

EPILOGUE

THE ROYAL ART OF MASONIC KINGSHIP: FROM STUART EXILE TO SWEDISH RESTORATION, 1688–1788

Emanuel Swedenborg believed that numbers could have magical and predictive powers when correlated with Hebrew letters.¹ Thus, the historical coincidence that he was born in 1688, the same year when James VII and II was driven from the British throne, could be interpreted as a foreshadowing of his long participation in Swedish service to the Stuart cause. Even more striking was the date of 1788, when Charles Edward Stuart died and Gustav III succeeded him as Grand Master of the Masonic Order of the Temple. The hundred years between 1688 and 1788 witnessed the survival of the Stuart cause and the “early modern” spiritual, intellectual, and political mentality within Sweden, while the revolutionary years after 1789 only partially moved the northern kingdom into the “modern” period. The next hundred years witnessed the surprising revival of the Jacobite cause and Swedenborgian Freemasonry within British and European political movements.² For the Irish nationalist poet William Butler Yeats, the year 1888 was fraught with Jacobite and Masonic significance, for he attended a requiem service for “Bonnie Prince Charlie,” while participating in a neo-Jacobite political movement and joining a Rosicrucian order based on Swedenborgian Masonic rituals.³ In each of these historically potent ‘88s, a secretive subculture of Kabbalistic and *Écossais* Masonic themes fueled the esoteric and exoteric activities of initiates and activists.

When the twenty-two year-old Swedenborg was sent to England in 1710, he was commissioned to learn as much as possible about the “new science” of Isaac Newton and his mathematical followers. Though Swedenborg’s biographers long assumed that he became an admirer of

¹ Swedenborg, *Spiritual Diary*, #3909, 4327; *Heaven and Hell*, #263.

² Ian Fletcher, “The White Rose Re-budded: Neo-Jacobitism in the 1890s,” in his *W.B. Yeats and His Contemporaries* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1987), 83–123.

³ Marsha Keith Schuchard, “Swedenborg, Yeats, and Freemasonry,” *Transactions of the American Lodge of Research, Free and Accepted Masons*, 38 (2011), forthcoming.

Newton (some even claiming, inaccurately, that he met the celebrated scientist), his experiences in England actually turned him against the Whiggish science of the Newtonians. Instead, he admired the more spiritually-infused, “Solomonic” science of the seventeenth-century, Stuart-supported Royal Society, in which John Wilkins, Robert Moray, Christopher Wren, and Robert Hooke combined experimental science with the esoteric interests of the Rosicrucians and Freemasons.

To Swedenborg, Benzelius, and their colleagues, the early modern science of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz represented the most imaginative and productive vision of science, for it drew upon previous neo-Platonic, Hermetic, and Kabbalistic thinkers, while stressing the modern importance of “demonstration.” Under the Swedish kings Charles XI and Charles XII, they received encouragement and support for their efforts at opening up Sweden to international and multi-ethnic research into scientific, military, and religious affairs. When this royalist agenda was overturned by Sweden’s move to anti-absolutist government, a strong counter-movement emerged that aimed to restore the traditional “Stuart” role of the monarch and the religious toleration advocated by the late Charles XII and current Stuart Pretender, James VIII and III. In the process, many of the leading intellectuals in Sweden maintained their seventeenth-century ideals throughout the eighteenth century.

Though the long dominance of Whig-Protestant historiography created a conventional wisdom about the allegedly doomed nature of the Jacobite cause after the disastrous defeat at Culloden in 1746, the vigorous revisionism currently taking place within international Jacobite studies reveals the enduring appeal, power, and threat of the Jacobite movement in the eighteenth and even nineteenth centuries. After the death of the “Young Pretender” in 1788, the cause may have seemed definitely dead, but ten years later Napoleon threatened to place Charles Edward’s brother, Henry Stuart, Cardinal York, upon the British throne “by force of arms.”⁴ Rumors circulated that Henry was implicated in the great Irish rebellion of 1798, which was supported by *Écossais* and Templar Masons but was crushed by British forces.⁵ Over the next decades, various Pretenders to the Stuart heri-

⁴ Shield, *Henry Stuart*, 281–84.

⁵ Brendan Clifford, *Freemasonry and the United Irishmen* (Belfast: Athol Books, 1992); A.T.Q. Stewart, *A Deeper Silence: The Hidden Roots of the United Irishmen* (London: Faber, 1993).