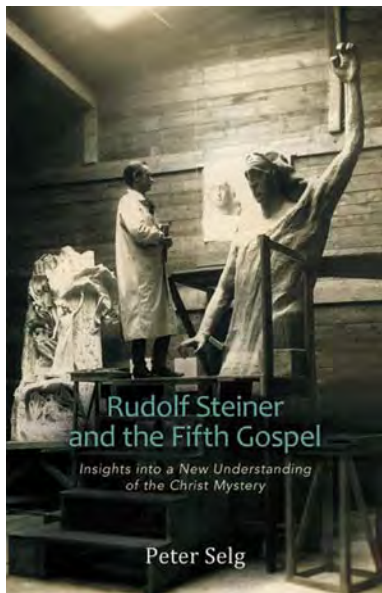


The Fifth Gospel: An Opening into the Heart of the Christ's Ongoing Work for Humanity



Ask Gene Gollogly, publisher of SteinerBooks and its related imprints, why he organizes an annual “spiritual research seminar” in a big dramatic top-floor space at New York University—the kind of location where Bill Clinton hosts his global leadership programs—and the answer Gene gives is simple: because it *ought* to be happening. Rudolf Steiner and anthroposophy and the continuing remarkable work of “spiritual research” *ought* to be visible in the most important settings in today’s cultural life.

In his introductory remarks this year Gene observed that, with this seventh seminar, “we are getting our permanent teeth,” referring to one of the key child development markers in the Waldorf schools. We’re here at a great university and we’re asking who is doing basic creative work in our field today, since no movement can just follow the past.

Gene then introduced Christopher Bamford, long-time editor of SteinerBooks (formerly Anthroposophic Press). Together with a strong board and team of colleagues, they carry out a major publishing program at the highest professional level. In all the breaks, the several hundred people in attendance reminded themselves of that at a series of book-laden tables along one long wall of the room.

Chris Bamford

Chris gave a full and deep review of the content and significance of Rudolf Steiner’s sharing of a “fifth gospel,” beginning in October of 1913 in Christiania (now Oslo), Norway, and continuing in other cities into February of 1914. It includes the life events of Jesus from age 12 to age 30, a period left blank in the previously known gospels. This fifth gospel is meant, Chris said, to make possible an “initiation of the heart.” As a spiritual gospel it was known to the Rosicrucians, but Rudolf Steiner now brought “icons of cognitive feeling” to transform life. “We need a school of selflessness,” said Dr. Steiner, and these lectures point toward an all-embracing love made possible by the Holy Spirit.

Our understanding of Christ must be transformed. His role in history is greater now than ever. Recall how initially He was carried into the hearts of the simplest, uneducated people. And with the first Pentecost or Whitsun, the power of Christ poured out over the Earth. The death of Jesus had meant the birth of

Cosmic Love on the Earth. The story of the “missing” eighteen years of the life of Jesus, followed by the descent of the Christ and his three-and-a-third years in a human body on Earth, as revealed in these lectures, shows the transformation of the deepest *passive* suffering into *active* suffering. And Chris mentioned the book, *An Interrupted Life: The Diaries of ETTY HILLESUM 1941-1943*, a woman in the Nazi concentration camps who comes, as the end of her life approaches, to this active suffering:

There is no hidden poet in me, just a little piece of God that might grow into poetry. And a camp needs a poet, one who experiences life there, *even there*, as a bard, and is able to sing about it. At night, as I lay in the camp on my plank bed, surrounded by women and girls gently snoring, dreaming aloud, quietly sobbing and tossing and turning, women and girls who often told me during the day, “We don’t want to think, we don’t want to feel, otherwise we are sure to go out of our minds,” I was sometimes filled with an infinite tenderness, ...and I prayed, “Let me be the thinking hear of these barracks.” And that is what I want to be again. The thinking heart of a whole concentration camp.

Chris ended with the thought, “We should be willing to act as balm for all wounds.”

Peter Selg

Peter Selg was the seminar’s main speaker, giving three talks over the two days. Born in Stuttgart in 1963, he studied medicine and worked as head physician of a hospital’s juvenile psychiatry department until 2000. He now directs the Ita Wegman Institute for Basic Research into Anthroposophy in Arlesheim,



Switzerland, and is professor of medicine at the Alanus University of Arts and Social Sciences in Germany. He has written more than forty books, including *Karl König’s Path to Anthroposophy*, *The Figure of the Christ* on Rudolf Steiner and Edith Marion’s great sculpture, and just released in English, *Rudolf Steiner and the Fifth Gospel*.

Peter expressed his mission of showing Rudolf Steiner’s deeper intentions, especially to younger people today, as reading of the collected works decreases. The *Fifth Gospel* lectures were closed events for branches only, to help keep them on the original high level. (They were given in the first year after the founding of the original separate Anthroposophical Society.) Now my life task, said Peter, is to open hearts and ears to Steiner’s words, and I want to bring together this *Fifth Gospel* with our life experience now, with the 20th century’s experiences, and with the future.

In 1910 in Palermo Rudolf Steiner had mentioned a “fifth gospel” in connection with the

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“reappearance of the Christ in the etheric.” The whole task of anthroposophy is to prepare this event. Steiner acted in a certain way in the tradition of John-the-Baptist preparing for this event. Yet “we really know nothing of Steiner’s inner life in these years.” The summer of 1913 was difficult, he had a feeling of dying every morning. It was like the situation of Christ Jesus, and it was a decision of the Christ for Rudolf Steiner to bring forward this *Fifth Gospel*.

To talk about this, as Steiner did initially, in Scandinavia, provided a special spiritual atmosphere. He said that all the gospels originated in the spiritual world and should be reproduced in their original forms. Where science today might speak of collective memories, Rudolf Steiner spoke of an “Akashic record,” a spiritual script, a “chronicle of becoming” as Steiner said. This is to be contrasted with “archive truth.” The spiritual world is the life space of the hierarchies. The Archai (who rank above the Angels and Archangels) are the spirits of ends and beginnings. The task is to read in their consciousness. It is a question of making a commitment to the Archai, a self-sacrifice, of offering oneself, one’s consciousness, *as food for them*. “We to the Archai are as grains of wheat to us... I am living their life in them.”

Higher research is a matter of pain and suffering. And with the original, halting, almost improvised style of the lectures in Christiania, Rudolf Steiner “became a brother” for his listeners. He had never read about the crucifixion in the Bible, he approached it first from his own research. The anthroposophical movement was weak, the society was difficult. They did not fully grasp what he offered. Who then was the real audience for these lectures? Unborn souls? The elemental beings? His presentation took on, by the January 1914 lecture in Berlin, a composed, written style. There was more to share, but Rudolf Steiner had to stop bringing it.

Who is really able to say of himself, herself, that “I am a pupil of Rudolf Steiner”?

Saturday

Peter Selg continued on Saturday with the remarkable insights provided by Rudolf Steiner into the bodily requirements for the incarnation of a great spiritual being, the Christ. That there were “two Jesus children” seems at first blush like the most difficult idea to understand, even though the Matthew and Luke Gospels present two different ancestries, birth stories, and childhoods, and we now know that two kinds of Messiah had been expected. One of the Jesus boys was the least earthly of human beings, who had never incarnated before and carried the original human potential without any darkening of karmic error.

This child, the Luke Jesus, is a “child of humanity,” intellectually backward but a genius of the heart with special power to feel the joys and sorrows of others. The other child was the reincarnation of the greatest initiate, who had previously attained to the highest insights into the cosmic development and plan for the human being. So when the selfhood of the Matthew child abandons its life and body and enters into the consciousness sheaths of the other child at the age of twelve, a singular human being is prepared who combines wisdom and innocence in the

fullest measure.

And the eighteen years about which the four original gospels are silent—these are a chronicle of profound suffering of soul and spirit. It includes Jesus’ recognition of the loss of spiritual connection in the Israelite mainstream, in the surrounding world of paganism, and even among the reclusive spiritual elite, the Essenes. And when Jesus is thirty and has reached the depth of despair, there is the final sharing of it with Mary. In speaking it to her, the sorrow achieves a further reality. And in hearing and receiving it, she, too, is raised back to a state of innocence. The wise selfhood of the Matthew child now departs the body as he finds his way to the Jordan to be baptized by John and receive the being of the Christ.



Rudolf Steiner reported that around 1840 humanity reached the uttermost depth of materialism, and that all the subsequent ill effects for humanity are only consequences. The tragedies of our times should raise questions in us. If we take answers from anthroposophy *but do not have questions*, we lose the answers.

Peter shared much, much more, and SteinerBooks has placed full audio recordings of all the talks online, linked from the front page of www.steinerbooks.org. In addition, his book on this subject does indeed produce a remarkable human portrait of Rudolf Steiner at this crucial moment in his life work.

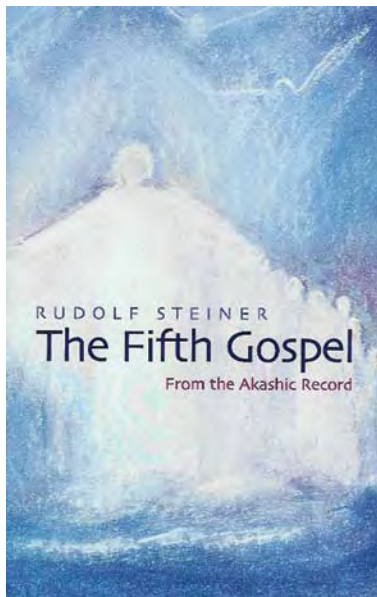
And more...

As last year, Rachel Ross led the large audience in hygienic eurythmy during several breaks in the talks. “Hygienic” indicates that these are easy-to-remember exercises for self-strengthening which can be continued at home, and a helpful handout was provided. I-A-O and the purifying HALLELUJAH were practiced, and these breaks were particularly helpful in the controlled atmosphere of a large modern New York building.

Around the meeting room, which felt almost as large a football field, many art works were displayed. These included fine line drawings of figures at Chartres cathedral by Dan Marshall, along with one of his large oil paintings. Herr Dreier, who had crashed the New York branch symposium, also made a “special appearance,” now under the spelling “Herr Dryer.” Next year, as “Hair Dryer”, he may be revealed as an Andy Warhol associate.

Ross Rentea

Three other speakers made presentations on Saturday. They are covered only briefly here, but all are online and each would have been an outstanding evening lecture in its own right. Dr. Ross Rentea spoke about the temptations of the Christ, following the baptism at the Jordan. Crucially, when tempted by Satan (Ahriman) to “turn stones into bread with my powers,” the Christ did not yet know the earthly forces and could not give a decisive answer. Thus Ahriman, the spiritual force of materialism and mechanization and death, can hold his place in the fur-



ther development of the Earth. Consider, for example, that *money is really concentrated spirituality*, yet we have to exchange physical matter, coins. So following Christ we try to understand the new laws which can overcome materialism. Dr. Rentea pointed out a physical change that Rudolf Steiner shows in his statue (detail at right) of “the Representative of Humanity,” the Christ, namely that the “ego point,” the spot just at the top of the nose which is indented in human beings now, is bulging out in this figure.

An example of a new productive law on the Earth is the biodynamic spraying of quartz solution on fields of crops. Desperate farmers in 1924 were asking the question, and Rudolf Steiner could bring answers. Jesus had had the most intense questions, and Christ brought answers. We must learn to ask, and do so in the right mood.

Along with much else, Dr. Rentea brought a display of the root systems of the seven trees used in building the First Goetheanum, and offered a special preparation from the TrueBotanica company which he co-founded to seminar participants.

Michael Gruber



Michael Gruber also gave a notable talk, “Toward a Logos of the Soul,” which extended the focus on the *Fifth Gospel* in several ways. It included a very welcome exchange between anthroposophy and his professional field, psychotherapy. Rudolf Steiner’s deepest intention was to inspire us to be transformed from out of the deeds of the Christ: “love transformed into action.” The gospels are a living force to awaken cognition, and one remarkable thing we learn is that *joy can coexist with measureless pain*.

Today we can conceive of a process of self-correction leading to a conscious union with nature. And we can see a long process from ancient times of coming to terms with death, which the old spirituality did not understand and divine beings did not experience. Ahriman sought to reduce human beings to experience of a single life, so a god had to come down, to know the Earth and to learn about death. Yet even since that coming there have been two thousand years of human passivity, and we are too weak to grasp the meaning of the second coming (the reappearance of Christ in the etheric).

Christ now stands beside us as an etheric angel as we learn to combat evil. Evil’s goals are dehumanization and reducing the Earth to a wasteland: a deformed astral, weakened etheric, and diseased physical body. Our goal must be to reconnect the Earth with the divine world. Our sense of guilt comes from a failure to fulfill potential, “to do life justice.” We need forgiveness and a sense of moral responsibility: beyond revenge to atonement. Shame depletes our sense of worth and leads to a feeling of soul collapse. At our boundaries we reach murderous rage or schizoid withdrawal. We end up dominated by lower passions and addictions. Freeing from fear and then healing wounds are



key goals of psychotherapy, which ideally is nothing less than “a soul-affirming knowledge quest.”

Kwan-Yuk Claire Sit

Finally, Kwan-Yuk Claire Sit, author of *The Lord’s Prayer as Seen From an Eastern Perspective*, presented an overview of “The Fifth Gospel and the Eastern Middle Way.” The Middle Way is a tremendous concept which has a special but somewhat different place in Confucian, Buddhist, or Taoist practice. The Confucian approach is “easy to understand and hard to do.” The Taoist Middle Way is “very esoteric, but anyone can work with it.”



Four classic texts are particularly important: *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Analects*, and *The Mencius*. Claire presented a number of slides with trigrams and hexagrams—ancient three- and six-line image structures used in the *I Ching*. Without these we cannot properly report her talk, but she quoted several exemplary passages from the four books, these two among them:

The gentle man stays in the middle,
the little man goes to extremes.

Nothing is more visible than secrets.
Nothing is more manifest than trifles.
So the gentle man is careful when alone.

She also shared trigram pairs expressive of the Baptism and the Mystery of Golgotha, and suggested toward the end that the Taoist approach might be understood as *attempting to realize the Christ within*, while the Confucian approach would be *to balance Lucifer and Ahriman*. As we look to a world culture worthy of our human being, these bridging insights to the very ancient culture of the East were hopeful indeed.



If the SteinerBooks Seminar has received its permanent teeth after seven years, as Gene Gologly said at the beginning, this two-day event left us all with much to chew on and digest. And perhaps that very modest pun may be excused if not redeemed by recalling one of the most striking observations, and one of the most sober ones, of the entire event. That was Rudolf Steiner’s imagination of offering himself, his consciousness, to be food, to be chewed on like grains of wheat and digested by those great beings called Archai. In this way he was taken into their very being, where he could experience the Akashic record, the hidden record of the cosmic truths about human evolution, and share them with us.

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