

# **Towards the Sources of Freemasonry**

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The problem of the origin or origins of Freemasonry has engaged the minds of many able Masonic students for several generations, and has led to much valuable research being carried out. But notwithstanding the volume and the value of the information that has accrued as a result of that research, the problem is still unsolved. Different students have reached conclusions which no doubt, in their opinion, indicate the true sources of our Craft; but these conclusions vary widely, and we seem still to be far from the demonstration of these sources with any degree of certainty, or even from the formulation of any theory that would command general acceptance because of the convincing nature of the evidence on which it is based. All students do not approach the study of Freemasonry from the same angle, nor are all guided by the same principles and canons; and writers of different periods reflect the general outlook and accepted criteria of the period in which they write.

## **THE MASONIC SYSTEM**

Freemasonry has been defined as " a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbol." Let us now consider some of the elements in this " system," and the sources from which they may have been derived. The first and most obvious element is the use made of the methods and implements of operative Masonry, which are ostensibly derived from that practical art. It may at once be admitted, on adequate evidence, that our Order has inherited much from the operative guilds of the Middle Ages. From that source has been derived our organisation into Lodges, as is borne out by the records of many of our oldest Scottish Lodges. For example, the Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel), now No. 1 holding of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, has in its possession records going back continuously to the year 1599. There are also other Lodges of which the origins are lost in the mists of time, such as Mother Kilwinning, No. 0; or which derived their origin from these Time Immemorial Lodges, such as Canongate Kilwinning, No. 2, which held its original charter from Mother Kilwinning. From such evidence, going back in many cases to a time before the founding of the Grand Lodges of Scotland or England, we know, as a matter of historical fact, that the organisation of our modern Masonic Order is not merely copied from the organisation of the medieval Craft Guild, but is a direct inheritance therefrom. This fact meets with such

general acceptance that many craftsmen, particularly those associated with the older Lodges, assume without due appreciation of all the problems involved that the Freemasonry of to-day is the same as the Masonry of the earliest days of these Lodges, or at least is a natural development or evolution therefrom. But to the serious student such an assumption raises so many insuperable difficulties as to make it altogether untenable.

### **THE WORKING TOOLS**

Some of these difficulties are to be met in connections in which one would least expect to meet them. While it is obviously difficult to see how the legend of the Third Degree could possibly have arisen by any process of natural development or evolution from the activities of the operative guild, one would not expect to find any difficulties suggested to one's mind by the selection of the working tools with which our E.A.'s, F.C.'s and M.M.'s are presented, and the moral lessons based thereon. And yet, such difficulties are raised by a detailed study of these working tools. It is no doubt a reasonable inference that, in any trade guild, the implements of that trade might be made the basis of moral instructions. But if such moral lessons were to be driven home with force, and if the craftsmen were to be reminded of these lessons daily through the regular use of these tools, then the tools chosen should obviously be those that the craftsman actually uses. But are the tools with which our candidates are presented in the three degrees those which an operative craftsman would use in the corresponding stages of his tradesmanship? I doubt it. Indeed, the first tool presented to an E.A. in our Lodges would never be entrusted to a young apprentice: all his work is measured off for him. And again, a tool which is essential to the operative craftsman from the first day when he commences hewing is withheld from our candidates until they become F.C.'s-which in the old operative days would mean for a period of seven years! One inference is clear, and that is, that the selection of tools presented to our candidates in the three degrees could never have been made by operative Masons for presentation to operative apprentices; and accordingly we cannot reasonably regard that selection as having been inherited from the operative guild. The most that we can regard as having been so inherited is the general principle of using tools as bases for the inculcation of moral or spiritual lessons.

On the other hand, the working tools that are presented to our candidates are of profound significance in our modern system. It is true that some of the moral applications of these tools taught in the course of our ritual are somewhat crude and illogical; but these are only the simpler exoteric lessons. The tools themselves, regarded as

symbols, admit of an interpretation at once reasonable and logical which amply justifies their selection in our unique symbolical system. But the tools of each degree, as symbols, must be interpreted in terms of the subject matter of that degree-(First Degree, " the principles of moral truth "; Second Degree, " the principles of intellectual truth "; and Third Degree, those spiritual principles to which we are therein raised).

### **DEVELOPMENT OF MASONIC SYMBOLISM**

A modern writer in Freemasonry, Brother A. E. Waite, has suggested that the spiritualisation of a craft is more likely to have been planned from without than from within. He points out that those who are engaged on practical work are naturally the last to see the bearings which it may have outside the practical issues. He then suggests that there comes a point in the craft degrees when it seems necessary to assume the intervention of some extraneous influence which took over any rough ceremony in use by the building guilds, shaping it to another purpose, but in the process preserving something of the old craft wordings and craft emblems, but imparting to them a new direction and significance.

This expresses succinctly a view which I had reached independently and for which I have long contended. It provides a possible explanation of the selection made of the working tools presented to our candidates-they are some of the old craft emblems preserved in our ceremonies, but the selection was determined, not by actual operative uses of these tools, but by the new purposes to which they were adapted. But this general conception does not solve our problem-it merely shifts it. Our problem will not be solved until we can determine with some degree of certainty the nature of the " extraneous influence " which effected this change.

There are those who maintain that this spiritualising influence has always been present in the operative guilds, and was inherited by these guilds from preceding organisations. They love to think of the craft as having a long descent, right from the time of the building of K.S.T., stages in that descent being the Dionysian Artificers, the Pythagorean Schools (on the philosophical side) and the Roman Collegia (on the practical side), the Comacine Masters, the Cathedral Builders, and the operative guilds in the Middle Ages. This is a very pleasing theory, attractive to certain types of mind. I do not propose to examine it in detail, but will content myself with saying that the theory has not so far been established by any concrete evidence that would command our acceptance.

There is no gainsaying, however, that there was much spiritual symbolism associated with the work of the operative guilds during the cathedral building period. This is borne out by wonderful symbolism of these early cathedrals and churches. But the conception of that symbolism probably arose, not in the minds of the members of the guilds, but in the minds of the great ecclesiastics or ecclesiastical orders of the time. And it is possible that, since many of the operative craftsmen were lay members of these orders and under their direction, that some of the spiritual influences filtered through to the rank and file of the guilds. But even if we acknowledge this, it does not help us very much forward in our particular quest. In the first place there is no direct evidence of the effects of such influences in our ritual or ceremonies. On the contrary the symbolism embodied in the old cathedrals and churches is in the main Christian (as witness their cruciform plan), and it would be reasonable to expect that any influence from the same source on our ritual and ceremonies would be Christian in character. But we know that the symbolism of the Masonic Craft is not distinctively Christian but is universal in form.

### **THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR**

Another traditional theory as to the extraneous influence that brought spiritualising factors to bear upon the Masonic guild is, that these were brought from the East to the West by the Order of Knights Templar during the Crusades. The speculation behind this may be briefly summarised as follows:- In Syria there is said to have continued down through the centuries certain initiatory Orders which were traditionally associated with the building of K.S.T. These sects, though their members were entirely of pastoral or agricultural peoples, and though they were practically ignorant of the art of masonry (for when they did not live in tents they lived in crudely-built houses, innocent of any ornate architecture) yet their symbolism was based entirely on the art of building. This is said to have been derived from Phoenician builders or from Dionysian Artificers, who had migrated from Asia Minor to Phoenicia, who were brought by H.K.T. and H.A.B. (both Phoenicians) to Jerusalem for the building of K.S.T., and who, after that building was completed, continued to live in the neighbourhood and were assimilated with the indigenous inhabitants of that district. They continued their rites, which were not only associated with the art of building in general but with the building of K.S.T, in particular. It has even been suggested that it was by them that our Himaric legend was preserved, and from them that it was derived by the Freemasons through the Knights Templar or through another channel which I shall mention presently.

The Order of Knights Templar was founded in 1118. Jerusalem had been captured by the Crusaders of the First Crusade in 1099, and the Order was established by eight valiant Knights under Hugo de Payens for the purpose of affording protection to those pilgrims who visited Jerusalem and other holy places in Judea. The original Knights were pious men as well as valiant, and they took the monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Thus the Order was religious as well as military. The Order grew rapidly; knights from many lands were attracted to its ranks. In the discharge of their self-imposed task of protecting the routes by which the pilgrims travelled, they frequently, in small bands, advanced far into the interior of Palestine and Syria. Tradition says that some of the chief Knights of the Order came into touch with some of those secret sects of Syria, and were initiated into their mysteries. However that may be, this we do know, that the Knights Templar, who originally were a simple and austere body of men dedicated to service and on the religious side were circumscribed by their three-fold monastic vow, soon became a secret oath-bound fraternity, with ritualistic ceremonials the nature of which was jealously guarded.

Further, though their original dedication was to service in the Holy Land, numbers of them returned westwards to Germany, France and Britain. Was this a case of deserting their post of duty or merely returning to seek recruits to fill their ranks? Or did they return to spread in the West the mystical knowledge they had acquired in the East?

In course of time the Order grew in numbers, in power and in wealth. The original vows of poverty and chastity were forgotten. With the increase of wealth and power, the Order became in a measure decadent; the " original impulses " were lost sight of. But in spite of that, it is said that the higher ranks of the Knighthood were really an inner circle who adhered, not perhaps to the original impulses that actuated the founders of the Order, but to the spiritual teachings and traditions which they received from their initiators in the East.

Further, as the Order grew powerful, they built all over Europe, temples and preceptories, and it was thus that they got into touch with the building guilds, and to them, or to some of them at least - the Architects and Master Builders - imparted some of their mystical knowledge, which both modified and amplified the teaching given within these guilds.

This is a very romantic theory, and no doubt very attractive to some types of mind. But we must admit that a critical examination of the

facts, as far as known, does not bring to light any evidence that would lead to the acceptance of the tradition as historical fact.

### **THE ROSICRUCIAN ORDER**

The other channel that is claimed by many as that through which the mystical teaching of the Near East was brought to the West was the Rosicrucian Order. The traditional founder of this Order was Christian Rosenkreuz. It is a matter of indifference for the purposes of our study whether we regard him as a historical personage or as a symbol of a movement amongst a number of workers interested in occult matters. I shall here repeat his story very briefly.

C.R.C. was born in Germany in 1378, of noble parents. He spent his boyhood in a monastery; and while he was still very young he was associated with a Brother who was determined to travel to the Holy Land. They set out together, but this Brother died on the way at Cyprus, and C.R.C. proceeded alone. He went first to Damascus, and proceeded to a place which, in the record, is called Damcar. This latter place cannot be identified and is probably to be taken as either mythical or as a cryptic allusion to some sacred place of initiation. Here he was welcomed by the " Wise Men " who initiated him into their mysteries and instructed him in their occult sciences. At the time of his initiation he was only sixteen years of age. He remained at Damcar, receiving instruction, for a period of three years; thereafter he went to Egypt, and thence proceeded to Fex, in Morocco, where he trained for two years under the tuition of new masters. Thereafter he travelled through Spain and other European countries, and ultimately returned to Germany. Here he founded the Fraternity of the Rosie Cross. This Fraternity is said to have become the repository of the esoteric knowledge acquired by C.R.C. in the course of his travels; and it is emphasised by the votaries of this tradition that these travels carried him first to the Holy Land, and that the " Wise Men " who there initiated him into their mysteries may have been members of an Order or Sect possessing the Solomonic traditions, and possibly also the Hiramite Legend.

C.R.C. lived to a ripe old age, and after his death, the existence of the Fraternity was at his specific request kept secret for 120 years. Its existence only became known through the publication, about 1610, of a pamphlet called the " Fama Fraternitatis of the Meritorious Order of the Rosie Cross, addressed to the learned in general and to the Governors of Europe." After the publication of this pamphlet a protracted literary conflict was waged in Europe as to whether such an Order as was portrayed in the Fama did really exist as an Order. However that may be, a lively interest in Rosicrucianism and in the occult subjects associated therewith was

manifested in England in the mid-seventeenth century; and it is known that some who were interested in that sphere of thought were also initiated into Freemasonry—e.g., Elias Ashmole, who was initiated at Warrington in 1640; while others, such as Robert Fludd and Thomas Vaughan, who, though not themselves Freemasons so far as we know, doubtless influenced profoundly the thought of many of those who became honorary or speculative members of the Craft, and such influence would be in the direction of those lines of thought and speculation which we are accustomed to associate with Rosicrucianism.

There are many who believe that it is to this extraneous influence that we must attribute the beginnings of that development of Craft Masonry which culminated in the ultimate establishment of speculative Freemasonry, with its three degrees and the Hiramic Legend, in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

There is no doubt a certain amount of circumstantial evidence in support of this theory. When Elias Ashmole was made a Freemason at Warrington in 1640 there were none but speculative Masons present. Changes that took place in the organisation of the Craft about this time are reflected in the New Articles embodied in the Harleian MS. (1663), particularly as regards the admission of "accepted" masons, as distinct from operative craftsmen, and, more important still, the regulation and government of the whole "Society, Company and Fraternity of Freemasons" by "one Master, and Assembly and Wardens, as the said Company shall think fit to choose, at every yearly General Assembly." There is no earlier evidence of any central government of the whole Craft; and this new regulation seems to point to a new development which presages the founding of Grand Lodge. Further, during this period the symbolism associated with the building of K.S.T. becomes more definitely associated with Masonic ceremonies, and other elements that can scarcely be associated with the operative art are first met with.

### **EARLY SPECULATIVE MASONRY**

In 1930 there was discovered in the Register House, Edinburgh, a document now known as "The Edinburgh Register House MS." The importance of this MS. is now recognised by Masonic students all over the world. It consists of "Some questions anent the Mason Word," and the answers thereto, followed by a narrative of the ceremony of admission; and it is very similar to the famous Chetwode-Crawley MS. which is of about the same period (circ. 1700). It has a very important bearing on the obscure problem of the practice of Freemasonry in the years immediately preceding the

founding of the Grand Lodge of England, and from the questions and answers there emerge some interesting points bearing on our present study. They refer to a Lodge standing E. and W. as the Temple of Jerusalem; the first Lodge was held in the porch of K.S.T.; there are three " lights " - the Master, the Warden and the " setter croft." (This obscure expression may possibly mean a journeyman Mason or Fellow-of-the-Craft, as " Setter " is an old Scots expression meaning one who hires or lets, and " croft " may be a misspelling of " craft " - hence " setter croft " may mean one who hires or lets his craft or skill. Alternatively, the expression may be a mis-copying of " fellow craft" which appears in other similar documents, and if this be so, it points to a still earlier document from which this one was copied. On either interpretation one who was a skilled craftsman was recognised as a " light" of his Lodge). Again, there are three " jewells "perpend esler, a square pavement and a " broad oval." (I have been unable to determine the import of this expression which is probably also a mis-copy.) The F.P.O.F. are given, in a slightly different order from that to which we are accustomed, and with one modification-e. to e. instead of h.o.b.-but they are not given in the same setting nor with the same significance as in our modern ceremony.

The questions and answers demonstrate that there were two degrees, with separate O.B.'s-the second degree being designated " Master " and " Fellow " interchangeably. The apprentice O.B. is given in full, and later it is stated that that of the Master or Fellow is the same with omission of one reference. The sign of the First Degree is described somewhat crudely, and the words of the two Degrees are given not explicitly but by references to Scripture, in such a way as not to indicate which is which. The questions are referred to Lodge Kilwinning. Towards the end there is a threefold repetition of a conventional phrase which is not now in use in any Scottish Lodge so far as I have heard, but which is, I believe in regular usage in English Lodges when the W.M. greets the Brethren.

There is no reference in this document to the Third or Master Mason Degree as we now know it, nor to the theme of our Third Degree, yet there is surely here evidence of some progress having been made towards the setting and form of our modern speculative Order. But though this development accompanied or followed the admission of non-operative members who were " accepted " into the Craft Lodges because of their interest in the speculative elements therein, and though some of these " accepted " Masons are known to have been interested in the studies associated with Rosicrucianism, there is not any direct evidence that the development was due to that particular influence.



## **THE "ANTHROPOLOGICAL" SCHOOL**

In my brief survey of various theories that have been propounded to account for the origin of speculative Freemasonry, I have not dealt so far with the theories of the Anthropological school. I shall only refer to these very briefly. The pioneers of that school have directed our attention to numerous similarities between symbols current in our craft and symbols found in ancient drawings, sculptures and vases that have been discovered in Egypt, in Central and South America and elsewhere. They have also studied as far as information is available, initiatory rites and ceremonies among primitive peoples of the present day, and have found that in the course of these ceremonies signs and symbols are used somewhat similar to some of those with which we are familiar. Because of that similarity many have jumped to the conclusion that there must be some historical connection between these primitive rites and modern Freemasonry. Some maintain that Freemasonry has risen from these rites by a natural process of development or evolution; others that modern Freemasonry and modern primitive rites have descended from a common stock, the former having progressed and risen in the scale, and the latter having degenerated. No doubt the facts to which they have directed our attention are intensely interesting and present us with many curious problems in Anthropology; but they do not help us to solve the problem of the origin of Freemasonry. The fact of similarity between a few widely spread signs and symbols and symbols which we use does not imply any necessary historical connection; and the conclusions they have formulated do not reasonably follow from the evidence they adduce.

## **THE HIRAMIC LEGEND**

I should now like to approach the problem from a different angle. Earlier in my paper, I suggested that the first and most essential qualification for the task of tracing Freemasonry to its source is an understanding of our complex system, and of the elements of which it is composed. Let us now consider various elements in our system that are obviously not derived from the operative art of Masonry and also examine a few established facts in the history of our Order; and let us see whether by any reasonable deductions we can arrive at an acceptable theory.

The most obvious element not derived from the operative art of building is of course the central theme of our Third Degree, the Hiramic Legend. So far as evidence is available, there is no

indication of our Third Degree or its subject matter being associated with Freemasonry prior to the founding of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717. So far as I am aware, the earliest reference to the Third Degree in Scotland appears in the minutes of Lodge Greenock Kilwinning, now No. 12 on the Roll of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. That Lodge was founded in 1728 by charter from Mother Kilwinning, and a reference to " Entering, Passing or Raising " appears in its minutes for that year; and a further reference appears in 1729. The first of these records was eleven years after the founding of the Grand Lodge of England and eight years before the founding of the Grand Lodge of Scotland.\* Lodge Canongate Kilwinning, No. 2 on the roll of the Grand Lodge of Scotland first worked the Third Degree in 1735, the year before the founding of that Grand Lodge, and the earliest record of the working of the Third Degree in the Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel), No. 1 is 1738. I understand (on the authority of a statement in Brother A. E. Waite's " New Encyclopedia of Freemasonry ") that Lodge No. 83 E.C. was working three degrees in 1732.

Brother R. F. Gould, interpreting " Master " and " Fellowcraft " in Anderson's Constitution of 1723 as alternative terms (an interpretation which is supported by the usage of these expressions in the 1696 document to which I have already referred), was of opinion that there were only two degrees worked at that date. We can therefore conclude that it has been established with a reasonable degree of certitude that the Third Degree was introduced into Freemasonry some time between 1723 and 1728.

But these facts do not help us towards a determination of the source from which the legend of the degree was derived. Let us now see whether an examination of the legend itself will yield any result in this direction.

Some Masonic students, having in view the various allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures in our rituals, and the general scriptural setting of the three degrees, have pointed out, and with reason, that our rituals must have been compiled by persons having an intimate knowledge of these scriptures, of which there was a widespread knowledge following the dissemination of the King James version of the Bible early in the seventeenth century. But the central theme of our Third Degree does not conform to the scriptural record. The great work that was done by the son of the Widow of the tribe of Naphthali in connection with the building of the Temple is recorded in the seventh chapter of the First Book of Kings, and is also referred to in the second chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles. We read nothing there of his meeting an untimely death before his work was completed. On the contrary, we read in I Kings, vii., 40:=

` So Hiram made an end of doing all the work that he made King Solomon for the house of the Lord." Thus he did complete his work. And Josephus, the Jewish historian, relates that he returned to his own country and lived to a ripe old age.

Thus, though the main outline of our legend is based upon the scriptural story, there is no reference whatever in scripture to what our ritual now presents as the chief incident and makes the pivotal point of the lessons of the degree. We must assume that the compilers made this departure for a very definite purpose, and in the course of our study we shall, I submit, find what that purpose almost certainly was.

It has been suggested by Brother A. E. Waite that the Third Degree legend was introduced in our ritual as a vehicle for instruction as to resurrection and immortality, and that it introduced into speculative Freemasonry a spiritual as distinct from a philosophical or ethical element. I quite agree that the instruction conveyed by our Third Degree is pre-eminently spiritual rather than ethical (the objective of the First Degree) or intellectual (the purpose of the Second Degree); but I doubt if its purpose was to teach the doctrine of immortality. Our ritual contains at this point definite allusions to immortality, but I think that there are definite indications that our degree was intended by its compilers to teach a much deeper lesson, not of physical death and subsequent resurrection and immortality, but of mystical death of the lower nature, and the raising to a higher life, which henceforth ought to be guided by our spiritual nature. Note that the candidate is raised " to a reunion with the former companions of his toil," and that it is only then that the spiritual instruction of the degree is imparted. The spiritual perception that results from the experience symbolised in our ceremony enables us to realise that the light of a Master Mason is but darkness visible, serving only to express that gloom which rests upon the prospect of futurity. Yet even by this glimmering ray we are enabled to discriminate between what is mortal and what is immortal. Thus while the fact of immortality is certainly implicit in it, the theme itself, as a symbol, rather teaches the lesson of spiritual regeneration which may be experienced while still incarnate in these mortal bodies, which is, as Brother A. E. Waite says, " the root matter of the Greater Mysteries." The part played by the candidate in our ceremony is analogous to the mystical identification of the novitiate with the tutelary hero in the Mysteries of Dionysos, Osiris and others of the ancient mystery cults that arose in such numbers around the shores of the Mediterranean between a time prior to the building of the K.S.T. and the beginning of the present era. These mystery rites are popularly interpreted as versions of the Sun Myth, but I suggest that they had a deeper

meaning for the instructed Initiates of these Mysteries, at least before the Mysteries themselves began to deteriorate, as they undoubtedly did.

The interpretation I suggest bears upon the deepest experience of the human soul. If there be any spiritual truth at all in the Greater Mysteries of Initiation which have been recognised in all ages of human experience, surely they must lead to, and beyond, that great experience which I suggest is the true teaching of our Third Degree. I say " and beyond " because spiritual re-birth is only the beginning of a new life wherein there is the possibility of infinite progress. This interpretation, too, gives a great glory to our Masonic Order, and is calculated to impress with a sense of responsibility those who are entrusted with the working of our degrees, who are indeed " stewards of the mysteries of God."

### **OUR " PECULIAR SYSTEM "**

If you accept the interpretation of the Third Degree which I have submitted, you will, I think find that all the teaching of the three Craft Degrees fit in with it perfectly. And I would further suggest that the symbolical teaching of these degrees would be found to constitute a complete and coherent system of spiritual philosophy. Our Masonic symbolism does not consist of a mass of symbols that have been gradually accumulated as a collection of separate and unrelated units; our symbols are elements in an organic whole which constitutes our " peculiar system " of spiritual instruction though veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbol. The more our three degrees are studied from this point of view, the more they are seen to " hang together," to symbolise a normal progression in human experience, a progression which is epitomised in the changes in the relative positions of the Three Great Lights in the three degrees.

The recognition of this organic unity of our three degrees clearly suggests that the three ceremonies of these degrees as we now know them were compiled at or about the same time, and accordingly that our First and Second Degree rituals in their present form were compiled after the Third Degree had been conceived, and that all three were promulgated simultaneously.

In our Third Degree we have to be content with substituted secrets, the genuine secrets having been lost. This I interpret as meaning that we have to be content with an intellectual knowledge of spiritual verities which have been lost as a matter of spiritual experience. These genuine secrets are recovered symbolically in the Royal Arch degree, and may be recovered experientially. It is

because they may be so recovered that I regard Freemasonry and its peculiar system of instruction as potentially one of the greatest spiritual forces in the world to-day. A detailed interpretation of the symbolism of the Royal Arch Degree supports my thesis to the point of almost mathematical proof. Though we have no record of the R.A. Degree being worked until some few years later-probably in 1734 or 1744-from the facts I have just stated, considered along with a particular and significant phrase in the ritual of the Third Degree which every R.A. Mason will recognise, I believe that the higher degree had been at least conceived if not fully formulated at the time when the three Craft degrees were promulgated in their present form.

### **THE KABALLAHS**

I have said that, if the legend of the Third Degree and the interpretation of it which I have suggested be taken as the starting point for the study of the aim and objective of our speculative Freemasonry, all the other parts will be found to fit into it perfectly: still, this legend is but one element. The rest of the degrees will, I suggest, be found to fit together according to a scheme which, in point of origin, is quite distinct from that legend. The learned Brethren who compiled our degrees were demonstrably deeply versed in the philosophical Kaballah of the Hebrews as well as with the Hebrew Scriptures, and many important features of the Kaballistic system are veiled but thinly by the symbolism of our ceremonies. The number of these features so embodied is so great, and they are so basic to our system, as to preclude the idea they are there merely by chance or coincidence.

The philosophical Kaballists were profound psychologists. They recognised that the outer activities of our life spring from inner sources. In the first place, some of our actions spring from our instincts and natural passions; others are guided by reason; and still others spring from spiritual inspiration or intuition. Thus we have three distinguishable sources of action within us. These are sometimes spoken of as three " planes " or " worlds " which we may call the instinctual or moral plane, the intellectual plane and the spiritual plane. These three with the outer world of action make four altogether. There is an interesting instance of this classification in the prologue to St John's Gospel. In the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth verses of the first chapter of that Gospel we read:-" To as many as received Him to them He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His Name: which were born, not of blood (physical nature, representing the outer world of action), nor of the will of the flesh (instinctual or moral nature), nor

of the will of man (intellectual nature-intellect being the distinctive attribute of man), but of God " (spiritual nature).

In considering the three inner or subjective planes, you will readily recognise that they correspond precisely to our three Craft degrees. Our instinctual or passional natures, which we share with the whole animal creation, must be disciplined, controlled, educated. Only when we have, by diligent and persevering labour, knocked off all superfluous knobs and excrescences from the rough ashlar of our nature, only when that rough stone has been still further smoothed by a process of education, are we rendered fit members of regularly organised society. This is the work of an E.A.

Proceeding onwards, still guiding our progress by the principles of moral truth inculcated in the First Degree, we are led in the Second to contemplate the intellectual faculties and to trace their development through the paths of heavenly science. The secrets of Nature and the principles of intellectual truth are then unveiled to view.

In the Third Degree, as I have already indicated, we pass through a mystical death to a re-birth on a still higher or spiritual plane, where we are (symbolically) born, " not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

This recognition of the correspondence between the four " worlds " of the Kaballah and the form and scope of our Masonic symbolism is but a starting point for the study of this aspect of our subject. But there are many other elements in our rituals of which the significance is obscure until they are seen in their mutual relationship within this framework. It is not possible to go into them in detail at present-that would require a separate paper of considerable length. But a detailed and sustained study has led me definitely to the conclusion not only that there are many Kaballistic elements in Freemasonry, but that the broad framework of the four degrees (including the Royal Arch) is essentially Kaballistic. From this I infer that those learned Brethren who compiled our ritual and promulgated it in the early part of the eighteenth century, were deeply versed in the Hebrew Kaballah.

Before leaving this aspect of my subject, I should like to emphasise that the intimate, indeed essential, association of elements of the philosophical Kaballah with the great spiritual fact of regeneration as symbolised in our Third Degree in Freemasonry, is unique. And yet the combination is very reasonable and accords well with the highest human experience. All the moral and intellectual instruction provided by Kaballistic or any other system cannot alone lead us to a knowledge of spiritual things. As St Paul said, " The natural man

receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned " (I Cor. ii. 14). " Ye must be born again," said Christ (John iii, 7), for He too knew and taught that only by such re-birth can we acquire the spiritual faculty to discern spiritual things. This the compilers of our ritual knew, and of this great truth they provided us with a glorious symbol in the dramatic ceremony of our Third Degree, which is the culmination of the moral and intellectual training symbolised in the earlier degree.

Though the broad framework of the system embodied in our ceremonials is essentially Kabalistic, into that framework have been fitted many symbols that are not derived from that source. Notable amongst these are- the Three Great Lights; but there are many others, some of fundamental importance. These can be shown to correspond with symbols or with teachings found in other systems of philosophy or religion, and clearly indicate that the expert Brethren who compiled our system were also versed in these other systems. That they should have taken all these elements from various sources, and should have woven them into a system so complete, so consistent, so symmetrical, speaks volumes for their knowledge, their understanding and their wisdom, and compels not only our admiration, but our reverence.

### **LANDMARKS**

I think that it also speaks volumes for their wisdom and foresight that they should have taken measures for the preserving and perpetuating of this wonderful system of instruction for all succeeding generations of craftsmen by requiring all Masters to acknowledge, and make their successors in office acknowledge, that it is not within the power of any man, or body of men (not even of Grand Lodge itself!) to add thereto or take therefrom. Was not the doctrine of " Landmarks," which we are taught must be preserved sacred and inviolable, conceived and promulgated to this same end? The earliest mention of Landmarks appear in the 39th Article of the Regulations of George Payne, Grand Master of England in 1720, which appears in the original Book of Constitution in 1723. That regulation provides that " Every Grand Lodge has an inherent power and authority to make new regulations, or to alter these for the benefit of the Ancient Fraternity: provided always that the old Landmarks be carefully preserved." From this it has been argued that, since the Landmarks were " old " in 1720, they must have been present in the practice of pre-Grand Lodge operative Lodges. But surely it will be admitted by all that the theme of our Third Degree is an essential Landmark of our Order. If so, and if the conclusions now generally accepted as to the post-1717 origin of

the Third Degree be correct, then the inference just mentioned can scarcely be accepted, as it would exclude that theme from the category of " Landmarks." But this reference to the Landmarks in 1720, when read along with the evidence as to the formulation of our complete three-degree system about that time may reasonably be interpreted as indicating the intention of the compilers that the system should continue unchanged and unchangeable so long as it continued at all-the word "old" or "ancient" being introduced into the formula of the doctrine to impress the uninstructed rank and file of the Craft with that sense of authority which is popularly presumed to be derived from antiquity. Without this subterfuge (if it may be so called) it is probable that their end would not have been attained. While on the subject of Landmarks, might I quote Brother A. E. Waite again? After discussing the subject (and accepting the word " old " in its literal usage) he concludes: " Under all the circumstances it must be recognised that there are Old Landmarks, but as the original authority failed to specify concerning them, no one knows what they are " ; and he adds a personal note: " I infer personally that George Payne had nothing definite in his mind when he made the reference." But surely this last inference is unreasonable! Surely Payne had something in his mind when he said that the " old Landmarks" were to " be carefully preserved." I suggest for consideration that the Landmarks are those elements in our peculiar system of spiritual philosophy and instruction which are so essential that if any of them were to be omitted or changed, the completeness, the consistency and the symmetry of the system, would be marred. Surely it is amazing and a justification of the wisdom and foresight of our eighteenth-century Brethren in promulgating this doctrine of " Landmarks " that their wonderful system of spiritual instruction which was launched under the auspices of a Grand Lodge-constituted in a public house, in an age that was characterised by sensuous indulgence and when Lodges normally met in taverns - should have been preserved intact during two centuries, and should have been disseminated over the whole world, and in this twentieth century should have become such a mighty spiritual force? This miracle (for it may be so regarded) is seen to be all the greater when it is realised that it has only been in this twentieth century that Brethren have arisen who have been able to recover the spiritual key to our Mysteries, for exponents of the nineteenth century were content to expound the ethical and charitable teachings of the Craft.

### **CONCLUSION**

From what I have submitted in this paper, were there no other evidence, surely we may reasonably conclude that our system was



compiled by learned Brethren who had an almost unparalleled knowledge of man's psychological and spiritual nature and needs, and of the teachings by which the teachers of many systems of philosophy and religion had sought to meet those needs in many ages and lands. The grandeur of the whole scheme is amazing; the comprehensiveness of the conception makes even the boldest of the speculations as to the origins of the Craft, to which I referred in the earlier portions of my paper, dwarf into puny insignificance. And that they had the practical wisdom to select essential elements from their extensive field of knowledge, express these elements in new forms consistent with a general scheme of symbolism based on the building art, and then, for the promulgation of their teachings, should make use of the dying operative guild which had served its day and probably would not have continued much longer, at least as a power in the land, is surely one of the most arresting phenomena in the history of the human race.

I have one more point to make in conclusion, and I shall deal with it very briefly. I have tried to show that there is evidence that our modern speculative Freemasonry is not the result of a gradual process of evolution, but rather that it is the result of a deliberate and selective eclecticism on the part of certain learned Brethren. It has been suggested by Brother A. E. Waite that this task was accomplished by a band of Masonic literati about the period of the founding of the Grand Lodge of England. I do not share this view exactly. I agree that the work culminated then, but I think that there is evidence (e.g., in the Edinburgh Register House MS. of 1696, to which I have referred) that the process had begun somewhat earlier. From this evidence I would conclude that two or three successive generations of instructed and spiritually-minded Brethren had contributed towards the work; but there is no evidence of the work having been begun before the widespread admission of speculative members in the seventeenth century. In the first quarter of the eighteenth century the work was probably completed, and polished and given final form. And might I again suggest, as I have already hinted, that the Brethren who applied the final touches were probably behind the formation of the Grand Lodges then established, which have been the vehicles for the promulgation of their peculiar system. Who these Brethren were may never be known. Whether they derived their inspiration from the Rosicrucian or any other Order may never be established. But after all these things matter little. What does matter is the system itself, and that bears on every facet the hall-mark of its genuineness. In proportion as we make progress in the understanding of that system, and carry the instruction symbolised therein into practice in our lives, we shall realise more fully what is really symbolised by the perfect ashlar, a spiritual stone fair and

square and well-wrought, ready for its place in that spiritual Temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

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\* In the " Pocket History of Freemasonry " by F. L. Pick and G. Norman Knight (1953), page 174, reference is made to records in the Minutes of Lodge Dumbarton Kilwinning, now No. 18, Scottish Constitution. A minute dated 29th January 1726 refers to Masters, Fellows of Craft and Entered Prentices; and at the following meeting on the 25th March a Fellow Craft was " unanimously admitted and received as a Master of the Fraternity and renewed his oath and gave his entry money in terms of the Constitution."