

PUBLISHED IN MASONIC BULLETIN - BCY -JUNE 1948
EDITOR'S QUESTION BOX

By L. Healey, P.D.D.G.M.

A Brother from New Westminster writes: "I was raised in the American Work, but when undergoing an examination in a Canadian-Work Lodge I found that they required two substitutes for the Ancient Master's W . . . while I had only one. How do you account for this, or how does it come about that there should be such a difference on this important point?"

The answer to this, and to many similar questions concerning differences between the Canadian and the American work, is to be found in Masonic history and particularly in the record of the early years of the Grand Lodge of England formed at London in 1717. Though the years from about 1720 to 1750 were noted as a period of rapid growth and development and the extension of the Craft to various parts of the world, including the American Colonies, it was also a time during which there were many internal disputes and rivalries which caused serious dissension in the organization, and ultimately resulted in division of the Grand Lodge into two separate bodies known to later history as the "Ancients" and the "Moderns."

Many of these differences and disputes had their roots deep down in the political intrigues of the opposing factions that were a prominent feature of that somewhat disturbed period. In the newly formed Grand Lodge such leaders as Dr. Anderson, Dr. Desaguliers, the Duke of Montagu and the Earl of Dalkeith, staunch supporters of the recently established Hanoverian succession to the Throne of Gt. Britain in the person of George I, were obliged to contend with the pressure of Jacobite supporters such as the Duke of Wharton, et al, who disavowed any form of allegiance to the "wee German lairdie."

On occasions when the loyal toast was proposed they passed their wine over the glasses or jugs of water on the table, and by this gesture signified that they were drinking to "the King across the water" the exiled James. An examination of the contemporary history of the period, and the background of the Masonic leaders concerned, as well as the prompt recognition given to the dissenting body-the "Ancients" by the Grand Lodges of Scotland and Ireland will tend to confirm the belief that reactions from the disastrous defeat of the forces of the Young Pretender, Charles Stuart, at Culloden Moor in 1746, helped to widen as well as accelerate the division of Grand Lodge in 1751 into the two separate bodies which continued in bitter rivalry for more than sixty years. On the surface of Masonic affairs these disputes manifested themselves in certain irregularities in the making of Masons in subordinate Lodges, in refusal to comply with some rulings and instructions of the Grand Lodge, and in general to challenge its constitutional authority, with the result that a number of Lodges were suspended from the roll. In order to meet the situation arising through these irregularly made Masons visiting the regular Lodges, Grand Lodge made various changes and transpositions in the words and passwords of the three degrees, and this was one of the charges levelled at the Grand Lodge by the "Ancients" who claimed to continue the old workings unaltered.

During this period a number of Lodges had been chartered in the American Colonies, and during the subsequent years the Grand Lodge of the "Ancients" was particularly active in establishing many more up to 1776, when the War of Independence severed all

connection between the American Lodges and their parent bodies in the home lands. Towards the-end of the eighteenth century the shadow of Napoleon Bonaparte fell across Gt. Britain, and in the nation politically united to meet the menace of a common foe there was no place for a divided Freemasonry, especially when nearly all the causes of the division had been long forgotten. So in the year 1809 there was established a "Lodge of Promulgation" which resulted in the bringing together of the two opposing Grand Bodies in 1813 to form the United Grand Lodge of England as it is known today.

To cement this union many adjustments and compromises were necessary in connection with the ritual and work, including the return of the various words and passwords to their original context. Neither body was prepared to dispense with the word it had been using for so many years as the substitute for the Ancient Master's W . . . and to solve the problem it was agreed that both of them be retained. Thus in all the workings which have derived from the Grand Lodge of England since 1813, such as the Canadian, The Emulation, etc., the two words are continued.

In the meantime, following the Declaration of Independence of 1776, the Lodges in various American States of the Union formed their own Grand Lodges as sovereign bodies under which they carried on the form of work with its pass words and ceremonies to which they had been accustomed. Due to the feelings of that time they were not likely to hear much, or care a great deal, about the changes and adjustments which had been made in the Grand Lodge of England in 1813. And so the many differences so notable between the American and the other forms of work have continued down to the present day.

Ron Bushby, PM
Mt.St.Paul 109
Kamloops, B.C.
bushby@shaw.ca