

The Fascinating Masonic World

Masonry, the Royal Art, is a school of moral values which uses rituals to pass on its teachings through symbols and allegories.

Among the innumerable Masonic Rites are: Adoption, Adoniramite, Brazilian, Rectified Scottish Rite, Egyptian or Misraim, Heredom or Perfection, Hermetic, Mexican, Modern or French, Memphis, Pernetty, Russian, Strict Observance, Schroeder, Swedenborg, Swedish, and York or Emulation.

All Masonic Rites operate with the Legend of Hiram. There are several versions of this Legend. In some, for example, the assassins were decapitated and their heads were put on high sticks which were left exposed to the public for a long time. French sociologist, E Martin Saint-Léon in his book "Le Compagnonnage- Paris, 1901" which was published at the "Masonic Magazine, vol. LVIII, Italy's Grand Orient, Rome" says that the first assassin was denounced by Perpignan where he had gone to seek refuge and was decapitated and his body was embalmed and then left exposed to the public.

Six months later, Ben-Gabel, King Solomon's attendant, discovered that the assassins had sought refuge with the King of Gipta, named Maaco. They fled from there and were caught in Bendicon. They were then returned to Jerusalem, where they were tied to two trunks by their feet and necks and their hands were tied behind their backs. Their bodies were open and left exposed in the sun for eight hours and finally that night, King Solomon ordered their decapitation and their heads were put together with the first one. Their remains were thrown to animals.

Regardless of which version you follow, legends, like biblical parables, aim at transmitting the truth through philosophical narratives. Those teachings and conclusions should be analyzed in depth.

Another point is that the assassins' names vary, too - Sebal, Oterlut, and Stoking (in several rituals, Stalkin, the master who found Hiram's body); Abiram, Ramvel, and Gravelot; Giblon, Giblas, and Giblos; Hobbhen, Sterke, and Austerflirt; and Jubela', 'Jubelo' & 'Jubelum' and known collectively as 'The Juwes'.

In some rituals, the branch of Acacia was placed by the assassins to mark the location where they had deposited the body. Others claim that it was placed by the Master, Stalkin, to mark where he found the body.

You, as Master Mason, have learned the distress signal, which varies even among Scottish Rite members. My intention is not to judge which one is the correct way. My intention here is to draw attention to the diversity of ways and customs.

I would also like to highlight that for many, the term Accepted Masons appeared to differentiate the Rosicrucian who became Masons. One of the oldest speculative masons was Sir John Murray initiated in a Lodge in Newcastle, England and Elias Ashmole initiated in 1646 in a Lodge in Warrington, Scotland. Both were Rosicrucian. I wonder if and why the 18th degree in Masonry honors the alchemic and hermetic brothers. In addition, in the reflection chamber where the initiated is placed and the fold is taken off his eyes, he can see alchemic elements such as, mercury, sulfur, and salt.

Even before the building of the temple in 968 BC, there are signs of institutions which were similar to our beautiful Masonary. Here are a few examples:

715 BC – The king of Rome, Numa Pompilius (715-673 BC) founded the “Artisan Collegia”.

300 BC – The architects of Dionysius, an association of men of science were distinguished not only by their knowledge, but also identified themselves with signals, grips and passwords. For some, Hiram Abiff was a Dionysian follower.

79 AD – In 1878, the “Collegiums of Pompeii” was unearthed. It had been buried by the Vesuvius eruption. It had two columns in the front entrance and interlaced triangles on the walls.

152 AD– During the excavations of the old Port of Rome, an inscription of year 152 AD was found. It bore the names of the Ostia ferrymen corporation members.

286 DC – Saint Alban was authorized by Carausius, British Emperor, to carry out a General Assembly of Masons. Saint Alban attended the reunion, initiating new brothers (as published at Gothic Constitution - 926AD)

287 or 302 or 303 DC– Santi Quattro Coronati were patrons of Lombardi and Tuscan architects. (As cited at the Lenin’s Francmasonry Encyclopedia in 1901)

643 DC – The King of the Lombards, Rothari (reined between 636-652DC) authorizes, by edict, the Magistri Comacini. The Comacini Masters are considered by many as the ancient relatives of Masonary. In 674, they built a Church in Wearmouth, British Isles.

712 DC – A stone found that year, describes the Comacini were made up of Masters and disciples and obeyed a Grand Master. They called Lodges the places where they met. They used signs, grips and passwords, and they also wore aprons and white gloves. Among their emblems were the square, the compass, the level, the plumb, and they venerated the 4 Crowned Martyrs (Quattro Coronati).

899DC – During the progressive and cultural reign of Alfred the Great of England (849-899), the Masonic corporation establishes itself under regular forms.

926DC – Prince Edwin calls for an assembly in York, known as “Masonic Convent of York”. That was when the Gothic constitutions were created.

1268 – Etienne Boileau, provost of the King of France, orders the writing of the Book of Offices, codification of the Statutes of the Parisian Confreres.

1272 – Gilford, Bishop of York, might have been the Grand Master of the Corporation of Builders. (Source: Histoire du Grand Orient de France, A.G. Jouaust)

1326 – The Council of Avignon through its Canon XXXVII condemns the corporations of Builders (Nicole Aslan in General History of Masonary)

1354 – In a letter, Edward III, King of England, allows Freemason companies to elect their Wardens annually.

1376 – On August 3rd, for the first time, the word Freemason appears on the Book of the City of London.

From this date on, there are numerous evidences which can be researched more easily.

Our Scottish system was created by the Stuarts partisans who were exiled in France. Among the various forms, there is the Morim's which was translated and rewritten by our dear brother Albert Pike.

We should evaluate everything with criteria, intelligence, and impartially. Masonary does not look good with radicalism. A Mason is a free thinker. Every Master Mason has the obligation and the Freedom to seek sources wherever he goes.

Bro. Arturo de Hoyos, in his preface to Albert Pike's book "Esoteric, the Symbolism of Blue Degrees of Freemasonry" says that "The true meanings of a few of symbols are still known in the Lodges. Those of many others are disused; and those of some, I fear, are lost beyond of recovery" (p.xxvi). A lot has either gotten lost or forgotten, not only the symbolism. It is up to us to continue doing research and understanding that Masonary is a divine "melting pot" which aims at finding the truth.

The Rites are routes which favor our search for improvement. There is no Rite better than the other because all of them have the same objective. I hope reason always prevail!

And that Love, which unites us, never ends.

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