

if any man enter in, he shall be saved."¹

Yet another Christian survival from pre-Union days is to be found in a ritual issued under the authority of William Harvey, Provincial Grand Master of Forfarshire from 1934-36. The printed version has run into some twelve editions, and is in fairly popular use particularly in the west of Scotland. This preserves, among other pre-Union archaisms, a reference in the first degree obligation to the Lodge "dedicated to the memory of Holy St. John." Most American rituals also preserve this dedication, usually and more correctly in the plural, "Saints John," for both St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist were regarded as patrons (and by the fanciful, as members), of the Order. In England, as we have seen, this dedication does not appear to have survived the Union of the Ancients and Moderns in 1813. The first lecture, fifth section, however, used to conclude with the following reasons for the Johanne dedication:—

Q. Why were the Lodges dedicated to St. John the Baptist?

A. Because he was the forerunner of our Saviour, and by preaching repentance and humiliation, drew the first parallel of the Gospel.

Q. Had St. John the Baptist any equal?

A. He had; St. John the Evangelist.

Q. Why is he said to be equal to the Baptist?

A. Because he finished by his learning what the other began by his zeal, and thus drew a second line parallel to the former; ever since which time Freemasons' Lodges, in all Christian countries, have been dedicated to the one or the other, or both, of these worthy and worshipful men.

It is not certain who was responsible for the omission of this passage; both Mackey and Oliver ascribe it to Dr. Hemming, but the name of Peter Gilkes, Preceptor of the Emulation Lodge of Improvement, has also been suggested. A hint of it still remains in present-day versions of the lectures, in this rubric:—"There is sometimes given a supplement to the Fifth Section, but it is not orthodox." Webb's and Sickert's Monitors in America, however, continue to depict as a Masonic symbol the two parallels, representing these two saints, tangent to a circle between.

There is another old lecture adopted by Preston which further
1. John, X, 9.

III

CHRISTIAN REMAINDERS

If we just go on being brotherly to one another it doesn't matter what we believe about God. . . . Take away theology and give us some nice religion has been a popular slogan for so long that we are apt to accept it, without inquiring whether religion without theology has any meaning. And however unpopular I may make myself, I shall and will affirm that the reason why the Churches are discredited today is not that they are too bigoted about theology, but that they have run away from theology.

Dorothy L. Sayers, Creed or Chaos?

IN *Darkness Visible* I wrote that the only clear and specific Christian allusions which survived in the Craft ritual after 1723 appeared to be the Christian symbols of faith, hope, and charity (the cross, anchor, and chalice) which appear on Jacob's Ladder in the tracing-board of the first degree, and the "bright morning star, whose rising brings peace and salvation to the faithful and obedient of the human race" in the ritual of the third degree. The Lectures, however (I do not mean the charges or the tracing-board lectures, but the "Emulation lectures" or "sections" in catechetical form which give a commentary on the ritual) provide another instance in quoting words of our Lord, but without mentioning His name.

In the First Lecture, Second Section, there is the following passage on the admission of an initiate into the Lodge:—

Q. How did you gain admission?

A. By three distinct knocks.

Q. To what do those three distinct knocks allude?

A. An ancient and venerable exhortation, Seek, and ye shall find; ask, and ye shall have; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

Q. How did you apply that exhortation to your then situation?

A. Having sought in my mind, I asked of my friend, he knocked, and the door of Freemasonry became open to me. Although our Lord's words are quoted, they are given an entirely different context. The Mason asks, not of his Heavenly Father, but of a friend, his sponsor in Masonry. The door is the door to the Lodge, whereas Christ said, "I am the door: by me

developed on more fanciful lines the reasons for the Johanne dedication, and explained the parallels :—

“ From the building of the first Temple at Jerusalem to the Babylonish captivity, Freemasons’ Lodges were dedicated to King Solomon ; from thence to the coming of the Messiah, they were dedicated to Zerubbabel, the builder of the second Temple ; and from that time to the final destruction of the Temple by Titus, in the reign of Vespasian, they were dedicated to St. John the Baptist ; but owing to the many massacres and disorders which attended that memorable event, Freemasonry sunk very much into decay ; many Lodges were entirely broken up, and but few could meet in sufficient numbers to constitute their legality ; and at a general meeting of the Craft, held in the city of Benjamin, it was observed that the principal reason for the decline of Masonry was the want of a Grand Master to patronize it. They therefore deputed seven of their most eminent members to wait upon St. John the Evangelist, who was at that time Bishop of Ephesus, requesting him to take the office of Grand Master. He returned for answer, that though well stricken in years, being upwards of ninety, yet having been initiated into Masonry in the early part of his life, he would take upon himself the office. He thereby completed by his learning what the other St. John effected by his zeal, and thus drew what Freemasons term a *line parallel* ; ever since which time Freemasons’ Lodges, in all Christian countries, have been dedicated both to St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist.”¹

The feasts of these Saints which used to be observed as Masonic festivals have extremely significant dates ; St. John the Evangelist falls on Dec. 27, St. John the Baptist on June 24, approximately corresponding respectively to the winter and summer solstices of the sun, which plays a great part in Masonic symbolism. It is difficult to escape the inference that this was the original reason for the double dedication, and indeed Mackey’s *Revised Encyclopædia of Freemasonry* (an American publication) in making this very point, informs us that “ In dedicating our Lodges to them (the two Sts. John) we do not so much declare our belief that they

1. An even fuller explanation, accompanied by rather fantastic scholarship, is given in the Rev. George Oliver’s *A Mirror for the Johannite Masons*, 1848, which deplores the excision of this dedication.

were eminent members of the Order, as demonstrate our reverence for the Great Architect of the Universe in the symbol of His most splendid creation, the great light of day.”¹

In England today, however, the dedication is all but extinct, if not completely so. The form of Consecration of a new Lodge has no reference to it, and even in Scotland and America where it lingers, it seems purely nominal, and certainly does not exclude the Moslem and other non-Christian. It is quite possible for a Jew to live in Los Angeles without being particularly conscious of the patronage of St. Mary of the Angels, or at St. Helen’s without showing any devotion to the Mother of Constantine.

The “ bright morning star ” in the third degree seems a clear reference to Revelation XXII, 16, and a survival of Christianity. *The Revised Ritual of Craft Freemasonry*, first produced by Franklin Thomas in 1888 and at one time popular in certain Indian Lodges, though never much used in England, faces this anomaly boldly, and alters the passage to “ ... lift our eyes to Him in Whose Hands alone are the issues of life and death, and in whose mercy we trust for the fulfilment of His gracious promise of peace and salvation to the faithful and obedient of the human race.” To this is added a footnote, explaining that the original version, “ if it have any meaning, can only allude to the Founder of the Christian Faith... the sentence in question would be quite consistent with the Christian degrees (Knight Templar, Rose Croix, etc.) but it is not in accordance with Craft Masonry which embraces men of every creed.” This is perhaps logical, but I have seen no other ritual which follows it,² and the excision or alteration of a favourite purple passage in the Masonic ritual would doubtless be bitterly resisted.

Modern Masonic commentators vary in their interpretation of this symbol. E. H. Cartwright calls it frankly a Christian allusion which “ apparently escaped the notice of the revisers at the Union, when the Christian references generally were excised.”³ And this is by far the most probable explanation. Others, however, are at pains to give a non-Christian interpretation ; and relate it to the “ Blazing Star ” of the first degree, or

1. Vol. I, p. 268.

2. Not even a privately-printed one in my possession which appears to have been issued especially for a Lodge of Jewish faith.

3. *A Commentary on the Freemasonic Ritual*, p. 192.

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to the "Sacred Symbol" (the letter G in an irradiated triangle) of the second.

Major Meredith Sanderson, however, says "This is a figurative allusion to Sirius or *Sothias*, the dog-star, which by its rising at dawn brought tidings of the approaching inundation, and so brought Peace and Salvation to Egypt."¹

The Rev. F. de Castells writes that "the Christian interpretation has been given up, although it remains a beautiful illustration....Any star, and for that matter, any object shining over our heads would have been equally suitable...the author of Revelation borrowed it, as we have done, from the classic writers of Greece...for ages, and almost all the world over, the name was a popular and generally accepted cognomen for the planet Venus. Whenever the Greeks spoke of 'the Light Bringer' (Phosphoros) they were referring to Venus, in which they saw the Herald of the Dawn." He therefore concludes that, to the Mason, the Bright Morning Star refers to the "Ineffable Essence in whom we have discovered the ultimate Source of Light, physical, intellectual, and divine."²

J. S. M. Ward follows Sanderson's interpretation, yet allowing also for a Christian interpretation.³ A. E. Waite, too, allows a varied interpretation, including a reference to Osiris:—"We remember this, and other speaking connotations, when our eyes are lifted to a certain bright and Morning Star, whose rising brings peace and salvation. We remember, it may be, the Sign of Osiris slain, the Sign of the Mourning of Isis, the Sign of Typhon and Apophis, and the Sign of Osiris risen. We remember the rending of Iacchos and his symbolical restoration...we remember greater things...of the Great Master of all, concerning whom it is said: *passus et sepultus est*; but thereafter: *tertia die resurrexit*."⁴ In a later passage he interprets the same allusion as a prophecy of Christian Masonry in the Templar grades:—"Templar grades issued from unknown preceptories, witnessing of secret things learned by St. John as he leant on the Master's breast, of Him Who is the Bright and Morning Star, prefigured

1. *An examination of the Masonic Ritual*, p. 51.
2. *The Apocalypse of Freemasonry*, pp. 160-1.
3. *The M(aster) M(ason's) Handbook*, pp. 49-51.
4. *The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry*, pp. 37-8.

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in the speaking darkness of the Third Degree."¹

Christian Masons at pains to justify their adherence to non-Christian Craft Masonry are particularly prone to light on this interpretation, arguing from it that as "Masonry is a progressive science"² the Craft is but the Old Testament of Masonry, foreshadowing the New in the alleged Christian degrees. Although it must be admitted, and indeed stressed, that there is no official interpretation of Masonic symbolism, and that each Mason is perfectly entitled to interpret as he pleases, we shall see later that this analogy is false, and from the point of view of Christian orthodoxy, untenable.

As for the Christian symbols commonly found in the traditional design of the first degree tracing-board, it may perhaps be pointed out that these representations are not absolutely standardized; considerable liberty is granted to the artist where a Lodge has the imagination or the funds to depart from stock Masonic-outfitter goods, and in many cases the Latin cross, the anchor, and the chalice (or sometimes heart) are replaced by the initials F., H., and C. This variability does not really matter or even score a debating point, for it is beyond dispute that the faith, hope, and charity which are symbolized derive from the three Christian "Theological Virtues," but they are not identical with them. The tracing-board lecture explains them as follows:—

"...Jacob's ladder...is composed of many staves or rounds, which point out as many moral virtues, but three principal ones, which are Faith, Hope, and Charity: Faith in the Great Architect of the Universe, Hope in salvation, and to be in Charity with all men. It reaches to the Heavens, and rests upon the Volume of the Sacred Law, because, by the doctrines contained in that Holy Book, we are taught to believe in the dispensations of Divine Providence, which belief strengthens our faith, and enables us to ascend the first step; this Faith naturally creates in us a Hope of becoming partakers in the blessed promises therein recorded, which Hope enables us to ascend the second step; but the third and last, being Charity,

1. *Ibid*, p. 178. Waite's Christianity, however, was Gnostic. He looked on the Sacraments of the Roman and Eastern Orthodox churches (he had a profound contempt for Anglicanism) only as gateways of initiation to inner occult mysteries for the few.
2. *Ceremony of Passing*. See *Darkness Visible*, p. 124.

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comprehends the whole, and the Mason who is possessed of this virtue in its most ample sense may justly be deemed to have attained the summit of his profession ; figuratively speaking, an Ethereal Mansion, veiled from mortal eyes by the starry firmament...”

Bearing in mind that Masonry is not committed to the inspiration of the Bible, that the “ Volume of the Sacred Law ” is not the Christian Bible, but the sacred scriptures of any faith according to the religion of the Mason, and therefore only incidentally the Bible in Christian countries, it will be seen that Masonic faith and hope are not *per se* faith and hope in *Christ*, and that Masonic charity is not *Christian* charity. Indeed in most rituals it is not St. Paul who is quoted on this virtue, but Portia, from the *Merchant of Venice*,¹ and it is constantly stressed, that Masonic charity is to be exercised “ without detriment to oneself or one’s connections.”

In this same tracing-board, early commentators have equated the irradiated star at the top of the ladder with the Star of Bethlehem. William Hutchinson’s *The Spirit of Masonry*, (1775) has in the sixth section of the Entered Apprentice lecture the following explanation of the star :—

“ We may apply this emblem to a still more religious import : it represents the star which led the wise men to Bethlehem ; proclaimed to mankind the nativity of the Son of God ; and *here* conducting our spiritual progress to the Author of our redemption.”

This Christian interpretation, however, seems entirely ruled out today, and is seldom if ever put forward. The tracing-board lecture in its present form specifically states that “ The Blazing Star, or Glory in the centre, refers us to the Sun, which enlightens the earth, and by its benign influence dispenses its blessings to mankind in general.”

Such, then, is the tiny catalogue of specific or alleged Christian symbols and references remaining in the Craft, which have survived the disappearance of their Christian context. It seems incredible that any case for the Christianity of Freemasonry could be based on such slender evidence. The Koran, unlike the

1. “ Suffice it to say (charity) has the approbation of Heaven and earth, and, like its sister, mercy, blesses him who gives as well as him who receives.” *Ceremony of Initiation*. (See *Darkness Visible*, p. 105.)

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Masonic ritual, even contains polite references to Our Lord Himself and His Mother, but that does not make it a Christian book. Yet this type of reasoning continues to be produced by Christian Masons today.

IV

THE HIRAMIC LEGEND AS A CHRISTIAN ALLEGORY

*Types and shadows have their endings,
For the newer rite is here.*

St. Thomas Aquinas, Pange lingua gloriosi.

Idolatry consists in worshipping God under any other conception of Him than that which is set before us in the Gospels. . . . Idolatry is indeed a deadly thing.

Archbishop William Temple, Personal Religion and the Life of Fellowship.

“ALL right, then,” a certain type of Mason will argue. “So the Masonic ritual isn't Christian at all, on the surface. But beneath the surface you will find an allegorical meaning which is Christian even though Masons of other religions can also see in it an allegory of their faiths.”

Allegorizers and symbolists can find anything in everything if they try hard enough, and Freemasonry provides a happy hunting ground for their efforts. On the assumption that three of anything symbolizes the Holy Trinity, Masonic mystics have produced an impressive series of triads in their workings to prove how Christian they are, on the analogy that a tricycle is a more Trinitarian means of transport than a car or a bicycle and therefore more acceptable to God. There is the trinity of the Master of the Lodge and his two Wardens. There are three Greater Lights and three lesser, three degrees, three rosettes on the apron, three “regular steps,” even three assassins in the third degree. An enterprising Mason by the name of C. E. Ferry once compiled a list of seventy such triads from the ritual to demonstrate the Trinitarian orthodoxy of the Fraternity.¹ But of course the Hindu could ponder this list with an equal satisfaction.

Crosses, too, are in plentiful supply. The poniard which is applied to the naked left breast of the Candidate on his entry to

1. This manuscript, called *The Triad*, is in the library of Lodge Quatuor Coronati.

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the Lodge is a cross of sorts; Masonic symbolists have therefore made this piece of ritual an emblem of our Lord's passion. A tau cross is made with the feet when the “regular steps” are taken, and the Candidate for the third degree crosses his feet before he is “slain.” The Tyler who guards the Lodge from without is emblematic of St. Peter with the keys of Heaven.

The blue with which the apron is trimmed is the traditional colour of the Blessed Virgin. In more mystic vein it has been pointed out by Masons (and by the non-Masonic Venerable Bede centuries before) that the two pillars Boaz and Jachin at the porch of King Solomon's Temple (which form the secret words of the first and second degrees respectively) represent the founder of the House of Jesse and the Father of the Blessed Virgin, the first and the last of the male ancestors of our Lord, and are therefore prophetic of the Saviour.

Another fruitful source of allegory is the comparison between the stages of Masonic advancement and the sacraments of the Church. Thus initiation represents Baptism; passing to the second degree, confirmation; raising to the third degree, Communion with the Crucified Lord; installation to the Master's chair, Holy Orders, and so on, always suggesting that Masonry has extra spiritual gifts not to be found in the Church.

“An attempt has been made,” writes W. H. Topley in concluding his book *The Craft and the Royal Arch*,¹ which sets out these parallels in a diagram, “to outline the salient features of the Masonic Sacramental System as the writer sees it, a System which portrays in terms of allegory and symbolism, the path of man's pilgrimage from his entrance to this world to his departure therefrom, and even dares to peer into that unknown futurity, beyond the realm of time and space when this mortal shall have put on immortality. If beneath its social structure and outer coverings, Freemasonry is not something like this, then it is hardly worthy of the serious consideration of thoughtful men.”

All these lesser allegories and symbols, however, revolve round, and are dependent upon the core of the allegory in Craft workings, that Hiram Abiff is a type of our Lord, from which it follows that the legend of the third degree is therefore an allegorical re-enactment of the drama of our redemption.

1. p. 92.

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For the benefit of the non-Mason, here is the Hiramic legend, quoted except for the portions in brackets from the words of the Masonic ritual itself.

"He (Hiram Abiff) was slain just before the completion of King Solomon's Temple, of which he was the principal architect. The manner of his death was as follows. Fifteen Fellow Crafts of that superior class appointed to preside over the rest, finding that the work was nearly completed and that they were not in possession of the secrets of the third degree, conspired to obtain them by any means, even to have recourse to violence. At the moment, however, of carrying their conspiracy into execution, twelve of the fifteen recanted, but three, of a more determined and atrocious character than the rest, persisted in their impious design, in the prosecution of which they planted themselves respectively at the east, north, and south entrances of the Temple, whither Hiram had retired to pay his adoration to the Most High, as was his wonted custom at the hour of high twelve. Having finished his devotions, he attempted to return by the south entrance, where he was opposed by the first of those ruffians, who for want of other weapon, had armed himself with a heavy plumb rule, and in a threatening manner demanded the secrets of a Master Mason, warning him that death would be the consequence of a refusal. Hiram, true to his obligation, answered that those secrets were known to but three in the world (Solomon, Hiram King of Tyre, and himself, the three Grand Masters) and that without the consent and co-operation of the other two he neither could nor would divulge them, but intimated that he had no doubt patience and industry would, in due time, entitle the worthy Mason to a participation of them, but that, for his own part, he would rather suffer death than betray the sacred trust reposed in him.

"This answer not proving satisfactory, the ruffian aimed a violent blow at the Master's head, but being startled by the firmness of his demeanour, it missed his forehead and only glanced on his right temple, but with such force as to cause him to reel and sink on his left knee. Recovering from the shock he made for the north entrance, where he was accosted by the second of these ruffians, to whom he gave a similar answer with undiminished firmness, when the ruffian, who was armed with a level, struck him a violent blow on the left temple which brought

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him to the ground on his right knee. Finding his retreat cut off at both these points, he staggered faint and bleeding to the east entrance, where the third ruffian was posted, who received a similar answer to his insolent demand, for even at this trying moment our Hiram remained firm and unshaken, when the villain, who was armed with a heavy maul, struck him a violent blow on his forehead which laid him lifeless at his feet. The villains bore the body away, and hastily buried it outside the city.

"A loss so important as that of the principal architect could not fail of being generally and severely felt. The want of those plans and designs which had hitherto been regularly supplied to the different classes of workmen was the first indication that some very heavy calamity had befallen him. The Menatschin or prefects, or more familiarly speaking, the overseers, deputed some of the most eminent of their number to acquaint King Solomon with the utter confusion into which the absence of Hiram had plunged them, and to express their apprehension that to some fatal catastrophe must be attributed his sudden and mysterious disappearance. King Solomon immediately ordered a general muster of the workmen throughout the different departments, when three of the same class of overseers could not be found. On the same day the twelve Craftsmen who had originally joined in the conspiracy came before the King, and made a voluntary confession of all they knew, down to the time of withdrawing themselves from the number of conspirators. This naturally increased the fears of King Solomon for the safety of his chief artist. He therefore selected fifteen trusty Fellow-Crafts, and ordered them to make diligent search after the person of Hiram, to ascertain if he were yet alive, or had suffered death in the attempt to extort from him the secret of his exalted degree.

"Accordingly, a stated day having been appointed for their return to Jerusalem, they formed themselves into three Fellow Craft Lodges, and departed from the three entrances of the Temple. Many days were spent in fruitless search; indeed one class returned without having made any discovery of importance. A second, however, were more fortunate, for on the evening of a certain day, after having suffered the greatest privations and personal fatigues, one of the Brethren, who had

rested himself in a reclining posture, to assist his rising caught hold of a shrub that grew near, which to his surprise came easily out of the ground. On a closer examination he found that the earth had been recently disturbed. He therefore hailed his companions and with their united endeavours re-opened the ground, and there found the body of Hiram very indecently interred. They covered it again with all respect and reverence, and to distinguish the spot, stuck a sprig of acacia at the head of the grave.

"They then hastened to Jerusalem to impart the afflicting intelligence to King Solomon. He, when the first emotions of grief had subsided, ordered them to return and raise Hiram to such a sepulture as became his rank and exalted talents, at the same time informing them that by his untimely death the secrets of a Master Mason were lost. He therefore charged them to be particularly careful in observing whatever casual sign, token, or word might occur whilst paying this last sad tribute of respect to departed merit.

"They performed their task with the utmost fidelity, and on re-opening the ground one of the Brethren looking round observed some of his companions with their heads turned over their right shoulder, their hands raised with the backs to their faces, struck with horror at the dreadful and afflicting sight, while others viewing the ghastly wound still visible on his forehead, smote their own in sympathy with his sufferings. Two of the Brethren then descended into the grave and endeavoured to raise him by the Entered Apprentice grip, which proved a slip. Then they tried the Fellow Craft's, which proved a slip likewise. Having both failed in their attempts, a zealous and expert Brother took a more firm hold on the sinews of the hand, and with their assistance raised him on the Five Points of Fellowship (hand to hand, foot to foot, knee to knee, breast to breast, and left hand over back); while others, more animated, exclaimed *Machaberi* or *Machbina*, both words having a nearly similar import, one signifying the death of the builder, the other, the builder is smitten.

"King Solomon therefore ordered that those casual signs, and that that grip and word, should designate all Master Masons throughout the universe, until time or circumstances should restore the genuine.

"It only remains to account for the third class, who had pursued their searches in the direction of Joppa, and were meditating their return to Jerusalem, when, accidentally passing the mouth of a cavern, they heard sounds of deep lamentation and regret. (In American and some Scottish workings, these cries of regret gave rise to the penalties of the three degrees. The first exclaimed 'O that my throat were cut across, and my tongue torn out by the root, rather than that I should have been accessory to the death of our good Master.' The second exclaimed 'O that my breast had been torn open rather than I should have assisted in the death of our innocent Master.' And then the third most lamentably exclaimed 'O that my body had been severed in two, rather than I should have smitten and killed our sublime Master'). On entering the cave they found three men answering the description of those missing, who, on being charged with the murder, and finding all chance of escape cut off, made a full confession of their guilt. They were then bound and led to Jerusalem, when King Solomon sentenced them to that death the heinousness of their crime so amply merited.

"The Master was ordered to be re-interred as near to the Sanctum Sanctorum as the Israelitish law would permit; there in a grave, from the centre three feet east and three feet west, three feet between north and south, and five feet or more perpendicular. He was not buried in the Sanctum Sanctorum because nothing common or unclean was allowed to enter there; not even the High Priest, but once a year; nor then until after many washings and purifications against the great day of expiation for sins; for by the Israelitish law, all flesh was deemed unclean. The same fifteen trusty Fellow Crafts were ordered to attend the funeral, clothed in white aprons and gloves as emblems of their innocence."

This is the legend which is dramatically performed in the ritual of the third degree. The Candidate impersonates Hiram, and is "slain" during the recitation by the two Wardens and by the Master. Later he is "raised" by these same three officers. The darkened Lodge is illuminated solely by the light of a single candle in front of the Master's pedestal.

"It is thus," the Candidate is told, "all Master Masons are raised from a figurative death to a reunion with the former

companions of their toils. Let me now beg you to observe that the light of a Master Mason is darkness visible, serving only to express that gloom which rests on the prospect of futurity. It is that mysterious veil which the eye of human reason cannot penetrate unless assisted by that light which is from above. Yet even by this glimmering ray, you may perceive that you stand on the very brink of the grave into which you have just figuratively descended, and which, when this transitory life shall have passed away, will again receive you into its cold bosom. Let the emblems of mortality which lie before you lead you to contemplate on your inevitable destiny, and guide your reflections to that most interesting of all human studies, the knowledge of yourself. Be careful to perform your allotted task while it is yet day; continue to listen to the voice of Nature, which bears witness, that even in this perishable frame resides a vital and immortal principle, which inspires a holy confidence that the Lord of Life will enable us to trample the King of Terrors beneath our feet, and lift our eyes to that bright Morning Star, whose rising brings peace and salvation to the faithful and obedient of the human race."

Before considering this legend as a Christian allegory, there is one vital difference that will be readily noted. Hiram is raised only in his dead body, for the purpose of a more honourable burial, though the "genuine secrets" which died with him are raised, as it were, in the Royal Arch degree. The Candidate, on the other hand, is raised from a figurative death to a new life, from a "dead level," as an old lecture expresses it, "to a living perpendicular."

Another difference, not so much of form and matter as of intention, so to speak, is that Hiram died in order to *preserve* a secret truth, a secret moreover which we learn in the Royal Arch is concerned with the name and nature of God. Our Lord, on the other hand, was put to death for his fearless *proclaiming* of the true secret, because that truth was profoundly uncomfortable and had therefore to be destroyed by the civil and religious authorities.

Superficially indeed the differences appear greatly to outweigh the resemblances. The recurring number of fifteen in the Hiramic legend, the points of the compass at which Hiram was attacked, the instruments with which he was slain, the secrecy of his burial

(though both were buried hastily), with no soldiers to guard, or government seal to protect the body, and every detail concerning the quest and finding of the body, have no Christian parallels. If one must seek an anti-type for Hiram, there are many myths and characters which fit far more aptly, and which are indeed more likely. Canon Covey-Crump, in *The Hiramic Tradition*, lists not only Osiris, Persephone, Hecate, Orpheus, Bacchus, Adonis, Tammuz and Mithra, but also such historical characters as Thomas à Becket (where there are striking resemblances of detail),¹ Jacques de Molay (the last General of the Knights Templar) and Charles I. A possible interpretation, too, is that the Hiramic legend incorporates the persistent myth (and sometimes historical fact) of the architect of some particular masterpiece being slain in order to prevent his ever again equalling the achievement. Coupled with this is the idea of the foundation-sacrifice.

If, however, Hiram represents Christ, we are faced at once with the fact that this degree teaches a Gnostic heresy rather than Christian orthodoxy. The death of Hiram in itself, even though symbolizing the death of Christ, avails nothing; it is not an objective propitiatory sacrifice wrought for the Candidate, but rather a type of the experience which the Candidate himself, representing Hiram, must undergo by his own efforts in his quest for light. This is precisely how the Gnostics, roundly condemned by the Church, regarded the crucifixion. Apart from the superficial blasphemy, then, the allegorical identification of Hiram with Christ in this context is extremely dangerous in that it lays Freemasonry wide open to the charge of being a revival of the old Gnostic heresies and mystery-religions. Yet this identification is at least a century and a half old.

As far as is known for certain, the Hiramic legend only entered Masonry in the early eighteenth century, after the Craft was substantially de-Christianized, 1725 or thereabouts is the commonly accepted date, when the trigradal system became established. True, it may have derived, as explained in Chapter I, from a similar and earlier legend on the death of Noah, which had the same original necromantic significance of

1. See Hugh Ross Williamson, *The Arrow and the Sword*. The resemblance is all the more striking, as the author is not a Mason and was not acquainted with the details of the third degree when he wrote this book.

attempting to wrest a secret from a corpse. Few Masonic scholars of repute, however, have ever maintained that the Hiramic legend was actually devised and inserted as an allegory of our Lord. Of this there is not a shred of evidence, internal or external; all that can be considered is the attempt to read a Christian allegorical meaning into a clearly non-Christian legend of unknown source.

There are certain higher degrees—these are worth studying in more detail—which have as their "secret" the fact that Hiram really is Christ, wrapped up in an allegory for the benefit of the Craft which is not yet ready to receive the inner truth. As without exception these degrees are some years later than the introduction of Hiram into the Craft, and arose mainly in France and Germany, there is an element of *post hoc ergo propter hoc* in this position, and it would appear that these degrees were formulated partly in reaction against the non-Christian universalism of Craft Masonry. The Christian interpretation then filtered down unofficially from these higher degrees, and was accepted by some writers as a permissive allegory for the craft.

This hypothesis is certainly supported by the chronology of references to Hiram as an anti-type of our Lord. R. F. Gould cites Prof. J. G. Buhle (1804) for the information that "Hiram was understood by the older Freemasons as an anagram H.I.R.A.M.—Homo Jesus Redemptor Animarum; others made it Homo Jesus Rex Altissimus Mundi; whilst a few, by way of simplifying matters, added a C to the Hiram, in order to make it CHRISTUS Jesus, etc."¹

Who exactly these "older Freemasons" are is not specified; A. E. Waite, however, quotes chapter and verse for the appearance of this celebrated anagram in the Degree of Perfect Master of St. Andrew, as promulgated at the General Convocation of Wilhelmsbad in 1728.² This degree had as its tracing-board a representation of Hiram in the likeness of the Lord of Glory.

Again Waite (who had studied the original rituals) tells us that "In the Grade of Perfect Architect it is affirmed that the

1. *The History of Freemasonry*, Vol. II, p. 114, quoting from J. G. Buhle, *Ueber den Ursprung und die Vornehmsten Schicksale des Ordens der Rosenkreuzer und Friemaurer*, 1804.
2. *Emblematic Freemasonry*, p. 158.

Mysteries of Masonry are none other than those of Religion; but this fact was kept a profound secret. It was revealed to those only whose discretion had been tried and proved. To others Symbolical Secrets were transmitted apart from all explanation... The Passion of Christ is the true explanation of the whole Hiramic mystery. The three blows suffered by the Master Builder are emblematic of the three judgments pronounced on the Divine Man by Pilate, Annas, and Caiaphas (also to the buffetings before Caiaphas and Pilate, the scourging, and the death on Calvary). The death of Hiram answers to the death of Christ. When the Candidate is extended upon the Master's tomb—according to French procedure—the Brethren by whom he is surrounded symbolize the Disciples weeping about the Cross. The Lost Word is in analogy with the words uttered on the Tree of Calvary: the *Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani*. The true significance of the Substituted Words is said to be: The Son of the Widow is dead. The grave in which Hiram was laid hurriedly by his murderers typifies the Rock-Hewn Sepulchre... the Masons who sought and found the Master in his grave answer to those disciples who came to embalm the body of the Son of God. The Raising of Hiram is the resurrection. The Twelve Elect Masons who received the Secrets of the Order from King Solomon as a reward of fidelity,¹ and then scattered in the four quarters, correspond to the Twelve Apostles who went forth to preach the Gospel, after receiving His Holy Spirit from the Great Architect of the Universe."²

This degree, Waite tells us, provides a summary of the Christological tradition drawn from various sources and other degrees. In the Ancient and Accepted Rite, as revised by Albert Pike in America in the middle of the nineteenth century, the 26th degree known as Prince of Mercy (not worked in England) also regards Hiram as a type of Christ in His death and resurrection, presented "in language known only to the Initiate." Before recapitulating the allegorical teaching of the first three degrees, however, the Prince of Mercy informs the Initiate to the 26th degree: "Certain explanations have been given, by Christian Masons, of some of the ceremonies of the first three

1. This number of twelve does not appear in present-day Craft workings in England, though it does in Ireland. Details, however, vary considerably in different ritual versions of the legend.
2. *The Secret Tradition in Freemasonry*, pp. 173-4.

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degrees, which, whatever your faith, may not be uninteresting to you, since you are in no wise required to receive them as correct." After the explanation comes brief expostions of the symbolism for the Hebrew, Mohammedan, and "to the Mason of every faith."¹

The Templar tradition gives another slant on this allegory, and the Allied Degree of Knights of St. John the Evangelist, which is still worked in England today, contains the following teaching to the Candidate:—

"It is now my duty to explain to you the origin of Masonic rites as now practised. It is said that the Crusaders, finding themselves unable to expel the Saracens from the Holy Land, agreed with Godfrey de Bouillon to veil the mysteries of religion under emblems, by which they would be enabled to maintain their devotions in secret...The model which they selected was Solomon's Temple, which emblematically represents the Christian Church. Hence it follows that the mysteries of the Craft are in reality the mysteries of religion. The knights were, however, careful not to entrust this important secret to any whose fidelity and discretion had not been fully proved. They therefore invented different degrees to test their candidates, and gave them only symbolical secrets, without explanation, to prevent treachery, and solely to enable them to make themselves known to each other...It was, however, only in the Master Masons' degree that our Knightly brethren began to unfold the true mystery by narrating the assassination of H(iram) A(biff) at the hands of false brethren. The symbolic mystery of H(iram)'s death represents to us that of the Messiah, for instance, the three attacks that were made on the Master Builder at the three gates of the Temple, allude to the three points of condemnation against Christ at the tribunals of Caiaphas the High Priest, Herod the King, and Pilate the Roman Governor...The three blows...are also symbolic of the buffet on the cheek, the flagellation and the cruel crown of thorns. The brethren assembled around the tomb of H(iram) represent the disciples lamenting the death of Christ on the cross. The Master's word which is said to be lost, since the death of H(iram) A(biff), is the same that the Messiah pronounced on the cross, and which

1. *Liturgy of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States*, Part IV, 1944, pp. 129-49.

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the Jews did not comprehend. (Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani). Instead of these words in the third degree, our ancient brethren substituted (Mahabone) which in Arabic signifies 'The son of the widow is dead'...The sprig of acacia is the figure of the cross which was made of wood from an acacia tree. The Royal Arch, referring to the captivity of the Jews, shows us the persecution of the Christians under the Roman Emperors, and their liberty under Constantine the Great."¹

Although historically this hypothesis comes well within the lunatic fringe of fantasy, and although in England this degree does not ante-date the nineteenth century, the extraordinary similarity even of phraseology between this Lecture and Waite's quotations already given from earlier Continental degrees suggests an earlier derivation for it, possibly stretching back as far as Baron von Hund's Strict Observance in the mid-eighteenth century, the hey-day of the higher degrees.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century (but not, as far as I am aware, before), we find references to the Christ-Hiram in writers for Craft Masonry, not as inner secret teaching, but as a possible allegory for Christian Freemasons. William Hutchinson wrote in 1775:—"The acquisition of the doctrine of redemption, is expressed in the typical character of *Huramen* (inveni) and by the application of that name with Masons, it is implied, that we have discovered the knowledge of God and his salvation, and have been redeemed from the death of sin, and the sepulchre of pollution and unrighteousness. Thus the Master Mason represents a man under the Christian doctrine, saved from the grave of iniquity, and raised to the faith of salvation."² This, however, does not prevent him from saying in the same book " (Masonry) directs us to divest ourselves of confined and bigoted notions, and teaches us that humanity is the soul of religion...As Masons, we only pursue the universal religion, the *religion of nature*. Worshipers of the God of Mercy, we believe that in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him. All Masons, therefore, whether *Christians, Jews, Mahomedans*, who violate not the rule of right, written by the ALMIGHTY upon the tables of the

1. *Ritual of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre and Novice and Knight of St. John the Evangelist, As Authorized by the Patriarchal Council, 1949.*
2. *The Spirit of Masonry*, 2nd edition, p. 100.

heart ; who *do* fear him, and *work* righteousness, we are to acknowledge as brethren ; and, though we take different roads...we mean to travel to the same place...how lovely is an institution fraught with sentiments like these."¹

A few nineteenth-century writers who follow Hutchinson in this identification of Christ and Hiram may be cited in passing. The voluminous and historically worthless output of the Rev. George Oliver has already been considered in a preceding chapter ; he manages to assume the identity of Christ and Hiram without at the same time impairing the universalism of Craft Freemasonry. The Rev. Moses Margoliouth pointed out that of the three tools with which Hiram was slain, the level and the plumb-rule when placed one upon the other form a cross, and that the mallet was a necessary tool for fastening anything to the cross. He continues "I do not know how so important a portion of Christian doctrine could be better illustrated by symbols. Taking this view of the third degree, we have not only the picture of our Grand Master's death, but also a graphic portrait of the murderous conspiracy of Caiaphas, Herod, and Pontius Pilate."² Again Whymper, in the significant book already referred to, simply takes the identification for granted. "We are not here raising any theory as to Hiram being a type of Christ," he declares. "If any other than the English Constitution can receive Hiram as typifying someone else, well and good, it is nothing to us. If another Constitution can differently apply all the symbols which, when introduced into our system, were intended to have a Christian significance, so be it ; but any applicability which may be discovered concerns us not."³

The present century, with its greater emphasis on the universality of Freemasonry, has seen the abandonment of this historically untenable claim that the Hiramic legend was originally intended as a Christian allegory. Few would maintain that this is *the* interpretation and key of the mystery, but merely that it is a valid and permissive one. Let us examine a few popular writers on the subject.

J. S. M. Ward was a *soi-disant* Bishop, but in no sense a

1. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
2. *Genuine Freemasonry Indissolubly Connected with Revelation*, 1852.
3. *The Religion of Freemasonry*, 1888, p. 102.

theologian.¹ He had, however, along with an overdose of irresponsible fantasy, some considerable learning in archaeology and folk-lore. He wrote a bulky book in an endeavour to prove that the true anti-type of Hiram was Osiris or Tammuz,² yet elsewhere he admits that "we are not entitled to say one meaning is right and another is wrong. Both may be right... the student is perfectly entitled to consider that both the Christian and the pre-Christian interpretation of these symbols are equally deserving of respect."³ However, Ward develops the Christian allegory on fantastic lines. In the same book⁴ he writes "The title H(iram) AB(iff) is taken direct from the Hebrew of 2 Chron., Chapter 4, Verse 16, and means 'H(iram) His Father'...it is of interest to note that *abib* in Hebrew means 'Ears of corn', or 'Green fruits'...if the word *abib* is the correct rendering for the second half of the name in question, we get a clear reference to the Sacramental bread." (Is it to be hoped, then, that some future Masonic Pope will re-cast the Divine Praises at Benediction to include "Blessed be Hiram in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar?")

When W. L. Wilmshurst identifies Hiram with Christ, he makes it quite clear that he fully understands and accepts the position that the interpretation must inevitably be Gnostic and not orthodox, as I have already pointed out. Here at least he is logical. Christ is for him, not in any unique sense the incarnate Son of God, but a master-hierophant and super-initiate of occult mysteries. The Church on earth, he maintains, which follows the esoteric aspects of His ministry but ignores the esoteric, has failed to do more than lead the questing soul to the portals of the inner mystery. "The Gospels," he writes, "became a manual of Initiation-instruction to the whole world according to the measure of the individual capacity to receive it...The recurrent cycle of the Church's year...is a true chart of the path

1. See T. R. Brandreth, *Episcopi Vagantes and the Church of England*, p. 43, for Ward's episcopal credentials.
2. *Who was Hiram Abiff?* 1925.
3. *The Master Mason's Book*, 1929, p. 107. Cf. *Light Invisible*, which states that "Hiram... is not a rival to Christ, or to Mahomet, nor to Vishnu, but is a type and symbol of them all... Here indeed in the legend of Hiram is a mystery... which is the anti-type and symbol of every death-and-resurrection motif of every religion, Christianity included." (p. 47-8).
4. pp. 75, 77.

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to be followed by those who themselves seek initiation under the mastership of the Great Hierophant and Exemplar of regenerative science ; while in the Sacrament of the Altar is portrayed albeit under different symbolism, the actual process of Initiation and the same transmutative changes in the body and mind of the recipient as are emblemized to the Masonic Candidate in the Craft Degrees." He concedes, therefore, that " Religion will not die...nor will 'the Church' in some form cease to exist and to fulfil a certain ministry. But today a supplementary form of ministry is required and Masonry can provide it."

It is against this background that Wilmshurst, in a purple passage of apocalyptic hyperbole, allegorizes to the point of blasphemy. Transported in the spirit to the Grand Lodge Above, he describes his celestial initiation, of which the earthly Masonic ceremonies are a type. As the Masonic apron is made of lambskin, it is therefore to Wilmshurst the sacramental Body of Christ, the Lamb of God. " The Great Benignity, the Hierophant... drew a garment as it were of pure white lambskin from the substance of His own person, in which garment and flesh were one, and girded it about my loins as an apron, saying ' This is my body, given for you, that your body may be given for me.' And again waves of coloured sound poured over me from the choired voices singing ' *Ecce Agnus Dei, qui tollit peccata mundi!* ' And a great strength passed into me, so that all weakness fled and I stood erect before Him, an accepted Apprentice Mason in the Grand Lodge Above." But as the Candidate in the third degree dies the death of Hiram, so is Wilmshurst in his Gnostic apocalypse himself crucified in a manner following the death of Him of whom he claims Hiram to be the type. " I hung suspended from that invisible Life-Tree ; myself a cross ; myself the crucified upon that cross...And my Craftsman's apron, at once a weight and a support to my straining loins, felt growing into me, to be becoming of my very flesh and substance. I knew now why, traditionally depicted as a loin-cloth, this garment alone was worn upon the Cross by the King of the Jews, the Supreme Chief of all Initiates...Nothing of me still was, save the labouring spirit that strove to be born but could not."

Eventually, however, came his joyful raising, and " my good

1. *The Masonic Initiation*, (1924) pp. 216-7.

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Brother gripped me as a Master Mason. We drew together in an embrace of fellowship so fervent that we seemed to coalesce beyond the possibility of further separateness."

I quote these disgusting blasphemies only because, apart perhaps from the revolting details of the apron, Wilmshurst does at least show logically the direction in which an even symbolical identification of Hiram with Christ must inevitably lead. How else, if Hiram is Christ, can the third degree be interpreted except through the Candidate's own initiation through his own mystical crucifixion ? The Christian indeed dies unto sin with Christ in his baptism, but it is the most satanic of all heresies to believe that the Christian can achieve his own salvation by being crucified independently of Christ, by repeating in himself the one sacrifice once offered by the only One who could possibly offer it.

Not unnaturally Christian Masons are inclined to disown altogether the mystical rubbish of Ward and Wilmshurst, and find it highly embarrassing. Yet the fact remains that both these authors have enjoyed enormous sales for their books, which certainly suggests a considerable interest in them, and wide sympathy, if not agreement, with their point of view. Many of Ward's books, including the one from which I quote, are prefaced in highly commendatory terms by Sir John Cockburn, once Grand Deacon of England, and Deputy Grand Master of Australia. Wilmshurst, whose works are still commended in the Masonic press, was rewarded for his services in lecturing to Lodges on the meaning of Masonry by the conferment on him of Provincial Grand Rank by the late Earl of Harewood in person in October, 1926. Masons should certainly consider these points before writing off these and similar authors as individual fantasists without any authority, influence, or standing in the Craft. However offensive and blasphemous their sentiments may be, Christian Masons as *Masons* have never made any effective protest against these books. As Christians they only do so in evasive terms when such literature is quoted against them by non-Masons.

So when Canon Covey-Crump in *The Hiramite Tradition* included our Lord among the gallery of possible originals for

1. Op. cit. These quotations are all from the chapter *Apocalypse*, pp. 146-182.

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Hiram, although he wrote in the more sober tradition of Hutchinson and Oliver in listing merely the external similarities without following them to their logical conclusions, he was not only treading on very dangerous ground, but doing so in very dangerous company. And this is the inevitable position of all those well-meaning Masons who adopt, probably in all innocence, this interpretation.

Not that the alternatives are very much better. If the ritual is followed with sincerity it clearly partakes of the nature of an alien mystery-cult of some sort, whoever Hiram was. It claims to confer an esoteric light which leads to immortality, and if Hiram be not Christ, it opens the door to the Grand Lodge Above by a short cut which completely by-passes Calvary. In either case it is substituting or supplementing the divinely-ordained rites of the Church which Christ founded by others secretly practised behind locked doors.

If the hearty businessman Mason, or the hearty Anglican Vicar, can laugh the whole thing off as a bit of moral allegory or even harmless mummery (which of course is the attitude of the majority), they can only work the ritual at the expense of some sacrifice of spiritual sincerity and integrity, for all is performed most solemnly and prayerfully before the open Word of God, and in His Holy Name.

If Masonry is not religion, it is certainly playing at religion.

THE HOLY ROYAL ARCH

V

For consider, O all ye who are busy with such inventions :—Whereas He alone is called God the Father, Who really is so, whom ye call Artificer ; whereas the Scriptures also know Him only as God ; whereas again the Lord acknowledges Him only as His own Father, and knows no other.

St. Irenaeus (A.D. 203) Against Heresies.

*“ Again there is sprung up
An heretic, an arch one.”*

Shakespeare, King Henry VIII.

THE early history of the Royal Arch degree is baffling and obscure. There are those who claim for it an antiquity equal to the rest of Craft Masonry of which, they say, it has always formed an integral part. Others maintain that, although some of the esoteric teaching and symbols now found in the Royal Arch are traceable in embryo to the early decades of the eighteenth century it was not until the 1740's and 1750's that it arose as a separate degree.¹ Those preferring to base conclusions on established facts rather than starting with a theory and finding or twisting facts to fit it tend to take the latter view.

It has been suggested that the core, at least, of the Royal Arch legend was at one time included in Craft workings as the “ Master's Part,” that is, in the ceremony of installation of the Worshipful Master to the chair of the Lodge. The Rev. George Oliver thought it originated with the Chevalier Ramsay in France. Others find evidence for an Irish origin. All that is known with certainty is that by the middle of the eighteenth century Royal Arch Masonry had taken root in England and steadily increased in popularity, particularly among the

1. See Knoop and Jones, *The Genesis of Freemasonry*, Chapter XIII ; Bernard E. Jones, *Freemasons' Guide and Compendium*, Chapter XXXIV ; and John Stokes, *Royal Arch Masonry for recent historical scholarship in this degree*. Notable contributions in the nineteenth century are Gould, *History of Freemasonry*, Vol. 11, p. 457 *et seq.* ; W. J. Hughan, *Origin of the English Rite of Freemasonry*, p. 79 *et seq.* ; and Henry Sadler, *Masonic Facts and Fictions*, p. 165.

Ancients. Not only did it provide a happy ending to the tragedy of the third degree, a discovery which made good the loss, and genuine secrets to replace the substituted secrets with which the Craft must be content, but it also had a stronger element of mysticism, probably with a more elaborate ritual, which made its appeal to some at a time when the official religion of the Established Church was at its lowest and driest ebb.

The well-worn formula with which the Articles of Union in 1813 accepted the Royal Arch, that "Pure Antient Masonry consists of three degrees and no more; viz. those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and the Master Mason (including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch)" and the declaration to the newly-exalted in that order that he has not taken a fourth degree, but has merely completed the third, are not so much historical statements of fact as articles of compromise. The Moderns would not allow more than three degrees. In the eighteenth century the Royal Arch was in practice a separate degree. So it is to all intents and purposes today, under the separate (though of course overlapping) control of Grand Chapter, not of Grand Lodge.¹

Ritually the Royal Arch is not so much a fulfilment and completion of the third degree as a sequel to it, based on a legend separated by nearly half a millenium from the death of Hiram.²

As I have already given the Royal Arch ritual in full in

1. Both bodies are administered from Freemasons' Hall in London. The Earl of Scarborough is Grand Master of the Craft, and also First Grand Principal of Supreme Grand Chapter. His deputy the Earl of Derby is second Grand Principal. Indeed it is laid down that these offices in Grand Chapter, together with the Grand Scribe (secretary), Treasurer and Registrar devolve upon those holding the corresponding positions in Grand Lodge, if they are qualified by having taken the Royal Arch degree. In about two-thirds of the Provinces there is the same identity of Provincial Grand Master of the Craft and Superintendent of the Chapter. Local or "Private" Chapters must be attached to Lodges, and bear the same number, and in most cases the same name. There is no separate Board of Benevolence and no separate charities. Hence it may be said that the distinction between Grand Lodge and Grand Chapter is administratively purely departmental.

2. There is a series known as the Cryptic Degrees, still worked, which fill in this gap to a certain extent, to the fall of Jerusalem, and give some account of the building of the vault and Hiram's prophecy that at his death the secrets would be safely concealed. These degrees are Most Excellent Master, Royal Master, Select Master, and Super-Excellent Master. The rituals (latest issue, 1934) are published from Mark Masons' Hall.

Darkness Visible a very brief recapitulation of the legend is all that is required here.¹ The scene is Jerusalem in the days of Zerubbabel after the Decree of Cyrus which ended the Babylonian captivity. Work has already started on clearing the ground of the ruins of King Solomon's Temple preparatory to rebuilding it. Three Sojourners arrive from Babylon and request the Sanhedrin (which the Royal Arch Chapter represents) to be allowed to take part in this undertaking. Zerubbabel, Joshua, and Haggai who preside question them, and finally put them to work clearing away the ruins, instructing them to report immediately if they make any discovery they deem of importance. In the course of their labours they discover the top of a dome. They remove three keystones, and one of the Sojourners is lowered into the vault beneath, where he finds a scroll (the long-lost Pentateuch), and an altar in the form of a double cube; on the front are the initials of the original three Grand Masters; Solomon King of Israel, Hiram King of Tyre, and Hiram Abiff. On the top of the altar is a "plate of gold" with a triangle within a circle. On the circle is inscribed the name JEHOVAH, and on the three sides of the triangle JAHBULON. These discoveries are reported to the Sanhedrin, which declares that the long-lost secrets have been discovered; the Sojourners are rewarded by being invested with the insignia and secrets of the Royal Arch, and three lectures, historical, symbolical, and mystical, are delivered to them explaining further the teachings of this supreme degree.

It has been alleged that in the eighteenth century this degree had specifically Christian elements as worked by the Ancients. No rituals actually survive to prove or disprove this, and it must be largely a matter of conjecture. But there can be no disputing the position now. As J. S. M. Ward has said, "The R.A. today is not Christian, and particular care has been taken to eliminate anything which would indicate a Christian meaning. ... This fact is important and enables men to enter our order

1. There is no "authorized" or official ritual for the Royal Arch, any more than in the Craft. Several workings have been published by A. Lewis, including Aldersgate, Sussex, Metropolitan, Complete, Oxford, and Perfect. Geo. Kenning & Son publish Hornsey and Cornwallis workings. Many others (my own collection has over thirty) have been privately printed; that of M. M. Taylor enjoying considerable popularity. Quotations in the text, unless otherwise specified, are from Aldersgate, which in practice serves as a norm.

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who are not Christians in the strict sense of the word."¹ From which it would appear to follow that only those "who are not Christians in the strict sense of the word" can logically enter the Royal Arch at all. Despite the existence of considerable numbers of Royal Arch clergy and even bishops which might seem to disprove this contention, certain facts are abundantly clear and have never been answered or disproved.

It is very often pointed out that the Royal Arch Chapter is opened with the Collect for Purity ("Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open...") with which the Order of Holy Communion in the Book of Common Prayer begins. Royal Arch masons unfamiliar with this rite will occasionally go so far as to imply that Cranmer and his successors were paying Freemasonry a delicate compliment by including this Masonic prayer in the liturgy of the Church.² "Many Masons listening on the radio to the inspiringly solemn Coronation Service in the Abbey," reported the *Freemasons' Chronicle* of June 20th, 1953, "must have been struck to hear recited in its entirety by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the course of the Dedication rites, the Prayer in use in the Royal Arch at the Opening of the Chapter." In the Anglican liturgy, of course, this prayer is offered in Christ's name, and is a Christian prayer. In the Royal Arch the closing words "through Christ our Lord" are most pointedly omitted, and therefore it ceases to be a Christian prayer. It could be offered to almost any God. In the Masonic context it precedes the triangular invocations of Jehovah Jah-Bul-On.

Nobody who knows what religion means could claim that the Royal Arch is not "religious." Even those who maintain that Craft Masonry is just harmless playing at Old Testament games and moral allegory would find it impossible to say the same of this degree. It breathes religion from beginning to end, and claims to teach about the name and nature of God Himself. The following facts are simply indisputable. All quotations are from the ritual itself.

The title is the *Holy Royal Arch*, and holy means set apart for a sacred use.

1. *An Explanation of the Royal Arch Degree*, p. 13.
2. Actually this collect does not appear to have been introduced into Royal Arch workings before the revision of the Rev. Adam Brown, about 1834. It is not to be found in most Scottish rituals, where borrowing from the Prayer Book would be less popular.

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The pass-word to it is *Ammi Ruhamah*, or, "My people have found mercy."

The prayer over the Candidate asks God to "grant that the Brother who now seeks to participate in the *light of our mysteries*" may be endowed with a portion of the divine Spirit.

The Candidate is bidden to "advance toward the *Sacred Shrine* in which they (the mysteries) are deposited, by seven steps, halting and bowing at the third, fifth, and seventh, for at each step you will approach nearer to the Sacred and Mysterious Name of the True and Living God Most High."

This name, veiled on the Altar, is JEHOVAH JAH-BUL-ON. The Three Greater Lights of the degree are the "creative, preservative and annihilative powers of the Deity" a correspondence to Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva.

The three Principals at their installation are given as their own "secret" words three titles of God, *Jah* for Zerubbabel, *El Shaddai* for Haggai, and *El Elohe* for Joshua.

The five signs of the Royal Arch "mark in a peculiar manner the relation we bear to the Most High as creatures offending against His mighty will and power, yet still the adopted children of His mercy." They are even referred to as "Sacred Signs."

The third lecture deals with the "mystical portion of this Degree," and declares that it "inspires its members with the most exalted ideas of God, it leads to the exercise of the purest and most devout piety."

The name of Christ is completely omitted throughout.

Anyone but a Freemason who drew up a new ritual incorporating all these points and submitted it to his Bishop to ask permission to use it for meetings of Boy Scouts or a Men's Guild would be assured of a monumental snub. He would even be told that, as a Christian, he was dabbling in dangerous things. If he protested that such a ritual was not religious at all, he would be laughed at. Freemasonry, however, has been described even by Bishops as a handmaid of the Church. But Mother Church has never asked for her handmaid's references.

Clearly some pretty drastic allegorizing must be resorted to! Those who draw parallels between the first three degrees of the Craft and the birth, life, and death of Our Lord consider that the Royal Arch represents His resurrection, or even His ascension, and the beatific vision. "When the sprig of

acacia blooms at the head of his soul's sepulchre," Wilmshurst writes of the newly-exalted Mason, "he will understand at one and the same moment the mystery of Golgotha, the mystery of the death of Hiram, and the meaning of the Royal Arch ceremony of exaltation.... It is then that the mystery is consummated. The Great Light breaks. The Vital and Immortal Principle comes to self-consciousness in him. The Glory of the Lord is revealed to him and in him, and all his flesh sees it.... The condition attained by the illumined Candidate is the equivalent of what in Christian theology is known as the Beatific Vision and in the East as *Samadhi*." But as we have seen, the identification of Hiram with Christ, and of the Candidate with Hiram, in the third degree, must inevitably lead to Gnosticism; even more true is this in the Royal Arch. "He is able to discern that it was himself who was at first 'without form and void' and who in virtue of that *Fiat Lux* has at last become transformed from chaos and unconsciousness into a form so perfect and lucid as to become a co-conscious vehicle of the Divine Wisdom itself."¹

Those wishing to see a Christian meaning in the Royal Arch will sometimes point out a similarity between the discovery of the long-hidden word in the vault and the *logos* doctrine of the prologue to St. John's Gospel. There is some Masonic authority for this identification. Until nearly the middle of the nineteenth century the first verse at least, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God," commonly appeared in the ritual. It does to this day in the United States, where the rituals in many respects follow early forms now largely discarded in England. An early manuscript ritual (about 1797) of the Chapter of Hope, No. 49, at Deptford contains the instruction that if the Candidate was a Christian, the first chapter of St. John's Gospel was to be read to him, but if a Jew, the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people," etc.

But any identification of the "word" in Freemasonry with the "word" (*logos*) in St. John's Gospel will result in near blasphemy. The *logos* of St. John does not refer to the name of God, the incomprehensible Jehovah, nor to the Law, nor to the Scriptures, but to the creative and healing power of God; the

1. *The Meaning of Masonry* (10th Edition, 1951) Chapter IV, *The Holy Royal Arch*.

word of God in the sense that God spake the word, and the heavens and the earth were created. The climax of St. John's prologue is "the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" in the incarnation of our Lord and Saviour. Would any Mason dare to say of the metal letters of which his word is composed surrounded by six lighted candles that "the word was made brass, and dwelt among us?" That of course is the symbolical inference of the Royal Arch ritual, which declares that three of those lighted candles which surround the words on the altar "represent the Sacred Word itself, and are emblematical of the creative, preservative and annihilative powers of the Deity."

The word is only verbally communicated, almost as an incantation, in the Chapter, a syllable each at a time by groups of three people standing together so as to form a series of triangles with their feet and hands. "In times of antiquity names of God and symbols of divinity were always enclosed in triangles; in the days of Pythagoras the triangle was considered the most sacred of emblems" explains the Mystical lecture of this degree. The whole process suggests the primitive idea of a talismanic and occult significance given to a mystic and secret divine name and to its correct pronunciation. There is nothing Christian about this whatsoever, and nothing could be further from the meaning of the *logos* of St. John. As to the nature of the word itself, the priests and prophets of the Old Testament would have been horrified at its blasphemy and its syncretism. If good Christian folk, including our Anglican clergy, really enjoy this kind of thing, it is a pity that the name of God should be the subject of it.

The triad-mongers who would believe that the Holy Trinity is represented by any group of three have rich material in the Royal Arch. Apart from externals such as the three Principals, three Sojourners, three keystone to the arch, three greater and three lesser lights and so on, there are two distinct trinities of divine names or attributes specifically introduced. The Christian Royal Arch Mason, then (along with the Hindu), may indeed claim with justification that this degree is "definitely trinitarian."

The first of these trinities is the word itself, the "Sacred and Mysterious Name" made up of Jah, Bul, and On. It is

hard to find any Masonic commentator of any faith who does not agree that Bul is a version of Baal. There is less unanimity about On, the majority equating him with Osiris, but others with the city of On (or Heliopolis) identified with sun-worship. The Oxford Royal Arch ritual adds in explanation of the word that "Joseph in Egypt married the daughter of Potiphara, Priest of On."¹

Albert Pike was one of the greatest figures of Masonry in America. The Ancient and Accepted Rite, of which he was Grand Commander, is in its present form largely the work of his hands, and the rituals are still based on his revision. No name stands higher in America, and he is venerated in this country as well by those in the higher degrees. His words therefore cannot be brushed aside as a mere unofficial and individual private opinion. But even if he could be so disowned, it would be difficult to find fault with his declaration on the Royal Arch word, which even without his authority has its own weight of truth and logic. In a now rare book which very naturally is practically unknown to Masons today,² he wrote:—

"I think it is high time that Royal Arch Masons began to look seriously at this matter. If there is anything *real* in our professions, if our Royal Arch Masonry is not a hideous and detestably hypocritical farce, it is almost a religion. We inscribe on the mitre of the High Priest, *Kadosh-l' Yehuah—Holiness to the Lord!* We forbid taking his name in vain; and we claim to be the lineal descendants of those Israelites to whom every Baal was a detestable thing, an unclean abomination; to associate whose name with that of the Lord God of Israel would have been an unpardonable sacrilege. And we find Royal Arch Masons pretending to bring up into the *Sanctuary*, from the place where it was deposited by Solomon, the Holy Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, on which once were the cherubim, and where the Shekinah, the very God, cohabitant, spoke to Israel the oracles of truth; and written on this, by the side of the name of God, *and forming part of the same Triad*, the unclean name of

1. From Genesis XLI, 50.

2. *The Holy Triad—A Reply to the Grand Chaplain and Grand High Priest of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Massachusetts.* (Washington, 1873) pp. 24 et seq.

Baal...¹

"When they so accept Baal as a name of the true and Supreme God, and as put upon the Ark as such by Solomon, they accept it with all its surnames. It is Baal-Zebub, Baal-Amun, Baal-Tsaphun, and Baal-Paar or Peor....."

"The whole question...is whether Baal was to the Hebrews of the time of Solomon the name of an evil and malignant being, at enmity with Jehovah, accused and detested. If it was, it has no business on the Ark, and infinitely less in a word of Triads... The name of Baal *cannot* form one of those Triads; because Baal is *not* a member of the divine trinity. To make it so is sacrilege, is blasphemy, is an insult offered to God with whose name the abomination is thus coupled...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 accused and beastly heathen god, whose name has been for more than two thousand years an appellation of the devil...No word has any business in the Royal Arch degree that makes the name of a heathen deity one of the names of the true God."

So said a prominent and authoritative Mason; hence the allegation that it is only the anti-Mason who can interpret the word so is groundless.

What answer, then, can be made to this crushing indictment of blasphemy? Our good Anglican Bishops to whom we look for spiritual guidance can only reply that it is all very symbolic, and that they don't *really* mean Baal when "we three do meet and agree in love and unity the Sacred Word to keep and never to divulge the same...." But Albert Pike was surely aware of that. It was even the symbolical use of the word that he objected to.

Here is the explanation as it is actually given to the Candidate in the Mystical Lecture:—

"It is a compound word, and the combination forms the word Jah-Bul-On. It is in four languages...Chaldee, Hebrew, Syriac, and Egyptian. Jah is the Chaldee name of God, signifying 'His essence and majesty incomprehensible'. It is also a

1. In American Royal Arch workings the Ark of the Covenant is discovered in the vault. Inscribed on it is the same "sacred and mysterious name" as on the Altar in English workings, with slight variations in spelling.

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Hebrew word, signifying 'I am and shall be', thereby expressing the actual, future, and eternal existence of the Most High. *Bul* is a Syriac word denoting Lord, or Powerful; it is in itself a compound word, being formed from the preposition *Beth*, in or on, and *Ul*, Heaven, or on high; therefore the meaning of the word is Lord in Heaven, or on high. On is an Egyptian word, signifying Father of All, thereby expressing the omnipotence of the Father of All, as in that well-known prayer 'Our Father, which art in Heaven'. The various significations of the words may be thus collected: I am and shall be; Lord in Heaven or on High;

'Father of All! in every age

In every clime adored

By saint, by savage, and by sage,

Jehovah, Jove, or Lord''.

The explanation may sound innocent enough, though the inclusion of Pope's Universal Prayer is a clear admission of an anti-Christian syncretism. Surely, says the Christian Mason, there is nothing unorthodox in teaching that God is Lord in Heaven, and Father of All, even though the Royal Arch (as a priestly Mason of many degrees admitted), "presents for the adoration of its initiates an idea of God which is derived from the pagan religions of antiquity."

Why any Christian should adore an "idea of God," pagan or otherwise, presented to him by any body other than the Church has never been explained; clearly the Christian revelation appears to them in need or capable of supplementing. But the plain answer is that an innocuous dressing-up of one whom Bro. Pike called an unclean abomination makes the name no more Christian than that of Lucifer who, the Bible tells us, is equally deceptive in presenting himself as an angel of light.

At the risk of becoming repetitious this point must be brought home. It would be quite as easy, and masonically quite as legitimate, and certainly no less Christian, to devise a symbolical trinity such as Jah-Lucifer-Pan. The Mystical Lecture could explain the last two items thus:—"Lucifer is a Latin word meaning Bearer of Light... Pan is a Greek word signifying

1. The Rev. J. L. C. Dart, *Christianity and Freemasonry*, in *Theology*, April, 1951.

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Love...the various significations of the words may be thus collected; I am and shall be; Bearer of Light; God of Love." How harmless it sounds! And however silly, this analogy is perfectly valid. It is only two centuries of Masonic usage and muddled thinking that has made their trinity seem respectable to them.

In the second trinity of the Royal Arch ritual the verbal approximation to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is much closer. This is made up of the three Hebrew characters Aleph, Beth, and Lamed which appear at the points of the triangle on the Altar. With an exegesis that would horrify even the most ignorant Rabbi, these letters are explained thus:—

"The characters at the angles of the triangle are of exceeding importance, though it is immaterial where the combination is commenced, as each has reference to the Deity, or some Divine attribute. They are the Aleph, the Beth, and the Lamed of the Hebrew, corresponding with the A, B, and L of the English alphabet. Take the Aleph and the Beth, they form AB, which is Father; take the Beth, the Aleph, and the Lamed, they form BAL, which is Lord; take the Aleph and the Lamed, they form AL, which means Word; take the Lamed, the Aleph, and the Beth, they form LAB, which signifies Heart or Spirit. Take each combination with the whole, and it will read thus: AB BAL, Father, Lord; AL BAL, Word, Lord; LAB BAL, Spirit, Lord."

But this again is Baal masquerading with an even closer resemblance to an angel of light. Moloch also could be taken to mean Lord or Powerful, and this trinity is as anti-Christian as Father, Moloch; Word, Moloch; Spirit, Moloch.

Any attempt, therefore, to read Christian symbolism or allegory into the Royal Arch leads to blasphemies even greater than in the Craft. Such an attempt is a confusion of superficial verbal similarities, based on even greater confusion of thinking.