

WAS CHARLES TAZE RUSSELL A MASON?

By Lorri MacGregor

An examination of some of the publications of Charles T. Russell, the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, would indicate that he had ties with the Masons. He used Masonic symbols. The Watchtower drawing that graced early publications right up to a couple of decades ago was pure Masonic. Russell was buried under a cross and a crown, again Masonic. Other Masonic symbols were used frequently on his publications.

We keep getting speculative articles in our mail and e-mail indicating that Russell was a Mason. Missing is the proof—where are the records of his membership if he indeed was one?

Over the past twenty-two years we have resisted jumping on the "Masonic Russell" bandwagon, awaiting something definite. Well, we feel we have finally found something which should settle the issue once and for all.

We are indebted to the extensive information found on Randall Watters website (www.freeminds.org) which included a ***Special 1913 Convention Report of the International Bible Students***. Under the subject of "The Temple of God" is a discourse by Pastor Russell reported verbatim on pages 120-127. Russell's own comments on this very subject should settle the speculation once and for all. Was he a Mason?

It is evident he was familiar with the Masons. In the beginning of the discourse he points out how he is "more" than many of the groups, Masons included. These first sets of quotes are all found on page 120.

Do our Masonic friends understand something about the Temple, and being Knights Templars and so on? We more.

He goes on to say that Masons and others have "...that little bit of truth."
Russell admits

...we remember we had very similar ideas, and not very long ago; but, without finding any fault with anybody, we are glad that we are coming to see a more reasonable and harmonious way....

He next moves on to points where he agrees with the Masons. A very careful reading is needed here, because if one or two sentences are taken out of context it would indeed appear that Russell was a Mason. Notice that he refers to Masons as "them" and "they," excluding himself and the brethren.

I am very glad to have this particular opportunity of saying a word about some of the things in which we agree with our Masonic friends, because we are speaking in a building dedicated to Masonry and we also are Masons. I am a Free Mason. I am a free and accepted Mason, if I may carry the matter to its full length, because that is what our Masonic brethren like to tell us, that they are free and accepted Masons. That is their style of putting it. Now I am a free and accepted Mason. I trust we all are. But not after the style of our Masonic brethren. We have no quarrel with them. I am not going to say a word against Masons, and I can appreciate that there are certain very precious truths that are held in part by our Masonic friends. I have talked to them at times, and they have said, "How do you know about all these things? We thought nobody knew anything about these things except those who had access to our very highest logic."

So, Russell did say "Now I am a free and accepted Mason" but, in context it is obvious he was not, because he included all his brethren in the faith as being "Masons" as well. He

also said they were all Masons, but “not after the style of our Masonic brethren.”

Russell went on to place himself above the Masons because he felt he had more “secrets” than they did, his coming from the Lord himself!

I said that I had been in conference with the Great Master Workman, the Lord himself, and I have secret information through the Holy Spirit and guidance in respect to what the Bible says, and that contains all the truth, I believe on every subject. And so if we talk to our Masonic friends about the Temple and its meaning, and about being good Masons, and about the Great Pyramid, which is the very emblem they use, and what the Great Pyramid signifies, our Masonic friends are astonished.... We are going to discuss free and accepted Masonry—the Bible Masonry, my dear friends.

So, it is evident that while Russell tells all listeners to this discourse that he and they are all “Masons,” it is obvious that he has his own meaning for the term, which he calls “Bible Masonry.” As we go on, it is evident he feels he has transcended masonry’s secrets and added a few of his own.

By page 121, which we will now consider, he parts company with Masonic theology, which does not recognize Jesus Christ as their head. Russell says,

...for you know the Head of the Pyramid is a perfect pyramid itself, and all the stones under that simply come into line with the top stone; and that top stone is what the Bible declares Jesus is—the chief cornerstone.

I hate to point out obvious errors in construction, but a “cornerstone” is the foundation of the building, not the peaky stone at the top! Our faith rests on the chief cornerstone Jesus Christ, He doesn’t sit atop our faith (shaped like a pyramid)!

Russell mixes up the Temple with the Pyramid theology he held, and then compares his organization’s temple to the Masonic one.

The Temple will not be completed until every living stone is there. And then what? The next thing will be that which our Masonic friends make so much of, and which we make so much of namely: the glorification of the temple. That is a grand thing in Masonry. They picture how Solomon the wise, the type of Jesus—offered the sacrifice, and how God accepted it, and the glory of the Lord came into the Temple. Just so our Temple, the Church in glory, will not be the Temple of God until the Heavenly Father himself shall have recognized it.

Russell later went on to claim that Jehovah God did indeed recognize himself and his little band of followers as the true Temple, and they alone, in all the earth were pleasing to the Father. How is this possible when he was steeped in pyramidology and Masonic “secrets” which he accepted? It boggles the mind to imagine God choosing one steeped in occult and pagan doctrines.

Russell now goes on to compare the heavenly reign of himself and his followers, the “Royal Priesthood” (who he says will be divine) to the Knights Templar of the Masonic Lodge! (The order with the most occult symbols.)

...A thousand years during which these Knights Templar are to scatter blessings to all the families of the earth.

Heresy aside, he just loved to use masonic terms and show how he and his followers were superior “Masons,” superior “Knights Templar.” He then offers full freedom of choice to his followers in these words,

...If you feel that you want to become a member of the Free and Accepted Order of Masonry, and do not feel free and masonic enough as a follower of Christ, God bless you, use your own judgement; that is yours to decide not mine. But now I am talking about this great order of masonry of which Jesus is the Grand Master. This

Order is to be entered in a peculiar way. There are certain conditions—the low gate, the narrow way, the difficult path.

Now comes his most telling statement on the subject of whether or not he was a Mason.

Although I have never been a Mason, I have heard that in Masonry they have something which very closely illustrates all of this.

So, by Russell's own words, minus the "double-speak" and the parallels he draws all through this discourse, he plainly says he has never been a Mason.

He gives the Masons their due, however, when he says,

Our Masonic friends have it down very fine. I do not know where they got it so well. I have often wondered where they found out so many of the secrets of our High and Accepted Order of Masonry. From the time you come in to be a member of the Royal Priesthood, a living stone, a member of the craft of Masonry, from the Lord's stand-point,... if any man will be a living stone in the Temple, if any man will be a member of this High, Free and Accepted Masonry—let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

I can hear the gasps from modern Jehovah's Witnesses that their exalted leader used the word "cross," but this was before "new light" on the "torture stake," so I guess he's excused for ignorance.

So, although Russell claimed to know Masonic Secrets, and compared his "Royal Priesthood in Christ" to the Lodge, he felt himself above ordinary Masons, and in fact said plainly he never was one.

Nevertheless, his massive ego, just led him on and on to make more and more ridiculous statements. We continue on with remarks from page 122,

Do you mean that the Lord's Church is a secret order? Yes, surely it is.... Did the world know the great Mason when he was here? No. Did the world slay the great Master Mason? Yes.

So now we have Russell referring to our God and Savior, Jesus Christ as a "Master Mason." Is this not blasphemy of the highest order?

In case we missed the point, Russell expands on it,

So you and I as under-masons are waiting for the return of our Master Mason, who gave his life on this very account in connection with this secret of the construction of the Temple, the Church.

Christ died for our sins to set us free from the condemnation of sin and death, not for some secret regarding the Temple. Russell is way off base from the gospel.

He goes on to equate the Christian walk with the degrees of Masonry saying,

...we must go on to higher degrees, because those who are in the first degree practically know very little.

He then states again how exclusive he is in his own opinion, how clever, and how full of secret knowledge he considered himself,

...Not everybody has the hearing ear and the seeing eye. It is only those who have come into this divine masonry that have this spiritual insight, and this spiritual guidance, and may know the things that are freely given unto us. It is something that is freely given to one class, and not intended for anybody else.

This mindset is with us today among the modern Jehovah's Witnesses and even the many offshoot sects from Russell. They believe their organization alone is "spiritually guided." They say they receive messages from angels given to the "remnant" (the privileged few who rule over the others). I suggest that they are spiritually guided by the forces of darkness, for who else would dare tamper with God's word on the subject of Jesus

Christ, and the very nature of God!

As we read on in this amazing discourse to page 123, Russell reveals just how contaminated his brand of “Christianity” was when he made these statements.

...You know our order is so secret we cannot know each other always. Is not that wonderful? I find that is so with Masons also. Many Masons shake hands with me and give me what I know is their grip; they don't know me from a Mason. Something I do seems to be the same as Masons do, I don't know what it is; but they often give me all kinds of grips and I give them back, then I tell them I don't know anything about it except just a few grips that have come to me naturally....

Again, we have the admission from Russell's own lips that he knows nothing really about Masonic grips. It's interesting that both Russell and the Masons sense a brotherhood with each other—occult and pagan both! How deserving of each other they are!

Russell goes on to claim that the Apostle Paul was a thirty-second degree Mason in the Lord's order and bore the marks to prove it! He says the Masons are ignorant of the marks that Paul received.

Unbelievably, Russell makes a salvation plea to his followers in these words,

Now have you taken the first step of humility to acknowledge your sins? Have you acknowledged you have nothing in your hand to bring to make you worthy to be accepted of God? Have you acknowledged that you are trusting in the precious blood of Jesus? Have you taken these degrees? Have you said, Simply to Thy cross I cling? Have you taken that degree? Have you gone on then to say, Lord, I give myself to Thee? And have you received the initiation into this high degree in which you may be called a Priest, a saint of God, a member of the Royal Priesthood? I hope you have.

Did you ever hear such a garbled message of salvation, mixing the grace of God with occult Masonic degrees! It is truly shameful.

At the bottom of page 123, continuing on to page 124, Russell identifies a secondary class of Christians, not as spiritual as the Royal Priesthood, but going to heaven anyway. He calls them the “Great Company.” This will come as a shock to the present “Great Crowd” who are told they can't go to heaven, but must remain on earth. The light just keeps flashing off and on doesn't it?

Page 125 tells us that if we have on the “robe of Christ's righteousness...”

All his past is under the blood; Jesus has made him whole; he is accepted as a member of this spiritual Masonry. Thank God!... All of these spiritual Masons should know each other, not after the flesh but after the spirit.

Again, the ungodly mix of Gospel and Masonry. The most deceptive teachings are those that mix truth with error.

Page 125 repeats much of what we have already covered. Page 126 was pictures, and the discourse concludes with page 127, which again exalts the heavenly “Little Flock” and leaves the “Great Company” with spots on their robes and tribulation to go through.

I confess to feeling sick in my spirit as I read through this discourse. Charles T. Russell must have been a very charismatic man to sway a crowd who claimed to be students of God's Word the Bible. I could see myself leaping to my feet and shouting “heresy!” I'm a little late, but that's what I'm doing now.

I can only pray that this information will find its way to many modern Jehovah's Witnesses who revere this false prophet and his twisted teachings. I pray many eyes will be opened and modern Jehovah's Witnesses will begin an investigation into their roots. If the foundation is faulty, the structure is rotten to its core!

2APMacGregor0301