

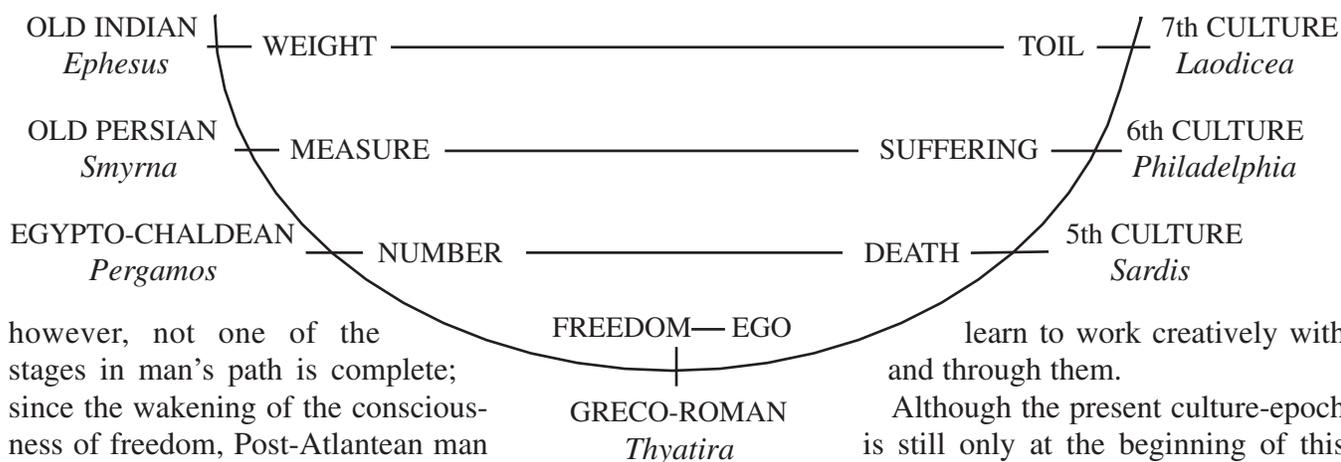
MYSTIC LIGHT

Studies in the Apocalypse— The Letter to the Angel of the Church in Sardis

IN THE PRECEDING SECTION* we have seen a definite path which mankind must tread in order to ascend from the trials of Weight, Measure and Number to that of Freedom. The stages of this path led from the life [vital] body to the sentient [desire] body, from the sentient body to the sentient [emotional] soul, and from the sentient soul to the intellectual soul where the problem of freedom arises. Even so,

lution, which can be illustrated by the figure below.

Man makes the three karmic necessities his own when he receives *within himself* that which formerly approached from outside, and when, creating it in the spirit of freedom *out of himself*, he changes it into higher forces and faculties. Thus the mission of the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch consists especially in once more coming to terms with “death,” so that mankind may absorb its forces and



however, not one of the stages in man’s path is complete; since the wakening of the consciousness of freedom, Post-Atlantean man is bound to come to terms with “death,” “suffering,” and “toil” (that is, with the great tasks of Number, Measure and Weight) in the spirit of Freedom. And indeed, man’s further path depends on his making the three primal necessities of human karma his own in such a way that they are raised into the sphere of Freedom and altogether permeated by it. From this point of view, a path results for the Post-Atlantean epoch of man’s evo-

learn to work creatively with and through them.

Although the present culture-epoch is still only at the beginning of this task, it already shows the right and

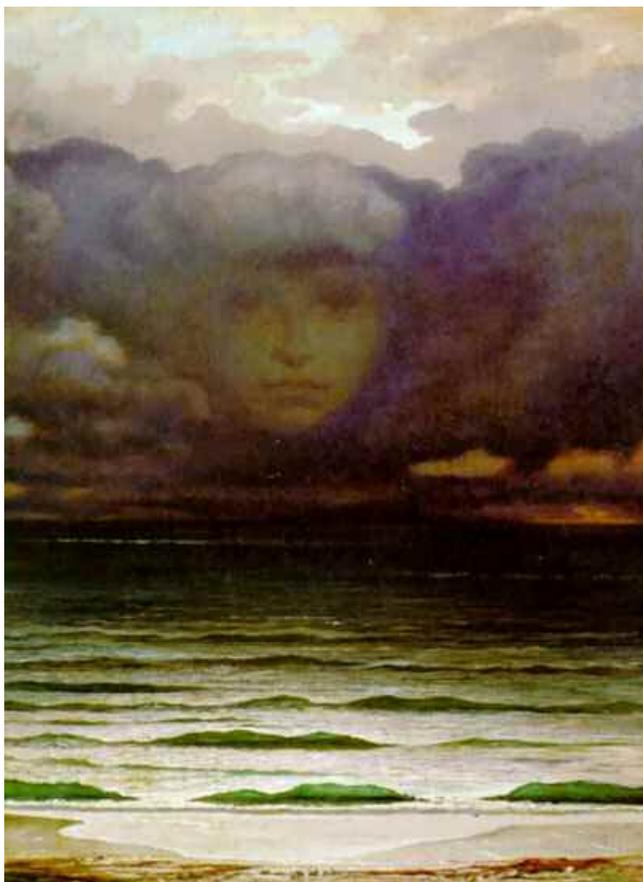
wrong paths connected with the creative and controlling forces of “death.” Thus, for example, modern civilization owes its expansion to the co-operation of two forces: the force of dead abstract thinking, and the mechanical forces of the external world. Almost all modern technical and scientific civilization has arisen from the combined influences of the faculty of abstraction within man and the mechanical forces outside. Now, the faculty of abstraction is the faculty of disconnecting “life”—that is, light, color, rhythm and warmth—from the

*See May/June 2003 Rays. Valentin Tomberg’s Studies of the Apocalypse, ©1985 by Candeur Manuscripts, is reprinted by permission of Anthroposophic Press.

sphere of thinking. The modern, theoretic procedure is essentially the killing of thought-life until it becomes a shadow, in order to be able to handle this shadow freely, and so apply it to any region desired. For abstractions are felt to be inconsequential, and therefore, without influence on the human soul. Man holds them in his hand and can deal with them as he likes.

Similarly, the modern man can also deal as he pleases with the mechanical forces of Nature, especially with the forces liberated by the disintegration of matter. The sub-organic forces of the outer world offer him a field for the development of power in which there are no restrictions, such as are imposed by the forces of living things where an uncontrollable element is always inherent.

But this working with the forces of “death” brings about two opposite results: on the one hand, it can set free the inner forces of the soul, and awaken them to a higher activity; on the other, it can mechanize man himself so that the inner forces of the soul fall asleep. The first process takes place when the soul within the modern life of civilization demands and strives after *another* spiritually active sphere of existence. The very *emptiness* of the soul and spirit of modern civilization becomes a mighty spur for the development of an inner, creative activity which will fill that emptiness. Then the arena of the forces of “death” will furnish abstraction and mechanism with a field for the awakening of the deeper consciousness forces of the soul. For it is characteristic of the mysteries of Death that it may bring with it an awakening of the higher consciousness, an illuminating clarity of consciousness. Certainly, to it the law is applicable: “He that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.” For as the wind makes a strong flame burn more brightly still, so it extinguishes a flame which is feeble. And in this sense we may understand the effect upon the consciousness of a civilization which gives the abstract and the mechanical the leading role. The deadly breath of the abstract and the mechanical can either stir the creative consciousness of the soul to a mighty blaze, or extinguish them altogether. This “either... or” in the effect of the death-forces of modern civ-



Oil on panel, 1870, Elihu Vedder, Los Angeles County Museum of Art

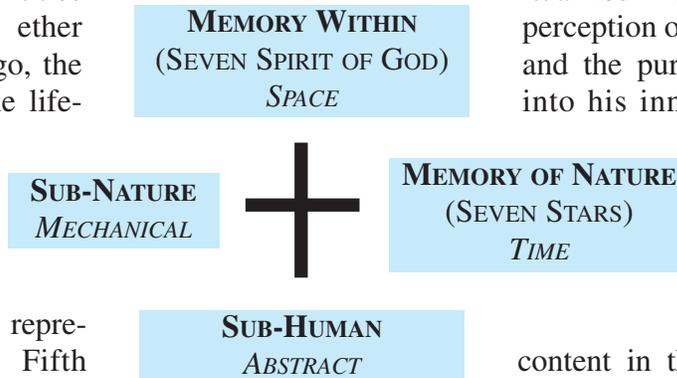
Memory

ilization forms the test of the present age, the main task of the Fifth Post-Atlantean culture-epoch. For this reason, the admonition of the Fifth Letter of the Apocalypse runs: “I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain which are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.” (Rev. 3:1-2) The “works,” that is, the sum-total of the created culture values, are, as seen from within (“before God”), definitely “not perfect” (*ou pepleromena*). That is, they are *empty* of divine life. In these circumstances, therefore, the first commandment is, on the one hand: “Be wakeful,” and, on the other, “Strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die.” Dying and keeping awake are to balance each other. The more the one process is in evidence, the more so must the other be also.

But the awakening of the consciousness in facing Death must take place in two directions: in waking to the true nature of *man*, and in waking to

the nature of the *world*. The latter, indeed, must be effected by means of waking and intensifying the *memory*, whereas the knowledge of the nature of man must result from study of the *world*. That which the memory-force must draw up from the depths of consciousness is knowledge concerning the “seven stars”—knowledge of the course taken by the vast “biography” of the *universe through Saturn, Sun, Moon, Earth, Jupiter, Venus and Vulcan*. And the result of an awakened study of the universe is the knowledge of the divine origin of the seven members of the human being—the knowledge that the original entities of the physical body, the ether body, the astral body, the ego, the spirit-self [human spirit], the life-spirit and the spirit-man [divine spirit], are “the seven Spirits of God.” These two consequences of the awakening of the higher consciousness forces represent the mission of the Fifth Culture-epoch. That is why we find at the beginning of the Letter to the Church in Sardis the ideal of the cosmic Christ, as of Him “that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.” For the special mission of the culture-epoch represented by the Church in Sardis is to understand the Christ by the aid of the seven stages of world evolution, and the seven-membered nature of man. During this culture-epoch a Christendom is to arise based on a knowledge of the cosmos, and then, having made the aims and tasks of the cosmic evolution its own, is to build up the temple of the seven membered man as a habitation for the “seven Spirits of God.”

To fulfill this task of the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch, the path of the awakening of memory must be followed. And of course the awakening must not only be that of memory from within, but also that of the recognition of natural phenomena as the objective cosmic memory of past conditions in world evolution. Nature has to remind man of the distant past; but man has to awaken *in himself* his true nature by a “change of heart” (*metanoesis*) or “repentance.” There are two kinds of *memory*: hor-



izontal memory in time, which can be awakened by nature, and vertical memory in space, where man becomes conscious of his own true character.

As may be seen from the diagram of the “Cross” of the Fifth Post-Atlantean culture, the two kinds of memory arise from the force of spiritual opposition—in the one case, to the sub-natural mechanical sphere, in the other, to the sub-human abstract. It is the awakening of a higher inner activity in opposition to the forces of death inside and outside man. This awakening is complete when it has passed through three stages: the images of the spiritualized memory-force, the inner perception or “hearing” of the soul, and the purely spiritual reception into his inner being. Thus, what is “received” in intuition will be “heard” in the inspiration of the soul, and will reappear as memory content in the consciousness. But when memory has descended from

the sources of intuition by the path of inspiration to the imaginative picture, then the point is to translate it into the ordinary presentation of a concept so that it may remain the permanent possession of waking day consciousness. The “remembering” and “hearing” of what has been “received” is followed by the injunction to “hold it fast”: that is, to make it a lasting possession of the ordinary consciousness.

Thus the admonition of the Letter to the Angel of the Church in Sardis contains the quintessence of the spiritual method of the epoch of the consciousness soul: “*Remember* therefore [*mnemoneue*] how thou hast *received* and *heard*, and *hold fast*, and *repent* [*metanoeson*]” (Rev. 3:3).

But repentance, a “change of heart,” underlies this method—from the moral force of “opposition” to the sub-human and the sub-natural are to be awakened the faculties in the soul which add to thinking as a higher faculty of knowledge the force of spiritual memory. It is the duty in the present age of this higher faculty of knowledge, having been awakened to a consciousness based on the

realm of death, to be aware of the great event of the Second (etheric) Advent of the Christ: "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (Rev. 3:3).

The etheric Second Advent of the Christ is both the great hope and the great test of the present age. It is the great hope because it will exercise an influence which will enable the soul to overcome the influence of the abstract and mechanical. Its influence will appear, for example, when a number of men overcome the abstract in so far as to become capable of being stirred to the depths of the heart by pure thought. And this will not be the emotional relationship of soul to thought—such as existed, for instance, in the Middle Ages—but rather the living activity of thought itself. For its influence will extend even to the life [vital] body of man, and the life body re-activated by the Christ will give such life to thought as will set it free from abstraction. But, for this freedom to be attained, the conquest of abstract questioning must precede the conquest of abstract knowledge. The abstract questioning, which, without the participation of the whole human being, merely wishes to achieve the comfort of a "flawless and incontrovertible system," will at first be replaced by a different kind of questioning in which each question leads to a further step of the awakened conscience.

There will then be no other questions than such as arise from the moral need of the soul. Then also the questioning will deal with the happiness and unhappiness of the soul, but no longer merely for the sake of increasing comfort. As we have said, however, that change in the questioning must precede a change in the sphere of knowledge. There must be a time of tragedy in the questioning, of questions in which all the happiness and unhappiness of the soul are at stake, before the inner miracle can come to pass; and again, before it becomes *apparent*, even if it has come to pass. The incapacity

and failure of the existing human moral and cognitive forces must be fully experienced before an actual event answers the one great question in which all separate questions are summed up, namely, the *whence* and the *how* of spiritual life force. More and more men and groups of men must come to recognize: What we have wished to do, in that we have failed. We have a task to fulfill, but we are not equal to it. We *cannot* do it. How are we to be *able* to do what we *must* do?

It must not be thought that only those who stand positively and affirmatively within the realm of modern external civilization and science experience the tragedy of having "reached a dead end," and that men who devote themselves, say, to spiritual science are immune from this on their karmic path. No. Everyone in his turn will have to stand the test of experiencing failure—esotericist as well as exotericist. The particular occasions may be met with on different planes of existence and in different states of consciousness, but they are spared no one, just as no one can overcome the whole unhappiness of mankind in the present age. It is the task of the Initiates to experience the great crisis of human occultism, of the disciples to experience the crisis of community, and of the representatives of external culture to experience the crisis of the moral and true value of modern world concepts.

Rudolf Steiner spoke more than once of actual individual experiences of future meetings with Him who will reappear at the etheric Second Advent. He spoke, for example, of the experience of a lonely man sitting in his room in deep grief and helplessness, "not knowing which way to turn." Then One comes in and speaks to him, and in place of despair the man receives light, strength, and life. Or, for instance, there is a group of men, all, as it were, "at their wit's end." Again, One appears among them and speaks words of comfort and hope.

All the definite examples of future meetings

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with the etheric Christ...have one thing in common: the men, whether alone or in groups, who experience these meetings are, in every case, “at their wit’s end, not knowing which way to turn.” For the conscious meeting takes place at the moment when the consciousness needs it. And that need is felt when the soul has been prepared by the tremendous pain of questioning—to be *awake* to the encounter. The soul is “awake” when the whole soul has experienced the questions of a conscience awakened to the super-personal, and this is the condition necessary for knowing “the hour of His coming.” *Not* to know the hour of His coming, that is, not to become conscious of the event which concerns the whole of humanity, is, however, not a punishment, but the result of the fact that if a consciousness has no need of the Christ, neither does it have the conscious experience of meeting Him. And no consciousness needs Him when it is conscious of no question to which He, as the truth, could be the answer.

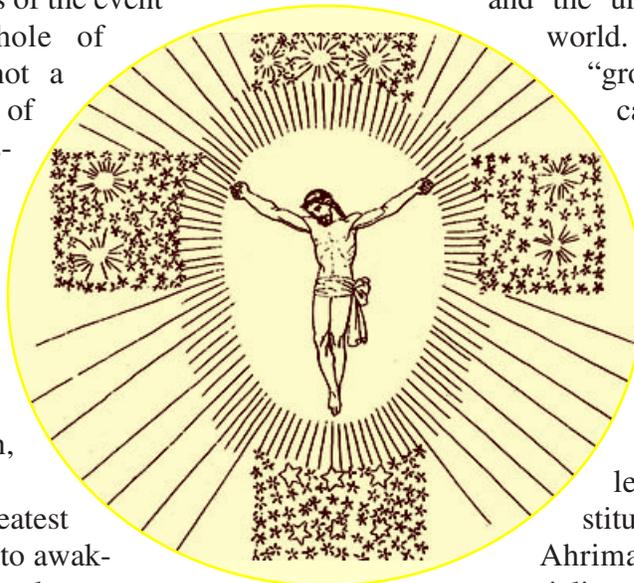
Therefore it is of the greatest possible importance today to awaken human consciousness to those questions which are rooted in the conscience of the soul. The most essential and the most urgent task which must be undertaken in these days is to bring to consciousness, by the aid of spiritual science, the “spirit’s awakening call to the human soul.” Now this call is something quite different from what is usually expected in such a challenge as the result of ordinary physical experience, for ordinary experience places the awakening effect of the call in the *strength* with which it sounds. But with the spiritual clarion the contrary is the case; the more silent and gentle the challenge is, the stronger is its awakening influence on the soul.

The picture presented by unhappiness accompanied by deep external silence is the strongest spiritual awakening call for the conscience of the soul. Indeed, this type of call happens so often by means

of a “voice awaiting free initiative on the part of the human soul” that there is every reason for a man—whenever this strange, pregnant silence falls upon the spiritual world, or upon any one of its members—to ask himself: “What is expected of me? Let me strive to see it in the light of my conscience.”

The calls of the spirit are always pictures of unhappiness accompanied by pregnant silences. In this sense, three such awakening calls are sounded in the world as the comprehensive demands of conscience addressed to all souls. They are the unhappiness of nature, the unhappiness of man,

and the unhappiness of the spiritual world. What St. Paul meant by the “groaning of all creation” is the call of the spirit to the human soul through nature. For nature is dependent on man; her weal and woe depends on the human race. Man can redeem nature by uniting her once more with the spirit, or he can allow her to fall more deeply into darkness, letting her become a constituent part of the kingdom of Ahriman [soulless, mechanistic materialism—Ed].



The “awakening” which Buddha experienced under the bodhi tree when he was actually roused to full Buddha-consciousness resulted from his becoming aware of the unhappiness of humanity. Birth, sickness, old age and death are the lot of all men—stages in the Way of Sorrows of which human life consists. And it is because Buddha was right in his valuation of human life that the Christ event had to take place nineteen [twenty] centuries ago.

For nineteen centuries the Cross and the Crucified have stood as a sign, not only of what once happened in history, but also as showing the condition of the spiritual world in general in its relationship to the events on Earth. For if the Cross of Golgotha stands for the healing of the soul and body of man, it stands at the same time as a call, a challenge, to the free ego of man. The *body* of the

Crucified was taken from the Cross by men, but did that also happen to the soul and spirit? Must not the Liberator, Himself, be one day liberated? The spiritual crucifixion still continues, becoming increasingly the destiny of the spiritual world. Actually, almost every guardian-angel experiences crucifixion in the human being under his care.

It is the task of the consciousness soul to become aware of these calls of the Spirit; that is, the questions connected with them must become a concern of the soul's conscience. This is the task of the soul: "awake" to the consciousness of the hour in which the Christ will be present. For that hour may either be lived through in the "night" of consciousness, or it can be lived through in such a way that the consciousness goes along with it. "But thou hast a few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk [peripatesousin] with Me in white, for they are worthy" (Rev. 3:4). The possibility, however, of this "going together" or "walking with" is dependent on the condition described in the Apocalypse as "names which have not defiled their garments."

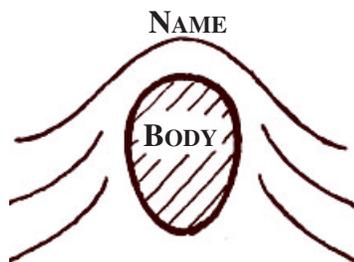
To understand this condition we must study the two karmic regions of the soul's life and activities which constitute, on the one hand, her personal happiness and unhappiness and, on the other, her significance to the world. For in every man, distinction must be drawn between his objective influence on the world and his personal destiny—the destiny which he has to experience in the narrow circle of his personal life. The first region has been called, from very early days, the "name," the second is the karmic "body." Thus, for example, Goethe has both a "name" and a "body." His works, his influence on the world, his knowledge expressed and unexpressed, these represent the "name" of Goethe. His personal life, his friendships and tastes, qualities of character and temperament, sickness and health, these are the "body," which is, and must remain, covered from the world by the garment of the "name," just as the physical body must appear clothed before the eyes

of the world. In this way men may write biographies, drawing attention both to the "clothing name" of the man (which, indeed, as a rule is all that concerns the world in general) and also to the "body," which is covered by the "garment of the name."

....But it is not only biographers who must distinguish between the objective influence of a soul and its intimate life, but the students of spiritual science must also do so. Because, for them, the practice of "distinguishing the essential from the unessential" is the elementary and fundamental requirement of their spiritual discipleship. And the progress of that practice depends on an insight into the difference between the "name" and the "body," in the sense that the "name" is the concrete significance of the revelation of Manas (the spirit-self [or human spirit]) through the operation of the human soul, while the "body" is the life of the soul itself apart from its connection with the spirit-self which guides it from incarnation to incarnation. The fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the mission—the objective task—of a soul towards the world is always the revelation through this soul of the

spirit-self (whether the soul itself is conscious or unconscious of it does not, in this case, matter), while the purely personal is nothing more or less than the expression of the personality itself. It is possible and permissible to interest oneself in the personality when the "name" has first been recognized up to a certain point; one's vision is then purified, and one cannot proceed without piety.

But a man can, himself, treat his "name" irreverently. This happens whenever he lets personal motives and aims filter into the objective mission which he has to fulfill towards the world. Today, this kind of attitude towards his task may be described as "compromise." In the language of the Apocalypse, however, it is called "the defiling of the garment of the name." Compromise is the principle of a false peace between the two polarities of human life, and at the same time it is the cause of the darkening of that system of spiritual current which, so to speak, sheathes the personal like a "garment." (Continued) □



GARMENT OF THE NAME