



Provincial Grand Chapter of Warwickshire

The Passwords

Q. Where did the words A.. R.... come from and why were they chosen for use in the Royal Arch ?

A. The words come from the Book of Hosea, chapter 2 , verse 1. It is doubtful if anyone can give an authoritative answer as to why they were chose for use in the Royal Arch. My somewhat tentative suggestion is that the words are meant to remind us of our duty towards God.

The compilers of our ritual were devout men. Although the events around which that ritual is woven come from the Old Testament, it has to be remembered that such events are used as seen through the eyes of a Christian, reflecting the aphorism of St Augustine of Hippo, namely 'The New Testament is hidden in the Old, and the Old is manifest in the New.' I illustrate this by a quotation from a Christian Bible Commentary on the Book of Hosea:

The people of Israel had turned away from God and gone after foreign gods as a wife who goes astray. In order that the people may realize the hideousness of their behaviour, the prophet is to marry a woman of disreputable character and thus excite a feeling of horror in their insensible hearts. Obeying God's command, Hosea married Gomer.... Times without number God had shown mercy to his people; but there is a limit to God's mercy and that limit had been reached. God will however, have mercy on the house of Judah ... that is the Davidic dynasty, which will never be permanently cut off. As a political power it will be overthrown but a time will come when, through the assistance of God and without military help, it will be restored to its former, and even to a brighter splendour.

The perspective is obviously Messianic. The Royal Arch is a spiritual Order. The lessons to be derived from its ritual should remind us to return to the path of God, just as the Book of Hosea, from which our words come, reminds us of God's mercy and forgiveness.

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