

Ramsay and his *Discours revisited*

Ramsay was a worthy man ; but he caused much amusement by his starchy airs, by his affectation in parading learning and wit in company, by the insipid compliments with which he overwhelmed the ladies; in a word, he was a Scots pedant.

Abbé Iraitlh ¹

The exoneration of the Chevalier Ramsay from all share in the propagation of the Higher Degrees so favoured on the Continent has come late ; but it has come completely. Its completeness is due to the learned labours of Dr. W. Begemann...

Chetwode Crawley ²

Un Ecossais dont l'histoire est obscure.

Albert Chérel ³

¹ A younger contemporary of Ramsay quoted after Chérel in Henderson 1952 : 233.

² AQC **26** (1913) : 63.

³ Quoted in Henderson 1952 : 228.

RAMSAY'S LIFE

We don't have a single portrait of him and we do not know when he was born (1681, 1688 or, more likely, 1686, June 9⁴), and where. Brought up in Ayr, a small village near Kilwinning in Scotland, he was educated at Ayr Grammar school but we are not sure when and where he studied further. Possibly at Glasgow and then at Edinburgh University. A deeply religious young man,⁵ he was supposed to become a minister but never did.

In 1708, Ramsay accepted the position of tutor to the two children of David, 3rd Earl of Wemyss.⁶ About April 1710, Ramsay unexpectedly left the Wemyss estate in Thistleworth and went to Holland to meet Poiret⁷ who will be responsible for the publication of Madame Guyon's writings.⁸

Shortly afterwards, Ramsay left for Cambrai where he arrived in August 1710⁹ and made the acquaintance of the local archbishop Fénelon. Ramsay converted to Roman Catholicism six months later and stayed at the archbishop's house until 1714. Ramsay went afterwards to Madame Guyon's in Blois where he remained two years as a disciple as well as a private secretary. He left Blois for Paris toward the end of 1716 and became tutor to the son of the Comte de Sassenage, first gentleman of the chamber to the Regent.¹⁰

While living at the Sassenage's house in Paris, Ramsay entered in contact with Stuart exiles.¹¹ His name first appears in the *Stuart Papers* in a letter from Dec. 16, 1720, in which Lord Landsdowne¹² described him to James as « a gentleman entirely attached to your Majesty's service... [who] made it his request to me to introduce to your favourable acceptance his last edition of the labours of that great prelate »¹³ herewith alluding to Fénelon whose life Ramsay was to publish in 1723.

About that time, Ramsay wrote to James addressing him as « the King of Great Britain » and ending his letter with the words « Be pleased to accept it as a tribute of my loyalty, as a mark of

⁴ According to the *Anecdotes* (see Bibliography, I. Primary sources, Manuscript).

⁵ In 1708, « he had become one of a most interesting group of sincere religious persons in Scotland who turned with distaste from the prevailing forms of Christianity and sought satisfaction in mystical union with a loving God and worship of Him in spirit and in truth. » (Henderson 1952 : 16).

⁶ Wemyss' son James (1699-1756) became 4th Earl and had two sons. The elder, David, was attained after the 45'. His younger brother James became 5th Earl and was elected Grand Master Mason in Edinburgh, November 30, 1743, succeeding William, 4th Earl of Kilmarnock.

⁷ Pierre Poiret (1646-1719). Edited from 1711 to his death Mme Guyon's *Oeuvres complètes* in 39 vol.

⁸ Jeanne-Marie Bouvier de la Motte (1648-1717) became famous as *Madame Guyon*. Author of mystical *Commentaires* on the Bible, « une folle pour les libertins et une hérétique pour les dévots » (Roger Priouret, *La Franc-Maçonnerie sous les lys*, 1953, p. 28), a « religious adviser to a host of earnest and completely unfanatical Christians in many lands and in different sects. Her writings had been commended to Ramsay before he left England » (Henderson 1952 : 37). See *Le Quiétisme* (1973) by J.-R. Armogathe.

⁹ Ramsay, *Histoire de la vie de Mess^r. François de Salignac de la Motte Fénelon*, p. 102. The book was first published in 1723. My quotes are from the 1724 ed. printed in Bruxelles. Fénelon was one of the greatest French theologians.

¹⁰ Louis XIV died September 1, 1715. His great-grandson, Louis XV, heir to the French throne, will act as King from June 16, 1726, at the age of 16. In the meantime, power was in the hands of the Regent, the Duc d'Orléans, succeeded after his death (1723) by the Duc de Bourbon.

¹¹ Among those, the Duke of Mar who was Secretary of State to James III and lived in Paris. Mar mentioned Ramsay's name in several letters to James (Henderson 1952 : 59-60).

¹² Made a peer under Queen Anne, sent to the Tower in 1715, he went to live in France. Formed there a group called the 'Triumvirate' with Mar and Dillon.

¹³ Henderson 1952 : 85-86.

my duty, and as an earnest of that most profound respect, with which I have the honour to be, Sr, your Majesties most humble, most faithfull and most obedient servant and subject. »¹⁴

Ramsay left the tutorship of Sassenage's child during the Summer of 1722. His Paris friends interceded by the Regent, then head of the Order, to have him knighted *chevalier de St Lazare*, May 20, 1723,¹⁵ herewith qualifying him to receive a pension on the Abbey of Signy in France. Four days later, James III. granted Ramsay a patent of nobility written in French which reads thus translated into English :

It having been certified to us by several Lords of our Realm living in Paris that Andrew Michael Ramsay Esquire, a gentleman of Scotland, is descended through his father from the noble and ancient house of Dalhousie Ramsay, Peer of Scotland and through his mother from the most noble and very illustrious house of the Duke of Mar, Duke of Erskine and Peer of Scotland, we have been graciously pleased to grant him this our authentic declaration of the nobility of his descent, that it may be of service and of value to him whenever he may have need of the same.¹⁶

However when a French historian wrote in 1999 to Sir Malcolm Innes of Edingight, KCVO, the Lord Lyon King of Arms in Edinburgh, in order to ascertain whether Ramsay's claim to nobility had any ground at all, he became the following answer :

I have not come across this person in my reading and researches. I note that the Old Pretender confirmed certain genealogical matters for this person. This having been done at some distance the reliability of such a certificate or diploma might be questioned.¹⁷

James seems to have hold Ramsay in high esteem¹⁸ and, alluding to the possibility that Ramsay may sometimes come to Rome, wrote to him : « I believe it will be easy for me to employ you in a way equally fitting my service and your genius ». A little later, Ramsay was appointed a tutor to the Old Pretender's first child, Charles Edward, who was born in Rome on New Year's eve 1720. He left Paris, Jan. 3, 1724, and arrived in Rome after a three weeks journey. However he was to stay only a few months. Unhappy about the Roman atmosphere - he was considered an agent of the Paris Stuart coterie¹⁹ - Ramsay asked permission of James to return to Paris and left middle of November. Altogether Ramsay's association with the royal family at Rome was rather a failure.²⁰

Ramsay lived then at the duke of Sully who had married one of Madame Guyon's daughter in 1719. He began to write *Les Voyages de Cyrus*.²¹ The novel issued in 1727 was a great success. However clever people noticed that Ramsay borrowed a lot. Lantoine²² found an anonymous pamphlet printed in 1728, *Entretiens sur les Voyages de Cyrus*,²³ which listed all

¹⁴ A couple of years later, Ramsay wrote to James: « My greatest ambition as well as greatest happiness shall ever be to sacrifice all I am and all I have to your interests » (Henderson 1952 : 87-89).

¹⁵ Facsimile of the ms Minutes, *Renaissance Traditionnelle* 114 (April 1998) : 110-111.

¹⁶ *Stuart Papers*, Misc. 21/26 (Windsor Castle), facsimile in *AQC* 81 (1968) : 283. Bro. Tunbridge found the document and put it at Bro. Batham's disposal (*ibid.* : 313).

¹⁷ *Renaissance Traditionnelle* 117 (Jan. 1999) : 2. However Naudon and Lamoine wrote imprudently: « In spite of Voltaire's assertions, reproduced without control by numerous historians, Ramsay belonged to a noble and great Scottish family » (Naudon 1960 : 78), « Ramsay, of genuine noble Scots stock » (Lamoine 2002 : 237). Both could not read very well either : quoting a sentence of Ramsay's *Discours* after Lantoine, Naudon writes (*ibid.* p. 82, note 2) – but here, he seems to be copying Daruty 287 inaccurately ! - he could not find it in La Tierce 1742, whereas the sentence stays p. 136. Lamoine ascribes the imaginary date 1740 to an edition of La Tierce (Lamoine *ibid.* : 226).

¹⁸ « I have heard a great deal of good of him of all sorts of people and never any ill, and I believe he will answer my expectation » James to Southcott (Henderson 1952 : 93).

¹⁹ Henderson 1952 103. James must have become suspicious of Ramsay and in April 1724 wrote to Murray: « Ramsay is not to be anyways concerned in writings or politics » (Henderson 1952 104).

²⁰ Henderson 1952 :108.

²¹ The French edition was dedicated to Sully, the English one to Lord Landsdowne. A Dublin edition appeared in 1728.

²² Lantoine 1927 : 122.

²³ Likely the source of Voltaire's entry 'Plagiat' in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique* : « Dans ces voyages, il [Ramsay] copie les phrases, les raisonnemens d'un ancien auteur anglais qui introduit un jeune solitaire disséquant sa chèvre morte, et remontant à Dieu par sa chèvre. Cela ressemble fort à un plagiat. Mais en conduisant Cyrus en Egypte, il se sert, pour décrire ce pays singulier, des

the sentences culled by Ramsay in Fénelon and Bossuet, or in less famous authors like Jacques de Turreil (an obscure member of the Académie Française) and *The improvement of human reason, exhibited in the life of Hai Ebn Yokdan* from Abu Ibn al-Tufail, translated from the Arabic by Simon Ockley and printed in 1708 in London by E. Powell & J. Morphew ! Translated by Nathaniel Hooke, the *Travels of Cyrus* chiefly contributed to turn English attention to Ramsay.

In 1727, George II. succeeded to the English throne. A 'general act of pardon' seems to have been expected from the next Parliament but did not materialise. George merely did some pardoning, which possibly explains why Ramsay was able come to England toward the middle of 1729.²⁴ Highlights of his one year stay was his election (together with Montesquieu) as a Fellow of the Royal Society, Dec. 11, 1729 ; his membership of the Spalding Club, March 12 (O.S.), 1730²⁵; his initiation in the Horn Lodge of which the Duke of Richmond was WM, March 16 (O.S.), 1730,²⁶ a few weeks after Montesquieu ; and his reception as a Doctor of Civil Law at Oxford, April 10, 1730.

Back in Paris in July 1730²⁷ Ramsay was employed by the Bouillon family as tutor of the young Godefroi Geraud, Duke of Château-Thierry (nephew of the Comte d'Evreux) and when the lad died, March 1732, of Evreux's grand-nephew, Godefroi Charles, Prince of Turenne, born 1728.²⁸ Ramsay kept that position until June 1741.²⁹ James awarded Ramsay the title of Knight and Baronet, March 23, 1735,³⁰ on the recommendation of the Duchess of Bouillon and of Sir David Nairne whose younger daughter, Marie, then aged 34, Ramsay married in June.³¹

One and a half year later, Ramsay appears as out of nowhere on the French masonic scene. The title-page of a manuscript version of his *Discours* states the date of its delivery : 1736 *Discours de M^r Le Ch^{er} de Ramsay Prononcé a la Loge de S^t Jean le 26 X^{bre}*, that is, December 26, 1736. From then on, documents concerning Freemasonry in Paris multiply whereas the last mention of Ramsay in a masonic context, besides his talks with Geusau in 1741, is a letter he wrote to a Jacobite friend on August 2, 1737. It is quoted below.

Ramsay died, May 6, 1743. The next day, his burial in St. Germain was attended by two freemasons : the Earl of Derwentwater, elected Grand Master of France one day after Ramsay delivered his *Discours* in Paris, and Alexander of Montgomerie, 10th Earl of Eglinton, then aged nineteen, who was made a mason by the Earl of Kilmarnock in the Lodge of Kilwinning on January 20, 1742 and became Master of the Lodge as well as Grand Master Mason in Scotland

mêmes expressions employées par Bossuet ; il le copie mot pour mot sans le citer. Voilà un plagiat dans toutes ses formes. ».

²⁴ Ramsay spent Christmas 1729 at the Duke of Orrey's (John Heron Lepper, *AQC* 35 : 78)

²⁵ Not 1729, as Gould wrote (II : 284n & III : 81), since Ramsay signs as a FRS (Henderson 1952 : 140).

²⁶ The date of Ramsay's initiation was first ascertained by the Rev. Oxford (*No 4, An Introduction to the History of the Royal Somerset House and Inverness Lodge*, 1928, p. 16). Sitwell was immediately aware of it that same year (*Transactions for the year 1928*, Lodge No. CC, p. 42). In 1913, Chetwode Crawley did not believe in it (« He cannot have been initiated during the visit... » *AQC* 26 : 61). Neither Lantoine who states Ramsay was initiated in 1736 (Lantoine 1930 : 48), nor Henderson (Henderson 1952 : 166), nor Pierre Chevallier (Chevallier 1964 : 140) were aware of it.

²⁷ Pierre Chevallier 1964 : 136. Henderson ignored how long Ramsay stayed in England (Henderson 1952 : 147). According to *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia* (1961 ed.), Ramsay went in 1728 to England and spent 8 years there and in Scotland !

²⁸ Godefroi Geraud was born 1719, his mother was Marie Charlotte Sobieska, sister of James' wife, Marie Clémentine. Godefroi Charles was born 1728. Head of the house was the Duc de Bouillon.

²⁹ He wrote many pamphlets and books during that time, his most important work being *l'Histoire du vicomte de Turenne, maréchal général des armées du roy*, issued in March 1735.

³⁰ Henderson 1952 : 181-182.

³¹ Marie was born January 6, 1701. According to a gazette dated July 10, 1735, the wedding had taken place « about a month ago » (Chevallier 1968 : 135). Their first child, Isaac, born Dec. 1737, died June 1740. A daughter, Marie Catherine, born Jan. 1739, died in 1758 (Henderson 1952 : 185-186).

in 1750. Ramsay's death certificate ³² was signed by both of them, together with Eglinton's tutor, Michel de Ramsay who was Andrew Ramsay's cousin, Alex. Home - likely a member of the Douglas family - and Geo de Leslie who belonged to the Roth family.³³

THE BEGINNINGS OF FRENCH FREEMASONRY ³⁴

Along the 20th Century, early important French masonic documents were discovered and published. The main ones are :

1. the French *Regles et Devoirs* approved by the French Grand Lodge on December 27, 1735 under Grand Master Macleane and stating they are a modified version of those given by Philip, Duke of Wharton, described in the *Approbation* as having been Grand Master of the Lodges of the Kingdom of France.
2. A French *gazette manuscrite*, dated January 4, 1737, stating that a general assembly of the most ancient and honourable society of freemasons, held December 27, 1736, at a place called *Le Grand St Germain*, rue du Paon, elected « the most high and mighty Lord Charles Ratcliff, earl of Derwent-Waters, a peer of England, in the place of Lord Hector Macleone (*sic*), baronet of Scotland ». ³⁵
3. A document ³⁶ stating that Derwentwater delivered a Warrant for a new lodge in Paris, February 14, 1737, in consequence of a temporary one issued by his predecessor MacLean, November 29, 1736. Derwentwater's Grand Officers are listed by name as well as the WM and both wardens of the new lodge : Louis Collins, [Jean-Pierre] Le Lorrain and Joseph Agard. The lodge met at the hôtel de Bussy, also known as Landelle's.
4. The earliest-known Minute Book of a Parisian Lodge whose WM was the famous John Coustos.³⁷ It covers the period from December 18, 1736 to July 17, 1737. The Duke of Villeroy was made a mason in that lodge and chosen as WM in February. Coustos' Senior Warden was a 'D. Errembault Dudzeele', whereas a 'Denis Erembault, Marquis du Dyes' was signatory to Document Nr. 3 from February 14, 1737, as Deputy Master p. t. of GM Derwentwater.
5. A slightly different version of Document Nr. 1, delivered November 25, 1737, by Grand Master Derwentwater to the Baron of Scheffer, then a member of Coustos' Lodge, together with a power to constitute lodges in the Kingdom of Sweden.³⁸

PARIS AND THE FIRST LODGES

How many lodges existed then in Paris is still a conjectural matter. The above documents mention three only :

- Coustos' lodge which met every other Tuesday *à la ville de tonnerre dans la rue des boucheries*.

³² Parochial register quoted in French by Henderson (Henderson 1952 : 197).

³³ 'Lesley, comte de Rooth' is listed in Bord 1908 : 118 as a member of the Lodge said by him to have existed in the Regiment of Dillon between 1700 and 1730. See also Philip Crossle in *Transactions for the year 1928*, Lodge No. CC, pp. 61-73 & 73-75 (translation of Bord 1908 : 491 and ff.) and his foot-note, p. 74.

³⁴ Writing in 1968, Bro. Tunbridge stated: « Very little is known of Freemasonry in France prior to 1737 » and added in a fit of pure imagination : « In 1735 five French Lodges appeared on the English Registers » (AQC 81: 92) whereas they were only three : Paris, Aubigny and Valenciennes.

³⁵ For the references to the first two documents, respectively published by Etienne Fournial in 1964 and George Luquet in 1956, see Bernheim 1968 : 120-121.

³⁶ First published in Juvanon 1926 : 134-135.

³⁷ Transcribed, published and commented by Daniel Ligou in *Bulletin du Centre de documentation du Grand Orient de France* 51 (1965) : 33-68.

³⁸ Originally transcribed and published by Arthur Groussier, GM of the Grand Orient of France, in 1932. Republished by Fournial in 1964 (see note 35). Facsimile of the original document, extant in the Library of the Swedish Masonic Order, in Feddersen 1989 : 585-605.

- The lodge at the *hotel rue de Bussy* (Document 3) whose WM Collins (replaced in April 1737 for a short time, by the Duke of Aumont) and wardens visited Coustos' lodge, February 17, 1737.
- The Grand Master's (Derwentwater's) lodge, mentioned in Document 4, March 12, 1737, in the following words :
 WM Gousteau [Coustos], in the place of My Lord, the Duke of Villeroy, moved that the Masters and Wardens meet with the Grand Master of the lodges in France concerning some innovations made in the said Grand Master's lodge, such as to hold a sword during the receptions [and] to find in the ballot-box more balls than the number of attendants. The brethren have unanimously said that nobody was allowed to make laws in freemasonry, since the offices of Grand Master, Master and Wardens merely consist in enforcing those laws which are transmitted by tradition.³⁹ Such uniformity distinguish masons from all other sects and made them respected in the whole of Europe, without which one is not acknowledged as such in another land, since one cannot wear any metal during a reception, the brethren added further that the order was not an order of chivalry but a sociable one, wherein any man of probity may be accepted without wearing a sword notwithstanding the fact that many lords and princes enjoy being a member thereof.⁴⁰

According to the lists of lodges, printed in London since 1722, a lodge meeting at the King's Head or *Louis d'Argent*, was warranted under Nr. 90 in Paris, April 3, 1732, by the *premier* Grand Lodge. It can hardly be Derwentwater's, it cannot be the Bussy lodge warranted in 1736-37 nor Coustos', since the latter met every other Tuesday whereas Nr. 90 met on the first Monday.⁴¹ According to an undated note found in police archives, WM of the *Louis d'Argent* was Thomas-Pierre Le Breton⁴² who was present on December 18, 1736, at the first meeting recorded in Coustos' lodge Minute-Book.

THE TWO MAIN VERSIONS OF THE *DISCOURS*

Until 1964, the interpretations given by various scholars of Ramsay's *Discours* had one thing in common : they all commented 'the' *Discours* as if there had been one only.

My friend Pierre Chevallier was the first historian of French Freemasonry to bring out parts of an earlier hitherto unknown manuscript version of the *Discours*.⁴³ He followed indications given by Albert Lantoine⁴⁴ who mentioned its existence in the archives of a small French town, Epervain, located in the heart of Champagne's vineyards. Lantoine wrote the manuscript copy was an

³⁹ Words very similar to those included in the Minutes of the Grand Lodge meeting in London, June 24, 1723 : « And the Question was moved. That it is not in the Power of any person, or Body of men, to make any Alteration, or Innovation in the Body of Masonry without the Consent first obtained of the Annual Grand Lodge. » (*Quatuor Coronatorum Antigrapha X*, 50), as well as to Regulation XXXIX printed in Anderson's *The Constitutions of the Freemasons 1723*.

⁴⁰ When masonic ceremonies will be revealed to the French public in December 1737, Derwentwater is reported by a member of Collins' Lodge, abbé le Camus, as having « strongly protested against the French and stated they had been admitted in spite of his desires » (Luquet 1963 : 176).

⁴¹ After meeting every Wednesday *au Louis d'Argent dans La Rue de Boucherie a Paris* (1734 list), Nr. 90, according to the engraved lists issued from 1735 to 1740, met on the first Monday at the *Hotel de Bussy, rue de Bussy* (1735 & 1736 lists) and afterwards at *the Ville de Tonnerre, Rue des Boucheries* (1738, 1739 and 1740 lists, in the latter one under Nr. 78). Strangely enough, another French Lodge, warranted by the *premier* Grand Lodge, August 12, 1735, with Nr 133 *At the Castle at Aubigny* (a castle which belonged to the Duke of Richmond) always met on the First Monday (1735, 1738-1740 lists).

⁴² Chevallier 1964 : 51. This lodge was never called Saint-Thomas until the 1760s, a fact brilliantly demonstrated in 1985 by Etienne Fournial, although most historians, from Thory to Sitwell (*Transactions for the year 1928*, Lodge No. CC, p. 41) as well as Pierre Chevallier asserted the contrary.

⁴³ In *Les Ducs sous l'Acacia* (1964). Paul Tunbridge wrote Pierre Chevallier was a Mason (AQC 81: 93). He never was.

⁴⁴ Lantoine 1927 : 117-118 (the text quoted there by Lantoine is that of the printed version of 1738, not the manuscript one, in spite of what his comments suggest) & 1930 : 32.

'incomplete' one,⁴⁵ suggesting it was a first sketch of the printed version. This was a mistake : both texts are quite different from another.⁴⁶

The date mentioned on the manuscript of the *Discours*, December 26, 1736, was one day before the Earl of Derwentwater ⁴⁷ was elected Grand Master by a general assembly of freemasons in Paris. Derwentwater, an Englishman, succeeded James Hector McLean, knight, baronet of Scotland. MacLean was several years Grand Master in France.⁴⁸

Both versions are divided into three parts whose respective length is quite different :

PLAN OF RAMSAY'S <i>DISCOURS</i>	MS VERSION	PRINTED VERSIONS
1. Qualities required in the Order	ca. 1'000 words	ca. 1'800 words
2. Ancient traditions of the Order's history	ca. 840 words	ca. 65 words
3. True history of the Order	ca. 400 words	ca. 850 words
APPROXIMATE TOTAL LENGTH :	2'240 words	2'715 words

Whereas the ms version is about 2'200 words long and the printed one 2'700, both have only 500 words in common. Some 1'000 words of the ms version were left out of the printed one to which about 1'500 new words were added.

Except for minor variations, later printed versions are similar to the earliest one from 1738.⁴⁹ Accordingly the ms text and the printed one must be discussed separately.

Both versions begin with identical words : the speaker addresses men who are about to be, or have just been, made Masons.

THE 1736 MANUSCRIPT VERSION AND ITS SOURCES

Ramsay appears to have been a plagiarist – which wasn't considered a capital sin along the 18th Century – which explains why many ideas from both versions of the *Discours* originated in the writings of others and were not the result of his imagination.

⁴⁵ A word which Sitwell changed into 'imperfect' (Sitwell 1928 : 43). Also : « March 1737, the *Discours* is written in its definitive version » (Chevallier 1964 : 144). Printed versions are also termed 'more complete' by Lamoine.

⁴⁶ Only the third part of the ms version was transcribed in Chevallier 1964 : 147-149. Cyril Batham who issued both versions in English (AQC **81** : 298-304) names the printed version « Grand Lodge », which is misleading since it was not delivered in Grand Lodge by Ramsay. Batham admits he copied Gould's translation (AQC **81** : 282, note 2), which is why one reads identical French words rendered differently in both English versions of the *Discours* printed in parallel columns in AQC **81**. For instance : *Oui, Messieurs* translated as 'Yes, gentlemen' (ms) and 'Yes, sirs' (printed version).

The last-issued volume **114** of AQC (October 2002) includes a further translation of the Epernay manuscript version by Georges Lamoine together with the translation of another ms version (originally located in the Bibliothèque Municipale of Toulouse by Jacques Légliše, see Bibliography).

⁴⁷ James Ratcliff, Earl of Derwentwater (1693-1746), and his son James Bartholomew embarked from Dunkirk to Montrose, November 22, 1745, in order to take part in the 45' in Scotland. The boat was captured by the Sheerness. Imprisoned at the Tower, James was beheaded in London, December 8, 1746.

⁴⁸ Neither the date of MacLean's first election nor that of the foundation of the Grand Lodge of France have been ascertained yet. It is well to remember that we do not know the date of the foundation of the GL of Ireland either and that the only testimony we have of the *premier* Grand Lodge being formed in London on June 24, 1717, is the uncorroborated one of Anderson in the *New Book of Constitutions*, issued 1738, some twenty years after the event.

⁴⁹ See Bibliography.

In the first part - the three required qualities to enter the Order : philanthropy, ability to keep a secret and a taste for the fine arts – we find at first ideas from Fénelon :

- q *The false love of a few men... for their country destroyed... the love for human mankind was a Fénelon sentence quoted by Ramsay : « I love my family better than myself ; I love my country better than my family ; but I love human mankind still more than my country. »*⁵⁰
- q *The whole world is but a large republic of which each nation is a family and each individual a child comes from that same work : « All nations on earth are but various families of a same Republic of which God is the common father. »*⁵¹

as well as ideas culled in English masonic literature :

- q *Thus did the Orientals, Egyptians, Greeks and the wise men of all nations conceal their dogmas behind figures, symbols and hieroglyphics was probably inspired by : « ... the old Egyptians, who concealed the chief Mysteries of their Religion under Signs and Symbols, called Hieroglyphicks » in A Defence of Masonry.*⁵²
- q The grand lodge said to have been established in Rome by Augustus likely originated in Anderson's 1723 *The Constitutions of the Freemasons* : « the glorious AUGUSTUS became the *Grand-Master* of the Lodge at Rome... ».⁵³

In the second part which is more than 800 words long, the *ancient traditions* of the Order's history also rely heavily on Anderson :

- q *It was God himself who taught the restorer of mankind the proportions of the floating vessel which was to keep alive the animals of every species during the Flood... Consequently Noah must be regarded... as the first grand master of our Order* [Anderson, p. 3 : « NOAH... was commanded and directed of God to build the *great Ark*, which, tho' of Wood, was certainly fabricated by *Geometry*, and according to the Rules of *Masonry*. »]
- q *The arcane science was handed by oral tradition from him [Noah] down to Abraham and the patriarchs, the last of whom carried our sublime art into Egypt.* [possibly Anderson, page 5 : « the Royal Art was brought down to *Egypt* by MITZRAIM, the second son of *Ham*... » - Anderson, p. 7 : « Nay, the Jews believed that ABRAM also instructed the *Egyptians* in the *Assyrian Learning*. » Or, more likely, *A Letter from the Grand Mistress* (Dublin 1724, reprinted 1730) : « The *Egyptians* probably had it immediately from *Abraham* as the Scripture Plainly hints in the Life of that Patriarch »]
- q *Moses, inspired by the Most High, had a mobile temple erected in the desert in conformity with the model he had seen in a heavenly vision... this ambulant tabernacle... became the model of the famous Temple of Solomon...* [Anderson, p. 8 : « that most glorious tent, or *Tabernacle*, ... (prov'd afterwards the Model of *Solomon's Temple*) according to the Pattern that God had shewn to MOSES in the Mount... »]
- q *... built by over three thousand princes or master masons, whose chief was Hiram Abif, grand master of the lodge in Tyre whom Solomon entrusted with all our mysteries.* [Anderson, p. 14 : « the *learned King HIRAM* was GRAND MASTER of the *Lodge* at *Tyre*, and the *inspired HIRAM ABIF* was *Master of Work*... »]
- q *After the destruction of the first temple ... the great Cyrus ... appointed Zorobabel grand master of the lodge at Jerusalem and ordered him to lay the foundations of the second temple* [Anderson, p. 19 : « ... the GRAND CYRUS ... having constituted ZERUBBABEL... the Head, or *Prince* of the *Captivity* ... they began to lay the Foundation of the SECOND TEMPLE... it was dedicated ... by ZERUBBABEL the Prince and General *Master-Mason* of the *Jews*... »]

⁵⁰ In *Histoire...* (see note 9), p. 152.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 168.

⁵² An anonymous pamphlet printed as a reply to Prichard's *Masonry Dissected*. Advertised for sale in the *Daily Post*, London, December 15, 1730. Transcribed in Knoop, Jones & Hamer, *Early Masonic Catechisms* : 210-225 (the sentence quoted here stays p. 216).

⁵³ Page 25.

In this last paragraph appears a remarkable new idea which has no equivalent in Anderson and was not invented by Ramsay either :

After his [*Hiram's*] death, King Solomon wrote down our statutes, maxims and mysteries in hieroglyphic figures, and this ancient book is the original code of our Order. After the destruction of the first temple, the great Cyrus, who was initiated in all our mysteries instituted Zorobabel grand master of the lodge⁵⁴ in Jerusalem and ordered him to lay the foundations of the second temple wherein the mysterious book of Solomon was deposited. This book was preserved for twelve centuries in the temple of the Israelites, but after the destruction of this second temple under emperor Titus and the dispersion of this people, this authentic record was lost until the time of the crusades when it was partly recovered after the taking of Jerusalem. This sacred code was decyphered and although the sublime spirit of all the hieroglyphic figures it contained were not fully understood, our ancient Order was revived...

Ramsay mingled here two different sources together :

q The Bible :

And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD.⁵⁵

The book found in King Solomon's Temple (about 622-621 B.C.) is that of the law of the Lord (lahve) written down by Moses.

q The *Ecclesiastical History* by Claude Fleury, a priest and historian befriended with Fénelon.⁵⁶

In Fleury's *History*, a book, the Gospel of St John, is found in the foundations (not in the Temple itself) of King Solomon's Temple and the event takes place during the 4th Century A.D. at the time of the Roman Emperor Julian, commonly called the Apostate (c. 331-363).

This legend was by no means an invention of Fleury : when he wrote his *Ecclesiastical History* he merely recopied it in a work by Philostorgius⁵⁷ bearing the same title. The comparison between both texts set in parallel columns on next page shows unmistakably that Fleury recopied Philostorgius.

Ramsay's innovations consisted in turning the Gospel of St. John into *the original code of the masonic Order* written by Solomon and setting the time of its recovery after the taking of Jerusalem (1099). Which was the time when Godfrey de Bouillon, the celebrated namesake of the children he tutored from 1730 to 1741, became King of Jerusalem !⁵⁸

⁵⁴ The transcription of the ms issued by Chandon de Briailles in the 1900s (Lamoine, AQC 114 : 226) reads *loi* (law) instead of *loge* (lodge). Batham's translation (following Chevallier's transcription) has *lodge*, Lamoine's has *law*.

⁵⁵ II Kings 22 : 8 and II Chronicles 34 : 18.

⁵⁶ Claude Fleury (1640-1723), like Ramsay, was tutor of children of the highest nobility. First a tutor of the Princes of Conti, he was appointed in 1689 sub-preceptor of the dukes of Burgundy, of Anjou and of Berry, thus becoming intimately associated with Fénelon, their chief tutor. Member of the Académie Française, 1696, succeeding to La Bruyère. His *Histoire Ecclésiastique* was issued 1690-1720. He should not be mistaken for André Hercule, Cardinal de Fleury (1653-1743), former tutor of King Louis XV and his State Minister since 1726.

⁵⁷ Philostorgius was born about 368 at Borissus in Cappadocia Secunda but went at the age of twenty to Constantinople where he spent most of his life (Additional notice to the 2002 electronic edition of Philostorgius, taken from J. Quasten *Patrology*, vol. 3, p. 532). The *Ecclesiastical History* of Philostorgius was translated in English by Edward Walford in 1855 (Jones 1957-1972 : 126-127).

⁵⁸ Saint-Simon narrated with a touch of sadism and in great detail problems of the Bouillon family twenty years earlier as they tried without success to prove their ties with the Godfrey de Bouillon of the Crusades (*Mémoires*, vol. II, chapter 43 and vol. III, chapter 40, ed. Pléiade, 1949-1950).

PHILOSTORGIUS	CLAUDE FLEURY
When Julian bade the city of Jerusalem to be rebuilt in order to refute openly the predictions of our Lord concerning it ...	Julian, called the Apostate, ... having formed a plan to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem, to refute the prophecy of Daniel, & that of J. C.
... during the preparation of the foundations, one of the stones which was placed at the lowest part of the base, suddenly started from its place and opened the door of a certain cave hollowed out in the rock.	While working on the foundations, a stone from the first row became dislodged & uncovered the opening of a cavern hewn in the rock.
... persons were appointed to investigate the matter, who ... let down one of their workmen by means of a rope. On being lowered down	A Workman was lowered, attached to a cord ;
he found stagnant water reaching up to his knees;	& when he was in the Cavern, he felt water half-way up to his legs.
and, having gone round the place and felt the walls on every side...	He explored with his hands in all directions,
... he struck his foot against a column which stood slightly rising upon the water...	& upon a column which rose just above the water,
he found lying upon it a book wrapped up in a very fine and thin linen cloth.	he found a Book wrapped in a very fine linen.
... he gave a signal to his companions to draw him up again.	He took it & gave the signal to be drawn up.
... he showed them the book, which struck them all with astonishment, especially because it appeared so new and fresh, considering the place where it had been found.	All who saw the Book were surprised that it had not been spoilt.
This book, which appeared such a mighty prodigy in the eyes of both heathens and Jews,	But the astonishment was even greater, particularly among the Pagans & Jews,
as soon as it was opened shows the following words in large letters : " In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God...	when having opened it, they read, first of all, in large Letters, the words, In the beginning was the Word, & the Word was with God :
In fact, that volume contained that entire Gospel.	& the rest, because this was the complete Gospel of St. John.

COMPARISON BETWEEN PHILOSTORGIUS' AND CLAUDE FLEURY'S *ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORIES*

Remarkably, the above words of Claude Fleury – not those of Ramsay ! - were fully quoted ten years later in two French exposures : *La désolation des entrepreneurs modernes* and *Nouveau Catéchisme des Francs-Maçons* with an accurate reference to the source, namely 'Hist. Eccle. de M. de Fleury. T. quatrième, L. quinzième, pag. 90'.⁵⁹

Now begins the last part of the *Discours* :

in the times of the holy wars in Palestina, several princes, lords and artists associated,⁶⁰ swore to reestablish the temples of the christians in the Holy Land and to use their science and their goods to bring back architecture to its pristine institution, they recalled all the ancient signs and mysterious words of Solomon in order to distinguish themselves from the Infidels and make themselves known to each other.

[...] united closely with [...] ⁶¹

Ever since then, our Lodges in all countries were called of St John. This union was accomplished after the example set by the Israelites when they rebuilt the second temple. While some handled trowel and compasses, others defended them with sword and buckler.⁶² ...

Prince Edward ⁶³ brought back all his masonic brethren and this colony of adepts settled in England. Having ascended the throne, he declared himself grand master of the Order [...] and from that time our brotherhood took the name *francs masons*. Since then, Great Britain became the seat of the secret science, the keeper of our dogmas and the depositary of all our secrets. From the British Isles, the ancient science begins to pass into France. The wittiest ⁶⁴ nation in Europe will become the centre of the Order ... the basis of which is wisdom, strength and the beauty of genius. It is in our lodges in the future that without travelling, the French will be able to see, as in a miniature, the distinctive marks of all nations ; and it is here that Foreigners will experience that France is the true native country of all mankind.

Because some words are unreadable in the manuscript, the contents of these paragraphs are commented below together with their counterpart of the printed version.

THE PRINTED VERSION, CHANGES AND ADDITIONS

The general plan remains identical in both versions though with considerable difference in length of the three parts and many modifications.

Changes in the first part are as follows :

- q The requested qualities to enter the Order are four instead of three, *a pure moral* is added.
- q Introduction of the famous words, *our ancestors, the Crusaders*, and of the three classes : *Novices or Apprentices, Fellow Crafts or Professant*,⁶⁵ *Masters or Perfect*.

⁵⁹ About these two exposures, see Bernheim 1994. The Fleury quote stays pp. 31-32 of *La désolation des entrepreneurs modernes* (1747) and of the *Nouveau Catéchisme* (1749) as a foot-note. (English translation in Carr 1971 : 332).

⁶⁰ I am unable to render in English the idea conveyed by the French words *entrèrent en société*. The expression *entrer en* is mostly used in *entrer en religion*, entering a religious order.

⁶¹ Words unreadable in the ms.

⁶² A variation of *Nehemiah* IV : 17-18 ?

⁶³ Prince Edward actually attempted to take part in the eighth and last Crusade but arrived somewhat late in Acre, May 1271. See the remark by Chetwode Crawley (*AQC* 23 : 61, note 2) : « Ramsay's reference to St. John's Lodges and King Edward III. [*sic* ! read : Edward I.] of England recalls the *Collection... of the Daily Journal... London, Second Edition, 1731. »*

⁶⁴ *Spirituel*, translated as spiritual by both Batham and Lamoine.

⁶⁵ Since the XIIth C. the original meaning of the French word *Profès* is someone who takes vows in a religious Order. Batham translated : *Professed Brothers*, Lamoine : *Professed ones*. I found *Professant* in the Webster. The three classes are identical with those of *l'Ordre de la Cognée* whose degrees were the following : « the novice (termed once apprentice), the professant [in French : *le profès*, the same word as that used by Ramsay] and the perfect » (Robert Amadou, *Renaissance Traditionnelle* 57, 1984, p. 3. See *ibid*, p. 13, Amadou's comments about the word *Profès*). The oldest attested manifestation of this little-known and most interesting Order is 1743.

- q *Mysteries* are now termed *secrets* and described as *mots de guerre* (watch words) which the *Crusaders* gave one another to protect themselves from the surprises of the *Saracens*⁶⁶ who often crept in to cut their throats.
- q The feasts celebrated in Eleusis, Greece and Egypt, formerly described as *none other than lodges of our initiated members*, are now said to be only *related to our own feasts*. They degenerated into debauchery, not because wise principles were abandoned (ms version) but for the reason that *persons of both sexes* were therein admitted, which explains why *women are [nowadays] banned from our Order*.
- q Mathematics are not mentioned any more in the paragraph devoted to the liberal arts. They are replaced with the statement that *Grand Masters in Germany, England, Italy and elsewhere [...]* exhort all learned men to unite in order to supply the material for a *Universal Dictionary, a work already begun in London*.
- q Accordingly, *the name Franc-maçon must not be taken in a material, literal sense as if our Founders had been mere craftsmen in stone... They were not only clever Architects building outdoor Temples, but religious and martial Princes as well who intended to enlighten, erect and shelter the living Temples of the Most High*.

The 800 words of the second part (the ancient traditions of the Order's history and the recovery of the original code of the masonic Order written by Solomon) have disappeared entirely. Those who ascribe the origins of our institution to Solomon, Noah, Enoch or even Adam are discarded in a single sentence : *Though not claiming to deny such origins, I shall pass on to matters less ancient*.

Now begins the third part, the history of the Order, allegedly found among other sources by Ramsay *in the living tradition of the English nation*.

In the times of the Crusades in Palestina, several Princes, Lords and citizens associated and swore to reestablish the Temples of the Christians in the Holy land and to devote themselves to bring architecture back to its pristine institution. They agreed upon several ancient signs and symbolical words drawn from the fund of religion in order make themselves known to each other when amongst the Infidels and the Saracens. [...]

Some time later, our Order united intimately with the Knights of St John of Jerusalem. Ever since then, our Lodges in all countries were called of St John. This union was accomplished after the example set by the Israelites when they erected the second Temple. While they handled the trowel and mortar in one hand, they carried the sword and buckler in the other.

Words unreadable In the manuscript version prevented us to ascertain if the Knights of St John of Jerusalem were already introduced there or if they come now in the printed one as a novelty – which I do not believe –, but in any case the idea was by no means an invention of Ramsay !

St. John of Jerusalem used as another name of King Solomon's Temple and for that of a Knight's Order stays in *A Letter from the Grand Mistress of the Female Free-Masons to Mr. Harding the Printer*,⁶⁷ a masonic pamphlet, originally printed in 1724 in Dublin where it was reprinted in 1730 :

⁶⁶ A name given to the Muslims in the Middle Ages.

⁶⁷ Facsimile in Lepper and Crossle 1925 : 449, 451-462. Lantoine already noticed in 1927 that 'the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem' were mentioned in the pamphlet but thought it was printed in 1731 (Lantoine 1927 : 127). Batham wrote " « There is, in fact [!], an even earlier reference as Kloss quotes a document of 1718... of which Baron de Tschoudy was probably the author, in which not only is the theory of the Crusader origin advanced, but also the claim that Richard Coeur de Lion was the founder » (Batham 1968 : 289). Batham fully misquoted exact indications given in Chevallier 1964 : 15, and besides was not aware that Tschoudy was born in 1724. About the text quoted in Kloss I : 72-74, see Schröder 1806, I : 182 ff., Schiffmann 1882 : 151 & 158 and Begemann 1906 : 50 ff.

The Branch of the *Lodge of Solomon's Temple*, afterwards call'd the *Lodge of St. John of Jerusalem* on which our Guardian ⁶⁸ fortunately hit, is as I can easily prove, the Antientest and Purest now on Earth : The famous old *Scotish Lodge of Killwinin* of which all the Kings of *Scotland* have been from Time to Time Grand Masters without Interruption, down from the Days of *Fergus*, who Reign'd there more than 2000 Years ago, long before the Knights of *St. John of Jerusalem* or the Knights of *Maltha*, to which two *Lodges* I must nevertheless allow the Honour of having adorn'd the Antient *Jewish* and *Pagan Masonry* with many Religious and Christian Rules.

Scotland, a word not mentioned once in the manuscript version, appears four times in the next paragraph and becomes *the seat of the secret science*. Ramsay introduces here as well – and why shouldn't he ? - the Kilwinning lodge of the Irish pamphlet :

At the time of the last Crusades, several lodges were already erected in Germany, Italy, Spain, France and from thence, in Scotland, because of the close alliance between the French and the Scots. James, Lord Steward of Scotland, was Grand Master of a Lodge established in Kilwin in the West of Scotland in the year 1286, shortly after the demise of Alexander III., King of Scotland, and one year before John Baliol ascended the throne. This Lord made the Earls of Gloucester and Ulster Masons in his Lodge, the one English, the other Irish.⁶⁹

Little by little, our Lodges and solemnities were neglected in most places. Which is the reasons why, out of so many historians, those of Great Britain are the only ones who speak about our Order. It was however preserved in its splendour among the Scots entrusted by the Kings (of France) with the safeguard of their sacred persons during many centuries.

After *Prince Edward declared himself Protector* – not Grand Master as in the ms version – of the Order, comes a new paragraph devoted to

The fatal religious discords which set Europe afire ⁷⁰ and tore it apart in the sixteenth century caused our Order to degenerate from the nobility of its origin. Many of our rites were changed, disguised, suppressed... Several of our Brethren, like the ancient Jews, forgot the spirit of our Laws and retained but its Letter and its bark. Some remedies have been started of late. What now matters is to keep on and bring the whole at last back to its original condition.

The *Discours* ends on lines similar to those of the ms version with the addition of a couple flattering sentences for the King and his State Minister, Cardinal Fleury.

TWO LETTERS WRITTEN BY RAMSAY IN 1737

We shall see now, with the help of a letter written a few weeks after the Grand Lodge meeting was cancelled – which is the last contemporary document of Ramsay as a Mason - , what was on his mind when he wrote the paragraph last quoted above.

This essential new piece of evidence came to light in 1963. when François Weil published a hitherto unknown letter written by Ramsay to the Marquis of Caumont ⁷¹ in Avignon, April 16, 1737, which includes many words and sentences closely resembling, and sometimes identical with, the printed version of the *Discours*. Their differences show what Ramsay chose not to express publicly.

⁶⁸ Described at the beginning of the pamphlet as « A Gentleman... who has... form'd us into a *Lodge*, and whom we therefore call our Guardian ».

⁶⁹ Words quoted and commented upon as « inadmissible as a historical fact » in Murray Lyon 52.

⁷⁰ The word *embarassèrent* (embarrassed) of the earliest printed version is a very old misprint for *embrasèrent* (set afire) which was overtaken in all later ones. In the letter from April 16, 1737, quoted below : *embrazerent*.

⁷¹ François Weil found the letter in the Wellcome Medical Library, London, within a Ramsay file and further ones in the musée Calvet in Avignon. In a letter from November 22, 1733, to a M. Brossette, Voltaire wrote about Caumont : « c'est un homme qui, comme vous, aime les lettres, et que le bon goût a fait sans doute votre ami ». See comments in Chevallier 1964 : 215 and Bernheim 1974 : 30-32.

Two and a half centuries before Professor David Stevenson, Ramsay stated that Freemasonry had come down from Scotland to England :

John, Lord Stewart or Grand Master of the House of the King of Scotland, brought our science from the Holy Land in 1286 and established a lodge at Kilwinn in Scotland in which he received as *freemaçons* the Earls of Gloucester and Ulster. Since that time, the old Kingdom and intimate ally of France was the depository of our secrets, the Center of the order and the conservator of our laws. From Scotland, our society spread in England, under the great Prince Edward, son of Henry III.

And directly following the previous words, Ramsay expressed his true inner political and masonic leanings :

The baneful religious discords which set Europe afire ⁷² and tore it apart in the sixteenth century caused our order to degenerate from the greatness and nobility of its origin. In order to satisfy the parricidal usurper Elizabeth who looked upon our lodges as so many nests of Catholicism which must be suppressed,⁷³ the Protestants altered, disguised and degraded many of our hieroglyphs, stamped our brotherly meals as Bacchanals, and polluted our sacred assemblies. Mylord Earl of Detwentwater, martyr of Royalty and of Catholicism, attempted to bring everything here back to its origin and to restore everything upon its ancient footing. The ambassadors of the Netherlands and of George Duke of Hannover ⁷⁴ took offence, and blaspheming against what they ignored, assuming that the catholic, royalist and Jacobite freemasons resembled the heretical, apostate and republican freemasons, they blamed us first, and then sung our praises by screaming everywhere that we intended to undertake a ninth Crusade in order to re-establish the true monarch of Great Britain. Our assemblies at the head of which Louis XV intended to declare himself have been suspended for a while. That storm will only help to separate the wheat from the chaff but finally virtue and truth will triumph under the reign of the most loveable of all Kings [...].

Another document, also discovered by Françoise Weil, adds a further interesting touch. In a letter from August 2, 1737,⁷⁵ Ramsay wrote to the well-known Jacobite Carte :

you have no doubt heard of the rumours our French Free Masons made. I was the orator and had great views, if the Card. ⁷⁶ had not wrote to me to forbear. I sent my discourse made at the acception at different times of eight dukes and peers and two hundred officers of the first rank and highest nobility to his grace the duke of Ormond. George Kelly is to translate it and send it to M. Bettenham to be printed. You'll[] see there my general views for learning but my particular views for the good of our country, I'll tell you when at meeting. If the Card. had deferred one month longer, I was to have gone to the 'merite' to harangue the king of France as head of the confraternity and to have initiated His Majesty into our sacred mysteries.⁷⁷

⁷² See note 70.

⁷³ A reminiscence of Anderson's *The Constitutions of the Freemasons* 1723 : 38.

⁷⁴ Meaning King George III. Since August 1730, the British Ambassador in Paris was James, 1st Earl of Waldegrave, a grandson of James II by Arabella Churchill. In 1721, Waldegrave is listed as a member of the Goose and Gridiron Lodge (Harry Rylands, *Records of the Lodge of Antiquity No.2*, I : 25) and in 1723-1725, as belonging to the Horn Lodge in London in which both Montesquieu and Ramsay were made masons in 1730 at a few weeks' distance. In April 1728, Montesquieu and Waldegrave travelled together from Paris to Vienna where Waldegrave was Ambassador. Both were present when lodges were held in Paris at the Duchess of Portsmouth's house in 1734 and 1735. Waldegrave « had been requested by the Duke of Newcastle [England's Premier Minister] to keep a vigilant eye on... the Jacobites in Paris » (see W.K. Firminger, *AQC* 48 : 114-115 & Wilfrid G. Fisher, *AQC* 76 : 56-57) The Dutch Ambassador was M. de Van Hoey (Duc de Luynes' *Mémoires*, March 18, 1737, quoted in Luquet 1963 : 154.

⁷⁵ A Jacobite agent living in France under the name of Philipps. See F. J. McLynn, *France and the Jacobite Rising of 1745* (1981).

⁷⁶ Read : Cardinal [Fleury].

⁷⁷ Original English text. Bodleian Library (Oxford), Carte 226, f° 398 (Weil 1963 : 1789).

DID RAMSAY DELIVER 'A' *DISCOURS* IN MARCH 1737 ?

As far as documents bear testimony, the answer to that question is negative. I showed why five years ago :⁷⁸

- q According to Luynes' *Mémoires*, under date March 18, 1737, Cardinal Fleury had on the previous day instructed the *Lieutenant Général de Police* Hérault that 'no further meetings of Freemasons were to be held'.
- q Being away in the country, Ramsay was not aware of Hérault's instructions when he wrote in a first (undated) letter to Cardinal Fleury : « *Comme je dois lire mon discours demain dans une assemblée Generale de l'ordre, & le donner lundy matin aux examinateurs de la Chancellerie...* ».⁷⁹
- q As soon as Ramsay returned to Paris and heard the news, he quickly wrote a second letter dated March 22 (Friday), telling the Cardinal he had « *just learned that masonic assemblies displease His Excellency* ».
- q What about the General Assembly said to be held the next day in Ramsay's first letter⁸⁰ ? The key to the riddle lies in the Minute-Book of the Coustos' lodge.⁸¹ On March 23 (Saturday), the lodge held an extraordinary meeting '*to discuss proposals to be submitted to-morrow, 24th of the present month, to the Grand Lodge*'. Coustos' lodge met again the next day, March 24, and during that meeting a letter of the Grand Master [Derwentwater] was read, in which he moved (likely in consequence of Hérault's instructions of the previous week)

to postpone the meeting of Grand Lodge because of certain circumstances (*conjunctures*) which shall not be stated (*déduites*). Enough to say that the free-masons are threatened not to have the freedom to hold meetings any more.

Accordingly, it appears more than likely that the text Ramsay sent to Cardinal Fleury was not delivered at all in 1737, since the Grand Lodge meeting was postponed on March 24 and, as far as we know, no further one was held that year.

In any case, we ignore which version of his *Discours* Ramsay sent to the Cardinal.⁸² A version of the *Discours* may have been delivered in 1740 by the French Grand Master in Grand Lodge, as stated two years later by La Tierce (see Bibliography), but no further extant document corroborates his assertion.

DID RAMSAY INVENT ANY DEGREE AT ALL ?

For the past two hundred years, many commentators charged Ramsay with inventing additional degrees (including the Royal Arch) as well as a 'Ramsay's rite' which, they say, he tried – without success – to introduce in London in 1728.

The latter absurdity originated in a manuscript *History of Freemasonry* written by Fessler in 1802.⁸³ According to Fessler, to the existing three English Craft degrees Ramsay added that of Knight of St Andrews of the Thistle, which already existed since the time James II. was in

⁷⁸ Bernheim 1997 : 9-10.

⁷⁹ In English: « Since I ought to read my oration to-morrow in a General assembly of the order and hand it over Monday to the Chancery's examiners... ». At the head of the letter stays '20 mars' (see the following note).

⁸⁰ Both letters were first published by Lemontey (*Histoire de la Régence et de la Minorité de Louis XV*, 1832, II : 292 ff.), then reproduced in Daruty 1879 : 287-288. On the first one, transcribed in Lantoine 1927 : 120 and reproduced in facsimile in Lantoine 1930 between pp. 40-41, one can notice that the date 20 mars is not in the same handwriting as the letter and was likely added by the secretary of the Cardinal. *Demain* (to-morrow) doesn't make sense, as showed below. Facsimile of the second letter also in Lantoine, facing p. 49. English translation of both letters in all editions of Gould.

⁸¹ See note 37.

⁸² An unsigned paragraph preceding Lamoine's paper states : « There exist several printed and MSS versions of this text because Ramsay re-wrote it in order to have it approved by Cardinal de Fleury, the acting Prime Minister of the time » (AQC 114: 226). A similar sentence is included in the paper on the same page. It is repeated p. 233 with the addition of the word 'obviously'.

⁸³ It is quoted and discussed in Schiffmann 1878 : 54 ff and Schiffmann 1882 : 7-13.

France, and grafted thereupon the three degrees worked in the Chapter of Clermont. Ramsay presented his reform to both the English and the French Grand Masters.

Thory, familiar with Fesslers History,⁸⁴ embellished the above in his *Acta Latomorum* and wrote without blushing :

In that year [1728], the Scottish Knight Baronet Ramsay laid in London the foundations of a new Masonry which, according to him, originated in the Crusades and whose invention he ascribed to Godfrey of Bouillon. He asserted that the St Andrews Lodge in Edinburgh was the head of the true Order of the Freemasons who were the scions of the knights of the Crusades. He conferred three degrees : the Ecosais, the Novice and the Knight of the Temple. Ramsay preaches a reform based on his discovery ; this doctrine is rejected.⁸⁵

Many credulous historians recopied Thory. Gould, who was familiar with Schiffmann's study on Ramsay, realized the claim was absurd.⁸⁶

However it was still alive and growing in the middle of the 20th century. While preparing his biography of Ramsay, Henderson « had the privilege of consulting Dudley Wright⁸⁷ » on masonic matters and became the following answer :

There were nine degrees in Ramsay's system. The first four comprehended Symbolic Masonry and formed the first Chapter. The second Chapter was composed of four further degrees and constituted what was called the Masonry of the Crusades. The third Chapter consisted of those who had been admitted to the ninth or highest degree, known as the Secrets of Scientific masonry. The three Chapters or Lodges were united into a Consistory...⁸⁸

A WILD GUESS BY WAY OF A CONCLUSION

It seems to me that Ramsay's life, what he did and chose not to do, what he thought and chose not to write, can be summarized in a few words : he was a true Jacobite, poor⁸⁹ and, most of all, dependent on the good will of various groups of persons – French aristocrats, Stuart exiles, Freemasons of different origins - whose opinions were different. And he needed them all.

Since we know nothing of Ramsay's masonic activities between 1730 (his initiation in London) and December 1736 - the notes taken by Geusau in 1741 during his conversations with Ramsay, as reported by Büsching, might have proven a help ; however they include many inaccuracies and it is hardly possible to use them as a reliable source⁹⁰ -, guesses are our last resort in order to try and understand Ramsay's behaviour.

⁸⁴ Thory 1815 II : 320.

⁸⁵ Thory 1815 I : 23.

⁸⁶ « I do not believe that this speech first *suggested* additional degrees... If any persons assert that he was the concoctor of a new rite of seven degrees, the *onus* of proving anything so wildly improbable rests entirely upon themselves. » (Gould 1886, III : 79, note 4 & 91).

⁸⁷ Henderson 1952 : 170. Dudley Wright is responsible for the first revision of Gould's *History of Freemasonry*, five volumes, issued in 1931 (according to Hewitt, *AQC* 85 : 66) or in 1933 (according to Hugo Tatsch, *AQC* 46 : 457). He is described on the Web as « a prolific British author and folklorist who wrote several works on ancient religions, Freemasonry, and legends. His work in the area of vampirology remains important to this day ».

⁸⁸ Besides, one reads in both 'revised' editions of Gould : « In 1737 [...] he delivered an oration, which has made his name famous in the annals of the Craft. This was published afterwards as the *Relation Apologique et historique de la Société des F. M.* » (Gould-Wright III : 8 & Gould-Poole 1951, IV : 179), which is pure nonsense but fooled at least one unexperienced American scholar (See Bernheim 1997).

⁸⁹ « I should be sorry if my health do not recover to have my dear Nerina [his wife] overcharged with debts, which I contracted these five years past by the excessive dearth of all necessaries, the vexatary impositions, the extravagant expenses of living at a pompous court, the death of my father in law Sir David Nairne, the infidelity of professing friends, and the diminution of my income by all these circumstances and events.» (letter from August 145, 1742, to Dr Stevenson, University Library of Edinburgh, La. 11 301/2, quoted in Chevallier 1968: 191-2).

⁹⁰ Ramsay is said to have stayed « five trimesters » at James' Court, while he remained in Rome from February to November 1724 ; his wife to have been thirty years old when they married, whereas

Although made a Mason in London, Ramsay is not recorded among those present when the Duke of Richmond held a Lodge in Paris at his mother's house in September 1734 nor when he held another one together with Desaguliers a year later, whereas Montesquieu attended on both occasions. Was Ramsay not invited ? Did he choose not to go ? Was he, at that time, already reading his *Discours made at the acception at different times of eight dukes and peers and two hundred officers of the first rank and highest nobility* ? We have no way to know.

What we know is that the printed version is extremely different from the manuscript one. So different indeed that I presume it might have been written as a consequence of the election of Derwentwater as Grand Master in France and likely under his influence.

If – but this is a very big if – if Ramsay was an early or even a founding member of the *Louis d'Argent*⁹¹ at the time it was warranted by the *premier* Grand Lodge in Paris, that is, two years after Ramsay was made a Mason in Richmond's lodge in London, it might explain why he did not keep the Gospel of St John as the book recovered in the foundations of Solomon's Temple in his *Discours*. The book upon which Masons took the oath in England was the Bible. In French lodges, at least since 1736-1737, it was St. John's Gospel.⁹²

If – again 'if' – he decided to come closer to the Grand Master's Lodge after Derwentwater was elected, it might explain some if not most of the changes between the two versions.

It is well to remember that the 1st article of the French *Charges* – in the 1735-1736 version – said : *But though in past centuries, masons were charged to be of the religion of the land where they lived, yet it is thought lately more expedient only to oblige them to that religion in which all Christians agree, leaving their particular opinions to themselves [...]*, whereas under Derwentwater it became worded thus : *in past centuries, masons were charged to profess the Roman Catholic religion, yet, lately, they are not asked about their particular opinions on the subject, inasmuch as however they are Christians [...]*.

Would it be too far-fetched to read Ramsay as the author of a true story behind which recent events were told as legends of the past ? Should we dare translate *At the time of the last Crusades* with : *A few years after the 1715', take James, Lord Steward of Scotland made the Earls of Gloucester and Ulster Masons in his Lodge, the one English, the other Irish* as meaning : Hector McLean made James Earl of Derwentwater and O'Heguerty (who were English and Irish) Masons in his Lodge ?⁹³

Could it explain why Ramsay wrote : *the Protestants altered, disguised and degraded many of our hieroglyphs,... and polluted our sacred assemblies. Mylord Earl of Detwentwater, martyr of Royalty and of Catholicism, attempted to bring everything here back to its origin and to restore everything upon its ancient footing* ?

And wouldn't Ramsay's *Discours* make sense then ?

Alain Bernheim

she was thirty-four ; the cancelled French Grand Lodge meeting of March is termed « a general assembly of the brotherhood from all nations ».

⁹¹ Absolutely nothing is known about that lodge before 1737.

⁹² In the oldest-known French catechism (*Reception d'un frey-maçon*, 1736) : « the Candidate is led... face to face with the Grand Master, who is at the upper end, behind an Armchair, on which the Gospel of St. John has been placed ». In 1737, a French police report mentions that the oath is taken on the Gospel of St John (Chevallier 1968 : 56). In 1745, the French police raided a lodge at work and found among other things on a table a book mostly consisting of empty white pages. On one of the few written ones was the beginning of St John's Gospel (Chevallier 1964 : 125).

⁹³ According to Lalande, the three founders of Freemasonry in France.

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PRINTED VERSIONS OF THE DISCOURS UNDER TWO DIFFERENT TITLES

1. *Discours prononcé à la réception des frée-maçons. par Mr. de Ramsay, Grand-Orateur de l'Ordre.*

§ *Lettres de M. de V***.*

- 1738. First ed. (pp. 47-70). Fully q. in Lantoine 1930 : 18-23. Facs title-page *ibid.* : 16.
- 1739. (pp. 47-74).⁵
- 1744. Partly q. in Chevallier 1964 : 149 & Chevallier 1968 : 138. Includes the following sentence which is not in both previous editions : « *Notre Grand Maître, dont les qualités respectables surpassent encore la naissance distinguée, veut qu'on rapelle tout à sa première institution, dans un País où la religion et l'Etat ne peuvent que favoriser nos loix.* ». The sentence stays in the Toulouse ms translated by Lamoine.⁶
- 1757. Original French fully q. in Lenning-Mossdorf III : 194-200 (partly different from earlier editions).

¹ Besides the Épernay ms, Jacques Légliſe mentions three further ms copies: two in Toulouse (ms 932 & 1213) and one at Lyons (ms 761 [679]). The latter was mentioned by Lantoine as well as a further one in Rouen (Lantoine 1930 : 41). Daruty 286 cites another ms copy after *Hermès* 339 entitled 'Discours prononcé à la réception des Ff.: Maç.: par M. de Ramsay, Gr.: Or.: de l'Ordre' whereas the title given for it in Fesch 738 is : 'Discours du F.: Ramsay, prononcé en 5740'.

English translations of the Épernay ms by Cyril Batham in *AQC* 81 (1968); by Georges Lamoine in *AQC* 114 (2001) who names it T1. Lamoine also translated one of the the ms versions extant in the Bibliothèque municipale of Toulouse (ms 1213), termed by him T2.

The presence of ms copies in Toulouse could well be related to the founding of an Irish Lodge in that same town, February 2, 1741, by *Richard de Barnaval, son of my Lord Trimleston, peer of the Kingdom of Ireland* (Crossle 1928 : 91). He and his elder brother John were naturalized French in 1745 and 1746. Richard married Frances, sister of the Irish Grand Master, Henry Benedict, 4th Viscount Kingsland. Richard's sister Bridget married Brigadier General Christopher Nugent (Jean-Pierre Lassalle, 'Les Barnewal de Trimleston', *Cahiers de la Grande Loge Provinciale d'Occitanie*, N° 1, 1985), eldest son of Thomas, 4th Earl of Westmeath (Firminger, *AQC* 48 : 105-106). Thomas Nugent, the 6th Earl, was Irish Grand Master 1763 and 1764 (Heron & Lepper 1925 : 190).

² Title after Légliſe I : 29. Title not given in French in Lamoine 2002.

³ All three manuscript sources discovered by Françoise Weil (Weil 1963 : 272-3).

⁴ Reference in Légliſe II : 7. Also see Chevallier 1964 : 133, note 2 ; Henderson 1952 : 1.

⁵ According to Begemann 1906 (pp. 34 & 82), this 1739 ed. is identical with the 1738 one.

⁶ See note 1 of this bibliography.

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⁸ Mentioned in Gaston Martin 1932 : 17 and Lantoine 1930 : 40. Quoted in Gaston Martin 33-35 under the title 'Discours Qui se prononce à la réception des *Free-Masons*'. I own a photocopy of the title-page and of pages 152-257 of this rare print. The last sentences of the *Discours* stay on pp. 152-153.

⁹ Mentioned in Daruty 286 & van der Schelden 136n.

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