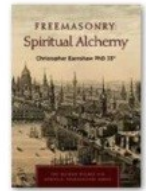




Freemasonry: Spiritual Alchemy
by Christopher Earnshaw



An interesting theory...

How alchemy may have influenced early Freemasonry

Lovers of the early history of Freemasonry will find much of interest in this book as the author navigates his way through a detailed history of alchemy and attempts to link it directly to the formation of the first Grand Lodge in 1717.

Earnshaw believes that, like the alchemists seeking to find the philosopher's stone and the secret to eternal life, the early Freemasons had a quest for immortality at their core.

He takes readers through a history of alchemy from pre-biblical times up to the mid-17th century, when real science began to overtake the theories of the alchemists.

At the heart of that transition was the Royal Society and Isaac Newton. Yet we know that Newton experimented with alchemy as well as the proper science for which he is now famed.

Although there is no evidence that Newton was a Freemason, Earnshaw thinks he had strong links with the first Grand Masters and that he influenced the drafting of early rituals.

Earnshaw also discusses his belief that the rituals of Freemasonry contain a form of cryptography as well as hidden signposts of which we still aren't aware.

It is an interesting attempt to try to close the gap in our knowledge between the operative Freemasons and the emergence of the speculative ones. The decade following the formation of Grand Lodge especially intrigues him.

Much of the book, which is sanctioned by a Past Grand Master of the Lodge of Japan, is factual, well-researched and well-referenced, but the conclusions may be more controversial, and the level of detail sometimes daunting.

When Earnshaw sticks to the history, there is much we can learn from this book; however, when he allows his own rather individual views to intrude, the effect is somewhat undermined.

Review by Richard Jaffa

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