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THE BACKGROUND OF THE LECTURES

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The Mason of today, unfortunately, seldom has an opportunity of listening to one of the Lectures, let alone take part in them. In the opinion of many we are all too busy making Masons. The "Complete Working of Craft Freemasonry" is one of the few rituals in which the Lectures are to be found. It is a bulky volume as rituals go, and for that reason, it can be assumed, is not popular.

Few brethren, however, appreciate to what extent a knowledge of the Lectures can increase his knowledge and interest in the Craft, and provide a background to what sometimes appears incomprehensible to the young Mason when he begins to learn the ritual; a state of mind which often, in the long run, develops into the soulless parrot who crosses all the 't's and dots all the 'i's but leaves his understanding outside with his hat and coat.

The Lectures, whether contained in a ritual or a separate volume, make an excellent bedside book but having read them, many brethren would wish to know how they came into being. A neat summary of the background was recently provided by V.W.Bro. A. G. Pretty when delivering a lecture to the members of the Lodge of Research, No.218, at Melbourne, Australia.

He said the title is confusing to modern Masons who think of lectures in Lodge as being a solo or team effort. "The Catechisms" would be a title more aptly descriptive today. For the full story of the development of these Lectures, or Catechisms, there could be no better authority than the most recently published volume of *Ars Quatuor Coronatum*, being volume 79, the transactions of 1966*. For the present it is sufficient to record that they are directly descended from the principle and practice of oral transmission inescapably adopted by the earliest guilds or Lodges of operative Masons in Britain, and expanded as the organization expanded, eventually to become speculative. Although in time the invention of the printing press had removed one of the earlier compulsive reasons for the adoption of the principle of oral transmission, its use had established its value on at least two grounds: (a) the learning had to be more thorough since each initiate was expected to instruct the next new-comer; and (b) the fact of his having to do so, and being able so to do, gave a feeling of achievement and involvement in the scheme of things.

By the time of the formation of the first Grand Lodge in 1717 they were in use throughout Britain in a variety of forms as regards detail, though broadly uniform. The disclosures of the 18th century, particularly Pritchard's "Masonry Dissected." , revealed the extent of the coverage of the Masonic system of instruction under the catechetical principle

One of the principal points of disagreement between the Antients and the Moderns rested on the subject-matter of these Lectures. The Antients stood fast for the old operative forms and discounted much of the newer material made necessary to explain the symbolism and moralizing character of the Speculative's innovation. This divergent state of affairs, and the several differing versions that enjoyed varying degrees of popularity within the two jurisdictions and throughout

Britain, naturally created great friction.

It was not until William Preston was led, to quote his own words: "to enquire, with a more minute intention, into the contents of our various Lectures. The rude and imperfect state in which I found some of them; the difficulties I encountered in my search after others, and the variety of modes

1. established in our assemblies, rather discouraged in my first attempt. Persevering, however, in my design, I continued my pursuit; and with a few zealous friends to the cause, who had carefully preserved what ignorance and the degeneracy of a corrupt age had rejected as unintelligible and absurd, I diligently sought for the ancient and venerable Landmarks of the society."

The outcome of his search, which took several years, was that on 21st May, 1772, he presented to a gala meeting of Grand Officers the Lecture on the First Degree, in catechetical form. This was so well received that by 1774, he had completed a series of Lectures in the three Degrees, and delivered them as public Lectures to the Craft.

Even before the union in 1813, a spate of Lecture writers arose, probably inspired by the degree of acceptance accorded Preston's work, and anxious to record their own favoured working. Naturally, during the course of the work of the Lodge of Reconciliation the Lectures, as well as what we now call the Ritual but to them the Ceremonies, received much attention. The Ceremonies, originally quite brief, were gradually expanded, together with the Tracing Board Lectures, by the introduction of material from the Lectures. Together they became the system of moral instruction peculiar to Freemasonry

*The Lectures of English Craft Masonry by W. Bro. P.R: James. P.A.G.D.C.P M of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No.2076, and Prestonian Lecurer for 1962.

TELL IT TO THE BEES.

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The beehive is not often seen today among the symbols which adorn a Masonic Lodge In the past it had its place as an emblem some authorities that this fascinating emblem, with its bees flying round a hive, disappeared as the result of the Jacobites adopting the bee and a beehive as its emblem of immortality and resurrection soon after tof industry and was on old jewels, tracing boards, lodge furniture banners and summonses. It is stated by heir reverse in 1745.

In a recent issue of The Freemason Brother J. Marsengill traces the origin of the beehive as a symbol far back in time before there was ever a thought of speculative masonry and indeed even before the operative Masons had ever begun to build. We must, he says, of necessity, look toward ancient Egypt, which many Masonic scholars believe to be the cradle of many of our Masonic teachings and there we find that on the tomb of Seti I, a Pharaoh who lived, reigned, and died before the time of the Exodus, the soul is represented issuing from the skin of victims under the form of a bee. (Lefebure L'office des morts a Abydos, 1889.) In the Egyptian religion we find many more such references, and indeed these peoples worshipped a god called Apis. Though this god was worshipped under the guise of a bull yet the name can be literally translated "bee".

Through the centuries the bee has been used as an emblem of immortality by many of the world's great religions. "The bee was used as a symbol of immortality by the Mithraic cult, so popular in the time of the Caesars, and by the early

Christians, as the catacomb pictures still witness". (The Emblems: H. L. Haywood, The Builder January 1921.)

In the Georgics we find that Virgil gives to the bee breeders a recipe for spontaneous generation of a swarm of bees. By the action of magic rites a swarm can be brought into existence within the hides of sacrificed bulls. (Kings and Gods of Egypt, Alexandre Moret: G P. Putnam and Sons 1912.)

Jesus of Nazareth, whom many revere as the son of God, was often called the "aethereal bee" and Vishnu was also so honoured. Krishna has been seen represented in wall paintings with a blue bee circling over his head to symbolize the spiritual part of man.

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Many of the Christian kings of the earlier centuries, had small golden bees buried in the tombs as an emblem of immortality.

Strange beliefs grew up around the bee and even about its honey. At one time honey was supposed to have great embalming powers and Alexander the Great was said to have been embalmed and buried in this way.

The kings of France have always borne three bees upon their banners, although they later disguised them and referred to them as "fleur-de-lis". When Napoleon usurped the throne of France, he adopted a bee as his emblem not only to symbolize the initial of his last name "Bonaparte" but to give to his upstart regime a certain air of respectability.

Other beliefs have been prevalent at other times about the bee. For example in the Greek myths we find Venus informing her son Cupid that he was like a bee, that which stings and at the same time brings sweetness.

The honey of the bee was supposed to have a certain curative power for afflictions of speech so that Pindar, whose name has been immortalized in the "Pindarian Odes" was supposed to have had his lips touched with honey. This legend has been passed down to us in our phrase of "honeyed words" etc. "There is a curious incident in the Kalevala, the national epic of Finland. The mother of Lemmirikainen rakes the fragments of her son from the river bed and by her spells she pieces him together. But he remains dumb and lifeless until she anoints him with the honey bought to her from the heavenly pastures by the bee. This honey completely restores him to life and speech." (The Symbolism of the Beehive: The Iowa Grand Lodge Bulletin Geo. W. Bullamore, February 1930.)

Looking further back, even before the time of the Egyptians, to the era of the cult of Cybele, "thou art black but comely", we find that even before there was the slightest conception of the sun god "RA". the old earth-mother Cybele was worshipped throughout the known world. Many of her cults worshipped her under the guise of the Queen bee, the mother of the hive. Thus considering the hive as an emblem of the world, and the queen of it as the mother goddess we may assume that this might be one of the concepts which the ancient progenitors of our order wished to portray. In this religion, the god had a very inferior role. He was merely the consort of the mother and having violated her, was immediately mutilated and slain by her. This is the same way in which the queen-bee serves the drone as soon as she is fertilized. During their relation the organs of the drone are ripped from him and he is left to fall to the earth and die.

Bees as a symbol of immortality are found in the pages of the Bible. In the book of Judges we read that Samson, after slaying the lion, observed a swarm of bees inhabiting the carcass and taking some of the honey therefrom ate of it.

Could this not be a survival of the old Egyptian religion, from which so much of our Judeo-Christian theology is borrowed, in that the bee is meant to symbolize the soul coming forth from the body as does the bee from the body of the lion? There is a great possibility that this story, in itself, is not an historical narrative but an allegory intending to teach a lesson of resurrection.

Thus looking at the story of Samson and the lion as an allegory we are able again to use the bee to typify the concept of immortality.

Death and the bee have always been inseparably connected. In most folk-lore we find that the bees must be told of a death in the family.

Let us then, rather than looking at the beehive as a Lodge full of industrious Freemasons, or operative Masons as the case may be, cheerfully building their cells and storing their honey, look at this

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same beehive as an emblem of the world and the bees as the souls contained within that world, and take hope in the symbolism that as these bees shall wing their way toward greener and more fertile fields, so shall the soul of man take wing and ascend to a glorious immortality. In this manner we can bring the emblem of the beehive into a closer relation with the other monitorial emblems of the Master's lecture and as Master Masons enjoy the happy reflections consequent on a well spent life and die in the hope of a glorious immortality

MASONIC TRIVIA (and Facts)

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Sept 1993, The Short Talk Bulletin, Masonic Service Association of the United States

When did Freemasonry begin?

No one knows when Freemasonry began. The first written reference to Masonry as an organization appeared in 1356, when a Code of Mason Regulations was formally drawn up at the Guildhall in London, England. In 1376, we find information about the London Masons' Company and it is interesting to note its early evolution. According to Grand Lodge, it leased in 1463 some land and buildings for 99 years, and the buildings were converted into the first Masons' Hall. (In the 99th year it purchased this property outright.); in 1472, the company was given a Grant of Arms with the motto "God Is Our Guide," later changed to "In the Lord is all our trust..". The Arms, but slightly changed, remain part of the Arms of the United Grand Lodge of England today.

Where are the earliest lodge records to be found in Scotland? In England?

In Scotland, the earliest lodge records still in existence were recorded in Aitchison's Haven in 1598; minutes of Mary's Chapel Lodge at Edinburgh are unbroken from 1599; in England, according to Gould, only the records from Alnwick between the dates of 1700 and 1717, are known to have been recorded. Grand Lodge tells us "Early evidence relating to other [than Acception] non-operative Lodges is very scarce." From many sources we learn of Elias Ashmole's entry on October 16, 1646 in his diary: "I was made a Free-Mason at Warrenton in Lancashire" along with "Coll: Henry Mainwaring of Karinham in Cheshire." He added the names of seven members of the Lodge. The records of this Lodge have disappeared.

When did Freemasonry enter Ireland?

No one knows. It was some time after a Grand Lodge was formed in England before

the first Lodge came into being in Ireland.

How long have lodges with speculative masons been in existence?

To be historically accurate, one cannot go beyond six centuries to find lodges of masons accepting men other than operative craftsmen. And for many centuries few, other than actual craftsmen, were accepted. But it is not unreasonable to assume and other educated men were readily united with the craftsmen (most of whom couldn't read or write). Grand Lodge says the first record of non-operatives being accepted was in July 1634 when Lord Alexander, Sir Anthony Alexander and Sir Alexander Strachan were admitted "fellow craft" in the Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel). Coin dates non-operative masons from 1600, in the Lodge of Edinburgh, but McLeod believes this is incorrect. The non-operative, John Boswell, attended the trial of a warden, not a meeting of the Lodge. But this Lodge did admit Lord Alexander of Menstrie in 1634, as a Fellowcraft. Then Coil finds non-operatives in Kelso, 1652; Aberdeen in 1670; Kilwinning in 1672. He found the last of the operative masons as members of a Lodge in Lodge Glasgow in 1842.
