

VII. The Spiritual Life of Europe and the Crisis of Freemasonry

Esoteric and Ecclesiastical Christianity

If the reader has the opportunity to speak about the occult-political manipulations in the world with an ordinary Freemason he will experience that the latter will reject them as the fantasies of Roman Catholic circles. At best he will say that true Freemasonry is represented by the regular Lodges where self-knowledge is cultivated and faith in traditions is preserved etc., but that irregular Lodges exist too, the 'P-2' Lodge for instance, which is possibly involved in wrong practices. These are neither tolerated nor acknowledged by regular Freemasons.

But in truth it has long been the case that in the Lodges **there are only a few individuals who remain faithful to the purely spiritual interests**. The leadership, however, is without exception entangled in the most varied affairs going on behind the scenes.

The tragic destiny of Freemasonry is now beginning to repeat itself in the Anthroposophical Society and movement. Here too the majority of members live in the firm conviction that the work in the branches and the national societies is still done in the spirit of the principles as given by Rudolf Steiner. Sadly enough, in many cases this is not so. But even though nothing is left in the world of the brotherhoods we must not at the same time lose all hope for a healing in our circles. Each individual anthroposophist carries responsibility for this. It is **engraved in his karma**; it is part of his spiritual being.

If we lose hope, then everything will be lost. Anthroposophy is the last hope for the world, so long as the capacity for the renewal of life still lies in it, the power to understand events and find a sure orientation within them. Because *the first thing that one can do is to try to understand things, to penetrate them. Then thoughts will be there that are forces and will have their effect* (Jan. 15, 1917, GA 174). For the divine hierarchies hold sway in true thoughts. And however mighty the assault of the ahrimanic-luciferic forces may be, it is secondary and lacking in true being, in relation to the real world of God.

Rudolf Steiner therefore emphasizes in one of his lectures: *if only enough people today would have the urge to say to themselves: we must above all gain insight into these things* (i.e. the occult-political struggle and its background), *all else will follow!* – *And especially if one wants to have insight into social matters, it is essential for waking life that above all we have the will to acquire insight. The stimulation of the will – that will look after itself, it will come, for it develops of itself ... A great deal can be accomplished if only we have the earnest will first of all to gain insight. All else will then come. It is not so tragic that not many people can do much today; but it is unspeakably tragic if people cannot decide at least to get to know the social laws spiritual-scientifically, to study them. The rest will come, if they are studied* (Dec. 12, 1918, GA 186).

But precisely this is not taking place, because not only in the outer world, but also within our Society, thorough measures are taken to exclude social understanding, to disperse the members in groups with differing herd-opinions that are hostile to one another. We simply must understand that **the question: to know or not to know? is identical with another: To be or not to be?**

Many faint-hearted people pale with fright in face of the reality of today's world and fall victim to opportunism. Even behind the mask of a spiritual world-view there often lurks the inhumane attitude born in the horrors of the concentration camps (GULAG): you die today, my turn to die tomorrow! How is one to explain to such people that there is a second death and that it comes to the very ones who decide in this way to put off the first? Indeed, the situation in the world can be frightening.

Political occultism is a form of madness of the world. But madness represents the most extreme form of corruption of what constitutes the highest value of the human spirit – self-consciousness. Thus it stands with the phenomena that are important for the world. Healthy occultism, the teaching of initiation – forms the quintessence of the best strivings of all that which lives in the self-consciousness of the epoch. At the same time it is the wrong use of occultism that dooms all of civilization to inevitable ruin.

Freemasonry is one of the most significant spiritual streams of humanity, but in its present form it is truly the grave-digger of culture as well as of civilization. The situation today is such that it is not only people within Freemasonry who hasten the destruction of the world, but also those who criticize it, not in an

objective way, but from a confessional or ideological standpoint. We can only escape this vicious circle with the help of spiritual-scientific knowledge.

In Anthroposophy we have been given a profound teaching of the spiritual evolution of humanity, corresponding in the highest degree to the true facts. It speaks of three spiritual streams in which the Greco-Latin culture flows into our fifth cultural epoch. The ancient world rested fully and entirely on the Mysteries. But in proportion as the consciousness that thinks in concepts consolidated itself, the actual initiation principle of antiquity disintegrated. It experienced a fundamental renewal in the Mystery of Golgatha. It gave to a certain category of the **Great Mysteries** of antiquity the possibility to continue in a metamorphosed form on the path of esoteric Christianity. For the simple people the Church ritual was created as an equivalent to the **Lesser Mysteries** – a possibility accessible to every person to partake in the divine without special preparation (which is not to say that preparation is altogether unnecessary). And we see how in the ancient Orient a deepened, inner veneration for ritual develops very far. The pilgrimages to the grave of the Lord also had cultic significance; it was experienced as the crowning of cultic experience, a great deed of ritual.

In the meantime intellectualism was consolidating itself in Europe. Towards the 9th century Rome had finally understood that the inhabitants of Middle- and Western Europe could not remain dependent on simple observance of the cultic-religious ceremonies that merely spoke to the heart. Although these observances (Anschauungen) still gave people the experience of the unity of their soul-world, they became inaccessible to the European. Therefore one began, under Pope Nicholas I (858-867), to give dogmatic forms to the spiritual heritage of the Orient. Words were sought, sayings with the help of which one was able to speak of the experience and, in addition, the utmost was done to hinder the supersensible perception of what was being spoken of. Thus, says Rudolf Steiner, the idea of faith arose (not, of course, in the sense of St. Paul). *The idea arose: one has to give to people the content (of religion) in an abstract-dogmatic form in which they can believe, without giving them the possibility of perception* (Oct., 1, 1922, GA 216).

But in the esoteric stream that had gone to Ireland with Joseph of Arimathea, people continued to try to enter with their feeling into the connection of the soul with the spiritual world. They stood before the great question: *how can the*

human being find his way in the etheric world, in the etheric cosmos? – For the visions, which in this way also included the Mystery of Golgatha ... related to the etheric in the cosmos (ibid.). The second coming of Christ, in the expectation of which the entire Christian world lives, also takes place in the etheric world.

Rome too, had knowledge concerning the secret of the etheric cosmos. What moved to the East, however, and became the Eastern Church did not carry within itself the question of the etheric cosmos, but the question how one can bring this into harmony with the etheric organization of man, with the ether-body. *But if man – explains Rudolf Steiner – wants to live with his etheric body here on earth, he can do this only in an external way, when he lives in ceremonies, within ritualism, when he lives within events that are not reality of the senses, of earth. In the East one wanted to live into such events in order to experience the inner peculiarity of one's own human etheric organism* (ibid.).

The Roman Catholic Church gave the cult a new aspect. *Visible symbolism* played a special role from then on; *one strove to illumine the cult by means of the dogmas*. For this reason the Church radically opposes esoteric Christianity because the latter is based on the supersensible vision taught in it.

That which went to Eastern Europe was able to preserve something of the mood in which the Christians of the first Christian centuries had lived. To a limited extent it also advanced to the West, where there lived a passionate striving to relate to the Christianity of the Holy Grail, to Rosicrucianism. Here too there was a longing of the human ether-body for the holy act of consecration (Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter of Amiens lived in this mood). With the crusades it also reached Jerusalem; and from there it rayed back to Europe where it fanned out widely in a range of Orders and heretical teachings and gradually took the form of occult societies and Freemasonic Lodges (ibid.).

All this – it must be emphasized again – **sought the connection to esoteric Christianity but always remained something different from it**. Only very few could ascend the heights demanded of its pupils by esoteric Christianity in connection with the elaboration of a special force of ideas necessary to penetrate the secrets of the etheric cosmos. And this was the main principle of the new initiation. With Goethe it finally enters the wide field of exoteric culture as the doctrine of metamorphosis and of the power of judgment in beholding ('anschauende Urteilskraft'). In Anthroposophy Goetheanism becomes the teaching

of the all-encompassing metamorphosis of being, the teaching of reincarnation and karma, which has very little in common with the seeds sown in the Orient.

Thus Anthroposophy represents the newest form in which esoteric Christianity has stepped forward into the wide spheres of human life. It bears within it the power to initiate a metamorphosis in the most important spiritual streams of humanity of which we have already spoken. All are hopelessly outdated, since there is no form of development that could exist eternally. **Because of the infirmity of their 'old age' they must either die away altogether or 'die and become', i.e. go through a metamorphosis in order to become something qualitatively new.**

For this, and only for this reason, the world received from Rudolf Steiner – the great Christian initiate who had realized within himself the principle *not I, but the Christ in me* – a renewed cult as a gift for the Christian churches – a cult that can still the longing of the human ether-body, in its present-day constitution as an expression of the fifth cultural epoch, for a holy ritual. **This cult was given to mankind through Rudolf Steiner by the Divine Hierarchies themselves.**

Goetheanism as an all-encompassing theory of science carries the life of the spirit into dead, obsolete, materialistic natural science. It is an illusion to think that a new departure is possible on the basis of parapsychology.

The Spiritual Background of Rituals and Ceremonies

Rudolf Steiner attempted, as already mentioned, to give, for the use of the Masonic Lodges, a renewed cultic-ceremonial ritual which could have led to true spiritual work. **But it became apparent that all streams of spiritual life had taken into themselves too much of the force of death and, instead of renewing themselves through a fresh spiritual impulse, threatened to dismember, suppress and dissolve this impulse in their own process of disintegration. And if these things go too far, if the helping hand stretched out from the divine world is rejected or misused for evil purposes, humanity will be faced with the most difficult trials. The 20th century has shown that this bitter and painful process has already begun.**

Anyone who does not grasp this will obviously have joined the Anthroposophical Society on the basis of a peculiar misunderstanding. Those who do under-

stand should not omit to develop occult-social perspicacity, for in our century all significant spiritual processes unfold in the social sphere.

We must recognize what other groups in the world also recognize, whilst we follow a different methodological procedure. When we speak of a decline of traditional spiritual movements we try to penetrate to their archetypal phenomenal foundations and at the same time leave all ideological aspects completely to one side. Thus for example we emphasize, when investigating the decline of the spiritual quest in the fifth cultural epoch, the fact that the ancient Egyptian culture had already brought forth much that was decadent. Dark and magical procedures were used that bound the souls of the dead to their conserved physical form, the mummy.

When intellectual culture, strengthened through the materialistic influence of Arabism, began its activity around the 14th/15th century it brought with it a dangerous weakening of the deepest spiritual search in the realm of the ceremonies and cultic acts that enliven the ether-body. Now various Orders and Lodges began **to conserve the ancient cults.** Rudolf Steiner characterizes it thus: *These are truly mummies, just as much as the human mummies of Egypt. They are mummies if they are not glowed-through, warmed-through by the Mystery of Golgatha. An extraordinary amount is contained in such cults and ceremonies, but from what once lay in them in very ancient times they have (now) conserved only what is dead, just as the mummy had only retained the dead form of the human being. And to a great extent it is still the case to this day ... Just like the ordinary Egyptian, who only felt a kind of shudder when he gazed at the mummy, so a modern man experiences, if not exactly a shudder, something that is not a true feeling of soul when he comes near to these mummified spiritual acts* (Sept. 24, 1922, GA 216).

Such an experience has a very serious, quite concrete occult foundation. Rudolf Steiner gives an explanation that is not easily accessible to quick understanding. He speaks of the elementary spirits active in the process of human in and out-breathing. Breathing is an extraordinarily spiritual process. In antiquity man gained great spiritual knowledge through developing a conscious relationship to the spirits active on the path of in-breathing. When this experience began to fade, the Egyptian priests turned to mummification; a refuge for the elementary spirits was created in the mummies.

In more recent times a conscious relationship to the elementary spirits active in out-breathing is growing in importance, as it is their task to carry the inner form of man into the etheric world. They find this path into the outer world within the ceremonies that are enacted in occult brotherhoods, even if they are incomprehensible and mummified.

During the daytime it is still possible for these spirits, whose mission it is to be man's helpers, ... *to live in the breath in an honest way. For in the daytime man thinks and he is at least sending out his intellectual forms of thought with his breath ... But at night, when man does not think, thought-forms are not going out, there are no little etheric ships on which the earth spirits can go out from man into the world in order to imprint his form there in the ether-cosmos* (ibid.). And here, such spirits make use of the mummified ceremonies. This activity would be justified only if it had made a connection to spiritual science.

Without spiritual science these activities would be unjustified, particularly since the beginning of the epoch of the Archangel Michael (since 1879; Goethe had participated in these acts at the turn of the 18th and 19th century). In the previous epoch (each of which lasts about 300 years), when the Archangel Gabriel had leadership, the elementary spirits we are concerned with here and whose activity had already begun in the medieval period, were justified in living parasitically in the human consciousness, while people in the secret societies were celebrating rituals or listening to the Mass without comprehending what was going on. These beings thought the deeds that were being enacted by the passive human understanding. But around the end of the 19th century it became dangerous to sleep during religious or occult ceremonies, for with the beginning of the epoch of Michael *these elementary beings who thought with the human brain and then, by taking hold of human feelings and bringing about the social connections of the 19th century, actually spun those threads (of the forces working between people), these beings had now had enough. They had fulfilled their world-historic task, or rather satisfied their world-historic need (also of use to man). Ever more people came to earth who hoped for much from earthly life itself, and who had their own ideas concerning the organization of life on earth. Since then, these elementary beings, who once held sway in human thoughts, no longer come to man* (cf. Aug. 9, 1922, GA 214).

The result was **that human beings no longer knew what to do with their thoughts**, and this was mirrored in the crisis of knowledge and of life. So long

as thinking had not been entirely independent man appreciated it, but as soon as he was able to dispose of it as he wished, it lost all attraction for him. He began frivolously to play with it and develop various theories without considering his responsibility. Everything became relative for man. And consciousness that had become superficial fell more and more into a sleep in its depths; but out of the subconscious, out of the realm of the dream-pictures, utopian, spectral ideas – monsters – pressed into the intellect of man.

This went so far that, as Rudolf Steiner says, *there are really a great number of people who are, fundamentally speaking, not simply reincarnated human beings, but the bearers of beings who... show a premature path of development, who are actually only supposed to appear in a human form at a later stage of development. These beings do not use the entire human organism but they preferably use the metabolic system of these Western people ... Such people also reveal outwardly, to those who can look at life in the right way, that this is the case. For example, a large number of those people belonging to Anglo-Saxon secret societies ... and who are influential, are actual bearers of such premature existences who ... work into the world through certain people, and who seek out a field of activity for themselves through the bodies of people who do not live in regular reincarnations* (Oct. 22, 1920, GA 200). Often these 'people' wield authority in sects with a large following. It is easy to imagine how tragic-comical it is when people who have retained control over their own consciousness try to come to a rational understanding with them.

Rudolf Steiner says quite openly: ***One should not think in an abstract way that human beings everywhere and without exception are subject to repeated earth lives*** (ibid.). Of course it is inconvenient to have to grapple with such truths. It is much easier passively to follow those in authority. And this is exactly what happens: some want to know nothing, so as not to risk their comfortable existence; others help them to satisfy this wish. But it is urgently necessary to break this vicious circle.

Three kinds of spirits today illicitly ensoul a large proportion of those people who know how to forge a path to the levers of power. The first strive especially towards *what are, so to speak, the elementary forces of the earth ... they are able to detect: how is a colonization to be carried out here according to the natural climatic conditions ... or, how is a trade-relationship to be started, and so forth. A second kind of such spirits are those who make it their special task*

... to suppress self-consciousness, not to allow full awareness of the **consciousness-soul** to arise, and thereby to produce among others in the environment, where something like this **spreads like an epidemic, a certain compulsion not to hold themselves accountable for the true motives of their actions** ... The third kind ... (make it) their task ... to make people forget what their individual capacities are – capacities we bring from the spiritual world. They allow us just as little to come to individual spirituality; they make us into ‘stereotypes’ of our own individuality. Empty phrases, lies, hostility to social threefolding, refined egoism, false mysticism – all these are attributes that these three kinds of beings cause to arise in us¹ (ibid.). They infect civilization powerfully through the secret societies of the Anglo-Saxon race, which are responsible for every kind of spiritual, cultural and political mischief we meet in the world today.

It is precisely these beings who promote a continuation of the secrecy of occult societies, even though the reason for it – the danger from Rome – no longer exists. There are possibly still people in these societies who wish to receive the gifts of the true spirit. But any possibility of openly coming to an understanding with them is out of question. How in these circumstances are we to distinguish between a spirit-possessed occultist and a legitimate one? The only criteria are evidently the striving for power, aloofness, falsity and refined egoism. And these are attributes that increasingly set the tone in our Society and movement – people who have to a certain extent been replaced in their consciousness by elementary spirits who have no right to interfere in the spiritual life and in the social relationships of human beings in our epoch.

In their mass – Rudolf Steiner explains – these beings infiltrated people who belong to the Anglo-Saxon race, as a result of what comes *from the language*, because of the unstable equilibrium which the Germanic nature, transferred to the British Isles, attained at the time. It established itself there, but to a lesser degree than the Latin element that was woven through with the Roman, etc. (The question cannot be dealt with extensively here, since it would divert from the actual theme; the interested reader should study Rudolf Steiner.) In Middle Europe and the Roman world these beings are far more bound, they are not in a position to act arbitrarily (cf. Oct. 23, 1920, GA 200). Therefore the tendency

¹ We want to advise all readers of the last issues of the *Flensburger Hefte* (No. 40/41) to consider this when they read the abominable accusations scattered throughout against Rudolf Steiner.

exists in the world to found Lodges from England, in order to import Pan-Americanism with its political and spiritual-cultural criteria.

People involved with occultism have to be especially careful in these matters. They risk becoming the prey of these beings if they approach the threshold of the supersensible without the necessary preparation. The preparation is the **practice of mastering the consciousness-soul**, which seemingly in all its forms of manifestation is opposed by our civilization. But one should not believe that the moral disintegration of humanity is a natural occurrence. The destruction is taking place deliberately and according to plan. And the actual purpose to which everything is directed is already apparent: the creation of favourable conditions for the incarnation of Ahriman.

In the outer world the opinion is consistently propagated that Brotherhoods and Lodges are apparently nothing more than harmless playgrounds for slightly eccentric idealists, similar to those described by Leo Tolstoy in his novel *War and Peace*. For the above-mentioned elementary beings what Rudolf Steiner said about them and the secret societies is unbearable. **That is why they also wage their war against us from within our own midst.** It is no coincidence that the ‘established’ anthroposophist Rudi Lissau who lives in England wrote the foreword to a series of lectures published in English translation on this theme, turning practically everything that Steiner says in them to nought.² But all of Lissau’s reproaches against Rudolf Steiner are foolish and completely unfounded (e.g.: that he did not research everything by means of clairvoyance!) – and are not at all new.

Rudolf Steiner remarks in a lecture from 1920 that when, a few years before, he had started to speak about the secret societies, his communications were met with an ironical smile. But already by 1920 this had fundamentally changed: *the matter-of-fact English press, truly not given to special leaps, is now for weeks publishing articles about the existence of secret societies* [*The Morning Post*, London 1920, July 12-30 also appearing as a flyer with the title *The Causes of World Unrest*, London 1920]. *And even if these articles deal with suppositions that are nothing more than a ludicrous Jesuit hoax, one nevertheless has to say: Even if people sense the wind from a completely wrong corner,*

² The preface is printed in the weekly *Das Goetheanum*, No. 11, 1992.

one takes notice of such things today (Aug. 15, 1920, GA 199; remark by the R. Steiner Nachlassverwaltung).

Not so some present day ‘anthroposophists’. For them there is no more ‘wind’ – only the silence of the graveyard. But the more the dusk settles over our waking consciousness, the more distinctly the shadows – of what has been condemned to death and is practically dead – appear from behind the gravestones. And these shadows begin to guide the destinies of the living.