



Pillars of Light



Compiled by the
Editorial Team of the
Grand Lodge Library

Volume 4 Issue 9 (46)

September 2008

Editorial

In the view of many, there is but one fundamental problem in our world and all others are secondary and auxiliary or resulting from the main one. *The problem is the immense conflict between ignorance and education, between science and superstition, of truth against the falsehoods of prejudice and intolerance.* It is clear that all other social, political, religious problems of modern times might be considered as strongly related to the basic conflict between scientific development and diffusion of scientific knowledge and the negative aspects of their proliferation in some parts of the world. We can sincerely say that this conflict between knowledge and ignorance is at the base of the loss of membership in our Lodges. It is the cause of lack of interest, the cause of our diminishing numbers. There has never been a more excellent statement of the benefits derived from the solution of the basis problem than the maxim:

"Know the truth, it shall make you free."

Certainly, the Rituals of our Craft reflect the profound thought and the designs of our ceremonies which follow the thread of advancing education. They spread Light amongst our candidates, leading them through the first steps, out of their state of blindness - through the darkness of their ignorance - into the uplifting light of truth and knowledge. But that is not a simple and instant process. The time taken by the ceremonies of Initiation, Passing and Raising is not enough to take them over the abyss of darkness to the perfect light.

More time is needed and the period between ceremonies must allow the candidate, the necessary time for learning, reflecting and finally understanding. Time and work are therefore of essence. Assiduity in presence, regularity in Lodge are essential to achieve the goal of education, before a Candidate can become a Master Mason. Therefore, we all welcome, wholeheartedly, the Grand Master's decision to impose a regular attendance of twelve meetings in Lodge before the ceremony of raising to the Sublime Degree. We must now make sure that the new Mason's time in Lodge is not wasted and that from the beginning, he is given access to all sources of information. I suggest that at his Initiation, he be handed a Library Registration Form. His Mentor must ensure that he is regularly reading appropriate material that will make his discovery of our Mysteries, a captivating experience. He will find in our team of volunteer librarians, guidance and readiness to provide answers to all his questions. The Library should become a practical support to Mentors and Candidates alike. With good management the candidate has enough time to emerge as a Master Mason, articulate and ready to enjoy further discoveries of higher spheres of knowledge.

If we respect the rules, our candidates will reward us for contributing to the strengthening of their Masonic personality, with a level of Masonic knowledge that can only benefit our Craft.

Joseph V. Haffner—Grand Librarian

BRETHREN OF ASIA

by RW Bro Raymond Apple AO RFD PJGW PGC

Masonic history has become one of my passions and I have done a fair amount of writing on the subject. I cannot claim to have solved many or even any of the problems that surround the emergence of Freemasonry as we know it, though I am rather certain that the legends on which we have been brought up are closer to dreams than to reality. As far as I am concerned, speculative Freemasonry is a creation of the 18th century, probably deriving from Scotland and not continental Europe, and with little if any organic connection with the so-called operative masons of the Middle Ages.

But Masonry is not without its pre-history, not specifically located within the building trade but part of the age-old human fascination with schemes and secrets, cabals and conspiracies, plots and parties, bands and brotherhoods.

The primary school playground was my first introduction to gangs and clubs with their pledges of secrecy and loyalty, their rudimentary rituals and modes of recognition, their grandiose objectives and swashbuckling oaths and initiations. Nobody wanted to be left out but some were, the criterion being somewhat racist and intolerant. In later years I was solemnly told that small children have no racist bias other than what they hear at home, but I don't believe a word of it. At the age of five or six we were already thorough-going bigots, including or excluding others from our clubs on the basis of mere facial appearance without the slightest idea that others had minds, consciences and beliefs that were at least as genuine as ours.

Time did not entirely cure us or any other children of the prejudices of the playground, nor eradicate the feeling that it was good to have a group identity which often remained a secret that was not to be revealed to the uninitiated outsider.

Back then to the pre-history of Freemasonry. Countless movements and brotherhoods, many quite impressive in their idealism and altruism, preceded the emergence of the craft. Some lasted for long periods. Some – like Jonah's gourd in the Bible – "arose in a night and perished in a night". Some became relatively respectable while they lasted; some were part of economic, political, social and philosophical revolutions. Many were torn asunder by dissension; countless breakaways took place, and these in turn also split apart in an atmosphere of mutual recrimination.

No wonder that official Freemasonry developed a strict policy of non-recognition of fringe movements and even declined to approve a number of groups that adamantly declared that they were Masonic. The result is that Freemasons who contemplate attending a meeting of an Order outside formal Masonry are advised to seek the advice and guidance of their Grand Lodge.

There are of course academic studies of some such movements, and I dare say that I could have tried to join the ranks of the researchers and writers who have worked on this theme.

Continued on page 3



We refine our interests...

Currently we are making renewed efforts toward the discovery of new sources of knowledge. The NSW Lodge of Research has changed its name to The Discovery Lodge of Research, and rightly so as we need to discover first and research our findings later. We are following the direction established by the Grand Master, a new direction which will guide us through an increased emphasis on Masonic education to a wider understanding of the Mysteries: the Esoteric side of our Craft. Learning, learning, learning is the command of the day. We will start to discover the enchanting parts that Masonry is not readily and openly offering but encourages us to follow from the first steps in our Masonic life.

I feel that some expressions, some words, some ideas must be properly understood before we can research the subjects. We will start to encounter them as soon as we take our first steps. So here are some explanations – widely accepted - which will be needed in the future and will, I hope become the basis of more profound research.

The Library of the United Grand Lodge contains a vast collection of books, many of which are dedicated to these subjects. Theosophy (Theosophia) - means Divine Wisdom in the sense of Divine Science or Knowledge or Wisdom of Gods. The word 'Theos' means 'god' in Greek, one of the divine beings but certainly not GOD in the sense attached to the word by monotheists today. Theosophy, therefore is not 'Wisdom of God,' as translated by some, but *Divine Wisdom*, such as that possessed by the gods. The name comes to us from the Alexandrian philosophers called 'lovers of truth', Philalethians, from 'phil' (loving) and 'aletheia' (truth).

The 'Wisdom-Religion' was largely accepted in antiquity and the quasi-similarity between primitive religious philosophies is proven to us by the identical doctrines taught to the Initiates during the MYSTERIES.

The Neo-Platonists were a large body, and belonged to various religious philosophies. In those days, the Jew Aristobulus affirmed that the ethics of Aristotle represented the esoteric teachings of the Law of Moses; Philo Judaeus endeavoured to reconcile the *Pentateuch* with the Pythagorean and Platonic philosophies; and Josephus was convinced that the Essenes of Carmel were simply the copyists and followers of the Egyptian Therapeutae (the healers).

Every ancient philosophical cult offered an exoteric (outward public) worship. Furthermore, it is a well known fact that the MYSTERIES of the ancients comprised 'greater' (secret) and 'lesser' (public) Mysteries.

The Jewish Rabbis called their secular rites, the Merkavah (the exterior body or the vehicle) and the Hidden Soul – their highest secret knowledge. Pythagoras called his Gnosis 'the knowledge of things that are', and preserved that knowledge for his pledged disciples only; and he pledged them to silence and secrecy.

Occult alphabets and secret ciphers are the development of the old Egyptian *hieratic* writings, the secret of which were, in days of old, in the possession of Hierogrammatists or initiated Egyptian Priests.

Finally, we find the same approach in early Christianity, among the Gnostics, and even in the teachings of Christ. He spoke to the multitudes in parables which had a two-fold meaning and explained his reasons only to his disciples. "To you," he said, "it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; but unto them that are without; all these things are done in parables" (Mark iv.11). "The Essenes of Judea and Carmel made similar distinctions, dividing their adherents into neophytes, brethren, and the *perfect*, or those initiated" (Ecler.Phil.).

No books exist today which explain the secrets of alchemy in plain language. All are symbolical or in parables; and as the key to these has been lost for ages, how can one learn the correct meaning of what one is reading and studying? Therein lays the greatest danger of being lead to unconscious *black magic*. Therefore we must have an initiate for a Master. While two thirds of our society ridicule the mere notion that there is anything in Theosophy, Occultism, Spiritualism or in the Kabala, the other third keeps asking questions, studies and discovers the opposite.

Some believe in the mystical, and even the *supernatural* (!) but each believes in his own way. Others will rush into the study of Kabala, Psychism, Mesmerism, Spiritualism or some form or another of Mysticism. Result: no two men think alike, no two are in agreement upon any fundamental occult principles and many claim for themselves the ultimate knowledge on the subject and make outsiders believe that they are convinced adepts.

Not only is there no scientific and accurate knowledge of Occultism, or of true astrology, but no one has any idea of what real Occultism means. Some limit ancient wisdom to the Kabala and the Jewish Zohar. Others regard Swedenborg as the ultimate expression of the highest wisdom; while others again see in mesmerism the great secret of ancient magic.

The ultimate truth lies at the end of a long road of studying and discovering - one milestone after the other – a progressive and inspired research under the guidance of illuminated, skilled Masters of the Art.

Undoubtedly, in our rich Library, we have the means for study and the Masters of the Art are to be found amongst us. All is here; ready to illuminate our way towards the discovery of the hidden Mysteries, the true treasures of Freemasonry.

Joseph V.Haffner

(Inspired by the works of H.P.Blavatzky and the new path to follow, more information will follow in the next issues of our Pillars of Light)

Brother Secretary that it would be greatly appreciated if you could include our link:

www.uglnsw.freemasonry.org.au/Library/Default.htm

in every Notice Paper sent to the members of your Lodge.



BRETHREN OF ASIA

Continued from page 1

But I am afraid that I have allowed personal curiosity to impel me into the subject of this present paper – personal because a movement, however short-lived, that used Biblical and rabbinic terminology, based itself on Jewish mystical doctrines, had colourful Jewish figures in its leadership, and preceded the so-called Jewish Enlightenment, is bound to appeal to a Mason who is a Rabbi.

The Asiatic Brethren were known by several names, e.g. Knights and Brothers of Asia and “Asiatischen Brueder vom Rosenkreuz”. Asia was not meant in a strictly geographical sense. It was a European order, introduced in Vienna with Berlin connections. “Asia” figured in the title because of a New Testament passage, Revelation 1:11, which spoke of seven congregations or churches in Asia, symbolic of the spread of Christian teachings. Later, various legends developed around Asian groups cut off from the Christian mainstream after the fall of Rome and the rise of Islam.

Probably an offshoot of and breakaway from the Rosicrucians (the Rose Cross or Rosenkreuz), the movement was one of many that sought the secrets of life and truth. What made them particularly interesting was the participation of both Jews and Christians with an amalgam of Jewish and Christian kabbalistic ideas laced with colourful imagery and sexual symbolism. For the Jews it was a welcome expression of religious tolerance, however short-lived; the Christians – or at least some of them – probably also had proselytising thoughts of converting the Jews to Christianity.

A word is necessary about the Rosicrucians. Said to have been founded in medieval Germany, the movement claimed to have begun as a circle of the devotees of a certain Father Christian Rosenkreuz, though whether such a person existed is problematical. Some regard the name as a pseudonym of Francis Bacon (1561-1626), the English philosopher and essayist. Esoteric doctrines concerning the natural and spiritual realm were advocated as the means of achieving a universal reformation of mankind. An attempt at linking the Rosy Cross and the early Masonic order is made by the Scottish poet/historian Henry Adamson in his “Muses’ Threnodie”, 1638, when he wrote:

“We are Brethren of the Rosie Crosse:

We have the Mason Word and second sight...”

Before proceeding with our subject, something must be said about the so-called Mason Word. The fact that there was such a word is attested in Masonic literature but what it actually was has not been fully established. It must have signified an apprentice whose training had equipped him to work on his own, but the word is said to have been lost with the death of Hiram Abiff, the central event in the third degree ritual, so it is a substitute word which is whispered in the candidate’s ear. It complicates the story to discover that before about 1730 it was not the raising of Hiram Abiff that was enacted in the ritual but the attempt by the three sons of Noah to raise their father in order to discover his secrets.

In the search for the original Mason Word it does not help us to analyse the substitute name, though much can be said about the often comical mispronunciations and misinterpreta-

tions of that name. It is likely that, as with the other key words of the ritual, the original Word was from Biblical Hebrew. Henry Adamson tantalises his readers by asserting, “We have the Mason Word”, and we wish he had even hinted at it. It is possible that it came from a Hebrew root *aleph-vav-nun* with the meaning of “vigour”, or perhaps a root *aleph-mem-vav-nun* with the meaning of “craftsman”.

There were many imitators and offshoots of Rosicrucianism, of which one is the order of Asiatic Brethren. A major difference between the movements was that entering Rosicrucianism, as the word “cross” indicates, would be a problem for Jews, whilst the Asiatic Brethren had its significant Jewish component and included Jewish as well as Christian (and Muslim) ceremonies in its rituals.

Like many such movements, it used quasi-Biblical and aristocratic titles such as prince, priest and levite. It added nine degrees to the standard three to make a total of twelve, equivalent to the twelve tribes of ancient Israel.

Brought into being in the 1780s and barely surviving for a decade (though at least one of its publications continued until about 1810), the Asiatic Brethren were spearheaded by Hans Carl von Ecker und Eckhofen, otherwise known as Carl Ferdinand von Boscamp. He attracted support from a motley group, never very large in numbers, that included monks with theosophical tendencies; European aristocrats; Enlightenment thinkers; and a sprinkling of wealthy Jews. Strange bedfellows, and the movement could not last. From the Jewish point of view, the order became part of an ideological tug-of-war between mystical and rationalist currents – the esoteric *kabbalah* and the exoteric *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment movement.

The founder’s Jewish secretary was Ephraim Joseph Hirschfeld (c. 1755-1820). Hirschfeld was the son of a synagogue cantor in Karlsruhe. He had a Jewish and general education and was a supporter of the *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment movement which urged Jews to involve themselves in wider cultural pursuits.

Hirschfeld was the theoretician of the movement and went so far as to claim that its writings were ancient and were originally in Hebrew or Aramaic. About 1791 the movement declined, possibly because Hirschfeld was quarrelsome, sued his patron for a debt and was accused of threatening his life. Ecker argued that Hirschfeld had introduced too much *kabbalistic* Jewish teaching into the order and expelled him. Ecker died in mid-1791 and Hirschfeld was released but not restored to his position; indeed he was accused of writing a polemic against the movement. Eventually he returned to Karlsruhe and later lived in Offenbach.

Hirschfeld’s debts were paid by another Jewish member was Moses Dobroschka or Dobruska, an alchemist from a rabbinic family, who introduced the movement to the German translations of Sabbatean writings. In 1775 he (at least nominally) became a Christian, assuming the name Franz Thomas von Schoenfeld or Scheinfeld; he was also known as Junius Frey. In 1794, at the time of Robespierre’s Reign of Terror, he was executed in France as a Jacobin radical; it was also said that he had spied for Austria.

Continues on page 4



BRETHREN OF ASIA Continued from page 3

The Jews in the movement included followers of two pseudo-messiahs. Several dozen such individuals arose over the centuries and manipulated the minds of the masses, generally when morale was low and the dream of redemption sustained the people's spirits. Time after time a wave of immense enthusiasm led to bitter disillusionment, especially as a consequence of the rise- and fall - of Sabbatai (Shabb'tai) Zvi and Jacob Frank, who were both eventually seen to possess feet of clay. Sabbatai Zvi became a Muslim and Jacob Frank a Christian, though their followers continued to believe in them and argued that their "conversions" were spurious and part of a deliberate strategy aimed at securing political support. Sabbateans and Frankists who joined supposedly idealistic movements such as the Asiatic Brethren presumably expected that they would help achieve what the Biblical prophets called "the end of days", but it was a vain hope.

A more difficult problem for the Jews was the engagement of irreconcilable strands in Jewish thinking – on the one hand the esoteric, magic, sensual and often anti-intellectual mysticism of the *Kabbalah* (with its Christian version of which something will be said in a moment) and on the other the highly rational intellectuality of the *Haskalah*, the movement to introduce the norms of European secular culture into Jewish identity. The presence of both forces within the Asiatic Brethren could hardly be expected to work and must have produced an eclectic soup which the few theoreticians could not handle (see Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, 1961). But neither in the Asiatic Brethren nor, it must be said, in most of the official expressions of Freemasonry that developed later, was there any rigorous reconciliation between competing elements of intellectual tradition.

Why then were Jews attracted to movements such as the Asiatic Brethren? Precisely because they had hitherto been barred from much of European culture. In Spain and some other places the Jewish contribution to civilisation was widespread and influential, but this was not the general picture. On the whole the Jew was an outsider, in a country but not of it. If an opportunity arose to be accepted and treated tolerantly it was not to be spurned. If a movement endeavoured to unite Jewish and Muslim tradition with Christian teaching it was to be encouraged.

This was seen as the aim of Christian *Kabbalah*, pioneered in the 13th and early 14th centuries by Raymon Lull, the mystic and philosopher. Attempting to bring the system of nature and the principles of geometry and language into one system echoing the Jewish *Kabbalah*, he was followed by others who believed they could prove Jesus and the Trinity in *kabbalistic* fashion. Information about *Kabbalah* entered Christian circles through a number of Jewish converts and then by means of translations of the *Zohar*, the handbook of the Jewish mystics. The Asiatic Brethren were an exciting expression of this aim while they lasted.

A warm Masonic Tale

It was a tale of Masonic men surrounding a campfire in the Old West, at night, discussing the Fraternity and its teachings. One old man listened patiently, and finally spoke up:

"I can tell you more about Masonry in a little example than some of the great Masonic philosophers can in books. Everybody stand up, and gather in a circle around the campfire."

They did that. "Now, everybody holds hands with the man next to him." They did that too. "Now, what do you see, looking ahead?"

"The face of a Brother Mason through the flames."

"What do you feel in front of you?" "The warmth of the fire, and the comfort it brings on a cool night."

"What do you feel at your side?" "The warm hand of a Brother." "OK. Now drop the hands and turn around." They did so. "Now, what do you see, looking ahead?" "Complete darkness."

"What do you feel, looking ahead?" "A sense of loneliness, of being alienated."

"And what do you feel at your side?" "Nothing at all."

What do you feel on your backside?" "The warmth of the fire." "So it is with Masonry." said the old man.

"In Masonic gatherings, you can feel the warmth of Masonic interaction, you can see the face of a Brother through the light Masonry brings to you, and you can always feel the warm hand of a Brother.

When you turn away from Masonry, and are out in the world, you see darkness, feel alienated and alone, and do not feel the warm hand of your Masonic Brother. But Masonry, and the warmth and light it brings, are just a turn away from you.
(Author unknown)

Masonic Recipe

Take 2 heaping cups of Patience

One heart full of Love

2 handfuls of Generosity

Dash of Laughter

One head full of Understanding

Sprinkle generously with Kindness

Add plenty of Faith and mix well

Spread over a period of a lifetime

And serve everybody you meet.



Enlightened Pillars of the Grand Librarian

Any Questions? Ask the Grand Librarian-POL edited by Rt Wor Bro J. V. Haffner

Q: The Ritual mentions the following phrase: "...have not thought it derogatory to their dignity to exchange the Sceptre for the Trowel." **Could you please explain the meaning of this sentence?**

A: I prefer to let one of my illustrious predecessors, RW Bro JRW Danks PDGM and Grand Librarian 1969 – 1982 to answer to your question, simply because nobody could do it better:

"The Art of the operative mason has always been considered that of a cutter and shaper of stone and it could well be that this led to the trowel being ignored by the Craft as a working tool. On the other hand, the trowel remains the only surviving link with operative masonry in the laying of a foundation stone with Masonic ceremonial.

In the 18th century the trowel played an important part in our ceremonies and Bernard Jones refers in his 'Freemasons Guide and Compendium' to the fact that a lodge at Carmarthen in June 1754 paid for 5 trowels and the mending of 12 others.

In the early 18th century the trowel had become the weapon of the Entered Apprentice whose duty, at this early stage of his Masonic career, was to act as inner doorkeeper, a duty which later devolved upon the inner guard. In the records of some old Lodges the newest initiate, the junior Entered Apprentice, is armed with a trowel.

A Library's real value is the access to knowledge that is available in it. A Library is a home for freedom of thought, freedom of speech and freedom of action.

(from the Grand Lodge of Iowa Bulletin 2005)

Q: Bro. Librarian, could you, please, explain to me what is the origin of the tassels and the rosettes on the apron?

A: Originally the apron was tied around the body with a cord which fastened in front. The tassels first appear about 1827 as decorative ends of this cord. Later they were widened to contain seven cords as a symbolic reminder.

The development of the modern apron began in 1717 with a reduction in size but with flap up and fastened to the vest buttons. After 1740 leather was used in its manufacture.

In 1775 rosettes first appeared – two on the F.C. apron, the Master of the Lodge wearing three rosettes. In 1786 the size was reduced again, small enough to be made from the skin of one lamb. In 1796, the Tau appeared as an illustration of two levels back to back. At this time all adornments and fringes were controlled by Grand Lodge.

At the reconciliation and unification of the Ancients and the Moderns to form one United Grand Lodge of England, a watered silk border with silver braid, and gold for Grand Lodge Officers, was introduced and two years later uniformity was insisted upon and strict control was imposed. As mentioned, in 1827, the tassels appear.

Mystically the Square apron represents material things and the triangular flap, spiritual. Flap down means the descent of the spirit into matter and also the number of angles - 4 plus 3 equal 7 – refer to the Perfection in Freemasonry.

But do not forget that more important, and above all, the apron is a personal reminder of the practical side of Masonry.

Are you in love with our traditions and the richness of our heritage?

Do you wish to delve into the Hub of Knowledge, your Library?

**Will you invest a few hours a week and be recognized
as a valuable member of our volunteers team?**

**All you need is a true love for the Craft, its literature & a Masonic heart that
is ready to offer, and glean the satisfaction of serving the Order.**

Contact the Grand Librarian RW Bro. Joseph V. Haffner Ph. (02)9284 2825