Orangeism and Freemasonry

Paul J. Rich, George Mason University

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/paulrich/67/
The thesis I supervised related to Orangeism by Carlos Cruz is at
http://catarina.udlap.mx/u_dl_a/tales/documentos/lri/cruz_f_c/

in April 2010, years after this paper was delivered at
conferences, and after it was placed on the Commons, I
received a note asking me to remove the identity of authors
of an email in one of the notes –

Dear Bro Paul,
The Brother concerned here, Name Omitted, is
asking if it would be possible to either remove his
name from the document or substitute an alias in
some way.
It may be worth remembering that in the USA, there
is a more open attitude to Masonry than here in the
UK. There are many employers, mostly in the public
sector, where membership of a lodge can lead to an
uncomfortable situation if not dismissal.
This is why - rightly or wrongly - a lot of UK
Masons are reluctant to have their name bandied
about.
Again, thank you for your assurances .Name
Omitted

That I did (April 17, 2010) , as it did not effect the
article.
Masonry and Orangeism: More Fraternal and Less Vitriolic in a Changing Scene

Paul Rich

The Loyal Orange Institution or Orange Order originated in eighteenth-century Ireland and was profoundly influenced by Freemasonry, although the two movements in recent times have tried to distance themselves from each other. The Orange remains a highly secret, oath-bound, ritualistic movement which confers "degrees" which as in other fraternal orders are akin to plays in which the initiate is a major player. Passwords, signs of identification, and promises of brotherhood upon pain of draconian penalties are all reminiscent of Masonry.

The growing reconciliation between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland has profoundly changed Orangeism: the Irish Republic is giving money to restore historic lodge halls in its territory, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board is helping identify Orange sites and publicize Orange demonstrations as “festivals”, and the orange brethren are starting to look more and more like members of a fraternity rather than a strident political movement.

Orangeism is closely identified with Protestantism and the British Crown. Its use of ritual to sustain political legitimacy is one of many instances. For example, in England, "...the nation is endowed with functionaries who act as a kind of priesthood. Thus the schoolmaster becomes a transmitter of historical
lore; the Royal Family have a high papal-type role; the military too are ritual practitioners; even sporting outfits play some role in transmitting national values and glory."

iv In the United States, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, and elsewhere, the Masons of course have perpetuated the idea that they are a source of democratic values.v

It is then no wonder the Protestant leaders in Ulster long wrapped themselves in Orange aprons. The Orange Order dominate politics in the province, supporting the monarchy but also supporting Protestant economic dominance.vi In this context, Hobsbawm’s definition of invented tradition is useful: “‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”vii What the consequences of such myth-spinning and ritualizing are in the case of a secret ritualistic society like the Orange are closely related to the question of the popular perception of its power.viii

In an era before the phrase “networking” became popular, in Northern Ireland and hence vastly controversial.ix

Critics of the Orange such as civil rights activist Flonnbarra O Dochartaigh have compared it to the Ku Klux Klan: "We viewed (the Orange Order) as similar to the KKK -- so bare-faced and confident enough in the bigoted status quo they wore bowler hats and sashes rather than white robes and pointed hoods."x There is some similarity, as Brian
Dolley writes:

“...the two organizations shared obvious similarities, not least an active hostility to Catholicism. Members of both organizations also paraded in bizarre costumes, the Klan in its trademark white hoods and sheets, the Orange Order in bowler hats and flamboyantly-coloured sashes. While Klan leaders went by names like Imperial Wizard or Grand Goblin, Orange Order leaders were known by the slightly less exotic title of Worshipful Master, or were elevated to become members of the elite Royal Black Preceptory. The appeal of the Orange to the Ulster Protestant population (it has its women's and youth auxiliaries) has undoubtedly rested partly in its mystery and secrecy.”

If the Orange had been confined to being a lobby for the continued Protestant ascendancy in Ulster, and if its members met openly and without the trappings of a fraternal group, it would probably not have been so effective. It offered a community within a community. One suspects that for some members the Orange ritual takes the place of more conventional religions, and thus ironically not defending religion as it claims, but substituting for it.

Orangeism is not confined to Northern Ireland. It gained considerable power in Canada during the nineteenth century. Even today its World Imperial Council includes representatives of a number of countries and, amazingly, it has popularity in West Africa, where evangelical black Protestants have established numerous lodges. It is found in Australia and New Zealand, as well as in the United States.
Ironically, the Orange has never been not content to meet behind tyled doors, guarded by a sentinel with drawn sword. Unlike Freemasonry, where often public displays by the craft were frowned upon, the Orange has been known for its marches, and it is these marches which have provoked the most fulsome Catholic reaction. Those that parade through predominantly Catholic areas understandably are the most controversial. The marches are akin to pilgrimages, as they have long-established routes and take in shrines of Protestant defiance or triumph. They also have a totalitarian aspect, as waves of black bowler-hatted men clutching black umbrellas and wearing Orange sashes and medals step in cadence to the giant drums beaten for the occasion.

The image created of power is thus not a reference of reality but reality itself. Now it seems that the parades are to be defanged, and even billed as something for tourists to photograph. We shall see.

_The Orange has been a good example of why ritualistic secret societies can have problems with the community._ We need ritual and symbolism, but the right sort. Recent changes in sovereignty have meant many changes in political symbolism, and not just in Ireland. During the upheavals following the end of the Cold War, many of the former Communist-dominated states were forced to seek new designs. The world has provided quite enough excitement in recent decades to produce changes in official symbolism that will keep scholars occupied for many years to come.
The Orange has survived a long association with the now declining governing elite of Ulster, and continues as a strong but still controversial force in Irish political life. Whatever the movement’s vices and virtues in the Irish context, there is a ‘something’ to the hidden creative conspiratorial world of the Orange which seems to meet a deep if enigmatic need in the Protestant Ulster personality. If it now is losing some of its fury and becoming more fraternal, the problems of Northern Ireland really do seem to be on their way to solution.

i . Date: Mon, 1 Jun 1998 11:06:40 +1200
From: RodPW <rharries@ihug.co.nz>
To: UKMASON-LIST@LISTSERV.NETFORCE.NET
Subject: Re: Research: Orange Lodges

What connection is there between regular Masonry and the "Orange Lodges" in Northern Ireland?

Legally there is no connection and, in fact, the Orange Lodge is not recognised.

That is a somewhat misleading way of putting it. To be 'not recognised' is to be held to be an irregular masonic body, for example, the Grand Orient of France is 'not recognised'. If a body is 'not recognised' it is a Masonic offence to have anything to do with it. The Orange Lodge is not regarded as a Masonic body at all, that is, it is, Masonically
speaking, on all fours with the Rotary and the British Israelite Society (if it still exists), and there is no more connection with it than there is with those other bodies. As far as Masonic Law goes it is a matter of indifference whether a member belongs to the Orange Lodge; were it 'not recognised', it would be quite otherwise.

Rod Harries  1233 & 2007 UGLE;  6 GLNZ

Date: Mon, 1 Jun 1998 20:48:20 +0100
From: name omitted by request
To: UKMASON-LIST@LISTSERV.NETFORCE.NET
Subject: Re: Research: Orange Lodges

Name Omitted wrote:

> I ask the following in search of a factual answer and not with the
> intention
> of introducing politics or dissension of any kind into the list.
> What connection is there between regular Masonry and the "Orange
> Lodges" in
> Northern Ireland?

Simple answer....NONE ...as stated by a few other Brethren there is no connection, I believe ( and this is speculation, I
can't substantiate it in anyway) that way back in about the 1700's a few Masons may have somehow been involved in a personal capacity in the assisting of the setting up and or structure of the Orange Order, a lot of O.O ritual and somehow been involved in a personal capacity in the assisting of the setting up and or structure of the Orange Order, a lot of O.O ritual and symbols etc. would be very similar to Freemasonry's, this is why some people get confused even today IMO...meanwhile coming back to the present in a Province as small as Northern Ireland there would be a few people who might belong to both organisations, this is a matter for their own conscience and has no bearing on either body in any way.

Hope this helps, if you wish to discuss further mail me direct and I will help if I can.

Regards

Name omitted by request.
Co.Down

ii. See the site of the Orange Grand Lodge of Ireland http://www.grandorangelodge.co.uk/press/index.html passim.


v. In the 1820s, at the time of the York and Scottish troubles in Mexico there was considerable feeling in the United States that Masonry was antithetical to democracy:
“One of the major elements which went into forming the new Whig party was the Anti-Masonic party, an anti-elitist group which had emerged in the late 20’s to fight the presumed influence of a Masonic cabal, of which Andrew Jackson was thought to be a member.” Seymour Martin Lipset, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, Norton Edition, 1979, W.W.Norton, New York and London, 1979, 84.


x. Brian Dooley, *Black and Green: The Fight for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland and Black America*, Pluto Press,
xi. "Few human activities convey the allure and the dangers of secrecy as vividly as do the secret societies that have sprung up in so many parts of the world." Sissela Bok, *Secrets: On the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1982, 45.

xii. "What unites them is not any one purpose or belief. It is, rather, secrecy itself: secrecy of purpose, belief, methods, often membership. These are kept hidden from outsiders and only by gradual steps revealed to insiders, with further secrets always beckoning, still to be penetrated. In this way the secret societies hold out the possibility of exclusive access to the forbidden roots of secrecy, and promise the brotherhood and community feeling that many lack in their everyday life." Bok, 46.


xiv. "The fear is that such societies, by depriving members of autonomy, thereby injure them and cause them to lead thwarted lives; and that, reduced to such a state, the members may the more easily be used as tools for injuring others." Bok, 56.