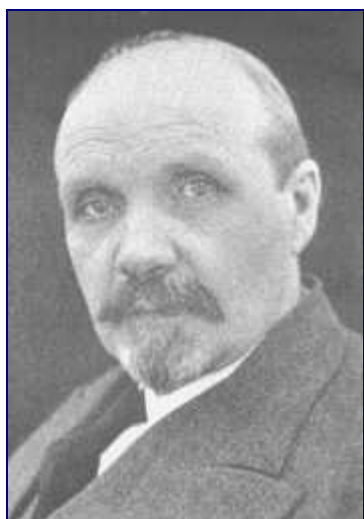


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A READER'S JOURNAL

Rudolf Steiner Comes Into My Life

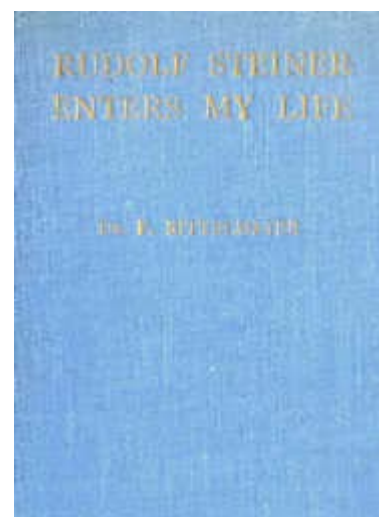
by

Friedrich Rittelmeyer

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A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2008

While reading [A Life for the Spirit](#) by Henry Barnes, I first heard of this book about Rittelmeyer's relationship with Rudolf Steiner. Here's how Barnes describes the book:



[page 171 of "A Life for the Spirit"] Late in 1910, while searching for a broader and more encompassing view of the religious life, Rittelmeyer met the work of Steiner. This meeting was decisive for Rittelmeyer, who sensed that Steiner was a thinker who could lead him farther in his search for a contemporary Christianity. Yet he took nothing on faith; each of Steiner's statements was challenged, questioned, and thought through. This process is wonderfully described by Rittelmeyer in his book, *Rudolf Steiner Enters My Life*, from which one gains not only warm and vibrant impression of Rudolf Steiner, but also of Rittelmeyer himself. After years of strenuous testing, Friedrich Rittelmeyer joined the Anthroposophical Society in 1916.

As I read the Note by Translator on page v, I was reminded of my own experience of reading Steiner for the first time. It took me ten books, purchased at random and read with puzzlement, before I began to make sense of Steiner's works. Over the 15 years since that first book, I have found Steiner's works to be lucid and enlightening, often mind-boggling in their revelations of new and unsuspected truths about human and cosmic origins. Osmond writes about Steiner's colleagues from his years working in the Goethe archives at Weimar, "Very few of those . . . followed him into Anthroposophy."

[page v] Was this most gifted scientist and philosopher on the wrong track? or was his progress too rapid and too unusual to be followed by lesser minds? An answer to these questions may be found in the pages of this book. The author, Dr. Friedrich Rittelmeyer, tells us of his experiences with Rudolf Steiner over a period of many years in the form of a personal narrative, speaking of his ten years of apprehension, critical investigation and cautious scrutiny of the new body of thought, and his final conviction of the unparalleled greatness of Rudolf Steiner's spirit.

A friend of mine who recently read Steiner's book [Nutrition and Stimulants](#) at my recommendation, wrote to me afterwards, "While I enjoyed reading your review of that 1923 book, I must confess that I would be more inclined to listen to a more recent information. He never addressed alcoholism because it was not identified as a disease until the 1930's. We know a lot more about nutrition as well. He was very advanced for that period of time." This is a typical attitude of our time in the sense that we tend to credit more recent information as being more valuable than older information. For my part, I have noted that new information, when it proves valuable, is never completely new, but simply a modern spin on much older information. The very process of in-form-ation is something that must be done by readers in every age, and those writers who best describe how to do the process of in-form-ation are the most valuable to me. Rudolf Steiner describes the process of in-form-ation better than any other author, scientist, or philosopher that I have found. In the Preface to the Second Edition of this Rittelmeyer book, A. Heidenreich states that

Steiner's work will only become more important to future generations. As someone born seven months after he wrote this next passage, therefore of a future generation he spoke of, I can wholeheartedly agree:

[page 8] Steiner undoubtedly belongs to those few human beings whose influence and importance grow as time goes on. As our present civilization more and more disintegrates, it is very likely that an increasing number of men will find in his work the powerful seeds of a better future. They will then like to have a picture of his personality drawn by one who knew him well, and who was himself great enough to gauge the exceptional rank of the other. *January, 1940.*

My feeling is that I want to hear about Rudolf Steiner from someone who knew him personally, not an opponent of his, but someone who did not accept what Steiner professed without opposition and severe questioning. That would be Friedrich Rittelmeyer by his own admission. He admits that the final impetus to writing this book came from a pernicious attack upon Steiner in a leading periodical. His first approach to Steiner was initiated by Michael Bauer.

[page 15, 16] — So there was Michael Bauer, sitting in front of me. In a tone of smiling superiority I tried to introduce the conversation with the question: "And so you believe in reincarnation?" But I saw immediately that I would have to drop this tone once and for always. A shadow passed over that open, spiritual face. Not unkindly, but in a tone indicating an unmistakable defensive, came the answer: "I cannot do otherwise." And then, in this and subsequent conversations, he proceeded to tell me how his innermost strivings had always been directed to Christ. The fact that he could reverently bear Christ within him as the veritable Son of God, while maintaining a firm, impartial position in the modern world of science and research — this he owed to "Theosophy." . . . Michael Bauer was an unlooked-for herald of a Christianity to come. Christhood as the apotheosis of a full and complete alertness to the world, of an all-pervading clarity of spirit and of the highest Ego freedom — that was what I glimpsed at the time.

Friedrich Rittelmeyer was one of many who found Christ through Rudolf Steiner and continues to do so today. Most religions focus so much on Jesus the Teacher, the Man, and so few on Christ Jesus as the spirit-embodied Man, up until now. And even fewer on Christhood as the divine exemplar of fully human living. The result is that a clear concept of Christ is yet alien to most Christians today. Bauer shared with him how he first met Steiner:

[page 17] He told me how, during a train-journey by night, he had spoken to Dr. Steiner of his experiences in connection with Kerning's "exercises," how he immediately found himself in the presence of a superior knowledge, and how, as the result of Dr. Steiner's advice, he had quickly escaped from undesirable byways and been guided to a path of sure and healthy spiritual development. And so we spoke of worlds which are today still foreign to the majority of human beings.

Michael Bauer gave Rittelmeyer a stack of theosophical literature to read. He worked his way through the pile and said, "The only one who interested me was Rudolf Steiner." This was similar to my experience, but I didn't need to read much to come to that conclusion. Whatever light that theosophy had to reveal seemed to be hidden under a bushel basket of sesquipedalian verbiage. Reading theosophy for comprehension seemed to me equivalent to learning to play the violin by starting on Beethoven concertos. When I later began reading Steiner, I found his words lucid, and comprehensible, but I was reading lectures given to people who already knew the basics, so I was left with lots of unanswered questions. After ten books of such lectures, the Internet bloomed into being, and I quickly located folks who could tell me what his basic books were, which ones are best for me to read first. After the next ten books, I was in much better shape to comprehend Rudolf Steiner. But even now — after 157 books of his, each new book I read of his lectures contains mind-boggling concepts and revelations about the spiritual world that I had not imagined existed. Thus said, you can imagine that I find sympathy with Rittelmeyer's statement at

the head of this next passage:

[page 18] How can a man say such amazing things, one after the other, unendingly new, and make such astounding statements with the air of a prosaic recorder? At that time I had no idea that Rudolf Steiner had already made a name for himself by philosophical works of historic and fundamental value before he came forward as a spiritual investigator, nor had I the slightest inkling that he was thoroughly at home in the various branches of scientific research. I simply felt: Here is a man who must be taken seriously.

That Rudolf Steiner was a philosopher is something that is often glossed over by his critics who would prefer to ignore the credentials of the man they wish to deride. His [Philosophy of Freedom](#) is one of his fundamental philosophical works. In it he develops a critique of Kant's philosophy which is cogent and lucid. Steiner shows that it is possible, contrary to Kant's claim, to know the *ding an sich* or the "thing in itself". My approach to Steiner was as a physicist wanting an explanation of the spiritual world which jived with what I understood of the physical world. I found it. Rittelmeyer's approach to Steiner was as a Christian theologian, and he was taken up short immediately. He writes on page 19, "Either this man has no inkling of what we theologians think of the Bible, or he has something absolutely new to give." That meshes with what I found after I had pored over and worked my way through the basic books of Steiner's: he had something new to give in every subject he covered.

He didn't argue about what was true, he simply gave the truth, and invited me to understand how what he gave illumined the whole of which it was a part. I began to fit, like a jigsaw puzzle piece, each book's contents into the whole and they fit perfectly every time. Never once did I find a conflict between what he described and what I had learned in other fields of learning — with every puzzle piece he expanded what I had already learned, made it more comprehensible and useful to me. — And improved my own life and health in the process. The spirit of Rudolf Steiner spoke to me as it did to Rittelmeyer decades ago:

[page 19] Later on I often went to Rudolf Steiner with a list of debatable interpretations of biblical passages in my pocket, but when I was talking to him other things seemed of far greater importance. The list remained in my pocket, unessential as compared with what I was able to ask and experience. Now and again I convinced myself by means of a brief question that there were significant backgrounds to these interpretations of the Bible. The spirit of Rudolf Steiner had said to me: "Just think of all that is trying to speak to you! Try for once to enter this world with good-will! When you understand more of the whole, many things that now weigh heavily will clear up. And if they do not — Is that after all so very important? Can new spiritual teaching be anything but an offense to old, well-worn beliefs? Is it fair to allow unintelligible passages to prey upon you and then base your judgment of the whole upon them? Should not your conception of the whole be determined by its own life and being?"

When I began reading Alfred Korzybski's classic work, [Science and Sanity](#), I found that I could not read more than three or four pages in any one day. I had to stop and allow the material to digest, before I could continue. The 1000-page book took me nearly a year to complete. Ludwig von Mises' [Human Action](#) was another book which had that effect upon me. — As did Rudolf Steiner's [An Outline of Occult Science](#), which book I had to work my way through again years later. This second and more detailed reading and review was only possible *after* I had begun to comprehend the meaning and scope of Steiner's landmark book. My first review of it was about a [page long](#), my second review is over 200 pages long. Within its covers, Steiner describes the evolution of humankind and the cosmos from beginning to end, both physically and spiritually.

[page 19] Rudolf Steiner's *Outline of Occult Science* was lying on my table at that time. I can still see it there. It upset me, for I simply could not wade through it. If I read for any length of time a feeling of nausea came over me. All this mass of knowledge weighed like

undigested food, and I had to read cautiously, never more than two or three pages at a time if I were not to get sick of it. And so it was quite a year before I knew what the book really contained. At that time I had not realized how one ought to assimilate such writings.

How can one read a book full of incredible concepts? One must accept the things they can understand and hold as unanswered questions the things they cannot understand. If what they are studying is worthwhile, those questions will be answered from within and without in due time. This process of holding an unanswered question which I have found so fruitful in my life is what Rittelmeyer hints at in the next passage when he says "let things rest".

[page 19, 20] One must be able to read *freely*, with much more open-mindedness than is required with different kinds of writing, in order to avoid precipitate acceptance on the one hand and over-hasty denial on the other. One must let things rest as they are, with very great inner tranquillity, and wait without being scared at the realization that well-worn tradition is beginning to totter. One must read such books with inner *activity*, constantly putting what is read to the test of life, and life to the test of what is read, so that one's own firm stand in life is fortified against the flood of new statements. And furthermore, one must be able to read *meditatively*, with constant and fairly long pauses, building up what has been read again within oneself and listening with calmness and unimpeded freedom to what one's own spirit and experience has to say to it. If a man does not do this, it will be left to future generations to discover the spirit and living essence of such books, and to him they will remain so much abstruse literature.

After 15 plus years of putting Steiner's work to the test of my life and my life to the test of what he wrote, my own life is a fortress of testimony to the truth and validity of his work. It has become clear to me that my lifetime of study and work in physics, computers, software, psychology, philosophy, physiology, etc. before I found Steiner was merely prologue to prepare me for his revelations. — To ensure that I would be ready to comprehend the reality of the physical and spiritual worlds and to assist others in doing likewise, whatever background they brought to the task.

And, yes, I felt like, still feel like a pigmy when I read a new work of Rudolf Steiner — just like Rittelmeyer did almost a hundred years ago.

[page 21] When I was reading Rudolf Steiner's works, a faint voice would often whisper within me, but only gradually did I become attentive to it. It said: "If this man is right, you — with all your knowledge — are just a pigmy! You may as well begin all over again, and even then you will never get to the point of proving these things for yourself with these higher organs that are promised! And so, if you let any of this teaching get into you, you will start as a pupil again and remain one for the rest of your life. You will have to build up your spiritual outlook from its very foundations, at the moment when you thought you were standing as a teacher before men, and when, moreover, they were looking for and needing you. And in any case you will never get very far in this new sphere."

When you are reading lectures of Steiner, you are reading a live transcription of what he said to an audience of people who each came with their own concerns and wishes. Steiner sensed these at every point during the lecture and would change what he was planning to say based on his perceptions of what they wanted or needed. In his series of books of [Questions and Answers](#), the questions are made explicit, but if the same group had gathered there without submitting questions, Steiner would likely have spoken on many of the same topics, perceiving their questions directly. Steiner apparently admitted as much to Rittelmeyer in a conversation about his curious style of delivering lectures.

[page 26] The rather roundabout and involved style of many of Dr. Steiner's phrases was

explained, as I gathered in a later conversation, by the fact that he was taking stock of the particular make-up of his listeners.

There is a variety of card tricks in which you ask questions in such a way as to force the person to recover the very card they were thinking of. If while speaking you structure your sentence in such a way as to evoke responses, you can cue off these responses and finish your sentence to answer questions which came up mid-sentence in the listener's mind — without them ever having posed the question aloud. This is how I understand what Rittelmeyer describes above of Steiner's way of speaking. Such a way of speaking is more natural in the original German which Steiner spoke and seems awkward when translated into English, so long sentences with inverted structures are often broken into two sentences when translated into idiomatic English, thereby losing this probing aspect of Steiner's original words.

Theologians, according to Rittelmeyer, like to "set up 'God' in haunts impenetrable to the light of scientific research." That is a great way of describing what I found unacceptable about conventional theology. I wanted to know "where Heaven was" and no one had an acceptable answer to that question, no one except Rudolf Steiner.

[page 28] He himself was looking into the world with Goethe's eyes. But he brought greater power into those eyes, and a richer, more spiritual world in which there was room for all the Gods of men — above all the God of the Christians. Here, in very truth, was a kingly mind in the realms of knowledge, far-seeing and mighty in its freedom. He let a science of Nature come to flower around us, a wisdom far more stimulating than the dead knowledge of the day and a science in which religion could breathe anew.

Kristina Kaine has written a fine book called, [I-Connecting](#), in which she describes the salubrious effects that I-connecting has upon one's health. One feels lighter, happier, and has fewer neurotic symptoms when one learns to connect with one's I. The exercises that Rudolf Steiner suggested for Rittelmeyer seemed to have that effect upon him. What he calls "unexpected domains" are exactly the domains which Kaine's book explains would lead one to expect changes for the better from I-connecting. I-connecting is a complex concept which, rightly understood, requires an entire book to assist those who are disconnected from their "I" to learn about the process, both to understand it, learn to do it in your own life, and to recognize its healthful consequences when it later occurs. Many of the smooth and delightful experiences, what a poet would call "ineffable" experiences, result from unconscious I-connecting. After a study of Kaine's book, one is able to trace the roots of these unconscious events and create more of them via one's will or conscious volition.

[page 32, 33] It must not be imagined that by means of these exercises a man will quickly attain higher knowledge. In the vast majority of cases it will certainly not be so. Their effect is much more often experienced in wholly *unexpected domains*. [*italics added*] In my own case, for example, the first effect was that I felt much more physically healthy. The exercises were like a healing bath or a refreshing bodily exercise, only more spiritual and life-giving. One's whole organism became more normal, more harmonized(1). Lost instincts as to what was right for the body returned. Neurasthenic symptoms abated. In this way one began to realize that neurasthenia is not to be cured by relaxation and change, or by doing nothing, but by a healthy strengthening of inner activity as a counteraction to the exhaustion caused by outer life. Another result was an enhancement of the power of mental achievement.

Rittelmeyer found no subjects about which he could not approach Rudolf Steiner and find a font of valuable information ready.

[page 37, 38] In everything I said and asked I found myself in the presence of an unmistakable expert. There was nothing I could say that he did not seem already to know. Whereas in other conversations I had had with outstanding men I always

refrained from speaking about certain experiences because one was accustomed to find no understanding, here I could touch upon whatever intimate and delicate subjects I liked and was always answered by genuine human kindness and a superior power that could not but inspire every confidence.

Rudolf Steiner never answered questions about someone's previous incarnations, he would instead suggest that people work that out for themselves. He was very careful when he spoke to give out information which would help and never any that would hurt. Rittelmeyer gives a view of what it was like to have a personal conversation with Steiner:

[page 44] If only people could have seen how he spoke of these matters in personal conversation! His great dark eyes became even more alert. With a consciousness of responsibility than which nothing greater or purer could be imagined, he spoke every word with hesitation. It was as if, all unseen, he had passed into a temple where he was acting before the eyes of higher powers. One could have wished that all the sensitive minds of humanity had been present to witness such a spectacle! If the teaching of reincarnation were to be renewed in a Christian sense it could not have been entrusted to a more scrupulous mind.

Here is a passage which reveals Rittelmeyer as a theologian. He meets Steiner again after some six months, and shared with him a thought about the Gospel of John . (Click [link](#) to view passage on death referred to in next passage.)

[page 45] I said something to the effect that the revelational character of this Gospel seemed to me to be strongly indicated by the fact that in the passages on death spoken by Christ before His Departure, the word "Father" occurs where one would have expected the word "Death." Rudolf Steiner looked at me with interest. "So you have discovered that? I had to travel a much longer occult path before I discovered it."

One curious paradox about Steiner's spiritual science is that one cannot become an authority on it and oppose it. The root of the word, authority, is author; it would be better spelled out as "author-ship". One only becomes an authority on a subject by investigating it deeply enough that one is able author new and creative works on it, i.e., express "author-ship". Friedrich Rittelmeyer did that with this and other books of his. He also recognized, as I have, that it is impossible to investigate spiritual science or anthroposophy deeply and then find fault with it. Those who do find fault often openly betray their shallowness in various ways.

[page 46] For nearly five years I had devoted practically all the spare time I had from my profession to the theoretical and, above all, the practical study of Anthroposophy. My object was to take stock of my responsibility to humanity and then have the right to speak with *authority* (*italics added*). Is there anyone among the opponents who has applied anything like the same amount of time and earnest investigation before writing against Anthroposophy? And above all, is there anyone of them who has really tested it in his own experience? More than once I have found that men with a name and a position in public life asked for anthroposophical literature on the naive pretext that they were proposing to write or speak about the subject in the near future. And it was a very near future indeed! Conversations with those who really knew their subject were not sought for, and sometimes deliberately avoided. There was one outstanding case where the person in question did not even wait to receive books which could have served as a real introduction to Anthroposophy.

Rittelmeyer was present during one or more lectures when Rudolf Steiner revealed the events from Christ Jesus's life compiled in the book, [The Fifth Gospel](#). In our imagination we can enter the room with

Rittelmeyer and Michael Bauer and selected others to hear Steiner speak(2).

[page 48, 49] The evening that followed will remain in my memory, far beyond the bournes of this life, as one of the most wonderful in my experience. A hundred or so people had gathered in the narrow premises where the Theosophical Society, as it then was, held its meetings. The audience which had gathered in this catacomb-like room in the Sulzbache Strasse to hear such extraordinary things, consisted of the small, sincere group of people who had collected around Michael Bauer, and a few Members from near and far who used to travel from town to town where Dr. Steiner was lecturing. . . . Rudolf Steiner stood before us and spoke of the boyhood of Jesus. From my seat in the front row I was able to watch every expression. He seemed to be looking away from and beyond the audience, gazing intently at pictures before him. With the greatest delicacy of touch and a most striking alertness and caution he proceeded to describe these pictures.

It was a magical moment, Rudolf Steiner viewing scenes of the Akashic Record and revealing them to the assembled in a small room with trains running by outside. We owe a debt of gratitude to Rittelmeyer for allowing us into the room with him on this august occasion.

[page 50] Suddenly it struck me that all my life I had been thinking: When I pass into the higher worlds after death I desire nothing else during the first years than to be able for a long space of time to contemplate the life of Jesus with spiritual eyes. — Again and again I tried to be fully conscious of the unprecedented nature of the whole situation. Outside, electric trams were clanking by, one after the other, with shrill hootings. Within stood a man who claimed to have the past in pictures before him and spoke of them with natural assurance.

In a remarkable dream seven years before he helps form the Christian Community, Rittelmeyer remembers the future(3) and visualizes a church whose steeple reaches all the way up to Heaven. He climbs up a high mountain.

[page 56] At the summit of the mountain — I still see it there before me — stood a church with a steeple rising sheer to the heavens. The church had been built by Rudolf Steiner. The path was not easy and yet not too difficult. After a brief glance I set out calmly to make the ascent. — How remarkable that a dream like this should not only have reflected the reality of the moment, which in my waking consciousness I should never have expressed in such a form, but that a remote future of which one could have known nothing should also have shone into it!

Remember the surge of interest in the mystics and yogis of India during the 1960s? Apparently there was a similar interest in things Eastern during the 1910s as well. Scientists were going to faraway places and looking into telescopes and microscopes to find the truth about the world, all the while they were ignoring the revelations provided close at hand in Middle Europe by Rudolf Steiner.

[page 60, 61] It is a strange chapter, this behavior on the part of orthodox science. Thick volumes were being written on the Mystics of the past; people were journeying to India in search of Yogis in order to converse with them. But they did not see that in the very heart of European civilization there was something far greater, something that would have given them the most living understanding of the Mystics of the past and the Yogis in far-off India. Eyes were being strained down microscopes and telescopes; every beetle and every comet examined. But scientists did not trouble about the rarest phenomenon of all and yet so near to hand, in the shape of one who could have shed such many-sided light on what is more significant than anything else — the nature and being of man. Never once in Rudolf Steiner's life, so far as I know, did it happen that a recognized

scientist went to him saying: You write such remarkable things. May I ask you about them? — Nothing that he wrote was taken seriously. Men would not let themselves be attracted by his other work nor be compromised by contact with something unfamiliar and unrecognized. At most they expected Rudolf Steiner to come forward on his own account and ask for investigation and recognition. But the request for the former was clearly enough stated in his books. When that had no effect, every other step would have been beneath him.

Those scientists who claimed to be studying the spiritual world were mostly interested in table-tipping, seances with the dead, and such forms of spiritism which Steiner abjured. He recognized that those who looked for sensory data about supersensible phenomena were merely materialists wearing a thin veneer of spirituality and that they did more harm than good.

[page 61] So all that was left to science was to concern itself with old-fashioned seeresses or automatic painters. But all such phenomena only lead into the dim, unconscious regions of the life of soul, and in any case the right methods of investigations are not there. With Rudolf Steiner there was simply no question of trance. One looked there into a *super*-consciousness, not into a dark, dreamy subconsciousness. It was a difference as between the uncanny flashing of rockets by night and the bright sunlight of day.

This next passage reveals that Rittelmeyer may have provided the source of inspiration for the Christ figure in Steiner's amazing wood sculpture, Representative of Man, which stands yet today in the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland.

[page 63] I asked Rudolf Steiner: "Is it really possible, simply by meditation upon the words of Christ, to come to the point of being able to say anything at all about His actual appearance?" "And what do you think He looked like?" came the quiet counter-question. When I began to say certain things, Rudolf Steiner took up my description and led it — I can only say — to clarity. It was the same picture which he afterwards gave in his lectures: A brow unlike that of a modern thinker, but one upon which reverence for the deep mysteries of existence was written; eyes that did not gaze upon men as though in observation but penetrated their very being in the fire of self-sacrifice; a mouth — "When I saw it for the first time I had this impression: this mouth has never taken food, but has been proclaiming divine truths from all eternity." In astonishment I asked: "Yes, but if you know what Christ was really like, is it not right to make this picture of Him in some



The Group, Rudolf Steiner's Woodcarving

way accessible to mankind?" "Yes, indeed," was his answer. "And that is why I have told an artist in Dornach to make a model of Christ according to my indications."

In the Christ figure, we find an Aryan head and Semitic features around the mouth. These represented the two streams of people in the remote past who came

together to give birth to Christianity.

[page 64] What Dr. Steiner had said in lectures, namely, that in a far remote past two streams of peoples went out destined to seek for the revelation of the Divine mainly in the *outer* world, and the other in the more southerly, Semitic peoples who were wont to seek the Divine in the world of *inner* being, until finally both streams united in Christianity — all this was impressively reflected in the head of this statue.

Rudolf Steiner was a natural clairvoyant since birth. He often saw dead people walking around, but found it better not to mention those occurrences to anyone. He admitted to Rittelmeyer under questioning that his present thoughts of Christ were present even in his early twenties, but he barely discussed them with anyone. That led him to a question that any serious student of Steiner's work and life would have liked to ask him:

[page 68, 69] "Did you always think of Christ as you think today, even in your scientific days?" I asked him. "I remember that in a conversation in the middle of my twenties I spoke of Christ like this," he answered. "But then of course it fell temporarily into the background. I had to pass through all those other phases. It was a karmic necessity." "Why was it that in spite of all you must have known even in those early years, you were so completely silent about occult matters until your fortieth year?" I asked. "I had to make a certain position for myself in the world first. People may say nowadays that my writings are mad, but my earlier work is also there, and they cannot wholly ignore it. And, moreover, I had to bring things to a certain clarity in myself, to a point where I could give them form, before it was possible to talk about them. That was not so very easy. And then — I admit it frankly — it needs courage to speak openly about such things. I had first to acquire this courage."

Anthroposophy is the one science in which everyone has a fully-equipped lab at the ready: their own human body, soul, and spirit. One does not require microscopes, telescopes, oscilloscopes, pyrometers, thermometers, etc — nor a staff of technicians — in order to affirm the truths which Steiner revealed in his writings on spiritual science. One need only study and work at it and the truth will reveal itself in time. Rittelmeyer had another approach open to him via his direct personal contact with Steiner: test the man who was doing the teaching. If there were pervasive delusions in Steiner's teachings, he could test the man himself. And he did.

[page 70, 71] How can one really discover whether a body of new spiritual teaching like this, with all its claims, is actually based on truth — or whether it is all a colossal error? — That was the question. I personally felt that the natural thing to do was to form as accurate a judgment as possible of the man who was bringing the teaching. I did not let a single opportunity for judging Rudolf Steiner as a man slip by. It had been my privilege in life to come into contact with many outstanding personalities and, as a clergyman, with the destinies and characters of very many human beings. A good foundation for judging the worth of a man was therefore present.

Lacking personal contact with the man, I pored through his works. When I completed my intense study of *An Outline of Occult Science*, I was in awe of the robustness of the image Steiner had laid out for the evolution of humankind and the cosmos. I knew where Heaven was, the structure of God through the spiritual hierarchies, how they played and continue to play their role in our daily lives, how the Bible contains in terse metaphoric language in Genesis and Revelations descriptions of the beginning and ending of time in our local section of the cosmos which meshes perfectly into Steiner's more detailed and comprehensive description, and how Steiner knew the facts of the material he presented before he read them in the Bible and other ancient mystery school literature, where he found ample correlation for his personal findings. And, most importantly, my own Christian beliefs were amplified and made real in the process of studying Steiner's works. It was as if Aristotle and Aquinas had merged into one man and come to illuminate humankind with the knowledge it requires to begin its progression upward into the spiritual world again.

[page 75, 76] A man who knows something of the spiritual history of humanity will have to ask himself: Where and when has mankind ever experienced anything like this? Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas — but here there was something more, something really like a sublimated union of both. The purity of spirit, the manifold confirmations in actual life, the illuminating explanation of hundreds of details, the magnificent interplay of the parts, the healthy way in which a place was assigned to the world of nature and its innate connection with the world of spirit, the living fullness of the spirit as creator of the natural world — when one considered all this and put it to the test of life, here indeed was a conception of the world with which one could really live! My own desire was to hold to what I knew of Christ in my inner being and to regard everything else as secondary. But my Christianity could live and breathe in this conception of the world,

even if I still accepted it as a mere hypothesis. Indeed it increased in clarity and power.

Some time after reading a lot of Carl Jung's work and attending a lot of meetings with people who claimed to be Jungians, I came across a statement by Jung that he could never be a *Jungian*. I felt I knew by that time what he meant. Any organization attracts people who are joiners and not leaders. If you would find people who are self-assured and love freedom, you will not likely find them as the prominent members of an organization. Since reading Steiner's work, I have been to some meetings of anthroposophists and have found a similar situation as in the Jungian meetings. There was little doubt in my mind that Steiner could never be a Steinerian, but even that minor doubt was dispelled when I read the following passage.

[page 76, 77] There was also far too much easy chattering about anthroposophical truths and a great deal of blind following of the leader of Anthroposophy. Such is the tragedy that is bound up with greatness, a tragedy that will always be there when a great man appears. But Rudolf Steiner never failed to let it be known that the men he liked best were those who stood before him in freedom and self-assurance. Even wilfulness did not altogether displease him, although he could not regard it as a quality likely to promote the cause of Anthroposophy. The way in which he combined the pressing need of the cause with respect for personal freedom always called forth my unqualified admiration. If it were a matter of choosing, he invariably put the freedom of a man before the needs of the cause. For he regarded the future temple of mankind as lost if it were built upon mediæval foundations.

Of the first private lecture Rittelmeyer attended, given by Rudolf Steiner in Berlin, he writes on page 79 that he realized "how a man in the very Presence of Christ speaks of Christ." All the pontifical sermons about Christ he had heard over the years paled in comparison with a man speaking of his direct experience of the Christ.

[page 79] Only a warped nature could fail to perceive that here one was standing in the very light of truth. The man before us was telling of a world in which he himself was living. The many hundreds of sermons I had heard about Christ came up in the background of my mind. They faded into shadows. "We speak of that which we do know and testify of that which we have seen." — A new proclamation of Christ was there. A new Christ-era was dawning — as yet in the first faint rays of the promised morning. The lecture itself spoke of this — spoke without the least trace of selfish longing for what has yet to come, proclaiming simply what is and would like to bestow itself upon us. Anyone who witnessed this could doubt no longer but that a fully authorized servant of Christ was standing before him.

This next passage tickled me because, as a poet myself, I find it a great freedom to write in a way that might engender great opposition among materialistic philosophers, were they ever to read my works and take them seriously. Some might call it poetic license — using poetry to stretch the truth. I call it something else — using the truth to stretch minds. Unfortunately, some minds are unable to stretch without snapping.

[page 81] Christian Morgenstern, who, as a poet, frankly and emphatically avowed his adherence to Rudolf Steiner, was still but little known and he, moreover, enjoyed a poet's freedom in not being taken seriously enough in the domain of philosophy.

Most people, yet today, seem more interested in what so-called important minds have to say about new writers than in the writer's writings. When Rittelmeyer wrote an article on Max Dessoir and Rudolf Steiner, he was told that he put too much emphasis on the differences between the two men — that "The public were more interested in knowing where the two men were in *agreement*, and, above all, what a mind like Dessoir had to say about Rudolf Steiner! If I would recast the article in this sense it would be

gladly accepted." Before then Rittelmeyer's articles were never refused by that journal, but now they were refusing an article because he was writing truthfully and usefully about Rudolf Steiner. Rittelmeyer declaimed, "The invisible pope of public opinion had issued his decree." (Page 87)

Rittelmeyer knew influential and powerful thinkers and he frankly admits that none rose to the level of Rudolf Steiner.

[page 93] When I look back today, I ask: Who was there in Germany at that time who saw things with this clarity of perception? Every week I had conversations with men from University circles who were regarded as leaders of thought. But what blindness they had in comparison with Rudolf Steiner when one had just talked with him!

Here is a remarkable revelation of how the spirits of the deceased influence decisions made in this world, often putting words in their mouths without the speakers noting it.

[page 93, 94] A singularly interesting experience during those months shall be recorded here for historical reasons. It was at Midsummer, 1917. Kuhlmann had resigned. Dr. Steiner said one day: "You are always keen on knowing things that are confirmed afterwards. Now I will tell you something. I have discovered that Moltke (not the Chief of the General Staff, but his uncle, the Field Marshal) is now trying to work for peace from the spiritual world. And now read Kuhlmann's speech. Again and again he quotes the old Moltke. It was agreed that he should say nothing about peace in his speech. The others — I will not mention names — went to Kuhlmann afterwards and reproached him for having broken his agreement. Kuhlmann told them that he did not know himself what made him do such a thing." And then Dr. Steiner gave a poignant description of Kuhlmann's bodily condition that particular morning which resulted in a somewhat lowered consciousness. This made him particularly susceptible to supersensible influences, and they flowed into him under the most unfortunate conditions.

Most people are unaware that the living spirit of the recently dead may visit their own funerals. Over years of studying Steiner's works, I have learned to be very thoughtful of the presence of live spirits at funerals. I inwardly acknowledge their being alive in the spirit world, and scarcely pay any attention to the dead corpse which they have cast off. I assiduously avoid speaking inwardly or openly about grieving for someone being lost forever from me (something which greatly pains the living spirit when someone does that), rather I speak of their life and the love I felt for them. I speak words which they would wish to hear. After I spoke a eulogy for my beloved brother, David, the spouse of one of my cousins said to me, "When I die, I want you to speak at my funeral." On the other hand, a couple of my siblings seemed to be chagrined that I lacked their sense of onerous grief.

After a funeral at which Rittelmeyer did the services, he noticed Rudolf Steiner in attendance and walked with him back to his carriage. He chanced to ask Steiner a couple of pertinent questions about funerals:

[page 100] "Are the dead really there when one is giving their funeral oration?" I asked, and waited eagerly to see what he would reply to this unexpected question. , "When you spoke of the words which had comforted him on his death-bed, he came and stayed there until Prince X. got up so abruptly and went away. Then I did not see him any more." Again I tried to realize the extraordinary situation. There among three hundred others was a man who had experienced this. — But nobody could have guessed it. What kind of faces would they have pulled if they had suddenly seen what was happening? — "It must often be very unpleasant for the dead to be obliged to listen to these funeral orations!" I continued. Dr. Steiner replied: "I have never noticed that. If they have no inner relation to what is said they stay away."

After pondering Steiner's replies, Rittelmeyer made himself a promise, "Never in my life will I give a burial speech to which the dead himself could not listen!" Consider that the dead are not gone, only passed

into the living spiritual world and what you say and think about them can affect them immediately and directly. Excessive grief and mourning will cause them pain, as will the simple thought that they are gone forever and you will never see them again, etc. If you wish to honor and respect your loved one after they have passed over into the spiritual world, follow Rittelmeyer's advice and only think and speak thoughts of them which your loved one would wish to hear.

Biblical exegetes mostly accept the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) as being the closest to the actual words which Christ Jesus spoke during his lifetime, and they tend to treat the John Gospel as the odd-ball or errant Gospel, the farthest from the truth. Rittelmeyer asked Steiner specifically about this issue.

[page 106, 107] "Do you not think that in the Gospel of St. John we have the words of Christ as they were reflected in a particular individuality, whereas the Synoptics present Christ's actual way of speaking?" "To me it is just the reverse," was the reply. "When I read St. John's Gospel I find my way immediately into the language Christ really spoke. With the Synoptic Gospels I must first adjust myself." One can realize how deeply such a statement conflicted with theology in general, but also what a relief it was to a man who had steeped himself in the John Gospel, and had from the very beginning tried to vindicate it from a deep inner consciousness. "And the farewell words of Christ? Were they spoken so?" "Certainly, they were; but many other words were spoken as well which have not been recorded." When Rudolf Steiner was speaking of such matters it was always with particular humility and reverence.

"And Christ's words on the Cross — were they actually spoken so?" "Certainly they were." "But why is it, then, that one Evangelist gives one account and another a different one?" I asked. "They were not, of course, giving an historical account. There are no historical records. The Evangelists tell what was revealed to them as truth after deep contemplation of the events, even when they had not actually witnessed them. And so one word came to one, another to another, each according to his particular preparation." Naturally there will have to be a great deal of "unlearning" before theology will be able to accept a view like this.

Many people yet today, almost a century later, still hold that reincarnation and karma are not Christian. No Christian, they say, would believe in such a thing nor wish it to be true. This is a very parochial view of what constitutes a Christian. Rittelmeyer knew what it meant to be a Christian and he gives us three wishes that an authentic Christian would make upon passing into the spiritual world:

[page 109, 110] Think of it for a moment: a man passes into the higher world. How will it be with him? For a time he may rejoice to find himself free of the earth and all her misery. But then, if he is allowed a prayer — what will it be? He will surely wish again to meet all those human beings whom he wronged in earthly life, and he will crave for the opportunity to do good to those whom he wronged on earth. "Grace" will lie precisely in this, that he asks if this may be granted him. . . .

And now suppose the man in the other world is allowed a second request—what will he wish? He will wish that he may help the Christ where His task is heaviest and most menaced, where Christ Himself suffers and has to fight most bitterly. This wish, if it were fulfilled, would lead the man back again to the earth.

It is *not* Christian to long for rest and blessedness far from the miseries of earth. It is Christian to bear within one the consciousness which once brought Christ from Heaven to earth, to find one's joy in being like unto Him and to work with Him wherever He may need us. The whole truth of the Christian doctrine of Resurrection remains intact — as could be shown in a theological treatise — indeed increases in — clarity and grandeur.

Rittelmeyer was one of the founders of the Christian Community and yet he openly avers that

reincarnation is *not* a dogma of his church.

[page 110] *The Christian Community*, in the service of which I now live, has no dogmas — most certainly not reincarnation. Everyone can live in the Christian Community who is at one with us in devotion to Christ, even if he says: I reject all these things. But those who leave others freedom have also the right to claim freedom for themselves. And in the name of this same freedom let it be said: The truth of reincarnation is a word of Christ to our time. It comes at the right hour, just when the path to the christianizing of the East is to be made free. All these things form part of a theologian's experience of Rudolf Steiner.

Detractors from Steiner's work see *The Christian Community* as a church founded by Steiner to promote his own skewed (to them) beliefs. Perhaps they should read how Steiner himself described the difference between his spiritual science and the church formed by students of that science:

[page 122] When Dr. Steiner was asked: What is the difference between the Anthroposophical Movement and the Christian Community? — he answered: "The Anthroposophical Movement addresses itself to man's need for knowledge and brings knowledge; the Christian Community addresses itself to man's need for resurrection and brings Christ." We have already shown the sense in which knowledge, too, in itself can lead to Christ.

Anyone who works for long in the healing professions knows how the stories which people bring to them deeply affect and accumulate in their own soul. One place this shows up is in the well-known statistic that psychiatrists in our time have a very high suicide rate. The advice given by Steiner shows evidence of a process of projection at work, or maybe simply an acknowledgment that Rittelmeyer was doing unconsciously in his own life what Steiner was doing consciously in his.

[page 129] Years before, in connection with my own much humbler work in the cure of souls, Dr. Steiner had once said to my wife: "He must cut out all these visits. What people say to him gets all stored up inside him and that makes him ill." Those who can guess how much inner sacrifice is required for really spiritual discernment and counsel — sacrifice that far transcends what is so commonly called "love" — will be able to gauge what was happening in those days.

Rittelmeyer has one more scene to share with us, the burial service he gave for Rudolf Steiner.

[page 130] When, at the wish of Frau Dr. Steiner, and in the solemnly decorated hall where Dr. Steiner had given most of his great lectures, I was performing the burial service according to the ritual of the Christian Community, a drop of the sprinkled water fell in the center of the forehead and shone there through the whole service like a sparkling diamond. The light of many candles was reflected in this glittering star — even as the revelations of light from higher worlds had been reflected in his spirit. Thus adorned, the body sank into the coffin. — To me it was as if higher Spirits had indicated in an earthly picture what it had been our lot to experience.

Rudolf Steiner was a sparkling diamond during his lifetime and the light which shone upon him has been reflected in the many brilliant hues of his work: the Goetheanum, eurythmy, sculpture, bio-dynamic agriculture, bee-keeping, medicine, philosophy, Gospel interpretation, education, and even more. Some 6,000 of his lectures remain today to greet new generations of seekers for truths which encompasses both the material and the spiritual world.

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See also Friedrich Rittelmeyer's book, [Meditation](#)

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Footnote 1. This page 33 footnote by Rittelmeyer is included in full as he speaks to overturn some vicious rumors spread that his health was compromised by Rudolf Steiner:

[page 33] It is rather against the grain to go further into this point. But calumnies spread abroad by opponents to the effect that Rudolf Steiner's exercises made people ill, and that I myself am an example of this, must be put an end to. The truth is exactly the reverse. These exercises gave rise to a first real joy in life, and a comforting sense of health in an organism that from youth onwards had been far too sensitive. That is what actually happened. When, later on, this state of things altered for a time, again the cause was not due to Rudolf Steiner but to the after-effects of a fall in the mountains, which injured the membranes of the brain and made all mental exertion, and the exercises, impossible for many months. The exercises never did any harm, but, on the contrary, once more helped to bring about a cure. It is an obligation of gratitude to Rudolf Steiner to state this publicly in order to contradict rumors of another kind.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 1.](#)

Footnote 2. The only public notice made of Steiner's revelation of The Fifth Gospel was "a frightful caricature of him [appeared] in the illustrated papers with the inscription 'The Fifth Evangelist!'" Rittelmeyer added, "And not one of the recognized leaders of religion was even willing to hear about or examine the gift this man had to give from the divine world." (Page 52)

[Return to text directly before Footnote 2.](#)

Footnote 3. [Remembering the future](#) is a process which everyone has access to, but few realize it. Most people call it coincidence and slough it off immediately. The most common example of the process is called "love at first sight." It is experienced as a feeling which arises spontaneously when one meets the person one will be in love with for years to come. The feeling itself flows as a wave from the future to trigger the very events which will later generate the feeling that appears from the future in the first meeting.

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