



# Continental Freemasonry

Philosophy, developments and worldwide impact



**Michel Jaccard**

## THE BOOK

### CONTINENTAL FREEMASONRY *Philosophy, Developments and Worldwide impact*

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## THE PUBLISHER

Every two years the ANZMRC brings an eminent Masonic researcher and author on a tour through Australia and New Zealand, hosted by the twenty-five affiliated Research Lodges, Chapters and Study Groups in both countries.

### AUSTRALASIAN CONFERENCE TOUR 2015

(August 8<sup>th</sup> to November 9<sup>th</sup> 2015)

Johannesburg; Perth; Auckland; Hamilton; New Plymouth; Hastings; Gisborne; Wellington; Blenheim; Invercargill; Dunedin; Timaru; Christchurch; Melbourne; Adelaide; Canberra; Sydney; Launceston; Cairns; Townsville; Brisbane; Singapore and Hong Kong.



## FOREWORD to the Book

The 2015 lecture Tour organised by the Australian and New Zealand Masonic Research Council happily coincides with the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Swiss Research Group, the Groupe de Recherche Alpina (GRA – founded in September 1985).

It is with particular warmth that the ANZMRC and our Group have been exchanging information of all kinds for nearly twenty years. ANZMRC also, several years ago, considered us worthy of being Associate members of this dynamic research programme. Despite the distance, despite the lack of physical and brotherly contacts, the “current gets through”, thanks to a most exciting relationship, somewhat similar to the numerous literary and lecturer exchanges practiced by us over the years with other renowned research lodges in Europe, Quatuor Coronati in London being an outstanding example. Similarly, despite the language barrier, grasp in the meaning of concepts has not hampered mutual comprehension. In addition, brotherly esteem has continually dominated the intense give-and-take of our Internet contacts. It marks the hinge moment of “where two hemispheres meet”.

When the then ANZMRC secretary, Bro Colin Heyward, suggested two years ago that a member of our Research Group accept the task of presenting modern Freemasonry amongst your impressive series of research bodies, he had in mind of entrusting this considerable adventure to my modest person, which I declined for reasons of age and health. But it rapidly became obvious that Bro Dr Michel Jaccard, a past President and talented member of our Research Group, would make a splendid job of it. His professional and Masonic backgrounds were ample guarantees for a successful and meaningful tour.

Dr Jaccard asked me to correct the translations he had made of his impressive series of papers, gathered and perfected over a long period of instructions, conferences, and research. I agreed, in spite of the fact that my English has become rather rusty after a period of sixty-five years immersed in French, which is my mother tongue! I thereby plead for forgiveness if the end result does not match with Bro Winston Churchill’s exceptional style! A lecture tour, the kind ANZMRC has transformed into a powerful tradition, represents a most stimulating and prodigious challenge. Our entire Research Group of twenty-two active members was completely and enthusiastically behind Michel, whose talent as an academic lecturer is known well outside our frontiers. After a brilliant career as a Freemason, his contribution to your Lecture Tour will outline the delicate differences between our respective mentalities, yet united and whetted by universal Masonic ideals and values.

Dr Jean Bénédict, PM Lodge *Liberté*, honorary 33° A. & A.S.R., honorary President of the Swiss Alpina Research Group (GRA)

# ANZMRC AUSTRALASIAN TOUR 2015

## Papers read on the Tour and included in the book

### **1. Switzerland, the Grand Lodge Alpina and the Alpina Research Group - Characteristics, Principles and Core Values**

Switzerland is one of the smallest nations in Europe and it is possible that Australasian brethren may not be aware of its history and of the development of Freemasonry within its boundaries. This paper will delineate Swiss cultural aspects as well as their core values as Freemasons. The objectives and achievements of the Groupe de Recherche Alpina (GRA) as a research unit for all Swiss Lodges are described.

### **2. History and Development of the Craft in France and Germany**

Switzerland has four borders - with France (on the West), Germany (on the North), Austria (on the East) and Italy (on the South) - and its history is linked with the destiny of two of those nations, France and Germany. Freemasonry in both countries played an important role in the development of the European Masonic currents that began to flow from the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The first part of the paper outlines the history of French Freemasonry and of its main obedience, the Grand Orient de France. It also explains the historical and political causes of its progressive deviation from the “mainstream” Masonic currents, and describes the creation of the Rectified Scottish Rite, the Christian order that was reborn at the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century. The second part of the paper describes the rise of Freemasonry in Germany, the birth and death of the Order of Strict Observance which claimed Templar origin and influenced both the Scottish Rite and Scandinavian Freemasonry. A description of the impact of Nazism on German Freemasonry is also presented and discussed.

### **3. Spiritual Paths of Masons in Continental Europe**

European Freemasonry is often known as “Continental Freemasonry”, especially in the USA, and is usually linked to the so-called “liberal” Freemasonry such as is practiced by the Grand Orient de France, which allows discussion on political, social and religious issues within a Lodge meeting. However, most European Freemasons belong to Lodges that are affiliated to Grand Lodges that fully respect the landmarks established by the United Grand Lodge of England. On the other hand, Continental Freemasonry was strongly influenced by the Enlightenment currents of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century and has had to cope with a decline of interest in mainstream religions, including Christianity. This paper describes the spiritual (often modern) paths, in full agreement with Masonic values and rituals that are embraced by European brethren.

### **4. Genesis and Content of the French Modern Rite**

The French Rite is intimately linked to the development of Freemasonry in France and was founded in 1786. British (mainly Scottish) exiles brought the “Modern” rite to France and this was progressively passed on to the French Rite. In order to guarantee that French Freemasonry would have a national dimension, the Grand Orient de France organised the standardisation of “Modern” French rites from 1782 onwards, and in 1785 the model was fixed for the first three degrees in a “blue Lodge”, which showed a strong “Modern” English influence. Later on, further degrees were added, which strongly influenced the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. This paper will provide a deep analysis of the Rite and its special characteristics.

## **5. The French Rite of 1785 and the Practice of Virtues**

How to live and enjoy a good life was recurrent theme of the philosophy of ancient times, replaced by the religious and theological dogmas of the Christian Church. Ancient philosophy considered that the search for wisdom was the path of the philosopher; this path was mainly paved by the practice of virtues (especially the small group of cardinal virtues). The practice of virtues pervaded the content of speculative Freemasonry and is found in all Masonic rites. With the dawning of psychoanalysis, this spiritual path faded. However, at the beginning of the XXI<sup>st</sup> century, there are signs of recovery: the study and practices of virtues has again awakened the interest of philosophers and a new associated discipline, positive psychology, has emerged. This paper presents the most important virtues, their practices and their use in moral evolution of the Freemason in an ancient and post-modern perspective, for instance, the input of “positive psychology”.

## **6. Analytical Psychology and Masonic Improvement**

Universalist philosophical perspectives have penetrated the world of religions and spirituality. Traditionalism, referring to a lost golden age, is one modern movement which fulfils universal spiritual expectations; it displays, however, conservative (or even theocratic) political values. The other current, more liberal and progressive and also compatible to modern science, is certainly analytical psychology as developed by the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung, a disciple of Sigmund Freud. Jung asserted that those unconscious concealed psychic nuclei, the archetypes, presented strong symbolic characteristics and were organised by an image of the Divine, the Self. According to him, the spiritual maturing of the human being was related to the integration of the archetypes and the Self by ego. This paper investigates whether the content of analytical psychology, its generic models and its techniques:

- Mirror Masonic initiation rites
- Are able to influence and/or bring new light on Masonic core values
- Facilitate a spiritual progression of the candidate.

## **7. Alchemy and Freemasonry: Genesis, Content and Impact**



Carl Gustav Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist, promoted the use of alchemical symbols in his psychotherapy. He also declared that alchemy was a way to describe the evolution of the psyche during human life. But what is alchemy, its' operative and speculative content, and what part of it may be included in Masonic ceremonies? Did specific alchemical and Masonic degrees once exist? Does the psychological content of alchemy influence the moral progression of a Freemason and, if so, how?

#### **8. Newton and Solomon's Temple**

Sir Isaac Newton, the English physicist and the discoverer of gravitational theory was, for many years, president of the renowned Royal Society which "invented" the modern method of scientific research. Curiously enough, many members of the Royal Society were also members of the first Grand Lodge of England. Isaac Newton was an outstanding natural philosopher and a gifted mathematician, but he had other interests, such as alchemy and the study of ancient philosophy, mythology and theology. He devoted a large part of his time to these subjects. On his death in 1727 Newton left hundreds of unpublished manuscripts, among which included reconstruction sketches of the sacred architecture of the Temple in Jerusalem. Solomon's Temple was not a major feature in the ceremonies of the operative Craft. Did Newton's investigations have an impact on the content of the rituals of speculative Freemasonry?

#### **9. Indo-European Influences on Freemasonry**

The Indo-European culture is defined as being the civilisation of the Neolithic era. This culture had a major influence on the Greek, Celtic, German and Roman peoples, as well as those of the Middle and Far East populations, especially in India. According to the French scholar and Freemason, Georges Dumézil, the one key characteristic of the Indo-European society was its tripartite division into a class of priests and jurists (the sacred function); into warriors; and into craftsmen and peasants (the productive function). This paper investigates some of the puzzling relationships within Freemasonry, such as the pillars of Wisdom, Force (Strength) and Beauty and also the legend of Hiram, with the myths and symbols of the Indo-European culture and, thus, showing that an influence of this antique culture is quite obvious and not just sheer coincidence.

#### **10. Rene Guénon: Freemason, Sufi and the Esoteric Traditionalism**

Rene Guénon was a French mathematician, philosopher and Freemason, who ended his life in Egypt as a Sufi. Strongly interested by esotericism, he was first active in many occultist societies and circles. However, he quickly discovered that these pseudo neo-platonic matters did not have a sound spiritual basis and a sufficient philosophical content. Was it possible to

restore the original message of Universalist Tradition, suited to all spiritual and religious groups and societies? What therefore would have been its content? This was the key message of his philosophy, exposed progressively in several major publications. Freemasonry and the Catholic Church were considered by Guénon to be degenerated, while retaining some of their true spiritual and esoteric content; was it therefore possible to reconstitute their original message, to regenerate them? Guénon had a noticeable bearing on the spirituality of continental Freemasonry and wrote specific articles in direct relationship with symbolism, tradition and initiation. This paper establishes the basics of his important philosophy and ascertains how it was related to Freemasonry.

### **11. The Role of Asceticism in Guénon's Work and the Perennialist Movement**

Asceticism is an unavoidable step in any spiritual path. How did Guénon and the Perennialist movement consider it? How could it be related to Masonic progression, remembering that Guénon had been initiated at the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century into a French lodge of the Grande Loge de France and was always looking for a spiritual renewal within French Freemasonry? But Guénon's work also had a significant impact on scholars in the Human Sciences such as, for instance, the historian Mircea Eliade. This paper outlines the main aspects of their doctrine and how it may be related to the progression of Freemasonry.

### **12. Guénonism, Perennialism and Traditional Freemasonry**

At the end of the Second World War, Freemasonry in France was slowly recovering from the persecutions of the Nazis and Petainist fascism (named after the French military ruler, Marshall Pétain). Many Masonic dignitaries felt that the liberal and positivist model of Freemasonry, as represented by the Grand Orient de France, did not any longer match the expectations of future candidates aiming to find a path of moral and spiritual development in their Lodge. Another Masonic current had to be developed. This paper investigates the attempts of the two main French obediences, *La Grande Loge de France* and *La Grande Loge Nationale Française*, to set up a new model of Freemasonry, which, while fully respecting the ritual, values and core content of the Craft, would integrate the main aspects of the doctrine developed by René Guénon, especially his theories on initiation, symbolism and tradition. The paper also brings to light the associated projects used to introduce a specific ascetic exercise, under the form of a "Masonic meditation", in order to remove the virtual (spiritually inefficient) aspect of the Masonic initiation as claimed by Guénon's imitators).

### **13. Solomonic Magic and Freemasonry**

The relationship between Occultism and Masonry is often claimed by its enemies, especially the use of “black magic” in a Lodge. Where do these accusations come from? Do they have a sound basis? Was there once any borrowing from European magic by Freemasonry, or vice versa? Do any Masonic rites have a magical content? What exactly is this occult domain called “magic”? This paper outlines the profile of European magic at the end of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, which could have had an influence on Freemasonry.

#### **14. Egyptomania and Freemasonry of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century - Ancient Egypt and the Rite of Cagliostro**

The XVIII<sup>th</sup> Century was a period of Enlightenment, of the triumph of Reason, as well as of the decline of political absolutism and of religious imperialism. This emergence boosted the growth of natural sciences, such as physics and chemistry. But, due to the progressive decline of orthodox religious influences, scientific research in the realm of rationality was also mirrored by innovative paths and new investigations in spirituality. Personalities such as William Blake, Swedenborg, Cagliostro, the Comte de Germain and Casanova illustrated this phenomenon. These trends promoted a new interest for occultism and esoterism, as well as Ancient Egypt. This paper describes the characteristics of XVIII<sup>th</sup> century Egypt and how it was integrated in Cagliostro’s first Egyptian Rite.

#### **15. Egyptomania and Freemasonry in the XIX<sup>th</sup> Century – the Napoleonic Expedition in Egypt and the Creation of Egyptian Orders**

Napoleon’s expedition into Egypt was a military fiasco, but a cultural and scientific success. It was also the first time that scholars and scientists joined a military expedition, among them many Freemasons. It was suggested that on their return to France they had brought with them the “ancient wisdom of Egypt” and that they had used it to create the Egyptian Masonic orders such as the Memphis or Misraim Rites and the Parisian Order of the Sophisians. This paper investigates if there is any truth in these assumptions.

#### **16. One Tarot and two famous Swiss Freemasons (de Gebelin & Wirth)**

This paper explores the influence of two Swiss Freemasons on the development of the “esoteric” and the “Egyptian” Tarot. Was it, at its beginning, an occult, a Masonic or an esoteric set of cards? Is there a close relationship between Freemasonry and the Tarot? What is the symbolic content of the major Tarot cards? Is it in direct relationship with Hermetism, Neo-Platonism, alchemy or any other esoteric domain? Are these symbols in a way linked to the content of Masonic rituals or ceremonies?