artistic Sensitivity as a Spiritual Approach to Knowing Life and the World*, vol. 161 (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: Steiner books, 2018), xiv-xvi.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 242-46.

Spiritually through the Christ Impulse,⁶⁷ Steiner explored the relationship between Christianity, esoteric or mythical tradition and gnostic teachings. He explored ideas such as the seed from the tree of knowledge placed in Adam's grave; the provenance from the cross; how the Christmas mystery relates to the Mystery of Golgotha; the *Pistis Sophia*; and how Clement of Alexandria and Origen struggle to combine the historical person of Jesus with the cosmic spiritual being of Christ. During this time, Steiner began to take a clear stance on the relationships between the heretical gnostic traditions and the themes that he considered needed to be re-integrated constructively into systematic Christology.

Second, early in 1917, towards the end of the war, Steiner held two consecutive lecture cycles in Berlin published under the title *Building Stones to an Understanding of the Mystery of Golgotha*.⁶⁸ In these lectures, Steiner addresses the essential nature of understanding the Christ Impulse for moral and social development compared with the ever-increasing influence the materialistic sciences have over the moral development of humanity. Although not a new theme, he kept inviting his audience to consider how reincarnation and Christianity are not in conflict with one another if the evolution of consciousness is the field of experience through which one ponders human development on earth. He pointed out that through evolution, the human being had to go through individuating consciousness. So that individuals could continue to develop morally and spiritually, reincarnation became an evolutionary necessity for a time and not an endless cycle. Reincarnation has a purpose with a definite beginning and end point for the sake of developing the individual to overcome their isolation through perfection, Theosis or divinisation, the theme of Steiner's conceptual model of theology, which I present in chapter two. I will develop this theme of Christianity and reincarnation in chapter four from the point of view of why Christianity anathematised it and then forgot about it and the practical implications of its re-introduction to western Christology.

Along with the centrality of Christ as a moral impulse for social development, another theme Steiner had been developing for many years is the more profound experiences of the human soul during the course of the year. In the third lecture of the cycle mentioned above, Steiner made a statement about spiritual science and religion. He interrupted his talk with this short remark:

At this point I need to make an important interpolation that should be thoroughly understood, particularly by friends of spiritual science. It should not be thought that our spiritual scientific endeavours should be a substitute for religious life and practice.

⁶⁷ *Unifying Humanity Spiritually: Through the Christ Impulse*, vol. 165 (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2014).

⁶⁸ *Building Stones for an Understanding of the Mystery of Golgotha: Human Life in a Cosmic Context*, vol. 175 (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2015).

Spiritual science can to the highest degree, and especially with respect to the Christ mystery, be a support for – and a foundation of – religious life and practice. But one should not turn spiritual science into a religion, and one needs to be quite clear in one’s mind that religion in its living way kindles a spiritual consciousness of the soul within the human community.⁶⁹

He continued to explore the relationship between religious practice and the search to understand the experience, or consciousness, which comes from religious practice.

Steiner differentiates between religious experience and theology as the path of ‘faith seeking understanding’ and how the findings of spiritual science can help a modern person who has been formed very strongly through the scientific knowledge of our time. This differentiation is still relevant in the current dialogue between science and theology. At this point, Steiner explains his understanding of the contemplative phenomenological method through questioning and engagement, suggesting that “a person with true religious feelings is driven by these very feelings also to seek knowledge. Spiritual consciousness is acquired through religious feeling, and spiritual knowledge through spiritual science, just as knowledge of the natural world is acquired through natural science”.⁷⁰ There is an initial clarification of the possible but necessary constructive dialogue between religious/spiritual experience, spiritual understanding and scientific understanding.

Some five years later, in 1922, some of the Lutheran ministers and theologians preparing to found The Christian Community, who had been present at the lectures in Berlin, felt as if his pointed remark was an intentional nudge for them to come to him with their questions of renewal of religious life. Steiner did not see himself as the founder of a new church. He continually reminded people that he acted as an advisor to the priests who founded The Christian Community, but also acknowledged that the church shared an inner esoteric source with the Anthroposophical Society. He saw them as two independent organisations sharing an inner task of offering a renewed path to Western esoteric Christianity.⁷¹

During the war years Steiner addresses Christ as the central impulse through a survey of history. He brings Pauline themes of the first and second Adam along with a commentary on the pre-Christian mysteries into focus. Finally, he concludes that human beings can awaken to a Christ

⁶⁹ Ibid., 39-40.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 40.

⁷¹ *Man and the World of the Stars: The Spiritual Communion of Mankind*, vol. 219 (New York: Anthroposophic Press, Inc., 1982), 156-71.

consciousness through their biography. He intentionally sets the foundations for the shift to social initiatives that were becoming the focus of his work after the war.

1.2.4 The Post-War Years

The war had shaken society to the core, and there was a search for other ways of education, medicine, agriculture and religious life. Steiner had tried to influence political changes through his ideas of the threefold social order. In 1919 he drew up a proposal for the constitution of the League of Nations. Still, the person representing Steiner, who went to the meetings in Zurich where the models for its inception were considered, forgot the manuscript on the day, and it was never tabled. After that, Steiner said that individual groups of people must now carry the anthroposophical social impulse.

Throughout 1919 he held lectures on *Problems of Society*⁷² and, in particular, brought into focus how the Christ impulse works as a social impulse through the emptying out, or kenosis, of the soul. Through selflessness, Christ can work through us as a social, moral impulse, and the Pauline concept of “I no longer live, but the Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20). It is this affirmation that I am formulating as Steiner’s hermeneutical key and his conceptual model for his theology. Steiner says it succinctly:

We can only find [the Christ] if we know that as human beings living after the Mystery of Golgotha we have a flaw which we must remedy or compensate for in what we do in our life here. I am born as a person with prejudices, and have to gradually free myself from these in my thinking. How can I do so? Only by developing interest not only in what I myself think and what I consider right, but also selfless interest in everything human beings can think, all which approaches me however mistaken I consider it. The more a person insists that their own outlook and opinion is the only right one, and is only interested in this, the more they sunder themselves from the whole world’s evolution, from Christ. The more a person develops social interest in the views of others, even if they think them wrong or misguided, the more they will feel in their inmost soul the truth of the saying of Christ, which today must be interpreted in accordance with the new Christ language: ‘Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.’ (Mt 25:40)⁷³

Steiner goes on to develop the idea of two paths to Christ. The first path is selflessness in thought leading to tolerance. The second is idealism in our wills, which grows from an instilled idealism of youth into an acquired or reborn idealism in our adult years. These two paths lead to “our inner, moral rebirth. Then we can say, Not I but Christ in me”.⁷⁴ During these years, he

⁷² *Problems of Society: An Esoteric View, from Luciferic Past to Ahrimanic Future*, vol. 193 (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2015).

⁷³ Ibid., 44.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 44-46.

addresses several themes related to Christ as the Sun-Spirit guiding humanity. He introduces the idea that the work of the Divine Sophia complements that of Christ, which I will bring into consideration in part two of this thesis. He also begins to speak on the Christian path of bridging the philosophical divide in our consciousness between the natural cycle of the year and the soul work which the Christian festivals cycle provides.⁷⁵ Friedrich Rittelmeyer, a founding priest of the Christian Community, asked Steiner “how a Damascus-like experience of Paul can be prepared”. Rudolf Steiner answered that it would be possible *through the meditative experience of the cycle of the year*.⁷⁶ The experience of the Christian cycle of the year relative to the natural cycle of the year is part of the guidance for the spiritual schooling of the spiritual senses.

Four further factors need to be mentioned to complete the first biographical lens for Steiner’s Christology. The first factor is the growing antagonism towards him from church and state. At the end of 1919, Steiner held a lecture course called *Cosmic New Year*,⁷⁷ where he revealed some of the resistance the Roman Catholic Church placed on his teachings. Here he summed up the decree of the Congregation of the Holy Office on July 18, 1919, which pronounced a complete ban on Theosophical teaching by the Roman Catholic Church:

The question before the Congregation of the Holy Office... was as follows: “Whether the teachings, which today are called Theosophical, can be reconciled with Catholic teachings and if it is therefore permitted to join Theosophical societies, attend their meetings, read their books, newspapers, periodicals and writings...?” The answer was: “No, in every case” - *Negative in Omnibus* (Acta Apostolica Sedis II, 1919, 317) Compare: “Die Kirchliche Verurteilung der Theosophie” [The church’s condemnation of Theosophy], in *Stimmen der Zeit* [Voices of the time], Freiburg im Bressgau, vol. 98, 50th year, issue No. 2, Nov 1919 p.150. Otto Zimmermann⁷⁸ and other Catholic clergy then extended this decision to also include Anthroposophical writings.⁷⁹

More recently Catholic Professor Helmut Zander's extensive work on anthroposophy in Germany⁸⁰ has been a contribution towards shifting this criticism. He produced an academic appraisal, and critique, of the history of theosophy, esoteric thought and anthroposophy in Germany. His “monumental study of anthroposophy's early development presents an imposingly thorough examination of the subject and its context, and in the process establishes new standards for

⁷⁵ For a select list of published works in this part of Steiner’s life see Appendix 3.

⁷⁶ Martin Samson, *Festivals in the Southern Hemisphere : Insights into Cosmic and Seasonal Aspects of the Whole Earth* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2016), 166.

⁷⁷ Rudolf Steiner, *Cosmic New Year: Thoughts for New Year 1920*, vol. 195 (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: SteinerBooks, 2007).

⁷⁸ Ibid., 68. Otto Zimmermann S.J, polemicized for years against Rudolf Steiner in the Catholic periodicals *Stimmen aus Maria Laach* [voices from Maria Laach] and *Stimmen der Zeit* [Voices of the time].

⁷⁹ Ibid., 69.

⁸⁰ Helmut Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Göttingen, 2007).

comprehensive historical engagement with esotericism”.⁸¹ A more historical-critical reading of Steiner is part of the efforts of Zander and his colleagues to critique and integrate Steiner’s work in various academic research fields.⁸² Within the anthroposophical world here is a large and complicated reaction to Zander’s academic involvement with anthroposophy, including a reflection upon Zander’s work by Lorenzo Ravagli, published as *Zander’s Erzählungen*⁸³ [Zander’s storytelling]. Staudenmaier reflects on this response as: “a virtually heretical claim in anthroposophist eyes; the received wisdom is that Steiner was an esotericist and an Initiate throughout his life, that all of his works from the different phases of his career are internally consistent, and that his mature teachings sprang fully fledged from his head as revelations from the "higher worlds".⁸⁴ While there is an increasing academic engagement with anthroposophy, in general, the Christology of Rudolf Steiner remains under the hermeneutic of suspicion; that it is a theology with a hidden agenda.

The second factor in this fourth phase is that 1922 was a year of significant changes in Steiner’s life, including an increase in criticism and accusations against Steiner by Dietrich Eckart, one of the founders of the German Workers’ Party and a key influence on Adolf Hitler. In 1922 the activism by the national socialists led to an incident in Munich where what was suspected to be a bomb was detonated, and people supporting National Socialism rushed the stage while Steiner was escorted out the back door of the venue. This antagonism escalated during the Second World War when all anthroposophical initiatives were systematically closed down, as they promoted individual freedom.⁸⁵

The third factor is the founding of The Christian Community in 1922. The group of theologians and ministers who wanted to start a movement of religious renewal after the war in Berlin had approached Steiner for advice, which resulted in Steiner giving them insights and guidance recorded in five lecture cycles.⁸⁶ Three of these (CW 343,344,345) are specifically about the training of priests and the administering of sacraments and remain unpublished publicly in

⁸¹ Staudenmaier, "Anthroposophie in Deutschland: Theosophische Weltanschauung Und Gesellschaftliche Praxis 1884–1945," 107.

⁸² David W Wood, "Plaidoyer for Historical-Critical Steiner Research.," *Research on Steiner Education* 3, no. 2 (2013): 17-27.

⁸³ Lorenzo Ravagli, *Zanders Erzählungen: Eine Kritische Analyse Des Werkes" Anthroposophie in Deutschland"* (Berlin: BWV Verlag, 2009).

⁸⁴ Staudenmaier, "Anthroposophie in Deutschland: Theosophische Weltanschauung Und Gesellschaftliche Praxis 1884–1945," 111.

⁸⁵ Bente Edlund, "Anthroposophical Curative Education in the Third Reich: The Advantages of an Outsider.," *Scandinavian Journal of disability Research* 7, no. 3-4 (2005): 176-93.

⁸⁶ Rudolf Steiner, *Lectures and Courses on Christian Religious Work: Spiritual Knowledge -Religious Feeling - Sacramental Working*, 5 vols., vol. 343 (1921); *Lectures and Courses on Christian Religious Work: Lectures at the Founding of the Christian Community*, 5 vols., vol. 344 (1922); *Lectures and Courses on Christian Religious Work: Concerning the Nature of the Working Word*, 5 vols., vol. 345 (1923); *The Book of Revelation and the Work of the Priest*, 5 vols., vol. 346 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1998); *First Steps in Christian Religious Renewal*, 5 vols., vol. 342 (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: SteinerBooks, 2010).

English. The introductory lectures focus firmly on the renewal of the sacramental life; the inclusion of women in ordination; freedom of belief; and freedom of teaching as central gestures of renewal of Christian religious life.⁸⁷ These principles place The Christian Community as a movement within the shift to polydox discourse⁸⁸ within the manifold relations in theology. Polydoxy offers a pluralistic religious philosophy and theology as a method to explore the many ways of understanding God as different from the orthodox approach of ‘right belief’ and ‘right doctrine’. For Steiner this approach to religion was necessary as his whole Christology is based in individual autonomy and religious freedom.⁸⁹ The inner thread of this part of Steiner’s work was to help the religious community find a way to bring a renewed religious experience of Christ so that his conceptual model of *deification in Christ* could be fulfilled in a religious community. It is also the fruit of his ideas in 1905 on using religious texts to develop the spiritual senses. In section two of chapter three, I will expand Steiner’s ideas on the spiritual senses.

The fourth and final factor in the first lens for Steiner’s Christology involves the events in the last two years of his life. On New Year’s Eve of 1922, the building he had been working on in Dornach burned down. A year later, at Christmas 1923, Steiner renewed the constitution of the Anthroposophical Society. Then in September 1924, Steiner collapsed while holding a lecture, and could no longer leave his bed. This was an illness from which he did not recover. He died on March 30, 1925. During these last nine months, he wrote weekly letters to the anthroposophical community, published in *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts*.⁹⁰ In short aphoristic thoughts and short letters, he recaps many aspects of his teachings. He focuses on the work of Christ and Sophia as the central guiding consciousness of human evolution and how the student can find a path of knowledge in a Christian Gnostic sense.

1.3 Summary

In this chapter, I have named three observations of mainstream academia when considering Steiner’s work as scholarly, systematic and theological. To address those, I have described the first lens to show how in the first part of Steiner’s life, he developed his epistemology and later his Christology out of his scholarly background. These two themes of his work became the foundation for developing his spiritual scientific methods. In chapter two, I will create a second lens of Steiner’s hermeneutical key and conceptual model of theology after showing how his thinking

⁸⁷ *First Steps in Christian Religious Renewal*, 342.

⁸⁸ Catherine Keller, ""Theology's Multitude: Polydoxy Reviewed and Renewed", *Modern theology* 30, no. 3 (2014): 127-39.

⁸⁹ Steiner, *First Steps in Christian Religious Renewal*, 342.

⁹⁰ *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts: Anthroposophy as a Path of Knowledge*, vol. 26 (London: Rudolph Steiner Press, 1973).

developed within his historical context. This lens will provide a way of seeing his theological approach. In chapter three, I will create the third lens of recent shifts in systematic theology that offer new insights to approach Steiner's theology. Then, before describing his Christology in part two, I will apply these three lenses to reincarnation and Christianity as a central theme for understanding Steiner's Christology. I will also present some ideas about how these considerations might be brought into the dialogues of systematic theology in chapter four.

CHAPTER 2: STEINER'S HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF THEOLOGY

2.1 Steiner's Historical Context

In this chapter, I will establish a second lens through which to explore Steiner's hermeneutical key and conceptual model of theology. I will argue that the Pauline concept of "I no longer live, but the Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20) offers a hermeneutical key to understanding his Christology. After showing the evolution of Steiner's scholarly approach in chapter one, in this chapter, I will present the context for the development of his theological understanding. To do this, I will begin by naming some of the historical contemporaries in science, philosophy and theology who influenced his philosophical and theological direction. Steiner's journey is his response to the perception of the rapidly expanding materialistic philosophy of the nineteenth century encroaching on all sciences and social philosophies. His emphasis was on how modern life needs to extend by finding a fuller understanding of reality through experiencing the spirit. Ven. A. P. Shepherd described it this way:

The birth of anthroposophy at the opening of the twentieth century was historically a surprising phenomenon. Science, in the first flush of its confident development of the Darwinian theory of evolution, was complacently asserting the sufficiency of matter and its functions to explain the whole universe, including man him-self [sic]. The first violent orthodox reaction against Darwinian Theory had died down, and public opinion was gradually accepting the scientific view-point as proved. On the continent, and especially in Germany, where Haeckel's version of Darwinism had swept the board, Protestant theologians were humanizing Christianity, extracting from it almost everything that was supernatural. In the Protestant Churches of England and America theology was at a low ebb, and there was a complacent indifference to the apparent contradiction between credal and scientific beliefs, in the confident expectation that the world was getting better and better every day... But the chief possibility that lies in an unprejudiced approach to anthroposophy by the Christian Churches is a real reconciliation between Science and Religion.⁹¹

Steiner was adamant that active engagement with the sciences of one's time is essential to developing the higher spiritual senses. For this reason, he distanced himself from the Theosophical Society and its methods. In 1924 in the lecture cycle *True and False Paths in Spiritual Investigation*, he stated that he found other spiritual scientific researchers of his time reluctant to accept and even antipathetic to natural science, but that

...when I first steeped myself in modern scientific ideas in order to impregnate them with imaginations that I found it possible to penetrate to the Sun and Saturn spheres. I did not

⁹¹ Ven. A. P. Shepherd, *The Battle for the Spirit; the Church and Rudolf Steiner* (Stourbridge, West Midlands: Anastasi Ltd., 1994), 92, 101.

use these scientific concepts as a method of cognition after the fashion of Haeckel or Huxley, but as an inner motivation in order to overcome the limitations to which the initiates were subject... I attempted to imbue with inner meaning the fully conscious scientific outlook of Huxley and others which is normally only associated with the external world, and to impregnate the imaginative world with it.⁹²

Steiner continuously pointed to his anthroposophical method requiring natural scientific knowledge as its point of origin. He was clear that there is no anthroposophical science, medicine, pedagogy or theology. As stated in chapter one, the already established knowledge of any discipline is offered an extension through spiritual knowledge, which does not replace already established knowledge. This extension had a particular method that he saw as being a reunification of science, art and religion as the basis for spiritual scientific understanding:

Anthroposophy begins in every case at the scientific level, calls art to the enlivening of its concepts, and ends in religious deepening. It begins in what the head can grasp, takes on all the life and colour of which words are capable, and ends in warmth that suffuses and reassures the heart, so that the human soul can at all times feel itself in the spirit, its true home. We must learn on the anthroposophical path, to start with knowledge, then lift ourselves to the level of artistry, and to end in the warmth of religious feeling.⁹³

My faith journey gained a similar direction when I attended a lecture held by Episcopalian Bishop Shelby Spong in Adelaide in 2001. He made the point that people of faith no longer want to leave their reason and intellect outside the doors of the church. He argued that if religion, and theology, were to survive, they needed to broaden and ground their doctrine through the findings of science. From this insight, I undertook my Master's in Theological Studies at the Adelaide College of Divinity. I discovered that theology was actively investigating the findings of many fields of science and reformulating the tenets of the Christian faith. This journey has continued, and I particularly enjoy participating in the research field of religion/theology and science. Steiner's ideas find a good voice and reception when presented in the context of this dialogue.

To address the comment raised in chapter one, that Steiner's thinking is mainly theosophical mystical musing, I will now reflect upon his contemporaries in natural science, philosophy and theology. In doing so I am primarily seeking to highlight Steiner's engagement with extending materialistic philosophy through the insights of spiritual science. Steiner's inner question of overcoming the limitations of knowledge led him away from more literal and positivist scientists, philosophers and theologians. Instead, it guided him in developing another tradition of contemplative phenomenology that bridges the two worlds.

⁹² Rudolf Steiner, *True and False Paths in Spiritual Investigation*, vol. 243 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1969), 175.

⁹³ *Awakening to Community*, vol. 257 (Spring Valley, New York: The Anthroposophic Press, 1974), 35.

Who were his contemporaries, and what bodies of knowledge were emerging in these fields that led him to emphasise how important it is to bring spiritual understanding together with materialistic knowledge? This broad theme goes beyond the scope of this thesis. Still, I will briefly describe the three areas in chapter one pertinent to understanding his Christology: evolution of consciousness, contemplative phenomenology, and the spiritual quest for the historical Jesus. These three areas do not cover the field of Steiner's Christology completely but provide the basis for part two of this chapter.

The three fields are intertwined, and it is necessary to acknowledge that no train of thought is isolated from thinkers who precede a given age. For Steiner, this progression of ideas through history is only one aspect of understanding how philosophy develops. He points out that the struggle of a person with this inherited history of ideas and the engagement with inklings of the future challenges of their times give better insight into a particular person's corpus of thought.⁹⁴ In his book *Christianity as Mystical Fact*, Steiner ends with Augustine. One could argue he finishes the book where Christianity, or at least the Christian church, begins. Eighteen years later, Steiner returns to this theme of how Christian thought progresses beyond Augustine. Through scholasticism, the struggle of modern materialistic science comes about. Steiner suggests four formative experiences play into Augustine's life: his culturally inherited Neo-Platonism of Plotinus; the claim by Manichaeism that spirit appears undifferentiated as matter - that super-sense and sense are blended; the doubt in spirit advocated by the Sceptics; and his own inkling that the individual human being was getting cut off from experiencing the oneness of both worlds. Steiner argues that "it was because he did not wish the idea of human individuality to develop that Augustine formulated the doctrine of Predestination. In order to preserve the concept of humanity as a whole he suppressed the idea of human individuality".⁹⁵

According to Steiner Justinian's declaration against Origen, and therefore the Platonic idea of the threefold human being, sets the scene for the subsequent loss of understanding of the spiritual nature of humanity.⁹⁶ The consequences of these ideas led towards the dualistic philosophy of the human being consisting of only a twofold nature of body and soul. This soul comes into existence at conception and attains eternal life beyond death. The esoteric ideas of the Trinity and the human being were held in the esoteric teaching of Dionysius the Areopagite and brought back into scholasticism to influence Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas through the writings of Scotus

⁹⁴ *The Redemption of Thinking: A Study in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 74 (Spring Valley, New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1983), 21-52.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁹⁶ Shepherd, *The Battle for the Spirit; the Church and Rudolf Steiner*, 67-83.

Erigena. Steiner focused on the threefold human being consisting of an eternal spirit incarnating in a physical body. The soul, which comes into a unique existence as the personality for this lifetime, mediates the two worlds of spirit and matter.⁹⁷ For Steiner, they are different models: he sees how the twofold concept became a philosophical foundation for dualism in western philosophy and theology, which influenced the scientific world.

For Steiner, the conceptual struggle between the scholastic nominalists, who thought that reality is only in the name of a particular, and the realists, who claimed that the universals are as real as the physical and measurable material world, led to the birth of empirical scientific thinking, which holds that theories must be verified by sense-observation and reflection on the natural world.⁹⁸ The same dilemma further progressed between idealism and realism in the eighteenth century. Later, by the end of the nineteenth century, materialistic philosophies gained the upper hand in empirical science. Steiner argues that at the same time, scholasticism struggles with the dawning realisation that human reason and intellect had partaken in the fall of humanity⁹⁹ and began to realise that:

To arrive at the Christ, however, he [Thomas] holds that one must pass over to the sphere of faith. In other words, in the view of Thomism, man [sic] cannot reach the Christ by the inherent power of his [sic] own intellect... How does Christ enter into human thinking? How does human thought become permeated by Christ? How does Christ lead human thought up to that sphere where it finds itself in agreement with the spiritual content of Faith?... Thus scholasticism left behind it unanswered the question, "How can human thinking develop itself upwards to a vision of the spiritual world?"... The only answer that can be given to it at the moment is still that of the scholastics, that man [sic] penetrates up to a certain level into the spiritual nature of things, but beyond that lies the content of faith.¹⁰⁰

The ongoing redemption of thinking through Christ working into our intellect¹⁰¹ is a subject for chapter seven in part two of this thesis. For Steiner, re-establishing the Pauline premise of the threefold human being, consisting of body, soul and spirit, was his philosophical redemption of Pauline thinking. To be able to approach Christology, he was facing the same struggle of needing to respect the philosophy of the world as it had become, but striving to open a path to what would be required in the future. For Steiner, this meant bridging the world of sense and super-sense with our thinking. He considers that the time of the fourth Council of Constantinople – the eighth Ecumenical Council in 869 CE – was when the materialistic ideas of nominalism gained a foothold

⁹⁷ Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophy: An Introduction to the Supersensible Knowledge of the World and the Destination of Man*, vol. 9 (Spring Valley, New York: Anthroposophic Press, Inc., 1971).

⁹⁸ *The Redemption of Thinking: A Study in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, 74, 50-53,71,87,91.

⁹⁹ *Awake! For the Sake of the Future*, vol. 220 (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: SteinerBooks, 2015), 106-21.

¹⁰⁰ *The Redemption of Thinking: A Study in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, 74, 81-83.

¹⁰¹ *The Birth of Light*, vol. 92 (Spring Valley, New York: Mercury Press, 1984).

in western philosophy. This council was the point in Christian history where the old spiritual seeing of the early Christian Gnostics ended, and the dialectical-legal thinking was forming Roman Christian doctrine: “Through Rome the Mystery of Golgotha became clothed in dialectics... It was a kind of theocratic empire ... permeated by dialectical-legal forms... The old spiritual life based on spiritual vision... moves over entirely into a political Church-Empire which extends over the greater part of Europe”.¹⁰² From that point, the social structure of the ancient Orient, permeated by the spirit of the old instinctive clairvoyance, gave way to the authoritarian social system of the Middle Ages.

The evolution of the social fabric precipitated Steiner’s realisation that the threefold human being, preserved through Dionysus the Areopagite and Scotus Erigena, was needed for a spiritual scientific balance to the positivist sciences emerging in his times. Steiner pointed out that in the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus were “presenting humanity with a line of demarcation between rational knowledge and the content of faith and revelation... For Albertus and Aquinas, man [*sic*] stands on this side, bounded by the limits of our understanding and unable to look directly into the spiritual world”.¹⁰³ The emerging rift between beliefs and knowledge became the basis of the Descartes-Kantian limits of knowledge that split the methodologies of science and theology or religion. Steiner considered Kant to be the fulfilment and conclusion of nominalism in that he says that ideas are only names; we fashion them in ourselves and attach them to objects.

For Steiner, Spinoza stands out among modern philosophers, as he sees the vital necessity of the transformation of thinking, where thinking develops thought itself, which then fills itself anew with a spiritual content:

Spinoza comes to the conclusion that man [*sic*] can so develop by means of the intellectual faculties that the spirit can come to meet us. If then we are also able to fix our thoughts upon the Mystery of Golgotha, not only does our spirit-filled consciousness become intuition – that is, the manifestation of spirit through thought – but intuition itself is transformed into Theophany, the manifestation of God Himself [*sic*]. The human being is on the spirit-path to God.¹⁰⁴

Steiner's formulation of Spinoza’s ideas imbues them with his theological model and gives cause for us to explore his doctrine of the spiritual senses. Steiner then follows how Spinoza’s ideas inspire Goethe, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, thus naming his lineage through the German Idealists

¹⁰² *The New Spirituality: And the Christ Experience of the Twentieth Century*, vol. 200 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1988), 93.

¹⁰³ *The Redemption of Thinking: A Study in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, 74, 96.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

and Romantic Philosophers who influenced the development of contemplative phenomenology.¹⁰⁵ While the rest of the world could not escape from nominalism, another stream of realism and romanticism flowed through German Idealism, and Steiner's destiny led him to be deeply influenced by these streams.

For Steiner, identifying the need to regain a philosophical understanding of the threefold human being was not a sudden realisation. Concerning the themes of this thesis and the centrality of Christ for our times, he states that the result of thirty years of inner work led him to explain the human being as a threefold entity: One part of the physical human body – the brain and nerve system – is connected with the thought and sense-perceptive activity; the rhythmic system, all that pertains to the breathing and heart rhythms, is connected with the feeling or emotion activity; and finally the digestive and metabolic system is connected with the will activity.¹⁰⁶

Steiner continues to acknowledge that the relationship of the Christ-principle to the threefold human being is central to understanding his Christology and his teachings on the spiritual senses, which I will explain in chapter three. At this point, two layers of the threefold human being have become relevant to Christology: body, soul, spirit and the understanding of thinking, feeling and willing relating to the sense-perceptive, rhythmic and metabolic systems. How Christ is related to these through evolution and how the human being can develop spiritually through engaging the Christ-principle in these areas is part of Steiner's theological model.

Steiner's struggle to define a spiritual scientific extension of science through his engagement with the science of his time is the focus of the following three sections of this part of chapter two. The three following sections will concisely show how his contemporaries influenced him scientifically, philosophically and theologically.

In light of my original observation that Steiner's critical attitude to the thinking of others, while isolating him and causing others to distance themselves from his work, was part of his methodology, this raises the question as to the nature of the influence that his contemporaries had on him. I will show that Steiner's path was formed by his critique rather than by finding any who could agree with his intention of establishing the foundation for the schooling of the intellect, as Spinoza suggested, through thinking itself. Steiner contended that the intellect can prepare itself for the spirit and answer the question: How does Christ enter human thinking? How does human

¹⁰⁵ In 1916 Steiner published *The Riddle of Humanity*, CW20, exploring the forgotten stream in German spiritual life. In three chapters he considers ideas that Fichte, Schelling and Hegel had said and left unsaid about the awakening of the soul, nature and the spirit, and the beholding of thoughts.

¹⁰⁶ Steiner, *The Redemption of Thinking: A Study in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, 74, 103-04.

thought become permeated by Christ? How does Christ lead human thought up to that sphere where it agrees with the spiritual content of faith? This method would place Steiner in the early twentieth-century philosophical turn to language, rigour in arguments, and the analysis of the logic of concepts that are well-established in analytical philosophy and applied in emerging analytic theology.¹⁰⁷ The approach of using several methods in theology is also found in the works of Sarah Coakley¹⁰⁸ whose theology engages many disciplines. Coakley shows commonality with Steiner in her analyses of language and concepts to develop systematic Christology. She further employs other methods, such as mystical theology and biblical scholarship, as a mutual method with Steiner. In chapter three I will give particular attention to a comparison between Steiner and Coakley.

2.1.1 Natural Science: evolution of consciousness

Steiner's spiritual scientific understanding of atoms is that they reflect the consciousness that holds the universe together.¹⁰⁹ He understood consciousness as the driving force of evolution. The theory of evolution as an evolution of species was well represented and explored by Ernst Haeckel, whom Steiner regarded highly; Steiner often reflected upon Haeckel's method of art.¹¹⁰ Steiner thought Haeckel worked similarly to Goethe and that he accomplished for zoology and embryology what Goethe did for botany and Steiner for anthropology.¹¹¹ They were all working from a similar point of departure in their research, epitomised in Haeckel's wanting to bridge religion and science. However, Steiner also thought that these theories of evolution were being driven by materialistic philosophy and losing their connection to the spiritual scientific side. He suggested that evolutionary theory needed another perspective that included knowledge of the influences of the super-sensible. This perspective Steiner called the evolution of consciousness. Essentially, our cosmos' spiritual guiding beings work through evolution. Setting out this aspect of his anthropogeny and evolutionary theory will help to explicate his position within his scientific community. In chapter five, I will present further ideas of Steiner's about the working of Christ and the Logos in the history, evolution and becoming of our humanity.

¹⁰⁷ Oliver Crisp and Michael C. Rea, *Analytic Theology : New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 35.

¹⁰⁸ Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self : An Essay 'on the Trinity'*, *God, Sexuality & the Self : An Essay on the Trinity* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2013); Janice McRandal, *Sarah Coakley and the Future of Systematic Theology*, *Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 2016).

¹⁰⁹ Rudolf Steiner, *The Temple Legend and the Golden Legend: Freemasonry & Related Occult Movements*, vol. 93 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1985), 197-209.

¹¹⁰ Rainer; Voss Willmann, Julia, *The Art and Science of Ernst Haeckel* (Köln: Taschen, 2021).

¹¹¹ Rudolf Steiner, *Fruits of Anthroposophy* (SteinerBooks, 1986), 12-14.

In 1903 Steiner touched upon the evolution of consciousness,¹¹² and in 1923 he held an entire cycle of lectures called *The Evolution of Consciousness*.¹¹³ Steiner believed that God is present in and through evolution, expressed in scripture and Christian doctrine. For Steiner, the essential nature of the Trinity is to hold the quintessential ideas which form the focus of the various stages of the evolution of consciousness. For example, when God says, ‘let there be’ (Gen 1:3-27), it is an idea that matter emerges and evolves through a complex layering of cooperation between spiritual beings.¹¹⁴ Steiner claims that a reversal in the order of appearance of the various kingdoms occurs. In the first phase, under the guidance of spiritual beings, the human form emerges before the plants and creatures and is reflected in the creation story of Genesis 2.¹¹⁵ The second phase of evolution reverses this, and the plants and animals take on the physical form before humans do. Darwin and modern evolution theory have defined this second phase. A third is added to these two developmental phases where human development will eventually reveal our capacity to work formatively, preferably in cooperation with God’s intention, upon the world.¹¹⁶ As our evolution continues through cultural ages of unfolding conscious creativity so, through what we now term the Anthropocene, other levels of artisanship and transformative work will emerge through the human being. Finally, Steiner argues that a ‘jolt’ is given to evolution through the incarnation of Christ, where humanity can begin to discern a new evolutionary impulse: “The Mystery of Golgotha signifies a coming together of a supersensible being with earthly evolution through the body of Jesus of Nazareth, a coming together which, through the death on Golgotha, brought about the uniting of the Christ being with the earthly human being.”¹¹⁷ Through Christ becoming part of the human constitution a new spiritual formative force is at work in us, which unfolds through history. We can see a material and a spiritual evolution right into the physical manifestation of our development. These aspects of Steiner’s evolution theory provide insight into the development of free will and morality comparable to the development of what Aquinas called the ‘dignity of causality’.¹¹⁸

Steiner was not the only scientist concerned with these issues. For example, even though published posthumously, the priest and palaeontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in *The*

¹¹² *Concerning the Astral World and Devachan*, 88, 161-66.

¹¹³ *The Evolution of Consciousness: As Revealed through Initiation-Knowledge*, vol. 227 (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2006).

¹¹⁴ *Genesis: Secrets of Creation - the First Book of Moses*, vol. 122 (Rudolf Steiner Press, 2002).

¹¹⁵ *The Gospel of St. John and Its Relation to the Other Gospels*, 2nd ed., vol. 112 (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: SteinerBooks, 1948), 72-75.

¹¹⁶ *Foundations of Esotericism*, 93a, 204-13.

¹¹⁷ *Michael's Mission: Revealing the Essential Secrets of Human Nature*, 194, 24.

¹¹⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica (Part 1)* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media Limited, 2012). Q22, Art.

Phenomenon of Man [sic]¹¹⁹ developed his perception of a light sphere of consciousness and thought around the earth (noosphere), which came into existence when the human being was the first to reflect upon instinct. Teilhard named a new era of evolution, the origin and development of consciousness (noogenesis), founded on the convergence of the spirit experienced in thought, as differentiated from the soul or psyche. Teilhard argues that:

If the world is convergent and if Christ occupies its centre, then the Christogenesis [the dynamic presence of God in evolution] of St Paul and St. John is nothing else and nothing less than the extension, both awaited and un hoped for, of that noogenesis in which cosmogenesis culminates... Christ invests himself organically with the very majesty of his creation... Evolution has come to infuse new blood, so to speak, into the perspectives and aspirations of Christianity... And at the present moment Christianity is the unique current of thought, on the entire surface of the noosphere, which is sufficiently audacious and sufficiently progressive to lay hold of the world, at the level of effectual practice, in an embrace, at once already complete, yet capable of indefinite perfection, where faith and hope reach their fulfilment in love.¹²⁰

Even though expressed in classical scientific and theological language, it is easy to see the similarities of thought between Teilhard and Steiner, including the view that science, in this case, evolutionary theory, has infused new blood into Christianity. Teilhard points to another spiritual part of the picture:

The Christian movement... exhibits characteristics of a new phylum... in its trends to synthesis based on love... The presence at the summit of the world of what we have called the Omega Point... The palpable influence on our world of an other and supreme Someone... Is not the Christian phenomenon, which rises upward to the heart of the social phenomenon, precisely that?¹²¹

Teilhard lived in Paris until 1923, but he was most likely unknown to Steiner. However, both touched on the effect of consciousness on matter and evolution.

More recent accounts of evolutionary theory consider some of the same issues as Steiner. In his lecture at the 2015 Science and Non-Duality conference,¹²² Peter Russell suggested that there is another line of enquiry to the traditional 'hard problem' of physics. Instead of extending Descartes' conundrum of how an immaterial mind can influence a material body, he asks: "how can something as immaterial as consciousness arise from unconscious matter?"¹²³ Russell suggests we look at the world from the point of view that consciousness is more fundamental than space, time and matter.

¹¹⁹ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (London: Collins, 1959).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 297-98.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 298.

¹²² Peter Russell, "Spirit of Now," <https://www.peterrussell.com/TV/vidcall/PCEexcerptU.php> (accessed June 12, 2019).

¹²³ David J Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

In his article on *Consciousness: The Bridge between Science and Religion*, he argues the fact that humans are

...conscious beings is the most obvious fact of our existence. Indeed, all we ever know are the thoughts, images, and feelings arising in our consciousness. Yet as far as Western science is concerned, there is nothing more difficult to explain. Why should the complex processing of information in the brain lead to an inner personal experience? Why doesn't it all go on in the dark, without any awareness? Why do we have any inner life at all?

This paradox—the undeniable existence of human consciousness set against the absence of any satisfactory scientific account for it—suggests there may be something amiss with the current scientific worldview. Most scientists assume that consciousness emerges in some way or other from insentient matter. But if this assumption is getting us nowhere, perhaps we should consider an alternative worldview—one found in many metaphysical and spiritual traditions. There, consciousness is held to be an essential component of the cosmos, as fundamental as space, time and matter.

Interestingly, expanding the scientific model to include consciousness in this way does not threaten any of the conclusions of modern science. Mathematics remains the same, as do physics, biology, chemistry, and all our other discoveries about the material world. What changes is our understanding of ourselves. If consciousness is indeed fundamental, then the teachings of the great sages and mystics begin to make new sense.¹²⁴

The more recent work of Denis Noble presumes consciousness as fundamental to space, time and matter in his integrative view rather than a reductive approach to understanding evolution. He argues that organisms harness stochasticity (irregularity, lack of regularity or plan, or randomness), creating order from randomness to generate function and direction.¹²⁵

Positivist science and some theology exclusively based on historical criticism remain within the Kantian confines of the material world, applying knowledge only to the things we can experience empirically.¹²⁶ However, some thinkers in science and theology turn to the effects of consciousness on space, time and matter. If consciousness has primacy, as Russell suggests, then the emerging complexity of the other three are within consciousness. Theologians Denis Edwards, John Haught and Jürgen Moltmann all indicate that evolution is an expression of divine consciousness. In evolution, we experience divine agency and intention and see the invisible in creation.¹²⁷ Another aspect of the effects of consciousness on evolution that correlates with Steiner's

¹²⁴ Peter Russell, "Consciousness: The Bridge between Science and Religion," *Spirit of Now* <https://www.peterrussell.com/SP/AGNT.php> (accessed June 12, 2019).

¹²⁵ Denis Noble, *Dance to the Tune of Life: Biological Relativity* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

¹²⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy : The Doctrine of the Faculties* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 5-6.

¹²⁷ Denis Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*, Orbis (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006); John F Haught, "The Boyle Lecture 2003: Darwin, Design and the Promise of Nature," *Science & Christian Belief* 17, no. 1 (2005); Jürgen Moltmann, "God's Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World.," *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* (2001).

views on evolution is the idea of extended evolutionary synthesis. Lynn Chiu suggests that “studies flip our understanding of the relationship between development and evolution. Instead of thinking of developing organisms as a passive putty molded and sculpted by natural selection, development is instead found to be a complex and dynamic process actively guiding phenotypic evolution”.¹²⁸ Agustín Fuentes posits that rather than trying to measure evolutionary histories separately from human cultural experiences and human experience independent of biological form and function, we can work with integrative anthropology and evolutionary theory. Fuentes suggests that:

The webs of action and perception, memory and history, items and ideas that humans are entangled in is a dynamic and fundamental constituent of a human niche that is simultaneously constructed by and constructing of this human experience and is thus highly evolutionarily relevant. This is not a novel concept; it is a central theme in any attempt at an integrated anthropology and it needs to be embedded as a basal component in evolutionary approaches to the human.¹²⁹

Rudolf Steiner’s evolutionary theory centres on the idea that consciousness's evolution has primacy over species' evolution. It differs from the ‘random’ nature of Darwinian ideas and ‘intelligent design’ ideas. Holding a very similar paradigm as Russell, he explains how in earlier times, before the axial age started around 800 - 600 BCE, humanity could perceive both worlds, matter and spirit, as one. However, as individuated intellectual faculty of reason emerged, the faculties of supernatural perception faded. They became veiled as we developed the senses for the physical world. As a result, the current range of perception, limited to the physical world, is reduced compared to earlier cultures.¹³⁰ David Graeber and David Wengrow¹³¹ argue that this is a Eurocentric perspective. Therefore, I suggest it would help if ‘earlier culture’ is read as ‘earlier European cultures’.

2.1.2 Philosophy: contemplative phenomenology

Between the turn of the century and when he parted from the Theosophical Society in 1912, Steiner developed his ideas differently from earlier philosophical colleagues such as Brentano,

¹²⁸ Lynn Chiu, "Extended Evolutionary Synthesis; a Review of the Latest Scientific Research," (2022), <https://www.templeton.org/news/moving-beyond-darwin-the-modern-study-of-extended-evolutionary-synthesis> (accessed September 13, 2022). 19-20.

¹²⁹ Agustín Fuentes, "The Extended Evolutionary Synthesis, Ethnography, and the Human Niche: Toward an Integrated Anthropology," *Current Anthropology* 57, no. S13 (2016): S16-S17.

¹³⁰ Steiner, *The Gospel of St. John and Its Relation to the Other Gospels*, 112, 220-41.

¹³¹ David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (London: Penguin Books, 2022).

Husserl and Eduard von Hartman, to whom he dedicated the publication of his doctoral dissertation.¹³²

His critical attitude to the thinking of others, while isolating him and causing others to distance themselves from his work, was part of his methodology. The direction he takes here is a key to why history seems to have forgotten him in philosophy and theology. I have shown that Steiner considered Kant to be the fulfilment and conclusion of nominalism. Steiner followed both the romantic philosophy of encounter and individuation through Spinoza, Goethe, Schiller and the German idealists Fichte, Schelling and Hegel in regard to the spiritual reality of thought and ideas manifesting in the world of phenomena.

To develop a spiritual science, Steiner offers a doctrine of the senses that includes three sets of senses: physical, soul and spiritual senses. This teaching stems from his reintroduction of the threefold understanding of being. Rather than accepting the duality of matter and spirit, Steiner acknowledges the third realm of the soul that mediates between them. In chapter three, I explore the development of these three sets of senses in more depth as a doctrine that shapes theological method.

Phenomenology focuses on the individual's subjective experience as it was lived as its field of observation and devises methods to collate these experiences so that with enough data, we can assume it is objective. This approach works well – to a point – within the subjective areas of personal experience. A phenomenologist describes the experience precisely as experienced from the first-person point of view. Steiner's concern with spiritual scientific observation is the subject of the 'noumenon', a posited object or event that exists independently of human sense and perception. The term *noumenon* is contrasted with the term *phenomenon*, which refers to anything that can be apprehended as an object of the physical senses. In spiritual-scientific or anthroposophical terms, we could call it the spiritual being, archetype or idea of a thing. According to Steiner, spiritual science researches more than just the subjective experience of conscious experience. How can the noumenon be consciously experienced as an object of perception? Can the noumenon become a phenomenon as an objective experience? For this to happen three levels of observation are necessary: sense perception, subjective experience perception and spiritual perception.

To identify Steiner's method as contemplative phenomenology, it is important to differentiate various types of phenomenology, especially hermeneutical phenomenology, to highlight the difference in emphasis. Martin Luther can be identified as the moment of origin for

¹³² Steiner, *Truth and Knowledge: Introduction to "Philosophy of Spiritual Activity"*, 3.

modern hermeneutical phenomenology, Schleiermacher made it universally applicable to interpreting all texts.¹³³ Luther took the step of giving the text to the individual for self-reflection, and Schleiermacher set out to rescue religion and Christianity from both superstition and Enlightenment scepticism and universalises Luther's method of scriptural interpretation into a method of interpreting any text. Schleiermacher's hermeneutical circle assumes a shared language between reader, text and author. A thinking reader plays off the text's grammatical language and the author's state of mind in a dialectic. This influences both Hegel in his concept of *Aufhebung* (sublation) and Husserl's development of the *epoché*. It is also an early formulation of theological hermeneutics using the key of pretext, text, and context to dialogue between reader, text and author. Philip F. Esler, in his search for a hermeneutical key, suggests he can only return to Thomas Torrance's summary of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics: "The great presupposition with which the interpreter must go to work, according to Schleiermacher, is that it is concerned with speech or language, with what is spoken and heard in acts of communication between subject and subject".¹³⁴ Nicola Hoggard Creegan in her Chapter *Constraint and Transcendence: Theology and the Umwelt of Creativity*,¹³⁵ suggests from Schleiermacher's idea that interpretation, hermeneutics, is part grammar and part divination, where

...one part of any creative exercise is pure slog – knowing the basics and having 10,000 hours of time indwelling the object of our attention. Theologians may learn languages, read scripture, and devour the theological works of the past, known as the tradition or traditions... Divination, on the other hand, is the magical way in which something new happens when human consciousness indwells a space, when humans pay attention, when burning questions are asked, or humans examine the source of hope; divination occurs when we have glimpses of the future or when we make connections to the Whole, otherwise unseen. Divination is sometimes known as intuition or inspiration; it can be recognised but cannot be modelled or programmed.¹³⁶

All of the above descriptions of the methods of phenomenology and hermeneutics become a critical foundation for understanding my description of Steiner's method as contemplative phenomenology. As I have said, contemplative phenomenology needs to be differentiated from the sense phenomenology of Goethe, the hermeneutical phenomenology of interpretation, and from observing subjective experience with soul faculties such as micro-phenomenology.¹³⁷ These perspectives range from exploring ways to experience soul and spirit by starting from a natural

¹³³ Karl Simms, *Hans-Georg Gadamer* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 10-15.

¹³⁴ Philip F. Esler, *New Testament Theology: Communion and Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 146.

¹³⁵ Nicola Hoggard Creegan, "Constraint and Transcendence : Theology and the Umwelt of Creativity ." in *Creativity and Spirituality : A Multidisciplinary Perspective.*, ed. Maureen Miner ; Tony Dowson (Charlotte, North Carolina: Information Age Publishing, 2017), 44.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Claire Petitmengin et al., "Studying the Experience of Meditation through Micro-Phenomenology," *Current opinion in psychology* 28 (2019): 54-59.

phenomenon to giving a systematic account of the phenomenology of the imaginative consciousness in Steiner. I suggest this progression in phenomenology types culminates in what I have named Steiner's contemplative phenomenology, which requires the development of spiritual senses. Anthroposophical phenomenological types are called anthroposophical phenomenology, contemplative enquiry, and the phenomenology of imagination.¹³⁸ However, *contemplative phenomenology* is never named as I have done in this thesis. Nevertheless, I shall demonstrate that it is an appropriate designation for Steiner's phenomenology.

Listening to language and communication between subject and subject is the essence of Steiner's communication of spiritual scientific understanding. Contemplating a question allows a conversation to emerge. Hans-Georg Gadamer suggests that this conversation needs to include understanding the author of a text beyond language and time differences. Literature possesses an 'ideality' and 'autonomy' that allows, through the contemplation of a reader, a 'fusion of horizons' between text, reader and author.¹³⁹ Over the years, I have found when pondering an inner question, that I may choose to read a text from which I have not initially sought a response to my question, yet it does answer the question. This occurrence is more than Gadamer's fusion of horizons; for me, it is not simply about how to read or interpret a text, but also about choosing the text to read. It has given me certainty and confidence in a contemplative method I use to approach all my research and spiritual/theological pondering. This experience convinced me that by pondering a research question and holding an inner reflective dialogue with Steiner, I built an intuitive faculty for which text to read. It is part of the contemplative phenomenology that Steiner developed and is applicable beyond Steiner's work. For example, when I was in a European city far away from home where English was not spoken, I decided to visit a large bookstore driven by a feeling that a book was in there that I should be aware of. It turned out that an English copy of Karen Armstrong's *The Lost Art of Scripture*, of which I was unaware, was on the shelf, and it informed this thesis. This could be described by some as serendipity, or intuition, or the prompting of the Holy Spirit, but I attribute it to the coherence of contemplative phenomenology.

Hermeneutical phenomenology already uses the method of conversation and questioning to form knowledge. Psychotherapist Linda Finlay develops the ideas of 'the phenomenological

¹³⁸ Roger Druitt, *Observing Nature's Secret; Practical Exercises for Perceiving Soul and Spirit* (Forest Row, East Sussex: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2018); Terje Sparby, "Anthroposophical Meditation and Spirituality. Connecting Divinity and Nature through the Human Being," *Studies in Spirituality* 27 (2017); "The Phenomenology of Imaginative Consciousness in Steiner.," *Steiner Studies. Internationale Zeitschrift für kritische Steiner-Forschung* (2020); Arthur Zajonc, *Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry: When Knowing Becomes Love* (Lindisfarne Books Great Barrington, MA, 2009).

¹³⁹ Simms, *Hans-Georg Gadamer*, 93.

attitude' and 'dwelling as immersion'¹⁴⁰ as part of the phenomenological process in ways that align with Steiner's method. Such an insight provides a contemplative phenomenological dialogue with the reader, which is how Steiner promotes that a reader should approach his texts and teachings:

A book such as this should be taken as a conversation between the author and the reader. When it is said that the pupil needs personal instruction, this should be understood in the sense that the book itself is personal instruction. In earlier times there were reasons for confining personal instructions for oral esoteric teaching; today we have reached a stage in the evolution of humanity when spiritual scientific knowledge must become far more widely disseminated than formerly.¹⁴¹

'Spiritual' rather than 'contemplative' may be more direct in naming Steiner's method of phenomenology. However, Hegel's influential and much-discussed *Phenomenology of the Spirit*¹⁴² could be conflated with this method. The obvious correlation is that Hegel's work is a scientific method and an epistemology about how humans become aware of themselves and "finally grasp themselves as spirit... the initially subjective spirit turns itself into objective spirit. The idea highlights what it is as such in what are the spiritual institutions: marriage, family, law, morals. All of that is combined in the state."¹⁴³ Hegel's phenomenology confines the word 'spirit' to the human mind, consciousness, and the expression of a self-conscious human spirit after emancipating itself from nature. Hegel's work is an important study to gain insight into Steiner's epistemology.

Steiner's method searches for a way to experience the spiritual world objectively. Thus 'spiritual phenomenology' would be a contender for Steiner's approach. Further, contemplation, or various forms of dwelling upon and immersion in phenomena, is part of every type of phenomenology. Finlay regards the fourfold process of seeing afresh, dwelling, explicating and languaging as the steps for any phenomenology.¹⁴⁴ To differentiate these four steps specific to contemplative phenomenology, I describe *faith* as the process of open-minded perception where we construct symbols through contemplation. Steiner's particular use of the word contemplation is the process whereby a person takes time to build symbols upon which their meditation or attention dwells.¹⁴⁵ That being so, using the word 'contemplative' to describe a form of phenomenology is justifiable. The second step I describe as *pondering* is, for example, experienced by Mary in Luke 2.

¹⁴⁰ Linda Finlay, "Engaging Phenomenological Analysis," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 11, no. 2 (2014): 122, 26.

¹⁴¹ Rudolf Steiner, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, vol. 10 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1969), 220.

¹⁴² Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Terry P. Pinkard, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Cambridge Hegel Translations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

¹⁴³ Rudolf Steiner, *Paths and Goals of the Spiritual Human Being: Life Questions in the Light of Spiritual Science*, vol. 125 (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2015), 21.

¹⁴⁴ Finlay, "Engaging Phenomenological Analysis."

¹⁴⁵ Rudolf Steiner, *Occult Science: An Outline*, vol. 13 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1969), 230-34.

To dwell upon the spiritual noumenon, Steiner promotes that we learn the construction of symbols to train our soul and spiritual perceiving capacities.¹⁴⁶ I describe the third step as allowing, emptying a thought and allowing a new idea or concept to enter. The fourth step is *art* as the process of giving language or expression to the experience of the noumenon.

While these four steps align contemplative phenomenology with phenomenology's general methods and language, Steiner concisely presented these steps. He held the lecture *The Foundations of Anthroposophical Methodology*¹⁴⁷ at a philosophical conference in 1911 in Bologna, where he presented the practical exercises to develop the three spiritual senses of Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition. These were a brief account of the detailed instructions given in his book *Occult Science: An Outline*.¹⁴⁸ While a complete description of this method goes beyond the scope of this thesis, chapter three will present a further understanding of contemplative phenomenology and how Christ enters human thinking to develop the spiritual senses.

2.1.3 Theology: the spiritual quest for the historical Jesus

Steiner considers the Copernican Revolution the time when the materialistic approach to science and philosophy finally took hold of western philosophy. Later historical criticism of the Bible led to a loss in the Pauline process of knowing by spiritual perception. While the first historical quest for Jesus is attributed to Albert Schweitzer, his book *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*¹⁴⁹ builds on much earlier quests by scholars such as Hermann Reimarus (d. 1768) and William Wrede (d. 1906).

During the lecture cycle *Inner Impulses of Evolution*,¹⁵⁰ Steiner shows that the works of David Friedrich Strauss, Ernest Renan and Vladimir Solovyov¹⁵¹ each exclude an essential aspect of the Christology that he was trying to present:

There you have the three figures. The same Being meets us in the nineteenth century in a threefold description. The Life of Jesus by Ernest Renan, completely realistic; realistic history a fortiori; Jesus as an historical figure; a book that is written with all the learning of the nineteenth century. Then came David Friedrich Strauss with this idea of mankind,

¹⁴⁶ *Metamorphoses of the Soul: Paths of Experience: Vol. 2* vol. 59 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1934), 28-40.

¹⁴⁷ Rudolf Steiner and Sergei O Prokofieff, *Rudolf Steiner's Path of Initiation and the Mystery of the Ego: The Foundations of Anthroposophical Methodology* (Forest Row: Temple Lodge Publishing, 2013).

¹⁴⁸ Steiner, *Occult Science: An Outline*, 13, 222-97.

¹⁴⁹ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1911).

¹⁵⁰ Rudolf Steiner, *Inner Impulses of Evolution: The Mexican Mysteries and the Knights Templar*, vol. 171 (Spring Valley, New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1984).

¹⁵¹ David Friedrich Strauss; *The life of Jesus Critically Examined*, Published 1835; Ernest Renan; *The Life of Jesus*, Published 1863; Vladimir Solovyov; *A Story of the Anti-Christ*, 1900.

working on, running through all mankind, but remaining an idea, never awakening to life. Lastly, Soloviev's [sic] Christ; living power, living wisdom, altogether spiritual.¹⁵²

While Steiner understands the necessity of these three directions of the times, he is also clear that another approach, which stems from a spiritual quest for the historical Jesus, is necessary for a contemporary relationship with Christ. Steiner suggested that the historical quest - to prove the truth of Jesus through historical criticism - would only lead to dead ends. While approaching the question from different starting points it is worth noting that for Schweizer and Steiner, the truth of Christ needs to be found as a personal spiritual experience and not based on the process of doubt in positivist scientific methods.

Steiner's concerns about positivist science are similar to that of scientist and philosopher Michael Polanyi, who looked to religious faith's language to help illuminate science's function in an open society. Polanyi's theories, published well after Steiner's death, meet and overlap with Steiner's on the questions of imagination and the place of art in society. Polanyi "contends that appreciating the structure of a work of art can help us to acknowledge the importance of similar principles in procedures of scientific investigation".¹⁵³ He also argues that scientific knowledge, which relies too heavily on positivism, can be enhanced by what he calls tacit knowledge or the ability to know or do something without necessarily being able to articulate it or even be aware of all the dimensions.¹⁵⁴ His principles of "tacit knowledge" applied to art, poetry, religion and morality, summed up in his idea of self-giving integrations, or subsidiary clues of information gathered through our observations and experiences, lead to integrated tacit knowledge, to which we surrender. A poem or literature "is a focus for personal emotions and memories which we are not accustomed to evoke, but the poem also gives to these some explicit focus and form which claim to be meaningful".¹⁵⁵ It becomes evident that Steiner, along with many of his contemporaries, was considering similar themes and the effects of empiricism on epistemology and methods of learning.

Further, the semiotic process of reading and understanding poetry, literature, myth, symbol and metaphor uses the 'transnatural' placing of elements not found in nature to give shape to the memories and experiences to create meaning in which we can dwell. Steiner agrees with the hermeneutical phenomenologists that we can come to knowledge through contemplative immersion in symbols and literature. However, Steiner's method also uses art to develop the higher senses from which we can perceive soul and spirit worlds. Art thus plays a double role for Steiner of being

¹⁵² Steiner, *Inner Impulses of Evolution: The Mexican Mysteries and the Knights Templar*, 171. 44

¹⁵³ Patrick Grant, *Six Modern Authors and Problems of Belief* (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd, 1979), 121.

¹⁵⁴ Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge : Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958); *The Tacit Dimension* (Chicago University Press, 2009).

¹⁵⁵ Grant, *Six Modern Authors and Problems of Belief*, 136.

both the object of observation, the phenomenon we engage with, and the verification of our experiences through the spiritual senses. I will discuss this in further detail in chapter three.

Steiner was trying to offer a method of enquiry and perception that had arisen from his own philosophical and scientific journey. Steiner considered his epistemology Pauline because of the idea of knowledge through spiritual perception. His Christology and theological comments come from his personal spiritual experience, which he then says he used to verify the Gospels. It was his spiritual quest for the historical Jesus.¹⁵⁶

I am suggesting that some of Steiner's scientific, philosophical and theological considerations are not of historical value only. Instead, they have become more relevant in the current direction of these three disciplines. Steiner was a man of his time and made a clear stand on the need for spiritual science as a necessary counterpoint to the materialistic tendency of his times. Scientific enquiry has started to embrace and develop this field of knowledge, and what seemed so radical a hundred years ago can now find resonance with newer research findings. As observed at the start of this chapter, current theological and biblical scholarship work emerging from historical criticism, theological anthropology, and systematic theology show great depth in their findings that complements, even substantiates, Steiner's insights. Therefore, one should not think that a spiritual quest would replace the historical one. Instead, they can collaborate to present a far-reaching systematic theology.

2.2 Rudolf Steiner's Hermeneutical Key and Conceptual Model of Theology

Steiner's biography reveals three key aspects of his methodology and Christology are: the evolution of consciousness; contemplative phenomenology; and the spiritual quest for the historical Jesus. I will now show that Steiner developed a hermeneutical key and a conceptual model of theology, which he brought to bear on biblical scholarship, exegesis and the systematic categories of Christology.

A hermeneutical key is the means through which the scriptures are interpreted. The Pauline idea of "I no longer live, but the Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20) became Steiner's central key for his biblical exegesis. He often paraphrased this to: 'Not I, but Christ in me'. He explained the essential nature of this Pauline theology at an Easter lecture in 1920: *Easter; The Festival of Warning –The Event of Damascus and the new Knowledge of the Spirit*.¹⁵⁷ Steiner explains that spiritual vision was necessarily lost for human freedom to quicken. "Another vision of the spiritual was now to

¹⁵⁶ Steiner, *The Gospel of St. John and Its Relation to the Other Gospels*, 112, 20-23.

¹⁵⁷ *The Festivals and Their Meaning*, vol. Collected Lectures (Bristol: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1992), 125-40.

dawn in a new kingdom of light, which each person must acquire by their own inner initiative... Paul knew from his own supersensible experience... that Christ Jesus... can only be found through the awakening of an inner power of vision, not through any mere beholding with the senses".¹⁵⁸ Steiner developed this hermeneutical key to show how Christ worked in evolution towards the selflessness of the human being.¹⁵⁹ This thought was the key to his biblical scholarship and became central to his understanding of his theological model. He argued that Paul's direct spiritual experience of Christ at Damascus and his idea of "not I, but Christ in me" is the impetus for another approach to theology and a non-materialistic interpretation of the Gospel.¹⁶⁰ I have named this approach the 'spiritual quest for the historical Jesus'. In his critical edition of *Christianity as Mystical Fact*, Christian Clement says Steiner's approach "was an understanding of Christianity as mythical mysteriosophy rather than a historical-critical approach."¹⁶¹

Although neither a theologian nor a biblical scholar by qualification, Steiner's method was nonetheless theological in as much as he developed a conceptual model, a systematic metaphor, through which he reflected theologically in relationship to the scientific and theological methods of his times. Wentzel van Huyssteen says that:

It is important that theologians realize that they are authentically involved in their pursuit not only when approaching their field of study critically, observantly, intelligently, rationally and responsibly, but also when they realize that critical thought does not demand cutting themselves off from their basic convictions and ultimate commitment through a supposed objectivity. Creativity and rationality in a fundamental-theological reflection on systematic theology can never mean abandoning the sources and traditions of theology. They imply, rather, the construction of a model in which the extremes of the content of the Christian faith, on the one hand, and the context of the problems currently engaging philosophy of science, on the other, are transcended in a new and creative conceptual transformation.¹⁶²

Steiner was indeed engaged in such a new and creative conceptual transformation, understood against a broad background of sources and traditions.

Developing a theological model as the art of theological reflection "is a systematic metaphor that aims toward the apprehension of reality, opens new and interesting avenues for thought, organizes relevant data from scripture and tradition, and shapes human experience".¹⁶³ It is how we

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 132.

¹⁵⁹ *Approaching the Mystery of Golgotha*, vol. 152 (Great Barrington: Steiner Books, 2006), 118-31.

¹⁶⁰ *The Festivals and Their Meaning*, Collected Lectures, 129-33.

¹⁶¹ Christian Clement, *Introduction to Rudolf Steiner Critical Edition, Vol 5; Writings on Mysticism and Christianity*, vol. 5, Rudolf Steiner: Schriften - Kritische Ausgabe (Basel: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 2013), xxv-lxxv.

¹⁶² Wentzel Van Huyssteen, *Theology and the Justification of Faith: Constructing Theories in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), xvi.

¹⁶³ James M Watkins, *Creativity as Sacrifice: Toward a Theological Model for Creativity in the Arts* (Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2015), 16.

bring our experience into conversation with the Christian tradition. In an early formulation, Steiner expressed the idea of his model by saying:

If Christ Jesus is regarded by those who divined something of His greatness as the most significant manifestation in the evolution of humanity upon earth, then this Christ Jesus must in some way be connected with what is most vital and sacred in the human being. In other words, there must be something in the human being that can be brought into relation with the Christ event. Can we not ask, if Christ Jesus, as the Gospels maintain, is really the most important event in human evolution, does it not follow that always, in every human soul, there is something that is related to Christ Jesus?¹⁶⁴

A contemporary example of a theological model would be the work of Stanley J. Grenz, who thought anthropology was the most fruitful context to extend theology and developed the *Imago Dei* as his relational model.¹⁶⁵ Steiner never formally articulated a conceptual model of theology *per se* and in this respect could be seen to be similar to Jürgen Moltmann, who wrote “if I were to sum up the outline of my theology in a few key phrases, I would have at the least to say that I am attempting to reflect a theology which has: a biblical foundation, an eschatological orientation, and a political responsibility”.¹⁶⁶ Moltmann “avoided the seductions of the theological system and the coercion of the dogmatic thesis”.¹⁶⁷ He made ‘contributions to theology’ rather than describing dogmatics.

Having suggested that Steiner may not have wanted to claim a theological model and would have been more willing to remain understood as making theological contributions, I will, from my reflections, formulate a conceptual model for Steiner’s theology here. Christ has worked for the divinisation of the human soul in and through evolution, or *Theosis in Christ*. This is not a unique conceptual model and is similar to the Eastern Orthodox perspective of *Theosis*. More recently, Panayiotis Nellas in *Deification in Christ*¹⁶⁸ provides a contemporary account of *Christification* through living the spiritual life. Steiner and Nellas agree concerning selflessness, surrender, *kenosis*, and opening the human self to Christ. However, Nellas, along with Slavko Eždenci,¹⁶⁹ sees the role of the Church in the process as instrumental.

¹⁶⁴ Steiner, *The Gospel of St. John and Its Relation to the Other Gospels*, 112, 5.

¹⁶⁵ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), ii-iii.

¹⁶⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1991), 182.

¹⁶⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), xii.

¹⁶⁸ Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987).

¹⁶⁹ Slavko Eždenci, *Deification and Union with Christ; a Reformed Perspective on Salvation in Orthodoxy* (London: The Latimer Trust, 2011), 12-14.

At the same time, Steiner considers the process in the gnostic sense of the individual's religious authority. Elaine H. Pagels describes this understanding of the Gnostics as:

They [the Gospels] point out how often Christ rebukes the disciples for taking his symbolic statements literally. They see Peter as, perhaps, the worst offender, the most persistent in this attitude of stubborn literal-mindedness. The Valentinians express dismay, but not surprise, at seeing the majority of contemporary Christians... emulating the disciple's literalism as well as their faith... Their error consists in mistaking literal historical data for spiritual truth. They fail to recognize these events as "images". To recognize their true meaning, one must come to see that these events do not in themselves effect redemption. Rather, they serve to symbolize the process of redemption that occurs within those who perceive their inner meaning.¹⁷⁰

This difference highlights how Steiner's conceptual model relates to theological anthropology,¹⁷¹ which focuses on the sociological and anthropological aspects of being in a community and created in God's image. On the other hand, Steiner's theological model emphasizes personal deification through individual effort. Steiner brings the two closer by saying that anthroposophy is the spiritual, esoteric study correlating to the exoteric social study of anthropology. He thereby shows that the exoteric and the esoteric are two mutually supportive halves of a science:

Our science itself leads us to the conviction that within the physical human being there lives a spiritual, inner one – as it were, a second human being. Whereas that which humankind can learn about the universe through the senses and through the intellect, which relies upon sense-observation, may be called "anthropology", that which the inner, spiritual human being can know may be called "anthroposophy".¹⁷²

Steiner's '*Theosis in Christ*' emphasises the individual's spiritual development before our role in the community. He does so, while not downplaying the vital aspect of the path of transformation of the soul in the community. This emphasis on the individual's spiritual development has an interface with his teachings that human freedom is the central idea of human evolution. For Steiner this freedom of the human being to create something new is expressed historically in the concept of 'creation out of nothing'. Steiner's esoteric explanation of this process stands out, possibly uniquely, from the traditional understanding of '*Creatio ex Nihilio*' meaning that God brought the world into existence "out of nothing" through a purposeful act of free will. For Steiner 'creation out of nothing' is the

¹⁷⁰ Elaine H Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon's Commentary on John* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1989), 13-14.

¹⁷¹ Michelle A Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image: An Introduction to Feminist Theological Anthropology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2014), xv. Michelle A. Gonzales says that theological anthropology is "the study of what it means to be human, created in the image and likeness of God... it speaks of our relationship with our Creator and one another. It seeks to understand and explain what it means to be a creature of God"

¹⁷² Steiner, *The Mission of Spiritual Science and of Its Building at Dornach Switzerland*, 35, 8.

...capacity to create something new from what is given, to make the interrelationships in which we are embedded into a foundation for new things that we ourselves create, to think things that go beyond the actual reality we experience around us, to feel more than stands purely objectively before us... In Christian Esotericism, creating something new from given conditions is called 'creating in the spirit', while creation drawn from right (or truth), beautiful and virtuous conditions is called the 'holy spirit'. The Holy Spirit inspires us when we are able to create truth, beauty and goodness out of nothing. This foundation was given through Christ's entry into our evolution...

We human beings, though, are capable of incorporating this creation out of nothing into ourselves. We only become capable of this, though, by raising ourselves to this freedom of self-creation through the freest deed we look upon as our example and paradigm. What freest deed is this? It is that the wise, creating Word of our solar system took the inner resolve to enter a human body and participate in earth's evolution, to enact a deed that lay in no preceding karma. When Christ resolved to enter a human body, he was not compelled to this by any preceding karma but too it upon himself as a free deed. This was founded solely on a prefiguring vision of the future evolution of humanity, which had never previously existed but first arose in him as a prefiguring thought created out of nothing.¹⁷³

Steiner bridges the difference between the orthodox Christian position of Paul and Augustine of justification by faith alone and the teaching of Pelagius of earning salvation. He does this similarly to James, who says: "faith without works is dead" (Jas 2:26). Steiner confirms that salvation came through the grace of the death and resurrection of Christ, yet each individual needs to cooperate in the process through faith and works. Theosis, for Steiner, is the fulfilment of salvation in the individual through their own effort, based on the grace given through Christ. Then the realisation, or fulfilment, is graced again through the Holy Spirit. The completion of salvation is not through the individual alone but through the Holy Spirit. I will explain Steiner's position on salvation through justification further in chapter seven.

Teilhard de Chardin explored the theme in his work *The Divine Milieu*¹⁷⁴ as the divinisation, or individual and collective progress in the divine milieu. The divine omnipresence "has the properties of a centre, and above all the absolute and final power to unite (and consequently to complete) all beings within its breast".¹⁷⁵ Further, like Teilhard, Steiner also based his conceptual model on Pauline thought. Friedrich Hiebel points out that Steiner built a system of knowledge and an idea of freedom founded on the Pauline worldview purely out of the world of ideas and concepts.¹⁷⁶ Paul did not create a theory of knowledge but a theological anthropology based on the first and second

¹⁷³ *Disease, Karma and Healing: Spiritual-Scientific Enquiries into the Nature of the Human Being*, vol. 107 (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2013), 232-36.

¹⁷⁴ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu* (London: Collins Perennial, 2001).

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁷⁶ Hiebel, *The Epistles of Paul and Rudolf Steiner's Philosophy of Freedom*, 14.

Adam, which forms the Christological basis for Steiner to say in his doctoral thesis that his epistemology restores the unity of reality which was lost:

The act of restoration consists in thinking about the world as given. Our thinking consideration of the world brings about the actual union of the two parts of the world content: the part we survey as given on the horizon of our experience, and the part which has to be produced in the act of cognition before that can be given also. The act of cognition is the synthesis of these two elements. Indeed in every single act of cognition, one part appears as something produced within that act itself, and, through the act, as added to the merely given. This part, in actual fact, is always so produced, and only appears as something given at the beginning of epistemological theory.¹⁷⁷

Hiebel, drawing on 1 Corinthians 15, shows that Paul understood that Christ brought about necessary changes in the human condition for cognition to overcome the duality of consciousness. The *soma psychikon* of the first Adam, as the *protos*, provides the ensouled physical body, which is subject to the senses, sin and death. The *soma pneumatikon* of Christ provides the light-filled spirit body as the *eschatos*, which is subject to *charis*, grace, reverence, freedom and beauty of the spirit.¹⁷⁸

Steiner's conceptual model, revealed through his hermeneutical key is made up of four themes:

1. The life of Christ was a historical event.
2. Christ is an objective spiritual entity, the Christ-principle that works through evolution and can be traced in earlier philosophies, myths and religions.
3. The Gospels are mythical initiation stories that individuals can access for their moral and virtuous development.
4. Christ is a force, the Christ impulse, for the ennoblement and deification of human capacity as the teleological hope of human evolution.

These four themes relate directly to the four senses of scripture - literal history; the typological allegory of past and present events; the tropological moral implication for human virtue; and analogical interpretation for the future. In medieval exegesis, "the letter teaches events, allegory what you should believe, morality teaches what you should do, and anagogy what mark you should be aiming for".¹⁷⁹ While Henri de Lubac revises the medieval method as a modern exegetical and oratory method, he also suggests that they provide a method for the spiritual senses: "to rediscover a direct contact with the Word of God, which has been opposed to the quite historical and disinterested concern to enter completely into a system of thought that is presented in an obsolete

¹⁷⁷ Steiner, *Truth and Knowledge: Introduction to "Philosophy of Spiritual Activity"*, 3, 63-64.

¹⁷⁸ Hiebel, *The Epistles of Paul and Rudolf Steiner's Philosophy of Freedom*, 25-28.

¹⁷⁹ Henri De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis, Volume 1: The Four Senses of Scripture*, 4 vols., vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 1.

garb to facilitate understanding”.¹⁸⁰ In the final chapter on *The Sense Given by the Spirit*, de Lubac follows the doctor of the church, Saint Jerome, in saying “we ought to have a spiritual understanding. After the truth of history, everything should be perceived spiritually”.¹⁸¹ He acknowledges the collaborative path of science and spirituality and the existence of a twofold sense, literal and spiritual, to knowledge. However, he also reasserts the role of faith in the spiritual sense held by the church’s spiritual exegesis. He says: “the informed theologian knows beforehand that the whole veil is lifted from on high for the person who queries the text with zealous piety”.¹⁸² Steiner is such a person, but not one sanctioned by the tradition of Christian patrimony. The inner core of where de Lubac and Steiner meet is in the renewed search for the understanding of the spiritual senses. In the broadest interpretation of Scripture, there is common ground in understanding that Jesus is assimilated into scripture by taking on body and flesh and, through his death on the cross, poured out his Spirit into the world and Scripture. Through zealous piety, faith, humility, purity of heart, and the perfection of life in a person, the eyes of the interior person open through the grace of the Holy Spirit¹⁸³ and reach a full spiritual sense of Scripture.¹⁸⁴

There is still a gap to be closed between the full spiritual sense received in faith, albeit from persons who have had the eye of the soul unveiled, and the development of the spiritual senses as a method of exegesis. Therefore, in chapter three, I will offer a detailed exploration of Steiner’s insights on the development of the spiritual senses as a valid fifth sense of exegesis that goes beyond the spiritual sense and which tradition holds is given to the church by the Holy Spirit.

2.3 Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined Steiner’s intellectual development through his engagement with the influences of his contemporary scientific, philosophical, and theological thinking of his historical setting. I have shown that his thinking can be seen as theological rather than mainly theosophical mystical musings, as suggested by one contemporary theologian observed in chapter one. I have given the context for considering Rudolf Steiner’s teaching on Christ and his biblical studies as theological by developing the second lens of a hermeneutical key and a conceptual model of theology. While Steiner did not articulate them as such, I have named them as the Pauline concept of Not I, but Christ in me - ‘I no longer live, but the Christ lives in me’ (Gal 2:20); and

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 11.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 262.

¹⁸² Ibid., 267.

¹⁸³ Steiner, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, 10, 19-44, 191-213.

¹⁸⁴ De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis, Volume 1: The Four Senses of Scripture*, 1, 264-67.

Theosis in Christ: Christ has worked for the divinisation of the human soul in and through evolution.

The second lens of this chapter has provided the four themes of Steiner's theological model mentioned above in the last section. In chapters five, six, and seven, I will consider stages of Christ's working in history for the evolution of the human being. I will first consider the third lens for reading Steiner: how current theological thought around Gnosticism, heresy and the doctrine of the spiritual senses provide a field of study within which Steiner's work can find a voice in systematic Christology. Then I will present his method of developing spiritual senses for spiritual perception and research and his understanding of the centrality of Christ in evolution as the impulse through which human beings undertake the path of *Theosis*.

CHAPTER 3: SYSTEMATIC CHRISTOLOGY - EMERGING METHODS IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

3.1 Approaches to Gnosticism

The third lens, defined in this chapter, is the formulation of a doctrine of the spiritual senses arising from Steiner's ideas. I will describe his spiritual scientific research method and explain Steiner's views on the requisite soul faculties that need developing. This chapter begins with a response to the observation in chapter one that Steiner's Christology is Gnostic and, therefore, heretical. I then consider two current theological shifts that help evaluate Steiner's work: current approaches to Gnosticism and Western Christianity's re-emerging doctrine of the spiritual senses. In this chapter I argue that Steiner's work needs reconsidering as a modern form of mysticism that reflects the Pauline influence and not as a heretical Gnostic philosophy. One that can promote progress towards developing the correct methods and organs of perception for people in the twenty-first-century context.

In the 2018 Routledge volume *The Gnostic World*, Wayne Hudson describes Rudolf Steiner's Gnosticism:

Steiner was not a Gnostic in the sense of someone who held that the world was ruled by a demiurge, that matter was evil, or that it was possible to escape from this fallen universe by acquiring secret spiritual knowledge... What made his approach distinctive was his attempt to marry Rosicrucianism with the phenomenological immanent idealism implicit, in his view, in Goethe's scientific studies, and the spiritual philosophy of thinking advanced by the German Idealists Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel¹⁸⁵

Steiner defines gnosis as the process whereby a person "gets to know the things of the world not through the senses, but through certain cognitional forces of the soul itself".¹⁸⁶ The use of cognitional forces today is set out in what Steiner considered the most appropriate path of initiation for modern western human beings. In the annotated collected lectures in the volume, *The Secret Stream*,¹⁸⁷ Steiner differentiates his understanding of the Rosicrucian principles from what "remains extremely vague for most people... Rosicrucians are believed to be some sort of sect that flourished in the early centuries of German culture".¹⁸⁸ In essence, Steiner's description of Rosicrucianism as he applied its principles to his methods aligns with the Gnostic approach to knowledge through direct experience:

¹⁸⁵ Hudson, "Rudolf Steiner: Multiple Bodies," 510.

¹⁸⁶ Rudolf Steiner, *Human and Cosmic Thought*, vol. 151 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1961), 43.

¹⁸⁷ *The Secret Stream: Christian Rosenkreutz and Rosicrucianism: Selected Lectures and Writings*, ed. Christopher Bamford (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 2000).

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

For the genuine Rosicrucians, however, these feats of transformation were only symbols for the inner moral purification of the human soul: the transformations represented ways that inner human virtues should be developed. When the Rosicrucians spoke of transforming base metals into gold, they meant that it was possible to transform base vices into the gold of human virtue.¹⁸⁹

From these insights, it is essential to differentiate between the Gnostic heretical cosmologies, practices, and secret knowledge and a more constructive understanding of gnosis. Elaine Pagels suggests that the way the Gnostics used the term "gnosis" does not refer just to cognitive knowledge: "we could translate it as "insight," for *gnosis* involves the intuitive process of knowing oneself. And to know oneself, they claimed, is to know human nature and human destiny ... the gnostic is one who has come to understand".¹⁹⁰ This understanding is consistent with the Gnostic Stephan A. Hoeller, who says:

For a long time, most people were more familiar with the antonym of gnostic- namely, agnostic – meaning "someone who claims to know nothing about ultimate realities and concerns." By contrast, a Gnostic is often defined as a person who seeks salvation by knowledge. The knowledge the Gnostic seeks, however, is not rational knowledge; even less is it an accumulation of information. The Greek language distinguishes between theoretical knowledge and knowledge gained through direct experience. The latter is gnosis, and a person possessing or aspiring to this knowledge is a Gnostic.¹⁹¹

Was Steiner heretical and Gnostic in his teachings? The Pauline language of the human person refers to three aspects – the body (soma), the spirit (pneuma) and the soul (psyche). The issue of whether the spirit and the soul refer to two different aspects of the human person, or just one, became an important debate. To answer this question, we need insight into two church decrees against the tripartite view of the human being. First, in chapter two I mentioned the Gnostic background for the eleventh canon in *Canones contra Photium* from the Council of Constantinople in 869. This canon declared that the human being does not have two souls but '*unam animam rationabilem et intellectualem habere hominem [that man[sic] has one rational and intellectual soul]*'. Otto Willmann observed:

The perversion committed by the Gnostics in connection with the Pauline distinction between the pneumatic and the psychic human being, by declaring the former to be an expression of perfection and the latter as representing Christians caught up in canonical law, brought about the express rejection of the trichotomy by the church.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 42.

¹⁹⁰ Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), xix.

¹⁹¹ Stephan A Hoeller, *Gnosticism: New Light on the Ancient Tradition of Inner Knowing* (Quest Books, 2002),

¹⁹² Otto Willmann, *Geschichte Des Idealismus*, 3 vols., vol. 2 (Braunschweig: Brunswick, 1894), 111.

While the eighth Ecumenical Council (the fourth Council of Constantinople) in 869 was poorly attended its validity is also contested as it is one of eleven councils held between 858 and 880 to deal with controversies created by the Photian schism. While in 869 Photius was declared a heretic a second time. In the final Council of Union in 879 Photius was re-instated as Patriarch. In 869 the twenty seven canons were read and passed with little or no discussion. Canon eleven was one of them. In the scheme of church history the impact of the council of 869 is negligible. For Steiner the eleventh canon is a critical moment, albeit an unconscious one, in the philosophical swing to the dual nature of the human being.

Second, the decree of the Congregation of the Holy Office on July 18, 1919, mentioned in chapter one, which pronounced a complete ban on theosophical teaching by the Roman Catholic Church.

Third, also discussed in chapter one, was Steiner's reintroduction of the threefold aspect of the human being into anthroposophy were named by Otto Zimmermann¹⁹³ as part of why Catholics could not read anthroposophical literature. These views exist today and have been explicit in Pope Francis' 2018 Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*.¹⁹⁴ In chapter two, Francis reflects on two subtle enemies of holiness, contemporary Gnosticism and contemporary Pelagianism, citing all the traditionally well-established and well-founded concerns of the dangers of engaging with the path of purely subjective faith.¹⁹⁵ Steiner agrees with these dangers and stays clear by developing anthroposophical methods so that a person can present their subjective experiences rationally through the language of spiritual science.

In my journey with Steiner's Christology, my early studies of the threefold nature of the human being conflicted with what I knew from my Roman Catholic upbringing and formation in the Redemptorist novitiate. I would visit my former novice master and theological teacher and present these ideas to them. I found myself wondering at their response which at the time was often: that is not so different to what we teach. I wasn't sure if I could not articulate what I was learning or some misunderstanding of the difference. Despite the response I received, I felt that there was a fundamental difference between the two positions. With time I realised that the difference between the pneumatic and psychic human was how I experienced myself.

¹⁹³ Otto Zimmermann S.J, polemicized for years against Rudolf Steiner in the Catholic periodicals *Stimmen aus Maria Laach* [voices from Maria Laach] and *Stimmen der Zeit* [Voices of the time].

¹⁹⁴ Pope Francis, "Gaudete Et Exsultate; on the Call to Holiness in Today's World," (2018), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.pdf (accessed March 19, 2022).

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10-16.

Steiner was trying to re-establish the understanding of the threefold nature of the human being. However, he was cautious not to misuse or misinterpret it. He was also creating a method of spiritual scientific research, an epistemology of gnosis, which a modern soul can follow. Gnosis is a philosophical method rather than a philosophy of religion: “to penetrate religious experience by the aid of thought”.¹⁹⁶ Liturgical theology is a modern example of this philosophical method of gnosis, and is based upon the same philosophical premise. The religious experience of the individual is the primary theological process that precedes the secondary reflective sense making work of thought:

Liturgy is encounter with God, but furthermore it is also a living adjustment, i.e. a theological response, to the Holy One. The division which puts raw experience in the sanctuary but theology in the office is here rejected. The assembly makes response too, in its rite, although this is different in form from the organized, analytical, systematic, researched response which makes up secondary theology. The assembly’s response can be truly characterized as theological if our definition of the term is not excessively narrowed by institutional presuppositions, and if their response is ruled by activity. The adjustment made by those who encounter God’s holy presence in word and sacrament is an instance of *theologia prima*. There may be reasons to reflect in a further, more systemized fashion but such organization of thought does not disqualify primary theology as theology. Secondary theology is but one species in the genus theology.¹⁹⁷

It is core to the spiritual quest for the historical Jesus that Steiner develops that Paul himself did not encounter the historical Jesus, but the spiritual Risen Christ: “The possibility is required to understand the historical Jesus in a spiritual way”.¹⁹⁸ Steiner based his epistemology on the Damascus conversion experience of Paul, who founded his faith in the historical Jesus on his spiritual perceptions of the risen Christ:

What does the world today know about the fact that in one field an attempt was even made to develop epistemology in the spirit of Paul? Such epistemology could not argue in the sense of Kant that the thing in itself is something that cannot be understood. But it could say: it is up to you, human being... To place epistemology on such a Pauline basis was the task of my two works Truth and Knowledge and Philosophy of Freedom.¹⁹⁹

Steiner developed his theory of knowledge at the same time that other philosophers were also wrestling with the question of how one can know spiritual truth. Nietzsche, for example, was writing his criticism of the church at this time.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Boldt, *From Luther to Steiner*, 132.

¹⁹⁷ David W Fagerberg, *What Is Liturgical Theology?: A Study in Methodology* (Collegeville Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1992), 17.

¹⁹⁸ Rudolf Steiner, *The Christ Impulse: And the Development of Ego-Consciousness*, vol. 116 (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2014), 118.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 129-30.

²⁰⁰ *Ecco Homo* written 1888 published posthumously 1908; *The Antichrist* published in 1895, although also written in 1888; *Twilight of the Idols* published 1889; *The Will to Power* published 1901.

Steiner developed his ideas parallel to many attempts of his times: “He built a system of knowledge and an idea of freedom founded on the Pauline world view purely out of the world of ideas and concepts”.²⁰¹ Paul did not create a theory of knowledge but a theological anthropology based on the first and second Adam. This concept of freedom, based on individualised ideas and concepts, can be seen as Euro-centric. The anthroposophical concept of cultural evolution would benefit through more recent anthropologic research such as *The Dawn of Everything; A new history of humanity*,²⁰² by David Graeber and David Wengrow trace the mutual influence of cultures on each other. For example the North American people in Nova Scotia and Quebec on the emerging seventeenth-century French Enlightenment debates. They show, from the French Jesuit documentation of the times, that the Wendat people had a very different concept of freedom of the individual in a community. The community provided a place for expressing individual freedom without subjecting their will to anyone, which was different from the Jesuit idea of subjugating the will and person to God.²⁰³ These exchanges led to the views of liberty, equality and fraternity, ideas which, in turn, influenced Engels and the communist ideas for social structure and Steiner’s threefold social understanding. While Steiner alluded to some of these influences, he never presented them explicitly enough to show how every culture contributes towards the evolution of consciousness of their shared times. Students of anthroposophy would benefit from exploring these broader anthropological dynamics. This theme would help the future expression of spiritual science that requires another book beyond the scope of this thesis.

Jonael Schickler claims that: “a more complete metaphysical Christology inspired by esoteric Christianity remains to be developed”.²⁰⁴ This comprehensive account shows its philosophical implications and relation to more conventional Christology. Schickler provides the epistemological background to such an endeavour. He argues that the synthesis of transcendental scepticism, represented by Kant, and the subject-object rigour of dialectical philosophy, represented by Hegel, would transform epistemology into ontology. He suggests the notion of the resurrection of a physical body and so of a mediated synthesis of spirit and matter fulfils this demand of a synthesis of transcendental ontology and dialectical monism.²⁰⁵ The last chapter of Schickler’s book shows how Steiner unifies these two paths, using the methods of phenomenology together

²⁰¹ Hiebel, *The Epistles of Paul and Rudolf Steiner's Philosophy of Freedom*, 15.

²⁰² Graeber and Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, 27-77.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 41.

²⁰⁴ Schickler and Watts, *Metaphysics as Christology: An Odyssey of the Self from Kant and Hegel to Steiner*,

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 153-55.

with the development of cognitive organs and faculties. Steiner develops a scientific methodology which is a transcendental ontology.

This transcendental ontology agrees with Elaine Pagels, who suggests in *The Gnostic Paul*²⁰⁶ that we must remember that Paul taught in two antithetical ways at once. The first is in the more traditional interpretation of the pastoral letters, which she calls *antignostically*. The other is *gnostically* to the initiates or the psychics who were capable of knowing, which originated from his experience of revelation.²⁰⁷ Based on Paul's experience at Damascus, this gnostic practice aligns with how Steiner approached spiritual knowledge.

Sheila E. McGinn reflects on a revision of our understanding and evaluation of Gnosticism in the 2017 second edition of *The Early Christian World*, where she says:

Perhaps one of the most significant debates of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries among scholars of early Christianity is the extent to which it is appropriate to speak of 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy' before the Council of Nicea (325 CE). The rise of historical criticism and its application to the development of doctrine shattered scholars' former straightforward assumption of the canon of Vincent of Lerins—that orthodoxy is what was believed by everyone, everywhere, at every time... The working assumption of the priority of orthodoxy, however, was not easily unseated... The title of this essay illustrates how far the pendulum has swung. Less than a generation ago, this section of a volume on the early Christian world would have been entitled 'Heresy and heresies.' Now the discussion is set in the framework of 'Internal renewal and dissent in the early Christian world.' Individual movements still are given their traditional names—Gnosticism, Montanism, Donatism, and Arianism—although without attempting to prejudge the question of their propriety, which currently itself is a matter of considerable debate...²⁰⁸

Another approach to revising Gnosticism is by Robert Crotty in *The Christian Survivor*,²⁰⁹ where he explores the idea of 'many Christianities' in Early Church History and how the Roman Christian Church worked at suppressing and excluding many different Christian communities and their thoughts. Roman Christianity has become the 'surviving' one, and Crotty tracks how even though there are many Churches, their theologies still centre on the doctrines of the Western Roman Church. However, while providing the context of the political exclusion of other understandings of Christ by the Roman Church, the conclusions that Crotty draws fall directly into the literalism of the fourth quest for the historical Jesus²¹⁰ providing further scepticism towards these revisions of the

²⁰⁶ Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1992).

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁰⁸ Sheila E McGinn, *Internal Renewal and Dissent in the Early Christian World*, Second edition ed., *The Early Christian World* (London: Routledge, 2017), 837-49.

²⁰⁹ Robert Crotty, *The Christian Survivor How Roman Christianity Defeated Its Early Competitors* (Singapore : Springer Singapore : Imprint: Springer, 2017).

²¹⁰ This fourth quest tries to prove that Jesus married and created an earthly community after surviving the cross. It was popularised by Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*.

Gnostic teachings. In his book, *Jesus, his Mother, her Sister Mary and Mary Magdalene: the Gnostic Background to the Gospel of John*,²¹¹ Crotty, out of his historical-critical understanding of Gnostic rites, suggests Jesus married his mother at the marriage feast in Cana rather than Mary Magdalene as the fourth historical quest claims.

Steiner would agree with Crotty that the Church suppressed specific knowledge, but for a good reason: to help create the societal conditions for human freedom, the birth of the intellect and the complete individuation of the human soul, as discussed at the beginning of chapter two. Steiner sees modern scientific philosophy as a consequence of the Scholastic dilemma of the Middle Ages, where nominalism has become the source for the philosophy of empirical science. The Scholastic intellectual influence upon Christianity and Science was a necessary balance to the Gnostic ideas concerning Christ.²¹² Steiner suggests that the early Gnostic teaching had a tendency, under the consciousness of the time, which included more spiritual vision and insight than our times, to teach that the individual could, through their own effort, work according to spiritual law and transcend the physical world. He argues that Tertullian

...faced the great riddle how far thinking can be applied that is appropriate for nature, the natural phenomenon. And he pointed out to Marcion: if we use only the thinking that appears plausible for human beings, then we can claim what Marcion says. But with the Mystery of Golgotha something has entered world development to which this thinking cannot be applied, for which other concepts are needed... How is the divine Christ nature linked with the human Jesus nature? And here it was clear that human concepts are not suitable for grasping what happened in the Mystery of Golgotha.²¹³

Steiner's approach is that we need both aspects of working according to spiritual and natural law to transform the earth and human nature. However, he did not support the tendency to transcend spiritually or confine knowledge to only the material nature of things.

This observation highlights the need to revise the Gnostic teachings under both the hermeneutic of suspicion and grace. First, the lens of suspicion is that orthodoxy has interpreted the Gnostic understanding of Christ to marginalise and anathematise it. It is epitomised by St. Augustine declaring to a congregation in Carthage that: "all superstition of pagans and heathens should be annihilated is what God wants, God commands, God proclaims".²¹⁴ Second, the lens of grace is that some Gnostic teachings were excluded by the editing of the Church and council

²¹¹ Robert Crotty, *Jesus, His Mother, Her Sister Mary and Mary Magdalene: The Gnostic Background to the Gospel of John* (Melbourne, Australia: David Lovell Publishing, 2016), 210-17.

²¹² Rudolf Steiner, *The Fifth Gospel: From the Akashic Record*, vol. 148 (Forest Row, East Sussex: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2013), 5-12.

²¹³ *Unifying Humanity Spiritually: Through the Christ Impulse*, 165, 181.

²¹⁴ Catherine Nixey, *The Darkening Age: The Christian Destruction of the Classical World* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018), xxxiii.

doctrines so that out of our current individualised and intellectualised age, humanity can find a renewed connection to the spirit. It may be seen as the syncretic approach to evolution of accommodation and mutation to cultural change.²¹⁵ These two dynamics of maintaining a purer form of a revealed religion through reformations that seek to purge a faith of erroneous or extraneous elements and aspects of faith engaging with the world undergoing a syncretic transformation are both necessary for this revision. Steiner observes both elements in the church's exclusion of Gnostic teachings. In some cases, necessarily maintaining the traditions and, in others, acting in the knowledge that particular spiritual awareness and soul capacities needed to be forgotten so that humanity could take the next step in the evolution of consciousness. It is necessary to discern between the two in revising the teachings themselves.

Certain teachings became anathema, leading to the history of misuse of power and suppression that the hermeneutic of suspicion illuminates. In addition, Steiner points out how Church history positively influenced the philosophical conditions for science that is cut off from the epistemology of gnosis and active perception of the spirit. Steiner argues this has brought the human being to the necessary point of free will and the capacity to, once again, through individual effort and constructive gnosis, reawaken the true spiritual nature of the world.²¹⁶ In chapter two I showed that Steiner understood this process happened from the time of Augustine, through the Council of 869 CE and the schism in scholasticism. He also shows how other influences were at work within Central Europe to remove both esoteric knowledge and esoteric life from the religious sphere so that people would close down their faculties of spiritual perception.²¹⁷

Claims of the Church consciously misleading people into a condition of blind obedience is, at the same time, a truth and a misrepresentation of the kind of collaboration suggested by Steiner. The claims only focus on the hermeneutic of suspicion and unveil incredible forgotten histories that precipitate a renaissance in theology and biblical scholarship. For Steiner, orthodoxy was a good and much needed necessity for the ongoing impact of the original fall into abstract intellectual logic that disconnected us from the gnosis. Through its influence the intellect is a much-reduced faculty of consciousness compared to cultures of antiquity, and we have forgotten what we have forgotten. On the other hand, the capacity to reason is the first step to higher cognitive powers and the spiritual senses. Steiner, using the hermeneutic of grace, focused on several of these excluded teachings to

²¹⁵ Eric Maroney, *Religious Syncretism* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 13-14.

²¹⁶ Steiner, *The Fifth Gospel: From the Akashic Record*, 148, 5-12.

²¹⁷ *Supersensible Influences in the History of Mankind with Special Reference to Ritual in Ancient Egypt and in Later Times*, vol. 216 (London: Rudolf Steiner Publishing Co., 1956), 68-83.

show that they were rightfully excluded until they could be revised through reason out of the free insight of the individual:

In pre-Christian times, the search for the spiritual foundations of life led inevitably to the path represented by the mysteries. Augustine, however, can direct even those who do not find it within themselves to follow such a path to strive with all their human powers for knowledge, and beyond that faith, belief, will conduct them into those higher regions of spiritual truth... It was but one step further to assert that by its nature the human soul could only attain to a certain degree knowledge by its own unaided powers, and that thereafter further progress was dependent upon faith – on belief in the written and oral traditions of Christianity.²¹⁸

A middle ground between orthodoxy and heresy is needed. As stated I have argued that Steiner's work needs reconsidering as a modern form of mysticism that reflects the Pauline influence and not as a heretical Gnostic philosophy. One that can promote progress towards developing the correct methods and organs of perception for people in the twenty-first-century context.

3.1.1 Steiner's Mysticism and Analytic-Mystical Theology

The interface of gnosis and mysticism is not a new theme in theology and exegesis. While I will present Steiner's methods of developing the spiritual senses as applicable to spiritual exegesis of scripture in the second section of this chapter, I will first present his understanding of mysticism. Steiner suggests that an objection against mystical experience is that

...just because mystical experience is so intimate and inward, and has an individual character derived from the mystic's earlier years, it is extraordinarily difficult, for anything he [sic] says about mystical life, closely bound up as it must be with his [sic] own soul, to be rightly understood or assimilated by another soul. The most intimate aspects of mysticism must always remain intimate and very hard to communicate, however earnestly one may try to understand and enter into what is said. The point is that two mystics, if both are far enough advanced, may have the same experience –and anyone well-disposed will then recognise that they are speaking of the same thing – but they will have passed through different experiences in their earlier years, and this will give their mysticism an individual colouring. Hence the expression used by a mystic and their style of utterance, in so far as they derive from the pre-mystical life, will always remain somewhat incomprehensible unless we make an effort to understand their personal background and so come to see why they speak as they do. This, however, will divert our attention from what is universally valid to the personality of the mystic, and this tendency can be observed in the history of mysticism.²¹⁹

We need to learn to understand a person's teaching from the point of view that their approach to understanding is at once personal and objective. A case in point for mysticism is

²¹⁸ *Christianity as Mystical Fact: And the Mysteries of Antiquity*, 8, 119.

²¹⁹ *Metamorphoses of the Soul: Paths of Experience: Vol. 2* 59, 34.

Hildegard von Bingen. She is known as the Sybille of the Rhineland, a medieval musician and artist of the sacred who is “as little understood in our day as she was in her own”.²²⁰ Her life and work give insight into what was much later to become Steiner’s mysticism. Hildegard asks the fundamental question of whether it is possible to know God, as this passage from Pope Benedict XVI indicates:

Hildegard asks herself and us the fundamental question, whether it is possible to know God: This is theology’s principal task. Her answer is completely positive: through faith, as through a door, the human person is able to approach this knowledge. God, however, always retains his veil of mystery and incomprehensibility. He makes himself understandable in creation but, creation itself is not fully understood when detached from God. Indeed, nature considered in itself provides only pieces of information which often become an occasion for error and abuse. Faith, therefore, is also necessary in the natural cognitive process, for otherwise knowledge would remain limited, unsatisfactory and misleading.²²¹

Hildegard and Steiner both agree that faith is the door to the mystery of God, and both had a working practice of gnosis and mysticism that led to spiritual knowledge. While there are many ways or paths that a mystic can come to knowledge due to their own ‘personal background’, certain hallmarks can draw the path of cognition, emotion and vision together in a cataphatic theology. The understanding that a mystic arrives at “is understood in a symbolic or analogical sense, rather than an apophatic or negative theology normally applied to mystical experience where there is no literal application of such concepts”.²²² These three aspects of both Steiner’s and Hildegard’s mystical experience can be summed up in Hildegard’s own words:

From my early childhood, before my bones, nerves and veins were fully strengthened, I have always seen this vision in my soul, even to the present time when I am more than seventy years old. In this vision my soul, as God would have it, rises up high into the vault of heaven and into the changing sky and spreads itself out among different peoples, although they are far away from me in distant lands and places. And because I see them this way in my soul, I observe them in accord with the shifting of clouds and other created things. I do not hear them with my outward ears, nor do I perceive them by the thoughts of my own heart or by any combination of my five senses, but in my soul alone, while my outward eyes are open. So I have never fallen prey to ecstasy in the visions, but I see them wide awake, day and night. And I am constantly fettered by sickness, and often in the grip of pain so intense that it threatens to kill me, but God has sustained me until now.

The light which I see thus is not spatial, but it is far, far brighter than a cloud which carries the sun. I can measure neither height, nor length, nor breadth in it, and I call it "the

²²⁰ John Michael Talbot and Steve Rabey, *The Way of the Mystics: Ancient Wisdom for Experiencing God Today* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 51.

²²¹ Pope Benedict XVI, "Proclaiming Saint Hildegard of Bingen, Professed Nun of the Order of Saint Benedict, a Doctor of the Universal Church," (2021), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apl_20121007_ildegarda-bingen.html (accessed March 19, 2022).

²²² John Macquarrie, *Two Worlds Are Ours : An Introduction to Christian Mysticism* (London: SCM Press, 2005), 9-14.

reflection of the living Light." And as the sun, the stars appear in water, so writings, sermons, virtues, and certain human take form for me and gleam within it. Now whatever I have seen or learned in this vision remains in my memory for a long time, so that when I have seen and heard it, I remember; and I see, hear and know all at once, and as if in an instant I learn what I know. But what I do not see, I do not know, for I am not educated but I have simply been taught how to read. And what I write is what I see and hear in the vision. I compose words than those I hear, and I set them forth in unpolished Latin just as I hear them in the vision, for I am not taught in this vision to write as philosophers do... Moreover, I can no more recognize the form of this light than I can gaze directly on the sphere of the sun. Sometimes-but not often-I see within this light another light, "the living Light." And I cannot describe when and how I see it, but all sorrow and anguish leave me, so that then I feel like a simple girl old woman. But because of the constant sickness that I suffer, I sometimes get tired of writing the words and visions that are there revealed to me. Yet when my soul tastes and sees them, I am so transformed that, as I say, I forget all pain and trouble. And when I see and hear things in this vision, my soul drinks them in as from a fountain, which yet remains full and unexhausted. At no time is my soul deprived of that light which I call the reflection of the living Light, and I see it as if I were gazing at a starless sky in a shining cloud. In it I see the things of which I frequently speak, and I answer my correspondents from the radiance of this living Light.²²³

This account shows how three aspects of cognition, emotion and vision meld together in a cataphatic theology. This a positive theology which emphasises the similarity between the divine and the human and opens up the possibility of experiencing the divine through the senses. Hildegard and Steiner have a similar approach to uniting gnosis and mysticism.

Hildegard's visions were accompanied by headaches and left her fettered by sickness and pain, and she could not write in the language of philosophers. Her work covers vast spectrums of science, medicine, art, religion and theology. She had her revelations, not from ecstasies and dreams, but opened herself to the will of God and used her inner sense to receive her revelations. She also had a deep connection to nature and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the *Veriditas* or green of nature as the living breath of God. This inner experience, balanced by the pragmatic complexity of the outer world of nature, is what Rudolf Steiner recommends as a healthy path for the mystic.²²⁴ Steiner trained in Philosophy, yet many of his developments parallel those of Hildegard, as will be set out below. While he did not succumb to debilitating suffering, he teaches how an individual can develop these capacities in a way where the inexplicable revelations of Hildegard can be brought about through spiritual practices. Hildegard's experiences of the light have been explained away as being induced through hallucinogenic herbals or a medical condition of migraine called "scintillating scotoma, a form of migraine characterized by hallucinations of flashing, circling, or fermenting points of light... In the end, her particular mode of seeing visions

²²³ Barbara Newman, "Hildegard of Bingen: Visions and Validation," *Church History* 54, no. 2 (1985): 164-65. Translation by Barbara Newman

²²⁴ Steiner, *Metamorphoses of the Soul: Paths of Experience: Vol. 2* 59, 28-40.

within visions, its pathology, and its glory remains *sui generis*. To her contemporaries, the gift appeared “strange” and “unheard-of”, and we must finally concur”.²²⁵

Both of them had visions as a child, and while Hildegard entered the monastic life, Steiner trained his capacities of cognition. In their 40s, they both begin to contribute to a Christian spiritual scientific cosmology, a naturalistic understanding of medicine, and write mystery plays to encourage people on the path towards Christ. They guide the virtuous and moral development of human beings. Theologically their visions reveal knowledge of the past, the present and the future. The second part of this thesis will expand upon Steiner’s insights into these three aspects. Hildegard experienced and reported on these three aspects in her visions. In *Scivias*, she includes scenes of Satan being thrown out of heaven, images of the Holy Trinity, the church bathing in the blood of its Redeemer, and premonitions of the last days. *The Book of Divine Works* takes a cosmic view of the work of the Creator and visions of Cosmic Man [*sic*], a Cosmic Egg.²²⁶ Finally, through symbolic art, they both developed a body of work that offered comparable insights. First, through sacred paintings, they offer people images and imaginations through which they can approach the spirit. Second, Hildegard composed sacred music, while Steiner brought the art form of eurythmy into being, through which people can ponder and enter into the inspirations of the music of the spheres. Third, through creating an unknown language, Hildegard began to show that people experience the intuitions of *Logos* behind all manifestation; in a comparable way, Steiner developed eurythmy as visible speech manifesting the *Logos*. Steiner describes the three faculties of imagination, inspiration and intuition as three higher senses of perception and cognition, which emerge through the development of the spiritual senses and reveal themselves through image, sound/music and word/language.²²⁷

While Hildegard managed to remain within the orthodoxy of the Church and centuries later becomes a Doctor of the Church, Steiner moved beyond it with a specific intention. As mentioned in chapter two, he recognises that every person struggles between respecting the traditions within which they live and representing what they experience as the new and needed for the future. Steiner considers the evolution of consciousness to have taken a step at the end of the nineteenth century. The preceding five hundred years, the age of industrialisation and scientific progress, developed the use of the intellect and thought to work formatively in the physical world. He acknowledges the achievements of knowledge and solutions to problems that have come through science. In his

²²⁵ Newman, "Hildegard of Bingen: Visions and Validation," 167-69.

²²⁶ Talbot and Rabey, *The Way of the Mystics: Ancient Wisdom for Experiencing God Today*, 53-54.

²²⁷ Steiner, *Theosophy: An Introduction to the Supersensible Knowledge of the World and the Destination of Man*, 9, 70-153; *The Stages of Higher Knowledge: Imagination, Inspiration, Intuition*, 12.

understanding of evolution, the twentieth century was the start of a new step. Now the individual finds their way to the spirit in freedom, not dissociated from people and community, but through developing an independent character of the soul. To a well-developed intellectual life, a spiritual understanding is added.

For Steiner, thinking has a purifying force that leads us out of the darkness of the ordinary sense world to the spiritual light. He says: “I myself have engendered the thought and am present in it, and so I know what is in it... thought is most completely our possession. If we can find the relation of thought to the cosmos, to the universe, we shall find the relation to the cosmos of what is most completely ours”.²²⁸ The fuller balance between the influences of thought, emotion and volition on each other is of particular interest in developing thinking. He suggests as a primary practice that a person on this path needs to continually gain agency over the three in unison with each other.²²⁹ In *The Philosophy of Freedom*, describing the premise giving rise to the driving forces of action, Steiner says:

An action, of which the agent does not know why they perform it, cannot be free... As soon as our conduct rises above the sphere of satisfaction of purely animal desires, our motives are always permeated by thoughts... It is said that here the heart and mood of soul do not create the motives... They presuppose them and let them in... yet the way to the heart is through the head”.²³⁰

On the journey of unveiling the spiritual senses, we learn that certain connections in our ordinary emotional body can hinder the clarity of spiritual perception. Steiner warns that modern mysticism is fraught with being coloured by a person’s relationship to people and philosophical and belief frameworks. Our personal and religious community attachments can lead us to the right kind of relation to religious questions. For Steiner, this meant a person who wishes to develop higher senses of perception must form an objective judgement of the event he called the Mystery of Golgotha. We do not need to leave our relationships or our religious community but go through a process of letting go of satisfying our lower human egotism through connection and community, which in the next part of this chapter, I describe as becoming selfless or the *Imitatio Jesu*.²³¹ In the following section, I describe a biblical method towards developing both the soul and the spiritual senses. I will show that Steiner took great care to illustrate the role of community, imagination,

²²⁸ *Human and Cosmic Thought*, 151, 9.

²²⁹ *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, 10, 129-33.

²³⁰ *The Philosophy of Freedom (the Philosophy of Spiritual Activity): The Basis for a Modern World Conception: Some Results of Introspective Observation Following the Methods of Natural Science*, 4, 11.

²³¹ *Initiation, Eternity and the Passing Moment*, vol. 138 (Spring Valley, New York: The Anthroposophic Press, 1980), 141-47.

understanding symbols and the work of the individual in refining feeling where the path leads from *Imitatio Jesu* to the *Imitatio Christi*.

Hildegard's mysticism connects gnosis, mysticism, and the use of symbol and allegory as part of modern practises that also apply to Steiner's work. Her role as the mystic

...invites debate, as two leading scholars, Barbara Newman and Caroline Walker Bynum, both deny her the title of 'mystic'... with the basic tenets of the definition of mysticism...Hildegard does not speak of union...but about doctrine... Her visions depict the reward for achieving union with God and did so not by emphasizing Christ, but rather the redemption he brought.²³²

While not being God-mysticism, a direct becoming one with the infinite creative will, it certainly stands in the same realm as the Christ-mysticism of Paul and John the Evangelist: "a belonging together with Christ as our Lord, grasped in thought and realised in experience".²³³ The factors of understanding/gnosis and experience/mysticism of Christ-mysticism are also central to understanding Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy.

Steiner's way of developing a sensorium for the reliable perception of the spirit, would give theological research the capacity to bring spiritual experience into language that satisfies the scientific dialogue of reason and necessity. To have experience, we need a sensorium. Steiner's idea of developing senses that can reliably perceive the spirit is not a commonly agreed opinion. Even if mystics report spiritual experiences and perceptions, their reliability and universality come quickly into question. Macquarrie describes this situation as a need to understand better knowledge derived from mystical experience, which as

...an untested and unsupported opinion based on emotion is not a guarantee of truth, but I do not think that the description fits mysticism, as we shall see. Just one minor point... the cognitive claims of mysticism are in fact claims that have been tested and supported by a very large number of people, so while, as I have already said, mystical knowledge is not objective by scientific norms, it is at least intersubjective and not just the opinion of a few individuals.²³⁴

To avoid the psychologised, individualistic interpretation focusing on fleeting high-point experience, Sarah Coakley uses 'mystical theology' rather than 'mysticism'.²³⁵ Steiner suggests that the subjective nature of mystical experience can be given an objective basis. For the mystic, the

²³² Zachary Jordan Young, "Hildegard of Bingen: Mystic of the Rhine" (Masters Thesis, San Jose State University, 2014), 41-42.

²³³ Albert Schweitzer and William Montgomery, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Library, 1953), 378.

²³⁴ Macquarrie, *Two Worlds Are Ours : An Introduction to Christian Mysticism*, 5.

²³⁵ Sarah Coakley, *Deepening Practices: Perspectives from Ascetical and Mystical Theology*, Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life. Grand Rapids, Mi: Eerdmans (2002), 83-84.

content of experience is derived from higher clarity, which begins where the clarity of science ends. The problem with the subjective nature of experience is that it is not easily articulated or understood by another. To overcome this, we need to take the other path, the exploration of the physical world around us, into a relationship with the inner experience. Steiner suggests a renewed use of symbols would provide a balance between the laws of nature and the laws of inner experience. Not only does this provide a basis for the experience, but it also forms the senses as we ponder mystically upon them.²³⁶

Steiner did not use the term Christ-mysticism either. He described the process as necessary for a person who experiences themselves in a fully individuated state yet wants to go on the path of spiritual experience. Each person's path is determined through their own life of soul and cultural formation, a factor he considers essential in understanding the differentiations of the Gospel narratives.²³⁷ He describes that spiritual awakening can no longer be facilitated through an external agent as in the old mysteries. Now, the person becomes the agent of transforming the mind, as a new understanding of John the Baptist's call in the loneliness of the human soul.²³⁸ The person undertaking the formation of experience and knowledge of Christ will "readily accept that by penetrating into the realm of spirit one may arrive at first at an inkling, then at faith, and finally at cognition and vision of the spirit".²³⁹ The union with Christ, as compared to the experience of God-mysticism, is preparing oneself to "receive so strong an impulse from the Christ... as to affect the circulation of the blood – this Christ influence expressing itself in a special form of circulation... penetrating even the physical principle – then is in a position to be initiated within the physical body".²⁴⁰ We can then experience that the Christ impulse enables the human being to influence the force that causes our blood to pulsate as an inner fire expressing itself in the circulation. As we open our soul to the Christ impulse, it acts in such a way that the experiences in the soul flow over into our somatic body and result in spiritual perception.²⁴¹ This path Steiner described as the possibility of 'thinking the Christ' mentioned in chapter two. As the experiences of Christ become conscious, our thoughts and innermost ideas and feelings fill with the loosening of blood ties. The effect of this loosening is that spiritual love, rather than a self-centred focus on one's desires, can be discovered within the personality and be utilized to reconnect to other humans, community, nature, creation and spiritual beings.²⁴² In this sense, the union with Christ, under the Pauline idea of 'I no longer

²³⁶ Steiner, *Metamorphoses of the Soul: Paths of Experience: Vol. 2* 59, 28-40.

²³⁷ *The Gospel of St. John and Its Relation to the Other Gospels*, 112, 136-56.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 109-11.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 130.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 113-14.

live, but the Christ lives in me' (Gal 2:20), lifts the mystical experience from being intimate, inward, and individual in character to be able to represent personal understanding in clarity such as Paul, Hildegard and Steiner did in their own ways.²⁴³

3.2 Spiritual Senses and the Spiritual Practices for Systematic Theology

Steiner's phenomenology is a contemplative phenomenology style. Its intention is in the strictest sense of Pauline gnosis or Theosis in Christ. I will now explain his method in detail. Steiner wrote about many ways to develop these faculties to suit individuals' starting points, including philosophical, aesthetic practice, transformations through life's sufferings, anthroposophical, gnostic imaginations and meditative pathways.²⁴⁴ The scope of this thesis does not allow me to relate the dynamics of each of the different ways. In the last section of this chapter, I will single out one method and provide Steiner's teachings for developing the spiritual senses as they relate to theology and scripture. Understanding his approach opens the possibility of reading his Christological teachings as Christ-mysticism born of understanding and experience rather than heretical Gnosticism and personal musing. In the context of this chapter providing the third lens of the systematic aspect of Steiner's Christology, I will show that he created a method of exegesis and spiritual development by working with the Gospel of John. I will identify three factors essential for developing contemplative phenomenology: the *Imitatio Jesu* towards selflessness, developing the spiritual senses, and the role of symbol and art in Steiner's biblically based method of forming the spiritual senses.

Elaine Pagels' comments on Gnostic exegesis that scripture reads as a symbol, rather than literally, and that it serves to symbolise the process of redemption that occurs within those who perceive their inner meaning.²⁴⁵ These differentiations are the same as Steiner's and the medieval exegesis discussed in chapter two as an approach to the scriptures from a spiritual scientific point of view. Steiner emphasises that to have an instruction of experiences in the spiritual world is essential and is different from how we learn in the sense world:

In what concerns the understanding of these other worlds, you would not be judging correctly if you affirmed that, in order to comprehend, grasp and receive what can be given

²⁴³ An exploration of further contemporary scholars who embrace additional ideas associated with Gnosticism is beyond the scope of this thesis and remain for further volumes arising from this thesis.

²⁴⁴ Steiner, *The Stages of Higher Knowledge: Imagination, Inspiration, Intuition*, 12; *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, 10; *Theosophy: An Introduction to the Supersensible Knowledge of the World and the Destination of Man*, 9; *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts: Anthroposophy as a Path of Knowledge*, 26; *The Philosophy of Freedom (the Philosophy of Spiritual Activity): The Basis for a Modern World Conception: Some Results of Introspective Observation Following the Methods of Natural Science*, 4; *Occult Science: An Outline*, 13; *A Way of Self-Knowledge*, vol. 16 (Hudson, New York: Anthroposophic Press Inc., 1999).

²⁴⁵ Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon's Commentary on John*, 15-19.

by those who have taken the first or further steps towards initiation, you had necessarily to experience it yourself. On the contrary, it must be emphasized repeatedly that any person who devotes themselves without prejudice to what is vouched for by actual spiritual investigators in supersensible worlds, any person who will accept their descriptions, experiences and communications without prejudice, letting their unbiased judgement and active understanding hold the field, will really be able to grasp all that they are offered... It is still true to say that only the person who can see for themselves, can grasp things in sensory existence. So that in this existence understanding must come after seeing. That is by no means the case in higher worlds. Those who seek there, can draw out that for which they seek, put it into the forms and concepts of human ideas, and thus give it to the world.²⁴⁶

Steiner agrees that symbols connect how an individual communicates what they have experienced in the spiritual world and a tradition's theological framework. The scriptures provide the Christian tradition with symbols that, through an individual's contemplation, offer a higher understanding of the process of redemption and instruction for developing the soul and spiritual senses.

These ideas are similar to a research group by Sarah Coakley on *The Spiritual Senses*.²⁴⁷ She acknowledges that the Western Christian Tradition of the spiritual senses is connected with Paul's idea of the inner person (Rom 7:22; 2 Cor 4:16; Eph 3:16). She asks if these spiritual senses are metaphorical or analogical, and suggests that the spiritual senses are analogical and are built through silent prayer and other ascetic practices found in the mystical and ascetic theological tradition. She says the authors of the book

...use the expression 'spiritual sense' to designate non-physical human perception, rather than the non-literal interpretation of scripture... The physical and spiritual senses could be seen as two different sets of powers or faculties, operating in tandem, or alternatively, as two states of the same fivefold sensorium directed at different aspects of the same object, or perhaps having different objects altogether.²⁴⁸

Coakley and Steiner propose that the transformation comes through Christ working within us. In this sense, Steiner correlates his epistemology with Paul's saying: Not I but Christ within me (Gal 2:9-21).

First, Steiner names three sets of senses that we need to develop and differentiates the particular experience of perception each provides. Second, his ideas on cultivating the spiritual senses can add to the growing body of knowledge towards a doctrine on the spiritual senses. Third, he also defines a biblically based method for cultivating the soul and spiritual senses.

²⁴⁶ Steiner, *Initiation, Eternity and the Passing Moment*, 138, 136.

²⁴⁷ Gavriilyuk and Coakley, *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity*.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4-6.

Mark S. Medley comments on Coakley's work that I suggested in chapter two shares commonality with, and are similar to, Steiner's theological framework:

Sarah Coakley is one of the most creative and fascinating systematic theologians in the world today. Her work is a convergence of systematic theology, analytic philosophy of religion, patristic and medieval theology and mysticism, and feminist theology... Coakley advances a *théologie totale*, an approach to systematic theology that dialogically engages disciplines outside of theology, such as science (evolutionary biology), critical gender theory, postmodern philosophy, the social sciences, and art. She contends that this integrative method is required at this present moment when the task of systematic theology is contested and being renegotiated.²⁴⁹

The following three sub-sections of this chapter will present these three themes in more detail as foundational to Steiner's systematic theology and understanding of contemplative phenomenology.

3.2.1 Three Sets of Senses and the Role of Selflessness

Steiner also argues that the spiritual senses are analogical and developed through transforming the forces of one set of senses into the other without debilitating the first. Goethe's idea of *metamorphosis* in his introduction to his *Scientific Studies* suggests "if the eye were not sun-like, the sun's light it would not see".²⁵⁰ An organ of perception is built through the nature of the environment and, through metamorphosis, becomes selfless to pass on the perception to the perceiver. The capacity to create organs of perception and then develop the ability to serve the organism selflessly occurs under the guidance and grace of Christ. Steiner uses this insight and suggests the inner practices and soul work of the individual cooperate with the environment of soul and spirit to build, through the grace of Christ Jesus, two new sets of senses through which we can then perceive and think in those worlds. The first set is the soul senses, and the second is the spiritual senses. Part two of this thesis will explain more fully the role of Christ in this development.

Steiner's teaching of the threefold nature of the human being shows that each of our natures has an environment to which it belongs. The body belongs to the material world and requires physical senses, which are already the most developed and offer selfless service to the body. The soul is at home in the environment of the soul world and requires a transformation of the physical senses into the soul senses. These are already partially developed and are presently the field of our soul's work towards selflessness. Finally, the spirit is at home in the spirit world, which requires further transforming the previous two sets of senses into the spiritual senses. All three work

²⁴⁹ Mark S. Medley, "Sarah Coakley and the Future of Systematic Theology," *Reading Religion* (2016), <http://readingreligion.org/9781506410722/sarah-coakley-and-the-future-of-systematic-theology/> (accessed August 8, 2022).

²⁵⁰ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Scientific Studies*, ed. Douglas Miller (New York: Suhrkamp, 1988).

together, and the unification of perception in all three is necessary to participate in the whole reality of body, soul and spirit. As part of the evolutionary progress aimed at complete individuation described in this thesis, the human being has lost these faculties of perceiving in soul and spirit worlds.

The locations of these senses overlap and add to the previous layers of perception. For Steiner, the senses provide us with perception and the ability to understand by cognition. The four elements of understanding, which in the world of sensation and physical sense perception use the faculty of reason, are

...the object, which makes an impression on the senses; the image, which the human being forms of this object; the concept, through which the human being arrives at a spiritual comprehension of an object or an event; the ego, which forms for itself the image and concept based on the impression of the object... In it the union of images and concepts is produced. The ego stores up the image as memory. Otherwise no continuing inner life would be possible.²⁵¹

There are three further stages of knowledge,²⁵² or modes of cognition, that a human being can use to receive impressions other than from external sensation: imagination, inspiration and intuition. Each relies on the four elements of the first mode of cognition, but the object of perception becomes something else. In the second mode of cognition, imagination: “the impression made upon the outer senses, the ‘sensation’, falls away. There is no longer any outer sensory object. Of the elements to which the person is accustomed in ordinary knowledge there remains only the three: image, concept and ego... the individual must first acquire the faculty of forming meaningful images without sense impressions.”²⁵³

Using the third mode of cognition, inspiration:

Images no longer appear. The human being has now to deal only with “concept” and “ego”... The human being starts to live wholly in a purely spiritual world... What was sensation at the first stage of cognition, and imagination at the second, here becomes “inspiration”. Inspiration gives the impressions and the ego forms the concepts...it is the world of tone... but now not the tones of earthly music, but purely “spiritual tones”. One begins to hear what is going on in the heart of things... the world begins to express its true nature to the soul.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Steiner, *The Stages of Higher Knowledge: Imagination, Inspiration, Intuition*, 12, 4-5.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, vii-xii. Steiner indicates that there are further modes of cognition than and spiritual senses beyond these three, but never developed any teaching on them.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

In the fourth mode of cognition, intuition: “what now lives in the soul is in reality the object itself. The ego has streamed forth over all beings; it has merged with them. The actual *living* of things within the soul is Intuition”.²⁵⁵

Steiner stresses the importance of the healthy development of these higher forms of perception and cognition. They are not to be confused with fantasy, phantasy, hallucinations, illusion, channelling, or any other personally imbued states of insight that are also popularly called intuition and can easily lead to false enlightenment.²⁵⁶ The way to ensure the healthy development of these other three forms, which Steiner calls intentional clairvoyance, is through “energetic and continued inner strengthening of one’s soul life”.²⁵⁷ The contemplative phenomenology method encapsulates his soul work. To learn to perceive image, tone and living essence, of which the sense-perceptible world is a part, requires a transformation of the soul senses through a process towards selflessness.

Our intellectual faculty of reason is schooled to concentrate thinking in such a way that we prepare our intellectual apparatus to create ideas about the outer world. So too, to form ideas about the supersensible world, we need to “allow strengthened and concentrated thoughts to act upon it [the intellectual apparatus]. In this way, the apparatus is gradually transformed and becomes capable of taking the suprasensory world into the life of representation.”²⁵⁸ The practice of meditation and concentration ensures that the soul withdraws for a time from its union with the sense organs. It is immersed in itself. In the process “any ‘losing of oneself’ in another being is to be avoided. Therefore only an ego fortified to a high degree within itself can, without damage, plunge into another being”.²⁵⁹ At the same time, all forms of interest that prevail in ordinary life as pleasure and pain concerning truth and error, must first be silenced. Then a different kind of interest, wholly without self-seeking, must enter if anything is to be achieved through higher cognition.

Within a method of contemplative phenomenology, this path is an *Imitatio Jesu*: the preparation of Jesus to receive Christ,²⁶⁰ the preparation of a person towards schooling the spiritual senses under *Theosis in Christ*. This method is, therefore, under the blessing of Paul, whose faith in the historical Jesus was based on his spiritual perceptions of the risen Christ. (Rom 8:38-39) Paul’s

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 9.

²⁵⁶ *True and False Paths in Spiritual Investigation*, 243.

²⁵⁷ *A Way of Self-Knowledge*, 16, 128.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 130.

²⁵⁹ *The Stages of Higher Knowledge: Imagination, Inspiration, Intuition*, 12, 57.

²⁶⁰ *Imitatio Jesu* is not a standard theological concept, and in the sense used here it is derived from Rudolf Steiner differentiation of the two unique hypostases of Jesu and Christ. For Christ to incarnate into Jesus at the Baptism in the Jordan he needed to be prepared to receive the fully divine aspect into his fully human being.

‘I am convinced’ (πέπεισμα) is born of his experience at Damascus and can have an extended interpretation of trust, belief or faith born of the heart’s power of seeing. He came to understand the truths of Christianity through his vision, united his heart with them in faith and came to be convinced in his will and confessed to them. This conviction by experience is the Pauline prototype of Christ-mysticism.

Steiner describes how before the Axial Age, starting around 800 BCE, western theology would have found thoughts and concepts in the spiritual world and sought their verification in the physical. It was clear to them that thought or consciousness was how the created world manifested. Since the birth of intellectual life, western humanity has sought its ideas and thoughts in the physical world and projected them onto the unseen world.²⁶¹ This approach explains the spiritual from the physical, leading to the point where we have reached the post-truth world anticipated by Nietzsche,²⁶² where everyone can posit their truth, leading to confusion and doubt in the reality of spirit. For Steiner, this was necessary for human beings to establish freedom in their will and the process of knowing. Human freedom and the capacity to learn higher forms of love derived from that freedom are the inner *telos* of creation. In his understanding, it is now time for humanity to build the organs of perception, which can once again give us the thoughts and ideas of the spiritual world that we use to understand the physical world anew.

The method of current classic church theology preferences the use of deriving thoughts and ideas from that which is physically perceptible. Through anthropological, historical and textual criticism, God’s work in our life has been sought by understanding human life from *a priori* ideas. Approved texts that form the basis of scripture provide thoughts and ideas that let us know how to perceive God’s intentions for us. For example, scripture can be interpreted as the whole journey of humanity’s cooperation as given through the biblical narrative. This seen from the start of Genesis, where humanity is in a garden, and, through taking on knowledge, is propelled into the course of individuation and evolution of consciousness, through to the end of Revelation, where a sanctified humanity carries the fruits of the earth into the new earth and new heaven so that a city descends out of the spiritual worlds like a bride adorned for her husband. The marriage of matter and spirit through the agency of humanity is fulfilled. Positivist science, of course, finds no evidence for this and does not hold scripture as reliable. The dynamic of forming ideas in the material and trying to

²⁶¹ Rudolf Steiner, *The Mystery of the Trinity and the Mission of the Spirit* (SteinerBooks, 1991), 9-28.

²⁶² Nietzsche’s claim that ‘God is Dead’ was not so much an atheist statement as a severance of the link between reason and divinity. Absolute truth becomes impossible. God’s point of view is no longer available for determining the truth creating a culture where each person can claim their own perspective as the truth.

describe non-material experience leads to fields of science where religious and spiritual experiences are seen as biochemical or neurological effects in the mind.²⁶³

For theology and its contribution to understanding spirit, Steiner suggested that: “the possibility is required to understand the historical Jesus in a spiritual way”.²⁶⁴ This is what I am calling in this thesis ‘the spiritual quest for the historical Jesus’. Finally, Steiner asks: “How would it be possible to base a science of knowledge upon the principle of experience if we did not find anywhere in experience the basic element in all that is science – that is, ideal conformity to law?”²⁶⁵ This conformity to law poses the problem of verifiable spiritual experience, which I will address in the last section of this chapter.

Before we turn to this, we need to consider how our perception of spiritual things can change and increase over time. Suppose evolution is how we perceive, experience and verify God’s intention and agency in creation. In that case, we need another aspect of evolutionary theory than that suggested by natural selection alone. Evolution is now described in multiple ways, including cooperation and emergence, giving more depth by extending the classic understanding of mutation and natural selection.²⁶⁶ Darwin was interested in the cultural transition from developing instinct to an action performed for the sole good of another. This sort of behaviour between non-kin in animal societies seems to challenge the idea that individuals compete to survive and maximize their success.²⁶⁷ Cooperation is the phenomenon of a species giving up or sacrificing something of itself to cooperate with another species for overall fitness, rather than competing against another to survive at the detriment of the other.²⁶⁸ What sort of consciousness influences such a choice? Scientists have argued that the human being has a selfish gene by nature,²⁶⁹ that the true human condition is genetically conditioned to be caring, and that our selfish nature results from the societal factors that influence us.²⁷⁰ However, another observable phenomenon is that specific evolutionary steps happen which have yet to be explained by mutation or natural selection. The term *emergent*

²⁶³ Alireza Sayadmansour, "Neurotheology: The Relationship between Brain and Religion," *Iranian journal of neurology* 13, no. 1 (2014): 52-55.

²⁶⁴ Steiner, *The Christ Impulse: And the Development of Ego-Consciousness*, 116, 118.

²⁶⁵ *A Theory of Knowledge Implicit in Goethe's World Conception*, Third ed. (Spring Valley, New York: The anthroposophic Press, 1978), 33.

²⁶⁶ Sarah Coakley, "Evolution and Sacrifice," *The Christian Century* 126, no. 21 (2009); Nicola Hoggard Creegan, "A Christian Theology of Evolution and Participation," *Zygon* 42, no. 2 (2007).

²⁶⁷ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species, 1859* (Essex, England: the Rainbird Publishing Group Ltd., 1979), Chapter 8.

²⁶⁸ Martin A. Nowak, "Five Rules for the Evolution of Cooperation," *Science (New York, N.Y.)* 314, no. 5805 (2006).

²⁶⁹ Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene: 40th Anniversary Edition* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

²⁷⁰ Jeremy Griffith, *Freedom: The End of the Human Condition* (WTM Publishing and Communications, 2016).

*evolution*²⁷¹ describes how the mind and consciousness act in evolution through the rearrangement of entities in ways other than adaptation, mutation and survival. Cooperation and emergence are as real and fundamental to evolution as mutation and natural selection.

Cooperation and emergent evolution are a bridge between science and theology. Humanity's role is collaborative with God rather than only dependent upon God's grace. (Rom: 8) A theology of cooperation has been developed by John Macquarrie, who says we need to "talk rather in terms of humanity's cooperation with being, since this better recognizes our genuine responsibility".²⁷² Steiner identifies this soul work as developing selflessness.²⁷³

The idea of cooperation in evolutionary theory and anthropological theology raises the question of how to achieve it. Sacrifice is one track of thought to give it an embodied practice, but that often brings up an 'end of existence' feeling in practice. I suggest that Steiner's idea of selflessness as a preparation for spiritual perception sets out the necessity and logic of why inner sacrifice of selfishness is required. The image of the Lamb of God is given in scripture to help us transform our desire into selflessness as it is the creature that selflessly sacrifices itself.²⁷⁴ I will elaborate further on the use of images and symbols as part of the practices towards cultivating the spiritual senses in the next section of this chapter.

Peter Selg records Steiner's concept of selflessness as a Christian path towards preparing the soul and mind for transformation as the *Imitatio Jesu*:

The Concept of imitation includes transforming our feelings and our inner life so they resemble the life of Christ. The *imitatio Christi* should not be ruled out, but I prefer to speak of an *imitatio Jesu*, since of course it is possible to become similar to Jesus in our human attributes. The similarity, however, ends with the final stages of the Mystery of Golgotha. Christians can become similar to Christ through the Christ's living in them in the Pauline sense. That is the appropriate Christian concept, and it can be understood only in the sense of Christ's becoming alive in us through his presence. When individuals become Christ-like, they do so through the Pauline "Christ in me."²⁷⁵

Selflessness, I suggest, has primacy in cooperation both in evolution theory and theological anthropology. From that conclusion, we can derive our first factor of selflessness towards understanding contemplative phenomenology, as it requires us to overcome the subjective nature of

²⁷¹ Conwy Lloyd Morgan, *Emergent Evolution* (London: London : Williams & Norgate, 1927).

²⁷² John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, Revised ed. ed. (London: London : S.C.M. Press, 1977), 83.

²⁷³ Steiner, *Approaching the Mystery of Golgotha*, 152, 118-31.

²⁷⁴ Sarah Coakley, "Is There a Future for Gender and Theology? On Gender, Contemplation, and the Systematic Task," *Svensk teologisk kvartalskrift* 85, no. 2 (2013); Rudolf Steiner, *Deeper Secrets of Human History in the Light of the Gospels*, vol. 117 (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2021).

²⁷⁵ Peter Selg, *The Culture of Selflessness* (Great Barrington: Steiner books, 2012), 8-9.

mystical experience. To do so, we need selflessness in thought and emotion for our minds to transform our experiences and scientifically offer our findings.

3.2.2 Transformation of the Physical Senses into the Soul and Spiritual Senses

The second factor of contemplative phenomenology is, as pointed out above, understanding how to develop the spiritual senses. To learn to perceive image, tone and living essence of which the sense-perceptible world is a part requires a transformation of the soul senses through a process towards selflessness. The three spiritual senses of imagination, inspiration and intuition have already been named as a transformation of sight, hearing and thought. Steiner's doctrine of the senses includes seven physical senses other than touch, taste, smell, hearing and sight. He differentiates between the seven senses that inform us about the outer world and the five that tell us of our inner world. The senses directed to the external world are taste, sight, warmth, hearing, word, thought, and ego/essential being of others. For Steiner, as for Teilhard de Chardin, the world of thought, the noosphere, is sensed through thinking. The inner senses are life, movement, balance, touch and smell. Through transforming the inner senses, we gain mastery over sensing mystical union with the divine. In contrast, the transformation of the outer senses leads to the first three higher senses of imagination, inspiration and intuition.²⁷⁶

An intermediary factor involves our soul faculties of thinking, feeling and willingness. While this is a complication, it is a subtle factor necessary to understand in developing the spiritual senses. It is important to differentiate between the soul faculties already at our disposal through evolution and the soul senses, which develop through conscious or intentional spiritual work. Our organs, physical senses and, more recently, these three soul faculties evolved through evolution. Some have already attained selflessness, exemplified in the organs and physical senses not holding onto their content for themselves but passing substance and perception on into the service of the whole organism. Steiner suggests we should imagine what would result if the lung wanted to keep the oxygen for itself or the ear the sound. In our soul faculties of thinking, feeling and willing, we are not yet at the point of selflessness; this is the place of our current development.²⁷⁷

At this point of our evolution, we have certain physical senses, twelve in total,²⁷⁸ which already are offering up their forces to the higher senses. For Steiner, there is a twofold transformation of the forces of the physical senses into the spiritual ones. Through practices, which

²⁷⁶ Rudolf Steiner, *Spiritual Science as a Foundation for Social Forms* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1986), 37-55.

²⁷⁷ *Approaching the Mystery of Golgotha*, 152, 118-31.

²⁷⁸ To the agreed five senses of touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing, Steiner identified through his own anthropological observations another seven: life, movement, balance, warmth, word, thought and ego.

will be explained in the next section, the seven soul senses are established as the organs of perception and soul foundation for the later development of the spiritual senses. In part, Steiner's system is limited as he only developed a detailed explanation of seven soul organs of perception and three spiritual organs. He did not manage to expand on other spiritual senses even though he continually speaks of more than the three already mentioned.²⁷⁹

To describe the process of the first transformation of the physical senses into the soul senses, I will focus on one of the senses. The physical sense of sight is located in the forehead, and the sun's forces have worked upon the human organism through our evolution to build this sense of sight. The light creates a sense organ for its perception. Through contemplative work, forces transform the physical sense organ and a second sense organ, or soul sense, is developed. From the sense of sight, a 'third eye' forms, which can perceive aspects of the non-physical world. The second transformation changes the 'third eye' into the spiritual sense of imagination. Each of the soul organs develops out of the transformation of the physical basis in the body. Further to the metamorphosis of sight, we have inner soul faculties that centre themselves in our organ of speech and the heart, which through their transformations, provide the soul senses as the foundation for the spiritual senses of inspiration and intuition, respectively:²⁸⁰

Just as imagination may be called a spiritual seeing, so may inspiration be called a spiritual hearing. Of course, it must be quite clear that by the expression "hearing" is meant a perception still further removed from sensory-hearing in the physical world than "sight" in the imaginative (astral) world is removed from seeing with the physical eyes... When the observer in the higher worlds once knows what imagination really is, they soon acquire the conviction that the pictures of the astral world are not merely pictures but manifestations of spiritual beings. They come to know that these imaginative pictures have reference to spirit or soul beings just as sensory colours to sensory things... So is the world of inspiration placed within the imaginative world. When the imaginations begin to unveil their meaning in "silent speech" to the observer, the world of inspiration arises within the imaginative world... In inspiration the experiences of the higher worlds speak their meaning. The observer... is conscious of becoming one with the deeds of such being, with the manifestations of their will; in intuition, for the first time they merge their own self into that of self-contained beings. This can happen in the right way only if the mergence takes place, not by the effacement, but by the complete maintenance of their own being.²⁸¹

In eastern philosophy, the seven centres of soul senses are called the chakras or lotus flowers.²⁸² As the human being undergoes further development, through practices and meditations, the forces that build our internal soul faculties of sensation, thought, reason, feeling, volition and

²⁷⁹ Steiner, *The Stages of Higher Knowledge: Imagination, Inspiration, Intuition*, 12, vii-xiv.

²⁸⁰ *The Wisdom of Man, of the Soul, and of the Spirit: Anthroposophy, Psychosophy, Pneumatosophy*, vol. 115 (New York: Anthroposophic Press Inc., 1971), 37-38.

²⁸¹ *The Stages of Higher Knowledge: Imagination, Inspiration, Intuition*, 12, 48-57.

²⁸² *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, 10.

mind turn outwards.²⁸³ In the old pre-Christian mysteries, the first transformation of physical senses into soul senses occurred through schooling in a mystery school and opened through a temple sleep. The second transformation of soul senses into spiritual senses ensued. Then, through initiation, the mystical three-day temple death opens them. Finally, the mysteries transform through the Christ event, and now in our times, it has become more and more possible for individuals to take these processes into their own field of practice.²⁸⁴

3.2.3 A Biblically Based Method for Developing Soul and Spiritual Senses

The third factor of contemplative phenomenology is the actual methods and practices, including symbols and art, for developing the spiritual senses. In chapter two, I included the hermeneutical phenomenological practices of language, dialogue and questioning as essential skills in contemplative phenomenology. The question of verifiable spiritual experience, raised in the previous section, can only be answered by providing a framework of the modes of cognition described above. As the object of perception, the spiritual experience must come together with a concept that holds up to reason. The use of symbols and art as a link between the two is a critical aspect. As mentioned in chapter one, art was, for Goethe, *one* of the revelations of the primal law of the world; science, for him, was the *other*. For him, art and science sprang from one source. Steiner continues this understanding by contemplating symbols and art to develop the spiritual senses that provide spiritual perception and experience.

Coakley suggests, in her *théologie totale*, which she calls theology *in via*, that the practices of un-mastery, silent prayer and a new semiotic approach to symbol would develop the spiritual senses and provide the foundation of experience of spiritual phenomena.²⁸⁵ These suggestions are similar to Steiner's. In Coakley's response to the criticism that systematic theology has operated in a mode that links its symbology to the male body. She welcomes the use of female symbols, but suggests we need to go symbolically and contemplatively deeper into issues that are more fundamental than gender symbols: "Gender is the powerful symbolic means by which culture slices humanity normatively into *two* (and only two), and thereby imposes, by continually repeated rituals of reinforcement (both conscious and unconscious), an oppressive and restricted form of life on those who do not fit the binary alternatives".²⁸⁶ Contemplative unknowing of symbols, such as the threeness of the Trinity, the image in which humanity is made, gives an experience of the

²⁸³ *The Wisdom of Man, of the Soul, and of the Spirit: Anthroposophy, Psychosophy, Pneumatosophy*, 115, 33-48.

²⁸⁴ *The Gospel of St. John: Berlin*, vol. 94 (London: Temple Lodge Press, 1980).

²⁸⁵ Coakley, *Deepening Practices: Perspectives from Ascetical and Mystical Theology*, 78-93; *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay 'on the Trinity'*, 33-65.

²⁸⁶ *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay 'on the Trinity'*, 52-53.

‘transfiguration of twones’ and allows us to emulate a trinitarian ‘equality in difference.’²⁸⁷ This image can lead us to knowledge through which gender gains new expression beyond worldly binary ideas. A person can then also understand the human being, remade in the likeness of Christ. This method parallels Steiner’s ideas of creating symbols through which the inner experience of spirit can emerge.²⁸⁸ He holds that through creating symbols derived from the physical world and pondering them mystically, objective higher experiences are maintained. Steiner taught that he did not arbitrarily construct these symbols, but they are given to humanity by spiritual guides called masters and held in esoteric schools through the ages:²⁸⁹

These are the feelings and images that the teacher can evoke in the pupil's mind and soul. If the pupil is not a dry stick, if they are able to enter with their feelings into the whole secret symbolised by this comparison, their soul will be stirred and they will experience something which will come before their spiritual vision as a symbolic picture. The picture can be of the Rose Cross: the black cross symbolising what has been slain in the lower nature of the human being and the roses representing the red blood, so purified and refined that it has become a pure expression of the higher soul-nature. Thus the black cross wreathed with red roses becomes a symbolical summing-up of what the soul experiences in this dialogue between teacher and pupil.

If the pupil has opened their soul to all the feelings and images which can make the Rose Cross a true symbol for them; if they do not merely claim to have placed the Rose Cross before their inner vision, but if with pain and struggle they have won through to a heightened experience of its essence, they will know that this picture, or similar ones, call forth something in the soul — not merely the little spark but a new power of cognition which enables them to look at the world in a new way. Thus they have not remained as they formerly were, but have raised their soul to a further stage of development. And if they do this again and again, they will finally attain to Imagination, which shows them that in the outer world there is more than meets the eye.²⁹⁰

As noted earlier, Coakley and Steiner propose that the transformation comes through Christ working within us. In this sense, Steiner correlates his epistemology with Paul’s saying: Not I but Christ within me (Gal 2:9-21). I suggest that Steiner’s theory of the senses adds to the growing body of knowledge towards a doctrine on the spiritual senses. He specifies, names and defines the methods for cultivation and the particular experience of perception of the spiritual senses that evolve from the physical ones. His theory of the senses suggests the spiritual senses are analogical to the physical senses. He names the transformed sense of sight *imagination*, the transformed sense of hearing *inspiration* and the transformed sense of thought and knowing *intuition*. He further names senses that the human being uses to sense their well-being within the body and names the

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 55-58.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 33-65.

²⁸⁹ Rudolf Steiner, *Esoteric Lessons, 1904-1909: Lectures, Notes, Meditations, and Exercises*, vol. 266/1 (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: SteinerBooks, 2007), 316.

²⁹⁰ *Metamorphoses of the Soul: Paths of Experience: Vol. 2* 59, 37.

transformed sense of smell, which sits on the edge between the outer and inner world, a sense for the mystical union with God or the Divine.²⁹¹

Coakley, like Steiner, provides methods by which the physical senses transform into spiritual ones.²⁹² Coakley centres her practices on the same three steps of purgation, illumination and unity that Steiner follows in his instruction in *Knowledge of The Higher Worlds*: preparation, enlightenment and initiation.²⁹³ Both of these are reminiscent of the Neoplatonic idea of Plotinian ascent, which suggests that the soul, after awakening, can reverse the order of emanation of the One using purification and illumination and ascend to know the One in union with it.²⁹⁴

Coakley suggests that sustained prayer practices are the prerequisite for specific theological knowledge. Through “a spectrum of beliefs and practices, over a lifetime of faithful observation of both public acts of worship and charity on the one hand, and private devotion on the other, one might hope ultimately to come to ‘know’ God in God’s intimate life”.²⁹⁵ In her *théologie totale* Coakley uses a prayer-based model and iconography, or artwork, as essential parts of her method of unity with God.²⁹⁶ While still embedded in church tradition and liturgy, these factors are named here as they reflect similar processes to those Steiner uses in his approach to the spiritual senses.

Steiner offers one method relevant to exegesis and Christology through the Gospel of John. In his two lectures on *The Three Paths of the Soul to Christ*,²⁹⁷ he explores the evolution of human consciousness and how human beings can find a relationship to Christ. He explains that the cosmos remembers every event in history. The consequences of everything live in “the most highly attenuated substances within reach of human faculties”.²⁹⁸ Steiner, after initially using the Sanskrit formulation of the *akasha chronicle* for this phenomenon, calls this the cosmic memory²⁹⁹ in order to frame this concept for western philosophy. In describing the path of the human soul to experiencing Christ, Steiner explains his experience of standing before the cross occurred in this *akasha* chronicle. Steiner verified the events spiritually and found the Gospel narratives to be faithful representations of the spiritual facts. He also says that the Gospels' origin comes from the writers' experiences in the spirit or akasha. According to the unique experience of the narrators, they

²⁹¹ *Spiritual Science as a Foundation for Social Forms*, 37-55.

²⁹² Coakley, *Deepening Practices: Perspectives from Ascetical and Mystical Theology*.

²⁹³ Steiner, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, 10.

²⁹⁴ Plato, *Phaedo*, 69c.

²⁹⁵ Coakley, *Deepening Practices: Perspectives from Ascetical and Mystical Theology*, 92.

²⁹⁶ *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay 'on the Trinity'*.

²⁹⁷ Rudolf Steiner, *The Three Paths of the Soul to Christ*, vol. 143 (New York: Anthroposophic Press Inc., 1942).

²⁹⁸ *Occult Science and Occult Development*, vol. 233 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1966), 1-4.

²⁹⁹ *Cosmic Memory: Prehistory of Earth and Man*, vol. 11 (West Nyack, New York: Rudolf Steiner Publications, Inc., 1959), 38-41.

wrote for their community.³⁰⁰ At first, people were able to feel spiritual lifeblood flow into them through the pictures of the Gospels, as the Gnostics did: “The question of the external physical reality never occurred to them. How their hearts warmed, how their feelings swelled in the presence of these great and powerful pictures – this was the main thing to them”.³⁰¹ As the intellect developed, this capacity faded until there was only the capacity to grasp the Gospels as historical accounts, resulting in a loss of spiritual nourishment through the literal reading of these accounts. Steiner explains that a second path of the soul has emerged, or been sustained, which he calls the *inner Christ experience*. Paul’s experience at Damascus is the foundation of this experience in Christianity. For Steiner, these two paths are still valid and form the basis of the method he describes using the imagery of the Gospel of John as contemplation to renew the inner experience of the soul for our times. He also speaks of a third future form through Christian initiation that I will explore further in the next chapter.

The use of art, imagery and symbol within a Gospel narrative as schooling of the human soul is the third aspect of contemplative phenomenology. This understanding aligns with Pagels’ description of the Gnostic account of the narrative mentioned previously.

In short, Steiner suggests a contemplative-meditative approach to the Gospel of John.³⁰² He explains that the old mystery schools had two-part initiation processes. The first is the temple sleep, for soul awakening, and the second is the temple death, for spiritual awakening. These two processes are written into the composition of John’s Gospel. In our times, the two experiences of sleep and death are replaced by meditation and soul trials. Steiner suggests that a person approaching this contemplative path meditate daily for a year on the Prologue. Then the first part of the Gospel, ending with the raising of Lazarus, is contemplated, and the seven soul senses awake:

As long as one does not do anything particular one is unconscious when the astral body is outside the physical body. One is as unconscious as one would be in the physical world without eyes or ears... one does not see this world or become aware of it because one has no astral sense organs. They must be gradually formed... There are seven such organs... If these are gradually developed one becomes clairvoyant in the astral world... One sees symbols. One loses consciousness of what takes place here in the physical world, but one can experience in symbolic pictures such events as the life of Christ Jesus.³⁰³

³⁰⁰ *The Gospel of St. John and Its Relation to the Other Gospels*, 112, 20-38; *The Fifth Gospel: From the Akashic Record*, 148; *The Three Paths of the Soul to Christ*, 143, 32.

³⁰¹ *The Three Paths of the Soul to Christ*, 143, 4.

³⁰² *The Gospel of St. John: Berlin*, 94, 1-17; *The Christian Mystery*, vol. 97 (Gympie, Australia: Completion Press, 2000), 27-46.

³⁰³ *The Gospel of St. John: Berlin*, 94, 5.

This first part of the path of schooling using meditation instead of a temple sleep to form the soul senses is the *Imitatio Jesu*. After the first Christ initiation of Lazarus, the narrative, from chapter thirteen to the end, depicts the events around the death and resurrection of Christ. Steiner identifies seven events that are the content of this second part of the path. They are the seven trials that each pupil faces: the washing of the feet; the scourging; the crowning with thorns; the crucifixion; the mystical death; the burial and resurrection; and finally, the ascension into heaven. Together they form the path of the *Imitatio Christi*.³⁰⁴ Should a person contemplate and meditate and experience the trials of these seven stages, they will awaken, as a second stage, the spiritual senses. Steiner develops this path along with other aspects of Christian practices in the lecture cycle on *The Gospel of John*.³⁰⁵ While he also develops different ways of opening the spiritual senses, this path of working religiously through the Gospels remains relevant for our times. The role of feeling and guidance of a teacher is an essential aspect of the practices and development of the higher senses:

I have repeatedly set forth the first steps leading to the vision of the Christ-Being Himself. The aspirant must live over again what is delineated for us in the Gospel of St. John... if they [a person] resolve to pass through a certain gamut of feeling – [they] can rise into the spiritual world which, since the event of Golgotha, there shines the light of Christ.³⁰⁶

As an extension of this method with the Gospels, Steiner agrees that through ritual and prayer, the religions offer paths of awakening appropriate for their community. These lead to the perception of the spiritual help that comes from the spiritual world into our destiny. We experience spiritual nourishment through a religious community. Steiner argues that every religion has a way of facilitating the inner spiritual experience, which he called the inner experience of Christ:³⁰⁷

In their ceremonies, sacraments and rites the religions have presented outwardly visible pictures of higher spiritual processes and beings. Only those who have not yet penetrated to the depths of the great religions can fail to recognise this. Anyone who has actual vision of spiritual reality will also understand the great significance of these outwardly visible acts. Religious worship itself becomes an image of communion with the higher, spiritual world.³⁰⁸

In his various ways, Steiner respects the emergence of the individual nature of each human in its capacity to school the soul to approach Christ. In the next chapter, I will present the third path of Christian initiation relevant to today. However, the way through the Gospels and the

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 14-17.

³⁰⁵ *The Gospel of St. John*, vol. 103 (New York: The Anthroposophic Press, Inc., 1962).

³⁰⁶ *The Gospel of St. John and Its Relation to the Other Gospels*, 112, 277.

³⁰⁷ *The Three Paths of the Soul to Christ*, 143, 21-27.

³⁰⁸ *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, 10, 159.

contemplative preparation for the Pauline-like inner experience of Christ remains central for theology and exegesis today.

3.2.4 Two Further Observations

Two further observations can be raised about this method. The first has already been mentioned and includes the dangers and false initiations that can occur if a person follows these practices independently without support or guidance from a school, teacher or tradition. The second is the observation that this method would take some time to produce results in developing spiritual senses in an individual, and what does a person do while these are not developed for them?

Steiner was always mindful of the danger of false initiation in his instructions. Along with detailed instructions about avoiding this, he also worked on creating a community and an anthroposophical tradition through which such guidance could happen. Steiner experienced how aspects of the path were challenging to establish and, towards the end of his life, changed how the anthroposophical community could provide more substantial guidance on that. In *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*, he devotes a chapter to the seven conditions for esoteric training,³⁰⁹ which include physical, mental and spiritual health along with continuing schooling in reason and critical thinking. He also emphasises that the path requires moral development. He suggests it would be better for a person to remain at the point of the path they have attained rather than push further if their moral development has not grown enough to contain the knowledge and experiences such development can afford. Such morality develops through the commitment to placing all knowledge learnt into the service of humanity. The path of selflessness already mentioned includes the moral development of selflessness in thought, opinion, emotion and deed. He offers a contemporary version of the Buddha's Eightfold Path as an ethical formational process towards self-mastery. How we think, speak, act and contemplate are necessary refinements of the soul towards spiritual perception.³¹⁰ Steiner was aware that other paths can offer quicker ways to spiritual perception but states specifically that patience and perseverance with preparation are better than shattering bodily health and moral ruin by too rapid a training. I cannot present the full detail of the book in this thesis, but it is helpful to see that Steiner was continuously working on circumventing false initiation.

To the second observation, Steiner held the same attitude as any science or academic faculty. At the same time as learning skills and knowledge, students engage with the methods and findings the discipline has already produced. While learning about sacred texts, engaging with others who have already found some knowledge of the higher world is essential. This learning is

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 104-16.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 121-26.

done with critical thinking and not a deferral to unquestioned authority. The publication of his lectures shows some of the inner reasons for this. He did not want the transcripts of his lectures to be published. He emphasised that when people did the work that his written works demanded, they could verify through their own experience all he said for themselves. As unofficial publications and caricatures of their content emerged, Steiner gave Marie Steiner the task of publishing the lectures. Readers were to be made aware that a healthy understanding of his five major works was a prerequisite to being able to comment on the content of the lectures. This directive is familiar to any school of knowledge. So patience and continuing engagement with the practices, along with a healthy reading of spiritual scientific findings, leads to the growth of knowledge and capacity. It takes years of study and training to develop the abilities of any school of thought.

In my first days of training at the seminary of The Christian Community, a leading teacher spoke to us students and asked us to desist from any current practices and focus exclusively on the work given in *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds* for some time. He said that it is easy to open spiritual perception but much harder to close it off when one needs to attend to the practicalities of life. The latter is a skill required for healthy interaction with the world. He then made a comment that has become a guideline for me. It is not about creating spiritual perception but about developing the spiritual senses healthily, which may not happen in this lifetime. Still, the fruits of work done now may come to full realisation in a future life.

In conclusion, I offer an example of how the methods of contemplative phenomenology and emerging spiritual senses might work in gaining experience and reliable knowledge of the spiritual world. The journalist Leslie Kean wrote in *Surviving Death* about how consciousness does survive death and “that consciousness may not depend on the human brain and therefore could have continuity from one life to the next”.³¹¹ As a journalist, she uses narratives and accounts of people’s experiences in various paranormal situations. Using open science methods, she continually declares her bias and limitations of her field of observation and offers insights into critiques of the work. She interviewed many experts in the field of noetic sciences and the division of Perceptual Studies at the University of Virginia to help process the content and align it with more than one hundred years of recorded and verified accounts.³¹² The accounts, especially in the realm of reincarnation, required a rigorous process of ensuring that the narrative was “received from the person’s memory and not transferred by living-agent psi (psychic functioning) or some highly developed ESP (Extrasensory

³¹¹Leslie Kean, *Surviving Death: A Journalist Investigates Evidence for an Afterlife*, Kindle Edition ed. (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2017), 79.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 36-42.

perception) transfer from people around the individual.”³¹³ She takes care to show how the confirmed cases accurately record the lived experience, be it memory or extra sensory perception. The records tell the experience as it was lived and not a later interpretation of the experience.³¹⁴ She also puts herself to the test of her own “personal experiment” in connection with people she knew who had died. The book is a clear and convincing communication of the evidence and the science of using individuals' spiritual/psychic experiences. The stories also reflect the journey of many of the family members and other acquaintances who, through working with the accounts, changed their outlook on consciousness surviving death. As an example of how the spiritual senses can be used to gain knowledge, this book is a contemporary scientific account of gaining knowledge of reincarnation, the central theme of chapter four.

3.3 Summary

I have in this chapter answered the final part of my initial question in chapter one: What then might we look for in Steiner’s approach to the Bible and theological themes that could qualify it as scholarly, theological, and systematic? I have described Steiner’s approach to gnosis by presenting his teachings of the spiritual senses that provide the basis to understand Steiner’s Pauline epistemology.

I have also identified and described three essential factors for developing contemplative phenomenology: the *Imitatio Jesu* towards selflessness, the *Imitatio Christi* developing the spiritual senses, and the role of symbol, art, language, dialogue and questioning in Steiner’s biblically based method of creating the spiritual senses.

While preparing to write this thesis, I read about a renewed interest in developing a Western Christian doctrine of the spiritual senses. While this became the lens through which I can present Steiner’s ideas on spiritual perception, it also showed me other ways of presenting systematic theology. A broad range of contemporary theologians, including Coakley, Macquarie, Esler, Fox and McGrath,³¹⁵ maintain that contextualising doctrine with modern questions and circumstances is the task of systematic theology. In contrast, some theologians will say this is a task of restating the same truths for a new time. However, it has become evident that the methods of more recent systematic theologians will also challenge some of these truths and possibly revise Christian

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 17-42.

³¹⁵ Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay 'on the Trinity'*; Esler, *New Testament Theology: Communion and Community*; Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality* (Santa Fe, NM: Bear & Company, Inc., 1983); Macquarie, *Principles of Christian Theology*; Alister E McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (John Wiley & Sons, 2016).

doctrine through well-founded research and observation. This revisioning excites me as it places theology on par with the methods of science that adjust knowledge when finding new understanding. Suppose doctrine is a body of knowledge that can change; we would stop considering it a set of immovable dogmas, significantly affecting the science-theology dialogue.

Chapter four will focus on aspects of Gnosticism relevant to Steiner's insights that can be revised as part of the theological discourse. Finally, using the established criteria, I will revise the gnostic/heretical theme of reincarnation and Christianity after presenting further considerations for the systematic theological model and its applications in considering knowledge in the introduction.

CHAPTER 4: INNER CHALLENGES FOR SYSTEMATIC CHRISTOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, using the criteria established in the previous three chapters, I will present a study of the gnostic/heretical theme of reincarnation and Christianity. To do this, I will present three further considerations for Steiner's theological model and its applications for theological reflection: systematic integration of metaphysics, meeting karma as a teacher and initiation, and faith. In my own life, after I had left the Redemptorist order and was working in the Camphill home, I attended the required introductory studies to Steiner's anthroposophy. These revolved around studying his book *Theosophy*. Each time I came upon a new thought, such as the threefold human being, I would contact my ex-novitiate master and Catholic theological teachers, who had expressed that they were happy to discuss my new studies with me. While they showed interest and the capacity to listen, their response was often that this body of knowledge was not so different from the Roman Catholic framework. Eventually, I read the chapter on repeated earthly lives. I struggled with the idea of the pre-existence of the human soul. I visited the monastery in person for this one. While explaining what I had been reading and wrestling with for several months, the phone rang, and I was left alone in the room. In the quiet of those minutes, I suddenly realised that I was not giving a précis of the chapter but was looking for permission to accept what I knew to be true. I realised that I believed the process of reincarnation was actual. Since then, this belief has allowed me to engage and ponder my own experiences and verify them for myself.

For the first consideration of integrating metaphysics, I will take the approach of Sheila E. McGinn who sets the discussion about heresy and heretics into the Routledge volume on *The Early Christian World* is set in the framework of "internal renewal and dissent in the early Christian world".³¹⁶ I have shown in the previous chapter that applying Steiner's work to theological discourse requires a systematic approach more akin to the *in via* methods that Sarah Coakley suggests in her *théologie totale*.³¹⁷ Her process includes the practices of un-mastery, silent prayer and a new semiotic approach to symbols, which develop the spiritual senses and provide the foundation of experience of the spiritual. These approaches differ from more traditional systematic processes, such as that which Wolfhart Pannenberg describes as follows:

The task of distinguishing in a particular traditional assertion the core of truth from the passing forms of language and thought arises again and again. In each historical epoch,

³¹⁶ McGinn, *Internal Renewal and Dissent in the Early Christian World*, 837.

³¹⁷ Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay 'on the Trinity'*.

systematic theology has to be done all over again. And yet, the task is always the same, and the truth which systematic theology tries to reformulate should recognizably be the same truth that had been intended under different forms of language and thought in the great theological systems of the past and in the teachings of the church throughout the ages.³¹⁸

Steiner thought systematic theology should consider reformulating its doctrines on reincarnation. The traditional reasons for rejecting the possibility of a Christian doctrine of reincarnation are summarized by Bobby Kent Grayson³¹⁹ in this way:

Attempts to argue that reincarnation is compatible with Christianity have to ignore the historical background of Jesus and the New Testament, the evidence and teachings of the New Testament, the theological beliefs of Christianity, and the interpretation of the Bible by the Church Fathers for several centuries. One can conclude that reincarnation is not biblical and was never a part of early Christianity. Therefore, one must conclude that reincarnation is not compatible with Christianity.³²⁰

Grayson refers to Rudolf Steiner only in the bibliography and makes one comment on a secondary anthroposophical source in the whole thesis. He confines his analysis of reincarnation theory to what the Church Fathers have said of it and finds that the critical issue is as follows:

The major difference between reincarnation and orthodox biblical Christianity centres in the conflict between the law of karma and the substitutionary death of Christ upon the cross. It is at this point that reincarnation and Christianity become most incompatible. When one embraces the law of karma and denies the substitutionary death of Christ for the sins of the world, one has taken an irreconcilable position in opposition to the heart of Christianity. One cannot be saved or reach oneness with God on the basis of the law of karma and also be saved by grace.³²¹

From another point of view, Jay Kurt Keller presented reincarnation in discussion with normative Christianity in his doctoral dissertation *Christian Reincarnationist Thought as Presented by its Major Twentieth Century Proponents*.³²² He thoroughly examines early Christian thought through the lens of the orthodox position and compares it with twentieth-century Christian thinkers, including a substantial passage on Rudolf Steiner on reincarnation. Keller concludes that: "it will be useful to leave the reader with a few ideas about the future of normative Christianity's ideas of the afterlife if we allow the assumption that reincarnationist thought will continue to influence the tradition".³²³ He suggests that scientific research using hypnosis, near-death experiences and past-

³¹⁸ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 7.

³¹⁹ Bobby Kent Grayson, "Is Reincarnation Compatible with Christianity? A Historical, Biblical, and Theological Evaluation" (Doctorate, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989).

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 268-69.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 262.

³²² Jay Kurt Keller, "Christian Reincarnationist Thought as Presented by Its Major Twentieth Century Proponents" (Northwestern University, 1987).

³²³ *Ibid.*, 249.

life recollections, such as those of Leslie Kean mentioned in the last chapter, can contribute to the knowledge base. After weighing up the evidence supporting Christian reincarnationist thought from his own point of view, taking into account scientific and modern oriental cultural influences in the west, Keller concludes:

Accepting the hypothesis that such cultural influences, and scientific endeavours, bear a positive relationship to increasing belief in reincarnation among western Christians, we can postulate that as these sort of influences continue to increase, so too might the number of Christian reincarnationists, as well as the proportion of reincarnationists within Christianity...

A complete Christian-reincarnationist dialogue would ultimately encompass many areas of study, and consider the theological, historical, sociological, psychological, and medical implications. Theological dialogues such as the one presented here must continue to examine both the large common ground between the two types of thought, and the grounds for differences... the differences, once isolated, must be examined for their real significance within the tradition. It is my point of view that the genuine significance of these differences upon central Christian theology is very minimal.

As for the afterlife doctrine itself, conceivably this could gradually change within the normative tradition, as postulated by John Hick. Certainly if the point is reached where 50%, or 90%, of the world's Christians believe in reincarnation, the doctrine essentially will have been changed even if no official conciliar or other action has endorsed it.³²⁴

These voices, sympathetic to an integration of reincarnationist thought into Christian doctrine, are by no means without resistance, as Dan R. Schlesinger argues:

Modern proponents of ancient Gnosticism claim that Jesus Christ, the Apostles, and the early Church fathers embraced reincarnation. However, their attempts to associate reincarnation with early Christianity belie their metaphysical bias, which is the basis of their historical revisionism. Because their hermeneutics are flawed, the neo-Gnostic interpretation of Scripture differs significantly from traditional Christian interpretations. In order to justify their doctrines of karma and reincarnation, neo-Gnostics revise Church history so that it reflects their metaphysical worldview. Their attempt to revise church history, creates the illusion that the Bible teaches reincarnation. However, neither the Old or[sic] New Testaments teaches reincarnation, which is why the neo-Gnostic preconceptions are baseless.³²⁵

Where might we place Steiner's thoughts on reincarnation and Christianity as a contribution to the theological discussion suggested by Keller? One place could be in the 'systematic synthesis' Ian G Barbour describes in his book *Religion in an Age of Science*. Barbour categorises several styles of dialogue between the view of the objective nature of science and the seemingly subjective process of religion as conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration. He states: "in articulating a

³²⁴ Ibid., 259-63.

³²⁵ Dan R Schlesinger, "Did Origen Teach Reincarnation? A Response to Neo-Gnostic Theories of Christian Reincarnation with Particular Reference to Origen and to the Second Council of Constantinople (553)" (University of Glasgow, 2016), 2.

theology of nature, a systematic metaphysics can help us toward a coherent vision. But Christianity should never be equated with any metaphysical system. There are dangers if either scientific or religious ideas are distorted to fit a preconceived synthesis that claims to encompass all reality”.³²⁶ He says:

A more systematic integration can occur if both science and religion contribute to a coherent world view elaborated in a comprehensive metaphysics. Metaphysics is the search for a set of general categories in terms of which diverse types of experience can be interpreted. An inclusive conceptual scheme is sought that can represent the fundamental characteristics of all events.³²⁷

Rudolf Steiner’s anthroposophy does have a systematic integration of metaphysics which is applicable to the dialogue about the integration of reincarnationist thought into Christian doctrine. Steiner’s metaphysics, as an inclusive conceptual scheme, can contribute the general categories through which spiritual experiences can be interpreted.

The second consideration is that in addition to the two paths of the soul to Christ discussed in chapter two, Steiner speaks of a third path of the soul to Christ: the initiation principle, or meeting karma as a teacher and initiation.³²⁸ At first, history teaches us through the Gospels, then the inner experience of Christ leads us, and now a third very personal experience of Karma becomes the guide to finding Christ. Steiner brings the experience of reincarnation and karma into direct relationship with the modern soul to experience the Christ where people will

...add the great teachings of karma to the other teachings, they will learn to understand their karma... They will learn to grasp the idea ‘I am placed on the earth through birth; my destiny is on earth; I experience joy and sorrow; I must understand what I experience as joy and sorrow does not approach me in vain, that it is my karma, and that it comes to me because it is my karma, my great educator. I look upon that which was before my birth, which placed me in this incarnation, because this, my destiny, is necessary for my further development. Who sent me hither? Who will continue to place me on this earth, into my destiny, until I have discharged my karma? I shall owe it to the Christ that humans can ever more be called to suffer their destinies, until they have discharged their karma on earth.’³²⁹

The experience and contemplation of karma as a teacher is a practical application of contemplative phenomenology in that Steiner’s thoughts and descriptions of reincarnation and karma serve as the imaginations for the reader to ponder along with one’s own experiences and endeavours to understand it. Through the theological method of selflessness, developing the

³²⁶ Ian G Barbour, *Religion in an Age of Science* (Harper & Row San Francisco, 1990), 41.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

³²⁸ Steiner, *The Three Paths of the Soul to Christ*, 143, 43.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

spiritual senses, the use of symbol, art, language, and dialogue and questioning, the spiritual senses awaken, and the experiences of our contemplations begin to affirm the knowledge.

The Catholic biblical theologian Gerhard Lohfink reflects on how Steiner's thoughts on reincarnation differ from the Eastern models. While brief, he represents some essential aspects of Steiner's ideas and acknowledges that increasing numbers of Christians hold reincarnationist views. While he argues against reincarnation, he points out that Steiner links reincarnation with evolutionary theory. Lohfink claims that for Steiner: "there is no going backward, for example, into an existence as a lower animal; there is only constant advance... while Steiner adopted many features of Buddhism, he ultimately holds to the western concept of person".³³⁰ However, such a brief description fails to note that Steiner sees that reincarnation can only have meaning for Christian thought if we understand how Christ works with human failing through karma. Steiner does speak of the appearance of regression and not only the constant advance portrayed by Lohfink.³³¹ Much of Steiner's evolutionary theory is based upon beings not fulfilling their development in a timely fashion and finding other work to complete in the economy of the earth's evolution. The positive and hindering effects of regression are essential to understanding Steiner's theory of reincarnation.³³²

The third consideration is that faith plays a critical role in cognition and knowing. For Steiner, faith is not incompatible but intrinsic to scientific method. It is not blind faith in dogma or authority but an inner attitude inherent to his central schooling path of the six basic exercises developed in *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*. It embraces

...the requirement of impartiality towards all that comes to meet one in life. In this connection we speak of 'faith' or 'trust'... The pupil... is ready at every moment to test and rectify their views and opinions. They remain always receptive to everything that approaches them... They banish faint-heartedness and scepticism. If they have a purpose, they also have faith in its power... It is the 'faith that can move mountains'.³³³

As this open-mindedness, trust or faith that guides our knowledge grows more robust, it becomes an inner spiritual experience. In describing *The Spiritual Foundations of Morality*, Steiner says:

³³⁰ Gerhard Lohfink, *Is This All There Is?: On Resurrection and Eternal Life*, ed. Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press Academic, 2018), 31-32.

³³¹ Rudolf Steiner, "The Influence of Spiritual Beings Upon Man," (Spring Valley, New York: Anthroposophic Press, Inc., 1961); *Nature and Spirit Beings: Their Activity in Our Visible World*, vol. 102 (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2022).

³³² *Genesis: Secrets of Creation - the First Book of Moses*, 122, 59-73.

³³³ *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, 10, 131.

It is wonder that leads our soul upward into the spiritual realms so that we can come to know them, and we can only come to know them if our souls are attracted by the entities to be known. This attraction is what is brought about by wonder and astonishment and also by faith. It is always wonder and astonishment that guide us to the supersensible, and at the same time this is what one usually calls faith. Faith, wonder and astonishment are three forces of the soul that lead us beyond the ordinary world.³³⁴

In describing this third path of the soul to Christ, Steiner points out that the inner deepening of the heart and soul must arise from feelings. Through feeling, the divine spark within a person may also feel pride and arrogance; if they are not conscious of this connection, they may feel despair. Moving between the three feelings of pride, despair and fixing our gaze upon the events of Palestine we are led to the birth of the Christ event within us: “That which hitherto had a justified place in the world as faith will be replaced by the vision of Christ... from the usual way of experiencing Christ, as an experience of the heart, the path opens quite naturally to what may be called Christian initiation”.³³⁵ Faith is the force that builds the capacity for us to behold Christ and is an essential virtue in contemplative phenomenology.

These three further aspects of contemplative phenomenology (systematic integration of metaphysics, meeting karma as a teacher and initiation, and faith) are essential to developing the spiritual senses as the perceptive faculties, and the systematic theological model of Steiner’s Christology that I have developed so far in this thesis. As Watkins noted, creating a conceptual model is the art of theological reflection whereby we can “bring our experience into conversation with the Christian tradition”.³³⁶ Hence, the methods of contemplative phenomenology and the use of spiritual senses have a place in theological research and systematic theology of giving the theologian the faculties to have the experiences necessary for the conversation with Christian tradition. The three methods suggested so far for a mystical experience of Christ are:

- Contemplative phenomenology,
- The use of spiritual senses supporting the hermeneutical key of Not I, but Christ in me – “I no longer live, but the Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20);
- The theological model of Theosis in Christ: Christ worked for the divinisation of the human soul in and through evolution.

These then become the foundation of Steiner’s approach to any of the contents under consideration in his Christology.

³³⁴ *The Spiritual Foundation of Morality: Francis of Assisi and the Christ Impulse*, vol. 155 (Anthroposophic Press, 1995), 64.

³³⁵ *From Jesus to Christ*, vol. 131 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1973), 65-66.

³³⁶ Watkins, *Creativity as Sacrifice: Toward a Theological Model for Creativity in the Arts*, 15-24.

4.2 Reincarnation

The first, and possibly central, Christian doctrine to revise in the light of Steiner's teachings is that of reincarnation:

Without doubt, an earnest question will arise before us when we do not merely consider abstractly the idea of reincarnation, of repeated earthly lives, but when instead we allow ourselves to become thoughtfully absorbed in contemplation on this fact of the spiritual life. Then, with the answer given to us in reincarnation, which provides such valuable fruit for our lives, there will in turn arise fresh questions. We may, for example, raise the following query: if a person lives on the earth more than once, if they return again and again in new embodiments, what can be the deeper meaning of this repeated passing through life? As a rule, this is answered by saying that we undoubtedly keep ascending higher in this way, and, through experiencing in later earthly lives the fruits of previous lives, we finally perfect ourselves. This, however, still represents a rather general, abstract opinion. It is only through more exact knowledge of the whole meaning of earthly life that we penetrate the significance of repeated lives on earth. If, for example, our earth were not to change, if human beings were to keep returning to an earth that remained essentially the same, then indeed there would be little to learn through successive embodiments or incarnations. On the contrary, their real meaning for us lies in the fact that each of these incarnations on earth presents us with fresh fields of learning and experience. This is not so apparent over short periods, but if we survey long stretches of time, as we are able to do through spiritual science, it becomes obvious at once that the epochs of our earth assume quite different forms and that we continually face new experiences.³³⁷

Steiner explains that reincarnation has a purpose with a definite beginning and end point for the sake of developing the individual through perfection or divinisation, the theme of Steiner's conceptual model of theology, which I named in chapter two. There was a time when reincarnation began, and when its purposes are fulfilled via evolution, it will discontinue. For this to happen, humanity will need to develop the soul and spiritual faculties to continue consciousness between lives after an intermission after death. This consciousness is a progression of our capacity to hold continuity of consciousness each day after a period of sleep. Steiner suggests that as we grow spiritually, we will be able to live in a continuation of consciousness in sleep³³⁸ and life after death.³³⁹

In his book *Theosophy*³⁴⁰ Steiner presented an argument for reincarnation for a person with a modern scientific framework and circumvents the possible arguments of fatalistic and egotistical understandings. These arguments of fatalism and egotism in reincarnationist thinking persist into

³³⁷ Rudolf Steiner, *The Reappearance of Christ in the Etheric*, vol. 118 (Spring Valley, New York: The Anthroposophic Press, 1983), 2-3.

³³⁸ *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, 10, 170-78.

³³⁹ *Philosophy, Cosmology, and Religion*, vol. 215 (Spring Valley: Anthroposophic Press, 1984), 135-52.

³⁴⁰ *Theosophy: An Introduction to the Supersensible Knowledge of the World and the Destination of Man*, 9, 40-69.

our contemporary understanding. However, Steiner's thoughts on reincarnation and karma stand apart from them. A first historical observation must be that for most of Christianity, reincarnation has become anathema, especially for these reasons of fatalism and egotism, as expressed by Lohfink's comment:

In the West today it is more and more common to see a superficial mixture of Eastern worldview, Western psychotherapy and Christian tradition being brewed together... Thus, for example, centres for "consciousness" or "spiritual healing" advertise journeys of the soul that supposedly take us back into earlier incarnations... A "therapy" of the kind they offer promises control over one's life, but it avoids genuine conversation, real change. It promises a higher existence from one incarnation to another. History and society are completely out of the picture; this is only about the individual and his or her individual happiness... For if life is a long chain of incarnations I can always make a new decision, revise every previous decision; I never have to decide once and for all because I still have an infinite number of evolutionary opportunities for self-optimization ahead of me... No one wants to commit; it's better to keep all options open. It's best to try everything but not be obligated to anything or tie yourself down.³⁴¹

Lohfink's suggests that reincarnation empties history of its meaning and creates a profoundly inhumane system of compensatory justice³⁴² reveal that he does not fully represent Steiner's Western Christian ideas on the transmigration of souls. As presented in this chapter, Steiner argues that the teachings of reincarnation had to be forgotten precisely for all these concerns raised by Lohfink. Lohfink's concerns are as follows: one could defer an action from the right moment; forget that moral development comes through renunciation and self-denial; that each life has its dignity; one could forget our work towards social justice, and that one can fall into not being obligated or committed. For Steiner, these same tendencies had to be balanced by individuals finding the importance and relevance of this one life as our moment for doing things rather than a deferral to an eternal process, which I will explain further in the next section of this chapter.

The struggle to reconcile various redemption theories with grace and the possibility that karma and the individual's journey through incarnations lead to the slow ennoblement of the soul – these things are central to the discussion. Can the position of normative Christianity, the interpretations of the church founded by the Church Fathers, and the attempts to reformulate these same truths systematically for each age enter into a contemplative dialogue with the possibility of grace and karma working together? For Steiner, it was critical to find another aspect than the oriental reasoning for karma and Christian thought towards karma.

³⁴¹ Lohfink, *Is This All There Is?: On Resurrection and Eternal Life*, 32-34.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 34-35.

I will argue that reincarnation and karma do not negate the Christian tradition of resurrection and redemption by grace. On the contrary, they are a complementary thought system. The open question of how they relate becomes all the more interesting for the conversation between experience and tradition. The current discussion of internal renewal and dissent implied by McGinn provides a framework for what might already be an experience in a growing number of Christians, as pointed out by Keller, and the biblical interpretation of the Church Fathers that Greyson suggests as the traditional evaluation of reincarnationist thought.

I will present this theme of Christianity and reincarnation from the point of view of Steiner's ideas of its spiritual reality: looking at why Christianity rejected the teachings on the transmigration of souls and forgot about it, the practical implications of its introduction to western Christology now; and finally, where reincarnation can be understood as biblical. I am not trying to create an argument towards establishing its truth, but rather presenting what Steiner thought its essential differences to the eastern concepts are by showing its relationship to Christology.

4.2.1 Elements of a Christian Doctrine of Reincarnation

I will present three of Steiner's ideas towards Reincarnationist theory finding a Christian expression in our understanding. These are first the principles and laws of action and reaction, second the spiritual archetypes through metamorphoses and third, how Christ changed our relationship to suffering.

In his book *Theosophy*³⁴³ Steiner explores the principles and laws of action and reaction; for every action, there is an equal and opposite action. He uses the example of how memory results from a deed and is revived in response to new external stimuli. Following on from that, he asks

...whether the consequences of a deed, on which the "I" [of the person] has stamped its own nature, retain the tendency to return to the "I" just as an impression preserved in the memory is revived in response to some external inducement. What is preserved in the memory waits for such an inducement. Is it not possible that what has retained the imprint of the ego in the external world waits to approach the human soul from without, just as memory, in response to a given inducement, approaches it from within?"³⁴⁴

These actions follow the law that they need to come back to us. Steiner then questions whether it is possible for an action not to return by the time we die. Would it not call to the self to fulfil the consequences? So too, he questions if some things have come to us from a previously unfulfilled consequence, thus creating a justification for the soul's pre-existence. Steiner's ideas on

³⁴³ Steiner, *Theosophy: An Introduction to the Supersensible Knowledge of the World and the Destination of Man*, 9, 40-69.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

the pre-existence of the soul have antecedents in the teachings of the Hebrews and Plato as well as in Philo and Origin,³⁴⁵ albeit that for Plato, it was an essential part of his theory of knowledge, whereas, for Steiner, it is necessary for understanding spiritual development:

Only one part of my deed is in the outer world; the other is in myself... A being that has once acted has united itself with the results of its action. This is also true of the human spirit. The soul was only able to impart certain capacities to the spirit by performing actions, and these capacities correspond to the actions. Through an action that the soul has performed, there lives in the soul the energetic predisposition to perform another action that is the fruit of the first action. The soul carries this as a necessity within itself until the subsequent action has taken place. One might also say that through an action there has been imprinted upon the soul the necessity of carrying out the consequences of that action... The body is subject to the law of heredity; the soul is subject to its self-created destiny. We call this destiny, created by the person, their karma. The spirit is under the law of re-embodiment, repeated earth lives. One can accordingly also express the relationship between spirit, soul and body in the following way. The spirit is immortal; birth and death reign over the body according to the laws of the physical world; the soul life, which is subject to destiny, mediates the connection of both during an earthly life.³⁴⁶

From this, Steiner suggests we need to add the concept of *unbornness* to *immortality* in our considerations. Understanding the threefold human being of body, soul, and spirit gives the foundation to explain the difference between the immortal spirit of the individual and the soul that comes into existence as the person for this one life. When the Council of Constantinople in 869 CE rejected the difference between the soul for one life and the eternal spirit, the knowledge of the pre-existence of the spiritual essence of a person was lost:

We need another word – besides the word “immortality”, which denotes the end of physical life – to speak of the eternal, imperishable aspect of the human essence, as opposed to the perishable, transient human body: we need the word “unbornness”. For, just as we pass through the gate of death with our eternal, spiritual essence and continue on to another life in the spiritual world – one visible to spiritual investigation – so too, we descend before birth or conception from the spiritual world into physical, earthly incarnation. Not only do we pass through the gate of death as immortal beings, we enter through the gate of birth as unborn beings. We need the term “unbornness” as well as the term “immortality”, to encompass the whole human being.³⁴⁷

Peter Selg, in *Unbornness*, suggests we can ask questions about our intentions from before birth to discover why things happen to us here in this life.³⁴⁸ This understanding of the human being can lead to a new approach to understanding the spiritual influences in our current life. That is of

³⁴⁵ Frank Chamberlin Porter, "The Pre-Existence of the Soul in the Book of Wisdom and in the Rabbinical Writings," *The American Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (1908): 53-66.

³⁴⁶ Steiner, *Theosophy: An Introduction to the Supersensible Knowledge of the World and the Destination of Man*, 9, 65-68.

³⁴⁷ Peter Selg, *Unbornness: Human Pre-Existence and the Journey toward Birth* (SteinerBooks, 2010), frontispiece.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 23-38.

the importance of this one life and not the tendency to become lulled into thinking we can always work it out later in another life. In part, the more gnostic idea of not focusing on the importance of this life is why reincarnation was made anathema. It needs to be said that Steiner did not promote the ideas of fatalism and acquiescence to pre-destination of all events in our life. On the contrary, he pointed to the fact that for this reason, we need to develop an acute discernment between karma and other events. A dynamic exists between what lives in our will for this lifetime, the lessons we wish to draw to ourselves for further refinement, and the events that happen outside of our choice, which become incorporated into our destiny.

The second of Steiner's ideas on reincarnationist theory and Christianity is the continuation of Goethe's understanding of how nature expresses spiritual archetypes through metamorphoses. Goethe developed the idea that the archetype of a plant is the leaf. Each part of the plant is a metamorphosis of the leaf form of the plant. From the seed form through the leaf, calyx, flower and fruit, we can trace the change in the shape and function of the leaf. He says: "The secret affinity between the various external parts of the plants, such as leaves, calyx, corolla and stamens, which develop one after the other as it were one out of the other, is the process by which the same organ presents itself to us in manifold forms".³⁴⁹ Goethe worked on the same principle for the animal world. He observed that the skeleton is a differentiated transformation of the vertebrae and made some progress with the metamorphosis principle in animals.

Steiner thought this principle manifests itself for the human being in the metamorphosis of the soul through reincarnation.³⁵⁰ In the process that the individual's life undergoes in the journey after death, a metamorphosis takes place, preparing the body for the next incarnation. Steiner said, developing Goethe's idea of metamorphosis: "Such is the difference between dead thinking and the inwardly alert, live thinking unfolded by Goethe in connection with the idea of metamorphosis. He enriched the world of thought by a glorious discovery".³⁵¹ Steiner then continues to unfold the picture of the human skull as a transformation of the whole human skeleton. The entire head can be conceived as a transformation of the rest of the human body: "I have told you that the head of our present earth-life is the transformed body (apart from the head) of our previous earth-life... the forces now embodied in your head were the forces which were embodied in the other parts of your body in your previous life."³⁵² The various processes on the journey between death and rebirth

³⁴⁹ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Metamorphosis of Plants: With an Introduction by Rudolf Steiner* (Wyoming, Rhode Island: Bio-Dynamic Literature, 1978), 20.

³⁵⁰ Guenther Wachsmuth, *Reincarnation as a Phenomenon of Metamorphosis* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1937).

³⁵¹ Steiner, *Supersensible Influences in the History of Mankind with Special Reference to Ritual in Ancient Egypt and in Later Times*, 216, 60.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 61.

transform the forces of the body and soul. They are turned inside out to form the next incarnation's head and later body. While this is difficult to accept intellectually, the contemplative method using art can reveal how to understand this. Peter Elsner produces an artistic impression of this transformation in *Metamorphosis in Nature and Art: The Dynamics of Form in Plants, Animals and Human Beings*.³⁵³ Through the appreciation of the visual arts, the other half of knowledge is revealed, and the artistic process being complementary to the scientific approach to learning emerges, as I described in chapter one.

Steiner called this process of metamorphosis the principle of spiritual economy, which in its simplest form, is when something of exceptional value is preserved and carried over into the future.³⁵⁴ This principle is a critical spiritual law in Steiner's understanding of the eschatological work of Christ, which I will present in more detail in chapter seven. It also holds good for an individual that what is of value is preserved for them in a future life. This preservation includes higher virtues and the values still to be learnt through our so-called mistakes and sufferings. This metamorphosis is the work of what Steiner names the 'causal body' as "the extract of the life and soul bodies which the human being bears from earth-life to earth-life and continually enriches".³⁵⁵ At first, we must process the last life in purgatory in the Christian tradition (kama-loka by Steiner following the eastern terminology), where the total collection of all that was not yet purified during life must be purged from influencing the metamorphosis directly. Then, as the fruit of the purgatory experience, the 'causal body' forms that which holds and builds the conditions for the further journey of the immortal spirit of the individual through the next incarnation. Steiner calls this the 'desire body' as it yearns for conditions to fulfil the consequences of the last life and seeks a new embodiment. The traditional and orthodox doctrine of purgatory does express an element of reincarnation theory, even if it would be strongly disagreed with within Catholic circles.³⁵⁶ A further, possibly surprising, confirmation of this post-death experience came from psychiatrist Brian L. Weiss³⁵⁷ who, upon finding his conventional therapy was not working with one of his patients, tried hypnotherapy and unlocked memories of previous lives. He had nothing in his background to assume or prepare him for these experiences. Through further memories emerging, they also discovered masters, or spirit entities, who guide people between incarnations.³⁵⁸ I would suggest

³⁵³ Peter Elsner, *Metamorphosis in Nature and Art: the Dynamics of Form in Plants and Human Beings* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Hawthorn Prewss, 2013).

³⁵⁴ Rudolf Steiner, *The Principle of Spiritual Economy in Connection with Questions of Reincarnation: An Aspect of the Spiritual Guidance of Man*, vol. 109 (Anthroposophic Press, 1986), 17.

³⁵⁵ *Foundations of Esotericism*, 93a, 284.

³⁵⁶ David Carlin, "Purgatory," *The Catholic Thing*, <https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2019/05/17/purgatory/> (accessed September 16, 2022).

³⁵⁷ Brian L Weiss, *Many Lives, Many Masters: The True Story of a Prominent Psychiatrist, His Young Patient, and the Past-Life Therapy That Changed Both Their Lives* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988).

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

that these masters could be an experience of what Steiner describes as the angelic guidance between incarnations. This account is a brief picture of the process of life between death and rebirth. It gives a quintessential understanding of what has been explored in many works on reincarnation by Steiner and other anthroposophical authors.³⁵⁹

The third of Steiner's ideas on reincarnationist theory and Christianity is how Christ changed our relationship to suffering. A reversal of attitude to suffering and reincarnation occurs between Buddha's teachings and the emerging understanding of suffering in Christianity. For Steiner, the four experiences of prince Siddhartha that showed him that all life is suffering, which led him to the path of transcending suffering, give the philosophy of reincarnation a gesture of transcendence. Further, through learning that being separated from what we love, being united with what we do not love and not receiving what we desire causes suffering:

Buddha's doctrine of suffering has a mighty effect on the hearts of human beings. Countless people learned the great truth of being liberated from suffering through the extinction of the thirst for being, and they also learned how to strive outward from their earthly incarnation. Truly, the highest peak of human evolution is placed before our soul by such an endeavour.³⁶⁰

Steiner suggests: "Never has there been a more momentous reversal in the entire evolution of the human race".³⁶¹ While Buddha saw in a corpse the insignificance and futility of life, now, "let us immediately consider the time six hundred years after the Mystery of Golgotha, when countless souls and eyes turned to the cross on which a corpse was hanging. It is from this corpse that the impulses emanated that spiritualized life and signalled the glad tidings that death can be conquered by life".³⁶² Franciscan friar Richard Rohr in *Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality* believes that "we are invited to gaze upon the image of the crucified to soften our hearts towards God, and to know that God's heart has always been softened towards us, even and most especially in our suffering. This softens us towards ourselves and all others who suffer".³⁶³ Through Christ, the

³⁵⁹ Selg, *Unbornness: Human Pre-Existence and the Journey toward Birth*; Wachsmuth, *Reincarnation as a Phenomenon of Metamorphosis*; Rudolf Steiner, "Reincarnation and Karma; from the Point of View of Modern Scientific Thought," Rudolf Steiner Archive, <https://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/19030326p01.html> (accessed March 29, 2019); *Reincarnation and Immortality* (Steinerbooks, 1970); Emil Bock, *Widerholte Erdenleben; Die Wiederverkoerperungsidee in Der Deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Verlg Urachhaus, 1941); Edward Reaugh Smith, *The Soul's Long Journey: How the Bible Reveals Reincarnation* (Great Barrington: SteinerBooks, 2003); Rudolf Steiner, *A Western Approach to Reincarnation and Karma: Selected Lectures and Writings* (Hudson NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1997); Wachsmuth, *Reincarnation as a Phenomenon of Metamorphosis*; Rudolf Frieling, *Christianity and Reincarnation* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1977).

³⁶⁰ Steiner, *The Principle of Spiritual Economy in Connection with Questions of Reincarnation: An Aspect of the Spiritual Guidance of Man*, 109, 106.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 107.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

³⁶³ Richard Rohr, *Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality* (SPCK, 2016), 192.

human soul gains strength to know that birth, illness, old age, death and being separated from what we love are all gates through which we must pass to find the Saviour. The great reversal is that they

will know that a person whose innermost being is pervaded by the power of Christ, that an individual who allows himself or herself to become imbued with the Christ-Impulse will be able to overcome all illness with the help of the strong and healthy powers he or she develops from within. This is so because Christ is the healer of humanity. His power comprises everything that emanates from a spiritual well and is really able to develop the strong, healing power that can conquer illness. No, illness is not suffering, but rather an opportunity to overcome an impediment or a handicap by the development of the Christ-Force within us... The souls that imbue themselves with the Christ-Force know that love can forge indestructible spiritual bonds beyond all material hindrances... The Christ brings us together with what we love.³⁶⁴

The reversal is from the pre-Christian Buddhist sense of suffering³⁶⁵ as something we must transcend and release ourselves from to understand suffering as our great teacher of developing from within our restorative powers. Through this understanding of suffering, we can connect the teaching of redemption through grace to the journey of Theosis of the individual through reincarnation. The Christ Force within us has been given to us through the grace of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and, yet, still requires the journey of unfolding the other higher self of the individual. This journey is achieved by accessing the forces of transformation from within the range of our human capacities. The two complementary aspects of our journey on earth require the knowledge that the human being evolves through spiritual metamorphosis and the principle of spiritual economy.

4.2.2 Why did Christianity reject Reincarnation and then forget about it?

The effect of Emperor Justinian upon Christian thought, especially his anathemas against Origen in 543 and 553 CE, played a role in Christendom forgetting, or losing, their understanding of the soul's pre-existence. Each anathema needs to be looked at in itself, which goes beyond the scope of this thesis. Steiner would argue that the first anathema against pre-existence and the restoration, or reincarnation, needs to be re-examined.

That being said, it is important to understand Steiner's position on why the loss of knowledge of the pre-existence of the soul and the memory of previous incarnations became an evolutionary necessity:

³⁶⁴ Steiner, *The Principle of Spiritual Economy in Connection with Questions of Reincarnation: An Aspect of the Spiritual Guidance of Man*, 109, 108-09.

³⁶⁵ Steiner focuses on the Buddha's experience of suffering to highlight the different focus that Christ brings. In this point he does not take into account all the differentiation of understanding of reincarnation in Oriental philosophies. Such an exploration would be a work beyond the scope of this thesis.

There was a special reason why, for about two thousand years, the teaching of reincarnation was completely suppressed. The human being was to learn to know and value the importance of the one life. Every slave in ancient Egypt was still convinced of the fact that he would return, that one day he would be a master instead of a slave, but that he had to pay his karmic debts. The single life was therefore not so important to him. But the lesson people then had to learn was to gain a firm ground under their feet; thus during one life reincarnation was to remain unknown. Christ therefore expressly forbade any teaching about reincarnation. But from about 800 years before Christ until about 1800 years after Christ, the time had elapsed during which nearly everyone had gone through one life without experiencing anything of reincarnation. The great Masters have the task not always to impart the whole truth at any one time, but only the part needed by humanity. This withholding of the consciousness of reincarnation came to poetic expression in this age in Dante's 'Divine Comedy'. ... When St. Augustine put forward the doctrine of predestination he was entirely consistent. Because in the age of materialism reincarnation was not to be taught, the Augustinian doctrine of predestination had to make its appearance; only in this way could the differences in people's circumstances be explained.³⁶⁶

While this may seem a simple idea, several themes rest upon forgetting our previous incarnations. The evolution of consciousness could also be named the evolution of free will. Free will is intended to enable the human being, through forces of their own soul, to develop the higher personality within themselves. This development is done with the aid of the forces given to humanity through the Christ being. In our time, reincarnation is the process whereby the gradual ennoblement of the individual soul allows us to absorb the life of the spirit. Steiner compares the Christian path from intellectual to spiritual life to the meaning of the Pentecost festival, the coming of the Holy Spirit. For Steiner, reincarnation is how this individual transformation into free creative spirits becomes possible. The exclusion of knowing reincarnation for some time is a necessary part of its full expression.³⁶⁷

This picture reflects many similarities with Origen's philosophy of the process of redemption coming into effect through the One soul, who was untouched by the cooling of the fire. Our minds were created in the Imago Dei, a consuming fire, and we are but irons in the fire of the divine. When we are removed from the fire, our mind cools to the soul, and the soul cools to the body - a threefold aspect of the human being. Steiner speaks of three veils being drawn over our consciousness which need to be lifted. Origen says of the one mind that did not cool and who was so united with Christ that it would have been impossible to distinguish between the two:

In this way, then, that soul which, like an iron in the fire, has been perpetually placed in the Word, and perpetually in the Wisdom, and perpetually in God, is God in all that it does, feels, and understands, and therefore can be called neither convertible nor mutable,

³⁶⁶ Steiner, *Foundations of Esotericism*, 93a, 55.

³⁶⁷ *The Temple Legend and the Golden Legend: Freemasonry & Related Occult Movements*, 93, 5-18.

inasmuch as, being incessantly heated, it possessed immutability from its union with the word of God.³⁶⁸

This theme of a soul which was one of the minds created in the Imago Dei, which was ‘never removed from the fire’, who united with Christ, and sacrificed itself to become part of the ‘cooled’ human body and soul so that they can, through reincarnations, become fire again is integral to Steiner’s Christology. For Origen, the transformation from body and soul back to fire must be fulfilled in freedom of the individual and, therefore, will take a long time; it will take many lifetimes for the fallen minds to be restored, including universal salvation of even the demonic minds as Peter spoke of as the ‘restoration of all things’ (Acts 3:21). In revisiting heretical teachings like this, it is worth mentioning here that Origen’s teachings were declared anathema three hundred years after his death by the Emperor Justinian at a council where Pope Vigilius was not present. Consequently, it can be thought that the emperor, and not the church, was responsible for the condemnation of Origen. Therefore, I suggest that these themes of the One soul uniting with Christ align between Steiner and Origen.

Another aspect of the necessity of our forgetting, and the cultural, religious, and philosophical context that enabled this forgetting, concerns how the Christ Impulse works for the freedom of human souls. Steiner maintains that our lives would be determined only by former causes if we were subject to the laws of karma and reincarnation alone. “Life really falls into two aspects that interweave without clear boundaries: experiences strictly determined by former causes, by karma, and those not karmically caused that enter fresh and new into our field of vision”.³⁶⁹ Steiner argues that had the Christ impulse not come into the world, the human being would have only been subject to the laws of evolution and involution or decay. Through Christ, the laws of creation out of nothing were added as a third dynamic to the laws of determination. Up until our present age, much was bestowed upon us through evolution and our inherited bodies. Now

within the I we increasingly develop new experiences, casting off what we inherited, what we were endowed with... we gradually replace all this with what we absorb from conditions that did not previously exist... at the end of our evolution we will bear in us only what we ourselves have elaborated, have created out of nothing, and not what was bestowed on us.³⁷⁰

The course of evolution has endowed the human being with an individual self or ego. We have now reached a time where out of this self or ego, we can add something new to pure or given

³⁶⁸ John Behr, *Origen: On First Principles*. (Oxford University Press, 2017), II 6:5.

³⁶⁹ Steiner, *Disease, Karma and Healing: Spiritual-Scientific Enquiries into the Nature of the Human Being*, 107, 225-26.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 228.

conditions. Something new proceeds from the individual, and we can bring forth a higher reality because we add something that does not proceed from the given conditions.

For Steiner, there are three things a human can produce from themselves. These three things stem from faculties that we already have at our disposal and can be summed up as goodness, beauty and truth:

First, what we call lawful thinking, our logical thinking. This is something we bring towards things. If we do not merely look out into the external world, do not merely observe ... but allow the lawfulness inherent in our observation to dawn on us, we live in logic, true logic... This logic is something that comes from us, is added by us to complement things. In giving ourselves to this true logic the I is creative over and above itself.

Secondly the I is creative over and above itself when it finds pleasure and displeasure in things that are beautiful, elevated, humorous, funny – in short, in things that human beings themselves produce... Your response arises from the singular outlook that you yourself have. Or let us say that you see a hero who is being assaulted by the world, initially managing to hold their own but perishing tragically in the end. What you observe is determined by karma, but the sense of tragedy you yourself feel as you witness it is quite new.

The third, is the way you feel urged to act under the sway of circumstance. This too is not solely karmically determined but arises from your relationship to the matter in hand. Let us assume that two people have a relationship in which karma determines that they have something to make amends for together. The more advanced person will make amends while another postpones this for later, doing so at a later time. One of the two will develop goodness of heart while the other does not participate in such feelings... You must not regard everything as determined, but it depends on whether or not we allow our actions to be governed by the laws of justice and equity. Ever new things arise in our morality, in the way we fulfil our obligations and in our moral judgement. In our moral judgement lies the third aspect by means of which we raise beyond ourselves, by means of which the I increasingly makes progress.³⁷¹

Naturally, the human capacity to think logically has the possibility of error; to take pleasure in beauty can create ugliness; to embrace duty over and above karma, the possibility of evil. The link between our free creative responses and the given destiny or karma of a situation was given by Christ. The Holy Spirit inspires us when we can create truth, beauty and goodness. The wise creating Word took the inner resolve to enter a human body and participate in the earth's evolution, to enact a deed that did not depend on karma. Christ enacted a freed deed and was not compelled by karma. Through this deed, humanity was endowed, through spiritual economy, with the ability to create something new over and above the given circumstances. Christ sends the Holy Spirit, and we can make what is right, beautiful and good in harmony with the further course of evolution. It is a prefiguring vision of the future evolution of humanity. Steiner's account of reincarnation differs

³⁷¹ Ibid., 229-30.

from other better-known accounts by adding the idea of creating out of nothing to those of evolution and decay. The idea of an eternal, endless cycle of reincarnation changes to evolution through the moral development of the human being bestowed upon us through Christ.³⁷²

To return to Origen, all of this must be accomplished through the individual's freedom, endowed upon us by the One soul who granted us, through the incarnation, the capacities and grace to unfold through our individuality that which we will become when fully human. Christ, in the form of the Holy Spirit, is the guiding force, symbol, and archetype that comes to us as the New Adam (according to Paul), to work with us to that end. To establish freedom, the knowledge of reincarnation needed to be forgotten. In this way, the process of Christian history played a constructive role. This necessary forgetting of reincarnation implies the need for the coming of a time when every human being will learn the importance of this one life as the urgent moment to act and develop. This realisation will help us not fall into the distractions of some early Gnostic communities of the egotism of self-realisation or a sense of laziness that can take as long as we like and fall asleep spiritually. I will now return to revise the understanding of reincarnation enfolded in a Christian philosophy without any misunderstandings and distractions.

4.2.3 Practical Implications of including Reincarnation in Christian Thought.

Keller observed that despite the lack of conciliar approval, the idea of reincarnation is increasing among Christian believers. As he suggested, reincarnationist theory might help people's understanding of the afterlife, as well as multi-faith dialogue, and the real impact upon central Christian traditions would be minimal and most probably positively enhanced:

The anomalies of present existence, the violence and seemingly senseless tragedies, the natural disasters and the starving third world countries, and the crippling diseases which affect so many individuals, even from the time of birth, only seem to become more apparent and more severe. Modern technology shows all of this to us with greater speed and clarity than ever before... the concept of karma and reincarnation not only offers an explanation, but also offers the only workable explanation for these apparent injustices. If so, these doctrines might be ones that more and more people look toward for their answers, and their comfort....

It will also be important to examine the sociological implications of reincarnationist belief. I have argued that certain sociological factors may give rise to the adoption of this belief; these factors should be compared to the historical influences upon resurrectionist thought which occurred during pre-New Testament times, and in the earliest centuries of the Common Era. What, if anything, does the current belief in reincarnation tell us about today's society which may show it to be different from Christian societies of the past? And, perhaps more fascinating, how might an increasing acceptance of the belief change today's society?

³⁷² Ibid., 232-34.

Would general belief in reincarnation cause a difference in the way of life which had formerly been influenced by the doctrine of the resurrection? We would have to assume first that any belief about an afterlife affects the general populace in some way...

This question of a way of living highlights again the question of grace, which is just as profound a device in reincarnationist thought as it is in normative Christian theories. Grace exists not only in the workings of a karmic system which allows continued opportunities for atonement and salvation, but it exists in a deeper, more meaningful way as well.³⁷³

In effect, incorporating reincarnation in our Christian teachings can offer a plausible and rational understanding of the differences in destiny between people. The inexplicable 'why does God let such suffering happen' question changes and gives individuals agency in their journey to fulfil the grace of redemption offered through Jesus Christ. These possibilities reflect Steiner's idea that destiny, the joys and sorrows of life, are our greatest teachers. How we carry our pain and suffering could become a contemporary expression of medieval ascetic practices of renunciation and mortification of the flesh. Rather than imposing ascetic practices upon themselves, people would be led to feel that the way they carry their destiny with dignity, hope and a sense of purpose reveals how their earthly life contributes to the evolution of consciousness.³⁷⁴

Steiner included goodness, beauty and truth into his pedagogical teachings to effect cultural changes as attributes of our human nature that can be nurtured and applied to the refinement of the soul, the scope of which goes beyond this thesis. The effect of the spiritual work of an individual during their lifetime, both the positive developments and the creation of error, ugliness and evil, is integrated through our living relationship with Christ - Not I, but Christ in me, 'I no longer live, but the Christ lives in me' - into the whole of humanity and evolution.³⁷⁵ Steiner argues that in the post-death experience, the 'desire body' carries both positive and detrimental effects. To follow how today we process the deeds of our life in kama-loka/purgatory, we need to understand the difference between the judgement according to the law of the father and that of the son: "You must not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the prophets. My task is not to abolish but to fulfil (πληρῶσαι). Yes, I say to you: until heaven and earth pass away, not a letter, not a dot of the Law will lose its validity. Everything must be fulfilled (γένηται) first" (Matt 5:17-18). 'The Law' has several possible understandings. First, it can refer to the law of karma that must be fulfilled and which Christ will not abolish but help fulfil. Second, it can refer to the two-fold nature of the judgment of the spirit: an old vengeful mode of karma established against an external code of

³⁷³ Keller, "Christian Reincarnationist Thought as Presented by Its Major Twentieth Century Proponents," 260-63.

³⁷⁴ Steiner, *Disease, Karma and Healing: Spiritual-Scientific Enquiries into the Nature of the Human Being*, 107, 39-53.

³⁷⁵ *The Gospel of St. John and Its Relation to the Other Gospels*, 112, 248-51.

behaviour or another way established through Christ, which has a saving nature.³⁷⁶ In chapter seven I will present further on eschatology, soteriology and the Pleroma of Christ. From this observation, I will now approach the question: how do we read the Bible with reincarnation in mind?

4.3 Biblical Language for Understanding Reincarnation

Using a contemplative-meditative approach to the Bible, it seems that *Art as Spiritual Activity*³⁷⁷ can be applied to this subject. The Gospels are the art of theology, while liturgy can be seen as an art of religion, and by contemplating these works of art, we can come to the spiritual knowledge that the texts can reveal to us. Origen recommends an *Imitatio Christi* that stems, above all, from reading the scriptures. The images of the biblical texts can be explored through the imagery and symbol of the Gospel narrative:

Christ has taught us to read the scriptures and, by his coming, has transformed the whole of scripture into gospel, or “good news.” But even this gospel is but a “shadow of the mysteries of Christ.” (Origen: Commentary on the Gospel of John, 1.39) Lest we come to worship the words on the page as we would a false god, Origen directs our eyes to the gospel in order to direct them beyond the gospel, or to another gospel. If our gospel is the text whose words we can read on a page, then there is another “spiritual” or “eternal” gospel always on the horizon of our reading. He writes, “Our task is to change the sensible gospel into the spiritual gospel.” (Origen: Commentary on the Gospel of John, 1.45) The task is to transform the bodily sense to the spiritual sense, the flesh of the word to the fire of the word. We can set each letter of a book aflame. The gospel of fire always exists out in front of us, leading us through many dark nights, like a fiery pillar in the desert. As we follow it, as we change the word’s flesh to fire, so too are we changed.³⁷⁸

For Steiner, a new kind of literalism is required in reading the texts. This literal method can be called spiritual literalism. An example of this spiritual literalism would be when Christ says to Martha: “I am the Resurrection and the Life” (John 11:25). Steiner suggests: “Life is to reappear in Lazarus. Do take everything literally, especially in the Gospels, and you will see how much comes to light. Do not speculate or interpret, but take in its literal meaning...It is the Christ impulse, the force flowing forth from the Christ... was the life”.³⁷⁹ Following this method, Emil Bock suggests an excellent way to follow the narrative is through the composition of the texts. By comparing the narratives, we find how the descriptions in the various accounts within the Bible complement and deepen our understanding rather than causing us to discard interpretations due to conflicting

³⁷⁶ Smith, *The Soul's Long Journey: How the Bible Reveals Reincarnation*, 245-55.

³⁷⁷ Michael Howard, *Art as Spiritual Activity: Rudolf Steiner's Contribution to the Visual Arts*, ed. Michael Howard, vol. 3, Vista Series (Hudson NY: Anthroposopic Press, 1998).

³⁷⁸ Charles Stang, "All Flesh Must Once Again Become Fire: Origen's Untamed Thinking," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* (Autumn/Winter 2017) (2017): 9.

³⁷⁹ Steiner, *The Gospel of St. John and Its Relation to the Other Gospels*, 112, 132.

reports.³⁸⁰ This author's paper on The Redemption of Biblical Imagery in Counselling is an example of deepening knowledge through compositional contemplation.³⁸¹

Seeking scholarly methods within biblical studies to prove or disprove the presence of reincarnation in the Bible reflects the role of presuppositions in biblical interpretation. One perspective would interpret that reincarnation does exist and thereby read the narrative favourably, while the other would interpret that reincarnation does not exist and read accordingly. However, another approach is needed, and I suggest understanding the philosophy of the authors of the text. Reading the compositional aspect of the narratives and understanding the author's pretext of philosophy, we can use the Bible as literature for our contemplation. This method is not new since reading the Bible as literature is the impulse of translating it into the vernacular, along with many contemporary biblical exegetes doing the same.³⁸²

Taking this approach, Edward Reaugh Smith examines the Bible as a narrative to show it reveals reincarnation.³⁸³ Instead of discussing whether John the Baptist shows there is no reincarnation since John denies being 'Elijah come again' or Jesus' insistence that he reveals it, Smith looks at the possible reasons why the discrepancy emerges. He suggests that "the Evangelists hid their references to reincarnation behind other language is in keeping with Steiner's assertion that reincarnation was not to be taught by the Church for two thousand years".³⁸⁴ Listening to the context of the narrative reveals an expectation in Jewish thinking at the time of Christ that Elijah would return (Mal 4: 5-6). And in Jesus' response to this question, he neither denied nor confirmed reincarnation. However, Jesus said: 'If it were not so, I would have told you' (John 14:2):

The least that can be said in this dialectic is that Christ's answer left the question of reincarnation unanswered, or might we say ambiguous. But that cannot be the case where Christ is faced with a great untruth. If reincarnation was spiritual error, he must surely have made this known, especially to his closest disciples".³⁸⁵

So too, with the disciples' questions of the man born blind being connected with the prenatal sin of the man or his parents (John 9:1-3). It reveals that they had an understanding of the pre-existence of the soul as well as the law of karma. Reaugh argues that: "all are in agreement about the critical part of his answer, namely, that the man was born blind to manifest the works of God in

³⁸⁰ Emil Bock, *Studies in the Gospels; Volume 1* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2009), 11-15.

³⁸¹ Martin Samson, " The Redemption of Biblical Imagery in Counselling " *Proceedings of the 7th National SCAPE Conference 28th -30th April 2006, Edited by Kaalii Cargill, 2006.* (2006).

³⁸² David Norton, *A History of the English Bible as Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

³⁸³ Smith, *The Soul's Long Journey: How the Bible Reveals Reincarnation.*

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 210.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 223.

or through him”³⁸⁶ Steiner argues that the narrative needs to be understood from Christ’s saying: “Is it not written in your law, I said Ye are Gods?” (John 10:34) and then argues that:

What Christ meant by this answer was that in the innermost soul of a person there is the potential nucleus of a God: something divine. How often have we not pointed out that the fourth principle of the human being is the potential capacity for the divine! “Ye are Gods.” That is, something divine dwells in you. It is not the human being but something different, not the person as they live on earth between birth and death; and it is different also from what a person inherits from their parents. Whence derives this element of divinity, this human individuality? It passes through repeated earth lives from incarnation to incarnation. This individuality comes over from an earlier earth life, from a previous incarnation. Hence we read, not the man’s parents have sinned, nor his own personality – the personality one ordinarily addresses as “I”; but in a previous incarnation he created the cause of his blindness in this life. He became blind because out of a former life the works of the God within him revealed themselves in his blindness. Christ Jesus points clearly and distinctly to karma, the law of cause and effect.³⁸⁷

The compositional contemplation and philosophical background to the narrative reveal that it is possible to read the Bible as holding both an understanding and a Christian teaching of reincarnation, albeit hidden behind another language for a specific purpose.

4.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented Steiner’s ideas on reincarnation in relationship to Christ. This presentation is not intended to convince the reader about reincarnation, but to offer a way in which phenomenological contemplation can be a theological method for considering ideas in their reality. It provides a process by which an individual can follow the path of faith through contemplation of the Gospels and come to knowledge supported by experience.

I will represent Steiner’s Christology in part two using this contemplative compositional method of reading the Bible as literature. The four themes of Steiner’s conceptual model revealed through his hermeneutical key (not I but Christ in me) applied to the Christ impulse, the Gospels, and the Mystery of Golgotha, will give a thematic structure to each chapter:

1. The life of Christ was a historical event.
2. Christ is an objective spiritual entity, the Christ-principle that works through evolution and can be traced in earlier philosophies, myths and religions.
3. The Gospels are mythical initiation stories that individuals can access for their moral and virtuous development.
4. Christ is a force, the Christ impulse, for the ennoblement and deification of human capacity as the teleological hope of human evolution.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 225.

³⁸⁷ Steiner, *The Gospel of St. John and Its Relation to the Other Gospels*, 112, 176.

PART TWO – RUDOLF STEINER’S CHRISTOLOGY

Christ has risen unto you as the meaning of the earth.

Easter Antiphon in ‘The Act of Consecration of the Human Being’.
Eucharist of the Christian Community

CHAPTER 5: THE WORK AND PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST UP UNTIL THE BIRTH OF JESUS

5.1 Introduction

I will apply the contemplative phenomenological method developed in part one to Steiner’s teachings on Christology in the following way. The four aspects of Steiner’s theological model of *Theosis in Christ* – Christ’s life as a historical event; the Christ principle that works in evolution; the Gospels as mythical initiation stories; and Christ as a force for the ennoblement and deification of human capacity and the teleological hope of human evolution – form the inner framework which will clarify and elaborate Steiner’s Christology. Steiner’s hermeneutical key – Not I but Christ in me – comprises the inner lens through which the reader is invited to consider the imaginations Steiner described. Steiner’s spiritual method, the contemplative phenomenological approach to theology, offers Steiner’s imaginations for the reader to ponder and integrate rather than assess as a collection of historical or literal facts.

Steiner’s written works comprise 45 volumes in his published collected works, some of which reflect an aspect of these four themes of Christ’s working. Two in particular – *Christianity as Mystical Fact* and *Occult Science; an Outline* – offer the reader insights into the course of development of the mysteries and an esoteric description of the evolution of our solar system. Some might say that it would suffice to read those. However, while the books represent the role of Christ in evolution, none of them presents an extensive overview that can be considered a complete picture of Steiner’s systematic Christology. On the other hand, Steiner held lecture cycles³⁸⁸ on Christology and biblical commentary between 1902 and 1914, which are listed in Appendix 1. While these follow an inner consistency, they do not, of themselves, give a systematic Christology either. In

³⁸⁸ Rudolf Steiner’s published volumes of lectures comprise another 309 volumes beyond the written publications.

1909 Steiner reflected that he had to change his planned approach to his esoteric commentaries on the Bible.³⁸⁹ He had, from 1902, made an extensive start with the Gospel of John and then Luke and had wanted to continue to Mark and Matthew. He described this approach as following each of the narratives from the perspective that they addressed. First, they represent the various streams in human evolution that played a part in preparing Christ's incarnation, and second, they describe the work of transformation each human being can go through under the guidance of the Christ impulse:

Contemplating what Christ Jesus was as a human being, how he acted as a human being in the thirty-three years of his earthly existence, can now be developed with reference to St. Matthew's Gospel. The contents of this Gospel furnish us with an image of self-contained harmony. If, in St John's Gospel, we described divine God-human belonging to the entire cosmos, we depicted a unique, self-sacrificing Being of love, as portrayed by St Luke, and then in St Mark's Gospel we encountered an embodiment of cosmic will, so in the gospel of St Matthew we have a true image of the Palestinian individual who lived as a human being for thirty-three years and in whom the synthesized essence of all the aspects described by the other three evangelists is distilled.³⁹⁰

He reflects how the gospels of John, Luke and Mark allow us to dimly divine Christ's thinking, feeling and willing along with the three soul qualities of the spiritual-soul, intellectual-soul and sentient-soul of our humanity.³⁹¹ While the following chapters present these themes, it becomes evident that Steiner changed his course of commentaries. He says:

We would now be in a position to investigate St Mark's Gospel had we, over the past seven years of our spiritual-scientific movement, been able to spend four years working on guiding principles and three years deepening these as a way of shedding light on various spheres of life. Then we could, as it were, have crowned the entire edifice with a contemplation of Christ Jesus in the context of the Matthew Gospel. However, as human life is not perfect and as this has not been the case – at least not for those within this spiritual-scientific movement – it is therefore not possible, without causing confusion, to move instantly to an exploration of St Mark's Gospel itself...For these reasons another way needs to be found. What should follow, as far as this is possible in the near future, is a study of St. Matthew's Gospel.³⁹²

Steiner saw the studies of the Gospels taking place alongside acquiring the methods of developing the spiritual senses. Unfortunately, the group of people he was working with were not putting the methods of developing the meta-skills required for contemplative phenomenology into practice. Therefore, the studies of the Gospels could not, within the context of his audience, bear their fruit as initiation texts.

³⁸⁹ Steiner, *Deeper Secrets of Human History in the Light of the Gospels*, 117.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 25.

Consequently, it has become more challenging to develop Steiner's systematic Christology. I would argue that part of Steiner's method was to present the imaginations in diverse ways so that the individual student of his work had at first to develop the skills he suggested, which he promoted as a four-year process. This preparation led to their working with the four Gospels to create a true living understanding of the Christ within them rather than have a written account of esoteric facts that they could easily refute through doubt and suspicion. The following three chapters will present a systematic account of the various aspects Steiner was attempting to present. It is a way to offer Steiner's esoteric perspective in imaginations so that people can contemplate and develop them into their own knowledge of Christ.

When, as a young priest working in Adelaide, I held a study of the Gospels, a participant asked what Steiner had said about the story reflected in the Bible and what made it so different to the orthodox position. They had grown up Roman Catholic and were currently exploring Buddhism. I sat for a whole evening explaining much of what has been presented here in this thesis, especially the second part. In the end, they said that's the same story, much more complicated. This thesis would say yes, but the knowledge of the complexity gives the person of faith ideas that further their own journey of knowing. Steiner's insights provide concepts and knowledge that help develop a fuller understanding of Christ. Through these elaborations on the narrative, I have found that my life has become more meaningful and my deeds more accountable. I argue that through the esoteric knowledge, the "justification through faith" of Paul and the "faith without works is dead" of James become contemporary with a third aspect of "faith and works without understanding is empty". The complexity of Steiner's Christology has broadened my philosophical and ethical framework to an extent where I experience my cooperation with the grace of Christ in the emerging evolution of the earth.

Steiner's descriptions of the four accounts of the canonical Gospels, summarised as follows,³⁹³ provide his perspective on the narrative and purpose of working with them in this order.

John: Christ's thinking, the human spiritual-soul, universal light of wisdom
Christ as the Divine and Cosmic Human

Luke: Christ's feeling. The human mind-soul, universal warmth of love
Christ, as a being of self-giving love

Mark: Christ's willing, the human sentient-soul, secrets of the universal will

³⁹³ Ibid., 18-25.

Christ as the cosmic will in a single individual

Matthew: Christ as the archetypal Human Being, a portrait of the harmonised human

Christ as the man in Palestine who unites everything as a human being

As suggested at the end of chapter four, these insights reflect Steiner's spiritual quest for the historical Jesus and offer another spiritual insight to complement historical-critical methods. As a starting point, Steiner suggests that:

Each of the evangelists portrays Christ Jesus as they understand Him according to the type of their initiation... We now understand that Christ is illuminated for us from four sides... all the Gospels agreed on the following points. The Christ-Being Himself descended from divine-spiritual heights at the Baptism by John, this Christ-Being dwelt in the body of Jesus of Nazareth, He suffered death on the cross, and He vanquished this death... The most characteristic feature of the death of Christ is that is that He passed through death unchanged, that He remained the same, and that it was He Who exemplified the insignificance of death. For this reason all who could know the true nature of the Christ death have ever clung to the living Christ.³⁹⁴

We can perceive a clarity of expression that, by approaching the four biblical Gospels in reverse order, Steiner was taking his audience on a journey to understand both the content and the ennoblement of their human capacities. This approach shows how his spiritual quest reflects the four aspects of his theological model. The effect of the incarnation of Christ in Jesus of Nazareth, as seen in the four Gospels, reveals the historical, the spiritual essence, the initiation path, and the practical applications of the individual Christian woven into a narrative that I will now present systematically.

5.2 In the Beginning

Following on from his comment on needing to continue his work with the Gospels by illuminating the Gospel of Matthew before Mark, Steiner added another dimension by holding a lecture cycle in early 1910 on *Genesis*.³⁹⁵ This cycle offers an esoteric understanding of the seven days of creation and how the narrative reflects the evolution of consciousness. The lectures also read as a commentary on his book *Occult Science*, which describes evolution from an esoteric spiritual perspective.

When was the beginning? This question is a persistent one in the conversation on the historical accuracy of biblical history. Steiner suggests that neither the *Bereshit* (בְּרֵאשִׁית) of Genesis 1:1 nor the *en archē* (Ἐν ἀρχῇ) of John 1:1 can be sufficiently understood unless we can begin to

³⁹⁴ *The Gospel of St. John and Its Relation to the Other Gospels*, 112, 152.

³⁹⁵ *Genesis: Secrets of Creation - the First Book of Moses*, 122.

experience what the Hebrew or Greek writers of those times experienced in the inner realities when they heard these words.³⁹⁶ To provide ways to live into these experiences, Steiner offers insights from his understanding of evolution. For both Testaments, the ‘beginning’ reflects the start of another aspect of evolution and not the ultimate beginning. They also do not mark the same ‘beginning’. In Genesis, Steiner argues we contemplate a transition into the current form of the world and can therefore accept, to a point, that it only reflects several thousands of years. This idea is extended further in that each ‘day’ in the Genesis creation narrative is symbolic of a step in evolution, not a twenty-four-hour period. In the Gospel of John, the ‘beginning’ offers a metaphorical, or symbolic, contemplation of even larger cycles of time. It presents that to understand evolution, we need to comprehend the nature of the Logos at work through longer cycles of time than the periods reflected in the ‘days’ of Genesis.

Another foundational concept that these insights lead to is the premise of consciousness preceding and forming matter, which is necessary for the reader to understand Steiner’s work. The process of metamorphosis needs to become an experience through the observation that even though consciousness precedes matter, matter is continually changing under the influence of consciousness or ideas. Evolution is not a continual repetition of the same: “Earth evolution provided the possibility for something new, namely that human beings became exactly the kind of beings they have become in the course of this evolution.”³⁹⁷ For this to happen, the consciousness, or mind, forming our evolution has to condense, or cool, as both Steiner and Origen state. From the condition of our material existence, something new, a new consciousness will arise. This consciousness will be one that was not there before the metamorphosis. Steiner describes this emerging new as the ‘creation out of nothing’ that occurs through an evolutionary process.³⁹⁸ The ‘nothing’ does not mean there was no matter, form or wisdom. It means it comes from outside the given and is an addition. Through an idea, the new is brought about through metamorphosis. The creation out of nothing presumes that there were preconditions of wisdom, understanding and matter. The new is added from an idea or feeling and expressed as goodness, beauty and truth. For Steiner, this principle of creation out of nothing is also the force through which the human being creates. The human being works in the same way as the Creator. It is something that was not inherently there before.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 1.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 10.

³⁹⁸ *Disease, Karma and Healing: Spiritual-Scientific Enquiries into the Nature of the Human Being*, 107, 218-

These two ideas of ‘condensing/cooling’ and ‘creation out of nothing’ reflect a similar understanding to that of the Lurianic Kabbalist description of the origins of creation.³⁹⁹ The Hebrew *Tzimtzum* (צמצום) means contraction and is used to describe the process of Divine self-contraction and self-limitation, which makes possible the concept of limited, worldly existence. The Divine essence contracts or withdraws the Infinite Light of its being, establishing an apparent ‘nothingness’. A space is created within which a beam of light is sent and enclosed into finite vessels through condensation. The primordial creation of humanity is an androgynous being, male and female alike. Only later in the shattering of the vessels do men and women appear in a further condensation. God’s presence is strengthened or made more prevalent through absence. The vessels are seemingly separate from the divine essence that can restore itself in the heavenly realm when the divine spark is reconstructed and the primordial man, Adam Kadmon, is rebuilt.⁴⁰⁰

5.2.1 Trinity, Elohim and Logos

To give a fuller imagination of where Steiner places Christ in the workings of the Trinity and Logos, I will begin by differentiating his understanding of different aspects of their expressions through creation. The Trinity also works through the creation out of nothing principle. The Trinity has a twofold expression. First, they, as a collective, hold an idea that drives and reveals towards outer manifestation (הַשְׁמַיִם *hashamayim*) and, second, has a will, or inner activity, filled with desire towards bringing about the new manifestation of the idea wishing to be revealed (הָאָרֶץ: *ha’aretz*).⁴⁰¹ This idea is the ideal seed form and the true thought-forming quintessence derived from a previous evolutionary cycle that works within matter.⁴⁰² For Steiner, the Trinity can be seen as a unified threefold essence holding an idea that will manifest through a process of evolution. For example, the evolution of our sun and solar system has a particular idea that will arise as a new consciousness that was not there at the start.

Steiner holds that the אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim*), as the plural of אֱלֹהָ (*Eloha*), are a collective of seven beings who hold and give expression to the two sets of mental images of the Trinity. This thought differs from the monotheistic Jewish understanding of Elohim being a singular God. Their collective nature is similar to the Trinity, but they work as the architects and manifesting creators within the solar system. Their activity is deeper within the condensations and metamorphosis of matter. The nature of their being holds the seed thoughts of the Trinity, which become revealed and

³⁹⁹ Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, "Isaac Ben Solomon Luria," Encyclopedia Britannica, August 1, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Isaac-ben-Solomon-Luria> (accessed September 28, 2021).

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Steiner, *Genesis: Secrets of Creation - the First Book of Moses*, 122, 15.

⁴⁰² *The Temple Legend and the Golden Legend: Freemasonry & Related Occult Movements*, 93, 116-27.

manifest outwardly through the nature of desire, full of inner activity – one nature more in outer revelation, external manifestation, and another nature more inwardly alive and active:

They [the Elohim] could do many things; in the course of their evolution they had acquired capacities in one direction or another. One of them could do this, another that. But we understand the nature of these beings best if we realize that at the time we are now considering they were working as a group towards a common goal. It is, at a higher level, as though a group of human beings, each with their own special skill were to co-operate today. Each of them has an ability in some direction, and they say to one another: you can do this, I can do that, and he can do the other. Let us pool all our activities to carry out a joint action in which each of us can be active. So let us imagine such a group of human beings, each of whom has a different capacity, but who have a common aim. What they intend bringing into being is not yet there. The object of their endeavours consists at the moment only of an aim, and does not exist as yet. What is there is a multiplicity, and the unit live initially in the form of an ideal. Now think of a group of spiritual beings who have passed through the evolution of Saturn, Sun and Moon, each one of whom has a specific ability and who, at the moment I have indicated, come to the decision: We will combine our activities for a common end, we will work in one direction. And the picture of this goal arose before each of them. What was this goal? It was the Human being, earthly humanity!⁴⁰³

The point in time where the Elohim join into a single goal is reflected in the plural of “Let us make the human being in our image after our likeness” (Gen 1:26). The ‘image’ and ‘likeness’ reflect a double process. ‘In the image’ is part of the seed ideal inner image of humanity, conceived by the Trinity and desiring the human being to love out of freedom. This ideal image could only arise out of the previous cosmos, developed through wisdom and now imbues the whole of the created world. Evolution produced the conditions for human beings to appear. ‘In the likeness’ is the earthly human being born of Sophia expressed through the complete unified working of all the hierarchies towards the outcome of evolution. There is an intention of love out of freedom, and there is a volition of guidance in producing the right conditions for the wisdom-filled human body. The third part of this chapter will explain this dual nature further.

For Steiner, separation is needed for consciousness to evolve. If everything were to continue expressing itself in a repetition of the same, there would be no progress. Therefore the principle of separation is a collaboration between the guiding spiritual principles at work in our solar system to generate conditions of separation so that new consciousness emerges. This separation process is similar to Origen’s explanation in *On First Principles*⁴⁰⁴ of the fire minds cooling into soul and body. The first six days of creation in Genesis 1 describe long periods where the conditions of separation, or cooling, occur. To attain freedom, one aspect of the human soul was kept in a more rarefied condition, and the other part condensed into the denser material physical conditions of our

⁴⁰³ *Genesis: Secrets of Creation - the First Book of Moses*, 122, 11-12.

⁴⁰⁴ Behr, *Origen: On First Principles*.

earthly world.⁴⁰⁵ In a similar description to evolutionary theory, Steiner speaks of a condensation of form and matter and through this process, various bodies in the solar system separate from each other. The moment of the sun separating from the central earth body is when the Elohim, in the creation narrative of Genesis, unite in purpose and begin to direct and metamorphose the forms through consciousness. Under the instruction of the Elohim, each hierarchy, or rank of angelic beings, participate in the process through their capacities learnt through earlier evolutionary conditions.

Steiner also describes that previous to the current earth, three other planetary expressions were guided by the inner pictures of the Trinity and put into effect through the Elohim. While the process of cooling, or condensation, is necessary to veil the individual's consciousness from all these workings, there came a time when it became possible for our evolution to become completely hardened and separated from the spiritual worlds. To counterbalance the possibility of complete severance, one of the Elohim created another way of working through the light and established the moon's separation. Steiner argues that the moon holds all the matter that was too dense to keep the earth in its optimal position for freedom to evolve. Yahweh is the seventh member of the Elohim and works in union with the Elohim, who are centred on Christ.

This collective working Steiner also names the Logos or a further expression of the three *Logoi* of the Trinity. He consistently follows how consciousness requires various layers of beings to work the ideas of the Trinity into manifestation. In *The Gospel of John*, Steiner suggests John's logos theory was not a reframing of Philo's views but, as the only Evangelist to be a student of Christ, he presents his own experience of this working of the seed idea in creation. Steiner suggests that we can see the forming of the human being out of the forces of wisdom inherent through the Trinity, Elohim and the Hierarchies as a mute being:

Thus these followers of this Logos-doctrine observed the human being and said: If we go back in evolution, we find him in earlier conditions still mute, still incapable of speech. But just as a seed comes from a blossom, so likewise the mute human-seed in the beginning had its origin in a God endowed with the power of uttering the "Word." The lily-of-the-valley produces the seed and the seed again the lily-of-the-valley; in like manner the divine creative Word had glided into the human seed, in order to spring up again within it, it sounded forth in words. When we go back in human evolution we meet an imperfect human being and the significance of evolution is, that finally the Logos or Word which discloses the depths of the human soul may appear as its flower. In the beginning this mute human being appears as the seed of the Logos-endowed human being, but, on the other hand, has sprung from the Logos-endowed God... What is called the Logos is the sum total of the six Elohim who, united with the sun, present the earth with their spiritual gifts, while externally the physical sunlight is falling upon the earth.

⁴⁰⁵ Steiner, *Genesis: Secrets of Creation - the First Book of Moses*, 122, 30-44.

Therefore the light of the sun appears to us like the outer physical body of the spirit and soul of the Elohim or of the Logos. At the moment of the Event of Golgotha, that force, that impulse which formerly could only stream down upon the earth as light began to unite with the earth itself. And because the Logos began to unite with the earth, the earth's aura became changed.⁴⁰⁶

In the lecture cycle, *The Spiritual Hierarchies and Their Reflection in the Physical World*,⁴⁰⁷ Steiner explains how an idea develops in great detail and gives us a fuller appreciation of the concept of the Trinity as a unified essence of three *Logoi*. Steiner originates his teachings from the celestial hierarchies of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. In this lecture cycle, Steiner's threefold teaching reveals itself fully. There are five layers of threefold collectives. The initial collective, the Trinity, holds the essential progression from a previous evolution. Then following Dionysius, we have the first hierarchy of three ranks of angelic beings known as the Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones, whose capacities were developed in an evolution preceding ours and who come to bring substance, form and consciousness into full expression through the following ranks. Steiner calls these three aspects beings of Love, Harmony and Will, respectively.

The following 'trinity' or threefold collective's evolution of consciousness also took place before the three phases of our solar development of ancient Saturn, Sun and Moon. Like the first three ranks, the Kyriotetes, Dynamis and Exusiai, or Elohim in the Hebrew tradition, went through a phase of developing their intrinsic capacity. Steiner calls them beings of Wisdom, Motion and Form, respectively, to give these capacities descriptive content. Here we begin to understand that the ideas of the Trinity under the guidance and work of the first and second hierarchies are taken up in consciousness and formed through the three phases of our solar evolution. Through long periods the capacities of these two hierarchy 'trinities' create the beings who can carry the idea of the free human being into reality.

A further step occurs when the third threefold hierarchy begins the evolutionary development of their capacities. These three ranks are known as the Archai, Archangels and Angels, described by Steiner as the spirits of personality, folk spirits of nations, and messengers of the spiritual worlds, respectively. The descriptive names become closer to expressing their destiny of guiding human life in its current expression.

Through the first three significant phases of our solar system called ancient Saturn, Sun and Moon, each of these ranks of beings acquires their specific capacity. As we enter our fourth phase,

⁴⁰⁶ *The Gospel of St. John*, 103, 27-28, 111.

⁴⁰⁷ *The Spiritual Hierarchies and Their Reflection in the Physical World: Zodiac, Planets, Cosmos*, vol. 110 (Spring Valley, New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1970).

the actual earth phase, the spirits of motion who move the ideas of the beings of wisdom offer their essence, which is taken up by the spirits of form and pressed into matter. The idea becomes manifest, and the material world we know is a condensation of the idea within it, awaiting the new process of our current human evolution, the Anthropocene, to transform it into a new capacity under the guidance of all that we have become through evolution. The recent identification of the Anthropocene agrees with Steiner's general approach to evolution. Steiner says that the gnostic term *aeons* describes this successive entering in of beings guiding evolution and not only the time frames but also "spiritual powers entering successively into evolution, one taking over from another. Aeon is a being, a living entity".⁴⁰⁸ Three further planetary conditions will emerge in the future. Steiner gives the name Jupiter, Venus and Vulcan, the final stage of the following seed idea as our solar system transforms into a new evolutionary process.

Dankmar Bosse compares Steiner's terminology with that of geology and palaeontology in his *The Mutual Evolution of Earth and Humanity*.⁴⁰⁹ For Steiner, the evolution of the idea of the earthly human being, who, along with the animals and plants, is the fifth threefold hierarchy of love and freedom, takes place through seven significant phases. Each phase has a manifesting phase and a dissolution phase where the human being appears in the material world by condensing the idea into form and substance. The inner intention of these processes is for the human being to be free in consciousness from the influences of all the other spiritual beings.

While wisdom still carries the manifestation of the human body, personified in Wisdom Woman, also known as Sophia, of previous phases, the new stage we are currently in, a fourth of seven, allows our complete freedom to come to expression. Steiner calls the previous three significant phases ancient Saturn, ancient Sun and ancient Moon and should not be confused with the current planets bearing those names. In these phases, unique features of the human condense. On ancient Saturn, the form of the human body is fashioned, on the ancient Sun, the etheric or life body is added, and on the ancient Moon, the soul or astral body is formed. Only now in the Earth phase of our evolution is human individuality added and endowed with freedom. This cosmology aligns in principle with Cyclic Cosmology⁴¹⁰ and, more specifically, with the Conformal Cyclical Cosmology ideas of Sir Roger Penrose that a universe becomes uniform, or ordered, before a Big Bang rather than after.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁸ *Genesis: Secrets of Creation - the First Book of Moses*, 122, 56.

⁴⁰⁹ Dankmar Bosse, *The Mutual Evolution of Earth and Humanity: Sketch of a Geology and Paleontology of the Living Earth* (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: SteinerBooks, 2019), 73-128.

⁴¹⁰ Paul J Steinhardt and Neil Turok, *Endless Universe: Beyond the Big Bang* (New York: Double Day, 2007).

⁴¹¹ Roger Penrose, *Cycles of Time: An Extraordinary New View of the Universe* (London: The Bodley Head, 2010).

The picture in Genesis that reflects this point in the Earth phase of our evolution is the eating of the apple that gives us knowledge of good and evil. We have been bestowed free choice. In the descriptions of the larger cycles of evolution, Steiner says that this consciousness came about relatively recently after many recapitulations and condensations into new forms. He calls the two evolutionary cycles preceding our current phase of evolution Atlantis and Lemuria, respectively.⁴¹² Bosse traces geological timelines and places the Lemuria time of Steiner's description as coinciding with the Proterozoic eon through to the Paleozoic and Mesozoic eras of the Phanerozoic eon. The Atlantis epoch corresponds with the Cenozoic era, or from the Paleogene period to the end of the Pleistocene epoch of the Quaternary period, which ended about 11,000 years ago. Our time, the Post-Atlantean epoch in Steiner's concepts, starts during the Holocene period after the Ice Age. For Steiner, the biblical moment of Genesis where humanity separates into the duality of the sexes and our consciousness emerges towards the capacity of freedom 'begins' (פְּרִיאִשִׁית) in the middle part of Lemuria through the Paleozoic era. Gunther Wachsmuth made a more specific study of the metamorphosis principle in evolution to reveal especially the transition from the Paleogene period to the end of the Pleistocene epoch of the Quaternary period, or the transition, in Steiner's model, from Atlantis to our Post-Atlantean epoch. This transition includes the migration of peoples to more suitable regions of the earth for the evolutionary steps in our times, including: "the deep change in the soul-spiritual nature of the human being".⁴¹³ The current phase, which Steiner calls the Post-Atlantean epoch, along with Lemurian and Atlantean, are the three terms I will use to reflect the events of biblical history in the rest of this thesis to remain consistent with Steiner's terminology. Each epoch has seven cultural ages lasting 2160 years. We are in the fifth Post-Atlantean age, which follows from ancient India, ancient Persia, ancient Egypt and the Greco-Roman-Semitic ages. Table 1 presents an overview of the correlation between geological, biblical and anthroposophical timelines.

⁴¹² A complexity in reading Steiner is that his earlier language reflects that of the Theosophical Society which had adopted many Oriental terms. Later, while shifting some of his language to a Western terminology, his esoteric language for the phases of evolution is maintained so as to differentiate between the scientific terms and expressions from the possibility of expressing the work of the spiritual world through evolution.

⁴¹³ Gunther Wachsmuth, *The Evolution of Mankind; Cosmic Evolution, Incarnation on the Earth, the Great Migrations, Spiritual History* (Dornach, Switzerland: Philosophic-Anthroposophic Press, 1961), 15.

Table 1. Stages of Recent Evolution

Physical Evolution	Steiner's Terminology	Biblical History	Chronology/Events
Precambrian supereon Hadean eon	Polaris	First Day of Creation	Recent Big Bang
Archaen eon	Hyperborea	Fourth Day of Creation Emergence of Elohim	Separation of the sun
Proterozoic eon End of Precambrian supereon Phanerozoic eon Paleozoic era To Permian period Mesozoic era Triassic, Jurassic, Cretaceous periods	Early Lemuria Middle Lemuria Late Lemuria	Sixth Day of Creation Separation of the sexes Genesis 2:20-25 Expulsion from Eden First pre-earthly Deed of Christ	Separation of the moon Standing upright Homo Erectus
Cenozoic era Paleogene period Quaternary period through to end of Pleistocene epoch	Atlantis Second Half of Atlantis	Second pre-earthly deed of Christ Third pre-earthly Deed of Christ	Memory, Language Thinking Homo Sapiens
Holocene epoch (post Ice Age)	Post-Atlantean epoch	Noah	Approx. 8,000BCE Technology Anthropocene

In summary, the Trinity holds the essential idea for our solar system, derived from a previous evolutionary process. The first hierarchy of love, harmony, and will receive, ponder and transform these ideas into action. The second hierarchy of wisdom, movement and form carry out what the first hierarchy initiated by creating our solar system through continually metamorphosing the planets' air, water and vegetation. Starting with the fourth phase of our evolution, the beings of form, the Elohim, condense ideas into matter. The *Bereshit* in Genesis 1 depicts this beginning. The fourth hierarchy of humanity, animal and plant, in the foundation of matter, has the task of developing love through freedom. Steiner suggests that evolution is a continual process; a seed idea changes and grows through evolution. There have been previous solar systems. There will be future ones, too, that will proceed from the love that humanity develops in freedom. As evolution

proceeds, these names of the hierarchies also become a description of phases of evolutionary processes:

The course of evolution for a system that has its starting point in a sun proceeds in such a way that, at first, the sun is too weak and thus has to throw off its planets so that it can develop itself to a higher stage. The sun then grows in strength, reabsorbs its planets, and becomes a Vulcan. Then the whole is dissolved and the Vulcan globe is emptied. Here we have something similar to the round of the Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim. The sun will dissolve into the cosmos, sacrifice itself, send forth its being into the universe, and thus become a choir of beings like the Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones who advance to new creative tasks in the universe.

Why were the Thrones able to give forth their substance, which was needed by Saturn? Because the Thrones had prepared themselves in an earlier system through seven conditions such as those through which our solar system is now passing. Before a system of Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim comes about, it must first have been a solar system. This means that a sun must have reached the stage when it could unite itself again with the planets; then it can become peripheral. The sun itself becomes a zodiac. What we have come to know as the exalted beings in the zodiac are the remnants that have passed over to us from a previous solar system. What previously evolved within a solar system can now work creatively into cosmic space and bring a new solar system to birth out of its own forces. Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones represent for us the highest hierarchy among divine beings because they have already accomplished their development as a solar system and have risen to an exalted rank of cosmic sacrificial service.

As a result, these beings have come into the closest vicinity of the most exalted divinity of which we can speak, the Trinity, the threefold divine power. We must, therefore, picture the Godhead as beyond the Seraphim. We find this threefold divinity among most peoples as Brahma, Siva and Vishnu, as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The creative source of a new cosmic system also resides within this lofty Trinity. Looking back, we may say that before anything of ancient Saturn came into existence the plan for it had to ripen within a divine Trinity, but the divine Trinity needs beings to execute its plan and these beings must first prepare themselves for the task.⁴¹⁴

Table 2 presents an overview of the five expressions of ‘trinity’ from the Godhead through the hierarchies to the earthly realm of humanity.

Table 2. Five Aspects of Threefold Trinity

Hierarchy	Name of Beings	Capacity	Task	Origin
Trinity	First Logos	Streaming forth of own body	Essence	Seed quintessence from an earlier Solar System
	Second Logos	Streams forth in pictures	Light	
	Third Logos		(warmth)	

⁴¹⁴ Steiner, *The Spiritual Hierarchies and Their Reflection in the Physical World: Zodiac, Planets, Cosmos*, 110, 56-57.

		Sounds through the world	Word	
First Hierarchy	Seraphim	Love	To receive the ideas of the Trinity	Evolved present capacity during an earlier Solar System
	Cherubim	Harmony	To ponder the ideas	
	Thrones	Will	To transform the idea into action	
Second Hierarchy	Kyriotetes Dominions Authorities	Wisdom	Bring to consciousness what the 1 st Hierarchy initiated	Evolved present capacity during an earlier Solar System
	Dynamis Virtues/Mights	Motion	Perpetual movement and metamorphosis in our planet of air, water and vegetation	
	Exusiai Powers	Form (Elohim)	To Create the Solar System and the Human Being	
Third Hierarchy	Archai Principalities	Personality First Beginnings	To engender a future type of human being who is self-directing	Ancient Saturn
	Archangels	Folk Spirit	To guide nations as Folk-Spirits	Ancient Sun
	Angels	Messengers of the Spirit-World	To guide individual Human Beings while on earth	Ancient Moon
Fourth Hierarchy	Humans	Spirits of the Earth	Love out of Freedom	During Earth Evolution
	Animals	Soul of the Earth	Purification of Passion	
	Plants	Life Body of the Earth	Purification of Desires	
	(All three based in the Mineral World)	Physical Body of the Earth		

5.2.2 Metamorphosis and Sacrifice

A complication arises in understanding how the consciousness of a preceding process, a Trinity, condenses through evolution and metamorphoses into a new consciousness. In the above passage, it is expressed as the capacity of ‘cosmic sacrificial service’. Here we can approach the central theme of the spiritual guidance of our solar system being effected by Christ’s sacrifice in

and through evolution. Even though Christ's sacrifice took place only two thousand years ago, Steiner suggests Christ is the central being who holds the Trinity's idea of humanity and offers, through sacrifice, the capacity for humanity to evolve. Steiner describes it as a way of understanding creation in terms of the necessity of dualism in Genesis. The emergence in the cosmos of even the most primitive form of consciousness requires a separation to happen:

As long as our earth forces were still united with the Sun forces, as long, roughly speaking, as the Sun did not shine on to the planet earth from outside, what we call consciousness could not come into being as part of the nature of earth; nor could an astral body, which is the basis for consciousness, enter into the physical and life body. For consciousness to arise a separation, a split had to happen, something had to split off from the sun.⁴¹⁵

The term 'separation' describes the metamorphosis of consciousness through the condensation of ideas into form and matter, thereby providing the foundation for new consciousness to emerge. I suggest that this is called 'sacrifice' in theological or religious terms.

The separation or sacrifice takes place in four ways.⁴¹⁶ First, it takes place when a particular being or group of beings have evolved enough to make the sacrifice willingly in connection with knowing what the intended outcome is. Second, through the condensation process, some elements can no longer remain within the denser material forms, such as the sun elements needing to separate from the earth for matter to appear. In this process, beings also separate from that entity or planet. When the sun separates from the whole earth, the spirit beings of the sun begin to work as a sun intelligence in the light. These are the Elohim or Archai. Third, through the need for something new to emerge, there is a higher guidance for some beings to change how they behave to create a separation consciousness. They make a conscious hindrance in the normal process of evolution so that separation is felt and a new impulse is set in place. Steiner sees this as the emergence of beings of hindrance who at first work constructively in evolution but also develop into evil beings later. The process of God commanding hindrance is part of Steiner's cosmology, which aligns with the tenets of Theodicy. The images of the wars in heaven reflect this separation within any rank of beings.⁴¹⁷ Fourth, through each process of evolution of consciousness, a part of a rank of beings manages to ascend to the new consciousness, and others remain at the earlier level and condense into a material form that reflects the earlier forms of consciousness. According to Steiner's evolution of species, the emergence of the animals and plants is that they were part of our human hierarchy but reflect earlier forms of consciousness that have had to separate for a time to attain

⁴¹⁵ *Genesis: Secrets of Creation - the First Book of Moses*, 122, 34.

⁴¹⁶ *Occult Science: An Outline*, 13, 102-221. Chapter four is an extensive explanation of these four processes.

⁴¹⁷ *The Spiritual Hierarchies and Their Reflection in the Physical World: Zodiac, Planets, Cosmos*, 110, 126-

freedom. In the further course of time, human beings must evolve their consciousness so that these other ranks of creation can reintegrate into our hierarchy as fellow creative beings. We can feel the other kingdoms are all part of the threefold ranks of our hierarchy and that they represent aspects of an earlier consciousness standing there as a mirror calling us to awaken and reintegrate them. We are the current threefold 'trinity' developing our creative capacities under the guidance of the Trinity and the three Hierarchies of angelic beings. The future evolution of creation stems from this spiritual guidance, the Wisdom of the Word, being transformed to inner wisdom in the human being: "and when thus resurrected in the inner life, in the I of the human being, it grows into the seed of Love."⁴¹⁸ This transformation occurring within the human self is akin to Paul's account the evolution of creation in union with the first fruits of the spirit in humanity:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. (Rm 8:19-23)

For Steiner, the accounts of Genesis and the Gospel of St. John offer the language of symbols to recapitulate preceding processes as they manifest for our phase of evolution. Their meaning is hidden or lost in the languages used and needs to be revealed again. They are written in Hebrew and Koine Greek, languages "which work upon the soul quite differently than any modern language can... it did at one time have the effect of when a letter or word was sounded it called up a picture in the soul. Pictures arose in the soul of someone who entered with living interest into the words and let them work upon them".⁴¹⁹ Steiner's Christology is an attempt to make these experiences of antiquity available to the current consciousness and languages of our times.

5.3 The Mystery of Golgotha: a Reflection of Christ's work in Humanity

In his lecture, *The Mystery of Golgotha*, Steiner suggests that "the secret behind The Mystery of Golgotha is the most profound secret in world evolution".⁴²⁰ He explains that this mystery is how Jesus became Christ in his thirtieth year and how the event gives humanity the

⁴¹⁸ *Occult Science: An Outline*, 13, 312.

⁴¹⁹ *Genesis: Secrets of Creation - the First Book of Moses*, 122, 3.

⁴²⁰ *The Christian Mystery*, 97, 47.

impulse towards further purification and ennoblement of their souls through what Christ achieved in the three bodies⁴²¹ of Jesus of Nazareth.

This differentiation between Jesus of Nazareth as the fully human nature and Christ as the fully divine nature united in one personality is similar to the Nestorian heresy. Here it becomes necessary to find the valid central teaching and keep it separate from the complexities of arguments and church schisms. In explaining this understanding of Christ, Steiner does not adopt what became the orthodox Christological doctrines of the Creeds. Instead, Steiner follows the Nestorian rejection of the *Theotokos* of Mary and the monophysite (one inseparable nature) claim of the hypostatic union in Jesus through his birth. He agrees with Nestorius on the radical dyophysitism of two natures and the prosopic (apparent) union of the divinity of Christ with the human nature of Jesus. Steiner also engages with the heretical Sabellian concept of modalism or three modes or aspects of divine revelation. As a third factor, Steiner made use of the Valentinian Gnostic idea of the complementary qualities of syzygy, which we will consider in more detail in chapter six. Without establishing the validity of Steiner's position on these complex theological debates, this section will present how Steiner suggests aspects of the two natures, one divine, the other human, become a complete hypostatic union in one persona. I will argue that Steiner revises the positive aspects of Nestorianism, Sabellianism and Valentinianism and suggests that a modified recognition of each of the teachings has a place in the understanding of Christ Jesus in current Christian doctrine. In a similar way to Steiner's description of the union of the seven Archai beings into one entity, or persona, in the biblical concept of Elohim, so did he understand the coming together of the divine and human natures in Christ Jesus.

5.3.1 Logos and Christ

Steiner differentiates Logos, Christ and Jesus as three aspects of the one being. This section describes Steiner's thoughts on the working of several entities as a unified being. It offers Steiner's understanding of how the collaboration of the Logos, Christ and Jesus works through and for the whole of evolution and humanity.

Steiner describes the three aspects of Logoi: "The third Logos is so selfless that it lets its being sound through the world. The second streams forth in pictures. However, the first Logos lets itself stream forth its [sic] own body. That signifies the highest degree of selflessness, when a being is able to allow its own being to flow forth".⁴²² In each of the three, the other two are also

⁴²¹ As indicated in the Glossary, Steiner describes that the human being has three bodies: the physical, etheric and astral bodies. Christ worked in all of these bodies as part of the redemptive work.

⁴²² Steiner, *Esoteric Lessons, 1904-1909: Lectures, Notes, Meditations, and Exercises*, 266/1, 151-52.

perceptible. The first and second sound forth in the third. The first and third radiate as pictures in the second. In the first, the second and third stream forth in essence or fragrance. At first, only the third Logos is recognisable to us humans. We have to work our way to understanding the higher aspects of the Trinity. The inner idea and will that the Trinity hold as the inner intention for our solar evolution are already implicit in these three aspects:

We speak of three Logoi, of that which we call the Trinity. The creative Word, which is the third Logos. It is the sound of the world, that sounds through the world from the beings that have become creative through the Word. There are yet higher, loftier powers: they are the creative light. The human being will also one day be a luminous being. Warmth raised to a higher stage becomes light. (All warmth is sacrifice!) Humans will in the distant future not only be “sound”; they will evolve into a radiant, luminous being that is light. That lofty being that is creative for our being is the second Logos, which is creative light. What goes through the world as the highest revelation is the aroma of the world. That is a principle of creation yet higher than the sound of the world and the light of the world.⁴²³

Steiner speaks of the Trinity in a way that relates directly to our senses of hearing, sight and smell. From there, developing the spiritual senses for understanding the Trinity is connected. These three aspects of the Trinity form the highest trilogy of what the human being will become through our evolution. Our inherited human condition is the result of very long evolutionary stages. The hierarchies offer ways, through their acquired capacities, of manifesting the preconditions for the human being to appear in the form where we can participate in developing these three more evolved aspects of our being. As a result, the three Logoi of the Trinity imbue these higher conditions of consciousness with wisdom. Steiner gives these three higher aspects of our humanity, known as Manas, Buddhi and Atman in the eastern thought system, the names Spirit-Self, Life-Spirit, and Spirit-Man, which I will refer to as the Spirit-Human.

The Trinity holds the essential nature of our full potential, which, through history, is slowly awakened and graced to humanity through the hierarchies, specifically through Christ. The three Logoi of the Trinity work one through the other two in succession. At one level, this waiting for another Logos to become operative when the right conditions of consciousness are prepared can be likened to Sabellian modality in the sense of the Gnostic emanations or Aeons that work successively. At the same time, the three persons or Logoi are present in the constitution of the Trinity from the outset. This model can be called soft monotheism or modified Trinitarianism.⁴²⁴ The modes of the Trinity are such that each Logos employs the complementary dualism of the other two, which, even though Trinitarian, reflects the syzygy ideas presented by Valentinus.

⁴²³ Ibid., 171.

⁴²⁴ Stephen Prothero, *God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World, and Why Their Differences Matter* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2011), 68-70.

The appearance of duality in the physical world presents a theological dilemma. Duality is a condition that manifests in the process of separation for consciousness to progress. In the physical realm of our current bodily state, this separation appears in the dualities in Genesis' first six days of creation. The separation into man and woman is a final picture for understanding how separation and the constructive interchange between the two brings about a new consciousness. The spiritual nature of the Trinity as a complementary syzygy offers an understanding of the further development of consciousness. This duality and creative interchange are not limited to man and woman in a traditional sense but, of necessity, includes any two beings that enter into a second-personal relationship with each other.⁴²⁵ The social implications for modern life would mean that the human being can enter into creative relations with any other as a syzygy. The fact that the names of Gods are male and female is a matter for theological anthropology to develop into more applicable terminology and goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

Understanding the Trinity as a complementary syzygy means that Steiner's concept of Christ is not synonymous with the Trinity's Logos or the Son God aspect. How can the workings of the Christ Impulse – of the seed idea of humanity – be described? How do the Logos and the Son God work through Christ and Jesus? Steiner argues that these names are all terms for different aspects of a being that comes into existence through evolution. Again, Steiner adopts a form of modalism that only describes the ongoing development of Christ's being and expression in the world. Steiner argues that the spiritual world and spiritual beings evolve along with the earthly world and earthly beings. It is challenging to differentiate between the descriptions of each spiritual being through their evolution and the heresy of modalism that would describe the singular God working in different modes. Steiner understands Christ Jesus as a new being who came into existence through the mystery of Golgotha.⁴²⁶ Paul compares Adam and Christ and describes this new being as the appearance the last Adam which gives us a spiritual body:

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit". The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man. (1 Cor15:42-49)

⁴²⁵ Christa L McKirland, *God's Provision, Humanity's Need: The Gift of Our Dependence* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2022).

⁴²⁶ Steiner, *The Fifth Gospel: From the Akashic Record*, 148, 31.

In Steiner's descriptions, Christ is not the Second Person of the Trinity and not Jesus of Nazareth. Instead, Steiner argues that the Creative Word Logos of the Trinity works through the central Sun-Spirit, Christ, who incarnates into Jesus of Nazareth. For this to happen, that a divine being of the sun could incarnate and join fully with the nature of the human being in Jesus required a long process of transformation, which Steiner describes as the three pre-earthly deeds of Christ.

5.3.2 The Pre-Earthly Deeds of Christ

Another aspect Steiner speaks on is how we can only understand Christ fully if we see the Mystery of Golgotha as an idea that expresses Christ's working through the evolution of the earth and humanity. He describes how, at a certain point in evolution, the sun and the other planets separate from the primordial substances and suggests that each heavenly body has consciousness or a planetary intelligence.⁴²⁷ Therefore, the sun has a hierarchy of beings within its spiritual sphere. In his cosmology, the Elohim or Archai are the sun beings who carry the sun's intelligence. The most advanced of these sun beings is the Christ being. This Sun-Spirit has been known throughout history, in each culture, by a different name. Before the incarnation, Christ worked into evolution from the sun. Pre-Christian cultures perceived this working and had initiation mysteries to connect with it as it metamorphosed in each age. Especially in our time, the time since the end of the Ice-Age, or the Post-Atlantean epoch, the various cultures had names and symbols for Christ. In the Vedic tradition, the name is Vishvakarman, the all-maker. Ahura-Mazda, or Ohrmazd, is the highest creator in the Yasna of Persia. In Egypt, Ra was the shining sun around the earth and Osiris with the counterpart of Isis, the earthly representative. Helios and later Apollo is the Sun God in Greece. Each symbolic myth story reflects the stage of working of the Sun-Spirit on the journey to grace the human being with a drop of its essence. Steiner argues that he follows the threefold teachings of Zarathustra, Osiris, Pythagoras and Anaxagoras, and says the sun has a threefold structure: "the spiritual sun, the elemental sun and the sun in the earth's ether... When the disciples of the initiates of old looked beyond the Earth into the cosmos, they perceived the spiritual being of the Sun in the physical Sun and its effects. In essence, this being was the one who would later be called the Christ".⁴²⁸ Steiner sought to frame his theology not only rigorously in keeping with evolution, but also drawing on the great mythic traditions of world religion and cultures.

In understanding different cultural mythologies reflecting the changing work Christ through history Steiner's theology is a modified modalism and is extended to Trinitarian modalism. Steiner

⁴²⁷ *Rosicrucianism and Modern Initiation; Mystery Centres of the Middle Ages*, vol. 233 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1965), 49-61; *The Spiritual Hierarchies and Their Reflection in the Physical World: Zodiac, Planets, Cosmos*, 110, 54-66.

⁴²⁸ *The Sun Mystery and the Mystery of Death and Resurrection*, vol. 211 (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: SteinerBooks, 2006), 128-29.

acknowledges the three distinct persons of the Trinity and explains that they form a higher unity in the same sacrificial gesture of uniting their understanding and creative will in one idea of the free human being and that each aspect has its own mode of working according to the evolutionary needs through time. Therefore, the Three-in-One co-eternal persons of the Trinity and the individual modality of work and revelation of each in creation are not incompatible if the assumption of God is only one in number derived from the Hebrew Testament. Hence it is modified or Trinitarian modalism.

Stated another way, as humanity evolved, there came a certain point where another consciousness needed to emerge within our being. So the spiritual beings used their capacities to condense the nature of the human being. This condensation caused separations to occur both on the earth and in the cosmos. Higher beings on earth gave seeds to humanity for subsequent evolutionary development. At first, these were from the hierarchy we call the Angels who had developed a capacity to work into humanity. Their essence created groups of people and races, and nations were born. Then the separation of the sun from the earth took place. Finally, beings, who had advanced to a higher aspect of the true nature of the essential idea of the Trinity, departed with the sun. From that time on, the Sun-Spirit, the highest of these beings, undertook the spiritual guidance of humanity. They worked from the sun to drop a part of its essence into humankind. This essence would initiate the step from the communities of nations to a universal humanity by transforming the love held in the hereditary blood to a universal love of the community of all humanity. This process is what Steiner calls the Mystery of Golgotha.⁴²⁹

From the middle of the Lemurian (Palaeozoic) epoch, where we received the capacity to know good and evil, the nature of the human body was changed and further densified. Christ saw that the human being needed guidance and grace to realise the idea of ‘love through freedom’ flowing from the Trinity. He had compassion for humanity and sacrificed his place as the spirit of the sun. Christ undertook a journey to empty himself to the point of being able to enter the earth within the human being and, through the capacities inherent in the human being, grace a part of his essence that would then unfold into the future as the three higher qualities of our spiritual nature. This journey to incarnation had three phases known as the pre-earthly deeds of Christ.

At that stage, humanity in Lemuria, situated between Africa, India and Australia, from where many migrations took place, and the physical entities that existed were more advanced than today’s animals and less developed than today’s humans. It was a form that would have become

⁴²⁹ *The Christian Mystery*, 97, 48-49.

decadent if higher beings had not poured a new seed, the soul, into the physical house. The Angels, who were at one level higher than human beings, could pour part of their soul essence into humanity so that it might develop further. This new part enabled the human being to “rise from the ground, stand upright, walk, learn to talk, grow independent”.⁴³⁰ Steiner sums up these capacities as the three steps of standing upright, learning to speak and expressing our thoughts in language. The principle that consciousness cannot arise without separation also holds good here. Separating the spiritual and the material had to happen for these three faculties to emerge, which are the essence of our humanity.

5.3.3 Christ and Jesus

I have described how Steiner suggests Christ emerged as the Sun-Spirit in the course of evolution and became the bearer of the creative word. We now need to follow the earthly counterpart in the appearance of Jesus as the human being through whom Christ came into the realm of human evolution. In this section, I will present the pre-earthly times of Jesus of Nazareth in relation to the Christ Deed and explain the essential aspects of the incarnation in the next chapter.

Steiner suggests a double process of placing a seed from one being into another and crystallising something out of the spirit into the material. It might be compared to an act of blessing. When a group leader ends their time as the holder of the group consciousness, they bless their successor with an anointing or laying on of hands. An example would be Isaac blessing Jacob. What transpires is that what lived in the one now moves into the other. It is transferred and becomes a living spirit in the other. We also know this capacity of blessing expresses itself when we say to someone that we believe in them. They can feel something beyond their own abilities become available to them. This energy then crystallises within them as they practice and manifest their capacity or leadership as an expression of the human level of the process. The event of the incarnation of Christ in Jesus was such an event. Steiner explains how the incarnation of Christ in Jesus, as described in the Gospels, had other steps to prepare it.

The epochs when the human being was guided or graced by the work of the Angels are of great relevance for Steiner’s Christology. The three human faculties of standing upright, language and expressing thoughts could be called Steiner’s description of the human condition. He emphasises how through the stages of Lemuria (Palaeozoic era) and Atlantis (Cenozoic era), these three aspects of our nature emerge as the basis for what we need to achieve freedom. While the Angels’ work directs these steps, it is the work of Christ that holds it for the human being alone,

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 48.

attained through a collaboration between Christ and the being who becomes Jesus of Nazareth. Steiner names these three steps as the pre-earthly deeds of Christ.⁴³¹

In Genesis, eating the apple symbolises the formative evolutionary stage in our nature where the desire for gaining knowledge was in the physical world through the senses. For Steiner, the concept of original sin is a way of trying to describe this change. It was a 'fall' in that we entered the process of losing our consciousness of the spirit, a veiling and a condensing into the sense world, which by the grace given through the deed of Christ Jesus, which Steiner calls the Christ impulse, the corresponding unveiling could take place.⁴³²

Therefore, the expulsion of Eve and Adam from Paradise is not a punishment but a symbolic representation of the condensation or cooling into the physical world and progressive separation from the consciousness of the spiritual world. The precise dates are unnecessary as these are descriptions of long periods where evolutionary steps happen. Following the spiritual guidance of humanity, when human beings were becoming more physical, a part of the human being was kept back in the spiritual world. As a result, a separation occurred, represented by the sixth day of creation in the words 'image' and 'likeness.' The descent into the material world and gaining knowledge through the senses were implicit in the ideas of our evolution. A future seeding was needed for the journey of developing a re-connection to the spiritual world. To do that, a pure fire mind, as Origen calls it, was kept in the spiritual world. Steiner has described the location of this pure soul as the Adam Kadmon in the whole structure of the solar system.⁴³³ The child Dionysus held in the thigh of Zeus to be born a god-man also reflects this process.⁴³⁴ In the Kabbalist philosophy, the concept of Adam Kadmon describes many of the links of which Steiner has spoken:

Adam Kadmon is the primordial world which is "in the likeness of" the Infinite Light which preceded it and which was concealed in the process of creation. This means that even though Adam Kadmon is a world, meaning that it comes into being through the concealment of the Infinite Light, it is such an elevated plane of reality that it is "in the likeness of" the Infinite Light (which, by nature, "precedes" the world of Adam Kadmon). Thus, although the world of Adam Kadmon is a world, it is a level so sublime, pure and transcendent that it is almost imperceptible. It cleaves to and mirrors the original Infinite Light. In Kabbala, the world of Adam Kadmon represents the transcendent will of G-d. G-d's desire for the Creation and how it is manifest are planned out in one broad, all-encompassing overview, without separation into specific details. This is called

⁴³¹ *Approaching the Mystery of Golgotha*, 152, 68-91.

⁴³² *The Concepts of Original Sin and Grace*, vol. 127 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1973); *The World of the Senses and the World of the Spirit*, vol. 134 (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2014).

⁴³³ Bosse, *The Mutual Evolution of Earth and Humanity: Sketch of a Geology and Paleontology of the Living Earth*, 78-80.

⁴³⁴ John A Sanford, *Fate, Love, and Ecstasy: Wisdom from the Lesser-Known Goddesses of the Greeks* (Wilmette, Illinois: Chiron Publications, 1995), 95-114.

the machshava kedumah, or "primordial thought" of Adam Kadmon. The primordial thought functions as the blueprint for all of Creation.⁴³⁵

Steiner explains this complex process in the lecture cycle, *Approaching the Mystery of Golgotha*.⁴³⁶ He makes the actual work of Christ in the human being very clear. At first, Christ's work through evolution has created the human condition, and second, the work we need to do on our spiritual self, awakening the I-am within us through Christ in me. This process described in Part One of the thesis is the path to selflessness. While the human being can now take steps within their individuated self through the inner aspects of thinking, the earlier developments had to be helped from the I-am from the spiritual worlds through Christ:

To know Christ means making oneself familiar with all the impulses of human development that trickle into our soul in such a way that they glow through, warm through, and call up to active soul existence everything in the soul that is inclined to selflessness... We can come to understand that what Christ did for the development of the earth is contained in the fundamental impulse of selflessness, and that what he can become for the conscious development of the human soul is the school of selflessness! We become aware of this best if we consider the Mystery of Golgotha in its broader context.⁴³⁷

As mentioned above, in these lectures, Steiner explains that the evolution of humanity through Lemuria and Atlantis creates the three capacities of standing upright, speaking and language. At the same time, there is the condensation of the physical sense organs, the metabolic organs and the soul organs through which we can will, feel and think. These were in danger of becoming chaotic, consumed by the forces of the earth and negative spiritual influences. These forces are named Lucifer and Ahriman by Steiner, Leviathan and Behemoth in the Hebrew Bible, the Devil and Satan in Christian tradition and the primeval snake and the dragon in the Revelation to John. These beings tend to draw humanity away from living in a balanced fashion where the spiritual development towards selflessness, or love through freedom, can occur. Steiner argues that one tendency, Lucifer, would draw us away from developing through the material and live in spirit alone; the other, Ahriman, would remove us entirely from the spirit and create a material world alone.

Steiner names the part of the human soul that remained in the spiritual worlds variously as the sister soul of humanity, the pure soul of humanity, the Nathan soul, or the Adam soul as it was before the fall.⁴³⁸ The Nathan Soul, who later becomes Jesus of Nazareth, and Christ build a

⁴³⁵ Moshe Miller, "Chaos and the Primordial; a Level So Sublime It Is Almost Imperceptible," [www.chabad.org](https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/380321/jewish/Chaos-and-the-Primordial.htm), https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/380321/jewish/Chaos-and-the-Primordial.htm (accessed September 6, 2021).

⁴³⁶ Steiner, *Approaching the Mystery of Golgotha*, 152.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 118-19.

⁴³⁸ The Nathan Soul is the sister soul of Adam working through history and whose incarnation is prepared through the priestly lineage of Nathan.

relationship through their mutual compassion for the process of human beings in the physical world. The ongoing work of transformation of the human being is born of the profound suffering the Nathan Soul experiences through being the sister soul to the earthly human. This suffering allows the Nathan Soul to offer its existence to the Christ forces repeatedly and thus transform and allow the Christ to enter his being.⁴³⁹ The Christ gives up, or sacrifices, the position of being the sun spirit and enters into the being of the Nathan Soul. Steiner describes it as similar to the Baptism in the Jordan, except it happened at these points in the spiritual world. Each time an evolutionary step of the human being was about to descend into chaos or be drawn by the adversary forces into other channels of evolution, Christ interpenetrated the Nathan Soul. That was a preliminary stage to the Mystery of Golgotha:

Through the suffusion with the Christ being, the future Nathan Jesus then assumed etheric human form. With that, something new entered into the cosmos. This then radiated forth over the earth and made it possible for the physical forms of the earthly human being, into which the power of the etheric Christ being flowed, to protect itself from the destruction that would have forced its way in, if the formative power that makes it a proper human being had not been able to shine into, interpenetrate, and live within it. If the formative power, which is able to shine in because the first Christ events took place, had not flowed in with the physical Sun forces, chaos would necessarily have come. What the human received through this has been living in the evolution of humanity since ancient Lemuria.⁴⁴⁰

Through these events, the human body we have now developed in a way that the various faculties that make us human were able to remain open and selfless as they entered the current step in our development. If Christ had not sacrificed to join with humanity's destiny, the various aspects of our humanity would have remained chaotic and egotistical. However, through the spiritual deeds of Christ and the Nathan Soul, we have forces within us that allow the human being to have organs that serve the further development of our spiritual nature. The fourth step in the Mystery of Golgotha took place on the physical plane and is presented in the narrative of the Bible. This fourth experience of the Nathan Soul continues in the incarnation of the physical life of Jesus of Nazareth, who again suffers when experiencing the human condition. Steiner speaks of this step as helping to balance the inner forces of thinking becoming chaotic and selfish. Table 3 presents an overview of these four deeds of the Mystery of Golgotha. The consequences of that deed are still working through the sheaths of our human essence and will be the focus of chapter six.

⁴³⁹ Peter Selg, *The Suffering of the Nathan Soul* (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: SteinerBooks, 2016).

⁴⁴⁰ Steiner, *Approaching the Mystery of Golgotha*, 152, 80-81.

Table 3. Pre-Earthly Deeds of Christ and Jesus

Evolutionary Epoch	Human Faculties	Christ	Adam Kadmon and Jesus of Nazareth	Preserved in Historical Myth
Late-Lemuria	Uprightness Sense Organs become selfless	As Sun-Spirit First pre-earthly Deed Christ joins with Nathan Soul	Expulsion from Eden Separation of First Adam (Earthly) and Nathan Soul as part of Adam Kadmon in Mother Loge Who then condenses/cool (Origen) from Archetype mind to Archangelic mind through the first Deed	Krishna Vedic Giant Ymir Germanic
Early-Atlantis	Speech Organs become selfless	Second pre-earthly Deed Christ joins with Nathan Soul	Nathan Soul Sister Soul to Earthly Adam condenses/cool (Origen) from Archangelic mind to Angelic mind through the second Deed	Mute Sphinx Egyptian and Greek
Late- Atlantis	Thought expressed in Language Soul organs of thinking, feeling, willing	Third pre-earthly Deed Christ joins with Nathan Soul	Nathan Soul Sister Soul to Earthly Adam condenses/cool (Origen) from Angelic mind to Human mind through the third Deed	St. George and the Dragon Middle Ages Osiris - Egypt Apollo – Greek Adonis – Asia Minor Mithras – Persia Europe – Baldur Hebrew – Ejeher esher ejeher
Post-Atlantean	The Human Self is Born I-Am Individualisation	Fourth Deed of The Mystery of Golgotha	Christ descends as Spirit of the Sun into Jesus of Nazareth Phil 2:5-11	Biblical New Testament

5.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented Steiner's ideas about the pre-existence of Christ and how the different aspects of his work in spiritual worlds can be clearly differentiated in Trinity, Logos, Elohim, Christ, the pure Adam Soul and the Earthly Adam. Through the process of evolution, each time the Christ, the Sun-Spirit, united with the pure Nathan Soul of Humanity, forces were released to help the human being retain the evolving human faculties for their further development.

There are forces at work on the earth that would leave the human being's faculties in chaos and others that would hold them in a state of selfishness. The Christ being's work is to help develop human faculties into selfless organs that serve the development of the individual. Through the three pre-earthly deeds of Christ, the Sun-Spirit and the Nathan Soul transformed the nature of the human being and transformed themselves towards taking on the human form.

I have also argued that a deeper understanding of orthodox teachings can emerge by focusing on the central constructive tenets of what is commonly regarded as heresies. These constructive tenets reflect the insights that Steiner offers. In this way, the traditional problem of the orthodox position versus the heretical becomes a new theological possibility, such as the Trinitarian modalism proposed here.

In chapter six, I will present Steiner's ideas of the incarnation of Christ in Jesus of Nazareth. This will include how that was prepared and the complexity required to unite the fully divine aspect of Christ with the fully human part of Jesus of Nazareth. Steiner's ideas on the role that both the Nathan Soul and Mary play in that will also be presented. Further, I will offer Steiner's insights about the life and suffering of Jesus and the constitutional changes in the human being through the deed of the Christ Jesus at Golgotha, the events of Easter, Ascension and Pentecost.

CHAPTER 6: THE INCARNATION - BIRTH, DEATH, RESURRECTION, ASCENSION AND PENTECOST

Before describing Steiner's understanding of the incarnation of Christ, a bridge between the spiritual pre-earthly deeds and the earthly work of Christ Jesus needs to be presented. The central idea in *Christianity as Mystical Fact* is that key pre-Christian mystery centres took on students and gave secret instruction and preparation towards initiation to the neophytes. In particular, earthly cultural founders, who were initiated into the mysteries, prepared humanity for the incarnation of Christ. Understanding that Christ was perceived in different pre-Christian cultures is a characteristic feature of Steiner's teachings, which sheds light on his contribution to Christology. Steiner focuses in his lectures on seven prominent cultural founder personalities: Manu, Krishna, Zarathustra, Hermes, Moses, Elijah and Buddha.⁴⁴¹ As Augustine says: "What we now call the Christian religion existed amongst the ancients, and was from the beginning of the human race until Christ came in the flesh; from which time the already existing true religion began to be styled Christian".⁴⁴² Steiner gives insights about how these historical, cultural founders taught wisdom and knowledge that guided people to connect with Christ, the Sun-Spirit, as the archetype of our humanity.

While working at the Camphill curative home, I read a book about some of the core tenets of Steiner's philosophy before going to my Christian Community formation.⁴⁴³ One of the chapters presented Steiner's ideas on "the two Jesus children" and what the Luke and Matthew genealogies could be saying. Once I had read it, I felt deeply disturbed in my Christian knowledge of the Bible and what had been the foundations of my Christian life. For several years, I had to lay the book aside and did not return to thinking, talking or reading about these ideas. I noticed that they were in the background, germinating into a more certain knowledge, a 'yes, I believe this is true' knowing. This was, I discovered retrospectively, the process of pondering as explained in the section on contemplative phenomenology in this thesis. Once that certainty arose, an open willingness to further enquiry began. Pondering the imaginations and letting them bear fruit through listening and adding further ideas along the way has become part of my method with Steiner's descriptions.

⁴⁴¹ *The Occult Significance of the Bhagavad Gita*, vol. 146 (New York: Anthroposophic Press, Inc., 1968); *The Bhagavad Gita and the Epistles of Paul*, vol. 142 (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1971); *Turning Points in Spiritual History: Zarathustra, Hermes, Moses, Elijah, Buddha, Christ*, vol. 60 & 61 (Great Barrington, Massachusetts: SteinerBooks, 2007).

⁴⁴² Meredith F. Eller and Augustine, "The "Retractationes" of Saint Augustine," *Church History* 18, no. 3 (1949): I, xiii, 3.

⁴⁴³ Frederik Willem Zeylmans Van Emmichoven, *The Reality in Which We Live: An Introduction to Rudolf Steiner's Spiritual Science* (New Knowledge Books, 1964), 85-102.

6.1 The Earthly Preparations

I will limit this overview to what Steiner calls the Post-Atlantean epoch, the Holocene/post-ice-age epoch in evolutionary terms, or the time since the Flood in biblical historical terms. Noah is the first post-flood figure to begin a cultural stream in biblical history. Steiner suggests that Noah was a highly advanced being who brought collective wisdom across from Atlantis. Towards the end of the pre-flood evolutionary cycle, Noah, a great teacher, the sun oracle, prepared seven personalities to be the founding teachers of our post-Ice Age cultures. He is the mythological figure in Hinduism known as Manu (the primal human being) who, being warned by an avatar of Vishnu of a flood, built a boat that brought the Vedas along with the seven sages or Holy Rishis to safety and then found the ancient Vedanta culture. Steiner calls this first Post-Atlantean epoch the Ancient Indian age, which takes place before the historical recording of the Vedas during the later emergence of Hinduism. During this time, the event recorded in the Bhagavad Gita preserves the event of the first pre-earthly deed of Christ.⁴⁴⁴ The figure of Krishna, as the earthly manifestation of Vishnu, the second person of the Vedanta Trimurti, speaks through the charioteer to Arjuna. Steiner points out that Krishna's teaching is “expressed in the deep privacy of the individual soul”.⁴⁴⁵ Krishna enveloped the Nathan Soul of Humanity, Adam Kadmon, and inspired these teachings: “Krishna spoke in such a super-human way; why he is the best teacher for the human ego, why he appears as an overcoming of the human ego; why his qualities are so sublime”.⁴⁴⁶ In this same lecture, Steiner speaks of how he had been criticised for presenting that Christ Jesus combines forces from every region in the cosmos. He encouraged his audience to continue developing the ideas and imaginations he offered to gain a feeling of the importance of this knowledge. The Mystery of Golgotha is the collaborative working of all these beings for the sake of the human self.⁴⁴⁷ Klaus J. Bracker explores the closer connection between the Vedic Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and Steiner’s work in *Veda and Living Logos*,⁴⁴⁸ especially the role of Krishna and the understanding of Logos in both Vedic and Christian Philosophy.

Steiner’s Post-Atlantean epoch timeline coincides with individuation and loss of knowledge of the spirit in humanity. This process of our consciousness becoming ever more disconnected from spirit awareness and bound up with the material world was balanced for humankind by the cultural founders and mystery centres teaching about the nature of the spiritual worlds. These teachings

⁴⁴⁴ Steiner, *The Occult Significance of the Bhagavad Gita*, 146; *The Bhagavad Gita and the Epistles of Paul*, 142.

⁴⁴⁵ *The Bhagavad Gita and the Epistles of Paul*, 142, 82.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

⁴⁴⁸ Klaus J. Bracker, *Veda and Living Logos; Anthroposophy and Integral Yoga* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 2018).

specifically provided ways of new connections to the spiritual sun and to prepare humanity for the incarnation of Christ. The pre-Christian mysteries provided symbols and mythologies that reflected the knowledge of Christ's journey to incarnation appropriate for each step in the evolution of consciousness. The way Steiner reflects upon the *Bhagavad Gita* and Krishna shows the emergence of the first post-flood teachings of the inner path of humanity.

Steiner's cultural comment is focused on the Mesopotamian Cradle and is therefore not representative of all humanity. He does acknowledge that not everyone is at the same point of consciousness, both individually and culturally. This statement is not one of the superiority of any particular culture. He states that his work focused on these particular cultures' contribution through their appearance and ascendance to high cultures. He acknowledges that other cultures have their contributions to make towards the evolution of humanity. In this context, he mentions positive aspects of, for example, indigenous Australian, Polynesian, North American and Mayan/Mexican cultures, among others, at various points in his teachings. My book on the *Festivals in the Southern Hemisphere*⁴⁴⁹ takes this perspective as its premise. To elaborate on them here goes beyond the scope of this thesis but needs mentioning to mitigate any incorrect interpretation of Steiner's cultural focus.

The second Post-Atlantean age came at the time of the Ancient Persian culture under the leadership of Zaratas, Zoroaster or Zarathustra, who was also the founder of Zoroastrianism at the time of the Babylonian Captivity in a subsequent incarnation under the same name. He became a historical figure in Persia during the biblical Babylonian captivity of the Hebrew people. While the people of the Vedanta period still had a direct connection to the spirit, humanity needed to connect more fully to the material world. The Persian culture brought with it the ennobling of the material world, such as grain development and early technology. The underlying philosophy moved from the union of all things to a dualism of light and dark. So epitomised in teachings recorded in the Avesta of the Sun-Spirit, Ahura Mazdao, the great sun Aura, the spiritual master and creator from which the Ormuzd, the spirit of light, arose and Angra Mainyus or Ahriman, the spirit of darkness. Steiner links his teachings on the dual nature of the 'forces of hindrance' to this Persian teaching.⁴⁵⁰

Two pupils of Zarathustra received the knowledge of space and time essential for the third age through the principles of spiritual economy. Steiner calls it the Egyptian, Chaldean, and Semitic age. One, Hermes, is the founder of the Egyptian mysteries and teaches knowledge of space,

⁴⁴⁹ Samson, *Festivals in the Southern Hemisphere : Insights into Cosmic and Seasonal Aspects of the Whole Earth*.

⁴⁵⁰ Steiner, *Turning Points in Spiritual History: Zarathustra, Hermes, Moses, Elijah, Buddha, Christ*, 60 & 61, 13-14.

including how the sun forces work into the physical world. He is known to be under the influence of the Egyptian deity Thoth, a self-begotten representative of the sun deity and a wisdom teacher of humanity, especially in understanding both the physical and moral laws. In Greece, he was called Hermes Trismegistos. The Osiris-Isis-Horus legend is Trinitarian and reflects the changes that were taking place in the human constitution.

Moses, the other pupil of Zarathustra, holds the knowledge of time. Steiner understands the account of the descendants of Abraham going to Egypt under the leadership of the dreamer Joseph so that the two streams can mutually influence each other. Through Moses, the Sun Mysteries held in the Osiris myth were incorporated into the Hebrew tradition, especially the teachings of the one sun principle of the Pharaoh Akhenaton. It reflects how the polytheistic Israelites became Yahwist henotheistic in belief.⁴⁵¹ Henotheism is the stage between the polytheism of Abraham and the monotheism of the Jews returning from Babylon. It is an understanding of having one unique deity among many, Yahweh, attending to the Hebrews.

Elijah appears shortly after the completion of the first temple during the period of Kings in biblical history. For Steiner, Elijah is the guiding folk Spirit of the Hebrew people and appears again in John the Baptist. The stage of consciousness he represents is hearing the divine speaking within, no longer in the outer voice of nature but in the still breath of the human soul (1 Kgs 19: 9-13).

A further turning point was at the end of the biblical age of kings when the first temple was destroyed. This time broadly coincides with the changes noted by the Axial Age, namely, Second Isaiah, Confucius, Lao Tzu, Pythagoras, The Captivity in Babylon and Buddha. As to the influence of the teachings of Zarathustra upon the Hebrews in captivity, the historical and cultural expression upon returning to Jerusalem is one of Monotheism, one priesthood and one temple.⁴⁵² Along with that, a double messianic expectation is also apparent in the teachings of the Essenes.⁴⁵³

In this period, Gautama Buddha reached a stage of enlightenment within the Hindu culture and brought a change in the direction of the spiritual path of the times. The spiritual inheritance in Brahmanism now had the way of the inner striving of the individual added to it. Buddha incorporated into humanity, through the eightfold path, the principle of compassion and love as a counter gesture to falling too deep into the physical world. Steiner argues that

⁴⁵¹ John J Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible, Third Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018), 409.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Barbara Thiering, *Jesus the Man* (Random House, 2005).

what the Gautama Buddha designated Nirvana... is a world of redemption and bliss that can never be expressed in terms of things that may be apprehended in the material state in which we have our being. There is nothing in this physical world or in the wide expanse of the cosmos that can awaken in humankind a realization of the sublime truth underlying such redemption.⁴⁵⁴

A final point in this brief insight into the pre-Christian esoteric leadership of humanity is the role of Abraham. For Steiner, Abraham was a Brahman and was taken from the Mesopotamian cradle from Ur to the land of the Canaanites. During his migration, he was influenced by the teachings of the Egyptian Pharaoh and Melchizedek. Steiner argues that Brahmanism and Abrahamic faith principles rest upon the spiritual initiation that comes to those of the correct lineage and following the law. Buddha brought the inner path to cultivate love and compassion within Brahmanism, but it could only develop to a certain point within that culture. Steiner suggests that once an impulse has reached its fullest expression, it needs a second culture to take it further. The Hebrew people were kept aside from the development in the Hindu culture to receive a second impulse through the Christ event five hundred years after Buddha. Steiner shows how the streams of humanity all work towards expressing love and compassion under the spiritual guidance of cultural leaders.⁴⁵⁵

6.2 The Nativity and the Divine Sophia

Steiner claims that law prevails in spiritual evolution whereby “every capacity humanity acquires must have its beginning in one individual. Faculties that are to become common to a large number of people must first appear in one person”.⁴⁵⁶ This principle is similar to the concept of *morphic resonance* developed by Rupert Sheldrake, who suggests that morphic resonance proceeds whereby “the forms of previous systems influence the morphogenesis of subsequent similar systems... [It is] a resonant effect of form upon form across space and time”.⁴⁵⁷ These two similar concepts lead to the question of what Christ did for the first time in the incarnation of the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Steiner’s insights do not provide a simple, straightforward answer. He argues that biblical history is a description of creating the one bodily form, that of Jesus of Nazareth, which was perfect enough to allow the incarnation of Christ to work through it. The birth of Jesus upon earth was the work of the Holy Spirit throughout history. This teaching also has to be reconciled with the work of the divine syzygy through the working of Sophia. Steiner describes these processes

86. ⁴⁵⁴ Steiner, *Turning Points in Spiritual History: Zarathustra, Hermes, Moses, Elijah, Buddha, Christ*, 60 & 61,

⁴⁵⁵ *According to Luke: The Gospel of Compassion and Love Revealed*, vol. 114 (SteinerBooks, 2001).

⁴⁵⁶ *The Universal Human; the Evolution of Individuality*, vol. 117 (Anthroposophic Press, 1990), 35.

98. ⁴⁵⁷ Rupert Sheldrake, *New Science of Life; the Hypothesis of Formative Causation* (London: Flamingo, 1995),

in his lecture cycles between 1902 and 1914, which I suggest are his collected biblical commentaries.⁴⁵⁸ Steiner offers an alternative narrative regarding Jesus' Incarnation that involves other cosmic chronologies.

For the archetype of the human being to reach earthly maturity and later re-join an earlier perfection, two streams of history had to run parallel to each other. One was on the earth starting from the first Adam, and the other was in the spiritual world under the guidance of the Mother Lodge or the Divine Sophia. We have already seen how Adam Kadmon evolved consciousness from the initial separation of the fall through three pre-earthly deeds in union with the Sun-Spirit Christ. The parallel journey was that of the earthly Adam, who spent many incarnations on earth developing the highest, noblest refinement of human capacities. These two similar processes are reflected in the genealogies of Matthew and Luke.⁴⁵⁹

There are some common names between Abraham and David in both genealogies, and biblical commentators suggest that both borrowed heavily from the genealogies of Chronicles. There are also some glaring gaps and inconsistencies, causing doubt about what one can understand from them. Some suggest that Matthew reflects a royal or legal justification through the kingly lineage, while Luke, writing for the Gentiles, reflects a physical hereditary. There are also thoughts that Matthew shows Joseph's line and Luke's that of Mary.⁴⁶⁰ Steiner's position on the two lineages is that they are symbolic. Matthew shows 42 generations (Matt 1:1-17), even though the last 14 only show 13 generations to Jesus. Matthew makes it clear that the addition of "who is called Christ" (Mt 1:16-17) shows Jesus and Christ as the last two generations, indicating at the same time that they become one being. For Steiner, this genealogy symbolises the maturation process of a particular impulse, starting with Abraham to Christ. Luke has 77 generations (Luke 3:23-38) going back to the original separation in Adam. For Steiner, this reflects the working of the Nathan Soul, the sister soul of Adam, through history and the preparation through the priestly lineage of Nathan. In Luke, the genealogy is not part of the Nativity narrative but an affirmation of the lineage at the Baptism. Steiner sees the double messianic expectation of the Essenes shown through the kingly line of Solomon in Matthew and the priestly line of Nathan in Luke. This double expectation is also expressed in the messianic prophecy of the "Books of Enoch pointing more to the Nathan Messiah of the priestly line, and the other in the Psalms referring to the Messiah of the kingly [Solomon]

⁴⁵⁸ See Appendix A for the chronological list of this particular collection of Steiner's works.

⁴⁵⁹ Christoph Rau, *The Two Jesus Boys* (Forest Row: Temple Lodge Publishing, 2019).

⁴⁶⁰ M. Eugene Boring, CD-ROM "The Gospel of Matthew," ed. Neil M Alexander, 12 vols., vol. 8, *The New Interpreter's Bible Electronic Edition* (Nashville: Abingdon Software, 2002). 127-33.

line”.⁴⁶¹ The two parts of the human soul had to be brought back together on the physical plane through two Jesus children.⁴⁶²

This interpretation of two different infancy narratives is possibly one of the most radically confronting thoughts of Steiner’s works. Still, it is not unique to his teachings as these ideas are in some Gnostic texts.⁴⁶³ Steiner’s capacity to read the memory of the cosmos shows more detail and offers esoteric meaning to several unique aspects in the nativity narratives. It is to be noted that Steiner’s interpretation of the genealogies of Luke and Matthew differ to the traditional scriptural and theological understandings. However, the contemplative approach will lead the reader to the possibility that two different families had the same names and, in their separate times, almost a year apart, brought a child to birth in Bethlehem.

In Matthew, the family do not travel to Bethlehem, and the birth takes place in a house (Matt 2:11 καὶ ἐλθόντες εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν). After the three wise sages visit from the east, the family flee to Egypt, fearing Herod’s wrath. Steiner suggests this journey recapitulates Joseph, the dreamer, leading the Israelites to Egypt. Now, through the guidance of a dream, Joseph leads his family to Egypt. Matthew places the date of Jesus’ birth on the 6th of January, traditionally the date of the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan.⁴⁶⁴ Originally Christmas was celebrated on this date and is still so in the Eastern Church. Upon their return six years later, the family of Jesus returned and settled in Nazareth.

Later that year, after the danger presented by the killing of the innocents has passed, the Lukan family travel from Nazareth and the child is birthed in what one assumes is a stable derived from placing him in a manger or feeding trough (Luke 2:7,12,16 ἐν τῇ φάτνῃ). The heavenly choirs guide the shepherds to visit the Holy Family, who return to Nazareth after the presentation in the temple and the encounter with Simeon and Anna. Steiner speaks of the Buddha’s involvement in the guidance and formation of the Luke child in the spiritual world. The light and angelic voices would have allowed Luke’s audience to understand that the child was imbued with divine compassion and love.⁴⁶⁵ Steiner suggests that this is how the impulse of compassion and love which Buddha brought was placed more maturely into the mother soul of humanity, the Nathan Soul, in preparation for the

⁴⁶¹ Steiner, *According to Luke: The Gospel of Compassion and Love Revealed*, 114, 101.

⁴⁶² *According to Matthew: The Gospel of Christ’s Humanity*, vol. 123 (SteinerBooks, 2003).

⁴⁶³ David Ovason, *The Two Children: A Study of the Two Jesus Children in Literature and Art* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 2010); Thiering, *Jesus the Man*; Friedrich Hiebel, *Treasures of Biblical Research and the Conscience of the Times* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1970).

⁴⁶⁴ Ormond Edwards, *The Time of Christ: A Chronology of the Incarnation* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1986), 80, 103.

⁴⁶⁵ Steiner, *According to Luke: The Gospel of Compassion and Love Revealed*, 114.

Christ impulse.⁴⁶⁶ Steiner suggests that the two families of the Lukan and Matthean accounts grow up in proximity to each other in Nazareth. Matthew's Jesus has brothers and sisters (Matt 13:55), while Luke's Jesus does not. I note here that more conventional biblical scholarship accepts that Matthew and Luke differ on some points, offering their own explanations and generally holding that the Gospels agree on essential matters. Steiner's insights elaborate the narrative to reveal an esoteric understanding of the narratives.

Steiner argues that the Jesus of Matthew's Gospel is the reincarnation of the oldest, most advanced human being, Zarathustra, who has developed everything that earthly life could offer to that point. The visitation of the three kings and their gifts are a recognition by the wisdom cultures of the three previous ages of earthly life, ancient India, ancient Persia and ancient Egypt. These streams are fulfilled in the birth of Matthew's Jesus, and the Nathan Soul comes to earth for the first time in Luke's Jesus. According to Steiner, the unique Lukan story of the twelve-year-old boy in the temple (Luke 2:41-52) relates the union of the two Jesus beings, the earthly Adam and its sister Nathan Soul:

The one speaking to the learned men in the temple was not only Zarathustra speaking as an ego, but also one having the resources Krishna had once drawn upon in proclaiming Yoga. He spoke about a Yoga now raised a step higher. He united himself with the power of Krishna, with Krishna himself, in order to continue developing up to his thirtieth year. Only then was the physical organism so completely matured as to be ready for the Christ to take possession of it. Thus do the spiritual streams of humanity flow together. So when the Mystery of Golgotha occurred, there was indeed a working together of the most important leaders of humanity, a summation, a synthesis, of spiritual life.⁴⁶⁷

Luke's Gospel reflects this in the following words: "he went down with them and came again to Nazareth and was guided willingly by them in all things. And his mother kept all these words in her heart and pondered them in all things. And Jesus progressed in wisdom, maturity/stature and favour/grace in the sight of God and man (Luke 2:51-52)." In the next verse in the third chapter of Luke, eighteen years have passed, which, for Steiner, represents the development of the union of the wisest soul of humanity with the most innocent one. The spirit of Zarathustra works as the ego within the body and soul of Luke's Jesus. Finally, at the Baptism in the Jordan, the Zarathustra ego leaves this body, allowing the Christ Spirit to incarnate into the refined vessel of Jesus of Nazareth. The next part of this chapter will explain Steiner's insights into those missing years in the narrative.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 56-74, 89-90.

⁴⁶⁷ *The Bhagavad Gita and the Epistles of Paul*, 142, 98.

Luke's Gospel also indicates the role Mary plays in Sophia's work in redeeming the human soul. Steiner argues that shortly after the unique Lukan event of the twelve-year-old in the temple, Matthew's Jesus dies, as does his father. The mother of Luke's Jesus also dies and becomes a spirit guide for the Matthew Mary, and they undergo a process that contributes to the Mystery of Golgotha. This connection appears in the story of the Mother of Jesus in the Gospel of John. Steiner says the remaining two families join together, creating one holy family.⁴⁶⁸ The Matthew Mary, with her children, and the Lukan Joseph with his son Jesus, in whom the Zarathustra individuality is working, form this family.

This narrative is more complicated than the generally accepted version, which holds Jesus Christ as the only son born of the Virgin Mary. This is the strict view of the *Theotokos* of Mary, and the monophysitism claim of hypostatic union in Jesus through his birth. Instead, Steiner agrees with Nestorius on the radical dyophysitism of two natures and the prosopic union of the divinity of Christ with the human nature of Jesus. Furthermore, it is important to follow how Mary and Jesus represent an emanation of the syzygy referred to in the last chapter. This revision of the Valentinian heresy of syzygy is made more complex by having two Marys and two Jesus beings.

The word 'syzygy' means yoked or joined together, and a simple search for the term shows that it is most commonly used to reflect the alignment of the sun, moon and earth at new and full moons. In philosophy, psychology, music and poetry, it is used with the common meaning of joining or union of two to make a new whole. In the Gnostic world, the emanations, or flowing forth, of God are often 'One' or 'monad'. In Valentinianism, the emanations of God are 'the Pair', syzygy, or a male-female yoking together for a particular task. The inner consciousness, or source of being, is known as its Aeon and the fullness of its expression is the Pleroma. In the Gospel of Phillip this union was enacted on the human field in the sacrament of the Bridal Chamber.⁴⁶⁹ The physical excesses in some groups led to its rightful suppression as heresy. In its higher form, the union between two aspects uniting for a transformative task is a law we can perceive in our world. The simple example of the union between seed and egg for a new offspring is an expression of this archetype. In the Gospel of John, the emanations are initially expressed as Logos and Zoe (Jn 1:1-5) and on the physical plane as Jesus and the Mother of Jesus (Jn 2:1-11).

The complexity of Steiner's narrative suggests that the earlier streams of the mysteries are united and raised to a higher level in the Gospels for the constructive evolution of the human being. Zarathustra and Buddha are present in the two Nativity narratives. In Egypt, the influence of

⁴⁶⁸ According to Luke: *The Gospel of Compassion and Love Revealed*, 114.

⁴⁶⁹ Hoeller, *Gnosticism: New Light on the Ancient Tradition of Inner Knowing*, 85-92.

Hermes and Moses awakened again in Zarathustra's soul. In the story of the twelve-year-old in the temple, we experience a further union of Zarathustra, Krishna and the Nathan Soul in the Luke Jesus. At the same time, Buddha remains a guiding essence in the spiritual world. Through Elijah working in his incarnation as John the Baptist, the spiritual presence of Zarathustra and Buddha joined with him so that they could collectively achieve the incarnation of Christ into Jesus of Nazareth at the Baptism in the Jordan.⁴⁷⁰

These insights that bring Christ into close connection with other deities might raise the question of false gods and cultural appropriation. Still, in light of the growing acceptance that different faiths can contribute to our understanding of Christ, these ideas can hopefully contribute to theological dialogue.⁴⁷¹ As far as I know, this teaching does not have a specific heresy connected to it. However, the absence of these ideas from the orthodox tradition can at least make them questionable. I have found that this level of insight contributes philosophical cohesion to the traditional accounts and generates cultural bridges between the various historical streams. It has given my faith a basis of trust in the progress of humanity and the spiritual cooperation in evolution. Rather than detract from my Christian faith, it has built a spiritual confidence that there is hope for humanity to grow in understanding how all the streams work in evolution, thus creating the potential to overcome religious and philosophical schisms in the world. Through understanding the full role of every spiritual being in the evolution and redemption of the human soul through Christ, each being attained their unique role in the human journey. Through accepting cooperation, we can begin to overcome alienation between faiths.

From the methodological point of view, the necessary shortening of the facts and processes to write an overview within the framework of a thesis has compromised representing Steiner's theological method fully. Instead, the contemplative phenomenological method would require the reader to consider a more extended, more expansive engagement of the ideas presented by Steiner. For example, pondering in the heart long enough reveals a complete understanding of biblical texts.

6.3 The Missing Years

The question of what happened in Jesus' life between his childhood and his baptism, the missing years, is being answered with teachings emerging from the discovery of ever more lost texts. These range from Jesus walking to Tibet, or India, to be taught healing by a Tibetan Master, explaining his capacity to work miracles, to appearing in England or America. There is, however,

⁴⁷⁰ Steiner, *According to Luke: The Gospel of Compassion and Love Revealed*, 114, 119-20.

⁴⁷¹ Francis X Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders* (Malden, Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

an apparent lack of evidence for these claims.⁴⁷² Through his ability to read the cosmic memory, Steiner speaks of these journeys, especially in his years as a carpenter with his father Joseph. In the lecture cycle *The Fifth Gospel*,⁴⁷³ by which Steiner means the knowledge that will come to light through people being able to read and reveal what they can of the cosmic memory, we are given an insight into the process of the hidden years. The lack of any clear textual, historical or archaeological evidence add the challenge to approach these ideas. As noted in the previous section traditional understanding needs to engage with the possibility of Steiner having revelation and contributing from that understanding. Steiner pointed out the esoteric understanding can be seen as part of Christ's words: "I have yet much to say to you, but you cannot bear it now. But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will be your guide on the way to the all-embracing truth." (Jn16: 12-13)

In these eighteen years, Jesus of Nazareth experiences the world, and, in the best sense of his being fully human, he shares the state of the people of his times. He feels their disconnection from the spirit and loss of guidance as deep suffering. He suffers, which becomes the capacity for selflessness discussed earlier in this thesis. An emptying out of his soul prepares him for the Baptism where Christ, as the Sun Spirit, can enter into his human vessel. As an archetypal path, it is the *Imitatio Jesu* that each Christian needs to undertake. The suffering we experience witnessing our times and the spiritual dilemmas prepare our souls to receive Christ.

Steiner does not speak of specific places and journeys but of three formative experiences of Jesus in this period. First, Steiner says of the twelve-year-old in the temple listening to the Hebrew scholars (Luke 2:46-47) and Jesus experiences the silence of the Bath Qol, (בַּת קוֹל ,) the daughter of the voice, in the Jewish scholars' teachings. Steiner argues that this had been the inspiring voice of God in the teachings of the Hebrew scholars in the past, but now they had lost their capacities to hear it. Second, Jesus experienced the loss of divine presence, and priestly ability, at the altars and sanctuaries of the Mithraic pagan cults. Third, was the exclusivism developed in the Essene communities. Jesus felt that they were creating the purity of its members while neglecting those outside the community. The perfection was only to be fulfilled if they became an Essene.⁴⁷⁴

Steiner described these three six-year experiences of observation and immersion in the Jewish, Mithraic and Essene cultures, which increasingly caused deep suffering for Jesus. Shortly before the Baptism in the Jordan, Jesus converses with his mother. This conversation is one where

⁴⁷² Richard Bevan, "The Lost Years of Jesus: The Mystery of Christ's Missing 18 Years," Sky History channel, <https://www.history.co.uk/articles/the-lost-years-of-jesus-what-was-he-doing-in-those-missing-18-years> (accessed October 29, 2022).

⁴⁷³ Steiner, *The Fifth Gospel: From the Akashic Record*, 148.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 44-58.

the understanding of syzygy is essential. Jesus had come to a point where he could speak of his suffering with his mother. How Mary listened allowed Jesus to transform his suffering into love: “Profound pain has the power to change into love, a love greater than the ordinary kind of love where you merely have to be there with your love. This love streamed out like the far-reaching rays of an aura”.⁴⁷⁵ At the same time, Mary felt that “the profound meaning of these words – a meaning full of suffering but also filled with profound love for humanity – entered her soul. She felt inwardly strengthened by a power that came from him and she felt her soul was changing”.⁴⁷⁶

Steiner goes on to explain how he had a profound and deeply moving experience in seeing this event in the cosmic memory. He experienced how the words that were spoken wrested a piece of Jesus’ own self from his soul and entered into the heart and soul of his mother. She felt the words gave her new life. At the same time, the woman who had been Mary in the Luke Gospel, now in the spiritual sphere around the mother, came down and united with the soul of the foster mother: “After that talk the soul of the Nathan child’s true mother [Luke Mary], had been received into the stepmother’s [Matthew Mary] soul. Virginity was reborn, as it were”.⁴⁷⁷ This information further develops the two Jesuses and two Marys of the nativity narratives. This experience of Mary parallels the picture of the Baptism in the Jordan, where Jesus becomes the vessel to carry Christ. Steiner describes it as a baptism, crucifixion and resurrection experience for Sophia through Mary. As noted in the previous section and above this further development of Steiner’s interpretations arising from his esoteric experiences of the two genealogies stands out from the traditional understandings of Jesus and Mary. I also note that it is a central difference that illuminates Steiner’s Christology and eschatology. I experience that through this differentiation he gives insights to the process of redemption of the human soul that gives rise to what Christa L. McKirland calls the second-personal relationship,⁴⁷⁸ or the co-responsible need of mutuality between God and the human being for human flourishing and on-going evolution, which I will explore in relation to Steiner’s ideas in chapter seven.

6.4 Baptism and Transformation of the Threefold Human Being

Steiner differentiates between Jesus of Nazareth and Christ and affirms the Nestorian teaching of Jesus Christ being a union of two distinct beings, one fully human and the other fully divine. Steiner’s thoughts on the period between the baptism in the Jordan and the death on the cross would be enough for several volumes of explanation. However, I will continue focusing on

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 194.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 128.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., 129.

⁴⁷⁸ McKirland, *God's Provision, Humanity's Need: The Gift of Our Dependence*.

the incarnation's syzygy nature. I will also show how the narrative becomes the mythical initiation story that individuals can access for their moral and virtuous development. It reveals Christ as a force, the Christ impulse, for the ennoblement and deification of human capacity.

According to Steiner, something completely new comes into existence at the Baptism of Jesus of Nazareth. Over eighteen years, Jesus of Nazareth had been guided and prepared to such an extent that he was able, through the edifying wisdom of the Zarathustra entity, to now receive Christ as the Spiritual Self of the human being.⁴⁷⁹ The human Archetype had, up until this point, been carried through the hierarchies through evolution. Now a completely new Archetype is established through the physical union of Jesus and Christ. The subsequent work of Christ on the three sheaths of Jesus, his soul, life and physical bodies, transforms them completely into what Paul describes as the second Adam. I suggest Steiner's Christology is an esoteric account of Paul's Christology.

After the Baptism, Christ begins to work into Jesus of Nazareth's human nature, which needs to be transformed before he can start the further work of redemption. The transformation happens under the principle of spiritual economy, a law that prevails in spiritual evolution whereby every capacity humanity acquires must begin in one individuality. Faculties that are to become common to many people must first appear in one person. Through the work of Christ with the human faculties of Jesus, a new morphic resonance is created. This form is a seed archetype for the work of Christ Jesus after Pentecost and will be explained in chapter seven.

The three temptations of Christ (Luke 4:1-13; Matt 4:1-11) are indicative of the transformation of the various layers of egotism inherent in our humanity which Steiner speaks of as coming through the two influences of Lucifer and Ahriman. Steiner argues that they both play a role in the temptations, an example of Steiner finding the twofold nature of evil throughout the Bible, as indicated in chapter five: "The Zarathustra soul had left certain abilities behind in the three bodies of Jesus of Nazareth, and the Christ was able to use these when he first of all faced a spiritual entity who was to arouse all the pride and arrogance of which the human soul is capable."⁴⁸⁰ First, the temptation to bow down and worship Lucifer: Christ could, by overcoming the temptation, transform the parts of the soul that have arrogance and conceit. Second, Steiner explains that Lucifer and Ahriman approach together and tempt Christ to throw himself off the temple. In this encounter with human pride, through feeling above all fear, a transformation is accomplished by overcoming this temptation. Third, Ahriman approaches Christ alone and tempts him to change stones into bread. Steiner suggests that Christ was not entirely able to overcome this third

⁴⁷⁹ Steiner, *According to Luke: The Gospel of Compassion and Love Revealed*, 114, 130-33.

⁴⁸⁰ *The Fifth Gospel: From the Akashic Record*, 148, 222.

temptation. This inability is because Christ did not yet fully understand the need for the human being to live off bread and that it is not yet time for the human being to live free of bodily nature. That final overcoming is something that humanity still needs to participate in through our engagement with the laws of matter, transforming them into spiritual laws.⁴⁸¹ Only after this initial transformation of the sheaths of Jesus can Christ begin creating the new forces and impulses that humanity will be able to develop themselves in the future.

This path is described in great detail in the Gospel of John and explained in chapter three of this thesis. John's gospel narrates events in the three years, or three Passovers, of the life of Jesus Christ, where the following stages of these transformations occur. After the original theophany at the Baptism, three other moments reveal these transformations. First, the feeding of the five thousand, along with the walking on the water the following night (John 6:1-21), shows the change of the astral or soul body of Jesus. Second, the transfiguration (John 1:14; 12:28-32) reveals his light-filled life body. Third, the entry into Jerusalem (John 12:12-19) heralds the final transformation of the physical body of Jesus in the death and resurrection.⁴⁸²

Another aspect to add at this point is the role that the Mother of Jesus plays in the inner path of transformation. As pointed out in chapter five, Steiner sees that the four Gospels agree on the fact that: "the Christ-Being Himself descends from divine-spiritual heights at the Baptism by John, this Christ-Being dwelt in the body of Jesus of Nazareth, He suffered death on the cross, and He vanquished this death".⁴⁸³ The unique narrative of the Gospel of John reveals the work of Christ and the Mother of Jesus in the transformation of the human being, represented especially in the marriage feast at Cana and the Mother of Jesus standing at the foot of the cross with the Disciple whom Jesus loved. While the four Gospels fill out the narrative, the Gospel of John describes the two stages of Christian transformation. The first transformation occurs through the seven signs, to the raising of Lazarus, and the second through the stages of crucifixion, from the washing of the feet to the resurrection and ascension.⁴⁸⁴

Steiner's esoteric interpretation of the seven signs is that they represent an evolution of the forces of love towards their full expression in the individual. At the marriage feast in Cana, Jesus acknowledges what is at work between him and his mother (John 2:4 *Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι*) so that these forces of love are drawn upon to fulfil a transformation within a group gathered at a marriage.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 130-32.

⁴⁸² Tom Ravetz, *The Incarnatin: Finding Our True Self through Christ* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2014), 80-102; Hermann Beckh, *Mark's Gospel: The Cosmic Rhythm* (Forest Row: Temple Lodge Publishing, 2021); Emil Bock, *The Three Years; the Life of Christ between Baptism and Ascension* (Edinburgh: Floris books, 1955), 85-89.

⁴⁸³ Steiner, *The Gospel of St. John and Its Relation to the Other Gospels*, 112, 152.

⁴⁸⁴ *The Christian Mystery*, 97, 27-36.

Steiner interprets these words of Jesus as: Oh Woman, that passes here from me to you!⁴⁸⁵ (Literal meaning: what to me and to you woman?). This force of love that resides in the blood and soul relationship is what Jesus used in the first sign, and his words show him uniting with his mother for the transformation to take place. Steiner, interprets the seven signs in John's gospel as an increasing transformation of the human soul to be able to exert influence through love. It is an evolutionary step in the forces of love from working within the soul and blood ties to ever increasing capacity to love that culminates in the raising of Lazarus. The collaboration between the Mother and Jesus marks the transition from the healing forces carried between souls through hereditary processes and the new expression that the Christ force was to bring individuals' healing through a universal love that unites humanity at a higher level.⁴⁸⁶ It is also where the path to selflessness begins. This universal love lives wherever people can understand this union of humanity through Christ. External diversity will increase, but Christ is the spiritual uniter of humanity who enables us to carry a word into all these diversities that is not merely a word of speech but one of power. Steiner claims: "we know that this 'Christ who lives in me' will not lead to the forming of groups; rather, it will bring about the spreading of the glory of 'the name human being' [Menschennamens] over the whole earth".⁴⁸⁷ At the first sign of his journey to establish the force of universal love in the individual, he still has to work from the available forces out of

the subtle, intimate force from soul to soul that passes from Him to His Mother... She had to possess the old forces of which nowadays people can have no conception; and she knew that He referred to the blood tie between son and mother, to the bond that should then pass to the others. Then she knew that something like an invisible spiritual force held sway, capable of effectuating something... And what had to be present in the mother of Jesus of Nazareth herself in order that at this moment her faith might be strong enough to produce such an effect? She needed just what she did indeed possess, namely the realization that He who was called her son had become the Spirit of the Earth. Then her strong force combined with His, with that which acted from Him upon her, developed so mighty an influence as to produce the effect described.

Thus we have shown, through the whole constellation of conditions surrounding this first sign, how the unison of souls which results from blood ties produces an effect even in the physical world. It was the first sign, and the Christ force is shown at its minimum. It still needed the intensification resulting from contact with the mother's psychic forces; and she needed the additional support of forces still united with nature in water, which remain present in the freshly drawn water. The active force of the Christ Being is here at its minimum: but special emphasis is made of the fact that the Christ-force passes over to and affects the other soul, and, the latter being particularly suited for it, evokes reaction from

⁴⁸⁵ *The Gospel of St. John and Its Relation to the Other Gospels*, 112, 167.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 157-78.

⁴⁸⁷ *The Universal Human; the Evolution of Individuality*, 117, 91.

it. The essential point is that the Christ force has the power to render the other soul capable of exerting forces.⁴⁸⁸

Through the sequence of the following six signs, we grow to feel how this force can act more and more directly on the soul of another. They show the evolution of the forces of love and the strengthening of the capacity of the Christ force.⁴⁸⁹ Finally, as a person contemplating the narrative of the first half of the Gospel of John, they, along with the seven I-am sayings, work upon the individual to create the seven soul organs of soul perception, as explained in chapter three of this thesis.

6.5 Death and Resurrection

Steiner describes the Gospel of John as the path of initiation of the disciple whom the Lord loved.⁴⁹⁰ After his awakening, Lazarus becomes John the Evangelist or the disciple the Lord loved. The Gospel is a detailed account of the path in two halves. The first half gives narratives that, through meditation, prepare the disciple. The middle point, in chapter eleven, is a transition where the Disciple – Lazarus – goes into a three-and-a-half day initiation sleep: “Martha and Mary were states of consciousness in his soul, one divine [Mary], the other [Martha] turned to life on earth”⁴⁹¹. The three disciples create a single narrative of the culmination of the first part of an initiation or the development of the soul senses. Chapter twelve presents a transition into Holy Week and the Disciple recognising the Christ Being in the revelation to the Greeks. In this chapter, John the Evangelist writes of the inner experience of the Transfiguration, not in its historical place, but at the moment when recognising Christ leads the pupil to the higher development of the spiritual senses. The first half of the Gospel works upon the soul transformation. The second half, from the thirteenth chapter onwards, focuses on the death and resurrection of Christ and describes the path of challenges by which the higher spiritual faculties are developed in Lazarus-John, as the *Imitatio Christi*, and subsequently in all human beings.⁴⁹² This amount of detail makes Steiner’s account of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus instructive for those searching for the moral source and spiritual development in the path described by Steiner.

By focusing on specific feelings and intentions of the second part of the path described by Steiner, the person of faith works upon the soul senses already developed through meditating on the first half of the Gospel. The seven stages are the washing of the feet; the scourging; the crowning

⁴⁸⁸ *The Gospel of St. John and Its Relation to the Other Gospels*, 112, 167-70.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 171-78.

⁴⁹⁰ *The Christian Mystery*, 97, 27-36.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 27-36.

with thorns; the bearing of the cross and crucifixion; the mystical death; burial and resurrection; and the ascension into heaven.⁴⁹³ The Gospel of John provides the symbols and methods for the Christian believer to follow in the *Imitatio Christi*. The narrative is structured so that the four aspects of Steiner's theological model can be used to approach the death and resurrection of Christ. These are first of all the historical event; second, Christ as an objective spiritual entity, seen in the Christ-principle that works through evolution; third, the Gospels as mythical initiation stories that individuals can access for their moral and virtuous development; and fourth, Christ as a force, the Christ impulse, for the ennoblement and deification of human capacity. So far, this chapter has represented the last two of these. I will now present aspects of the necessities of the historical event and what happened spiritually through Christ's death and resurrection.

As Steiner suggested, the inner intention of the Trinity for our evolution is to bring about love through freedom; therefore the focus of the incarnation of Christ is to guide that process in some way. Earlier I noted that the human condition, to establish a situation where a free moral decision is possible, had to become veiled. The result of this was that the human being's spirit became separated in consciousness from knowing the spiritual aspects of existence. The consequence of this process established egotism in the human soul. The physiological seat of this egotism, the selfish capacity of desire, wish and error, was placed in the blood and became part of the human constitution.⁴⁹⁴ For a new gesture of selflessness to be established in the human soul, Christ had to incarnate within a human being. Christ established the new capacity of selflessness within the blood through the available human capabilities- not through divine intervention. The symbol given for this selflessness in the human is the Lamb of God.⁴⁹⁵

The deed of emptying the human constitution of egotism was fulfilled when the blood of Jesus poured out onto the earth. Steiner suggests this emptying, sacrificing selflessly, of the blood of Jesus Christ, is the central mystery of Christ's deed on Golgotha. He calls it a necessary and heinous crime. Heinous because the innocent Jesus Christ did not deserve to die in that way, yet the blood was offered to establish this new capacity:

The greatest spirit on earth had to be incarnated in a body. This body had to die, to be killed, the blood had to flow. This means something special. Wherever the blood is, there is the self. If all the old self-communities were to end, the selfhood, which has its seat in the blood, had to be sacrificed on one occasion. All individual egotisms flowed away with the blood of Christ on the cross. The blood of tribal communities became the blood of all humanity when the blood of Christ was sacrificed at that time... The earth's whole astral atmosphere changed at the moment when he died, and events were possible that would

⁴⁹³ *The Gospel of St. John*, 103, 169-73; *The Gospel of St. John: Berlin*, 94, 14-17.

⁴⁹⁴ *The Christian Mystery*, 97, 47-55.

⁴⁹⁵ *Deeper Secrets of Human History in the Light of the Gospels*, 117, 49-53.

never have been possible before. Sudden initiation - like that of Paul – would never have been possible before. It has become possible because with the flowing of Christ’s blood the whole of humanity became a communal self. At that time the self flowed from the blood of Jesus’ wounds. ⁴⁹⁶

Three aspects arising from this quote show the inner journey of Christ. The first aspect is the battle of transformation of discord between people into love. Christ transformed an outer battle, which Steiner saw reflected in the Darwinian thought of ‘the struggle needed for existence’ in the animal kingdom, into an internal battle in the human being: “No one is going to quarrel with a different opinion of another if they first fight against all that must be combated in themselves, if they establish harmony among various principles of their being. They will confront the outer world as one who loves, not as one who quarrels”.⁴⁹⁷ Before the blood was sacrificed, this transformation had to be established within Christ. For Steiner, this inner battle of Jesus Christ was a deed that gave humanity the capacity to eliminate discord within the self. It had to be fulfilled in one person first, as per the spiritual law stated by Steiner. He argues that it is an evolutionary step to find the capacity to harmonise the inner human forces by diverting external strife into this inner unity.⁴⁹⁸

The second aspect concerns how humanity can access these forces through their destiny ever since the Mystery of Golgotha. The crucifixion further develops the role of the Mother of Jesus, or Sophia, in how this wisdom of Christ has been brought to the world. What started as a transformation of the inherited blood connection at the marriage feast in Cana reaches its fulfilment at the crucifixion. The disciple whom the Lord loved and the Mother of Jesus are placed in a new relationship of connection. Through schooling and transformation, the disciple whom the Lord loved had found the forces of Christ as the *Light of the World* in his soul. The wisdom of Christ lived as a light in his astral-soul principle, and he was entrusted to pour this principle into the Gospel as a schooling of the soul. Now at the foot of the cross, another step had to be fulfilled through which Christ unites his wisdom with the etheric-life body of the Mother. Christ as the *Life of the World* was bestowed on the Mother’s life body. Together with the disciple, as Mother and Son in a new relationship not born of inherited blood bonds, they can bring the teachings of Christ to the world.⁴⁹⁹

The third aspect is the role of the Last Supper in providing a way for humanity to have ongoing access to and be guided in transforming these forces. For these capacities to grow, the forces necessary for human beings to engage with them needed to be drawn from the earth. If love

⁴⁹⁶ *The Christian Mystery*, 97, 55.

⁴⁹⁷ *The Gospel of St. John and Its Relation to the Other Gospels*, 112, 209.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 209-10.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 218-19.

through freedom is to fulfil itself, divine intervention could not be the means for the deed of salvation. Christ initiated new forces within the human being from within the earthly forces and capacities. The path of further development also needed earthly substance as the source of these forces:

Indeed, with the event of Golgotha a new centre was created. Ever since then, the Christ Spirit has been united with the earth. It had long been gradually approaching, but since that time it has been within the earth... since the Golgotha event the Christ Spirit has been in the earth and in everything the earth brings forth... we shall see things in their true light only if we discern in every atom something of the Christ spirit that has imbued it since the time we speak of. Of what does the Earth consist since the Christ Spirit permeated it? Of life – right down to the atom. Every atom only has value, and can be understood, if you see in it a sheath encompassing spirit; and this spiritual element is a part of the Christ.

Now, consider anything that pertains to the earth: when do you understand it aright? When you say, that is a part of the body of Christ. What was Christ able say to those who would learn to understand him? As he broke the bread made of the grain of the earth he could say, This is my body. And what could he say to them as he gave to them the juice of the grape, which is derived from the juice of plants? This is my blood. Because He had become the soul of the earth, He could say of the solid substance, “This is my flesh,” and of the plant’s fluid, “This is my blood”. Those who are able to grasp the true meaning of these words of Christ create for themselves thought images that attract the body and the blood of Christ in the bread and the wine, and they unite with the Christ Spirit.⁵⁰⁰

The symbols of the Lord’s Supper build thought forms in our hearts which engender these forces of attraction and draw the Christ Spirit to us through Holy Communion. Steiner sees how, in time, the Sacrament is a preparation for the mystical union with Christ and that the sacrament of communion will rise from the physical symbol to a spiritual reality for the Christian believer.⁵⁰¹

To approach the next section on Ascension and Pentecost, I will present what Steiner said about the nature of the resurrection body. He says that “the observation of the physical human body, in itself, belongs to the most difficult clairvoyant problems, the hardest of all”.⁵⁰² The physical body, as we perceive it has two components. There is a material component and a form component. The mineral component is laid aside when we die, but the form component withdraws from it, and the mineral body decomposes. This form component is a transparent body of forces initially laid down in ancient times at the beginning of our evolution on ancient Saturn. Through the evolutionary stages, the various hierarchies, spirits of wisdom, movement, and form worked upon this thought reality and brought it to the point where it could accept the mineral part of the physical body. We lose our knowledge of the form aspect of the physical body, which Steiner gives the term the

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 270-71.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 272.

⁵⁰² *From Jesus to Christ*, 131, 112.

Phantom to differentiate it from both the mineral aspect and the etheric body, which holds the life forces in place:

This Phantom is the Form-shape which as a spiritual texture works up the physical substance and forces so that they fill out the Form which we encounter as the person on the physical plane... As the sculptor must have the 'thought' which they impress on the substance, so is a 'thought' related to the human body: not in the same way as the thought of the artist, for the material of the human body is not marble or plaster, but as a real thought, the Phantom, in the external world.⁵⁰³

Steiner argues that from the Baptism in the Jordan, Christ works in the three bodies (physical, etheric and astral) of Jesus of Nazareth in a way that is different from how an average person works in their body. Every human has a self that is bound to the physical world's effects. Christ is not bound at all. Therefore, in the three years of his ministry, Jesus of Nazareth is subject to the impact of the Sun-Spirit, and his body is transformed into something completely new.⁵⁰⁴ When the physical mineral body of Jesus is laid in the grave, it has been so profoundly transformed that it decomposes very quickly between the burial and the resurrection. Steiner suggests that the two angels perceived by Mary Magdalen, one at the foot and one at the head of the clothes (John 20:11-12), are descriptions of her perceptions of the transformed etheric and astral bodies of Jesus of Nazareth. Her other perception of Christ standing outside the tomb is the resurrection body of Jesus Christ: the fully restored phantom of humanity as a new archetype which Paul calls the second Adam. It is not the complete restoration of the mineral body of Jesus.

For the transformed aspects of human nature to work as the second Adam, the processes of Ascension and Pentecost were necessary for their preservation. This change is enabled through the principle of spiritual economy by the Krishna entity. Krishna provides the forces of his light body to the sheaths of Jesus of Nazareth at the event of the twelve-year-old in the Temple. Steiner says: "Christ took Krishna as his own soul sheath, through which he continued to work".⁵⁰⁵ In this way, what is resurrected is something new in the world. Steiner describes the process from the Baptism in the Jordan when Christ unites with Jesus as similar to the human conception of an embryo. The three years is the corresponding gestation period, and the new being of Christ Jesus is born on Easter Sunday morning. The Spirit of the Sun has been reborn as the Spirit of the Earth. There is a new being consisting of the archetypal forces born of the physical body through spiritual transformation. Steiner then argues that the earthly life of the newborn Christ Jesus is the forty days

⁵⁰³ Ibid., 113.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 116-17.

⁵⁰⁵ *The Bhagavad Gita and the Epistles of Paul*, 142, 98.

until the Ascension, which can be seen as ‘death’ as far as the appearance to the senses of human beings is concerned.⁵⁰⁶

6.6 Understanding Ascension and Pentecost

The resurrection is the Birth of Christ Jesus as the Spirit of the Earth, and the subsequent forty days are his earthly life, where he works with the group of people he gathers around him. It is the time when he prepares them to be the first recipients of the new way of Christ’s working for the future. Remembering the conditions for freedom in the human being (to be able to be as uninfluenced, or as independent of our influences, as possible in our discernment and decisions),⁵⁰⁷ Christ had to remove himself from the realm of the physically perceptible to that of another realm, the realm of the clouds or the sky, where he can continue to work through grace into the physical world (Acts 1:9-1).

Steiner describes the realm of the clouds, or the sky, as the world of etheric substances. Christ had to transfer his place and source of humanity's guidance into this invisible realm. Before doing that, he had to establish the schooling by which the human being can access the forces and capacities of the new archetype of humanity held in the second Adam. Christ, who has been reborn as the spirit of the earth, imbues the astral, etheric and physical bodies of Jesus of Nazareth. Through the blood of Jesus pouring onto the earth, the Christ being was able to establish an embodiment in the subtle spheres of existence.

From the point of view of what changed through the event of Golgotha Steiner suggests that:

The Mystery of Golgotha itself, that is, the death of Jesus, has to be seen as the birth of the Christ spirit on earth, whose real life on earth began after the Mystery of Golgotha. Then Christ went about with the apostles who were in an altered state of consciousness at the time. Ascension and the pouring out of the spirit which followed must be seen as something which in our case would normally be regarded as entering the world of spirit as we die. The continued life of Christ in the earth sphere after Ascension or Pentecost has to be compared to what the human soul experiences in Devachan (‘God Country’) or Spirit Land... Instead of entering a realm of the spirit, as human beings do after death, the Christ spirit brought a sacrifice by making its heaven on earth, as it were. Human beings leave the earth in exchange for a dwelling in heaven, as the saying goes. The Christ left heaven to seek his dwelling place on Earth. The true sacrifice made by the Christ spirit was to leave the spheres of the spirit to live on Earth and among human beings, and thus give the impulse that would guide human beings and evolution on earth towards the future. The Christ spirit came from spheres beyond the earth. The experiences between Baptism and Pentecost had to be gone through so the heavenly Christ spirit might be transformed in the Christ spirit on earth... The events in Palestine were gone through in order that this divine,

⁵⁰⁶ *The Fifth Gospel: From the Akashic Record*, 148, 31.

⁵⁰⁷ As discussed in Chapter 2.2

spiritual Christ entity might assume the form it needed to live in communion with human souls.⁵⁰⁸

Ascension is the process through which the new Christ spirit embodies itself into the subtle realms surrounding the earth. It is an expansion of consciousness rather than a removal of presence. Christ remains at work upon the earth in communion with the human soul but works from the etheric realm of the invisible. It also embodies the wisdom that Christ had gained through becoming fully human. Steiner argues that the spiritual world's beings had not fully understood what it means to be incarnated into a physical body, cut off from knowledge of the spirit and the experience of death. The angelic beings had never descended so far into the physical through evolution. Christ came to experience the whole reality of the human condition and brought the knowledge of death and its transformation to the spiritual world through the ten days of the ascension. As the place from which he works, it is also the world we enter when we die: "Christ had let his power of love flow into the 'cosmic aura' of the earth, in the part of the spiritual sphere of the earth where all souls meet after death to begin their journey to the higher worlds of light".⁵⁰⁹

Pentecost is the event of the return of Christ to work within the human soul. It is a remembering of the wisdom and truth (Jn 14-16), the beginning of a new form of initiation through the capacities inherent in human beings. This new capacity is called the Holy Spirit compared to the creation of the physical world through the creation by the Father. It is the transformation of what was created into new human capacities. Here I note the Holy Spirit as the return of the Wisdom of Christ might be construed as a modality rather than the Holy Spirit as a third and separate person of the Trinity.

It seemed [to the disciples] as if they had been woken by the all-encompassing power of love which fills the universe. It was as if they felt the power of this love flowing through them as a holy fire which transformed their whole being... They had been lifted up by the fire of the Holy Spirit to a higher level of consciousness from which they could look into the souls and hearts of everyone... They had received Christ consciousness.⁵¹⁰

Only after Pentecost can the new working of Christ be described and how it evolves now and into the future. Saul on the road to Damascus and his experience of the Light of Christ (Acts 9:1-9) is the first post-Pentecost initiation of the individual to experience the Resurrected Christ within them.

⁵⁰⁸ Steiner, *The Fifth Gospel: From the Akashic Record*, 148, 31-32.

⁵⁰⁹ Danielle Van Dijk, *Christ Consciousness: A Path of Inner Development* (Forest Row: Temple Lodge Publishing, 2010), 97.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

Paul was not one of the disciples present through the apostles' teachings nor witness to the events of Golgotha. Instead, he represents the first step of the individual undertaking preparation, receiving enlightenment and then working out of initiation consciousness that came about through the new working of Christ. For this reason, Steiner's hermeneutical key is that of Paul's 'not I but the Christ in me'. Paul stands for the archetype of modern initiation, experienced for the first time in one person.

6.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented Steiner's understanding of how spiritual evolution and pre-Christian cultures prepared humanity for the incarnation of Christ. Advanced beings, who were also the founders of cultures and mystery teachings, guided humanity. They taught the necessary steps to perceive Christ before his incarnation.

I have presented Steiner's ideas of the incarnation of Christ in Jesus of Nazareth, how that was prepared and the complexity required to unite the fully divine aspect of Christ with the fully human part of Jesus of Nazareth. I have presented the role that the Nathan soul and Mary play. Further, I explained Steiner's insights about the missing years, the suffering of Jesus, and the constitutional changes in the human being through the deed of the Christ Jesus at Golgotha.

Ascension and Pentecost were shown to be two events where the new being of Christ Jesus, as the second Adam, is transformed in such a way as to work at guiding humanity. The light and life bodies of the risen Christ work from the subtle realms of spirit. This work of the risen Christ is so that human beings can, through their work, access these transformative powers of Christ Jesus in freedom.

The next chapter will be about how the being of Christ, the transformed astral, etheric, and physical bodies of Jesus of Nazareth, work into the future evolution of humanity.

CHAPTER 7: SOTERIOLOGY, ESCHATOLOGY AND PLEROMA OF CHRIST

Steiner's insights into the ongoing future working of Christ since Pentecost are where I most experience the relevance and meaning in his ideas' complexity and esoteric nature. Understanding the effects of Christ's deed made the deeper working together between the human being and Christ in evolution evident. In understanding Steiner's ideas of salvation, eschatology and the fullness of Christ in the world, I have been able to understand how my endeavours of faith and morality participate in the evolution of the world. For me, it is an inner journey, from relying on external authority and faith in doctrines for my understanding and moral action to an experience of the direct consequence of Christ's deed for my life. I am moving from passively letting Christ's death and resurrection be enough for my atonement to realising the fulfilment of the deed of salvation as a collaboration between Christ and human beings' love for each other. In the apocalyptic words on the Mount of Olives, Christ formulates it as 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine you did for me' (Matt 25:40). Christ's deed became a source for my engagement with others. Knowing that what I do to each human being affects the work of redemption has become an inner personal source for moral impulses.⁵¹¹ Rather than having an externally sourced moral maxim, I could, through understanding these intricacies of the effects of Christ upon our humanity, find my own moral sources within my soul. In this chapter, I will reflect on critical realisations of this relationship between the development of the individual human being and the unfolding work of Christ since Easter and Pentecost.

Steiner agrees with traditional Christology that the manifestation of these new forces in Christ was termed the last or second Adam, created in the image of the invisible God, and is the creative agent and final goal of creation (1 Cor 15:45; Col 1:15-20). This second Adam is an entirely new being created in the course of evolution and, as the firstborn of creation, is not formed of earth and dust as the first Adam (1 Cor 15:45-57). By progression, Steiner would agree with the Church Father Irenaeus that the Virgin Mary is the second or last Eve.⁵¹² Throughout the rest of evolution, the human being will collaborate through their capacities to love one another with the Christ and Mary forces in themselves so that we bear the image of the heavenly human (1 Cor 15:49). Steiner states that:

Through its suffusion with the Christ being, the future Nathan Jesus then assumed etheric human form. With that, something new entered into the cosmos. This then radiated forth

⁵¹¹ Steiner, *The Spiritual Foundation of Morality: Francis of Assisi and the Christ Impulse*, 155, 68.

⁵¹² Mark Miravalle, *Mariology: A Guide for Priests, Deacons, Seminarians and Consecrated Persons* (California: Queenship Publishing Company, 2008), 613-14.

over the earth and made it possible for the physical form of the earthly human being, into which the power of the etheric Christ being flowed, to protect itself from the destruction that would have forced its way in, if the formative power that makes it a proper, upright being had not been able to shine into, interpenetrate, and live within it.⁵¹³

The relationship of the individual human being to the resurrected Christ Jesus and the Virgin Mary, as the last Adam and the Last Eve, are critical to the ongoing evolution of humanity and the Universal Human archetype in the world. Through the resurrection something new has come into the world which each of us are invited to access and develop within ourselves.

7.1 Teachings on Salvation – Soteriology

Steiner's understanding of the salvific work of this new being, the last Adam, can be understood through the principles of spiritual economy. Soteriology is the doctrine of how the human being is restored from the separation from God, specifically through the effects of grace from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Rudolf Steiner points out that the twelfth chapter of the Gospel of John is a vital transition between the first and second parts of the narrative. In this chapter, John gives voice to Christ, speaking of the nature of his death (John 12:20-36). Gail R. O' Day in her Section on *Jesus Interprets his Death*⁵¹⁴ in the New Interpreter's Bible, shows how John offers another theology of atonement than the three standard models of ransom, substitution and a model for moral behaviour. She suggests the idea of Abelard that Jesus' death is a demonstration of God's love that includes the demand for human response:

Jesus' death is described as both necessary and life-giving because as a result of it community is formed ("much fruit"). The discipleship teachings in vv. 25-26, which in the synoptic traditions define discipleship exclusively as taking up one's cross, instead define discipleship as serving Jesus and make clear that the goal of such service is restored relationship with God and Jesus. The passion prediction in 12:32 also focuses on relationship, that through Jesus' death all people will be drawn to him. Finally, in the concluding teaching of vv. 35-36, community is described as "becoming children of light".⁵¹⁵

Taking up one's cross, serving Jesus, restoring a relationship with God, being drawn to Jesus, and forming a community so that we become children of light are all themes of Steiner's soteriology. These ideas are also associated with the teachings on salvation in the Letter of James by faith and works. Steiner's hermeneutical key from Paul's 'Not I, but Christ in me' reaches the same development of ideas as Paul saying that salvation is through faith (Rom 4) and belief that the grace of reconciliation came through Christ's death (Rom 5). Paul uses faith and belief in the

⁵¹³ Steiner, *Approaching the Mystery of Golgotha*, 152, 80.

⁵¹⁴ Gail R. O' Day, CD-ROM "The Gospel of John; Introduction, Commentary and Reflections," vol. IX, *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002). 710-15.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 714.

present tense. Each Christian partakes in salvation in the present tense as: “faith of the heart leads to true being, the confession of the mouth to healing power” (Rom 10:10). The idea of justification by faith is expanded by James, who, as a wisdom teacher, says that ‘faith without works is dead’ (Jas 2:26). This understanding aligns with Steiner’s approach to salvation beyond Pauline Christology. I have found in my journey that Steiner’s use of the words ‘faith’ and ‘belief’ as activities of cognition and knowing has become a source of loving one’s neighbour. This insight changed my understanding from following a teaching to taking responsibility for the consequences of my actions, which I could no longer escape through the authority of confession through the church. At the same time, having grown up in the Roman Catholic Church and having entered into formation through the Redemptorist Order, I have seen this aspect of allowing the person of faith to take responsibility for their experience and action to re-emerge in Mystagogy and understanding the sacraments as rites of initiation.⁵¹⁶ In various ways, the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults has redefined how each sacrament may be conceptualised. Thus adult initiation provides a model for the exploration of every other sacrament: “its emphasis shifting from the washing away of original sin to incorporation into Christ”.⁵¹⁷ I find that the re-emergence of the importance of the Mystagogical process for each person's journey in contemporary developments in traditional orthodox sacramental theology stands in agreement with Steiner’s insights on the individual’s involvement in salvation.

For Steiner, the human being, under the current limitations of the soul faculties explained in chapter five, has always been given guidance from the spiritual world through spiritual teachers. These teachings were through moral codes and practices of being a good citizen. Steiner suggests the source of moral impulses in the human being requires this shift to where the responsibility for our actions is centred. Paul’s conversion at Damascus provides the archetype of the experience necessary for each person to establish and draw upon this source. The working of the spirit of Krishna, as the best teacher of the human self, in Jesus of Nazareth’s soul provided the light of the resurrection body of Jesus. Jesus unites himself with the power of Krishna, and so Christ’s followers are empowered by Krishna’s light:

As Paul journeyed to Damascus it was Christ who appeared to him. The flood of light that enveloped him was Krishna. Because Christ took Krishna as his own soul sheath, through

⁵¹⁶ Kathleen Hughes, *Saying Amen: A Mystagogy of Sacrament* (LiturgyTrainingPublications, 1999); Kenan B Osborne, *The Christian Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist* (Paulist Press, 1987); Liam G Walsh, *Sacraments of Initiation: A Theology of Rite, Word, and Life*, Second ed. (Chicago, Illinois: Liturgy Training Publications, 2011).

⁵¹⁷ Hughes, *Saying Amen: A Mystagogy of Sacrament*, 33.

which he then continued to work, everything that once was the content of the sublime Gita streamed from him.⁵¹⁸

The content of the Bhagavad Gita is that of moral ennoblement through various forms of yoga. Christ transformed this teaching into the new commandment of loving one another. Steiner took the approach of changing the four Platonic cardinal virtues, wisdom, courage, temperance and justice, into the three Pauline theological virtues of faith, love and hope and founded the work of salvation in the cooperation between human beings and Christ:

The future evolution of humanity will take place through the cooperation of human moral impulses with the Christ Impulse. Looking towards the future, we see humanity as a great organic structure. As human beings are able to integrate their actions into this organism, and through their actions create its sheaths, humanity will have prepared in the course of earth evolution the foundation for a mighty community which can be thoroughly permeated by the Christ Impulse.⁵¹⁹

Through Christ in us - the Christ impulse - the human being can begin to transform the three platonic virtues already well established in society through the feeling-will engagement of self-discipline. Steiner speaks of self-discipline as a framing of the virtue of temperance. Through self-discipline, wisdom and courage unite into the fourth virtue of justice or righteousness, expressed as the capacity to make a cohesive ethical life. Christ allowed the human self to crystallise ever more from its group or collective soul. Today with each person coming to understand the full knowledge of Christ through the teachings of spiritual science, the individual crystallises more and more. These crystallised spiritual substances can be taken with us beyond our life into the spiritual world.⁵²⁰ The individual self has the grace of being united with God through Christ, yet each one needs to bring these aspects of their higher evolution to fullness within themselves.

Steiner observes that this has been given a spiritual foundation through the principle of spiritual economy. Through Christ living in the body of Jesus of Nazareth in the three pre-earthly deeds, the three vessels of the physical, life and soul bodies were given new capacities. The fourth step releases forces into these parts of the human being. Christ provided the potential for ennoblement in each for the first time in Jesus. Since then, each human being, through reincarnation, has had the possibility of slowly working through the inscriptions of desires, passions and intellectual understanding that has gradually become devoid of spiritual knowledge. Each time we work through an incarnation, we can improve aspects of our former lives. Through the metamorphosis of the soul, that which we have ennobled is transformed into higher capacities of

⁵¹⁸ Steiner, *The Bhagavad Gita and the Epistles of Paul*, 142, 98.

⁵¹⁹ *The Spiritual Foundation of Morality: Francis of Assisi and the Christ Impulse*, 155, 68-69.

⁵²⁰ *The Universal Human; the Evolution of Individuality*, 117, 20-25.

will and compassion. The aspects that need more work or redemption are preserved in the law of return, and we are allowed to work upon them again. As we refine ourselves, Christ's higher being is more and more incorporated into our bodies. Our personality, capacities, and shortcomings are all unique for each life. They express the metamorphosis of our previous life and deeds in a way where the gifts and the lessons are placed into the patterns for this life. Through this understanding of reincarnation, the individual tasks of this particular life are not diminished.

This essential self can work upon the soul and transform innate wisdom and courage through self-discipline. Steiner gives an example in the historical person Francis of Assisi, who was born with the inherent virtue and courage of the warrior. Through a revelation, Francis realised that he would transform this into a powerful moral impulse to love. Through altercations with his father about the nature of goodness in every person, Francis changed his outer battles as a knight into inner ones. The warrior's courage transformed into compassion. A compassion and love that was so strong it became a moral force that strengthened, comforted and healed:

No one who has fully developed the impulse of faith in the original goodness of human nature, can do otherwise than love this human nature as such. It is these two fundamental impulses, to begin with, that can establish a truly moral life: first, the faith in the divine at the foundation of every human soul, and second, the boundless love of humanity that springs from this faith. For only the boundless love could lead Francis of Assisi to the ailing, the crippled, and those stricken with the plague. And then there is a third thing that is necessarily founded on the first two. A person who has a foundation of faith in the goodness of the human soul and in the love of human nature can do no other than say: What arises from the combination of the original goodness of the human soul and the active love justifies a perspective on the future wherein every soul, no matter how far it has fallen from spiritual heights, may be led back again to these heights. This is the third impulse, the hope that every human soul can find its way back to the divine spiritual world.⁵²¹

Francis of Assisi drew his saintly moral capacity from an earlier incarnation where he had refined his soul enough to receive, and be graced with, the capacities of the sentient soul of Jesus into his own soul. In that incarnation as Francis, he could work in such a way to effect the transformation of his warrior-like capacities into compassion and healing.⁵²² These explanations have given me a better understanding of Christianity than I had as a young person, where a saint's capacities were inexplicable graces of God. While this is true, knowing how grace works through individual effort has allowed me, as a simple Christian, to find the source of my engagement to better moral participation in the world. This position relies upon my embodiment, and personal efforts towards ennoblement, in the Christ community. Hence, I have come to experience the events

⁵²¹ *The Spiritual Foundation of Morality: Francis of Assisi and the Christ Impulse*, 155, 40.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, 32-37.

of my life as my design, under the principle of repeated earth lives, rather than an unexplained sequence of events from which I can discern no inner meaning.

As the capacities given to the human being become more robust and more present in individuals, so will they be able to express their works in the world through faith, love and hope. Profoundly universal humanising capacities have been graced to the human being. Through our faith, which is faith in the knowledge of how the spiritual world works, we participate in the ongoing works of love, which is the foundation of hope for the future human community born of the children of light. How Steiner saw that these virtues cooperate with salvation through Christ will be explained in part three of this chapter.

I first opened to this possibility of thought with Matthew Fox's *Original Blessing*,⁵²³ where he suggests that the traditional fall/redemption model of theology does not teach the believer about the New Creation of creativity as it focuses on sin. He argues that we should see fall redemption spirituality as part of the story, but the far greater part of our Christian spirituality is that we have been blessed so that we can bless.⁵²⁴ This resonates with Steiner's theology. I would add that Steiner's contribution to this kind of spirituality is that we have been created so that we can create,⁵²⁵ albeit in a limited form up to now.

7.2 On Last Things or the End of History – Eschatology

Steiner's understanding that evolution is both in the physical earth and a reality for the spiritual world has greatly encouraged me. The concept of the interaction and interpenetration of the physical and spiritual worlds is a widely held biblical principle, as expressed in such passages as Eph. 6:12, Rev. 12:7-17 and in the Gospel accounts of healings and exorcisms. Steiner takes it further by connecting this with evolution.

The essence of the spiritual world is changed through our becoming. I have realised that while salvation is an ongoing cooperation between humanity and Christ, the forces that created the fall continue to change. Their work is to offer the human being the original choice between good and evil, which is still the field of ongoing salvation because we choose the nature of our deeds. As humanity entered the twentieth century and now the third Christian millennium, Steiner suggested that our interactions with the forces of evil will need to become redemptive and transformative

⁵²³ Fox, *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality*.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, 9-29.

⁵²⁵ Steiner, *The Temple Legend and the Golden Legend: Freemasonry & Related Occult Movements*, 93, 281-

rather than overcoming, destroying or transcending.⁵²⁶ Christine Gruwez in *Mani and Rudolf Steiner: Manichaeism, Anthroposophy, and their Meeting in the Future*⁵²⁷ explains this point of view:

In agreement with the Manichaeic view, Steiner described how the forces of evil are becoming continually stronger in the inner life of human beings. This is “initiation”. The spiritual forces that reign in the world-all are becoming an integral part of the human ‘I’. This then also opens the possibility that these forces of evil can be transformed and redeemed. Redemption is an event that can only take place from one being to another. Human beings are not capable of redeeming the powers of evil in the world-all. Only the Saviour, the Redeemer, has that ability. But human beings have been given the capacity to get to know the powers of evil in themselves in such a way that a beginning of redemption becomes possible. The era of the consciousness soul marks the stage when a first beginning can be made in this direction. What counts for this is not any spectacular deeds, but it happens in the little daily vicissitudes of life.⁵²⁸

This capacity of the human being to cooperate in evolution becomes clearer when Steiner’s differentiation between the restoration, redemption and transformation aspects of the Mystery of Golgotha is defined. The first restorative quality is the return of the pure human soul through the birth of the Nathan Soul (Luke Jesus) and the subsequent transformation of our human soul’s faculties through the work of Christ. In biblical imagery, it is the return of the Tree of Life removed after having eaten of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil: “Now that the human being has become like one of us, knowing good and bad, what if they should stretch out their hand and also take from the tree of life and eat, and live forever!” (Gen 3:22) It is the restoration of the capacity to attain eternal life again.

The second redemptive quality of Christ’s deed is to rescue humankind from individual egocentric soul qualities. Steiner points to Christ’s deed in our thinking by imparting us with the capacity for selflessness in thought. The heavenly intelligence has been in the care of the Archangel Michael, who, leading the beings who guide the forces of the sun to form human beings,⁵²⁹ works closely with the deeds of Christ. Steiner calls this the redemption of the intellectual fall of humanity.⁵³⁰ Steiner explains that

In the past Michael unfolded the Intellectuality throughout the cosmos. He did this as the servant of the Divine-Spiritual Powers, to whom both he himself and the human being owed their origin. And he wishes not to depart from this relationship to Intellectuality.

⁵²⁶ *From Symptom to Reality: In Modern History* (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2015).

⁵²⁷ Christine Gruwez, *Mani & Rudolf Steiner: Manichaeism, Anthroposophy, and Their Meeting in the Future* (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 2014).

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁵²⁹ Steiner, *Christianity as Mystical Fact: And the Mysteries of Antiquity*, 8, 35-39. In the chapter on the Platonic Mysteries Steiner shows the influence of the *Timaues* in his understanding of the mysteries of creation.

⁵³⁰ *Awake! For the Sake of the Future*, 220, 106-21.

When Intellectuality was loosened from the Divine- Spiritual Powers in order to find its way into the inner being of humanity, Michael resolved thenceforth to assume his true relationship to mankind in order that in mankind he might find his relationship to the Intellectuality. But he wanted to do all this only in the sense of the Divine-Spiritual Powers and as their servant still. For with these Powers he has been united ever since his own origin and that of humanity. Therefore it is his intention that Intellectuality shall flow in the future through human hearts, but that it shall flow there as the self-same force which it was in the beginning when it poured forth from the Divine-Spiritual Powers.⁵³¹

Steiner continues to explain how when the heavenly intelligence loosened; it came under the influence of the forces he calls Ahriman. Human intelligence became similar to Ahriman's cold, freezing, cosmic impulse detached from anything of heart and soul. Ahriman would have our intellect formed into an automatic process where thinking becomes separated from experience, our heart and the life of our will. Through Christ, the intellect is connected to love and interest concerning the outer world so that it does not become, or remain, in the service of self-love. Christ and Michael lead divine intellect in the human intellect to our pure love for the action and away from our self-love in acting.⁵³²

This capacity leads to the third transformative quality of the Mystery of Golgotha, where human beings can engender spiritual thoughts by Christ becoming the higher self of all humanity.⁵³³ Thus the two traditional aspects of being created in the image (restoration) and likeness (redemption) of God have a third aspect of being created in the likeness of Christ (transformation) added to it. Therefore, the further course of evolution or the eschatological part of the human being is to become responsible for christening their ethical lives.

The third transformative quality of salvation is an eschatological aspect of Steiner's Christology, which falls under the idea of the redemption of thinking. The human intellect coming under the influence of self-love and abstract disconnection to the heart and the world needed further activity of Christ Jesus to bring balance to intellectual development. This process is one where the forces of resurrection, or the life of the spirit, can be brought into thinking. Steiner considers a person's engagement with the study of the ideas of spiritual Science, along with the pondering of the Gospels and symbols in the methods of contemplative phenomenology discussed earlier in this thesis, as a process by which these resurrection forces can affect our thinking. In his lecture, *The Birth of Light*,⁵³⁴ he describes the gradual indwelling of wisdom as the light of humanity. "The Spirits of Wisdom manifest themselves through the light...In ancient religion the trinity appeared in

⁵³¹ *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts: Anthroposophy as a Path of Knowledge*, 26, 97.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, 98-101.

⁵³³ Sergei O Prokofieff, *The Cycle of the Year as a Path of Initiation: Leading to an Experience of the Christ Being*, Second edition ed. (London: Temple Lodge Publishing, 1995), 48-51.

⁵³⁴ Steiner, *The Birth of Light*, 92.

such a way that first the unity, the primeval wisdom, was revered, then the duality, light and darkness, and finally the trinity that encompassed the illuminated human being.⁵³⁵ Steiner then explains how a fourth aspect was added through the Mystery of Golgotha when it became known that the divine could descend into the personal element and that the human being could give birth to the light within. And now, in our times, the divine has descended even further:

Christ stands so firmly within humanity that the conditions of various countries can be connected with His deed of redemption. This is how firmly He stands as a personality within humanity as a whole! Another mood arose, however. The belief in this archetype of humanity has in a certain way been shaken. Something has arisen which on the one hand constitutes a progress, in as much as a far greater circle of people took part in the further evolution of Christianity. On the other hand, they have ceased to grasp that the centre of their thinking, feeling and willing can be found in the individual personality of Christ. The number of people who dared admit that what is essential is the personality of Christ and not his teaching grew fewer and fewer. Finally this dissolved into veneration of an abstract ideal, into something only thought of as spiritual and toward which the human being strives... This was Brahman... then light and darkness... then it was the trinity. Then in the fourth time the trinity descended and became person. The personal element finally descended still further – as far as the mere intellect, which dissolved the personal essence of humanity, revering it only as an abstract ideal.⁵³⁶

The effects of the abstract ideals of the intellect also give birth to our materialistic age. Knowing this has helped me understand what Steiner calls the fifth step in the Mystery of Golgotha. As set out in chapter five, Steiner presents three pre-earthly deeds of the collaboration of Christ and the Pure Soul of Humanity before the work of Jesus Christ on earth. The fourth step in this mystery is where the light descends further and becomes a person. There will be three further collaborations to help humanity fulfil the consequences of Christ's salvific work. These future deeds must go through the transformation or ennoblement of the human being. The current fifth step is that the personality of Christ has in-dwelt the character and the intellect of human beings. The loosening of human intelligence from the Divine-Spiritual Powers has also darkened it and given it the tendency to self-love alone. The evolutionary impact upon the spiritual world is that through people carrying materialistic thought frameworks with them into the spiritual world, there has been a darkening of consciousness of the Nathan soul,⁵³⁷ who had passed through the Mystery of Golgotha and become angelic in nature, who carries Christ since his resurrection. Pondering this level of complexity and detail has given me a source, a knowledge-based source, to become more conscious of how I affect the world. It is a Christ-based source of moral will so that I can temper my cooperation in evolution. This idea shows in the shift in moral imagination described by Anglican priest Sarah Bachelard who says that it becomes an applied ethics in Christ that is not a moral or social code but a living way of

⁵³⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., 14-15.

⁵³⁷ *Occult Science and Occult Development*, 233, 28-29; *Approaching the Mystery of Golgotha*, 152, 44-54.

interaction with the world around me.⁵³⁸ In the next section of this chapter, I will present an applied and practical experience of what a Christ-based source means.

For Steiner, the evolution of consciousness brought humanity to the point where the divine-spiritual world depends on our collaborative role in where and how evolution continues. Steiner did not write about the Anthropocene as such, but his insight about the role humanity in evolution changing is the same. There is still an unconscious part in this process, and the guiding spirits inspire and guide humanity to our ennoblement. We are not entirely bereft of grace and guidance. I have found that knowing how we live affects social and environmental development, but also the forces of the spiritual world, creates a wish to understand a fuller picture of things. I find it significant to have a larger concept of the divine-spiritual intention in creation by which I can forge my ethical life. As said, it becomes evident that the forces of hindrance and evil too can be affected for their transformation to good or their continuance as they are, or even worse, enhance their capacity to be adversarial to our humanity. We are given this freedom and are at the point where the consequences of our collaboration in evolution become evident. These ideas allow me to feel and understand the suffering of humanity. They also provide an answer for people of faith who comment upon world events about how an all-powerful and all-loving God would allow such atrocities. It is helpful and consoling to understand that even though the spiritual guides of humanity have withdrawn further from intervening in human freedom, they have also graced us with the capacity to find our own solutions for our moral development in accord with the teaching that “what you do to the least of these you do unto me” (Matt 25:40).

Our choices to fill our consciousness only with a material philosophy affect the spiritual world. Steiner suggests that the effect on the spiritual world of thoughts and feelings that base themselves in a material cosmos devoid of any understanding of spirit is like depriving a human of air to breathe. Spiritual frameworks nourish the spiritual worlds that can become more present in our work. Steiner thought that the growing materialistic philosophy, which he saw as increasing from the Copernican revolution, through the industrial revolutions, reached a height during the nineteenth century.⁵³⁹ He did not live through the twentieth century to reflect on whether the 19th century was the worst materialism to exist. He did, however, reflect on the need for a new spiritual understanding to emerge if the 20th century was not to get worse in this respect.⁵⁴⁰ The effects of

⁵³⁸ Sarah Bachelard, *Resurrection and Moral Imagination* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁵³⁹ Rudolf Steiner, *The Occult Movement in the Nineteenth Century and Its Relation to Modern Culture*, vol. 254 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1973).

⁵⁴⁰ *The Fall of the Spirits of Darkness: The Spiritual Background to the Outer World: Spiritual Beings and Their Effects, Vol. 1* (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2022).

materialism on the spiritual world are part of his teaching on the necessity for a renewed Christ consciousness to arise.⁵⁴¹

Through the materialistic thoughts carried into the spiritual worlds, the being who has provided the life sheath for Christ, the angelic being, the restored Pure Soul of Humanity, is affected. Steiner observed that this being had an experience of suffocation and dulling of consciousness through materialism that reached a high point during the nineteenth century. Christ felt the cries of the suffering of humanity and decided to receive ‘the black sphere of materialism’ into his being.⁵⁴² This sacrifice extinguished Christ’s consciousness in the spiritual world, and Steiner describes this as a second crucifixion, a death by spiritual suffocation. Christ and the angelic soul are driven out of the spiritual world.⁵⁴³

The corresponding resurrection to this crucifixion and resulting expulsion from the spiritual world is an intensified presence within the awakening consciousness of human beings.⁵⁴⁴ This new resurrection is a Christ consciousness flaring up in human souls, not a second physical incarnation. The human being has to remember the Christ within; through that, Christ Jesus begins to reawaken and be embodied in the human being.⁵⁴⁵ Steiner places this process of Christ consciousness together with the work of the divine feminine, the Sophia of Christ:

We must grasp the fact we need to find an inner astronomy through the power of Christ, an astronomy that once again shows us the universe emerging from and active in the power of the spirit. And then, by comprehending the universe in this way, the rediscovered power of Isis – the power of the divine Sophia, this rediscovered Isis power of Christ, who has been united with the earth since the Mystery of Golgotha – can unfold its proper activity and efficacy within us because it gives us true insight. We do not lack Christ. What we lack is the Isis of Christ, the Sophia of Christ... What we have lost is *knowledge and perception* of Christ Jesus, and we must rediscover this with the power of Jesus Christ in us.⁵⁴⁶

In 1910 Steiner began to speak of the reappearance of Christ in the etheric, which for him, is the realm of the supersensible which carries the life forces for the earth.⁵⁴⁷ The second crucifixion referred to above leads to the relocation of Christ into the realm of the etheric and in the awakening consciousness of the human soul. For Steiner, the continuing existence of Christ became one with

⁵⁴¹ *Universal Spirituality and Human Physicality: Bridging the Divide, the Search for the New Isis, the Divine Sophia*, vol. 202 (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2014).

⁵⁴² *Approaching the Mystery of Golgotha*, 152, 28-31.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁴ *Occult Science and Occult Development*, 233.

⁵⁴⁵ Selg, *The Suffering of the Nathan Soul*, 66-68.

⁵⁴⁶ Steiner, *Universal Spirituality and Human Physicality: Bridging the Divide, the Search for the New Isis, the Divine Sophia*, 202, 182.

⁵⁴⁷ *The Reappearance of Christ in the Etheric*, 118.

the human soul's capacity to develop Christ consciousness. The cooperation between Christ and the human being became more intimate. Knowing this transformed my understanding from a transcendent God who intervened to redeem us from the consequences of sin to an immanent God who is also the archetype of my humanity which I must fulfil. My Christianity becomes pivotal for the sake of the earth and the cosmos. It is the final strength for human freedom to become cooperative in evolution. Christa L. McKirland explores this type of second-personal relationship between the human being and Christ. The central argument of her book is that:

The fundamental human need... is that humans need *a second-personal relation to God*. Humans are meant to relate to God as a subject, not as a list of facts. In theological shorthand, this has taken the form of expression that humans need *union* with God. In Biblical shorthand... we might say humans are intended for and need *shalom*. However, the state of union with God and *shalom* are the meeting of the need. The reason is that meeting the need involves mental acts. By Contrast, a fundamental need is a passive disposition. It is meant to be intentionally engaged by human persons because its satisfaction causally contributes to human flourishing. Put succinctly, it is the meeting of the need that is a mental act, rather than the need itself. My focus will be on the precondition for human flourishing in that human are creatures of a certain sort that require a second-personal relation with God to flourish.⁵⁴⁸

McKirland suggests being created in the image of God allows us to embrace our fundamental need, just as God has a need for this relationship. It is needs-based anthropology expressed through a committed and co-responsible relationship to each other, through which our human flourishing comes to fulfilment. Her pneumachristocentric anthropology has many similar thoughts on the collaborative role between humans and God as Steiner's analytic mystical Christology reflected in this thesis.

Steiner spoke of this reappearance of Christ in the etheric in terms of its being a supersensible event which he taught was the second coming of Christ but would not be another incarnation or appearance in the physical world:

St. Paul was convinced through such perception in the event of Damascus. This same etheric vision will be cultivated as a natural faculty by individual persons. To experience an event of Damascus, a Paul event, will be an increased possibility for human beings in the coming period... Christ will reappear because human beings will be raising themselves toward Him in etheric vision.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁸ McKirland, *God's Provision, Humanity's Need: The Gift of Our Dependence*, 17-18.

⁵⁴⁹ Steiner, *The Reappearance of Christ in the Etheric*, 118, 18.

It will be as the angels spoke at the Ascension that as the disciples saw the Christ move into the realm of the clouds, so too will we see the Christ reappear in the realm of the clouds (Acts 1:9; Rev 1:7), which represent the etheric realm around the earth:

Christ consciousness can thus be united with the earthly consciousness of humanity from the twentieth century on, because the dying out of Christ consciousness in the angelic sphere in the nineteenth century means the resurrection of direct Christ consciousness in the sphere of the earth. That is, the life of Christ will, from the twentieth century on, be felt increasingly in the souls of human beings as a direct spiritual experience.⁵⁵⁰

In the years of pondering this evolution of Christ's being, I have come to see that, at one level, it is a new expression of Christ Jesus' work in and with human beings. It is also a second coming in that the first one was on the physical plane, and this one is on the etheric plane. I suggest that it is essential to understand Steiner's description of the second coming or Parousia (the presence) as Christ consciousness becoming present in the human soul and does not fulfil Christ's work. Instead, it is the beginning of fulfilling the three aspects of salvation: restoration, redemption, and transformation. It is when the consciousness of Christ within the human soul begins. In this respect, the reappearance of Christ in the etheric can be understood as Parousia being a period when Christ consciousness becomes present and integral to Christian spirituality. Steiner's ideas of the reappearance of Christ in the etheric as the second coming are better positioned as the next phase in fulfilling the transformations started through the resurrection of Christ Jesus. Thus the locating of the Parousia or Second Coming as part of the Pleroma, or fullness of Christ, reveals the next revelation or expression of the salvific work of Christ in the human being, which in Steiner's understanding will only be fulfilled through further deeds of the Christ Jesus and humanity in the future.

7.3 Completing the Incomplete – The Fullness or Pleroma in Christ

The noun plērōma (πλήρωμα), fullness, and the verb plēroō (πληρόω), to make full or to complete, are the opposite of emptying, emptiness or kenōsis (κένωσις), which is fulfilled in the self-emptying of Jesus' own will (Phil 2:7). In Paul's letter to the Colossians the "believers 'have been given fullness or made complete (πεπληρωμένοι) in Christ' (Col 2:10). But the fact of their salvation does not exclude their contribution to this fullness... Christian service must contribute to realising the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God".⁵⁵¹ For Steiner, this fullness of Christ in the human being is the result of the person of faith completing the task of selflessness and

⁵⁵⁰ *Approaching the Mystery of Golgotha*, 152, 29.

⁵⁵¹ "The Niv Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words," in *An Abridgement of New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Verlyn D. Verbrugge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: ZondervanPublishingHouse, 2000), 1045.

emptying of the ego-focused self (*Imitatio Jesu*), followed by the completion of the transformation of human nature into our Christian self or the true and universal human (*Imitatio Christi*). These ideas are in line with traditional Christology. Steiner suggests that the theological virtues of faith, love and hope are the transformation of the four platonic virtues under the maxim of: “Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto me.” (Matt 25:40) The realisation that my moral development is the field in which the work of Christ is fulfilled has become the focus of my striving to understand the nature of Christ and the human being more fully.

It is a challenge to understand the full complexity of Steiner’s Christology presented in this thesis to benefit from his key insights. The traditional Christian theology, which would agree with Steiner that the Christ Event restored, redeemed and transformed human nature, is enough for most people of faith. For me, Steiner’s explanations on the evolution of consciousness, and also my own observations of how the ethics and legal systems of the world are becoming less able to hold the egotism of individuals in check, show that a fuller understanding of all the aspects of the Christ being and its work in the human being and history has undoubtedly become a source for moral action. What used to be held, schooled and nurtured through teaching and liturgy has become less effective over the last few hundred years. I experience people moving away from religion and societal structure towards spirituality and ethical individualism. While Steiner sees and values traditional communities and their role in Christian moral action, he also sees that it is time to expand Christian moral spirituality into these realms of personal experience and responsibility. For the Christ impulse to fulfil itself, the individual needs to grow into taking personal responsibility for their Christian development, with which many Christians would agree, using the same terms, albeit with a less detailed understanding than Steiner develops.

Christ is not only an external agent of redemption but also the model for the individual’s universal humanity. For Steiner, the full extent of that idea is that initially, the Platonic virtues of wisdom, courage, prudence, and justice hold our deeds. Then we can transform our inner soul will into our life wisdom from which wonder and interest in another grow. Then through awe and faith, our sense of the truth will begin to inform our ethical life. Love is the true catalyst, and Steiner thus agrees with Paul in placing it as the foremost virtue. Christ is the capacity in us to love out of freedom. Christ becomes a capacity, and through the Christ Impulse in us, our deeds that find their origin in love and compassion provide the source for embodying Christ in us:

What is it that has been done for Christ? Deeds that are done out of the Christ Impulse, or under the influence of conscience, or under the influence of faith that is in accord with knowledge, these separate themselves out from earthly life, and, inasmuch as through

moral deeds and attitudes one gives something to human beings, one also gives to the Christ. I will express it as a formula: Everything in the way of forces that we create through deeds of faith and trust, through deeds done out of wonder and astonishment, is something that is given over to the Christ-ego and that envelops Christ like a sheath comparable to our astral body. We build the astral body of the Christ-ego Impulse through all moral deeds done out of wonder, trust, awe, faith – in short, through everything that paves the way to supersensible knowledge. Through all these deeds we also foster love. Through our deeds of love we build the etheric body of Christ. And by means of what is created in the world through impulses of conscience, we build for the Christ Impulse that which corresponds to the human physical body. When the earth eventually reaches its goal, when human beings understand the moral impulses through which all goodness occurs, then will the Christ Impulse, which entered into human evolution like an ego be liberated. It will be ensheathed by an astral body built up through faith and through all deeds of wonder and astonishment, by an etheric body built up through deeds of love, and by something like a physical body, built up through deeds of conscience.⁵⁵²

This far-reaching understanding of the human being is instrumental in Christ's existence. However, two aspects need to be pointed out. First, our deeds are not limited to human beings but include all aspects of the world we live in and therefore are a source for ethical action on animals, plants, the environment and climate.⁵⁵³ Second, Steiner suggests that the virtues of faith, love and hope transform our individual astral, etheric and physical bodies.⁵⁵⁴ While this is an ideal description, the Parousia or reappearance of Christ reaches its Pleroma or fulfilment when the full embodiment of the Christ impulse is attained through the human being fulfilling their own transformation. The relationship between these aspects of the human being transforming their own being and their work contributing to the universal future embodiment of a Christened humanity are also suggested in Paul's letters of everyone being a member of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27) and his idea of putting on the armour of God showing the way of transforming our self by embodying virtues of Christ (Eph 6:10-18). The human individual who has reached a certain point in their moral and ethical activity can then have a transformative effect on the world of matter and spirit.⁵⁵⁵

There are many difficulties due to the influence of the darkening of thought, the capacity of self-love and the tendency to evil in the human soul. This is countered through the ennoblement of the soul through the development of the virtues and the possibilities of rectifying the wrongs we have done to others through the law of transformation, through karma, whose guidance falls under the development of the Christ impulse. To me, this is a refinement of the thought of the monastic orders where the final profession, or ordination, into the community is not just renunciation of the

⁵⁵² *The Spiritual Foundation of Morality: Francis of Assisi and the Christ Impulse*, 155, 67-68.

⁵⁵³ In 1924 Steiner worked with farmers to introduce the first explicit organic farming method called Biodynamic farming, which has grown in international application.

⁵⁵⁴ Rudolf Steiner, *Esoteric Christianity and the Mission of Christian Rosenkreutz*, vol. 130 (Forest Row, East Sussex: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2000), 151-87.

⁵⁵⁵ *The Principle of Spiritual Economy in Connection with Questions of Reincarnation: An Aspect of the Spiritual Guidance of Man*, 109, 17-31.

things of this world but the stripping away, even burning away or sacrificing of the mortal part of their humanity and consecrating their being to Jesus Christ. This process can be interpreted as involving Gnostic and Manichaeic trends, an enduring tendency in the history of Christian thought and a connection to Steiner's ideas. For Steiner practising esotericism had a similar effect:

Practicing esotericism means thinking the thoughts of God. All esotericism is given to us as the thought content of divine-spiritual beings, which should continue working in the soul and be enkindled into life... The astral body is lifted out of the physical body in sleep. Human beings then live in the sea of the astral world; they swim so to speak, in the sea of wisdom and divine thought. But they do not know that, because, for the most part, their astral body is dulled, darkened by the thinking of the erring 'I' that is bound by the senses during everyday life in the external world... However, in the Astral body there is a small part that has, so to speak, remained as the divine astral body was in primal times, from which the astral body of the human being was born. This very small part has never been darkened by drives, pleasures, desires or passions, which pull the human being down; it has remained virginal. Only this virginal part of the human astral body can still live in this sea of divine thought during the night... Through the kind of thinking found in esotericism we enrich again in full consciousness during the day this virginal part of our astral body; we cause it to grow; we strengthen it so that at last it becomes strong enough to convey its impression to the tough or solid etheric body. It makes an impression on the etheric body as a seal leaves an impression in sealing wax. Then the spiritual world opens for us with full, clear day consciousness; we can live in the sea of divine thought consciously.⁵⁵⁶

7.4 Summary

In this chapter I have represented the relevance, meaning, complexity and esoteric nature of Steiner's ideas on soteriology, eschatology and the pleroma of Christ. I have reflected on how these ideas have affected my journey of understanding and faith and drawn attention to where similar views are found in traditional Christian thought.

This chapter brings traditional Christian thought and esoteric Christian thought closer together in that both centre on the ongoing work of Christ connected to faith, works and understanding. Through the development of Christian morals and ethics, the fullness of Christ's redemptive act is fulfilled through human cooperation.

I have found in representing Steiner's ideas on the ongoing and future work of Christ that these words of his summarise the essence of this chapter and possibly even the whole of Steiner's evolutionary theory and Christology:

⁵⁵⁶ Esoteric Lessons, 1904-1909: Lectures, Notes, Meditations, and Exercises, 266/1, 276.

[The pupil] discerns in the physical world the seed-ground of a higher world. And in a certain sense this 'higher' world will appear defective without the 'lower'. Two vistas open out before the pupil: one into the past, the other into the future. The pupil looks into a past when this physical world did not yet exist; for they have long since outgrown the preconception that the super-sensible world evolved out of the sense-world. They know that the supersensible world existed first, and that everything physical evolved out of it. They see that they themselves belonged to a supersensible world before coming for the first time into the sense-world. But this pristine supersensible world needed to pass through the sense-world; otherwise its further evolution would not have been possible. The supersensible beings can resume their progress only when certain beings have developed appropriate faculties in the phenomenal world. And these beings are human beings. As they are now, with their present mode of life, they have sprung from an imperfect stage of spiritual existence and are being led, even within this stage, towards that fulfilment which will make them fit for further work in the higher world. And here a view into the future opens out. It points towards a higher stage of the supersensible world – a stage that will be enriched with fruits brought to maturity in the sense-world. The sense-world as such will be overcome; but its results will be incorporated into a higher world.⁵⁵⁷

In conclusion Steiner's integration of a Christian theory of reincarnation is a valuable contribution to Christian theology, as it addresses not only soteriology, but theodicy and eschatology.

⁵⁵⁷ *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, 10, 204-05.

PART THREE – CONCLUSION

People have a natural sense of truth in regard to what it will be possible through the logic of the heart to comprehend fully only in the future. Besides addressing themselves to the reasoning mind, the spiritual investigator turns to these faculties that are slumbering within the human being, and assumes that the human soul is organised, not for error and falsehood, but for truth; that long before the soul, out of its deepest knowledge, will recognise and accept the truths brought down from the higher worlds, spontaneous response in the life of feeling is already present – in other words, that truth about the higher worlds can be felt by numbers of human hearts before it is actually understood.⁵⁵⁸

Rudolf Steiner

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION: AT THE END, WHERE TO BEGIN?

There is an obvious shortcoming in presenting a summary of Rudolf Steiner's Christological ideas. He suggested his ideas were to be contemplated from various angles over many years before comprehending them. In trying to shorten a very complex narrative, it is always a choice between what knowledge to keep unrevealed and what to reveal, knowing that sufficient details and time to ponder it are lacking. I hope that I have provided enough detail so that it provides thoughts and ideas upon which the reader can dwell beyond the initial reading of this thesis. I set myself the task to find a grammar that bridges Rudolf Steiner's theosophical and anthroposophical terminology and language with the theological and scientific language usages. The second part of the thesis is compromised in length by the need of the first part to establish the lenses to read Steiner's work to respond to the initial questions asked of the project.

8.1 Beginning with Questions

Was Steiner a Gnostic? Yes and no. Yes, from the point of view that he offered insights and methods for a personal experience of Christ. I have formulated this aspect of his work as his hermeneutical key: 'not I, but Christ in me'. No, from the point of view that he was not trying to re-establish Gnosticism's practices into a neo-gnostic tradition. Steiner was, in his times, well aware of concerns articulated more recently by Pope Francis about the two subtle enemies of holiness, contemporary Gnosticism and contemporary Pelagianism. In short, they are the traditionally well-

⁵⁵⁸ *Macrocosm and Microcosm*, vol. 119 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1985), 184-85.

established and well-founded concerns of the dangers of pursuing purely subjective faith.⁵⁵⁹ Steiner agrees with these dangers and stays clear by developing his spiritual-scientific methods so that the subjective experience can be presented rationally through the language of anthroposophy. Steiner's esoteric approach encourages people to engage with the tasks at hand in their destiny and see this life as the one that is important to do things in, rather than trying to transcend away from the earth. Steiner is not the only one speaking in this manner. Until recently, Gnosticism's knowledge was mainly through its opponents' writings. However, many of the concepts can be found in other traditions. An example of such a tradition is Kabbalistic philosophy where the concepts of creation out of nothing; the five levels of threefold manifestation between emanation and creation in the Sefirot of the Tree of Life; the primordial soul of Adam Kadmon; the three souls of the human being; and pre-existence of the soul can be found in their own right.⁵⁶⁰

Was Steiner scholarly, theological and systematic? Yes and no. Yes, from the points of view suggested in the first three lenses in part one of this thesis. No, from the academy's point of view, as he did not remain within the academic world to build his systematic theology. However, I suggest yes, he was, but he did not use the academy's terminology beyond the need to raise an issue that he thought would benefit from deeper esoteric understanding. I have demonstrated that he was well-versed in his day's theological and church doctrine. My thesis has offered ideas that align Steiner's narrative with theological terminology. I have shown that Steiner was scholarly in his academic and intellectual biography; that he was theological, using '*Theosis in Christ*' as his conceptual theological model; and that he was systematic and used methods that parallel with the emerging understanding of the spiritual senses, which I have named as 'contemplative phenomenology'. More detailed expositions of these themes will have to be in future writings beyond this thesis.

Was Steiner unreasonably critical and dismissive of his contemporaries? Yes and No. Yes, from the point of view expressed in chapter one, many of his works establish his own point of view by refuting other thinkers' works. That may be seen as the style of late nineteenth-century philosophy, or even possibly the scientific method of 'doubt' leading to the quest for new knowledge. No, from the point of view that this style was also a part of Steiner's method. I have placed him among modern analytic theologians such as Sarah Coakley whose *théologie totale* is "an approach to systematic theology that dialogically engages disciplines outside of theology, such as science (evolutionary biology), critical gender theory, postmodern philosophy, the social sciences, and art. She contends that this integrative method is required at this present moment when the task

⁵⁵⁹ Francis, "Gaudete Et Exsultate; on the Call to Holiness in Today's World". 10-16.

⁵⁶⁰ Yeruham Fishel Lachower, Isaiah Tishby, and David Goldstein, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: Anthology of Texts* (Oxford, Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008), 549-58; 677-703.

of systematic theology is contested and being renegotiated”.⁵⁶¹ Along with his mystical approach to spiritual experience, I have suggested that instead of reading his un-systemised work as ‘theosophical mystical musings’, we can see his approach as ‘analytic-mystical’ theology.

Rudolf Steiner’s theology pre-empted aspects of postmodernism, seeking to integrate wisdom from many diverse cultural sources. He explored aspects of his culture and its wisdom in a time when the National socialist impulse had not yet appropriated it for their own ends. His work, and cultural legacy have since become important in many fields such as education and agriculture, and he is an extremely influential, though controversial, figure. This thesis presents his legacy for theology and biblical studies.

8.2 Beginning Again – Future Projects

I have applied Steiner’s analytic-mystical theology to the changing field of theology, especially in understanding Gnostic teachings. I formulated this as the contemplative phenomenology methodology and the spiritual senses’ development. By approaching the question of reincarnation and Christian doctrine, perspectives were offered for understanding where Steiner’s work could influence Christian doctrine. Anthroposophy and Steiner’s Christology are not for the impatient reader. In *Occult Science*, Steiner comments that

The reader will do justice to our use of the term ‘Occult Science’ if they consider what Goethe had in mind when he spoke of the ‘manifest secrets’ in the phenomena of nature. Whatever remains ‘secret’, that is to say unmanifest in these phenomena when we apprehend them only with the outer senses and with the intellect that is bound to the outer senses, will here be treated as the subject matter of a supersensible way of knowledge.⁵⁶²

Steiner continues to explain that the methods of spiritual science start with knowledge and imagination: “the results of supersensible knowledge must first be described... Information about the path to the attainment of higher faculties of cognition can only be of value to a person when they have first made themselves acquainted, through simple narrative, with that which supersensible research reveals”.⁵⁶³

Of necessity, this thesis is not written in that style. The need to present who Steiner was and how he could be read needed to be introduced first. This approach also included elaborating on his methods, offering an understanding of the faculties and skills of the spiritual senses.

⁵⁶¹ Medley, "Sarah Coakley and the Future of Systematic Theology".

⁵⁶² Steiner, *Occult Science: An Outline*, 13, 26.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, 40.

Rudolf Steiner's terminology and anthroposophical imagery have been illuminated with theological and scientific knowledge. I have also tried to find language and Christological grammar that is readable by both the academy and the person of faith. This aspect of my thesis reflects an observation of Tom McLeish that Peter Bafou's writing on the unconscious mind reveals the 'openness-hiddenness principle'⁵⁶⁴ in understanding reality in the world:

There seems to be something in the metaphor of 'bringing hidden things to light' that sparks not only the act of illuminating what is still hidden in nature itself, but also bringing into conscious apprehension new understanding that is latent within our minds, of hauling out into daylight the treasures lying unseen in the depths of our mental caves. If we are to grasp the process of scientific creativity, then we need to understand how to access these depths and how to nourish them in ways that best furnish their environment for the germination of ideas.⁵⁶⁵

Chapter four offers the reader the ideas and findings of Rudolf Steiner about reincarnation and its relationship to Christian doctrine, applying the methods of approaching theology and biblical studies that have been offered in the first three chapters.

The second part of this thesis offers the three chapters of Steiner's Christology. I have ordered and systemised Steiner's thoughts by representing the chronological unfolding of the Christ being in the evolution of humanity. The three chapters are the pre-existence, the incarnation, and the future work of Christ. Here, Steiner's imaginations are elaborated through Christian doctrine and scientific understanding so the reader can find foundations from which they can read his esoteric theology.

While each chapter could be expanded into a new book, some areas of Christological interest could only be briefly addressed, and this thesis leaves much scope for further volumes of systematic theology. The first is the role of Sophia in the redemption of the human soul. The second is an eco-theology developed from the moral sources Steiner describes growing in our Christened soul. Third, one could reformulate Steiner's anthroposophical cultural understanding using the anthropological lens of all cultures working towards a common end.

What is presented here is the beginning of developing an esoteric systematic theology. But, in the end, it is just the beginning of a greater exploration beyond the Christology of Rudolf Steiner and an ongoing expression of the seeds planted in this thesis.

⁵⁶⁴ Tom McLeish, *The Poetry and Music of Science: Comparing Creativity in Science and Art* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2019), 37.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

In this thesis, I hope to offer bridges between the teachings and methods of Christian doctrine, science, people of faith and the esoteric understanding of Rudolf Steiner.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - RUDOLF STEINER'S WORKS ON CHRISTOLOGY 1902 -1914

CW is the volume number in the Collected Works

Bold Type are written works considered to be the core reading to understand Anthroposophy

- 1902 - **Christianity as Mystical Fact: and the Mysteries of Antiquity** (CW8)
- 1903 – Concerning the Astral World and Devachan (CW88)
- 1904 - The Temple Legends (CW93)
- 1904 - **Theosophy** (CW9)
- 1904 – Cosmic Memory: Prehistory of Earth and Man (CW11)
- 1905 - Foundations of Esotericism (CW93a)
- 1905 - **Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and its Attainment** (CW10)
- 1906 - The Christian Mystery (CW97)
 - The Gospel of St. John: Berlin and Munich (CW94)
- 1907 - Rosicrucianism Renewed: The Theosophical Congress of Whitsun 1907 (CW284)
 - Rosicrucian Wisdom; an Introduction (CW99)
 - True Knowledge of the Christ: The Gospel of John (CW100)
- 1908 - The Gospel of St. John (CW103)
 - The Apocalypse of St. John (CW104)
 - Egyptian Myths and Mysteries (CW106)
 - Disease, Karma and Healing (CW107)
- 1909 - **Occult (Esoteric) Science: An Outline** (CW13)
 - Reading the Pictures of the Apocalypse (CW104a)
 - The Christ Impulse and the Development of Ego Consciousness (CW116)
 - The Gospel of St. John and its Relation to the Other Gospels (CW112)
 - The Gospel of Luke (CW114)
 - Deeper Secrets of Human History in the Light of the Gospel of Matthew (CW117)
- 1910 - Second course on the Gospel of John in relation to the Other Gospels (unpublished)
 - The Reappearance of Christ in the Etheric (A collection of lectures)
 - Genesis: Secrets of Creation - the first Book of Moses (CW122)
 - The Gospel of St. Matthew (CW123)
 - Background to the Gospel of Mark (CW124)
- 1911 - Turning Points in Spiritual History (CW60 and 61)
 - From Jesus to Christ (CW131)
 - Esoteric Christianity and the Mission of Christian Rosenkreutz (CW130)
- 1912 - The Gospel of Mark (CW139)
 - The Bhagavad Gita and the Epistles of Paul (CW142)
- 1913 - The Mysteries of the East and of Christianity (CW144)
 - The Esoteric Significance of the Bhagavad Gita (CW146)
 - The Fifth Gospel: From the Akashic Record (CW148)
- 1914 - Christ and the Spiritual World and the Search for the Holy Grail (CW149)
 - Approaching the Mystery of Golgotha (CW152)
 - Christ and the Human Soul (CW155)

APPENDIX 2 – RELEVANT WRITTEN PUBLISHED WORKS BEFORE 1902

- 1883 to 1897 - Goethean Science in four volumes (CW1)
- 1886 - A Theory of Knowledge Implicit in Goethe's World Conception (CW2)
- 1892 - Truth and Knowledge: Introduction to Philosophy of Spiritual Activity (CW3)
- 1893 - **Philosophy of Freedom: the Basis for a Modern World Conception** (CW4)
- 1897 - Goethe's World View (CW6)
- 1900 - Mystics after Modernism: Discovering the Seeds of a New Science in the Renaissance (CW7)

APPENDIX 3 – SELECT WORKS RELEVANT TO CHRISTOLOGY AFTER 1914

- 1914 - Inner Reading and Inner Hearing: Existence in the World of Ideas (CW156)
- 1915 - Artistic Sensitivity as a Spiritual Approach to Knowing Life and the World (CW161)
- 1916 - Unifying Humanity Spiritually through the Christ Impulse (CW165)
- 1917 - Building Stones for an Understanding of the Mystery of Golgotha (CW175)
- 1918- Three Streams in the Evolution of Mankind (CW184)
- 1919 - Problems of Society (CW193)
 - Michael's Mission: Revealing the essential Secrets of Human Nature (CW194)
 - Cosmic New Year (CW195)
- 1920 - Universal Spirituality and Human Physicality: Bridging the Divide, the Search for the New Isis, the Divine Sophia (CW202)
 - The Redemption of Thinking (CW74)
 - First Steps in Christian Religious Renewal (CW342)
- 1921 - Lectures and Courses on Christian Religious Work (CW343)
- 1922 - The Sun Mystery and the Mystery of Death and Resurrection (CW211)
 - Reimagining Academic Studies (CW81)
 - The Mystery of the Trinity and the Mission of the Spirit (CW214)
 - Philosophy, Cosmology and Religion (CW215)
 - Supersensible Influences in the History of Mankind (CW216)
 - The Spiritual Communion of Mankind (CW219)
- 1923 - The Evolution of Consciousness as revealed through Initiation Knowledge (CW227)
 - Awake! For the Sake of the future: the Intellectual Fall of Humanity (CW220)
 - The Four Seasons and the Archangels (CW229)
- 1922 - 1924 three further lecture cycles on the Renewal of Religious Working and the Foundation of The Christian Community (CW344, 345, 346)
- 1924 - Autobiography (CW28)
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