

PREPARING FOR THE SIXTH EPOCH

Rudolf Steiner, Düsseldorf, June 15, 1915; GA 159

This lecture was given in Düsseldorf at the opening of Group II, on June 15, 1915. It was originally published in English with the title *How Anthroposophical Groups Prepare for the Sixth Epoch, or Three Fundamental Characteristics of the Future Civilization of Mankind*. Copyright © 1957. This e.Text edition is provided with the cooperation of The Anthroposophic Press and made available through the Rudolf Steiner Archive.

We have come here today for the opening of the group founded by our friend, Professor C. This group wishes to dedicate itself to the spiritual life of the present and future in the way that is customary in our Movement. On such an occasion it is always good to remember why we associate in groups and to ask ourselves why we found working groups and cultivate in them the spiritual treasure to which we dedicate our forces.

If this question is to be answered truly, we must realize that we make a distinction, even if only in thought, between the work we do in a group like this and our other work in the world. Those who are unwilling to enter deeply into more intimate truths connected with the spiritual progress of humanity, might ask if we could not cultivate spiritual science without forming ourselves into groups, but simply by finding lecturers and providing opportunities for people who may not know each other to come together and have access to the spiritual treasure of which we speak. We could, of course, proceed in this way. But as long as it is at all possible to establish, in the wider and narrower senses, associations of human beings who are known to one another and who come together in friendship and brotherliness within these working groups, we will continue to found them in full consciousness of the attitude of soul that is part and parcel of spiritual science. It is not without meaning that among us there are human beings who want to cultivate the more intimate side of spiritual knowledge and who sincerely intend to work together in brotherliness and harmony. Not only are relationships and intercourse affected by the fact that we can speak quite differently among ourselves, knowing that we are speaking to souls consciously associated with us — not only is this so, but something else is also to be remembered. The establishment of individual groups is connected with the whole conception that we hold of our Movement if we understand its inmost nature. We must all be conscious that our Movement is significant not only for the existence known to the senses and for the existence that is grasped by the outward turned mind of man, but that through this Movement our souls are seeking a real and genuine link with the spiritual worlds. Again and again, in full consciousness, we should say to ourselves that by the cultivation of spiritual science we transfer our souls as it were into spheres that are peopled not only by beings of earth but also by the beings of the higher hierarchies, the beings of the invisible worlds. We must realize that our work is of significance for these invisible worlds, that we are actually within these worlds. In the spiritual world, the work performed by those who know one

another within such groups is quite different from work carried on outside such a group and dispersed about the world. The work carried out in brotherly harmony within our groups has quite a different significance for the spiritual world than other work we may undertake. To understand this fully we must remind ourselves of truths we have studied in many aspects during recent years.

Earth evolution in the post-Atlantean age was sustained in the beginning by the culture of the ancient Indian period of civilization. This was followed by the ancient Persian epoch — the designation is only more or less appropriate but we need not go into that now. Then came the Egypto-Chaldean-Babylonian period of culture, then the Greco-Latin, then our fifth post-Atlantean epoch. Each of these epochs has, on the one side, to cultivate a particular form of culture and of spiritual life primarily concerned with the external and visible world. But each epoch must at the same time prepare, bear within it in a preparatory stage, what is to come in the ensuing period of culture.

Within the womb, as it were, of the ancient Indian epoch, that of ancient Persia was prepared; within the ancient Persian culture, that of the Egypto-Chaldean epoch was prepared, and so on. Our fifth post-Atlantean epoch must prepare the coming sixth epoch of culture. Our task in spiritual science is not only to acquire spiritual treasure for ourselves, for the eternal life of the soul, but to prepare what will constitute the content, the specific external work of the sixth epoch of culture. Thus it has been in each of the post-Atlantean epochs. The centers of the mysteries were the places in which the form of external life belonging to the next epoch of culture was prepared. The mysteries were associations of human beings among whom other things were cultivated than those cultivated in the outer world. The ancient Indian epoch was concerned with the cultivation of the human etheric body, the ancient Persian epoch with the cultivation of the astral body, the Egypto-Chaldean with that of the sentient soul, the Greco-Latin with that of the intellectual or mind soul. Our own epoch, throughout its duration, will develop and unfold the consciousness or spiritual soul. But what will give to external culture in the sixth epoch its content and character, must be prepared in advance. Many characteristics of the sixth epoch of culture will be entirely different from those of our age. Three characteristic traits can be mentioned, of which we must realize that they should be carried in our hearts for the sixth epoch of culture and that it is our task to prepare them for this sixth epoch.

There is lacking in human society nowadays a quality that, in the sixth epoch, will be a characteristic of those men who reach the goal of that epoch, and have not fallen short of it. It is a quality that will not, of course, be found among those who in the sixth epoch have still remained at the stage of savages or barbarians. One of the most significant characteristics of men living on the earth at the peak of culture in the sixth epoch, will be a certain moral quality. Little of this quality is perceptible in modern humanity. A man today must be delicately organized for his soul

to feel pain when he sees other human beings in the world in less happy circumstances than his own. It is true that more delicately organized natures feel pain at the suffering that is so widespread in the world, but this can only be said of the people who are particularly sensitive. In the sixth epoch, the most highly cultured will not only feel pain such as is caused today by the sight of poverty, suffering and misery in the world, but such individuals will experience the suffering of another human being as their own suffering. If they see a hungry man they will feel the hunger right down into the physical, so acutely indeed that the hunger of the other man will be unendurable to them. The moral characteristic indicated here is that, unlike conditions in the fifth epoch, in the sixth epoch the well-being of the individual will depend entirely upon the well-being of the whole. Just as nowadays the well-being of a single human limb depends upon the health of the whole body, and when the whole body is not healthy the single limb is not up to doing its work, so in the sixth epoch a common consciousness will lay hold of the then civilized humanity and in a far higher degree than a limb feels the health of the whole body, the individual will feel the suffering, the need, the poverty or the wealth of the whole. This is the first preeminently moral trait that will characterize the cultured humanity of the sixth epoch.

A second fundamental characteristic will be that everything we call the fruits of belief today will depend to a far, far higher degree than is the case today, upon the single individuality. Spiritual science expresses this by saying that in every sphere of religion in the sixth epoch, complete freedom of thought and a longing for it will so lay hold of men that what a man likes to believe, what religious convictions he holds, will rest wholly within the power of his own individuality. Collective beliefs that exist in so many forms today among the various communities will no longer influence those who constitute the civilized portion of humanity in the sixth epoch of culture. Everyone will feel that complete freedom of thought in the domain of religion is a fundamental right of the human being.

The third characteristic will be that men in the sixth epoch will only be considered to have real knowledge when they recognize the spiritual, when they know that the spiritual pervades the world and that human souls must unite with the spiritual. What is known as science today with its materialistic trend will certainly not be honored by the name of science in the sixth post-Atlantean epoch. It will be regarded as antiquated superstition, able to pass muster only among those who have remained behind at the stage of the superseded fifth post-Atlantean epoch. Today we regard it as superstition when, let us say, a savage holds the view that no limb ought to be separated from his body at death because this would make it impossible for him to enter the spiritual world as a whole man. Such a man still connects the idea of immortality with pure materialism, with the belief that an impress of his whole form must pass into the spiritual world. He thinks materialistically but believes in immortality. We, today, knowing from spiritual science that the spiritual has to be separated from the body and that only the spiritual passes into the super-sensible world, regard

such materialistic beliefs in immortality as superstition. Similarly, in the sixth epoch all materialistic beliefs including science, too, will be regarded as antiquated superstition. Men as a matter of course will accept as science only such forms of knowledge as are based upon the spiritual, upon pneumatology.

The whole purpose of spiritual science is to prepare in this sense for the sixth epoch of culture. We try to cultivate spiritual science in order to overcome materialism, to prepare the kind of science that must exist in that epoch. We found communities of human beings within which there must be no dogmatic beliefs or any tendency to accept teaching simply because it emanates from one person or another. We found communities of human beings in which everything, without exception, must be built upon the soul's free assent to the teachings. Herein we prepare what spiritual science calls freedom of thought. By coming together in friendly associations for the purpose of cultivating spiritual science, we prepare the culture, the civilization of the sixth post-Atlantean epoch.

But we must look still more deeply into the course of human evolution if we are fully to understand the real tasks of our associations and groups. In the first post-Atlantean epoch, too, in communities that in those days were connected with the mysteries, men cultivated what subsequently prevailed in the second epoch. In the associations peculiar to the first, the ancient Indian epoch, men were concerned with the cultivation of the astral body, which was to be the specific outer task of the second epoch. It would lead much too far today to describe what, in contrast to the external culture of the time, was developed in these associations peculiar to ancient India in order to prepare for the second, ancient Persian epoch. But this may be said that when those men of the ancient Indian epoch came together in order to prepare what was necessary for the second epoch, they felt: We have not yet attained, nor have we in us, what we shall have when our souls are incarnated in the next epoch. It still hovers above us. It was in truth so. In the first epoch of culture, what was to descend from the heavens to the earth in the second epoch still hovered over the souls of men. The work achieved on earth by men in intimate assemblies connected with the mysteries was of such a nature that forces flowed upwards to the spirits of the higher hierarchies, enabling them to nourish and cultivate what was to stream down into the souls of men as substance and content of the astral body in the second, ancient Persian epoch. The forces that descended at a later stage of maturity into the souls incarnated in the bodies of ancient Persian civilizations were like little children in the first epoch. Forces streaming upwards from the work of men below in preparation for the next epoch were received and nurtured by the spiritual world above. So it must be in every epoch of culture.

In our epoch it is the consciousness or spiritual soul that has developed in us through our ordinary civilization and culture. Beginning with the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,

science and materialistic consciousness have laid hold of the human being. This will gradually become more widespread, until by the end of the fifth epoch its development will have been completed. In the sixth epoch, however, it is the spirit self that must be developed within the souls of men, just as now the consciousness soul is being developed. The nature of spirit self is that it must pre-suppose the existence in human souls of the three characteristics of which I have spoken: social life in which brotherliness prevails, freedom of thought, and pneumatology. These three characteristics are essential in a community of human beings within which the spirit self is to develop as the consciousness soul develops in the souls of the fifth epoch. We may therefore picture to ourselves that by uniting in brotherliness in working groups, something hovers invisibly over our work, something that is like the child of the forces of the spirit self — the spirit self that is nurtured by the beings of the higher hierarchies in order that it may stream down into our souls when they are again on earth in the sixth epoch of civilization. In our groups we perform work that streams upward to those forces that are being prepared for the spirit self.

So you see, it is only through the wisdom of spiritual science itself that we can understand what we are really doing in respect of our connection with the spiritual worlds when we come together in these working groups. The thought that we do this work not only for the sake of our own egos, but in order that it may stream upward into the spiritual worlds, the thought that this work is connected with the spiritual worlds, this is the true consecration of a working group. To cherish such a thought is to permeate ourselves with the consciousness of the consecration that is the foundation of a working group within the Movement. It is therefore of great importance to grasp this fact in its true spiritual sense. We find ourselves together in working groups which, besides cultivating spiritual science, are based on freedom of thought. They will have nothing to do with dogma or coercion of belief, and their work should be of the nature of cooperation among brothers. What matters most of all is to become conscious of the true meaning of the idea of community, saying to ourselves: Apart from the fact that as modern souls we belong to the fifth post-Atlantean epoch of culture and develop as individuals, raising individual life more and more out of community life, we must in turn become conscious of a higher form of community, founded in the freedom of love among brothers, as a breath of magic that we breathe in our working groups.

The deep significance of West European culture lies in the fact that the quest of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch is the consciousness soul. The task of West European culture, and particularly of Central European culture, is that men shall develop an individual culture, individual consciousness. This is the task of the present age. Compare this epoch of ours with that of Greece and Rome. The Greek epoch exhibits in a particularly striking form, especially among the civilized Greeks, a consciousness of living within a group soul. A man who was born and lived in Athens felt himself to be first and foremost an “Athenian.” This community between city and what belonged to the city meant something different to the individual from what community between human beings

means today. In our time the individual strives to grow out of and beyond the community, and this is right in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch. In Rome, the human being was first and foremost a Roman citizen, nothing else. But in the fifth epoch we strive above all else to be man in our innermost being, man and nothing else. It is a painful experience in our day to see men fighting against one another on the earth, but this, after all, is just a reaction to the perpetual striving of the fifth epoch for free development of the “human universal.” Because the different countries and peoples shut themselves off today from one another in hostility, it is all the more necessary to develop, as resistance to this, the force that allows human beings to be men in the full sense, allowing the individual to grow out of and beyond every kind of community. But on the other hand the human being must, in full consciousness, make preparation for communities into which he will enter entirely of his own free will in the sixth epoch. There hovers before us as a high ideal a form of community that will so encompass the sixth epoch of culture that civilized human beings will quite naturally meet each other as brothers and sisters.

From many lectures given in past years, we know that Eastern Europe is inhabited by a people whose particular mission it will be in the sixth epoch, and not until the sixth epoch, to bring to definite expression the elementary forces that now lie within them. We know that the Russian peoples will not be ready until the sixth epoch of culture to unfold the forces now within them in an elementary form. The mission of Western and Central Europe is to introduce into men qualities that can be introduced by the consciousness soul. This is not the mission of Eastern Europe. Eastern Europe will have to wait until the spirit self comes down to the earth and can permeate the souls of men. This must be understood in the right sense. Understood in the wrong sense it may easily lead to pride and superciliousness, precisely in the East. The height of post-Atlantean culture is reached in the fifth epoch. What will follow in the sixth and seventh epochs will be a descending line of evolution. Nevertheless, this descending evolution in the sixth epoch will be inspired, permeated by the spirit self. Today the man of Eastern Europe feels instinctively, but often with perverted instinct, that this is so; only his consciousness of it is, for the most part, extremely hazy and confused. The frequent occurrence of the term, “the Russian man,” is quite characteristic. Genius expresses itself in language when, instead of saying as we do in the West: the British, the French, the Italian, the German — Eastern Europe says, “the Russian man.” Many of the Russian intelligentsia attach importance to the use of the expression, “the Russian man.” This is connected deeply with the genius of the particular culture. The term refers to the element of manhood, of brotherhood that is spread over a community. An attempt is made to indicate this by including a word that brings out the “manhood” in the term. But it is also obvious that the height to be reached in a distant future has not yet been attained, inasmuch as the term includes a word that glaringly contradicts the noun. In the expression, “the Russian man,” the adjective really nullifies what is

expressed in the noun. For when true manhood is attained there should be no adjective to suggest any element of exclusiveness.

But at a much, much deeper level there lies in members of the Russian intelligentsia the realization that a conception of community, of brotherhood must prevail in times still to come. The Russian soul feels that spirit self is to descend, but that it can only descend into a community of men permeated with the consciousness of brotherhood, that it can never spread over a community where there is no consciousness of brotherhood. That is why the Russian intellectuals, as they call themselves, make the following reproach to Western and Central Europe. They say, "You pay no heed at all to a life of true community. You cultivate only individualism. Everyone wants to be a person on his own, to be an individual only. You drive the personal element, through which every single man feels himself an individuality, to its highest extreme." This is what echoes across from the East to Western and Central Europe in many reproaches of barbarism and the like. Those who try to realize how things really are, accuse Western and Central Europe of having lost all feeling for human connections. Confusing present and future as they do now, these people say, "it is only in Russia that there is a true and genuine community of life among men, a life where everyone feels himself the brother of the other, as the 'Little Father' or the 'Little Mother' of the other." The Russian intelligentsia say that the Christianity of Western Europe has not succeeded in developing the essence of human community, but that the Russian still knows what community is.

Alexander Herzen, an excellent thinker who lived in the nineteenth century and belonged to the Russian intellectuals, brought this to its ultimate conclusion by saying, "In Western Europe there can never be happiness." No matter what attempts are made, happiness will never come to Western European civilization. There humanity will never find contentment. Only chaos can prevail there. The one and only salvation lies in the Russian nature and in the Russian form of life where men have not yet separated themselves from community, where in their village communities there is still something of the nature of the group soul to which they hold fast. What we call the group soul, out of which mankind has gradually emerged and in which the animal kingdom still lives, that is what is revered by the Russian intelligentsia as something great and significant among their people. They cannot rise to the thought that the community of the future must hover as a high ideal, an ideal that has yet to be realized. They adhere firmly to the thought: We are the last people in Europe to retain this life in the group soul; the others have risen out of it; we have retained and must retain it for ourselves.

Yes, but this life in the group soul does not in reality belong to the future at all, for it is the old form of group soul existence. If it continued it would be a Luciferic group soul, a form of life that has remained at an earlier stage, whereas the form of group soul life that is true and must be striven for, is what we try to find in spiritual science. But be that as it may, the urge and the longing of the

Russian intellectuals show how the spirit of community is needed to bring about the descent of spirit self. Just as it is being striven for there along a false path, so must it be striven for in spiritual science along the true path. What we should like to say to the East is this: It is our task to overcome entirely just what you are trying to preserve in an external form, namely, an old Luciferic-Ahrimanic form of community. In a community of a Luciferic-Ahrimanic character there will be coercion of belief as rigid as that established by the Orthodox Catholic Church in Russia. Such community will not understand true freedom of thought; least of all will it be able to rise to the level where complete individuality is associated with a social life in which brotherhood prevails. That other form of community would like to preserve what has remained in blood brotherhood, in brotherhood purely through the blood. Community that is founded not upon the blood, but upon the spirit, upon community of souls, is what must be striven for along the paths of spiritual science. We must try to create communities in which the factor of blood no longer has a voice. Naturally, the factor of blood will continue, it will live itself out in family relationships, for what must remain will not be eradicated. But something new must arise! What is significant in the child will be retained in the forces of old age, but in his later years the human being must receive new forces.

The factor of blood is not meant to encompass great communities of human beings in the future. That is the error that is filtering from the East into the dreadful events of today. A war has blazed up under the heading of community of blood among the Slavic peoples. Into these fateful times all those elements are entering of which we have just heard, elements that in reality have in them the right kernel, namely, the instinctive feeling that the spirit self can only manifest in a community where brotherhood prevails. It must not, however, be a community of blood: it must be a community of souls. What grows up as a community of souls is what we develop, in its childhood stage, in our working groups. What holds Eastern Europe so firmly to the group soul, causing it to regard the Slavic group soul as something that it does not want to abandon but, on the contrary, regards as a principle for the whole development of the state — it is this that must be overcome.

A great and terrible symbol stands before the eyes of the world. Think of the two states where the war had its starting-point. On the one side, Russia with the Slavic world in general, declares that the war is based on brotherhood of blood, and on the other side, there is Austria, which comprises thirteen distinct peoples and thirteen different languages. The mobilization order in Austria had to be issued in thirteen languages because Austria encompasses thirteen racial stocks: Germans, Czechs, Poles, Ruthenians, Rumanians, Magyars, Slovaks, Serbs, Croatians, Slovenes (among whom there is a second and separate dialect), Bosnians, Dalmatians and Italians. Thirteen different racial stocks, apart from all minor differentiations, are united in Austria. Whether the implications of this are understood or not, it is obvious that Austria consists of a collection of human beings among whom community can never be based on blood relationship, for what its

strange boundaries contain shoots out into thirteen different lineages. The most highly composite state in Europe stands in opposition to the state that strives most intensively for life in a group soul, or for conformity. But this striving for life in a group soul brings a great many other things in its train. This leads us to another matter, the significance of which we will think about today.

In the public lecture yesterday I mentioned the great philosopher Soloviev, one of the most significant thinkers of all Russia. Soloviev is an eminent thinker, but a thoroughly Russian thinker, a mind that is exceedingly difficult to understand from the Western European point of view. Anthroposophists, however, should study his work and try to understand him. I propose to speak from our more intimate standpoint about Soloviev's main and central idea. Soloviev is far too good a philosopher to adopt for himself without question the principle of life in a group soul. He has difficulties with it and he disagrees in many respects. But one idea predominates in him, not quite consciously it is true, but in such a way that one only wishes he were clairvoyant and could thus anticipate what his soul will have to wait to see on the earth when he is incarnated in the sixth epoch of culture. The following conception that is extremely difficult for the men of West and Central Europe to understand became the main and central idea in Soloviev's mind.

In Western Europe, as a preparation for the sixth epoch, we try among many other things to grasp the meaning of death, the significance of death for life. We try to understand how death is the manifestation of a form of existence, how the soul is transformed in death into another form of existence. We describe the life of a man within his body and the manner of life between death and new birth. We endeavor to understand death, to overcome death by realizing that it is only semblance, that the soul in very truth lives on when it has passed through death. It is an essential aim with us to overcome death through understanding. But here we come to one of the points, indeed to one of the most vital points, where spiritual science deviates altogether from the central idea held by the great Russian thinker, Soloviev. His idea is this: There is evil in the world, wickedness in the world. If we, with our senses, behold the evil and wickedness, we cannot deny that the world is full of both. This, says Soloviev, refutes the divinity of the world, for when we behold the world with our senses, how can we believe in a divine world, since a divine world can certainly not exhibit evil! But the senses perceive evil everywhere and the extreme evil is death. Because death is in the world, the world is revealed in all its evil and wickedness. The arch-evil is death!

Thus does Soloviev characterize the world. He says — and I am quoting almost word for word: Look at the world with your ordinary senses; try to understand the world with your ordinary mind. You can never deny the existence of evil in the world, and to desire to understand death would be absurd! Death exists. Knowledge acquired through the senses reveals a world of wickedness, a world of evil. Can we believe, asks Soloviev, that this world is divine when it shows us that it is

full of evil, when it shows us death at every step? Nevermore can we believe that a world that shows us death is a divine world. For in God there can be no evil, no wickedness, above all, not the arch-evil death. In God there cannot be death. If, therefore, God were to come into the world (I am repeating what Soloviev says practically word for word) — if God were to appear, should we be able immediately to believe him to be God? No, we should not! He would have to establish his identity first. If a being claiming to be God were to appear, we should not believe him. He would have to prove his identity by producing something of the nature of a world document that would enable us to recognize him as God! Nothing of the kind exists in the world. God cannot prove his identity through what is in the world, for everything in the world contradicts the divine nature. By what means, then, can he prove his identity? Only by showing, when he comes into the world, that he has conquered death, that death can have no power over him. We should never believe Christ to be God if He did not prove his identity. But Christ did so, inasmuch as He has risen, inasmuch as He has shown that the arch-evil, death, is not in Him.

This is what Soloviev says. It is a consciousness of the divine that is based solely upon the actual, historical resurrection of Christ, Who, as God, proves His identity. Soloviev goes on to say: Nothing in the world, with the single exception of the Resurrection, enables us to realize that a God exists. If Christ had not risen, all our belief would be vain, and everything we could say about a divine nature in the world, this too would be vain. Soloviev quotes these words of St. Paul again and again.

This, then, is the fundamental outlook of Soloviev. If we look at the world we see therein only evil, wickedness, degeneration, senselessness. If Christ had not risen, the world would be meaningless, therefore Christ has risen! Note this sentence well, for it is a cardinal saying of one of the greatest thinkers of Eastern Europe: “If Christ had not risen the world would be senseless, therefore Christ has risen.” Soloviev has said: “There may be people who think it illogical when I say, if Christ had not risen the world would be senseless; therefore Christ has risen — but this is far better logic than any you can adduce against me.”

In this curious example of a document for proving God's divinity, which we find in Soloviev's writings, I have given you a concrete instance of the strangeness of thought in Eastern Europe. Curious thoughts crop up in the attempt to understand by what means God reveals indisputably that he is God. How different it is in the West and in Central Europe! What is the aim of spiritual science? Try to review and to compare what we try to cultivate in spiritual science. What is its aim and direction? It is our desire and aim to recognize out of knowledge that the world has meaning, significance and purpose, and that the world is not filled merely with evil and degeneration. It is our aim to realize through direct knowledge that the world has meaning. By this realization we try to prepare for actual experience of the Christ. We desire to comprehend the living Christ, accepting

all these things, of course, as a gift, as grace. We realize the portent of the words: "I am with you always even unto the end of the world." We accept all that the Christ unceasingly promises us. For He speaks not only through the Gospels; He also speaks within our souls. That is what He means by the words: "I am with you always even unto the end of the world." Always He can be found as the living Christ. We want to live in Him, to receive Him into ourselves.

"Not I but the Christ in me!" Of all St. Paul's sayings this is the most significant for us. "Not I but the Christ in me." For thereby we realize: Wherever we may turn, meaning and purpose are revealed. Faust expressed the same truth when he clothed his philosophy in the following words:

Spirit sublime, thou gav'st me, gav'st me all
For which I prayed. Not unto me in vain
Hast thou thy countenance revealed in fire.
Thou gav'st me Nature as a kingdom grand,
With power to feel and to enjoy it. Thou
Not only cold, amazed acquaintance yield'st
But grantest, that in her profoundest breast
I gaze, as in the bosom of a friend.
The ranks of living creatures thou dost lead
Before me, teaching me to know my brothers
In air and water and the silent wood.
And when the storm in forests roars and grinds,
The giant firs, in falling neighbor bough
And neighbor trunks with crushing weight bear down,
And falling, fill the hills with hollow thunders;
Then to the cave secure thou leadest me,
Then show'st me mine own self, and in my breast
The deep mysterious miracles unfold.

These words indicate a spiritual understanding of the outer and the inner worlds, of universal purpose, of the meaning of death itself and the realization that death is the passage from one form of life to another. In seeking the living Christ we also follow Him through death and through the Resurrection. We do not, as the man of Eastern Europe, take the Resurrection as our starting point. We follow the Christ, letting His inspiration now into us, receiving Him into our imaginations. We follow the Christ until death. We follow Him not only by saying: Ex Deo Nascimur, Out of God we are born; but by also saying: In Christo Morimur, In Christ we die.

We scrutinize the world and know that the world itself is the document through which God expresses His divinity. As we try to experience and understand the weaving power of the spiritual, we in the West cannot say that if God were to come into the world we would need a document to establish His identity, but rather we seek for God everywhere, in nature and in the souls of men.

So this Fifth post-Atlantean epoch of civilization needs what we develop and cultivate in our groups. It needs the conscious cultivation of the spiritual aura that still hovers above us, cherished by the spirits of the higher hierarchies, and that will flow into the souls of men when they live in the sixth epoch. It is not our way to turn as in Eastern Europe to the group soul life that is dead, to a form of community that is a mere survival of the old. Our efforts are to cherish and cultivate a living reality from its childhood — such is the community of our groups. It is not our way to look for what speaks in the blood, calling together only those who have blood in common, and to cultivate this in community. Our aim is to call together human beings who resolve to be brothers and sisters, and above whom hovers something that they strive to develop by cultivating spiritual science, feeling the good spirit of brotherhood hovering over and above them.

At the opening of one of our groups, this is the dedicatory thought we will receive into ourselves. Hereby we consecrate a group at its founding. Community and quickening life! We seek for community above us, the living Christ in us, the Christ Who needs no document nor has first to be authenticated because we experience Him within ourselves. At the foundation of a group we will take this as our motto of consecration: Community above us; Christ in us. We know furthermore that if two, or three, or seven, or many are united in this sense in the Name of Christ, the Christ lives in them in very truth. All those who in this sense acknowledge Christ as their Brother, are themselves sisters and brothers. The Christ will recognize as His brother that man who recognizes other men as brothers.

If we are able to receive such words of consecration and carry on our work in accordance with them, the true spirit of our Movement will hold sway in whatever we do. Even in these difficult times, friends from outside have associated themselves with those who have founded the group here. This is always a good custom, for thereby those who are waking in other groups are able to carry to other places the words of consecration. They pledge themselves to think constantly of those who have undertaken in a group to work together in accordance with the true spirit of the Movement. The invisible community, which we should like to found through the manner of our work, will thus grow and prosper. If this attitude, uniting with our work, becomes more and more widespread, we shall put to good account the demands made by spiritual science for the sake of the progress of mankind. Then we may believe that those great masters of wisdom who guide human progress and human knowledge will be with us. To the extent to which you here work in

the sense of spiritual science, to that extent I know full well that the great masters who guide our work from the spiritual worlds will be in the midst of your labors.

* * *