

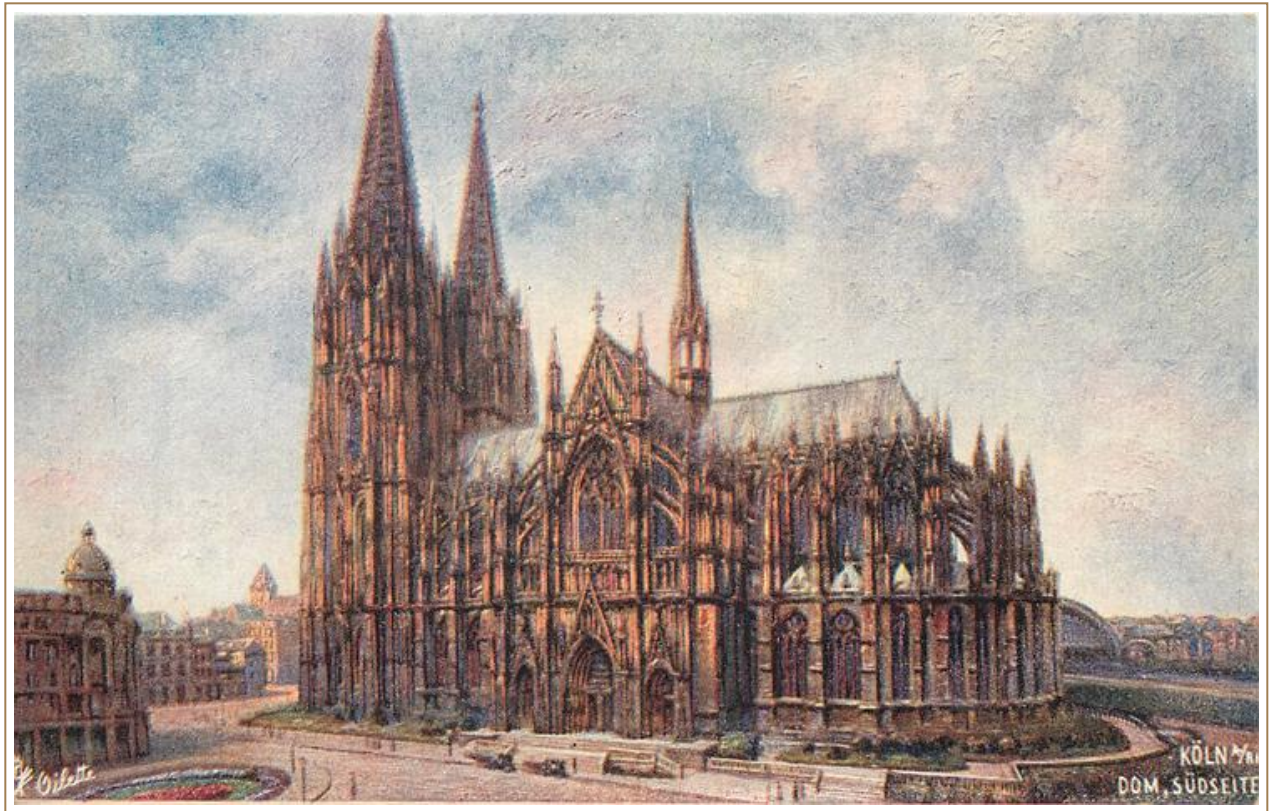
The Lectures of Rudolf Steiner

The Mysteries

A Christmas and Easter Poem by Goethe

GA 98

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Postcard found in Tuck's Travelogues circa 1907^[1]

If you were in the Cathedral last night you could have seen written there in illuminated lettering: C. M. B. As you will all know, these letters represent the names of the so-called Three Holy Kings, according to the tradition of the Christian Church: Caspar, Melchior, Balthasar^[2]. These names awaken quite special memories for Cologne. An old legend tells us that some time after they had become bishops and died their bones had been brought here. Another legend relates that a Danish king had once come to Cologne, bringing with him three crowns for the Three Holy Kings. After he had returned home he had a dream; in his dream the three kings appeared to him and offered him three chalices: the first chalice contained gold, the second frankincense, and the third one myrrh. When the Danish king awoke the three kings had vanished, but the chalices remained; they stood before him; the three gifts which he had retained from his dream.

In this legend there is profound meaning. We are to understand that the king in his dream attained a certain insight into the spiritual world by which he learnt the symbolic meaning of these three kings, these three wise men of the East who brought offerings of gold, frankincense and myrrh at the birth of Christ Jesus. And from this realisation he retained a lasting possession: those three human virtues which are symbolised in the gold, the frankincense and the myrrh: self-knowledge in the gold; self-piety, that is the piety of the innermost self — which we can call self-surrender — in the frankincense; and in the myrrh self-consummation and self-development, or the preservation of the eternal in the self.

It was possible for the king to receive these three virtues as gifts from another world because he had endeavoured to penetrate with his whole soul into the profound symbol lying concealed in the three kings who brought their offerings to Christ Jesus.

There are many features in this legend which lead us a long way towards understanding the Christ-principle, and what it is to bring about in the world. Among its profound features are the Adoration and the Presentation by the three Magi, the three Oriental Kings, and only with the deepest understanding may we approach this fundamental symbolism of the Christian tradition. Later the idea was formed that the first king was the representative of the Asiatic races; the second, the representative of the European peoples; and the third, the representative of the African races. Wherever people wanted to understand Christianity as the religion of earthly harmony they saw in the three kings and their homage a union of the different lines of thought and religious movements in the world into the One principle, the Christian principle. When this legend received this form those who had penetrated into the principles of esoteric Christianity saw in Christianity not only a force which had affected the course of human development, but they saw in the Being embodied in Jesus of Nazareth a cosmic world-force — a force far transcending the merely human that prevails in this present age. They saw in the Christ-principle a force that indeed represents for mankind a human ideal lying in a far distant future, an ideal which can only be approached by our understanding the whole world more and more in the spirit. They saw in man, in the first place, a miniature being, a miniature world, a microcosm, an image of the macrocosm, the great, all-embracing world. This macrocosm comprises all that man can perceive with his external senses, see with his eyes, hear with his ears, but comprises, besides, all that the spirit could perceive from the perceptions of the least developed human spirit up to perceptions in the spiritual world. This was how the esoteric Christian of the earliest times regarded the world. All he saw in the firmament or on our earth, all he saw as thunder and lightning, as storm and rain, as sunshine, as the course of the stars, as sunrise and sunset, as moonrise and the setting of the moon — all this was for him a gesture, something like a mimicry, an external expression of inner spiritual processes. The esoteric Christian looks on the universe as he looks on the human body. When he looks on the human body he sees it as consisting of different limbs: the head, arms, hands, and so on. When he looks on the human body and sees the movements of hand, eye, etc., these are for him the expression of the inner spiritual and psychic experiences. In the same way as he looked through the human limbs, and their movements, into that which is eternal, spiritual in man, the esoteric Christian regarded the movements of the stars, the light that streams down from the stars to humanity, the rising and setting of the sun, the rising and setting of the moon, as the external expression of divine-spiritual Beings pervading all space. All these natural phenomena were to him deeds of the gods, gestures of the gods, expressions in mime of those divine-spiritual Beings, as also was everything that occurs among mankind, when people establish social communities, when they submit to moral commandments and regulate their dealings through laws, when from the forces of nature they create instruments for themselves. These implements, indeed, they make with the help of the *forces* of nature, but in a *form* in which they are not to be found directly. All that was done in humanity, more or less unconsciously, was for the esoteric Christian the external expression of inner divine-spiritual sway. But the esoteric Christian did not confine himself to such general forms, he pointed to quite definite single gestures, single parts of

the physiognomy of the universe, of the mimes of the universe, in order to see in these single parts quite definite expressions of the spiritual. When he pointed to the sun he said: The sun is not merely an external, physical body; this external, physical solar body is the body of a spiritual-psychic Being; one of those psychic-spiritual Beings who are the rulers, the leaders of all earthly fate, the leaders of all natural occurrences on the earth, but also of all that happens in human, social life, in the relationship of men among each other as determined by laws. When the esoteric Christian looked up to the sun he revered in the sun the external revelation of his Christ. In the first place the Christ was for him the sun's soul, and the esoteric Christian said: "From the beginning the sun was the body of the Christ, but men on earth and the earth itself were not yet matured for receiving the spiritual light, the Christ-light, which streams from the sun. Men had, therefore, to be prepared for the Christ-light."

Then the esoteric Christian looked up at the moon and saw that the moon reflects the light of the sun, but more feebly than the sun's light itself; and he said to himself: "If I look with my physical eyes into the sun I am dazzled by its shining light; if I look into the moon I am not dazzled; it reflects in a feebler degree the shining light of the sun." In this subdued sunlight, in this moonlight, pouring down on the earth, the esoteric Christian saw the physiognomical expression of the old Jehovah-principle, the expression of the religion of the old law. And he said: "Before the Christ-principle, the Sun of Righteousness, could appear on earth, the Jahve-principle had to send down on earth this light of righteousness, toned down in the Law, to prepare the way." And so what lay in the old Jehovah-principle, in the old Law — the spiritual light of the moon — was for the esoteric Christian the reflected spiritual light of the higher Christ-principle. And with the pupils of the ancient Mysteries the esoteric Christian — until far into the Middle Ages — saw in the sun the expression of the spiritual light ruling the earth, the Christ-light, and in the moon the expression of the reflected Christ-light, which would blind man in its full strength. And in the earth itself the esoteric Christian saw with the pupils of the ancient mysteries that which at times disguised, and veiled for him, the blinding sunlight of the spirit. And for him the earth was just as much the physical expression of a spirit as was every other bodily form an expression of something spiritual. He imagined that when the sun looked visibly down on the earth, when it sent down its rays, beginning in the Spring and continuing through the summer, and called forth from the earth all the budding and sprouting life, and when it had culminated in the long summer days — then the esoteric Christian imagined that the sun cherished and maintained the external, up-shooting life, the physical life. In the plants, springing from the soil, in the animals unfolding their fertility in these seasons, the esoteric Christian saw the same principle, in an external, physical form, that he saw in the Beings whose external expression the sun was. But when the days became shorter, when autumn and winter approached, the esoteric Christian said: the sun withdraws its physical power more and more from the earth. But in the same degree as the sun's physical power is withdrawn from the earth, its spiritual power increases and flows to the earth most intensively when the shortest days come, with the long nights, in the season afterwards fixed by the Christmas festival. Man cannot see this spiritual power of the sun. He would see it, said the esoteric

Christian, if he possessed the inner power of spiritual vision. And the esoteric Christian had still a consciousness of what was a fundamental conviction and experience of the Mystery-pupils from the earliest times into the newer age.

In those nights, now fixed by the festival of Christmas, the Mystery-pupils were prepared for the experience of inner spiritual vision, so that they could see inwardly, spiritually, that which at this time withdrew its physical power from the earth most completely. In the long Christmas winter night the novice was far enough advanced to have a vision at midnight. The earth was then no longer a veil for the sun, which stood behind the earth. It became transparent for him. Through the transparent earth he saw the spiritual light of the sun, the Christ-light. This fact, which marks a profound experience for the mystery-novice, was recorded in the expression: To see the sun at midnight.

There are places where the churches, otherwise open all day, are closed at noon. This is a fact which connects Christianity with the traditions of ancient religious faiths. In ancient religious faiths the Mystery-pupils said, on the strength of their experience: "At noon, when the sun stands highest, when it unfolds the strongest physical power, the gods are asleep, and they sleep the deepest sleep in summer, when the sun develops its strongest physical power. But they are widest awake on Christmas night, when the external physical power of the sun is weakest."

We see that all forms of life which desire to unfold their external physical power look up to the sun when the sun rises in the sky in Spring and strive to receive the external physical power of the sun. But when, on a summer noon, the sun's physical power pours most lavishly on to the earth, its spiritual power is weakest. In the winter midnight, however, when the sun rays the least physical power down to the earth, man can see the sun's spirit through the earth, which has become transparent for him. The esoteric Christian felt that through absorption in Christian Esotericism he approached more and more that power of inward vision through which he could imbue his feeling, thinking and his will-impulses in gazing into this spiritual sun. Then the Mystery-novice was led to a vision of the greatest importance: As long as the earth is opaque the separate parts appear inhabited by people of different confessions, but the unifying bond is not there. Human races are as scattered as the climates. Human opinions are scattered all over the earth and there is no connecting link. But in the degree in which men begin to look through the earth into the sun by their inner power of vision, in the degree in which the "star" appears to them through the earth, their confessions will flow together to one great united Brotherhood. And those who guided the great separated human masses in the truth of the higher planes, towards their initiation into the higher worlds, were known as "Magi." They were three in number, as in the various parts of the earth various powers express themselves. Humanity had, therefore, to be led in different ways. But as a unifying power there appears the star, rising beyond the earth. It leads the scattered individuals together, and then they bring offerings to the physical embodiment of the solar star, appearing as the star of peace. Thus was the religion of peace, of harmony, of universal peace, of human brotherhood, connected cosmically and humanly with the ancient Magi, who laid the best gifts that they had in store for humanity before the cradle of the Son of Man incarnate.

The legend has retained this beautifully, for it says: The Danish king attained an understanding of the Wise Men, of the three Kings, and because he had attained it they bestowed on him their three gifts: first the gift of wisdom, in self-knowledge; secondly, the gift of pious devotion, in self-surrender; and, thirdly, the gift of the victory of life over death, in the power and development of the eternal in the self.

All those who have understood Christianity in this way have seen in it the profound idea in spiritual science of the unification of religions. For they had the firm conviction that whoever understands Christianity thus can rise to the highest grade of human development.

One of the last of the Germans to understand Christianity in this way is Goethe, and Goethe has laid down for us this kind of Christianity, this kind of religious reconciliation, this kind of theosophy, in the profound poem, *The Mysteries*, which has, indeed, remained a fragment but which shows us in a deeply significant way the inner spiritual development of one who is penetrated and convinced by the feelings and ideas that I have just described. Goethe first invites us to follow the pilgrim-path of such a man, but indicates that this pilgrim-path may lead us far astray, that it is not easy to find it, and that one must have patience and devotion to reach the goal. Whoever possesses these will find the light that he seeks. Let us hear the beginning of the poem: —

*A wondrous song is here prepared for many,
Hear it with joy! Tell all from far and near!
The way will lead you out o'er mount and valley;
Now is the view obscured, now wide and clear,
And if the path should glide into the bushes,
That you have gone astray, you need not fear,
For by a persevering, patient climb
We shall draw near our goal, when it is time.*

*But no one will, despite profound reflection,
Unravel all the wonders hidden here:
Our mother earth brings forth so many flowers,
And many shall find something to revere;
Maybe that one will gloomily forsake us,
Another stays with gestures full of cheer:
For many wand'ring pilgrims flows the spring,
To each a different pleasure it will bring.*

This is the situation to which we are introduced. We are shown; a pilgrim who, if we were to ask him, would not be able to say in formal words what we have just seen to be the esoteric Christian idea — but a pilgrim in whose heart and soul these ideas live, transformed into feeling. It is not easy to discover everything that has been secreted into this poem called *The Mysteries*. Goethe has clearly indicated a process occurring in human life, in which the highest ideas, thoughts and conceptions are transformed into feelings and perceptions. How does this transformation take place?

We live through many embodiments, from incarnation to incarnation. In each one we learn things of many kinds; each one is full of opportunities for gathering new experiences. It is impossible for us to carry over from one incarnation to the other everything in every detail. When we are born again it is not necessary for everything that we have once learnt to come to life in every detail. But if we have learnt a great deal in one incarnation, and die and are born anew, although there is no need for all our ideas to live again, we come to life with the fruits of our former life, with the fruits of what we have learnt. The powers of perception and feeling are in accord with our earlier incarnations.

In this poem of Goethe's we have a wonderful phenomenon: a man who, in the simplest words — as a child might speak, not in definite intellectual or abstract terms — shows us the highest wisdom, which is a fruit of former knowledge. He has transformed this knowledge into feeling and experience and is thereby qualified to lead others who have perhaps learnt more in the form of concepts. Such a pilgrim, with a ripe soul, which has transformed into direct feeling and experience much of the knowledge which it has gathered in earlier incarnations — such a pilgrim we have before us in Brother Mark. As a member of a secret Brotherhood he is sent out on an important mission to another secret Brotherhood. He wanders through many different districts, and when he is getting tired he comes to a mountain. He journeys up the path at last — (every feature in this poem has a deep significance) — and when he has climbed the mountain he finds himself before a monastery. This monastery here indicates the other Brotherhood to which he has been sent. Over the gate of the monastery he sees something unusual. He sees the Cross, but in unusual guise; the cross is garlanded with roses! And at this point he utters a significant word that only he can understand who knows how again and again that motto has been spoken in secret Brotherhoods: "Who added to the Cross the wreath of Roses?" And round the Cross he sees the Triangle shine, radiating beams like the sun. There is no need for him to understand in ideas the meaning of this profound symbol. The

experience and understanding of it live already in his soul, in his ripe soul. His ripe soul knows its inner meaning. What is the meaning of the Cross? He knows that the Cross is a symbol for many things; among many others, for the threefold lower nature of man; the physical body, the etheric body and the astral body. In him the "I," the Self is-born. In the Rose-Cross we have the fourfold man: in the Cross the physical man, the etheric man and the astral man, and in the roses the Self. Why roses for the Self? — the esoteric Christian added roses to the Cross because by the Christ principle he felt called upon to develop the Self more and more from the state in which it is born in the three bodies, to an ever higher Self. In the Christ-principle he saw the power to develop this Self higher and higher. The Cross is the symbol of death in a quite particular sense. This, too, Goethe expresses in another beautiful passage when he says:

*And until thou truly hast
This "dying and becoming,"
Thou art but a troubled guest
O'er the dark earth roaming.*

"Die and be re-born" — overcome what you have first been given in the three lower bodies: deaden it, not out of a desire for death, but purify what is in these three bodies so as to attain in your Self the power to receive an ever greater perfection. If you overcome what is given you in the three lower bodies, the power of consummation will live in the Self. In the Self must the Christian absorb in the Christ-principle this power of consummation down to the very blood. Right into the blood this power must work.

Blood is the expression of the Self, the "I." In the red roses the esoteric Christian saw the power of the Christ-principle purifying and cleansing the blood, thus purifying the Self, and so guiding man upwards to his higher being — he saw the power that transforms the astral body into the Spirit Self, the etheric body into the Life-Spirit, the physical body into Spirit Man. Thus the Rose-Cross in its connection with the triangle shows us the Christ-principle in profound symbolism. The pilgrim, Brother Mark, who arrives here, knows that he is at a place where the profoundest meaning of Christianity is understood.

*Full weary by a long and tiring journey,
With a sublimest motive underta'en,
A pilgrim, brother Mark, came through the thicket,
With staff in hand, his footsteps to sustain,
And longing for a little food and drinking,
One beauteous eve he reached a quiet plain.
Its wooded gorges soothing hope bestowed
Beneath a friendly roof to find abode.*

*But lo! a path he scarcely can distinguish,
High up a mountain steep before him wending.
He follows it, as more and more it rises,
In curvings in and out the boulders bending,
Until again by sunlight warm enveloped,
He turns and sees how fast he is ascending.
At last the summit comes within his sight,
Inspiring him with heart-felt, deep delight.*

*Next it the sun, majestic in its setting,
Enthroned 'mong clouds within the dark'ning sky.
Now for the peak! For all his weary toiling
He hopes to be rewarded there on high.
O'erlooking all the country 'fore him spreading,
A human home he will perchance espy.
And while he climbs, oh sound how full of cheer!
The chime of bells is wafted to his ear.*

*And as at length he has attained the summit,
Below a softly sloping valley lies.
His quiet look with inward pleasure brightens;
Before the forest full of joy he spies
A stately building in a greening field,
Which the departing sun with lustre dyes.
E'er long he nears through meadows dewy damp
A monastery lit with gleaming lamp.*

*He soon arrives outside the quiet homestead,
With hope and peacefulness his soul enfolding,
And on the arch above the closed portal
A symbol full of mystery beholding.
He stands and ponders, whispers words of prayer,
The deep devotion of his heart unfolding;
He ponders long: What does this sign convey?
The sun has set, the chiming dies away.*

*The sign he sees erected here on high
That brings consoling hope to all mankind,
Which many thousands pledged their lives to shield,
To which in fervour prayed the human mind,
That has destroyed the bitter powers of death,
On victors' banners fluttered in the wind:
A stream of comfort permeates his being,
He sees the cross and bows his head in seeing.*

*He feels anew the faith of all on earth,
The power of salvation streaming thence;
But as he looks, he feels his very soul
Pervaded by a new and unknown sense:
Who added to the cross the wreath of roses?
It is entwined by blooming, clusters dense,
Profusely spreading just as though they could
Endow with softness e'en the rigid wood.*

*While light and silv'ry clouds, around it soaring,
Seem heavenward with cross and roses flowing,
And from the midst like living waters streaming
A threefold ray from out one core is glowing;
But not a word surrounds the holy token,*

*The meaning of the symbol clearly showing.
And while the dusk is gath'ring grey and greyer,
He stands and ponders and is lost in prayer.*

The spirit of deepest Christianity which pervades this dwelling is expressed in the cross entwined by roses, and as the pilgrim enters he is actually received in this spirit. When he enters he becomes aware that in this house not this or that religion holds sway — but that there rules here the higher Oneness of the religions of the world. Within this house he tells an old member of the Brotherhood that lives there at whose behest and on what mission he has come. He is made welcome and hears that in this house there lives in perfect seclusion a Brotherhood of twelve Brothers. These twelve Brothers are representatives of different human races from all over the earth; every one of the Brothers is the representative of a religious faith. None is accepted here in the un-ripeness of youth, but only when he has explored the world, when he has struggled with the joys and sorrows of the world, when he has "worked and been active in the world and won his way to a free survey beyond his narrowly confined domain. Only then is he placed and accepted in the circle of the Twelve. And these Twelve, of whom each one represents one of the world religions, live here in peace and harmony together. For they are led by a thirteenth who surpasses them all in the perfection of his human Self, who surpasses them all in his wide survey of human circumstances. And how does Goethe indicate that he is the representative of true Esotericism? Goethe indicates, by the words the Brother speaks, that he is the bearer of the religion of the Rosy Cross. He said: "He was among us; now we are in deepest sorrow because he is about to leave us; he wishes to part from us. But he finds it right to part from us even now; he desires to rise to higher regions, where he no longer needs to reveal himself in an earthly body."

He is worthy to rise. For he has risen to the point that Goethe describes with the words: "In every religion there is the possibility of attaining the highest purity." When each of the twelve religions is ripe to form a basis of harmony, the Thirteenth, who has before brought about this harmony externally, can pass away. And we are beautifully told how we can achieve this consummation of the Self. First, the life-story of the Thirteenth is related; but the Brother who has received Mark knows many details, which the great Leader of the Twelve cannot tell himself. Several features of profound esoteric significance are now recounted by one of the Twelve to Brother Mark. He learns that when the Thirteenth was born a star appeared to herald his life on earth. Here there is a direct connection with the star which guided the three holy kings, and with its inner meaning. This star has an enduring significance: it shows the way to self-knowledge, self-surrender and self-consummation. It is the star which opens the mind for the gifts which the Danish king received from the vision in his dream, the star which appears at the birth of anyone ripe enough to absorb the Christ-principle. And there were other signs. There were signs showing that he had developed to that height of religious harmony which brings the peace and harmony of the soul. Profoundly symbolical in this sense is the vulture which swoops down at the birth of the Thirteenth, but instead of destroying it spreads peace around it among the doves. We are told still more. While his little sister is lying in the cradle a viper winds itself round her. The Thirteenth, still a child, kills the viper. Hereby is wonderfully indicated how a ripe soul — for only a ripe soul can achieve such a thing after many incarnations — kills the viper in early childhood: that is to say he overcomes the lower astral nature. The viper is the symbol for the lower astral nature; the sister is his own etheric body, round which the astral body winds itself. He kills the viper to save his sister. Then we are told how he submitted obediently to every demand of his parents. He obeyed his stern father. The soul transforms its knowledge into ideas and thoughts; then healing-powers develop in the soul and can bring healing into the world. Miraculous powers develop: they are represented by the sword with which he strikes a spring out of the rock. We are here definitely shown how his soul follows the path of the Scriptures. Thus gradually there develops

the higher man, the representative of humanity, the Chosen one, who works as the Thirteenth here, in the society of the Twelve, the great secret Brotherhood which, under the sign of the Rose-Cross has taken upon itself for all mankind the mission of harmonising the religions scattered in the world. This is how we are made acquainted, in a profound, manner, with the soul-nature of that one who has until now guided the Brotherhood of the Twelve.

*At last he knocks. The myriad stars above him
Look down with shining eyes as they appear.
The portal opes, and he is bidden welcome
By brethren wont to comfort and to cheer.
So he relates how far by hill and valley
The will of higher Beings led him here.
They stand amazed, for well they see their guest
Was sent to them by heavenly behest.*

*They crowd around him, and their inmost being
They feel by a mysterious power stirred,
Their breath they hold to listen, for he rouses
An echo in their hearts with ev'ry word.
Like deepest lore, yet uttered by a child,
The wisdom flowing from his lips is heard:
He seems so innocent, like crystal clear,
As though descended from another sphere.*

*At last an aged brother cries: Oh welcome,
If with consoling hope thy path is blessed!
Thou seest us, our souls are moved within us
By thee, and yet we can but stand oppressed:
Our greatest bliss from us is being taken,
Anxiety and dread disturb our rest.
Thou comest as a stranger, yet to share
Portentous hours of mourning and of care:*

*For he, alas! who all of us united,
To whom as father and as friend we bow,
Who light and fortitude within us kindled —
Our leader — is prepared to leave us now.
Yea, he himself his passing has predicted,
Refusing though to tell us when and how:
The mystery of what must needs befall
Brings bitter tribulation to us all.*

*Thou seest us grey and aged ev'ry one,
By nature destined for repose and rest:
Not one was here admitted who, a youth,
Desired to fly from wordly joy and zest.
Each one has met with life's vicissitudes,*

*Its burdens, pleasures and its anxious quest,
Until, matured, too old to longer roam,
Within these walls we found a shelt'ring home.*

*The noble man who led us to this haven,
Within his heart the peace of God does dwell;
Along the path of life we walked together,
His ev'ry action I remember well;
But now his fervent praying, his seclusion,
The hour of his departing must foretell.
How small is man! Oh would that he could give
His life, so that a greater one might live!*

*This is my heart's profound and only wish!
Fulfilment is denied to my desire.
How many have preceded me in death!
How bitter is the thought he must expire.
Had he been here, with hearty welcome's warmth
He would have given all thou didst require;
But now in spirit-regions dwells his mind,
Already far from those he leaves behind.*

*Each day one hour he lingers in our midst
And speaks to us, by strange emotion stirred:
The wondrous paths that Providence has led
Within his life he lauds with ev'ry word;
We hark and heed, for after-ages hoarding
With care the merest trifle that occurred,
While one writes down his words to make us sure
His memory shall live both true and pure.*

*I hear him speak, but oh, how much there is
That I would rather far myself relate,
For all is still alive within my mind,
The least of circumstances I would state;
Impatiently I list, can scarce conceal
How sore it is thus silently to wait:
One day I shall no more restrain my zeal,
The splendours of this beauteous life reveal.*

*I should disclose how first an angel's voice
His coming to his mother prophesied,
And how, when he was christened, in the sky
A star with brilliant lustre was descried,
How down a vulture swooped with mighty wings
To settle by the gentle pigeons' side,
But not to pounce on them in greedy wildness,
A harbinger he seemed of peace and mildness.*

*How as a child a viper he destroyed,
This is a miracle he ne'er has told.
He found his sister peacefully asleep,
The clinging reptile round her arm was rolled.
The nurse had fled and left the babe alone,
He killed the pois'nous snake, resolved and bold;
His mother came and saw the daring deed
And thrilled with joy she found her daughter freed.*

*He ne'er related that a spring arose
From out the barren rock before his sword,
And as a brook, with rippling waves alive,
Its plenteous waters down the hill-side poured;
E'en now, as quick as forth it gushed at first,
It bickers silver sparkling o'er the sward.
But those who saw the wondrous stream appear,
Dared not to drink, o'ercome by solemn fear.*

*For when a man excels by gifts of nature,
It is no wonder if his life is blessed;
In him we worship the Creator's power,
Through feeble human clay made manifest;
But he who overcomes himself has gained
The greatest triumph, stood the hardest test,
And well may he to all the world be shown:
Yea, this is he, this deed is his alone!*

*With all our strength we strive to live and labour,
Where'er by fate our twisting paths be wended;
Whereas the world oppresses, e'er impeding,
And seeks to tear us from the way intended;
Within this inner storm and outer struggle
Our spirit hears a word scarce comprehended:
The power that holds constrained all humankind
The victor o'er himself no more can bind.*

This man who had overcome himself, that is, who had overcome that ego which is man's portion at first, has become the Head of the chosen Brotherhood. And thus he leads the Twelve. He has led them to a point at which they are matured enough for him to leave them. Our Brother Mark is then conducted further to the rooms where the Twelve work. How do they work? Their activity is of an unusual kind, and we are told that it is an activity in the spiritual world. A man whose eyes observe only physically, whose senses experience only the physical plane, and only what is done by people in the physical world, cannot easily imagine that there is still another task which may even be far more vital and important than what is done externally on the physical plane. Work from the higher planes is far more important for mankind. Naturally, whoever wishes to work on the higher planes can only do so on condition that he has first completed the tasks of the physical plane. These Twelve had done so. For this reason their combined activity is of great importance as a service to mankind.

Our Brother Mark is led into the hall where the Twelve were accustomed to assemble, and there he sees in deep symbolic guise the nature of their combined activity. The individual contribution of each of the Brothers to this combined activity is expressed by an individual symbol above the seat of each one of the Twelve. Symbols of many kinds are to be seen there, expressing profoundly and in very different ways the contribution of each to the common task, which consists in spiritual activity, so that these streams flow together into a current of spiritual life which flows through the world and invigorates the rest of mankind. There are such brotherhoods, such centres from which such streams emanate and have their effect on the rest of mankind.

Above the seat of the Thirteenth, Brother Mark again sees the sign: the cross entwined with roses; this sign, which is at the same time a symbol for the four-fold nature of man, and in the red roses the symbol of the purified Blood or ego-principle, the principle of the higher man. And then we see what is to be overcome by this sign of the Rose-Cross, portrayed in a symbol of its own, to the right and left of the seat of the Thirteenth. On the right Mark sees the fiery-coloured dragon, representing the astral nature of man. It was well known in Christian Esotericism that man's soul can surrender to the three lower bodies. If it succumbs to them it is dominated by the lower life of the threefold bodily nature. This is expressed in astral experience by the dragon. It is no mere symbol but a very real sign. The dragon represents what has first to be overcome. In the passions, in those forces of astral fire, which are part of man's physical nature, in this dragon, Christian Esotericism, which has inspired this poem and which has spread through Europe, saw what mankind has received from the torrid zone, from the South. It is the South that has bestowed on mankind the fierce passion, tending chiefly towards the lower senses. The first impulse to fight and overcome it was divined in the influences streaming from the cooler North. The influence of the cooler North, the descent of the Ego into the threefold physical nature of man, is expressed according to the old symbol taken from the Constellation of the Bear and shows a hand thrust into the jaws of a bear. The lower physical nature expressed by the fiery dragon is overcome; and what has been preserved, represented by the higher rank of animal life, was expressed in the bear; and the Ego, which has developed beyond the dragon nature, was represented with profound appropriateness by the thrusting of a human hand into the bear's jaws. On both sides of the Rose-Cross there appears what must be overcome by the Rose-Cross, and it is the Rose-Cross which calls upon man to purify and raise himself more and more.

Thus the poem really describes the principle of Christianity in the profoundest manner and, above all, shows us what we ought to have before our mind's eye, particularly at a festival such as we are keeping to-day.

The eldest of the Brothers living here, and belonging to the Brotherhood, tells the Pilgrim Mark expressly that their combined activity is of the spirit, that it is spiritual life. This work for mankind on the spiritual plane has a particular meaning. The Brothers have experienced life's joys and sorrows; they have passed through conflicts outside these walls; they have accomplished tasks in the world; now they are here, but that does not mean that their work is at an end; the further development of mankind is their unending task. He is told: "You have seen as much now as can be shown to a novice to whom the first portal is opened. You have been shown in profound symbols what man's ascent should be. But the second portal hides greater mysteries: those of the influence of higher worlds on mankind. You can only learn these greater mysteries after lengthy preparation, only then can you enter through the other gate." Profound secrets are expressed in this poem.

*In him I scarce as virtue may denote
The power of good which e'en his youth inspired
And taught him to respect his father's word,
When harshly he his services required,*

*With duties burdening his leisure hours;
The son obeyed with ardour, never tired,
Like some poor boy who, friendless and astray,
Is glad to work for but a trifling pay.*

*On foot he joined the warriors in the field,
In lowering tempest and in dazzling light,
The horses he did tend, the meals prepare,
And armed the soldiers ready for the fight.
Oft as a messenger, both keen and fleet,
He hastened through the woods by day and night;
To live for others both in thought and action
Seemed but to give him joy and satisfaction.*

*And brave and cheerful always, in the strife
He sought the arrows scattered on the ground;
Then hastily he gathered curing herbs,
With which the burning wounds he cooled and bound;
And just as if his very touch were healing,
Ere long the sufferers were strong and sound;
How all regarded him with joy and pride!
Alone his father seemed not satisfied.*

*E'en as a ship, despite its heavy load
From port to port with speedy lightness sailing,
He bore the burden of his parents' word
That in obedience ne'er he should be failing;
As pleasure is for boys, for youths distinction,
For him his father's will was all-prevailing,
So that he might demand whate'er he would,
Each task was soon fulfilled, each test was stood.*

*At last the father yielded and acknowledged
The merit of his son in word and deed;
While of a sudden all his sternness vanished,
He gave the youth a swift and precious steed;
Henceforth a sword replaced the shorter #8224,
And from his lesser duties he was freed:
Thus, destined by his birth and well acquitted,
Into an Order he was now admitted.*

*Ah, well could I report for many days
Amazing things to every one who hears;
And higher than the most delightful tales
His life will be esteemed in coming years;
For what in poetry and fiction charms,
Yet to our mind incredible appears,
Will here with greater pleasure still be heard,
Because it has in real event occurred.*

*The name of him whom Providence has chosen
That wondrous things on earth he should achieve,
Whom I may often praise, though ne'er sufficing
Whose destiny we scarcely can believe,
His name — it is Humanus, Saint and wise one,
The best of men whom I did e'er perceive:
By origin another name he bears,
Which with illustrious ancestors he shares.*

*The aged brother would have spoken on.
Filled with the miracles that he did know,
And he shall gladden us for many weeks
With all the stirring facts he still can show;
But he was interrupted, just as now
His heart was pouring forth in fervent flow.
The others softly in and out had passed
And deemed it time to intervene at last.*

*When Mark had bowed before his hosts and prayed
In gratitude for the sustaining meal,
A bowl of crystal water he requested.
They brought what he had craved with friendly zeal.
Hereafter led him to their festive hall,
Therein a sight unwonted to reveal.
Of what he saw you soon will be aware,
For everything shall be described with care.*

*No ornament was here, the eye deluding,
A cross-arched vault rose sternly from the ground,
And thirteen chairs against the walls, he noticed.
Were like a pious chorus ranged around,
By clever hands full delicately carven;
In front of each a little desk he found.
Devotion seemed to fill the very air,
Fraternity and restfulness and prayer.*

*Above each chair was hung a special shield,
Thirteen in all the number he espied.
They seemed to be important, purposeful,
No boast of ancestors in shallow pride.
And brother Mark, with longing all aglow,
Desired to learn what secret they did hide:
Lo, in the middle one the mystic sign,
The cross which clustering roses do entwine.*

*Each object will arouse to life and action
The soul which to its inspiration yields;
Some places are adorned by swords and lances,
While helmets hang above these other shields;
Here battered weapons are to be discovered,*

*Such as one may collect on battle-fields:
There spears and banners, come from distant lands,
And even fetters here and iron bands!*

*Each brother sinking down before his chair,
In silent prayer profoundly wrapt they rested;
Then softly chanted fervent hymns of thanks,
By cheerfulness and piety suggested;
With mutual blessing they retired to sleep,
A short repose, by fancies unmolested:
But Mark remains, surrounded by a few,
Still wishing more attentively to view.*

*Though tired in body, full awake his mind,
Preoccupied by many hidden things:
For here, his thirst in raging flames appeasing,
A dragon is enthroned with fiery wings;
And here between his jaws a bear is holding
An arm from which the blood it loses springs,
Both shields, in distance corresponding quite,
Hung next the Rosy-Cross to left and right.*

*The paths were wonderful that led thee here,
The aged brother speaks unto his guest:
Oh let these symbols bid thee stay until
The many heroes' deeds we manifest;
Our mysteries we will confide to thee,
For what is here concealed, can ne'er be guessed;
Although thou wilt divine what here was done,
Endured and lost, and last what triumph won.*

*Do not believe that but of times gone by
The brother spake. Here wonders never fail;
And more and ever more thou shalt behold,
Until withdrawn is the enshrouding veil.
One portal only 'tis that thou hast passed:
And if thou feelst the call, O friend, prevail!
The foremost court as yet thou didst attain,
But worthy art the very core to gain.*

After a short sleep our Brother Mark next learns to divine something at least of the inner mysteries; in the powerful symbols he has let the ascent of the human Self work upon his soul, and when he is awakened by a sign from his short rest he comes to a window, a kind of lattice, and hears a strange threefold harmony sounding thrice, and the whole as if intermingled with the playing of a flute. He cannot look in, cannot see what is happening there in the room. We do not need to be told more than these few words as an indication of what awaits the man who approaches the spiritual worlds, when he is so far purified and perfected by his endeavours to develop his Self, that he has passed through the astral world and approaches the higher worlds — those worlds in which are to be found the spiritual archetypes of the things here on earth. When he approaches what is called in esoteric Christianity the world of heaven, he approaches it through a world of flowing colour; he

enters into a world of sound, into the harmony of the universe, the music of the spheres. The spiritual world is a world of sound. He who has developed his higher Self to the level of the higher worlds must become at home in this spiritual world. It is indeed Goethe who clearly expressed the higher experience of a world of spiritual sound in his Faust when he lets him be carried up to heaven and the world of heaven is revealed to him through sound.

*"The sun-orb sings, in emulation
'Mid brother-spheres, his ancient round:"*

The physical sun does not sing, but the spiritual sun sings. Goethe retains this image when, after long wanderings, Faust is exalted into the spiritual worlds (*Faust*, Second Part): "Sounding loud to spirit-hearing, see the new-born day appearing." "Pealing rays and trumpet-blazes — eye is blinded, ear amazes: The Unheard can no one hear!"

Through the symbolic world of the astral, man, if he evolves higher, approaches the world of the harmony of the spheres, the Devachanic domain, the spiritual music. Only softly, softly, does Brother Mark, after passing through the first portal, the astral portal, hear floating out to him the sound of the inner world behind our external world, of that world which transforms the lower astral world into that higher world which is pervaded by the triple harmony. And in reaching the higher world man's lower nature is transformed into the higher triad: our astral body is changed into the spirit-self, the etheric body into the life-spirit, the physical body into the spirit-man. In the music of the spheres he first senses the triple harmony of the higher nature, and in becoming one with this music of the spheres he has the first glimpse of the rejuvenation of man when he enters into union with the spiritual world. He sees, as in a dream, rejuvenated mankind float through the garden in the form of the three youths bearing three torches. This is the moment when Mark's soul has awakened in the morning from darkness, and when some darkness still remains; his soul has not yet penetrated it. But precisely at such a time the soul can gradually look into the spiritual world. It can look into the spiritual worlds as it can look when the summer noon is past, when the sun is losing in power and winter has come, and then at midnight the Christ-principle shines through the earth in the night of Christmas. Through the Christ-principle man is exalted to the higher trinity, represented for Brother Mark by the three youths who are the rejuvenated soul of man. This is the meaning of Goethe's lines:

*And until thou truly hast
This "dying and becoming,"
Thou art but a troubled guest
O'er the dark earth roaming.*

Every year anew Christmas will indicate to the one who understands esoteric Christianity that what happens in the external world is the mimicry, the gestures, of inner spiritual processes. The external power of the sun lives in the spring and summer sunshine. In the Scriptures this external power of the sun, which is only the forerunner of the inner spiritual power of the sun, is represented by John the Baptist, but the inner, spiritual power by Christ. And while the physical power of the sun slowly abates, the spiritual power rises and grows in strength until it reaches its zenith at Christmas time. This is the meaning underlying the words in the gospel of S. John: "He must increase, but I must decrease." And he increases until he appears where the sunforce has again attained the outer physical power. So that man may henceforth revere and worship in this external physical power the spiritual power of the sun, he must learn the meaning of the Christmas festival. For those who do not

know this meaning the new power of the sun is nothing but the old physical power returning. But whoever has become familiar with the impulses which esoteric Christianity, and especially the Christmas festival, should give him will see in the growing power of the solar body the external body of the *inner Christ* which shines through the earth, which gives it life and fruitfulness, so that the earth itself becomes the bearer of the Christ-power, of the Earth-Spirit. Thus what is born in every Christmas night will be born for us each time anew. Through Christ we shall experience inwardly the microcosm in the macrocosm, and this realisation will lead us higher and higher.

The festivals, which have long ago become something external to men, will again appear in their deep significance for mankind if they are led by this profound Esotericism to the knowledge that the occurrences of external nature, such as thunder and lightning, sunrise and sunset, moonrise and the setting of the moon, are the gestures and physiognomy of spiritual existence. And at the turning-points which are marked by our festivals we should realise that these are also times of important happenings in the spiritual world. Then we shall be led on to the rejuvenating spiritual power represented by the three youths, which the ego can only win by devoting itself to the outer world and not egotistically shutting itself away from it. But there is no devotion to the outer world if this external world is not permeated by the Spirit. That this Spirit shall appear every year anew for all men, even for the feeblest, as Light in the darkness, must be written every year afresh in the heart and soul of man.

This is what Goethe wished to express in this poem, *The Mysteries*. It is at once a Christmas poem and an Easter poem. It would indicate profound secrets of esoteric Christianity. If what he wished to indicate of the deep mysteries of Rosicrucian Christianity is allowed to work upon our souls, if we absorb its power even in part, then for some few at least in our environment we shall become missionaries; we shall succeed in fashioning this Festival once more into something filled with spirit and with life.

*When after short repose within his cell
A deep resounding bell awakes our guest,
His soul is filled with longing for devotion,
He rises quickly with unwearied zest
And hastens to the church, with all his heart
Responding to the gladly heard behest,
Obedient, peaceful and by prayer bestirred;
Alas! The door is locked, he stands deterred.*

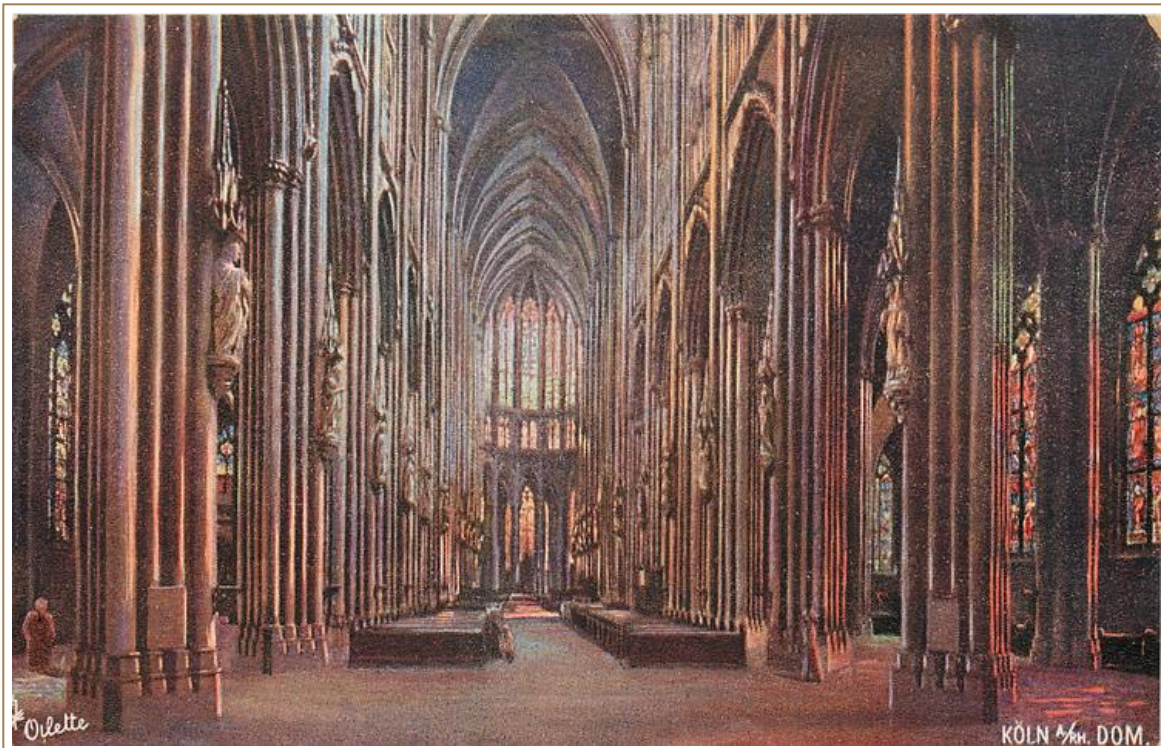
*But hark! a blow on dull resounding ore
Three times in equal intervals renewed,
No chime it seems to be of clock or bells,
From time to time with tones of flute imbued;
The floating music fills the heart with joy,
Mysterious 'tis and scarce to be construed,
It sounds like singing, solemn and entrancing,
To which the couples interlace in dancing.*

*Bewildered and by strange emotion moved,
He hastens to the window there to gaze;
The day is dawning in the distant east,
The sky o'erflown by lucent streaks of haze.
And may he trust his eyes? A mystic light*

*Is fleeting through the garden's winding ways;
Three youths with torches in their hands he sees
Who haste along the paths between the trees.*

*He clearly sees their wonderful apparel,
The white resplendent garments which they wear,
Their girdles made of intertwining roses,
The wreaths of flowers in their curly hair;
They seem to come from some nocturnal dances,
With joy of movement thrilled, enlived and fair.
But as the stars will fade, when day is near,
Extinguishing their torch, they disappear.*

More Image of the Cathedral



Another postcard of the Cathedral's interior, 1907



Another postcard of the Cathedral from the Rhine River, 1907





Top view of the Cathedral today




The Cathedral in 1944 – every structure around it, including the bridge, was destroyed while the Church remained and survived Allied bombings.^[3]

Notes

1.  The back of the postcard reads:
Cologne. The Cathedral. The great glory of Cologne and the most magnificent Gothic Edifice in the world. The foundation stone was laid 1248 and 200 years was taken for its erection. Early in the 19th century extensive restoration works were commenced and in 1880 the cathedral was completed. It is 570 feet long and 200 feet wide. The height of the roof is 200 feet and the Western Towers are 515 feet high.
2.  The bones of the Three Wise Men are housed at the cathedral in the Shrine of the Magi, something that has always attracted pilgrims from as far back as the Middle Ages. The bones are the reason that the cathedral was built, as it was decided that they needed a proper home. There is even a day that is dedicated to people paying their respects to the bones every January 6th. The shrine of the Three Wise Men was designed and built by a goldsmith, in 1182, Nicholas of Verdun.



Shrine of the Magi in the Cologne Cathedral

3.  Cologne, Germany, the famous Cathedral city in March 1945. Eight months after D-Day, the US troops are now on the cusp of a long-awaited milestone. Nazi propaganda has declared Cologne to be defended to the last cartridge. The impending battle has dominated the headlines of the world press for days. Dozens of correspondents, photographers, and cameramen have followed the US troops in order to report in detail on the event. Some of the shots taken by the cameramen of the US military are still perceived in the USA as the most famous scenes of World War II. The battle for Cologne ends with a final, dramatic tank duel at the base of the Cathedral. The film footage makes the engagement the most famous tank duel in the world. However, who the people in those scenes were still remains unknown. Based on several years of research into the background and contemporary witnesses, this documentary reconstructs the advance of US troops into Cologne and shows crucial moments of the battle for the city in March 5 -7, 1945.



Screenshot of the tank battle

Video Source



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