

ORATION

M.E. Grand Superintendent and Companions,

It would be appropriate on an occasion such as this that the Oration should be given by a Companion in Holy Orders - one, who, by his very training and spiritual experience, could enlighten the minds of his Companions on the mystical and ethical content of the Ritual message of this Supreme Order.

And although the Office I have the honour to hold is termed 'sacerdotal' (i.e. appertaining to the priesthood) I feel it would ill-become me to attempt to sermonise. I, therefore, propose to take a more modest and practical course and dwell for a short time on what may be termed some 'Obscurities' <sup>in the history & Ritual of the Order</sup> (~~in the Ritual of the Ceremony of Exaltation~~) And by 'Obscurities' I imply no criticism but will attempt to amplify some <sup>historical & philosophical</sup> allusions (~~in it~~) which are touched upon but not fully explained.

Firstly, as to origin - E.Comp. Harry Carr in a Paper entitled 'More light on the Royal Arch' printed in the Transactions X of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge of Research says:-

"....The Royal Arch made its appearance in England during the 1740's. We may assume that the seeds of this new ceremony were germinating for several years before we have records of it, but we cannot date the practice of the Royal Arch earlier than c.1740"

He asks 'Why did the Royal Arch appear?' and goes on to assert that a fourth grade was inevitable due to the evolution of the 3 Craft Degrees.

"It is almost certain" he says "that the first Masonic Ceremony was designed for the Fellow or Fellow-craft i.e. the fully trained Craftsman"

*He goes on to state that* In the late 1600's it is certain that the Craft had no more than 2 admission ceremonies, one for the Apprentice or E.A. and the other for the Fellow-craft or Master both of whom were equal in their technical capacity. But F.C's were employees whereas those who were able to set up as Masters quite naturally wanted a separate degree to themselves. The 3rd. Degree made its appearance in England about 1724 and by 1730 was widely known though not widely practised. At this stage all 3 working grades within the Craft were covered by separate ceremonies - only one grade remained unrepresented in this fashion i.e. there was still no distinguishing ceremony for the men who had presided in a Lodge i.e. Masters of Lodges. Inevitably, a ceremony appeared around 1740. *- Ramsay's "Oration"?*

The origin of the Ceremony of Exaltation itself is based on 2 separate stories:-

- 1) The true Biblical story of the return from Babylon and the building of the Temple
- and 2) The ancient legend describing the discovery of the Vault, the Altar and the Sacred Word.

With regard to the legend, about the year A.D. 400 Philostorgius, writing of the re-building of the Temple, gives a recog-



-nisable account of the discovery of the Vault. About 900 years later i.e. in 14th. century, Nicephorus Callistus, writing on the re-building of the Temple took the Philostorgius version and enlarged on it. It is worth quoting:-

"When the foundations were a laying, as I have said, there was a stone among the rest to which the bottom of the foundation was fastned, that slipt from its place and discovered the mouth of a cave which had been cut in the rock. Now when they could not see the bottom by reason of its depth; the Overseers of the building being desirous to have certain knowledge of it they tied a long rope to one of the Labourers and let him down. He being come to the bottom, found water in it that took him up to the mid-angles and searching every part of that hollow place he found it to be four square as far as he could conjecture by feeling. Then returning towards the mouth of it he hit upon a certain little pillar not much higher than the water, and lighting with his hand upon it found a book lying there wrapped up in a piece of thin and clean linnen. Having taken it into his hands he signified by the rope that they should draw him up. When he was pulled up he shews the book which struck them with admiration especially seeming so fresh and untoucht as it did, being found in so obscure and ~~dark~~ a hole. The Book, being unfolded, did amaze not only the Jews, but the Grecians also, holding forth even at the beginning of it in great Letters ('In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God'). To speak plainly, that Scripture did ~~it~~ manifestly contain the whole Gospel which the Divine tongue of the Virgin-Mary had declared"

The point I would make here is that the Vault legend was not an 18th. century invention but a pure piece of religious legend dating back to the 5th. century <sup>and probably</sup> ~~or~~ even earlier, and from the Biblical story and the legend, has grown the Ritual we use to-day.

It is generally believed that in the early 1830's the Duke of Sussex, then 1st. Grand Principal, commissioned the Rev. George Adam Browne to examine the many divergent rituals in use at that time with the object of co-ordinating them into a uniform ritual. This he did and in the process our Rev. Companion made a considerable number of additions including the Historical, Symbolical and Mystical Lectures.

\* In February 1834 a Committee was appointed by Grand Chapter to take into consideration the ceremonies for the Installation of Principals as well as various other ceremonies of the Order. Its 9 members were the 3 Grand Principals (i.e. Duke of Sussex, Lord Dundas and John Ramsbottom) with 6 distinguished companions including the Rev. Adam Browne. This Committee reported to Grand Chapter in ~~Nov~~ November 1834 the result of their labours and it was resolved "That Members of the Grand Chapter be summoned in classes to consider separately such portions of the ceremonies as their qualifications and ~~rank~~ <sup>rank</sup> entitle them to participate"



This resulted in the acceptance of the Committee's recommendations albeit with a few amendments and on the 4th. February 1835 a special Chapter of Promulgation was warranted for 6 months only.

In this Chapter the new Ceremonies of Exaltation and Installation of Principals was worked. It may be noted in passing that the revised Ritual eliminated the ceremony of Passing the Veils, the only reference to it being by E.Comp. H. when, in the Symbolical Lecture, he refers to the Ribbon (or Sash) worn by the Companions as "being composed of the two principal colours with which the veils of the Temple and the Tabernacle were interwoven...".

So strongly did Grand Chapter feel about the adoption of a uniform working that in November 1835 it resolved as follows:-

"Some misconception having arisen as to what are the ceremonies of our Order, it is hereby resolved and declared that the ceremonies adopted and promulgated by Special Grand Chapter on 21st. and 25th. November 1834 are the ceremonies of the Order which it is the duty of every Chapter to adopt and obey".

So it is that the Ritual we practise to-day substantially conforms to that devised by the Rev. Adam Browne and the Committee in 1835. (13. years ago)

E.Comp. H., in his Symbolical Lecture, following the Exaltation Ceremony, referring to the Greater and Lesser Lights and their arrangement in equilateral triangles says:-

"This symbolical arrangement corresponds with the mysterious Triple Tau which has two rt. angles at each of its exterior lines and two at their union in the centre, in all 8 rt. angles corresponding with the number in the 4 tri-angles; for the angles of every tri-angle are together equal to 2 rt. angles. It also serves to illustrate the Jewel worn by the Comps. which, by its inter-sections, forms a given number of angles. These may be taken in five several combinations, and when reduced to their amount in rt. angles will be found equal to the 5 regular Platonic Bodies, which represent the 4 elements and the Sphere of the Universe"

The so-called Platonic Bodies are the 5 regular geometrical solids and are in fact, the only strictly regular solids which can be constructed. They were discovered (or first described) by Pythagoras about the year **B.C. 40. B.C.**

When it is said that the so-called Platonic Bodies are the only regular solids which can be constructed, it must be borne in mind that the word 'regular' is used in the sense that Euclid employed it. Euclid's definition of a regular plane figure is one which has all its sides equal and all its angles equal - and thus a regular solid is one which is contained by equal and similar plane surfaces so that it has all its surfaces equal & equilateral and its solid angles equal.

A → Now to relate the angles formed by the Greater & Lesser Lights, the Jewel worn by the Comps., and the mysterious Triple Tau it can be stated:-



<del>(Tetrahedron)</del>	That (1) a 4 sided solid made up of 4 eq'l triangles=8 rt.a=1 T/Tau	Fire
(Octahedron)	(2) an 8 " " " " " 8 " " =16" "=2 " " Air	
(Icosahedron)	(3) a 20 " " " " " 20 " " =40" "=5 " " Water	
(Cube)	(4) a 6 " ".....has.....=24" "=3 " " Earth	
<del>(Sphere)</del>	(5) a 12 " ".....has.....=72" "=9 " " Sphere	

In one of the Platonic Dialogues, known as the 'Timæus', is to be found a description of the formation of the Universe by the Diety. According to the Platonic Theory everything that is created, or as the Platonists preferred, everything that is generated, must be visable or tangible, and must be composed of visable & tangible elements - by which they meant that it must be capable of appreciation by the senses.

Timæus argues thus;- Whatever is created must be visable or tangible, but nothing can be visable without the aid of FIRE. Nothing can be tangible unless solid, and nothing is more solid than EARTH. Fire & Earth were, therefore, regarded as the two principal Elements.

The Platonists held that no two things can conere without the aid of a third medium and that one such medium was necessary to form a superficies (of 'surface') but that two media were required to form a solid. They, therefore, introduced the two Elements, AIR & WATER, between Fire and Earth.

The Platonist theory was, that in order that the Universe might be as perfect as possible the Diety combined these 4 Elements in such a manner that there might be an exact analogy between the four i.e. as Fire is to Air, so is Air to Water, and as Air is to Water, so is Water to Earth, thus forming a regular and harmonious gradation from the lightest and most penetrating of the Elements to the heaviest and most obtuse.

The Platonists reasoned that the Diety thus formed the Universe from the 4 Elements, and, as the SPHERE was considered the most perfect form - since it contains within itself all other forms - He made the Universe in the form of a Sphere.

But how were the 4 Elements considered to be represented by the 4 regular solids? The Platonists held that the Elements were tangible bodies and that all bodies possess some degree of solidity. They therefore likened the Elements to the most perfect of the solid bodies which are the regular ones, their theory being that all regular and symmetrical forms must be more perfect than irregular ones.

Of the 5 regular solids the CUBE <sup>(or six-sided figure)</sup> is the most stable and immovable therefore it was selected to represent the Earth.

The 20-sided figure (Icosahedron), being the heaviest, was assigned to Water.

The Tetrahedron (4-sided figure) , the sharpest and most agile was chosen to represent F-ire.

The Octahedron (8-sided figure) , the least stable, was selected for Air.



The Dodechedron (12-sided figure), which approached nearest to the Sphere, was chosen to represent the Universe.

The shape of these regular Platonic Bodies and their relationship to the 4 Elements and the Sphere are best illustrated by actual models but that could not be done to-day.

For the lack of a better word I said at the outset I would talk on 'Obscurities' and have briefly touched on the origin of the Order and its Ritual and the relationship of the 6 Lights, the Jewel and the Triple Tau. Much more could be added as, for example, the Ceremony of Passing the Veils, the Ensigns & Banners did time permit.

But Companions, you may wonder what all this has to do with the Consecration of a ~~new~~ Royal Arch Chapter. In Freemasonry there remain a number of questions unanswered. There are those who firmly hold that Freemasonry had its origin even before the building of W.S.T., while others contend that it gradually evolved from operative Masonic practice and was added to and embellished by Alchemists, such as Elias Ashmole.

In these schools of thought the protagonists will go on trying to prove their theories while we lesser ~~Masons~~ stand aside and listen with awe or scepticism according to ~~how we feel~~ *our own feelings*.

So if this afternoon there be among the Companions of this new Chapter some who like me were mystified and puzzled by the symbolism and philosophic allusions in the Ritual and have now a clearer conception of the subject some good will have been done in that the Chapter will start on its Masonic voyage with, at least, one mystery resolved and a fuller understanding of the hidden truths enshrined in its Ritual.

To the Founders I say - May T.A.L.G.M.H. prosper you in your endeavours and in the doing may you be blessed.

*5 minutes*  
*Chair at this evening*



To depress for a moment, -

(A) The Triple Tau, as a sign, is of great antiquity. In the 'Mystical' lecture it is spoken of as "that mark or character spoken of by the Angel whom Ezekiel saw in the spirit, when it was said to the man with the writer's inkhorn "Go thy way through the midst of the city of Jerusalem & set a mark on the foreheads of all those who sigh & lament for the abominations thereof" [~~ie. those who opposed the prevalent idolatry~~] by which mark they were saved from among those who were slain for their idolatry. Mackey (Encyclopedia of Freemasonry) says "it was a mark or sign of favorable distinction; and with this allusion we may, therefore, suppose the triple tau to be used in the Royal Arch degree as a mark designating & separating those who know & worship the true name of God from those who are ignorant of that august mystery". In the ritual explanation of the R.A. Jewel it is referred to <sup>among other occult references</sup> as "blavis ad thesaurum" (ie. the Key to the Treasure) - in other words it was a symbolical key to the knowledge of God & the Creation, as a whole.