

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF CHEVALIER ANDREW MICHAEL RAMSAY

Including a full transcript of his Oration of 1737.

by W. Bro. Martin I. McGregor

http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/ramsay_biography_oration.html

PM and Secretary The Southern Cross Lodge No.9.

PM Lodge Te Puke No.261.

Companion St. Andrew's Royal Arch Chapter No.90.

Master (2007) of the Research Lodge of Southland No.415.

Member the Waikato Lodge of Research No.445.

Past Grand Steward, Freemasons New Zealand.

Transcribed by R.'W.'. Gary L. Heinmiller

Archivist, Onondaga & Oswego Masonic Districts Historical Society [OMDHS]

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The name of Chevalier Andrew Michael Ramsay will probably mean very little to the majority of Freemasons and still less to the general public but he remains one of the most influential and controversial characters in the history of Freemasonry. Although he was ostensibly a man of humble birth he nevertheless mixed with ease with some of the elite of the nobility and intelligentsia of France, England and Scotland. Although raised as a Calvinist he became involved in unconventional religious groups until finally converting to Roman Catholicism. Although he was a staunch Jacobite he was nevertheless accepted and honoured by those with whom he was at political variance. More particularly, as a Freemason, he was an influential figure during the formative years of French Freemasonry and some Masonic historians believe him to be the originator of the Ecossaise or Scottish so-called 'higher' degrees including the Knights Templar, Royal Arch and the Scottish Rite. Above all, he is famous for his 'Oration' or discourse of 1737 which is alleged to have been the source of the theory of the Templar origins of Freemasonry. It is further alleged that the 'Oration' was the immediate cause of the condemnation of Freemasonry by the Roman Catholic Church. This is the story of Andrew Michael Ramsay.

Although it is known that his birthday was 9 January, the exact year of his birth is uncertain but is most likely to have been 1681. The son of a baker, Andrew Michael Ramsay was raised in the coastal town of Ayr in south west Scotland. He was educated at Ayr grammar school and at the age of 14 entered Edinburgh University where he studied for three years. Raised in a Calvinist family, he was deeply religious and destined for the ministry but this never came about. On completing his education, he accepted the position of tutor to the children of the 4th Earl of Wemyss whose seat was in Fife. Thus began a lifetime career as a personal tutor to children of the aristocracy.

There was another thread at work in his inquiring mind in this formative period of Ramsay's life, that of exploring alternative religious experiences to that of his Presbyterian background. In particular, he became attracted to the mysticism of Quietism as practiced by the Episcopalian divine and theologian Dr. George Garden at Rosehearty in Aberdeenshire, which was centred on the teachings of Antionette Bourignon in a community where people of different religions and social status lived in harmony together. A similar community was led by Pierre Poiret at Rijnsburg near Leyden. He was also a member at one time of a society called the Philadelphians. This non-sectarian group, incorporated in 1670 as the Philadelphia Society for the Advancement of Piety and Divine Philosophy, had their own unique blend of ideas drawn from elements of transcendentalism, pantheism and Gnosticism.

In 1706, Ramsay quit his position with the Earl of Wemyss and in 1707 studied mathematics under Nicholas Fatio de Duillier, who was Isaac Newton's most intimate companion. Ramsay then traveled to the Netherlands where he served in the English auxiliaries. This was at the time of the War of the Spanish Succession, which was principally a war between France and Spain on the one side and England and Austria on the other. The English army was commanded by the brilliant Duke of Marlborough from his base in the Netherlands. The reasons for his decision to leave Scotland and take up military service are a mystery except for a single, unverified reference to his having been embroiled in a religious controversy back in Scotland. One may surmise that he functioned as a junior officer from the apparent ease with which, in 1710, he severed his connection with the English Army and visited Pierre Poiret at Rijnsburg. Poiret was a great admirer of the Roman Catholic theologian Francois de Salignac de la Mothe-Fenelon, Archbishop of Cambrai, a major defender of Quietism and an admirer of the quietist mystic Jeanne Marie Bouvier de la Motte Guyon, usually known as Madame Guyon. Following his visit to Poiret, Ramsay went to stay in Fenelon's household at Cambrai until 1715 and was converted by him to Roman Catholicism. He became steady friends with the Marquis de Fenelon, a young relative of the archbishop. From 1714 to 1716 Ramsay acted as secretary to Madame Guyon and was present at Blois when she died in 1717. In 1718 he entered the employment of the Comte de Sassenage as tutor to his son.

It is instructive at this point delve a little more deeply into his background in an attempt to form a picture of the kind of influences which would have played a part in forming his character and direction in life thus far. Nothing is known about his father other than his occupation as a baker and his Calvinist (Presbyterian) religious inclination but, far from being a humble kneader of dough, it is likely that as a baker he would have been a man of some substance, almost certainly a burgess and a guildsman. In other words, he was likely to have been a free man, one who enjoyed the freedom of the borough and who took part in its government. This was an important privilege in 17th Century Scotland which was still a country run largely along feudal lines with many thousands of working class Scots bound to the service of a feudal lord or, if classified as vagrants, living in total servitude. The freemen or burgesses of the boroughs were indeed free of this bondage in every sense but, as we shall see, they could lose that freedom.

To be 'free' meant that a man was his own master. He could represent himself in law, protect his interests for himself in law, defend himself in law, sue for compensation for himself in law, purchase and sell property and, most importantly for a craftsman, enter into legal contracts and trade on his own account. As a free man he was qualified to be a burgess and a member of the town guild as well as a member of a merchant or trade guild. With regard to trade guilds, it is worth noting that whereas the English trade guilds were very seriously weakened and stripped of their assets during the English reformation, the Scots guilds experienced no such persecution and, apart from some reform of their religious activities, no detrimental interference in their affairs. The Scots trade guilds consequently remained strong until well into the 19th century.

The influence of his family's Calvinist convictions deserves examination, especially in view of his early interest in non-sectarian Quietism and his eventual conversion to Roman Catholicism. Calvinism, which developed in Scotland into Presbyterianism, was the product of the remarkable Scottish Reformation of 1560. The Scots reformation was remarkable for the comparative lack of rancor and the smoothness of transition from the old order to the new. There was none of the persecutions, executions and bloodletting of the English Reformation. Scotland produced only one martyr, England hundreds. There was none of the spoilation of the monasteries, guilds and chantries. Although the monasteries and chantries disappeared in Scotland, it was a very quiet and trouble free affair. Most of the priests and monks were pensioned off or else joined the Protestant ranks. The only blot on an otherwise perfect copy book was a certain amount of vandalism of church property to remove images. Also, most of church property ended up being sequestered by the Scots nobility, thus leaving the new Protestant church with few assets to support its programme of reform. With its standards enshrined in the Confession of Faith and its discipline and objectives set out in the Book of Discipline, the Protestant reformation in Scotland emerged triumphant, complete and extremely well organized. The emergent Presbyterian Church with its insistence on the separation of church and state and its system of synods, assemblies and Kirk sessions developed a method of church government, devoid of bishops and canons, which amounted to a democratic theocracy in which all members of the congregation could play a part. Although the Presbyterian Church insisted on the separation of church and state, it also believed that the government of the nation should be according to God's laws and that kings were but God's subjects. After all, Calvin himself had already shown in Geneva how it was possible for a theocracy to control civil government in the name of God. As can be well imagined, this viewpoint was the cause of deepest suspicion on the part of King James and when Scots cleric Andrew Melville declared to his face that "thou art but God's silly vassal", James's response was to imprison Melville in the Tower of London. Although King James was also referred to as "the wisest fool in Christendom", he was definitely no fool. James admirably performed the difficult task of ruling Scotland from 1567 to 1603 during which time he broke the power of the border clans and curtailed the activities of the more lawless highland clans in spite of having no sizeable army of his own. He then went on to rule both England and Scotland, equally successfully in most respects, until 1625. Part of his response to the Presbyterian Church was his introduction of episcopacy into Scotland along the lines of the Church of England. Although the Episcopal Church was never able to replace Presbyterianism, it found support in the Scottish Highlands and provided a useful brake on the excesses and ambitions of the Calvinists. Nevertheless there was bitter rivalry between these two rival Scottish churches for over two centuries.

Perhaps the most dominant feature of the Scots Kirk was its all-pervading control over the religious and moral conduct of the congregation. Observance of the Sabbath and attendance at kirk was mandatory and failure to comply was a cause for severe punishment, as was a vast range of sins and misdemeanors. Judged and condemned by their peers, sinners were subjected to public condemnation, punishment and penance. There was a wide range of cruel corporal punishments, many of them amounting to torture, and penitents were required to sit on the stool of repentance in church, sometimes every Sunday for months on end. Even then, they were likely to be banished from the community to become homeless and penniless vagrants devoid of all rights and protection and likely to be rounded up by the barons and forced into slave labour. It should be noted, however, that the Kirk did not usually apply the same treatment to the nobles and others of rank and substance as it did to the hapless and defenceless members of the so-called lower classes. Although at the urging of King William III the Presbyterian Church, by that time established as the Church of Scotland, adopted a more moderate approach it is virtually certain that young Ramsay would have been exposed to the hard-eyed, pitiless and relentless moral discipline which so typified the Scottish Kirk. In his youth he would have been exposed to relentless discipline at school as well as at church and it is to his education we now turn.

The Book of Discipline of 1560, compiled by John Knox, set out a plan for the education of all Scottish children. The plan was to have elementary schools in every parish where five to eight-year-olds would be taught scripture and reading by the minister. Grammar schools were to be established in the towns where eight to twelve-year-olds would be taught Latin grammar and high schools established in the larger towns where pupils from 12 to 16 would study Latin, Greek, Rhetoric and Logic. Three universities already existed for the more able pupils to study the Arts for three years, although the study of medicine, law or divinity would take another five years. Advancement from one stage to another depended on ability. The scheme was for rich and poor alike and was intended to be compulsory. It was not entirely free as it was felt that people would not value education if it was for nothing, but fees asked of the poor were very small. The schools were to be financed by the heritors, that is to say the landowners, and their tenants. The schools in the towns were paid for by the burgesses. School hours started at 6 a.m. and closed between eight and twelve hours later, six days a week. In addition, pupils were expected to attend church on Sunday and be able to explain what they learned from the sermon on the Monday. The teachers were provided by the Kirk. In the event, the Presbyterian Church provided the teachers for the elementary and grammar schools, whilst the high schools and universities were run by the Episcopalians.

By the time young Ramsay started school the Scottish education system was substantially in place in the Scottish Lowlands but was struggling to service the Highlands. Nevertheless, the sons of Highland chiefs were required by law to attend university in the hope that they would learn civilized ways. Even the famous outlaw Rob Roy had a good education and saw to it that his sons had one too. Whilst Rob was away raiding and lying low his wife sent the children to the elementary school at Logierait. But Rob played his part by donating a fine bell to the school which, however, he had stolen from the church at Balquidder! The church only got the bell back in the 1920's.

Ramsay was therefore the product of a Scottish education system which was unique, advanced and highly regarded in its time and, indeed, for a couple of centuries to come. It is hardly surprising that he found no difficulty in finding work as a private tutor and in making his mark on the intellectual life of Europe. Certainly, he comes across as a man with an educated and receptive mind, a man prepared to explore different beliefs and to think outside the confines of his upbringing. This is nowhere better demonstrated than his interest in quietism.

Quietism has its origins in the Middle Ages and aspects of it would have been familiar to monks and hermits but it appeared in the form of a religious revival during the 17th.Century due to the work of the Roman Catholic theologian, Miguel de Molinos. Fr. Molinos was a personal friend of Pope Innocent XI. In 1675, Fr. Molinos published his *Guida spirituale*. in which his quietest theology is expounded but it was not until 1681 that the Jesuit preacher Paolo Segneri attacked the work resulting in it being referred to the Inquisition. Although the Inquisition found the work orthodox, the Jesuits backed Fr. Segneri and set Fr.la Chaise to work on Louis XIV of France with the result that Fr. Molinos was arrested for heresy in 1685. In 1687, Fr. Molinos made a public confession of his errors and was sentenced to life imprisonment. In the same year Pope Innocent signed the bull, *Coelestis Pastor*, condemning the propositions put forward in the *Guida spirituale* and other works by Molinos. Molinos died in prison in 1697.

The Encyclopedia Britannica states that Quietism is 'a doctrine of Christian spirituality that, in general, holds that perfection consists in passivity of the soul, in the suppression of human effort so that divine action may have full play'. Wikipedia expands on this to assert that 'Quietism states that man's highest perfection consists of a psychical self-annihilation and subsequent absorption of the soul into the Divine, even during the present life. In this way, the mind is withdrawn from worldly interests to passively and constantly contemplate God. One can readily appreciate that Quietism is a deeply personal, contemplative form of mystic spiritual autonomy, somewhat akin to Buddhism, that requires the death of the ego in order to achieve a spiritual rebirth necessary to form a union with the Divine. It is the idea of spiritual autonomy springing from free will that ran contrary to the doctrines of orthodox Christian theology, both Catholic and Protestant, which state that God can only be reached through the intermediacy of Jesus Christ and his church. Quietism takes no account of the Holy Trinity and completely sidelines the Church, thus undermining its authority.

Because of the highly personal nature of its appeal, Quietism lent itself to individual variation at the hands of its disciples. One such disciple, Antionette Bourginon (1616-1680), made up for lack of scholarship with sheer visionary enthusiasm, sincerity and persistence in spreading the influence of Quietism to France, Holland, England and Scotland. She, in turn, had a disciple in the French mystic and philosopher Pierre Poiret (1646-1719) who collected and edited not only Madame.Bourignon's writing but also those of the more famous Quietist, Madame.Guyon. Poiret, whom Ramsay met, was widely recognized and respected as a man of great learning.

The most famous of the Quietists was Jeanne Marie Bouvier de la Motte Guyon (1648-1717). She first started to disseminate her mystical ideas in Geneva in 1681 which resulted in her being expelled from that city by the Bishop. Settling next in Grenoble she was again forced to move on and in 1686 settled in Paris where she soon began to attract adherents. She was arrested in 1688 on the direct order of King Louis XIV and was not released until seven months later after she had issued a retraction. In the same year she met the Abbe de Fenelon who was won over by her piety and became one of her staunchest defenders. Her influence spread even to the Royal Court, where Madame de Maintenon was a most ardent supporter until she was warned of the heretical nature of Madame Guyon's teachings. Her writings were submitted to a panel of civil and ecclesiastical judges meeting at Issy. This panel condemned her works and although she submitted to the findings of the panel of Issy, the so-called Articles of Issy, Madame Guyon was arrested in 1695 but released eventually from the Bastille in 1703 after she made a further retraction. After that she went to live with her son in Blois and spent her time in silence and isolation, taking no further part in public debate. Madame Guyon maintained until her death that it had never been her intention to separate herself from the Roman Catholic faith. Remember, Ramsay was her secretary for several years and was with her at her death.

Another close friend of Ramsay's, and a defender of Madame Guyon, was Francois Fenelon, the aristocratic Archbishop of Cambrai. By the time Ramsay met Fenelon, the Archbishop had already ceased his role in the Quietist controversy. Fenelon first met Madame Guyon in 1688 as a result of his acquaintance with the Duc de Beauvilliers and the Duc de Chevrause both of whom were strong supporters of Madame Guyon. He was deeply impressed by her piety and he became a defender of her version of Quietism many years later when his friend the, the Abbe Bossuet, wrote an exposition condemning Madame Guyon's theology. Bossuet asked for Fenelon's signature to the exposition prior to publication but Fenelon refused.

He went further by writing a theological work entitled *Explication des Maximes des Saints* in which he interpreted the Articles of Issy in a way much more sympathetic to Madame Guyon. As a result King Louis dismissed Fenelon as tutor to the royal grandsons and ordered him to remain within the confines of his diocese. This unleashed two years of pamphlet warfare between the opposing factions which ended when, in 1699, the Inquisition formally condemned the *Maximes des Saints* as unorthodox. Fenelon immediately submitted to the Pope's authority and with this the matter ended. Remember that Ramsay spent some time with Fenelon and was converted by him to Roman Catholicism.

Thus, upon his entry into the service of the Comte de Sassenage, Ramsay had undergone a far reaching phase of his personal spiritual quest. He had turned his back on the Calvinism of his family background and embraced both Quietism and Roman Catholicism. It was a dramatic change from the aggressive, intolerant intrusiveness of the Presbyterian Church of the time, with its pessimistic and somewhat baleful view of humanity to, in Quietism, a deeply personal, mystical and devotional spiritual path which was optimistic of mankind's ability to live a life of grace and was tolerant towards all Christian denominations. But, how was he able to reconcile Quietism with Roman Catholicism, which after all had condemned Quietism and persecuted some of its chief exponents? The answer seems to be in his relationship with Fenelon and Madame Guyon, both of whom had been effectively silenced by the Church prior to his meeting them but neither of whom had any difficulty reconciling Quietism with Roman Catholicism within their personal spiritual path. To Ramsay, as to his mentors, Quietism represented a spiritual path within and

fully compatible with the mystical body of the Church. The Roman Catholic Church itself provided Ramsay with an anchor for his faith in a world in which Christianity had been split asunder by rival theologies.

It was whilst living in the Comte de Sassenage's house in Paris that Ramsay made the acquaintance of several Jacobite exiles from Britain and Ireland, adherents initially to the deposed King James II and VII and after his death to his only son James Francis Edward Stuart who, by the Jacobite reckoning, was James III of England and Ireland and VIII of Scots. He was recognized as such by King Louis XIV of France but his attempt, in 1715, to regain his kingdom had ended in failure and yet more Jacobite supporters had been forced to escape to France. Amongst these the Earl of Derwentwater and several others were instrumental in the foundation of Freemasonry in France. Extracts from the Stuart Papers, including letters written by Ramsay to James Francis, show beyond doubt that Ramsay had turned Jacobite.

The reasons for Ramsay's support of the Jacobites can be found in his conversion to Roman Catholicism for it is often said that a convert to a religion can be more zealous than one born to it. Not that, in Britain, all Jacobites were Roman Catholics or that all Roman Catholics were Jacobites. Indeed, in the Scottish Highlands, always a bastion of Jacobite support, religion played little part in the policies of the clans. Thus, although the predominantly Catholic MacDonalds were amongst the leading Jacobites, other staunch Jacobite clans were either predominantly Presbyterian or Episcopalian. In some clans, such as the Macgregors, who were spread over large areas, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Roman Catholics fought side by side in the clan army. Blood was thicker than water with the Highlanders and their reasons for supporting the Jacobites had more to do with old loyalties and with politics than religion. There is very little evidence of religious rancor amongst the clans but a great deal of evidence that the clans used the Jacobite cause as an excuse to settled old scores. For example, it was a virtual certainty that the MacDonalds and Macgregors would always seek to fight on the opposite side to the Campbells thus continuing a centuries old feud by conducting economic warfare by means of laying waste and plundering as much Campbell property as possible.

In 1722 Ramsay became active in high level negotiations over a tax on the assets of Jacobite exiles propose by the British Government. Among his associates in these consultations were John Carteret, John Erskine the Duke of Mar, General Arthur Dillon, the Duke de Charost, the Duchess de Gramont and the Marquis de Fenelon. His services impressed James Francis Stuart, then exiled in Rome, who later invited Ramsay to tutor his son Charles Edward Stuart.

Ramsay left the employ of the Comte de Sassenage in the Summer of 1722. On 20 May 1723, he was knighted a Chevalier of St. Lazarus, thereby qualifying him for a pension on the Abbey of Signy. Four days later he was granted a patent of nobility by James Francis Stuart in recognition of his alleged descent from the noble house of Dalhousie Ramsay and, on his mother's side, from the noble House of Mar. In January 1723 he took up his appointment as tutor to Prince Charles Edward Stuart in Rome but this appointment was not a success as the Prince was only three years old. Ramsay returned to Paris in November of the same year. His *Life of Fenelon*, published in London in 1723, gives insights into Madame Guyon's system and its effect on him. It is most interesting that, despite his known association with James Edward Stuart and the Jacobite cause, he received from the future King George II an invitation to tutor the young Duke of Cumberland. Ramsay politely declined on the grounds that he considered his Roman Catholicism inappropriate in such an appointment.

From 1725 to 1728, Ramsay stayed as an invited guest of the Duc de Sully and it was during this period he wrote his famous novel *The Travels of Cyrus* which was published in 1727. Although literary experts pointed out at the time that Ramsay had borrowed a lot from other authors, the *Travels of Cyrus* was a best seller in its day and served to establish his reputation in England as well as on the Continent. During this period Ramsay frequented a gentleman's literary club known as the Parisian Club de L'Entresol in the company of Rene-Louis Argenson, Lord Bolingbroke and Charles-Louis de Secondat Baron Montesquieu who was famous for his advocacy for the separation of government, the church and the law.

In 1728 Ramsay traveled to Britain where, after a brief stay in London, he traveled to Scotland where he stayed as a guest of the Duke of Argyll at Inverary. The Duke of Argyll was a staunch Protestant. In 1729 he repaired to London where he met up with Montesquieu and in December of that year they were both elected Fellow of the Royal Society. In 1730 Ramsay became a member of the prestigious Gentleman's Club of Spalding which had amongst its prominent members such luminaries as Sir Isaac Newton, John Gay, Alexander Pope and the prominent Freemason Dr. John Desaguliers. In 1730 he was conferred with the honorary degree of Doctor of Law at Oxford University, the first Roman Catholic to be so honoured since the Reformation of 1535.

Significantly for Freemasonry, Ramsay was made a Freemason as reported in the London Evening Post for 17 March 1729, as follows "On Monday night last (16 March) at the Horn Lodge in the Palace Yard, Westminster (whereof his Grace the Duke of Richmond is Master) there was a numerous appearance of persons of distinction; at which time the Marquis of Beaumont, eldest son and heir apparent to the Duke of Roxburghe; Earl Kerr of Wakefield, a peer of Great Britain; Sir Francis Henry Drake, Bart., the Marquis de Quesne; Tomas Powel of Nanteos, Esq., the Chevalier Ramsay; and Dr. Misanbin, were admitted members of the Ancient Society of Free and Accepted Masons."

Ramsay returned to Paris in July 1730 and entered the service of the Comte d'Evreux of the Tour d'Auvergne and Bouillon family which had marriage ties to the Jacobite Court and which had bonds of friendship with Fenelon through Cardinal de Bouillon. Ramsay's position involved being tutor to Godefroy Geraud, Duc de Chateau-Thierry, son of Emanuel Theodose de la Tour d'Auvergne, Duc de Bouillon. On the death of Geraud, Ramsay became tutor to the Prince of Turenne. Ramsay kept that position until June 1741 and during his time with that noble household, in 1735 wrote the *History of Viscount de Turenne* about the famous former commander of the French armies. In 1735 he married Marie Nairne, the daughter of Sir David Nairne, undersecretary to James Edward Stuart who, for the occasion, awarded Ramsay the title of Knight and Baronet. Ramsay's son died in infancy and his daughter died from smallpox at the age of nineteen.

We are now at the point at which Ramsay delivered, or may have delivered, his famous oration or discourse in his capacity as Grand Orator but we will first take a brief look at the origins of French Freemasonry. The origins of French Freemasonry are

somewhat obscure and confused due to the lack of contemporary records and the existence of conflicting traditions, but it is generally agreed that the first lodge was formed in Paris in 1725 by Charles Radcliffe, the [5th] Earl of Derwentwater. Charles Radcliffe was a Jacobite exile. Having taken part in the 1715 Jacobite rebellion, he was taken prisoner along with his brother James and sentenced to death.

His brother [James] was beheaded but Charles Radcliffe escaped to France and became secretary to the Jacobite claimant, James Francis Stuart. It is alleged that Radcliffe founded the first lodge in conjunction with Chevalier Maskelyne and Mr. D'Henguelty at the house of one Hure, the keeper of an inn in the Rue de Boucheries. The second lodge, called St. Thomas, was formed in 1726 by an English lapidary, one Goustand, who in fact was none other than the famous John Coustos who went on to found a lodge in Spain and was arrested by the Inquisition. The French made havoc with the spelling of non-French names. The third lodge to be formed was called Louis d'Argent. An alternative claim was that Freemasonry was introduced by Irish supporters of James II in 1688, with the first lodge formed in the Palace of Saint Germaine, James's headquarters. However, the same author, Clavel, also claims that the first lodge, called l'Amitie et Fraternite, was formed at Dunkirk in 1721 under a charter from the Grand Lodge of England. There is reference also to a lodge in Paris called Sainte Marguerite about which nothing whatsoever is known. Finally, a Paris lodge called de Bussy was formed in 1732. To complicate things even more Anderson's Constitutions of 1738 refer to only three lodges, one at Valenciennes in 1732, the de Bussy lodge in 1732 and one at Chateaux d'Aubigny in 1735. Other French lodges of the 1730's of which there is record include Lebreton, Laudelle, and a lodge called l'Anglais at Bordeaux.

The answer to this problem is that there were three French lodges warranted by the Grand Lodge of England, the rest were either self-constituted or else irregularly warranted by one of the other lodges. The first lodge warranted by the Grand Lodge of England was No.90 at the Kings Head, Paris which Gould equates to the Louis l'Argent constituted 3 April 1732. Gould asserts that de Bussy lodge and Louis l'Argent lodge are one and the same. The second lodge was constituted at Valenciennes as No.127. The third was constituted on 22 August 1735 as No.133 by the Duke of Richmond and Aubigny at his of Aubigny. English lodge l'Anglaise at Bordeaux was also working but not yet warranted. The other lodges, all of them in Paris, were self constituted, the most prominent of which was the lodge St. Thomas founded by the Earl of Derwentwater and which eventually had a membership in excess of 500. Of course, it is unlikely that Scottish, or Irish, or even English Jacobite exiles would have wished to seek a warrant from the Grand Lodge of England especially if, as we shall appreciate from Ramsay's 'Oration' they did not hold the English Masons in any great esteem.

There is no evidence of any grand lodge structure in France until the foundation of the Grand Loge Anglaise de France in 1743 under the Comte de Clermont, Prince of the Royal Blood, but in 1738 Anderson acknowledges that the independent authority of the Grand Masters of France was recognized in England. It has been asserted that the Duke of Wharton, who was Grand Master of England in 1722, was France's first Grand Master from a record which describes him as "Grand Master of the French lodges" but this seems to allude to the fact that he would, as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England, have presided over any French lodge warranted by England at that time. The Duke of Wharton did indeed visit France with the idea of joining the Jacobite Court, but he was hastily dispatched to Vienna and later to Rome. The Earl of Derwentwater is, without doubt, the first who may be regarded as a Grand Master of French Freemasonry due to his having very successfully introduced Freemasonry into Paris in 1725. According to French historians he handed over, in 1735, to a British peer, one Lord Harnouester of whom there is no trace in the British peerage. Clearly, the French hopelessly garbled the name, but we do know that, in 1737, the Earl of Derwentwater again became Grand Master when he succeeded Sir Hector Maclean who had been elected in 1736. Derwentwater, however, left France for England the same year and the Grand Mastership returned to Maclean. It seems likely that Sir Hector Maclean, another Jacobite exile, is one and the same as Lord Harnouester. Harnouester may be a garbling of a Jacobite title given to Maclean, such as 'Lord Carnoustie'. In 1738 the French nobleman Duc d'Antin was elected Grand Master and remained so until 1743. From then on the French had no more problems with spelling.

Little is known of Chevalier Ramsay's Masonic career. He was a member of the Louis l'Argent Lodge, of which he was its Orator. He was also described as Grand Orator, an office equivalent to Grand Lecturer and he described himself to one of his friends as Grand Chancellor, an office equivalent to Grand Secretary. He would have held these Grand Officer appointments in the context of the informal organizational structure pertaining to the Paris lodges at that time. Grand Officers were most probably appointed by the Grand Master to perform certain functions common to the interests of all the Paris Lodges. Certainly, his offices as Grand Chancellor and Grand Orator indicate that Ramsay enjoyed a high status in the Parisian Masonic hierarchy. Up until the time that Ramsay produced his discourse or oration in, 1736 or 37, the French lodges worked only the three Craft degrees similar, if not identical, to the English working but in the following years new degrees started to appear and by 1740 the invention of new degrees was in full swing. This circumstance has given rise to claims that Ramsay himself was the originator of the first series of these new, so called 'higher' degrees, on the basis that some of the degrees, such as the 'Templar' degrees, appear to be based upon Ramsay's version of the history of Freemasonry given in his 'Oration'. According to Ladislav de Malezovich in his Sketch of the Earlier History of Masonry in Austria and Hungary, Ramsay established three degrees known as Ecossais, Novice and Knight Templar which formed part of the so-called Rite of Clermont which was founded by the Chevalier de Bonneville in 1754. Ramsay added four further degrees, Maitre Ecossais, Maitre Elu or Chavalier de l'Aigle, Chevalier Illustre de Templier, also called Knight of the Most Holy Sepulchre, and chevalier Sublime or Knight of God, thus making a Rite of seven degrees. Dr. Oliver, in his Historical Landmarks, says that Ramsay claimed that the degrees dated from the Crusades and that he visited England with a view to promoting his degrees there but was rebuffed by the English Grand Lodge. In summation, there is no solid evidence that Ramsay was the author of any new degrees whatsoever but, on the other hand, there is no other known candidate for such inventions at that time. In any event, it is certainly possible that Ramsay's 'Oration' provided the inspiration for both the Royal Arch and the Templar degrees and rites.

On 20 March 1737 Ramsay wrote to Cardinal Fleury, Chief Minister to Louis XV, as follows:

Deign, Monsigneur, to support the Society of Freemasons in the large views which they entertain and your Excellency will render your name more illustrious by this protection than Richelieu did his by founding the French Academy. The object of the one is

much vaster than that of the other. To encourage a society which tends only to reunite all nations by a love of truth and of the fine arts, is an action worthy of a great minister, of a Father of the Church and of a Holy Pontiff.

As I am to read my discourse tomorrow in a general assembly of the Order and to hand it on Monday to the examiners of the Chancellerie, I pray your Excellency to return it to me tomorrow before mid-day by express messenger. You will definitely oblige a man whose heart is devoted to you.

There is no extant record of de Fleury's reply, but on 22 March, Ramsay wrote again to Cardinal de Fleury, as follows:

I learn that the assemblies of Freemasons displease your Excellency. I have never frequented any of them except with a view to spreading maxims which would render by degrees incredulity ridiculous, vice odious and ignorance shameful. I am persuaded that if wise men of your Excellency's choice were introduced to head these assemblies, they would become very useful to religion, the state and literature. Of this I hope to convince your Excellency if you will accord me a short interview at Issy. Awaiting that happy moment, I pray you to inform me whether I should return to these assemblies and I will conform to your Excellency's wishes with a boundless docility.

Cardinal Fleury wrote on the margin of the letter "the King does not wish it".

What are we to make of all this? Ramsay has prepared a discourse which he is scheduled to read at a general assembly of Freemasons on 23 March 1737, following which he will be presenting it to the censors for approval to publish. What better an endorsement of his discourse than that of the Chief Minister of France! Such an endorsement would add massive credibility to his work and guarantee approval by the censors. But Ramsay is asking for far more than an endorsement of his discourse, he is asking de Fleury to support and protect the Society of Freemasons. It was, as we would say today, a 'huge ask' and he didn't give the Cardinal much time to think on it. Moreover, it would appear that a very big event was about to happen, a great assembly of Freemasons followed by the publication of Ramsay's discourse – a great promotion of the craft which would be the talk of Paris, even France! Imagine the impact de Fleury's endorsement would have had! But it was not to be.

Ramsay was not the first, nor was he to be the last person to be fooled by de Fleury's relaxed and amiable demeanor for de Fleury's reaction was quick and decidedly adverse. In his second letter, Ramsay seems to be running for cover whilst at the same time going even further than he did in his first letter by trying to involve the Cardinal in the affairs of Freemasonry, this time by suggesting that he place his own picked men in control of the Craft. From the de Fleury's marginal comment it appears that he did at least consult the King on the matter. In the end Ramsay says, in effect, that he will leave Freemasonry if the Cardinal wishes him to. Again, we do not have any record of de Fleury's direct response to Ramsay, if any.

We can only surmise the reasons for de Fleury's adverse reaction to Ramsay's invitation and his subsequent moves against Freemasonry. The reasons may be seen as twofold, the one political and the other religious. The Cardinal Minister would firstly have well aware of the dominant role played by the Jacobites in Freemasonry in France and the consequent close connection of French Freemasonry with the aspirations of the exiled House of Stuart. Jacobite pressure was building up for another attempt at regaining the British throne, this time under the leadership of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, and it was inevitable that the Jacobites would seek substantial financial and military aid from the French for the venture. This was a potential embarrassment to de Fleury's policies, which included peace with England and an overall downscaling of French military intervention together with a conservative and thrifty economic policy. From the point of view of the Church, de Fleury would have taken the traditional view of the Catholic Church in regarding any group involved in the spreading of moral maxims as directing attention away from the Church's role and he would have been hostile towards any group which admitted Protestants alongside Roman Catholics. Ramsay's Quietist inclinations may have been at the back of de Fleury's mind when considering the potential religious ramifications presented by French Freemasonry.

Although Chevalier Ramsay, possibly due to his longstanding friendship with de Fleury, escaped any direct penalty for his involvement in Freemasonry the Cardinal, nevertheless interdicted the Craft and in 1738 Louis XV published an edict prohibiting all loyal subjects from associating with Freemasonry. All Freemasons belonging to the nobility were forbidden to appear in court and risked imprisonment. Cardinal de Fleury also urged Pope Clement XII to act, which he did on 17 April 1738 with the Bull in Eminenti Apostulatus Specula in which Freemasonry is condemned and Catholics prohibited from practicing it on pain of excommunication. Interestingly, however, neither the Bull of Pope Clement XII or that of Pope Benedict XIV were published in France and although the French police conducted raids on Masonic meetings and meeting places in 1738, 1744 and 1745, Freemasonry in France not only survived but went from strength to strength. The nobility, it would seem, took no notice of either Pope or King. The Duc d'Antin was appointed Grand Master in 1738 and on his death the Duke of Clermont, Prince of the Royal Blood became Grand Master thus cementing Freemasonry into the fabric of French society once and for all. It appears that none of the measures against Freemasonry applied to Masons who were not French citizens, that is to say the English and Irish as distinct from the Scots who were, by birthright, French citizens under the conventions of the Ancient Alliance.

Nothing more is known of Ramsay's activities from the time of the 'Oration' controversy and his death. He died at St. Germain-en-Laye on 6 May 1743, where he was buried. His heart was removed and transferred to the convent of St. Sacrament in Paris. But there was a sting in Ramsay's tail when his monumental work entitled *The Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion* was published in Glasgow in 1749. In it he states that "every Mason is a Knight Templar."

Now there's food for thought! The book caused quite a stir at the time because it contained unorthodox religious tenets.

Although the French Masonic historian Thory gave the date of the reading of Ramsay's 'Oration' as 24 December 1736, according to Robert Gould, Ramsay's first letter to Cardinal de Fleury fixed the date of the 'Oration' at 21 March 1737. This remained the definitive opinion until, in 1967, a manuscript version of the 'Oration' was found in the public archives of the town of Epernay. This

manuscript was entitled 'Discourse of le Chevalier Ramsay given at the St. John's Lodge on 27th December 1736.' This, of course, is very close indeed to the date originally stated by Thory. Another manuscript version was later found in the municipal library of Toulouse. The manuscript version is similar to the printed, so called 'Grand Lodge' version except that in the manuscript version the Order of Freemasonry has its origins in the Jewish, strictly speaking the Israelite, people at the time of the building of King Solomon's Temple and that the lost secrets of the craft were rediscovered by the Crusaders. In the printed version he dropped all reference to the Jews, doubtless for political reasons and to cause the censors less reason for concern.

Although Jouast asserts that the Oration was first printed at the Hague in 1738 for the occasion of the installation of the Duc d'Antin on 24 June 1738, the first known publication was in the 1741 edition of the Almanack de Cocus, the next publication being that of the French Masonic historian De la Tierce in 1741. De la Tierce states that the Oration was pronounced by the Grand Master of France at an assembly in 1740. In any event, the document burned in Rome by the Public Executioner on 1 February 1739 was not Ramsay's 'Oration' but rather an anonymous defense of Freemasonry, to some extent based on the Oration, written in response to Pritchard's *Masonry Dissected*. Here, then is the 1737 version of Ramsay's Oration as published in Gould's *History of Freemasonry*.

RAMSAY'S ORATION OF 1737

The noble ardour which you, gentlemen, evince to enter into the most noble and very illustrious Order of Freemasons, is a certain proof that you already possess all the qualities necessary to become members, that is, humanity, pure morals, inviolable secrecy and a taste for the fine arts.

Lycurgus, Solon, Numa and all the political legislators have failed to make their institutions lasting. However wise their laws may have been, they have not been able to spread through all countries and ages. As they only kept in view victories and conquests, military violence and the elevation of one people at the expense of another, they have not had the power to become universal, nor to make themselves acceptable to the taste, spirit and interests of all nations. Philanthropy was not their basis. Patriotism badly understood and pushed to excess, often destroyed in these warrior republics love and humanity in general. Mankind is not essentially distinguished by the tongues spoken, the clothes worn, the lands occupied or the dignities with which it is invested. The world is nothing but a huge republic, of which every nation is a family, every individual a child. Our Society was at the outset established to revive and spread these essential maxims borrowed from the nature of man. We desire to reunite all men of enlightened minds, gentle manners and agreeable wit, not only by a love of the fine arts but, much more, by the grand principles of virtue, science and religion, where the interests of the Fraternity shall become those of the whole human race, whence all nations shall be enabled to draw knowledge and where subjects of all kingdoms shall learn to cherish one another without renouncing their own country. Our ancestors, the Crusaders, gathered together from all parts of Christendom in the Holy Land, desired thus to reunite into one sole Fraternity the individuals of all nations. What obligations do we not owe to these superior men who, without gross selfish interests, without even listening to the inborn tendency to dominate, imagined such an institution, the sole aim of which is to unite minds and hearts in order to make them better, to form in the course of ages a spiritual empire where, without derogating from the various duties which different states exact, a new people shall be created, which, composed of many nations, shall in some sort cement them all into one by the tie of virtue and science.

The second requisite of our Society is sound morals. The religious orders were established to make perfect Christians, military orders to inspire a love of true glory and the Order of Freemasons to make lovable men, good citizens, good subjects, inviolable in their promises, faithful adorers of the God of Love, lovers rather of virtue than of reward.

*Polliciti servare fidem, sanctumque vereri
Numen amicitiae, mores, non munera amare.*

*To faithfully keep a promise, to honour the holiness of friendship
To love virtue, not its reward.*

Nevertheless, we do not confine ourselves to purely civic virtues. We have amongst us three kinds of brothers: Novices or Apprentices, Fellows or professed Brothers, Masters or Perfected brothers. To the first are explained the moral virtues, to the second the heroic virtues; to the last the Christian virtues; so that our Institution embraces the whole philosophy of sentiment and the complete theology of the heart. This is why one of our brothers [Comte de Tressan] has said:

Freemason, illustrious Grand Master
Receive my first transports,
In my heart the Order has given them birth,
Happy I, if noble efforts
Cause me to merit your esteem
By elevating me to the sublime,
The primeval Truth,
To the Essence pure and divine,
The celestial Origin of the soul
The Source of life and love.

Because a sad, savage and misanthropic philosophy disgusts virtuous men, our ancestors, the Crusaders, wished to render it lovable by the attractions of innocent pleasures, agreeable music, pure joy and moderate gaiety. Our festivals are not what the profane world and the ignorant vulgar imagine. All the vices of heart and soul are banished there and irreligion, libertinage, incredulity and debauch are proscribed. Our banquets resemble those virtuous symposia of Horace, where the conversation only touched what could enlighten the soul, discipline the heart and inspire a taste for the true, the good and the beautiful.

*O noctes coenaeque Deum ...
Sermo oritur, non de regnis domibusve alienis
...sed quo magis ad nos
Pertinet, et nescire malum est, agitamus; utrumne
Divitiis hominess, an sint virtute beati;
Quidve ad amicitias usus rectumve trahat nos,
Et quae sit natura boni, summumque quid ejus.*

*O nights, o divine repasts!
Without troubling ourselves with things that do not matter
But to dwell on those which concern us
...and it would be bad to ignore:
If wealth or virtue give happiness to Man
What use do friendship or virtue bring us
What is the nature of good, and what is the highest good.*

Horace, Satire VI Book II

Thus the obligations imposed upon you by the Order, are to protect your brothers by your authority, to enlighten them by your knowledge, to edify them by your virtues, to succour them in their necessities, to sacrifice all personal resentment, to strive after all that may contribute to the peace and unity of society.

We have secrets; they are figurative signs and sacred words, composing a language sometimes mute, sometimes very eloquent, in order to communicate with one another at the greatest distance, to recognize our Brothers of whatsoever tongue. These were words of war which the Crusaders gave each other in order to guarantee them from the surprises of the Saracens, who often crept in amongst them to kill them. These signs and words recall the remembrance either of some part of our science, of some moral virtue or some mystery of the faith. That has happened to us which never befell any former Society. Our Lodges have been established, are spread in all civilized nations and, nevertheless, amongst this numerous multitude of men never has a Brother betrayed our secrets. Those natures most trivial, most indiscreet, least schooled to silence, learn this great art on entering our Society. Such is the power over all natures of the idea of a fraternal bond! This inviolable secret contributes powerfully to unite the subjects of all nations, to render the communication of benefits easy and mutual between us. We have many examples in the annals of our Order. Our Brothers, traveling in diverse lands, have only needed to make themselves known in our Lodges in order to be there immediately overwhelmed by all kinds of succour, even in the time of the most bloody wars, while illustrious prisoners have found brothers where they only expected to meet enemies.

Should any fail in the solemn promises which bind us, you know, gentlemen, that the penalties which we impose upon him are remorse of conscience, shame at his perfidy and exclusion from our Society, according to those beautiful lines of Horace:

*Est et fidei tuta silencio
Merces; vetabo qui Ceris sacrum
Vulgarit Arcanum, sub iisdem
Sit trabibus, fragilemque mecum
Salvat Phaselum. ...*

*Loyal silence is surely rewarded
But he who reveals the sacred secret of Ceres
Him I will not allow to dwell under my roof
Or to share my shallow skiff*

Horace, Odes, Book III

Yes, sirs, the famous festivals of Ceres at Eleusis, of Isis in Egypt, of Minerva at Athens, or Urania amongst the Phoenicians, of Diana in Scythia were connected with ours. In those places mysteries were celebrated which concealed may vestiges of the ancient religion of Noah and the Patriarchs. They concluded with no banquets and libations when neither that intemperance nor excess were known into which the heathen gradually fell. The source of these infamies was the admission to the nocturnal assemblies of persons of both sexes in contravention of the primitive usages. It is in order to prevent similar abuses that women are excluded from our Order. We are not so unjust as to regard the fair sex as incapable of keeping a secret. But their presence might insensibly corrupt the purity of our maxims and manners.

The fourth quality required in our Order is the taste for useful sciences and the liberal arts. Thus, our Order exacts of each of you to contribute, by his protection, liberality or labour, to a vast work for which no academy can suffice, because all these societies being composed of a very small number of men, their work cannot embrace an object so extended. All the Grand Masters in Germany, England, Italy and elsewhere, exhort all the learned men and all the artisans of the Fraternity to unite to furnish the materials for a Universal Dictionary of the liberal arts and useful sciences, excepting only theology and politics.

This work has already been commenced in London and, by means of the union of our Brothers, it may be carried to a conclusion in a few years. Not only are technical words and their etymology explained, but the history of each art and science, its principle and operations, are described. By this means the lights of all nations will be united in one single work, which will be a universal library of all that is beautiful, great, luminous, solid and useful in all the sciences and in all noble arts. This work will augment in

each century, according to the increase of knowledge, it will spread everywhere emulation and the taste for things of beauty and utility.

The word Freemason must therefore not be taken in a literal, gross and material sense, as if our founders had been simple workers in stone, or merely curious geniuses who wished to perfect the arts. They were not only skilful architects, desirous of consecrating their talents and good to the construction of material temples; but also religious and warrior princes who designed to enlighten, edify and protect the living temples of the Most High. This I will demonstrate by developing the history or rather the renewal of our Order.

Every family, every republic, every Empire, of which the origin is lost in obscure history, has its fable and its truth, its legend and its history. Some ascribe our institution to Solomon, some to Moses, some to Abraham, some to Noah, some to Enoch, who built the first city, or even to Adam. Without any pretence of denying these origins, I pass on to matters less ancient. This, then, is a part of what I have gathered in the annals of Great Britain, in the Acts of Parliament, which speak often of our privileges and in the living traditions of the English people, which has been the centre of our Society since the eleventh century.

At the time of the Crusades in Palestine many princes, lords and citizens associated themselves and vowed to restore the temple of the Christians in the Holy Land, to employ themselves in bringing back their architecture to its first institution. They agreed upon several ancient signs and symbolic words drawn from the well of religion in order to recognize themselves amongst the heathen and the Saracens. These signs and words were only communicated to those who promised solemnly, even sometimes at the foot of the altar, never to reveal them. This sacred promise was therefore not an execrable oath, as it has been called, but a respectable bond to unite Christians of all nationalities in one confraternity. Some time after our Order formed an intimate union with the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. From that time our Lodges took the name of Lodges of St. John. This union was made after the example set by the Israelites when they erected the second Temple who, whilst they handled the trowel and mortar with one hand, in the other held the sword and buckler.

Our Order, therefore, must not be considered a revival of the Bacchanals, but as an Order founded in remote antiquity, renewed in the Holy Land by our ancestors in order to recall the memory of the most sublime truths amidst the pleasures of society. The kings, princes and lords returned from Palestine to their own lands and there established divers Lodges. At the time of the last Crusades many Lodges were already erected in Germany, Italy, Spain, France and, from thence, in Scotland, because of the close alliance between the French and the Scotch. James, Lord Steward of Scotland, was master of a Lodge at Kilwinning, in the West of Scotland, MCCLXXXVI, shortly after the death of Alexander III, King of Scotland, and one year before John Balliol mounted the throne. This lord received Freemasons into his Lodge the Earls of Gloucester and Ulster, the one English, the other Irish.

By degrees our Lodges and our Rites were neglected in most places. This is why of so many historians only those of Great Britain speak of our Order. Nevertheless it preserved its splendour amongst those Scotsmen of whom the Kings of France confided during many centuries the safeguard of their royal persons.

After the deplorable mishaps in the Crusades, the perishing of the Christian armies and the triumph of Bendocdar, Sultan of Egypt, during the eighth and last Crusade, that great Prince Edward, son of Henry III, King of England, seeing there was no longer any safety for his Brethren in the Holy Land, whence the Christian troops were retiring, brought them all back and this colony of Brothers was established in England. As this prince was endowed with all the heroic qualities, he loved the fine arts, declared himself protector of our Order, conceded to it new privileges and then the members of this Fraternity took the name of Freemasons after the example set by their ancestors.

Since that time Great Britain became the seat of our Order, the conservator of our laws and the depository of our secrets. The fatal religious discords which embarrassed and tore Europe in the sixteenth century caused our Order to degenerate from the nobility of its origin. Many of our Rites and usages which were contrary to the prejudices of the times were changed, disguised and suppressed. Thus it was that many of our Brothers forgot, like the ancient Jews, the spirit of our laws and retained only the letter and shell. The beginnings of the remedy have already been made. It is necessary only to continue and, at last, to bring everything back to its original institution. This work cannot be difficult in a State where religion and Government can only be favourable to our laws.

From the British Isles the Royal Art is now repassing into France, under the reign of the most amiable of Kings, whose humanity animates all his virtues and under the ministry of a Mentor, who has realized all that could be imagined most fabulous. In this happy age when love of peace has become the virtue of heroes, this nation one of the most spiritual in Europe, will become the centre of the Order. She will clothe our work, our statutes, our customs with grace, delicacy and good taste, essential qualities of the Order, of which the basis is wisdom, strength and beauty of genius. It is in future in our Lodges, as it were in public schools, that Frenchmen shall learn, without traveling, the characters of all nations and that strangers shall experience that France is the home of all nations. *Patria gentis humanae*.

Clearly, Ramsay was on a marketing exercise and he could scarcely have done better. The 'Oration' is targeted to appeal to the French aristocracy, gentry and bourgeoisie, thus any operative stonemason origins are down played and replaced by a claim to very ancient and noble origins. It is clear also that he set out to flatter the French King, his Chief Minister, Cardinal de Fleury, and indeed the French people. In this, however, he miscalculated.

His description of Freemasonry and what it requires of its members is excellent but his use of the phrase "the world is nothing but a huge republic", which in fact was borrowed verbatim from Fenelon, would have been sure to have activated alarm bells in the

Royal Court. Likewise, when he says that the religious orders were established to make good Christians but the Freemasons were established to make "loveable men, good citizens, good subjects" etc; it is hardly surprising that Cardinal de Fleury took offence. What Ramsay seems to be saying is that good Christians are not necessarily loveable men, good citizens and good subjects. Indeed, Ramsay sidelines the Church altogether, giving it no credit for moral leadership. Is this because Ramsay, during his formative years, had seen for himself the appalling treatment of the Scottish working classes and how this treatment was supported, indeed encouraged, by the Churches, both Presbyterian and Episcopal?

His assertion that work was being carried out on a dictionary, by which he means an encyclopedia, is most interesting in view of the fact there is no record of any group of Freemasons being involved in the creation of such a work. It is equally interesting, however, that the very first encyclopedia, Chambers Cyclopaedia, was published in 1728, the very year Ramsay arrived in Britain initially to stay with the Earl of Argyll who had one of the largest private libraries in the country. Considering his involvement in British literary circles, it is virtually certain that Ramsay would have seen a copy of Chambers Cyclopaedia and it probably fired his imagination. Indeed, the idea of making the creation of an encyclopedia into an international Masonic project was a stroke of genius, but there is no evidence that anyone took up on the idea. His mention of German and Italian "Grand Masters" is entirely fanciful. In 1737 the only German state with a lodge was Hanover and it was not until 1738 that the first lodge was formed in Italy. Ramsay was relying very heavily on the ignorance of his audience as to Freemasonry.

His most controversial assertion is, of course, that the Freemasons are derived from the Crusaders and was assumed by many at the time and, indeed, ever since that he meant the Knights Templar. In fact, he did not mention the Knights Templar at all. Indeed, he went on to distinguish between the Freemasons and the military and religious orders whilst also stating that the Order later formed a union with the Order of St. John. Remember also that he hinted at a pre-Crusade, indeed pre-Christian origin for the Order. In summation, he seems to be saying that the Freemasons are descended from the ancient mystery schools but re-emerged in a suitably Christian guise as a Crusading Order ostensibly involved in the restoration of the temple of the Christians in Jerusalem, presumably the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, but also involved in the preservation of ancient philosophical truths. They carried with them this combined architectural and philosophical mission back to their countries of origin in Europe. Thus the Freemasons were a Brotherhood of philosopher architects as distinct from mere hewers of stone.

This theory appears to have been entirely Ramsay's own and is totally different to the history of the Craft given in Anderson's Constitutions and in manuscript histories pertaining to the operative stonemasons. Clearly, Ramsay invented a history calculated to appeal to members of the French upper crust and from what we know of the growth and development of French Freemasonry in the years following the Oration, he succeeded admirably. This is demonstrated by the plethora of degrees of chivalry in French Freemasonry, which owe nothing to English or Scots Freemasonry, but which are clearly inspired by Ramsay's 'Oration.' Clearly, Ramsay himself believed that the French mentality would develop the potential of Freemasonry far beyond what he believed the English would achieve.

This concludes our study of Chevalier Ramsay, this extraordinary man who broke free from constraining world of his upbringing, who gave full rein to his questing mind, and who found a spiritual and intellectual home in France. He explored several spiritual paths, took the best features from each and made them his own, but never entirely committed himself to any single belief. In other words, he had a sophisticated mind which could achieve a highly personal synthesis of belief. That kind of mind is rare, even today, and it took great courage to walk alone on that spiritual path without the props of dogma which most others seemed to need.

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