

## English Chivalry?

In “The Origin of Additional Degrees” a paper in volume 32 of *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* (1919), JE Shum Tuckett attempts to prove that modern Masonry originated in England and was not imported from France. However, some of his information supports the antithesis. Depending upon how it is understood, some of it flatly states the opposite. But the question of whether a modern organization calling itself *Freemasonry* existed in France first is a moot point. Regardless of whether Freemasonry existed in France prior to English Masonry or not, the question which bears on our thesis is: “Did Templarism and the chivalric degrees come from France?” Honestly, I do not think that Tuckett proves his point. We are indebted to these men for digging up evidence to refute their own arguments.

Originally, primitive Masonry only had three degrees:

the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and the Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch.

Tuckett himself does not believe that

those other Degrees (which for convenience may be called Additional Degrees) are not real Masonry at all, but an extraneous and spontaneous growth springing up around the ‘Craft’ proper, later in date, and mostly foreign, *i.e.*, non-British in origin . . .

He believes that they were not foreign but British. However, Tuckett admits:

There is undeniable evidence that in their *earlier forms* the Ecossais or Scots Degrees were Roman Catholic; I have a MS. Ritual in French of what I believe to be the *original* Chev. de l'Aigle or S.P.D.R.C. (Souverain Prince de Rose-Croix), and in it the New Law is declared to be 'la foy Catholique', and the Baron Tschoudy in his *L'Etoile Flamboyante* of 1766 describes the same Degree as 'le Catholicisme mis en grade' (Vol. in. p. 114). I suggest that Ecossais or Scots Masonry was intended to be a Roman Catholic as well as a Stuart form of Freemasonry, into which none but those devoted to both Restorations were to be admitted

Despite the Catholic influence, Tuckett believed that the higher chivalric degrees were a product of the British Isles rather than imported from France. Nevertheless, elsewhere he admits:

According to Bro. R. Greeven (*The Templar Movement in Masonry*. Benares. 1899. p. 29):—

'Templarism especially in its clerical development is saturated with open allusions to the Pretenders and to Jesuits and to Florence . . .'

and it may be remembered that 'Florence' is among the Notes added by Chefdebien d'Amand to the *Cahier* entrusted to him by Savalette-de-Langes. (*A.Q.C.* xxx., p. 154.)

In the Greeven quote above the "Pretenders" refers James II and III; the "Jesuits," to Clermont College, as we have seen; but the reference to "Florence" is cryptic. I believe that it refers to the Rosicrucians. Rosicrucianism, for all practical purposes, started in Florence with the Renaissance humanists and the publication of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. The significance for our study is that Renaissance humanism was not altogether divorced from Roman Catholicism. They had things in common, namely Platonism and Neoplatonism, as we show in our appendix on the subject. In other words, not only were the Jesuits a Catholic connection, but Rosicrucians are connected with Catholicism at this

early stage.

Tuckett also mentions the “clerical development” of Templarism. Rosicrucianism was priestcraft. Perhaps this is where it came from. Later we will see that Edmond Ronayne, in his 1879 *The Master’s Carpet*, speaks of a catechism in Freemasonry. And while the word *catechism* originates in the Greek *katēchízēin*, which means “teach orally,” and was used academically, one cannot escape the Catholic overtones of its usages. Catholicism had been the sole employer of the word for 1,000 years. These references were probably designed to show mocking antipathy for Catholicism, but the imitation is noteworthy, nonetheless.

In his *Concise History* of 1903 Bro. Gould shows signs of a change of attitude on the subject of Stuart Masonry: at p. 321 he says:—

‘The Scots Degrees smoothed the way for the Templar Movement in Masonry, called the Strict Observance, and the key to the problem. . . . it is contended, may be found in the extent to which the Jesuits moulded the Stuart agitation, ending with the rising of 1745-6.’

In the “Discussion” of Tuckett’s research in same volume, Bro. Count Goblet d’Alviella’s opinion is more reactionary than Tuckett’s. He flatly denies any influence of French Masonry on English Masonry, claiming that English Masonry was the progenitor of all Masonry. His argument is qualified, however, by admitting Rosicrucian origins.

From 1721 we are confronted with references to certain organizations, working under Masonic denominations connected in some mysterious way with Rosicrucianism, or even with some real or spurious Orders of Chivalry; while outside the British Isles there is no authentic mention of any Masonic meeting before the second quarter of the eighteenth century. There is even, as Bro. Tuckett reminds us, trace of such connection as early as 1638 in Adamson’s *Muses Threnodie*, where the author openly claims to be at once a Freemason and a Brother of the Rosie Cross,

Even d'Alviella's remonstrance is an admittance. The avowed purpose of the Quatuor Coronati was to substantiate Masonry, in this instance its origins, but this is essentially immaterial to determining actual Jesuit influence. In point of fact, these men substantiate the idea that the Clermont College cabal, which drummed up Templarism, was Rosicrucian. According to Sig-mund Richter and JG Findel, French Rosicrucianism itself was a Jesuit invention;<sup>1</sup> and, evidently, they used the Rosicrucian angle to wedge themselves into Scottish Masonry. Whether the Clemont chapter claimed to be Masonic matters nothing with regard to our thesis.

Be that as it may, Tuckett contradicts himself. He does so often. In an attempt to evenhandedly present all the evidence, he, like Mackey and Findel, reveals things that refute his own argument, and he does not successfully explain them to comport with his thesis. For example:

The account of Freemasonry given in *Cérémonies et Coutumes Religieuses . . . Bernard Picart. Amsterdam. J. J. Bernard. 1701. Vol. iv., 1756*, was written in 1735, either by the Abbé Antoine Banier or the Abbé Jean Baptiste le Mascrier, or possibly by the two jointly.

Ramsay's Oration was 1737. Here we have evidence of Free-masonry in France prior to the date of writing which was 1735. There is the possibility that the two abbés in question may have been working for Jesuits to create a false history, but we care little when Freemasonry actually started in France. In either case, this evidence vindicates Robison.

In point of fact, Tuckett says Picart was a Protestant. But he endeavors to undermine this evidence, in order to disavow French origins of Freemasonry, presumably to cast aspersion upon the abbés as possible forgers and Jesuit schills.

Monsieur Simonnet, in his *Idée juste, &c.* (MS. dated 1744), ascribes the account of Freemasonry in *Cérémonies, &c.*, to

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1 See note in "Chapter : Templar Degrees."

Banier alone . . .

But Tuckett is adamant.

there is no hint of any Masonic developments in France or anywhere else passing back into England.

Even his refutation of Robison is poor.

In any attempt to determine the origin of . . . any of the High Degrees, recourse is necessarily made to the famous ‘Oration’ certainly written if not delivered by the Chevalier Ramsay, and to the equally famous tract by Dr. Fifield Dassigny. In both of these there are passages which are of immense importance in the discussion of this subject, which, so far as I am aware, have never been noticed by previous writers, although they bear directly upon the theory of a foreign Origin.

Tuckett begins by casting aspersion upon the idea that Ramsay even delivered the Oration, but he was certainly the author of it, he admits. Whether Ramsay delivered the Oration as the allocution of an orator matters nothing to us. But it was clearly published, he says, and cites several sources to this effect. Then he attempts to use the words of the very Oration himself to prove that the higher degrees of Freemasonry originated in England and not France.

The final paragraph of Ramsay’s Oration as it appears in De la Tierce’s book of 1742 commences thus:—

Des Isles Britanniques l’Art-Roïal commence à repasser dans la France sous le regne du plus aimable des Rois, &c, &c

According to Ramsay, therefore, France was at this time *receiving* Masonic enlightenment *from* England.

All that this proves is that the Clermont chapter got something from England. Of course, they did. When one wants to mimic something, one must learn, “import,” certain features in

order to successfully assume the form of the other.

Immediately, Tuckett contradicts himself, presenting evidence that indeed higher degrees already existed in France.

Original documents preserved in the archives of the Grand Lodge of Sweden, which were first published as recently as 1892, state in the year 1737 the Baron (later Count) K. F. G. Scheffer received at Paris in the 'Prince of Clermont's' Lodge the three St. John's Degrees and also two Ecossois Degrees.

One of the earliest accounts of French Freemasonry comes from *Le Journal de l'Arocat Barbier* (vol II , pp 148 and 149), March 1737.

This account is quoted in full in *Dict. Hist. des Inst. Mœurs et Coutumes de la France, par A. Chéruel*. Paris. 1874. Now this is capable of two interpretations according to the exact meaning we assign to the word '*inventé*.' The first is that French courtiers were at this time making up or *creating* a Freemasonry of their own following the fashion set in England, but the new Masonry thus created was something quite different from the English, and this reading is to some extent supported by the use of expressions such as 'chevaliers' 'chevalerie' 'chaptres.' If this interpretation is correct then Barbier must be passed as evidence that the manufacture of additional Masonic Degrees in France was in full swing early in the year 1737, but even so he affords no evidence that any of the novelties were passing across the Channel to England at this time. But the paragraph may equally well mean that French courtiers had *quite recently* founded or set up Masonic Lodges after the pattern (*i.e.*, working the same ceremonies) as the English Lodges worked at home. In point of fact, we know that this did actually happen at this very time. The use of expressions 'chevaliers' 'chevalerie' and 'chaptres' must then be excused as a blunder not very serious in a non-Mason.

Tuckett goes on to incidentally mention something of note, by which he attempts to show the improbability of Jesuit involvement, although he scarcely ever directly addresses this subject, which looms over the entire Clermont question.

I need hardly point out that if the first interpretation of Mons. Barbier's meaning is the correct one, then some political feature in the new Masonry accounts for the violent opposition of the Cardinal-Minister Fleury, a secret enemy of the Stuart Cause, which is not easy otherwise to understand.

He certainly seems suggest that Cardinal Fleury was against the Jesuits. But is this the case?

It is not. The website of the Palace of Versailles says this about Cardinal de Fleury:

Cardinal de Fleury, private chaplain to Queen Maria Teresa, Preceptor to Louis XV and later his Prime Minister, held one of the most important positions in the government: administration, the economy, foreign policy . . .

André Hercule de Fleury studied theology at the Sorbonne before being appointed chaplain to Queen Maria Theresa in 1677, and later to her husband Louis XIV.

Of course, the Sorbonne was a famous Jesuit university. But his connection with the Jesuits appears greater. *Wikipedia* tells us:

He was sent to Paris as a child to be educated by the Jesuits . . .

In fact, he appears to have been placed as an advisor to the king by the Jesuits. Therefore, it is unlikely that he was against Jesuit attempts to take over England. He had another reason for dissuading Jacobite rebellion.

The *Wikipedia* entry "Jacobite rising of 1745":

Cardinal Fleury, chief minister of France 1723 to 1743 . . . viewed the Jacobites as an ineffective weapon for dealing with British power.

The Quatuor Coronati Museum of Freemasonry online agrees:

Cardinal Fleury, Louis XV's chief minister, believed the Jacobites lacked sufficient backing to guarantee a Stuart Restoration and offered only limited support. Indeed, French assistance was modest until Fleury's death in 1743 when more hawkish officials took his place and helped facilitate the 1745 Rising.

What of the Forty-five Rebellion? Just as Fleury predicted, it failed.

Cardinal Fleury wanted to avoid war—he advocated European peace, Europe having been devastated by the religious wars—and the Jacobins, he felt, were ill equipped to restore the Stuarts. This is not to say that he would not have supported subversive measures.

## Early French Masonry

Tuckett cites three French letters circa 1737 which show unequivocally that a French Freemasonry existed. He cites another from a 1740 magazine to the effect that Freemasonry was fashionable in 1737, as if that were a long time ago. And the Prior of Sorbonne published an excoriation of Freemasonry in 1742. It is curious how the dates coincide with the activities of the Clermont Jesuits mentioned by Robison and Ramsay's Oration.

A book burned by the Inquisition in 1739, *Rélation apoligique et historique de la Société des F.M.*, seems to suggest to Tuckett that Freemasonry passed from England to France and not vice-versa. But all this antiquarian wrangling is ridiculous. It does not prove that Jesuits did not infiltrate English Masonry and influence it. Rather it does much to prove Robison's thesis.

Tuckett references a Jean Baptiste de Boyer who was a friend of Frederick William of Prussia who once, in 1738, refers to the Knights Templar in a discourse on Freemasonry. Tuckett says that Ramsay's Oration was delivered in 1738, but was it not actually 1737. be that as it may, we have seen how swiftly the new Masonry spread. It was contagious.



This is the source of Tuckett's confusion. Virtually all evidence substantiates that Templarism and the chivalric degrees spread to the continent from England after the Oration of 1737. From this date, irrespective of the Oration, Tuckett supposes English origin of the chivalric degrees. Rumors of "Templar Succession" were in the wind before 1741, Tuckett says. Indeed, they were. We have already seen how others commented upon immediate dissemination from England.

Tuckett's numerous obscure documents and letters are scanty evidence actually. Nothing disproves what we have seen already about Stuarts in exile and Jesuits at Clermont College. Evidence of chivalric degrees prior to 1737 is virtually non-existent. What Tuckett provides is insufficient to prove the case.

I am not the only one who questions Tuckett's conclusions. His own compatriot, Brother Gordon Hills, comments in the "Discussion."

It seems to me that whilst Bro. Tuckett rather over-burdens some of his points with evidence, others are left to depend very much on surmise, and on some questions his evidence seems rather contradictory in itself . . .

Others, such as WJ Songhurst, express similar misgivings, albeit in qualified language.

In neither case, however, does there appear to be any necessity for the traditional history to contain any reference to a loss or a recovery; and it is therefore necessary to examine very carefully the evidence put before us by Bro. Tuckett, which to him seems to indicate that in pre-Grand Lodge days something was known in connexion with Masonry very suggestive of what we call the Royal Arch.

This is a reference to Tuckett's thesis that the higher degrees were of British origin and at that beginning at an early date, a hypothesis he toys with which contradicts his main thesis.

Perhaps one of the most interesting of Bro. Tuckett's references is to the *Muse's Threnodie*, which proves that what was

called 'The Mason Word' was known to exist so early as 1638, but I do not think it shows anything more . . .

Brother Sydney T. Klein writes:

It is extraordinary that so little was done in this country in the Chivalric Orders until some thirty or forty years after the references Bro. Tuckett mentions were made. . . . I cannot think that when those Additional Degrees were practised, about 1780, and rather before that time, they did not include very many things imported from the Continent, and some which arose from the lively imagination of our French Brethren.

Here Klein notes a phenomenon, which itself does not disprove Robison, either. The English were more conservative about adopting the chivalric higher degrees, but it spread like wildfire everywhere else.

Nevertheless, Henry Lovegrove comments:

The connection between the Knights Templar of old and the modern seems vague and lacking proof . . .

WB Hextall expresses his misgivings:

His conclusion III. appears to rest on two negative and one affirmative proposition: (1) That British Masonic writers do not assert importation from abroad of Additional Degrees; (2) that Foreign writers make no claim to such; but, on the contrary (3), assert any importation or transference to have been from Britain to the Continent of Europe and passages referred to in the paper no doubt tend in that direction if taken as they stand.

Any qualified agreement I could express must be subject to the observation that I fail to see that some of the English references included in the Addendum to the paper support views there contended for.

Count Goblet D'Alviella agrees with Tuckett that the higher degrees originated on British soil, but "they received their prin-

cial extensions after 1740 in France and Germany . . .” He also, predictably, does not ascribe to the “imposition” theory:

. . . I very willingly and freely admit that the theory of a Freemasonry-apart *founded with a deliberate political or political-religious intent* has been tried, and tried fairly, and found wanting, and that such a superstructure of hypothesis is not justified by a sufficiency of foundation in incontrovertible fact.