

Behind the Curtain: Uncovering the Freemasonic Gestures of Pointing to the Side

Resurrecting God (Part 1)

Introduction

Although unconsciously all human beings are striving towards divinity, a number of genuine freemasons consciously do so after the model of God. Imitation of God (*Imitatio Dei*) is the culminating point atop their entire system signifying the masonic obligation to imitate God in his ideas and acts. It is the attempt to live as God which is seen as the ideal toward which mason's behaviour should aim. To this intent the original Old Time Freemasons, who are said to have recognized fellow craftsmen by secret signs, watchwords, marks and steps, had an elaborate system of hand and body gestures, signs and poses that were always meant to be viewed by others outside of the close ties of society. Freemasonry employs them in *portraying* presenting and upholding the God-centered perspective.

These gestures, signs and poses grew out of older masonic wisdom, offering the key for the correct understanding of the masonic teaching. These are, first of all, the pointing to the side gestures that became dominant in masonic art providing the model for generations of freemasons who made them in their portrait representations. They have been largely overlooked having two different variations: **the index finger pointing to the side gesture** that we find shown in different examples in a great number of portraits (fig. 1) and **the middle and ring finger close together (middle fingers) pointing to the side gesture** shown in the set of portraits on fig. 2.

What follows is a perspective that is drawing on a broad range of works of art from the fourth to the twenty-first century, which includes miniatures, paintings, sculptures, engravings and photographs this work investigates. It is a descriptive research where the basis is a vast number of art works in which the pointing to the side gestures are revealed to provide an understanding to why they were used and what they mean. *It is a method which when explaining an image, the description is part of the explanation.* In turns, the explanation becomes part of the description. Our starting point will be the works by Léonard Gabanon who was the author in 1740 of the “Nouveau catéchisme des francs-maçons”, the 1730 English school work “Portrait of a Freemason”, as well as the multiplicity of depictions that testify to the persistence of pointing to the side gestures in the portraits of well known prominent freemasons. These are *James Thornhill (-1734)*, *William Hogarth (1697–1764)*, *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)* and his father *Leopold Mozart (1719 – 1787)*, *Edward Prince of Wales, later Edward VII (1841-1910)*, *Benjamin Franklin (1706–90)*, *Goethe (1749 – 1832)*, *Alexander Hamilton (1755 – 1804)*, *Christopher Wren (1632 – 1723)* and *George Washington (1732–1799)*. These personalities and their portraits will be described and discussed further below providing the basic information about the research problem. Following the descriptions, the discussion and analysis sections begin. In addition, we will show some of these hand and body

pointing to the side gestures, signs and poses that are still in use in contemporary masonic portraiture and photography.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Gabanon's engravings

Leonard Gabanon's 1740 "Nouveau catéchisme des francs-maçons" was one of the first Masonic disclosures following shortly after the establishment of the Modern English Freemasonry in 1717. It was a book illustrated by a number of engravings that reveal for the first time certain moments of the masonic rituals as well as the practical use of the masonic pointing to the side gestures. They can be seen in the following illustrations the first of which represents a meeting of Freemasons for the Admission of Masters (fig. 3).



1. le Gr.^d Maître.
2. le 1^{er} Surveillant.
3. le 2^e Surveillant.
4. le Récipiendaire.

Assemblée de Francs-Maçons pour la réception des Maîtres.
 Le Grand Maître relève le Récipiendaire en lui donnant l'atouchement, l'acollade et en lui disant le mot du Maître.

Dédié au très Galant, très sincère et très véritable Frère profane Leonard Gabanon, Auteur du Catéchisme des Francs-Maçons.
 A Paris, chez J. Cherou, rue St Jacques, au Coy.

5. l'Orateur.
6. le Trésorier.
7. le Secrétaire.

Fig. 3

In this lively composition the Master raises the candidate giving him the grasp with his right hand while the left one is showing the *middle and ring finger close together (middle fingers) pointing to the side gesture*. Even more dramatic is the reaction of the candidate in the coloured copy of the same engraving shown on fig. 4. Still laying in the symbolic coffin, while holding Master's right hand he is responding to his middle and ring fingers close together pointing to the side gesture with the same gesture shown with his left hand. The observer is drawn into the heart of the action by observing this gesticulation process that allows the symbolical releasement or resurrection to life of the candidate from the "grave". Owing to the Gabanon's picture, the most dramatic episode of the Masonic Initiation or the final step of the struggle for enlightenment and life in God, becomes known to the public. A distinguished genuine initiation gesture comes to the light open to different interpretations. The picture is also noticeable for the peculiar masonic steps, made by some of the participants, in which the weight of the body is supported on one leg, while the other rests in advance, both turned out.



Fig. 4

Another Gabanon engraving is shown on fig. 5 representing the Initiation process of an Apprentice Freemason in which the applicant is lead into the lodge blindfolded. **The Junior Warden seems to make him show the gesture he shows, namely the middle fingers pointing to the side gesture.** Very significant are the *hidden hand gestures* most of the participants show!



1. le grand Maître.
2. le 1^{er} Surveillant.
3. le 2^e Surveillant.
4. le Récipiendaire.

Assemblée de Francs-Maçons pour la réception des Apprentifs.

Entrée du Récipiendaire dans la Loge.

Dédié au très galant, très sincère et très véridique Frère profane Leonard Gabanon, Auteur du Catéchisme des Francs-Maçons.

*Dessiné par Madame la Marquise *** et gravé par Madem.****

A Paris, chez J. Cherreau, rue St Jacques, au Coq.

5. Orateur.
6. le Secrétaire.
7. le Trésorier.
8. le Frère Sentinelle.

Fig. 5

Portrait of a Freemason (Senior Warden), c. 1730

Despite of the fact that it is not notable for its exceptional artistic quality, this is a remarkable portrait that is providing a glimpse into the deep symbolical world of Freemasonry conveying a message about its background. The freemason in this portrait, painted by an anonymous English artist, is a Senior Warden staring out towards his audience with confidence. He is not distinguishable due to the lack of individualized facial features. Picture's composition, however, is filled with components symbolic to the principles of Freemasonry, emphasizing the following elements that comprise the core of the motif.



Fig. 6

1. Subject's full masonic regalia;
2. His right hidden hand gesture that is commonly found in "masonic" portraiture. This is its standard form that is known colloquially as "hidden hand" and "Hand-in-waistcoat";
3. The portico-like space, in which the subject stands, complete with short column, purple curtain and window through which a vision can be seen;
4. The traditional masonic apron with simple blue embroidery that recalls the blue sky at the distant landscape;
5. The column that today suggests (one of) the columns of the Solomon's Temple that are central symbol of Freemasonry. Every modern masonic lodge represents the architecture of this Temple that includes one, two or more columns present into the hall. Among the most distinguished modern masonic pillars are "Jachin" and "Boaz" through which every initiate has to pass;
6. The grey and pink checkered floor that recalls of the black and white checkered floors of the contemporary masonic temples;
7. The curtain, which is a distinguished masonic element, symbolical for the **Threshold of the spiritual world of God**. Commonly, in masonic paintings it has been pulled aside to reveal a background of an open sky or landscape which is made to represent heavens and the spiritual realm;
8. The glove wearing and the glove holding gestures that are symbolic of certain masonic traditional customs. Newly initiated freemasons are given pairs of white gloves that are being worn on ceremonies and special occasions;
9. The elegant old-masonic step position of the subject;
10. The tapering stone pillar in the background that is set up as a monument. Its *prolonged* form is related or comes out of the solid triangular formed stone under the window;
11. Master's T-shaped square jewel around subject's neck;
12. The "threshold" position of the person standing in the space between the column and the wall opening, symbolising the "gap" between our physical world and the World Beyond.

The painting is full of symbolism drawn from masonic tradition that also can be found in many other "masonic" works. Seemingly similar is the depiction of William Cowper, 1st Earl Cowper (ca.1665-1723) made by Thomas Murray (1663–1734) shown on fig. 7 showing him standing, facing left. His left hand is resting on hip *showing the middle fingers pointing to the side gesture while his right arms is extended outward showing the index finger pointing to the side gesture*. They strongly suggest that the person depicted was a freemason which a few other typically masonic compositional elements also show. These are, first of all, the portico-like space which in this case is divided into two parts: lighter and darker. Cowper is standing on the floor of the darker part which is checkered grey and shining red recalling of the masonic floors.

Notable is his masonic “ballet” step and his feet in dark leather boots that cast a dark shadow behind him that is limited only within the dark room. This is in harmony with the still darker corner of the room, and the darkest of all, the curtain falling behind Cowper's back. It crosses his head diagonally, against which the upper part of his body stands out. Thus, the dark lower part of his body is in harmony with the dark part of the room, and the upper part - with the far lighter part of it. Beyond this space is the sky to which Cowper is actually pointing. All this again shows the typically Masonic position "between two worlds": the Divine and the earthly, occupied by the portrayed William Cowper, hinting at his masonic status.



Fig. 7

Another example is shown on fig. 8 where George Washington is standing in a lodge room, surrounded by masonic symbols: black and white checkered floor, a row of classical columns five at each side and purple curtain dividing the Lodge in two different parts: inner and outer. The set of steps at the background is leading from the inner (lower) to the outer (upper) floor or world representative of the World of God. Similar pillar and curtain, or pillar, curtain and throne decoration is to be seen in the „masonic“ portraits of Prince Frederick of the Netherlands (1797-1881) (fig. 9) and Edward (1841-1910) Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, as Grand Master of Freemasonry (1884 photo) (fig. 10).

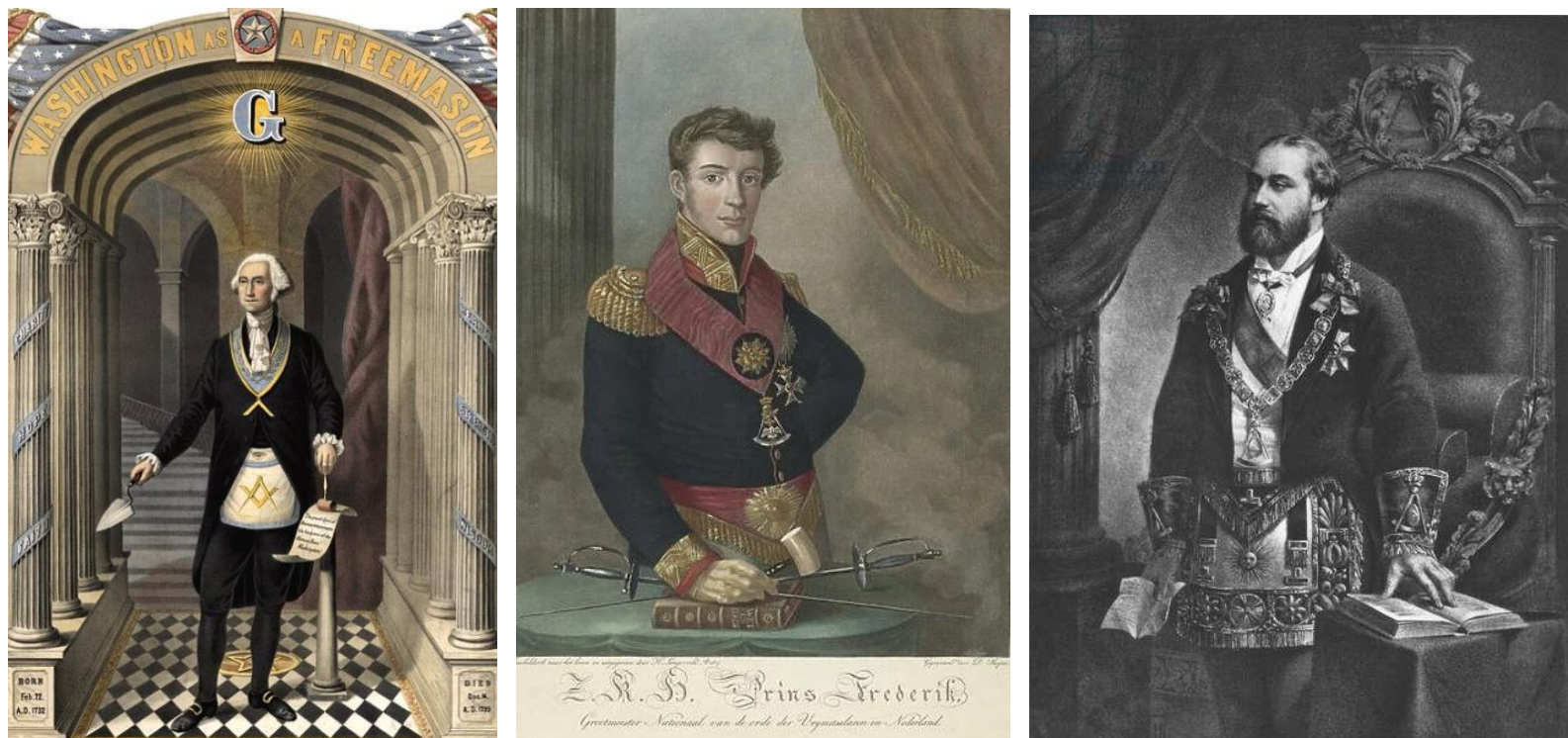


Fig. 8 – 10

Such masonic motives are used to illustrate the principles which Freemasonry espouses. Identifying them helps reveal the deep meaning and intent that may connect the viewer with the work's message. Central is the motive that has the hand and body pointing to the side gestures, signs and poses of freemasons at its core represented in some portraits of notable Freemasons.

James Thornhill (1676-1734)

Thornhill was a prominent British decorative painter, a fellow of the Royal Society and politician. In 1689 he was apprenticed to Thomas Highmore (1660–1720) learning a great deal also from Antonio Verrio (c. 1636 – 1707) and Louis Laguerre (1663 – 1721), two prominent foreign decorative painters from Italy and France then working in England, as well as from his colleague *Godfrey Kneller* (1646 – 1723). In 1718 King George I made him court painter, and in 1720 serjeant-painter. He was knighted in the same year, being the first native artist to receive that honour. In 1711, Thornhill was one of the twelve original directors of Godfrey Kneller's academy succeeding him as Governor until 1720.

Thornhill was also a prominent freemason, and in 1728 he was the Grand Senior Warden of the Premier Grand Lodge of England. He featured masonic symbolism in most of his major works as at the Painted Hall of the Greenwich Hospital, London, in which he introduced his own portrait (fig. 11). In this work he showed two pointings to the side masonic gestures: *the index finger pointing to the side gesture* made with his right hand while looking directly at the viewer and the *middle fingers pointing to the side gesture* made elegantly with his left hand. Thornhill stands close to the basement of two pillars as if merging with them. His pallitra and an L-shaped square instrument on the basement are representative of his secular and masonic interests correspondingly.



Fig. 11 – 12

Thornhill's self portrait seems an external, pictorial expression of one of the most profound masonic truths into which he was initiated. But even more impressive is his portrait engraved by John Henry Robinson (1796–1871) after Thomas Worlidge (1700–1766) shown on fig. 12. In this exceptionally fine piece of work there are two special, catching-eye moments: first of all, this is Thornhill's straightforward telling gaze with a challenging glint. He preferred this type of looking directly at the viewer gaze in his (self)portraits, rather than off to the side, which is to be seen in many other masonic portraits; secondly, this is Thornhill's hand that is gesturing into the air making an impressive middle fingers pointing to the side gesture. It is touching the edge of the engraving as if pointing to... nowhere! It appears, however, that together with his gaze he and the people are conversing and a message is sent to everyone! Sitting on his chair with his favourite brush and pallitra and the curtain that is enveloping him as if taking hold of him he is as if standing on the Threshold of the spiritual word. This is what the darkness behind him perhaps means, significant and symbolic of masonic God's eternity, the fundamentally different, spiritual in its essence, world of God that no human senses (still) can perceive.

Thornhill was a capable portrait-painter who produced more than one portrait in which the subjects are represented with (middle fingers) pointing to side gestures that are the core of the "masonic" art works. Two of them are shown on fig. 13 and fig. 14, in the first of which notable are the column and the throne-like chair as well as the specific pointing to the side gaze of the subject while he is also pointing to the (same) side with his gentle right hand gesture. The second portrait on fig. 14 is designed in the typical masonic portico-like space that reveals sky and a lighter building to the outside, and a darker space inside, subject's warm straightforward gaze, middle fingers pointing to the side gesture while sitting in his chair.



Fig. 13 - 14

William Hogarth (1697–1764)

Before succeeding to the above mentioned Thornhill's colleague, Godfrey Kneller, and his significant "pre-1717" "masonic" paintings, we will first look at several other authors and subjects as William Hogarth who was also a very prominent English painter and engraver notable for his series of engravings on masonic and social subjects. He was one of the greatest artists and masons England ever had who often satirised the deficiencies of both secular and spiritual life in 18th-century England. He is known for being the Grand Steward at the Grand Lodge of England's annual Festival in 1735 and a master of portraits and jewels for his fellow masons. In 1729 he married Thornhill's daughter Jane.

Looking at the various Hogarth's portraits we find the pointing to the side gesticulation in few different examples: Martin Folkes (1690 – 1754), Captain Thomas Coram (1668 – 1751), Theodore Jacobsen (died 1772), Thomas Herring (1693 – 1757), and Benjamin Hoadly (1676 – 1761). The first of them was an English antiquary, mathematician, astronomer, the president of the Royal Society from 1741 to 1752. He was a distinguished freemason, appointed Deputy Grand Master of the Premier Grand Lodge of England during the year 1724–1725 and his portrait on fig. 15 shows this. It represents him slightly turned to the side against sky background staring off into the distance in accord with his active middle fingers gesticulation that is pointing to the same distant side. His left hand is hidden in masonic manner.

Thomas Coram, the sea captain and philanthropist who opposed slavery and established the Foundling Hospital, London's first home for babies abandoned because of stigma and destitution, is represented on fig. 16. He is sitting on a chair before a portico-like space, complete with a classical column and a green curtain that are typical in "masonic" portraiture. He looks directly at the viewer while slightly pointing to the side with his right hand. Hogarth painted Coram surrounded by symbols of his work that remind of his sea-faring past as well as masonic symbols as the gloves he is firmly holding in his left hand, and the column and the curtain.

Theodore Jacobsen was an English merchant in London whose portrait was painted by William Hogarth in 1742 (fig. 17). Interestingly, he represented him against a natural portico-like cavity complete with rock and plants instead of column and curtain. He is staring at the viewer while holding a plan of a *triangular* house designed by him and pointing to it with his middle fingers gesture. The same kind of gesticulation he shows in his portrait by William Verelst (1736) on fig. 18 against a "classical" masonic portico-like background.



Fig. 15 – 16



Fig. 17 – 18

In Protestant countries Freemasonry counted bishops among its number since its very “1717” beginning. This is asserted in the first edition of the Constitution (1723) written by James Anderson (c. 1690/1691–1739), the official historian of the Premier Grand Lodge: *“several Noblemen and Gentlemen of the best Rank, with Clergymen and learned Scholars of most Professions and Denominations, having frankly joined and submitted to take the Charges, and to wear the badges of a Free and Accepted Mason, under our present worthy Grand-Master, the most noble Prince John Duke of Montague.”* It is not then difficult to understand that masonic gestures appear in the Hogarth’s “bishop” portraits. One instance is Thomas Herring (1693–1757) (fig. 19), the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1747 to 1757, who is represented against the background of throne-like chair and semi-open curtain. He is holding a book with his middle and fourth finger close together gesture challenging the viewer with a strait-forward gaze and an active left hand pointing to the side position.

Benjamin Hoadly, the Bishop of Winchester and Prelate of the Order of the Garter, is represented on fig. 20 also sitting on a throne-like chair. A curtain has been pulled aside behind him to reveal a background of stainless window. He is wearing clerical dress and a white wig actively gesturing to the side while the other hand is resting in a well notable “middle fingers” position. He shows the same gesture in the curtain–portico interior in his portrait on fig. 21 also made by Hogarth. He is sitting in red velvet covered armchair at an elaborately carved desk. Light green curtain is to the right falling down under Hoadly’s chair as if becoming a part of his dark green robes. A city with flag on top of building is to be seen in distance. Large vertical columns rise exactly above his head in the centre of the composition. Most significant is the checkered floor under Hoadly’s feet that recalls the checkered floors in the masonic temples.



Fig. 19 - 20

A second “bishop” portrait of Thomas Herring is shown on fig. 22, made by the British painter Thomas Hudson (1701–1779). Here the sitter is shown against black curtain background that looks as if becoming one with his black and white full robes. Behind the curtain there is little light slightly falling also on his black chair. The darkest point is the book Herring holds with his right hand showing a contrasting middle fingers gesture that is the core of the painting!



Fig. 21 - 22

Hogarth’s self-portrait shown on fig. 23 is also very interesting since it is full of the specific symbolism based on certain ancient tradition. It is composed of two parts divided by the special curtain coloured differently in each side. This is highly significant since the red part of the curtain is as if belonging to Hogarth’s “clothing”. The other side is green as if belonging to the outer, physical world. Uniquely, the colours change exactly at the place where the dog is sitting dominating the whole picture. Its place is where the “inner” and “outer” Hogarth’s parts meet! It looks as if dividing these parts, or worlds sitting on the Threshold between them. It is a Threshold dog and perhaps due to this its fur is shaped in a way that is similar to the shape of the curtain.

Hogarth loved Thornhill’s daughter Jane and in 1729 married her. With both her father and husband prominent painters and freemasons she seemingly did not have choice but to be painted by her husband sitting enthroned on a gilded armchair carved with flowers while holding an object with both her hands gently showing the *middle fingers masonic sign* (fig.

24). Such inclusions in female portraits were not uncommon in “masonic” portraiture to be examined in bigger detail later in this work.



Fig. 23 - 24

The Mozart Family

Mozart was one of the greatest classical composers who wrote more than forty symphonies, over twenty string quartets, nearly thirty piano concertos, and sixteen operas. He was a highly talented pianist who could play multiple instruments. As a Freemason was also highly talented and it is known that he was admitted to Freemasonry in 1784. His father, Leopold, was a freemason, too. He commissioned the portrait of the child Mozart painted possibly by Pietro Lorenzoni in 1763 in which Mozart poses with two masonic gestures: *hidden hand* and *forefinger pointing to the side gesture* before a dark green curtain (fig. 25). In his famous portrait on fig. 26 both his hands are hidden in masonic manner. In his portrait-sculpture in Wien's Burggarten on fig. 27 made in 1896 by Viktor Tilgner (1844–1896) he is shown pointing to the side while opening a book. In his finely made portrait on fig. 28 Mozart's father Leopold

presented himself in masonic manner too: with one hand hidden under his black curtain-like cloak while the other is resting on a thick book *gently showing the middle fingers configuration*.



Fig. 25 - 26



Fig. 27 - 28

Benjamin Franklin (1706–90)

Franklin was a statesman, writer, printer, publisher, and inventor whose main scientific achievements were the formulation of a theory of electricity and a demonstration of the electrical nature of lightning. He is considered the Father of American Freemasonry who had seriously busied himself in organizing the Society in America. Below are four portraits in which the artists have portrayed him in a hidden masonic fashion. In the first of them on fig. 29, which is very beautifully made piece of art, he poses demonstrating the combination of two masonic hand gestures. These are the subtle middle fingers pointing to the side gesture made with his right hand commonly interpreted as pointing down to the map of Philadelphia, and his hidden left hand that (also) reveals his masonic status. Similar is the position in his somewhat unskillfully portrait on fig. 30 in which he is sitting against a “classical” masonic portico-like background. He is as if pointing to the bolt of lightning striking down toward a city while his right hand is “hidden”.

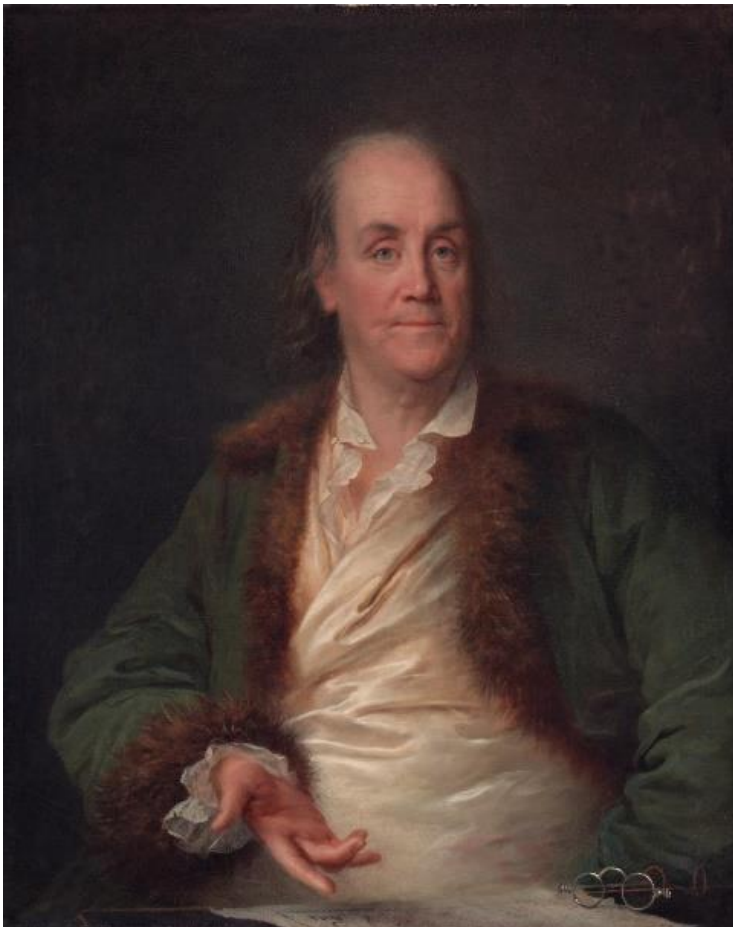


Fig. 29 - 30

In a hidden way he is pointing off to the side also in his portrait on fig. 31 in which he is represented sitting on chair and reading. A red curtain is hanging from the top left corner behind his right shoulder. In the left hand is a pair of papers while the right hand under the chin is pointing off to the side, or *back* to the darkness behind the curtain. The seat of the chair is dull red, and on the left a table, carrying books and papers, is covered by a red cloth.

Less “hidden” are Franklin’s masonic poses and gestures on fig. 32 where he is shown standing in a portico-like podium complete with a pair of columns, pair of curtains, throne-like chair, table, books and many other masonic attributes. He is dressed in full masonic regalia, holding hammer with his right hand while the left hand rests on a book with the masonic pointing to side middle fingers gesture or sign. His masonic step is as if holding a position between two worlds: a lower, and higher one.



Fig. 31 – 32

Alexander Hamilton (c. 1757 – 1804) and George Washington (1732 – 99)

Both were American statesmen and Founding Fathers. Hamilton established the US central banking system, and Washington helped win the War of Independence subsequently serving two terms as president. Both were freemasons whose “masonic” “twin” portraits, shown on fig. 33 and fig. 34, bear striking similarities.

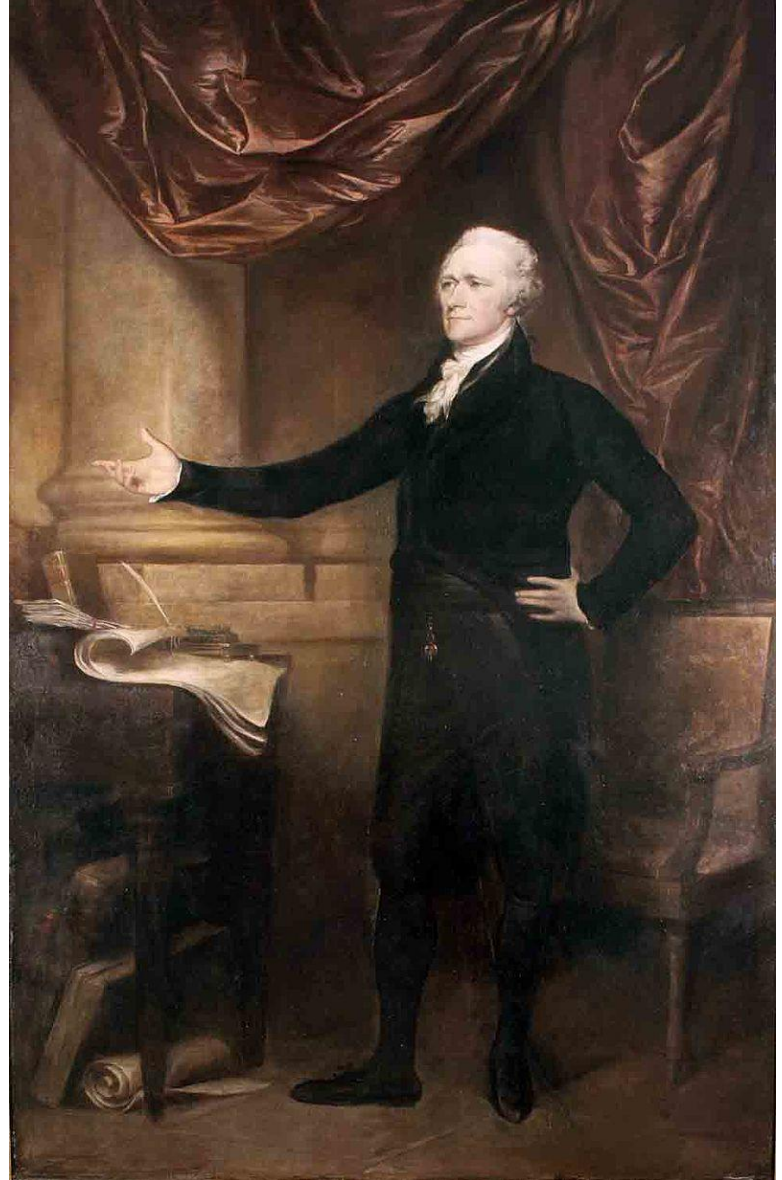


Fig. 33 - 34

George Washington's portrait on fig. 33 was painted by the American artist Gilbert Stuart's (1755 – 1828) in 1796 thus predating Trumbull's portrait with nine years. This portrait was produced during Washington's final year in office and it was a gift to former British Prime Minister William Petty, 1st Marquess of Lansdowne. Stuart painted Washington from life showing him in black coat, standing, facing left, left hand resting on ceremonial sword, right arm extended outward pointing to the side. This gesture, however, is not as clear as in Trumbull's portrait due to which it is widely interpreted as an oratorical, or welcoming. Rather *fancifully* than realistically, it's said to depict his December 7, 1795 annual address to the Fourth U.S. Congress when the highly unpopular Jay Treaty had been presented for approval. Acknowledging the struggle over the Treaty Washington called for unity that is supposed to be depicted in the portrait. This, however, can not explain the presence of the typical masonic portico-like "column and curtain" background as well as the position of Washington who doesn't seem standing in the U.S. Senate. He does not look like speaking or welcoming audience to the Senate or in his office, but he is pointing to the side while standing between two rows of large vertical columns! Those to the right rise behind his head, and those to the left rise behind his outstretched hand. Wrapped around and between them is a large red curtain hanging in two directions: *before* the left row of columns down on and under the table to the left, and *behind* the right row of columns into to the outside.

Significantly, Stuart also painted the curtain round the right row of columns leaving the left row rising as if to the outside of the building. **Thus he divided the background into two parts: before and beyond the curtain!** Attaining beyond the curtain reveals realities of another world: blue sky, clouds and importantly *rainbow*, that catches our attention being symbolical in masonry to the covenant the Father God made with Noah who made the ark which saved his people and specimens of every animal from the Flood. Generally speaking, in masonic terms, the rainbow is a reminder of the God's decision to wash away the sinful world making way for a fresh start! *The secret here is kept behind the curtain - beyond the left row of columns!* The behind-the-scenes action happens "behind the curtain" and Washington is as if standing between these two worlds, outer and inner meaning higher and lower, in the final days of his career. Notable is his chair recalling a throne and contains elements from the Great Seal of the United States that reveal the power of thirteen (12+1) (white) stars streaming down from above – an action symbolised by the thirteen alternating red and white stripes which appear underneath.

Hamilton's portrait (fig. 34) was painted in 1805 by the American artist John Trumbull (1756 – 1843) representing him in typical masonic environment: portico-like inner space decorated with two columns, chair, scrolls, books, and curtain. He is also depicted in black coat, standing, facing left. The important difference is that his left hand is resting on hip *while showing the middle fingers pointing to the side gesture!* Also his right arms extended outward clearly *showing the index finger pointing to the side gesture* immediately over the table and the several books that are underneath the table. More books stand upright on top of the table, as well as inkwell, quill and several sheets of paper, similar to Washington's portrait. Notable is Hamilton's masonic step which points to the intention of Trumbull to include as much masonic symbols as possible encoding the portrait with his masonic character. His portrait is as if explaining the portrait painted by Stuart which seemingly has hidden meaning!

Both Stuart's and Trumbull's portraits do not include any political symbols, indicating that they are far more than portraits of American statesmen. The evidence of whether Hamilton was

a freemason is also found in his bronze statue made by James Fraser (1876 – 1953) in 1923 (fig. 35) located on the south patio of the U.S. Treasury Building in Washington. It depicts him holding tricorn hat in the right hand and a long dress coat in his left hand while showing the middle fingers gesture. Concerning Washington, many pictures illustrate him as a freemason: in masonic attire, holding scroll and trowel, or trowel in one hand and mallet in the other; in military attire demonstrating the hidden hand gesture or a pointing to the side gesture as shown on fig. 36. With his right he shows a distinguished middle fingers gesture while his left hand in hidden way is pointing to the side in his portrait on fig. 37. He is sitting before portico-like “column-curtain background”, again, with a rainbow that is shining in the sky, a motive that apparently was favourite to him.



Fig. 35 - 37

John Trumbull (1756 – 1843)

Trumbull was an American artist who was called the "Painter of the Revolution". He was a soldier in the American Revolutionary War and appointed second aide-de-camp to George Washington. He painted Washington's portrait (see further below) by memory as well as the portraits of few other American founding fathers helping to shape American early standards for masonic art.

Regardless of the absence of the historical documentation, Trumbull most likely was a freemason or at least he was aware of the latest trends of masonic portraiture tirelessly

representing them in his works. In Hamilton's portrait and in numerous other works produced during his long artistic career he demonstrated these trends exemplified in his own self-portrait on fig. 38 in which while friendly meeting viewer's eyes he is *hiding both his hands in masonic manner*. Beside on the table are his book and pallitra.

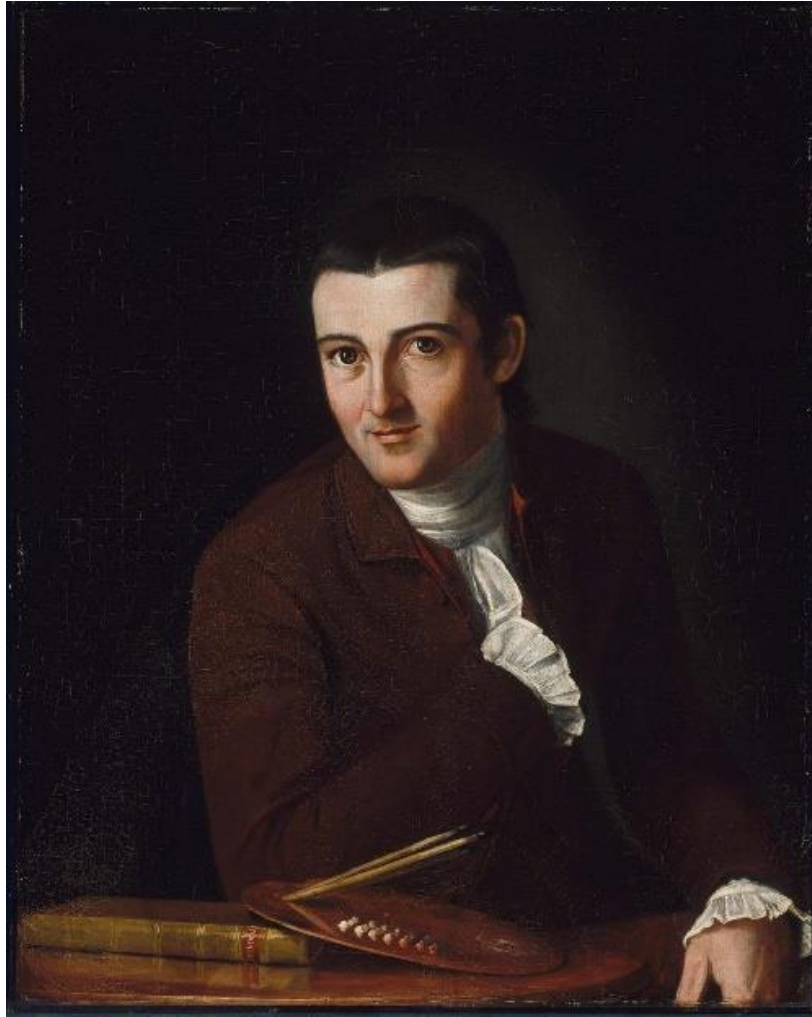


Fig. 38

Very interesting is Trumbull's painting Declaration of Independence (fig. 39) that illustrates the five-man drafting committee of the Declaration of Independence presenting their work to the Congress. One of them, John Adams (1735 – 1826) was a leader of the American Revolution, Founding Father, diplomat, writer and the second president of the United States from 1797 to 1801. In this painting he appears with his hand on his hip demonstrating distinguished middle fingers sign. Very significant is the checkered carpet he is stepping on referring to the floors in the masonic temples. Also interesting is the fact that a re-production of this painting can be found on the back of the U.S. two dollar bill (fig. 40, reverse series 2003) in which, however, both the carpet and the masonic sign are obliterated. In many works

John Trumbull left his “masonic” signature, however, in this case it underwent a radical transformation.



Fig. 39

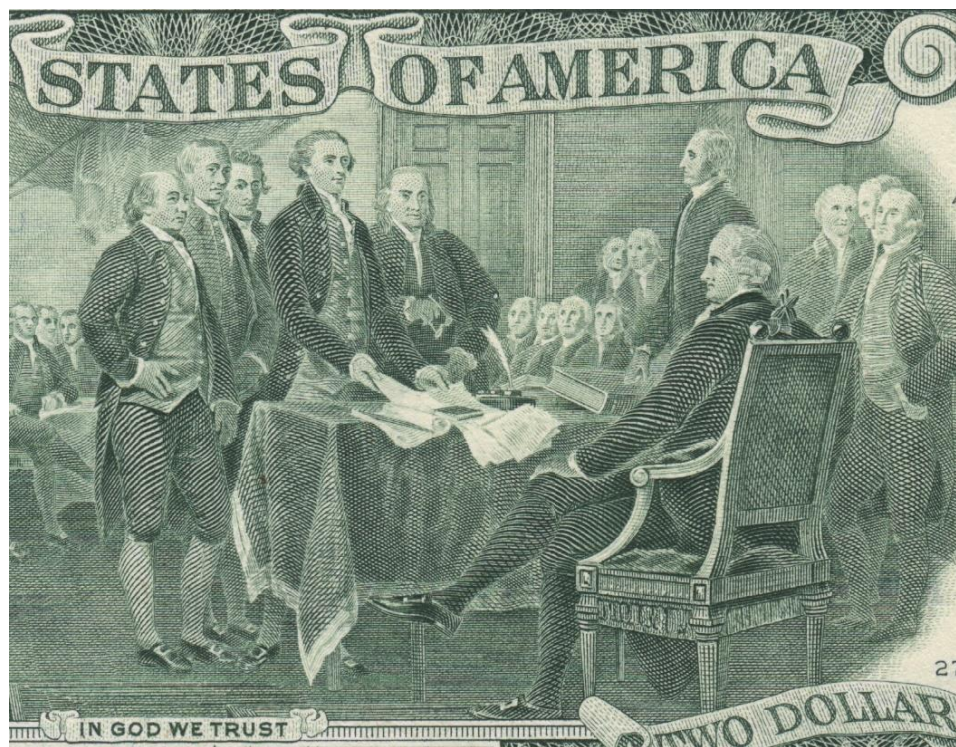


Fig. 40

Especially impressive are Trumbull's portraits of his wife, Sarah Harvey (1774–1824), shown on fig. 41, 42 and 43. They reveal the same masonic trend of representation of the middle fingers gesture, that seemingly was favourite to Trumbull. In the last of them Sarah is holding and as if teaching the dove the middle fingers gesture. The Dove is symbolical to the Holy Spirit.



Fig. 41 - 43

Absolutely unique is Sarah's portrait on fig. 44 in which her husband represented her laying in her dead bed. Sarah is as if stretching out her hands towards heavens in the last moments of her life. And with her left hand she is showing the middle fingers gesture before a green curtain as a "key" that can open it. The gesture looks as something that can be inserted into a "lock" that can pull the curtain aside revealing the heavens. This recalls the Gabanon's engraving on fig. 4 in which the person who applies for initiation in the Masonic Mysteries is showing the middle fingers gesture to his Master, or in respond to his Master's gesture! This would allow his resurrection from his "dead bed" which is the final achievement in the true Masonic Mysteries. A new state of consciousness is being achieved by him that goes far beyond the normal one meaning beyond the Curtain! Sarah's picture shows similar transition - from the physical world into the spiritual world which is the world of God that can be achieved through the Gate of Death or through the Gate of Initiation! This has to do with the green curtain next to Sarah and the curtain that is falling on candidate's head on fig. 45 revealing the meaning of this symbol: Threshold (Boundary) between the Earth and Heaven. Piercing it, means achieving the ultimate goal of the genuine Masonic Initiation which in Sarah's case is happening "naturally" or unconsciously. She is represented in a genius way facing the Gate of heavens which she is as if already seeing. What she is missing is the hand of God that corresponds to the hand of the Master in the Gabanon's picture!



Fig. 44 - 45

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832)

Goethe was a German poet, scholar, statesmen and playwright whose works had a profound influence on Western thought from the late eighteenth century to the present day. Furthermore, he was a zealous freemason, joining the Weimar's lodge Amalia in 1780 when he was thirty-one years of age. And he remained a member of this lodge to the day of his death.

At least two Goethe's portraits reveal his masonic status, shown on fig. 46 and 47. Both are from his earliest portrait pictures painted by Georg Kraus (1737 – 1806) in 1775/76. The first is commonly known as Goethe with the Silhouette since it is showing him gazing at a silhouette in his hand. The portrait seems to hint at a deeper meaning judging by the diagonally orientated green curtain behind Goethe and the *middle fingers gesture he shows with both his hands*. In the engraving on fig. 47 he is presenting something different: while sitting in a portico-like room he is holding (receiving/giving) a paper with his left hand while the right hand is showing the hidden hand gesture. The open window to the left shows sea and a single boat in distance. Both pictures represent Goethe in profile.

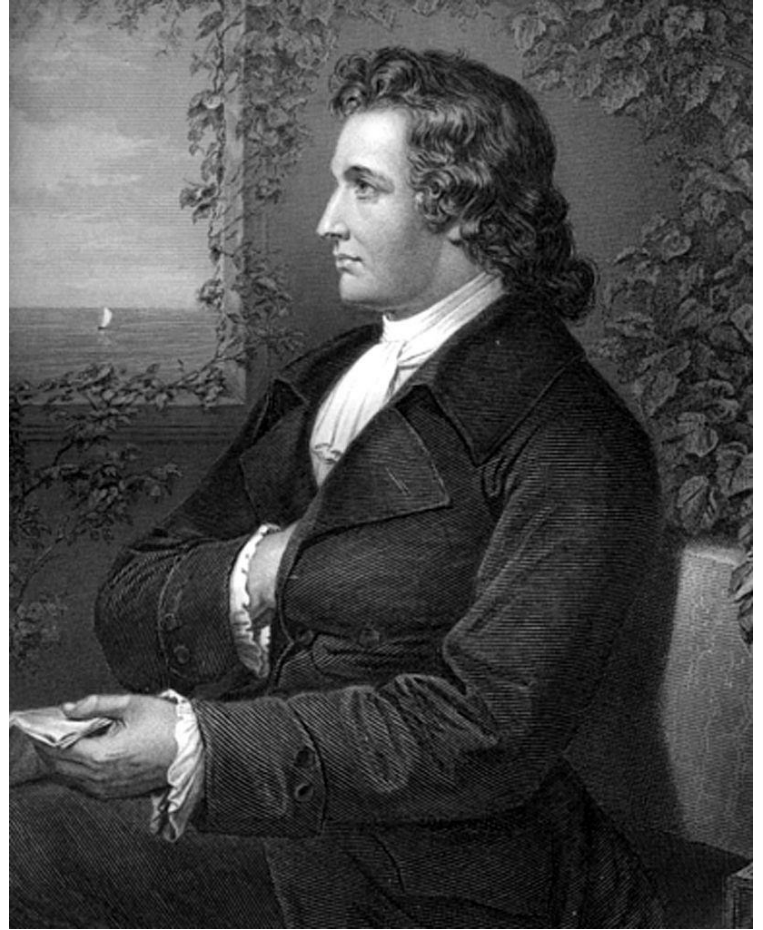


Fig. 46 - 47

Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807–82)

Garibaldi was an Italian general, revolutionary, republican, leader of the Risorgimento and Italy's greatest national hero that played a key role in the establishment of the Italian united kingdom. He was an active mason initiated in 1848 into the Order of Ancient Freemasons of the Memphis and Misraim Rite in the Les Amis del la Patri Lodge in Montevideo, Uruguay. As a man with prominent masonic reputation he served as Grand Master for several years. His postures in the photos on fig. 48 and fig. 49 are considered to reveal his masonic status.

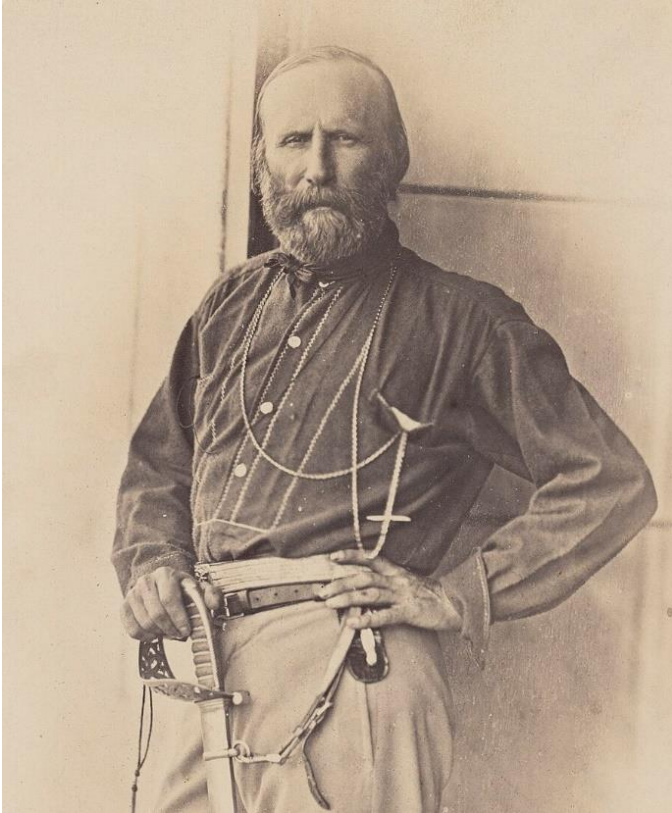


Fig. 48 - 49

Isaac Newton (1642 – 1726)

Newton was a mathematician, physicist, scholar, and discoverer whose three laws of motion and universal law of gravity changed the foundation of physics. His work on light revolutionized the field of optics. Lesser known are his spiritual interests: his theological tracts dealing with the interpretation of biblical prophecies and **especially of the Apocalypse**. Notably, he believed spiritual area was just as valid as scientific experimentation. For him, space was “an eminent effect of God,” and the laws of motion and gravity applicable equally to terrestrial affairs and to the Heavens. Newton warned against using them to view the cosmos as a mere machine, believing that they put the planets into motion *not without the help of the Divine!* Interestingly, in his eyes, worshipping Christ as God was idolatry since he recognized Christ as a divine mediator between God and man, who was subordinate to the Father who created him. This highly interesting view reflects the conflict between Athanasius and Arius which defined the Creed, and Arius’s outlook that rejected what became a conventional view of the Trinity.

Newton was deeply involved in spiritual research, for instance, in investigating the structure of the Temple of Solomon and sacred geometry, subjects that interest many Freemasons. This has led many to believe he was a mason himself who helped re-establishing the new form of Freemasonry that appeared in England in 1717. Even, some consider him seminal in this masonic “invention”. Still, there is no verifiable record of him being a freemason and no evidence has yet been found to directly connect him to Freemasonry. **Except one, and this is the pointing to the side gesticulation that he shows in his portraiture.** It occurs for example in his portraits in old age (fig. 50 and fig. 51) made in by James Thornhill *years before the act of establishing of the modern English form of Freemasonry*. This means that this kind of gesticulation predates Modern English Freemasonry suggesting also that Newton was a freemason too. His portrait on fig. 50 has been painted in “classical” masonic fashion showing him seating with a curtain behind him and a portico-like opening through which a dark landscape can be seen. He avoids looking directly at the viewer but instead is *staring out ambiguously into the space*. Notable is his left hand middle fingers pointing to the side gesture placed in the middle of his body.



Fig. 50 - 51

The same motif is represented in his portrait on fig. 51 in which, however, he is showing a different gesture. It is painted by James Thornhill in 1712 and here Newton poses before the same type of columns we see in Thornhill's self-portrait. There is a curtain that is as if falling on Newton's head - pulled aside to reveal a piece of the sky. Notable is Newton's telling, already tired straightforward gaze and his index finger pointing to the side gesture that he makes with *both* his hands. The impression is of a final message he is sending to the public which is more important than anything else.

To all appearances, there was a masonic pictorial tradition among Baroque artists before the appearance of the Modern Masonry dating at least back to 1689 when Newton's first "masonic" portrait was produced (fig. 52). It was made by another painter, Godfrey Kneller, who is showing Newton with three masonic gestures made at once. These are the pointing to the side right hand *middle fingers* gesture, the hidden left hand gesture and the avoiding viewer's gaze staring "off to the side" fiery gaze. The synchronicity between them is astonishing.

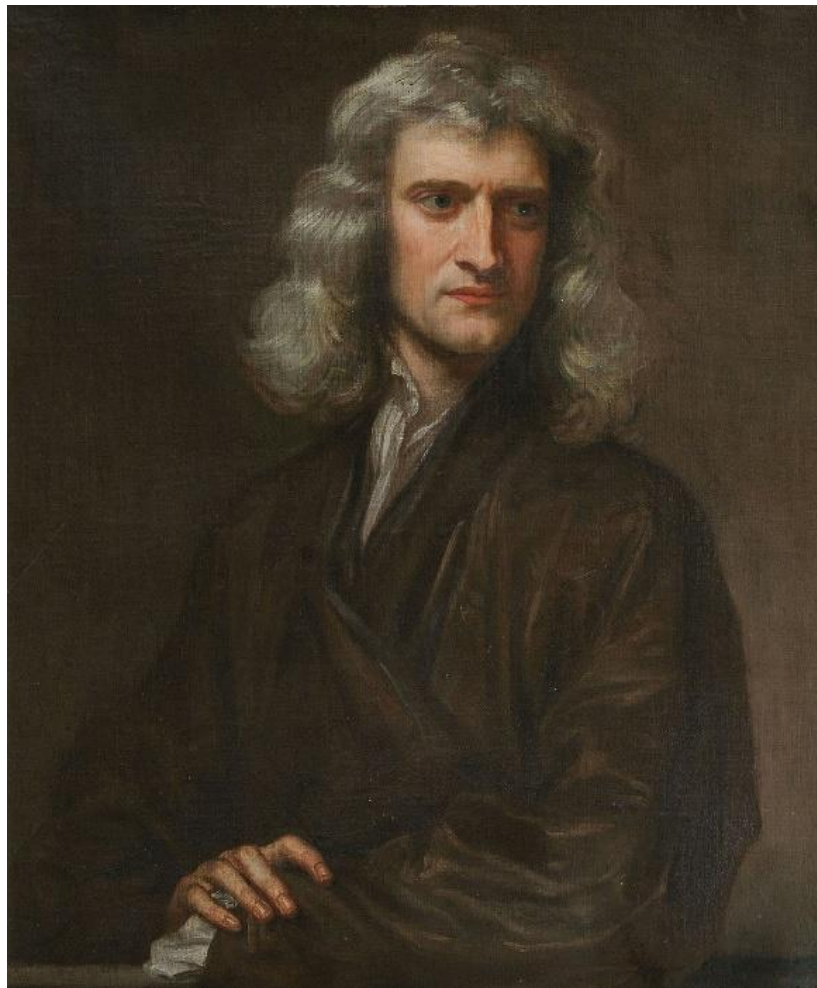


Fig. 52

Godfrey Kneller's (1646 - 1723) pre-1717 “masonic” portraits

A German-born painter Kneller settled in England after studying in Holland and Italy. He became the leading portraitist of England in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries who was created a baronet by king George I, an unprecedented honour for a painter.

There are many portraits that reveal Kneller's masonic status as his 1685 self-portrait shown on fig. 53 in which he is holding a scroll while pointing off to the side. It is worth noting his dark curtain-like cloak against which his left hand stands out while his right hand is completely absent, or “hidden” outside the picture.



Fig. 53 – 54

In the portrait on fig. 54 dated 1694 Kneller's hidden hand gesture is represented again along the middle fingers gesture that is also slightly “hidden” - it is inscribed in the folds of his garment. This is a unique semi-hidden–semi-middle fingers gesture that we find in many of his works (see below).

Among Kneller's sitters were many important figures as Charles Townshend (1674 – 1738) whose interestingly designed portrait is shown on fig. 55. It represents its sitter posing against a “natural” rocky portico-like background on which his face stands out. Beyond are the sky, light that is shining and a deep forest. Wrapped in tiled red cloak that recalls a curtain Townshend demonstrates a hidden hand gesture while defiantly looking at the audience. His right hand is pointing to the side in the manner described above—with the middle fingers that are partially hidden under the cloak. Again, this gesture is midway between hidden hand and middle fingers. Although rarely it is to be seen in other "masonic" portraits too.

A natural portico-like background we also find in the portrait of William Congreve (1670 – 1729) on fig. 56 and fig. 57 designed by Kneller that demonstrate the pointing to the side gesticulation. Similar is the John Rushout's (1770 – 1859) portrait shown on fig. 58. The combination of pointing to the side gestures he shows is typical and stunningly impressive to be seen in a great number of Baroque portraits.



Fig. 55 – 56

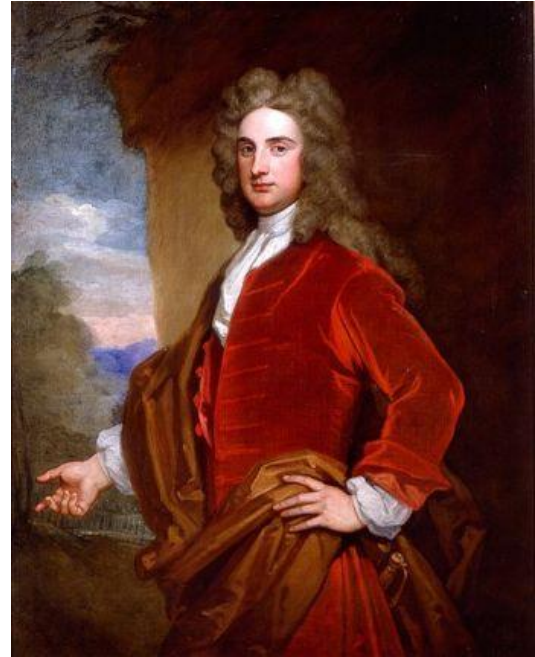


Fig. 57 - 58

John Radcliffe's (1652–1714) portrait on fig. 59 represents its sitter warmly gazing at the viewer while showing middle fingers pointing to the side gesture devotedly placed on his chest. On the left is his table, covered by a red cloth carrying a paper object right next to his arm. Emblematic is his holding glove hand gesture possibly representing his masonic character. Similar gesture we find in William Whitmore's (1682-1715) portrait on fig. 60.



Fig. 59 - 60

Christopher Wren (1632 - 1723)

One of the most famous and important men painted by Godfrey Kneller was Christopher Wren, the English scientist, mathematician, researcher and the greatest architect of his time. He is best known for designing the St Paul's Cathedral in London and many of the new buildings in the City of London after the Great Fire in 1666. A founder of the Royal Society he served as its president from 1680 to 1682.

Wren was an ardent devotee of many sciences, incl. Freemasonry of old of which he was the last of its Mohicans. As asserted in the James Anderson's revised Book of Constitutions, published in 1738, he was a freemason who "continued as Grand Master until 1708, when his neglect of the office 'caused the Lodges to be more and more disused.'" This signifies the collapse of the old-masonic pre-1717 system referred also in the first edition of the Constitutions (1723) in which Anderson pointed to the "*drooping lodges of London*".

Wren was the leader of all London's masonic lodges of old and especially of the Goose and Gridiron Lodge at St. Paul's churchyard (the Lodge of Antiquity No. 2 as it is called today). It was the oldest of the four founding Masonic Lodges of the Premier Grand Lodge of England in 1717. In his portrait by Godfrey Kneller shown on fig. 61 Wren demonstrates the pointing to the side middle fingers gesture along with the typically old-masonic "pointing off to the side" gaze, before portico-like inner space and the emblematic for the old (and new) Freemasonry book laying on the table.



Fig. 61

Special attention is placed on the compass in Wren's right hand. It was emblematic of Old Freemasonry which meaning that is not just "architectural", but also "masonic". It is shown in Gabanon's illustrations on fig. 62 representing an oath-taking ritual by the newly initiated Apprentice. In addition to his right hand gesture placed upon the book (the Bible, perhaps) he is holding a compass in his raised left hand. It is placed on his heart which is a telling gesture together with his bent kneeling knee. All men are dressed in simple attire, decorated just with apron and jewels in the Master's cases. Their gentle "ballet" masonic steps are referring to hidden aspects of their masonic teaching.

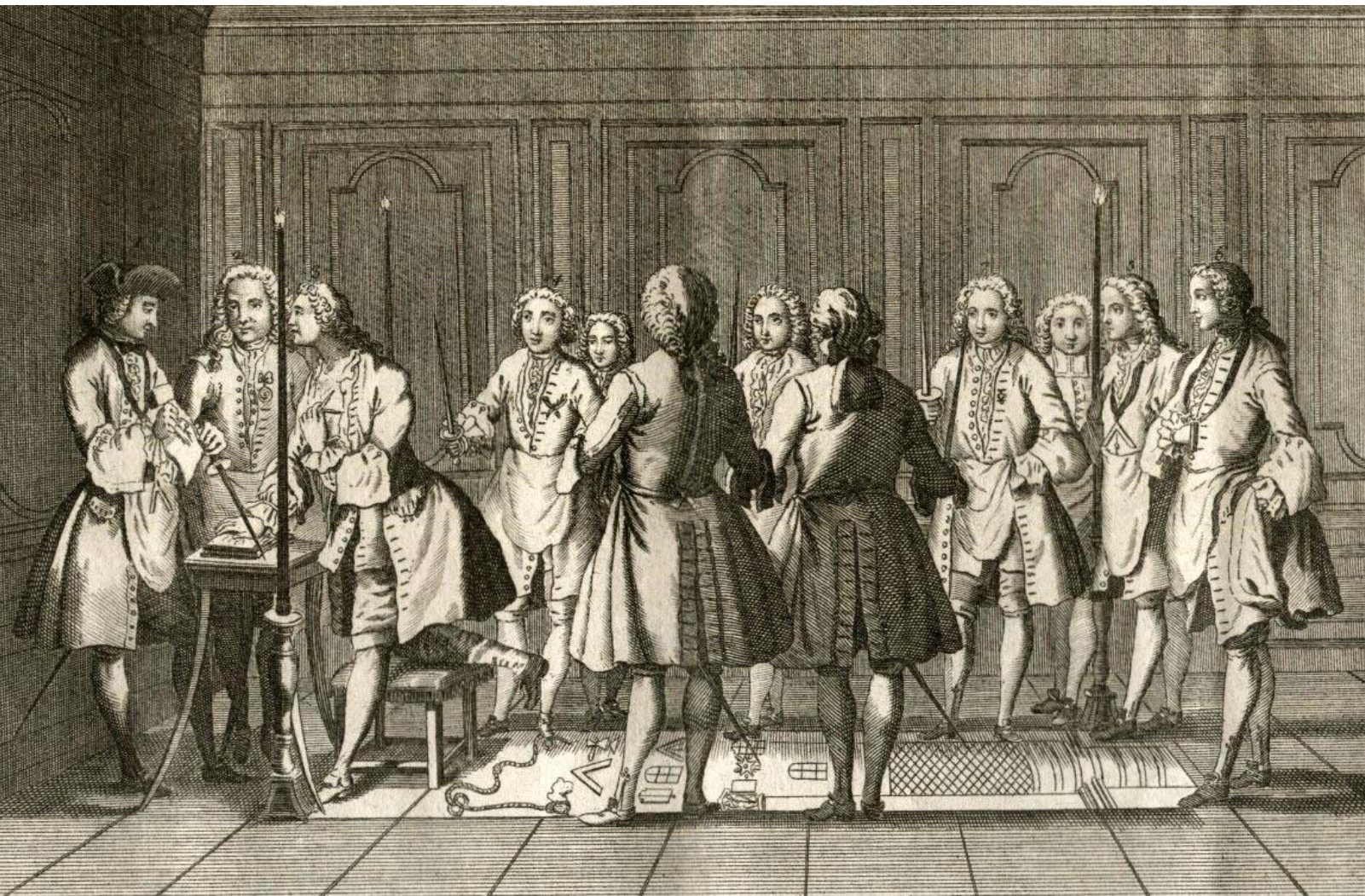


Fig. 62

Rudolf Steiner (1861 – 1925)

Steiner was an Austrian spiritual investigator, philosopher, Goethe scholar, social reformer, leading occult Teacher and founder of anthroposophy. In 1905, being at the time General Secretary of the German Section of the Theosophical Society and Arch Warden of its Esoteric Section, he was invited to join the Order of Ancient Freemasons of the Memphis and Misraim Rite. Although in a purely formal way he entered into relationship with this Order that allowed him to form his own Mystic Temple, Mystica Aeterna, in Berlin. This came to an end in the middle of 1914.

Steiner had knowledge of the pointing to the side gestures which he depicted in his First Apocalyptic Seal of Revelation, painted by Clara von Rettich for the theosophical congress in Munich in 1907 on the basis of his indications (fig. 63). It depicts Revelation 1:16:

"In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength"



Fig. 63

This seal represents God-like figure in long white garment whose feet are of molten metal. His fiery sword is projecting from his mouth and his right hand is surrounded by the signs of the planets: Saturn, Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter and Venus. Steiner explained:

“They are the sign that indicates the height to which a man will be able to develop himself. His planet then will consist of fiery matter, and he will be able to speak creatively into this fiery matter. The fiery sword that projects from the mouth of the figure in the seal represents this. All will be fiery, hence the feet of flowing metal.”¹

According to Steiner every sign, every form in his seal pictures is telling. This certainly refers also to the hand gestures of the figure clad in white. Both of them, made very skillfully, show the middle fingers pointing to the side configuration: as a pointing to the side gesture in the right hand and as a pointing or pressing down middle fingers sign in the left hand (fig. 64).



Fig. 64

These are hands that say a lot. Both containing the middle fingers configuration they are to be interpreted apocalyptically together with numerous other much older representations that are tracing back to Medieval and Renaissance times as shown on fig. 65, 66 and 67. These are depictions of God, or John in the second example, pointing off to the side made by Jakob Zeiller (1708 – 1783), Matthias Gerung (1500–1570) and Hans Burgkmair (1500 - 1559).

¹ See Steiner's lecture from 16 September 1907



Fig. 65 - 66



Fig. 67

This initial description serves but as an introduction to the topic hinting only at the basic imaginative information about the research problem. It shows the true, deeper origin of the masonic pointing to the side gestures that pre-dates Modern English Freemasonry entirely. This in what the artwork sets on fig. 1 and fig. 2 painted by different masters as Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641), Conte-Jacopino (1510–1598), Bartolomeo Passerotti (1529–1592), El Greco (1541–1614), Pontormo (1494–1557) show as well as numerous others as Piero Pollaiuolo (c. 1443 – 1496) (fig. 68), Parminigianino (1503 – 1540) (fig. 69), Largillière (1656 – 1746) (fig. 70), Karel Skreta (1610 – 1674) (fig. 71) and Robert Levrac Tournières (1667 – 1752) (fig. 72 - 73).



Fig. 68 – 69



Fig. 70 – 71



Fig. 72 – 73

The last of these impressive sitters is pointing into the direction of the ghostly shimmering light streaming through out the portico-like opening as if from another world (fig. 72). The true magic is in the *Light Behind the Curtain* falling and enlivening sitter's gentle smiling face and white peruke that has something of the form of the opening. It illuminates also his pointing to the light left hand resting on the right hand - both showing the middle fingers gesture (fig. 73) before the dark curtain-column inner space. Sitter's telling gaze is direct and challenging as if not of this world. Summarising, this is what the topic we mean to broach concerns in relation to the pointing to the side gesticulation and some other mainly old masonic key areas of artistic exploration. The topic will be examined thematically, rather than chronologically on the basis of still richer body of artworks during the period roughly from the fourth to twenty-first centuries, together with a consideration of their meaning. Decoding them is similar to learning how to read and reveal the vast information that is hidden in them and must come into the open.