

A DAILY ADVANCEMENT

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William Charles Vahland: architect, citizen,  
freemason

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to whom we give grateful thanks for permission to reprint

Every community has a history of founders: people who worked hard to enable future generations to enjoy what they hoped would be a better life. William Charles Vahland was a founder of Bendigo, and he probably contributed as much to the establishment and structure of the city as any other of his time, or after.

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William Charles Vahland was born in the town of Nienburg an der Weser in Hanover, Germany on 2 October 1828. At that time, the Elector of Hanover was George IV of England; indeed throughout his life Vahland would vehemently deny he was German. Rather, he was born a Hanoverian! When only a few days old, he was baptised Carl Wilhelm in the Lutheran Church in Nienburg. Though we know him as William Charles, this Anglicisation of his name only took place after his arrival in Australia.

He was the son of Johann Ernst Otto and Augusta Sophia Caroline (nee Scheele) Vahland and was the youngest of six sons and several daughters. Johann was a master builder, joiner and cabinet-maker, so it is not surprising that the young Carl Wilhelm would follow his father's line of work.

He finished his general schooling in 1844, seems to have worked with his father for several years, before entering the Baugewerkschule (School of Building) at Holzminden in Braunschweig. This institution was a most prestigious tertiary college, in level somewhat between the current Australian TAFE College and a university, providing very specific training in building and architecture at an advanced academic as well as practical level. It was the only one of its type in North Germany and accepted students from several European countries.

It had been founded in the 1820s after a State Commission identified that many of the traditional skills of building and architecture had been lost, and many apprentices could not follow the simplest instructions. Plans of instruction and a Master's examination were developed because of the Commission's findings, and were written by Friedrich Ludwig Haarmann, the founder of the Holzminden Baugewerkschule.

It was a residential college, with students boarding in large dormitories. The students only attended their courses in winter, spending the summer months working in the trade. They attended 75 classes a week, 6 days a week, from 6 in the morning until 9.30 at night, though they did finish early on Saturdays, at 7pm! The course ran for three years in this format, though it is interesting to note that when Vahland enrolled, he was placed in the second class after an initial examination, which excused him the whole first year of study.

Haarmann placed great importance on solid geometry, building construction, working drawings and estimation so his course was clearly intended for practical application. He favoured classical styles of architecture and this preference can be seen in Vahland's work - simple Greek-style lines of roof, columns, and other features creating a whole impression (unlike the hugely ornate Victorian and Baroque decoration favoured by many other architects). Haarmann also emphasised the need for harmony between domestic and rustic buildings, and between commercial and public buildings.

Vahland's final "Testimonial" or report card from the Baugewerkschule lists a large number of categories such as spelling, mathematics, physics, geometry, drawing plans, design, structure of buildings, law, surveying and book-keeping as well as conduct and effort. In all of them, he was ranked "Good" or "Very Good".

After completing his studies in March 1852, Vahland travelled for a while (a recommended practice for architects to help place their studies in a real world context). He then practised his vocation in Hamburg and Bremen before acting as engineer for the building of a rail line between Hamburg and Kassel. He had not long set up private practice in Diepholz, near Hanover, when a combination of concern about the local political situation, a wish to avoid military service in that situation, and the lure of the Australian goldfields took hold of him.

Therefore, he arrived in Melbourne on board the sailing ship "San Francisco" in September 1854. Within a few days, he was on his way to the Bendigo

diggings with three companions from the ship, among them Jacob Cohn, who was to be a lifelong friend. One of the stories of the companions' trip to Bendigo was related in Vahland's obituary in the *Bendigo Advertiser*. They had been told gruesome stories of the ferocity of the natives and the depredations of bushrangers and outlaws, so the group left Melbourne armed to the teeth with pistols and cutlasses. They mounted guard every night and kept a tense and earnest watch all the way. After a completely uneventful journey, they arrived in Bendigo, creating an hilarious impression amongst the locals. Seeing the joke, they threw their weapons into a disused mineshaft and settled down to prospecting.

Vahland's gold prospecting was not very successful, so he very soon began work as a carpenter, fitting out the Crown Hotel in Hargreaves Street. The *Advertiser* also reported that this occasioned his one and only effort at bricklaying. He was instructed to build a kitchen chimney. He pointed out that the ground was honeycombed with mining shafts, but the owner was prepared to take the risk. The chimney went up satisfactorily, but a few days later it rained. Next morning, the chimney was nowhere to be seen, having completely sunk underground!

Soon after, he set up his own carpenter's shop in Bridge Street, making miners' cradles and other accessories that were in major demand, until the year 1857. The period of the next few years from 1857 was to be a watershed for Vahland, because of several events and decisions that would guide his life ever after.

On 20 July 1857, he took out British citizenship. He took his oath of allegiance before Redmond Barry, who was later to preside over the trial of the infamous bushranger Ned Kelly. One limitation of this citizenship, which we might find strange, is that he (and any other naturalised citizen) was not permitted to sit in Parliament. So, he could, and did, become a Justice of the Peace and administer laws, be a local councillor and apply by-laws, be a peaceable citizen and pay all his taxes, but he could not make the laws. To do that, one had to be born a British citizen. Remember, though, that his monarch at birth was the King of England! It was anomalies like these that fuelled the dissatisfaction that led to demonstrations such as the Eureka Stockade and finally Australian Federation and independence.

It was in 1857 that Vahland began practising as an architect in the rapidly growing Bendigo township. He opened chambers at 2 Pall Mall with another German architect, Robert Getzschmann, with whom he was to work until Getzschmann's death in 1875.

Over the next 40 years Vahland, and his firm, was to have a greater influence on the appearance of the city than any other person or body. He designed and directed the building of major public architecture including the Town Hall, the Shamrock Hotel, the Hospital, the School of Mines, the Mechanics Institute, the Princess Theatre, the Masonic Hall (now the Regional Arts Centre), the Cascades (a water feature in Rosalind Park) and the Alexandra Fountain, the Sandhurst Club and the Grandstand at Canterbury Park, Eaglehawk. He was responsible for many private homes, from mansions such as *Fortuna* to simple miners' cottages. The places of worship on which he worked covered the wide range of the Bendigo community of the time: the Eaglehawk Wesleyan Church, the Lutheran Church, St Liborius's Catholic Church at Eaglehawk, St Kilian's Catholic Church, still the largest wooden building in Australia, the Jewish Synagogue (now demolished), the Anglican, Methodist and Congregational churches in Forest Street and so on. Commercial premises, from small shops to large hotels and emporiums, were all undertaken. The firm practised far afield as well, in Hay, Deniliquin, Lorne, Lancefield, Rochester, Rushworth, Swan Hill, Yarrowonga and Benalla among others. They had an office in Echuca as they constructed the Echuca Town Hall, the Court House and the Church of England. Vahland even spent some time in Napier, New Zealand fulfilling contracts.

In 1857, too, he designed and built his own residence at 58 Barkly Terrace, which still stands. It was to this home that he brought his bride, Miss Jane Barrow of Runnymede, in July 1859. She had emigrated from England with her parents in 1844 when she was two years old, which meant she was 17 when she married the 30 year old Vahland. They were to enjoy a long and fruitful marriage, with a large family - seven children surviving infancy. For his new wife, Vahland converted from Lutheranism (in which he had been a lay preacher and Church Committee member) to the Church of England, and the family was brought up in typical English/Australian style. Vahland certainly, however, kept his friendships and links with the German community of Bendigo - people such as the Cohn brothers, Father Backhaus and Ludwig Becker, the artist who was to perish on the Burke and Wills expedition

In 1858, Vahland was one of the founding members of the Bendigo Land and Building Society, the institution that was eventually to grow into the current Bendigo Bank. For some 38 years he would serve as its Chairman and Managing Director. While modern economic practices have given many banks and financial institutions a less-than-benevolent public image, the

intentions of the founders of the Bendigo Land and Building Society were really quite radical: to provide the thousands of simple miners and families of Bendigo with the chance to live in their own permanent house. Remember that Bendigo was still an active gold rush area. Many, many people still lived in tents or makeshift shanties.

The Society, and Vahland, were not looking for quick profits from housing loans. Their interest was to establish the town of Bendigo and its community on a firm and safe basis. They operated to the needs and financial capacities of their clients. For instance, during the 1870's Vahland designed a simple symmetrically planned cottage for miners with a four-posted verandah. It could be mass-produced and simply erected, and many examples can still be seen around Bendigo today.

There was one more change of note for Vahland in 1857. In the foyer of the Bendigo Masonic Centre there is a small, manual pump organ which for nearly 40 years was used to provide music for Lodge meetings in Bendigo. It was presented to Golden Lodge the night of 5 May 1857, less than three years after the lodge had been founded.

It was an auspicious night because Golden Lodge also had a candidate for initiation. William Charles Vahland was initiated into Freemasonry in the Golden Lodge on that night, 5 May 1857. He already had many friends among the Craft, including Jacob Cohn and his partner Robert Getzschmann so, with his vocation in building and the natural civic-mindedness, which would manifest itself in so many ways, it was a natural step to take.

On 27 December 1861, he was installed as Worshipful Master of Golden Lodge. He was not able to serve his full year as he sought leave of absence in March to go to New Zealand for work reasons. Indeed, he only sat in the Chair for two meetings.

However, soon after his return, he was given another opportunity to serve Golden Lodge. Many lodges, in those days, also operated as benevolent societies, arranging loans and finance for struggling brethren and looking after widows and orphans. There was no public or government-sponsored system of social security for the unemployed, the orphans, the widowed and so on. So, for some years it had been the practice to pay the Golden Lodge Secretary a salary of £50 a year, which was quite a good annual wage. He then took on the great responsibility of distributing the charity raised by the lodge and to look after those unfortunate brethren or their families, who had reached the lowest ebb of poverty and distress. With the

change in mining in the 1860s from surface work by individuals to deep mining by companies, there was an economic downturn and the Lodge had to lower the salary to £30 before cutting it out altogether. In August 1863, Vahland took on the position for no salary and served for the next 10 years, through the amalgamation of Golden and Corinthian Lodges and the building of the View Street Masonic Temple. In 1874, the Lodge presented him with a special PM's jewel and an illuminated address as an expression of its thanks.

This was not just a formality, because the Bendigo lodges had experienced great turbulence during that period. Both Corinthian Lodge and Zenith Lodge broke away from Golden through bitter disputes over the Mastership. The purchase of the View Street site for the Bendigo Masonic Temple saw Golden and Corinthian side against Zenith in a rigged auction, and then Golden and Corinthian amalgamated to build the Temple. These were described in his newspaper obituary as "events provocative of much feeling being displayed, and perhaps little 'brotherly love'". We will never know the full details of Vahland's role in them, but the respect in which he was held by all sides and the rapid healing of the wounds would suggest that it was major and positive.

He had little time to rest after his testimonial though because, seven years later in 1881, he was appointed Secretary of Golden and Corinthian again, a position he was to hold until 1910, a total of 39 years service in that role. He also served as a Trustee of the Masonic Hall and was able to steer it, and Golden and Corinthian Lodge, through the financially difficult times of the 1890s, enabling both to enter the new century sound and secure.

In 1871, WBro Vahland was appointed Provincial Deputy Grand Superintendent of Workings and, in that capacity, he was the Director of Ceremonies of the Grand Masonic Procession that laid the Foundation stone of the View Street Temple on 24 June 1873. He was to act as the PGM's representative in the Bendigo area on many occasions over the years, including the delicate and difficult consultations on the formation of the United Grand Lodge of Victoria in 1888. He was, for many years, a member of the Board of General Purposes. In 1897, as a recognition of his work, the GM, Lord Brassey, conferred on him the rank of Past Deputy Grand Master. In the Conference room of the Bendigo Masonic Centre there hangs a magnificent portrait of Right Worshipful Brother Vahland in that capacity.

He was also an active member of the Royal Arch, serving as First Principal of Royal Golden Chapter (now Royal Eaglehawk) in 1867 and later being honoured with the rank of Past Grand Haggai.

In 1901, during a trip back to his native land, Vahland attended the installation in London of HRH the Duke of Connaught as GM of UGLE. The Duke was installed because the previous long serving GM was about to become King Edward VII. Vahland was also feted by his relatives in Germany, with over 200 attending a huge banquet in his honour. Apparently it took several hours, with breaks between courses for everyone to walk around and make room for the next course! While in Germany, he also had to pay a fine for not being available for military service in the 1850s.

So, what sort of man was William Charles Vahland? His many achievements can easily be listed, but what sort of person, friend, father was he?

According to family members, he was a typical Victorian husband and father. The youngest children always referred to him as “the Pater”, but always with affection. He was fond of animals, kept silky terriers and cats. He enjoyed music and reading, and a good pipe or cigar; when smoking he always wore a smoking jacket and cap. Good food and wine were features of his home, undoubtedly with a major contribution from his 800 acre property, Charterhouse Estate, at Elmore. Much of this was planted with vines, with wine and spirits of the highest quality being produced and exported through his brother’s wine merchant business in Melbourne. He even used a system of vacuum packing grapes, which were then sent to Germany to be turned into wine.

He was certainly a pioneer, and a major figure in the early Australian wine industry. With considerable foresight, he was a staunch opponent of labelling Australian wines with traditional European names such as “Burgundy” or “Claret” or Hock”, feeling that they should be called by their grape type and region. It has only been the last 10 years or so that this practice has been accepted fully.

Vahland loved trains, too. Whenever practicable, he would travel around Victoria by train. He became well known by conductors, who would often reserve a compartment for him, as he disliked travelling in company. One story that was told of him concerned a warm day when he was returning from Melbourne. The train was crowded and he had to share his compartment. Unfortunately for the other travellers, Vahland was taking home a very large and very ripe Limburger cheese. It was a very warm day and,

not long out of Spencer Street Station, he found himself quite alone in the compartment.

But what of the public man? To say he served his community would be an understatement. We have already noted his long connection with the Building Society. From 1869 to 1872, he was a member of the Sandhurst Council and saw it proclaimed a city in 1871. He resigned at the end of his term because he did not want to give the impression of a conflict of interest with his commercial business.

In 1859 he was the manager of the Sandhurst Fire Brigade. He was a Director of the Gas Company for 20 years. He was treasurer of the School of Mines and examiner in mechanical drawing, architectural drawing, practical geometry and design, as well as judge of their annual exhibition. He served on the boards of the Cognac Distillery, the Hospital, the Benevolent Asylum, the School of Mines, the Mechanics Institute, and was a member of the Victorian Institute of Architects.

He had been a lay preacher with the Lutheran Church before his marriage, and contributed greatly to establishing that church community, and to public fairs and festivals.

William Charles Vahland was a man who served. He served his family by providing a loving, stable and secure home and business; he served his community in many, many roles that helped establish social structures and lasting facilities; he served his lodge with dignity, compassion, enthusiasm and hard work.

His newspaper obituary puts it all into well-chosen words:

A marked characteristic of the late Bro Vahland which made itself felt with all who knew him, was his absolute sincerity in life and character, rugged honesty of purpose, sterling integrity, and loyalty in his friendships. He never seemed to be, or tried to be, other than he really was! No one ever doubted him. No kind of temptation, no seeming advantage, could induce him to forsake the path of integrity, or to prove false to his own convictions - hence, he enjoyed the confidence and respect of all who knew him.

A great man, undoubtedly, and recognized as such by his friends, his peers and his brethren. A man who helped, as much as any, and more than most, to make Bendigo a city and a community to treasure. The Golden

and Corinthian Lodge and Freemasonry in Victoria all grew so much from his efforts. Indeed, here was a brother of whom we can say without question that he "lived respected and died regretted".

But there is a little more to his story that must be told.

In 1904, for the golden anniversary of Freemasonry in Bendigo, William Charles Vahland wrote an excellent book covering those fifty years, *A History of Freemasonry in the Bendigo District*. It seemed a fitting conclusion for Vahland to a great public life. Copies are rare, but still around and it is well worth seeking out and reading. (I have a copy that may be borrowed - NWM)

He settled down to enjoy his retirement. He had left active practice as an architect some years before in 1901, letting his son, John, carry on the business. But John died suddenly in 1905 and the firm was eventually sold. His hopes of building on the grape and wine successes of Charterhouse Estate were dashed by the great phylloxera outbreak at the turn of the century. Only 60 acres had been recovered 10 years later.

But in 1914, with the outbreak of war, came a final disappointment and a public humiliation that is painful to consider, even today. William Charles Vahland, citizen of the country for nearly 60 years, respected community member and family man, Past Deputy Grand Master, William Charles Vahland was required to report to the police station each week and to surrender his passport and his assets. Why? Because he had been born in Germany. Little matter that the nation of Germany did not exist when he was born there or left his birthplace, or that at his birth his monarch in Hanover was King George IV of England, or that he had been a British citizen since 1857. Of no account was his immense contribution to Bendigo, all the buildings, all the business, all the trade, all the employment, or his work for decades with the Building Society, the School of Mines, and the churches, or that he had been a City Councillor, and a Justice of the Peace.

In the hysteria of the time, he was an enemy alien.

There was even a move, I am ashamed to say, to force him to resign from his lodge. While that came to nothing, it is clear that this whole humiliation was a blow to the now frail old man. He died at home on 21 July 1915, his 56<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

His community, his friends, his brethren and his family knew what they had lost. Long obituaries were published in the local papers. His funeral was a major public event, with an attendance described by the newspaper report as "unusually large". At Bendigo Cemetery, the Masonic service was led by WBro O D Watson, Worshipful Master of Golden and Corinthian, and that Lodge's choir sang "Holy Night". The Masonic mourners were headed by Past Deputy Grand Master, Sir John Quick, and included WMs of all the area's lodges with many, many brethren.

One obituary wrote: "Death comes equally to us all, and makes us all equal when it comes. We will miss his familiar face, and the well known voice can no longer respond to our fraternal greeting".

And that closes the curtain on the life of an outstanding man - Carl Wilhelm Vahland, William Charles Vahland, architect, citizen, freemason. A man to whom the city of Bendigo is deeply indebted for what he has left in a magnificent heritage of fine buildings and public places. A man to whom the community is deeply indebted for his compassion and hard work for them, and his legacy of institutions still operating and evolving, like the Building Society (now the Bendigo Bank), and the School of Mines (now the University campus and the TAFE college). A man to whom Freemasonry is deeply indebted for his untiring commitment to laying a firm foundation for the Craft in Bendigo and to raising a superstructure pleasing in all its parts and honourable to the builders.

## MASONIC SYMBOLS A THEIR USE AND ABUSE

(Delivered at the Annual Banquet of the Allied Masonic Degrees, 25  
February 1995)

Wallace McLeod, F.P.S.

Let's ponder the meaning of Masonic symbolism. We approach the topic with diffidence, because a few years ago Allen Roberts wrote a superb book called *The Craft and its Symbols*, that should be in the hands of every Mason. So I shall steal some ideas from him, and borrow a few words from myself, and see where it takes us.

Freemasonry is said to be "a beautiful system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols." Allegory and symbol certainly play a large role in it, but they are not restricted to it. If you have a clear notion of how they work, you may find a deeper understanding of Masonry and its meaning.

A symbol, according to the dictionary, is "something that stands for, represents, or denotes something else (not by exact resemblance, but by vague suggestion, or by some accidental or conventional relation)." Some symbols occur so frequently in daily life that we have stopped thinking of them as symbols. The most familiar ones are the letters of the alphabet. There is no reason why one kind of curling line should stand for a hissing noise, or why something that looks like a couple of bee-hives side by side should make a humming sound; but we all accept them without thinking. Other symbols in common use include the numerals (1, 2, 3), mathematical and monetary signs (plus, square root, dollar), and musical notation (treble clef, flat, semiquaver). Such symbols are indispensable for almost any kind of communication.

Another type of symbol is found in the arts, both graphic and verbal. It represents something abstract by something that we can perceive with our senses, above all by sight. So white stands for purity, the dove and olive branch for peace, the skull and crossbones for poison, and the eagle for the United States.

In literature the symbol often occurs in combination with one of the traditional figures of speech, simile, or metaphor. Robbie Burns tells us that his sweetheart is beautiful to see and to hear, and he tells us this by comparing her to other things.

O, my luvie is like a red, red rose,

That's newly sprung in June.  
O, my luvè is like the melodie,  
That's sweetly play'd in tune.

Shakespeare tells us that the problems of life are like the missiles hurled by an attacking enemy, and that difficulties roll in upon us like the waves of the ocean. That's the imagery behind the familiar words,

To be or not to be - that is the question;  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them?

In a little poem by Walter Savage Landor, life is compared to and symbolized by a warm fire.

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife.  
Nature I loved, and after Nature, Art.  
I warmed both hands before the fire of life.  
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

A symbol's associations go far beyond its simple pictorial meaning. It can be used, not merely to facilitate thought, but even to shape it. Who can be afraid of death if it is symbolized by putting out to sea, as in Tennyson's familiar words?

Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me!  
And may there be no moaning of the bar  
When I put out to sea.

Who can be afraid of death if it is symbolized by falling asleep, as in Bryant's *Thanatopsis*?

So live, that when thy summons comes to join  
The innumerable caravan which moves  
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take  
His chamber in the silent halls of death,  
Thou go not like the galley-slave at night,  
Scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed  
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave

Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch  
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

For the Freemason, every character, figure, and emblem has a moral tendency, and serves to inculcate the practice of virtue in all its genuine professors. The principal rounds of Jacob's ladder are faith, hope, and charity. Chalk, charcoal, and clay stand for freedom, fervency, and zeal. The square represents morality, the level equality, and the plumb rule justness and uprightness of life and conduct. The three pillars are wisdom, strength, and beauty. An ear of corn near a stream of water is plenty. The four tassels are Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, and Justice. The five steps are the five noble orders of architecture, and also the five senses. The seven steps represent the seven liberal arts and sciences. All these symbols are explicitly defined in the ritual, and I suppose we are obliged to accept these definitions, and are not at liberty to disagree.

But the symbols are not always explained for us. If you have a flair for interpreting them, there is ample scope to indulge your talents. There's no harm in that. It may help you in your personal development. But how far can we go? Let's look at a few examples of how the symbols have been read by others. There's a book by Foster Bailey, called *The Spirit of Masonry*. He tells us that the three degrees can foretell the future: having passed through the Entered Apprentice or physical age, and the Fellow Craft or intellectual age, we now stand at the threshold of the Master Mason or spiritual age; a new revelation will soon restore to us the true lost word. Moreover, we learn, the two great pillars represent the constellation Gemini; so the Craft began in the Age of Gemini, more than 6500 years ago. Or there's another book, by Arthur Ward, entitled *Masonic Symbolism and the Mystic Way*. There we learn about the Working Tools of the Entered Apprentice: the chisel stands for intellect, the common gavel for will, and the twenty-four inch gauge for vital feeling. This is not what the English ritual says; it says that they stand for accuracy, labor, and perseverance. When we push on to the Second Degree, Ward tells us that the Working Tools "are essentially the same powers, but in the intense and spiritual form possessed by the higher Self within; they are reached and shared by the personal man in the practice of meditation." So the plumb rule turns out to be spiritual insight, the square is spiritual intuition, and the level is spiritual inspiration. Again, that's not what the ritual says.

A few years ago W. Kirk MacNulty wrote *Freemasonry: A Journey through Ritual and Symbol*. He says that the three Craft degrees recapitulate the development of the individual person, and encourage further development.

The Entered Apprentice Degree (or the Ground Floor of the Temple) represents the physical or material being, Jung's "individual consciousness." The Fellow Craft (or Middle Chamber) represents the soul or psyche, Jung's "personal unconscious." The Master Mason (or Holy of Holies) is the spiritual being, Jung's "collective unconscious," one step closer to the Divine.

And non-Masons can shed light on our symbolism. A fascinating study by Katharine Thomson, called *The Masonic Thread in Mozart*, tells us that "the number three has a special significance in Freemasonry. Most of the songs are in three-part harmony.... Many songs are in triple time; threefold repetitions are frequent, and major triads are of particular importance.... In Mozart's music certain keys are specifically associated with Freemasonry, notably E flat major ... [with] the key signature of three flats." Other Mozart specialists argue that *The Magic Flute* is clearly a Masonic opera. They note the three chords repeated three times, the three attendants of the Queen of the Night, the three boys, the three doors, the three trials, and so on.

Besides these familiar published sources, you will find that sometimes an older and respected Mason has his own interpretation of some of the symbols, arising out of his knowledge and experience. More than one mature brother has disclosed to me that, no matter what we say, Freemasonry is fundamentally Christian, because the equilateral triangle is an emblem of divinity, and it can refer only to the Christian Trinity.

It may well be so. These examples are all personal interpretations. Can we take them as correct? Arthur Ward says, "If you find a key which translates a cypher message into sense, you know for certain that you have the key of the cypher; similarly, if you find an explanation which makes sense of a series of symbols you have their true meaning." This is the problem. If we accept subjective interpretations by Masons, how can we exclude subjective interpretations by non-Masons?

In the Masonic ritual, God is called "the Great Architect of the Universe." For me, this is a simple metaphor; the universe is like an immense mansion or temple, and the Creator of the universe is compared to the builder. Nothing secret or disrespectful about that! But in 1986 a Canadian religious magazine called *The Presbyterian Record* published an attack on Freemasonry, saying that the Great Architect of the Universe was the name of the false god "that the Masons worship at their altar." And two years ago, Dr James Larry Holly, the man who orchestrated the Southern Baptist campaign against the Masons, said that to call God a Great Architect "is

derogatory to the True God's creative omnipotence. An architect only puts together from the materials already at hand. God creates from nothing."

Actually a bit of research discloses that the term "Great Architect" was introduced into Freemasonry in 1723 by the Presbyterian minister, James Anderson, and that he got it from the works of John Calvin, one of the founders of Presbyterianism. The modern dogmatists are attacking an expression that was used by one of the great theologians of all time!

We all know that the square and compasses form a symbol that stands for Masonry. But there's more to it than that. The fundamentalist Pastor Ron Carlson, who has spoken about Freemasonry in evangelical churches in many parts of America, says that the square represents the earth, the compasses represent the sky, and the square and compasses when united represent the sky impregnating the earth with its showers; that is, they represent sexual intercourse.

But there is more to come. There's a man called Ed Decker, who has written a book called *What you need to Know About ... Masons*. And in it he tells us that the evil square and compasses are permanently enshrined in the plan of this city. I quote: "Take any good street map of downtown Washington D.C. and find the Capitol Building.... The left leg [of the compasses] is represented by Pennsylvania Avenue and the right leg by Maryland Avenue. The Square is found ... with the intersection of Canal Street and Louisiana Avenue. The left leg of the Compass stands on the White House and the right leg stands on the Jefferson Memorial.... On top of the White House is an inverted five-pointed star.... The point rests squarely on the White House.... The center of the pentagram is 16<sup>th</sup> Street where, 13 blocks due north of the very center of the White House, the Masonic House of the Temple sits at the top." This must show that the Masons have been running the country since the beginning!

The same writer tells us that, when the new Mason says he wants "Light," and it is given to him at the command of the Worshipful Master, this is wrong, because Light is salvation, and comes only through Jesus. See John 8:12: "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." And again, Dr Holly, whom we just mentioned, speaks about Masonic light: "This is blasphemous," he says. "Jesus Christ is the Light of the World. No other light is revealed in the Word of God." Pretty strong language!

Pat Robertson, in his book *The New World Order*, says that the Masonic All-Seeing Eye is found in the Great Seal of the United States on the back of the dollar bill. This, he tells us, is “the eye of an ancient Egyptian deity, Osiris, who is revered in ... the sacred rites of the Masonic Order.” It follows that Masonry still preserves the pagan mysteries, and is incompatible with Christianity or Judaism, because the All-Seeing Eye belongs to an Egyptian god. And you will be aware that a number of these people are convinced that the truncated pyramid, likewise found on the reverse of the dollar, in fact points to the International Masonic conspiracy to take over the world, because it corresponds to a symbol that was used by the Illuminati of Bavaria in the 1770s.

These interpretations are every bit as plausible as the others, but they are all contrary to the spirit of Masonry as it is reflected in the symbols that are explained in the ritual, and they are all anti-Masonic.

There is a real problem here. If a symbol in one part of the world resembles another in a different part of the world, does that mean they are related, or that they mean the same thing? If we look at an ancient Greek statue, and see that its pose resembles a modern Masonic gesture, does that mean that it portrays a Mason? If we find that the Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamen was buried wearing an apron, does that mean he was a Mason? I could refer you to written texts that say he was. To me, this is obviously preposterous, and I decline to discuss it further.

But in the very same way, the anti-Masons confuse similarity with identity, and accept only one interpretation for any symbol. We noted that Pat Robertson objects to the All-Seeing Eye, because it is pagan. I can't help wondering if his Bible includes the words, “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Proverbs 15:3), or “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth” (2 Chronicles 16:9). This sounds to me as if the God of the Bible also has an all-seeing eye! We noted that several of these people object to the new Mason asking for “Light,” because light can only be the salvation of Jesus Christ. But the Bible itself uses light in various senses. It can stand for life: “Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul?” (Job 3:20). It can represent joy and prosperity: “Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart” (Psalm 97:11). It can mean moral excellence: “The path of the just is as the shining light.... The way of the wicked is as darkness” (Proverbs 4:18).

And of course in literature light means many things, and its precise application is derived from the immediate context. In a poem by Arthur Hugh Clough, light clearly means hope, in time of despair, that the future will be brighter:

And not by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light.  
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly,  
But westward, look, the land is bright.

In general, warmth, light, fire, and day regularly stand for "life." But at one point in *Paradise Lost* Milton calls upon Light to help him. This is appropriate in a literal sense, because his story is moving from the gloomy realm of Satan to the ethereal brightness of Heaven. We are also reminded that Milton, because of his blindness, could not see the light like other men. But finally we learn that here the light is symbolic, and represents poetic insight.

Shine inward, and the mind through all her parts  
Irradiate; there plant eyes, all mist from thence  
Purge and dispose, that I may see and tell  
Of things invisible to mortal sight.

In the educational world, the lamp of learning clearly represents knowledge. And so too in Masonry, in the First Degree the darkness is the darkness of ignorance and the light is the light of knowledge; in the Third, it is the darkness of death. It is stupid and dishonest of the Fundamentalists to say that "light," wherever it occurs, must be the salvation of Jesus Christ.

In Masonry, the symbols need not be consistent, but they can stand for different things. The twenty-four-inch gauge can represent the twenty-four-hour day, and also accuracy. The square stands for morality, but also for the Worshipful Master.

Should we go on and worry about numerical symbolism? Obviously the Masons are not the sole owners of certain numerals. Is the number three Masonic? Consider: Three Little Pigs, Three Blind Mice, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Three Men in a Boat, Three Musketeers, Three Stooges, Three Coins in a Fountain, Three-penny Opera, Three strikes and you're out. Are these all Masonic?

Or again, what about five? We hear of a Five-act play, the Five Books of Moses, Five Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, the Fifth Amendment, the five-sided building known as the Pentagon, the five athletic contests of the Pentathlon, five o'clock shadow, five Great Lakes. Are these all Masonic?

Or shall we worry about seven? Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Seven League Boots, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, Dance of the Seven Veils, Seven Brides for Seven Brothers, Seven-Percent Solution, Seven Wonders of the World, Seven Hills of Rome, Seven Years War, and the Seven Seas. Are these all Masonic?

Or should we brood about music? We mentioned a few minutes ago that the key-signature of E flat was particularly Masonic, because it has three flats. So I looked through the hymn-book, and discovered that, not only "Abide with me," but also "Be Thou my vision," and "O happy is the man who hears" are Masonic. Or, when we turn to an old song book, so are "Believe me if all those endearing young charms," "Drink to me only with thine eyes," and "Shenandoah." Do we believe that?

I am prepared to say that every Mason may interpret the symbols as he wishes, provided that they are not explicitly explained in the ritual in some other fashion. It can help the individual Mason in his spiritual growth or moral evolution. But I do not believe that he should attempt to impose his own interpretations on other Masons as if they were gospel truth, and cannot be denied. In my more intolerant moments I apply the name "mystical nuts" to such people. And there are a lot of them. I think of Foster Bailey, and Albert Churchward, and Manly P. Hall, and A. E. Waite, and Arthur Ward. My advice would be to avoid them like the plague.

Do you see the nature of the problem? I'm prepared to agree with Foster Bailey that one of the functions of Freemasonry is "the erection of our spiritual temple." Indeed, we are told in one part of the ceremonies, "From the foundation laid this evening, may you raise a superstructure perfect in its parts and honorable to the builder." But the precise way in which this is to be done is not, in my opinion, specifically taught in Freemasonry. The brotherhood is explicitly intended to be a group of men of high ideals and moral purpose, who believe in the omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence of a Supreme Being, who have shared certain deeply moving experiences, and who are striving, each in his own way, to improve himself, and to make the world a better place in which to live. Because of these

common beliefs and experiences, Freemasonry is in effect an affinity group, a group of men who enjoy each other's company.

Interpret the symbols how you wish, by all means. But, unless the interpretation is confirmed in the ritual, be very careful about what you tell others. And don't let the Anti-Masons shove a false interpretation down your throat.

Note: This paper was accompanied by illustrations which have not been included in this version.

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*A DAILY ADVANCEMENT...*  
CANBERRA LODGE OF RESEARCH AND INSTRUCTION  
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## Freemasonry and Lord Baden-Powell

“...there is no evidence that Major-General Lord Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell was a freemason under the English, Irish or Scottish Constitutions. It is remotely possible, but unlikely, that he was initiated under some other jurisdiction. Bro. George Kendall, in his paper ‘Freemasonry during the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902’ (*AQC* 97), makes no mention of him. Paul Butterfield’s *Centenary: The First Hundred Years of English Freemasonry in the Transvaal* (1978) is similarly devoid of reference. Had Baden-Powell been a member of the Craft it would surely have come to light during the war in South Africa, during which masonic activity is well documented.”<sup>1</sup>.

“Lord Baden-Powell must clearly have approved of Freemasonry, for he presented to the first lodge to bear his name (No. 488, Victoria) the Volume of the Sacred Law which is still in use. Its fly leaf was thus inscribed by him: ‘With best wishes for the success of the lodge in its good work, Baden-Powell of Gilwell. 12<sup>th</sup> May 1931’. His grandson, Hon. David Michael Baden-Powell was initiated in this lodge and remains an active member.”<sup>2</sup>.

## MASONIC LODGES

There are six masonic lodges named after Baden-Powell, all in Australia--but they were formed by scouts, not by Baden-Powell. Baden-Powell Lodge No. 505 UGLQ has published a booklet entitled *Freemasonry and the Scout Movement* (1982). They can be reached through the United Grand Lodge of Queensland, Box 2204 G.P.O., Brisbane, Queensland 4001

It is well known that Baden-Powell borrowed heavily from his friend Rudyard Kipling when he created the Cub Scout programme. Kipling was initiated in Lodge Hope and Perseverance at Lahore. He often mentioned the Craft in his writings: *The Mother Lodge* being only one example. There is a mallet

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Smyth, *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*. Transactions of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076, Volume 103. London: 1990. p. 264.

<sup>2</sup> It is understood that this brother is either currently the Worshipful Master of Lodge Baden Powell 488 VC or the IPM.

and chisel in the museum of the District Grand Lodge of the Punjab in Lahore, a gift from Bro. Kipling with his handwritten note.

If one looks closely at the structure, beliefs and goals of both movements, it can be seen that they inculcate the highest ideals of respect for the individual and society combined with a sense of duty and responsibility manifested in self reliance, service to others and charity to all.

Lady Olave Baden-Powell, Founder of Girl Scouting, has confirmed that B-P was not a Freemason, but that his younger brother was.

### **The Empire Sentinels Scheme**

There have been many speculations about connections between Scouting and Freemasonry, and whether early leaders in Scouting were connected to the Craft. This article discusses a scheme that was officially trialed by the Dominion Boy Scouts Association in New Zealand and has some characteristics that may seem familiar.

#### **Some Early History**

After Lt.-General Baden-Powell had commenced the Scout movement in England, a Boer War veteran, Major David Cossgrove formed the first New Zealand Troop in 1908, and the next January held the first camp. By the end of 1909 he had enrolled upwards of 500 patrols. He also started a scheme for "Junior Scouts" prior to the development of Wolf Cubs in England. Later he started a scheme for retaining those lads who had reached the age when they could no longer be Boy Scouts. This was the inception of the Empire Sentinels.

We know of the trial from official minutes. The scheme is also referred to in letters between Col. Cossgrove and Sir Robert Baden-Powell, and from a few surviving copies of a printed handbook.

The scheme is based around "Watchtowers" and 3 degrees of efficiency:

1. based on religious duty, with proof of the ability to work.
2. of patriotism and good citizenship and better work.
3. self-sacrifice in service to others, and still better work.

The Officer's were to be: a Chief Sentinel, a Sentinel of the South, a Sentinel of the East, a Sentinel of the West, an Inner Guard, an Outer Guard, a Senior Watchman, a Junior Watchman, a Scribe, and a Padre.

The Tower is opened in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Watch, then dropped to the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> as required. Visitors are admitted before each Watch is commenced. Sentinels enter using a pass word, saluting, then being seated, but a visiting Chief Sentinel is escorted up the centre of the building with Watchman's poles forming an archway over his head as he proceeds.

Halters and blindfolds are used and the "Alarm" appears to be the same number of knocks as the Watch in which the Tower is working. The saying "So Mote it Be" is mentioned. There are four principal officers in the Tower ceremonies, and the Chief Sentinel sits in the North. Lights are lowered and symbols of office illuminated in each Watch.

### **Whither the Sentinels?**

In 1919 in a letter to B-P., Colonel Cossgrove said of the Empire Sentinels: "There are no groups of these in New Zealand at present. The Scheme is for young men who are beyond Scout age and whose work prevents them taking up Scout activities the scheme has already been taken up enthusiastically in Africa, America and in Australia, I believe, and will be here when our young warriors return and have settled down various schemes for Senior Scouts do not appeal to Scoutmasters here due to the fact that all our boys of 14 years and over must attend to their military duties, often two and three times a week and also on Saturday afternoons. In the towns where most of these boys are they have to attend Technical Schools too, and in the country districts they have no time for Scouting as they work late and early.

Research has not shown that David Cossgrove was ever a Freemason. With his death in 1920, and the developments foreseen in the extract above, the impetus may have been lost. There is no indication that any Watch Towers ever operated other than as a trial, but the scheme is still demonstrated a few times a year by Masonic Scouters in New Zealand<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The information on the Empire Sentinels is excerpted from a posting by Edward Robinson, Westminster Lodge 308, New Zealand [robinson@the.net.nz](mailto:robinson@the.net.nz)

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## B-P and Freemasonry

As part of the research on Baden-Powell and Freemasonry, the author of the article received the following correspondence from a Brother Mason and Scouter in Belgium.

From the Worshipful Master. "Persevere in Unity" Chapter, Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for Belgium, Antwerp, Belgium, September 25th 1994:

Dear Brother,

.... I have been a member of the Boy Scouts de Belgique (founded mostly by Freemasons in 1910). I joined in 1944 (during the war!) as a cubscout and have been very active for about 40 years, during which I have been a Patrol Leader, a Scoutmaster, Assistant District Commissioner, Deputy Camp Chief for Wood Badge training, and Treasurer of the National Council. Now I am an honorary member and Secretary of the Old Scouts Guild, District Antwerp....

.... As to the links that exist between Freemasonry and Scouting, I did quite a lot of research and I wrote a few articles in the field. I also undertook some research in regard to B-P's possible membership in Freemasonry. To date I have found no proof that he was a member of our Order....

As far as B-P is concerned I found two interesting indications, which are:

1. In *27 Years with Baden-Powell* (London, 1957) by Mrs. E. K. Wade, once secretary of the Founder, the author mentions that in 1912 B-P was raised as "Knight of Saint John of Jerusalem."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Baden-Powell was created a Knight of Grace of Saint John of Jerusalem in 1912. The Knights of Saint John are a charitable order of Knighthood. Although not a Masonic Order, most Freemasons recognize a strong link to the history and traditions of this Order, which dates from the time of the Crusades.

2. In the bulletin "l'Intermediare des Chercheurs et Curieux, le mensuel de la Grande et la Petite Histoire" Number 485, December, 1991, I found under the heading "Origines de Scoutisme ("Origins of Scouting"), an article written by a Francis Gombert....

.... I will try to translate this into English:

"I possess a photostat of a letter addressed on January 20<sup>th</sup> 1966 to one of my friends, today an eminent member of the Grand Lodge of France, written by Cecil Potter, at that time Treasurer of Juventus Lodge of London. Mr. Potter writes: "I joined the Scout Movement in 1910 and I became a Freemason in 1916. I knew Baden-Powell, as well as his son Peter. A few amongst us, who were all together as Scouts and Masons, asked Baden-Powell to become a Freemason. He answered that he was unable to do so because he was the Chief Scout and that the movement included many Roman Catholic Scouts who might be offended learning that he belonged to the Freemasons.

His son Peter found it also inadvisable to ask to become a Mason because he was National Guildmaster of the Baden-Powell Scouts' Guild and he kept up many contacts with Roman Catholic Scouts on the continent.

As to the current Lord Baden-Powell (1966), grandson of the Founder of the Movement, we spoke a few months ago of the possibility, but he added that he did not wish to pursue it because it was preferable that no Baden-Powell be a Freemason."

Dear Brother, I hope that this letter will contribute to our better mutual knowledge of our founder....

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A DAILY ADVANCEMENT  
Canberra Lodge of Research and Instruction  
October 2001

**MASONRY, MASONRIES, AND HISTORICAL PROBLEMS OF  
PLURALISM:**

**The Prince Hall and Mexican Examples**

by Paul Rich MPS (Life) and Guillermo De Los Reyes

Dr. Paul Rich and Lic. Guillermo De Los Reyes are Professors of International Relations and History at University of the Americas, Puebla, Mexico. Dr. Rich is a member of the Scottish and York rites in Boston, as well as of many research lodges around the world. Their current research includes a comparison of Opus Dei, the Roman Catholic secret society, with Freemasonry.

Historians have a terrible time with the pluralism of social movements, often presenting as a single organization what upon investigation is found to be a multiplicity of groups. The histories of Prince Hall Freemasonry and Mexican Freemasonry are excellent examples of the distortion and obfuscation that results. A case in point is the dispute over the part played by Joel Poinsett, the American minister in Mexico in 1825-1829. He is sometimes depicted as a sort of antebellum James Bond.

He was not the genius behind a worldwide Masonic plot to subvert Mexican ambitions for independence. Contrary to claims, Poinsett did not introduce Masonry to Mexico. The origins of Masonry in Mexico are shrouded in mystery, almost an inevitability given the nature of the organization and the passage of time. What can be confidently written is that there was not one Masonry in Mexico but rather many Masonries, and this would apply to other countries.

Early nineteenth-century Mexico was in revolutionary ferment, the atmosphere being one which encouraged the growth of different expressions of Freemasonry and a multifarious jumble of Masonic ideologies and philosophies. The analogy to the political confusion and the jurisdictional and regularity issues facing Prince Hall Freemasons of the period is obvious.

As mentioned in the first article in this series, Poinsett did not go to Mexico with the notion of being the patron of a Masonic conspiracy. Rather, he seized upon the York rite of Masonry, to which he belonged, as a means by which he could strengthen his diplomatic mission. The

British minister, Henry B. Ward, was siding with the Scottish Rite in hopes of achieving trade privileges, and the Colombian Minister had been an Scottish Rite officer in Cartagena and was siding with Ward. This foreign interference coincided with growing resentment among Mexican patriots of the political power of the Scottish Rite, which was suspect not only for offering the cultural advantages of its supposed European affinities (relying as it did on the legend that Frederick the Great was the organizer of the Scottish Rite) but for proffering patronage and position rather than enhancing the commonweal.

In respects, Poinsett's decision to employ Masonry as one of the tools of his interventionist policies was the start of that long involvement of Masonry with Mexican politics which has been regarded so ambiguously by scholars as far as its good and bad effects have been concerned. He could not have expected the longlasting consequences of what looks like a spur-of-the-moment decision.

In any event, regardless of the rite, whether Masonry's political role was beneficial to Mexican society remains a deeply contentious issue. There are those who believe Masonry in Mexican history has been "a symbol of and major instrument for the creation of the modern 'neutral' society - a society in which the fixed statutes of the medieval world gave way to the needs of a changing and dynamic economic and social structure, where artificial and dysfunctional group distinctions are ignored and the individual is judged on his achieved rather than ascribed status." Others would be far less complimentary. The difficulty is that both sides prefer invective to objectivity.

Mexican historiography often presents Poinsett's motives and activities as purely political, and not enough credit has been given Poinsett's Masonic as opposed to his political enthusiasms. His involvement in Masonry was during an intense period of anti-Masonic activity in America. (This is also a factor which is not considered by the foes of Prince Hall regularity, who when considering the formation of Prince Hall lodges after the initial African Lodge period fail to acknowledge the difficulties for all Masonic groups in North America during the 1820s and 1830s as an aftermath of the Morgan incident.)

Such was the anti-Masonic opposition of the period to any politician with a Masonic affiliation that his commitment to the fraternity must have

been firm. He was a Mason when it would have been politically expedient not to have been one.

Poinsett was active in Masonry long before his first contacts with Mexico. He had been Master of Recovery Lodge No.31 in Greenville, South Carolina, and of Solomons Lodge No.1 in Charleston. In 1821 he was Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of South Carolina as well as High Priest of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of South Carolina, a post he held until 1841. The conclusion is that he enjoyed Masonry. He participated long after there was any apparent political reason to do so.

The Royal Arch degrees of which he was an officer, then as now, were open to a Mason after first taking the three degrees offered by the "blue" lodge. Conferred in chapters rather than lodges, they are known to all Masons today as part of the system of Masonic initiations popularly called the York rite. The situation in Poinsett's day was somewhat similar to that of today as far as the York rite being composed of several autonomous bodies: other York organizations included even then the Council of Royal and Select Masters, which conferred the Cryptic degrees, and the Knights Templar, whose commanderies gave the chivalric degrees.

The Royal Arch was much more wide-spread in the United States at the time than was the Scottish Rite, so it was not surprising that Poinsett's major affiliation as far as the "higher" degrees were concerned was with the Royal Arch rather than the Scottish Rite. The degrees are highly dramatic pageants and it is easy to understand that he liked seeing them exemplified and that he found satisfaction in being an officer and helping to stage them.

Poinsett's is a case where personal inclinations have public consequences. The full implications for Mexico of his Royal Arch membership have to our knowledge never been adequately discussed. Mexican historians lump the Royal Arch degrees with all Masonry and do not understand the diversity of Masonic bodies. Mexican historians have not written with an appreciation of the pluralism of Masonry: it is rather like Martians writing about Christianity and lumping Jehovah's Witnesses, Episcopalians and Unitarians together. Moreover, Mexican historians writing from a conservative Catholic perspective have a vested interest in

describing Masonry as a monolith. (So too do white Masonic historians in the United States who wish to deny that from the start American Freemasonry has been a pluralistic movement.)

Unfortunately, for understanding Mexican history, this apparently arcane matter of lodge affiliations and diversity of Masonic rites was to prove enormously significant in Poinsett's tempestuous Mexican career and to American relations with Mexico. To this day the activity of the Scottish and York Rites during the Mexican struggle for independence is misunderstood, sometimes deliberately.

One aspect of the Scottish-Yorkist issue in Mexico during the last 175 years which hinges on appreciating that they have diverse rituals and purposes is that there has been no study of the possibility of two rites having contrasting views about religion and secularism caused by their ritualistic perspectives. It is reasonable to expect that there would be different attitudes arising out of their rather different rituals, but that has gone unremarked.

Mexican Masonry since it achieved visibility in the 1820s has always been involved with Mexican church-state issues and in a running war with the Roman Catholic Church. What is missed is that a case can be made that the Scottish and York organizations have had different postures towards religion because their rituals are different. The York rite culminates in the Christian degrees of knighthood, including those conferring the honors of the Crusades in the Knight of Malta and the Knight Templar. The Scottish Rite included a degree in which the Papal tiara was trampled.

That is not to claim that the York rite in Mexico was Christian in a sectarian way or that the entire rite was Christian; the matter is more complicated. Nor is it to assert that the Scottish Rite was for the anti-religious. However, when it comes to considering Poinsett's part in Mexican politics, his York affiliation has to be considered. His lifelong devotion was to the Royal Arch. While taking the Royal Arch degrees was then as now a requirement for taking the chivalric degrees, the Royal Arch has never been a mere appendant and dependant body, as some would argue are such Scottish Rite bodies encountered on the way to the thirty-second degree as the Lodge of Perfection and Council of Princes of Jerusalem. Arguably (though contestably) it is a part of the

original blue lodge or basic system of degrees which accidentally became estranged.

The Royal Arch was the most universal and widespread of the York organizations when Poinsett belonged, having the largest membership of the York bodies. Its situation in Freemasonry was then as now unusual. Unlike many of Masonry's auxiliary bodies, Royal Arch Masonry has a case for being considered as an integral part of Masonry. Proponents consider that its ritual dramas complete the story which the candidate is told in the first three degrees. Thus considerable numbers of men, including non-Christians, took and take the Royal Arch degrees not as a step to further degrees but as a completion of their Craft or blue lodge degrees.

On the other hand, although the Royal Arch admits non-Christians, the York rite of which it is part limits its 'higher' degrees to Christians. So it may be that the religious beliefs of members provide a partial explanation of why the Royal Arch in Mexico has never been accused of being opposed to religion to the same extent that the Scottish Rite has. The Masonic knights pledge to defend the Christian religion. Whether the presence in the Royal Arch of many chivalric knighthood holders who had climbed the degree ladder to become Templars mitigated any potential anti-clericalism is worthy of investigation.

In any event, a full consideration of how the teachings and rituals of the degrees may relate to the Scottish and York competition over the decades in Mexico and their religious posture is beyond the brief of this paper. It seems though to have had a relevance to political developments, because in the later part of the nineteenth century the growing Scottish anti-clericalism in Mexico enabled the rite to present itself and to prosper as the spokesmen for a secular Mexican republic in the face of a corrupt and authoritarian church in a way that the York movement never did.

Moreover, the Scottish Rite had (and still maintains) a tradition of reinterpreting Christian symbols which the York never did, giving them a Masonic gloss. For example, INRI stood not for the Latin inscription *Jesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum* but instead had a different and dual meaning, standing for the Hebrew words iammim (water), nour (fire), rouach (air) and iebeschah (dry earth) and as well for the Latin *Igne*

*Natura Renovatur Integra* (all of Nature is renovated by fire). The cross was reinterpreted as Druidic, Egyptian, and Indian symbolism.

This gross theological revisionism understandably would fuel fears of the Catholic hierarchy about Masonry. Nor of course would the Church appreciate Masonic orders of crusading knights, no matter how pious and sincere their professions of faith. The Roman church has its own order of knighthood, with their own claims of historical legitimacy.

Moreover, a case can be made that both the Scottish and York lodges were anti-Catholic and that the differences are those of degree (to pun) rather than of kind. Undoubtedly the continuing tension between Catholicism and secularism which has characterized and troubled Mexican history since the beginnings of the Republic can trace part of its roots to the Masonic activity of this era. But that is not the same as claiming that the troubles were all of Poinsett's making.

The question then of whether the ritual of the Scottish and York Masons supported opposing outlooks on the church-state problem and contributed to the political animosity between the two rites in Mexico is deserving of attention. While this has relevance to considering Poinsett's Yorkist activities while minister, the rivalry of the two rites works against any speculation that he headed a general Masonic conspiracy.

Also worth emphasizing is that the Scottish Rite in Poinsett's time was not anti-clerical in the way that the Scottish Rite subsequently was in the 1850s and 1860s during the time of President Benito Juárez. Indeed, clergymen belonged to the early Scottish Rite in Mexico.

Any effort at an understanding of the Scottish-York issue is further complicated by the fact that the accurate reconstruction of the rituals worked in early Mexico has not yet been accomplished. Problems of analysis of fraternal ritual are compounded by the secrecy that enshrouded the affairs of the early lodges. The orders were more scrupulous about obeying injunctions not to have the ceremonies recorded or published. However, "...publishers sold exposés to members who needed help in memorizing their parts or to the curious who wished to 'fathom the wonderful secrets of Freemasonry' without paying for an initiation (Richardson's *Monitor*, p.iv)."

In any event, Scottish or Escocés Freemasonry was the dominant Masonic rite in Mexico in the early 1820s when Poinsett arrived on the scene, and despite his efforts for the Yorkists it continued in the face of difficulties to be a major influence in Mexican life for many decades. It still dominates Mexican Masonic life, at least in terms of size of membership. Apparently one of its roles has been to legitimize political power in a country where other sources of legitimacy, such as the Church, are denied to the ruling elite: "To sustain a 'father' role, the power leader often surrounds his leadership with a mystical aura. By claiming a divine right, for example, he persuades the 'sons' of his own infallibility, supposedly derived from a godhead."

What is crucial to an appreciation of Poinsett's position in Mexican affairs is to understand the ambiguities of Mexico in the 1820s, and here there is a direct parallel with the ambiguities at the time of Prince Hall's lodge activities in revolutionary Boston. The Scottish Rite and York Rite in Poinsett's day were not the same as they were later. He had been an enthusiastic Mason before he set foot in Mexico and he remained an enthusiastic Mason long after he left Mexico. The various Masonic bodies were not all of one mind. Masonry has always been a pluralistic system. This takes on importance today not only for understanding Mexico but for appreciating other historical disputes, such as that over the corruption of history to buttress last-ditch attempts to depict black Freemasonry as somehow outside the pale.

As will be seen in the concluding article in this series, Poinsett did use York Masonry for political purposes. What is significant is that it was the Mexicans who took the initiative in the politicization of Masonry, not Poinsett. Masonry was already part of Mexican politics when he arrived. Nevertheless, there is denying that the brothers found in him an energetic ally.