



WHAT'S IN A NAME

**Bro. Maurice "Sparky" Strange
First Master of William O. Ware Lodge of Research**

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My title is taken from Shakespeare's immortal "Romeo and Juliet," in which the Bard goes on to say, "A rose by any other name should smell as sweet." This implies that the name is but a title or designation, and that a rose is not a beautiful flower because it is a rose, nor is it called a rose because it smells sweet; nor is a skunk called a skunk because he has a bad odor or has a bad odor because it is called a skunk. Webster's Dictionary generally bears out this implication, but a study of religious history, along with its sister subjects – mythology, symbolism and magic – are in direct opposition to it.

In fact throughout the ages, entire religious systems have been built upon that single foundation, from the beginning of Egyptian mythology, through the ritual magic which prevailed from about 1800 B. C. through the Middle Ages, and are at least partially incorporated in modern religion, including Christianity. Since I believe that in all religions there is more good than harm, and since Masonry symbolizes to me the highest teachings of individual theology and universal brotherhood, I must conclude that "a rose by any other name should..." be something more than just a rose.

The oldest religious texts that have yet been translated are those pertaining the Egyptian mythology. These are known variously as "The Book of the Dead," "The Coffin Texts," "The Pyramid Texts," etc. These evidently date back to the conquering of the Delta by the Egyptians of the Nile Valley, when the two lands were formed into the first great nation or union, since hieroglyphic writing came into being at about the same time, marking the beginning of recorded history.

It is probably that these legends had been recited as ritual for countless centuries before, and it is evident that the theological questions that have been unanswered by Christianity in the present two thousand years, were present in ancient Egypt. The Creator who was not created; whether God exists in time; the male and female in divinity; the origin of sin and evil were already unsolved

problems at least two hundred years before Christ, but the rational concept of God as Supreme Being was never lost.

The importance of names is apparent in Egyptian theology. The Pharaohs, who were half-man, half-myth, each bore five names. The uncreated Creator, having many names, was ascribed varying powers commensurate with the name he bore. In one of the Pyramid Texts, Atum is praised, "Hail to you, O Becoming One, who came into being of himself. You rose up in your Name of High Hill. You came into being in this, your Name, of "Becoming One." In chapter 85 of the "Book of the Dead," the word, "khoprer," the name of a scarabus beetle, was used to symbolize the "Becoming One, "or deity emerging, "I came into being of myself in the midst of the primeval waters in this my Name of Khopri."

Atum then created male and female, Shu and Tefnut, according to the Coffin Texts. "And Atum said, "That is my daughter, the living female one, Tefnut, who shall be with her brother, Shu. Life is his Name, Order is her Name." Another of the Coffin Texts recognizes God as omnipotent and divine. "I know his Name, Eternity is his Name. Eternity, the Master of years is his Name, exalted over the vault of the sky, bringing the sun to life every day."

The Akkadian-Chaldean Inscriptions, which are the oldest known documents of ritual magic, are generally acknowledged to date to 1800 – 2000, B. C. and possibly much earlier, are the earliest indication of primitive man's belief in the magic of names. These inscriptions are presently in the royal library of Nineveh. They were engraved in the original Akkadian language with Assyrian translations by order of Assurbanipal in the seventh century, B. C.

Sometime between the origin of the Egyptian religions and the origins of these inscriptions, man began to regard his name as a vital part of himself. He believed that by the magical use of his name, injury could be done him as easily as wounding him with a weapon. Consequently, he went to great lengths to conceal his real name. Every Egyptian was given two names: the true name and the good name. The good name was made public; the true name was a carefully guarded secret. The Abyssinian Christian is also given two names at baptism – the one his common name and the other a never to be divulged secret. Jewish tradition records that Gehazi was punished with leprosy for pronouncing the name of his master, Elisha. In the Eleusinian mysteries of Greece, it was forbidden by law to speak the name of priests, or any other official who had to do with the administration of the mysteries. Kings and emperors were given titles in keeping with their royal stations, such as "Majesty," "Royal Highness," or "Son of Heaven."

If the names of men held so much power over them, how much more powerful would be the knowledge of the true name of Deity! In the Egyptian

legends, Isis was a mortal who yearned for immortality of the gods. Ra, who had many names, but whose great name that gave him power over gods and men was known only by him, had grown old and slobbered so that his spittle fell on the ground. Isis gathered the mud made by this spittle and formed it into a serpent, which she caused to sting Ra so that he was severely poisoned. Isis having the only antidote to the poison, she refused to heal Ra until he had divulged his true Name, by which knowledge Isis became queen of the gods.

In Jewish folklore, Solomon was hampered in the building of the Temple by Beelzeboul, Ornias and the hosts of demons, but by calling on the Holy Name of God he was able to subdue them and set them to work on his behalf by forcing them to tell him their names. In the Testament of Solomon, one of the handbooks of Jewish magic, the following conversation takes place between Solomon and Beelzeboul:

“I, Solomon, said unto him, ‘Beelzeboul, what is thy employment?’ And he answered me, ‘I destroy kings, and I ally myself with foreign tyrants. And my own demons I set onto men, in order that the latter may believe in them and be lost. And to the chose servants of God, priests and faithful men, I excite desires for wicked sins, and evil heresies and lawless deeds; and they obey me, and I bear them on to destruction. And I inspire men with envy, and murder, and for wars and sodomy, and other evil things. And I will destroy the world...’ I said to him, ‘Tell me by what angel art thou frustrated?’ And he answered, ‘By the Holy and Precious Name of the Almighty God, called by the Hebrews by a row of numbers, of which the sum is 644, and among the Greeks it is Emmanuel. And if one of the Romans adjure me by the great Name of the power of Eleeth, I disappear at once.’

The Bible records many instances of power invoked by a transition of names. In Genesis 17:5 we read, “Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.” In Exodus 6:2 & 3, “And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the Name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not know to them.” In Exodus 3:14 & 15, “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you ... this is my Name forever.” Jacob asked the name off the emanation who wrestled with him; Manoah asked the name of the angel; both were told that it was “secret” or “wonderful” according to the translation.

There are many other instances, the most notable the commandment, “Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.” Legend has it that Joshua destroyed Jericho by calling on the Name of the Lord. So also Samson when he pulled down the temple. In our prayers we ask for blessing “In His Holy Name.” God, and the sacred Name of God, were thought to be one and

the same, as evidenced by Plato's teaching of the Logos or Word. The priesthood early recognized the powers of this Holy Name, and claimed for themselves the sacred knowledge, passing it from mouth to ear in solemn secrecy.

Whatever the origin of this tradition, the mythology of ancient Egypt through Akkadian-Chaldean documents, God's emanation to Abram, Jacob and Moses, or Plato's Logos. Whatever its symbolic meaning, the Messianic traditions of the Caballah, Enoch's sacred stone of Talmudic legend, or the evils of the mythological black magicians, there can be no acceptable theorem for the origin of theology, or Masonry, without them. Albert Pike summed it up in this one paragraph, "There can be no doubt in the mind of any student of ancient philosophy or theology, of the great importance attached, from a very early date, and among the many nations, to the knowledge of the TRUE NAME of God" (Morals and Dogma).

Perhaps for many of you, these are not revelations, as they were for me. I have not yet exhausted either my curiosity or my source of data and material, but I have been led to this conclusion: That in order to find the origin of the Masonic quest for divine knowledge, we must go far beyond the Grand Lodge of 1717, beyond the Crusades, even beyond the advent of Christianity, and the Colleges of Artificers, to the very roots of theology, mythology and ritualistic magic.