



# SIX CENTURIES OF CRAFT RITUAL

Published by:

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**BASED ON THE RESEARCH OF HARRY CARR OSM AND  
ADAPTED LARGELY FROM HIS " SIX HUNDRED YEARS  
OF CRAFT RITUAL" WHICH IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF  
HIS "HARRY CARR'S WORLD OF FREEMASONRY"  
PUBLISHED IN 1983.**

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## NOTES

## INTRODUCTION

*This publication is an abridged version, an adaptation if you like, of a presentation by Harry Carr, one of the Craft's greatest sons, whilst he was in the USA.*

*Whilst I have refrained from including those comments that make a presentation sparkle, and I have rephrased some of the words used by Wor. Bro. Harry Carr, I have undertaken this publication because the fruits of his research herein contained are factual as well as interesting.*

*The contents hereof are not based on fanciful writings or imaginative conclusions, but are based on absolute facts and historical evidence that still exists today.*

*This is fact and not fiction.*

*Puzzled about our ritual? Where did it find its origin?  
Was this really practiced in medieval times?*

*Here are the historical facts, entertaining and provable, as provided by one of Masonry's most distinguished and reliable researchers.*

*Keith Stockley  
Cowan,  
Australia*

## NOTES

### Who was Harry Carr?

Harry Carr ( 1900 - 1983) was a distinguished and knowledgeable Freemason who was a founder as well as Worshipful Master of many Lodges in England. He was also the Editor of, as well as a prolific contributor to, the Transactions of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge of Research which was the first Research lodge to be established in the world, over 120 years ago.

His list of Masonic awards is enormous and includes the following: The prestigious Grand Master's Order of Service to Masonry (OSM - England) The James R Case Medal of Excellence, the Joseph Warren Medal for Distinguished Service, the Benjamin Hurst Jnr. Medal for Meritorious Service and was an Honorary S.G.W. of the Grand Lodge of Israel.

Harry Carr was well known internationally in the world of Freemasonry having toured and lectured in most countries including Australia.

A prolific writer, his publications were all involved with the history of the Order based on documented evidence, rather than fanciful pipe dreams and he was the author of the following :-

The Mason and the Burgh 1954), Lodge Mother Kilwinning No. 0 (1961), The Minutes of the Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel) No. 1 (1962), The Collected Prestonian Lectures (1967) , The early French exposures (1971, The Freemasons at Work (1976), 3 Distinct Knocks (1981),Jachin and Boaz (1981)and Harry Carr's World of Freemasonry (1983) and between 1952 and 1981, he presented no less than 39 papers to the Ars Quatuor Coronati.

His renown spread throughout the entire Masonic world.

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**HARRY CARR**

*The Founders of the  
Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076*

The founders of the premier Lodge of Research in the world  
were as follows:

Sir Charles Warren  
W Harry Rylands  
Robert Freke Gould  
Rev. Adolphus F A Woodford  
Sir Walter Besant  
John P Rylands  
Major Sisson C Pratt  
Willikam James Hughan  
George W Speth



George W Speth  
Founder and first secretary of the Lodge

I cannot go into details now, but from the Rituals and Monitors I have studied and the Ceremonies and demonstrations I have seen, there is no doubt that your ritual is much fuller than ours, giving the candidate much more explanation, interpretation and symbolism than we normally give in England.

In effect because of the changes we made in our work between 1809 and 1813, it is fair to say that in many respects your ritual is older than ours and better than ours.

## SIX CENTURIES OF CRAFT RITUAL

It is surprising the number of Freemasons throughout the world who have an idea that our Masonic ritual emanated n heaven from where it went directly into the hands of King Solomon. Naturally it was in English, engraved on two tablets of stone and was practiced by King Solomon in the exact same format as we do today in our own lodges.

This is to say the least a fairy tale.

### **The beginnings of a Mason Trade Organisation**

This did not start in Egypt, nor Palestine, nor Greece, nor Rome, nor France.

It all started in London, England in the year 1356 and it all began from a dispute on a demarcation issue.

In the year 1356 there was a huge row going on between the mason hewers ( the men who cut the stone) and the mason layers or setters ( the men who actually built the walls). The exact details of the dispute are not known, but as a result of the row, 12 skilled master masons, including some very famous men, came before the Mayor and aldermen at Guildhall, London and, with official permission, drew up a simple code of trade regulations.

This document still survives today. Its opening words state that these men had come together because their trade had never been regulated in a way similar to other trades.

So here we have the guarantee that this was the very first

attempt at some sort of trade organisation for the masons and the first rule they drew up gives us a clue as to the demarcation dispute that started it all.

They ruled that “ *Every man of the trade may work at any work touching the trade if he be perfectly skilled and knowing in the same.*” This was the wisdom of Solomon! If you knew the job, you could do the job and nobody could stop you!

The organisation that was set up at that time became, within 20 years, the **London Masons Company**, the first trade guild of the masons and one of the direct ancestors of our own Freemasonry today. This was the real beginning.

Now the London Masons Company was not a lodge; it was a trade guild.

The guilds were **town** organisations, greatly favoured by the towns because they helped in the management of municipal affairs. In London, for example, from 1376 onwards, each of the trades elected two representatives who became members of the Common Council, all together forming the city government. BUT the mason trade did not lend itself to town organisation at all as most of their main work was outside the towns - the castles, abbeys, monasteries etc. The really big jobs involving the masons were always far from the towns.

I believe that it was in these places, where there was no other kind of trade organisation, that the masons engaged on these jobs for years on end, formed themselves into lodges, in imitation of the guilds, so that they had some form of self - government on the job while they were far away from all other forms of trade control

In 1809, the original Grand Lodge ordered the necessary revisions and the Lodge of Promulgation was formed to vet the ritual and to bring it to a form that would be satisfactory to both sides. They did an excellent job and many changes were made in ritual and procedural matters; but a great deal of material was discarded and it might be fair to say that they threw away the baby with the bath water. The beehive, the hour glass, the scythe, the pot of incense etc. which were in our Tracing boards in the early nineteenth century have disappeared.

### The USA Influence

I must add here for the Brethren in the USA ( remember dear reader that this lecture was being presented in America to American Masons) that I have been talking about your ritual as well as ours in England.

After the War of Independence, the States rapidly began to set up their own Grand lodges, but your ritual, mainly of English origin, whether Antients or Moderns, was still basically English. Your big changes began in and around 1796 when Thomas Smith Webb, of Albany, NY, teamed up with an English Mason, John Hanmer, who was well versed in Preston's Lecture system.

In 1797 Webb published his *Freemason's Monitor* or illustrations of Masonry, largely based on Preston's Illustrations.

Thus Webb's *Monitor*, adapted from the English ritual when that ritual was, as I have said, at its shining best, became so popular that the American Grand Lodges mainly in the Eastern States at that time, did everything they could to preserve it in its original form; eventually by the appointment of Grand lecturers whose duty it was ( and is) to ensure that the officially adopted forms remained unchanged.

for the rise of a rival Grand Lodge.

Le Secret (1742), Le Catechisme (1744) and the Trahi (1745) all give these words in the new order and in 1745, when the Passwords made their first appearance in France, they also appear in reverse order. Knowing how regularly France had adopted ( and improved) on English ritual practices, there seems to be a strong probability that Passwords were already in use in England, but there is not a single English document to support that theory.

### Polishing the Ritual

So Brethren, by 1745 most of the principle elements in the Craft degrees were already in existence and when the new stream of English rituals began to appear in the 1760's, the best of that material had been embodied in our English practice, but it was still very crude and a great deal of polishing needed to be done.

This polishing began in 1769 by three writers - Wellins Calcutt 1769, William Hutchinson 1749 and William Preston 1772. Preston, however, towered over the other two. He was a great expounder of Freemasonry and its symbolism, a born teacher, constantly writing and improving on his work. Around 1800 the ritual and the Lectures ( which were the original catechisms now expanded and explained in beautiful detail) were all at their shining best, and then with typical English carelessness we spoiled it.

You know, Brethren, that from 1751 to 1813, we had two rival Grand Lodges in England ( The original known as the 'moderns' founded in 1717 and the rival Grand Lodge, known as the 'antients' founded in 1751) and they hated each other with truly Masonic zeal. Their differences were mainly in minor matters of ritual and in their views on Installation and The Royal Arch. The bitterness continued until 1809 when the first steps were taken towards a reconciliation and a much desired union of the two.

### The Lodges and the Old Charges

The first actual information about lodges comes to us from a collection of documents which we know as the "Old Charges" or the "Manuscript Constitutions" of masonry.

The collection begins with the **Regius Manuscript** c 1390; the next is the **Cooke Manuscript** dated c 1410 and we have 130 versions of these documents running right through to the eighteenth century.

The oldest version, The Regius Manuscript, is in rhyming verse and differs in several respects from the other texts, but in their general shape and contents, they are all very much alike.

They begin with an Opening Prayer ( Christian and Trinitarian), then they give a history of the Craft, starting in Bible times and in Bible lands and then tracing the rise of the Craft and its spread across Europe until it reached France and was then brought across the channel and finally established in England.

This is unbelievably bad history! Any professor of history would drop dead if he were challenged to prove it; but the masons believed it. This was their guarantee of respectability as an ancient craft.

After the history comes the regulations, the actual Charges, for masters, fellows and apprentices, including several rules of a purely moral character. Occasionally the name of one of the characters changes, or the wording of a regulation will be altered slightly, but they all follow the same general pattern.

Apart from these three main sections ( prayer, history and the Charges) in most of them can be found a few words which indicate the beginnings of Masonic ceremony. We cannot find all the information in one single document, but when we study them all as a collection, it is possible to reconstruct the outline of the admission ceremony of those days, the earliest ceremony of admission into the Craft.

### **The Earliest Admission Ceremony**

The opening ceremony, such as it was, began with an opening prayer followed by a 'reading' of the history. As the vast majority of people, including the masons, could not read or write it is thought that particular sections of the history were selected and these were memorized and subsequently recited from memory. To read the whole text, even if they could read, would have taken much too long.

So the first part of the ceremony was a prayer and the second part of the ceremony was the 'Reading'.

Then we find an instruction which appears in practically every document, and usually in Latin, which reads "*Then one of the elders holds out a book ( sometimes 'the book'; sometimes the 'Bible' and sometimes "the Holy Bible") and he or they that are to be admitted shall place their hand thereon and the following Charges shall be read.*".

In that position the regulations were read out to the candidate and he took the oath, a simple oath of fidelity to the king, to the master and to the Craft, that he would obey the regulations and never bring the Craft to shame. This was taken directly from the guild oath, which was probably the only form of oath that they knew; no frills, no penalties, a simple oath of fidelity to the king, the employer ( the master) and to the trade.

Three more new questions ran as follows:

- Q. What is the Password of an Apprentice?  
 A. Tubalcain
- Q. That of a Fellow?  
 A. Shibolet
- Q. And that of a Master?  
 A. Giblum

This was the first appearance of Passwords in print, but the author added an explanatory note:

*'These three passwords are scarcely used except in France and at Frankfurt on Main. They are in the nature of Watchwords, introduced as a surer safeguard when dealing with brethren whom they do not know'.*

Passwords had never been heard of before this date, 1745. and they appear for the first time, in France. You will have noticed, Brethren, that some of them appear to be in the wrong order and because of the 30 year gap, we do not know whether they were being used in England at that time or if they were a French invention

On this question we have a curious piece of indirect evidence

In the year 1730, the Grand Lodge of England was greatly troubled by the exposures that were being published, especially Pritchard's Masonry Dissected, which was officially condemned. In Grand Lodge. Later, as a precautionary measure, certain words in the first two degrees were interchanged, a move which gave grounds in due course

explanations, the result of speculative influence.

And so we come to the last of the French exposures that I will deal with today ‘*L’Ordre des Francs-Maçons Trahi*’ (The Order of Freemasons Betrayed), published in 1745 by an anonymous writer, a thief! There was no law of copyright in those days and this man knew a good thing when he saw it. He took the best material he could find, collected it in one book, and added a few notes of his own. So, he stole Perau’s book, 102 pages, the lot, and printed it as his own first degree.

He said very little about the second degree. He stole Travenol’s lovely third degree and added a few notes including a few lines saying that before the Candidate’s admission, the most junior MM in the lodge lies down on the coffin, his face covered with a blood-stained cloth, so that the candidate will see him raised by the Master before he advances for his own part in the ceremony.

Of his own material there is not very much. No Chapters on the Masonic Cipher, on the Signs, Grips and Words and on Masonic customs. He also included two improved designs of the Floor drawings and two charming engravings illustrating the first and third degrees in progress. His catechism followed Travenol’s version very closely but he did add four questions and answers that are of high importance in our study of the ritual.

- Q. When a Mason finds himself in danger what must he say and do to call the brethren to his aid?
- A. He must put his joined hands to his forehead, the fingers interlaced and say ‘ Help ye children (sons) of the Widow’.

The ‘interlaced fingers’ is a well known sign in Europe and the ‘sons of the widow’ appear in most versions of the Hiram legend.

From this point onwards, the oath becomes the heart and marrow, the crucial centre of every Masonic ceremony. The Regius Manuscript, which is the first of the versions to survive, emphasizes this and it is worth quoting. After the reading of the Charges in this manuscript are the words “*And all the points hereinbefore To all of them, he must be sworn, And all shall swear the same oath of the Masons, be they willing, be they loth*”.

Whether they liked it or not, there was only one key that would open the door of the Craft and that was the mason’s oath.

The importance attached to the oath by the Regius manuscript is repeated over and over again, perhaps not in the same words, but with the same emphasis. The oath or obligation is the key to the admission ceremony.

Thus we have the date 1356 as the beginning of the mason trade organisation and around 1390 ( the date of the Regius Manuscript) the earliest evidence of a ceremony of admission, so in fact we actually have over 600 years of provable history and every step of our development thereafter can be proven at every stage.

The art of building began many thousands of years ago but for the antecedents of our own Freemasonry we can only go back to that line of history that can be proved and that is 1356, when it really began in Britain.

## **The Degrees**

In these early times clearly there was only one degree. Although the documents do not say that there was only one degree, they simply indicate only one ceremony and never more

However, I believe it cannot have been for the apprentice, or entered apprentice, it must have been for the fellow of the craft, the man who was fully trained.

The Old Charges do not say this, but there is ample outside evidence from which to draw this conclusion. There were many lawsuits and legal decisions that show that in the 1400's an apprentice was the chattel of his master. An apprentice was a piece of equipment that belonged to the master. He could be bought and sold in much the same way as the master would buy or sell a horse or a cow and under such conditions it is impossible that an apprentice had any status in the lodge. That came much later. So, brethren, if we can think ourselves back into the time when there was only one degree, it must have been for the fully - trained mason, the fellow of the craft.

Almost 150 years were to pass before the authorities and parliament began to realise that maybe an apprentice was actually a human being as well. In the early 1500's we find in England a whole collection of labour statutes, labour laws which began to recognize the status of apprentices and around that time we begin to find evidence of more than one degree.

From 1598 onwards, there are Minutes of two Scottish Lodges that were practising two degrees. Before that date there is no evidence on the degrees except perhaps in one English document, **The Harleian Ms No. 2054** dated c 1650, but believed to be a copy of a text from the late 1500's that has since been lost.

The first hint of two degrees found in this document The Harleian Ms. This Ms is a perfectly normal version of the Old Charges, however, bound with it is a note in the same handwriting, containing a new version of the masons' oath, of particular importance because it shows a major change from all earlier forms of the oath.

that the three assassins had compelled Adoniram to divulge it.

This is followed by a separate chapter which describes the layout of a master's lodge, including the Floor-drawing, and the earliest ceremony of opening a Master's Lodge. This contains a curious 'Master's Sign' that begins with a hand at the side of the forehead and ends with the thumb in the pit of the stomach.

Now follows a magnificent description of the floor work of the third degree, the whole ceremony, so beautifully described and in such fine detail that any Preceptor could reconstruct it from beginning to end - and every word of this whole chapter is new material that had never appeared before.

Of course there are many items that differ from the practices we know but now you can see why I am excited about these French documents. They give marvelous details, at a time when we have no corresponding material in England.

I must say a few words about 'Le Catechisme's picture of the third degree Tracing Board which contains as its central theme a coffin design, surrounded by tear drops, the tears which our ancient brethren shed over the death of our Master Adoniram.

On the coffin is a sprig of acacia and the word 'JEHOVA' - 'ancient mot du Maitre' (The former word of a Master) but in the French degree it was not lost. It was the ineffable Name, never to be uttered, and here, for the first time, the word Jehova is on the coffin. The diagram, in dots, shows how three zig-zag steps over the coffin are to be made by the candidate in advancing from west to east, and many other interesting details too numerous to mention.

The catechism, which is the last item in the book, is based ( Like all the early French catechisms) directly on Pritchard's Masonry Dissected, but it contains a number of symbolic expansions and

of the Craft. His words for the EA and FC were in reverse order ( which became common practice in Europe), but he said practically nothing about the second degree.

He described the Masonic drinking and toasting at great length, with a marvelous description of 'Masonic Fire'. He mentioned that the Master's Degree was a 'great ceremonial lamentation over the death of Hiram' but he knew nothing about the third degree and said that the Master got only a new sign and that was all.

The next work is '*Le Catechisme des Francs-Masons*' (The Freemasons' Catechism) published in 1744 by Louis Travenol, a famous French journalist. He dedicates his book to 'The Fair sex' which he adores, saying that he is deliberately publishing the exposure for their benefit because the Masons have excluded them and his tone is mildly anti-Masonic,

He continues with a note 'To The Reader' criticizing several items in Perau's work, but agreeing that 'Le Secret' is generally correct. For that reason ( bearing in mind that Perau was hopelessly ignorant of the third degree) he confines his exposure to the MM degree, but this is followed by a catechism which is a composite for all three degrees, undivided, though it is easy to see which questions belong to the Master Mason.

Le Catechisme also contains two excellent engravings of the Tracing Boards, or Floor-drawings, one called 'Plan of the Lodge for the Apprentice-Fellow' combined and the other for the 'Master's Lodge'.

Travenol begins his third degree with ' The History of Adoniram, Architect of the Temple of Solomon '. The French texts usually say Adoniram instead of Hiram and the story is a splendid version of the Hiram legend. In the best French versions, the Master's word ( Jehovah) was not lost; the nine Masters who were sent by Solomon to search for him, decided not to adopt a substitute word out of fear

This note says " *There are seu'all words & signes of a free Mason to be revealed to yu w'.h y will answ: before God at the Great & terrible day of judgm' y keep secret & not revaille the same in the heares of any pson but to the M" & fellows of the said Society of free Masons so helpe me God xc."*

The words " several words and signs" are plural indicating more than one degree and thus we have here, in a document that should be dated 1550, the first hint of the expansion of the ceremonies into more than one degree. A few years later we have the actual Minutes that prove two degrees in practice.

More importantly, Brethren, the ceremonies described above, indicate that they are starting to take on the modern shape we are acquainted with even though at this point we are still in the dark as to what the words, signs and secrets actually were..

We have to wait a long time before we find the contents, the actual details, of those ceremonies, but at the end of the 1600's we do in fact find them!

## A Description of the Two Degrees

I shall now refer to the documents which actually describe the two ceremonies referred to previously, as they first appeared on paper.

The earliest evidence is a document dated 1696, beautifully handwritten, known as the **Edinburgh Register House Manuscript**, because it was found in the Public Record Office of Edinburgh.

The first part of the text deals with the actual ceremonies. It is headed "THE FORME OF GIVING THE MASON WORD" which is one way of describing the manner of initiating a mason.

It begins with the ceremony which made an apprentice into an “entered - apprentice” ( usually about three years after the beginning of his indentures), followed by the ceremony for the admission of the “master mason or fellow craft”, the title of the second degree.

The details are fascinating, but for the moment I can only describe them briefly and wherever possible, I will use the original words so that the reader can get the feel of things.

We are told that the candidate “ was put to his knees” and “after a great many ceremonies to frighten him” ( rough stuff, horse - play if you like designed it seems to scare the wits out of him), he was made to take up the book and in that position he took the oath. What now follows is the earliest version of the masons’ oath as described .

*‘By God himself and you shall answer to God when you shall stand nakd before Him, at the great day, you shall not reveal and pairt of what you shall hear or see at this time whither by word nor write nor put it in wryte at any time nor draw it with the point of a sword, or any other instrument upon the snow or sand, nor shall you speak of it but with an entered mason, so help you God.’*

Thus Brethren we have here the earliest version of the words ‘indite, carve, mark, engrave or otherwise them delineate’. The very first version is the one given above, ‘*not write nor put it in wryte, nor draw it with a point of a sword or any other instrument upon the snow or sand*’ Notice Brethren, there was no penalty in the obligation, just a plain obligation of secrecy.

After he had finished the obligation the youngster was taken

The Candidate was deprived of metals, right knee bare, left shoe worn as a ‘slipper’ and locked in a room alone in total darkness. His eyes were bandaged and his sponsor knocked three times on the Lodge door.

After several questions, he was introduced and admitted in the care of a warden ( Surveillant). Still blindfolded, he was led three times round the floor-drawing in the centre of the lodge and there were ‘resin flares’. It was customary in the French lodges in those days to have a pan of live coals just inside the door of the lodge and at the moment the candidate was brought in, they would sprinkle powdered resin on the live coal to make an enormous flare, which would frighten the wits out of the candidate even if he was blindfolded. ( In many cases he was not blindfolded until he came to the obligation). Then amid a circle of swords we get the posture for the obligation with three lots of penalties and details of aprons and gloves.

This is followed by the signs, tokens and words relating to two pillars.

The ceremony contained several features unknown in English practice and some parts of the story appear to be told in the wrong sequence so that as we read it, we suddenly realise that the gentleman who was dictating it had his mind on much more worldly matters.

So Brethren, this was the earliest exposure from France, not very good, but it was the first of a really wonderful stream of documents.

### **Further French Publications**

Next is ‘*Le Secret des Francs-Masons*’ ( The Secret of the Freemasons) in 1742, published by the Abbe Perau, the prior of the Sorbonne, The University of Paris.

A beautiful first degree, all in narrative form, and every word in favour

Eventually, Herault decided that he could do much more damage to the Craft if he could make it a laughing-stock. If he could make it look ridiculous, he was sure he could put them out of business for all time and he decided to try this. He contacted one of his girl friends, a certain Madame Carton. Now, Brethren, I know what I am going to tell you sounds like our English News of the World, but I am giving you recorded history and quite important history at that.

So he got in touch with Madame Carton, who is always described as a dancer at the Paris opera. The plain fact is that she followed a much older profession. The best description that gives an idea of her status and her qualities, is that she slept in the best beds in Europe. She had a very special clientele. Now she was no youngster; she was fifty-five years old at that time and she had a daughter who was also in the same interesting line of business. And I have to be very careful what I say, because it was believed that one of our own Grand Masters was entangled with either one or both of them. All this was in the newspapers of those days.

Anyway, Herault got in touch with Madame Carton and asked her to obtain a copy of the Masonic ritual from one of her clients. He intended to publish it and by making the Masons look ridiculous he was going to put them out of business.

Well! She did, and he did. In other words she got a copy of the ritual and passed it on to him, It was first published in France in 17377 under the title 'Reception d'un Frey-Magon'. Within a month it was translated in three London newspapers, but it failed to diminish French zeal for Freemasonry and had no effect at all in England.

### **The Text of the Publication Summarised briefly**

The text, in narrative form, described only a single two-pillar ceremony. Dealing mainly with the floor work and only fragments of ritual.

out of the lodge by the last previous candidate, the last person who had been initiated before him. Outside the door of the lodge he was taught the sign, postures and words of entry (we do not know what they are until he comes back).

He came back, took off his hat and made a 'ridiculous bow' and then he gave the words of entry, which included a greeting to the Master and the brethren. It finished up with the words 'Under no less pain than cutting of my throat' and there is a sort of a footnote which says 'for you must make that sign when you say that'. This is the earliest appearance in any document of an entered apprentice's sign.

Now Brethren, forget all about your beautifully furnished lodges; I am speaking of operative masonry, when the lodge was either a little room at the back of a pub, or above a pub, or else a shed attached to a big building job; and if there were a dozen masons there, that would have been a good attendance. So, after the boy had given the sign, he was brought up to the Master for the 'entrusting'. Here is the Master; here, nearby, is the candidate; here is the 'instructor', and he, the instructor, whispers the word into the ear of his neighbour, who whispers the word to the next man and so on, all round the lodge, until it comes to the Master, and the Master gives the word to the candidate. In this case, there is a kind of a biblical footnote which shows, beyond all doubt, that the word was not one word but two., Boaz and Jachin, two pillar names for the entered apprentice. This is very important later, when we begin to study the evolution of three degrees.

In the two degree system there were two pillars for the entered apprentice.

This was really the whole of the floorwork, but it was followed

by a set of simple questions and answers, headed ' SOME QUESTIONS THAT MASONS USE TO PUT TO THOSE WHO HAVE YE WORD BEFORE THEY WILL ACKNOWLEDGE THEM'. It included a few questions for testing a stranger outside the lodge and this text gives us the first and oldest version of the Masonic catechism. Here are some of the 15 questions.

*“Are you a mason?”*

*How shall I know it?*

*Where were you entered?*

*What makes a true and perfect lodge?*

*Where was the first lodge?*

*Are there any lights in your lodge?*

*Are there any jewels in your lodge?*

Here we have the first faint beginnings of Masonic symbolism. It is amazing how little there was at the beginning. There, Brethren, 15 questions and answers, which must have been answered for the candidate, as he had not had the time to learn the answers.

And that was the whole of the entered apprentice ceremony.

Please, Brethren, remember, we are speaking about operative masonry in the days when masons earned their living with hammer and chisel. Under those conditions the second degree was taken about seven years after the date of initiation when the candidate came back to be made 'master or fellow craft'. Inside the lodge, those two grades were equal, both fully trained masons. Outside the lodge one was an employer and the other an employee.

created a sensation; it sold three editions and one pirated edition in eleven days. It swept all other exposures off the market. For the next 30 years Pritchard was being reprinted over and over again and nothing else could stand a chance; there was nothing fit to touch it. We lose something by this because we have no records of any ritual developments in England during the next 30 years. Only one new item appeared in all that time, the ' Charge to the Initiate', a miniature of our modern version, in beautiful eighteenth century English. It was published in 1735, but we do not know who wrote it. For fresh information on the growth of the ritual we have to go across the channel into France.

### **Further Evidence From France**

The English planted Freemasonry in France in 1725 and it became an elegant pastime for the nobility and gentry. The Duke of so-and-so would hold a lodge at his house, where he was Master for ever and ever, and at any time he invited a few friends round, they would open a lodge, and he would make a few more Masons. That was how it began, and it took about 10 or 12 years before Masonry began to seep down, through to the lower levels. By that time, lodges were beginning to meet in restaurants and taverns, but around 1736 things were becoming difficult in France and it was feared that the lodges were being used for plots and conspiracies against government.

At Paris, in particular, precautions were taken. An edict was issued by René Herault - Lieutenant-General of Police, that tavern keepers and restaurant keepers were not to give accommodation to Masonic lodges at all, under penalty of being closed down for six months and a fine of 3 000 livres. There is evidence in fact of two well-known restaurants being closed down for this reason in 1736-1737. This, however, was ineffective as Masonry began using private houses. It went underground so to speak.

*severed and ashes burned and scattered*). This is how they appeared in 1730.

Pritchard's 'Fellow Craft's degree' was very short, only 33 questions and answers. It gave J alone to the FC ( not lettered) but now the second degree had a lot of new material relating to the pillars, the middle chamber, the winding stairs and a long recitation on the letter G, which began with the meaning 'Geometry' and ended denoting 'The Grand Architect and Contriver of the Universe'.

Pritchard's 'Master's Degree or Master's Part' was made up of 30 questions with some very long answers, containing the earliest version of the Hiramic legend, literally the whole story as it ran in those days. It included the murder by the three ruffians, the searchers, 'Fifteen loving Brothers' who agreed among themselves ' that if they did not find the Word in him or about him, the first Word should be the Master's Word. Later, the discovery, 'The Slip', the raising on the FPOF, and another new version of the MM Word which is said to mean 'The Builder is smitten.'

There is no reason to believe that Pritchard invented the Hiramic legend. As we read his story in conjunction with those collected by Thomas Graham in 1726, there can be little doubt that Pritchard's version arose out of several streams of legend, probably an early result of speculative influence in this days.

But the third degree was not a new invention. It arose from a division of the original first degree into two parts, so that the original second degree with its FPOF and a word moved up into third place, both the second and third acquiring additional materials during the period of change. That was sometime between 1717 and 1725, but whether it started in England, Scotland or Ireland is a mystery, we simply do not know.

Back now to Samuel Pritchard and his *Masonry Dissected*. The Book

If he was the son of a Freeman Burgess of the city, he could take his Freedom and set up as a Master immediately. Otherwise, he had to pay for the privilege and until then the fellow crafty remained an employee. BUT, inside the lodge, they both had the same degree!!!

So, after his indentures of apprenticeship, and serving another year or two for 'meat and fee' ( i.e. board plus a wage) he came along then for the second degree. He was ' put to his knees and took the oath anew'. It was the same oath that he had taken as an apprentice. Omitting only three words. Then he was taken out of the lodge by the youngest master, and there he was taught the signs, posture and words of entry ( we still do not know what they were). He came back and he gave what is called the 'master sign' but it is not described, so I cannot tell you about it.

And now the youngest master, the chap who had taken him outside, whispered the word to his neighbour, each in turn passing it all round the lodge, until it came to the Master and the Master, on the five points of fellowship, - second degree, Brethren, - gave the word to the candidate. The five points in those days - foot to foot, knee to knee, heart to heart, hand to hand, ear to ear ( that is how it was at first appearance). No Hiramic legend and no frills; only the FPOF and a word, but in this document the word is not mentioned. It appears very soon afterwards and I will deal with that later.

There were only two test questions for a fellowcraft degree. That was all! Two degrees, beautifully described, not only in this document but in two other sister texts,. The Chetwode Crawley Ms, dated about 1700 and the Kevan Ms, dated about 1714. Three marvelous documents, all from the south of Scotland, all telling exactly the same story— wonderful as scientists in masonry, dare not trust them because they were written in violation of an oath. To put it at its simplest, the more they tell us the less they are to be trusted,

unless by some fluke or by some miracle, we can prove, as we must do, that these documents were actually used in a lodge; otherwise they are worthless. In this case, by a very happy fluke, we have got the proof and it makes it a lovely story. That is what you are going to get now.

### **Usage of the Three manuscripts**

Remember Brethren, these three documents are from 1696 to 1714. Right in the middle of this period, in the year 1702, a little group of Scottish gentlemen decided that they wanted to have a lodge in their own backyard so to speak. These were gentlemen who lived in the south of Scotland around Galashiels, some 30 miles S.E. of Edinburgh. They were all notable landowners in that area - Sir John Pringle of Hoppringle, Sir James Pringle ( his brother) Sir James Scott of Gala (Galashiels) , their brother-in-law, plus another five neighbours came together and decided to form their own lodge, in the village of Haughfoot near Galashiels. They chose a man who had a marvellous handwriting to be their scribe, and asked him to buy a minute book which he did. A lovely leather-bound book ( octavo size) and he paid 'fourteen shillings' Scots for it.

Being a Scotsman, he took careful note of the amount and entered it in his minute book, to be repaid out of the first money due to the society. Then, in readiness for the first meeting of the lodge, he started off at what would have been page one with some notes. We do not know the details, but he went on and copied out the whole of one of these Scottish rituals, complete from beginning to end..

When he had finished, he had filled ten pages, and his last 29 words of ritual were the first five lines at the top of page eleven. Now this was a Scotsman, and he had paid fourteen shillings for that book and the idea of leaving three-quarters of a page empty offended against his native thrift and so, to save wasting underneath

*The Fraternity and renewed his oath and gave on his entry money.'*

Now notice Brethren here was a Scotsman who started in January as a Fellow Craft, a founding Fellow Craft of a new lodge. Then he came along in March and he renewed his oath, which means he took another ceremony; and he gave his entry money, which means he paid for it. Brethren you can bet your life that if a Scotsman paid for it, he definitely got it!. There is no doubt about that. So here we have the earliest 100 percent gilt-edged record of a third degree.

Two years later, in December 1728, another new Lodge, Greenock Kilwinning, at its very first meeting, prescribed separate fees for entering, passing and raising..

From then on we have ample evidence of the three degrees in practice and then in 1730 we have the earliest printed exposure which claimed to describe all three degrees, *Masonry Dissected*, published by Samuel Pritchard on October 1730. It was the most valuable ritual work that had appeared until that time, all in the form of question and answer, and it had an enormous influence in the stabilization of our English ritual.

Its 'Enter'd Prentice's Degree' - by this time 92 questions - gave two pillar words to the EA, and the first of them was 'lettered'. Pritchard managed to squeeze a lot of floor-work into his EA questions and answers. Here is one question for the candidate: '*How did he make you a mason?*' Listen to his answer:

*'With my bare bended Knee and Body within the Square, the Compass extended to my naked Left Breast, my naked Right Hand on the Holy Bible; there I took the Obligation of a Mason.'*

The next question was '*Can you repeat that obligation which contained three sets of penalties. (Throat cut, heart torn out, body*

could talk about them all night, but for our present purposes, we need only follow the career of one of their members, Charles Cotton.

In the records of the Musical Society we read that on 22 December 1724, 'Charles Cotton esq' was made a Mason by the said Grand Master ( i.e. the Duke of Richmond) on the Lodge at the Queen's Head. It could not be more regular than that. Then on 18 February 1725....' *before we Founded this Society a lodge was held...in order to Pass Charles Cotton Esq..*' and because it was on the day that the Society was founded, we cannot be sure whether Charles Cotton was passed FC in the Lodge or in a Musical Society. Three months later, on 12 May 1725, '*Brother Charles Cotton Esq. Broth. Papillion Ball were regularly passed Masters.*'

Now we have the date of Cotton's initiation, passing and his raising; there is no doubt that he received three degrees, BUT regularly passed Masters' - No! it could not have been more irregular! This was a Musical Society - not a lodge!.

They had some distinguished visitors. First the Senior Grand Warden and then the Junior Grand Warden, and then in 1727 they got a nasty letter from the Grand Secretary and the society disappeared.

Nothing now remains except their Minute book in the British Library.

I wish we could produce a more respectable first timer for the third degree, but that was the earliest.

**Lodge Dumbarton**, now No. 18 on the register of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, was founded in 1726. At the foundation meeting there was the Master, with seven Master Masons, six fellowcrafts and three entered apprentices; some of them were operative masons, some non-operative. Two months later, in March 1726, we have this Minute '*Gabriel Porterfield who appeared in the January meeting as a fellow Craft was unanimously admitted and received a Master of*

The twenty-nine words, he put in a heading '*The Same Day*' and went straight on with the Minutes of the first meeting of the Lodge.

*(N.B. Harry Carr actually published a paper on "The Lodge of Haughfoot, the first wholly non-operative Lodge in Scotland—34 years older than the Grand Lodge of Scotland.")*

The Minutes were beautifully kept for sixty-one years and eventually in 1763, the Lodge was swallowed up by some larger lodge. The Minute Book went to the great Lodge of Selkirk, to London from where I wrote the history of the Lodge.

We do not know what happened, but sometime during those 61 years, somebody ( perhaps one of the later secretaries of the lodge), must have opened that Minute Book and caught sight of the opening pages and he must have had a fit! Ritual in a Minute Book! Out! And the first ten pages have disappeared; they are completely lost. That butcher would have taken page eleven as well but even he did not have the heart to destroy the Minutes of the very first meeting of this wonderful lodge.

So it was the Minutes of the first meeting that saved those 29 golden words at the top of page eleven. And the 29 words are virtually identical with the corresponding portions of the Edinburgh Register House Ms and its two sister texts. Those precious words are a guarantee that the other documents are to be trusted and this gives us a marvelous starting point for the study of the ritual. Not only do we have the documents which describe the ceremonies, we also have a kind of yardstick by which we can judge the quality of each new document as it arrives.

We have been speaking of Scottish documents. Heaven bless the Scots! They took care of every scrap of paper and if it were not for them we would have practically no history, for our earliest and finest material is nearly all Scottish, but when the English documents

begin to appear, they seemed to fit. They not only harmonise, they often fill in the gaps in the Scottish texts. From here on, I will name the country of origin of those documents that are not English.

### The Manuscript Evidence of Medieval Ritual

Within a few years, a number of valuable ritual documents are found. The first of these is the **Sloane Ms** dated c1700, and English text, which is today located in the British Library. It gives various 'gripes' (grips) which had not appeared in any document before. It gives a new form of the Mason's Oath which contains the words "*without Equivocation or mentall Resarvation*". This appears for the very first time in the Sloane Ms. And from now on, every ritual detail I give you will be a first-timer, and I will give you the name and date of the document by which it can be proved although I may not be able to say precisely when a particular practice actually began.

Now, back to the Sloane ms which does not attempt to describe a whole ceremony. It has a fantastic collection of 'gripes' (grips) and other strange modes of recognition. It has a catechism of some twenty-two Questions and Answers, many of them similar to those in the Scottish texts, and there is a note that seems to confirm two pillars for the EAF.

*(Publishers Note ' a catechism of Questions and Answers is common in most countries and is undertaken by two experienced brethren as the last part of a ritual ceremony in all three degrees'. This is a procedure nit used in NSW)*

One paragraph speaks of a salutation for the Master, a curious "hug" posture with 'the Master's grip by their right hands and the top of their left hand fingers thrust close on ye small of each others Backbone...." Here the word is given as 'Maha—Byn', half in one ear and half on the other, to be used as a test word.

This is the first time this word makes an appearance in any document

present Freemasons' Hall. Nice people; the best of London's musical, architectural and cultural society were members of this lodge. On the particular night in question, His Grace The Duke of Richmond, was Master of the Lodge. I should add that His Grace, the Duke of Richmond, was also the Grand Master at that time. It is true that he was the descendant of a royal 'illegitimate', but nowadays even royal illegitimates are counted as nice people.

A couple of months later, seven of the members of this lodge and one brother they had borrowed from another lodge decided that they wanted to found a musical and architectural society.

They gave themselves a Latin title a mile long - Philo Musicae et Architecturae Societas Apollini - which I translate as 'The Apollonian Society for Lovers of Music and Architecture' and they drew up a rule book which is beautiful beyond words. Every word of it written by hand. It looks as though the most magnificent printer had printed and decorated it.

Now these people were very keen on their Masonry and for their musical society they drew up an unusual code of rules. For example, one rule was that every one of the founders was to have his own coat-o-arms emblazoned in full colour in the opening pages of the Minute book. How many lodges do you know, where every founder has his own coat-of-arms? This gives you an idea of the kind of boys they were.

They loved their Masonry and they made another rule, that anybody could come along to their architectural lectures or to their musical evenings ( the finest conductors were members of the society) - anybody could come, but if he was not a Mason, he had to be made a Mason before they would let him in; and because they were so keen about the Masonic status of their members, they kept Masonic biographical notes of each member who joined. It is from these notes that we are able to see what actually happened. I

*Breast to Breast Cheeck to Cheeck and hand to back and cryed out help o father ....so one said there is yet marrow in this bone and the second said but a dry bob e and the third said it stinketh so they agreed for to give it a name as is known to free masonry to this day...*" This is the earliest story of a raising in a Masonic context, apparently a fragment of the Hiram legend, but the old gentleman in the grave was Father Noah not Hiram Abif.

Another legend concerns "Bazallieil" the wonderful craftsman who built the mobile Temple and the Ark of the Covenant for the Israelites during their wandering in the wilderness. The story goes that near to death, Bazallieil asked for a tombstone to be erected over his grave, with an inscription 'according to his diserveing' and that was dome as follows:

*'Here lys the flowr of masonry superiour of many other companion to a king and to two princes a brother Here Lys the heart all secrets could conceall Here lys the tongue that never did reveal.'* The last two lines could not be more apt if they had been specially written for Hiram Abiff; they are virtually a summary of the Hiram legend.

In the catechism, one answer speaks of those that ..... 'have obtained a trible Voice by being entered, passed and raised and Conformed by 3 severall Lodges...'

'Entered, passed and raised' is clear enough. 'Three several lodges' means three separate degrees, three separate ceremonies.. There is no doubt at all that this is a reference to three degrees being practiced. BUT we still want Minutes and we have not got them. And I am very sorry to tell you that the earliest Minutes we have recording a third degree, fascinating and interesting as they are, refer to a ceremony that never happened in a lodge at all; it took place in the confines of a London Musical Society. It is a lovely story, and here it is.

In December 1724 there was a nice little lodge meeting at the Queen's Head tavern on Hollis Street, in the Strand, about 300 yards from our

and if you were testing somebody, you would say "Maha" and the other would have to say "Byn" and if he did not say "Byn" you would have no business with him.

Now there is another Scottish document, **the Dumfries No. 4 Ms.** Dated c1710. It contains a mass of new material, but I can only mention a few of the items.. One of its questions asks "*How were you brought in?*" "*Shamefully, w' a rope about my neck*" This is the earliest 'cable-tow' and a later answer says the rope 'is to hang me if I should betray my trust'. Dumfries also mentions that the candidate receives the 'Royal Secret' kneeling 'upon my left knee'.

Among many interesting Questions and Answers and it lists some of the unusual penalties of those days. 'My heart taken out alive, my head cut off, my body buried within ye sea-mark'. "Within ye sea-mark' is the earliest version of the 'cable's length from the shore'.

Meanwhile, this was the situation when the first Grand Lodge was founded in 1717. We only had two degrees in England, one for the entered apprentice and the second for the 'master' or 'fellow craft'. Dr Anderson, who compiled the first English Book of Constitutions in 1723, actually described the English second degree as 'Masters and Fellow-Craft'. The Scottish term had already invaded England.

### **The Third Degree**

It would have been easy, of course, to stretch out a hand in a good library and pull out a large Minute Book and say, "Well, there is the earliest third degree that ever happened," but it does not work out that way. The Minute Books come much later.

The earliest hints of the third degree appear in documents that have been written out as aide de memoires for the men who owned them, but exposures printed for profit, or spite, must also be

used, and from these we get some useful hints of the third degree long before it actually appears in practice.

We start with one of the best, a lovely little text, a single sheet of paper known as the **Trinity College, Dublin Ms** dated 1711, found among the papers of a famous Irish doctor and scientist, Sir Thomas Molyneux.

This document is headed with a kind of Triple Tau, and underneath it the words "Under no less a penalty". This is followed by a set of 11 Questions and Answers and straight away we know something is wrong! We already have three perfect sets of 15 questions, so 11 questions must be either bad memory or bad copying - something is wrong! The Questions are perfectly normal, only not enough of them. Then after the 11 Questions we would expect the writer to give a description of the whole or part of the ceremony but instead of that, he gives a kind of catalogue of the Freemason's words and signs.

He gives this sign ( EAF Demonstrated) for the EAF with the word Boaz. He gives 'knuckles and sinues' as the sign for the 'fellow - craftsman' with the word 'Jachquin'. The 'Master's sign is the back bone' and for him ( The MM) the writer gives the world's worst description of the Five points of Fellowship. ( This suggests that neither the author of the paper nor the writer of the Sloane Ms had ever heard of the Points of Fellowship or knew how to describe them). The exact words used are '*Squeeze the Master by ye back bone, put your knee between his and say Matchpin*'

That brethren is our second version of the word of the third degree. We started with 'Mahabyn' and now 'Matchpin'. Now I must make it clear that nobody knows what the correct word was. It was probably Hebrew originally, but all the early versions are debased. We might work backwards, translating from the English, but we cannot be certain that our English words are correct. So here in the Trinity College,

Dublin Ms we have, for the first time, a document which has separate secrets for three separate degrees; the enterapprentice, the fellowcraftsman and the master. It is not proof of three degrees in practice, but it does show that somebody was playing with this idea in 1711.

The next piece of evidence on this theme comes from the first printed exposure, printed and published for entertainment or for spite, in a London newspaper, The Flying Post. The text is known as a 'Mason's Examination'. By this time, 1723, the catechism was much longer and the text contained several pieces of rhyme, all interesting, but only one of particular importance and here it is. '*An enter'd Mason I have been, Boaz and Jachin, I have seen; A Fellow I was sworn most rare, And Know the Astler, Diamond and Square; I know bnthe Master's Part full well, As honest Maughbin will you tell.*'

Notice, Brethren that there are still two pillars for the EAF and once again somebody is dividing the Masonic secrets into three parts for three different categories of Masons.. The idea of three degrees ns in the air. We are still looking for Minutes but they have not come yet.

Next we have another priceless document dated 1726, the **Graham Ms**, a fascinating text which begins with a catechism of some thirty Questions and Answers, followed by a collection of legends, mainly about Biblical characters, each story with a kind of Masonic twist in its tail. One legend tells how three sons went to their father's grave to '*try if they could find anything about him for to lead them to the vertuable secret which this famieous preacher had....*'

*They opened the grave, finding nothing save the dead body all most consumed away. Takeing a greip at a finger it came away so from joint to joint so to the wrest so to the Elbow so they Reared up the dead body and supported it setting ffoot to ffoot knee to knee*