

**Presentation to Templum Sion Lodge
Nov 5th 2005 by RW Bro. Victor G. Popow**

The Ancient Ritual of Freemasonry

Orientation-

The following was presented in MS PowerPoint to the brethren of Templum Sion Lodge. It was by no means meant to cover all aspects the several influences & the changes upon the ritual of the Craft but merely to illustrate and sensitize the Brethren to the fact that the Masonry of 1720 England was a time of great change upon Freemasonry and its ritual and that there were many other forms of the ritual based upon new research being conducted by Brethren and non-Masonic scholars in Europe. A different and more complex view is emerging in terms of the rituals of ancient times and how ritual changed. The following is not an easy subject to broach nor is it straightforward one, especially for the lay person such as myself, but certainly it is critical that we understand how Craft ritual has evolved and what indeed the ancient ritual may have been trying to instill in our ancient Brethren. This provides us with an opportunity to continue more accurately and purposefully into our future.

Our 'Unchanging' Ritual-

“Within a few years of the establishment of the Grand Lodge in London we find a strong body of opposition, in consequence of which a crisis arose, for the people who had joined the new movement were told they were not ‘Freemasons’ in the sense that the word had had before; and now a distinction was made between Antients and Moderns, a distinction that can be traced as far as 1726, only eight years after the Grand Lodge of London came into existence. In London, those Antients were the men who insisted on preserving the Freemasonry of the Old St. Paul’s Lodge, which had probably been purer than that of its successor, the Lodge of Antiquity. They felt that the Moderns had betrayed and vulgarized the Order both by admitting as members anybody who applied, and by remodeling the ancient Ceremonies. And they had the courage to say this openly.”¹

The Genuine Secrets in Freemasonry Prior to AD 1717.

Many of our Brethren are perhaps under the naive assumption that perhaps little has changed in our ritual and today’s custodians of our Work “protect” us from dilution, further changes, or future evolution or change. To be sure many elements, words and signs are similar to that of 18th century European Freemasonry but upon a detailed more academic examination of ritual we can begin to see how different the ritual really was and how much it has indeed evolved to what we find and practice today.

The type of Freemasonry practiced today is a direct descendant of the English Brethren of 1720 London, namely Dr. John Desaguliers² and Rev. James Anderson³, a Freemasonry that became one of “sociability” and “conviviality” and far less esoterically potent than its ancient ancestor. Prior to 1720 the “Premier” (or first) Grand Lodge of London was simply a General Assembly of Masons which did not use the term *Grand* at all but “*General Assembly, General Master, General regulations.*”⁴ The so –called Grand Lodge differed from modern Grand Lodges in that they did

¹ Ibid p 48.

² Dr. John Theophilus Desaguliers (1683-1744) was born in France obtained a Fellowship at the Royal Society and collected early Masonic manuscripts. Although the Constitutions were attributed to Anderson it was under Desaguliers supervision that the first Constitutions were compiled.

³ Rev. James Anderson born in Aberdeen Scotland was on Sept 29, 1721. .

⁴ Castells, F.D, *English Freemasonry in its Period of Transition 1600-1700*, p 130.

not claim any territorial jurisdiction, authority was not defined and organization was far more "loose".

On June 21, 1721 it is recorded that Grand Master George Payne presented the first noble Grand Master, the Duke of Montague, with "an old manuscript of the Constitutions which he got in the west of England, 500 years old." The Duke of Montague then evidently "found fault" with "all the copies of the Old Constitutions" and "ordered Brother James Anderson, AM to digest the same in *a new and better method.*" [Italics mine] He is commented upon by Prof. of Scottish History David Stevenson: "His version of the history of masonry contained a great deal of invention- and was badly written. His definitions at critical points were ambiguous. Even our events of his own time he was inaccurate- even deliberately so." Additionally "There was resentment and embarrassment that Anderson had tricked freemasons for generations with false history." Even more interesting is the fact that the Constitutions were not an "official" Masonic publication but rather a private venture! Thus a financially poor Anderson is seen as using Freemasonry to make money and "When he attended Grand Lodge in the 1730's this was only 'to get authority for his literary work or to obtain patronage for his publications.'"⁵

The Great Fire of London & Politics

More than 50 plus years before the Grand Lodge of London the Great Fire of London in 1666 destroyed 373 acres over 13,000 homes, 400 streets, 89 churches including the great St. Paul's Cathedral and this event was to be the facilitator of change. The rebuilding effort attracted Masons from all over Europe and hence this imported a different kind of Freemasonry than had been known. After the rebuilding effort a great exodus of Masons occurred and hence Lodges closed and left London with the need to solidify and keep what was left. The politics of the time also had a great deal to do with the manner in which Freemasonry was to change in c.1720. The supporters of James VIII known as Jacobites⁶ and did not like the idea of a Hanoverian German King George I⁷ who did not speak English sitting on the throne of England and the Scottish Jacobites planned for a return of James VIII. On Sept 6, 1715 a march was organized which resulted in an unsuccessful battle and the Hanoverian King was to remain on the throne of England. This did not bode well for Freemasonry which had a very strong Jacobite flavour and hence was viewed as a possible threat to the rule of George I. The thought of being a Freemason in Hanoverian London resulted in many Masons leaving the Order and in order for the Freemasonry to continue the remaining members would have to cleanse the movement of its dangerous Jacobite influences; in this manner the Ancient Rituals were ratified.

Anderson and Desaguliers, who it is thought had access to the older rituals which they either obtained from Scotland or via other means sought to re-establish Freemasonry as loyal to the King. Ritual was altered to remove memory of Freemasonry's ancient origins and any allusion to perhaps more Gnostic, anti-religious, esoterically viewed or misunderstood materials. The English apparently attempted to match the regal heritage of Scottish Freemasonry by encouraging members of the Hanoverian Royal family to join and lead Freemasonry in England. London Freemasons set themselves up unilaterally as the ruling body of all of Freemasonry which was not generally accepted and led to response from other Masons who refused to acknowledge their authority. A system of control and patronage would soon be developed to ensure compliance with the edicts of the new Grand Lodge of London.

As well it is known that the destruction of ancient work was undertaken either by the Antients to protect the Work from the Moderns or by members of the new Grand Lodge to destroy evidence

⁵ Stevenson, D., from *James Anderson (1679-1739): Man and Mason*, p 199-200.

⁶ Jacobite was the name given to the political movement that supported the restoration of the House of Catholic Stuart Kings to the Thrones of England and Scotland.

⁷ George I, grandson of Elizabeth Stuart and Friedrich, Count Palatine of the Rhine, when George died in 1727 he was succeeded by George II who reigned till 1760.

of pre-1720 history. We find "this year [1720] at some private Lodges, several valuable manuscripts concerning the Lodges, regulations, charges, secrets, and usages of Masons (particularly one written by Mr. Nicholas Stone, the Warden under Inigo Jones), were too hastily burnt by some scrupulous Brethren, that the papers might not fall into strange hands."⁸ It was considered shocking to the Antients by the way that Moderns were orienting the Craft and making Freemasonry so public. We learn that "We would argue that the Jacobites did not just have a 'critical influence on the development of Freemasonry'. We would argue that they were, at least initially, its chief custodians and propagators. And when Grand Lodge- subsequently to become the prime repository of English Freemasonry- was created in 1717, it was created in a large part as a Whig or Hanoverian attempt to break what had hitherto been a virtual Jacobite monopoly."⁹ "Grand Lodge Freemasonry was noted for its ban on the discussion of politics, yet in a very basic way the movement was profoundly political. It was committed to the revolution settlement, based on acceptance of the Protestant succession and limited monarchy."¹⁰

Lawrence Dermott a well educated Freemason, who spoke Hebrew and Latin brought through the Irish Tradition moved to London in 1748 was appalled by the changes that had been unilaterally made by the Grand Lodge of London that he became the first Secretary of the "Antient" or ancient Freemasons.

After the reconciliation of the Antients and the Moderns in 1813 the new United Grand Lodge of England denied history and "sought to erase whole sections of their contents from Masonic memory." The Duke of Sussex was one of the first to be initiated into the Degrees of the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite and was so offended by what they contained he did his best to prevent others from taking them.¹¹ The Duke of Sussex as Grand Master was so incensed he sought to completely erase whole sections of their contents from memory. The issue seems to have been the "Christian content that had been introduced to the original rituals that were distinctly non-Christian. As a Christian and a Freemason he felt the older pagan parts were in collision with the new Christian elements and he decided to neutralize the situation by removing all Christian teachings and all aspects he considered strange. In this way, he neutered Freemasonry by cutting away anything that appeared to have either reference to, or conflict with, Church teachings."¹² What would our keepers of the Work say about such arbitrary changes? Such steps taken by unenlightened men who had little understanding of the true dimensions of the Crafts original import removed any possibility of the ancient Craft ritual and meaning but did succeed in building a more utilitarian organization. What could have been so offensive to English Freemasons that they decided to ignore their own responsibilities to the Craft which states it is not in the power of any man or body of men to bring about changes to the rituals?

So What Was Ancient Masonry?

"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."

Book of Constitutions, United Grand Lodge of England 1813.

English Freemasonry certainly isn't the parent nor can it claim to be the ruling body of all Freemasonry as we have seen given the Grand Lodge of all England in York twelve years before

⁸ Anderson, James. *The New Book of Constitutions*, 1738, p.111.

⁹ Baigent, M & Leigh, R, *The Temple and the Lodge*, p 239.

¹⁰ Stevenson, D, *James Anderson (1679-1739): Man and Mason, Freemasonry on Both Sides of the Atlantic*, p 208.

¹¹ Jeremiah How, *The Freemasons Manual*,

¹² C. Knight & R. Lomas, *The Second Messiah*.

the Grand Lodge of London, the initiation of Sir Robert Moray in 1641, or Elias Ashmole in Warrington, in 1646. As seen above, it is interesting that the recognition of the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch was conceded by the Moderns to the Antients. Even more interesting is the very passage which states explicitly Masonry has “no more degrees.” Why the need to state this unless of course there were other degrees?

Given the recent and highly speculative theories from such writers as Knight & Lomas- *The Hiram Key*, *The Second Messiah*, *The Hiram Key*, much of their work containing little or no primary historical investigation, and with the fictional and wildly popular *Da Vinci Code* of Dan Brown what are we left to think? Where is reality and where is fiction? What have we really inherited? What do we really need to know? What is the “heart and marrow” of our Craft? What is real and what is not? And given the fact that the majority of Freemasons do not make a daily advancement but rather attend and regulate business and convivial meetings much of the actual discovery, study and discussion of new historical facts or directions lie with a relatively small group of academics mostly within Europe. As well there are a number of academics and researchers who are non-Masonic that are breaking new ground in terms of understanding the Craft, its development, and its impact in Western culture.

It seems that Jacobite Freemasonry was the original mainstream and repudiated for political reasons by those 18th century English Masons who would build a fraternity that would demonstrate toasts to the Hanoverian King with songs of allegiance- a dining and drinking club. Thus it would seem the ‘Premier’ Grand Lodge of London was a deviant strain of Freemasonry from the original. Like early Christianity, the original Gnostic Christianity became supplanted by a political belief system of secularism rather than spirituality.

We do find reference to additional degrees by way of the Jacobites, Lodges in France where Masons who practiced these degrees were known as *Maitres Ecossais* or Scottish Masons. Such higher degrees were known as ‘Scottish Degrees’ and were associated with the Catholic Andrew Ramsey, known as a Jacobite, who was born in Ayr in 1686. As a young man he was said to have joined a quasi-Rosicrucian group called the ‘Philadelphians’. He graduated with a doctorate in civil law from Oxford and tutored the sons of James VIII of Scotland who were living in exile in France. In 1730 Ramsey visited England and was made a fellow of the Royal Society by Isaac Newton who was then President. He had no known scientific credentials but was known to be a Freemason with the French Lodge of St. Thomas in Paris.¹³ It was Ramsey who would speak of an ancient Craft in which he alluded to a union between the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem and Freemasonry. He also described the Lodge at Kilwinning of which James, Lord Stewart of Scotland, was Master in 1286. Ramsey “condemned the Grand Lodge of London as well as other forms of non-Jacobite Freemasonry, as ‘heretical’, ‘apostate’, and republican.”¹⁴ “Ramsey stressed that the origins of Freemasonry lay in the mystery schools and sects of the ancient world:

The word Freemason must not therefore be taken in a literal, gross, and material sense, as if our founders had been simple workers in stone, or merely curious geniuses who wished to perfect the arts. They were not only skilful architects, desirous of consecrating their talents and goods to the construction of material temples; but also religious and warrior princes who designed to enlighten, edify, and protect the living Temples of the Most High.”¹⁵

Another clue to ancient Freemasonry might be the Acception, a separate group connected with the London Masons Company in existence as early as 1375. It was only one company of many however this particular company was highly distinguished and famous. The secret and mysterious group of the Acception were ‘Fellows’ of the company it is from the Acception that all Freemasons have as their title *accepted* Freemasons. What does *accepted* indicate? Masonic

¹³ Thory. *Histoire de la Fondation de Grand Orient*

¹⁴ Baigent, M & Leigh, R, *The Temple and the Lodge*, p 257.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p 257.

author F. P. Castells stated “accepted as meaning received, admitted, initiated”.¹⁶ The Acception was according to Professor of Scottish History David Stevenson “formed an exclusive cell within the London Masons’ Company” of initiated men who were both mason and non-mason such as the learned antiquarian, Rosicrucian, scientist Elias Ashmole; Architect Sir Christopher Wren; And Nicholas Stone.

Scotland offers us another view of the Craft in terms of Freemasonry’s ancient rituals. Prof. Stevenson in his *The Origins of Freemasonry, Scotland’s Century 1590-1710* demonstrates essentials of the Craft in Scotland in the 16th century when the Lodge system had impregnated within it late Renaissance ideas (Hermeticism, Neo-Platonic and Rosicrucian ideas). Space does not allow in this paper a thorough look however quoting Stevenson:

“..it is likely that the whole Hermetic and Rosicrucian atmosphere helped to draw them [gentlemen joining the Craft] towards the Lodges as secret societies possessing at least Hermetic and Rosicrucian overtones where they could feel, through initiation and access to the lore of the Old Charges and the Mason Word, that they were at least gaining access to the fringes of the world of the occult search.”

What are the ancient rituals telling us? That the genuine secrets of Freemasonry are secrets of God and of self. Found below,

“Q- Where do you keep the Secret of the Freemasons?

A- In the heart.

Q- Have you the key to it?

A- Yes.

Q- Where do you keep it?

A- In an ivory box.”

Catechism of the Free-Masons, 1742

Where are the secrets? The above passage would indicate it is inside of the person, kept in the “bone or ivory-box”. What are the implications for this in a time of strict hierarchical and religiously conservative society- trial, punishment, and far worse. In the Catechism of Fellows the candidate is asked “What did you expect to receive from our Order, in becoming a Fellow? The ritual states the answer: “An increase in spiritual light.”¹⁷ To be sure spiritual is not meant as the new age pagan or Gnostic orientation that we might think today rather we must consider the meaning of spiritual in the 16th century traditional sense. However we certainly can’t discount or deny the underground occult or spiritual influences that existed such as the Kabbalist, Neo-Platonist, Hermetic¹⁸ or Rosicrucian streams either.¹⁹

Certainly it can also be noted the Reformation changed the very orientation of what religion was. Pre-Reformation religion was far less dogmatic, and more a ritual way of living. Protestantism emphasized a shift to regimented control. It is noted that Scottish guild –fraternities or confraternities (brotherhoods) had their own paid for chaplains, they were communities unto their

¹⁶ Castells, F. D, *English Freemasonry in its Period of Transition 1600-1700*, p 90.

¹⁷ Carr, H. *The Early French Exposures 1737-1751*, p 138.

¹⁸ The first copy of the *Corpus Hermeticum* published in 1549 was dedicated to Charles de Guise, Cardinal of Lorraine- brother of Mary de Guise who married James V of Scotland and bore Mary Queen of Scots.

¹⁹ A massive amount of Byzantine literature accumulated during the previous thousand years which originated in Alexandria during the early centuries AD on Hermeticism, Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism, Kabbalism, astrology, alchemy, sacred geometry entered Western Europe upon the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453. This would seed the future Renaissance.

own “masters, journeymen and apprentices existed as a religious fellowship as well as a trade corporation.”²⁰ Centuries before that the Knights Templar acted as sponsors and patrons of their own guilds of craftsmen and stonemasons and it becomes very easy to see how the Craft developed or could have maintained a secret life separate from church and state despite such counter-revolutions such as the Reformation.

Rev F. de P. Castells in his fascinating work *The Genuine Secrets in Freemasonry* prior to AD 1717 points to much older influences in Craft Freemasonry such as Kabbalism, alchemy, and Masonic orders such as “*Harodim*” or precursors of the Holy Royal Arch that seem to form the “higher degrees or additional Work that may have been misunderstood or completely at odds with the later and more political innovations of Anderson and Desgouliers and their “Premier” Grand Lodge in London. Masonic scholar A. E. Waite states “It is admitted that some kind of Masonic Order or Degree subsisted under the name of *Harodim* in the northern part of England.” “In 1784 Bro. General Charles Rainford told the French Masons that “*Heredom*” (which is a variant of *Harodim*) designated “the Mount of Jehovah”, the last of the Ten Sephiroth of the Kabbalists, viz. Malkuth, “Kingdom”²¹. So just what was this degree or rite of *Harodim* or *Heredom*? The name *Harodim* can be traced back to Scotland and Mother Lodge Kilwinning designated #0 whose origins are truly ancient and date to the 12th century. It alludes to Mount *Heredom* in Jerusalem, a Supreme Degree or Highest Point of Initiation. *Harodim* in Hebrew means “Rulers” and it would seem that the Holy Royal Arch was synonymous or some form of it. Castells further states: “In the North of England the Royal Arch was known as “the *Harodim* Chapter”. Of course this idea of a far more ancient influence on the Moderns innovations were discounted by such early 20th century Masonic researchers Gould and Hughan who refused to believe to accept the antiquity of the Holy Royal Arch or any other influences. Hughan had nothing but scorn, for example, when he heard about statements such as a “Fifth Order” alluded to by the Grand Stewart of the London Grand Lodge, Bro. Richard Rawlinson in 1734. Castells relates to “systematic opposition of some Masonic scholars to new ideas” as he relates Brethren like Hughan attributed ‘typographical errors’ to historical evidence (!) where in 1851 there is mention of Irish Royal Arch Chapters operating in France in 1730. Castells further relates:

“Original Freemasonry has been so disfigured and degraded that the short sighted advocates of the new type assumed it to be a fabrication for the mean purpose of making confusion worse confounded, and for dividing the Brethren.”

“The name “Royal Arch” seems not to be the original term by which it was known in ancient times but rather a comparatively modern one. It arose from the arch, or dome, in the subterranean chamber combined with the title of the Third Grand Original, the “Grand or Royal Lodge.” As early as 1744 in Ireland, Dr. Dassigny spoke of our mode of advancing in the Royal Arch as “the material steps to approach our *Summum Bonum*, the Immortal God.”²² The Matthew Cooke MS dated 1430 CE mentions three pillars by which the speculative vein has been preserved by the eminent figures Pythagoras and Hermes. A central theme of the Royal Arch deals with the name of God or completion of the loss of the word in earlier degrees. The Holy Royal Arch deals with the return of the Hebrew exiles from Babylon 70 years after the destruction of the first Temple commencing their plans discover a secret passage²³ which runs the entire length of the old Temple “east west” and somewhere in that passage lies the apex, crown, or vault: “In the bosom of the Holy Mount Moriah, in the very centre of the ground on which the Sanctuary of the Solemn Sanhedrin was...erected.”²⁴

²⁰ Stevenson, David, *The Origins of Freemasonry, Scotland's Century 1590-1710*. p 121.

²¹ Castells, F de P., *The Genuine Secrets if Freemasonry Prior to AD 1717*, p 30.

²² Ibid, p 119.

²³ King Solomon had a deep vault built underground the Temple “with many intricacies” where he placed the Ark of the Covenant because he had forseen the destruction of the Temple.

²⁴ Royal Arch Historical Lecture.

A great deal of this knowledge lies in having knowledge of ancient Hebrew and mystical texts such as the ancient book of Hebrew wisdom the Zohar (meaning Splendor). We are told "by meditating on this Name the man will perceive six yods in the pure sky, three on the south and three on the north and then three vaus below which hover about in the heavenly arch." The Zohar speaks of becoming conscious by knowledge of the two pillars through mediation. How could such ancient and obscure knowledge that dated back to the 2nd and 4th centuries CE and survived into the European monastic confraternities and guilds be sustained, let alone understood, in the strict religious and politically charged period of 1720? It becomes easier to imagine how a fraternity of esotericism that preserved ancient Classical knowledge which attracted thinkers, purists, seekers of knowledge suddenly becomes seen as obscure, misunderstood, even threatening and becomes reinvented as a new, open and "convivial" drinking and dining club of a 'new' Freemasonry of the 'Premier' Grand Lodge in London.

The late Bro. Col. W.J.B. McLeod Moore, who imported the Knights Templar, Scottish Rite and the Societas Rosicruciana to Canada and was a Past Grand Master Templar, had received information "from an aged Danish Physician, and which included the Templars and Masons. He asserts that the Benedictines, who date to circa 600 CE, practiced sacred mysteries of the arcane discipline of the Alexandrian Church. He was informed that the King of Denmark was head of a secret non-Masonic Society in the 18th century, of which he himself was a member in 1785. It had seven degrees. When the United Orders of St. John and the Temple were suppressed in the 16th century, and Torphican and its Knights dissolved, these fugitives carried their mysteries to Denmark, and that he belonged to the body at Copenhagen 60 years previously. These sacred Mysteries represented the Fall of Man; his Redemption by sacrifice; and the Resurrection. They saw Christ by Faith and represented his doctrine by symbols; they taught that none can claim the right of eternal life beyond the grave, but those that "believe on Him that liveth, and was dead, and is now alive for evermore." The object, the end, the result of the great speculations of antiquity, was the ultimate annihilation of evil, and the restoration of man to his first state by a Redeemer, a Master, a Christus, the Incarnate Word. (*Canadian Craftsman*, Vol.19- 22, 1885-8)

Conclusions

If indeed we may trace an ancient philosophical orientation of the Ancient Mysteries to Freemasonry through many older variations and practices of the ancient Magi of Babylonia and the Temple Builder Priests of Egypt, the Collegia²⁵ of Rome, Arabian Sufi's, to the 8th century Medieval Monastic Fraternities and the Knights of the Temple, to the various Lodges existing in the 12th century, and the artists, scientists and merchants of the Renaissance, to the building Guilds, Companies and Confraternities we may find ourselves in contact with a Freemasonry that is far more diverse and occult in its orientation. Through such a study we learn of the changes made to the Work of Freemasonry for political, religious and various human Machiavellian purposes particular to 18th century London. The 'evolution' or perhaps more appropriately the devolution of 'modern' Freemasonry in seeking to become a popular, politically inert, and more open and convivial gentlemen's society severed any ties with its ancient, esoteric or 'subversive' influences. Of course this would mark the beginning of a long road towards liberalism and a fraternity that we see today as more a 'club' that does good works versus a brotherhood that promotes the development of human consciousness and evolution towards peace and God.

What's even worse, even today we find further changes to the ritual and organization of Freemasonry as seen by the recent proposal by the United Grand Lodge to sever any ties to the Holy Royal Arch. Further evidence of the continual changes, and dislocation of any ancient ties

²⁵ Toward the end of century BCE the Roman Architect Vitruvius stated what was to become the basic orientation for the building Guilds. He recommended that builders be organized into *collegia* or mutually beneficial organizations, that 'Altars should look to the east' and he stated that architects should be more than technicians but 'a skilful draughtsman, mathematician, familiar with historical studies, a diligent student of philosophy, acquainted with music..familiar with astrology..' *De Architectura*.

to the Work or bodies that are central to the understanding of our origins. How does this happen? Ignorance basically, intent secondarily due politics and personalities. Instead of further separation of the Craft and its Work should we not be making an effort to understand where it came from and how it evolved and rather try to solidify instead of further separate the Work?

The Freemasons of today and tomorrow must continually seek to build a more accurate picture of the Craft and not simply stand for and continually regurgitate a sanitized version that satisfies a trite and convivial membership. Understanding the true nature of the Craft goes to the heart of why it exists and what it represents to the world and to those who would truly seek it. True Freemasonry cannot be hijacked by those who would simply make it a social and charitable club (and to a large degree this is what it has become) rather the Freemasons who are among the enlightened today must seek to protect and save this Craft from triviality. The more attuned Freemason may be able to explain and demonstrate the greater dimensions and import of the Craft rituals which point the initiate to nothing less than the secrets of living, dying, and rebirth, the nature of the world and of the Creator. Gnostic philosophy grounded itself on earlier pagan philosophy and has permeated into the centuries for people who simply wanted to know more of those basic fundamental questions, where have I come from, why am I here and where do we go, what is the 'meaning' of things? These very thoughts drive the curiosity of the young people these days who are entertained but not totally satisfied by a consumerist and technologically driven society. The younger generation as well question standard or status quo religious services that espouse dogma and demand blind faith rather than the desire of direct *experience* of the sacred – the essence of God itself and an understanding of the universe in which we reside. This is why the actual experience and understanding of a real and ancient Freemasonry is so critical, as a methodology for quickening the sacred or divine potential within each human being. The membership and the organization that sustains this Work and promotes the ritual must be enlightened themselves as it is our very ritual, including its multifaceted original influences, that allows us to rise above our limited selves to direct communion with God and indeed build an actual Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

By RW Bro. Victor G. Popow

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