

The Etheric Christ in Relation to the Zodiac

Unrevised Lecture by Willi Sucher - 6 January 1951

We are now facing a world situation that makes it essential that we develop the strength for the obvious struggles ahead, struggles that seem to indicate that Western civilization must change its spiritual weapons against the opposing forces. One spiritual weapon of Christianity is of the utmost importance, and it is essential that we develop a deep knowledge of the spiritual background of Christianity as it regards our present age.

Therefore, we shall speak of the etheric Christ, which makes it necessary to get clear on one aspect of human life; and that is death. For at death, the life streams away; that is, the ether body, or life body of the organization of the formative forces within our physical body, separates. The physical body then follows the laws of nature and disintegrates. The astral and the ego separate every night from the etheric and the physical, not only at death. However, at death the etheric is also released, and we are immediately confronted by a memory picture of our past life, as in one great tableau. We live in this tableau for about three days after death. The etheric body is the architect within the physical body, maintaining its particular human form, and all the laws of nature are overcome by its activity.

An architect always stands between the world of architectural ideas and the earthly reality of building. Thus the ether body stands between the spiritual complexity of the human aspect of the physical body and the aim to maintain our Divine image, received from the starry world into the physical world. The ether body is the guardian of cosmic memory, an accumulator, we might say. At death it is freed from the task of impressing the Divine image on the physical body and returns to its Divine realm of memory; thus it can recall and reproduce this grand tableau at death. So, the etheric body separates from the physical body at death but remains within its environment for a few days.

Spiritual research has also revealed a further cosmological tableau through cosmological empiricism, on an exact mathematical foundation of the position of the Sun or Saturn in a certain position at a person's death that may be connected with an important or special event that happened during the life just lived.

After three days the first tableau vanishes, and the individual ether body dissolves into the cosmic ether, uniting with it, which is like a receptacle that takes in what comes to it from our etheric bodies. This is a tremendous thought, for it shows our relation to the universe in a new way; for at death, the whole cosmos waits for what our soul has to bring as an individual message from our life on Earth.

However, in Christ's case this was different. The ether body of Christ certainly separated at death, and there was also the tableau of the 33 years of the life of Christ Jesus; however, it did not dissolve after three days. This greatest tableau of all time remained complete and compact for several centuries, and it was thus the source of inspiration and information for those writers of the Gospels, who beheld the Events of Palestine with inner vision. Hence, there is a difference in their content and approach, according to their particular vision; for the faculties of the various writers reached out to the various spheres. It is generally agreed that St. John's vision was the most far-reaching and profound.

These visions all ceased after the 3rd century. Until then the Gospels had not been written, because the earlier preachers spoke of the life of Christ from an experience of a present reality in the etheric world. Later, this vision slowly vanished, and the impulse to record it arose.

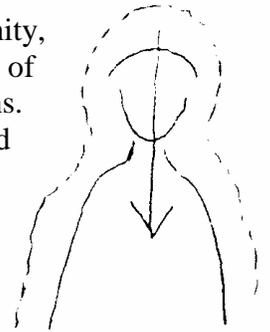
The vision did not vanish through dissolution but through a great, majestic transformation. The Mystery of Golgotha is concerned not only with the Earth but with the whole cosmos, and the message sounded through the whole cosmos; and all the Beings partook of this great Event. The complete Ether Body of Christ expanded through the totality of etheric-cosmic space, and its Divine Events were communicated through every sphere of the planets. The Etheric Body of Christ moved as far as the boundaries of the etheric cosmos and then returned to the Earth in a kind of twofold spiral activity. Events, Words, and Deeds of the Christ thus were made eternal, transforming the ether universe into the reality of His statement that "Heaven and Earth will pass away, but My Words will never pass away." It was a process connected with both time and memory. Thus was earthly time and space transformed into spiritual time.

What is time? Time is determined by cosmic rhythms. There is one rotation of the Earth every 24 hours. A month is determined by the Moon rhythm of about thirty days. The Sun moves around the Earth once a year, if we take the Ptolemaic viewpoint. This is the rhythm of time, and if we watch the movement of the Moon, we will see that the Moon takes just 2½ days to go through one constellation, while the Sun needs a whole month. On the other hand Saturn goes through the space from Aries to Taurus in 2½ years. In the sense of cosmic rhythm, time is not at all uniform and must be considered from various aspects of the universe. There is a ratio of one to thirty between Saturn time and Earth time, for Saturn is the outermost planet in our solar universe, and it is the Guardian of the Etheric in its journey from the physical into the etheric world. Therefore, time is entirely different in the spiritual world, as it is thirty times longer. The expansion of our ether body at death deals with cosmic space. One can speak of time and space of a human life.

The ether body of the universe contains qualitatively all the great Imaginations of the Life of Christ, but it is also quantitative. Thirty-three years is equal to thirty-three cycles of the Sun around the Earth. This expansion takes thirty times longer than the Life of Christ. Thus $33 \times 30 = 951$ years, approximately, because the years and months we deal with are not always exactly regular. Therefore the Etheric Body of Christ took approximately 950 years to expand and spiral to the outermost boundaries of the spiritual universe, and the same time to return to Earth, which brings us approximately to the present time. Indeed, Rudolf Steiner gives the approximate year of 1935 in which that Archetypal Eternal Gospel has returned to the Earth in its Etheric Sheath.

It was in 1910 that Rudolf Steiner first spoke of the Second Coming of Christ as approximately between 1933 and 1937. It is an awe-inspiring truth that since that great moment, our Earth has rested in the Etheric Sheath of the Living Gospel, which contains Christ's great Imaginations.

You all know how traditional Christianity suffers, how it is waning fast within humanity, and that we live at a time of utmost Christian crisis. Into this has come the new Revelation of Christ. It is something we cannot behold with our physical senses, but only by etheric means. In ancient times, people possessed a universal dreamy clairvoyance that was not controlled by the ego, for the etheric body was outside people, so that they might communicate with the spiritual realm (see drawing). However, this outer etheric body has gradually become incarnated into and gripped by the physical body, and through this process we have learnt self-consciousness. Thus by Roman times, people were much more abstract in thought, because of their inability to perceive the etheric spiritual realm of the etheric.



In our time, the opposite is gradually taking place; like a natural event, this is something that must happen to everyone in the long run. The etheric must gradually loosen in us again, rise, and be able to behold the spiritual world of the etheric—this great Divine Aura around the Earth. It will behold two facts: that this Earth has become the Star of Christ, so that this Christ-Earth will be able to clothe Itself with the Sheath of Archetypal Eternal Gospel surrounding the Earth, and that this is the Second Coming.

Christ, now resting in that garment of Ether, will be able to clothe Himself and will appear as a present reality, as the Healer and Comforter and the Sun Spirit. People will be able to perceive this Etheric Christ. Maybe He will enter a room where several people battle to find the truth, or come to someone who is alone and in despair, as the Great Comforter and Healer, because He is no longer bound to one body, as in Palestine, but can manifest in many places because of this faculty of the etheric world for communication.

However, the present grave situation is that the loosening of the ether body, which is necessary for people to behold Christ, is withheld for a time. This is the great challenge of this Age. Events have taken place, but whether we perceive them is a different matter. Deliberate forces wish, very subtly, to hold back this evolution of ours. Sometimes it is by way of nutrition—the manufacture and consumption of artificial food fastens the etheric to the physical body; by education, which hardens the children by its intellectual nature, so that the etheric cannot loosen; and also by fear. This fear is a creeping monster, and is our greatest danger. Shocks can be beneficial and contribute to the loosening of the etheric body, but a slow, creeping fear, which is often artificially infused, can only be overcome by the will and by absolute honesty and truth. All of you have experienced utter fear at times by which the etheric body is gradually contracted and withdrawn. It is essential for us to remember that the adversary uses such means to prevent the necessary loosening of the etheric body.

This puts a grave responsibility upon us, so that we become conscious of the adversary; for it is one thing the adversaries cannot tolerate, i.e., the exposing of their intentions.

One thing to be cultivated is watchfulness, and to distinguish the subtle and tortuous falsehoods of the adversary in the realm of the “taken for granted”. It is absolutely essential that we cut through all confusion to absolutely clear thinking about these things.

Both the Gospels and the Acts say that “No man, but the Father knoweth the hour” of the Second Coming. We cannot know when our whole bodily organization will be sufficiently developed to have this experience of these majestic and ever-present and comforting Events, in which our Earth is now embedded. Christ said that He “would come like a thief in the night” and that we must be ready and watchful or we might miss it. It is for us to thoroughly prepare for the moment, but only Divine Grace knows when to open our eyes.

I would like to end on a personal note. I came from the continent some years ago, and it was like coming to a new world, for the British Isles presented a great Imagination to me. Many of my continental friends have had this same experience. I realize now that it was the grand heritage of the Celtic Christianity that rested in the background of the British Nation, and most certainly, I believe in the great task and mission of the British Isles, which is to bring to new birth Cosmic Christianity and carry it into the dark world. I can only hope that gathered together, as we have been, we have contributed a small share toward this great task during these twelve Holy Nights.