



PAPER

Including the Holy Royal Arch According to Fred & Charlie



Summary: ‘...pure Antient Masonry consists of three degrees and no more, ...including Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch.’

Charlie had just returned from a visit to a neighbouring Chapter and was bubbling-over with enthusiasm. Questions flowed. Fred listened patiently but finally cut to the chase.

‘What’s really troubling you about the Royal Arch, Charlie?’ he enquired.

‘Well...’ said Charlie.

‘You told me that the operative stone masons only recognised two levels, the apprentice and the craftsman and that when the Moderns organised Speculative Craft Freemasonry in 1717, they didn’t intend to depart in any way from the landmarks and traditions of the operatives. You also said they would never recognise any other Degree. So, how come our Constitutions now include the Holy Royal Arch? Surely that was never practised by working masons, was it?’

Fred laughed.

‘Full marks for memory Charlie. No, and true to their word, neither the Royal Arch, nor any other Degree was accepted by the Modern Grand Lodge right up to unification in 1813.’

‘So...’ said Charlie, *‘how come it’s now part of the Craft?’*

‘Because of two highly dedicated and enthusiastic 18th century Freemasons, Charlie, Andrew Ramsay and Laurence Dermott. It’s a long story. Be a good chap, top up the jars and perhaps we might chat about it.’

Dry throat moistened, Fred continued.

‘As Lodges became all-speculative in the early years of the 18th century, many influential members wanted a status befitting their rank in life. So, Lodges quietly created a grade of Master Mason for them. It was just a title given in passing and without ceremony, but it made them all feel happy. Modern Grand Lodge, true to its traditions, wouldn’t accept it, and continued to recognise only Apprentice and Fellow Craft.

Meanwhile, by the mid-1730s, a large community of Scottish aristocrats, supporters of the exiled King James II, had fled to Paris and become enthusiastic Speculative Freemasons. As noblemen, they found the aims of operative masonry too limiting and wanted their Masonry to be focussed on higher ideals; honour, courage, duty and chivalry. One of their number, Andrew Ramsay, a Knight of the Order of St Lazarus, and also Grand

Orator, wrote them a paper in 1737 proposing nine degrees leading to an Order of Knighthood which defended Jerusalem, with 'sword and trowel in hand'; you remember the phrase? His Third Degree was in fact that of a Master Mason, which became an essential step towards the Holy Royal Arch as the next rung up the ladder. Modern Grand Lodge took the hint, and in 1738, also organised a Degree of Master Mason by taking the material from the existing two Degrees and splitting it three ways.

In the western English Provinces there was 'trouble in't mill' with a growing resistance to the Modern's efforts to impose new ideas and remove Christian references in the ceremonies. By 1754, this reaction had become so strong, an Irish emigre Laurence Dermott, encouraged the formation of the Antient Grand Lodge, in competition with the Moderns, to restore all the old traditions. They simply wanted their Christian heritage back.

The Antients' Third Degree tackled the question of authority behind Masonic morality by revealing its spiritual source within the Volume of the Sacred Law. This was neatly done within an extension to the Degree later called the Holy Royal Arch. For Dermott it was 'the root, heart and marrow of Masonry' so several Lodges today still work both elements sequentially. Records of the award of this Royal Arch Degree occur from 1740 onwards. Modern Grand Lodge still wouldn't buy it. Modern Lodges working the Royal Arch therefore had to look to an independent Grand Chapter created in 1767 to administer their affairs. Surprisingly in 1771, the Antients also formed their own Grand Chapter; surprising because the Royal Arch was already an intrinsic part of their third Craft Degree.

While by the late 1790s, amalgamation of the Modern and Antients Grand Lodges made perfectly good sense, 'the dinosaurs' still resisted. The two Grand Masters, Royal cousins both, then banged a few heads together, and by 1813 the two Grand Lodges had at last become one. There was one hiccup though, the Grand Chapters took until 1817 to complete their union.'

Charlie, fascinated, asked impatiently 'Why the hold up?'

Fred replied laconically 'Mr Rock met Mr Hard Place. The Moderns insisted that Freemasonry had to be universal and not tied to any one religion. The Antients insisted as strongly that Masonic morality required not only the idea of a Supreme Being but also clear guidance towards his revealed will and word.'

'Mm', said Charlie, 'how on earth did they square that circle?'

'With difficulty' said Fred, '...with difficulty. They employed a clever word-smith who devised a sentence that allowed the former Modern Lodges to complete their Third Degree without any religious affinity and the former Antient Lodges to conclude their Third Degree acting out the who and the where.'

'He sounds like a second Graham Redman' said Charlie. 'What exactly did he say?'

'...pure Antient Masonry consists of three degrees and no more, ...including Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch.'

'The Holy Royal Arch was therefore not an additional Degree (which pleased the Moderns), but its use was recognised and permitted within a Craft Lodge (which delighted the Antients). It was, my dear Charlie, a win-win all way round!'

'I'd drink to that, Fred, but my glass does look empty...'



Recommended use of Papers

Papers offer a simple, direct means of advancement in a particular aspect of Masonic knowledge. They can be used in a variety of ways:

- Read at home for private study
- Shared for pre-reading by members of a discussion group
- Read aloud in Lodge or Chapter, or in an LOI/COI/new members forum
 - Followed by 'any questions'
 - As a precursor to a discussion (in which case much more time is needed, possibly more than double that allocated to the paper itself)
 - Supported by audio-visual aids, if necessary

They can be delivered by a single person or split into bite-sized pieces and read by multiple presenters (in which case, the speaker(s) should have read and practiced the delivery of the paper beforehand).

If the paper is to be used to introduce a discussion, the presenter will need to have thought about the material, done a little research, and prepared some open questions to engage with the audience. Kipling's dictum can be of help in preparing open questions, which should begin with one of his 'serving men', as follows: *'I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I knew). Their names are, What and Why and When and How and Where and Who'*. Rudyard Kipling

*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version and any reference to ritual will be from Emulation unless otherwise specified.

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Fred and Charlie character drawings courtesy of Eddie Wildman.

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