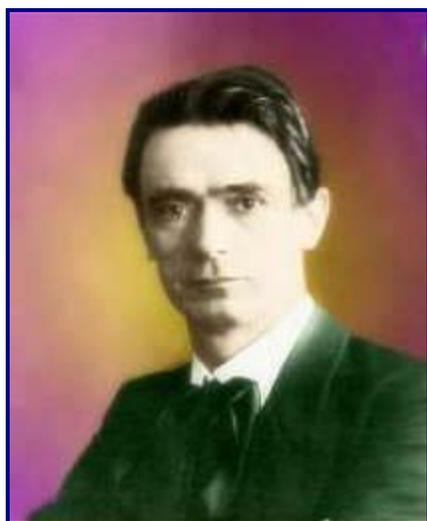


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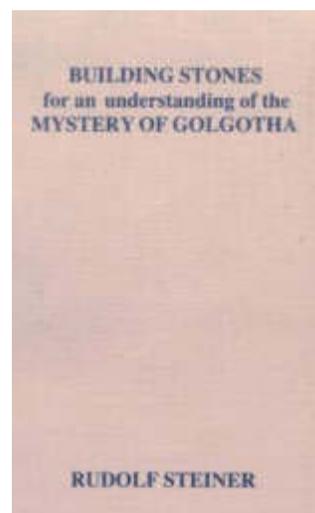
A READER'S JOURNAL

**Building Stones for an Understanding
of the Mystery of Golgotha, GA# 175**

by
Rudolf Steiner

10 Lectures in Berlin, 1917
Published by Steiner Books, Blauvelt NY in 1985

Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2000



One of the most famous quotes of political wisdom is attributed to Lord Acton, to wit, "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." I was thinking of this quote in connection with a story that Rudolf Steiner tells in the first lecture of this book. Cardinal Acton, an uncle of Lord Acton, refused to take an oath that had been required of all Cardinals since the 16th Century, an oath to preserve a fund to be used only in times of great need. Cardinal Acton was privy to the fact that the fund no longer existed, that it had been exhausted for forty years, during which time the cardinals had been swearing to preserve a fund that was gone! Steiner's point of telling the story is to get his listeners to pay attention to the many stories and plausible theories that arose to explain Cardinal Acton's refusal to take the oath, all of which dissolve into nothing in the knowledge of the facts of the case.

As he progresses through his lectures on this subject, Steiner relates many such cases where plausible theories for why something came to be quickly dissolve when facts are uncovered. Facts whose evidence had been systematically destroyed by the Church to hid them from public perusal. With the increasing influence of Rome on the Church, the idea of spirit was systematically eliminated from the dogma of the Church. Not only was the very idea of spirit eliminated but the evidence and public records for its existence were destroyed *en masse*. An example was the 700,000 scrolls burnt in 391 by Archbishop Theophilus of Alexandria. These scrolls contained "vitaly important records of Roman, Egyptian, Indian, and Greek literature and their cultural life." (Page 187) This destruction of the records of the existence of the spirit was followed by the Ecumenical Council of 869 after which it was proper, in Church circles, to speak only of a body and soul, but not of a spirit. This was easy to do given their *destruction of evidence* to the contrary. Even as learned a scientist as Wilhelm Wundt, physiologist and psychologist, c1871, accepted the dichotomy of body and soul as "self-evident."

[page 25] He had no idea that this was the consequence of the decree of the eighth Ecumenical Council. Even today philosophers do not mention the spirit. They follow the dogma laid down by the eighth Ecumenical Council. Precisely why they deny the spirit, though not openly, they do not know, any more than the Roman Cardinals knew what they were swearing to when they took an oath to preserve intact the fund which no longer existed.

One of the consequences of the blurring of the conception of spirit was the schism of the Roman Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Roman Church held that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father

and the Son, and the Eastern Church that the Holy Ghost proceeds only from the Father. This is a difference that divides the two churches yet today.

Another key tenet of the Christian church is that the soul is created at one's birth, and thus there is no possibility of reincarnation. Steiner traces this concept to Aristotle, who near the end of his life rejected reincarnation. In the passage below, Steiner rebuts Aristotle's claim.

[page 41] It is not possible to attain to the idea of the spirit without accepting the idea of reincarnation. The idea of reincarnation is inseparable from the idea of the spirit.

Some historians claim that the ancient pagan rites were simply co-opted by the writers of the Gospels and offer as evidence the similarities of rites of the Mystery cults, such as the Phrygian festivals, to the Easter mysteries of Christianity. Steiner rejects this argument and says that these rites "date far back in the past and sprang from those profound and original insights into the nature of man and his relation to the cosmos as revealed through atavistic clairvoyance." In the next passage, Steiner shows his profound respect for modern science, if it stays within its limits.

[page 45] The natural science of today - there is no need to repeat my admiration for its achievements, though I harbour certain reservations about it - is concerned only with the superficial aspect of things. It can make only a minimal contribution to an understanding of their true nature. It is true that science has made great advances in certain spheres - but it all depends upon what one understands by "great advances". The invention of wireless telegraphy and many other discoveries which are important contributions to our life today are certainly deserving of admiration. But, one may ask, where does that take us? If we were to pursue this question we should come face to face with what is forbidden territory today. Modern science naturally considers the primordial wisdom, the last corrupt remnants of which survived in the Mystery cults I have mentioned, to be sheer folly That may well be. But what is foolishness in the eyes of man may often be wisdom in the sight of God.

Humans are basically different from animals in that animals are born to die, but humans are not, Steiner tells us. How is it that we die? "Man became mortal through a moral defect, through what is called original sin." In the animal kingdom there exists a species-soul that is immortal and when an animal dies its "relinquishes the animal organism which is subject to death without having undergone any transformation." (Page 48) In a human being an individual soul appears and ensures the individual's immortality, and yet the human being dies "due to a moral act originating in the soul." Men at the time of the Mystery of Golgotha knew this to be a fact and looked back to some earlier event that led to this. Over thousands of years, this event, this Fall from grace, had caused a progressive corruption in the human body, until one day it came to be known with assurance that it would no longer be possible for humans upon death to find their way back to the spiritual world. "In ancient times it was this moment that was anticipated with fear and dread." (Page 49) When that point in time arrived, it was the time of the Mystery of Golgotha, and, by uniting spiritually with the Christ, humans were able to recover all that was lost since the Fall.

To my mind it seems that the Christ spirit experienced the Fall by descending to Earth into the human body of Jesus during His baptism by John in the Jordan. In the events leading up to His crucifixion, Christ Jesus experienced life as a human (betrayal by a friend, Judas), as an animal (carrying His cross as beast of burden), as a plant (nailed immobile to a tree trunk while yet alive), and finally upon death He abandoned His physical body, returning its minerals to the substance of the Earth. When we follow Christ Jesus in His Way of Cross, we are following Him following us in each of our own lives as human beings. By following us, He has acted as our Way-Shower, an Explorer carrying the Light ahead of us so that we may Him in safety and assurance.

[page 51] That is why the Mystery of Golgotha must be regarded as the central point in

human evolution. From the "Fall" until the Mystery of Golgotha man experienced a progressive decline of his spiritual forces. The forces of corruption had increasingly invaded his soul and threatened to make man an automaton of the spirit. And from the Mystery of Golgotha until the end of the Earth cycle all that was lost before the Mystery of Golgotha will gradually be retrieved once more. Thus at the conclusion of Earth evolution, the spirits of men will incarnate in the physical body for the last time and these bodies will once again be immortal. It was in expectation of this redemption that men understood the Mystery of Easter.

In the third lecture Steiner begins with a dynamic conception of faith which is counter to the usual theoretic definition of faith as belief in knowledge yet to be proven and more in line with the concept of faith in action which Christ Jesus preached. He refers us to this passage in the Gospels (Matt.XXI, 21.): "If ye have faith and doubt not . . . But also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done."

[page 57] A little reflection will show what is the essence of Christ's conception of faith. Faith must be an active force, a force that accomplishes something. Its purpose is not simply to evoke an idea or to awaken knowledge. He who possesses faith shall be able to move mountains. If you refer to the Gospels you will find that wherever the words "faith" or "trust" appear, they are associated with the idea of action, that one is to be granted a power through which something can be effected or accomplished, something that is productive of positive results. And this is extremely important.

Another extremely important aspect of Christ's life is the distinction between a Baptism by Water and a Baptism by Fire. John the Baptist talked about the two types of Baptism, saying that he was baptizing by Water, but one would soon come that would baptize by Fire. I found a description of the distinction for the first time in Steiner's lecture three. John's baptism by water was that of the Essene community - a people that during their full-immersion baptisms loosened their etheric bodies and were able to experience the pre-lapsarian state of grace or before-the-Fall condition of humankind. That describes the Baptism by Water. Christ was to bring to humankind a Baptism by Fire that allows them to remain in a state of grace and find salvation while in the present world. (Pages 60-61)

In the following cogent passage, Steiner summarizes the four Gospels, explaining what each one was concerned with, and then explaining what Christ Jesus was concerned with.

[page 65] The Gospel of St. John can only be rightly understood when we realize that , as the Gospel of St. Matthew is concerned with the Jews, the Gospel of St. Mark with the Romans and the Gospel of St. Luke with all those who had succumbed to the Fall, so the Gospel of St. John is concerned with the spirits of men and those spirits bordering on humanity who fell along with man, whilst Christ Jesus is concerned with the spiritual world itself.

Who were the first to recognize what Christ Jesus was here to accomplish? Not John the Baptist, Steiner says, "he divined it" - no, it was the people who were possessed with devils that recognized Him, and called out, "Thou art the Son of God." Steiner says, "They knew it because He was able to cast them out."(Page 66)

One could readily expect that one concerned solely with the spiritual world would not write down his words, and that is why we have the four Gospels but no written testament from Christ Jesus Himself, only His living words as recorded by others.

[page 70] If Christ had written down His words and translated them into the current language of the day, Ahrimanic forces would have entered into them, for all set forms are Ahrimanic.

Thus we come to understand Christ's condemnation of the Scribes - they derived their knowledge from written documents rather than the living word. Christ proclaimed to humankind that "Heaven and Earth may pass away, but my words shall not pass away." These words are rightly understood only when we inspect the cosmogenesis of our world in the time to come. If we look at the [Table of Evolution](#) in my review of the [Spiritual Hierarchies and the Physical World](#), we will find that Jupiter is the next phase of evolution of our world when Earth has "passed away."

It should not seem strange that Earth as our planet's physical body should one day die just as we in our physical body one day die. Nor should it seem strange that the [Table](#) shows us to be in the middle of our evolution. If we are on a journey, say to a distant land, we can at all steps along the way, look back at our origin and forward to our destination, and it will seem like we are in the middle of our journey. As soon as we arrive we find ourselves set upon another journey to some distant shore and immediately we are back in the middle of our journey. We view our cosmogenesis like one viewing from a mountain top one's journey: we can see as far back as we can see forward. That is why we are placed on Earth in the middle of our evolution in the [Table](#).

[page 76] Now picture the Earth as an organism, like a plant, the moral law as the seed which is formed within the organism, and the Christ force as the impulse which stimulates the seed to grow into the future Earth, into [Jupiter](#). We then have a totally new conception of the Gospels from the standpoint of Spiritual Science.

This impulse can only come from faith, the *active faith as impetus* mentioned above. That faith, and only that faith, can "transform the seed 'morality' into a cosmic reality." (Page 76) This *active faith* is the power that Christ Jesus wished to implant into His disciples. This was *rock* on which He wished to build - a living force that would be passed from person-to-person down the ages, not written documents like the Scribes and the Pharisees depended upon.

[page 76-77] It was the mission of the Mystery of Golgotha to imbue Earth evolution with this power. This power had to be implanted in the souls of the disciples. At the same time they were reminded of the loss suffered by those who possessed only the written records. It is the power of faith which is of paramount importance. And if we do not understand what we owe to Christ when one so often hears the words "faith" or "belief", then neither do we understand what entered Earth evolution at the time of the Mystery of Golgotha.

What would have happened to Earth but for the Mystery of Golgotha? In Steiner's words on page 90, "Just as the plant cannot fulfil its development if the ovary is removed, so the Earth could not have fulfilled its evolution if the Mystery of Golgotha had not taken place."

[page 91] People imagine that those who strive to arrive at the truth by means of Spiritual Science can be met with the weapons of scorn and ridicule that often pass of criticism. In the Sixth epoch they will be treated medically!

Steiner is referring here to the Sixth Post-Atlantean Cultural Epoch or Russian Epoch which begins 3573 A.D. [See [Table](#) in Steiner Guide.] During the Seventh epoch which begins 5067 A. D., the American Epoch, we will enter the menopause of Earth, a time when women will become less and less fertile. Through Steiner's eyes we are led to see the microcosm of an individual woman's life projected onto the macrocosm of all women of the Earth during the appropriate stage of the macrocosm. Elsewhere Steiner tells us that a new form of reproduction will arise in which the organ of reproduction will be our speech organs. He says on page 151 that we must envision Earth of the future, not as a "graveyard of humanity, but as the seed-bed of a transformed humanity."

If we take to heart Christ's admonition to his disciples to disregard the ways of the Scribes with their written laws, we must likewise recognize that the living word of the ancient Mystery cults have a greater importance than the evolution of dogma within the Christian Church over the ages. (Page 168) Here he

explains how the outward suppression of Mystery practices paralleled a sub-rosa utilization of the suppressed rites in Church sacraments. The reason for the priest and parishioners to fast before receiving the Host during Mass is lost if one does not look to its origins in the ancient Mysteries.

[page 169] What is the inner significance of the Catholic Mass? In reality, the Mass and all that is related to it, is a continuation and development of the Mithras Mysteries, blended to some extent with the Eleusinian Mysteries.

Aristotle was aware of and used methods of meditation that he shared with us in his writings, but we cannot find these today, because of a systematic expunging of his description of these processes by Church authorities. What might we expect if there was such an extirpation of his description of his attempts to directly discover the meaning of the Mystery of Golgotha?

[page 172] But, according to commentators, whenever Aristotle is on the point of describing his method of meditation, he breaks off and is silent. It is not that he did not describe his technique, but that the later transcripts failed to record it, so that it was never transmitted to posterity.

Thus it came to be that Christ was crucified a second time by the suppressing of the Mysteries that would allow people to come to understand the Mystery of Golgotha on their own terms separate from the Church. This was something that Constantine could not permit so he began the systematic destruction of the pagan temples. With a clean sweep of the pagan temples and records, people would have no knowledge or evidence of what existed prior to that time and thus they would be dependent on the Church to tell them what to do.

[page 179] Just as Christ was crucified for the first time on Golgotha, so He was crucified a second time through Constantinism. by suppressing the Mysteries, Christ, as a historical reality, was crucified a second time. For those acts of vandalism which lasted for centuries destroyed not only priceless treasures of art, but destroyed also man's experience of the spiritual world, the most important experience he could have.

Is there hope for humankind? Steiner says most definitely, Yes!

[pag 183] Reflect upon these words for they are of momentous importance: out of the spirit new creative possibilities will arise! The power of the spirit must work unconsciously within you. And this depends upon the idea of resurrection. That which has been crucified must arise again. This will not come to pass by passively waiting on event, but by quickening the spiritual forces within us, by quickening the creative power of the spirit itself.

It is common to see bumper stickers on automobiles today that ask "What Would Christ Do Today?" Steiner asks an interesting variation on that question:

[page 212] What would Christ most vigorously condemn if He were to appear in our midst today? Most probably what the majority of people call "Christian" today . . ."

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