



FREEMASONRY

AN INITIATIC ORDER OR ASSOCIATION?

Allocution taken by the Grand Lodge on the 11th December 2010 from the Grand Master of the Regular Grand Lodge of Italy Fabio Venzi

*Just as the many rivers flow into the one ocean,
Losing their names and forms, so the wise person,
free from name and body, enters into that Divine being
higher than the highest.*

Upanishad

Introduction

What is Freemasonry? An Association, a Pseudo-religion, the origin of modern political parties (as maintained by several historians), or, lastly, an Initiatic Order?

To provide an answer to these questions, fundamental in attempting to comprehend the future that awaits Freemasonry, I opted to examine the transformation of several Masonic rituals, underlining their degeneration from an initiatic-esoteric into an associationistic-political form.

At the same time I have attempted to highlight how the distorted view of several historians who, lacking all forms of distinction, have arbitrarily depicted all Masonic Obediences as a mere associationist, if not overtly political, organisation, thereby contributing towards creating in the public opinion a false, unfounded view of Freemasonry. Although in some cases

the latter may have been subjected to a transformation from the original model towards profane forms of associationism devoid of any initiatic peculiarities, continues, albeit in extremely rare instances and solely thanks to a meagre group of esotericists, to be an Initiatic Society.

In the first part of this paper I have compared the Masonic Rituals adopted in the Consecration of a Temple and of a Lodge, originating from two different Masonic contexts: Anglo-Saxon (England and Scotland) and French (Grand Orient of France). The confrontation will underline substantial differences in the initiatic and esoteric content of the rituals examined, differences that, it will soon become evident, are one of the causes underlying the progressive degeneration that has led Freemasonry increasingly towards profane, associative forms.

In the second part I will analyze the text written by T.O.Haunch "*Constitution and Consecration of Lodges*" in which the author, whilst providing an unexceptionable historic reconstruction of the Ritual for Consecration of a Lodge, at the same time conveys a sense of constant underestimation of the esoteric-initiatic significance of the ceremony. This criticism of the work published by Haunch, author of important essays and one of the most knowledgeable in the field of Masonic studies, should not be construed as criticism of the author, but as a paradigm of how this view of Freemasonry common to numerous other authors of the period (referring to the 1960s) held the issue of Masonic esotericism in such low regard. Today however, clear signs of change are being heralded.

In the third and last chapter I will briefly illustrate the origins of the rituals used in the consecration of "sacred spaces", referring specifically to the archaic rites of foundation. Thus, the fundamental importance given to orientation of the Temple and to spatial collocation, an operation corresponding in ancient society to a "*cosmization*" of the area occupied, progressing from a state of "*chaos*" to one of "*order*", a concept constantly present in Masonic rituals, will be underlined.

Freemasonry has progressively lost the true, most significant connotations

of its esoteric-initiatic component, even at times transforming rituals so completely as to create a practice differing entirely from the original forms. If no corrective actions are undertaken, the remaining initiatic and ritual vestiges, based on age-old metaphysical and esoteric doctrines, will degenerate even further into a squalid pseudo-initiatic syncretism.

Chapter 1

Consecration: An esoteric or profane ritual?

1. Inauguration of a Temple and Installation of a Lodge

No substantial differences are present between the ceremonies adopted in the Anglo-Saxon ritual for Consecration of a Lodge and the Scottish ritual of Consecration of a Temple. Both ceremonies are indeed characterised by an Opening Prayer, although in view of the diverse nature of the ceremonies the prayers differ, by a hymn of consecration in the Scottish rite alone and by the reading of Psalm 133 in both rites. The Scriptures subsequently adopted are of a diverse nature and are greater in number during the ritual for Consecration of a Lodge. Both rituals involve walkabouts during which the Temple is sprinkled with incense; in the ritual performed to Consecrate a Lodge wheat, wine, oil and salt are scattered, whilst in the Temple dedication ritual wheat, wine and oil are strewn, but not salt.

None of these features are present in the rituals performed by the Grand Orient of France, an essentially “*atheist*” Masonic Grand Lodge which in 1877 removed all references to the “Grand Architect of the Universe” from its rituals. On analysing the French ritual it is immediately evident how the term “*Consecration*” has been abandoned and replaced by the profane term “*Inauguration*” when referring to a Temple and “*Installation*” when referring to a Lodge. Although the premises state in a contradictory manner how “*one should adopt an esoteric approach to the inner decorations of the Temple of Solomon*” (on se rapproche ésotériquement au décor intérieur du Temple de Salomon), no elements conveying esoteric connotations are present in the ritual, although it is subsequently underlined that “*Inauguration thus evolves into an exceptional and moving ceremony that sacralises these singularly symbolic premises*”(L’inauguration est alors toujours une cérémonie exceptionnelle et émouvante qui “sacralise” ce lieu particulièrement symbolique).

Indeed, the ritual is devoid of any esoteric or symbolic reference to the metaphysical nature of the ceremony, the transformation of a profane site into a “*sacred*” space. On the contrary, during the ceremony a marked influence produced by the enlightenment and progressive movements typical of the eighteenth century French Freemasonry is clearly evident. The ritual recites that the “*flame is the symbol of Reason (capital letter)*” and “*that the Blazing Star will lead us towards progress*”; Reason and Progress were the acknowledged key issues of the Eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Of all the theories that have harmed and proved particularly damaging to a correct understanding of Freemasonry, one of the most commonly acknowledged maintains that the origins of Freemasonry derive from the Enlightenment movement. This theory purports that an esoteric-initiatic society originates from a school of thought based on empiricism and positivism.

However, the theory whereby Freemasonry is the offspring of the eighteenth-century movement of enlightenment and progressivism is hard to eradicate, and the damage produced by this situation within the confines of studies performed to analyse Freemasonry has been considerable. Undeniably, during the eighteenth century “several” Masonic bodies in Europe introduced the principles of enlightenment into their rituals, thus distorting their esoteric and initiatic origins. In these Obediences the ritual has gradually been deprived of its true symbolic significance and replaced by commentaries and exegeses characterised by a desolating banality and a dull moralism reminiscent of the “*century of the Enlightened*”.

This “*progressivist*” degeneration of the principles of Freemasonry has consequently led to a misconceived interpretation of the concept of Brotherhood, increasingly construed as an independent “*individual subject*” invested with a real power within the context of socio-political confines, or levelling out into a form of essentially moral and material solidarism. The sentimental aspect, largely crystallised in the moral element, is particularly typical of religious forms and, as is well known, Freemasonry is not a religion.

Consequently, we have witnessed the transformation of an initiatic society in which Brotherhood is a feature shared by all individuals undertaking a “*personal*” journey of research and knowledge, into a generic associative phenomenon based on morals springing from an initiatic-religious syncretism.

Through “*intellectual knowledge*” the Masonic process is delineated as a method enhancing the implementation of an active process of inner transformation leading to the development of an actual change in status in an “*individual*” and “*personal*” rather than a “*social*” context. It is an established fact that the ultimate aim is to be reunited with the Supreme Being, free of material bonds (“metals”), thereby fulfilling one’s spiritual identity.

To return to the ceremony of the “*Inauguration of a Temple*”, the entire French ritual is seasoned with the triptych “*Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*”. There is a complete lack of Prayers, Beseechments, Bible readings, walkabouts and esoteric formulas, all widely present in the Anglo-Saxon Masonic ceremonies.

The “*Installation*”, or creation of a new Lodge, is in rituals employed by the Grand Orient of France, likewise substantially devoid of esoteric elements, underlining the enlightenment implications contained in the ceremony for inauguration of a Temple. Indeed, the premise recites: “*Freemasonry, being an institution essentially philanthropic, philosophic and progressive...has for its object the search for the intellectual and social perfection of Humanity... and its motto is Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.*” The entire Ceremony of Installation in the Grand Orient of France is ritually confined to the transportation of the Lodges’ star, which is then added to the emblem of the Obedience. Accordingly, in this vision philanthropy, philosophy and politics constitute the tools, and intellectual and social progress the aim of Freemasonry.

On the contrary, an Initiatic Order focuses solely on an “*individual*” journey of progressive self-discovery, tracing back an age-old

uninterrupted learned tradition defined as esoteric as it addresses a single follower within a specific context and ignores and rises above the worldly presence of politics or philanthropy.

Chapter 2

The esoteric component in the ritual of Consecration

1. Evolution of the Ritual

In the Anderson Constitutions published in 1723 a paragraph on “*The Manner of Constituting a New Lodge*” states how the ceremony for the foundation of a Lodge was comprised in the ceremony of Installation of the Worshipful Master of the Lodge itself, being reduced to little more than a mere formal undertaking performed by the Grand Master or his Deputy. The Constitutions recite: “*Does not appear to involve any ceremonial rite of Constitution at all but merely the formal pronouncement by the Grand Master “I constitute and form these good Brethren into a Lodge” followed, it is suggested, by something like an oration on the nature and principles of the institution*”.

Thus, it would seem that the changes applied, following which the ritual assumed its current esoteric-initiatic semblance took place between 1723 and 1815, year in which the consecration ritual used today was likely established. Subsequent modifications to the ceremony for the Consecration of a Lodge were based on the first edition of the *Illustrations of Masonry* by William Preston (1772), although further important changes and additions were included in his eighth edition. In his third lecture, in mentioning the Ceremony of Consecration, Preston provides considerable cues for discussion. He of course does not describe the actual ritual but rather provides a wealth of elements enabling reconstruction of the same. Up until 1880, year in which the ritual formula ‘*The Lecture of the Three Degrees in Craft Masonry with the ceremony of Installation and Consecration*’ was published by Lewis of London, the only reference available was contained in the work by Preston. It can therefore be concluded that the ceremony used today is an evolution of the Prestonian model, although no form of documentation is available to reveal how the evolution took place. Indeed, the documents available seem to denote a

marked evolution in the Ceremony of Consecration that was to lead from an initial absence of ritual to development of the same following fundamental additions of an esoteric nature. I personally do not agree fully with this theory, particularly, as I will clarify subsequently, the absence of historic documents on the rituals performed does not necessarily imply either that they did not exist or had not been handed down verbally.

2) Constitution, Consecration and Dedication

T.O.Haunch historian of Freemasonry and specifically of the London Lodge n. 2076 *Quatuor Coronati*, in his important study of the evolution of the rite of consecration of a Lodge, reported in *Volume 83 of Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, defines the differences between *Constitution*, *Consecration* and *Dedication*. I however agree only partially with the definitions put forward by Haunch for the following reasons.

Haunch refers to *Constitution* as “*the formal act which brings a new Lodge into being, gives effect in Masonic law to the terms of the warrant, and empowers the members of the lodge to carry out the function specified in the warrant.*”, and here we of course concur with the statements made. *Consecration* “*is the Masonic rite, religious in form, by which it is regularly constituted, i.e. the practice of Freemasonry*”, and lastly, *Dedication* is reported as “*the religious and Masonic rite by which a building or room is allowed and sanctified for the practice of Freemasonry, in distinction to “Consecration” which performs the same action towards the corporate body of Mason forming a new Lodge.*”¹

In particular, important considerations should be made with regard to the definitions provided for *Consecration* and *Dedication*. Indeed, Haunch differentiates between the *Consecration* of a Lodge and the *Dedication* of a Temple, two rites that although both performed for the same reason and being “*religious in form*”, are addressed to two different entities, the first to the corporate body of Mason (The Lodge) and the second to a building

¹ T.O.Haunch, *The Constitution and Consecration of Lodges under the Grand Lodge of England*, AQC 83, page 1.

(The Temple). I personally do not agree with this differentiation and maintain that the two rites feature an identical *esoteric* and *initiatic* vocation: the first the establishment of a “*sacred space*” and the second to creating an “*initiatic body*” to perform inside the former. Consequently, the term “*consecration*” may correctly be applied to both ceremonies.

Traditionally, considerable importance should be placed on the presence of an “*unbroken initiatic chain*”, with the Anderson Constitutions stating that consecration of a Lodge should be undertaken “*agreeably to the ancient usages and customs of the Fraternity*”. The consecration of this initiatic body, the Lodge, *agreeably to the customs*, therefore implies how the initiatic chain together with the esoteric “*Tradition*” from which the latter originates, should not be broken and, should such an occurrence take place, the Lodge would be viewed as an irregular Lodge from an initiatic point of view.

To address once again the Rituals of Consecration, the Grand Lodge of Scotland refers to the two ceremonies, the Foundation of a new Temple or the creation of a new Lodge, using the term “*Consecration*”. Accordingly, the document “*Ceremonial for the guidance of Grand Office-Bearers, Provincial and District Grand Office-Bearers and Office-Bearers of Daughter Lodges*” published by the Grand Secretary under the authority of the Grand Committee, refers to the ceremony of the foundation of a new Temple as “*Consecration*”, officially including the latter in the chapter “*Consecration of a Temple or Lodge Room set apart for the purpose of Freemasonry*”.

Further confirmation of the profoundly esoteric and sacred component of the Ceremony for Consecration of a Temple or other premises to be used for esoteric ceremonies is provided by the interesting addition whereby the “*Consecration*” ceremony should be performed even for the ritual use of a single room in which, *albeit only occasionally*, Masonic work is carried out. The latter implies that in the absence of an esoteric ritual conveying to premises “*other*” features previously lacking and rendering it suitable for use in initiatic tasks, these premises are not appropriate for use in Masonic

issues.

On returning once more to the term “*Dedication*”, it can be stated that this term is likely of ecclesiastic origin. The term is indeed found in the “*Ceremonial of Bishops*” adopted by the Catholic Church for the occasion of “*Dedicating*” a Church to a particular Saint.² Could this be the reason why Haunch defined it a religious Masonic ritual? The “*Dedication*” of a Church may be undertaken at the time of its Foundation, for the purpose of “*dedicating*” the Church to the Lord by means of a solemn rite according to the ancient tradition of the Church. The Bishop appointed to attend to a given Church will be responsible for dedicating to God all new churches erected in his diocese³. With the exception of the sprinkling of incense, the rite of “*Dedication*” has nothing in common with the Masonic rite of Consecration of a Temple. A ceremony known as “*Rededication*” is included in the Ceremonial of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, but is referred to the “*Ceremony observed when a Daughter Lodge is celebrating an occasion such as a centenary, bi-centenary, etc.*”, as is clearly evident, a ceremony devoid of any esoteric or initiatic components.

To conclude, the use of the term “*Dedication*” would appear to be not only inexact, but even misleading when addressing the ritual discussed herein.

3) “More or less esoteric”

Largely speaking, the historian Haunch doubts the presence of a ceremony of consecration throughout the first decades of the eighteenth century, based on the fact that to date no documents have been found to attest the existence of such a ritual. Moreover, Haunch marvels at the lack of any such reference in documents such as the Anderson Constitutions: “*The*

² The “*Ceremonial of Bishops*” used to date was first published by Pope Clement VIII in the year 1600. However, this edition was merely a revised version obtained in accordance with the principles of the Tridentine reform of a previously approved text. Indeed, the *Ceremonial of Bishops* had taken the place of the “*Ordines Romani*” which, at the end of the seventh century passed down directives for papal liturgies performed by the Roman Popes.

More recently, in 1886 Leo XIII (1878-1903) ordered the publication of a new typical edition of the *Ceremonial of Bishops* that maintained unaltered the third book, although no longer of any importance following the abolishing of the Ecclesiastical State and confining to the Vatican City.

Finally, the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican decreed the reform of all sacred rites and texts, thus leading to the complete revision and publishing of a new edition of the *Ceremonial of Bishops*.

³ The *Ceremonial of Bishops*, pages 140-141.

description given by Anderson of “The Manner of Constituting a New Lodge” in the Postscript to the 1723 Constitution is the earliest official account we have of a Masonic ceremony...It is, in essence, an initial installation ceremony preceded by formal act of constitution by the Grand Master...In Anderson’s account of the “Manner” does not appear to involve any ceremonial rite of Constitution at all but merely the formal pronouncement by the Grand Master.”⁴ The ceremonial is seemingly dedicated entirely to the Installation of the Worshipful Master, and Anderson refers to the rituals employed using the words “by certain significant Ceremonies and ancient Usages”.

It is however Haunch himself to remark on how in the paragraph “*Of Constituting a New Lodge*” the 1815 Constitutions state: “*The lodge is then consecrated according to ceremonies proper and usual on those occasion, but not proper to be written, and the grand master constitutes the lodge in antient form*”⁵. Therefore, it could feasibly be concluded that the written ritual was merely part of a more extensive ritual handed down only verbally at the time. Furthermore, Haunch himself provides confirmation of this when, citing the renowned *Ahiman Rezon* by Lawrence Dermott, the Constitutions of the *Ancients*, he states that he was referring to “*some Ceremonies and Expression that cannot be written*”, whilst adding that “*the act of constitution might indicate a consecratory rite in embryo*”⁶. However, why Haunch should have deemed the ritual to be “*in embryo*” is hard to understand, as the part “that could not be written down” may actually have rendered the ritual considerably more complex than Haunch maintains.

The most disconcerting aspect is that on referring to the ceremony as reported in the “*Manner of Constituting*” written by Anderson in 1723, Haunch comments “*This may imply some procedure of a more or less esoteric nature*”. It should first be stated that if similar “practices” observed within the confines of Freemasonry convey, according to

⁴ T.O.Haunch, *ibidem*, page 4.

⁵ T.O.Haunch, *ibidem*, page 6

⁶ T.O.Haunch, *ibidem*, pag.9

Haunch, some degree of esoteric significance, these rites therefore are not “*procedures*”, but rather “*rituals*”, and Masonic rituals are undeniably wholly esoteric as they address and are performed by initiates in a consecrated, enclosed space. Moreover, to define a ritual as “*more or less esoteric*” conveys a confused, distorted, and questionable view of Freemasonry. In the same way that a individual cannot be more or less initiated, likewise a ritual cannot be performed in a more or less esoteric manner, otherwise, as mentioned by Guénon, we would end up by merely “*playing at rituals*”, fulfilling initiatic rites whilst ignoring their full sense and failing to further understanding of the same.⁷

Haunch, in explaining the significance of the ritual of Consecration and Dedication, defines both as being “*religious in form*”, thereby creating considerable confusion. Indeed, the rituals used by Freemasonry can in no way be defined as being of a “*religious*” nature in view of the substantial differences between an “*initiatic*” or *esoteric rite* and “*religious*” or *exoteric rites*. Initiatic rites are by their very nature confined to the elect few in possession of specific requisites, the so-called “*qualification*”, whilst religious rites are addressed indiscriminately to all members of a given faith for the purpose of deliverance and salvation. To define a Masonic ritual as “*religious*” would be confusing and risk transforming Freemasonry into an incoherent syncretism, a mere overlapping of elements from various sources.

Freemasonry is neither a Religion nor a surrogate for religion, being rather an initiatic philosophy capable of providing cognitive and methodological tools to aid individuals to embark on a journey towards personal improvement and spiritual perfection. Indeed, prayers and beseechments are both present in Masonic rituals, but these are the expression of spirituality viewed as a progressive experience of acquaintance with the divine heralding, in Freemasons, a true ontological metamorphosis.

⁷ René Guénon, *Considerations on the Initiatic Way*, page 152.

Chapter 3

The Sacred Space

1. The “sacred space” in ancient societies.

The Consecration and construction of a sacred space in traditional ancient societies was invariably performed in compliance with ancient rules, traditional standards, based particularly on a primeval revelation that “*in the beginning*” provided the archetype for the sacred space, subsequently perpetuated in the erecting of all new Temples, and even underlying the establishing of Masonic rituals.

The Consecration of a space using a ritual of orientation represents the *cosmization* of the area, as the Cosmos is a divine creation with a prevailing sacred structure. “*Cosmization*” therefore indicates a transition from chaos to order (the ceremony performed for exaltation into the Royal Arch includes the words “*Almighty and Eternal Father of the Universe, at whose command the world burst from chaos, and all created matter had its birth*”), and consequently the “*Consecration*” of a Temple or a Lodge represents the imitation of a cosmogonic gesture, the repetition of the “*first action*” (the “*Ritual*”) as reiteration of the divine action of the archetypal construction of the Creation. The first gesture is constituted by consecration of the ground, its transformation into a “*centre*”, in a space diverse from the previously profane extension. Subsequently the “*subject*” is created, the Lodge, likewise consecrated to render the space suitable for use at a sacred time, as demonstrated by the date of the Foundation Charter (4000 years ago), portraying the metahistoric and timeless dimension in which the ritual is invariably performed.

2. Delimitation and Secrecy

A “*sacred*” space is first and foremost a delimited space, constructed ritually, differentiated from the remaining profane space. The gesture of delimiting, present in older rites such as Vedic rituals, represents an

attempt to create order, to establish a foundation in the midst of the instability and impermanence of things. On the one hand a power is exercised in view of the need to dominate and control the space by delimiting the same, on the other conveying the profound sense of precariousness of the Earth. The action of delimiting is the manifestation of a divine power capable of producing a hierophany, or better cratophany, in which the delimited space subtracted from the flow of all things, is transformed into a “*sacred*” space.

As emphasised by Mircea Eliade “The hierophany therefore does not merely sanctify a given segment of undifferentiated profane space; it goes so far as to ensure that sacredness will continue there. There, in that place, the hierophany repeats itself. In this way the place becomes an inexhaustible source of power and sacredness and enables man, simply by entering into it, to have a share in the power, to hold communion with the sacredness”⁸. The latter assists us in understanding why a Masonic Temple should not be used for the purpose of performing activities other than initiatic rites.

The foundation of a Masonic Temple therefore is a ceremony denoting marked esoteric features, and the rite performed is consequently termed “Consecration”. Since the night of time the Temple has had a celestial prototype, as revealed repeatedly in the Old Testament, dating back to the moment on Mount Sinai when Jehovah showed Moses the exact form to be applied in constructing a sanctuary in his name: “*This Tabernacle and all its furnishings you shall make exactly according to the pattern that I will now show you...See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain*”.⁹

An additional characteristic feature of Freemasonry and all initiatic societies arises from the need to delimit the sacred space that will subsequently host the rite: Secrecy. This term however is not used to convey a sense of operating in the shadows, but rather the need to remain

⁸ Mircea Eliade, *Traité d’histoire des religions*, Payot-Paris, page 333

⁹¹⁰ Roberto Calasso, *L’Ardore*, Adelphi, Milan, 2010, pages 288-289. Exodus, 25,8-9.

“*segregated*” from the rest of the world, to be confined to a sacred place in which to seek contact with a higher dimension, far from the rest of the world that exists in a state of chaos and instability. It is only through detaching oneself from the cacophony of the social world that an attempt can be made to climb the vertical path. “The secret is not a means of disguising something that would otherwise be clear to all. The secret indicates access to an area where everything, from significance onwards, is comprised within a delimited space. The secret is a place isolated by a barrier, in the same way as a frame surrounding a picture”¹⁰. Cosmogony is the model underlying all types of constructions, each Temple imitates and, in a certain sense perpetuates, the Creation of the Universe. Indeed, each Temple is situated at the “*centre of the universe*” and accordingly can only be built once the *profane* spaces and times have been eliminated and a *sacred* space, a *transcendental* place, created. I should therefore start by mentioning that the tradition of “*orienting*” a Temple is in itself an action deemed to be “*sacred*”. The orientation of the Temple actually recalls the notion held by primitive civilizations of orientation in space, or rather the separation of space into four horizons corresponding to foundation of the world. This “*foundation*” of the world is aimed at transforming “*chaos*” into “*order*”, in placing the Temple at the “*centre of the world*”. Access to this “*centre*”, symbolizing the rite of passage from the profane to the sacred, from the ephemeral and illusory to reality and eternity, from death to life, from man to divinity, corresponds to a consecration, an initiation.¹¹ The symbolism of the centre is fundamental in the rites of foundation and, through symbols used by the constructors of cathedrals, has survived in the western world to the present day. The ancient conception of the temple as an *imago mundi*, the idea that it reproduced the essence of the universe, has indeed been passed on to the sacred Christian architecture in Europe, from the basilica built in the first centuries A.C., to the medieval cathedrals, to the Masonic Temple, all symbolically reproduce the celestial Jerusalem.

¹¹ Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Gallimard, Paris, 1949, page 35.

3. Opening towards the “Cosmos”

Ancient man lived in constant contact with the “*Cosmos*”, with the dwellings used featuring openings at the summit to facilitate permanent communication with the world “above”. The symbolic *Ladder* illustrated on the *1st Degree Tracing Board* is metaphorically linked to the celestial vault, likewise constituting the open roof of the Lodge. Thus, “*Jacob’s ladder*” represents the evolution of the “sacred staff” used by ancient populations to exert a cosmologic function facilitating permanent communications with the world of the divine and in orienting and controlling chaos.

Of all the symbols used, the *Ladder* best represents the link with the higher world, it denotes the breach in a level enabling passage from one dimension to another, from the profane to the sacred world. In archaic rituals the ladder generally rises from a “*centre*”, thus enabling communications between the various levels of being; likewise the *Tracing Board* rests on the Volume of the Sacred Law, the sacred “*centre*” of Freemasonry.

I would therefore like to conclude by affirming that the desacralization and demythicization of the modern world have produced a profound influence on Freemasonry that, evidently, although continuing to undertake its ancient rituals, has not been capable of avoiding the chaos of time and maintaining intact its heritage of initiatic and esoteric knowledge. The loss of significance of the gestures, symbols and rites can only result in a depletion of the sense of Freemasonry which is currently wandering uncertain of its true identity, traipsing through things of the profane world. But its main aim manifested, of hewing the raw stone to form the keystone of Humanity, cannot be ignored.