



Provincial Grand Chapter of Warwickshire

The Grand Originals

Those Provinces who use the 'Warwickshire' Ritual or 'Aldersgate' Ritual, or variations of it, will be familiar with the rather strange and sadly unexplained dialogue between the First Principal and the Principal Sojourner read at the Festive Board and ending: "Let us drink to the pious memory of those Three Grand Originals."

The Grand Originals, of course, refer to the three Original Grand Lodges - the first, held by Moses, Aholiab and Bezaleel in the portable Tabernacle in the wilderness of Sinai after the Exodus. The second, in Solomon's Temple on the Holy Mount Moriah where Solomon, Hiram of Tyre and Hiram Abiff presided and the third, in Zerubbabel's Temple, at Jerusalem, after the Hebrews return from their captivity in Babylon, when Zerubbabel, Haggai and Joshua the son of Josedech, the High Priest presided.

But where does all this come from and why is it delivered at the Festive Board?

In Cana Chapter in Colne, Lancashire which was constituted in May 1769 and is the oldest surviving warranted Chapter under the English Constitution the exaltation ceremony is conducted similarly to other Chapters, having been subjected to the mandatory changes by the introduction of the 'new' ritual after the 1834 revision. However, the opening and closing are quite different to the 'norm' and claim to be as the 'original' workings.

After the opening, which before 1834 would have been carried out in private by the Three Principals, there continues a dialog between Z and each of the Officers, who give an explanation of their position and duties similar to the opening of a Craft Lodge. Incidentally, the 2nd Assistant Sojourner acts as 'Inner Guard' !

Surprisingly, the dialogue for the closing, after establishing, via the Sojourners, that the Chapter is properly guarded, proceeds as follows:

Z: "Companion 2nd AS - Where was the first or Holy Lodge held?" the questions which follow are directed to and answered by the Sojourners in turn using exactly the same words as the 'Aldersgate' dialog but, ending with Z stating: "**Let us return thanks to the Great 'I Am' in prayer.**" A prayer is given by Joshua, which is followed by further questions and answers:

Z – "Comp Scribe E - What is the last care of all RA Masons?"

S.E.: "To close the VSL after renewing our obligations as to the ineffable word of this Supreme

Degree, Most Excellent."

Z – "Then let that sacred duty be done in the Antient and prescribed form."

Z, H & J and all the Companions present form separate groups of three and share the word, after which, the **S.E. states: "M.E. the Companions have shared the word and saluted the VSL"** (it being previously held by the S.E. for all to kiss in turn). The Sacred Volume is now closed.

Note: As all present form 3's to close the Chapter - The words "We ALL do meet and agree" are appropriate, as opposed to "We three do meet and agree" at the Opening.

The Closing is then completed in a similar manner as current practice.

Therefore, the mysterious explanation of "The Grand Originals" at the Festive Board, was probably once a normal part of the ritual used at the closing of the Chapter. It must have been removed from the actual

working by the 1834 (mandatory) revision! However, it has been retained by those who follow the 'Warwickshire' or "Aldersgate" procedure, by its delivery outside the Chapter in the Festive Board as a reminder of how it used to be.

The use of 18th century words like 'holden' instead of the modern 'held' should be a clue that the text is from an earlier time.

It would appear that reference to the Grand Originals was removed from the ritual at the time of the 1834 (drastic) revision but is preserved by those who use the Warwickshire and Aldersgate versions (in particular) and is delivered (without any explanation) at the Festive Board, whilst Cana Chapter still retain it in their original closing ritual.

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