

5 : 1 et seq.), who built the temple in Jerusalem (I *Kings* 9 : 13 ; II *Chronicles* 2 : 3 et seq.). King Hiram sent King Solomon architects, workmen, cedar and gold to build the temple. Included in their number was a craftsman also named Hiram (II *Chronicles* 2 : 13 et seq.) whom King Hiram described to King Solomon as skilled in work—

“in gold and silver, bronze and iron, in marble and in wood, in tapestry of purple and blue, lawn and scarlet thread ; to carve what carving thou wilt, and devise all that needs devising with the aid of thy craftsmen...”

There is no mention of *this* Hiram having any skill at working in stone. Nor does it appear that the temple planned by King Solomon was to be built in stone, but in wood. Nor was the temple so built the massive structure of Dr Anderson's imagination.

Freemasonry involves the meeting of men in private, indeed in secret, observing ceremonies grounded on this series of fictions. Each such society is known as a lodge. Its meetings are conducted with a formality which parodies, unconsciously, religious ceremony. When the members of the lodge move to admit a candidate to membership, they do so in a ceremony which resembles those accompanying certain of the sacraments of the Catholic Church. It is something like *Confession* in that the individual submits himself to a superior—though the superior is not a priest—and he is required to pledge himself to certain actions. Again, the ceremony is something like *Baptism* in that it involves a solemn oral commitment, though not a commitment to renounce Satan and his works and all his empty promises. The commitment demanded is that he keep the society's secrets and obey his superior in the lodge in all he is commanded. The commitment demanded is *amoral*, and it is blind as to content and ambit, characteristics that should start alarm bells ringing in any candidate's head.

The resemblance to *Baptism*, with its symbolic death and resurrection in imitation of that of Christ, assumes greater proportion when the detail of the ceremony is exposed. It occurs in three steps, or degrees, separated in time : that of the *Apprentice* ; of the *Fellow* ; and of the *Master* Mason.

The *Apprentice* swears on the Bible that he will never reveal any of the craft's secrets or mysteries. He does so in a set formula in a certain state of undress, bare-breasted, blindfolded and with a noose around his neck, “under no less a penalty... than of having my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by the root and buried in the sand of the sea at low water mark, or a cable's length from the shore, where the tide regularly ebbs and flows twice in twenty four hours... So help me God and keep me steadfast in this my Great and Solemn Obligation of an Entered Apprentice Mason.” We need not go into further detail.

In the second degree, that of *Fellow* Craft Mason, in the event that the candidate breaches the undertakings to which he swears, he faces the penalty of “having my left breast laid open, my heart torn therefrom, and given to the ravenous birds of the air, or devouring beasts of the field as prey.”

In the third degree, that of *Master* Mason, in the event of the candidate breaching the undertakings to which he swears, he faces the penalty of “being severed in two, my bowels burnt to ashes, and those ashes scattered over the face of the earth and wafted by the four winds of heaven, that no trace or remembrance of so vile a wretch may longer be found among men, particularly Master Masons.” In the ceremony attached to the third degree the candidate plays 'Hiram'. He appears bare armed, bare-breasted, bare-kneed and shod in slippers. He is struck down ceremonially and laid back into a grave.

To heighten the sense of doom, an organist may accompany the play-acting with funereal music. The candidate is then 'resurrected' by the lodge master using a Masonic handshake. He is properly clothed again, then invested with a Masonic apron. Whereupon he is welcomed into their fellowship by the other Master Masons.

There is much more in the initiation ceremonies than these bare recitals but this is sufficient for our purposes.



The Masonic Oaths

An oath is a religious act ; that is, it is an act of worship, which calls on God as witness to the truth of a statement or the fulfilment of a promise. St Thomas Aquinas teaches—

“An oath is in itself lawful and commendable... Yet an oath becomes a source of evil to him that makes evil use of it... who employs it without necessity and due caution... A rash oath lacks judgement, a false oath lacks truth, and a wicked or unlawful oath lacks justice.” (*Summa Theologiae* II-II, aa. 3, 4 & 7.)

Masonic oaths offend against probity in every way. First, they involve something the *jurant* (the one swearing) can do but ought not to do, as it subverts his God-given freedom without due cause. Second, a man may not abuse the gifts given him by God, his body and soul, by promising to allow another to harm him. Third, no mere association of men, i.e., no association falling short of the authority of the state, or of God's Church, has power to punish another or to impose the death penalty. All authority comes from God (*Romans* 13 : 1), and there is no lawful way in which the authority proper to the state or the Church can be assumed gratuitously. So to act is to engage in a species of tyranny. Fourth, an oath gets its force through calling on God to be witness. This force is supreme : there is no greater sanction than of offending God. The addition of a threat of physical harm, even death, subverts its supreme force. Fifth, and worst of all, the Masonic oath calls on God to witness that the *jurant* inverts the loyalties to Church and state which God Himself has commanded. It mocks God to His face.

Christ's Church was not slow, as we will see, to recognise Freemasonry's evil provenance, or its evil propensities, as neither were the heads of various states in Europe.
