

FOUCAULT'S PENDULUM

One of the great mysteries of Freemasonry which has peaked the interest of many of the Masonic scholars and historians of the last two centuries has been the source of the development of our speculative Craft. For the majority of the Twentieth Century, most of the pre-eminent Masonic historians have held the view that the speculative gradually evolved from the operative. However, in the recent past, several non-fictional works have been published linking the Knights Templar, subsequent to their suppression, to the early development of a secret society which eventually appeared before the public as the Speculative Freemasonry we know today. "Born in Blood" by John J. Robinson is perhaps the most familiar; "The Temple and the Lodge" by Baigent and Leigh, contributing authors of "Holy Blood, Holy Grail" propounds the similar theory.

Another work, albeit fictional, also appeared in print at about the same time. Umberto Eco, in "Foucault's Pendulum", weaves not only the Knights Templar and Freemasonry, but also Rosicrucianism throughout his plot. This work achieved best seller status, as had Eco's earlier mystery, "The Name of the Rose". Eco is a Professor of semiotics at the University of Bologna, Italy. Semiotics is the science of signs and symbols. "Foucault's Pendulum" is rich in its references to symbols, evincing the erudition of the author.

The title refers to the experiment of the French physicist, Jean Bernard Foucault, which, in the middle of the nineteenth century, demonstrated that the earth has a component of rotation around the observer. If a pendulum could be swung from a point above the north pole and started vibrating in a plane, it would continue to vibrate in that plane. Since the earth rotates around the pole, the earth would rotate under the pendulum. To the observer, the earth would appear stationary and the pendulum would appear to rotate, making one complete rotation in twenty-four hours. This experiment has been since duplicated in many laboratories, and examples are in evidence in the United Nations building in New York City, as well as in the Smithsonian Institution in the District of Columbia. The allusion of the title is brought forth in the work in the proposition of a single seat of Mystic Power upon the earth.

The book, which is intricate and packed with arcana, is, on its simplest level, a mystery. However, the Masonic Rosicrucian will find therein numerous references which will prove familiar. For example, the work is arranged into ten sections, each bearing the name of one of the emanations of the Supreme Being as taught in the Dogmatic Kabbala. These Sephiroth, or Splendors of the Infinite One, begin with KETER, or Crown; then HOKHMAH, Wisdom; BINAH, Intelligence; HESED, Mercy; GEVURAH, Justice; TIFERET, Beauty; NEZAH, Firmness; HOD, Splendor; YESOD, Foundation; and finally, MALKHUT, Kingdom. The Literal Kabbala is also represented within the work in the allusions of the numerical values of various words.

The author precedes each Chapter with a quotation from various sources. Johann Valentin Andreae's "The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz" is cited numerous times. Other Rosicrucian works such as Cassel's "Fama Fraternitatis", and Michael Maier's "Atalanta Fugiens" are evident. Other sources include Theosophist H.P. Blavatsky's "Isis Unveiled", Swift's "Gulliver's Travels", Piazzi Smith's work on the Great Pyramid, and even "Holy Blood, Holy Grail", together with the Talmud and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

As the plot moves along, the reader is presented with an extensive account of the suppression of the Knights Templar. Linkages are formed with John Dee, Robert Fludd, and other early Rosicrucians and alchemists. The Druids are brought in as well as the cathedral at Chartres, France, built in the thirteenth century. Freemasonry is also added to the mix, as is Theosophism, the Golden Dawn, Shakespeare, Francis Bacon, and Isaac Newton. To these are added Le Comte de Saint Germaine, Cagliostro, Chevalier Ramsey, and even Ignatius Loyola and the Jesuits. Eco appears to have brought together within this volume essentially every subject or individual ever linked to the origins of Speculative Freemasonry.

The main thrust of the plot however, involves not Freemasonry, but rather the suppressed Knights Templar. One of the characters states, "The Templars have something to do with everything", the premise upon which the plot is based.

Perhaps the greatest mystery concerns not the contents of the book, but how a work filled with references which must be extremely obscure to the general reading public could have achieved the status of a number one International Bestseller. It must be assumed that the general reader must have ignored the allusions he did not understand and read only for the superficial mystery presented.

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