

The Relationships between Craft Masonry and the Holy Royal Arch.

The legend of the third Craft degree and the mystical drama of the Holy Royal Arch alike present a puzzle to all Masonic students. The origin of both is obscure, the period of their first association with the constitutions and gild rites of operative Masonry has not been definitely decided. Did they arise from elaboration of teachings embedded in the traditional history held secret by the Gothic Builders, or were they added when in the 17th and 18th century Masonry was made "free and accepted or speculative"? History is silent, only a hint or two appears in time to guide the quest for truth. So each has to form his own conclusions and reach a decision for himself upon such evidence as he may gather from history, and from a study of the rituals themselves.

The second of the articles of Union of the Antient or (Holl) Lodges, and the Moderns Lodges to form United Grand Lodge in 1813, was especially commended to the notice of all brethren as it marks a departure from the definition of Masonry held by some brethren, particularly the Moderns. "It is declared and pronounced that pure ancient Masonry consists of three degrees and no more, viz. those of the E.A. the F.C. and the M.M. including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch. The R.A. was high in the favour of the Antients" for in 1756 we read in "Aluman Rezon" the Book of Constitutions of their rival Grand Lodge written by Laurence Dermot that the R.A. is the "Root Heart and Marrow of Free Masonry". But the Grand Secretary of the Premier Grand Lodge of 1717 (Moderns) wrote in 1759 "Our Society in neither Arch, Royal Arch, nor Antient". Many "Moderns" however joined the Royal Arch under the jurisdiction of a Grand Chapter at York from 1760 onwards though the Grand Lodge still did not recognise R.A. Masonry, for as late as 1792 it declared "that the G. Lodge of England" has nothing to do with the proceedings of the Society of Royal Arch Masons".

Thus the R.A. was being worked by Masons in 1750. Before that date there are but few references to it.

Brother Gould cites an account of a procession in 1743 of the members among the earliest of Hughall Lodge, Ireland, whose Minutes record "the R.A. carried by two excellent Masons".

Bro. Hugham in his Origin of the English Rite of F. Masonry refers to a work published by Dr. F. Dassigny, which states that an assembly of Master Masons under title of Royal Arch Masons was held at York, that they had all passed the Chair" and were most Excellent Masons, This was in 1714.

Bro. Tuckett suggests that the 1723 Constitutions (Anderson's) might indirectly refer to the R.A. since Art 11. states "The Master of a particular Lodge has the Right and Authority of congregating the members of his Lodge into a Chapter at pleasure" and points out the phrase "the well built Arch" in the same writing. This however in view of the known non recognition of the R.A. by Premier Grand Lodge is strongly debated.

In a Ritual of 1730 it is said "The word which was once lost is now found" and Brother Richard Rawlinson LL.D., FRS. writing in 1725 of the Grand Master Dr. Desaguliers says "He makes wonderful brags of being of the Fifth Order ----- he pretends that he has found out a mysterious Hocus Pocus Word, which belongs to the Anathema pronounced against Ananias and Sapphira --- and he further pretends that whomsoever he (as a member of the Fifth Order) shall pronounce this terrible word, the person shall instantly drop down dead as they did ----- I'll take all the care I can, to keep out of the Doctor's way; for I am sure if he meets me, and knows me, out comes the great millesyllabicum and I'm dead as William the Conqueror".

Here is a distinct reference to the Tetragrammaton of the Kabbalists or as we say, the SAMNDTTALGMH. together with the possible association of the R.A. with the Craft as a 5th degree - the EA. FC. MM. PM. RA. We thus trace back to 1725.

No minutes appear to have survived earlier than those of Stirling Chapter of 1743, and prior to 1725 nothing of the R.A. has so far appeared, though it may have been worked. A careful survey of all existing evidence makes it fairly evident that the RA was established in Britain somewhere about the opening of the 18th century. Some hold that it was then introduced from the Continent. Bro. Tarker in one of his pamphlets mentions that Chevalier Ramsey (a Scottish Freemason) long resident in France published in 1728 "The Travels of Cy" which is of interest to R. Arch Masons, and the subject of his work may have led him or some of his associates to formulate our R.A. Degree.

Bro. Hughan however cannot decide whether the Continental or the English R.A. was the senior. In any case, the R.A. appears in history about 1700 AD. and is closely associated with the activities of Freemasonry of that time.

This date is also a significant one in Craft Masonry. About this time the original Craft Masonry developed distinct EA and FC degrees, and had a third degree, that of M.M. added. The skilled architect of the Temple building became the central figure of a "mythos" highly valued by the whole Craft and distinct from the Stonecraft teachings of first two degrees. To these two degrees EA and FC were evidently added Hermetic and Kabbalistic references in order to lead up to this new third degree, and co-ordinate the whole system as shown in the retrospect shown the Candidate in the M. Masons' degree. The date of formulation of the M M Ritual is generally conceded as about 1720. So the significant fact emerges that the EA and the RA rite - the latter "completing" the teachings of the former, appear in our Masonic system at almost the same time - a time when the decay of Gothic building art had brought that great master guild of Craftsmen to the lowest spoke of fortunes wheel, and when the work of non operative brethren - the speculatives so called - within the old constitutions, rescued Masonry from ruin and gave it the form in which we have received it. In its "Free accepted and speculative form, the influence of these brethren of "antiquarian" interest is apparent. Versed in the philosophies of the Ancient Mysteries in an age when the full effect of the Renaissance operating upon British thought and culture, they supplemented the stone-craft teachings with correspondences drawn from the Kabbala, the Rites of Hermes, and of Egypt, which had been their study.

A careful study of the metaphysics of our 3^o and Arch Rituals comparatively with that of the mysteries and legendary literature of the centuries prior to the 17th. indicate to me that only at the beginning of the 18th Century would they make intelligent and welcome appeal to the rank and file of Britain.

The "mystery teachings" of the ages in Britain in the Arthunau cycle the Townley Plays, Piers Plowman, Faerie Queen, and like Works shows treatment of simpler and more primitive order than it does in this its current Masonic garb. And moreover, the brethren who received and lived by the precepts and ordinances of "The Old Charges" would not appreciate the form, setting, and allusions of the rituals as we now have them.

The developed knowledge of letters and platonic philosophy the revivals of learning, the spread into Christendom of the Arabic culture, all had influenced human thought. Men no longer had the simple plain outlook suggested by the Regius Poem, the Schaw Statutes, the Cooke MSS. of 1400. Pope could find a public for his Essay of Man and his Universal Prayer, our 3^o and R. Arch Rite could be formulated with fair expectation of being appreciated by the Mason. Such allusions as those to "erring from the Centre" "the sublimary abode" and such teachings as of L B T on the of the three steps and their inversions to form the T's I would be by 1700 readily comprehended and welcomed within the older Masonic

rituals which we even today need to be carefully explained, it must not be supposed that in 1700 they were as archaic and difficult of understanding. Modern science has since demanded another mode of thought and approach to circumstance. The Platonism and philosophic mode of thought of the 18th century have fallen into disuse - almost oblivion - so much so that the student of our rituals needs to recapture this human outlook to appreciate fully the significance of many of their utterance.

The mathematician is the mystic of our practical age, the metaphysical philosopher was the mystic of 1700. Today Masonry survives, the sole representative and descendant of the ancient mysteries of Osiris, Eleusis, Nuthras, Hermes, etc. the repository of the fundamental teachings of all of them, doing the great work of human culture they were each in turn designed to do, presenting in stonemasonry guise the wisdom of the ages. For this reason Masonry is claimed by our enlightened students as surviving the wreck of mighty empires, withstanding the destroying hand of Time and as existing from time immemorial - and may it so be transmitted pure and unsullied through the ages to come as we now receive it.

Masonry does not rest upon its history nor its formal settings for its worth. For its mystery Masonry is valued, and for all who look with the veils, there is discovery of the truth of life.

The Royal Arch is the climax of Freemasonry. It completes the third degree what is lost through violence and selfish egoism is refound in the vault of lunar being by the reverential seeker. The signs of the R.A. correspond in number with the F.P.O.F. of the 3^o - the latter show our relationships one to another in brotherhood and benevolence, the former the relationship existing between man and the Divine - the finite and the infinite.

Man in the 3^o is led to the study of the most interesting of all human studies - himself, to identify himself, not with his mortal frame habituated by beneficence and charity taught of a 1^o, nor with the intelligent nature and mind by which he is instrumented in the 2^o, nor yet with the tropic egoic power which selfishly grasps at power and in slaying the spiritual promise within loses the secret of life. Such are not he. He is the vital and immortal principle, buried in the Centre, his Nature is its grave, from which on "raising" he perceives it. Within the Centre, - 3'E 3'W and 3'bet N and S 5' or more perp - - - he finds himself an earthly representative" of the skilled artificer the Master H ★ B, a widow's son - reborn of life. This centre is no evidently the Pineal Centre held till the 18th Century (in accordance with the traditions of the mysteries) to be the domicile of the Spiritual Man in Earth. In that Centre shines the light which comes from above, from the sun in its meridian splendour.

To convince a man of his spirit being beyond "nature and science" body and mind is a work in itself, the work of a 3^o - a raising or re-orientation to show him how to be and use the power of this newborn spirit consciousness is yet another work. - a Rite rather than a grade, step or degree. The 3^o "raises" man to higher consciousness, to spiritual birth the Arch Rite illumines the happiness and ordering of spiritual life.

He has again and again to enter the vault of being and find that Centre. He has to rebuild his nature in the light of that spirit presence. Who is there who saw the first house - which rose fair and at first honourable to the builder - and how do we see it now? It has fallen through self will and egoic selfishness. Yet be strong and work, build, "I am" with thee saith the Lord. - The Infinite functions creatively in the finite. So man makes his way by labour along his "sub-terranean" passage or gallery to his own secret and sacred place.

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He wrenches forth the bonds of old habits, and self conjecture - the two Arch Stones - he dislozes the keystone of the dominating self and enters the vault to find the origin of his being, the "in the beginning" of his hight and in the meridian splendour of high 12, the true worship of the living Divine "Inverinnes Cultor dei o Civis Numdi", he joyously inscribes upon his jewel.

"The Ancient Bard" is made by Tennyson to say to the young poet whose sceptical and sensuous poem he scans -

if thou - - - - - wilt dive
Into the Temple cave of thine own self,
There brooding by the central altar thou
Mayst haply learn the bameless has a voice
by which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise.

and so briefly indicates the mystic truth of the 3^o and R. Arch Ritual which they so richly elaborate. For the relationship of the R.A. to the Craft is such that the R.A. could have no esoteric meaning without the 3^o would not unveil its full significance without the R. Arch rite. Each needs the other, and both need the prior building of the pillars that in ourselves, in that Place, the infinite can establish His seat to stand firm for ever.

Among the Rules of the Grand Chapter of 1778 A.M. regulation II reads:-

"That to this exalted degree, none are to be admitted but men of the best character, and repute - of good natural capacity - and some degree of education - open, generous, liberal in sentiment, totally devoid of superstition, bigotry and real philanthropists ----" I am arrested by the words "totally devoid of superstition". I am glad to realise that it is only as I, free from acquired mortal conception, prejudice, superstition and self opinion, true to the discernments born of experiencing in sane living, can enter the interiority or cave of my own Being and of the Present, beyond body psychic sense, mind and death that I can touch and find that one Reality which alone is, myself and all else, as a R.A. Mason I realise all creeds, dogmas, opinions, theories and philosophies as mentally preferred ideas merely pointing a way along the subterranean gallery of Being. Within is Reality best realised and felt as a brotherliness and for all life, and as a genuine practice of Philanthropy.

To the mystic of Masonry who has learned to penetrate the mysterious veil which rests upon the prospect of the unpeering through the darkness visible assisted by the light from above, the sun always at high noon to Fr. Masonry the relationship of our Rite to the Craft degrees is perceived as the connections of those human vestures enshrining the Universal Spirit he shares with every one of his fellows. He now does this despite the many changes in our rituals. The passing of these veils tracing the progress of man to his sanctum sanctorium by Kabbalistic teachings, and still practised in Beaufort Chapter Bristol, is omitted ordinarily from our texts; the old script drawn from the Kabbala and Talmud (Tarker) has been overlaid by interpolations like that of the quotation from Pope's Universal Prayer ("In every age in every clime, adored by saint by savage, by sage, Jehovah Love Lord") the whitewash of a puritan period concealing not destroying the pictured saints on the walls of our old churches: the Clatonist thought and teaching of mediaevalism has yielded to modern scientific matter of fact thinking and inductive logic. Let he who has eyes to see can see - the connection of our wholesystem is completed in the Arch, and the Knowledge of Masonry so perceived inspires its adherents with the most exalted ideas of infinite Being, leads to the exercise of the purest and most devout piety and the practise of a benevolence and Charity in Universal philanthropy.

C - In this paper I seek to establish arguments of historical and mystical significance for the inclusion of 3^o and H.R.A. Rite in our M. System about 1720 - by the Speculatives or Non-operatives of that time.
