

Anti-Masonic Propaganda

The Myth of the Judaeo-Masonic Conspiracy

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Most of us are not in the Craft very long when we start to become aware of the large number of anti-masonic statements which are constantly circulating. These statements invariably have two things in common (1) they come from somebody who has little or no real knowledge of, or exposure to, the Craft and its workings, and (2) they are always attributed to 'a reliable source' and someone who 'really knows'. My own personal experiences began shortly after my initiation when I was congratulated by a non masonic employee, who at the same time informed me that he had it from 'a very reliable source' that it was "impossible to get into business in Taupo unless you are a Freemason". The English wife of a good friend told me that after an accident sustained whilst driving in England, she had been charged with a motoring offence and, though innocent, had been convicted because the driver of the other vehicle was a Freemason and the Magistrate was one also". Doubtless all members who have belonged to the Craft for any length of time will have had similar experiences.

These examples, however, are mere word of mouth 'hearsay', which in many cases evoke only amusement from most of their listeners, both within and outside the Craft. Of a far more serious nature are anti-masonic statements which are given the stamp of authenticity because they are made by those who hold responsible positions. These statements are reported in otherwise reputable news media, which the non discerning public does not normally question. It must be acknowledged that, to the majority of the public, news media statements in either printed or broadcast form are accepted without question and recapitulated with the thought "it must be true, I read it in the paper or heard it on TV".

In these days of mass communication, where news media are reaching a public of unprecedented size, when sensationalism and the marketing of the product is of greater importance than the veracity of the content and where, to paraphrase an oft quoted statement "only the facts have been changed to make a good story", we are facing a growing flood of anti-masonic propaganda. There are few ills in our world today, the cause of which, masonic detractors do not lay at the door of the Craft.

In 1978, when I was in the chair of Lodge Kaimanawa, I attended an evangelist meeting at Tokoroa in the company of my deputy master, W.Bro. Stan McCash, and the late W.Bro. Jack Mathews, who at that time was Master of Lodge Tokoroa. A 'hell fire and brimstone' preacher had promised to reveal the hidden evils of Freemasonry. We were bitterly disappointed, and about the only concrete fact with which we were enlightened, was his unequivocal statement that Freemasons controlled world economics and more particularly the United States Treasury. As sole proof thereof, he offered the example of the US one dollar bill, on the back of which is depicted both sides of the Great Seal of the United States. The obverse of this seal is, of course, the familiar bald eagle with out stretched wings, arrows in one claw and olive branch in the other. The reverse is less well known and the only place that this appears is on the back of the one dollar bill. It depicts an unfinished pyramid with 13 rows of stones (portraying the Union) being watched over by the all seeing eye of God, which is contained within a triangle. This symbol, he assured us, was proof positive of Masonic control of the US monetary system.

Early this year, we were treated to a newspaper report of a recently published book by Stephen Knight which claims to document and prove the subversive activities and the potential dangers of the Craft. This was featured in the Wellington Evening Post under the arresting headline "Freemasonry Used for Soviet Spying Author" and in the Auckland Star under the equally eye catching, "Freemasonry Claimed KGB Stronghold".

In the column 'Nutshells' in the N.Z. Herald there appeared a quote from a statement made by the Iranian Minister of Islamic Guidance, Ayatolla Doa'i, that "The press is the most dangerous arm in the contemporary world. Freedom of

the press is an invention of Jews, Freemasons and colonialists and a means of sowing dissension among the disinherited”.

Much of this type of anti-masonic propaganda bears a similar hallmark, the fixation of the concept that Freemasonry is, in fact a worldwide conspiracy, bent on total behind the scenes control for its own ends.

Whence comes this insidious myth, this portrayal of Freemasonry as a gigantic octopus moving with unseen malevolence through the corridors of power, manipulating and scheming and forever growing?

For the answer to this question, we must go back to the late 18th century. In 1797, a French Jesuit, the Abbe Barruel, wrote in his ‘Memoire pour servir a l’histoire du Jacobinisme’ (which was a monumental opus of five volumes) that the French Revolution was the carefully orchestrated fulfillment of an ancient conspiracy of what he considered, the most secret of all secret societies. Barruel claimed that the medieval Order of Templars, a surviving relic of the Crusades, had not really been successfully abolished by Papal Decree in 1312 but had survived as a clandestine organization preaching unrestricted liberty to all people, dedicated to the overthrow of all monarchies and the Papacy, and to the foundation of a world republic controlled by the Templars themselves. He further postulated that since that time, it had, in the implementation of that policy, been responsible for a large number of political assassinations and in the 18th century had taken over control of the Order of Freemasons. It had, according to Barruel, established in 1763 a secret literary academy, among whose members were such freethinking liberals as Turgot, Voltaire and Robespierre. These men, meeting in the house of Baron d’Holbach, published tracts and pamphlets which had, he claimed, resulted in the deterioration of morality and religion among the French. It had furthermore, from 1776, created a gigantic revolutionary organization involving half a million Frenchmen who were the Jacobins of the revolution. At the centre of the conspiracy were the Bavarian ‘Illuminati’ led by Adam Weishaupt, whom Barruel describes as “enemies of the human race, sons of Satan”. All the Freemasons and Jacobins in France, he claimed, already owed complete blind obedience to that small band of Germans who, he felt, would, unless stopped, completely control the world.

Barruel’s claim that the French Revolution was the result of a conspiracy dating back to the 14th century, is so fanciful as to be unworthy of any effort of rebuttal. As regards that little known German group called the ‘Illuminati,’ they were in fact rivals of the Freemasons and had been dissolved in 1786 (3 years prior to the French Revolution.) He had greatly oversimplified and exaggerated the role of the Freemasons. Without doubt they were numbered amongst those whose concern for humanitarian reform assisted in creating the climate leading to the Revolution. They had already contributed to the abolition of witchcraft trials and of judicial torture. On the other hand, most French Freemasons were monarchist (Louis XVI and his brothers were all Freemasons) and during the mass executions which followed the Revolution, Freemasons were guillotined by the hundred and their Order, the Grand Orient was suppressed.

Barruel’s work, in its original uninspiring and clearly erroneous form would doubtless not have long survived the death of its author in 1820 and would have vanished into richly merited obscurity. It was prevented from so doing by the mischance which associated it with another equally scurrilous (and equally false) defamatory fabrication of a sick mind. I refer to the infamous “Protocols of the Elders of Zion”. The scope and time available for this paper simply does not permit a detailed discussion of the origins and evolution of this work. In brief, they consist of a rabidly antisemitic document purporting to be the blueprint for a Jewish plot to take over the world.

The earliest traceable source of this myth is contained in a letter received by Barruel from Florence in 1806. This was ostensibly written by an army officer, one J. B. Simonini, of whom nothing else is known and with whom even Barruel himself failed to establish contact. This letter appears to be the first in a line of antisemitic forgeries which were to culminate in the ‘Protocols’. In it the author commences by first congratulating Barruel on having “unmasked the hellish sects which are preparing the way for the Antichrist” and then goes on to draw Barruel’s attention to the “Judaic wealth and the protection it enjoys in almost all European countries”. The mysterious Simonini permits his imagination to run riot. He claims to have penetrated to the centre of a Jewish conspiracy and to have discovered, that amongst other things the founders of Freemasonry and of the “Illuminati” were both Jews (although the founders of both are known and neither was founded by Jews), that in Italy alone, over 800 ecclesiastics were Jews and ranked among their number

were bishops and cardinals and would shortly include a pope! All of this is, of course, self evidently spurious. At the time of the Simonini letter, many lodges were still practising a ritual highly Christian in character and many others were still reluctant to accept Jewish members. Jews or persons of Jewish descent have never occupied a disproportionate place in Freemasonry. These are established facts, but nevertheless, the basis of the myth of the Judaeo Masonic conspiracy was born. Barruel had shown, at least to his own satisfaction, that the French Revolution was the result of a conspiracy of Freemasons. The increasing freedom from discrimination against religious minorities which followed the Revolution, was clearly to the advantage of the Jews. No further evidence was required to demonstrate to these somewhat less than unbiased critics, that Freemasons and Jews were closely associated in a worldwide Judaeo Masonic conspiracy.

The twisted logic of the combination of Barruel's imagination and the Simonini letter aroused little public interest in the first half of the 19th century until in the 1860s Hermann Goedsche, a discredited former employee of the Prussian postal service, who had been sacked for forgery, commenced writing novels under the pseudonym of Sir John Retcliffe. In one of these novels 'Biarritz', an eerie scene in the macabre style of Edgar Allen Poe is recounted. Set in a Jewish cemetery in Prague, the scene portrays how at midnight on the Feast of Tabernacles, representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel hold conversation with the Satanic presence emanating from a tomb. These representatives report on the progress they have made towards fulfillment of the aims of their conspiracy for world domination. The novel 'Biarritz' was published in 1868, in the antisemitic climate existing in Germany after a partial emancipation of the Jews. This is merely the start of the saga. At this point we are discussing a novel, a work of fiction only. Soon however, this clearly fictional chapter, taken out of the framework of the novel begins to turn into a forged document.

Russian anti-semites published the relevant chapter in 1872 in St Petersburg in the form of a pamphlet, which, although bearing the comment that it was a work of fiction, stated that it had a basis in fact! In 1876, it appeared in a similar publication in Moscow under the title 'In the Jewish Cemetery in Czech Prague (the Jews, sovereigns of the World)'. In 1880, a second edition was issued and similar items appeared in Odessa and Prague. In 1881, it arrived in France, printed in *Le Contemporain*. At this point no reference is made to it being a work of fiction, it has now become established fact!! All the speeches supposedly made by the twelve representatives in the cemetery in Prague were combined into a single speech, ostensibly made by a chief rabbi to a secret meeting of Jews. The authenticity of the speech is vouched for by an imaginary English diplomat (after all, who would dare doubt the word of an Englishman?), and indeed, is claimed as an extract from his projected book. Goedsche had originally written his novel (from which this work had been extracted) under the pseudonym of Sir John Retcliffe, perhaps not surprisingly the imaginary English diplomat is given the name Sir John Readclif. When, in 1896, Francois Bournand printed the so called speech in 'Les Juifs et nos contemporains, it is attributed to Chief Rabbi John Readclif!

Further editions followed and found fertile ground in the superstitiously gullible minds of a populace not far removed from a generally accepted belief in witchcraft werewolves and sorcery. Its many translations spread throughout Europe under a variety of titles, including one which appeared in 1906 with the title *Extracts from the Protocol of the Freemasons.*

Although the Protocols themselves, in the standard version, are only twenty four in number and contain only passing reference to Freemasonry, they are invariably published with a commentary proving and justifying their veracity. (The two English editions each comprise about 100 small pages.) These Freemasonic references, albeit small, when conjoined in the reader's mind by the anti-masonic pronouncements included in the commentaries, are sufficient to create the implication of a great Judaeo Masonic conspiracy.

One such example will suffice, where Meurin, in his version entitled 'La Franc Maconnerie, Synagogue de Satan said, "Everything in Freemasonry is fundamentally Jewish, exclusively Jewish, passionately Jewish from the beginning to the end". Later in the same publication, he says, "The fact that all revolutions are made in the depths of the Masonic back lodges would be inexplicable, if we did not know that the Ministries of all countries are in the hands of Freemasons who, in the last analysis, are controlled by Jews. Meurin has further 'facts' to reveal about these 'back lodges'. They consist of Freemasons and Jews of the 33rd degree. The Protocols themselves end with the words "Signed by the Representatives of Zion of the 33rd degree". This allusion to the Ancient and Accepted Scottish rite is clear. This particular

Freemasonic system, which originated in the USA in 1801 and thence spread with great rapidity to many countries, has, as its highest rank, the title of Sovereign Grand Inspector General which is, in fact the 33rd degree of that order of Freemasonry.

We, as citizens of a liberal democracy which has for some generations prided itself on the quality and universality of its educational system, are hard put to comprehend the impact these doctrines could have on superstitious, largely illiterate populations. It must be emphasised that these publications were not merely a solitary outburst by a few sensation seeking individuals. They were published in literally hundreds of editions, translated into scores of languages: Russian, German, Polish, French, Rumanian, Czech, Yugoslav, Greek, Italian, Portugese, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian and, of course, English, to name a few. A generation ago, one authority, Henry Rollin, author of "L'Apocalypse de notre Temps" reckoned that the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, in all its various forms, was probably the most widely distributed book in the world after the V.S.L. It has served as the justification of most of the anti-semitic and anti-masonic steps taken by totalitarian governments in the last 150 or so years, culminating, of course, in the well documented excesses of one Adolf Hitler towards both Freemasons and Jews.

The evil potential of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion should never be underestimated.