

EMERALD TABLET

The Hermetic Influence on Freemasonry

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There is an undercurrent within Freemasonry which cannot be ignored if its symbolism is to be understood. This nuance is related to the teachings of Hermetic Philosophy. In Masonic terms, we can think of Hermetic philosophy as “a system of hieroglyphical instruction, taught by allegory and illustrated by symbols.” The characteristic of all hermetic tradition is that its lessons are revealed only to those who are “duly and truly prepared” to receive them. Hermetic and alchemical traditions are often cited as the same thing in that both kinds of instruction involve an interpretation of the complete knowledge of man, in mind, body and spirit, discovered through the use of various symbols and associations, and Hermes was said to be the inventor of alchemy. Of course, this is a kind of science that must ultimately engage the seeker in very internal and private work, in which he is protected from the outside by the hidden nature of the symbols themselves. Almost all processes of this type, then, are initiatic in form and considered a part of the Secret Tradition.

The teachings of Hermetic philosophy, of which this essay is focused, owe their origin (it is said) to the one known as Hermes, or sometimes Hermes Trismagestus- the “*Thrice Great*.” Hermes was believed by some to have been a man; by others, a god. To still others, he represents a lineage of initiates. The Greek Hermes was known as Mercury by the Romans, Thoth by the Kemetian-Egyptians, Taaut by the Phoenicians, and Inki by the Sumerians. He became associated with learning and communication, and his image can often be found in art, poetry, and even murals in the cathedrals of Notre Dame.

Hermes became the patron saint of alchemy by the alchemists of the middle ages, who believed he was the inventor of the science- though the Egyptians

likewise deemed him the inventor of all the sciences. The writings attributed to him and his followers were studied by philosophers and scientists alike, and he became an influence on a wide range of personalities, including Leonardo Da’ Vinci, Botticelli, Paracelsus, Giordano Bruno, Thomas More, Sir Robert Moray, Elias Ashmole, Isaac Newton, John Theophilus Desaguliers, William Blake, Percy and Mary Shelley, John Milton, Johannes Kepler, Victor Hugo, Carl Jung, Ralph Waldo Emerson, along with many, many others.

It is believed that Hermetic philosophy lays at the foundation of the rituals of Freemasonry, and that the very figure of Hiram himself may, in fact, be an allusion to Hermes. Indeed, we find in an early French ritual (c.1800) entitled “Zwei Hochgrad-Rituale des 18. Jarhunderts,” a passage where a brother impersonating Hermes explains that he has emerged from the night of the tomb and admonishes the candidate to, “*Remember me. My true name is Mercurius for the Egyptians, Thoth for the Phoenicians, Hermes Trismagistus for the Greeks, and all over the earth, I am Hiram, whose wonderful story has amazed you.*” Given this early association, it is important for students of Masonry to examine this enigmatic figure that has been so celebrated throughout history.

Though Hermes is mentioned and quoted a number of times in the degrees of the AASR (SJ) of Freemasonry, the first reference to him in the Craft Degrees actually goes back to some of the earliest recorded charges of Freemasonry. The following is from the “Old Charges,” also called the “Gothic Manuscripts” compiled and published by Brother J. Roberts in 1722. These are a collection of manuscripts which some suggest date from the late 14th century, which give the history of Freemasonry as passed down at that time. Albert Mackey, in his *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, sources a similar origin, and mentions a similar quote in the “Grand Lodge, No.1, MS” of 1583. Here is what the “Gothic Manuscripts” say of the two

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pillars that have become such an integral part of Masonic ritual:

“The one stone was called marble that cannot burn with fire. The other was called lateras that cannot drown with water. Our intent is now to tell you truly how and in what manner these stones were found whereon these crafts were written in Greek; Hermenes that was son unto Cush, and Cush was son unto Shem who was son unto Noah- this same Hermenes was afterwards called Hermes the Father of Wise Men, and he found out the two pillars of stone wherein the sciences were written and taught them forth...”

Of immediate notice is the suggestion that Hermes was responsible for finding the original two pillars, which were designed to withstand catastrophes of water and fire, so that the mysteries stored within them could be preserved. It is perhaps also fitting that one of the common names for a pillar in the ancient Greek is a “Herme,” the very name associated with Hermes, and said to share a similar name due to the veneration of him. A *Herme*, or *Herm*, in Greek was also associated with a stone, which took on alchemical significance. In general, it was defined as any object created to venerate Hermes, and often times they consisted of pillars with a bust of Hermes on top of them, or they were pillars erected at sacred sites venerating Hermes.

The main writings associated with Hermes have come to be known as the *Corpus Hermeticum*- which literally means “body of Hermes.” The majority of these writings are in Greek, Latin, and Coptic from the first through the third centuries CE, however there were also later Arabic sources for some of these, which the Latin translations came from. The main texts of the *Corpus Hermeticum* originally come from seventeen Greek treatises. However, there are also various fragments in the anthology of Ioannes Stobaios, a Latin translation of the text called *Asklepios* found in the works of Apuleius, texts from Codex VI of the Nag Hammadi library, and more recent texts of Hermetic philosophy like the *Kybalion*. Nonetheless, the earliest evidence of writings and veneration of the wisdom of Hermes go back far into antiquity.

Under the guise of the Egyptian Thoth, Hermes was venerated as early as 3000 BCE, and was credited with the invention of the hieroglyphic writing and the arts and sciences. He was also deemed the recorder of all human deeds throughout life. The first known reference to Hermes as the “thrice great” is in the writings of Hor of Sebennytos, recording a meeting of a council of an Ibis cult on June 1, 172 BCE. The Ibis cult of Egypt was associated with Hermes as the god Thoth, in which the minutes of the council state: “...the benefit which is performed for the ibis, the soul of Thoth, the three times great...” Esoteric tradition has suggested that the ibis bird was associated with Thoth because

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this bird stands in the water with one leg up, holding a stone. As the bird begins to fall asleep, it drops the stone, which awakens it again. Therefore the bird represented wakeful meditation; and being a bird, it also symbolized the ability to fly to heights, alluding to transcendence. The ibis bird is also known to eat snakes, and the snake was a symbol of cosmic energy- which it was mastering by digesting it.

As mentioned, there are a number of known surviving texts of early Hermetic literature, and Egyptian texts emphasizing the role of Thoth, some being dated as early as the fourth century BCE. There are also references to Hermes in the sixth Nag Hammadi Codex- which some date liberally to as early as the first century BCE and others to as late as the First Century CE. Hermes was deemed a prophet by the Sabians, a culture associated with Islam, which has always been a kink in the theory that Islam condemned all forms of traditionally Pagan ideas. There were Latin translations of Hermetic writings in the twelfth century from Arabic sources copied from Greek, but it was not until 1462 that most Hermetic writings became accessible to Europe due to the translations of Marsilio Ficino, under his patron Cosimo de' Medici. Hermes shows up in artwork from ancient Greece through the Renaissance, with people like Botticelli painting him in his Primavera painting and Leonardo Da' Vinci mentioning him in his notebooks. There is even a Roman copy of a 4th century BCE Greek statue of Hermes in the Vatican Museum.

It was once believed that Hermetic texts were a rather later creation which idealized an earlier Egyptian civilization. However, as older and older texts are being discovered, and as Egyptian texts are being translated that are nearly identical in concepts (if not in the actual wording) as these "later" Hermetic texts, it is now starting to seriously be considered by researchers in this genre' that Hermetic thought may, in fact, actually go back to ancient Egypt.

However, it should be noted since these texts were largely written down by Greek scholars in Alexandria in the second century CE, the Egyptian texts likely became filtered through Greek scholarship of the period. This filtering naturally resulted in Greek thought and ideas being added, as well as known ideas associated with Christianity and Judaism, being interjected into the texts. Consequently, one of

the biggest critics to the antiquity of early Hermetic thought having origin in Egyptian doctrine was by Isaac Casaubon in 1614, who, of course, was writing two centuries before Egyptian hieroglyphs had even been translated. Moreover, it was once believed that Hermetic texts were newer in age because they had phrases and ideas in them very similar to those found in the New Testament. And indeed, Christian Gnostic thought was deemed to be Hermeticism wrapped in new packaging. However, it has been found that many of these ideas expressed in the New Testament can likewise be found on earlier Egyptian temple walls and texts,⁴ again suggesting that possibly both traditions shared a similar source in antiquity. Perhaps this solves the mystery as to why Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt in order to give birth to Jesus? In any event, the famous Hermetic axiom of "As Above, So Below" can be seen in such phraseology as the Lord's Prayer emphasizing "on earth as it is in Heaven." Such ideas are also later reinforced in symbolism associated with the globes in Masonic ritual, and are likewise emphasized in the 18th degree of the AASR (SJ).

Regardless of the age of Hermetic texts and thought, there can be no question that Hermetic thought was a strong influence on the thinking of people from the 1400's through 1800's in particular, which is right in the timeline of when modern Freemasonry was developing. We find Hermes being mentioned in esoteric Rosicrucian texts like *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* in 1616, which some researchers have suggested owe a contribution to the development of our modern Masonic traditions. In *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*, for example, we find in the fourth day a description of a shrine that has these words on it:

"Prince Hermes. After so many injuries done to the human race, by God's counsel, and by the aid of the art, here I flow, made a healing medicine. Drink from me who can; wash who wishes; stir who dares; drink, brethren, and live."

These texts, along with other alchemical treatises, had an influence on people like Elias Ashmole—often referred to as the "first English Freemason"—who translated and published alchemical texts like *Fasciculus*
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Chemicus, which specifically celebrated Hermes and even feature him on the cover page with the sun and the moon. Likewise, the first “speculative Freemason” of Scotland, Sir Robert Moray, was an operative alchemist who studied the works of Hermes. It also cannot be over stressed what a profound influence Hermes was on Isaac Newton and his good friend, Dr. John Theophilus Desaguliers, who was largely responsible for the shaping of Freemasonry in the early 1700’s. In fact, not only did Desaguliers have a huge influence on Anderson’s Constitutions, but some have gone so far as to suggest that it was under his direction the Third Degree of Freemasonry was created; or at least embellished and perpetuated more widely.

Desaguliers was an operative alchemist, among other things, and studied the writings of Hermes. Desaguliers studied alchemy with Newton, and Newton in his own right studied a great deal of Hermetic thought, especially in relation to alchemy. Below is Newton’s translation of *The Emerald Tablet of Hermes*, c. 1680, which is one of the most revered Hermetic writings by alchemists:

*‘Tis true without lying, certain & most true.
That which is below is like that which is above
& that which is above is like that which is below
to do ye miracles of one only thing.
And as all things have been & arose from One
by ye meditation of One: so all things have their
birth from this One thing by adaptation.
The father is the sun, the moon its mother, the
wind (air) hath carried it in its belly, the earth
its nurse.*

*The father of all perfection on ye whole world
is here, Its force or power is entire if it be
converted to earth. Separate thou ye earth from
ye fire, ye subtle from the gross sweetly and with
great industry.*

*It ascends from ye earth to ye heaven & again
it descends to ye earth and receives ye forces of
things superior & inferior.*

*By this means you shall have ye glory of ye
whole world & thereby all obscurity shall fly
from you.*

*Its force is above all forces. For it vanquishes
every subtle thing & penetrates every solid
thing. So was ye world created.*

*From this are & do come admirable
adaptations whereof ye means (or process)*

*is here in this. Hence I am called Hermes
Trismegistus (the thrice illustrious), having the
three parts of ye philosophy of ye whole world.*

*That which I have said of ye operation of ye sun
is accomplished & ended.”*

It should be mentioned that, over the centuries, *The Emerald Tablet of Hermes* has been found in various translations across many cultures—even in China. It is believed that it may have made its way to China via Manichean Gnostics. *The Emerald Tablet* has obviously been considered a sacred text by various cultures and traditions, though nobody has any idea how old *the Tablet* actually is. According to some accounts, even Alexander the Great studied it after he discovered the tomb of Hermes at Siwa, in Egypt.

Owing to the widespread influence that the Hermetic texts and ideas had on the people who shaped Freemasonry, we need to examine how and where these ideas found their way into Masonic ritual. Albert Pike certainly suggests in several of his writings, including *Morals & Dogma*, his *Esoterika*, and the *Sephir H’Debarim* (Book of the Words) that Hermes and Hermetic doctrine are critical to understanding Freemasonry. Pike regularly goes back to an old Masonic catechism of recognition which states “Have you seen your Master today?” The answer is “I have.” Followed by the question, “How was he clothed?” The answer is “In blue and gold”- or sometimes “In a blue jacket and a yellow pair of Breeches.” Pike suggests the Master alludes to Hermes, (also associated with Mercury). Pike says, “for Hermes, the planet, while in the blue ground of the sky is also always in the golden glory of the sun, and by these questions it was ascertained whether the person to whom they were put was a Mason, acquainted with the secret doctrines of Hermetic philosophy.” Since Mercury was the closest planet to the Sun--the source of light--this became symbolic to the philosophers of his Mastership. Such ideas are further expanded upon in the *Knight of the Sun or Prince Adept* degree in the AASR (SJ), which alchemically alludes to Man’s ultimate spiritual transmutation and regeneration. As a planet, Mercury was also seen to dart seemingly wildly across the sky, like a messenger to the other planets, which is how Mercury became associated as a messenger to the gods.

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It has also been suggested that the very name “Hiram” is a Hebrew version of the Greek “Hermes”. Indeed, it is said that “Hiram” is taken from the Chaldean “Chiram.” Numerous authors have suggested that the name Hiram was created by the translators of the Bible from “Chiram” by changing the Hebrew letter “Chet” into “He”- since both of these Hebrew letters are very similar. Since Hebrew does not use standard vowels, with a different emphasis on the consonants, the Hebrew “Hiram” becomes the Greek “Herme”- which is Hermes. As mentioned, a “Herme” in Greek was a name for a pillar as well, and it is on top of the pillars in Masonic instruction that the globes are emphasized. It is these globes which illustrate the “above and the below”, which is found highlighted in Hermes’ *Emerald Tablet*.

Hermes’ *Emerald Tablet* emphasizes the sun and moon, which we likewise find associated with the Master in the Lesser Lights of Freemasonry. The *Emerald Tablet* was deemed to be Hermes’ alchemical instruction on how to produce the Philosopher’s Stone. The Greek Hermes was the Roman Mercury, who was given a rod by the god Apollo. On a journey to Arcadia, Hermes encountered two snakes fighting and threw his rod down between them. The snakes peacefully entwined themselves about the rod. The rod, or caduceus, thus became a symbol of peace—of balance and equilibrium of two warring energies. In some Masonic jurisdictions, the Junior/Senior Deacons’ rods are capped by an icon of Mercury, or Hermes. In other jurisdictions, the sun and moon are featured, which come directly from Hermes’ *Emerald Tablet*. So here again we see another suggestion of Hermes in the symbolic lodge ritual.

In alchemy, Mercury also occupies a special place. Though it is commonly associated with the metal mercury, it was also associated with the animating principal that gives consciousness from the air, and more particularly the breath. This hidden element in the air was thought to be the life force that gives animation and consciousness. Mercury is also the alchemical symbol for consciousness because the metal mercury, quicksilver, is used to coat glass to make mirrors. In both western and eastern traditions, the mirror is often used as a metaphor of the transparent nature of mind, or pure awareness. It is the light of primordial consciousness. Mercury can therefore be

viewed as a kind of life force that flies here and there as a messenger, or healing hand of God or super-consciousness. It is for this reason that Mercury is also associated with healing. The caduceus of Hermes later became the symbol for the American Medical Association, and Hermes was the healing patron saint of alchemists. The caduceus of Hermes has also been found depicted in Taoist alchemical texts from China and in Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhist texts and tapestries, and some think the red and white serpent coiled around the rod is alluded to in the vision of Merlin and the dragons, as found in the Arthurian legends. It has likewise been suggested by various researchers that Aaron’s rod, as emphasized in the Royal Arch degree, used to be depicted as a caduceus in older Royal Arch rituals. Some have seen this rod as representing the spinal column, and the two snakes representing the opposite energies that work their way up it- giving consciousness and sustaining the body. In many ancient depictions of this rod, it is capped by a pine cone and wings, which some have associated with the pineal gland in the head and the brows of the forehead. This gland looks like a small pine cone, from which it gets its name, and it was associated with the “third eye” in esoteric tradition- directly over the brow.

It is for these reasons or allusions that many have looked to the alchemical significance of the degrees within Freemasonry. After all, if the signature of Hermes is showing up all over in the ritual words and symbols of Freemasonry, then certainly his science must be alluded to within Freemasonry itself. It has recently been shown that many of the phrases and symbols in the Schaw Statutes of 1598 and 1599 were using specifically alchemical language in these early Masonic catechisms. For example, when a Mason says that the secrets are hidden “Between my tongue and teeth, and under the lap of my liver where all the secrets of my heart lie,” this is alluding to the fact that the various spirits of vitality in early alchemical texts were actually generated in the head, the heart, and the liver. The penalties described in these early statutes likewise had alchemical significance--which strongly suggests that Operative Masonry was passing down alchemical ideas at this early date. This alchemical symbolism has been interjected and grafted on to most modern symbolic lodge rituals as well, likely due to

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Desaguliers' hand or influence.

So even today, the very order of the penalties in the three symbolic degrees outline the elementary stages in the alchemical process—from water (digestion), to air (distillation), to fire (calcinations)—and, as well, the penalties themselves describe the symbols used for these stages in the alchemical process. For example, the first stage in alchemy is collecting an herb by its roots, burying it in a vessel, and placing it in a sand bath, with a low water mark of alcohol in the vessel, in order for the herb to digest. The vessel is only to be removed twice in twenty four hours, in order to shake the vessel so that the oil in the herb can be liberated into the alcohol. This first stage was called “caput mortuum”, or “dead head”, and these processes and names obviously find resonance with the penalty and penal sign of the Entered Apprentice degree. The same sequence of penalty/alchemical operation associations occurs for the following two degrees, with vultures of the air, beasts in the field, and towers regularly being depicted in alchemical texts for distillation, and with the final stage including the herb at the bowels of the vessel being burnt to ashes to liberate the secret salts. For this last stage of the process, the alchemists likewise venerated Tubelcain, or Vulcan, said to be the inventor of metallic operations by fire. It was according to the 1530 CE alchemical writings of Paracelsus, where specifically Vulcan was deemed a Master of the Hermetic science of alchemy, and therefore any Hermetic philosopher who mastered alchemy was a Vulcan.

Some believe the early degrees of Freemasonry may have featured the drama of Noah and his Ark; it being only later that the ritual language incorporated the widespread development of the Hiram legend, and of Solomon's Temple. Along these lines, it is believed that Desaguliers may have encountered the Noah degrees in Scotland and later changed the degrees to feature Solomon's Temple due to Newton's fascination with Solomon's Temple, and his belief that it's Biblical description and dimensions contained alchemical secrets and metaphor for operations. However, even in the earlier story of Noah, we find the same elementary progression between the flood (water), the birds being let go in the air (air), and the burnt sacrifice (fire), so the same ideas were intact even at an early stage. To the Hermetically inclined Freemasons, this

progression was a clear sign of the progression of the alchemical process, and the keys to the operation were to be found in Hermes' *Emerald Tablet*.

Other symbols in Freemasonry that are found in alchemical texts include the Beehive, the Ark of Noah, the point within a circle with two parallel lines on either side, the Master Mason's apron, the divisions of the body, the pillars, the death and raising metaphor, and many, many other details. It should also be stressed that alchemical ideas were celebrated by Masons at an even earlier date on the very cathedrals themselves. The cathedrals of Chartes and Notre Dame, for example, are covered with alchemical symbols and murals. In fact, the main doors of Notre Dame in Paris have several plates at eye level which depict all the stages of the alchemical processes, and include things like salamanders on fire, stars issuing forth essences, alchemical furnaces, and even Hermes with his caduceus. The Cathedral at Chartres has sundials and alchemical clocks depicted, showing which planetary and zodiacal sign rules each hour for alchemical transmutations, and it also has stained glass windows depicting the Zodiacal signs. This was important to alchemist since they believed there was an influence between the stars and planets above and the substances they were working with below, and therefore operations needed to be done during the right astral influence for transmutations to occur. Most people think of the cathedrals as strictly depicting Biblical images, but it is clear that even the artisans who built these cathedrals, these operative Freemasons, were studying Hermes' alchemical art. Hermes was the patron saint of alchemy, and it was by the secrets of his art that the beauties of holiness could be displayed. It is for these reasons that Albert Pike says:

“Among the sciences taught by Hermes, there were secrets which he communicated to the Initiates only upon condition that they should bind themselves, by a terrible oath, never to divulge them, except to those who, after long trial, should be found worthy to succeed them. The Kings even prohibited revelation of them on pain of death. This secret was styled the Sacerdotal Art, and included alchemy, astrology, magism, the science of spirits, etc. He gave them the key to the Hieroglyphics of all these secret sciences, which were regarded as sacred, and kept concealed in the most secret places of the Temple.”

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We should also not underestimate the title of Hermes, “the thrice great,” and its possible association with Freemasonry. Indeed, as our lectures tell us, the number three is found everywhere we turn in Freemasonry. There are various ideas as to why he was called the “thrice great,” or “thrice illustrious,” but we likewise find identical titles within Freemasonry. Some have suggested that the writings of Hermes were really written by a tradition of initiates who all wrote under the name “Hermes.” Therefore each initiate was “Hermes,” just like in Freemasonry each Master Mason is “Hiram.”

In the Gnostic schools (which were deemed to have been born out of the Hermetic tradition), we know that they had three principle degrees entitled Psychic, Pneumatic, and Gnostic, and it is possible that this may have likewise been a carry over from the Hermetic system of initiation. If so, then the thrice great Hermes could have been a title for one who had attained the third degree, much like we refer to a Master Mason in Freemasonry. In this light, a *Hermes* and a *Hiram* would both represent the same stage of initiation, as it would be the name that the initiate took in the initiation drama. The Gnostics likewise featured Hermes on their talismans and jewelry, and venerated light as the symbol of *Gnosis*- the Greek word for divine knowledge. This same idea of light and divine knowledge is found in almost all the Hermetic texts as well.

One of the main ideas behind Hermetic Philosophy is “the All is Mind; the Universe is mental.” This idea suggests that all creation is a result of the Mind of the Grand Architect of the Universe. By this idea, it was believed by Hermetic philosophers that by studying nature we could come to understand God. It is for this reason that the seven liberal arts and sciences were created, and Geometry was venerated, for it proved that there was intelligent Mind behind Creation itself. In fact, in both the Egyptian and Greek myths, it was Hermes/Thoth who created the seven liberal arts and sciences to begin with. Such ideas are likewise hinted at in the Masonic degrees themselves. The Hermetic texts suggest that all intelligible reality was created from a Word, and indeed it was deemed that Hermes became a Master of that Word. In the Discourse of *Hermes Trismegistus: Poimandres*, God says to Hermes, “I am the light you saw, mind, your God, who existed before the watery nature that

appeared out of darkness. The light giving Word who comes from Mind is the son of God.” And also, “Holy are you, who by the Word have constituted all things that are...” Though we certainly see such ideas mentioned in the beginning of the Gospel of John and alluded to in Genesis, it is a recurring theme in the Hermetic texts. ‘The Word’ was likewise associated with light, and Hermetic philosophy sought to understand and find this Word, and by extension, become an embodiment of light. The Master’s Word plays a significant role in Freemasonry, as does the light itself--just as in the Hermetic texts.

As mentioned earlier, the pillars were referenced in the Gothic manuscripts as being created by Hermes. The globes on the pillars also highlight the “above and below” of Hermetic philosophy. However, even the very spheres associated with the globes are deemed by some to have originated in a Hermetic text from around 1256 CE called the *Picatrix*. The *Picatrix* was largely a magical text, originally in Arabic, which outlined how to bring down astral influences from above into talismans and elixirs below based on Hermetic principle. It is also the first text to mention a terrestrial and celestial globe. For example, in Chapter Three of Book One it says:

“What the heavens are and their substance is composed of...The shape of the heavens is spherical, round, and smooth in its surface, and all planetary bodies in it share these same qualities and times. Some have thought that at one time the sky did not appear to have roundness. This is false, for the shape of the heavens is its proper shape, and it cannot be any other, for this is the shape of spirit, as though saying that spirit is first and nothing in creation can be found that is older than it. For it cannot be doubted that what is first and oldest in the universe ought to have perfect form. The perfect form is the figure of a circle, because it is the first of all figures and is made by one line.

No creation or corruption of terrestrial bodies can take place in the heavens. Conversely, it is impossible for any part of the heavens to undergo new creation or

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corruption on planet earth. This is because of the superior influence of the heavens. Now the heavens, as mentioned, is a sphere, round in all its parts and of equal curvature. A circle line surrounds it; in the middle of that circle is a point so positioned that all lines drawn from it to the surrounding circle are of equal length, and this point is the center. It is said that these lines signify the rays that the stars cast upon the earth, which symbolically sits at its center of influence. From these come the power and virtue of images, and they work in this way. Thus we say that the heavens are a round sphere and contain within them the whole world of earth, that is to say, within its capacity. Such a sphere has no excess or lack, and is a figure permanent in itself; from it all the powers are summoned.

The fixed stars can be found on this sphere. The nature of the heavens is all one nature, and all the movements of nature and of material bodies follow the movements of the heavens. All heat comes from it, and by this we mean that whatever heat exists in the world exists because of the heavens.

The degrees of the celestial heavens are 360 in number, according to first division, and there are as many figures, and by them all judgments in astrology are distinguished, since judgments follow the images of the heavens, and the heavens are the cause of all operations below them..."

So here we have the first text to emphasize a terrestrial and celestial globe in temple work- including stating that the earth is round. The text itself was of great influence to writers of the middle ages like Agrippa, and it explains the roles of the Deacons, who map and rule the sky above and the land below. The word "Deacon" comes from the Greek "Dekanos," which means "ruler of ten". As mentioned, the Deacons in the Masonic lodge carry the rod associated with Hermes, with some traditions actually having Hermes on top of the rods, and others having the sun and moon featured from Hermes' *Emerald Tablet*. In the *Picatrix*, the Dekanos are the rulers of the 10 degree segments of the

sky--each 1/3 of an entire Zodaical sign: 12x30 degrees each= 360 degrees of the Zodiac. The *Picatrix* was a very important work to Hermetic philosophers of the middle ages, and it should be pointed out that the Bible does not say that there is a celestial and terrestrial globe on top of the pillars, but these globes do show up in the *Picatrix*.

The first Bibles to actually depict images of globes on top of the pillars were not published until the mid 1500's, and they do not show these globes as celestial and terrestrial, but rather as just blank spheres. This suggests that whoever put together the Masonic ritual with these globes may have been using the Hermetic text of the *Picatrix* as a source for part of the ritual. Obviously the Deacons play an important role in every Lodge today, and, in many jurisdictions, it is the Senior Deacon that gives the lectures concerning the globes. It is the knowledge of the above and the below, as emphasized by Hermes and illustrated by the globes, which was the key to the Hermetic arts and sciences, particularly in relation to alchemy. Of this science, we would do well to quote Pike again:

"The Hermetic Art is, therefore, at the same time a religion, a philosophy, and a natural science. As a religion, it is that of the Ancient Magi and the Initiates of all ages; as a philosophy, we may find its principles in the school of Alexandria and the theories of Pythagoras; as a science, we must inquire for its processes of Paracelsus, Nicholas Flamel, and Raymond Lulle.

The Science is a real one only for those who admit and understand the philosophy and the religion; and its process will succeed only for the Adept who has attained sovereignty of will, and so become the King of the elementary world: for the grand agent of the operation of the Sun, is that force described in the Symbol of Hermes, of the table of Emerald...Therein is the secret fire, living and philosophical, of which the Hermetic philosophers speak with the most mysterious reserve: the Universal Seed, the secret whereof they kept, and which they represented only under the figure of the Caduceus of Hermes. This is the grand

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The Hermetic Influence on Freemasonry

Hermetic Arcanum...the Great Work is more than a chemical operation; it is a real creation of the human word initiated into the power of the Word of God. The creation of gold in the Great Work is effected by transmutation and multiplication...

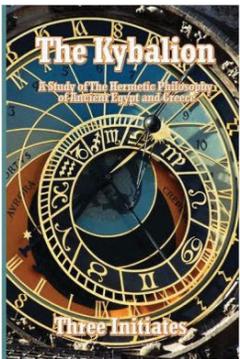
These are just a few of the many associations between Hermes, Hermetic thought, and Freemasonry. Understanding them helps to shed further light on the symbolism in Freemasonry itself, and why certain things may have been chosen to be emphasized. Since the early operative Masons were venerating Hermes and his alchemical art, and since the first speculative Freemasons were also studying alchemy and the works of Hermes, then this suggests that Hermetic science was at the foundation of Freemasonry. This is further emphasized in the early Masonic texts, and we see later developers of Masonic rituals like Desaguliers and Pike continue this tradition of interjecting Hermetic doctrine into the fabric of Masonic study. Desaguliers' influence on the symbolic degrees and Pike's influence on the Scottish Rite degrees bear the markings of Hermetic philosophy all over them. I leave

you with a quote from Emerson, as he celebrates the Trismagestus:

"I cannot recite, even thus rudely, laws of intellect, without remembering that lofty and sequestered class who have been its prophets and oracles, the High Priesthood of Pure Reason, the Trismegisti, the expounders of thought from age to age. When, at long intervals, we turn over their abstruse pages, wonderful seems the calm and grand air of these great spiritual lords, who have walked in the world- these of the old religion...This band of grandness: Hermes, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Plato, Plotinus, Proclus, Synesius, Olympiodorus, and the rest, have somewhat so vast in their logic, so primary in their thinking, that it seems antecedent to all the ordinary distinctions of rhetoric and literature, and to be at once poetry, and music, and dancing, and astronomy, and mathematics." †

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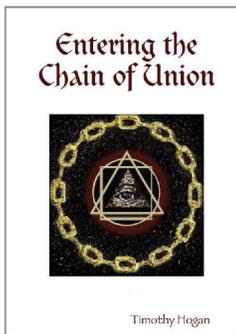
Books



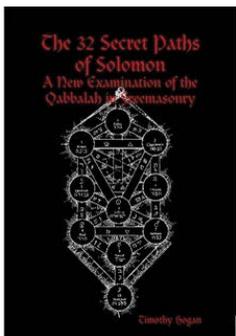
The Kybalion—Three Initiates was first published in 1908 by the Yogi Publication Society and is now in the public domain, and can be found on the internet. The book purports to be based upon ancient Hermeticism, though many of its ideas are relatively modern concepts arising from the New Thought movement. The book early on makes the claim that it makes its appearance in one's life when the time is appropriate and includes variations of material found in the book of Proverbs. The "Three Initiates" who authored *The Kybalion* chose to remain anonymous. As a result, a great deal of speculation has been made about who actually wrote the book. The most common proposal is that *The Kybalion* was authored by William Walker Atkinson, either alone or with others, such as Paul Foster Case and Elias Gewurz. Atkinson was known to use many pseudonyms, and to self-publish his works.

Also suggestive is the fact that, among his earliest published pseudonymous and anonymous works may have been a series entitled *The Arcane Teachings*, which bears many superficial similarities to *The Kybalion* — *The Kybalion* explores seven "Hermetic Principles" while *The Arcane Teachings* examines seven "Arcane Laws", *The Kybalion* claims to be an elucidation of an ancient, unpublished Hermetic text of the same name, while *The Arcane Teachings* claims to reveal the wisdom of an ancient, unpublished scroll of occult aphorisms, and both books describe three "Great Planes" of reality which are further subdivided into seven lesser planes. Both books also describe three of the lesser planes as "astral black keys" analogous to the black keys on a piano, and inhabited by elemental spirits. And, both books describe the process of "Mental Alchemy" in great detail, and in nearly complete agreement with each other. There are other similarities, and *The Arcane Teachings* might have been Atkinson's "first draft" of material which later became *The Kybalion*. Atkinson also attempted to describe the workings of the universe in terms of a set of laws in 1918's *The Secret Doctrine of the Rosicrucians* and his last manuscript *The Seven Cosmic Laws*, written in 1931 and published posthumously in 2011.—*Wikipedia*

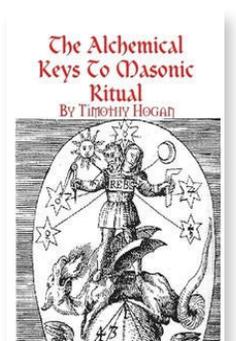
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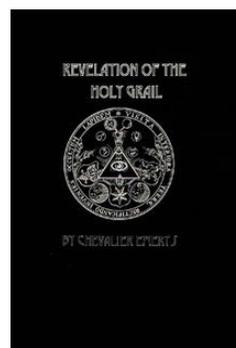
Entering the Chain of Union—Timothy Hogan *Entering the Chain of Union* explores different esoteric, spiritual, and initiatic traditions from around the world and illustrates how they share similar doctrines and rituals. This book is a first hand account by a western initiate as he examines traditions as diverse as Gnosticism, Hermeticism, Sufi, Druze, Taoist and Tibetan alchemical doctrines, Egyptian mysteries, Mayan traditions, and an exploration of many sacred monuments from around the world. It is also a first hand account of his meeting with spiritual leaders of different traditions, including Harun Yahya. This book will be particularly interesting to anyone with a background in Templarism, Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, or Martinism. Timothy Hogan is the Grand Master of the Knights Templar (Ordre Souverain du Temple Initiatique lineage), and he currently runs CIRCES International. He speaks regularly around the world on the western mystery tradition. This book follows some of his travels as he attempts to do The Great Work.



The 32 Secret Paths of Solomon—Timothy Hogan *The 32 Secret Paths of Solomon* is a new examination of the role of Qabbalah in Freemasonry. This book explores how Freemasonry holds certain keys which reveal a completely new perspective to the Qabbalistic science. Qabbalah is mentioned many times in the degrees of Freemasonry, and this book explores why an understanding of Qabbalah is important in order to truly understand Masonic ritual. This book also publishes for the first time gematria correspondences which are found within Masonic ritual, and it demonstrates how Freemasonry holds the keys to understanding a different layout of the Qabbalistic Tree than has ever been published before. This book will be of value to both the new and old student of the Qabbalistic science.



The Alchemical Keys to Masonic Ritual—Timothy Hogan *The Alchemical Keys to Masonic Ritual* is the first book which establishes a direct link between the rituals of Freemasonry and the practice of both chemical and spiritual alchemy. Albert Pike understood that the symbolic degrees of Freemasonry contained alchemical secrets, but he never put the whole pattern together and showed how. This book shows these connections for the first time. This book is a must for any Freemason who wants to understand the secret meanings behind the Symbolic “Blue Lodge” ritual. Tim Hogan is a PM, 32*KCCH, KT, FRC, PSM-AMD, and Knight RC of the Royal Order of Scotland. He lectures extensively both inside and outside of the United States on Freemasonry.



Revelation of the Holy Grail—Timothy Hogan The Holy Grail has become a popular field of study in recent years, however most books on the subject are written by authors who are not themselves initiated into the mystery school tradition of the Grail. *Revelation of the Holy Grail* is one of the first books on the subject which is written by an initiate within several of the Knighthood Orders associated with the Grail Tradition. This book provides many previously unpublished facts about the history and tradition of the Grail movement, which includes some of the most influential people in human history. The Quest of the Holy Grail has proved to really be about the quest for human civilization. It has spawned not only the greatest political movements in history, but also it has been the cornerstone of human technology. Alchemy, Hebrew Mysteries, Templar Secrets, ancient technologies, Gnostic traditions, and secret societies have all been involved in this exciting history which is the backbone of our modern day world.

Coming in the April issue of Emerald Tablet

Feature Article: *The Lodge at Table*

—by Brother Pete Normand, First American Worshipful Master of Quatour Coronati No. 2076

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Three Ruffians. Shot at the Texas Clay Festival in Gruene, Texas October 27, 2013. Photo by Paul Bullock

Parting Shot



George Santayana

Jorge Agustín Nicolás Ruiz de Santayana y Borrás, known as George Santayana (December 16, 1863 – September 26, 1952), was a philosopher, essayist, poet, and novelist. A lifelong Spanish citizen, Santayana was raised and educated in the United States and identified himself as an American, although he always kept a valid Spanish passport. He wrote in English and is generally considered an American man of letters. At the age of forty-eight, Santayana left his position at Harvard and returned to Europe permanently, never to return to the United States. His last will was to be buried in the Spanish Pantheon of the Cimitero Monumentale del Verano in Rome.

Santayana attended Boston Latin School and Harvard University, where he studied under the philosophers William James and Josiah Royce and was involved in eleven clubs as an alternative to athletics. He was founder and president of the Philosophical Club, was a member of the literary society known as the O.K., was an editor and cartoonist for *The Harvard Lampoon* and helped found the literary journal, *The Harvard Monthly*. In December, 1885, he played the role of Lady Elfrida in the Hasty Pudding Theatrical, Robin Hood, followed by the production *Papillonetta* the spring of his senior year. After graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Harvard, in 1886, Santayana studied for two years in Berlin. He then returned to Harvard to write his dissertation on Hermann Lotze and teach philosophy, becoming part of the Golden Age of the Harvard philosophy department. Some of his Harvard students became famous in their own right, including T. S. Eliot, Robert Frost, Gertrude Stein, Horace Kallen, Walter Lippmann, and W. E. B. Du Bois. Wallace Stevens was not among his students but became a friend. From 1896 to 1897, Santayana studied at King's College, Cambridge.

Santayana is known for famous sayings, such as “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”, and “Only the dead have seen the end of war.” (a quote often wrongly attributed to Plato). Santayana is broadly included among the pragmatists with Harvard University colleagues William James and Josiah Royce. He said that he stood in philosophy “exactly where [he stood] in daily life.”—*Wikipedia*