

The following paper was received from the Victoria Lodge of Education and Research, B.C. Canada. The author R.W.Bro. Doug Greer, of Ashlar Lodge No. 3 B.C.R. is a Past District Deputy Grand Master of the B.C. Grand Lodge, and was compiled by him February 6, 1995, This paper was read at the July meeting of the WH.J.Mayers Lodge of Research, Cairns.

Origins of the Ancient Ritual or Workings of Freemasonry in B.C., Canada

One of the reasons why I was motivated to do a paper on the so-called Ancient", "American", "Scottish", "Scotch", "Old Scotch", "York" ritual is that there is probably more confusion and misunderstanding about its origins than any other subject in Freemasonry. I am glad my good friend and brother Jim English decided to do a paper as well, so that he can clear any confusion and/or misunderstandings which I will create. What I can say is that we haven't collaborated or connived or co-authored these papers. So that you may find a bit of overlapping from time to time.

For the sake of uniformity I will use the name "Ancient" to mean and include all of the other terms by which this work or ritual has become to be known. The terms "work", "working", and "ritual" are also synonymous terms as well, so if I use one or other of these terms, they all mean the same thing. Albert J. Mackey, that well known masonic author defined ritual as:

"the mode of opening and closing the lodge, the conferring of degrees, of installation, and other duties, constitute a system of ceremonies which are called ritual....in each Masonic jurisdiction it is required by the superintending authority, that the ritual shall be the same; but it more or less differs in the different rites and jurisdictions. But this does not affect the universality of Freemasonry. The ritual is only the external and intrinsic form. The doctrine of Freemasonry is everywhere the same."

It is generally agreed that the ancient work originated in the early days of Freemasonry in B.C. when there were only two rituals practised, the Emulation used by those lodges chartered by the Grand Lodge of England, and the Ancient or American used by the lodges chartered by the Grand Lodge of Scotland. The one difference between the policies of these two Grand Lodges was that the Grand Lodge of Scotland allowed the lodges she chartered to use the ritual of their choice, whether or not it was the same as that used in the lodges in Scotland.

While I was secretary of Ashlar Lodge I came into possession of copies of letters that passed between the then RWBro. (later MWBro.) Laurence Healy and WBro. Chris Wright (late secity of Ashlar Lodge) in May of 1948 as to the ritual of Ashlar Lodge. Chris had written to Healy to remind him that in 1893 the Committee on Uniformity of Ritual had recommended (among other things) that while there should be no change made in the work as practiced by existing Lodges, that any Lodges thereafter inaugurated should be required to select and work in one of the 3 rituals now practiced, namely the "English" as practised by Victoria-Columbia 41; the "Scottish" as practised by Ashlar #3 and the "Canadian" as practised by Cascade #12. Healey responded to Chris' letter in great detail..a single spaced four page letter in which he set out the development of rituals in Grand Lodge. The interesting thing to me was the detail he gave about the different rituals, even including the Australian ritual as practised by Southern Cross Lodge #44. MWBro. Healey who later became GM of the Grand Lodge of B.C. was a real Masonic scholar. It is for this reason that I will borrow heavily from the text of his letter for this paper.

MWBro. Healey goes on in his letter to explain that "when the excitement of the gold rush days of the 49'ers in California had subsided, a great many of the miners and their followers headed North, attracted by the stories of the discovery of gold in the bars of the Fraser River, and of Williams Creek in the Cariboo, as well as the discovery of coal at Nanaimo. Amongst the thousands who came from the south into B.C. in the late 50's and early 60's of the last century were many Freemasons."

It is worthwhile noting that this American ritual was brought by RWBro. Jonathon Nutt of Cariboo Lodge #4, from California, where he had been made a Freemason in Tehama Lodge #3 at Sacramento and later affiliated with Western Star lodge #2 at Shasta before he came to B.C. This is in the same way as other California-made masons had brought the same ritual to Vancouver Lodge #471, SR in Victoria. Bro. Healey

quotes from a pamphlet read to Grand Lodge at the 50th Anniversary in 1909 by the late MWBro. De Wolfe-Smith:

"These brethren, being unacquainted with the work practised by Victoria Lodge desired to organize a lodge which would use the American work, and proposed to apply to the Grand Lodge of Washington for a dispensation. This did not suit the brethren of Victoria Lodge who said that as this was a British Colony, the application should not be granted. This objection caused these brethren to make application to the Grand Lodge of Scotland for a warrant. In due time a warrant was issued for the formation of Vancouver Lodge No. 421 (SR). These brethren also received permission to do the American work to which they were accustomed. This was the predecessor of Vancouver & Quadra Lodge #2."

He then goes on to say: "Subsequently other Lodges were formed by these American brethren, Cariboo #469 at Barkerville, Caledonia #478 at Nanaimo, and Mt. Herman #491 at Vancouver. Incidentally, the 1st lodge formed at Nanaimo was an English Lodge Nanaimo 41090 which later on in 1373 amalgamated with Caledonia Lodge to become Ashlar Lodge #3 of the Grand Lodge of B.C. which still continues to practice the American work. All of these lodges chartered by the Grand Lodge of Scotland prior to the formation of the Grand Lodge of B.C. became commonly known as "Scottish" Lodges, and to a later generation of brethren who did not know the difference, came the erroneous conception that they were doing the "Scottish" work. This erroneous conclusion, said MWBro. Healey has been perpetuated in the Book of Forms and Ceremonies."

He also points out that: "All these lodges and those who have descended from them are doing the American work of California. It is commonly known amongst students and scholars in Freemasonry as the "Barney Ritual", so named after Bro. AG Barney who was a highly skilled and enthusiastic ritualist living in Vermont in 1811. He went to Boston and learned the Preston Work as developed by Webb, Gleason and other distinguished ritualists of that period. It was derived from the work of the Grand Lodge of the "Antients", who claimed to follow the "Old Workings of the Lodge of York, hence it is often referred to in Canada and the USA as the "York" work or rite. Bro. Barney attended the now historical Conference of Grand Lodges at Baltimore in 1843 where that work was approved. It was followed by the Grand Lodges of Ohio and Missouri by whom the lodges in California were warranted, and it was adopted as the official ritual of the Grand Lodge of California in 1850. It has nothing to do with Scotland and does not bear even a remote resemblance to the work of the Scottish rituals."

MWBro. Healey goes on to state that: "I have in my possession a number of Scottish rituals, including the "Standard Ritual of Scottish Freemasonry", and the ritual as practised by the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge #2 in Edinburgh. The latter was given to me by an officer of that lodge, and it has been vouched for by a former PM of that lodge who is now a PDDGM in B.C. and I can assure you that it has no similarity whatsoever to the work of Ashlar Lodge #3, or of the other lodges that are supposed to follow the work of Ashlar."

MWBro. Healey then goes on to recount a very amazing set of facts that I was until very recently unaware of: "By a unique paradox, Lodge Southern Cross #44 (Australian) is the only lodge in B.C. (and the USA) that is doing the "Scottish" work. The reason for that is that when the Grand Lodge of New South Wales set up a committee to establish an official ritual, and to select the best from the 3 workings then in use, they selected the Scottish work and promulgated their findings accordingly. This so called Australian work was brought to B.C. by RWBro. J J Miller and others who founded Lodge Southern Cross and used the official printed rituals of the Grand Lodge of New South Wales. It is exactly word for word the ritual of Canongate Kilwinning #2 of Edinburgh, except that in the Scottish the WM is referred to as the "Right Worshipful Master", and the (sic Wardens) are called "Right Worshipful Wardens." Some years ago when the Australian rituals were scarce, the officers of Southern Cross learned their work from the Scottish rituals that were available."

The policy eventually adopted when the Grand Lodge of B.C. was formed in 1871 was to allow any new lodge the right to use any form of recognized ritual they desired. By doing so, they were adopting the so-called Scottish Rule. This rule was to be responsible for the high proportion of Ancient work lodges in B.C. The adoption of the ancient work was also bound up in the eventual formation of Ashlar Lodge, which Lodge is largely credited with being the founder of a number of Lodges on the Island, Doric #18, St. John's #21, Cumberland #26, Temple #33, Hiram #414. Ashlar Lodge arose out of the union of Caledonia Lodge #478 and Nanaimo Lodge #1090. Two prominent members of these latter lodges (WBro. William

Stewart and WBro. Solomon D. Levi) were first members of Union Lodge in New Westminster and were obliged to use the English ritual because of the Grand Lodge policy. These men were used to the ancient work and so they applied for a charter from the Grand Lodge of Scotland. This was how Caledonia Lodge #478 came into existence. It is mentioned in the history of the Grand Lodge of B.C. that the adoption of the "Scotch" work as he called it stemmed from the fact that WBro. William Stewart brought the ritual with him from St. John's Lodge 141 at Charlottetown, PEI, which like all the lodges in the Maritimes, stemmed from the Athol Grand Lodge, a Grand Lodge in London which was known as the "Ancients", the office of the Grand Master being held in the family of the Duke of Athol until 1813, when the "Ancients" and the "Moderns" were permanently reconciled on the formation of the Grand Lodge of England, by two blood brothers who had been elected GMs of the two Grand Bodies: the Dukes of Kent and Sussex.

Uniformity of Ritual:

In studying the history of our Grand Lodge one is immediately struck with the number of times that uniformity of the ritual is mentioned. Countless committees on uniformity have been struck throughout the years. Advice has been given and asked for from other jurisdictions. Why uniformity is so important battles me. To my way of thinking, uniformity is a bore. The different means by which we convey the lessons and teachings of Freemasonry in each of our lodges is the most beautiful part of our work. I am supported in this view apparently by the brethren in Western Australia who in 1921 were astonished at the importance attached to uniformity of ritual, especially as it was admitted that the essentials were identical, and that the only difference lay in the manner of communicating and demonstrating them to the candidate.

Conclusion...

While the ancient work has had a difficult time of it over the many years it has been in existence, it nevertheless has served its purpose. To communicate the basic tenets and principles of Freemasonry in a dignified and distinguished manner. For those of us for whom it is the "native tongue", we will never forsake it, nor admit that it is not the best form of ritual in existence in this grand jurisdiction. The main problem has been that there has not been a consistent means of identifying it, and there has been a lot of confusion over its antecedents. There has never been any difficulty with the form of the work, merely the means by which we refer to it. It is not the 'cup of tea' for all freemasons, because of its length and volume of words. I hope that this paper will contribute to a greater understanding of the 'work' so that those of us who practise it can speak more knowledgeably about it.
