

THE NATURE OF FREEMASONRY

HUBERT S. BOX, Ph.D., B.D.

DR. BOX is a scholar of repute whose book will be keenly read by those who have followed his campaign in the Convocation of Canterbury for an inquiry into the theological implications of Freemasonry. His criticisms of the Craft were described by a Priest and a loyal Mason in a letter to the *Church Times* (Dec. 14, 1951) as "penetrating and commendable.....on which, as a Christian, I congratulate him." *The Nature of Freemasonry* analyses with great learning the Masonic mythology; it follows the death-and-vengeance motif from the Craft through the lesser-known 'higher degrees' of whose rituals the author has made a profound study. He draws striking and inescapable parallels between modern Freemasonry and the ancient mystery-religions.

The reader is left in a state of complete bewilderment as to why the Church of England has so long tolerated Masonry unquestioned in her midst.

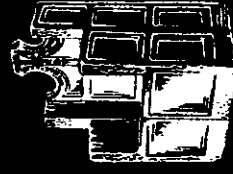
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# DARKNESS VISIBLE

DARKNESS  
VISIBLE

A REVELATION &  
INTERPRETATION  
OF FREEMASONRY



WALTON HANNAH

AUGUSTINE  
PRESS

When Mr. Hannah wrote at the beginning of 1931 an article criticising the religious implications of Freemasonry in a theological review, a storm broke out in the Church of England which extended to the national press. The issue was raised, but adroitly side-stepped, in the Convocation of Canterbury. The article was debated in the Church Assembly, but the debate was almost entirely confined to irrelevant matters such as the moral worthiness and respectability of the Craft which Mr. Hannah has never called in question. The question was delicate and even explosive. Too many prominent dignitaries were involved. Too many Masonic clergy were determined to stop an investigation at all costs.

One point, however, was stressed and even gloated over—the lack of information, which would make any inquiry by the Church abortive.

*Darkness Visible*, therefore, carries the controversy a stage further. Mr. Hannah has called the bluff of Masonic secrecy. He gives in full the entire Masonic Ritual of the three Craft degrees, and of the Royal Arch. Appendices deal with Ritual variations in Scotland, Ireland, and America, and with other degrees, Mark Masonry, Knight Templar, the Rose Croix and so on. Every degree is carefully listed, and the more important are described.

No longer can it ever be alleged that criticism of the Craft must be based on speculation and a few doubtful shreds torn from their context. For here is the entire context, and the reader may study it and judge for himself. Any man considering initiation should read it first, and discover to what his oath will commit him, for in a sense to read this book is in itself an initiation.

*Darkness Visible* is a provocative and curiously disturbing book which the Church cannot afford to ignore.

## opinions differ . . .

"The difference between Mr. Hannah's book and those that go before, lies in the reasons which he had for writing it . . . He desires to reveal Masonry in the light of a mystery religion, at variance with the religion of Jesus Christ. He shows that many of the great Christian bodies have rejected the craft as hurtful and antagonistic to revealed truth. He asks why the Church of England has not done likewise . . . Has the Church considered the points he puts forward? This is surely a question that deserves a very careful answer."

*Church Times*

" . . . has good fun with Masonic Bishops who take part in ceremonies that are, theologically, hard to square with their professed faith."

*Manchester Guardian*

"It is surprising that so many Church of England bishops and clergy can reconcile participation in these rites with their duties as ministers of the Gospel of Christ. Perhaps His Grace of Canterbury will break a dignified silence and explain."

*The English Churchman*

"Whatever the effect on Anglicanism of this revelation and interpretation of Freemasonry, it cannot but contribute notably to Christianity in English-speaking countries."

Archbishop Roberts, S.J., in  
*The Universe*

"This book is all tommy-rot—rubbish of a worthless kind. The author could not possibly know the ritual of Freemasonry. No one but a Mason could possess those secrets."

Canon J. Cornes,  
Prov. Grand Chaplain,  
in the *Birmingham Gazette*

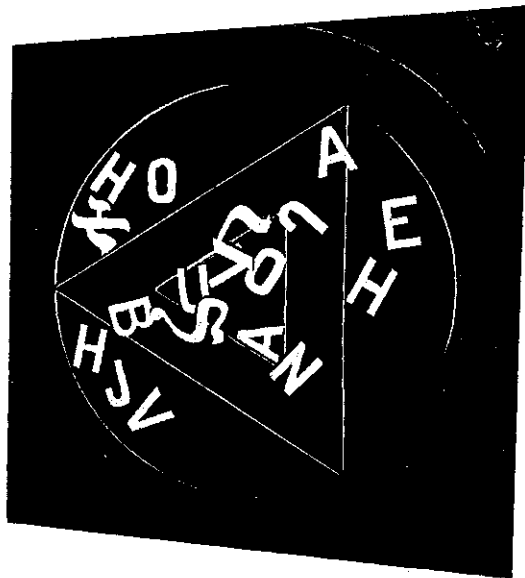
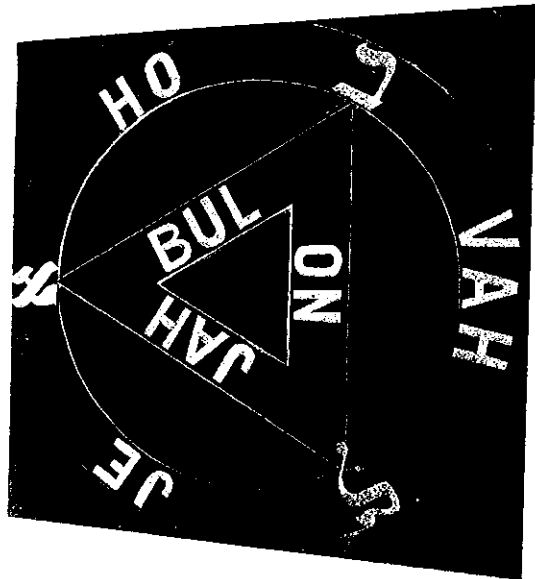
## LA FM ANGLAISE ET L'EGLISE ANGLICANE

On peut lire dans TIME du 18 janvier 1954 :

"Le Révérend Hubert Thornton Trapp, recteur de l'Eglise anglicane de St Mary Magdalene à Londres, a défié l'Archevêque ((anglican)) de Canterbury de "s'expliquer clairement" sur la Franc-Maçonnerie. Dans son bulletin paroissial, il a déclaré notamment que "le Dieu des chrétiens et le Dieu des maçons n'ont rien de commun ... les deux obédiences sont opposées". Il a également annoncé qu'il interdirait à tout ecclésiastique appartenant à la Franc-Maçonnerie de prêcher ou de célébrer dans sa paroisse. Au palais ~~de~~ archiépiscopal de Lambeth, on déclara que le Dr. Geoffrey Francis Fisher, Maçon lui-même et Archevêque de Canterbury "ne désirait pas répondre à l'article." (p.39)

On se souvient qu'un des "best-sellers" de 1952 fut l'ouvrage du Révérend Walton Hannah, DARKNESS VISIBLE", "Révélation et interprétation de la Franc-Maçonnerie" comme l'indiquait le sous-titre. Dans cet ouvrage, un respectable clergymen démontrait que "le rituel à lui seul prouvait que la Maçonnerie était incompatible avec le christianisme". Le même, assisté d'un confrère, le Dr Box avait précédemment dénoncé le caractère antichrétien de la maçonnerie à ~~xx~~ l'une des Assemblées annuelles du clergé anglican. Sa motion demandant une commission d'enquête avait été repoussée par une majorité dont les clergymen maçons formaient évidemment le solide noyau...

THE "SACRED AND MYSTERIOUS NAME  
of the  
TRUE AND LIVING GOD MOST HIGH"



DARKNESS VISIBLE

The Altar-top of the Holy Royal Arch (top) with the letters arranged in the words JEHOVAH, JAH-BUL-ON. (Below) The letters are scrambled before the Chapter is closed. For the explanation of these words, and of the three Hebrew characters, see pp. 180-182. These articles were purchased at a recognised Masonic outfitters in London, and assembled in accordance with a diagram put out by a member of the Aldersgate Chapter of Improvement, No. 1657.

# DARKNESS VISIBLE

*A Revelation &  
Interpretation  
of Freemasonry*

A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,  
As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames  
No light, but rather darkness visible  
Served only to discover sights of woe.  
(Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book I)

Of darkness visible, so much be lent  
As half to show, half veil, the deep intent.  
(Pope, *The Dunciad*, Book IV)

The light of a Master Mason is darkness visible.  
(*Masonic Ritual, Ceremony of Raising  
to the Third Degree*)

BY  
WALTON HANNAH

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THE general argument of this book first appeared in an article "Should a Christian be a Freemason?" in the January 1951 number of *Theology*. Although I have not consciously quoted verbatim from this article, I am indebted to its Publishers, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, for their permission to re-use this material.

That article excited considerable controversy, and I am also greatly indebted to the many hundreds of people from all over the world who kindly took the trouble to write to me both in support and in criticism, particularly for the courtesy and forbearance (with certain unpleasant exceptions) of the latter. This correspondence was very valuable in helping me to see further into the spirit of Masonry, and to assess the validity and importance of certain arguments, and the comparative irrelevance of others. It enabled me, too, to correct a few inaccuracies which crept in.

In a book of this nature, however, complete accuracy is difficult if not impossible to achieve. The reasons for this are clearly expressed by one of my (Masonic) correspondents whom I quote by permission. He wrote:—"You will never achieve 100% accuracy in the book you are contemplating, because the accuracy you are striving for *simply does not exist*. Variations between the different workings may consist only of verbal trivialities and ceremonial differences, yet even amongst Lodges professing to work Strict Emulation such deviations occur. A Mason who does not visit extensively (as I have) may find some phrase or direction unfamiliar, and in fairly good faith pounce on it avidly in order to stigmatize the book (as he will be only too anxious to do, believe me!) as 'full of inaccuracies'. But the really honest Mason will in his heart know better, and keep silence."

I have tried to take into full consideration every relevant argument that has been urged by my correspondents on behalf of the Fraternity. But the fact that no adequate or convincing reply has yet been made to the theological objections to the Craft either in the columns of the Church press (including *Theology*), in my personal correspondence, or in the Church Assembly debate in June 1951 (which body was not in any case competent to deal with theological issues) has strengthened my conviction that sooner or later the Church of England, if

To LIONEL - an operative stonemason

she is to preserve the integrity of her Christian witness, will have to face the issue and modify, or least define, her attitude to Freemasonry. I have been urged to write this book by many who are puzzled and perplexed, and also by some who have recently resigned from their Lodges and Chapters. It is my hope that this reproduction of the Masonic workings will provide a basis of information not always readily available without considerable research, on which others far better qualified than I can base their observations and form their own conclusions. It is obviously wrong (as the Rev. C. E. Douglas pointed out in the Church Assembly debate) to base any case merely on extracts taken from their context. Hence in fairness to Freemasonry it seems only just that the entire context should be published and made freely available. If this small contribution to the literature on the subject exerts even a trifling influence, it will not have been written in vain.

The quotations from Lewis Carroll and others which appear at the chapter heads are for the benefit of those who might otherwise feel that I have treated a turgid and nonsensical ritual somewhat too ponderously. They are not to be taken as any indication that this book is not very much in earnest.

My thanks are due to Dr. V. A. Demant, of Christ Church Oxford, for his kindness in contributing an opinion on the Masonic oaths, and for reading the chapter which deals with that subject; to Dr. Paul M. Bretscher of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, U.S.A. and to Canon A. Abraham of London, Ontario, for information and literature from America. Also and especially to Dr. H. S. Box for invaluable assistance and advice at every turn, and to Fr. Krivoshein of Oxford for information on the Greek Orthodox attitude. I am most grateful, too, to a certain Bishop and Past Grand Chaplain whom I will not embarrass by naming, for his sympathetic understanding and courtesy in giving a morning of his much-occupied time to trying, at my request, to persuade me to a different opinion on Freemasonry. He succeeded abundantly in convincing me of the personal sincerity of the individual Christian Freemason, which nowhere in these pages do I wish to impugn.

WALTON HANNAH

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I  
 H O W K N O W N

"Now I declare that's too bad!" Humpty Dumpty cried, breaking into a sudden passion. "You've been listening at doors—and behind trees—and down chimneys—or you couldn't have known it!"

"I haven't indeed!" Alice said very gently. "It's in a book."

"Ah, well! They may write such things in a book," Humpty Dumpty said in a calmer tone.

Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking-Glass.

HERE are over six thousand Masonic Lodges under the jurisdiction of English Grand Lodge, and on an average nearly a hundred new Lodges are consecrated each year. As Freemasons are drawn almost exclusively from the economic middle and upper classes (if these terms still have any meaning) it will be readily appreciated that they represent a very powerful and well-organized influence.

The scope of these chapters is not to analyse that influence on the political and social life of the nation, still less to discuss the influence on the craft of Templarism or Rosicrucianism, or to attempt a history of Freemasonry in its development from the Catholic guilds or lodges of operative stone-masons in the Middle Ages through the speculative and Deistic seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the pan-religious non-Christian universalism which the Craft upholds to-day. As Freemasonry very considerably overlaps with the non-Roman Churches, particularly with the Church of England, my concern is rather to examine the extent to which this overlap is morally and theologically justified. In other words, to inquire whether Freemasonry is compatible with the Christian faith.

In any such investigation one is faced at the outset with the apparent dilemma that authentic information is impossible to obtain because those inside the Craft refuse to divulge the

1. *Statistics Fraternal Societies*, 57th edition, 1951 (Fraternal Monitor, Rochester, N.Y.) gives the number of Masons in England and Wales as 550,000; in Scotland, 400,000 (?); in Ireland 47,000; in Canada, 218,000; in Australasia, 300,000; in the United States, 3,597,810. The total Masonic membership in the world is about 5,200,000.



secrets, and those outside can therefore know nothing about it. This is the legend that Freemasonry has spread about so successfully that not only is it generally accepted by those outside, but in all sincerity by most Masons as well.<sup>1</sup>

There is, then, only one Masonic secret that has been tolerably well kept, especially from Masons. And this secret is the fact that there is no such thing as a specific Masonic secret.

What passes for secrecy is in reality a mixture of bluff and an assumption that the non-Mason is not sufficiently interested to investigate. So complacent are they on this latter point that they have imposed no effective check on the public sale of printed rituals (and Masonic publishers, like any others, are run on a profit-making basis).<sup>2</sup> Were I to become Grand Secretary I would be tempted to move heaven and earth to introduce legislation to ensure that Freemasons could obtain printed rituals only through their Lodge secretaries or from the Tyler, and then denounce as pirated and highly unofficial such products as outside publishers continued to produce. It is probably too late now, and even were such a step to become effective it would not deal with the problem of the Masonic effects of a deceased Brother finding their way to the second-hand market through the agency of an unsympathetic widow.

Another objection, probably insuperable, to this course of action is that it would imply the sanction of an 'official' printed ritual, and strictly speaking there is at present no such thing. Until fairly recent times there were no printed rituals at all; workings were learned by heart and transmitted orally. As was to be expected variations crept in, and when

1. A. E. Waite, on the other hand, in his *New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* (1925) admits that it is common knowledge that the secrets "have been betrayed times out of number" (Vol. II, p. 208) and is too honest to insert the usual Masonic qualifications of 'alleged' or 'supposed' disclosures. What Waite (together with most enlightened Masons) claims to be the real secret of Masonry is not a secret at all, but rather a 'mystery', verbally incommunicable to the outsider and Mason alike—the Masonic life based on moral symbolism and allegory which the initiate, having been given the ceremonial key, must discover for himself.

2. This public and indiscriminate sale of rituals on further investigation is I think mainly confined to London. I have toured bookshops extensively in certain provincial cities, and friends have done so for me in others, without any success.

printed manuals were tolerated to stabilize the ritual and to ease the burden of committing it to memory, several distinctive workings had evolved — such as Emulation (generally regarded as the norm) and Stability, Oxford, Bristol, and many other treasured local variants.<sup>1</sup> As long as the 'ancient landmarks,' the signs, grips, words, and the general structure of the ritual are preserved and remain constant, trivial verbal and ceremonial variations are allowed, and Grand Lodge has consistently refused to pronounce any working as 'official.' As printed rituals are not allowed inside the Lodge at all, therefore, they are merely tolerated as guides to the various usages in the Lodges, and as aids in committing them to memory. That is their only status.

It can be safely assumed, however, that authentic Masonic publishers do not spend money on printing deliberately bogus rituals with the purpose of putting the public off the scent, and that gentlemen seen committing them to memory in trains and restaurants are not deliberately wasting their time. These manuals, rightly interpreted, do, therefore, give a reliable guide to Lodge workings.

Here, then, is the first source of information.

But of course it is not as easy as all that. These manuals are printed in a manner supposedly "intelligible only to the Craft", and have their gaps ("the sign is given by etc.") Many operative words (as well as some quite inoperative ones, to heighten the mystery) are indicated either by initials or by complete blanks. But this process is extremely clumsily done, again apparently on the assumption that no outsider will bother to study it with the same intelligence and assiduousness that he might devote to a *Times* cross-word puzzle. Different editions of, say, Emulation workings will vary in the words which are initialled and those that are printed in full, so that by comparing several books many of the gaps can be filled at sight. And even where this does not apply, I submit that, given a general idea that the Masonic legend is in some way connected with King Solomon's Temple, such

1. This is perhaps an over-simplification of a very complicated subject. Some distinctive features of local provincial workings probably date from pre-Union times, and survived the attempt of the Lodge of Reconciliation of 'Ancients' and 'Moderns' to establish a uniform rite which would please both.

passages as the following (describing the Word of the first degree) can be readily de-coded with a fair degree of probability even without reference to I Kings VII, 21 or Ruth IV, 13 and 17:—"This.....is derived from the l.h.p. at the P..... way or entrance of K.S.T., so named after B....., the G.G. of D., a P. and R. in I.". Other manuals of Masonic instruction on the meaning of the ritual will quite shamelessly and in the clear context of the Temple and even of the Words talk about "the two pillars B. & J." Obviously then there is no great secret about the first degree Word—or of that of the second degree either. And again, even had I omitted the secret pass-word SHIBBOLETH from the Tracing Board Lecture of the Second Degree, the context of the Lecture gives it away completely.<sup>2</sup>

And that brings me to the second source of information, the spate of Masonic commentaries, periodicals, ceremonial guides, and even histories which are unwittingly spattered with clues. Such an excellent, reliable, and usually discreet book as Bernard E. Jones's *Freemasons' Guide and Compendium*, for instance, mentions that Tubal-Cain (printed in full) appears in a certain degree. So he does. In many rituals the pass-word to the third degree is actually given as T.C., the first A. in M., and Genesis IV, 22, confirms that he was the first artificer in metals.

I have left as third and last the most obvious source of information, namely published disclosures. These vary greatly in accuracy and reliability, and the fact that none in this country is altogether up-to-date or dependable is one of my reasons for publishing this book. It would be a lengthy and largely irrelevant task to discuss and evaluate in detail these disclosures, ranging from Pritchard and Morgan to the scurrilous badly-printed little pamphlet. One needs to know something of their historical background, the status of the authors and, if Masons, their motives in making such disclosures in order rightly to assess their value and accuracy. One must compare them with each other, for some are merely compiled from earlier disclosures with no reference to contemporary workings, and no fresh information added.

The classic exposé in the United States was that of the unfortunate William Morgan, whose subsequent murder in

1. See p. 102. 2. See p. 125.

1826 led to such a popular outcry that Masonry suffered a severe set-back in America which lasted for many years. Amongst the flood of literature of that period was a booklet by the celebrated evangelist, educationalist and ex-Mason, Charles G. Finney called *The Character and Claims of Freemasonry*. In this he stated of Morgan's book "As nearly as I could recollect, it was a *verbatim* revelation of the first three degrees as I had myself taken them." I have mentioned Finney in particular because although of an earlier generation he was a great friend and brother in the Ministry of my own maternal grandfather at Oberlin, Ohio, and his complete integrity, sanctity, and honesty of character made him almost our family oracle. This is one of the *imponderabilia* which naturally carried weight with me in assessing the value of his assertion.

American workings, however, differ considerably from our own. In this country the most reliable disclosure as far as the Craft degrees are concerned is Richard Carlile's *Manual of Freemasonry* which during the past century ran into several editions and can still be obtained. It has never been revised, however, and there are many trifling variations between Carlile and Strict Emulation, including one in the Test Questions which, I believe, has been made use of as a deliberate trap with which to catch the imposter. In the so-called higher degrees he goes more seriously astray — "holy ends" for instance, appears as an absurdly meaningless phonetic rendering of *oriens*. His version of the signs in the Royal Arch is quite different from the way in which they are given to-day. Yet in the three Craft degrees, despite a slight tendency to a greater verbal prolixity than is found in present-day workings, Carlile is beyond doubt substantially accurate.<sup>1</sup> Again I have two personal confirmations of this, quite apart from the general

1. E. H. Cartwright, Senior Grand Deacon, in *A Commentary on the Freemasonic Ritual* (Hepworth & Co., 1947) says of this ritual (which he refers to as the "ritual of 1825", and nowhere mentions Carlile's name) "Although as a 'spurious ritual' it is theoretically unreliable, there is no doubt that in some points it does present the contemporary practice of regular Lodges and provide useful evidence in regard to some of the details" (p. 39). He refers to it throughout as a source apparently of equal reliability with other early rituals of more correct origin. The value of Carlile, as he admits, is that it is the earliest post-Union printed ritual. *Historical Analysis of the Holy Royal Arch Ritual* (F. de P. Castells, 1929) also assumes the reliability of Carlile, and discusses when and why alterations have been made in the Royal Arch ritual and signs since 1825.

## DARKNESS VISIBLE

agreement between this book and authentic modern rituals. A clergyman friend of mine who rather enjoyed his Masonry but refused to take it very seriously admitted frankly in the heat of an argument that the secrecy was largely bluff and cited Carlile as an instance, saying that to the best of his knowledge it was reasonably accurate, and the signs, grips, and words were certainly correct. Secondly, I have a copy in my possession which had folded in it several papers of unquestionable Masonic genuineness—one of those little cards looking outwardly like a cricket fixture list with the Test Questions printed esoterically inside, a Lodge summons, and a receipt for dues paid. It also has certain pencilled comments and corrections which appear to indicate that it had actually been used by a Lodge officer in learning his ritual.<sup>1</sup>

By comparing these various disclosures with the modern authentic rituals of Masonic publishers, and by checking them one against another, one can find the answers to all the blanks and initials with a degree of certainty. There is a common denominator of reasonableness and consistency. When every disclosure, for instance, gives an identical account of the first degree Masons' grip, and when a recent 'authentic' ritual also states that the "G. or Tn. is given by a d.p.o.t.t.o.t.f.j.o.t.h.; this, when regularly given and received, serves to distinguish a Brother by n. as well by d." one can but assume that this grip or token is indeed given by a distinct pressure of the thumb on the first joint of the hand. The only alternative to assuming the transparent truth of these findings is to suppose the existence of a gigantic world-wide hoax in which all Masons join, exceeding in cleverness and consistency any conspiracy yet known to mankind. But of course most Masons are too simple for that. And is it merely coincidence that the 'supposed' means of recognition are often reciprocated by complete strangers, and even followed up with invitations to visit their Lodges?

I have dealt with this question of the imaginary secrecy of Masonic workings at considerable and perhaps wearisome length in order that the reader may assess at true value the normal and instinctive Masonic reaction to disclosures.

1. I have seen an early copy with an old-fashioned binding containing a lock in the clasp, another indication that it was actually in use by Masons themselves.

## DARKNESS VISIBLE

"Books purporting to give Masonic secrets"—"what Mr. So-and-So supposes himself to have discovered" are almost stock phrases. The insinuation of doubt or gross inaccuracy is always there. But let us not judge too harshly the apparent near-dishonesty of this means of discrediting an exposé, for Masons have sworn solemnly on the Bible never to reveal.

If you ask a Masonic friend for an opinion on this book, you will either receive a reply in some such terms, or else a complete and evasive silence. What Masons will say about it among themselves, however, is a very different matter.

But in conclusion, I can reveal that I have had a final check made on my ritual disclosure. I have two friends living in quite different parts of the country, each of whom I have deliberately kept in ignorance of the other's existence. Both have unquestionably been Masons who have convinced me of the genuineness of their certificates. Both are religious men who have come to the conclusion that *oaths sworn on false pretences are null and void*. Both volunteered for conscience sake and with no prospect of material advantage to look over and correct the manuscript of this book, and the corrections (of an extremely trifling nature), allowing for variations in non-essentials between Lodge and Lodge, in each case agreed.

Now had there been only one, the stock but tendentious Masonic argument that a man who is capable of breaking the Masonic obligation is capable of telling any untruth might conceivably carry weight with a few. But I leave it to the reader to judge whether two people quite unknown to each other could have made me the victim of deliberate deception by telling identical lies on identical trivialities, when both are enthusiastic to establish the truth.<sup>1</sup>

1. The reliability of this book has been further confirmed publicly in a review by D. R. Denman, M.A., M.Sc., Ph.D., writing as an ex-Mason in *The Life of Faith*, Oct. 15, 1952.

# II

## W H Y W R I T T E N

"Christopher Robin, you must shoot the balloon with your gun. Have you got your gun?"

"Of course I have," you said, "But if I do that, it will spoil the balloon," you said.

"But if you don't," said Pooh, "I shall have to let go, and that would spoil me."

When he put it like this, you saw how it was, and you aimed very carefully at the balloon, and fired.

"Ow!" said Pooh.

"Did I miss?" you asked.

"You didn't exactly miss," said Pooh, but you missed the balloon."

"I'm so sorry," you said, and you fired again, and this time you hit the balloon, and the air came slowly out, and Winnie-the-Pooh floated down to the ground.

A. A. Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh.

**M**Y MOTIVE in producing this disclosure is not a desire to irritate my many Masonic friends, nor it is a mere yielding to the temptation to call a gigantic bluff.

There is an increasing number of clergy and devout laity in the Church of England who have their misgivings over Freemasonry, which the necessarily evasive answers of Masons do not altogether allay. They are aware (as indeed is constantly pointed out to them) that many people of the highest distinction and repute both in Church and State are members, but an *illi quoque* argument has no more validity in logic than the *tu quoque*, particularly when it is remembered that these distinguished personages themselves had no previous knowledge of the teaching to which they swore compliance.

There are parochial clergy, too, who realize that although some of their most faithful laymen, possibly Churchwardens and Parochial Church Councillors, are also members of Lodges, there are a great many more who appear to find in Freemasonry a complete and adequate substitute for religion. Those who believe that the Church, and the Church alone, has Christ's authority on earth to teach religious truth and define moral codes openly and fearlessly, may legitimately feel some disquiet at the thought of another and purely human body doing so under a close-tyled Masonic bushel. And again the

## DARKNESS VISIBLE

repeated assurances that Masonry cannot conflict with anyone's religious beliefs do not always adequately allay these misgivings. If churchmen are receiving moral instruction and precept (however innocuous or beneficial) from an outside source, the Church surely has the right, if not the duty, to investigate.

And yet so little information is readily to hand. A straightforward presentation of the ritual itself in the three Craft degrees plus the Royal Arch (the entire Masonic system as recognized officially by Grand Lodge) will therefore enable people who have these misgivings and yet have no time for lengthy researches to judge for themselves.

It is sometimes thought that there is some inner secret imparted verbally to the candidate for initiation, but too esoteric to be hinted at in printed rituals. I can assure the reader, however, from ample personal Masonic confirmation as well as from researches into previous disclosures that this is not so. In toasting the initiate at the Festive Board afterwards it is customary for the Worshipful Master to say a few words on the meaning and privileges of Masonry, but this follows no official form, and the nature of such teaching seldom rises above the platitude, and depends entirely on the Master's own outlook. In an old school Lodge with a fair sprinkling of the cloth the initiate may be told that Masonry is the handmaid of the Church. In a business-man's Lodge the Master may even declare that although he can't answer for everyone, personally he thinks that Masonry is the finest religion in the world.

Only the loyal toast of the Queen and Craft, and the Tyler's toast ("to all poor and distressed Masons") follow a set form. Official Masonic teachings are contained exclusively in the workings within the Lodge, the lectures and the charges. They may therefore be studied almost in their entirety in these pages. Nothing of value is omitted. The only 'inner secret' is the Masonic way of life based on this symbolic morality, and the term is equally applicable to the sacramental life of the Church.

It will be seen, then, how utterly without foundation is the Masonic parrot-cry that no one who is not a Mason can possibly form any opinion of Masonic teachings or come to

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any understanding of what it all means. It is not necessary, after all, to become a member of the Roman Catholic Church in order to understand her teachings. That again is part of the great bluff on which Masons themselves refuse to be undeceived. For after all, no one likes to admit that a solemn oath of secrecy sworn on the Bible is an attempt to protect things which are not secret at all, and that the oath is therefore a meaningless farce.

If it be objected that in giving the signs, grips, and words in full I am merely causing needless offence by publishing matters quite irrelevant to the real meaning of Masonry I can only reply that I do so for two reasons. First, to prove my contention that there are no secrets in Masonry and therefore that the Solemn Obligations are farcical and even invalid, and secondly, were I to reproduce the ritual incomplete in these particulars it might be insinuated that it was incomplete in other more important particulars too, and that outside knowledge of it can only be very partial. I am aware that every possible attempt will be made to discredit and suppress this book, and may perhaps be pardoned for wishing to forestall such action in advance.

A supposed secret shared by half a million people in England alone which can readily be discovered on the shelves of any good library cannot be regarded in the same light as a personal or family secret which if discovered by prying or by accident it would be shameful to betray. If to reproduce Masonic esoteria is to be guilty of perjury at second hand, then the researches of many a classical scholar into the secret mystery-cults of the past must come under the same condemnation. The mysteries of Eleusis, for instance, were secret. Admittedly they are dead, and Masonry is not. But suppose, for the sake of argument, it should be discovered that in some remote fastness of the Aegeans these secret rites were still being kept alive to-day. Would that make the researches of the scholar scandalous?

I am firmly convinced that for a Christian to pledge himself to a religious (or even, to avoid begging the question, to a quasi-religious) organization which offers prayer and worship to God which deliberately exclude the name of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in whose name only is salvation to be

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found, is apostatic. I am also quite aware that there are many Christians, and even Archbishops, who are also Masons who do not see it in that light, either because they do not take their ritual very seriously, or because they allow other considerations such as the good works, benevolence, and moral uprightness of the Craft to outweigh the clearly pagan implications of its formulae. The Englishman is a Pelagian at heart. It is my sincere hope, therefore, that this book may be of service not only in giving information to the non-Mason, but that it may also lead the Christian Mason seriously to re-consider his position. He might well ask himself at the outset, is it morally licit to bind oneself in advance, by a solemn oath on the Bible, to secrecy and fidelity in an organization which concerns faith and morals of which nothing is revealed to him previously? Here is the first stumbling-block for the Christian Mason who is at all conversant with moral theology.

## III

## M A S O N I C O B L I G A T I O N S

"I see," said the Queen. "Off with their heads!" and the procession moved on, three of the soldiers remaining behind to execute the unfortunate gardeners, who ran to Alice for protection.

"You shan't be beheaded!" said Alice, and she put them into a large flower-pot that stood near. The three soldiers wandered about for a minute or two, looking for them, and then quietly marched off after the others.

"Are their heads off?" shouted the Queen.

"Their heads are gone, if it please your Majesty!" the soldiers shouted in reply.

"That's right!" shouted the Queen. "Can you play croquet?"

"What is the fun?" said Alice.

"Why, she—" said the Gryphon. "It's all her fancy, that: they never executes nobody, you know."

Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland.

THE oaths, or Solemn Obligations as they are termed in the ritual, probably give rise to more misgivings among thoughtful Masons themselves than any other aspect of Masonic workings. The full text of these obligations and the context in which they are taken will be found in their respective degrees,<sup>1</sup> and there is no need to give them again here at length.

The Candidate takes them kneeling, with one hand on the open Bible. The Deacons cross their hands above his head. Although the Worshipful Master has declared that the oaths contain nothing which can conflict with his social, moral, or religious duties, the Candidate finds himself repeating, phrase by phrase after the Master, expressions such as he has probably never used before except in jest or profanity. He renders himself liable to shocking tortures and mutilations should he prove faithless. His throat may be cut, his tongue torn out, his left breast laid open, his body severed in two and bowels burned to ashes, his head cut off, his right hand cut off and slung over his left shoulder to wither and die.

Perhaps in his schooldays he made use of such expressions as "cut my throat and hope to die", accompanied even by the appropriate gesture, thus unwittingly giving the Penal sign of the first degree. But if he was brought up in a Christian

1. See pp. 99, 119, 135, and 164.

household he would surely have had misgivings over swearing these words on his knees with one hand resting on the Bible.

It will be noticed, too, that although the first degree obligation is solely concerned with secrecy, the second and third degree and Royal Arch oaths include also certain moral principles and loyalties, the infringement of which likewise carries the death penalty. The Candidate swears that he will accept a punishment of being severed in two, for instance, if he fails boldly to repel the slanderer of a brother-Mason's good name, or if the position of his daily supplications does not remind him of a brother's need. "All these points," he declares, "I solemnly swear to observe, without evasion, equivocation, or mental reservation of any kind, under no less a penalty....."

It must be admitted that on his initiation he is treated more reasonably. An alternative penalty has been inserted (probably a later interpolation) branding him as "void of all moral worth" and so on, but in England and Scotland, at least, this appears only in the Entered Apprentice obligation; to assume that it applies equally to the penalties in other degrees when it is nowhere hinted that it does so savours of 'equivocation.' The Irish workings are also more reasonable; the alternative appears as "the more modern but no less effective punishment" in each of the Craft degrees, and the Grand Guignol clauses are described as the "ancient and symbolic" penalties. This gets over some of the difficulties. But how can the Scot and the Englishman get over theirs?

The problem bristles with dilemmas.

Either the oaths mean what they say, or they do not. If they do mean what they say, then the Candidate is entering into a pact consenting to his own murder by barbarous torture and mutilation should he break it. If they do not mean what they say, then he is swearing high-sounding schoolboy nonsense on the Bible, which verges on blasphemy.

Again, in the third degree obligation, the Candidate swears that he will respect the confidences of a brother-Mason, "murder, treason, felony, and all other offences contrary to the laws of God and the ordinances of the realm being at all times most especially excepted." This clause, of course, safeguards the oaths from coming into conflict with the law of

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the land. It removes any suspicion that respectable English Freemasonry could ever be politically seditious. Yet at the same time this very clause which guarantees Masonic respectability makes nonsense of the penalty which follows it. For although it is nowhere stipulated or even hinted who should have the task of exacting the penalty, it is quite obviously contrary to the laws of God and the ordinances of the realm that a man should be severed in two and have his bowels burned to ashes for any offence whatsoever. A Past Master seen in the streets with his right wrist ending in a stump, and the withered and decaying hand slung over his left shoulder would have every right to demand police protection against further grotesqueries.

The simple common-sense answer to these difficulties is of course that no Mason takes these oaths literally. The pledge to secrecy, he will say, is taken very seriously indeed. The penalties on the other hand are purely symbolic, and to be understood in the Irish sense.

But while this is certainly true it does not remove the objections. This symbolic interpretation means that the faithless Mason deserves dire physical penalties even though they cannot and should not be imposed, and Masons themselves would be the first to register horror and shock if they ever were imposed. The one reasonably authentic Masonic murder in recent years, that of William Morgan in the State of New York in 1826, led to mass resignations from Lodges, denial of liability, and a general eclipse of the Craft in the United States for some time, whereas logically they should have gloried in it as an act of justice in conformity with their sworn obligations. This in itself shows the unreality of the position. However symbolically interpreted, the oaths imply that an indiscretion leading to the disclosure for instance of the identity of the pillars at the entrance to King Solomon's Temple with the words of the first or second degree deserves a greater and more barbarously un-Christian torture than society imposes for treason, rape or murder. Even a symbolical interpretation, that is, outrages the sense of justice and proportion.

And although a symbolical interpretation of the penalty

1. There is, however, a certain vague tradition that the Tyler is responsible for this duty.

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clauses is universally accepted in practice, it is impossible to reconcile it with the express declaration, sworn on the Bible and in the presence of God, that the oaths are taken "without evasion, equivocation, or mental reservation of any kind." This would appear to rule out the possibility of any clause in the obligations meaning other than it says, or being taken in a different sense from that which is clearly expressed.

There is, of course, the argument from antiquity. The oaths are landmarks, priceless survivals from a primeval past less squeamish over the blunt forthrightness of rough-and-ready justice than our own century. But age in itself does not justify, or make wrong right. Logically, the argument could be equally applied to a survival of the excesses of the Roman Bacchanalia. The Christian may well feel that not only are the penalties out of all proportion to the crime, but that the oaths themselves, taken on the Bible in an atmosphere of religious solemnity, are also out of proportion to the comparative triviality of the secrets thus guarded, and on that score alone are profane. And certainly there are many Masons, Christians among them, who aggravate this profanity by taking the religious side of Masonry lightly. By doing so they may feel that they escape the condemnation of belonging to an alien cult, yet at the same time they only thereby increase in proportion the profanity of their oaths.

If Masonry, which professes to be based on the practice of every moral virtue, claims that these oaths with their blood-thirsty penalties are congruous with Christianity, one wonders whether the Christian Mason would see any incongruity in approximating the Book of Common Prayer to Masonic usages. Suppose, for instance, candidates for Confirmation were asked to swear "do ye here, in the presence of God, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your Baptism—under no less a penalty than that of having your throat cut across, your tongue torn out by the root, and buried in the sand of the sea?" And yet if it is right for the Christian to swear such oaths in a Masonic Temple dedicated to God, why should a similar oath seem blasphemous (however symbolically interpreted) when sworn in a Church dedicated to God?

The only possible answer is that I am taking these things



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far too seriously. But this answer can only mean that it is morally licit for a Christian to swear a solemn oath on the Word of God and in His Holy Name—and yet *not* take it too seriously.<sup>1</sup>

I sent a transcript of the Masonic obligations with their context to Canon V. A. Demant, the Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Oxford University, and asked him for his judgment as to whether they were morally licit for the Christian. His reply (which of course is conditional on the accuracy of my transcript, being that which appears in this book) was as follows:—"Looking at the nature of the vows in general, it does seem very difficult for a Churchman to undertake them without being guilty of either vain (*vanum*) or rash (*temerarium*) swearing. He seems to be initiated into an alien cult. If it is not taken seriously—or taken very symbolically (in contravention of the oath's words: without evasion, equivocation, or mental reservation of any kind) then the oath comes under the heading of vain swearing or profanity. If it is taken seriously then it must be put down as rash swearing, for there is no certainty that the Christian initiate will not find afterwards that he has joined an alien cult."

Another difficulty in interpretation which may arise for the Freemason of sensitive conscience is ambiguity over what is to be considered secret. He promises that he will never reveal "any part or parts, point or points, of the secrets or mysteries" of Freemasonry, yet nowhere is it specifically defined what is secret and what is not. Having taken the oath, the Worshipful Master informs the initiate that the secrets of this degree "consist of a sign, token, and word"—which would seem to indicate, if "consist" be taken to mean what it usually means, than any other matters which the initiate may learn are either not secret, or are covered by the term "mysteries". On any interpretation the publication and public sale of printed rituals seems a clear breach of the obligation. When even the secret words are indicated by initials, it is difficult to understand in what spirit the Masonic composers

1. "Concerning the oaths and obligations, we may say, cowboys and Indians." (The Rev. W. G. Branch, writing as a Master Mason to the *Church Times*, March 30, 1951.) This attitude is undoubtedly the common one, and indeed extends to the whole Masonic ritual.

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and printers working for Masonic publishers promised not to "write those secrets, indite, carve, mark, engrave, or otherwise them delineate...whereby or whereon any letter, character, or figure, or a least trace of a letter, character, or figure, may become legible or intelligible." Masons who possess and use these rituals would appear to be accessories to these crimes, and "crimes" is surely not an overstatement, as the oaths clearly state that they deserve the death penalty. In whatever sense the oaths are taken, then, it is obviously not "without evasion, equivocation, or mental reservation of any kind." The fact that there are no real secrets whatsoever in Masonry adds somewhat to the preposterous unreality and insincerity of the oaths. Although the Candidate may be quite unaware of it, he is in reality pledging himself, as far as secrecy is concerned, to maintain a colossal system of bluff.

Any Freemason is entitled to proclaim to the world that British Masonry believes in God, is loyal to the State, and runs a hospital, for these things are altogether admirable and beyond controversy. There is no secret either about Masonry being a system of symbolic morality, for here too it gains the approval of the world. The "secrets and mysteries", apart from the methods of recognition, appear to begin where Masonic teachings and practices deviate from orthodox Christianity. It is not blazoned abroad that a death and resurrection rite is practised in the third degree, that the names of pagan deities are equated with that of Jehovah in the Royal Arch, or that fantastic tortures are attached to violations of the oaths. The average Mason, to do him justice, keeps his oath to the letter by not talking about Masonry at all, and by changing the subject as adroitly as possible. If forced into a defence, however, he will not go far wrong according to Masonic precedents if he freely admits those features on which there can be no disagreement, but keeps as secrets and mysteries such aspects as might incite ridicule, disapproval, or condemnation.

To what extent are the oaths binding in conscience once they are taken? It is difficult to give a precise or universal answer for the member of the Church of England, though there are certain guiding principles.

An oath may be subsequently realised to be "vain and



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rash swearing" and hence sinful; this in itself does not invalidate the obligation if it was taken in good faith with every intention of keeping it.

On the other hand, an oath taken on false pretences is null and void. Suppose, to take an extreme and unlikely example, a man interested in social work swore an oath of loyalty and secrecy to an organization on the express understanding that its aims were to provide holiday homes for tired mothers. After he has taken this oath it is revealed to him that the real aim of the society is to drop an atom bomb on Buckingham Palace. His oath of loyalty to that organization is obviously not binding in conscience, because it was taken on false grounds, and he could not fulfil it without sin. But in this instance, as a loyal citizen, he may well feel that the secrecy, too, is not binding on him; that it is his duty to inform the police, that he would be guilty of a serious sin of omission were he to fail to do so.

Now the Masonic oaths are taken on the express understanding that they can in no way conflict with a man's social, moral, or religious duties. And without doubt the Worshipful Masters who administer them do so in perfectly good faith, and themselves see no possibility of such a conflict. The majority of Masons who take them, even good Christian Masons, do not appear to be aware of any conflict, largely, I think, because they have never had any cause to reason the situation logically in the light of their faith. Obviously the rank and file of the Brethren cannot possibly be expected to be moral theologians, and although the gruesome penalties often jar on their natural feelings when first recited, and certain portions of the ritual may seem strangely at variance with what they may hear in Church, familiarity usually dulls misgivings in the course of time. But should a Christian initiate come to realise that Masonry in regarding all Gods as equal, or in offering prayers which deliberately exclude Our Lord, or in proclaiming the name of God in terms of heathen deities as in the Royal Arch (things which were not disclosed to him on initiation) does violate his Christian principles, his oath ceases to be binding in conscience. The obligation to secrecy may remain. But if he feels very strongly that Freemasonry is even unintentionally undermining by its subtle universalist

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heterodoxy from within the supreme majesty due to Our Lord and the distinctive and exclusive witness of the Church as devastatingly as an atom bomb on Buckingham Palace might undermine the British constitution, it is surely arguable that he has a clear duty in conscience to speak out in warning.

*"If anyone swear rashly with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatsoever it be that a man shall utter rashly with an oath, and it be hid from him; when he knoweth of it, then he shall be guilty in one of these things: and it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that wherein he hath sinned." (Leviticus V, 4-6)*

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pagan. And a Past Assistant Grand Chaplain has surely some authority to speak on the religious nature of the Craft.

How is one to arrive at a fair judgment on this crucial matter?

Christian Masons obviously cannot assent in as many words to the proposition that Masonry is a religion, for Christianity is an exclusive faith. Even to admit such a possibility would provoke the suspicions and perhaps investigations of those Churches which have not yet pronounced against it. It cannot, it must not, be for them a rival to the supreme claims of Christ. Therefore, regardless of certain clear implications in the ritual and declarations of their own members to the contrary, it is not. They prefer to consider it a handmaid of the Church; a strong moral foundation on which any faith can be practised, but no more a religion than the Mothers' Union or the Boy Scout movement.

Let us be quite fair to this position. In the three Craft degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow-Craft, and Master Mason the specific "secrets" are really no more than methods of mutual recognition in certain grips (or handshakes), signs, and words, knowledge of which (together with the Grand Lodge certificate) will prove a man on examination to be a Mason. All this seems perfectly harmless. The rest of Masonry to them is concerned with the symbolism of character-building, and indeed Craft Masonry defines itself as "a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols." Certain events, mainly apocryphal, concerned with the building of King Solomon's Temple form the core of the allegory, and the various implements and working-tools of the operative stone-mason (particularly, of course, the well-known emblem of the square and compass) to which moral teachings are attached, are among the symbols.

"We are organised," said the President of the Board of General Purposes to Grand Lodge in September 1949, "to provide a series of Lodges where Masons can meet in a hallowed atmosphere, where good fellowship can be promoted through a Brotherhood founded on the Fatherhood of God, where we can be happy in a confidence founded on mutual trust, where character can be moulded and strengthened and aptitudes developed, so that our members are thereby better

## IV

### IS MASONRY A RELIGION?

*"Whether the fogs produce the serious people or whether the serious people produce the fogs, I don't know, but the whole thing rather gets on my nerves."*

Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*.

MASONRY frequently declares that it is not a religion, yet it claims to be religious.<sup>1</sup> Unofficially one even hears it stated "Masonry is not a religion, it is religion". If Masonry were a new thing, and if the Masonic ritual had been composed only this year, and submitted to an impartial panel of Bishops for their judgment, approval, and blessing, there can be little doubt that it would be rejected with amused scorn. But while many distinguished clerics vigorously deny that Masonry is a religion, and expect the outsider to take their word for it without further investigation, the outsider is sometimes pardonably doubtful and legitimately curious as to how these clerics would define the word religion, about which, if the term be denied to Freemasonry, there appears to be some woolly thinking. For instance, the Rev. Canon E. Paton-Williams, Past Assistant Grand Chaplain and Assistant Provincial Grand Master for East Lancashire, in a purely pagan Christmas message to the *Freemasons' Chronicle* (Dec. 22nd, 1951) wrote, "It was Plato who said we must now wait for one, a God or a God-like man, who will teach us our duties and take away the blindness from our eyes. Masonry is fulfilling that mission in no uncertain manner. Masonry herald the *Dies Natalis Solis Invicti*." Any Christmas message from a clergyman which deliberately omits all mention of Christ may be regarded as a theological curiosity, but it would be difficult to maintain that Canon Paton-Williams is not here referring to Masonry in terms of a religion, however

1. This distinction is, however, practically meaningless. It is equivalent to saying that a thing is not an abomination, but it is abominable. An adjective must refer to a noun. A symbol might be said to be religious but not a religion, but it is difficult to apply this to an organization in this context. If Masonry is 'religious', to what religion is it related? To Christianity?

qualified to exercise a wholesome influence as citizens in their private capacities on all matters of public issue."

This, coupled with the spice of mystery, an occasional evening away from the wife, and in some cases an affection for pretentious titles, a love of dressing-up and ceremonial, is the sum total of what the Craft means to the average Master Mason, and perfectly innocent and harmless it all seems to him. He may be aware of various references in the ritual to the crudities of pagan worship, for instance to the "sun at its meridian", but these are looked on as old-fashioned survivals and rather quaint. Most Masons do not take their ritual seriously, and certainly do not read the works of Ward, Wilmshurst or Waite. They would not understand them if they did.

The issue of whether Masonry is or is not a religion is confused by the traditional and Pelagian tendency of many Englishmen to fail to distinguish between religion and morals. The following syllogism, therefore, is typical:—religion exists to help people to lead good lives. Masonry helps people to lead good lives. Therefore Masonry is religion. Blissfully unaware of the fallacy of the undistributed middle and convinced that religion is what any man chooses to make it, the Englishman may go on by arguing that as Masonry teaches morals much more pleasantly and excitingly than the Church, therefore it is a more satisfactory religion. Everybody is going to end up at the same place; his wife and the parson call it Heaven, he calls it the Grand Lodge Up Above.

Seen in this light, Masonry is not so much a religion as a parasite on religion, and a rival to the Church as a moral guide. But there is more in it than this. There are in the Masonic workings distinct elements of religion in a far more supernatural sense of the word, a religion that is entirely non-Christian. And when critics of these elements are accused by Masons of misunderstanding completely the meaning of Masonry, what really happens is that these critics call attention to things which many Masons, Churchmen in particular, have never seen or prefer to ignore.

I have so far resisted the temptation to build up a scissors-and-paste case for this on the testimony of Masonic mystics. This has already been done admirably and convincingly by the Rev. C. Penney Hunt in *The Menace of Freemasonry to the Christian Faith*.

as I prefer to base my case on the ritual itself. But there is a passage in a book by Sir John Cockburn (Past Grand Deacon of England, and Past Deputy Grand Master of Australia) called *Freemasonry: What, Whence, Why, Whither* which will bear quotation because it is in conformity with the ritual, and few Masons could logically disagree with it. He writes:—

"The question whether Masonry is a religion has been keenly debated. But the contest appears merely a war of words. Perhaps the best way of arriving at a conclusion would be first of all to enumerate the points which are common to most religions and then to enquire in what respect Masonry differs from them. Religion deals with the relationship between man and his Maker and instils a reverence for the Creator as first cause. Religions abound in observances of worship by prayer and praise. They inculcate rules of conduct by holding up a God or Hero as a pattern for imitation.....It would be difficult to say in which of these characteristics Freemasonry is lacking. Surely it abounds in all. Its ceremonies are elaborate and are unsurpassed for beauty and depth of meaning. They are interspersed with prayer and thanksgiving.....If the title of religion be denied to Freemasonry it may well claim the higher ground of being a Federation of Religions. It is a form of worship in which all religions can unite without sacrificing a jot of their respective creeds."

All these facts, except the last, mentioned by Sir John Cockburn can be abundantly substantiated. The ritual is worked in the spirit of a solemn religious ceremony; it is a frequent custom to sing hymns at the opening and closing of the Lodge, candles are lighted before the three pedestals, and the Bible is always open before the Worshipful Master. The Lodge must be opened and closed with prayer, which is also offered for the Candidate at his initiation, passing, raising, and exaltation. The Grand and Royal Sign is accompanied by the exclamation "All glory to the Most High". The places where Lodges meet are customarily known as temples, a word strongly associated with worship and religion. Most Lodges have chaplains and organists who have their regular part to play in the ceremonies.

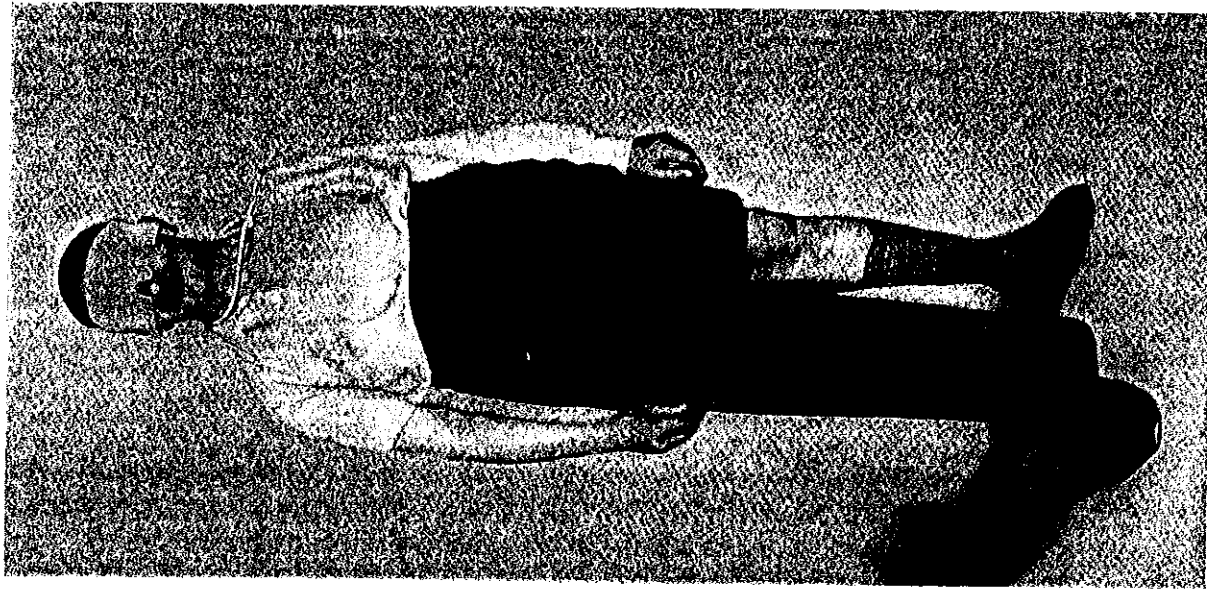
It may still be argued that Boy Scouts sing hymns and have chaplains who offer prayers which, at least in open troops,

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can also be vague and pan-religious, and yet Scouts may be devout members of a Church without any incompatibility. Masonry, however, goes very much further than this, even if individual Masons do not.

For Masonry claims to impart to its initiates a spiritual and esoteric light. True, the Candidate must profess a belief in God which implies that his previous darkness is not complete, but the symbolism throughout is clear. He is stripped of money and valuables at his initiation to symbolise his poverty, his blindfold typifies a state of spiritual as well as material darkness, his cable-tow is a sign of humility. He is introduced into the Lodge with the words "a poor candidate in a state of darkness...humbly soliciting to be admitted to the mysteries and privileges of Freemasonry". After he is obligated (a vile phrase, as Polonius would have said—but not mine) he is asked what is the "predominant wish of his heart" and he replies, light. This is the most dramatic moment of the ceremony; coinciding with a thunderous hand-clap from the assembled brethren his hoodwink is removed, and for the first time he beholds the Lodge. The emblematic Masonic lights are now indicated to him, being six in number; the Volume of the Sacred Law, the square, the compasses, the "sun to rule the day, the moon to rule the night, and the Worshipful Master to rule the Lodge." Whether the illumination received is sufficient to justify the offensive phrase in the second degree Obligation which stigmatizes non-Masons as the "uninstructed and popular world" is perhaps open to question; certainly in the third degree this Masonic light shows beyond doubt not only its inferiority to, but its utterly pagan incompatibility with the light which Our Lord shed upon the grave, for we are told that "the light of a Master Mason is darkness visible, serving only to express the gloom which rests on the prospect of futurity".

And yet Masonry believes in immortality. It believes that death can be trampled under foot and expresses the hope that "when we shall be summoned from this sublunary abode, we may ascend to the Grand Lodge above, where the world's Great Architect lives and reigns forever." But this hope of immortality is not in Christ, but through the example, dramatically re-enacted by the candidate, of a semi-mythical Phoenician



*Candidate prepared for Initiation*

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brass-founder, Hiram Abiff, who died rather than betray the secrets of Masonry. Here indeed is a type of every pagan dying vegetation cult, and yet it is more than drama. It is presented in the ritual however symbolically as a religious rite; not only as a moral example but as a quasi-sacramental experience with an *ex opere operato* significance, raising the Candidate, as one of the Lectures expresses it, "from a dead level to a living perpendicular." "It is thus," says the Traditional History, "all Master Masons are raised from a figurative death to a re-union with the former companions of their toils." Of what is this death figurative? The passage is reminiscent of the phrassology of the Prayer-Book Baptismal service, "being dead unto sin, and living unto righteousness... as he is made partaker of the death of thy Son, he may also be partaker of his resurrection." The prayer at the beginning of this ceremony for "Thy servant who offers himself a Candidate to partake with us the mysterious secrets of a Master Mason" continues with this passage:—"Endue him with such fortitude that in the hour of trial he fail not, but that, passing safely under Thy protection through the valley of the shadow of death, he may finally rise from the tomb of transgression, to shine as the stars for ever and ever." If (as seems obvious) this refers to the death ceremony shortly to be performed as well as to the Candidate's latter end on earth, it indicates that it is the "mysterious secrets of a Master-Mason" which have robbed the grave of its victory. "But thanks be to God," Bro. Paul would have written in his Communication to the Lodges which are in Corinth, "which giveth us the victory through our Grand Master Hiram Abiff."

The fact that most Masons do not see the third degree ceremonies in this light may completely exonerate them from the sin of wilfully partaking in what the early Fathers of the Church stigmatized in contemporary mystery-religions as satanic parodies of Christian worship, but it does not exonerate Masonry, which after all claims (in the first degree Tracing Board Lecture) that its usages and customs approximate to those of ancient Egypt. Unawareness of an obvious and logical interpretation does not *ipso facto* make the interpretation false.

The question of universalism in Masonry may be variously interpreted. God is presented and titled in such terms that

people of all reputable faiths may agree in a lowest-common-denominator deity shorn of all attributes distinctive of any single system of belief. Masonry is presented as a unifying influence because in its Lodges men of different religions can meet together for their common good and for common prayer. But, says the Mason, this represents a minimum of belief—not a maximum or an optimum—on which no disagreement is possible. The Christian will of course know that the Great Architect of the Universe is the Holy Trinity. The Hindu, Brahma, and the Moslem, Allah. In their hearts they pray to him as such.

But even in this supposed minimum or common-denominator conception of God there are grave difficulties. The titles given to the deity are so taken for granted by the Fraternity that their irreverent inadequacy does not seem to be realised. To call God, as in the first degree, a "Great Architect" is derogatory to His creative omnipotence, for an architect only puts together from materials already at hand. He designs, but he does not create, and the conception is frankly Deist. "Grand Geometrician" is even more woefully inadequate, and smacks of the outmoded symbolical mathematics of the Kabbala. The "Great Overseer" of the side-degree of Mark Masonry is tolerable if it refers to the "all-seeing eye" (which is certainly used as a Masonic symbol) but in the context of this working it appears more relevant as a divine type of the overseer or foreman over labour who works under the architect or contractor.

All these epithets may be allowable as attributes of the Godhead, but the fact that God is referred to officially and almost solely under these titles in these respective degrees suggests that they are definitions rather than attributes.

The third degree name, "The Most High" is quite unexceptionable and indeed familiar to the Christian. But in the Royal Arch very grave difficulties arise. For here the secret word is not a Biblical name or catch-phrase, nor a mumbo-jumbo of corrupt Hebrew, but a compound word of quite recognisable origin spelt out on the top of the Altar in separate character of metal, which claims, together with Jehovah, to be the "sacred and mysterious name of the true and living God most High." This word, JAH-BUL-ON, is explained in the

Mystical Lecture as consisting of certain titles or attributes of divinity to which in English no one could take exception. Yet this word is made up (as is also explained) of the Hebrew Jahweh coupled with the Assyrian Baal, so utterly repugnant to the Prophets even as a symbol, and the Egyptian On or Osiris. However happily it may be recited by the three office-bearers Zerubbabel, Joshua, and Haggai, syllable by syllable, their originals in the Old Testament would have been shocked beyond measure. The great Masonic authority Albert Pike Grand Commander of the Southern Jurisdiction of the Supreme Council at Charleston, U.S.A. (a Masonic body which does not include the Royal Arch) was disquieted and disgusted at the introduction of this word. He wrote:—"No man or body of men can make me accept as a sacred word, as a symbol of the infinite and eternal Godhead, a mongrel word, in part composed of the name of an accursed and beastly heathen god, whose name has been for more than two thousand years an appellation of the Devil." The fact that Anglican bishops and clergy see no inconsistency in forming groups of three to recite this word almost as an incantation is really staggering.<sup>2</sup> Of course they would say that it is all very symbolic, but Pike objected to it even as a symbol. They also say doubtless that they do not take it very seriously<sup>3</sup> but this implies an attitude to God and to a solemn Bible oath which suggests the unfortunate possibility that another solemn oath to "banish strange and erroneous doctrine" may likewise not be taken too seriously, at least where secret doctrine is concerned. But of this more in the following chapter.

The claim that the Masonic deity is common-denominator again breaks down when the Greater Lights of this degree are indicated, which are the creative, preservative, and annihilative

1. *The Holy Triad*, Washington, 1873.

2. In view of the un-Scriptural nature of this Masonic title for the Deity, one is puzzled by the widespread attitude, expressed by the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master of Norfolk (the Bishop of Norwich) to a meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge at Yarmouth (as reported in the *Freemasons' Chronicle* of July 28, 1951) that "Masonry.....was a system of morality that was based on the recognition of, and obedience to, the Volume of the Sacred Law, and this was the full extent, so to speak, of its religious character."

3. Another Masonic Bishop in a personal letter, although admitting that the analogy was far from perfect, drew a comparison between the Masonic ritual and a Punch and Judy show.

powers of the Deity.<sup>1</sup> This is an exact correspondence with the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, and is not only non-Christian but un-Christian.

Indeed the plea that Masonic workings are not to be considered as religious rites but as dramatised morality breaks down completely in this degree. There is plenty of moral exhortation, yet the contrast between the Craft and the Royal Arch is remarkable. In the former the signs (apart from the Penal signs) are 'casual' and connected with certain events in the Masonic legend; the Words are given out, but are quite incidental to the drama and have no particular religious significance. The Royal Arch, on the other hand, is concerned almost entirely with the quest and discovery of the lost Word, and that Word is a pagan and syncretistic name of God. Royal Arch signs are fully explained in the Mystical Lecture as religious signs, exemplifying the relationship of man to his Maker. The full title of this degree is the *Holy Royal Arch*, and the Chapters set up their altars. The Officers represent the functions of 'prophet, priest, and king', and they are given as their own secret words three Old Testament titles of God—*Jah* for King Zerubbabel, *El Shaddai* for Prophet Haggai, and *El Elohe* for Priest Joshua. Although the custom is tending to die out, there is provision for a foot-washing ceremony at the Installation of Joshua, and for him and Zerubbabel to be solemnly anointed with oil. The use of incense, too, is not unknown in Royal Arch ceremonies. All these things are, by any recognised definition, religious rather than moral symbols, and indeed this degree claims to teach us about the nature of God. It is quite impossible to maintain that "Masonry has no theology"<sup>2</sup> when the second half of the Mystical Lecture which deals with the Altar-top (Jehovah, Jah-Bul-On, and the Baal trinity made of the Hebrew

1. See, however, note 1, p. 175.

2. The late Bishop Crotty actually used this phrase (as reported in the *Freemasons' Chronicle* Aug. 25, 1951) in addressing the Provincial Grand Lodge of Sussex at a Masonic service in the Parish Church of Hove. He added that Masonry "had its own contribution to Man's consciousness of God", but naturally did not, in a Christian Church, refer to the fact that God the Son is deliberately excluded from this Masonic consciousness. The Rev. J. L. C. Dart, defending Masonry as a Christian priest in *Theology* (March 1951) admitted that Freemasonry has a theology by saying "It would not be true to say that Masonry has no doctrine of God."

characters Aleph, Beth, and Lamed) is sheer theological ex-position on the nature and attributes of the Masonic deity.<sup>1</sup>

*Invenimus cultor Dei, civis mundi* is a motto which appears on every Royal Arch jewel, and is translated in the Jewel Lecture "we have found the worship of God, O citizen of the world". This translation would merit a beating for any fourth-form schoolboy, but it is theirs, and must be accepted.<sup>2</sup> But again its meaning and implications on the common-denominator no-theology theory are disastrous to the Christian Mason. The believer in a vague first-cause God on being converted to Christianity might exclaim with joy in the words of this motto. But it is puzzling to understand how a believer in the Holy Trinity can claim to have found the worship of God in Masonry when the God whose worship he has found is a minimum belief, a God which totally excludes God, his divine redeemer. One can only assume again that he does not take all this too seriously. If he took the claims of Christ seriously, it is difficult to see how he can take to Masonry at all.

But supposing these difficulties can be overcome (or as is more likely, ignored) the question remains whether there is such a thing as a religion behind religions, in which all men agree, and whether it is lawful for the Christian to join in common worship with the Moslem of a common-denominator God specifically of neither faith, whom each in his heart worships as his own God. This issue is fundamental, and no amount of eloquence on the non-controversial benefits of meeting together to promote charity and good works should be allowed to obscure it. In this country the issue in practice arises but seldom, but Masonry stands four-square on the principle that it can and should happen. Many Anglicans have tender consciences over joint service with Nonconformists on the ground that where different bodies mean different things by what they say in their worship, that worship becomes unreal.

1. See pp. 178-83. The seeming approximation of this trinity (Ab Bal, Father, Lord; Al Bal, Word, Lord; Lab Bal, Spirit, Lord) to the Christian Trinity which is often urged by Masons is vitiated by the fact that Bal or Baal was an abhorred term which the Hebrews would never dream of applying to or confusing with Jehovah. It would have sounded as idolatrous to them as, say, Father, Moloch; Word, Moloch; Spirit, Moloch, would to the Christian.

2. See note, p. 224.



And yet the differences between separated Christian bodies are trifling compared with the difference between those who do and those who do not accept Christ as the Son of God, their only Mediator and Saviour. Christianity is an exclusive faith. To offer worship to God in forms which reject Christ with the specific intention of including people who likewise reject Christ is an act of apostasy for which no amount of mental reservation can altogether atone. To argue that as there is undoubtedly some measure of truth in all faiths the Christian is at liberty temporarily to set aside what he knows to be the full revealed truth in order to come down to the level of what the non-Christian happens to have in common with him is again apostasy, however charitable the motive.

The Church does not sanction common-denominator worship with other religions. The Christian, therefore, himself a part of the Church yet who claims the right to worship outside the Church in a manner forbidden within it is simply defying her authority, and what is perhaps worse, doing so in secret. For it cannot be admitted that there is one worship of the Church and another of the Temple if there is a vital conflict in principle between the two.

Masonry practised on the mission-field would show clearly this grotesque situation. Although most Christian missionaries to-day recognise in non-Christian cults such elements as reflect a knowledge of God and His holy will, this is quite different from worshipping together with those people they have been sent to convert, in an atmosphere which regards all gods as equal. The missionary in all good faith may not do so personally, but Freemasonry in whose Lodges he so worships refuses to draw distinctions. By all means let him meet his prospective converts socially and co-operate with them cordially in every lawful enterprise for charity or welfare. But to worship with them in this context can only weaken his Christian witness. Again allowing that in practice this situation seldom arises, the very fact that the missionary is a member of a fraternity which allows and encourages such a situation is difficult to explain away.

St. Paul's missionary address to the Athenians on Mars Hill was not, perhaps his most successful effort. But had he met some of his audience later in the day at the Athenaeum Lodge

of Antiquity and prayed with them in a common devotion to the Great Architect who equally represents the Father of Christ Crucified and the 'Unknown God' whom he had castigated them in the morning for worshipping superstitiously and ignorantly, it is open to question whether his converts would not have been even fewer. But in any case it is stretching the imagination to the breaking-point to conceive of St. Paul becoming Bro. Paul under the aegis, say, of an unconverted Galatian Worshipful Master assisted by two unconverted Corinthian Wardens even though all four could express a sincere belief in a Higher Being not unversed in the science of architecture or geometry. Such a belief would be accepted as adequate for initiation by the Grand Lodge of England to-day.<sup>1</sup> The situation is as fantastic as to imagine Elijah seeking some secret formula whereby the followers of Jehovah and Baal might meet in brotherly prayer when no one was looking.

Again if Freemasonry had been practised in the primitive Church of Rome to the same extent as in the present-day Church of England many quite unnecessary martyrdoms would have been spared. Christians in those days were willing to face death rather than cast a few grains of incense to the Emperor or other deities. But had their pagan brethren from Numa Pompilia Lodge claimed the right to visit Lodge Roma Ecclesia the latter would doubtless have discovered that the Great Architect of the Universe to whom they prayed together in brotherly peace and harmony could be equated with Nero and Jupiter quite as legitimately as with the Holy Trinity.<sup>2</sup> Why then deny to the point of death in the Colosseum outside the Lodge what was so inevitably true inside?

Although Christians may claim that their Masonry is not a religion but an ethical and charitable handmaid to the

1. The Rev. F. de P. Castells, referring to the Impersonal Necessary Being of Spinoza's agnosticism, actually declares "This *Deus Ignotus* accords with the conception presented to us in the modern R. A. Degree." (*Origin of The Masonic Degrees*, p. 307.)

2. Aldersgate and certain other Royal Arch workings abundantly justify this point by including in the ritual the first verse of the Universal Prayer of Pope:—

"Father of all, in every age  
In every clime adored,  
By Saint, by Savage, and by Sage,  
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord."



Church, Masonry itself nowhere claims to occupy such a subordinate position. On reading the ritual carefully Masonry will be found to present itself as a complete and self-sufficient system of moral and spiritual guidance through this world and the next. It teaches one's whole duty to God and to man, and a way of justification by works which if followed will lead to salvation. Nowhere does it give the slightest hint that anything further is necessary to the religious life. It urges, it is true, the reading of the Volume of the Sacred Law, but as this may or may not be the Bible<sup>1</sup> the inference is obviously that moral precept rather than the doctrines of any particular Church or religion should be the object. One of the Charges (bound up with the Book of Constitutions but usually not with the ritual) declares that whatever a man's religion may be, he is not debarred from the order as long as he believes in the Glorious Architect, and that if he has a faith he is to demonstrate its superior excellence by his conduct. This however does not imply that he should have any other religion, but merely that if he has, it need be no impediment to his becoming a Mason. There is plenty of sound instruction to the initiate to be a loyal and law-abiding citizen, which is uncontroversial. But there is no suggestion that he should be loyal to any Church, which might disrupt the harmony of the brethren. In an organization which claims to be 'religious' and to have found the worship of God this consideration alone might make the convinced Christian a little thoughtful.

The religious outlook of Masonry strongly echoes the Deism of the eighteenth century in stressing the light of nature as a moral guide, in beginning and ending with man's upward aspirations to God, with man's justifying himself in the eyes of God by his own good works. Although Masonry also echoes Gnosticism in claiming to impart an esoteric light that is *sui generis* it disdains (or at least ignores) any conception of God reaching down from Heaven to save and heal mankind.<sup>2</sup>

1. The Volume of the Sacred Law in a Moslem Lodge, for instance, would be the Koran, and in a Jewish Lodge the Pentateuch. In England it is of course normally the Bible. The New Testament is included, but ignored in all Degrees officially recognised by Grand Lodge.
2. A reference, however, to Freemasonry as a revelation from God may be seen in the second line of the first verse of a hymn by Charles Delafaye; the fact that it is included in Anderson's Constitutions gives it a certain authority:— (cont. foot of p. 41)

At best, "Freemasonry is to be regarded as a human groping after that very thing which God himself has established in the Christian Church."<sup>1</sup> Masonry teaches much of moral righteousness but almost nothing of sin or repentance. It is a religion of complete uprightness and respectability, of justification by works, but not of holiness or humility. Perhaps that is why the British Empire and America produce many times more Masons than the rest of the world together.

No Mason would attempt to deny that his workings are shot through and through with paganism, pre-Christian mysticism, and elements taken from contemporary non-Christian religions. But, he will argue, as long as these things are in themselves morally unexceptionable, where is the harm in that? Is not Christianity also full of pagan customs and ceremonies, is not Easter a time-immemorial festival of new life in the Spring, and the reverence paid to the Mother of God but an echo of the Magna Mater of imperial Rome? Did not other religions have as a saviour a virgin-born demi-god who died and rose again?

No instructed Christian would attempt in his turn to deny the possibility of a substratum of truth in these assertions, and the student of comparative religions might go even further. But if he is an instructed Christian he will realise that there is for him no analogy or justification whatsoever.

Christianity is a faith revealed by God to man, not a system worked out by man of ascent to God. Before that supreme and final revelation of truth in the Incarnation of Our Lord there had of course been partial glimpses and foreshadowings of it, purely human and not revealed, by no means entirely limited to the Jewish nation. There were anti-types indeed of our Saviour in the pagan world. Man's hunger and yearning for God, his aspirations to truth, the fulfilment of his natural religious instincts were of course fruitful of more than mere glimmerings of truth, for man, though sinful and fallen, was

Hail Masonry, thou Craft Divine!  
 Glory of earth, from heaven revealed;  
 Which doth with jewels precious shine,  
 From all but Masons' eyes concealed:  
 Thy praises due, who can rehearse,  
 In nervous prose or flowing verse?

1. Dr. H. S. Box, *The Nature of Freemasonry*, p. 53.