

DARKNESS VISIBLE

made in God's image and endowed with an intellect and a conscience. But the Incarnation is the supreme and final revelation in which types and shadows had their ending. And Christianity is not only supreme but complete in its revelation; whatsoever truth, however partial, had been before guessed or discovered by man's intellect was naturally included and baptised into it. Many customs, symbols, and ceremonies which were of value were adopted. Much else, too, was fiercely rejected. For God had sent His Son into the world to reconcile mankind to Himself, and to lead them, guided by the Holy Spirit, into all truth. And there is salvation in no other name.

No one would be so narrow or so dogmatic as to assert that those who live and die without Christ are bereft of all hope of salvation, if they live according to the light that is in them in good faith, for that would be limiting the infinite mercies of God, who is not bound by His own laws though man is so bound. But if it is blasphemous to limit God's uncounted mercies, it is equally presumptuous of man to take them for granted.

For the Christian who accepts this revelation, however, to revert to pre-Christian types and shadows for spiritual or moral light, and in so doing to ignore Our Lord altogether and exclude all mention of Him in an unofficial and man-made system of worship and moral betterment is to dishonour the Incarnation by ignoring it and by going behind Christ's back. Those who maintain that Freemasonry is "Christian in all but name" or even compatible with Christianity have all too often no idea that the faith of Christ really means anything more than a standard of decent conduct. Nor do they appear to realise that all worship which deliberately excludes Christ is pagan. "Idolatry," said Archbishop William Temple in *Personal Religion and the Life of Fellowship* "does not consist in bodily kneeling before a material image; it consists in worshipping God under any other conception of Him than that which is set before us in the Gospels.....Idolatry is indeed a deadly thing."

Archbishop Temple, of course, was not a Freemason. *Tempora mutantur.*

V

THE CLERGY AND THE CRAFT

"The White Knight is sliding down the poker. He balances very badly."

Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking-Glass.

IN ADDITION to the theological and moral objections to the ritual and oaths which have been already set out, there are further considerations which make Freemasonry particularly unsuitable and unbecoming to the clergy.

Superficially at least it seems lacking in dignity and propriety that a priest and more particularly a bishop should undergo, usually at the hands of the laity, the rather ludicrous humiliation of the preparation for initiation. That a bishop should, in the name of the Great Architect, be deprived of his episcopal ring and pectoral cross along with all other articles of metal, and be blindfolded, haltered and partially undressed in search of a Masonic light of which the Church in her fulness of grace knows nothing, is an act of humility, to a purely human institution which seems to differ not only in degree but in kind from a layman undergoing the same ceremony. One simply cannot imagine the Apostles doing it. And a bishop as successor to the Apostles has not only dedicated his life to the service of maintaining the Apostolic faith and salvation in Christ alone, but is himself, as a member of the episcopate, the *esse* of the Church. And the priest is the representative in the parish of the bishop.

Of course the clergy share with the laity the right to indulge in harmless and amusing parlour games and charades in fancy dress in their moments of leisure. But the Masonic workings certainly have in them too much of the solemn religious ritual to be so easily dismissed.

It has already been stressed that the syncretistic universalism of Masonry is untenable on the mission field. Yet in a sense England, too, is a mission field where unbelief exceeds belief. Anglicanism, it is true, does not provoke the hostility and outright rejection that is accorded in Europe to the Church of

DARKNESS VISIBLE

Rome, but indifference may be a more deadly and insidious danger.

Many, perhaps even the majority of decent-living folk outside the ministrations of the Church have a certain belief in a higher being which, however vague, qualifies them for admission to Freemasonry. Yet they could no more be called Christians (even though they may have some traditional respect for Our Lord as a good man) than could the lapsed Moslem who also leads a decent life and may also express respect for the teachings of Christ.

Now the motive of many a clergyman in joining the Craft is often the laudable one of seeking to mix more intimately than might seem otherwise possible with influential laymen who are already members of his Church; and with those who are not, in hopes of bringing them in. As religion may not be discussed inside the Lodge (though perhaps the vicar didn't know that when he joined) he can obviously only do so by making and cementing friendships to be followed up professionally outside. In passing it might be pointed out that (however much it happens in practice) it is considered highly un-Masonic conduct to use Masonry to promote business ends; by analogy, therefore, it would seem that to use it even indirectly as an organ for proselytism might be considered equally undesirable by Grand Lodge.

But is this motive really desirable or legitimate from the point of view of the Church? A parson may justifiably visit his Local to seek and to save the sinners and unbelievers of his parish—and probably he will enjoy his half-pint with the saints and believers there, too! He may join any lawful club where he feels his influence may be felt, and the light of Christ be spread. But the argument that this provides a justification for meeting people in the Lodge at a pre-Christian level as a *preparatio Evangelii* is both deadly and fallacious.

For initiation into Masonry is not merely 'meeting' people at any level at all. It is *joining* them—identifying oneself by solemn oath with those people and with their sub-Christian beliefs. It is praying with them in prayers which deliberately exclude Our Lord. And even though it be regarded as a minimum and not a maximum standard of belief (as the Christian Mason must) to join such a system which nowhere

DARKNESS VISIBLE

claims to be a minimum belief might well appear to sanction it as an adequate belief.

The argument that it is legitimate to meet people at a pre-Christian level would appear equally to justify a Christian priest in undergoing a slight surgical operation and becoming a Jew for one evening a month in order to convert that race to Christianity. It is true that Judaism rejects Christ, whereas Freemasonry ignores Him. But the result is equally non-Christian.

But although Masonry does in a sense represent religion at a pre-Christian level, it also claims to impart a light, spiritual and moral, which shines nowhere else. It claims to have secrets which add to a man's sense of spiritual values, and improve his character. It claims the exclusive possession of certain truths, one of which is the sacred and mysterious name of God. It claims to have found the worship of God.

The ordinary Christian who knows that his vicar is a Mason may therefore be entitled to doubt whether the revelation that is preached from the pulpit is after all complete, if his pastor finds it expedient or even possible to supplement it with hidden mysteries obtainable only in the Lodge.

Furthermore, there are to-day two deadly enemies to the divine supernaturalism of the Church. One of them is humanism. The other is the increasing popularity of a pseudo-mystical occultism which finds expression in spiritualism, theosophy, and other less desirable manifestations. Freemasonry is frankly humanist in tone, and yet at the same time includes a great deal of mystical and symbolic nonsense about geometry and astronomy which no educated Mason in this enlightened age would dream of taking seriously. Can a bishop or priest seem to countenance these tendencies, even in the socially and morally respectable setting of the Lodge, and at the same time run a risk of what might appear a dual allegiance, a religious bigamy?

For this risk is certainly there, as becomes apparent when a bishop finds his episcopal oath and his Masonic obligation in conflict, and when the latter perforce takes precedence.

This is indeed a grave charge, and I am treading on delicate ground in substantiating it, but the matter is important. I can deal with it best if I write personally.

Some years ago a brother priest approached me with a view to my becoming a brother Mason. He kept within the law by not asking me outright, but indicated that it would be a very good thing if I did so, and that he would always be glad to propose me. It really comes to the same thing. I replied that I was extremely reluctant to join any organization of which I was allowed to know almost nothing in advance. To which he answered that if everyone felt that way there would be no Masons at all, for no one outside the Craft could possibly discover its secrets, and what was good enough for the bishops who had become Masons ought to be good enough for me.

It was that reply which interested me in the subject. I remembered a Member of Parliament telling me (long after such a revelation could have been considered indiscreet) that even at the secret sessions of the House of Commons during the war it was considered too dangerous to reveal top secrets of policy and strategy even to some six hundred trusted M.P.'s, and that in general they were occasions for members themselves to discuss such delicate topics as shipping losses and tank deficiencies. Was it then probable or even possible that an organisation of some five million people, doubtless including good, bad and indifferent, which had been in existence for over two centuries could really keep the rest of the world in complete darkness as to their secrets? I was intrigued, and started to investigate.

I was surprised at the facility with which information could be unearthed in a manner explained in the first chapter, —and yet increasingly perturbed at the nature of that information. Accordingly I wrote to a Masonic bishop whom I had once met personally setting forth some of these perplexities, mentioning the inclusion of Baal in the secret name of God in the Royal Arch, making it quite clear that I was asking him for guidance as a bishop in a matter which concerned faith and morals.

The reply was more taken up with surprise tinged with indignation that I had discovered supposed secrets than with any anxiety to allay my misgivings. He said very courteously that if I did not like Freemasonry I had better not join, but he was not allowed to discuss these things with any who were not

Masons. To which I wrote in return that I was truly appalled at the implications of this remark. I had made a *prima facie* case (and I then claimed no more) for the Craft being incompatible with Christianity, and appealed to a bishop for guidance. And his reply that he was bound by oath not to refute or even discuss such matters, although they admittedly concerned faith and morals, with any who were not similarly oath-bound to secrecy clearly implied that his Masonic obligation took precedence over his Episcopal oath to banish strange and erroneous doctrine. But there was no reply.

Other Masonic bishops to whom I wrote either were equally evasive, or did not trouble to acknowledge my letters. "Dignified silence" is a phrase much beloved by Masons. One delightful exception, to whom I shall always be grateful, invited me to his house and heard me out with truly Christian patience and charity. But he was equally unable to answer my objections.

My questions to these bishops admittedly were not directly concerned with definitions of the doctrine of the Church. Yet they did concern the teachings of a body which claims to worship the same God as the Church and which overlaps the Church—these bishops being within that overlap. No bishop can be expected to be omniscient even in matters pertaining to God; had I asked some abstruse question on the adventism of the Irvingites any bishop would be entitled to say that he didn't know and it wasn't his subject. If he thought the question silly he could even answer in terse Anglo-Saxon monosyllables, and I should have no cause to complain. But these bishops refused to answer questions about the name and nature of the God whom they worship as Masons, even though they would of course claim Him to be the same God whom they worship and serve as bishops. Obviously they knew the answers to my serious and perfectly reasonable questions, but they were oath-bound not to give them to any Christian whom they are divinely appointed to guide and instruct unless he was a brother Mason also pledged to secrecy, by an oath quite unrecognised by the Church. This is lamentable and

1. Since the first appearance of this book, however, several ex-Mason clergymen have assured me that the real reason I received no answer is the fact that there is no answer. That, of course, was before the publication of *Light Invisible*. (See Appendix D.)

DARKNESS VISIBLE

highly disquieting. Surely no bishop or clergyman should expose himself to even the possibility of finding himself in such an invidious and equivocal situation by joining a society possessing secrets of such a nature.

One of two things must be true. Either the implications of my questions were wrong, in which case I myself was in error in believing things that were "strange and erroneous." If this is true, then these bishops were breaking their episcopal vows by refusing to banish my errors, for such terse words as 'nonsense' when coupled with an inability to refute factually is no refutation of what is, to say the least of it, strong *prima facie* evidence.

The alternative is that the implications of my questions were at least partially true, and the fact that no one has yet refuted the case, and that certain Masons have even resigned their Lodges and Chapters in agreement with me has heightened that possibility. The question of unbanished strange and erroneous doctrine then assumes a context so delicate that I must leave it at that.

Admittedly these Masonic bishops and clergy must defend themselves with one hand tied behind their backs. This, however, can hardly be regarded as an unfair disadvantage, as their Lordships deliberately, securely, and irrevocably tied them there themselves. But is this attitude a dignified one for our Fathers-in-God?

VI

T H E G R E A T D I L E M M A

"Have you guessed the riddle yet?" the Hatter said, turning to Alice again.

"No, I give it up," Alice replied: "what's the answer?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," said the Hatter.

"Nor I," said the March Hare.

Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland.

FREEMASONS will probably consider that I am making a great deal of fuss and bother about certain aspects of their ritual which certainly do not occur to them at all. They may agree that it is just possible to read into the ritual the interpretation that I (and many Masonic writers as well) read into it, but that as most Masons do not so interpret it, it is really preposterous to raise the issue.

They will say, too (and the point has been already dealt with) that certain pre-Christian and pagan elements can be read into the liturgy and usages of the Church.

The teachings of the Church, however, are public property which are openly and fearlessly proclaimed before the world. They have been for centuries examined, criticised, attacked, subjected to every test and scrutiny known to the scholar, friendly or hostile. The clergy especially who are the guardians of the Christian mysteries have trained themselves in controversy. They have familiarised themselves with popular objections to creed, sacraments, and service-books, and should have a clear answer to them. For they know that these things have stood the test of time, of criticism and investigation.

Freemasonry, on the other hand, although sometimes denounced, has been comparatively immune from real criticism and investigation from outside. And indeed it appears to claim this immunity as a privilege almost by divine right, even though no other body enjoys or would dream of claiming such a position.¹ Yet immunity from outside criticism always tends to have an enervating effect upon self-criticism from I. The arrogant complacency of this attitude is exemplified in a letter from the Grand Master the Earl of Scarborough to Dr. H. S. Box (printed in the *Church Times* of Dec. 7, 1951), stating "I can only take cognizance of complaints referred to me by a Freemason."

within ; it encourages a sense of smug security. The Counter-Reformation, after all, did not take place until after certain Christians had left the Catholic fold and attacked its abuses.

The average Mason, therefore, in his close-tyled security has seen no necessity to examine his workings critically or to justify them from the Christian point of view to the world outside. Why should he bother to discover answers to questions that he is oath-bound not to answer, and which in any case do not interest him, and are unlikely ever to be asked? As generally speaking Masonry appeals to the least spiritual layer of the bourgeoisie (I do not say the least moral, or the least respectable) the Masonic conscience, still speaking in broad generalities, does not, even amongst its Christian adherents, instinctively shrink from those aspects of the workings which dishonour the supreme mediatorship of Our Lord and Saviour by ignoring it or by providing substitutes. Their Biblical scholarship (again with exceptions which defy explanation) is such that they either do not realise how utterly repugnant to the Prophets of God was any confusion between Jehovah and Baal, or they do not appear to think it matters. They do not seem aware that syncretism, 'natural' religion, and indifferentism were the deadly enemies of the early Church which Freemasonry has made friends with to-day. If no one outside the Lodge is likely to discover and comment on these aspects of Masonry, why should they bother? After all, the Grand Principles are "brotherly love, relief, and truth" (principles equally upheld by the Church, but with less concomitant conviviality) and does it matter in what context these unexceptionable principles are upheld and promulgated?

It seems that those who declare that this interpretation of Freemasonry is preposterous and utterly out of touch with reality do so, not from inside knowledge which comes from investigation and criticism, but from the very lack of these things—from a tendency to take it all uncritically for granted.

However presumptuous, an analogy suggests itself. When in the days of the Oxford Movement the celebrated Tract XC appeared it was met with anger, scorn, derision, and accusations of disloyalty from many people in perfectly good faith who had traditionally taken it for granted that the Thirty-Nine Articles were an impregnable bulwark of Protestantism in the

Church of England. To-day, however, the main thesis of the tract, that the Articles are at least patient of a 'Catholic' interpretation and were deliberately so drawn up as a compromise is generally accepted by Anglican theologians and Church historians.

There will always be die-hard Protestants who reject this interpretation. Probably, too, there will always be die-hard Masons.

Not every Mason, not even every Christian Mason, could reasonably be expected to be a theologian or perhaps to realise even the possibility of his Craft being at variance with the exclusivity of the Christian faith. Yet surely anyone capable of clear thinking must realise that in Masonry is an inescapable and insoluble moral dilemma.

If Freemasonry claims to possess secrets the knowledge of which would benefit all mankind in enabling a man to lead a higher and more moral life, it is immoral to keep that knowledge to itself.

If Freemasonry does not possess such secrets, it is equally immoral for it to claim that it does possess them.

And after all, why should any knowledge about morals and the nature or name of God be kept secret? The Tracing Board Lecture of the first degree attempts an answer, it is true, but an answer which would be scorned as fatuous in an enlightened twentieth century.¹ For this lecture implies that the teachings of Masonry are kept secret for the same reason that higher knowledge was the secret and oathbound possession of the few in ancient Egypt, because it conferred occult powers which might be mis-used in unworthy hands.

But can our democratic and enlightened Masons of to-day think of a better answer? Their own ritual nowhere suggests one, but it is difficult even after the most exhaustive examination to consider that ritual 'enlightened.' However symbolically the turgid nonsensicalities of its mysteries may be interpreted, this, apparently, must always remain an unexplained mystery. Even to Freemasons.

1. See p. 109.

VII

BENEVOLENCE, BROTHERHOOD, AND TOLERANCE

"You know the sort of things ministers say in cases of this kind. A few ordinary platitudes will do. In modern life nothing produces such an effect as a good platitude. It makes the whole world kin."

Oscar Wilde, *An Ideal Husband*.

THE first reaction of a Mason on hearing theological criticisms of the Craft often seems to be "how dare you! Don't you realise the good we are doing?" The answer is deliriously irrelevant. Papal infallibility is not proved by the selfless labours of the Poor Clares in the slums of Paris, nor is the imperfect Christology of Unitarians justified *ipso facto* by the fact that many of them subscribe most generously to hospitals and are kind to their maiden aunts. Hindus are kind to cows, which is also a most estimable virtue.

But let it be admitted that Masons are indeed generous, with a lavishness which often leaves Christian giving far behind. The Charity Column which circulates at the Festive Board returns with far more paper and large silver in it than the average collection bag at Evensong. Let it be admitted, too, that the Masonic institutions, their hospital for sick Masons, their nursing-home, and their two schools for the children of Masons are well and efficiently run. They have a Fund of Benevolence for the benefit of poor and distressed Masons, their widows and orphans.¹ In addition to these closed-shop charities, the scope of which is equalled by the benevolent and insurance funds of many a trade union, other deserving non-Masonic institutions, Lord Mayor appeals, and so on, are liberally supported by Lodges.

Yet the claim that "no other institution has done more to relieve the poor and heal the sick—" is obviously quite untenable if these Masonic institutions for the benefit of Masons,

1. In order to benefit from the Fund of Benevolence it must be proved that the Mason himself or whose widow or children seek relief was a subscribing member of his Lodge for at least five years. This is, of course, a perfectly reasonable requirement, yet a fund so administered savours of insurance rather than of charity.

DARKNESS VISIBLE

excellent and above criticism as they are, are compared numerically with the vastly greater number of schools, hospitals, and orphanages sponsored throughout the world by the Church of God. If the claim means that *pro rata* the average Mason gives more than the average Christian, it is probably justified. Undoubtedly they boast more about it. But Masons come mainly from the better-off sections of the people who can afford to pay not inconsiderable fees for their privileges.

When every allowance is made, Masonic benevolence is not to be identified with the ideal of Christian charity. It is not the spirit of the widow casting in her mite, but of rich men (styling themselves Sons of the Widow¹) giving of their superfluity.

Now there is nothing un-Christian about superfluity, and Christ did not (in that instance) condemn it. He merely said that the other was dearer to His heart and more acceptable to God, because she gave till it hurt.

The Masonic ritual with a matter-of-fact business-like common-sense warns against this ideal of Christian charity. The third degree obligation pledges the Candidate to relieve a brother Mason in need only "so far as may fairly be done without detriment to myself or my connections," a phrase which is repeated in various charges and lectures.

The Charity Jewel which may in practice be purchased for twenty pounds and a term of stewardship, and further bars added for ten pounds each, is a piece of Pharisaism so outrageous that the more spiritually-minded Masons themselves have their misgivings and subject it to fierce criticism. Perhaps it is only rubbing unnecessary salt into the wound for outsiders to wish them well.

Undoubtedly the greatest attraction of Freemasonry to most of its adherents is not its ritual or religious implications, nor its supposed advantages in business and certain professions, but the warm fellowship of sincere and genuine friendliness and brotherhood at Lodge meetings and at after-proceedings, a *koinonia* which has to be experienced to be fully appreciated. For Masons admit frankly that they exist for the entirely

1. "On the supposition that all Master Masons are Brothers to Hiram Abiff, who was a Widow's Son." (Ceremony of Raising to the Third Degree.) See p. 148.

DARKNESS VISIBLE

laudable purpose of mutual enjoyment as well as for mutual benefit.

No one indeed would wish to level any criticism whatsoever against this were not Masons inclined a little self-righteously to hold themselves up as an example to the Church in claiming to have achieved brotherhood and mutual love where the Church has failed. The Rev. C. K. Hughes, signing himself 'Priest and Freemason' wrote to the *Guardian* (Feb. 23, 1951) "Proctors in Convocation should ask themselves why so many elements of fellowship, loyalty, brotherhood, charity and the like, which marked the New Testament Church are absent from the Church of England, but supposed to be present in Freemasonry? If the organised Church provided what Freemasonry provides, there would be no need for the latter."

This attitude implies that the Church and Freemasonry can be compared on similar grounds, and that the latter is successful where the former has failed. That the standard of fellowship and brotherliness in the Church falls far below the ideal set out by Our Blessed Lord few would deny, for the Church on earth is struggling in (and against) a fallen and sinful world.

Yet the fellowship of the Lodge is based on something so different from the fellowship of the Church that a comparison is really impossible. It is based on a principle of exclusiveness that makes it, although quite genuine in one sense, yet nevertheless artificial. For the Lodge is made up not only exclusively of men, but of men of similar background, income-group, and interests. In many Lodges they are of the same profession. Controversial matters such as religion and politics are barred for fear of disturbing the harmony. Anyone known to be quarrelsome or ungenial can be black-balled from initiation. Given these conditions, stimulated by excellent food and drink, a hearty good fellowship which not even the long and usually platitudinous toasts can depress is not difficult to achieve.

Masonic fellowship is quite above criticism once these limitations are appreciated. For of course men (and women too) will naturally and rightly forgo into clubs and associations into which people of like interests, background, and hobbies can temporarily withdraw themselves for mutual profit and enjoyment. But to compare it with the wider fellowship of the Church is deliberately misleading.

DARKNESS VISIBLE

For Christ suffered and died on the cross to open the gate of Heaven not only to the respectable business-man, bank manager, doctor, lawyer, officer, parson, and civil servant. He died for the woman and the child too. He poured forth His precious blood for the scandalmonger, the pimp and the prostitute, He suffered scourging to atone for the sins of the bestial and cruel, He endured agonizing thirst for the sots and drunkards, He endured every humiliation in satisfaction for the sins of the proud and the self-righteous. To all mankind, therefore, the Church spreads out her arms in her call for penitence, for a realization of the true and wider brotherhood of man redeemed by the precious blood. She has no black-ball and no waiting-list for Baptism, she has no Tyler with drawn sword at her portals to keep away those likely to disturb her peace, for the life of the Church Militant here on earth is not a life of peace and enjoyment, but of constant spiritual warfare. She has it is true the weapon of excommunication, but she ever welcomes back the penitent. She dare not ban controversy within her ranks, for through controversy truth may be established.

Naturally, then, her fellowship here on earth is human and desperately imperfect. But it has a divine reality, and amidst all her storms and stresses she offers, not hearty conviviality, but the true joy that comes from the peace of God that passeth all understanding. What, then, has Freemasonry to teach her? What merit has the untimely death of Hiram Abiff that can supplement the redemptive sufferings of Our Lord, which unite the redeemed into the true Body?

Another virtue in which Freemasons claim to excel the Church is tolerance. "Let a man's religion or mode of worship be what it may," runs an old Charge, "he is not excluded from our Order, provided he believe in the glorious architect of heaven and earth, and practise the sacred duties of morality." Here, they say, is no bickering over creed and dogma, no wrangling over politics, but an example to the world of how to live and let live.

Apart from a hyper-sensitive intolerance of outside criticism, however, there is one highly significant exception to this genial tolerance of Grand Lodge, which lies in its attitude to other Masonic bodies which it does not recognise.

DARKNESS VISIBLE

These fall into two groups. First, there are the Mark Master Masons, the 'Higher Degrees' of the Ancient and Accepted Rite, the Knights Templar, the Royal Order of Scotland, the Allied Degrees, and others with whom, although there is no official recognition, relations are friendly, and Craft Masons are not debarred from joining them.

In the second group come various bodies including the Grand Orient of Europe¹ and certain splinter-groups from them, the 'Eastern Star' and other bodies of Adoptive or Co-Masons. It is these last that deserve attention.

The reason given for the schism with the Grand Orient is that they forsook the ancient and absolutely essential landmark of belief in the Great Architect. Fair enough. But there is in England an organization open to women known as the Honourable Fraternity of Ancient Masonry (derived from Mrs. Besant's theosophical Masonry but now repudiating it) which practises precisely the same Strict Emulation ritual as Regular Masons, with the same signs, grips and words,² which has the same moral teachings, and the same belief in the Great Architect. Admittedly it is unimportant and numerically insignificant, numbering its Lodges in tens where Grand Lodge numbers its thousands. But the principle remains. Grand Lodge will have none of it, and claims the right to discipline and expel any regular Mason who visits any Lodge where women are admitted as Masons. It would seem to follow then that the landmark of restricting the moral and spiritual light of Masonry to men only is of equal importance to the landmark of belief in the Great Architect, for women who have seen the same Masonic light and share the same secrets and grand principles are nevertheless scorned and denounced as bogus Masons.

It is often asked why anyone in the Church should seek a measure of condemnation for a body of men as respectable, generous, and God-fearing as Masons when the open Godless-

1. There is evidence that the breach between Grand Lodge and the Grand Orient is not quite so complete as is generally believed. See *English Masonic Isolation, a Myth Exploded*, (Britons Publishing Society), which if not quite succeeding in exploding the 'myth' certainly gives some uncontrovertible and disquieting facts.
2. The form of preparation alone varies from Strict Emulation workings in that the shoulder rather than the breast is bared.

DARKNESS VISIBLE

ness of Communism is menacing and rampant. One could answer that a subtle heterodoxy from within can be more deadly than the open enemy without. But in any case has the Mason a right to ask that question unless he in turn can explain why Grand Lodge has passed a similar measure of condemnation on a body of respectable, generous, and God-fearing women?

Every organization has of course a perfect right to impose its own rules and discipline upon its members. But only in a legal sense has every organization the right to boast of its tolerance and universality.

VII

CONTENTS

"I don't know what you mean by 'glory,'" Alice said.
Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course, you don't till I tell you. I mean 'there's a nice knock-down argument for you!'"
"But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument,'" Alice objected.
"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."
"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."
"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be Master—that's all. Impenetrability! That's what I say!"

* * * * *
"Oh!" said Alice. She was much too puzzled to make any other remark.

Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking-Glass.

A FREEMASON usually starts with the assumption, not often challenged, that an outsider can know nothing of what goes on inside the Lodge. Should this be disproved, and a certain amount of knowledge displayed (which of course the Mason can neither confirm nor deny) he can only fall back on the argument that the ritual cannot be understood or rightly interpreted outside the context and atmosphere in which it is worked.

Freemasons have the unquestioned right to interpret their own ritual in their own way, or in any way they please. If they interpret it in a sense that violates, strains, or ignores its clear meaning, however, the onus of proving the validity of their interpretation would appear to rest with them. But 'context and atmosphere' is the last ditch argument which seems unanswerable, as the outsider cannot disprove it by the simple expedient of visiting a Lodge to see and feel for himself—though gate-crashing is by no means a complete impossibility. A few cases are on record. Others have never been detected. Such is the occasional carelessness of Lodges, particularly in the Metropolitan area.

It would be idle to deny, however, that this argument from context has a superficial force. A simple statement in print, for instance, can often be given two or more distinct and separate meanings according to the vocal stress of the words

DARKNESS VISIBLE

which a printer objecting to the use of italics would be unable to convey. Yet it would be difficult to maintain that the meaning of a ritual could be seriously misunderstood or misinterpreted in such a way.

Perhaps a better analogy occurs in the worship of the Church of England. The comprehensiveness of this body is well known, and it is certainly true that the Communion office of the Book of Common Prayer in one setting can be made to approximate to the Roman Mass, with emphasis on sacrifice and objectivity, in another setting it takes on the meaning of a simple and rather subjective Protestant commemorative service.

Again, a non-Catholic reading in cold print the Lord's Prayer followed by ten Hail Mary's set out in full repetitiousness in close type, ending with the Gloria, and all repeated five times (supposing that it ever had been so printed) might legitimately feel that the Rosary was a wearisome form of devotion. He might of course continue to think so were he to hear it publicly recited in Church; on the other hand heard in this context possibly within the framework of Benediction or before the exposed Sacrament he might be carried away by the devoutness of the congregation offering up a great surging billow of prayer made of tiny ripples to the Throne of Grace and see something of the inner meaning of it all which the mere printed words cannot convey.

Without going into the tangled complexities of the Elizabethan Settlement which gave shape to the Book of Common Prayer, it may safely be stated that a deliberate compromise was achieved to make as many people of varying views as happy as possible within the Anglican establishment. The Ornaments Rubric and the Black Rubric both have their place, and if the twentieth-century contrast between the meaning of worship in Margaret Street and Islington, or between Virginia and Fond-du-Lac, was not foreseen it was certainly invited. The history of the Masonic ritual offers no such explanation to justify the difference of interpretation placed upon it by those, Masons or others, who look on it as a separate mystery-religion and those whose first allegiance is to the Church and who see nothing incompatible in being Masons as well. If continuity is to be traced between Freemasonry to-day

and the operative trade guilds of medieval and Catholic stonemasons (and the subject is almost as controversial as the continuity between Anglicanism and the medieval Church) it must be admitted that after Grand Lodge was established, Anderson's Constitutions in 1723 completely and entirely excluded all specific references or allusions to Christ and His Church, in a way in which the Prayer-Book never completely eliminated medievalism.¹

The clear intention of the Masonic workings is to provide a symbolical and allegorical system of character-building and morality based on pagan models which cannot conflict with, and may indeed be the basis of a belief in any reputable religion, and to offer prayer and worship to a Most High who can be equated with any deity. The wording of the ritual and every ceremonial act with which it is performed can be reconstructed in detail by the non-Mason. All that the Mason can allege is lacking in the outsider's understanding of it, therefore, is the context, the spiritual atmosphere which inspires and animates the performance. But can this atmosphere really alter the clear meaning and purpose of the words?

Participation in a public recitation of the Rosary may bring meaning to it and awaken to life what on paper may appear very dry bones. But it does not in any way alter the meaning. Rosary manuals instruct the novice that it is not the words of the Hail Mary which are important but the meditations on the various mysteries to which they form a verbal accompaniment, and to take part in such acts of worship can do no more than convince the inquirer that there may be a spiritual validity and reality in what might be thought monotonous repetition. But the Protestant who is convinced that invocation of the saints is wrong and an infringement of the supreme omnipotence of God will not see a different meaning in the Rosary as recited than in the Rosary as described. The

1. The only clear exceptions of which I am aware are the Christian symbols of faith, hope, and charity (the cross, anchor, and chalice) on the first degree tracing-board and the curious reference in the third degree to the "bright morning star whose rising brings peace and salvation to the faithful and obedient of the human race" — an allusion which is either Luciferian, meaningless sentimentality, or more probably a remnant of the Christianity which formerly pervaded the Craft in its earlier and operative days. Masons to-day tend to equate it with the "Blazing Star" of the first degree, or the "Sacred Symbol" of the second.

Catholic on the other hand would be supremely uncomfortable: to say the least of it, if the Rosary meditated the life of Christ accompanied by the repetition of an invocation to Baal or Osiris, however his priest tried to justify it on the grounds that it was the context of the meditations that mattered, not the words.

A play can be understood, and understood with accuracy, by reading it and following the stage directions. Even though it may come to life only by being performed, the meaning and significance of it remain fundamentally unchanged however much different nuances of interpretation are acted into it.

It must be admitted that lines which appear silly and trivial in cold print may in their right context almost achieve dignity when spoken on the stage. Sensitiveness to ridicule is a strong secondary motive in maintaining Masonic secrecy; certain aspects of the workings, the forms of preparation of the candidate in particular, are when read on paper wide open to that form of attack. So to a lesser degree are the rites of the Church, though the latter does not attempt to conceal her mysteries for such a reason. Educated Freemasons have always been aware that there are patent absurdities, anomalies, and turgid pomposities in their ritual which can but be smiled at by the cultured, sensitive and logical, however reverently they are performed and accompanied by solemn music from Bro. Organist. In this context they may lose something of their apparent absurdity, but "how can grown men be so silly?" is not a valid theological argument unless it is felt that trivial silliness performed to the greater glory of God is so silly as to dishonour His supreme majesty. Silliness is relative, not absolute, and the greatest saints and doctors of the Church have not always been immune. Nor are the drawers-up of special services for firemen or animal-lovers nor some of the self-styled reformers of the Prayer-Book or other innovators in the Church of England to-day. Let us keep a sense of proportion.

This argument from context, then, is primarily emotional, not intellectual. There may be an atmosphere in some Lodges where the officers have attended Lodges of Instruction and work the ritual with a precision, reverence, and beauty, which is lacking in others where the working is careless and slipshod

DARKNESS VISIBLE

—and this applies equally to the Churches. As too with the Church liturgy, this atmosphere may bring meaning and life to what on paper are dry forms, directions, and ceremonial rubrics. But it is difficult to understand how that meaning or life can be completely different from that lying dormant in the words and forms.

If it is alleged to be different, then Masons themselves are guilty of the offence of reading into the ritual something that is not there. Or what is more likely, of ignoring something that is.

What a Freemason really means when he says that "Masonry cannot be understood outside the Lodge" is that the atmosphere inside the Lodge is so charged with high moral principles, warm fellowship, benevolence and genuine friendliness that the anti-Christian implications of a ritual which is usually not taken very seriously sink into insignificance, if they are noticed at all. It is an argument which might equally justify a Christian (remaining a Christian at heart) in taking life vows as a Buddhist monk. Buddhists, as a rule, are extremely friendly and generous, even if they are not inclined to boast about it.

IX

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

Her listeners were perfectly quiet until she got to the part about her repeating. You are old, Father William, to the Caterpillar, and the words all coming different, and then the Mock Turtle drew a long breath, and said, "That's very curious."

"It's all about as curious as it can be," said the Gryphon.

"Curiouser and curiouser!" cried Alice.

Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland.

THE religious interpretation which I have placed on the Masonic workings will of course be repudiated and disowned by Christian Masons. As there is no official interpretation they are perfectly at liberty to do this, but such a repudiation will only be convincing if they can produce an alternative. Expressions such as "preposterous", "utterly wide of the mark", "no Mason would think of reading into the ritual what you read into it" are inadequate answers without more factual refutation.

Speculative and mystical Masonic writers such as Wilms-hurst, Ward, Fort Newton, Castells, Sir John Cockburn, and a host of others have interpreted Freemasonry explicitly or implicitly as a mystery-cult and a separate religion. They are equally entitled to do so, and an impartial reading of the rituals and especially the Tracing Board Lectures would seem to justify the contention that this interpretation does indeed correspond not only with the ritual as we have it to-day, but with everything that we know of the tendencies of the period which gave it birth, and the Rosicrucianism that so strongly influenced it. Many such authors, some of high Masonic rank, have been re-printed and appear to be in fairly constant demand. Such books provoke no storm of indignation from Christian Masons. Yet when an outsider ventures to say almost exactly what these Masonic writers say, or to suggest that their religious interpretation of Freemasonry may after all have a certain validity from the Masonic point of view, the indignation of Christian Masons is thoroughly aroused. Is not this indignation mis-directed? The analogy

of heterodox opinions within the Church of England is almost groundless. Bishop Barnes's views, for instance, have been publicly disclaimed by the present Archbishop of Canterbury in the name of the Church. I am not aware, however, that the same Archbishop in his capacity as Past Grand Chaplain of the Craft has ever seen fit to disclaim the views of those who write books on Masonry as a religion. Wilmshurst, the most pagan and anti-Christian of them all, was even rewarded with Provincial Grand Lodge rank by the late Earl of Harewood for his services to Masonry—these services consisting mainly of lecturing to Lodges on this very subject. An organization known as the Dormer Study Circle exists to perpetuate his ideals.

The answer to the question as to whether Masonry is, or is not, a religion, then, must (in theological jargon) be regarded as 'pious opinion,' not as *de fide*. "I say Masonry is not a religion" is as far as any Mason has the authority to go. And Grand Lodge itself could not make an official pronouncement to this effect with any sincerity until the ritual, particularly of the Holy Royal Arch, has been drastically overhauled. The very fact that the ritual is even capable of such an interpretation shows that Masonry has in itself at least the germs of a separate religion, a fact which justifies an investigation by the Church.

As far as I am aware, there is not one single Masonic commentary addressed primarily to Christians which seriously attempts to reconcile Masonry with the doctrines of the faith as held by the Church. Christianity is mentioned often enough; analogies are drawn for instance between Baptism and Initiation, but always suggesting that the latter adds something of objective sacramental reality to a man's spiritual experience which cannot be obtained in the Church, or which at least can be equally obtained in the Lodge. This conception is repugnant to the convinced Christian who believes that the Holy Ghost guides the Church into *all* truth, and that in the Church alone is the fulness of spiritual experience.

How, then, can Christians interpret the Masonic ritual? Realising that the *ipsissima verba* of the ritual (particularly in the Holy Royal Arch) are conclusively against them, they can only fall back on the assertion that they simply do not take their ritual seriously. It is a sort of morality play or

Christmas pantomime. If the morality is sound, why worry about the play?

As this answer is not only widespread but indeed the only possible one, it deserves consideration.

No one except the extreme puritan could conceivably object that it is immoral for the Christian to witness or even act in plays such as those of the great dramatists of Greece and Rome, even though they were written under the religious inspiration of a paganism utterly rejected by the Church. It would be quite fantastic for ecclesiastics solemnly to ban a Punch-and-Judy show because some one managed to prove an Egyptian origin of the legend. And if indeed the spectators feel morally uplifted and improved by witnessing such spectacles it is all to the good, for that is a function of dramatic art.

But at this point the analogy significantly fails. If Lodges had public galleries whose entrances were uncontrolled by the ministrations of the Tyler with his drawn sword, or if the death and resurrection rite of Hiram Abiff were re-constructed and presented publicly on the stage of a London theatre, no one could reasonably object to the Christian attending or begrudge him an atom of moral profit which he might thereby acquire. But Masonic participation in these rites is surely a very different affair, even if they are not taken seriously *au pied de la lettre*. For the Freemason identifies himself with the mysteries, not in the sense that a good actor identifies himself with his part, but by a solemn oath and in the name of God he participates in the paganism of the play, and associates himself spiritually with it.

Secondly, to treat the ritual or even parts of the ritual as something not to be taken too seriously involves a trifling with holy things which seem impious. For everything is done in God's name, and the Bible is present and open throughout. Prayer is offered at every Initiation that "assisted by our Masonic art" the Candidate may "the better be enabled to unfold the beauties of true Godliness"—if the Masonic art is not to be taken seriously it would almost seem to follow that the true Godliness which it is supposed to promote is not to be taken too seriously either. If the Christian is to participate at all in such a ritual he should surely do so with

DARKNESS VISIBLE

the very utmost seriousness.

Thirdly, as every clergyman knows to his grief, there are a great many nominal Christians who do not take the ritual of the Church seriously either. The attend services two or three times a year at Christmas or a harvest festival because they enjoy it and feel that it is morally uplifting, and yet they have little use for creed or sacrament, and value the Church only in so far as it helps people to lead decent lives. Repentance, grace, and the atoning sacrifice of Christ play no part in their lives. They have been initiated by Baptism into the mystical body of Christ—but they do not take it too seriously.

No one would consider such people good Christians or Churchmen. Their conception of the faith, rejecting what is distasteful to them or what they only imperfectly understand, is too incomplete. No one, therefore, would regard them as ideal or even reputable defenders of the Church. What right, then, have Freemasons who refuse to take the teaching of their ritual seriously other than its moral uplift, to regard themselves as good Masons, or authoritative defenders of the Lodge?

The Prophet Ezekiel was deeply perturbed when he saw in a vision women weeping in the Temple for Tammuz. He may have been singularly lacking in humour, and he may even have got the whole thing out of proportion, but he considered it nothing less than an abomination. It may be pointed out in passing that the Masonic writer J. S. M. Ward in one of his more fanciful moods declared that Hiram Abiff was the earthly counterpart of Tammuz, so it is quite possible that these misguided females might have been able to symbolize their tears into perfectly orthodox co-Masonic channels. Nevertheless, it is open to grave doubts whether Ezekiel would have been mollified or the anger of Jehovah mitigated had they pleaded that they didn't really mean it to be taken seriously. It was all part of a play, and everybody meant well.

X

ECCLESIASTICAL CONDEMNATIONS OF FREEMASONRY

"Let the jury consider their verdict," the King said, for about the twentieth time.

Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland.

IT IS well known that Freemasonry has been condemned by the Roman Catholic Church, and that any Roman Catholic on initiation become *ipso facto* excommunicate. Contrary to popular rumour, she does give dispensations for convert Masons to continue in Masonry.

This condemnation is resented by Grand Lodge Masons of the English-speaking world. It is popularly felt to be unjust, and the belief is widespread that the Papal condemnations, in so far as they include *all* Masonic systems, are based on a complete misunderstanding of what Grand Lodge Masonry really stands for, and on a regrettable confusion between Grand Lodges and Grand Orients. "Rome" said a recent apologist for the Craft: "knows very little about Regular Masonry."

Actually Rome is remarkably well-informed about Regular Masonry. She has a mass of information to draw on, quite apart from the fact that both in this country and in America her converts have included Freemasons, and sometimes (like the Grand Master the Marquess of Ripon in the last century) very distinguished ones. In many cases they retain a loyalty

1. Masons who properly understand the Roman outlook, however, take a more realistic line. A. E. Waite, anti-Catholic but on the whole extremely fair, says in his *New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* (1925) "It is impossible that the Latin Church should tolerate an institution like Masonry. That Church has not only an elaborate and systematic literature of *theologia et philosophia moralis* but a doctrinal ruling thereon and . . . by its own hypothesis it is the sole and Divinely ordained custodian of faith and morals. Masonry sets out to be regarded as another and independent system of ethics, another guide to life. As such it is, implicitly and explicitly under judgment from the beginning, a competitor and a rival." (Vol. II, p. 264-5)
2. The Rev. J. L. C. Dart, *Christianity and Freemasonry*, (Theology, April, 1951).

to their former Brethren in the Craft, and have testified to the appropriate authorities in terms stressing the political harmfulness, constitutional loyalty, and essential belief in the Great Architect which are Masonic landmarks. Rome knows all that, accepts it, and takes it into full consideration.

It must be admitted that many clauses in some of her censures are not only inapplicable to Regular Masonry, but also strike the honest God-fearing Protestant Mason as extremely offensive. When he thinks of the respectable pillars of society and commerce, including perhaps the vicar, who congregate quarterly in his Lodge, their breasts resplendent with the Charity Jewel, he considers himself entitled to feel that Clement XIII was a little wide of the mark when he said that such assemblies "have become to the faithful such objects of suspicion that every good man now regards affiliation to them as a certain indication of wickedness and perversion."¹

But "now" in this Encyclical means 1738; clearly Clement XII had in mind when he wrote this (among other factors) the bad reputation which French Masonry had acquired through the influence of the notorious Duc D'Orleans; later condemnations also took into account such movements as the degrading Illuminism of Weishaupt and the frankly seditious *Alta Vendita* in Italy, by which the Holy See was more nearly surrounded and threatened. It may then be frankly admitted even by the most rigid of Ultramontanists that not every clause of every condemnation could reasonably be expected to apply to every Masonic or quasi-Masonic secret society. Accusations of religious indifference, for instance, are quite as irrelevant to the militantly atheist organization as imputations of consciously "perverting the minds of the incautious, and shooting down innocent people from their hiding places"² would seem to a Lodge composed of respectable Anglican professional men. But to admit this is very far from admitting that Papal condemnations should not apply at all to Anglo-Saxon Masonry, or that they are wide of the mark in outlawing it.

A study of the whole series of Roman Catholic condemnations of Freemasonry from *In Eminente* (1738) to the clauses in the *Codex Iuris Canonici* issued by Benedict XV in 1917 will show that the main reasons for which world Masonry

1. *In Eminente*, 1738. 2. *ibid.*

has been denounced, apart from political seditiousness and open atheism, are the fact that Masonry teaches a purely 'natural' religion, the character of the Masonic rituals which are often blasphemous, the oaths and promises (with their extravagant penalties) which disregard the conditions required by the moral law for a just and reverent oath, and Masonic indifference in matters of religion which (however it may be explained away) in practice teaches that all Gods are equal. Here are ample grounds for Catholic condemnation—indeed any one of these points would justify such a course. And Anglo-Saxon Masonry is as guilty in these matters as the Grand Orient, who at least do not swear the ridiculous Masonic oaths on the Bible or in the name of God.

It is commonly thought by Masons that the Roman Catholic objections to Freemasonry are in some way bound up with the confessional—that there must be no secrets which could be withheld from the confessor. This is not so. A Catholic is as entitled to his secrets, provided they are not sinful, as anyone else.

The plea that Rome has condemned English Masonry on false and mistaken grounds, then, is based either on ignorance or on muddled thinking.

The suggestion has often been made that it was the hostility of the Holy See which drove the Grand Orient into atheism; and that were the Church of England to pronounce adversely on the theological implications of Freemasonry, Grand Lodge might likewise become the bitter enemy of God and society. The first point is, however, historically untenable. Continental Masonry almost from the very start was a manifestation of free thought, of liberalism, political and religious, anti-clericalism, and the neo-paganism which was infecting contemporary society, even before the 'Great Architect' was rejected at the close of the nineteenth century. The second point, therefore, represents 'Anglican comprehensiveness' at its most ludicrous and Laodicean. It is equivalent to suggesting that Irenaeus was wasting his time in denouncing the Gnostic mystery-religions and thereby risking their hostility instead of urging Christians to join them in order to prevent their becoming even more Gnostic and more mysterious. And is it worse for the Church to be openly attacked from without, rather than

DARKNESS VISIBLE

insidiously undermined from within ?

The well-known Papal attitude to Freemasonry will be found in the following documents; as all are readily obtainable no further summary is needed here.

In Eminente

Clement XII, 1738.

Ecclesian

Pius VII, 1821.

umanum Genus

Pius IX, 1873.

Etsi Multa

Leo XIII, 1884.

The Greek Orthodox Church, too, has set its face against Freemasonry. Although surrounded by Grand Orientis rather than by Grand Lodges, the terms of the condemnation are directed mainly against the latter, particularly, it seems, in their American form. Much of it indeed is wholly inapplicable to any Masonic system that has abandoned the Great Architect. As this condemnation does not appear to have been translated or published in Great Britain before, despite its importance, and as it obviously has a vital bearing on any Anglo-Orthodox *rapprochement*, I reproduce it in full.¹ It will be noticed from the reference to the earlier condemnation of Freemasonry as a "false and anti-Christian system" by the Inter-Orthodox Commission which met on Mt. Athos that not only the Greek, but indeed all the autocephalous Orthodox Churches are committed to outlawing the Craft.

The Bishops of the Church of Greece in their session of October 12, 1933, concerned themselves with the study and examination of the secret international organization, Freemasonry. They heard with attention the introductory exposition of the Commission of four Bishops appointed by the Holy Synod at its last session; also the opinion of the Theological Faculty of the University of Athens, and the particular opinion of Prof. Panag Bratsiotis which was appended thereto. They also took into consideration publications on this question in Greece and abroad. After a discussion they arrived at the following conclusions, accepted unanimously by all the Bishops.

"Freemasonry is not simply a philanthropic union or a philosophical school, but constitutes a mystagogical system which reminds us of the ancient heathen mystery-religions

1. *Ekklesia*, no. 48, Dec. 4, 1933, Athens. I am indebted to Fr. Krivoshein, Orthodox priest at Oxford, for obtaining this statement for me, and for the translation.

DARKNESS VISIBLE

and cults—from which it descends and is their continuation and regeneration. This is not only admitted by prominent teachers in the lodges, but they declare it with pride, affirming literally:—'Freemasonry is the only survival of the ancient mysteries and can be called the guardian of them'; 'Freemasonry is a direct offspring of the Egyptian mysteries'; 'the humble workshop of the Masonic Lodge is nothing else than the caves and the darkness of the cedars of India and the unknown depths of the Pyramids and the crypts of the magnificent temples of Isis'; 'the Greek mysteries of Freemasonry, having passed along the luminous roads of knowledge under the mysteriarchs Prometheus, Dionysus and Orpheus, formulated the eternal laws of the Universe'.

"Such a link between Freemasonry and the ancient idolatrous mysteries is also manifested by all that is enacted and performed at the initiations. As in the rites of the ancient idolatrous mysteries the drama of the labours and death of the mystery god was repeated, and in the imitative repetition of this drama the initiate dies together with the patron of the mystery religion, who was always a mythical person symbolising the Sun of nature which dies in winter and is regenerated in spring, so it is also, in the initiation of the third degree, of the patron of Freemasonry Hiram and a kind of repetition of his death, in which the initiate suffers with him, struck by the same instruments and on the same parts of the body as Hiram. According to the confession of a prominent teacher of Freemasonry Hiram is 'as Osiris, as Mithra and as Bacchus, one of the personifications of the Sun'.

"Thus Freemasonry is, as granted, a mystery-religion, quite different, separate, and alien to the Christian faith. This is shown without any doubt by the fact that it possesses its own temples with altars, which are characterised by prominent teachers as 'workshops which cannot have less history and holiness than the Church' and as temples of virtue and wisdom where the Supreme Being is worshipped and the truth is taught. It possesses its own religious ceremonies, such as the ceremony of adoption or the masonic baptism, the ceremony of conjugal acknowledgement or the masonic marriage, the masonic

memorial service, the consecration of the masonic temple, and so on. It possesses its own initiations, its own ceremonial ritual, its own hierarchical order and a definite discipline. As may be concluded from the masonic *agapes* and from the feasting of the winter and summer solstices with religious meals and general rejoicings,¹ it is a physiolatric religion.

"It is true that it may seem at first that Freemasonry can be reconciled with every other religion, because it is not interested directly in the religion to which its initiates belong. This is, however, explained by its syncretistic character and proves that in this point also it is an offspring and a continuation of ancient idolatrous mysteries which accepted for initiation worshippers of all gods. But as the mystery religions, in spite of the apparent spirit of tolerance and acceptance of foreign gods, lead to a syncretism which undermined and gradually shook confidence in other religions, thus Freemasonry to-day, which seeks to embrace in itself gradually all mankind and which promises to give moral perfection and knowledge of truth, is lifting itself to the position of a kind of super-religion, looking on all religions (without excepting Christianity) as inferior to itself. Thus it develops in its initiates the idea that only in masonic lodges is performed the shaping and the smoothing of the unsmoothed and unhewn stone. And the fact alone that Freemasonry creates a brotherhood excluding all other brotherhoods outside it (which are considered by Freemasonry as 'uninstructed' even when they are Christian) proves clearly its pretensions to be a super-religion. This means that by masonic initiation a Christian becomes a brother of the Muslim, the Buddhist, or any kind of rationalist, while the Christian not initiated in Freemasonry becomes to him an outsider.

"On the other hand, Freemasonry in prominently exalting knowledge and in helping free research as 'putting no limit in the search of truth' (according to its rituals and constitution) and more than this by adopting the so-called natural ethic, shows itself in this sense to be in sharp contradiction with the

1. These ceremonies are quite unknown in Great Britain, except for the occasional Masonic funeral and of course the consecration ceremonies. The others, however, are occasionally found in the United States, particularly in the higher degrees. W.H.

Christian religion. For the Christian religion exalts faith above all, confining human reason to the limits traced by Divine Revelation and leading to holiness through the supernatural action of grace. In other words, while Christianity, as a religion of Revelation, possessing its rational and super-rational dogmas and truths, asks for faith first, and grounds its moral structure on the supernatural Divine Grace, Freemasonry has only natural truth and brings to the knowledge of its initiates free thinking and investigation through reason only. It bases its moral structure only on the natural forces of man, and has only natural aims.

"Thus, the incompatible contradiction between Christianity and Freemasonry is quite clear. It is natural that various Churches of other denominations have taken a stand against Freemasonry. Not only has the Western Church branded for its own reasons the masonic movement by numerous Papal encyclicals, but Lutheran, Methodist and Presbyterian communities have also declared it to be incompatible with Christianity. Much more has the Orthodox Catholic Church, maintaining in its integrity the treasure of Christian faith, proclaimed against it every time that the question of Freemasonry has been raised. Recently, the Interorthodox Commission which met on Mount Athos and in which the representatives of all the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches took part, has characterised Freemasonry as a 'false and anti-Christian system'."

The Assembly of the Bishops of the Church of Greece in the above mentioned session heard with relief and accepted the following conclusions which were drawn from the investigations and discussions by its President, His Grace Archbishop Chrysostom of Athens :—

"Freemasonry cannot be at all compatible with Christianity as far as it is a secret organisation, acting and teaching in mystery and secret and deifying rationalism. Freemasonry accepts as its members not only Christians, but also Jews and Muslims. Consequently clergymen cannot be permitted to take part in this association. I consider as worthy of degradation every clergyman who does so. It is necessary to urge upon all who entered it without due thought and without examining what Freemasonry is, to sever all connection with it, for

Christianity alone is the religion which teaches absolute truth and fulfils the religious and moral needs of men. Unanimously and with one voice all the Bishops of the Church of Greece have approved what was said, and we declare that all the faithful children of the Church must stand apart from Freemasonry. With unshaken faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of His Grace, whereby He abounds to us in all wisdom and prudence' (Ephes. 1, 7-9), possessing the truth revealed by Him and preached by the Apostles, 'not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in the manifestation of the Spirit of power' (1 Cor. 2, 4); partaking in the Divine Sacraments through which we are sanctified and saved to eternal life, we must not fall from the grace of Christ by becoming partakers of other mysteries. It is not lawful to belong at the same time to Christ and to search for redemption and moral perfection outside Him. For these reasons true Christianity is incompatible with Freemasonry.

"Therefore, all who have become involved in the initiations of masonic mysteries must from this moment sever all relations with masonic lodges and activities, being sure that they are thereby of a certainty renewing their links with our one Lord and Saviour which were weakened by ignorance and by a wrong sense of values. The Assembly of the Bishops of the Church of Greece expects this particularly and with love from the initiates of the lodges, being convinced that most of them have received masonic initiation not realising that by it they were passing into another religion, but on the contrary from ignorance, thinking that they had done nothing contrary to the faith of their fathers. Recommending them to the sympathy, and in no wise to the hostility or hatred of the faithful children of the Church, the Assembly of the Bishops calls them to pray with her from the heart in Christian love, that the one Lord Jesus Christ 'the way, the truth and the life' may illumine and return to the truth those who in ignorance have gone astray".

It is less well known that certain Protestant Churches have also condemned Freemasonry, and in each case it is Grand Lodge, and not Grand Orient Masonry that has been censured.

- Four groups of Presbyterians have pronounced against it :—
1. The 'Original Secession' in Scotland repudiated Freemasonry as early as 1757, mainly on the grounds that it was against the moral law to bind oneself by oath to secrets which were not revealed till afterwards.¹
 2. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland makes abstinence from Freemasonry a condition of membership.²
 3. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland imposed a similar condition of membership in 1927.³
 4. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church of America set up a Committee on Secret Societies which reported to the General Assembly at Rochester, N.Y. in 1942 condemning Masonry mainly on the grounds of religious indifference.⁴

The English Methodists passed a resolution on Freemasonry (largely due to the stir made by the Rev. C. Penney Hunt's book *The Menace of Freemasonry to the Christian Faith*) at the Bradford Conference in 1927, which contained the following clause :—"Freemasonry, in its ritual and official language, is of purely Theistic nature.....the distinctive faith of Christianity can find no expression in its formulae, and that the Christian message of salvation, through faith in Christ, as the basis alike for home and foreign evangelization, is wholly incompatible with the claims which have often been put forward by Freemasons."⁵ Contrary to popular Masonic rumour, this resolution has never been rescinded.

Masonry has been outlawed by the Salvation Army. The late General Booth addressed a letter to every officer with these clauses :—

"No language of mine could be too strong in condemning any Officer's affiliation with any Society which shuts Him outside its Temples; and which in its religious ceremonies gives

1. This Act was published in full in the *Scots Magazine* (Vol. XIX, p. 432).
2. Rev. C. Penney Hunt, *The Menace of Freemasonry to the Christian Faith* (eighth edition) p. 92.
3. *ibid.* This is the body known colloquially as the "Wee Free's."
4. This Report has been published as a pamphlet *Christ or the Lodge?* (published for the Committee on Christian Education, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia).
5. Minutes of the Methodist Conference, 1927.

DARKNESS VISIBLE

neither Him nor His Name any place.....As for the future, the Army's views upon this matter will be made known to all who wish to become Officers, and acceptance of these views will be necessary before Candidates can be received for training, and further from this time it will be contrary to our regulations for any Officer to join such a Society."¹

American Lutherans have strongly condemned Freemasonry.²

The Missouri Synod, for instance, holds that "These organizations, which our Church terms 'lodges', demand belief in God, but not in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Their rituals often provide for an oath which a Christian cannot but regard as unnecessary or even frivolous and blasphemous. These rituals oftentimes promote salvation by the Law and by good works, not by faith in Jesus Christ. They often provide for prayers not directed to the Triune God and not spoken in the name of Jesus.....These organizations most frequently claim to be non-sectarian and to allow for complete religious freedom. Nevertheless, their rituals disregard, level out, or even deny the most precious truths of the Christian faith in order to make their moral and religious principles acceptable to anyone joining the organization regardless of his religious convictions.

"For more than a hundred years our Church has testified against doctrinal errors in many churches and cults. But it has also testified against the false religious views and principles expressed in the rituals and other literature of many secret oathbound societies. It has done so because it believed that the worship of a 'god' other than the Triune God is idol worship; because it was mindful of the Saviour's directive "All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father: he that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father, which hath sent Him" (John 5:23). It has done so moved by its

1. The Rev. C. Penney Hunt, *The Menace of Freemasonry to the Christian Faith*, pp. 67-7.

2. A complete account of the American Lutheran attitude, and of the resolutions passed by the various constituent Lutheran bodies on the subject of Freemasonry will be found in a series of two articles *To Join Or Not To Join* which appeared in *The Lutheran Witness* (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri) on July 10 and 24, 1951, by Dr. Paul M. Bretscher, Chairman of the Commission on Fraternal Organizations.

DARKNESS VISIBLE

unflinching loyalty to the Word of God and to the saving truths of the Holy Scriptures. The most recent statement issued by our Church re secret oath-bound organizations appears as follows in the *Proceedings* of its triennial convention held in Milwaukee in June, 1950:

"Resolved.....that we urge all pastors and congregations to exercise great vigilance in this matter:

"That such pastors and congregations as neglect their duty in this respect be properly admonished according to Matthew 18 by fellow Christians, fellow Pastors, and District officials; and

"That where all such evangelical dealing with offending pastors or congregations fails, the matter be taken to the *Præsidium* of Synod and finally to Synod itself, if necessary, for proper action."¹

The American Lutheran Conference is committed to what is known as the Minneapolis Theses, of which the following is a pertinent paragraph:—

"These Synods agree that all such organizations or societies, secret or open, as are either avowedly religious or practice the forms of religion without confessing as a matter of principle the Triune God or Jesus Christ as the Son of God, come into the flesh, and our Savior from sin, or teach, instead of the Gospel, salvation by human works or morality, are anti-Christian and destructive of the best interests of the Church and the individual soul, and that, therefore, the Church of Christ and its congregation can have no fellowship with them.

"They agree that a Lutheran Synod should not tolerate pastors who have affiliated themselves with any anti-Christian society. And they admonish their pastors and congregations to testify against the sin of lodgery."²

The Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa (Cape Synod) appointed a commission to investigate Freemasonry which reported conclusively against the Craft in November, 1940. This report is admittedly rather inaccurate when it delves into Masonic history and organization. It quotes from a ritual which certainly appears to have been faulty. Yet none of these

1. See note 2 on p. 76.

2. *ibid.* The Lutheran attitude is stated in greater detail in the excellent book of Dr. Theodore Graebner, *Is Masonry a Religion?* (Concordia Publishing House, 1946).