

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS

---



# The Hiram Key

Chris Knight  
and Robert Lomas

# Contents

**About the Book**

**About the Authors**

**Dedication**

**Tile Page**

**Acknowledgements**

**Photo Credits - Plate section**

**Other Illustrations**

**Introduction**

## **1 The Lost Secrets of Freemasonry**

Sheer Pointlessness

A Poor Candidate in a State of Darkness

The Hidden Mysteries of Nature and Science

A Glimmer of Light

*Conclusion*

## **2 The Search Begins**

Where Did the Order Originate?

The Temple of King Solomon

*Conclusion*

## **3 The Knights Templar**

The Beginnings of the Order

What Were They Searching For?

The Rule of the Order

The Seal of the Order

Organisation of the Order

*Conclusion*

## **4 The Gnostic Connection**

The Early Christian Censors

The Gnostic Gospels

The Gnostic Resurrection

*Conclusion*

## **5 Jesus Christ: Man, God, Myth or Freemason?**

Another Virgin Birth

The Principal Groups of Jerusalem

The Hard Evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls

The Family of Jesus

The Birth of a New Religion

Truth Within the Heresies

A Positive Link between Jesus and the Templars

The Star of the Mandaeans

The Star of America

*Conclusion*

## **6 In the Beginning Man Made God**

The Garden of Eden

The Cities of Sumer

Ur, The City of Abraham

God, the King, the Priest and the Builders

The Figure of Abraham, the First Jew

*Conclusion*

## **7 The Legacy of the Egyptians**

The Beginnings of Egypt

The Stability of the Two Lands

The Making of a King

Proving the Unprovable

The Silent Evidence

The Morning Star Shines Again

*Conclusion*

## **8 The First Freemason**

Hiram Abif Discovered

The Collapse of the Egyptian State

The Hyksos Kings

The Loss of the Original Secrets  
The Biblical Evidence  
The Murder of Hiram Abif  
The Killers of Hiram Abif  
The Physical Evidence  
The Masonic Evidence  
Seqenenre Tao the Fearless  
*Conclusion*

## **9 The Birth of Judaism**

Moses the Law-giver  
The War God of the Mountains of Sinai  
And the Walls Came Tumbling Down  
The Timing of the Exodus  
David and Solomon  
*Conclusion*

## **10 A Thousand Years of Struggle**

The Early Jewish Nation  
The Exile in Babylon  
The Prophet of the New Jerusalem  
Zerubbabel's Temple  
The New Threat to Yahweh  
*Conclusion*

## **11 The Boaz and Jachin Peshier**

The Dead Sea Scrolls  
The Missing Books of Maccabee  
The Elect of Judah  
Midrash, Peshier and Parable  
The Secrets of Qumran  
The Twin Pillars  
*Conclusion*

## **12 The Man Who Turned Water into Wine**

The Race Against Time  
The New Way to the Kingdom of God  
The Arrest of The Kingly Pillar

The Trial and Crucifixion  
The Symbols of Jesus and James  
The Rise of the Liar  
The Treasure of the Jews  
*Conclusion*

### **13 The Resurrection**

The Remnants of the Jerusalem Church  
The 'Heavenly Jerusalem' Scroll  
The Impact of the Nasorean Scrolls  
*Conclusion*

### **14 The Truth Breaks Free**

The Prophecy Becomes Truth  
The Crucifixion  
The Physical Evidence  
The Message Breaks Out  
The Land of the Star Called La'Merika  
*Conclusion*

### **15 The Lost Scrolls Rediscovered**

The Scottish Sanctuary  
Return to Rosslyn  
Let There Be Light  
The Lost Secret of Mark Masonry Rediscovered  
The Lord Protector Who Protected Rosslyn  
Beneath Solomon's Seal  
Excavating the Nasorean Scrolls

### **Postscript**

### **Appendix 1: The Development of Modern Freemasonry and its Impact on the World**

The English Reformation and the Conditions for Emergence  
The King Who Built the Lodge system  
The Architects of the Second Degree  
The New Heresy  
The Old Charges

The Rise of the Republicans

The Royal Society Emerges

Freemasonry Finds Its Feet

The Spread of Freemasonry

The Development of Masonry in America

**Appendix 2: Pre-1710 Masonic Lodges in Scotland  
with Date of the First Recorded Mention**

**Appendix 3: Early Grand Masters of English  
Freemasonry**

**Appendix 4: Early Grand Masters of Scottish  
Freemasonry**

**Appendix 5: Chronology**

**Appendix 6: Maps**

**Footnotes**

**Picture Section**

**Copyright**

## About the Book

Are scrolls containing the secret teachings of Jesus buried in Scotland?

The discovery that the most important incantation of Freemasonry is spoken in ancient Egyptian was the turning point of a six-year quest to find the lost roots of the Order. Chris Knight and Robert Lomas, both Freemasons, soon found themselves unravelling an extraordinary chain of events that started with the solving of a murder in ancient Thebes and concluded with the deciphering of a strange medieval building on a Scottish hilltop. Their astonishing bestseller *The Hiram Key* raises questions that challenge some of Western civilization's most cherished beliefs.

Do the Gospels of the New Testament describe Jesus, the last claimant to the kingship of the Jews, practising the king-making rituals of the ancient Egyptians?

Were scrolls bearing the secret teachings of Jesus buried beneath Herod's Temple shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD?

## About the Authors

Christopher Knight was born in 1950 and in 1971 completed his education with a degree in advertising and graphic design. He has always had a strong interest in social behaviour and belief systems and for many years he has been a consumer psychologist involved in the planning of new products and their marketing. In 1976 he became a Freemason and is now the chairman of a marketing and advertising agency.

Dr Robert Lomas was born in 1947 and gained a first class honours degree in electrical engineering before taking up research into solid state physics. He later worked on guidance systems for Cruise missiles and was involved in the early development of personal computers and has always had a keen interest in the history of science. He currently lectures at Bradford University Management Centre. In 1986 he became a Freemason and quickly became a popular lecturer on Masonic history in lodges in West Yorkshire.

Their subsequent books are *The Second Messiah*, *Uriel's Machine* and most recently *The Book of Hiram*, all available in Arrow Books.



Dedicated to the memory of John Marco Allegro  
- A man 20 years ahead of his time.

Chris Knight and Robert Lomas

# THE HIRAM KEY

Pharaohs, Freemasons and the Discovery of  
the Secret Scrolls of Jesus



arrow books

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their thanks to the following people for their help and assistance during the writing of this book:

First, our families who have tolerated the long hours of absence whilst we have been researching and writing.

Reverend Hugh Lawrence, A Past Master of the Craft (who wishes to remain anonymous), Tony Thorne, Niven Sinclair, Judy Fiskien, Barbara Pickard, W. Bro Alan Atkins, W. Bro Aiden Unsworth, Steve Edwards, Baron St. Clair Bonde of Charleston, Fife.

Our agent Bill Hamilton of A.M. Heath & Co. Ltd, our editor Mark Booth and also Liz Rowlinson of Century, and Roderick Brown.

*'The Hiram Key* could spark the beginning of a reformation in Christian thinking and a reconsideration of "the facts" which we have so blindly accepted and perpetuated for generations. This book is a must for freethinkers!'

**David Sinclair Bouschor**

Past Grand Master of Freemasonry, Grand Lodge of  
Minnesota, USA

'Nothing is hidden that will not be made known, or secret that will not come to light.

What I tell you in the dark speak in the light. And what you hear in a whisper, proclaim on the house tops.'

Yehoshua ben Joseph, also known as Jesus Christ

## PHOTO CREDITS - PLATE SECTION

© *W Bro Alan Atkins*

[1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [7-8](#), [23](#), [24](#), [26](#), [27](#), [28-29](#).

© *Elliott Smith, The Royal Mummies (1909) - copied by W Bro Alan Atkins*

[9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13-14](#), [15-16](#).

© *Estate of the Late John M. Allegro*  
[17](#), [18](#).

© *University of Gent Library* [21](#), [22](#).

© *Colorado Shroud Centre* [19](#).

© *G R J Lomas*

[25](#), [30](#), [31](#).

*Authors' own collection*

[4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [20](#).

## OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

The page references in this index correspond to the printed edition from which this ebook was created. To find a specific word or phrase from the index, please use the search feature of your ebook reader.

p376 Drawing of the Westford knight taken from an original  
by Frank Glynn

## Introduction

Henry Ford once declared that 'all history is bunk'. It may have sounded a little abrupt but when it comes to the 'facts' of the past which most Westerners are taught in school, it turns out that Mr Ford was right.

Our starting point was a private piece of research to find the origins of Freemasonry – the world's largest society that today has almost five million male members in regular lodges and has in the past included many great men amongst its number, from Mozart to Henry Ford. As Freemasons, our goal was to try to understand a little about the meaning of Masonic ritual: those strange, secret ceremonies carried out by mainly middle-class, middle-aged men from Huddersfield to Houston.

At the centre of Masonic lore is a character called Hiram Abif who, according to a story told to every Freemason, was murdered almost three thousand years ago at the building of King Solomon's Temple. This man is a total enigma. His role as the builder of King Solomon's Temple and the circumstances of his horrible death are clearly described in Masonic history, yet he is not mentioned in the Old Testament. For four of the six years we spent working on this research, we believed that Hiram Abif was a symbolic creation. But then he materialised out of the mists of time to prove himself very real indeed.

Once Hiram Abif emerged from the distant past, he provided nothing less than a new key to Western history. The intellectual contortions and laboured conclusions that have previously formed Western society's collective view of the past gave way to simple and logical order. Our researches led us first to reconstructing the ancient Egyptian king-making ritual of four thousand years ago; that



in turn led us to uncover an assassination that took place around 1570 BC, gave rise to a resurrection ceremony that is the direct antecedent of modern Freemasonry. As we tracked the development of this secret ritual from Thebes to Jerusalem, we uncovered its role in the building of the Hebrew nation and in the evolution of Jewish theology.

In startling contrast to what is currently held to be fact, the Western world actually developed according to a very ancient philosophy encoded into a secret system that has come to the surface at three key moments over the last three thousand years.

The final proof of our findings may well turn out to be the archaeological find of the century. We have located the secret scrolls of Jesus and his followers.

## Chapter One

# The Lost Secrets of Freemasonry

*'That Freemasonry dates from before the Flood; that it is a mere creation of yesterday; that it is only an excuse for conviviality; that it is a soul-destroying, atheistic organisation; that it is a charitable association, doing good under a silly pretence of secrecy; that it is a political engine of extraordinary potency; that it has no secrets; that its disciples possess in secret the grandest knowledge vouchsafed to humanity; that they celebrate their mysterious rites under the auspices and the invocations of Mephistopheles; that their proceedings are perfectly innocent, not to say supremely stupid; that they commit all the murders which are not traced to somebody else; and that they exist only for the purpose of promoting universal brotherhood and benevolence - these are some of the allegations made by babblers outside the circle of the Free and Accepted brethren. Omne ignotum pro magnifico. The less one knows the more one takes of Freemasonry.'*

*The Daily Telegraph London, 1871*

*'Masonry puts considerable stress on encouraging high standards of morality among its members. But it is hardly surprising that a society which uses secret handshakes, signs and language for the mutual recognition of its members is suspected of being an influence for bad rather than good. Why have such methods, if not to hide the truth? Why hide, if there is nothing to hide?*

*Those outside Masonry find the whole idea of dressing up, reciting esoteric texts and performing strange rituals so silly that they tend to believe there must be some other, and probably more sinister, attraction to it. Probably there isn't . . . but a negative is always hard to prove.'*

*The Daily Telegraph London, 1995*

## **Sheer Pointlessness**

In 1871 Queen Victoria had thirty years of rule still in front of her, Ulysses S. Grant was president of the United States of America, and Freemasonry was the subject of public speculation. One hundred and twenty-five years later the first moon landing is a generation in the past, the world is switching on to the Internet, and Freemasonry is still the subject of public speculation.

We came across the first of these quotations on a neatly cut-out and folded scrap of newspaper in a dusty volume on Masonic history, where it had been placed as a book mark by some long-dead Freemason. Chris read the second mid-Atlantic between lunch and the feature film.

Almost everything, including writing styles, has changed over the last century and a quarter, but the general public's attitude to Freemasonry today is just as confused as it was in the nineteenth century. Most people do not trust what they do not understand and, if they perceive an elitism that excludes them, mistrust will quickly turn into dislike or even hatred. Whilst Freemasonry has always been open to all men over the age of twenty-one years (eighteen under the Scottish constitution) of sound mind and body, who can demonstrate good character and express a belief in God, there is no doubt that membership in the British Isles was in the past centred around the aristocracy, with the rank and file coming from the upper strata of the middle classes.

In the mid-Victorian period it was socially important, almost essential, for a professional man to be a Freemason. The nouveaux riches of the industrial revolution sought social status through membership of an exclusive society that had a high profile amongst aristocrats of all levels, right up to the royal family itself. In theory at least, members of the working classes were equally eligible to become Masons but in practice it would hardly enter their heads to ask to join their bosses 'club', so the Lodge has long been associated with the well-to-do. Those at all levels of society who were not Freemasons could only speculate about the secrets revealed to members of this mysterious organisation. They were known to wear aprons and large collars and rumoured to roll up their trousers and exchange strange handshakes, while whispering passwords to each other.

In the second half of the twentieth century, Freemasonry is a far less elitist organisation, as men from all levels of society have sought and gained membership. However, a glance at the top of the English Masonic hierarchy quickly illustrates that being a member of the royal family or an hereditary peer is still hardly a major handicap to promotion prospects.

Most people in the Western world are at least vaguely aware of Freemasonry, and its mysteries tantalise two large groups: those who are not Masons, who wonder what the secrets of the order are; and those who are Masons, who also wonder what those secrets are! A compelling reason for silence amongst Masons is not so much a compulsion to adhere to their sacred vows, or a fear of macabre retribution from their fellows; it is more that they do not understand a word of the ceremonies they participate in, and their only fear is that people would laugh at the apparently pointless and silly rituals they perform.

Freemasonry for us, and every other 'brother' we know, is little more than a social club providing an opportunity to

indulge in some amateur theatricals, followed by a meal and plenty of beer and wine. The complex and obscure ritual has to be memorised through years of chanted repetition. An emphasis is put on sincerity of delivery, but in reality only small parts of the ceremony can be understood as simple allegorical messages concerning uprightness of moral character – the rest is a strange mixture of meaningless words and re-enactments of supposed historical events surrounding the building of King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, some three thousand years ago.

Whilst we insiders are getting on with doing very little except learning oddball verses by rote, many on the outside are trying to destroy the organisation because they suspect it of causing corruption, seeing it as a bastion of capitalist privilege or a club for mutual back-scratching. Countless books on the subject have fed the curiosity and antagonism of the general public. Some, such as those written by American author John J. Robinson, have been superbly researched; others, such as those from the late Stephen Knight, have been little more than fiction to satisfy the worst fears of the anti-Masonic sector.

The anti-Masonic lobby is constantly at work to prove supposed misdeeds, and we have had first hand experience of this. A born-again Christian friend of Chris's recently stated that he was taking up a counselling role within his church group. Upon enquiring whom he was intending to counsel, I was horrified to hear the reply, 'Those suffering from Masonic curses.'

'What is a Masonic curse?' I asked, without telling him of my connection with the Craft (as Freemasonry is called by insiders).

'Masons have to swear allegiance to one another at the expense of all others, even their families. If they fail, they have curses brought down on them which create terrible suffering to them and those around them.'

I was momentarily lost for words. Freemasonry is many things but it is certainly not evil, although some people seem determined to find it so. In direct repudiation of such ill-informed accusations, the United Grand Lodge of England publicly states that 'a Freemason's duty as a citizen must always prevail over any obligation to other Freemasons' and that 'Freemasonry should not be allowed to harm a man's family or other connections by taking too much of his time or his money or causing him to act in any other way against their interest'.

We have no wish to be apologists for Freemasonry but it does do a lot of good and, as far as we know, nothing bad. It has always donated very large sums of money to charity, usually anonymously, and it promotes levels of moral rectitude and social responsibility that are impressive and have set the standards that others follow. Colour, race, creed or politics have always been irrelevant to membership and its two driving goals are a social order based on freedom of the individual, and the pursuit of all knowledge. The only absolute requirement is a belief in God . . . any god.

Our biggest criticism of Freemasonry is its sheer pointlessness. It does not know where it came from, no one seems to know what it is trying to achieve, and increasingly it seems improbable that it can have much of a future in a world that demands a clarity of purpose and benefit. Not only are the origins of Freemasonry no longer known, but the 'true secrets' of the Order are admitted to have been lost, with 'substituted secrets' being used in their place in Masonic ceremony, 'until such time as they are rediscovered'.

If the words that emerge from the ritual are taken at face value, Freemasonry would have to be at least three thousand years old. It is not only opponents of the Order who dismiss this - the United Grand Lodge of England itself does not claim such antiquity. Wary of public derision, it

avoids any official view on the origins of the Craft and allows so-called 'Lodges of research' to debate the limited historical evidence that exists.

### **A Poor Candidate in a State of Darkness**

When we were made Freemasons we both underwent the process experienced by every initiate to the Craft for at least two hundred and fifty years. As part of these ceremonies we were asked to swear, as men of honour, that we would not divulge any of the secrets of Freemasonry to the outside world, and we are very aware that the information we give here may be considered by some Masons a betrayal of those secrets. However, the United Grand Lodge of England considers only the means of recognition to be the protected secrets of the Order, and no one could falsely pass themselves off as a Freemason after reading this book. It is necessary to explain the rituals in considerable detail as they form the basis for all of our research. Some of the words given are secret identification devices, but we do not point out which words should be used in which circumstances, so we have done our very best to meet the spirit of our vows. In any event, we gave our agreement to maintaining these secrets on the understanding that they would not interfere with our freedom as moral, civil or religious agents; and were our vows to prevent us sharing such important discoveries as we have now made, they would have most certainly interfered with those freedoms.

\* \* \*

Although we joined different Lodges several years apart, we recall identical experiences. This is how it felt (we have used 'I' to stand for both of us):

Having been interviewed by a panel of past masters several months before, I was now ready to be made a Freemason. What I was joining was virtually unknown to me; the only firm question that had been put to me was 'do you believe in God?' I did, and everything proceeded from there to the point where I was now standing, with a guard who was banging with the hilt of a drawn sword on the large door to the temple, seeking permission for me to enter.

I was hoodwinked (that is, blindfolded) and dressed in loose-fitting white trousers and top. One foot was in a simple slipper (the expression for this is 'slipshod'), my left leg was exposed to the knee, and the left breast of the tunic had been drawn aside so that my chest was bared on that side. Unbeknown to me a hangman's noose had been put around my neck and draped down my back. I had been relieved of all metal objects and I was now ready to be led into the Temple. (We later learnt that this mode of dress, the rough smock with the running noose about the neck, was exactly how a medieval heretic would have been treated by the Inquisition prior to making his confession.)

I recall how I sensed a large number of people present and felt very vulnerable. I felt a cold point press on the skin of my chest.

'Do you feel anything?' the voice in front asked. A whisper in my ear gave the formalised reply which I repeated out aloud.

'I do.'

'Then let this be a sting to your conscience as well as instant death should you ever betray any of the secrets now about to be imparted to you.'

Another voice from the other side of the room then spoke - I recognised it as belonging to the Worshipful Master. 'As no man can be made a Mason unless he be free and of mature age, I now demand of you - are you a free man and of the full age of twenty-one years?'

'I am.'



‘Having answered that question so satisfactorily, there are others which I shall immediately proceed to put to you which I trust you will answer with equal candour. Do you seriously declare on your honour that, unbiased by the improper solicitations of friends against your own inclinations, uninfluenced by mercenary or any other unworthy motive, you freely and voluntarily offer yourself as a candidate for the mysteries and privileges of Freemasonry? Do you further seriously declare on your honour that you are prompted to solicit these privileges from a favourable opinion preconceived of our Order, a general desire for knowledge and a sincere wish to render yourself more extensively serviceable to your fellow creatures?’

‘I do.’

The dagger that had been held firmly to my chest was removed (although I did not know it at the time) but the noose (called a cable tow) remained about my neck. The man to my right whispered to me to kneel and a short prayer was said, invoking the blessing of the Supreme Governor of the Universe (God - described in a neutral way so that He is equally accessible to members of any monotheistic religion).

The ceremony proceeded with my helper guiding me around the perimeter of the Temple, pausing three times to introduce me as a ‘poor candidate in a state of darkness’. Although I could not see it, the centre of the Temple floor was laid out with a central rectangle of black and white squares. On the eastern edge was the Worshipful Master’s pedestal, in the south sat the Junior Warden and in the west the Senior Warden, both at lesser pedestals.

After my three laps I was brought, still blindfolded, to the Worshipful Master’s pedestal where he asked, ‘Having been in a state of darkness, what is the predominant wish of your heart?’

Once again the answer was whispered into my ear.

‘Light.’

‘Then let that blessing be restored.’ The blindfold was removed from behind and as my eyes adjusted I could see that I was in front of the Worshipful Master who immediately drew my attention to the emblematic ‘lights’ of Freemasonry, which were explained as being the Volume of the Sacred Law (for Christian candidates this is the Bible), the Square and the Compasses. He then told me that I had now attained the rank of Entered Apprentice Freemason – the first of three degrees through which I would have to pass before being accepted as a full Master Mason. The secret signs, grips and password of the First Degree were then explained to me and I was told that the left-hand pillar that stood in the porchway of King Solomon’s Temple has special significance to Freemasons. Both the left-hand and right-hand pillars are recreated in the Lodge and stand behind, and to either side of the Worshipful Master. The left-hand pillar, called Boaz, was named after Boaz, the great-grandfather of David, King of Israel.

After various perambulations around the Temple I was presented with a simple white calf-skin apron which symbolised the rank I had just obtained. Then I was told, ‘It is more ancient than the Golden Fleece or Roman Eagle, more honourable than the Star, Garter or any other order now in existence, it being the badge of innocence and the bond of friendship . . .’ This section proved to be a particularly revealing part of Masonic ritual; as we show later, it contains clear evidence of being constructed at three very different periods of history, from the genuinely ancient to the relatively modern.

Throughout the course of the ceremony various moral and social virtues were recommended to me using a number of architectural analogies; amongst them, stonemason’s tools were likened to methods of self improvement. Towards the end of the ceremony of initiation, I was alarmed to learn that there are test questions which must be committed to

memory in order to progress to the next degree, that of Fellowcraft Freemason. Amongst these questions and answers are some pieces of information that were more intriguing than informing:

Question: 'What is Freemasonry?'

Answer: 'A peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols.'

Question: 'What are the three grand principles upon which Freemasonry is founded?'

Answer: 'Brotherly love, relief and truth.'

To any candidate the first of these principles sounds reasonable, but the next two are a little hard to fathom. Relief from what? Which truth?

Now a fully accepted brother, albeit a mere 'entered apprentice', I left the Temple feeling that something special had happened; but I did not have a clue as to what any of it might mean. The festive meal followed and as the man of the hour, I was placed at the left hand of the Worshipful Master. Toasts and speeches rolled out and a good time was had by all. The mysteries of the Craft certainly had not been revealed. Perhaps, I thought, all will become clear at the next ceremony.

It did not.

## **The Hidden Mysteries of Nature and Science**

Some months later I passed through a Second Degree ceremony to attain the rank of a 'Fellowcraft Freemason'. This time I entered the Temple with the rest of the brethren wearing the plain white calf-skin apron that was the symbol of my genuine innocence - and my very humble status. The Lodge was then opened in the First Degree and as the candidate for elevation I was put to the test by answering the questions that were explained to me at the end of the previous ceremony. As soon as I had struggled through this examination of my ability to recite gibberish I was told to

leave the Temple temporarily to be properly prepared for the 'passing ceremony'.

I was readmitted wearing the same rough clothing used at my initiation ceremony, now with left leg and right breast laid bare. As the deacons conducted me around the Temple new passwords and signs were revealed, including a hand raised posture that claims to have originated when 'Joshua fought the battles of the Lord (in the valley of Jehoshaphat) and prayed that the sun be stayed in its course until the overthrow of His enemies had been completed'. This later proved to be highly significant.

The right-hand pillar from the porchway of King Solomon's Temple was described to complement the information given in the previous degree regarding the left-hand pillar. This pillar, identified as 'Jachin', was said to be named after the high priest who assisted at the dedication of this section of the Temple at Jerusalem. The twin pillars Boaz and Jachin were to become massively important at all points of our future research. The first is said to represent 'strength or in it is strength'; the second 'to establish' and when united 'stability'.

After the completion of the Second Degree ceremony I was 'permitted to extend my researches into the hidden mysteries of nature and science'.

Once again this ceremony was followed by eating, drinking, speeches and singing.

## **A Glimmer of Light**

Some months later, as a Fellowcraft, wearing a white apron with two blue rosettes, I was eligible to be raised to what is often called the 'sublime' degree of a Master Mason, but first it was necessary to prove my competence once again by learning the answers to more test questions.

During the putting and answering of these questions my attention was drawn to the fact that 'our ancient brethren

received their wages in the middle chamber of King Solomon's Temple without scruple or diffidence from the great reliance they placed on the integrity of their employer in those days.' Careful study of the Bible had found no mention of any middle chamber to Solomon's Temple. Such a factual mistake is unlikely, so to make sense of it, we assumed that the test questions indicated that the brethren had been able to trust their employers in the past, but might not be able to do so now.

At this stage I was also given an apparently biblical reference that does not exist in the Bible, but which points towards the mission with which I would be entrusted once I was raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason: 'For the Lord has said in strength will I establish My Word in this Mine House that it will stand fast for ever.' This quotation proved to be extremely important, although it makes no sense to modern Freemasons and it made no sense to either of us when we first heard it.

I was then entrusted with a password which enabled me to re-enter the Temple when the proceedings had been opened as a Master Mason's Lodge. Things this time were very different and dramatic.

I re-entered the Temple to find total darkness save for the lone glimmer of a candle burning in the east in front of the Worshipful Master. In the very large windowless room the solitary candle gave precious little illumination, but once my eyes had adjusted it was possible to make out faces behind it and just pick out the form of the whole Temple in shades of black and dark grey. Dramatically, I was then informed that the subject of this degree was death itself.

The ceremony started with a brief resumé of the previous degrees:

*'Brethren, every degree of Masonry is progressive and cannot be attained but by time, patience and assiduity. In the First Degree, we are taught the duties we owe to*

*God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves. In the Second Degree, we are admitted to participate in the mysteries of human science, and to trace the goodness and majesty of the Creator, by minutely analysing His works. But the Third Degree is the cement of the whole; it is calculated to bind men together by mystic points of fellowship, as in a bond of fraternal affection and brotherly love; it points to the darkness of death and to the obscurity of the grave as a forerunner of a more brilliant light, which shall follow at the resurrection of the just, when these mortal bodies which have been long slumbering in the dust shall be awakened, reunited to their kindred spirit, and clothed with immortality . . .'*

A prayer was then said which concluded:

*' . . . we beseech Thee to impart Thy grace to this Thy servant who seeks to partake with us the mysterious secrets of a Master Mason. Endue him with such fortitude that, in the hour of trial he fail not, but passing safely under Thy protection, through the dark valley of the shadow of death he may finally rise from the tomb of transgression to shine as the stars, for ever and ever.'*

The ceremony proceeded in a manner not too dissimilar to the previous occasions, up to the point where I was obliged to act out a remarkable story which explains the manner in which the true secrets of a Master Mason came to be lost. I played the role of a character who does not exist outside the rituals of masonry; his name was given as Hiram Abif:

The Worshipful Master told the story:

*' . . . nature presents one grand and useful lesson more - the knowledge of yourself She teaches you, by contemplation, to prepare for the closing hours of your existence; and when, by means of such contemplation,*