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THE CASE OF VALENTIN TOMBERG-ANTHROPOSOPHIST AND CATHOLIC

PART I

It is now more than forty years since I was introduced to the work of Valentin Tomberg, born In St Petersburg, Russia, in February 27,1900 (the same birth day as Rudolf Steiner's), who migrated to newly Independent Estonia after the Bolshevik Revolution and thereafter called himself an Estonian. The friend who had Introduced me to Anthroposophy a dozen or so years earlier gave me a copy of Tomberg's *Studies in the Old Testament* published and distributed in England by the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain. It carried an introduction by Elizabeth Vreede, formerly a member of the Vorstand in Dornach but excluded from it in 1935. Later lectures of Tomberg's on the Foundation Stone were Introduced and recommended by George Adams (Kauffman), a long time leading member of the Society. The lectures were translated by Miss R.H. Bruce, likewise an English member.. Dr Vreede in her Introduction makes it clear that no 'authority' of the kind freely accorded to Rudolf Steiner as the founder of Anthroposophy should be granted to Tomberg, but that his lectures should be studied with an open mind, 'refraining from over-hasty judgments or premature conclusions', and readers should 'weigh for themselves 'whatever in these pages reaches out beyond Dr. Steiner's teachings'.

In this spirit I read these lectures at the time, and many times since. I found them moving and eloquent, exceptionally Interesting In his discussions of the prophet Daniel, scarcely if ever referred to by Rudolf Steiner, and wonderfully stimulating in his interpretations of David and Solomon. However, as I had left England In 1937, aside from this gift I knew nothing of his other lectures translated and published In the 1930's (also by the AS in GB), and did not hear of Tomberg again until the early 1980's when William and Nina Rebensburger republished all the old lectures, and a few that had not been translated or published before I now became aware through an American friend of the high esteem In which Tomberg was held In certain circles there and in Germany.

In spite of (or perhaps because of) the sponsorship of the AS in GB, which since 1935 was no longer affiliated to the General Anthroposophical Society, evidently there were some reservations In Dornach about Tomberg's work. From Mary Steiner's correspondence recently made available, it seems clear that she shared them. In a letter of 1936 she reminded her correspondent that Rudolf Steiner had said that no one should teach esoterically before the age of forty. Tomberg had given his lectures on the Old Testament at the age of 33, and gave esoteric lectures consistently until, as Georg Unger tells us in an article that will be referred to later, he left the Society In August, 1938 when he still had not attained the age of 40. In all these lectures that he gave In Britain and other western European countries he stressed his debt to the pioneer work of Rudolf Steiner: "Humanity owes Rudolf Steiner an enormous debt for raising among men - by the imparting a lot of spiritual facts - such questions as would not otherwise have been wakened. Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy is a path which not only answers the questions which already exist, but which also sets new and greater questions before the soul. Because this is so, the spiritual world will not lapse into silence - the truth which flows forth from it will not run dry". Perhaps his most complete and unequivocal tribute to Steiner occurs In his Introduction to his three studies on the Foundation Stone, dated 1936. Here he says: "The author has for the past eleven years, not only regarded it (The Foundation Stone mantram) as the foundation stone of all anthroposophical study, but has endeavored to make it the foundation of all his written or spoken work. In whatever task he had to perform he has taken the Foundation Stone as his guide. It had proved an invaluable help and the following thesis is intended as an expression of gratitude for that help - an expression of gratitude to Rudolf Steiner". Lastly, a sentence from his New Testament studies, Chapter 3: "Indeed, we are justified in maintaining that the spiritual exercise described In An Outline of Occult Science contains in itself a no less prophetic content in a summarized form than many a chapter of the Prophets of the Old Testament". Neither this book nor the exercise (The Rosicrucian meditation given In Chapter 5) Is given any mention in Tomberg's last book *Meditations on the Tarot* which will be the main subject of this article.

I have no personal knowledge of the difficulties he experienced with members of the Anthroposophical Society which caused him to withdraw from it in 1938. But in the last lecture of the collection published under the title Inner Development given In Rotterdam in August 1933 (the month of his withdrawal if Dr. Unger is correct) he speaks very severely of the tendency of anthroposophists to rely on what Steiner said, constantly referring back to him instead of doing esoteric research on their own, knocking nails Into Steiner's coffin, as he vividly puts it, every time they say "The Doctor said." Indeed, he goes so far as to say that this represents the 'entombment', the last stage of the Christian esoteric path that Steiner had taken during his lifetime. Unquestionably this tendency exists and has always existed in the Society, but when he spoke in this way to members it is understandable that Tomberg would not have endeared himself to them, the more so since by this time, soon after moving from Estonia to Rotterdam, he had won himself a following of faithful admirers who studied with him and evidently regarded him as an esoteric teacher who, like Rudolf Steiner, spoke from his own knowledge. Possibly many of them looked upon him as the 'successor' to Steiner whom he had never indicated in his lifetime.

As a footnote to these remarks it is worth noting that twenty-five years later when Tomberg was writing the Tarot he obliquely returned to the same charge, saying that the "Anthroposophical Movement has become such as it is since the death of its founder: a movement for cultural reform (art, education, medicine, agriculture) deprived of living esotericism, i.e. without mysticism, without gnosis and without magic, which have been replaced by lectures, study and Intellectual work aiming at establishing a concordance between the writings and stenographed lectures of the master (!)" (p. 403) One wonders what he would have said If he had lived to read the works of his fellow-Russian Sergei Prokofieff and listened to his lectures. Could he have denied their truly esoteric content, even though they are entirely based on the work of Rudolf Steiner, and never, like some of Tomberg's lectures, add questionable material that does not seem, at least to me, consonant with what Steiner taught, even if it does not directly contradict him.. I am thinking especially of his description of Lucifer, who, Tomberg says, as early as his Old Testament lectures in 1933 (Lecture 8) "experienced an inner metamorphosis through the Mystery of Golgotha." In his New Testament lectures (Lecture 11) he elaborates on this by saying that Lucifer at the Crucifixion recognized the nature of the sacrifice of Christ and thereafter turned to him in love - and thereafter distanced himself from Luciferic beings whose deeds he no longer approves.

It Is true that Steiner in many places acknowledges the greatness and majesty of Lucifer and speaks of his task as man's helper in the spiritual worlds between death and rebirth, while in one isolated passage he speaks of Lucifer's presence among the apostles during their experience at Pentecost. Tomberg goes much further than this. In his last lecture on the New Testament he offers another beautiful Imagination of Pentecost, the result, he tells us, of work done in Bodhisattva group of friends gathered together to celebrate

the Whitsuntide festival in 1938. I find this picture moving and Interesting if not wholly convincing. What of Steiner's statement that Lucifer's redemption will come only at the end of earth evolution when he will turn to the Christ in love, and that this redemption will be brought about by man's actions, - man having to play an essential part in making the work of Lucifer no longer necessary? There are other examples of lesser importance, some of which will be discussed later.

I can well understand how uneasy many anthroposophists will have felt In the 1930's when this young man was expounding his ideas to his admirers in Holland after moving from Estonia in early 1938, and that such a man as Dr Zeylmans van Emmichoven, head of the Dutch Society chosen for the position by Rudolf Steiner and a highly developed individuality in his own right, may well have played a part in Tomberg's withdrawal. Zeylmans was no less staunch a believer in the centrality of Christianity within anthroposophy, as evidenced even in the title of his book *The Reality in which We live* (that Reality being Christ) and his own later work on the Foundation Stone. But his esotericism was very different from Tomberg's, and it may well be that Tomberg felt he could not work in a Society headed by Zeylmans. Nevertheless Tomberg's subsequent conversion to Roman Catholicism must have been wholly unexpected by him and others, and I think he would have been appalled if he had lived to read Tomberg's *Meditations on the Tarot*, completed in 1967 but written over many years (Zeylmans died In 1961), in which Tomberg virtually repudiated all his anthroposophy spoke condescendingly of Rudolf Steiner, and, in a book filled with quotations, never quoted a single line from any of Steiner's works. though he does acknowledge, a little grudgingly, one cannot help feeling, that Steiner had some good things to say, Including in his Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and its Attainment, the only book he mentions by name.

This brings me to Tomberg's remarkable work, Meditations on the Tarot I read about half of it in the original French edition of 1980, but returned my borrowed copy when a new edition appeared from the same publisher (Aubier-Montaigne) in 1984. Although the book was written in the French language because of the long and unique occult tradition In France, as Tomberg tells us, a German translation was published In 1972 presumably from a French manuscript that must have been circulated abroad prior to the French publication. A revised German edition from a different publisher appeared in 1983 and an English edition (Warwick, N.Y.: Amity House) appeared In 1985, based, according to Robert Powell, the translator, on the original French manuscript. I have no explanation as to how it happened that a German translation appeared In 1972 while the author was still alive, although he had given instructions for it to be published both anonymously and posthumously.

The publishing details are not given merely for the sake of academic convention but because of two major changes between the first and second editions in French. Yet Robert Powell's English translation is in conformity with the second French edition, and omits a crucial passage that appeared In the first. Both French editions have introductions, whereas the English language edition has neither. In the first French edition the introduction is written in such a way that there could be no possible doubt that the author was indeed Valentin Tomberg. Details of his life make this clear, even though the author's actual name is not given. In the second French edition the introduction is by no less a personage than Hans Urs von Balthasar, archbishop of Basel, who is not identified as such by the publishers but it contains no indication or even hint of the identity of the author. Nevertheless in view of the first introduction there can be no doubt as to the author and of course it will be assumed here. It may be readily understood why the Archbishop of Basel would not wish to involve his Church in this publication, thus giving it a more or less official imprimatur, now no longer required. Curiously enough, Powell in his book *Hermetic Astrology* criticized with some asperity by Dr. George Unger In the July number of the Goetheanum News (1988) for, among other things steadfastly refuses to disclose the identity of Tomberg by name, while making it clear enough whom he was talking about when he identifies him as the Maitreya-Bodhisattva who according to Steiner incarnates in 'almost every century', and was incarnated already In 1911 when he spoke and then goes on to say that he entered the Catholic Church, and wrote the Meditations on the Tarot. Powell claims that he was able to identify Tomberg as the Bodhisattva who in the fifth millenium AD will become the Maitreya Buddha through his 'hermetic astrology'. Unfamiliar as I am with this astrology I am unable to comment intelligently on this proposition, but I shall be marshalling other arguments against it at the end of this article.

Aside from the different Introductions in the two French editions of the Tarot a passage on the infallibility of the Pope has been omitted from the second edition, as it was also from Powell's English translation. I do not have a copy of the first French edition in front of me, but from my recollection and my notes the passage occurred in the author's meditation on the Pope, the fifth card of the Tarot. It was extremely dogmatic, and gave many arguments as to why the Pope must be infallible. That Tomberg wrote this passage, and that it must have appeared in his 'original French manuscript' only to be excised by his editors is confirmed by that was probably a lapse on the part of the wielder of the editorial scissors, since in his meditation on Card XII (the Hanged Man, p.330 in the English translation) Tomberg in speaking of papal infallibility, refers the reader back to the fifth card, which, he says, contains further material on infallibility, which it no longer does. It is easily understandable that a high ecclesiastic like the Archbishop of Basel and others would not have wished to draw special attention to the doctrine of papal infallibility, bearing in mind the controversy that arose when Pope Pious IX, after proclaiming as dogma the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary in 1854 and then proceeded to issue a syllabus of errors propounded by modern thinkers in 1864, completing this work by proclaiming the infallibility of the Pope in 1870. The last two were bitterly contested by many Catholics and resulted in their abandonment of Catholicism rather than accepting papal infallibility. Or a theologian might well have considered the case of St Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages, whose doctrines were condemned only a few years after his death, only to be declared later (by a Dominican Pope) 'miraculous' while Thomas himself was canonized and given the title of Doctor Angelicus. Better then to take out Tomberg's commentaries on such a thorny subject, however cogent his arguments. In so many other respects his book might be welcomed by thinking Catholics - as it evidently has been, if one may judge by the lavish praise bestowed on it by eminent Roman Catholics (no Protestants!) printed on the back cover of the English edition.

By the time Tomberg was writing his Tarot he had been a Catholic for more than twenty years, and his devotion to the Church is evident throughout. Not only does he accept and justify papal infallibility, but he approves of the cult of saints and the efficacy of prayer to them, he explains the role of relics in healing (p. 420), he never tires of extolling the traditional Catholic virtues of obedience, poverty and chastity as essential for the cultivation of the inner life, explains in detail why repetitive prayers such as are required in the Catholic novena and the use of the rosary in meditation ought to form part of the religious life of all Christians (p.515) in that it "carries prayer over from the astral to the etheric body". "The hundred and fifty *Ave Marias* and the fifteen *Pater Nosters* of the rosary prayer introduce one to the universal river of spiritual life....and thus lead one to joyous serenity". All his biblical quotations are given in the Latin of the Vulgate as also is the Creed, and throughout his book there are constant references to the greatness of the Catholic Mass. Here and there in the book, however, there are criticisms of the Church for establishing and continuing to so long the inquisition, and in one passage he speaks of the "parasitic double" of Catholicism the existence of which it would be futile to deny, which manifests itself as fanaticism, cruelty, 'diplomatic wisdom', and excessive pretensions. But this, as far as I have been able to discover is really the sum total of criticism of his Church that he offers in his book.

So It should be read as what it claims to be, namely an attempt to persuade the Church to accept and integrate within its thought all that can be taken from Christian Hermeticism, which is expounded throughout the book with the utmost sincerity and virtuosity. It takes the form of twenty-two meditations on the major Tarot cards, which the author interprets in his own manner, often involving long digressions when the author's own views on the general subject of the particular card. Many of the meditations are to me quite wonderful, and all are interesting, and the work, like Tomberg's earlier studies in his anthroposophical period, is suffused with Christian feeling, and at times rises to heights of eloquence that can scarcely be found elsewhere, especially not in modern theological writings. But Tomberg is surely not a theologian, he was much more nearly a mystic, and he quotes amply from such early mystics as St. Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross. His devotion to Christ and Christianity as he conceives of them is evident on every page. But as a Christian 'hermeticist' he shows a profound knowledge of earlier occultists as well as more recent

PART II

ones like Ellphes Levi and 'Papus' both French occultists of the nineteenth century. Wherever he can he connects his meditations to teachings of earlier occultists. Hence the numerous quotations, nearly all of them interesting and some perfectly to the point of what he is saying he claims that the hermetic tradition has existed from remote antiquity, but I think the work he cites most often is the Jewish Kabbala, for which he had the greatest respect. At one point he names the 'friends' now in the spiritual world whose 'fraternal embraces' he has felt. These were Papus, Guaita, Peladan. Eliphas Lévi and Louis Claude de St Martin, (p.391) No acknowledgment to Rudolf Steiner. Though he was In the spiritual world like the others, perhaps he was no longer a 'friend'!

The Meditations on the Tarot runs to 658 pages in the English translation, more in the French. After reading it carefully twice and partially a third time I am unable to detect any Influence of the work of Rudolf Steiner except for a few brief phrases that may have been taken from him. For example he calls Christ the Lord of Karma (p.566), he speaks of the archangels as national folk-spirits on a few occasions, and on page 512 he says that the whole purpose of the Jewish people was to provide the body for the incarnation of the Christ. I do not think he could have derived these notions from previous occult writers. But the divergence from Steiner's teachings is considerable, to such an extent that surely no one could have suspected that he was a student and lecturer on anthroposophy for, by his own account, approximately fourteen years and this in spite of his acknowledgments of his debt to Steiner in his Anthroposophical period. The esotericism that Powell rightly emphasizes he wished to flow from his hermeticism into the Catholic Church (p.320 of Hermetic Astrology) owed virtually nothing to anthroposophy since, as we have seen, all esotericism had been lost in the Anthroposophical Society in Tomberg's view. His own esotericism was either the result of his own work or stemmed from the work of earlier occult writers. He also infused his work with a boundless enthusiasm and an extremely powerful and acute thinking (he earned a doctorate in law from the University of Cologne). But throughout his work he does not claim to be original, preferring to stress the continuity of the hermetic tradition and its consonance with Catholic Christian thought. What he does make abundantly clear is how much he owes to his practice of meditation, on which indeed he seems to speak with authority. Even in his anthroposophical days what he says about meditation surely constitutes some of his best work (for example in his *Inner Development* lectures. All his life he seems to have meditated profoundly, and this cannot be denied.

In one of his rare autobiographical passages he tells us how at the age of twenty he became part of an esoteric circle of Russians which had three classes, of which the highest was called the 'Rosicrucian'. Members of this circle 'initiated' him into all its secrets, and in this sense he was undoubtedly an 'initiate'. (Tarot, page 590) It was with this group that he first recognized the value of the Tarot cards as aids to meditation. There is therefore no reason to doubt that when a few years later he became acquainted with anthroposophy he had already embarked on his individual spiritual path, no doubt accounting for the welcome he received from so many anthroposophists, who recognized that he could speak from his own experience and did not have to rely exclusively on Rudolf Steiner. Although his own less precise instructions for higher development differ in some respects from those of Rudolf Steiner, even in the Tarot he speaks with respect of Steiner's Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment (p.402)

This brings me to the necessity of giving some consideration to the question as to how far he ever did become at heart an anthroposophist, or whether at all times he remained the Christian Hermeticist he had already by his own account become before ever he entered anthroposophy and became a member of the Society. The evidence for this can be drawn only from his last book which is a kind of summa of his beliefs, and comparing what he said there with what he had said earlier in his anthroposophical days. I have already noted how often he acknowledged his debt to Steiner in his earlier lectures. But it should be said that his interpretations are always his own, to which he added his incomparable eloquence. In his Introduction to his studies on the New Testament Tomberg modestly wonders whether his studies were worth publishing in view of the fact that priests of the Christian Community had already published their own work on some of the subjects to be treated. In my own opinion what Tomberg had to say, both on the Old and New Testaments was well worth bringing to the attention of a wider public than could ever have heard his lectures. Nevertheless, I do not find his studies to have a content so vastly different or superior to the many studies of Emil Bock, or indeed Rudolf Frieling, whose beautiful Old Testament Studies were recently published by Floris. Yet these priests based themselves firmly on Steiner's teachings. The same might be said of Tomberg's original interpretation of Daniel (Old Testament, chapter 10) whom he called -undoubtedly correctly - an initiate rather than a true Prophet, I do not think Steiner would have repudiated anything Tomberg says in this study.

However, both in his scriptural studies when he was an anthroposophist and, more obviously, in the Tarot, it seems to me that Tomberg either never understood or was unwilling to accept Steiner's crucial teachings on the evolution of consciousness in history. For example in his very first Old Testament study he gives an account of the Holy Rishis and the first post-Atlantean 'civilization' which ends in a criticism of this civilization for its other-worldliness, suggesting that it failed, and had therefore to be replaced by the Old Persian civilization which in turn failed, and so had to be replaced by the Egypto-Chaldean civilization This is not at all Steiner's view. Each in turn, according to him, did indeed perform its evolutionary task in time, developing the etheric body (Ancient India), the astral body (Ancient Persia), then passing on to the sentient soul with the Egypto-Chaldean and the Intellectual soul with the Greco Roman civilization. Each of these phases was a necessary step in the evolution of human consciousness, and was in no way due to the 'failure' of its predecessor, as Tomberg insists. The same series of phases is also observable in the individual human life. In his uncompleted studies in the Apocalypse which deal with the Apostles letters to the seven churches in Asia Tomberg follows Steiner closely and gives the same interpretation, namely that each church represents a single post-Atlantean epoch. He also deals in much the same way as Steiner with the successive soul configurations. He was therefore not ignorant of Steiner's teachings on the subject. But did he accept them? Or did he abandon them when he entered the Catholic Church because they would conflict with his (and its notion of the continuity of tradition? In the Tarot Tomberg always writes as if human beings had always looked on the world in the same way, and that it was therefore quite appropriate to quote the Upanishads, 'Hermes Trismegistos', or early Christian

fathers like Origen as if they lived in his own age of the consciousness soul. The Roman Catholic Church does precisely the same thing, always proclaiming its dogmas as if the consciousness of human beings was the same new as it was, for example in the time of Christ. Steiner's message took the form it did because we are now living in the age of the consciousness soul, and it is to this soul that it was addressed.

It seems that it is for the same reason that Tomberg is unable to acknowledge the crucial character of the age of Michael. He does not often refer in the Tarot to Michael at all, and when he does it is invariably in regard to his tasks in the spiritual world, and not in the work he is doing for humanity in our present age. In his diary written in 1933 quoted by Powell (Hermetic Astrology, page 325) he recognizes the importance of the year 1879 when Michael became the spirit of the age, but he relates this, as we shall see later, solely to the 'Second Coming' of Christ. In his last series of lectures given while he was still an anthroposophist (*Inner Development*) he devoted much of his first lecture to Michael's cosmic tasks, using Steiner's revelations on the subject to the full. But even so he does not mention at all Michael's task as Spirit of the Age guiding humanity for the next two hundred years' though he speaks with his usual eloquence of the future forming of a Michael Community of 'knights of the threshold' to be realized in the sixth cultural epoch (p.13). Did Tomberg so concentrate on the esoteric that he lost all understanding for the exoteric world in which we all live?

As might have been expected Tomberg's failure to grasp or accept Steiner's teachings on the evolution of consciousness in the course of human history, what he has to say about reincarnation in the Tarot seems to me to lack clarity, as he discusses the subject in different ways in three different Letters, Card 4 (the Emperor, Card 10 (The Wheel of Fortune) and Card 13 (Death) If he had confined himself to what he wrote on Card 4 (pp. 93-94) all would have been clear. This is the passage of which I repeat only a few cogent sentences". Reincarnation", he states, "is in no way a theory which one has to believe or not believe...For the hermeticist it is a fact which is either known through experience or ignored... Reincarnation is neither a dogma i.e. a truth necessary for salvation, nor a heresy, i.e. contrary to a truth necessary for salvation. It is just a fact of experience, as blood and heredity are". He explains that priests, doctors and judges cannot always take this knowledge into account because they have to concentrate on the tasks of the present and should not be distracted from these. In his Letter on Card 10 Tomberg takes up the question, of what he calls 'biological continuity', (heredity), 'psychic continuity' (reincarnation) , and 'spiritual continuity' or the work of salvation.. "Heredity, reincarnation and the work of salvation - reincarnation being the intermediary principle between the other two - therefore together constitute the cosmic drama of evolution". (p. 256).

It seems to me that Tomberg is staying in a different way the essence of Steiner's teaching of ultimate salvation after evolving through numerous incarnations. But in his Meditation on Death (Card 13, NOT quoted by Powell) he seems to me to be backtracking, as the Catholic teaching of purgatory forces itself on his attention, and in the process for once he is, to me at least, seriously obscure. I must have read what he says on this thirteenth card more than a dozen times, and I still do not know just what he thought on this subject - especially if his Meditation on this card is later in time than the others quoted. First he quotes St John of the Cross on the three stages of the soul's union with God , purification, Illumination and union. "Purgatory", he says is purification (catharsis) which precedes illumination or heaven, and heaven is the state of the soul when it arrives at union with God, analogous to that experienced by mystics during their terrestrial life". Then he goes on to say that for such souls it is (as St John of the Cross says) a 'greater perfection' to remember the earth, and this is why saints (presumably from heaven) can help souls on earth. Others can have a 'holy birth', to carry out a divinely ordained mission. "A true mission on the earth serves the cause of the ennoblement and spiritualization of that which is (his emphasis) i.e. Of what lives as tradition (pp. 352-3). These, I take it, are the avatars of whom Rudolf Steiner spoke in his Berlin lecture of February 15, 1909. But then Tomberg a few pages later launches into a discussion of ghosts, quoting Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, and how a human being 'possessed by strong desires, passions and intentions' can animate a double consisting of these. Then "the 'self' of such an occultist would then be allied to this double who is the bearer of his memory and intellect, and could incarnate himself anew - avoiding purgatory and the whole path of purification illumination and union which is the lot of the human soul after death (my emphasis). He then mentions the 'bold program of the 'serpent of Genesis' but real and realizable, aiming at a mankind which would be composed of the living and of ghosts, with "the latter reincarnating almost without delay and avoiding the way which leads through purgatory to heaven".

"You see now, dear Unknown Friend, why the Church was hostile to the doctrine of reincarnation, although the fact of repeated Incarnations was known - and could not remain unknown - to a large number of people faithful to the Church with authentic spiritual experience. The deeper reason is the danger of reincarnations by way of the ghost, where one avoids the path of purification (in purgatory) illumination and celestial union. For humanity could succumb to the temptation of preparing for a future terrestrial life instead of preparing for purgatory and heaven, during earthly life...One ought during earthly life to prepare for this meeting with a fully awakened consciousness, which is purgatory, and for the experience of the presence of the Eternal, which is heaven, and not to prepare for a future terrestrial life, which would amount to the crystallization of the 'body' of a ghost". He then goes on to say that the attempt to 'popularize' the idea of reincarnation, which belongs to esoteric (i.e.) intimate experience leads to the "practical abuse of the fact of reincarnation. I implore you, therefore, dear Unknown Friend, to have the good will to examine, in the light of moral conscience, the question whether the way of treating reincarnation in exoteric teaching that has been adopted and is practiced in general both by representatives of the French occult movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and by Theosophists, Anthroposophists, Rosicrucians, etc, is justified and desirable. I may add that in the last analysis it is a matter not only of the moral danger of evading purgatory, but also of re-placing one immortality by another namely that of God by that of the serpent." (p.358-362). It is understandable why Robert Powell, who in his book claimed (p.157) to have discovered a 'law of reincarnation' (dealt with by Dr. Unger in the above mentioned article in the Goetheanum News) and devoted many pages and charts to the discussion of cases investigated by Rudolf Steiner chose to rely only on Tomberg's Meditation on Card 4, chose to ignore this passage from Card 13, warning against 'treating reincarnation in exoteric teaching) as Steiner had done before him. If one reads only this discussion on Card 13 it seems difficult to escape the conclusion that at this in his life did not regard reincarnation as the normal destiny of man, but rather that he should pass through purgatory and then attain illumination or heaven - the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church and the major reason, in the eyes of most of its adherents for its very existence. It is also worth noting that in his anthroposophical days Tomberg had an excellent understanding of kamaloka, as distinct from the Catholic purgatory (see especially his New Testament Studies 1:15 and IV 11) and neither concept nor name is appearing in the Tarot. Throughout the Tarot, as might be expected, he has much to say about the Virgin Mary, whom he usually calls Mary Sophia, and these are surely some of the most moving passages in his book. Including an explanation of the Assumption, or her reception into heaven immediately after her earthly death. He makes no mention of the two Marys spoken of by Rudolf Steiner, nor indeed does he discuss this matter in his earlier lectures, though he does make one passing allusion to the two Jesus children (Old Testament, Lecture 3). In Old Testament XII he

appears to make the assumption that the Zarathustra ego was present in Jesus from the beginning and not only from the twelfth year. In his account of the Marriage at Cana (New Testament VII) he explains the miracle of turning the water into wine without mention of the role of the mother, as stressed by Steiner. It does therefore seem possible that in spite of following Steiner quite closely in his Gospel lectures Tomberg already had different ideas from his on the subject of the Virgin Mary. Nevertheless he does quote in his *Inner development* Lecture I a verse of Steiner (also a gnostic teaching) about how Sophia had been 'slain' by Lucifer, and he goes into detail (as also in his last New Testament study) about the consequences of Lucifer's temporary 'imprisonment' of Sophia, an imprisonment from which she was freed at the Crucifixion when Lucifer himself was redeemed. There is no mention or even hint of any such imprisonment in the Tarot, nor does the 'serpent' as Tomberg calls Lucifer, have anything whatever to do with Sophia. Moreover it was Mary-Sophia who was present at the Crucifixion, contrary to Steiner's statement that Mary the mother of Jesus had already been taken back into the spiritual world, leaving the mother of the Solomon Jesus child to take her place on earth and unite with her later as described in The Fifth Gospel. It seems more than possible that Tomberg never saw the Fifth Gospel lectures. At all events I have not been able to trace any use of either in his period within anthroposophy or in the Tarot.

Perhaps the most glaring of the differences between Tomberg in his anthroposophical days and when writing the Tarot is to be found in his discussions of evil. In the earlier period he understood very well the nature of evil and the distinction between Lucifer and Ahriman, whereas in his letter on the Devil (in my opinion the weakest of all his Letters) he pours scorn on anthroposophists who "are led to classify thousands of facts from the point of view of the category of evil which is revealed through them - which suffice to occupy them for the whole day". (p. 402) But Tomberg himself in earlier days spoke clearly and often of the two different tempters, and in discussing the temptations of Christ he made, following Steiner's clear and helpful distinction between them, including the order of the temptations (New Testament, Lecture 1, pp. 16ff) In the Tarot his description of the temptations is quite different, he makes no distinction between the tempters, he changes the order from that given by Steiner, and his explanations and descriptions are guaranteed to cause no qualms to any Catholic as they are virtually identical though in his descriptions of the hierarchies of evil and the many different kind of demons he enters into a realm few Catholics could be willing to explore with him. On the whole, however, he prefers to combine Lucifer and Ahriman in the person of Mephistopheles, in this following Goethe, as Steiner often pointed out. Nevertheless Tomberg has a point when he more or less apologizes for his Meditation on Card 15 (The Devil) since he says that all the realms of good can be penetrated through meditation, whereas no one should meditate on evil, but only observe it from without.

Lastly, by far the most important omission in the Tarot is any mention of the Etheric Christ, and his 'Second Coming' in the etheric world in this century. In his anthroposophical days Tomberg devoted many lectures, including an entire group of lectures to the subject. It is also stressed by Powell in his book, although he never at any time alludes to the fact that Tomberg says nothing about it in the work he regards (with good reason) as the culmination of Tomberg's work - the Meditations on the Tarot. As early as 1933, according to an unpublished extract from his dairies incorporated into his book (Hermetic Astrology, p.324-7), Tomberg had a vision of how the Christ from 1579 onward, the beginning of Michael's rulership as Spirit of the Age, gradually approached the angelic or etheric world, moving from one realm of the hierarchies to the other until he reached the angelic realm about 1933. This is original with Tomberg and is not to be found anywhere in Steiner. It must therefore rest on his authority alone. According to Tomberg in this diary the descent of Christ through the hierarchies was met with some 'hindrances' in the realms of the Spirits of Motion (Dynameis) and of the archangels, mirrored in earthly events, among which he specifies the Russo-Turkish War which might easily have led to a world war, and the actual world war of 1914 to 1918.

PART III

Unfortunately for his thesis, the Russo-Turkish war of 1377-78 was brought to an end in 1878 by the combined efforts of the Great Powers by the Treaty of Berlin - thus a year before Michael began his rulership. Powell in a recent article (Shoreline, November 1988) corrects this error, bringing the descent into relation with the earthly life of Rudolf Steiner (born 1861) in accordance with his astrological findings. He gives the duration of the passage through the hierarchies as twelve years for each. The Russo Turkish War then does fall into the period assigned to the Dynameis.

Like Dr. Unger I can venture to say anything about the reappearance of Christ in the etheric world only with great hesitation. But in view of Powell's conviction that Tomberg was the Maitreya Bodhisattva (the shorthand term he prefers which will be used here) It is crucial to say at least something about it, using only what Steiner revealed. Ever since the Mystery of Golgotha, and not only in the period since 1930, Christ had been in the etheric realm, where it has been possible for some human beings to perceive him through grace, beginning of course with St. Paul on the road to Damascus. Before the Mystery of Golgotha he had dwelt in the realm of the sun, and Steiner often described how discarnate and hierarchical beings were able to perceive his departure for the earth. In the nineteenth century while he was in the etheric realm and his consciousness was that of an angel he experienced what Steiner called a second 'crucifixion' a result of the materialistic thoughts of men which then filled that realm. What followed then is deeply mysterious, and Steiner's words must be understood and interpreted, as far as we can, by each anthroposophist individually. These are his words:

"Christ came into the old Hebrew race and was led to his death within it. The angelic being, who since then has been the outer form assumed by Christ suffered an extinction of consciousness as a result of the opposing materialistic forces that had been brought into the spiritual worlds by materialistic human souls who had passed through the gate of death. The onset of unconsciousness in the spiritual worlds will lead to the resurrection of the Christ-consciousness in the souls of men on earth between birth and death in the twentieth century. In a certain sense it may therefore be said that from the twentieth century onwards, what has been lost by mankind in the way of consciousness will arise again for clairvoyant vision. At first only a few, and then an increasing number of human beings in the twentieth century will be capable of perceiving the manifestation of the Etheric Christ - that is to say Christ in the form of an angel. It was for the sake of humanity that there was what may be called an extinction of consciousness in the worlds immediately above our earthly world. In which Christ has been visible in the period between the Mystery of Golgotha and the present day....Thus the Christ-consciousness may be united with the earthly consciousness of man from our time on into the future. For the dying of the Christ-consciousness in the sphere of the angels in the nineteenth century signifies the resurrection of the direct consciousness of Christ - that is to say, Christ's life will be felt in the sonus of men more and more as a direct personal experience from the twentieth century onwards....Twice already Christ has been crucified; once physically at the beginning of our era, and a second time spiritually in the nineteenth century. in the way described above. It could be said that mankind experienced the resurrection of his body in that former time and will experience the resurrection of his consciousness from the twentieth century onwards".

For me these mysterious words were greatly clarified when I heard Carl Stegmann, the Christian Community priest, speak about them in words he incorporated into a privately published book, *The Other America*. I do not see that I can do better than quote what he said:

"There is an invisible but mighty happening going on behind the external course of events in our time, completely unconscious in man, but determining him. After the extinction of the Christ consciousness in the spiritual world, there begins, as it were, the sounding of the last and greatest trumpet from the Apocalypse, which announces the awakening of the Christ consciousness in man, not the experiencing of Christ, which was always present, but the experiencing of the Christ consciousness, Christ transforms the angel consciousness, which has died, in the etheric world, and this begins the resurrection of the Christ consciousness in man....Man becomes capable of thinking angel thoughts, spirit thoughts upon earth. Christ thoughts become human thoughts. And these thoughts bear not only the light of knowledge within them; they bear the world healing thought of the Christ being within them.

"In passing through man, these thoughts become something different than what they were beforehand. At first man takes this spirit knowledge up into his abstract, that is to say, his dead thinking. Thereby he can take it up in freedom; it cannot in any way force him. He must bring it to life from out of himself, if it is to become effective. He can do this only in the activating of his thinking through the ego. The enlivening of spiritual thoughts out of the ego transforms them into something new, stronger, better formed. Through these reflected or carried up thought the angel consciousness in the etheric world awakens at a higher stage. And only through this, I should like to say, does it first become the instrument, the being through which the etheric Christ, coming again, can work for the future of humanity". (Vol. II, pp.15-16)

It seems to me that these thoughts what has always seemed to me a strange omission in almost all Steiner's lectures on the reappearance of Christ in the Etheric World (recently collected in a book bearing that name (Anthroposophic Press, 1983). He never speaks there of the actual appearance of Christ in the etheric world from the 1930's onward, but only of the fact that human beings will begin to experience him directly through the development of their own etheric vision. But if he were always there and only his consciousness had been transformed or 'resurrected', then there would be no need to speak of the descent from higher spheres through the realms of the various hierarchies of which Tomberg informs us and that is stressed in such detail by Robert Powell. What Steiner tells us is that our human consciousness was changed by the resurrection of Christ in the etheric world. This then, for Steiner, constitutes the Second Coming in the Etheric. It therefore begins to seem that Tomberg's thought is very different. This is deeply significant since he became able in the Tarot to accept the traditional belief that Christ ascended into the spiritual worlds - or what he does not hesitate to call, heaven. In the Tarot he says nothing at all about any reappearance in the etheric world in our time - only of a Second Coming at the end of time, as taught in traditional Christianity. So he does not have to repeat what he said in 1933 about the descent to the etheric world through the hierarchies. Powell, to do him justice, does recognize that Christ had always been in the etheric world since the Mystery of Golgotha (Shoreline article, p. 38), and speaks of his coming again to mankind through the Second coming, being born anew from the angelic realm. But it is not clear (at least to being totally unable to follow his astrological arguments) how Christ can also be said to have made his descent to the angelic realm where his consciousness had always been until it was extinguished in the nineteenth century. Tomberg by contrast did not have to explain the matter at all in his Tarot, since he chose to say nothing about the Etheric Christ at all. What Powell thinks, and his astrological computations would not be so important if it were not for his assertion and belief, many times repeated in his Hermetic Astrology, that Tomberg was the twentieth century incarnation of the Bodhisattva who will eventually become the Maitreya Buddha, and that Rudolf Steiner, as he also says was a forerunner, a John the Baptist for this Bodhisattva. Dr Unger dealt effectively enough with Powell's exposition on the subject, pointing out especially apparent weaknesses in his evidence. He also emphasized the veiled manner in which Steiner always spoke of the Etheric Christ in our time. But I want here to discuss what seems to me to be the most crucial point against Powell's identification of Tomberg as the Maitreya Bodhisattva (as Powell calls him). Tomberg did not do (for whatever reason) what Steiner said he would do, and in actual fact, he did something else. This will necessitate a couple of quotes from lectures of 1910 and 1911, when Steiner first began to reveal the imminence of the reappearance of Christ in the etheric world.

In lecture X on St Matthew's Gospel (Bern, 1910) in speaking of the imminent incarnation of the Maitreya-Bodhisattva he reminded his audience that he "might be unrecognized or passed by with indifference". Yet, "while spiritual individuals are unappreciated and unrecognized, others are exalted to the skies, there is the liveliest tendency to deify individuals", and he then goes on to speak of the many false Messiahs who have appeared... "But if we strive to live according to the living spirit of a new Bodhisattva...we must make ourselves receptive to the inspiration of that Bodhisattva who will one day appear as the Maitreya Buddha. This Bodhisattva will inspire us and draw our attention to the time drawing near when the Christ will appear in a new form in an etheric body. He will bless, and endow with light those who through the new Essene wisdom (Jeshu ben Pandira, the only former appearance of this Bodhisattva on earth of when Steiner tells us, was an Essene) are developing new forces in preparation for his return in etheric raiment. We are now speaking entirely in the sense of the inspiring Bodhisattva who is to be the Maitreya Buddha.... We live only for the truth, and we declare the manner of the future coming of the Christ to be in the form we have learned from the inspiration of the Bodhisattva himself.

The other quotation comes from two lectures given in Leipzig in November, 1911 (Anthroposophic Press, 1942) published under the title Jeshu ben Pandira in which Steiner gives much more detail. In the lecture given on November 4th, for the most part devoted to the Etheric Christ, he tells us that the Bodhisattva who is to become the Maitreya Buddha has been "incarnated nearly every century since that time (i.e. the incarnation of Jeshu ben Pandira in the first century BC), is now already incarnated, and will be the herald of the Christ in etheric raiment...and even many of us will experience the fact that during the 1930's there will be persons - and more and more later in the century - who will behold the Christ in etheric raiment. It is in order to prepare for this that spiritual science exists, and everyone who works at the task of spiritual science shares in making this preparation".

In the lecture of November 5th Steiner spoke as follows:

"In highest degree of all is this [spiritual] developed through, as an example, by that individuality who once ascended to the rank of a Buddha when the preceding Bodhisattva became a Buddha, and who has, since that time been incarnated once in nearly every century.... How is he preparing himself? By developing in the highest possible degree those qualities which are called the good qualities. The Bodhisattva develops in the highest degree what we may designate as absorption, serenity in the presence of destiny, attentiveness to all occurrences in one's surroundings, devotion to all living beings, and insight. And, although many incarnations will be needed for the future Buddha, yet he devotes himself during his incarnations primarily to giving attention to what occurs, even though what he now does is relatively little, since he is utterly devoted to the preparation for his future mission. This will be achieved through the fact that a special law exists with regard to just this Bodhisattva. This law we shall understand if we take account of the possibility that a complete revolution in the soul's life may occur at a certain age.

“The greatest of such transformations that ever occurred took place at the baptism by John...A similar revolution will be experienced by the future Maitreya Buddha. But he experiences such a revolution in his incarnations quite differently. The Bodhisattva patterns his life on the life of Christ, and those who are initiated know that he manifests in every incarnation very special characteristics. It will always be noted that in the period between his thirtieth and thirty-third year a mighty revolution occurs in his life. There will then be an interchange of soulsThe ‘ego’ which has until then given life to the body passes out at that time, and the Bodhisattva becomes, in a fundamental sense, altogether a different person from what he has been up to that time, even though the ego does not cease and is not replaced by another, as was true of the Christ.

“This is what all occultists in common call attention to: that he cannot be recognized before this time....The earlier period of youth is always utterly unlike that into which he is transformed between his thirtieth and thirty-third years....That ego will then be active for a certain time in this body; thus can that take place which must take place in order to prepare the Maitreya Buddha. The rest of his life he then lives in such a way that he continues to live with this ego which enters at that moment”.

Many of these indications certainly fit the life of Valentin Tomberg. It was at the age of 33 that he had the ‘inspiration’ described above of the descent of the Christ through the hierarchies. Throughout his period as an anthroposophist he spoke often enough of the Second Coming of Christ in the Etheric. As far as I have been able to ascertain, aside from this ‘inspiration’ there was no greater sudden change between the ages of 30 and 33. He had been ‘initiated’ by the esoteric circle in Russia when he was twenty and learned its ‘Rosicrucian’ secrets, and in his Tarot he claimed he had always been a Christian Hermeticist. In 1935 he spoke of having studied anthroposophy for ten years, so that by 1933 he was already well acquainted with it. The major difference at the age of 33 was that he started to speak about anthroposophy with some authority, giving rise to criticism from, for example, Marie Steiner, who thought he was too young to be speaking so esoterically.

With his exceptional spiritual background from such an early period in his life in which Marie Steiner may not have been aware I do not find this criticism wholly applicable to him nor, of course would it have been applicable if he were indeed the Bodhisattva. There must in any event be some exceptions to Steiner’s general observation that one should wait until the age of 40 as he had done. Tomberg himself made an interesting comment about the Maitreya-Bodhisattva (p.64). After speaking about the promotion of Krishnamurti by the theosophists in the Order of the Star of the East, he goes on to say: “It was more discreetly and without putting any particular person in the limelight as candidate, that Dr. Rudolf Steiner, founder of the Anthroposophical Society, predicted the manifestation - again in the first half of the twentieth century...of the Bodhisattva, i.e. the individuality in the process of becoming the next Buddha, whose field of activity he hoped the Anthroposophical Society would serve. A new disappointment! This time the disappointment was due not to an error with regard to the awaited individuality, nor even with regard to the time of the beginning of his activity, but rather to an over-estimation of the Anthroposophical Society on the part of its founder -thus nothing became of it....There is much confusion concerning this idea, above all among theosophists, but there are also those who see clearly here. Rudolf Steiner, for example, saw very clearly; of all that has been written and said in public, the most correct is what was said by Rudolf Steiner. He was on the right track, at least” (my emphasis).

From this passage it would seem that Tomberg at least knew who the Maitreya was in his present incarnation, that he did in fact begin his activity in the 1930’s, as Steiner had implied without specifically stating it, but that he had been unable to work, as Steiner had hoped, within the Anthroposophical Society because of its deficiencies. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Tomberg did indeed believe himself to be the Bodhisattva without ever putting forward such a claim openly. Nevertheless, after joining the Roman Catholic Church when he came to write the Tarot, the culmination of his work, he did not act as the real herald of the Christ in etheric raiment. On the contrary he reverted to the old traditional teaching about the Second Coming. In spite of all the wonderful things he says in his Tarot about the Christ and Christianity this omission is startling in the light of what Steiner said was to be his principal task. Nowhere does he say he was to be a teacher. Powell was right in saying that he took on the task of working toward an integration of esoteric and exoteric Christianity within the Church, which, he goes on to say, was a ‘historical necessity’. And no doubt some Catholics, including leading ones, have taken note of and profited from his efforts. We have seen how closely Tomberg in his Meditations on the Tarot aligns himself with the teachings of the Catholic Church, and how little use he made in his Catholic period of everything he had learned of anthroposophy from Rudolf Steiner. If the Bodhisattva had been working within him during his anthroposophical period when he did indeed speak often of the Etheric Christ, why did he leave all this to immerse himself in Christian Hermeticism and say nothing further about the Etheric Christ? Is it not perhaps also significant that in the Tarot he makes no reference anywhere to Steiner’s work The Philosophy of Freedom (or Spiritual Activity) which he had praised in his anthroposophical period?

All through his life Steiner stressed the principle of Individual freedom in the age of the consciousness soul. In the two lectures given in 1907 and 1908 entitled “Christianity Began as a Religion but Is Greater than all Religions” Anthroposophical Publishing Company, 1959) he drew attention to the fact that only through the activity of the free individuality can human beings move toward the ultimate goal of human brotherhood. In the Atlantean period all were clairvoyant and needed no religion (defined as the binding of the sensible to the super-sensible). In the age of materialism religion was needed to bind humanity to the spiritual world that they could no longer perceive directly. But when etheric vision again became possible, direct experience of the spiritual took the place of religion. Human beings will no longer need religion because they will have become the bearers of spiritual Christianity.

“This is the basis”, he says of the sentence of which I would ask you to realize the profound significance ‘Christianity began as a religion but is greater than all religions’. “What Christianity bestows goes with us into all ages of time to come and will still be one of the essential impulses in humanity when religion, as we know it, is no longer in existence. Even when religion as such has been transcended Christianity will remain. The fact that it was first of all a religion is connected with the evolutionary process of humanity. But Christianity as a world-view is greater than all religions”. (p.29)

Although these were early lectures I do not think in later years Steiner would have spoken differently. When he spoke here of the ‘evolutionary process of humanity’ he was clearly referring to the evolution of human consciousness, the other most significant omission from the Meditations on the Tarot, with its constant emphasis on the continuity of tradition, as if our consciousness were the same as it was in the time of ancient Egypt. It is in the age of the consciousness soul that human freedom responsibility to oneself and the exercise of moral imagination by the individual become the principles by which humanity is to move forward and into the age of Manas or Spirit-Self. The exercise of this freedom is denied by the Catholic Church, with its emphasis on hierarchy and authority, and the Infallibility of its head in questions of faith and morality.

It is these considerations that make me say that in entering the Catholic Church whatever his motives and however much esotericism he may have allowed to ‘flow’ into it through his work, Tomberg took a retrograde step which I cannot associate with the task of the

Bodisattva who is to become the Maitreya Buddha. After earning his doctorate in law just after the war he deliberately chose to work for the rest of his life in a routine job in England where he could no doubt spend all his spiritual energy in deepening his meditative and esoteric life. If he had profited from his anthroposophical experience and tried to infuse some anthroposophy into that Catholic Church, at least this would have been in accord with the mission of Michael in our age - though surely he would have met with much opposition from the Church hierarchy which has its own ideas and policies.

But even this would scarcely have made him a herald of Christ in etheric raiment. For that it would have become its task surely to help modify the old traditional ideas of the Second Coming by making known what Steiner had said on the subject, using his wonderful eloquence and conviction and at least planting a seed for change within the Church. Within anthroposophy there has always been an abundance of esotericism, even if there have been numerous members in Tomberg's time and since who have not cultivated it as they could and should have done. If his severance from the Society was for him a karmic necessity, and as a result he had to work alone and without close followers as he so largely did, including presumably within the Catholic Church, there was surely no need to abandon all the knowledge he had acquired within anthroposophy in his fourteen years of study and devote himself to traditional occultism and Christian mysticism, studying in depth the teachings of hermeticists throughout the ages, recognized as such or not. In doing this he neglected - or even refused to recognize - the tasks of the consciousness soul in our age, dismissing the work done by anthroposophists as 'mere' cultural reform.

I say this even though I give the fullest recognition to the often profound insights and the total devotion to Christ and Christianity that he shows in his Meditations on the Tarot to say nothing of its prodigious learning. If he had not written the Tarot to be published after his death as his testament, I might have thought that he had been quietly building on the foundations laid by Rudolf Steiner within the Church, and perhaps have been more ready to acknowledge him as the Maitreya Bodisattva, who incarnates in 'almost every century' whose work does not have to be done publicly or in a public position. I might then have simply assumed that the conditions of the time had prevented him from fulfilling the task prescribed for him by Rudolf Steiner. But he did write the Tarot, and in so doing he set himself against the work of Rudolf Steiner that had been so fully known to him in the '1930. The Tarot, as it is, is far more likely to persuade anthroposophists who are unhappy with the lack of esotericism in the Society, as they (and Tomberg) perceive it, to find refuge within the traditionalism of

the Catholic Church - a temptation that can be resisted only by making fuller use of the esoteric content of anthroposophy. In this Sergei Prokofiaff has so nobly shown us the way; and the wide acceptance of his work among anthroposophists (although his major work was written well before the age of 40!) has clearly demonstrated what a hunger exists for the kind of modern esotericism of which Steiner was so powerful a proponent. It can scarcely be doubted that many of us anthroposophists have been inclined to neglect, underestimate, or even forget the tremendous and inexhaustible riches in Rudolf Steiner's life and work, busied as so many of us are with the day to day concerns of 'cultural reform', however valuable and necessary this is in our present day world.

Valentin Tomberg was without doubt a highly developed individuality, surely one of the highest ever to have entered the anthroposophical orbit. But I cannot accept Powell's

identification of him as the Maitreya Bodhisattva. The astrological indications he has discovered, if true, may point to nothing more than the incarnations of a truly exceptional individuality, the fruit of many former lives on earth, including at least one within the Christian stream - possibly a man like Ramond Lull, a medieval mystic of immense intellectual attainments who sought and achieved martyrdom at the hands of the Muslims when in advanced old age, and spoken of with great respect by Rudolf Steiner. Since Ramon also had an experience in his early thirties which entirely changed his life and let him to become a wandering hermit and Christian missionary, I offer the hypothesis to Robert Powell for his possible attention.

Nor can I accept for a moment Powell's notion that Rudolf Steiner acted as a kind of forerunner, a 'John the Baptist' in preparation for the incarnation of Tomberg as the Bodhisattva. Steiner's legacy has in no way been superseded by Tomberg's, and is capable of bearing fruit for a long time yet to come - for as long as there are anthroposophists ready to follow in his footsteps and work within the guidelines he left. This accords with the mission of Michael in the age of the consciousness soul, as I cannot bring myself to believe that Tomberg's work within the Catholic Church does. That Tomberg in his Tarot gives no recognition to Michael as the Spirit of the Age speaks, I think, for itself.

On what Tomberg's work could and ought to have been I can make no comment. But it remains deeply sad that, however beautiful and profound his legacy to mankind was when he wrote the Tarot letters to his 'unknown friends', his readers are not only unlikely to come to anthroposophy through him, but will probably become mystical worshipers within traditional Catholicism with a greater esoteric content but still securely anchored in traditional Catholic teaching. And they will never know through Tomberg of the Etheric Christ, whose activity on earth began a few years after the premature death of the man who truly did proclaim him while pointing toward the tasks of mankind for the future.

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