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Of Antient, Free and Accepted Masons

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In the selection of papers an endeavour is made to meet all tastes, and it is recognised that each reader will find that some are more attractive to him than others. While it is hoped that some papers attain a genuine research standard, others are simpler ones, intended for the average reader.

The opinions expressed by the authors of the various papers and those answering questions are their own personal opinions, and are not put forward as the considered opinion of the Lodge.

WHO WROTE OUR RITUAL?

by

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The subject of this paper was suggested to me by a question recently asked in this Lodge "Who wrote our Ritual?" The answer of was that no one person wrote it, but that it was a growth over the past two hundred and fifty years from the charges and ceremonial of the Operatives and the Catechisms of the transition period at the beginning of the 18th Century. This led me to enquire whether it was possible to trace with any degree of certainty the authorship of any portion or portions of our ritual.

Let us first make a brief survey of the origin and evolution of our present-day ritual. In the year 1717, when the gradual growth of speculative Masonry from the Operative culminated in the formation of

the First Speculative Grand Lodge, the ritual was, as was to be expected, a very primitive adaptation of the operative - catechisms. These Catechisms were archaic in nature, and in many cases the questions and answers were in the form of a doggerell rhyme. It is not even clear how many degrees there were in existence at the time of the Formation of Grand Lodge in 1717. One school holds that there was only one degree at that time, and that the Fellow Craft degree was formed by the year 1720, and the Master Mason's by the year 1723 from portions of the original one degree. The other school maintains that in 1717 there were two degrees, corresponding roughly to our first and third degrees, and that the first was divided up to make the present first and second degrees. In any event they all agree that by the year 1723 there were three degrees in existence.

A great deal of our knowledge of the early ritual comes from a study of the numerous exposures which were published between the years 1730 and 1800. The first and most famous of these was published in October, 1730, by Samuel Prichard and called "Masonry Dissected". By this time the trigradal system was firmly established, and we have the ritual of the three degrees, though the first and second do not seem yet to have been fully separated. For example, one obligation serves the two degrees. The fact however that concerns us most is that the whole ritual consists of question and answer, obviously modelled on the earlier catechisms. They are very similar in nature to the questions and answers in the opening and closing ceremonies of the three degrees in our Modern ritual. The wording of these questions and answers has of course changed very much in the past two hundred years, but it would seem impossible to find out who was responsible, for the change in any particular question or answer, or the insertion of a new question or answer. Of course the general wording and structure of our modern ritual, that is the English ritual, and those modelled on it, was finally fixed at the time of the Union of the two rival Grand Lodges in England in the year 1813. A Lodge of Reconciliation was set up, consisting of nine members of each Grand Lodge, for the purpose of securing uniformity. This was done and resulted in our Modern ritual. Although there are a number of different English rituals in existence they differ very little from each other, and obviously must be very close to that agreed upon shortly after the Union in 1813. Dr. Hemming, a member of the Lodge of Reconciliation, seems to have been mainly responsible for the work of revising and rewording the modern ritual. What he did however was to reconcile the rituals of the two Grand Lodges and possibly modernise the wording in places. It has never been suggested that he was originally responsible for any portion of it.

From the above it would seem our enquiries must be limited to those portions added or alterations made in the ritual between the years 1730

and 1813. It would also seem that the most profitable portions to enquire into would be the longer addresses, such as the Charge to the Initiate in the first degree. The longer addresses and charges in our ritual, or at least large portions of them, would in most cases have originated with one person, though the wording may have been changed or modernised from time to time through the years. They did not arise from the old catechisms, as did the questions and answers of our modern ritual. They are certainly in all cases an expansion of the ideas and references contained in the early catechisms and rituals. Even as early as the year 1723 there is reference to charges and addresses being given. For example we find the following in the description of the Installation Ceremony in the first Book of Constitutions in the year 1723:-

“The Grand Master shall be certain significant Ceremonies and ancient Usages, install him, and present him with the Constitutions, The Lodge Book, and the Instruments of his office, not all together, but one after the other; and after each of them the Grand Master, or his Deputy shall rehearse the short and pithy charge that is suitable to the thing presented”.

Further on in the same description we find that the “Grand Warden or some brother for him shall rehearse “the Charges of Wardens”.

It is obvious that the custom of giving charges and addresses during the Ceremony is a very old one. The actual wording however of these charges or addresses does not seem to have been considered important enough to put in writing. It seems to have been left to the individual working the Ceremony to please himself regarding the addresses and the wording of them. There was no attempt at uniformity of ritual in those days as there is now. Consequently between the years 1730 and 1813 there were quite a number of books published containing various addresses and prayers for use in the Lodge Ceremonies. Each individual Master would be at liberty to use which ever addresses of charges that he pleased. The most popular of these prayers, addresses and charges were published from time to time in the Pocket Companions, which were very popular between the years 1735 and 1800. These Pocket Companions contained the essential parts of the book of Constitutions, as well as Masonic Songs and various bits of information concerning the Craft, lists of Lodges and charges, prayers, etc., for use by the Craft. They were small and easily carried, and were largely used by members of the Craft in place of the more cumbersome Book of Constitutions. They helped largely to disseminate the various charges and prayers among the Craft.

As time went on the best of the prayers, addresses and charges naturally gained in popularity and tended to oust the alternative ones. When the ritual was finally fixed in 1816 by the Lodge of

Reconciliation, it was only natural that the best and most popular of the prayers, addresses and charges were adopted and the others discarded. Some of the other ones which were discarded are still found in other Constitutions such, as the Scottish and American Constitutions.

So far I have confined my remarks to the English Constitution for the reason that the rituals of most of the other English speaking Constitutions are based on the English. Some of them differ very much from the English Constitution rituals of the present day. That is because they parted company many years ago and have developed along different lines during the intervening years. Many of our New Zealand lodges still use one of the English rituals, while the Official New Zealand ritual was based on the English. As the compilers of the New Zealand official ritual state:- "The Committee has aimed at compiling a ritual which should be suitable to, lodges whatever their former Constitution. Not only have certain features, familiar in Scotch and Irish working, been grafted on the English ritual, but in the third degree a complete form of working following the Scotch, has been adopted as an alternative to the English."

I have given you an idea of the development of our ritual, with particular regard to the prayers, addresses and charges. Now let us see, by a an examination of the publications of the various Masonic writers of the 18th Century. Whether we can say definitely who wrote the various addresses etc. One great difficulty we find is the many publications contained the various addresses without any indication whether they were original or copied from some other writer. The only method we can see is to try and find out the earliest publication containing the particular address, and judge from the remainder of the contents of the book where it was the work of that particular author or compiler, or was merely copied from another.

I think most Brethren will agree that one of the finest and most impressive pieces of ritual of all three degrees is the "Charge after Initiation" of the first degree. This charge is the oldest of all the Charges and addresses in our ritual; it has changed during the course of time less than any of the others and yet we do not know its author. It first appears in "A Pocket Companion for Freemasons", published in the year 1735, and compiled by William Smith. This is the first of a long series of Pocket Companions, which were very popular during the 18th Century, and almost took the place of the Official Books of Constitutions whose size and expense rendered them unpopular with the majority of the Brethren. William Smith in the preface to the first edition of his Pocket Companion in 1735 explains his reasons for publishing it as follows:-

"At the desire of a great many of the Brethren I have comprized the History (which for the most part is extracted from our excellent

Constitution Book), Charges, Regulations, Songs, Account of Lodges and several other articles in Masonry, not to be found in any one of our books yet published, in a small Volume easily portable, which will render, what was before difficult to come at, and troublesome to carry about, of more extensive use.”

From the above it will be seen that William Smith does not lay claim to the Authorship of any of the material in his book. He is merely the compiler. So that all we can say about this address is that it was first published by William Smith in 1735, and was probably compiled sometime previous to that date, but by whom we have no record.

This magnificent piece of ritual has come down to us through the years with very little change. There were several other, alternative charges written by various Masonic ritualists during the 18th Century, but none of them survived against this one. The most popular of these alternative charges was one written during the latter part of the 18th Century by the great ritualist, William Preston. Preston's address though good could not stand up against this magnificent charge written by an unknown author, and first published in 1735. Printed below is a photograph of the original charge taken from a copy of the original Pocket Companion of 1735. One can see from this photograph, how little it has really changed in the intervening two hundred years.

The Charge after passing and the charge after raising both appear to be the work or the great 18th Century ritualist, William Preston. They have changed a little in wording here and there since they were originally published by Preston. Probably these slight changes were the work of the Lodge of Reconciliation and Dr. Hemming. These charges first appear in the appendix to the first edition of Preston's famous "Illustrations of Masonry" published in 1772. The Appendix also included Preston's version of the Charge on Initiation. This, however, as I have pointed out never succeeded in taking the place of the Charge first published by William Smith in 1735. The second edition published in 1775 was much enlarged, and included much additional matter in the form of Lectures, which incorporated the charges. These Lectures were expanded from time to time, and formed an important part of the numerous editions which were very popular for at least a hundred years. As these Charges do not appear in any of the current Pocket Companions, or as far as I am aware anywhere else



A SHORT
C H A R G E

To be given to new admitted

B R E T H R E N.

YOU are now admitted by the unanimous Consent of our Lodge, a *Fellow* of our most Antient and Honourable SOCIETY; *Antient*, as having subsisted from times immemorial, and *Honourable*, as tending in every Particular to render a Man so that will be but conformable to its glorious Precepts. The greatest Monarchs in all Ages, as well of *Asia* and *Africa* as of *Europe*, have been Encouragers of the *Royal Art*; and many of them have presided as *Grand-Masters* over the *Masings* in their respective Territories, not thinking it any lessening to their Imperial Dignities to Level themselves with their *Brethren* in MASONRY, and to act as they did.

The World's great *Architelt* is our *Supreme Master*, and the unerring Rule he has given us, is that by which we Work.

Religious Disputes are never suffered in the Lodge; for as MASONs, we only pursue the universal Religion or the Religion of Nature. This is the Cement which unites Men of the most different Principles in one sacred Band, and

brings together those who were the most distant from one another.

There are three general Heads of Duty which MASONs ought always to inculcate, *viz.* to *God*, our *Neighbours*, and *ourselves*.

To God, in never mentioning his Name but with that Reverential Awe which becomes a Creature to bear to his Creator, and to look upon him always as the *Suum Bonum* which we came into the World to enjoy; and according to that View to regulate all our Pursuits.

To our Neighbours, in acting upon the Square, or doing as we would be done by.

To ourselves, in avoiding all Intemperances and Excesses, whereby we may be rendered incapable of following our Work, or led into Behaviour unbecoming our laudable Profession, and in always keeping within due Bounds, and free from all Pollution.

In the State, a MASON is to behave as a peaceable and dutiful Subject, conforming cheerfully to the Government under which he lives.

He is to pay a due Deterence to his Superiors, and from his Inferiors he is rather to receive Honour with some Reluctance, than to extort it.

He is to be a Man of Benevolence and Charity, not sitting down contented while his Fellow Creatures, but much more his *Brethren*, are in Want, when it is in his Power (without prejudicing himself or Family) to relieve them.

In the Lodge, he is to behave with all due Decorum, lest the Beauty and Harmony thereof should be disturbed or broke.

He is to be obedient to the Master and presiding Officers, and to apply himself closely to the

the Business of MASONRY, that he may sooner become a Proficient therein, both for his own Credit and for that of the Lodge.

He is not to neglect his own necessary Avocations for the sake of MASONRY, nor to involve himself in Quarrels with those who through Ignorance may speak evil of, or ridicule it.

He is to be a Lover of the Arts and Sciences, and to take all Opportunities of improving himself therein.

If he recommends a Friend to be made a MASON, he must vouch him to be such as he really believes will conform to the aforesaid Duties, lest by his Misconduct at any time the Lodge should pass under some evil Imputations. Nothing can prove more shocking to all faithful MASONS, than to see any of their *Brethren* profane or break through the sacred Rules of their Order, and such as can do it they wish had never been admitted.



before Preston's "Illustrations, I think we are quite safe in attributing their authorship to William Preston.

In this same appendix we find the prayer used at the present day just after the Candidates entrance to the Lodge in the first degree. In its present form it is obviously the work of Preston, and has come down to us with hardly any alterations at all, only a few unimportant words.

The wording, however, is so like that of a portion of a much longer prayer contained in the first edition of Lawrence Dermott's "Ahiman Rezon," published in 1756, that it is obvious, either that Preston took his from the first edition of "Ahiman Rezon," or that they both had a common origin. It seems that the latter was the case, and that they both took the prayer from one used by the Operative Masons at least one hundred years before. The prayer is very little changed from that in the Operative Masons' ritual sanctioned by the General Assembly at Wakefield in the year 1663 and apparently compiled by Robert Padgett,

clerk to the Operative Society. Details of this prayer and its use by the Operatives will be found in "Guild Masonry in the Making," by Charles H. Merz. It would seem that this prayer is one of the very earliest portions of our ritual. I know of no other portion of our ritual which has come to us from the Operatives, and which we can date before the year 1663. The most surprising thing is that the wording has changed so little since that date. The prayer may of course have been in use by the Operatives long before the 1663 ritual was compiled by the Clerk, Robert Padgett.

We also find in the Appendix the three questions which the Candidate is asked immediately after his entrance to the Lodge in the first degree. They, too have been changed very little in the intervening 170 years. The first part of the third question has been added and several words altered in the other two questions.

The address in the N.E. Corner, or the Charity Charge as it is sometimes called, is one of the most impressive portions of our ritual. It is an address which one would expect to be able to trace right back to the earliest days of the Craft. Such is not the case, however, and we find very few traces of the subject matter of the address before the final settling of the ritual by the Lodge of Reconciliation. In most of the exposures such as Jachin and Boaz and Mahabone, between the years 1760 and 1800 we find that after the candidate had taken his obligation and been entrusted with the secrets he was taken out of the Lodge room, and those things restored to him which he had been divested of before entering the Lodge. He was then placed in the N.W. part of the Lodge to give thanks and in the N.E. part of the Lodge to be invested with the Apron, after which he was given in abbreviated form the address on the Apron. In the entered apprentice's "Reasons", however, we find the following questions and answers:-

Mas.: Why were you deprived of all metal.

Ans.: That I should bring nothing offensive or defensive into the Lodge.

Mas.: Give me the Third reason, Brother.

Ans.: As I was poor and penniless when I was made a Mason, it was informed me that I should assist all poor and penniless brethren as far as lay in my power.

In "Hiram", an exposure in 1766, we find the following passage:- "The ceremony being now ended he is desired to pay the usual fees of being made; which offering to do by putting his hand in his pocket, he finds no money; and this generally causes a laugh among the brethren, as all kinds of metal had been taken from him before he entered the room".

The only publication in which I have been able to find anything similar to our modern Address in the N.E. Corner is the second edition of "Browne's Master Key", published in 1802. This includes the simile of the foundation stone, as well as the claim on the candidates charity. It is not nearly as long as our modern address but the wording of most of it is absolutely identical with portions of our modern address. Browne's Master Key is a ritual rather than an exposure and is all in a peculiar cypher. It is generally recognised as giving the ritual according to the "Modern" Grand Lodge and not the "Antients". Browne does not lay claim to being the author of any portion of the ritual in his book, so that the most we can say is that the address in the N.E. Corner was just taking shape before the Union of the two Grand Lodges in 1813, and that the address as we have it now was probably the work of the Lodge of Reconciliation, who probably adopted and expanded the address which had just come into use. We cannot say who was the author of the original address. It does not appear in any of the editions of Preston's "Illustrations", or, as far as I can ascertain, in any of the "Pocket Companions" or exposures.

The explanations of the Tracing Boards appear for the first time, in something very close to their modern wording, in Browne's "Master Key" under the heading "Explanations of the Hieroglyphics". Under this heading in Preston's "Illustrations" we find what might be called the seeds of our present day Explanations. Who expanded them into the form in which they appear in Browne's "Master Key", which is substantially the same as our present day ritual, I have been unable to find out. Some writers maintain that the Explanations of the Tracing Boards were formed from the Emulation version of the lectures. This is obviously wrong in the face of what is published in Browne's "Master Key", as the Emulation Lodge of Improvement did not come into existence until many years after the publication of Browne's "Master Key".

The Installation Addresses are rather interesting from an historical point of view, that is, the addresses to the Master, Wardens and Brethren They appear to be made up of pieces from various authors These have been joined together, and obviously polished up and modernised a little, at the time of the Lodge of Reconciliation.

Let us take the address to the Master first. The portion commencing "As a pattern for your imitation I would refer you to that Grand Luminary of nature . . . comes from a book published in London in the year 1769 by Bro. Wellins Calcott, called "A Candid disquisition of the Principles and Practices of the Most Ancient and Honourable Society of Free and Accepted Masons". It is portion of "A short charge delivered to Brother William Winston on his being invested and installed Right Worshipful Master of the Palladian Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in the City of Hereford, on the Festival of St John the Evangelist A.L.5767, A.D. 1767 by Bro. Wellins Calcott." Bro. Calcott's contribution is quite a small one, and finishes with the words "light and instruction to the Brethren of your Lodge". This portion of Brother Calcott's address seems to have become very popular, and is incorporated in most addresses to the Master right up to the present time. Up until the time of the Lodge of Reconciliation the earlier part of the address to the Master was taken from the earlier paragraphs of Bro. Calcott's address. The earlier portion of our present address was inserted in place of Bro. Calcott's at the time of the Lodge of Reconciliation; but I have been unable to trace its author.

The next portion of the address commencing "Forcibly to impress upon them the dignity and high value of Freemasonry. . . ;" and finishing "And whose heart is expanded by Charity" is taken from a book published in 1777 by Robert Trewman, called "The Principles of - Freemasonry delineated". It is portion of an Address printed in this book and entitled "A Charge delivered at a quarterly Communication for the County of Devon and City and County of Exeter held at the Globe Tavern, Exeter, Jan. 17, 1777, by Bro. C----, D.P.G.M." Bro C., by the way, was Bro. John Codrington,

The last paragraph of our present address was added at the time of the Lodge of Reconciliation, but I have not yet discovered the author of it.

The two paragraphs quoted above, together with the earlier three paragraphs of Bro. Calcott's address, formed a very popular address to the Master. We even find it in America in the first edition of the Book of Constitutions of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts in the year 1792. None of the editions of Preston's "Illustrations" have an address to the Master, though right from the earliest editions they have the address to the wardens and the address to the Brethren.

The first half of our present address to the wardens obviously comes from the address published in all the editions of Preston's "Illustrations", though the wording has been considerably changed in parts, probably at the time of the Lodge of Reconciliation.

It is hard to say whether Bro. Preston was actually author of this address. Most of the wording is probably his own, but it has such a strong similarity to a portion of the address mentioned above from Bro. Calcott's book which was published in 1769, three years before the first edition of Preston's "Illustrations", as to create a very strong suspicion that Bro. Preston got it from that address, and after expanding it a bit and polishing up the wording, included it in his own book. I have been unable to find the last portion of our present address to the Wardens.

The first half of our present address to the Brethren also comes from that in Preston's "Illustrations". The wording of course has been changed a bit and modernised, but so much of it remains the same that there cannot be any doubt of its origin. I presume that Bro. Preston was the author. I cannot find any earlier address similar to it.

There are of course a number of different recognised rituals under the English Constitution, as well as those of the other Grand Lodges of the British Empire. They all differ one from the other. In some cases the differences are very minor, while in other cases the differences are large. It is a curious fact however about the three Installation addresses in particular that the portions which are common to all the rituals - at least to all that I have been able to examine - are those portions which I have traced back to their 18th Century origin. Evidently the worth of these portions was recognised, not only by our 18th Century Brethren but also by the various committees which from time to time in the different Constitutions have made the alterations.

I hope that the facts I have been able to glean regarding the origin and history of portions of our ritual will give the brethren an added interest in the wording of the various addresses. They will explain why the ideas in some of our addresses appear somewhat disjointed. They have been pieced together from parts of other addresses. When you next hear these addresses, Brethren, think of the old 18th Century lodges in which the different portions were first delivered nearly two hundred years ago.