

THE HIRAMIC LEGEND: WHENCE & WHEREFORE



A MASONIC ESSAY

By

W.Bro.C.S.MADHAVAN
Lodge Jyothi # 253
Salem

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PREFACE

The Hiramic Legend is the heart of the third degree ritual. Hiram Abif is one of the brightest characters recorded in the annals of Freemasonry, and his story is held up as the shining example for all Masons to emulate. Being the principal actor in the drama of the ritual, he might fairly be expected to make a ceremonial entrance from the wings. But Hiram comes to centre-stage through a trap door as it were. The legend is presented, suddenly and dramatically, in the third degree, without the least hint of it in the preceding degrees; neither the Entered Apprentice nor the Fellow-Craft knows anything at all about Hiram Abif.

Masonic scholars have tried to trace the origin of the Hiramic Legend, and discover when and why it was introduced in our ritual. But there is very little written record available about the internal working of the lodges before the early 18th century, and the little that is available is "complex, confusing, and often fragmentary". Our knowledge of the history of those times is incomplete and obscure, and according to Robert Gould:

To a necessarily great extent therefore, all speculations with regard to the more remote past of the sodality must repose on inference or conjecture; and deductions which are accepted with easy faith by some, will be rejected as irrational by others.

In this paper I have tried to present, with as little speculation as possible, a plausible and coherent account of the origin of the Hiramic Legend and of its inclusion in the traditions of our Craft.

With this rather lengthy preamble let us now start on the subject of this paper, for doing which there can be no better place than the VSL.

HIRAM ABIF IN THE BIBLE

The Bible has two accounts of the building of King Solomon's Temple - in the Second Book of Chronicles, and the First Book of Kings. According to Second Chronicles (ii:3) Solomon requested Hiram, King of Tyre, to furnish men and materials for building the Temple. Solomon also asked for a specially gifted craftsman :

Send me now, a man cunning to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in iron, and in purple, and crimson, and blue, and that can skill to grave with the cunning men that are with me in Judah, and in Jerusalem.
(ii:7)

The King of Tyre accordingly sent Hiram to King Solomon, saying:

And now I have sent a cunning man, endued with understanding, of Hiram my father's, the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father was a man of Tyre, skillful to work in gold, and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple, in blue, and in fine linen, and in crimson; also to grave any manner of graving, and to find out every device which shall be

put to him, with thy cunning men, and with the cunning men of my lord
David thy father.
(ii. 13 &14)

From this it is apparent that Hiram was esteemed highly in his profession as to have been deputed for so important a work. He is alluded to as "Hiram Abi," and the word "Abi," meaning "my father," is usually taken in the sense of "master," a title of respect and distinction.

Solomon had asked for a craftsman to work and engrave on metals and that is exactly what Hiram was. The pieces which he executed for the Temple were:

The two pillars, and the pommels and the chapters which were on the top of the pillars ; and four hundred pomegranates on the two wreaths; two rows of pomegranates on each wreath, to cover the two pommels of the chapters which were upon the pillars. He made also bases, and lavers made he upon the bases; one sea and twelve oxen under it. The pots also, and the shovels and the flesh hooks and all their instruments, did Hiram his father make to King Solomon, for the house of the Lord, of bright brass.

Chronicles (2: iii. 15 to 2: iv:16) & Kings (1: vii: 15 to 45)

So how did a skilled metalworker come to be known as a master stone mason? Albert Mackey offers an interesting explanation.

In the original Hebrew text of the passage in the book of Chronicles, the words which designate the profession of Hiram Abif are Khoresh nekhoshet,- literally, a worker in brass. The error into which the old legendists and the modern Masonic writers have fallen, in supposing him to have been a stone-mason or an architect, has arisen from the mistranslation in the Authorized Version of the passage in Chronicles where he is said to have been " skillful to work in gold and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber." The words in the original are Baabanim vebagnelsim, in stones and in woods,- that is, in precious stones and in woods of various kinds. That is to say, besides being a coppersmith he was a lapidary and a carver and gilder.

The wrong translation of the words 'stones and woods' in the singular to 'stone and timber', could well have led to the supposition that he was a stonemason.

There are two other differences between the accounts given in the two texts. In the Second Chronicles he is described as "the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father was a man of Tyre", while First Kings says " He was a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass".

Similarly, according to the Chronicles Hiram was sent to Jerusalem by the King of Tyre, when Solomon started to build the temple. But the Book of Kings says that "King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre" (vii; 1 & 8) when the temple was completed.

While most Masonic historians dismiss these as minor discrepancies, some argue otherwise, and suggest that there could have been two persons - possibly father and son - and claim that this interpretation confirms the death of Hiram. The first, a master craftsman who could work on any metal, who was probably murdered before his work was completed. And the second, his son, (his mother having become a widow because of the death of his father), who could work only in brass. Solomon sent and fetched him out of Tyre, instead of merely summoning him, (that is he sent his men to conduct him safely because of what happened to his father) to complete the work left unfinished by the death of his father.

Be it as it may, let us next look into Hiram in our Masonic history.

HIRAM ABIF IN MASONIC TRADITIONS

The earliest factual information that we have about Masonic history comes from a collection of documents known as the "Old Charges" or the "Manuscript Constitution" of Masonry. Two of the earliest of these are the Regius Manuscript of 1390 and the Cooke Manuscript of 1410. There are 130 versions of these documents running right through the 18th century. We meet with the first allusion to Hiram Abif in the Cooke MS. It says:

And at the making of the Temple in Solomon's time, as stated in the Bible in the third book of Kings and the fifth chapter, Solomon held four score thousand masons at work. And the son of the king of Tyre was his master mason.

Here Adoniram, the chief of the workmen on Mount Lebanon who was "over the levy", and who was later stoned to death, has been confused with Hiram Abif. The literal meaning of Adoniram being Lord Hiram, it has been mistakenly concluded that this Lord Hiram was the son of the King of Tyre. In nearly all the succeeding manuscripts the word Adon, seems to have been corrupted, and he is called variously as Aynon, Aman, Amon and Adon.

The first mention of the Hiramic Legend, including the murder, the discovery and the raising occurs in 1730, in Samuel Prichard's *Masonry Dissected*. But the name of Hiram Abif is first found in Dr. James Anderson's *Book of Constitutions* of 1723 in which he says

The King of Tyre sent to King Solomon his namesake Hiram Abif, the prince of architects . . . the wise King Solomon was Grand Master of the Lodge at Jerusalem, King Hiram was Grand Master of the Lodge at Tyre, and the inspired Hiram Abif was Master of Work.

The second edition of Anderson's *Constitutions* published in 1738 mentions the death of Hiram Abif.

Their joy was soon interrupted by the sudden death of their dear master, Hiram Abif, whom they decently interred in the Lodge near the Temple, according to ancient Usage.

And that is the first known reference to the death of Hiram Abif.

ORIGIN OF THE HIRAMIC LEGEND

The question that naturally arises is how did the elaborate legend of the builder originate from such slender references, and why was a tragedy invented where there probably was none?

Most Masonic researchers are of the view that the Hiramic Legend is simply the adaptation of the Legend of Orisis, with a Masonic and Biblical background. John Fellows suggests "The story of Hiram is only another version, like those of Adonis and Astarte, and of Ceres and Prosperine, of the fable of Osiris and Isis."

This legend is briefly narrated below:

Osiris was the wise and benevolent king of Egypt who was killed by his jealous brother Seth. This evil brother then cut up Osiris' body and scattered the parts throughout Egypt. Osiris had a faithful wife Isis who, along with her sister Nephthys, gathered the pieces together. Using her magical abilities, Isis put the pieces back together, but Osiris could never again live like the other gods. He, therefore, reigned as lord of the underworld. Horus, the falcon-headed son of Osiris and Isis killed his uncle Seth in battle and became the ruler of Egypt. Horus was born to Isis after the death of Orisis, and was therefore called a widow's son.

As Fellows so categorically states, "The likeness throughout is so exact as not to admit of doubt."

We might now digress a little to briefly discuss the structure of the Craft and the evolution of the ritual in the 17th and 18th centuries.

TRANSITION FROM OPERATIVE TO SPECULATIVE MASONRY

Until the 17th century, Freemasonry was mainly operative, and consisted of three classes or ranks - not degrees - of Masons, namely, Masters, who made contracts and undertook the work of building for employers; Fellow-Crafts or Journeymen employed by these Masters; and Entered Apprentices, who were received and taught the art of building. After seven years the apprentice was required to offer an essay or master's piece as proof of proficiency, and then admitted as a Master of the Art and a Fellow of the Craft. This ceremony of admission is the basis of our ritual.

In those days Fellow Crafts followed the work from building site to building site. When a building was completed they travelled, sometimes a considerable distance, to the site of another building, seeking employment. As they were not so well known to one another or to the Masters, it was necessary for the Master

to be satisfied that the man was not a cowan, or rough layer, but capable of skilled work. It also had to be ensured that that he had been regularly received into the Guild, a necessary condition of employment in those days. So "lodges" were formed at each site, to meet when necessary, to admit apprentices and Fellow Crafts. According to C.N.Batham:

The picture, then, is of lodges throughout the country meeting irregularly as occasion demanded, perhaps not surviving for any great length of time, and of informal meetings of groups of members of the Craft for the sole purpose of initiating friends of theirs. There is nothing other than brief references to their ceremonies as, unfortunately for Masonic historians, brethren of those days were pledged to the utmost secrecy about all aspects of Free-masonry and so committed nothing to writing if they could possibly avoid doing so.

But as the erection of great buildings such as cathedrals, palaces, and castles grew less, masons became more settled in towns where they were employed in more ordinary building. Then they formed what Bro. Knoop calls "territorial lodges". After the settling of lodges at fixed centres, non-operative members began to be admitted. Thus in the 17th century the transition from "operative" to "speculative" got well under way. Hughan remarks:

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The 17th century operative Masons were most favourable to the speculative element in their midst, and encouraged their admission to such an extent, that sometimes the Lodges consisted almost exclusively of brethren in no way connected with building.

This culminated in the transition to a wholly speculative character in the 18th century. Alfred Mackey says:

These two elements of Freemasonry continued to exist together for a very long period of time. But at length, from causes which must be attributed to the increasing power and influence of the Speculative element, as well as to intellectual progress, there came a total and permanent disseverance of the two. . . . The men of culture and science who were in constant communion with their operative associates, were getting dissatisfied with a society of mechanics who had lost much of that skill as architects. . . . The first act of severance occurred in England in the year 1717, when the Grand Lodge of "Free and Accepted Masons" was organised followed nineteen years afterward by the organization of the Grand Lodge of Scotland with similar methods.

EVOLUTION OF THE THREE DEGREE SYSTEM

We had seen earlier that, in the early 17th century the ritual consisted of a simple ceremony of accepting an apprentice, and that because of illiteracy and secrecy, there exist few records of the nature of this ceremony. Some Masonic scholars hold that there were two ceremonies. G.W. Speth believes that:

The Apprentice was "made" a Mason by some ceremony of a secret character, and received certain signs and words and so on for recognition. At the end of his servitude, his passing into the ranks of free craftsmen, Masters of the Art and fellows of the Fraternity, was celebrated by another secret ceremony, in which further signs and words and so on were communicated, and that this ceremony contained the essentials of the present third degree.

This theory is borne out by the Edinburgh Register House Manuscript dated 1696, found in the Public Records Office of Edinburgh. This contains the earliest description of the ceremonies and catechisms of the two degrees.

We now move on to the founding of the Grand Lodge in 1717. We definitely know that there were two degrees at that time and the second or senior degree was titled "Master and Fellow-Craft." The founding of the Grand Lodge also signalled the transition of the Craft from Operative to Speculative, the Speculatives being dominant. In time, the simple Operative ritual was no longer considered to be fitting to the character of the new Order and was progressively replaced by a more ornate one adapted to the designs of Speculative Freemasonry. According to Mackey:

On the establishment of the Grand Lodge . . . Speculative Freemasons . . .
.
. . . perfected the transition from wholly Operative to wholly Speculative Freemasonry by the fabrication of degrees and the development of a more philosophical ritual, composed, as it has always been conjectured, by Desaguliers and Anderson, but principally always by the former.

The original first degree was split into two and the second degree became the third. The Three-Degree System grew up by a gradual process between 1717 and 1730 and the ritual evolved from a simple ceremony for communicating the secrets of the Craft, to a sophisticated philosophical system of allegory and symbolism. This evolution from rudimentary ceremonies and catechisms, to the beautiful and elaborate ritual of today continued - through the time of the Union of the 'Antients' and the 'Moderns' in 1813, and the formation of "Stability Lodge of Instruction" in 1817, and the "Emulation Lodge of Improvement" in 1823 - until 1835.

HIRAMIC LEGEND IN THE RITUAL

The first record of the third degree being conferred was at London in 1724. But the Hiram Legend was probably not part of the ritual of that time. We had seen earlier that Anderson's Constitutions of 1723 make no mention of the tragedy, but just fifteen years later, in the second Constitutions of 1738, the three ruffians had killed the Prince of Architects. This is conclusive proof that the Hiram Legend became a part of Masonic Traditions between 1723 to 1738, and not earlier.

Pick and Knight, in their Pocket History of Freemasonry say:

It is probable that, before the Craft finally settled on the building of King Solomon's Temple, other prototypes were tried out, perhaps by small groups of Masons in isolated parts of the country.

We come across one such prototype in the Graham MS of 1726, with which we shall deal in detail in the next section of this paper.

For the present we shall continue with the question whether the story was entirely originated by the compilers of the new ritual, or was there some foundation for it existing in the craft guilds before the formation of the Grand Lodge? Gould thinks:

If the murder of Hiram Abiff had been a tradition of the Craft in early days, not only would allusions to him be found in the literature of the Order, but he would have appeared in the earlier degrees, and not been thrust without any sort of warning into the third degree, much to the surprise of all who regard Craft Masonry as a gradually developing spectacle.

Hughan is also of the opinion that ritualistically Hiram Abif is unknown before the Third Degree, and this has not been traced before 1723-7.

But there is another school of thought that contends, with justification, that Brethren, who a few years later, split up on very simple points into Ancients and Moderns, would not have allowed an entirely new legend to be introduced into Freemasonry and believes that there is sufficient evidence to prove that some part of the story of Hiram was known to Masons before this period. For instance, we read that, at the installation of the Duke of Montagu as Grand Master in 1721, Dr. John Beal, Deputy Grand Master, was invested and installed into the chair of Hiram Abif, to the left of the Grand Master.

I would like to end this part of our discussion by quoting Gould:

When the legend of Hiram's death was first incorporated with our older traditions, it is not easy to decide, but in my judgment it must have taken place between 1723 and 1729, and, I should be inclined to name 1725 as the most likely year for its introduction.

- but with the proviso that it is not impossible that the Legend, or some part of it, was known to the Craft before that time.

THE LEGEND OF NOAH AND THE GRAHAM MANUSCRIPT

We had, in the previous section, mentioned the Graham manuscript of 1726. This is of special importance for a study of the development of our Ritual because this manuscript makes very clear reference to King Solomon and Hiram Abiff, and their respective parts in the building of the Temple:

Four hundred and four score years after the Children of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, that Solomon began to build the House of the Lord. . . . Now we read in

the 13th verse of the 7th chapter of the First Book of Kings that Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre, he being a widow's son of the Tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass. . . . And he came to King Solomon and wrought all his work for him.

But the manuscript does not go on to give us the legend of our third degree, which has Hiram as its central figure. Instead, it gives practically all the ingredients of that legend in a very different setting, with a "traditional history" of which Noah was the central figure - which may be taken as about 1,300 years before the building of King Solomon's Temple. In the words of H.W.Coil:

We have it by tradition and still some reference to scripture that Shem, Ham and Japeth went to their father Noah's grave to try to find something about him to lead them to the veritable secret which this famous preacher had, for all things needful for the new world were in the Ark with Noah. Now these 3 men had agreed that, if they did not find the very thing itself, that the first thing they did find was to be to them as a secret thing not doubting but did most firmly believe that God was able and would cause what they did find to prove as veritable to them as if they had received the secret at first from God himself. So they came to the grave finding nothing but the dead body almost consumed. Taking a grip at a finger, it came away; so from joint to joint; so to the wrist; so to the elbow; so they reared up the dead body and supported it; setting foot to foot, knee to knee, breast to breast, cheek to cheek and hand to back, and cried out: 'Help, O, father,' as if they had said; 'O, Father of Heaven, help us now for our earthly father cannot.'" So they laid down the dead body again and not knowing what to do, one, said: 'Here is yet marrow in the bone;' and the second said: 'But a dry bone,' and the third said; 'It stinketh.' So they agreed to give it a name as is known to Freemasonry to this day.

We cannot fail to observe that there are several details that are almost identical with elements in the Hiramic Legend.

Anderson, in the Book of Constitutions of 1723 calls Noah and his three sons "all Masons true". This perhaps was an admission that the Legend of Noah was in use at that time, and a hint that its inclusion in the ritual of the proposed Third Degree was being contemplated by him and Dr. Desaguliers.

SYNOPSIS

Recapitulating the summary of the preceding sections of this paper, it can be reasonably assumed that: -

1. Hiram Abif is mentioned in the Bible and in Anderson's Constitutions and is referred to by different names in the Old Charges.
2. The Hiramic legend is an adaptation of the legend of Osiris;
3. Freemasonry had become predominantly, if not completely, speculative by 1717;
4. Prior to 1717 a two degree system was in existence, and the ritual of the second degree contained elements of the present Third Degree;

5. The Three Degree system was probably invented in 1724 by Dr. Desaguliers to give a philosophical and ethical content to the ritual.
6. The Legend of Noah was in use when the Three Degree system was introduced, and was later replaced by the Hiramic Legend.

REASONS FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THE LEGEND.

Let us next discuss the reasons for the introduction of the legend of the Builder in the ritual of Freemasonry. We know that the three degrees were meant by Dr. Desaguliers to represent birth & infancy, adulthood & education, and old age, death, & immortality of the soul, respectively. The symbolism of the third degree is expressed by the powerful imagery of Ecclesiastes xii, which is an exhortation to remember the Creator while you are still young, because old age will soon catch up with you, and the pleasures of life will no longer be yours to seek. That is, in old age, one should be able to look back on a life well spent, one's responsibilities fully discharged, and contemplate the end with equanimity and without fear, secure in the knowledge that it is only the body which will perish, while the soul is immortal. The great and useful lesson of the third degree is that:

(Nature) prepares you, by contemplation, for the closing hours of existence, and when by means of that contemplation she has conducted you through the intricate windings of this mortal life, she finally prepares you how to die.

And also that one need not fear death because the soul is immortal:

. . . in this perishable frame there resides a vital and immortal principle . . .

I submit that had this sentence been completed with a phrase like "*which will endure when time with you shall be no more*" it would have been more appropriate to the context, and more in tune with the theme of the teaching. But the ritual says that "the Lord of Life will enable us to trample the King of terrors beneath our feet". The resentment, violence and deep anger expressed in these words appears to be in sharp discord with the spirit of the degree, which is tranquility.

Let us now look at the Graham manuscript, and the Legend of Noah. It is fully in consonance with, and would have, as it probably did, amply illustrated the message of the Third Degree.

1. We have a very old and venerated patriarch, who was laid to rest after a life of great achievement.
2. It has its origins in the Bible and is, in fact, older than the story of Solomon's Temple.
3. It has been referred to in all the Old Charges, and is well known to the Craft.
4. It has all the elements that make up the legend of Hiram.
5. It was used in the third degree ritual before being substituted by the Hiramic Legend.

Now comes the important question. Why was the Legend of Noah replaced by the Legend of Hiram? Both are similar enough to warrant the continuance of the former. But if the Hiramic Legend replaced it in the Third Degree Ritual, it obviously was because it had an element which the former lacked - that of betrayal, violent death, martyrdom and revenge.

When we are taught to face death serenely, knowing that the soul is immortal, where is the question of grieving over a death, and avenging it? Truth to tell, it is this contradiction that prompted my study, and I believe that, it is in the answer to this question that we will find the reason for including the Hiramic Legend in our ritual.

BRIEF HISTORY OF ENGLAND & SCOTLAND IN 17th AND 18th CENTURIES

We had mentioned earlier that Masonic scholars have tried to trace the origin of the Hiramic Legend, and discover why it was introduced in our ritual. They have propounded many theories, some of which are listed below:

1. The actual death of Hiram Abif.
2. The legend of Osiris.
3. Expulsion of Adam from Paradise.
4. The entry of Noah into the Ark.
5. Death and Resurrection of Christ.
6. The murder of Thomas Becket.
7. Persecution of the Templars and the death of DeMolay.
8. Execution of Charles I.
9. An invention of the Jacobites to aid the house of Stuart.
10. A representation of Old Age.

Of these, I would like to take up the execution of Charles I, for further examination. This is because, it was a cataclysmic event which had the element of violent death, martyrdom and revenge; it could have provoked the strong resentment and anger observed earlier; and it occurred at the precise period of time that has been the subject of our discussions.

At this juncture, we might take a brief look at the history of the Royal House of Stuart during those turbulent years of early 17th century. At its zenith, the dynasty ruled over the kingdoms of England & Scotland, but in 1746 its fortunes were irretrievably lost in the bloody battle of Culloden.

For over 300 years Scotland had to struggle constantly to preserve its independence and fend off a powerful England. Yet ironically, in 1603, it was the Scottish king, James VI who ascended the English throne as James I and united the two kingdoms. On his death in 1625, his son Charles became king. But in 1649, after a civil war, Charles was tried by Parliament, and beheaded. The regicide traumatised the nation because, the populace remained largely royalist at heart; as evidenced by the fact, that after the Parliament had ruled the country for 11 years, monarchy was restored. Charles II, exiled son of the dead king ascended the throne and his brother, James II succeeded him. James attempted to restore royal prerogative, and supported the Catholic faith. In 1688

Parliament forced James to abdicate in favour of his Protestant daughter Mary, and her husband William, to prevent succession by his Catholic son, James Francis Edward, later to be known as the Old Pretender. This is called the Glorious Revolution of 1688. James died in exile in France in 1701. The Old Pretender, and his son, called Bonnie Prince Charlie, or the Young Pretender, made several efforts to recapture the throne of England; their supporters were called Jacobites. There were two major Jacobite uprisings; the attempt of the Old Pretender in 1715 had considerable support in Scotland but failed due to inept leadership; that of Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1745 was badly planned and the Jacobites were mercilessly slaughtered in Culloden. That was the end of the Jacobite cause.

HIRAMIC LEGEND AND THE EXECUTION OF CHARLES I

It must now be emphasised that from hereon the evidence is circumstantial, and our arguments, like Freemasonry in the middle of the 17th century, become predominantly speculative. With this caveat, let us return to the Hiramic Legend and the execution of Charles I. By the middle of the 17th century, Freemasonry had acquired power and prestige. Many eminent Masons - Robert Murray, Elias Ashmole, Inigo Jones and Nicholas Stone, to name a few - were staunch royalists. It is quite probable that the dead King's son, then in exile in France, was in contact with his supporters, and that they met in the safety and privacy of the Lodge to further their designs. For obvious reasons those designs had to be concealed from other members of the Craft. A suggestion was advanced that the Hiramic Legend might have been invented and cautiously introduced in the ritual to promote loyalty to the royalist cause. In the words of Hextall, the Hiramic Tradition was:

Calculated to remind the Royalist Freemasons, in the strongest possible manner, of the murder of their King, and of events to be striven for in the future.

In his History of the Three Grand Lodges, Rebold supports this theory and suggests that the speculative Masons of England and Scotland invented two higher degrees, and gave to Freemasonry an entirely political character; that these Masons were men of power and high position, and it was through their influence that Charles II was enabled to recover the throne in 1660.

Professor Robinson in his 'Proofs of Conspiracy' also appears to entertain similar thoughts:

It is not improbable that the covert of secrecy in those assemblies had made them coveted by the Royalists as occasions of meeting. Nay, the Ritual of the Master's Degree seems to have been formed, or perhaps twisted from its original institutions, so as to give an opportunity of sounding the political principles of the candidate, and the whole of the Brethren present. For it bears so easy an adaptation to the death of the King.

Ragon, in his Masonic Orthodoxy, goes still further. He says that Ashmole and other Brethren had renounced the simple initiation and established new degrees. That the Fellow Craft degree was fabricated in 1648, and that of Master a short time afterward; that the decapitation of King Charles I, and the part taken by Ashmole in favour of the Stuarts produced great modifications in this third and last degree, which had become of a Biblical character.

Dr. Oliver, in a posthumous work titled "The Discrepancies of Freemasonry," says that "The Grand Mystery", published in 1924

. . .was the examination or lecture used by the Craft in the 17th century, the original of which, in the handwriting of Elias Ashmole, was given to Anderson when he made his collections for the "Book of Constitutions.

There is one other fact that lends credence to this theory. In 1720 " 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 burned by some scrupulous Brothers" in order that the papers " might not fall into strange hands". The destruction followed a request by Grand Master Payne that any old writings or records concerning the fraternity, to show the usages of ancient times, should be brought to the Grand Lodge. Preston, in his Illustrations, remarks:

Many of the fraternity's records of this and the preceding reigns were lost at the Revolution: and not a few were too easily burnt in our times by some scrupulous brothers, from a fear of making discoveries prejudicial to the interests of Masonry.

There is evidence enough here to concede that the execution of King Charles I was the possible cause of the invention of the Hiramic Legend, to which Elias Ashmole was possibly instrumental. But even if the legend had been actually invented and introduced in our ritual, there would have been no justification for its continuance, since its purpose - viz. restoration of monarchy - was accomplished in 1660. So it might not be unreasonable to suggest that the propagation of the Hiramic Legend was abandoned after the Restoration, but was resumed after 1715 when the Jacobite cause demanded it.

HIRAMIC LEGEND AND THE JACOBITE CAUSE

Let us now examine the possible connection of the Hiramic Legend with the Jacobites. The 1708 Act of Union was repugnant to the Scots, and the accession of the Hanoverians to the thrones of England and Scotland in 1714 rekindled their latent loyalty to the Stuarts. The rebellion of 1715 nearly succeeded, and brought home the fact that the Jacobite cause had many influential supporters, not a few among them probably being Freemasons. It is not improbable that they used the privacy of the Lodge, as was done during the Cromwellian interregnum, and revived the old legend of the builder to test and keep alive the loyalty of Brethren to the Jacobite cause.

Much has been written about Freemasonry and the Jacobites and it is unnecessary for us to dwell in detail on that aspect. But no account of the subject would be complete without the mention of Chevalier Michael Andrew Ramsay, who was tutor to the Young Pretender. Ramsay was a man of learning and genius - a Scotsman, a Jacobite, a Roman Catholic, and an ardent Freemason to boot. He used his not inconsiderable powers to adapt Freemasonry as a fitting instrument for the restoration of Stuart fortunes. It is a matter of history that he invented the High Degrees during the second and third decades of the 18th century for this purpose. It is not improbable that he would have influenced the development and interpretation of the Craft ritual as well to the advantage of the Jacobites. Being intimately acquainted with the old legends of Masonry, he transferred the Biblical allusions of Freemasonry to his political aim.

Many examples of this can be cited from the rituals of the Scottish Rites. But we will restrict ourselves here only to those in respect of our Craft. One such is that, after the death of James II in 1701, his Queen Consort, Mary of Modena, survived as a widow for a period of seventeen years; her son the Old Pretender was styled "the widow's son", thus being identified with Hiram Abif. Similarly, the Jacobites invented a new substitute word for the master's degree, very similar to the word that we know.. This word, 'Macbenac' is derived from the Gaelic Mac, a son, and benach, blessed, and literally means the "blessed son"; and this word was applied by the Jacobites to James.

According to Rev. Covey Crump:

The possibility does remain that the Hiramic Tradition had in some way a Jacobite application, and that it was with the object of concealing that connection from Anderson that the famous holocaust of Masonic documents was effected in 1720.

We thus have reasonable grounds to propose that Jacobite loyalties could well have influenced the preferment of the Hiramic legend over the Legend of Noah in our ritual. I would now sum up this discussion with the words of Mackey, from whom I have drawn much in the course of this treatise:

It cannot be denied that at a subsequent period the primitive degrees were modified and changed till their application of the death of Hiram Abif to that of Charles I., or the dethronement of James II, and that higher degrees were created with still more definite allusion to the destinies of the family of Stuart.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages I have attempted to present a compendium of facts about the most celebrated Mason of all time. I have approached the Legend of Hiram Abif purely in a spirit of historic enquiry, and I believe, established a tenable case that its inclusion in the ritual of our Craft could have been influenced by the Jacobites. But it must always be remembered that any conclusion about its antiquity or authenticity can in no way affect the value of

the legend to Freemasons. The lessons found in the Legend of Hiram Abif reach to the roots of the soul and spirit. They are instilled in the heart forever. They depict man's search for truth, for courage, for his immortal soul. And that is why the Legend will live on and on and Hiram Abif will be venerated in the traditions of Freemasonry and continue to shine as the stars for ever and ever.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I gratefully list below the works of eminent Masonic scholars, which I have consulted and quoted from, in preparing this article.

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The Story of Hiram Abiff - William Harvey

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