

New Member Packet

Companion _____

_____ Chapter No. _____

Exalted this ____ day of _____, _____



From the Grand High Priest

WELCOME TO THE ROYAL ARCH MASONS OF OREGON

Companion _____

Congratulations! Today you were exalted to the sublime degree of the Royal Arch and have achieved the pinnacle of Ancient Craft Masonry. You were taught as a Mark Master Mason to work honestly and industrially, only claiming and receiving that for which we are due. We were instructed that the reward of faith in our Creator will provide us a just reward in Heaven.

As a Past Master your were taught the necessity of representing Honor, Dignity and respecting the rights of others. You were taught the need that some must rule, and others are required to govern. This precept requires obedience on the part of one, and kindness and respect by the other. At times, the Chapter may convey the lessons taught in the Allegory. This work is optional at the conferral, but none the less important. It contains the principle that through effort and recognition of principles and honor, the oriental chair is open to all men.

Most Excellent Master are charged to spread Masonic Light and offer knowledge to those seeking it. They are taught to study the virtues of Hiram Abiff. To emulate his worthy example. You were made present at the completion of the first Temple and its dedication. You were informed of the joy the peoples of Israel felt to see the mighty works long in construction complete, and God's acceptance of their effort. Now and only now, were the works freed from their obligation to remain until the temple was complete, Now and only now were they eligible to travel, receive Masters Wages, and extend the light and knowledge of the less informed. Now they are eligible to receive that which was lost.

The climax of Masonic teaching is presented in the Degree of Royal Arch Mason. Those things that may have seemed veiled or unexplained in the Master Mason Degree are here illuminated. The candidate is now made aware of why information was withheld in the previous degrees. He is now informed that through his travels in the degrees of the Holy Royal Arch, he is now qualified to receive that which was lost.

This manual or pamphlet is present to you as a foundational source for you to seek the path to build your own temple, and prepare for the journey ahead.

We were taught that there are only three degrees of Masonry, of which you have previously received, and the Holy Royal Arch which you now possess. Welcome Companion.

Fraternally,

Grant Sharp, Grand High Priest
of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Oregon

For our new Companion

Your Chapter is _____ No. _____,
located at _____, _____

Our Convocations are held:_____.

ON YOUR MARK: If you have not done it yet, one of the most important things that you can do is decide on a Mark. Starting on page 18 of the *New Mark Master Packet*, there are two articles on Marks to assist you. When you've decided, record your mark on the form on page 21, make a copy of that form and submit the copy to your Chapter's Secretary. Keep the original for your records.

CONVOICATIONS: Chapters have "**Convocations**", not meetings; and the room in which these Conclaves are held is referred to as a "**Tabernacle**", not a Lodge room. Stated Convocations are held according to the by-laws of the constituent (local) Chapter. Chapters open on the Royal Arch degree to conduct business. The "**Annual Convocation**" is held once each year for the election of officers for the ensuing year. "**Special Convocations**" are held as scheduled to confer the degrees (Marc Master, Past Master, Most Excellent Master, Royal Arch). A "**Grand Chapter**" is the jurisdictional governing body of the state jurisdiction and meets annually. The **General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons INTERNATIONAL** is the international governing body and meets on a triennial basis.

OFFICERS: The officers of a Chapter are styled : High Priest, King, Scribe, Secretary, Treasurer, Captain of the Host, Principal Sojourner, Royal Arch Captain, Chaplain, Master of the 3rd Veil, Master of the 2nd Veil, Master of the 1st Veil and Sentinel.

It's a bit different as the 3 "Pedestal Officers" all sit in the East. The Captain of the Host may be thought of as the Senior Deacon and the Royal Arch Captain as the Junior Deacon.

CHAPTER DRESS: A Royal Arch apron is required for Stated Convocations. While there is no specified dress for a Stated Convocation, most companions opt for Red Blazer and Tie in the winter months (NOV—APR) and red polo shirt in the summer months (MAY—OCT).

DEGREES: The Chapter confers the four "Capitular" degrees: Mark Master, Past Master (Virtual), Most Excellent Master and Royal Arch.

The work of the Chapter consists of its ritual. The regular exercising of which will improve the execution of the work. Ritual work consists of the opening and closing on the Royal Arch as well as the Open / Close / Confer of the other Capitular degrees. Participation in all aspects of the work can be exciting and fun. Depending on the schedule of your Chapter, staying current on your parts may be more of a challenge. Like any Masonic duty, it is important to do yours well.

PROTOCOL:

The presiding officer is referred to as "High Priest" and uses this title below his signature of documents; He is properly addressed and referred to by the honorary title of "Excellent High Priest".

A Chapter opens on the Royal Arch degree for business and to confer degrees. In Oregon, There must be six Royal Arch Masons, four of which must be members of the chapter to be opened, one of the four must be authorized to preside. Nine (9) Royal arch Masons are required for the conferring the Degree of Royal Arch Mason.

The Grand High Priest is given private Royal Arch Grand Honors with the due guard and penal signs with the Mark Master, Past Master, Most excellent Master and concluding with the signs of a Royal Arch Member. When in Public, the Masonic Grand Honors of three times three may be presented.

Introductions in a Chapter are done in order, Senior Officers to Junior Officers. The Grand High Priest is always first to be introduced and the last to speak.

All members of a Chapter are addressed as "Companion", except for the High Priest who is an "Excellent Companion". For example the High Priest is addressed as Excellent Companion <name>, High Priest. Grand Officers are Excellent (Appointed), Right Excellent (Elected) or Most Excellent (Grand High Priest).

Prayers are always ended with "So Mote It Be.

When forming a group of 3, the best procedure is: put left feet together, heel to toe; right hand over heart, reach forward with the left hand and each companion then grasp the left wrist of the companion on his left; finally, reach forward with the right hand and grasp the right wrist of the companion on the left.

After Balancing 3 time 3, it is the Grand Royal Arch Word that is given, the Ineffable Name of Deity is not. The companion in east of the group of 3 starts first and the syllables proceed in a clockwise direction through the group..

When giving the signs, at a minimum, the Due Guard and sign for the Royal Arch should be given. Try to remember what the penalty is that they represent.

As in your Blue Lodge, always salute the High Priest on the step and with the Due Guard and sign of the degree that the Chapter is currently open on.



These are samples of the Emblems you may wear on your Jacket, cap etc.

The first on one the left is a chapter emblem. Every one that has been exhalated is entitled to wear this emblem.



The next emblem is a High Priest's emblem, and those serving as a highh Priest may wear this emblem. Notice the background is now red. Some chapters indicate officer with a Red background. If elected or appointed to an office, check with the High Priest or Secretary to see if your Chapter has a preference.



The emblem on the left, is that of a high Priest, but the words added in the three triangles indicating this is the emblem of a Past High Priest. It should only be worn by a past High Priest.



This emblem is that of a Grand High Priest, it is that of a High Priest but with the laurels added indicates it is that of a Grand High Priest. The proper emblem for a grand officer would have the Laurels surrounding a triangle and Triple Tau. Our custom is that you may continue to wear the highest emblem you have been honored to wear in perpetuity.

GRAND CHAPTER: The Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Oregon is the sovereign governing body of all of the Chapters in the State, similar in function to the Grand Lodge of Oregon. It is composed of Officers similar to those in a regular Chapter and as with the Grand Lodge, these officers will make visitations to constituent Chapters during the year to keep Companions aware of what is taking place in Capitular Masonry in the state.

The officers and their modes of address are as follows:

- Most Excellent (Companion)—Grand High Priest
- Right Excellent (Companion)—Grand King, Grand Scribe, Grand Secretary, Grand Treasurer
- Excellent (Companion)—all other Grand Officers

Once a year the Grand Chapter holds an Annual Convocation in coordination with the other York Rite Bodies as part of the Oregon Grand Sessions.

The Grand Chapter maintains a website at <https://oryorkrite.org/ra/> at which useful announcements, as well as calendars of activities, forms and educational materials may be found.

GENERAL GRAND CHAPTER: The General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons INTERNATIONAL is an advisory body to which most Chapters in the United States belong (some have never joined, due to a sense of individuality; while other have occasionally joined, left and joined again, depending upon the temperament of their ruling Officers). It serves a function similar to the Council of Grand Masters.

The officers and their modes of address are as follows:

- Most Excellent (Companion)— General Grand High Priest
- Right Excellent (Companion)— General Grand King, General Grand Scribe, General Grand Secretary, General Grand Treasurer
- Excellent (Companion)— all other General Grand Officers

Once every three years the General Grand Chapter holds a Triennial Convocation at which the senior Officers of the States and Countries who are members of General Grand Chapter may come together to discuss ideas, resolve issues and generally fraternize.

The General Grand Chapter maintains a website at <http://ggcrami.org> at which useful announcements, as well as calendars of activities, forms, lessons and educational materials may

be found.



Reference Materials You Should Obtain

Ritual of the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, International
(together with “the Essentials”) (Red Book)

Handbook of the Chapter, Research and education Committee
Of the Grand Chapter of Oregon

Manual of Chapter / Oregon Grand Chapter

The York Rite of Freemasonry by Frederick G. Speidel

A History of Royal Arch Masonry (4 volumes) by Everett Turnbull and Ray Denslow

The History and Symbolism of Royal Arch Masonry by Edward E. Graham

The Book of the Chapter by Albert Mackey pub. 1863

Capitular Development Course by Piers Vaughn

Tell Me More About the Mark Degree by Rev. Neville Barker Cryer

What Do You Know About the Royal Arch? By Rev. Neville Barker Cryer

Daily Doses of Light by Steven G. Tiner

Current General Grand Scribe of GGCRAM Int’l

In Search of That Which Was Lost—True Symbolism of the Royal Arch by Duncan Moore

Guide to the Royal Arch Chapter by John Shelville and James Gould

Additional Courses

The Chancellor Robert R. Livingston Library: reading course 12 on Capitular Masonry
<https://nymasoniclibrary.org/reading-course/>

Companion Adept of the Temple—York Rite Sovereign College of N.A.
<http://www.yrscna.org/forms?YorkRiteenrollmentform.pdf>

Capitular Mason’s Links of Interest

General Grand Chapter Web page—<http://www.ramint.org>

York Rite Information Page—<http://yorkrite.org>

Attendance and Special Events

Your attendance at our regular Convocations is very important to you and to your Chapter. It affords you the opportunity to learn the ritual and workings of your Chapter, participate in degree work and education and benefit from the “further light” which is available to you.

Your Chapter, like any organization, needs all of its members to attend and participate to keep it vibrant and growing. In addition to the normal business each month there will, or should be, practices, educational offerings, and community activities that will need your help. The High Priest or his designate should discuss with you what programs the Chapter has and how you might help.

In each Capitular Year, there are Special Events in addition to our Stated Convocations. These are:

- Official Visits from the Grand High Priest the District Deputy or a school of instruction.
- Chapter Festivals—in the Winter and Spring, there are generally one or more Chapter Festivals where Degrees are conferred on new Candidates.
- Mid-year Meeting—a mid-year meeting of the Grand Chapter to discuss business for the Grand Sessions. This is open to all interested Companions and is a great way to meet your Grand Chapter Officers. Generally the mid of October
- Easter Observance—Commandery observances of Easter, may be opened to the Public
- Ascension Day Observance—Commandery observance of Ascension, may be opened to the public.
- Grand Sessions—the Annual Convocation of the Grand Chapter. Any Companion may attend. Also the Order of the High Priesthood is presented. Generally held in April.
- Northwest Department Conference—meeting with General Grand Chapter officers, generally held in October.
- Christmas Observance—Commandery observance of Christmas, may be opened to the public.

You should try to travel to other Chapters and share in the unique Friendship and Brotherly Love that is found among Companions. A list of Oregon Chapters is found on Page 13 of this manual.

If you travel, consider inviting a companion to ride with you. It makes the journey more rewarding.

The Capitular (Chapter) Degrees



Mark Master—The Mark Master Mason degree forms one of the closest links connecting the old operative Masonry with the present speculative system. In the old operative Guilds each newly admitted craftsman was required to select and record a mark amid impressive ceremonies. The lessons taught in this degree are those of Integrity, Charity, Education and Discipline.



Past Master—The Past Master (Virtual) degree is conferred because of the traditional requirement that only Past Masters of a Blue Lodge may be admitted to Holy Royal Arch. It may aptly be called the degree of responsibility for in this degree the emphasis is placed on the importance of being faithful to our Masonic duties and obligations, a lesson which must be learned before we can enter the Royal Arch and receive the Master's Word.



Most Excellent Master—This degree describes the completion of King Solomon's Temple using factual Masonic history and information contained in the Old Testament. It tells us in ceremonies most solemn, most beautiful, most instructive and impressive the true purpose of man's life and therefore what that life should be ... to further spread the light of Masonry to our lesser informed Brethren..



Royal Arch—An ancient manuscript states “The Royal Arch Degree has always been considered more august, sublime and important than those which have preceded it and is the very summit of perfection in Ancient Masonry”. With the discoveries of the missing sacred treasure at the rebuilding of the Temple of Solomon that which was lost in the Master Mason Degree is restored to the Craft in a vivid portrayal of epic events.



Order of the High Priesthood—This is a chair degree which is conferred upon individuals after they have been elected to preside over their Royal Arch Chapter. Many American Grand Chapters maintain a council of the Order of High Priesthood, or a similar title, and anoint their installed High Priests with this dignity.

Capitular Masonry's

Philanthropies



Royal Arch Research Foundation (R.A.R.A.) - Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD, also referred to as Auditory Processing Disorder or APD) occurs when the central nervous system has problems processing information that comes through listening. People with CAPD have difficulty processing auditory input, especially in unfavorable listening environments. They also have problems using auditory information to communicate and learn.

CAPD manifests itself in a number of ways, some of which look like other learning difficulties. Examples include poor performance in listening tasks, understanding speech, developing language, and learning in general, all of which could be symptomatic of other learning disabilities as well.

Auditory processing difficulties can have a tremendous impact on learning, from the ability to absorb content presented verbally to utilizing phonics strategies when reading and spelling.

Autism Speaks—

Autism Speaks is dedicated to promoting solutions, across the spectrum and throughout the lifespan, for the needs of individuals with autism and their families through advocacy and support; increasing understanding and acceptance of autism spectrum disorder; and advancing research into causes and better interventions for autism spectrum disorder and related conditions.



Publications of Interest



Royal Arch Masons Interational Newsletter—This e-newsletter is published monthly by the General Grand Chapter. It is available to all Royal Arch Masons by subscription and at no cost.

The newsletter contains messages from the General Grand Officers, timely articles on Capitular Masonry and the Royal Arch Research Assistance (RARA) and other items of interest to all Companions.

For a subscription, navigate to <http://www.eepurl.com/o5sRT>



Royal Arch Mason Magazine—A quarterly publication published by the General Grand Chapter. It is also available to all Arizona Royal Arch Masons at no cost and is included with your Chapter membership, courtesy of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Arizona.

This magazine contains editorials and articles of interest to all Royal Arch Masons as well as an Arizona state supplement with articles of particular interest to Arizona Companions.



Regalia Vendors

Company	Clothing	Insignia / Jewels	Sundry Items
Lapel Pins and More (owned by SK Sidney J. Leluan III, REPGC.) http://www.pinworld.com/masonic_c_10.html 800-758-5890 (AZ)	✓	✓	✓
Pepco Designs Contact: Connie Sharp connie@pepcodesigns.com 503-7595779 www.pepcodesigns.com	✓	✓	✓
Fratline Emblematics http://fratline.net/store 877-459-1440 (KY)	✓	✓	✓
Geo. Lauterer Corp. http://www.lauterer.com/ 312-913-1881 (IL)	✓	✓	✓
Kalamazoo Regalia https://kalamazooregalia.com 888-344-4299 (MI)	✓	✓	✓
Lighthouse Uniform Co. http://www.lighthouseuniform.com 800-426-5225 (WA)	✓		
New London Regalia https://newlondonregalia.com/shop 800-634-8253 (OH)	✓	✓	✓
Blazer Depot http://www.blazerdepot.com 412=273-3444	✓		

Company	Clothing	Insignia /Jewels	Sundry Items
Dominion Regalia (Canada) http://www.dominionregalia.com/index.php?id=3&nProductGroupsID=4 416-752-9987 (ON)	✓	✓	✓
University Apparel - The MAAC http://www.themaac.com/ 609-871-3601 (VT)	✓	✓	✓
Mayo's Discount Suits http://Mayosdiscountsuits.com 803-773-2262 (SC)	✓		
Spreen Fraternal Supply Co http://www.spreenfraternalsupply.com 253-370-8959 (WA)	✓	✓	✓
Simpson Jewelry and Uniform http://www.simpsonsjewelry.com/index.php 765-628-7674 (IN)		✓	✓

Note: The inclusion of a Vendor in this listing does not constitute an endorsement by any of the Oregon Grand York Rite bodies. The list is provided solely for the convenience of our members.



Multnomah Chapter #1 – 4090 S. Commercial
Salem, OR
Meets 1st Friday in January, March, May, September,
and November at 7:30 PM
Victor Morton, Secretary
Email: victormorton97351@gmail.com

Portland Chapter #3 – 1525 SW Yamhill St,
Portland, OR –
Meets 3rd Wednesday in February, April, August,
October, and November at 7:30 PM
Richard Harris, Secretary
harrisazor@yahoo.com

Oregon Chapter #4 – 570 Clover Lane,
Ashland, OR –
Meets 3rd Wednesday at 7:00 PM
N.L. "Skip" Bessonette, Secretary, 541 301-7649
Email: skip_bessonette2395@gmail.com

Ferguson Chapter #5 – 306 SW Madison Ave.
Corvallis, OR –
Meets 3rd Monday at 7:30 PM
Terry Brown, Secretary
Email: masontdb@comcast.net

Bayley Chapter #8 – 431 1st Avenue,
Albany, OR
meets 2nd Wednesday at 7:30 PM
Richard L. Harper, Secretary
Email: richardlharper@aol.com

Washington Chapter #18 – 3612 SE 52nd Avenue,
Portland, OR –
Meets 2nd Monday at 7:30 PM
Dale Imbleau, Secretary, 971 570-4638
dale.imbleau@gmail.com

Grand Ronde Valley Chapter #20 – 125 W. Cen-
ter, Union, OR
Meets 4th Tuesday at 7:30 PM Dark during July
and August
Brian Lackey, Secretary
bwlackey@hotmail.com

Arago Chapter #22 – 626 Winchester Avenue,
Reedsport, OR –
Meets 1st Monday at 7:00 PM except September
meets 3rd Monday at 7:00 PM
due to Labor Day.
Dark July and August
Michael D. Sullivan, Secretary, 541 404-6261
e-mail: oregonbayareayorkrite@gmail.com

Reames Chapter #28 – 320 Northwest E Street,
Grants Pass, OR –
Meets 3rd Thursday odd months at 7:30 PM
Richard Surroz, Secretary, 541 660-4128
richsurroz@gmail.com

Woodburn Chapter #29 – 123 Ross St,
Molalla, OR
Meets 2nd Monday at 7:30
Michael Early, Secretary, 503 708-0563
michaelearly@aol.com

Zadoc Chapter #34 – Boulevard Grange 3890
Highway 201, Ontario, OR –
Meets 4th Tuesday of February, April, June, Au-
gust, October and 3rd Tuesday of December at
7:00 PM, except in December meets 3rd Wednes-
day 7PM
Paul A. Gehrman, Secretary, 541 889-2018

Forest Grove Chapter #37 – 2019 Main Street,
Forest Grove, OR –
Meets 4th Tuesday at 8:00 PM Dark June, July,
August, October, and December
C. Allan White, Secretary
Email: pm79afam60@aol.com

Cottage Grove Chapter #41 – 33322 Row River
Road, Cottage Grove, OR –
Meets 1st Tuesday at 7:00 PM Dark July and
August
Jeff Day, Secretary, 541 680-1973
Email: phroun@gmail.com

Columbia Chapter #53 – 315 North 18th Street,
Saint Helens, OR
February, April, June, August, December and 304
East 3rd Street, Rainier, OR
January, May, July, September, and November –
Meets the 3rd Saturday of the month at 8:30 AM
Dark in March and October
John P. Ridenour, Secretary, 503 396-0889
Email: john.p.ridenour@gmail.com

Educational Documents on the Mark Master Degree may be found in the "New Mark Master Packet", which you should have received as part of that Degree.

PAST MASTER

Background of the Past Master Degree

The origins of the Past Master Degree are lost in history, and it is probably as old as the Entered Apprentice and Fellowcraft Degrees. From what can be gleaned, from the earliest times, when a Master was installed in the Chair to preside over a Lodge, there was a short ceremony, usually performed only in the presence of other Past Masters, in which he possibly took a further Obligation, and was entrusted with a grip and word known only to Past Masters. It is generally believed that this ceremony might have its roots in Operative Lodges, where it would be expected that, given the close attachment to the Church, there would be some kind of ceremony and blessing when a Brother was elected to preside over his Lodge.

In Scotland, indeed, the Installed Master's Degree was not even introduced until 1870 by the Earl of Rosslyn, from the English Ritual. In a declaration of 1846 it was categorically stated that "The Grand Lodge further considers every Master Mason qualified to be elected to and fill the chair as R.W. Masons without receiving any additional secrets whatever."

This sort of Ritual was known by a number of different names, including the Secrets of the Chair, Passing the Chair, Past Master, Passed Master, and Installed Master. The term "Past Master" is further confused by the fact that a Master-elect could be said to be receiving the Past Master Past Master strictly applies to a Master who has served his Lodge for the specified period, and has now vacated the East.

We have learned that the earliest form of the Royal Arch Degree was open only to Past Masters, and it quickly became evident that, given the small number of Past Masters, this important system of teaching Masonic secrets was in imminent danger of becoming extinct. It was among the Antients firstly, that a Degree which conferred the Secrets of the Chair upon worthy and well-qualified Master Masons was worked, which would entitle them to receive the Royal Arch Degree; while the Premier Grand Lodge continued to confer a Past Master Degree upon those elected as Master of their Lodge. Following the Act of Union between the Antients and Moderns in 1813, the United Grand Lodge of England took control and limited the ceremony of Installation to duly elected Masters of Lodges only. From that time the requirement for membership of a Royal Arch Chapter was reduced to being a Master Mason for a determined period of time.

The first documented mention of a Past Master's Degree is found in Anderson's Constitutions of 1723, six years after the founding of the Premier Grand Lodge, but also the time that the first Grand Secretary was appointed, and proper records began to be kept. The first mention of the Past Master Degree in connection with Capitular Masonry was in Bolton, England

in 1768, when the minutes mention that nine Brothers received the Royal Arch Degree, despite not having served in the Chair as Master of a Lodge.

In the United States, it is believed that the first known mention is the working of the Excellent Degree in St. Andrew's Royal Arch Lodge in 1769, Boston Massachusetts. When St. Andrew's and King Cyrus Chapters met in 1795 to standardize their Chapter Degrees, the records of St. Andrew's Chapter reported the working of the Past Master and Most Excellent Master Degrees in place of their Excellent and Super Excellent Degrees. Many scholars are certain this simply reflects a name change, and that this indicates the Excellent Degree practiced by them was in fact a Past Master Degree.

Naturally, given that the Past Master Degree was adopted as part of the series of Capitular Degrees by General Grand Chapter, there was occasional tension with those Grand Lodges who practiced a Past Master Degree as part of its Lodge Installation ceremonies. In 1853, the Triennial Session of General Grand Chapter resolved: "This body does not claim jurisdiction over the degree of Past Master, when about to be conferred on a Master-elect of a subordinate Lodge. Nature — and the inventive Mason — abhors a vacuum, and during the 1800s it appears the Degree of Past Master became increasingly elaborate and ribald, finally leading the General Grand Chapter under its General Grand High Priest, Charles Gilman of Maryland, to revise the Ritual in 1856. Albert Gallatin Mackey, his successor, commented in his Book of the Chapter (pub. 1858): "One of the evils resulting from the disseverance of the Past Master's degree from its legitimate position as a part of the installation service in a symbolic lodge, was the introduction of a number of ceremonies into the Chapter degree.. At length a powerful effort was made to divest the degree of those offensive ornaments which had been gradually fastened upon it, and to restore it, as nearly as possible, to its original simplicity."

That the Degree had become "offensive" was reflected by Edmund Ronayne, writing in his 1879 exposé of Freemasonry: "Notwithstanding this recommendation, the subordinate Chapters throughout the country continued to indulge in almost unlimited buffoonery in conferring this degree. I received this degree of Past Master twice, first in the Chapter on which occasion all kinds of stupid horse-play were indulged in at my expense..."

Back to Basics

The revised Ritual intended "to abridge the ceremonies now conferred in the Past Master's degree within the narrowest constitutional limits, only retaining the inducting of the candidate into the Oriental Chair, and communicating the means of recognition."

The current ritual reflects this minimalism, and the Degree is comparatively short, certainly in comparison with the now elaborate ritual conducted by a Board of Past Masters in the English Emulation Ritual. While some States no longer confer any kind of Past Master Degree, New York still holds a Board of Installed Masters in a side room prior to installing the Master-elect of a Symbolic Lodge, at which he takes his Obligation and is entrusted with the Grip and Word of Past Master.

In some Chapters, the Past Master Degree may still contain some of the elements of hazing referred to by Mackey, since the Ritual may include a short scene which most certainly places the Candidate seated in the Oriental Chair in an embarrassing situation. This is not part of the

authorized ritual from General Grand Chapter but is still added at the whim of the conferring cast.

Differences between a Virtual and an Actual Past Master

Given that a Past Master Degree is practiced within a Chapter, however similar it may be in form to that practiced within the Blue Lodge system, in 1853, it was categorically declared to be unconnected with the latter Degree, as it was necessary to distinguish between the two forms of Past Master Degree practiced in Capitular and Symbolic Masonry.

Some research has suggested that there may at one time have been differences in the secrets conferred, either a slight variation in grip or password, to ensure that nobody receiving the Past Master Degree as a prelude to receiving the Royal Arch Degree could gain entrance to a Lodge of Past Masters about to confer their version upon a Master-elect. In the United States, at least, this possible difference, if it ever existed, has disappeared over time, and there is now no substantial difference between the two Rituals, other than the fact that, in the Blue Lodge setting, obedience to the Grand Lodge, its Constitutions, Laws and Edicts is sworn; and the ancient penalties are omitted. Also, only the grip and word are given. In Blue Lodge, the Charge, and the presentations of gavel, Constitutions, Charter and gavel are done in presence of the whole Lodge at the Installation Ceremony (and sometimes non-Masonic visitors if an open Installation is conducted).

Another difference is in the name. While the ceremony within a Lodge created a Past Master (sometimes referred to as an Actual Past Master), the ceremony within Capitular Masonry creates a Virtual Past Master. This is to indicate that he has not been elected by a Lodge to serve over them, nor has he been required to meet the other prerequisites such as having served as a Warden. Because of this he cannot serve as a Master in a Blue Lodge, nor expect to receive any of the rights and privileges associated with that honor. These include conferring the Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft or Master Mason Degrees, being invited to a seat in the East, or being received in a Blue Lodge as a Past Master. Similarly, many of the duties of a Past Master recited in the Chapter are not in fact relevant to a Virtual Past Master (such as presiding at dedications, consecrations, the laying of cornerstone, and presiding at funeral

Variations Can Lead to Embarrassing Situations!

Unfortunately, the variations in requirements to receive — and to observe — the Royal Arch Degree can lead to embarrassment when visiting other countries.

American Master Mason can, by virtue of receiving the Virtual Past Master Degree, receive the Royal Arch Degree, and thereby rise through the offices to become High Priest of his Chapter. In England and Ireland, while any Master Masons may become a Royal Arch Mason, only those who have sat as Master of a Lodge may be elected to the three principle positions of the Council — Scribe, King or High Priest. An English Mason would find it most confusing that an American Mason could be a Past High Priest yet not Past Master of a Lodge. Another source of much confusion is that, in the Domatic Ritual (practiced in England and her Commonwealths, including Canada), the Grand Council are called the Three Principal Officers — and the most senior one is “Z”, or Zerubbabel the King. “T” or Jeshua the High Priest is the second in line. And the sign given on entering and retiring is uniquely given with the *left*, and

not the right hand in the English Royal Arch!

This can lead to problems when an English Royal Arch Mason wishes to visit an American Chapter. In theory there are a few areas of concern. Firstly, if he is not a Past Master, he will not have received the Past Master Degree — and indeed in most jurisdictions receiving the Past Master Degree in a Blue Lodge is for some reason not considered a substitute for receiving the “expedient” version in the Capitular Degrees! Secondly, since it is an entirely separate Body, he may not be a Mark Master Mason. Finally, since the Most Excellent Master Degree forms part of what we call the Cryptic Council, he probably won't have received that either.

A key issue is the fact that only Past Masters can invoke the Great and Sacred Name under a Living Arch and over a Triangle. In English Chapter the three Principal Officers raise the Arch, give the words and lower the Arch while the rest of the Companions watch. An English Royal Arch Mason is therefore not equipped to participate in our Openings and Closings.

There are just a few examples of the many differences which can lead to embarrassment, or possibly worse, a violation of our own Obligations if we allow those who have not yet taken certain Obligations to see the working and receive the signs and words. In all cases it is best to contact the Grand Secretary's Office to double check the situation regarding a visitor, if any notice of an impending visit has been given. In our own Jurisdiction a recent change was made to the Constitution to ensure the Mark, Past Master, Most Excellent Master and Royal Arch Degrees are given in that order: yes, it was discovered the a Chapter had conferred the Degrees in a random order!

The General Grand Chapter has a provision in its Constitution that if a person presents himself from another jurisdiction as a Royal Arch Mason, he may receive the preceding three Degrees in order to heal him and allow him to attend a meeting of Chapter without charge or capitation fee. However, this is impractical in most instances, since the visitor probably would not be around for the length of time required to put on the Mark, Past Master and Most Excellent Master Degrees.

When investigating a prospective visitor to a Chapter, if they hail from a jurisdiction other than one under the auspices of General Grand Chapter, you now understand that there are a number of precautions which must be taken, all the while ensuring that you in no manner offend the prospective visitor. If, for example, the visitor is a Principle or Past Principal, he may be invited to attend the conferral of the Royal Arch Degree. It is up to the High Priest whether a visitor who is not a Past Master should be allowed to attend a Royal Arch Degree, and in any event he may only observe, and not participate in the ceremony. Nobody outside the jurisdiction of the General Grand Chapter should attend the Opening and Closing of a Royal Arch Lodge, since they will not be in possession of the intervening signs and dueguards of the 4th to 7th Degrees.

If a person has moved to the United States and intends to affiliate with a Chapter, it is best if they simply go through the Degrees here, so that they might be best prepared to both learn all the Signs and Dueguards, and so that the Certificate they receive will allow them free entry into any Chapter under the purview of the General Grand Chapter.

Lessons of the Past Master Degree

The Address to the Candidate expressly states that: "The Past Master's Degree, unlike all the other Degrees in Freemasonry, sheds no light upon itself." It later states: "Our candidates are made to pass the Chair simply as a preparation and qualification towards being invested with the solemn instructions of the Royal Arch."

However, it would not be strictly accurate to say that undergoing a ceremony which, symbolically at least, prepares you to preside over a Lodge is without teaching. Whether or not the Candidate actually has to go through the work of planning and running an efficient Lodge, the very act of taking an Obligation, and focusing on the accoutrements with which he is furnished provide a number of points for meditation.

Indeed, it is to be hoped that there is something to be learned in this Degree. The Address tells us that "it was doubtful to many if it (the Past Master Degree) could legally be abolished, and, the law still requires that the August degree of Royal Arch shall be restricted to Part Masters." However, this statement is not strictly true, since a number of jurisdictions have removed the Degree yet their members are still recognized by jurisdictions which have not. It would also seem tragic if what was considered a meaningless ceremony was blindly followed from century to century which had no discernible use at all, simply because of blind tradition.

One author has described the lesson inculcated in this Degree as "responsible leadership." It teaches that moderation, decorum and justice which are essential for the fair exercise of Masonic leadership, and since the Capitular Degrees are intended to make the Brothers ever more tied to the beloved Craft and teaches them to lead their younger and less enlightened Brethren through leadership, example and education, this Degree would seem to be a moment of stillness for the Candidate to reflect upon those important attributes. The emblem of the square is worn about the neck, rather than being presented to him as a Working Tool or indicated upon the Holy Bible. It is to remind the Master forcibly that it is upon himself he must work to create the spiritual temple. He must take up the work and assume it himself in order to lead by example.

The threefold cord is likewise a reminder that, while the follower offers of himself, he must offer twice as much to help the newly-made Masons to achieve his goals. In some interpretations it manifests a lesson indicated earlier — the Capitular Degrees emphasize a transition from the

physical basis of the Symbolic Degrees to a Spiritual nature. Thus the Master offers an addition, spiritual level to the grip to raise the Candidate up to a higher plane.

In particular, it reminds us that we are bound by three kinds of law: the Law of Self, the Law of Man, and the Law of God.

The Law of Self is that circumscribing of passions we learned in the first degree, the need to control ourselves in order to make us fit citizens of society and a help to our fellow man.

The Law of man is represented by the presentation of the Constitutions and Bylaws, which teach us that, as members of society, we should both abide by and as Master enforce those rules which mankind has commonly agreed to follow.

Finally, by pointing once more to the Volume of the Sacred Law and invited to study and follow its precepts, we are reminded that the most sublime Law is God's, and if all our actions are calculated to do His will, we will never falter.



MOST EXCELLENT MASTER

Brief History

The Symbolic Degrees are set in the nearly completed Temple of King Solomon, as is the Mark Degree. The more elaborate Actual Past Master's Degree, as practiced in England at least from the mid-1800s, and in the longer explanation in the Ritual practiced in some States, is set in the Temple at a time following its completion and dedication, and describes the visit of the Queen of Sheba to see the Temple with her own eyes. In the Royal Arch Degree we will move forward several hundred years in history to a time when Solomon's Temple lies in ruins. Masonry abhors a vacuum, and it was perhaps inevitable that at some point a ritual would be written which covered perhaps the most important moment in the story of King Solomon's Temple: its completion and dedication

There is a symbolic and esoteric reason why this story needed to be told, too. How are we to move from the story of an incomplete Temple which is meant to represent that Temple we are building within ourselves, to the rebuilding of the Second Temple and discovery of Truth, if we never completed the first task?

Given these facts it would be quite easy to believe in the long-told story that it was Thomas Smith Webb who penned the Ritual for Most Excellent Master, in order to create the perfect conclusion to the Blue Lodge system and the transition into the Red Degree of Royal Arch. Indeed, that is what many researchers both assumed and wrote in their books. However, the story is far more complicated than that.

In the previous session we learned that St. Andrew's Royal Arch Lodge conferred the Excellent Master Degree, which is believed to be an early form of the Past Master Degree. However, they also conferred a Degree called the Super Excellent Master (not to be confused with the Degree of the same name conferred in a Cryptic Council). The name "Excellent" was already used in several Degrees in existence in the mid-1700s. While a number of members had connections with Irish Masonry, which included Degrees with names such as "Excellent" and "Super Excellent", there is a likely candidate in the 19th Degree of the Scottish Early Grand Rite, called "Most Excellent Master", which closely resembles our present Degree.

The Candidate is admitted on the Keystone, and the Most Excellent Master who presides tells the Candidate: "This degree was founded to commemorate the finishing of the first Temple..." It is the conclusion of the authors of the official history of the Royal Arch Degrees, commissioned by the General Grand Chapter, that this is the most probable source of the Most Excellent Master Degree, despite the fact that there is no clear trail showing how the Degree traveled from Scotland to America. They add the interesting comment that the name "Excellent" almost certainly came from the Geneva Bible (which was commonly in use in the colonies at the time, alongside the King James Bible, from a footnote to 1Kings, 5:18 which said: "The Hebrew word is Giblym which some say, were excellent masons" (*sic*).

Also of note, while the Degree might have come from Scotland, the Degree called "Excellent" in their system nowadays is a required precursor to receiving the Royal Arch Degree, but its Ritual now encompasses the Passing of the Veils. It was also noted above that some researchers believe the Most Excellent Master Degree may originally have been a part of an extended version of the Mark Degree, in which the Keystone, having been lost and found, was then used to complete the Temple.

Whatever its origin, it was not the original work of Thomas Smith Webb. Records show that, in 1783, St. John's Lodge No. 2 in Middletown, Connecticut formed a Chapter, at which several members were introduced into the "sublime degree of most excellent Masons." However, the records show the ceremony took no longer than 30 minutes, which would scarcely have allowed time to place the Keystone, and certainly not enough time to perform the Dedication Ceremony.

In 1797 Temple Chapter, a Royal Arch Chapter, was founded in Albany by Webb and others, with Webb being installed as High Priest. At the following meeting, in mid-February, five Candidate (Ezra Ames among them) had the Degree of Most Excellent Master conferred upon them. However, Webb and his colleague, John Hamner had already learned of this Degree in 1796, when they visited Cyrus and St. Andrew's Chapters. The version they observed and recorded was the shorter one which only included the placing of the Keystone. While not the author of the Most Excellent Master Degree, most researchers are confident that he was the ritualist who expanded the Degree into its present form, including the important processions and the Dedication of the Temple.

While this Degree can be performed with dignity by a relatively small cast, it has always been the one which has attracted the most opulent performances. Of course, modern laws forbid the burning of incense or the lighting of banks of candles in many locations, and in particular the extravagant pyrotechnics which were the culmination of this Degree, when the Shekinah descended from heaven to light the pot of incense. In 1922 in the old Convention Hall in Kansas

City, Missouri, in the presence of the General Grand High Priest, Dr. William Frederick Kuhn, over *one thousand* Candidates received the Degree before an audience of over *eight thousand* Companions. A seventy-five piece orchestra and one hundred fifty-strong choir provided the music; and the processions contained between two to three hundred participants! However, the opulence of the Ritual should not take away from the important message: that one cycle has ended and a new cycle — a more spiritual one — is about to begin.

Purpose of the Degree

The Degree is what is sometimes called a “pivot Degree”, in that it completes one story cycle and prepares for the next cycle. Indeed, in mainland Europe the Royal Arch has played such a role in the past: in both the Rite of Strict Observance of Baron von Hund and the Scottish Rectified Rite of Jean-Baptiste Willermoz in the late 1700s, both being Christian Orders, the Royal Arch story was used to lead the candidates from the Old Testament stories to the New Testament. Hiram was depicted as having risen from the dead, as an Exemplar for all Masons who, having completed the physical Temple, now needed to see it torn down — symbolized by Hiram's death — in order to rise again from the ruins and discover Truth, which was symbolized by Hiram's resurrection.

In this sense the preceding Degrees are now crowned by this final scene. As participants in the building of the Temple, the Craftsmen who discovered the assassins, who marked their work and received wages, and who were installed as Masters, as the Overseers of other more junior Workmen, and who thereby proved their proficiency in all the preceding Degrees, are finally recognized as Most Excellent Masters. We have completed our labors upon the physical Temple in the physical Sphere, and are now going to Graduate, in a sense, before taking up more spiritual labors. In this Degree we physically enact a great spiritual Truth: the completed Temple is now fit to house the Ark of the Covenant, just as our Great Work upon ourselves — that work of spiritual alchemy — has transformed ourselves from rough, crude stones into a Temple of holiness and morality fit to house the Divine Spark of Truth.

Since then the one major change made to the Ritual in many States has been the elimination of the Most Excellent Masters Song, penned by Webb himself. We are fortunate in Oregon that the song is still included in our Ritual. Every attempt should be made to sing it: the best tune to use is 0 Come All Ye Faithful (*Adeste Fideles*), since many people know the tune. The penultimate line needs to be repeated three times. If that is not possible, if there is a soloist of any worth in the Chapter, they may sing it as a solo. The atmosphere then becomes more powerful for the focus it brings to the ceremony.

The Six Circumambulations

Following the admission, there is a challenge, in which the candidate is tested with the Keystone. Having carried it as someone else's work in the Mark Degree, now he is finally identified with it himself. This symbolizes the fact that he is now passing to a higher level, and as this Most Excellent Master Degree represents, in a way the second turn of the cycle of development, so in this Degree, which follows the usual form of all the preceding Degrees (with the exception of the Past Master Degree, which requires no challenge at the door of the Lodge), we can see the progression of tools and objects with which the candidate is challenged tells its own story.

The Profane entering the Lodge is challenged with no particular instrument, other than being told that it is sharp. In England it is a dagger or poignard; but the important thing is that it is sharp and he feels it. There are many meanings to this symbol, from the prick of conscience to the simpler barring entrance. However, once he becomes a Mason, he is challenged with a progression of implements, from the Square, then the Compasses, then the Engravers Chisel, and finally here the Keystone. This is no random progression. His first challenge is with the symbol of the Terrestrial World — the Square. Then he is challenged by the symbol of the Grand Architect and the Celestial World — the Compasses, as he completes his journey through the Blue Lodge Degrees. Next he is challenged by the Chisel which, as we have seen, begins to hint at the internal world and the beautification of the work. He is now in symbolic possession of all the implements required to cut and prove the Keystone, for which his labors on the perfect ashlar are shown to be but a preparation. By mastering both himself and the lessons of the previous Degrees he is finally allowed to be touched by — or represent — the Keystone, that Peculiar Stone which completes the Temple, whose base is firmly seated on a terrestrial foundation, and whose cap or “cape” extends upwards like a rainbow, striving towards the heavens. And upon this Peculiar Stone is written a Name...

This time he circumambulates, or circles six times clockwise about the Altar, pausing before the Right Worshipful Master each time to salute with the sign and due guard of each ascending Degree. At each circumambulation the Chaplains recites verses from Psalm 24, which tradition says "accompanied a ceremony of the entry of God (invisibly enthroned upon the Ark) into the Temple." (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops).

Now the number six — and the number seven — have great symbolic significance in the Bible. God created the heaven and the earth in six days, and on the seventh He rested. In our Ritual we perform six circumambulations, and the ceremony of completion ends with the placing of the Keystone signifying the work is done. We are told to remove our aprons. In other words, we rest. We have built our Temple in six days, and now man has been perfected, there is rest.

The theme can also be seen in the Book of Joshua, when the Israelites circumambulate the city of Jericho in silence for six days, and on the seventh circumambulate seven times with shouting and noise. We can also see the movement in the Hajj, when Moslems circumambulate the Ka'aba — this time anticlockwise — seven times. In each Degree the Candidate has circumambulated, or walked in a circle, one extra time for each higher Degree. It should be recognized that in most religions and magical practices the act of circumambulating is symbolic of raising energy or rising to a higher plane. This is the principle, for example, behind walking

labyrinths, which we can see in many cathedrals, as well as outdoor groves.

Once accomplished, the Candidate approaches the Altar to take the Obligation.

The Obligation, Penalty, Grip and Word

Once the Candidate is in due form, the Companions gather in a circle about him, emphasizing that peculiar symbol of the point with a circle — now physically represented by the Altar and Candidate within the Fraternal Circle of his Brethren, just as the Brethren formed the Symbolic Temple in the Blue Lodge at the time of taking the Obligation. The Square has become a circle; and the Brethren now symbolize that circle first seen in the Mark Master Degree upon the Keystone. The most important part of the Obligation, which otherwise follows the usual formula, is that of promising "to dispense true Masonic light and knowledge to my less informed Brethren to be best of my ability." Having become proficient in the knowledge of all the preceding Degrees, the Brother promises to become a beacon, or a mirror, to reflect that Light and Knowledge upon other worthy Masons. It is interesting that the penalty this time emphasizes the removal of the organs of physical life and their being thrown back onto the earth to rot (the term "dunghill" is poetically used). In other Degrees an offending part of the anatomy was usually removed — for example, the right hand in the Mark Degree for improperly seeking wages not one's due — but here the element is that of Earth. We will return to this later.

The Grip is called the "Cover Grip" since it covers, or includes, all the preceding grips (really it only covers the Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason grips — but we shall see why in the section below called "Esoteric Implications").

The Word, "Giblim", means "Most Excellent Master" according to the Geneva Bible, as we have read. As such the title means little in itself in the English language, since it is but an honorific, and is used in the preceding Degree. However, the Hebrew word "rabboni" makes a powerful statement. It is only used once in a footnote in the Old Testament, and but twice in the New Testament. It can also mean "My Great Master", and is the term uttered by Mary Magdalene upon seeing the resuscitated Jesus. It was also used by the blind man in Mark 10:51 when he asks Jesus to restore his sight. We must remember that both Operative and Speculative Masonry developed in countries where Christianity was the predominant — if not sole — religion. It is hardly surprising, therefore to find this word taking on a much stronger meaning. So in the Bible the word is never actually used to indicate a good craftsman: it *is* used to indicate a man considered to be without sin; in this context the word becomes a very powerful statement indeed. Again, in many continental rituals of a Christian nature, Hiram becomes Christ, and of course one famous name for Christ is — the *Word*.

The Completion of the Temple

This theme has been comprehensively covered already. The only point to be made here is that the anthem tells us "to bring forth the cape-stone". Now, the copestone, or capstone is the final stone which tops off a building. It is **not** the Keystone, for that *keys* an arch together. In most States the word has been modified to say "Keystone". Albert Mackey, former General Grand High Priest, makes much of this point in his Monitor. Perhaps the confusion is deliberate: the Keystone has an important significance due, to its shape, and its central position in the Arch, which has often been portrayed as holding up the canopy of heaven like the arch of Noah's rainbow, perhaps therefore harking back to the Mark Mariner Degree, the stones forming the zodiacal signs between the Solstices which at one time marked the six monthly term of the Lodge Master in a number of traditions. On the other hand the Capstone marks the true completion of a building, yet its shape is of little interest, since it could be just another rectangular ashlar.

Removal of Aprons

The removal of Aprons is a powerful symbol that we have come to the end of the Symbolic Degree cycle. It also represents that seventh day of rest, referred to above. Everything in this Degree emphasizes and stresses completion, and end of a cycle and the beginning of a new one. But to proceed from one cycle to the next it is important that one has learned the lessons of the previous one.

In the circumambulations of this Degree we were reminded of Creation. Indeed, many papers have been written linking the building of the Temple with the story of Creation. Consider again the number "seven". The Temple was "seven years and upwards" in its construction (in Leviticus 25:4 the seventh year is called a Sabbath, which was the day God rested). It was dedicated during the Feast of Tabernacles, a seven day festival held in the seventh month.

In the context of Creation, what could removing one's aprons symbolize? Genesis 3:7 says: "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." Note that in this case the Geneva Bible is most definitely *not* referenced: it is also known as the "Breeches Bible" since it says they made themselves breeches! So a key external symbol of man's fall and imperfection is the wearing of the apron. Yet once the work upon ourselves is completed we remove the apron. We have in a way atoned — we have returned to our original, or primitive, state. We have created a Temple fit for the Lord to dwell in.

We see a reference to the fact that we have completed the external work, and are now ready for the internal work which will be our task in the next level, plane, or phase of our development.

The Reception

In this Degree there is no conferral of special secrets, nor any teachings to be imparted. It is assumed the Most Excellent Master already knows all he needs to, and this is more of a "Graduation Ceremony". Therefore King Solomon and Hiram, King of Tyre do not confer a Degree, but rather greet the newly-Obligated Brethren, receiving and acknowledging them Most Excellent Masters.

But this is once more accomplished through touch. In every Degree, more or less subtle depending upon the source of the Ritual, there is a transmission, accomplished through a meeting of bodies, a handshake. Think how all rituals of transmission, adulthood, religious passage are always accompanied by the passing of a “certain something” from the person who has it to the person who does not, by means of touch. We offer our hand "in token of friendship and Brotherly love". We shake hands, we embrace, we kiss, we impose hands upon the head, and we anoint: all involve touching. This time the handshake is given and received as equals, not with one person kneeling. The acknowledgement is therefore of a peer.

The Dedication of the Temple

The Dedication is almost completely made up of readings from II Chronicles Chapters 5 and 6. Those parts narrating history are usually given to the Chaplain, but the portentous prayer of King Solomon at the Dedication is put in his mouth and is followed by what used to be one of the most dramatic moments of all Freemasonry (prior to fire hazard laws, that is!).

Following the deposit of the Ark of the Covenant in its proper place, and the invocation by King Solomon, the sign of divine approbation — possibly even a sign of the Lord coming down to occupy the Mercy Seat — used to be a most dramatic pyrotechnic display used to visibly indicate the Shekinah coming down from heaven and igniting the incense. II Chronicles is a little more prosaic, telling us that "the house was filled with a cloud."

This “fire from heaven” is a common manifestation of communication between God and man. To give some example, think of the fire which lit the altar built by Abraham which to sacrifice his son; the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; the pillar of fire of the Exodus; the burning bush. Following this manifestation we have the fire Elijah summoned down on the guard and his fifty men, and of course the fire which descended to light the bituminous substance drawn up by the priests and laid upon the altar at the time of the Rededication of the Second Temple of Zerubbabel. Further, we have the tongues of fire which settled upon the Disciples. Each of these indicate a moment of communication between God and his creation. It also suggests that the Ark of the Covenant was something inactive until that moment, in that the true sign of occupancy or divine approbation did not take place until the divine fire descended, and only then was the Holy of Holies truly filled with the glory of God. If the analogy between Man and the Temple as a type of Man is to be maintained, then it is not until the divine breath or Word enters the body that it is vivified with the spirit.

Psalm 122 is then spoken antiphonally (i.e. alternating verses) between King Solomon and Hiram King of Tyre. This unusual treatment of the Psalm is more at home in religious services, where choirs often sing antiphonally (the two choirs being called *Cantoris*, or the side where the Cantor is seated, usually in the North, and *Decani*); or the congregation reads verses antiphonally with the priest. This could reflect the idea of speaking in tongues. When God communicated with Moses out of the burning bush, Moses complained he did not have the gift of rhetoric, and God appointed Aaron, his Brother, to speak for him. Similarly in the New Testament, when the fire descended the Disciples began to speak in tongues. Here, the words of peace are alternated between two Kings who, for one short moment, become one.

The Address

The Address to the Candidate is most comprehensive and gives a detailed account of the ritual which preceded it. Perhaps the most interesting part is the last sentence, which is truly a harbinger of what will follow: "...that when we leave this, for that far distant country from whence we shall never return, we may there receive the wages of faithful craftsmen."

We will not seek material wages in that distant land; for surely the only "wage" we seek is the True Word? And yet we have to leave this land for that in order to receive it. At the Opening of Lodge the Senior Warden says he became a Master Mason "to obtain the Master's Word, travel in foreign lands, work and receive a Master's wages?" But does he mean the *True* Word of Master Masons, and not the Substitute Word? Could this mean he has to travel to a far distant country in order to obtain that Word? And we know that far distant country from whence we shall never return is across the veil of death. Must we die, then, before we can learn the Truth?

The Temple as Creation / The Temple as Man

The building of the Temple holds much deeper symbolism than providing useful tools for us to consider when trying to improve ourselves. Many religious commentators, both Jewish and Christian have been struck by the parallel between the story Creation in Genesis and the building of the Temple in 2 Chronicles. Once more the number "7" is highlighted. In his paper, *and Work as Liturgy in Genesis 1-3* by Jeff Morrow of Seton Hall University, he notes that Genesis 1:1 contains 7 words in Hebrew. Genesis 1:2 has fourteen — "7 x 2". Other important words in the text may be counted and in the construction of the Tabernacle, the bronze laver or molten "sea" was built on the third day. Similarly Moses stressed the importance of the Sabbath for Israel on the seventh day, just as Genesis tells us how God rested on the seventh day.

One may also be struck that Solomon's Temple took seven years to build (the number "7" is important here as a symbol: in religious books days, months, years and centuries are often less important than the number attributed). The seventh year is called a "Sabbath". The dedication took place during the seven day Festival of Tabernacles, which fell in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar. King Solomon's speech included seven petitions; and Solomon was instructed to build the Temple rather than David because Solomon was a man of peace, as his name *shlomoh* implies. These numbers were not selected at random, they repeatedly emphasize that fact that the Temple construction is viewed as a new creation, and therefore the completed Temple a "microcosm" of the world, which in symbolic form, tried to recreate the Garden of Eden

prior to the Fall, when all was perfect and God dwelt in the midst of the Garden, in Eden; just as He now dwelt in the *Sanctum Sanctorum*, hidden behind a veil decorated with pomegranates and cherubim.

How more tragic, then, that the next prevarication of man resulted in the same fate: the departure of God, the razing of the Temple and man expelled into exile once more.

However, the word “microcosm” brings us to a second symbol of the Temple: that of perfect — or regenerated — man. The Kabbalah teaches us that God wished to see Himself face to face, to gaze upon His reflection. And so He created Adam Kadmon in His image and likeness, and placed him in Eden. But man heeded the voices of the tempters, and believing himself as powerful as God attempted his own act of creation, but only resulted in enmiring himself in the very mud from which he was trying to create another being, and became covered with a layer or slime — or flesh. So perfect man is hidden beneath a coating of sin, and must learn to perfect himself in order to cast off this earthly coating, and reveal his true form, his Glorious Body, to rejoin with the Godhead. To do this he must recognize the Truth about himself.

In this Degree this image is most powerfully put across by the fact that there are in fact *two* completions. During the procession the Keystone is carried in and placed. This completes the physical structure of the Temple. The outer vehicle is finished. To emphasize this point, after the second procession the aprons are removed. In terms of the Creation, the body is now formed. Man exists, but he is still nothing more than an empty shell.

Now the *second* completion takes place. The Ark of the Covenant is brought in and “safely seated.” God once again shows His approbation in air. At the Creation God breathed life into the inert dross by exhaling the breath of life into Adam. This time God's spirit, or Shekinah, descends from the heavens and fills the Temple, inflating it into life. Now I stress that this is a personal *exegesis* or interpretation drawn from the actual text:

"Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house." (2 Chronicles 7, verses 1 and 2).

My reading of this passage is that the fire came down to consume the sacrifices, but the Glory of the Lord is mentioned separately — and several times in the text which follows — suggesting it is something different, not fire. After all, if fire had filled the temple it would have melted all the gold and fused the precious stones, and immolated the priests and Levites! However, if we accepted that His Glory was found in the element of air, then this makes more sense. God's presence is frequently represented by fire if He is wrathful, but by air or wind if His approbation has been given to a project.

It is a powerful image to see God entertaining the masses in the outer Courtyard with impressive displays of pyrotechnics; while inside the Temple He manifests Himself in a mighty wind against which the priests and Levites have to brace themselves, and the curtains before the Ark are blown open and the incense swirls about the Sanctum Sanctorum, before the Shekinah finally comes to settle between the outstretched wings of the cherubim. And thus God breathes life into the Temple.

Finally after the plethora of “sevens” mentioned in the text, it almost comes as a relief to read 2 Chronicles 7 Verse 9:

"And in the eighth day they made a solemn assembly: for they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days."

After the cycle of creation and the day of rest which had been spent in joyous celebration, we reach the number “eight”, the number of renewal and new beginnings. We see the tone of this eighth day is solemn following the joy of the previous week. For life goes on, and Day 1 of life with *God-With-Us* now begins. For us it is Day 1 of our spiritual rebirth, and the first day in a new journey along the Masonic path.

The First Temple was also seen as a symbol for Man, with the Holy of Holies his Head, or Spirit; the Holy Place his Heart, Soul or Chest; and the Outer Courts his Body, Abdomen or Genitalia (one might make a case for the Two Pillars being his legs. While not wishing to do more than mention this concept now, it is nevertheless important to realize that the Temple was seen, even when the narrative was originally being written, as far more than a simple tale about the erection of a lovely building. Even then it was seen as representing a microcosm of creation, and a microcosm of all that man should aspire to in order to perfect himself, in preparation for reunion with God.

In support of this, although tradition informs us that the five books of Moses; the Torah, were written by Moses himself, modern theologians date the writing of the Torah which exists today — which no doubt existed in oral, and perhaps written form for many centuries before this — as being during the period of exile in Babylon, when the priests, having no idea how long their exile would last, wished to ensure that their traditions, beliefs and regulations would not be lost to the new generations being born in Babylon with no link or knowledge of the land of their ancestors.

Esoteric Implications

There are many lessons to draw from this impressive and educational Degree. Many have been alluded to already. For the present, we will limit ourselves to one: the penalties of the Degrees

Many comments have been made about the penalties, whether they were ever carried out (as the anti-Masons like to think); whether they should explicitly be said to be only symbolic; whether they should be omitted altogether as they have been, for example, in Ireland. However, this misses the point that the penalties are — just as the rest of the Rituals are — allegories which use .powerful and visceral symbols to transmit important teachings.

The road to the Royal Arch in the York Rite system really comprises *four* preceding Degrees, the Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, Master Mason and Most Excellent Master. The Mark Master and Past Master are really side Degrees, appended to the Fellowcraft and Master Mason Degree respectively. There are four *real* steps to the Degree of Royal Arch. We may speculate this was a proceed being introduced into the English System, too, particularly within the Antient rituals; but that the process broke down when politics intervened to crush their natural and organic development through the Act of Union in 1813.

The penalty of Most Excellent Master, when taken along with those of Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason, cover the four ancient elements. Trial by element is a concept

which goes back to the Ancient Mystery Schools, and is still practiced in some Masonic Rituals, including those of Memphis-Mizraim, the Scottish Rite and Willermoz' Scottish Rectified Rite. It can also be witnessed in the biennial conferral of the Entered Apprentice Degree by Garibaldi Lodge No. 542 under the authority of the Grand Lodge of New York F. & A.M.

In the Entered Apprentice Degree the tongue is removed and buried in **Water**. In the Fellowcraft Degree the heart and lungs are removed and left as prey to the vultures of the **Air**.

In the Master Mason Degree the bowels are removed and burned to ashes (with **Fire**).

In the Most Excellent Master Degree *all* the internal organs are removed (the “vitals”) and thrown on a dunghill (**Earth**). This is a powerful Rosicrucian concept and reflects true spiritual alchemy. Writers from early alchemists to Carl Jung have written about the need to deconstruct the body in order to understand and balance its elements, in order to create a perfect abode for the spirit to enter. It appears that Freemasonry may have picked something up from the Rosicrucians, after all.

ROYAL ARCH

The “Brief History of the Royal Arch “ that is part of this article may be found in the Mark Master Packet beginning on P 26. It is therefore omitted from this article to avoid duplication.

Overview of the Degree

The Degree is quite long and complex. Before we examine each section in detail it might be



useful to have a general overview of the Royal Arch Degree:

- A. The Candidates receive some instruction on the History of the Degree prior to entering the Chapter.
- B. The Candidates are prepared and enter the Lodge “under a Living Arch”.
- C. The Candidates pray, then rise and circumambulate, when they are challenged by the Captain of the Host.
- D. The Candidates take their Obligation at the West Altar.
- E. The Candidate perform six more circumambulations, during which they see the burning bush, learn the password, and are taken to the first (closed) veil.
- F. The Candidates pass each of the veils, with the Principal Sojourner answering the challenges on their behalf

- G. On gaining access to the High Council the Candidates, now Sojourners as they wish to sojourn with their fellow Israelites, are armed with a crow, pickaxe and spade, and sent to clear the rubbish.
- H. They make three important discoveries: a keystone, three squares, and the Ark of the Covenant. These are discovered buried in a vault, and brought to the light of day.
- I. The Sojourners bring their discoveries to the High Council.
- J. Inside the Ark the High Council find the Book of the Law, Pot of Manna and Aaron's Rod, as well as a scroll.
- K. Reading the scroll and deciphering the strange writing in the Masonic Alphabet around the Ark, the High Council rediscovers the Lost Master's Word and the Great And Sacred Name.
- L. As a reward the secrets of the Degree are conferred upon the Sojourners and the method of forming the Living Arch demonstrated.
- M. Several Instructional Lectures on the Apron, the History, the Masonic Alphabet and the Banner are given.
- N. The Ceremony concludes with an Address and the Charge.

Preparation of Candidates

The Candidates are clothed with white aprons as Master Masons, and also with sandals on both feet. They wear hoodwinks and a cable tow seven times round their waist.

They are Master Masons since they will now receive the true word and become Companions, which is the perfected state of a Mason. He is more than a Brother, which suggests a blood tie of obligation: he is now a Companion, a fellow traveler on the great journey of life, and his Obligations extend far further than mere family: now the entire human family has become his kin, and he labors for all mankind. There is a saying among those who follow the path of Transcendental Meditation (TM), that if only a small percentage of people, a number as little as 5%, practice TM, there would be no war, since the work of those few would affect all humanity. In a way we are being asked to practice our tenets, and by our adherence to our values amongst our fellow man we are given the ability to leverage a change which would vastly supersede our numbers.

As we will see, the removing of shoes and putting on sandals is integral to the Degree ceremonies, and the cable tow in this instance refers to an event rather more powerful in symbolism to its use in prior Degrees. We are told that the High Priest entered the presence of the Lord but once a year, when he uttered the Sacred Name of God in order to reestablish the link between heaven and earth.

His garment was fringed with small bells, and a rope was tied around him the end leading out of the Holy of Holies, and held by the Kohanim or Levites. He uttered the Name while the priests and people made a great noise. However, this was a most dangerous operation, and if something went wrong — and the implication was that if the High Priest was in some way impure, or mispronounced the Name of God — his dead body could be pulled from the Holy of Holies by

aid of the rope.

In Blue Lodge English Freemasonry there is a line which effectively states that if the Candidate had attempted to escape the Lodge he would have been accomplice to his own death by strangulation, and in a way the cable tow therefore is a reflection of this binding to obligation, and the serious consequences to a person who does not behave according to his vow.

A Triangular Altar

In the Degree of Royal Arch we a triangular altar in the East. Why the Eastern Altar should be triangular (which is unique to the United States: in almost all other countries it is a double cubical white altar) is a matter for debate. The most likely explanation is more prosaic than symbolic. It was probable that, at some point, it was decided to have a three sided altar to emphasize the number three, and to distinguish the paraphernalia used in the Royal Arch from that used in a Lodge Room.

The Obligation is by the Captain of the Host, which in a Lodge analogy would be like being Obligated by the Marshall! Why is this? We must remember that Officers of a Lodge or Chapter often take on multiple roles, just as the Worshipful Master becomes King Solomon at certain points of Blue Masonry. In this instance the Western part of the room represents Babylon, and the Captain of the Host is King Cyrus, while the Council represent Jeshua, Zerubbabel and Haggai, the High Priest, King and Prophet or Scribe. Following the Obligation the Candidates will start to travel towards the light, or East in a Chapter Room, and towards Jerusalem.

A Living Arch

When the Candidate first enters the Lodge Room, he stands, blindfolded, between the two Columns of Boaz and Jachin which in some traditions represent the two columns of the Tree of Life, Severity and Mercy. Standing between them he represents the Middle Pillar, sometimes called Balance, Equilibrium or Mildness. It is this middle path to Truth which will occupy a lifetime of study and application for the serious Mason. For now he stands in the very place he will seek to return, but for now hoodwinked, and unaware where he stands.

Now, in a similar manner, the two has become three, duality divine, the opposing forces of the two pillars reconciled by the addition of the arch, the third force which holds the other two in balance. Once again the Candidates will pass this way hoodwinked, unable to see that which will be revealed to him — indeed in which they themselves will participate — at the end of the ceremonies. As they enter the room the three Masters of the Veils form the Living Arch, and the three Candidates are told to "Stoop low, my Brothers, stoop low. He that humblest himself shall be exalted." The Candidates pass that way in single file, for they have not yet learned the Truth which will bind them together into a Living Arch themselves.

This is from the parable given in Luke Chapter 14, from which this quote comes. This reminds us that, although we are about to become Companions through a ceremony called Exaltation, we should remember that we should not allow this privilege or honor go to our heads. We may become more knowledgeable than our Brothers, but this does not make us any better than them: it simply means we may be half a step before them on the road to knowledge, and that it is our duty to help them to come to the same knowledge we now possess.

If you visit the Church of the Nativity in Manger Square, Bethlehem, you will find you have to "stoop low": in order to enter it. The entrance was lowered centuries ago to its present height of less than four feet in order to make it easier to secure against invaders, and now it is a salutary reminder to all who visit it that they should humble themselves before God.

The *Graham Manuscript*, comprising two scraps of paper dating to around 1726 (though it could be older given the odd spelling used), contain a reference to Bezaleel, about whom is said: "the two younger brothers of the aforesaid king Alboyn desired "for to be instructed by him his noble asiancc by which he wrought "to which he agreed conditionally they were not to discover it without "another to themselves to make a trible voice"

“I will Bring the Blind ...”

The words of the Principal Sojourner are taken from Isaiah, and include Chapter 42 verse 16 and Chapter 40, verse 31.

In this Degree, the Principal Sojourner, takes the Blue Lodge role of Senior Deacon, acting as both guide and intermediary for the Candidate, answering when challenged on his behalf. In the Ancient Mysteries this role was assumed by a person called the “Psychopomp”, not in the sense of the Ancient Mysteries where it was a guide from the land of the living to the dead (although that would also make sense in the Royal Arch Degree), but rather in the Jungian sense of being a mediator between the conscious and unconscious worlds. At the very basic level the Principal Sojourner leads a “blind” Candidate and provides the appropriate passwords to gain access from one level to another.

He makes darkness light, which is most appropriate for a Mason seeking Light; and provides the very same encouragement which Isaiah did in his book of prophecy.

Isaiah lived and wrote during the period of Assyrian expansion and the decline of Judah. While Judah survived the threats from Assyria, Isaiah prophesied that Judah's sin would deliver her to Babylon. However, he also said that God would deliver a repentant people from Babylon just as he rescued them from Egypt. This is why these most appropriate passages are used at this time. Note that they immediately follow the opening prayer, which mentions that God appeared to Moses "in a flame of fire out of burning bush", thereby cementing together the two key themes of this Degree.

The Story of Moses

It is useful to remind ourselves briefly of the times in which Moses lived. Although Joseph had held a very high rank in Egypt, causing many Israelites to remain in that land, we are told that their race grew quickly in relation to the Egyptians, and after Joseph's death, the good that Joseph had done was quickly forgotten by later pharaohs in light of the high numbers of Israelites living under their rule. Concerned that they might take sides against Egypt in a future war, the Pharaoh enlisted them as slaves, and even demanded that any male child should be drowned at birth. Moses escaped this fate by being hidden from the guards, and then placed in an ark and hidden among the bulrushes. He was found by a daughter of the pharaoh and raised as her own.

When he was a young adult he saw Israelites being treated badly by an Egyptian guard and killed one, fleeing from the land to Midian, where he tended the flocks of Jethro, the father of his new bride Zipporah. It was while he was tending the sheep on Mount Horeb that God came to him in a burning bush, and told him to remove his shoes, since the place he stood was Holy ground.

This was indeed a "calling", for God called to Moses by name, and he answered: "Here am I." Here God tells him that He will deliver his people out of bondage in Egypt and take them to "a land flowing with milk and honey." He charges Moses with going to the new pharaoh — for his adoptive father had now died — and demand their release. But first Moses must convince the Israelites to follow him, and asks God his name. "I Am That I Am" is my name. However, His name is also given as Jahweh (or Jehovah), which is often substituted in the Bible for Adone, or The Lord, since Jews consider it blasphemous to utter the name of God, as that was originally reserved strictly to the High Priest, and only then once a year.

When Moses asks Him how he will convince the Israelites that he was indeed sent by God, he is given the three signs used during the Passing of the Veils to give them: the rod which becomes a serpent, the hand which becomes leprous, and the water which becomes blood. Moses also laments the fact that he is not gifted with eloquent speech, and God tells him to enlist Aaron his brother to speak on his behalf. Now both Moses and Aaron were of the tribe of Levi, and as Aaron became the first High Priest, it was the Levites who were set apart for the priesthood from that time on.

Moses therefore returns to Egypt, but has difficulty persuading the Israelites that he is their savior, and with the help of Aaron and by performing the signs God gave him, they convince the Israelites to believe them. Moses and Aaron then go before the pharaoh and ask for the release of the Israelites in the famous phrase: "Let my people go." Pharaoh refuses, and thus begins the

twelve famous plagues of Egypt, ending with the death of the first-born, including the pharaoh's son. The Israelite firstborn are spared because they follow the injunction to kill a year-old kid or lamb, eat it roasted with bitter herbs, and smear its blood on the doorposts and lintel; consequently, the Passover is instituted, as an annual memorial of the Jews' release from Egyptian captivity, and as the first sign of God's active involvement in the daily lives of the Children of Israel.

Pharaoh relents and lets the Israelites leave, but then pursues them. Moses parts the Red Sea, and the Children of Israel are saved.

Early in their wanderings in the desert they arrive at Mount Sinai, and Moses ascends to commune with God. It is interesting that most people know that God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on the mountain, but little more. In fact Moses spent forty days upon the Mountain, and during this time God passed on a large number of laws to be followed, including most detailed instructions for the construction of the Ark of the Covenant, what it should contain, the holy vessels and the precise blueprints and assembly instructions for the tabernacle.

It is well worth reading Exodus, since within that relatively short book are detailed explanations of most of the characters and artifacts which features so prominently in the first part of this Degree.

It is also worth noting that, from the long lists of tribes and peoples the emigrant Israelites meet, trade with and fight during their travels, this region of the Near East was well populated by a large number of diverse cultures at that time.

At the end of his life Moses is permitted to see, but forbidden to enter the Holy Land. This may seem harsh indeed from a God who regularly proves so forgiving and indulgent towards the ungrateful Children of Israel, when Moses, who begged God to be allowed to enter that land, is denied his request. After all, he had faithfully followed every one of God's commands for well over forty years. However, one must remember that Moses stood in a special relationship with God: he is described as a prophet. On one occasion Moses allowed his temper to get the better of him, and in Numbers 20, we learn that, although God had told Moses precisely how to obtain water for the thirsty Israelites, Moses chose to add his own words and to strike the rock twice, an action God had not asked him to do. While this might seem a relatively minor infraction, for a prophet it was not: it was essential that a Prophet repeat the words God requires him to speak, without interpretation, adding or taking away from the message. Indeed in Deuteronomy 18:20, God says: "But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall prophesy in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die." So this was why Moses wasn't allowed to lead his people into the Promised Land.

Instead, it was his nominated successor, Joshua, who took the Children of Israel across the River Jordan.

Removing the Shoes

We saw that, when Moses encountered the burning bush, he is told by God: "put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." (Exodus 3:5).

This action is to be seen in a number of religions. For example, you remove your shoes to enter a Mosque. You also remove them to enter a Hindu Temple. In part the symbolism is one of removing the eternal clothing which attracts the most dirt and dust from the profane or outside world. This action is also reflected in the custom of bathing one's head, hands and feet prior to entering a holy site.

The story is repeated and acted out at the beginning of the Degree, for the Candidates wear sandals, which are removed at this point.

Seven Circuits

At the start of the ritual the Candidates make seven circuits of the Chapter. The first is made prior to the Obligation, upon their entrance as they are received under the living arch and make their way to the Western Altar. The second takes them to the diorama of the burning bush, at which point they remove their sandals.

Following the revelation of the burning bush their sandals are now replaced — at least in the modern version of the ritual.

The following three circuits continue the story of Moses up to the arrival of Joshua and the Children of Israel bearing the Ark of the Covenant into the Promised Land, and ends with the comment that, while they obeyed God's laws the people flourished.

At the sixth circuit they are told that, because the Israelites turned from God, they suffered the destruction of the Temple and city of Jerusalem, and were led away into captivity. But after seventy years they were freed by a Proclamation of Cyrus, King of Persia. The seventh and final circuit represents the exiles deciding to return to Jerusalem to assist in rebuilding the Temple, remembering the prophecy of Jeremiah 29:10 — 13.

However, in earlier versions of the ritual the circuits — or circumambulations — were rather more dramatic! Once the sandals had been removed at the burning bush, they remained off. Following the circuit describing the Jews being led into captivity, the Candidates were led out of the Chapter to simulate being led to Babylon. However, this was also a device to allow a unique piece of furniture to be set up. Called the "rocky road", it consists of a number of pieces of flat wood, on which had been attached wooden bosses of varying sizes placed randomly upon them. This gave the "road" a very uneven and treacherous surface to walk across — especially when blindfolded!

The Proclamation of Cyrus was then read and the Candidates led into the Chapter, being advised that there were two routes to Jerusalem, and telling them to take the one through the wilderness to avoid being captured in the cities or towns. After prayer, they were warned that they were approaching a dangerous part of the road, and helped across the "rugged road". They performed this circuit three times, after which they were led out of the room as the Chapter continued with the Ceremony of Passing the Veils. The wording accompanying this very physical journey beautifully describe the passage from Babylon to Jerusalem:

"We are now on the green banks of the ever-running waters of the Euphrates. We are now passing through Syria, towards Damascus. We shall pass near the ancient city of Tamor or Palmyra, and through many beautiful groves and pleasant vineyards."

The journey ends with:

"But rough and rugged as was the road and long and toilsome as was the journey, it at last came to an end, and the weary sojourners were blest by the sight of the ruined walls of Jerusalem and the glistening tents of their Brethren. Here they turned aside to rest: here let us turn aside to rest and refresh ourselves."

In esoteric terms this is often described as a *Pathworking*, which is sometimes defined as a technique of active imagination. Deprived of sight, the Candidates undergo a journey with physical stimuli (rocky road, circumambulations) while having scenes described to them which they can perceive in their mind's eye. This makes the experience very powerful since the Candidates are being allowed to relive the experience instead of simply being told about it. This technique is used throughout Masonic ritual, and a few minutes' contemplation on the Degree rituals will bring many examples to mind.

Although this dramatic journey is now but a memory in our modern ritual, it can still be seen performed each December in Ancient Chapter No. 1, which precedes the formation of the Grand Chapter of New York.

Finally, the number seven itself is a powerful figure in both the Bible and in Freemasonry. This is the seventh Degree in the York Rite. There are seven days in a week; there were seven days in the story of Creation; and seven ancient planets. Indeed, the number seven was closely associated with divine perfection and the completion of a cycle. For example, we have Joseph's interpretation of the Pharaoh's dream of seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine in Genesis 41: 1 — 32. To us the most important symbol is that of King Solomon's Temple being built in seven. We mentioned in the section on the Most Excellent Master Degree that the circumambulations in that Degree reflected the six days in the story of creation, and now we have reached the seventh cycle, that of rest. As we saw, it is for this reason that the Temple is seen by many commentators to be a symbol of creation. And this is why it is also seen as a symbol for Man, with the three parts of the Temple relating to the three traditional parts of man, or the head (seat of the spirit), breast (seat of the heart) and trunk (seat of procreation). Or again the Holy of Holies, Holy Place and Courtyard have been assigned to spirit, soul and body.

The final, or seventh, circumambulation brings us to the entrance of the Tabernacle. As we approach the Master of the First Veil, armed with the password we learned from the image of the burning bush, we are again reminded how closely entwined are the stories of the Tabernacle

in the Desert and the Tabernacle of Zerubbabel, which we are about enter.

To conclude this section it is worth mentioning a theory put forward by Rev. Neville Barker Cryer, an English Masonic scholar. He suggests that the reason a story involving a return from exile would have been a popular theme at the time the rituals were crystallizing was because this was a major preoccupation in England at the time. Firstly there was a wave of Jewish immigrants in the mid to late 17th Century seeking refuge during the Lord Protector's (Oliver Cromwell) time. Secondly this era saw the influx of Huguenots fleeing from France to Britain, and of course the Jacobites and Non-Jurors (those who refused to swear an Oath of Allegiance to William and Mary who came from Orange in what is now the Netherlands, to replace James II) fleeing in the opposite direction following the removal of King James II. This accords with the brief look at English History earlier in this section.

The Veils

The Veils are a representation of the Tabernacle. This part of the ceremony is a conflation of the stories of the Tabernacle, which was created under the instruction of Moses to contain the Ark of the Covenant, and the Second Temple, built on the ruins of King Solomon's Temple by his descendant Zerubbabel.

While there is no explicit mention in the admittedly sketchy descriptions of the rebuilding of the Second Temple in the Bible, the idea of the council meeting in a Tabernacle is quite plausible. It would have taken some years to rebuild the Temple and City, and the sacred vessels carried back from Babylon would have to have been stored somewhere inside. Since the leaders of the exiles included prophets, priests, scribes, and a prince, it is most likely they would have sought a solution from the Torah, Scribe Ezra (Esdras in Greek) is credited with bringing the Torah, or first five books of the Bible generally ascribed to Moses, back to Jerusalem following the exile, and would have had an extensive knowledge of them. It would be likely they would seek a solution to their problem in the sacred writings, and were inspired to create a second Tabernacle following the precise instructions in Exodus, in which it was explained how to create and store the Holy vessels.

While Exodus 26:31 seems to suggest there is but a single veil between the outer court and the Holy Place, the colors listed to be included are: blue, purple, red, and “fine twisted linen”. While this fourth color is normally interpreted as being white, during the recent refurbishment of the Chapter Room at New York Grand Lodge, this curtain was replaced by a linen-style curtain which, being off-white, more accurately reflects the original description.

If we examine the layout of the tabernacle as a whole, we find three veils, two of which later become walls in King Solomon's Temple. The first admits us into the outer courtyard; the

second into the area reserved for priests; and the third into the Holy of Holies. However, these do not have unique colors according to the Bible.

In the Royal Arch Ritual the four veils are used as barriers to entrance, and the Candidate must first negotiate his way through the four veils before finally arriving in the presence of the Grand Council. Symbolically they have been referred to the levels of progress in Masonry, to the four elements, and to the trials of Moses.

In this case the veils, which match the colors of the four banners, are used to draw attention to the close association between the Blue and Red Lodges, as we pass from the color blue, indicating Operative Masonry, purple, indicating an admixture of blue and red to show the “intimate connection” between Blue and Capitular Masonry, and finally to red, showing that the Candidate has now passed into the realm of the Royal Arch, also evidenced by the fact that the password are the names of those associated with the rebuilding of the Temple. Finally, the fourth veil is white, and is also used as a device to show us we are now moving beyond the three Degrees and onto a fourth level.

The First Veil, guarded by the Master of the First Veil, is negotiated by giving the Password of the Degree, which he heard given during the diorama of Moses and the Burning Bush. Here he is given the passwords and actions to pass the succeeding veils. In some traditions the reference to Ham, Seth and Japheth recalls Noah's Ark as the “Ark of Safety”.

The Second Veil sees Moses, Aholiab and Bezaleel referenced and their creation of the “Ark of Testimony”. And let us not forget that Moses was found in an Ark hidden in the bulrushes by an Egyptian princess.

The Master of the Third Veil mentions the Grand Council who presided over the Ark of the Covenant rediscovered.

At the Fourth Veil, in addition to the passwords and sign, he is also asked to present the Ring to show that he is indeed worthy to approach the Grand Council.

The perceptive student may notice a couple of anomalies here.

Firstly, if the white veil gives access to “the Sanctuary of our Sacred Tabernacle”, surely that should separate the Holy of Holies, which only the High Priest was allowed to enter. Firstly, the Ark of the Covenant had not be discovered at this point in the ritual, so no disrespect was being committed. Secondly, while they were following the layout of the Tabernacle, there was no reason they couldn't adapt the design to their own present needs, and since they had no expectation that the Ark would be found and the True Name discovered at that time, having an inner court where the ruler could sit, well protected from the enemies who the Bible tells us continually harassed the Jews while they tried to rebuild their city and Temple.

Indeed, while the modern day English ritual no longer uses the veils, the Bristol Rite does. In this case the veil ceremony is performed in a room outside the Chapter room, and the white veil hung over its door, so that, having gone through the ritual of Passing the Veils, and received the password needed to enter the Chapter, the Candidate finally passes through the white veil into the Chapter Room, which here represents the Sanctuary for this portion of the rite.

The second question might arise over why the Sojourner would present Zerubbabel's •ring if

Zerubbabel himself were seated within the Sanctuary! While the symbolism of the signet ring is discussed later, suffice it to note at this point that a monarch or ruler would have a number of signets produced to give to his delegates working in different parts of the kingdom and as ambassadors to other countries. Here we may imagine that Zerubbabel had given a number of rings to different tribes or groups who would travel separately back to Jerusalem, and this would be a clear sign that they were to be trusted before being let into the presence of the Grand Council.

In our ritual, however, the ring is held by the Master of the Third Veil which he then presents to the Candidate to give to the Royal Arch Captain guarding the Fourth Veil. While this seems illogical, it was probably a stage direction changed at some time to avoid the Principal Sojourner or a Candidate having to carry it from the beginning of the ceremony.

Although the veils are blue, purple, red and white, like the banners to which they allude they also refer to the four principal tribes (as we shall see in the sections on the banner below):

The First Veil is BLUE and the banner represents the tribe of Dan, symbolized by the Eagle.
The Second Veil is PURPLE and the banner represents the tribe of Reuben, symbolized by Man.

The Third Veil is RED and the banner represents the tribe of Ephraim, symbolized by the Ox.

The Fourth Veil is WHITE, and the banner represents the tribe of Judah, symbolized by the Lion.

There is a final attribution of the veils which we might consider. The first great Covenant of God with His people was that with Noah and his progeny, upon the blue waters, with his Arch of seven colors (reflecting the seven lights of the menorah or the seven planets) in the heavens. This reminds us of the Blue Veil. The second great Covenant was between God and Abraham, whom God tells "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great" (Genesis 12: 1 — 2). The covenant is sealed by Melchizedek the High Priest, who give him bread and wine. This Royal Covenant is symbolized by the Purple Veil. The third great Covenant was that with the Children of Israel and Moses, and was the Covenant borne of the blood with which they painted the lintels of their houses to indicate their trust in Yahweh. This is symbolized by the Red Veil. The last great covenant may be drawn from Revelations, perhaps, in which we read: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Revelation 21: 1 - 2). Note that we have progressed from flood, sea, river to "no more sea". At each Covenant the waters become less. Now there is no separation between us and God. And the Veil which must be drawn for us to enter into the presence of the great I AM is white. We will come across this "diminution" again a little later.

It should be stressed that these colors are unique to United States Royal Arch, and do not accord with the Bible what the Talmudists say, or even the Canadian Royal Arch! However, using the American version for now, the Eagle (sometimes symbolized by the Scorpion or Snake) has long been associated with the classical element of Water; Man with Air; the Ox

with Earth; and the Lion with Fire. Much has been written on these symbols; but since the attribution of color to each Tribe is very variable, any symbolic association should be undertaken with caution!

The Signs

The Signs come from Exodus 4: 1 — 9, and are given between the First and Second, Second and Third, and, Third and Fourth Veils. Each refers to the three Signs Moses was told to give to the Children of Israel in order to convince them that it was truly God who had send him to them to lead them out of captivity. Again, the number three is used to great effect in the Bible. In this case the people deny Moses three times, which is often used by those who seek to link the Old and New Testaments to reflect Peter denying he knew Jesus three times before the cock crowed. It is as if, as well as the password, the Candidate must convince each Master of the Veil that he is indeed coming as a representative of God by repeating the miraculous signs Moses gave to the Israelites in order to gain access to the next Veil. The three signs are of a rod turning into a serpent (and back again), a hand turning white and leprous (and back again), and water turning into blood. In a way this reflects the grip and word of the Blue Lodge Degrees, in that a word is not sufficient: a physical sign must also be given in order to be admitted to the next level.

Once again we see the melding together of the story of Moses and the Story of Zerubbabel. It is only at the fourth veil that the Mosaic references are finally set completely aside and we move several hundred years forward in the action.

We are taught that the four banners represent the principle tribes of Israel. Yet they are really representative of all Twelve Tribes of Israel, which marched in a set order during the sojourn in the desert under Moses and Aaron, and which camped in a set pattern about the Tabernacles as it traveled whenever the caravanserai halted. Indeed, in other Royal Arch traditions, notably in England and Scotland, all twelve banners are present.

These tribes have long been equated with the twelve months and twelve signs of the zodiac in the Zohar, a second century C.E. book attributed to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, yet reflecting teachings which went back much earlier. Astrology also features extensively in Talmudic teaching.

When the twelve tribes of Israel marched out of Egypt under Moses, and through the desert, they were divided into four groups, each under a leading tribe. The four main tribes were Judah (accompanied by Issachar and Zebulun), next Reuben (accompanied by Simeon and Gad), then Ephraim (accompanied by Manasseh and Benjamin), and finally Dan (accompanied by Asher and Naphthali). When they camped, they ordered themselves with Judah in the East, Reuben in the South, Ephraim in the West and Dan in the North.

Very early on the commentators linked the twelve tribes with the months, and the groups of three tribes with the four seasons. This also meant that they linked them to the signs of the zodiac, a device begun with the ancient Mesopotamians, who had divided the night sky into twelve bands of 30° in order to mark the seasons, and therefore the times to plant the crops — an important advance in knowledge for a people which had changed from a migratory to a sedentary society. At a very early stage the four main tribes were associated with particular signs: Judah with what we now know as Leo or the Lion, Reuben with Aquarius or Man,

Ephraim with Taurus or the Ox, and Dan with Scorpio or the Eagle (a common interchange in early times of astrology). The early Jewish scholars also associated the nine minor tribes with the other Zodiacal signs, though their associations have been debated by scholars for centuries. However, the associations of the four principal tribes probably come from Genesis Chapters 48 and 49. In these Israel (or Jacob) blesses his sons (actually he tells them what horrible futures they will have!), effectively setting the layout of Israel under the tribes.

Ephraim is recognized as the first tribe, telling him to “increase greatly on the earth.” One could suggest that this gave Ephraim the kingdom of earth, which is often represented by the sign of the Ox. However, in Deuteronomy 33:17, where Jacob blesses his sons, he says “His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim.” This is certainly a clearer association of Ephraim with the Ox.

Reuben is identified in Jacob's blessings as his firstborn — a man (Genesis 49:2). Judah is identified as a “lion's whelp” (Genesis 49:9); and finally Dan is called “a serpent”, which was often associated with the scorpion, and as explained above, therefore with the eagle (Genesis 49:16).

Another point worthy of mention is, while Judah was seen as the “protecting” tribe, the *primus inter pares* was still the first to receive Jacob's blessing in Genesis 48 — Ephraim. Remember that, due to the procession of the equinoxes, that wobble of the earth's axis which means different zodiacal signs rise at the spring equinox to begin the year every few thousand years, at that time it was Taurus which led the zodiacal procession across the heavens, a point which some have mystically associated with the fact that this was a time of intense animal sacrifice — especially bulls. Those same scholars have pointed out the contemporaneous timing of the Minoan culture, which also sacrificed bulls.

Later this symbolism was extended into the New Testament, with the four Evangelists represented in art by the same four animals: Matthew as the man, Mark as the lion, Luke as the ox, and John as the eagle.

The idea that the four principal tribes are represented by Man, Lion, Ox and Eagle is important because Hebrew scholars through the millennia have sought to draw parallels through the biblical texts. In this case we now see that, during the Exodus, around the Tabernacle, which was seen as the seat of God, were stationed the Lion, the Man, the Ox and the Eagle, in the four quarters. This of course refers to Ezekiel 1:10 and 10:14, and Revelations 4:7. So the banners of the “four principal tribes of Israel we use in Chapter have a very profound message, which goes beyond the fact that these tribes led the Israelites out of bondage and protected the tabernacles when the encampment was at rest: they represent the very avatars which surrounded the throne of God, of which the Tabernacles was an earthly representation.

And finally, we should not forget that, when George Washington, the first President of the United States, took the Presidential Oath, he chose this very passage — Genesis Chapters 48 and 49 — on which to lay his hand when taking his oath. Some have suggested the Bible was opened at random. It seems unlikely, given that the entire ceremony was planned by Masons well-versed in the Volume of the Sacred Law! Perhaps he chose the passage because it talked of the founding of a new Nation, which brought twelve sons and a father together — and there

were thirteen colonies uniting to create a Nation State. But then he was also a Mason, and initiated in the Lodge in Fredericksburg, the very Lodge whose records reflect the first Royal Degree being worked in the New World.

Shem, Ham and Japheth

Shem, Ham and Japheth were the sons of Noah, who, with their wives, went into the Ark with him and thus became the only survivors of the Flood.

It may seem odd that they would be mentioned in the Royal Arch Degree. It must be remembered that the Royal Arch Degree took its sources from a number of earlier rituals. One of these was — and is — called the Royal Ark Mariner Degree, and is based on the story of the Ark, and features these character in the ceremony. It is also believed by many scholars that this Degree originated in the Mystery or Miracle Plays performed by the guilds outside cathedrals and churches on Holy Day for the entertainment and education of the masses. It should be remembered that in earlier times the only language used in church was Latin, and the majority of the public being illiterate, the Miracle Plays were their main source of learning the more famous Biblical stories.

A key feature of this Degree was the rainbow, being God's promise and *covenant* with His people stretching across the sky.

Indeed, another consideration is how all these stories are about journeys to find some form of Truth. In the story of Noah the ark (incidentally, in many language the word for “ark” and “arch” is the same), a group of people are carried over the waters by an Ark to Ararat, a safe haven. In the story of Moses and the Chosen People, an Ark (of the Covenant) is carried across the earth by men, on their way to the Land of Milk and Honey. In the story of the Rebuilding of the Temple, the descendants of Israel travel a dangerous and rocky road, carrying the vessels of the destroyed First Temple from the East (Babylon) to the West (Jerusalem) with the intention of rebuilding the House of God.

As an aside, it is also curious to note that in each case we see a reiteration which, like ripples on a pond, become less with each repetition. In the story of Noah, his family are on a flood which covers the earth; in Exodus Moses parts a sea; and in the return to Jerusalem the remnants of Israel cross a river (the Jordan). Or again, if the Temple is an image of Creation, then we move from God's abode in Eden, with a garden adjacent in which lived Adam and Eve; then God lives in a vast Temple; and finally in a rather smaller Temple erected on the ruins of the greater by a band of emigrants. Once again we have this theme of “diminution” as man and God communicate on an increasingly even level.

It is therefore not difficult to see how this symbol of the arch, together with the key players, made its way into early forms of the Royal Arch Degree.

Moses, Aholiab and Bezaleel

To better understand why these three character feature in the Royal Arch Degree, it is useful to recall the short Catechism said at all Royal Arch Festive Boards in England:

"Companion Principal Sojourner, how many Grand Lodges do we commemorate? "

"Three, Most Excellent."

"Name them."

"The First or Holy Lodge, the Second or Sacred Lodge, and the Third or Grand and Royal Lodge. "

"Where was the First or Holy Lodge held?"

"At the foot of Mount Horeb, in the wilderness of Sinai."

"Who presided?"

"Moses, Aholiab and Bezaleel."

"Where was the Second or Sacred Lodge held?"

"In the bosom of the Holy Mount Moriah."

"Who presided?"

"Solomon, King of Israel, Hiram, King of Tyre, and Hiram Tyrian, Widow's Son."

"Where was the Third or Grand and Royal Lodge held?"

"At Jerusalem."

"Who presided?"

"Zerubbabel, prince of the people; Haggai, the prophet; and Jeshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest."

It is interesting to note that our ritual covers both the travels of Moses and those of Zerubbabel, while the story of King Solomon is absent, having been covered in the Master Mason Degree. A possible reason for this has been reviewed in the section *Possible Connection to the Third Degree* above.

Moses, of course, was the prophet who led the Israelites out of captivity into the desert, who organized the tribes during that journey, and who supervised the creation and erection of the Tabernacle, assigning the Tribes to the duties ascribed to it. It was he who dictated the design of the Tabernacle and the creation of the holy vessels, the primary ones being the Altar of Incense, the Seven-branched Candlestick, the Table of Shewbread and, of course, the Ark of the Covenant. It was also he who placed an omer of manna, Aaron's rod, and a copy of the Law received from God into the Ark.

In Exodus 31 we learn God called Bezaleel from the tribe of Judah and Aholiab of the tribe of Dan (two of the four principal tribes) to serve him. The description of their skills is remarkably similar to those of Hiram Abif, filling them: "in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood..." (Exodus 31, 7 — 11).

Bezaleel and Aholiab are to make: "The tabernacle of meeting, the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furniture of the tabernacle; the table and its utensils, the pure gold lampstand with all its utensils, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base; the garments of ministry, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to minister as priests, and the anointing oil and sweet incense for the holy place." (Exodus 31, 12 — 17).

Since Bezaleel and Aholiab are therefore going to work closely with Moses in creating the Tabernacle and all the furniture within, and since the two of them will provide and craft the objects under the supervision of Moses, it becomes apparent why their relationship is similar to that of King Solomon, who supervised, with Hiram King of Tyre, who provided, and Hiram Abif, who crafted. Remember, too, that Bezaleel and Aholiab were senior members of two of the four principal tribes, and therefore carried respect and authority in their own right. Since early Freemasonry came to see this triumvirate as the rulers of the "First or Holy Lodge", it is not surprising therefore that we still encounter them in the Royal Arch Degree, since they were the creators of the objects associated with the Ark which are brought to light in this Degree.

Jeshua, Zerubbabel and Haggai

We are familiar with these characters, since it is Jeshua who governs the Chapter as High Priest, Zerubbabel who assists him as King, and Haggai who competed the Grand Council as Scribe. In fact, in the Old Testament, Haggai is Prophet to Zerubbabel, and it is he who rouses Zerubbabel to speak with King Darius to seek permission to return to Jerusalem, as we read in the Book of Haggai. However, the Bible is unclear whether he actually returns with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, both of whom lead the remnants of the Israelites back to Jerusalem. We read of Zerubbabel in the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah and 1 Chronicles; and in the Prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah. The clearest description of the journey and rebuilding of the Temple are to be found in Ezra, here returning under the authority of King Cyrus of Persia, rather than Darius.

We also find brief mentions in two Apocryphal books, Sirach and I Esdras. It is in Esdras that we find the famous debate over the power of wine, women, and the king, in which Zerubbabel declares that Truth is greater than all things, and in terms of our ritual this joins his name to the

concept of truth, so that the ring or signet with which he is presented by Cyrus as evidence of his royal commission is called the "ring of Zerubbabel, or Truth."

As we saw above, this is the Third, or Grand and Royal Lodge presided over by Jeshua, Zerubbabel and Haggai.

In fact it is worth perhaps noting that, since we are descended from Operative Masons, in all three cases the rulers meet in Lodges, not Palaces, Temples or Throne Rooms.

The Signet

The use of a signet ring, which bore a seal, was a common method of sealing treaties and official documents from early in man's history. A document would be prepared, then melted wax poured upon it and the ring impressed in the wax to form a seal, which would attest to the document's authenticity. This was both an enduring symbol of authority, and also a useful measure when the monarch was often illiterate and incapable of writing his own name.

As a symbol of authority, the ruler's signet was often reproduced, either perfectly or with qualifying signs, and circulated to those who had authority over regions of his land, so that satraps, princes or minor rulers could issue local edicts in the name of the king. This led to the practice of giving a ring bearing the monarch's seal to those who needed to travel across his lands, as a sign to those the cities or places of passage that he traveled with official permission. While official papers were often issued for this purpose, a ring indicated the travelers had the personal permission of the ruler, and therefore should be allowed to pass without hindrance.

Note that the pharaoh gave a signet ring to Joseph when he put him in charge of protecting Egypt from the predicted famine (Genesis 41: 41 — 42).

In the Royal Arch the signet represents the fact that the traveler has the permission of Zerubbabel. This is of course unlikely, since there is no reason a prince would give his ring to a latecomer to the exodus from Babylon to Jerusalem, nor even a copy of it. However, in the Degree the ring has a second purpose: to remind us that Zerubbabel stands for Truth, and that by implication those who bear his ring are both seeking an audience with the Sanhedrin for a high purpose, and that their endeavors will bring about the discovery of Truth, or the True Word. In this it is a commonly used plot device, where a small object is a harbinger of future action.

Where does this idea come from? In Hebrew, the word "truth" is *emet* or *emeth* (**rinx**). Jewish sages noted that these three letters, *aleph*, *mem* and *tav* (remember Hebrew is written right to

left) are also the last letters of the three words which conclude the account of Creation, *bara Elohim la'asot'* (nitzwL, tririni N'12). These three letters (*aleph, mem* and *tav*) also mark the beginning, middle and end of the Hebrew alphabet.

According to the Jewish sages, "the seal of God is Truth", a phrase which should be very familiar to us by now. In this context, *emet* is seen as the experience of self-fulfillment, of completing God's plan for mankind. In one kabbalistic commentary, it is described as being "the power to realize one's own deepest potential, which is in fact the power of the Jewish soul to bring about the ultimate realization of God's potential."



It is interesting to see just how profound the background to this symbol in the Royal Arch truly is. It is yet another proof that these rituals were not lightly thrown together, but were assembled by men who were deeply versed in all manner of religious, spiritual, esoteric and historical subjects, who were determined to preserve this ancient wisdom in our rituals. We are fortunate indeed to have this treasury of philosophical and practical teachings to study.

The Breastplate and the Ark of the Covenant

If you read Exodus Chapter 25, you will find a detailed description of the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, the Breastplate, and the Seven-Branched Candlestick, the Table of Shewbread (which oddly is not mentioned at all in our ritual). Chapters 26 and 27 read almost like a modern craftwork manual in its detailed description of the building of the Tabernacle, adding that these plans were given to Moses along with the Ten Commandments on top of Mount Sinai.

The Breastplate — or *Breastplate of judgment* to give its full title — which is still worn by the Presiding Officer in most Chapters is described as a plate of gold into which are set four rows of three stones, each engraved with the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

The Ark of the Covenant we saw for the first time in the Most Excellent Master Degree, when it was "safely seated" in the Holy of Holies during that ceremony.

The presence of the Ark of the Covenant in the Royal Arch ritual is largely Masonic license, since there is no reference to it in the Bible after the sack and destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. It is also not featured upon Trajan's column in Rome, which commemorates the sack of the Temple in C.E. 66, in which only the Menorah is pictured. There is a telling story in the Talmud, the authoritative body of Jewish tradition, of a priest finding a loose stone on the Temple Mount and, realizing it is where the Ark was hidden, runs to tell his colleagues, but dies on the way. The moral is, that the Ark is not yet meant to be found. This common tradition of something remaining lost until it is meant to found can also be seen in the legend of King Arthur, and, of course, the Lost Word.

However, despite the debate over whether it featured in the Second Temple built by Zerubbabel, its importance as a Masonic symbol is profound, since it is the vehicle by which the True Word is recovered: it bears the Word upon its exterior, while within is found a cipher through which is learned how to pronounce that Word.

The form of the Ark is also different to that used in the Most Excellent Master Degree. While the one used in that ceremony is closer to the precise descriptions in Exodus, including the Mercy Seat and the two Cherubim, the one used in the Royal Arch Degree omits the Mercy Seat and Cherubim; perhaps to make the story of finding the characters upon it and removing the lid to discover its contents simpler to follow.

While the High Priest traditionally wears the breastplate at all meetings of the Chapter, the Ark of the Covenant, Menorah and Altar of Incense are normally only used during the Royal Arch Degree Ceremony itself.

In the ritual it is assumed that the Menorah and Altar of Incense were brought back to Jerusalem from Babylon by the exiles as part of the furnishings of the Temple handed over by King Darius; while the Ark of the Covenant was found beneath the ruins of the Temple during the ceremony, to realize the words of the Master Mason Degree: "until the wisdom of future generations discovers and brings to light the True Word."

The Prophecy

As the Candidates come before the High Council, the High Priest reads from Haggai 2:1 — 9, 23.

This is a bridge passage, which recalls how Zerubbabel the Prince and Jeshua the High Priest were inspired to lead the remnants of the exiled Israelites back to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and Temple. It recalls God's Covenant with his people when He led them out of exile in Egypt, and now reflected in the journey out of exile in Babylon. It is interesting to note that, in the passage, we are told that God said: "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former." However, we also read in Ezra 3:12 — 13 that: "many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off." In other words, those who were too young to remember the glory of the first temple shouted for joy, but those who remembered King Solomon's Temple wept when they saw the Second Temple being erected by Zerubbabel and Jeshua.

In our ritual the Scribe is Haggai. In the Bible, however, he is called a Prophet; and in the English ritual the three members of the High Council are Zerubbabel the King, Jeshua the Priest and Haggai the Prophet. The English ritual also had two scribes — Ezra and Nehemiah, which reflects the fact that they both wrote about the second temple, notwithstanding the fact that they were by no means contemporaries!

The Task and the Sojourners

In many versions of the Royal Arch Ritual the three Candidates are referred to as Sojourners. The term "sojourner" means someone who is a traveler, but is staying temporarily in one place. Thus, the Candidates, who have traveled from Babylon to Jerusalem are now invited to rest while, and assist in the work being undertaken. They are told that the only work remaining menial, and involves clearing away the rubbish in order to lay the new foundations for the

Second Temple. Symbolically, this indicates that, although they have just proven themselves to be Most Excellent Masters, or the most sophisticated and accomplished Masons, they are told they must undertake the type of work normally given to Entered Apprentices. However, they willingly accept the task in hand, for they have been taught that "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted": and we know that in a little while these humble sojourners will indeed be Exalted (the Ceremony of the Royal Arch is sometimes called "Exaltation") to become the Masters of the Veils.

The task itself, clearing away rubbish in order to lay the new foundation, is of course symbolic. In several continental versions of this degree, including the Scottish Rectified Rite and the Rite of Strict Observance, the Latin motto associated with this degree is *Adhuc stat*, meaning "It still stands". This is accompanied by a Tracing Board depicting the fallen Temple, but with the pavement and the bases of the two columns still standing. Here we can see the fallen Temple as a version of Hiram Abif. The man was destroyed, but the Inner Man, that part which makes him immortal could not be destroyed. Similarly, the physical Temple may lie in ruins, but that essential part, the immortal soul of the Temple, still exists, and this is why the ceremony has the Sojourners enter the very heart of the edifice in order to discover the great secret, that eternal part of the Temple which man alone cannot destroy.

Again, if the Temple is a symbol for our own bodies, now dead and corrupt, what is this rubbish which we are clearing away? It is the accretion of bad behavior, dissipation, sinfulness, pride, envy, indeed all those attributes which we have been working to chip away in order to reveal the perfect ashlar within. Now we clear away these "extraneous knobs and excrescences." And what do we find? The Ark within! At last we understand: Truth lies within. It is not some distant external goal. It was been within us all the time, but we failed to recognize it.

The Working Tools

The tools the Sojourners are given are the crowbar), pickaxe and the spade. We are told that the crowbar is used to lift objects of great weight — in this case the capstone of the vault. The pickaxe is used to loosen the soil and the spade is used to dig up and cast aside the rubbish.

We are also told that these refer to lifting prejudice and passion from our minds, loosening the hold of sin and folly, or vice and ignorance, and preparing the ground upon which to build the spiritual and moral life of his Second Temple.

In the English ritual their description is rather more evocative:

"The stroke of the pick reminds us of the Last Trump, when the grave shall be shaken and loosened and give up its dead; the crow, being an emblem of uprightness, points out the erect manner in which we shall arise on that awful day to meet our tremendous though merciful Judge; while the manner in which the body is laid in the grave is depicted by the work of the shovel."

Traditionally there are two other tools which were used by the builders of the Second Temple. While not overtly mentioned in the Preston Webb Royal Arch Ritual, they are commonly found in almost all other variants of the Royal Arch theme, and are even mentioned in the Cryptic Degrees, which once say alongside the Capitular Degrees. These are the sword and trowel, and are taken from Nehemiah 4:14, which says: "The laborers who carried the loads worked with one hand and held a weapon with the other." So the workmen carried a trowel with which they

rebuilt the Temple, and a sword in the other hand, with which they defended themselves from their enemies who sought to prevent them from finishing.

Symbolically the sword and the trowel also represent the Tree of Life, reflected in the two columns of King Solomon's Temple. The sword represents the Pillar of Severity, while the trowel indicates the Pillar of Mercy. Recall its introduction as a Working Tool of the Third Degree, when we are told it is used for: "spreading the cement of brotherly love and affection, that cement which unites us into one sacred band of friends and Brothers."

The Inventions or Discoveries

We learn, not surprisingly, that there are three discoveries. The first is the Keystone, the second the three Squares, and the third the Ark of the Covenant. Each discovery links it to one of the preceding Capitular Degrees.

Firstly the Keystone is found, which was discovered among the rubbish in the Mark Degree, and it once more discovered among the rubbish in this Degree.

Secondly the three Squares are discovered, which reminds us of the Virtual Past Master Degree, since the Square jewel is the insignia of Mastership.

Finally, Ark of the Covenant is found; and as we learned in Hiram King of Tyre's, speech in the Most Excellent Master Degree: "although the structure has been finished, the Temple is not complete, for it cannot be the House of God until the Ark of the Covenant has been placed therein."

For Masons, while the discovery of the Ark is of great importance, it is almost incidental in our story to the most important discovery of all: the True Word.

The True Word is written within the very heart of the Temple. In the Mark Degree we hear Revelations 2:17 quoted: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

We learn that, just as man has his true name written within, so does the Temple, and by finding and saying this word the Temple — like man — may be brought back to spiritual life.

The power of a name has been taught across the centuries. In magical lore, it was taught that, in order to control a person, angel or even demon one needed to know its true name. This is why, in the Rite of Exorcism, one of the priest's main tasks is to get the inimical spirit possessing the victim to divulge its true name. Once the priest has this he can go about the task of expelling it from the person it is occupying. Vodoun has a similar ritual for controlling another person through knowing his or her name. Even seemingly harmless Victorian love spells involved writing the name of the object of desire upon a piece of parchment and performing some innocent spells over it, then either wearing the paper in a locket or burying it in a place the desired one would walk over. Angels, demons, sprites, elementals, even gods have been summoned through the ages by evocation, which meant using their name. Even our fairy stories and nursery rhymes reflect this action: think of Rumpelstiltskin, or the Wicked Witch's mirror in Sleeping Beauty to cite just two examples.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that in this story the name which will reestablish the Temple is found at the very heart of the ruins, and that uttering it will bring the whole edifice back to life.

The Substitute Ark and Substitute Word

As an aside, it is worth noting that the Ritual is careful to note that the Ark of the Covenant is a *copy*, and the contents *imitations* of the pot of manna, Aaron's rod and the book of the Law. This problem is neatly sidestepped in other Royal Arch rituals. For example, in England, it is the word which is found on a double cubical altar, and not the Ark. Similarly, in some European rituals, the focus is upon rekindling the sacred fire to represent the return of God/life to the Temple/Man.

The passing mention that these are replicas themselves is completely incidental to the story, and is only included to provide continuity with the story of the Cryptic Degrees, which are a part of the York Rite family in the United States and some other countries. The point of the story is that of the discovery of a great secret within the vault of the old Temple, by means of which the True Word is rediscovered, and the “wisdom of former generations” restored.

The symbols found within the Ark are taken directly from the description of the contents in the Holy Bible, and are reflected in the Capitular Degrees. The manna is referred to in the passage describing the white stone upon which a name is written. The rod reflects that carried by the Principal Sojourner as a staff of office, that of Moses which became a snake before the Children of Israel and before the pharaoh's Priests; and that of Aaron when it budded to indicate that he had been selected as the High Priest. Finally, the Book of the Law reflects the belief that Ezra reintroduced the Pentateuch, or Torah in Jerusalem, upon the return of the exiles. This contained the books ascribed to Moses, being Genesis, Deuteronomy, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. We can also note that the Book of the Law represents the Scribe, the Pot of Manna the King (he who feeds and provides for his people), and Aaron's Rod the High Priest.

Finally, by means of the Ark and the key found within, the Substitute Word is abrogated, and the True Word rediscovered and conferred upon the Candidates. Henceforth they are Companions, in possession of that which was lost.

And they are finally taught the reason why Hiram Abif couldn't communicate the Master's Word to the ruffians. It was not stubbornness which prevented him. Of course there was bravery, but more than anything it was the physical impossibility of transmitting the word as it requires three people in the proper position in order to communicate the True Word. Once he was dead, King Solomon and Hiram King of Tyre could no longer utter the word themselves since, according to Masonic tradition, it could only be uttered by the High Priest in the Holy of Holies but once a year, or by three Master Masons each uttering but a single syllable of that word.

The Masonic Alphabet

The Masonic code or Pigpen code, as it is also known, despite the admonition in the ritual to destroy it after explaining how the words on the Ark are derived, can hardly be said to be secret any longer. It is found in Dan Brown's 2009 novel *The Lost Symbol*, and even in children's books as an easy substitution code. A simple search on the internet will reveal not only the code laid out for all to see, but even fonts which you can download and use on your computer!

However, there is evidence that this cipher played a much more serious role in the late 17th and early 18th Century. There is evidence that George Washington's army used the system, but with the letter of the alphabet more randomly associated with the signs, and it was also used during the Civil War by union prisoners in Confederate jails. We may see it on many Masonic gravestones of that period, too. And there is evidence it was used in communications between Masons which they wished to keep private.

The Discovery of the True Mason's Word

The actual word itself works particularly well in the context of the ritual. As we just learned, since the Word could only be uttered completely by the High Priest once a year in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple, the only other people who could utter it were King Solomon, Hiram King of Tyre, and Hiram Abif with a "tribble voice". When Hiram Abif was slain the ability to pronounce the Word was lost, and it was lost a second time — this time to the Children of Israel — when Judah was overrun by Nebuzaradan, Captain of the Guard to Nebuchadnezzar.

While Masonic lore is unclear on the matter, it is assumed that, since the High Priest could only teach his successor the Great and Sacred Name of God, this avenue of restoring the Lost Word was forever closed to King Solomon and Hiram, King of Tyre.

We should remember that Israel only remained united as a people for a very short time. When King Solomon's son, Rehoboam, came to the throne, the people of Israel begged him to lighten the taxes which King Solomon had put on them to pay for the Temple and his palace. But Rehoboam received bad advice from his young friends, and ignoring the counsel of the elders, uttered the famous line: "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add thereto: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." (2 Chronicles 10:14). So the majority of the people separated themselves, and two countries were established: Judah in the

Southern part, which included Jerusalem, and was composed of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin; and Israel, to the North, which was composed of the other ten tribes.

In Masonic lore the Word was lost to us when Hiram Abif was killed; and in the Bible it was lost to the people of Judah when the Temple was razed to the ground.

It is interesting to note that, while the means of discovery — called the Grand Royal Arch Word -is recited at every meeting of Royal Arch Masons, becoming in itself a kind of second substitute word, the Great and Sacred Name of God is only uttered when the Royal Arch Degree is being conferred upon Candidates. Since most Chapters will probably only confer the Degree once a year, this holds true to the idea that the Great and Sacred Name should only be uttered but once a year in the Holy of Holies.

It is interesting to see that the word *exaltation* has two meaning in England. Firstly, it is "the act of raising someone or something in importance." Secondly, it is "a strong sense of happiness, power, or importance." (both Merriam-Webster dictionary). www.dictionary.com goes on to include "elation of mind or feeling; mystical exaltation." Both would seem to be highly appropriate, in that they reflect both an external and internal transformation.

Externally the Candidate is now called a Companion rather than a Brother. He is no longer a Sojourner, but a permanent resident of Jerusalem, with an important and prestigious role in guarding the High Council seated in the Tabernacle. He is now symbolically a Master of a Veil. Since three must be Exalted at one time, this means the three new Companions now become the Masters of the Blue, Purple and Red Veils, under the instruction of the Royal Arch Captain. The new Companion is now in possession of the True Word of Master Mason. His old white apron has been removed and a more glorious one, trimmed with red and bearing a potent sigil upon its flap, tied about his waist.

Internally, he is overjoyed with the discovery of the True Word, and his elation is matched by the knowledge that he has symbolically completed his Masonic journey, that he is now perfected, his Living Stone now forms part of the fabric of the Spiritual Temple, and within him he carries that Name which no man may know, save him to whom it is given. He has died and passed beyond the veil. He has seen God face to face, and knows His Name.

But in all this euphoria, we must remember an important fact. Initiation, by its very definition, means a beginning, it does not make one an Adept; it only provides permission or authority to study to become that person which he has symbolically represented in the ritual itself. The Companion has been given the tools, but if he lays them aside, believing that he is now a perfect man, he fools himself and submits himself to the tyrannical sin of pride or *hubris*. His new journey is now only beginning. He has passed through the veil and now his learning, his path

begins anew. It is now for him to gird himself with his sword, take his trowel in hand, and continue on this magnificent journey of discovery.

The Words

The words used to learn the pronunciation of the Great and Sacred Name, we are told, are "composed of the names of Deity in three languages, the Syriac, the Chaldean and the Egyptian." Why are these three languages — or countries — selected?

Conveniently for Masonry, and its love of the number three, the Children of Israel are associated with three major journeys. The first was the journey out of Egyptian bondage and into the Promised Land. The second was the journey which led from Jerusalem into exile in Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar, of the Chaldean dynasty. Finally, the Children of Israel returned to Jerusalem empowered by the initial ruling of King Darius I, King of Persia, who adopted the Aramaic language of Syriac as the official language for all legal and political communication and documents across his empire.

It is interesting to note that all three of these tongues were associated with quasi-monotheistic religions. However, early Masonic scholarship was not what it is now, and so we find as few minor errors in what is otherwise a clever device: the rediscovery of how to pronounce the True Name of God by aid of the names of the “head” Gods of the three countries in which the Children of Israel formerly sojourned.

We are told that “Jah” is the name of the Syriac god. In fact this is unlikely, since Darius and Cyrus were almost certainly Zoroastrians. Apart from a healthy respect for the Judaic god, who among other names, was called “Jah”, the uncreated father-god of the Zoroastrians was Ahuramazda.

We are on firmer ground with the Chaldean *Bel*. This is another name for Marduk, who was the god of the Babylonian region and considered the leader of the gods.

Unfortunately with the Egyptian God we are back on shaky ground. We must remember that the translation of the Rosetta Stone — which provided a passage in hieroglyphs, demotic Egyptian and Greek, enabling hieroglyphic inscriptions to be translated — did not take place until 1822, and the first English translation not until 1854. Prior to that time ancient Egyptian history was largely guesswork and fantasy.

In Genesis 41:45 we read that, in recognition of interpreting the pharaoh's dream, Joseph is given Asenath, the daughter of Potiphar (sometimes rendered Potipherah), priest of *On*. It is highly likely that this is where the idea that On was a great god in Egypt arose. Initially -and incorrectly — On was thought to be an old name for Osiris. However, later scholarship revealed that On was in fact a place, not the name of a god! The true father of the Egyptian gods was Ra.

One thing in common between the gods is that they are all sun gods -associated with the sun. This recalls the position the sojourner's hand involuntarily took in order to protect his eyes when recovering the Ark.

The Number 3

We have seen a number of instances of the number three in this Degree, which continues the

litany of threes in the Blue Lodge Degrees. Indeed, the list at the end of the Historical Lecture may be read with profit.

However, there is a particular application of the number three which is prominent in this Degree, yet not explicitly mentioned in that list. At the Opening of the Chapter, the High Priest asks the Captain of the Host: "How shall I know you to be a Royal Arch Mason". The response is: "By three times three."

Now, we know there are three times three, or three groups of three Officers — the High Council, the three subordinate Officers (Captain of the Host, Principal Sojourner, Royal Arch Captain) and three Masters of the Veils. There are three times three passwords to pass through the Veils, and we put our right feet, left and right arms in a three times three position in order to communicate the Word.

However, there is a subtler force at work. Three times three can also be expressed as three squared, or 3^2 . If the regular symbolism of the Blue Lodge is the repetition of the number three, we now see this squared to nine. We can say mathematically that the number three is now functioning at a higher power. This is another indication that this Degree is suggestive of a higher level, or plane: as we have seen before, in the Royal Arch we have moved from the terrestrial, earthly plane to the spiritual plane.

The Triple Tau

Surely there can be no more fascinating and mysterious symbol than the emblem of this Grade: the Triple Tau, contained within a triangle within a circle. We are told that this device is "the emblem of emblems of a Royal Arch Mason, typifying the Sacred Name, the Author of Eternal Life."

This is a somewhat terse description of so profound a symbol.

In the English Ritual we are taught in the Mystical Lecture that: "The triangle has long been considered a sacred symbol. In times of antiquity names of God and symbols of the Deity were often enclosed in triangular figures. The Circle, having neither beginning nor ending, is an emblem of eternity, and may justly be deemed a symbol of God, without beginning of days or ending of years..."

However, on the subject of the Triple Tau it is less helpful:

"The Tau is that mark or character spoken of by the angel whom Ezekiel saw in the spirit, when it was said to the man with the writer's inkhorn: "go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof; by which mark they were saved from among those who were slain for their idolatry by the wrathful displeasure of the Most High."

"The Tau was in ancient times set up those who were acquitted by their judges, as a proof of their innocence, and military commanders caused it to be placed on those who returned from battle unhurt from the field of battle, to show that they were in perfect life. It has, therefore, even been considered a mark or sign of life. The union of the three Taus alludes to the Deity, by whom the gloom, horrific, and unshapen chaos was changed into

regular form and peaceful existence."

Very poetic, but it still doesn't tell us why we would wear this mark upon our apron!

The tau is both the 19th letter of the Greek alphabet, and also the 22nd letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In this context the Hebrew *tau* or *tav* is more pertinent. The 22nd Path of the Tree of Life links Malkuth, or Earth, to Yesod, or the Astral, and to attain that level you must pass through a veil. Another name for Yesod is Foundation, and this is what is being restored and rebuilt in the story of the Royal Arch Degree. It is also considered to represent a cross — not the Christian one with four arms, but the T-shaped cross Moses erected in the desert bearing the Brazen Serpent Nehushtan (Numbers 21:9).

Being the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet it also signifies ending, or a new beginning. Three Taus represent this emphatically. It is the symbol of the absolute, of the perfection of creation; and since it bears the highest value of any Hebrew letter, 400, it also stands for infinity.

In the form of the Greek *tau*, which may have been the original shape of the Hebrew tau, or the cross carried by Moses, in the passage from Ezekiel (9:4) mentioned above, it is a sign of absolution from sin, which is a similar purpose to the snake upon the cross of Moses, since many commentaries identify the snakes which plagues the Children with Israel with sin, and gazing upon the brazen serpent on the cross as an act of contrition, and therefore absolution., symbolized by the comment that those who gazed upon it did not die. Naturally, in Christian commentaries, that later led to this scene in the desert being seen as a harbinger of Jesus hanging upon the cross, bearing the weight of mankind's sins, and that those who gazed upon the cross — that is, turn to Christianity — would have everlasting life. However, we should also remember that the introduction of the cross as a symbol of Christianity was relatively late, not coming into common imagery until the 4th Century C.E. Prior to that it was more common to use the symbol of a fish, or the Chi-Rho symbol, since the cross was an awkward reminder of the ignominious death, reserved to slaves and traitors, which the Nazarene had suffered.

Esoterically the letter *tau* represents a gateway or opening (since its later appearance looked like two doorposts with a lintel across them), or a symbolic death leading to a new life; an initiation including a symbolic death, such as was practiced in many of the ancient mystery cults — and Freemasonry! In this sense the link between gateway and cross become obvious, since *tav* is the last letter of the alphabet, signifying the end, but a new beginning. A doorway symbolizes moving into a new place. And the cross symbolizes death to a new life, be it the painful torture or gazing upon a brazen serpent as a promise to live like a new man.

Some see the emblem of the Triple Tau as actually being a letter “T” standing upon a letter “H”. This is been severally identified with the phrase “Templum Hieroslyma”, Latin for the Temple of Jerusalem; and even the initials of Thoth, the great Egyptian teacher, who was meant to have brought the knowledge of the gods to mankind; and who was also believed to be Hermes Trismegistus, the legendary sage. In the Mark Master Degree we learned that the device written upon the Keystone began with the letters “HT” indicating Hiram (the) Tyrian.

Perhaps the most important lesson to learn is that the Masonic sign par excellence, the point within a circle, is now expanded in form and meaning. We are taught here that the Brother is the point and the circle Deity, and also the boundary of his duty to God and man. In this system man was at the center. Now in the Triple Tau God is at the center, and we contemplate Him, not as an external power, as we did in the earlier Degrees, but now as a part of us, within us, ruling and guiding our actions.

This God within, bears three essential attributes, as we are told in the Historical Lecture, like the triangle, to represent the three essential attributes of God, namely Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Omnipotence.

The Symbol of the Royal Arch

The Arch itself is a very profound symbol indeed. It has many interpretations, but perhaps the clearest one may be considered here.

Israelites and all nations of the Middle East, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Masons of the Gothic era and later were able to build ever taller structures with larger and larger protected interiors. So the columns raise the walls, the arch holds the ceiling in place, but the keystone binds the whole together.

The inspiration for this architectural structure, as we have seen, probably came from a close observation of the Book of Nature, and columns closely resemble the tree trunks which are still used in more primitive tribes as the verticals which form the framework of the walls, while the idea of the vaulted ceiling probably came from an observation of the way the higher branches became interwoven in forest canopies.

For us, we recognize the columns of Boaz and Jachin as representing the terrestrial and celestial worlds. Indeed in our Lodge Rooms “B” bears a terrestrial globe, while “J” bears a representation of the heavens or celestial realm.

What was once one in God became divided into two. This theme of division may be seen everywhere: male and female, day and night, good and bad, rich and poor, summer and winter. Everywhere in Nature we see two contending forces. Our entire Masonic journey has been spent trying to find how to reconcile these two forces.

Perhaps the most perfect and simple image of two contrary forces being reconciled is the triangle, or delta. It teaches us that a third side, or force, is require to balance the other two and make them harmonious and whole. This is perhaps why the delta has for so long been both a symbol of deity, and an indication of a reconciliation of three forces which comprise God. Most theologies contain some form of Trinity, from Isis, Vishnu, and Brahma; right down to Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Another is the arch.

If Boaz represents the Earth and Jachin the Heavens, then what does the Ark which unites them represent? It is the Ark of the Covenant, the arch of the rainbow, that which united God and Man. Since we have become separated through man's pride and his fall, then we can work to rebuild the path, the Jacob's Ladder which used to unite us. In the arch we reconcile heaven and earth, and open the path of communication between them once more.

The Keystone which holds the bond between heaven and earth conjoined and co-dependent is the very stone with the builders rejected. With it we bridge the gap, and all of us become a pontifex, or bridge-builder. This is the fifth or final Alliance which will be everlasting.

And one last thought to ponder. Upon the surface of that White Stone which holds the bridge between heaven and earth in place, is a name composed of eight letters, as we learned in the Mark Master Degree.

H::T::W::S::S::T::K::S

The number eight is considered the number of perfection in many esoteric systems. For example, in Nicomachus' Arithmetic, it is equated with universal harmony. It is also the third number of the celestial triad in the Qabalistic Tree of life (Kether being "10" and Binah "9"), and therefore represents the Eternal Son, or again Perfected Man who finally aspires to join with God. And Man is perfected through Truth, or *emet*...

And finally we learn why this degree is called the Royal Arch, when the Arch appears to feature so little in the story. For this is a story of recovering the Lost Word, of discovering Truth within ourselves once more. And armed with self-knowledge and knowing the True Name of the Great and Ever-Living God, we may dare to cross the bridge which separates us from Him.

The Charge

The Charge reminds us of our duties as Royal Arch Masons and Companions. It gives us three admonitions.

Firstly, that we are to study those lessons we have just received, and which should have profoundly impressed us. We should have realized that we are entering a completely different level of understanding of the lessons of Masonry, and have begun to realize there are indeed important secrets in Freemasonry which remain hidden to those who are not prepared to take the time to study and understand them.

Secondly, we are given an indication of the way we can accomplish this difficult goal. We are told to "contemplate" the Sacred Source, and to "realize more and more the ever presence of the Great I Am". This is a progressive study, borne of contemplation or meditation. It is not enough to sit and read: one must allow the teachings to infiltrate us, to move us, to become one with us, until we intuitively begin to understand the messages within the Degree which have only be touched in in this course.

And thirdly, we are told to guard the Outer Door more carefully than ever. We are not to cast pearls before swine. These Mysteries — and the Charge openly uses the word "Mysteries" are

only to be unveiled to those who have the capacity to learn from them. The outer courts of the Blue Lodge have their foundations in the earthly world. The Royal Arch established its foundations in the spiritual world. We have symbolically died, with Hiram, in order to pass to this Second Temple, and, like him, we have endured that Long Night of the Soul and merited coming before the Throne. And now we must keep the Veils between the two systems firmly drawn, and only part them when we find a person who is worthy to join this honorable Order of Companions.

Biblical References

As in the previous Degrees, the system of Capitular Degrees draws very heavily for both the Old and the New Testament. Although the stories told in the ritual are from the Old Testament, many lessons drawn come from the Gospels. This should not be very surprising. Firstly, these rituals came from countries which were heavily steeped in the Christian tradition. Secondly, these Degrees concern themselves with the fulfilment of promises made by God, and the perfection of Man who may now rise above his sinful nature and reunite with God. These are surely themes found in abundance in the New Testament.

In this it uses the references to Jesus in an almost gnostic sense: that we all contain a spark of the divine, and that however, immersed in mud and slime we become, and take on an earthly body, as Adam did when he turned from God, that spark lives on, immortal and undiminished. If we take the trouble to recognize our potential, and work upon ourselves, making us fit receptacles of that immortal fire, or spiritual temples not made with hands, as our ritual says, then we may once more shed our earthly body and find ourselves once more clothed in that glorious body which was our First "Estate", and commune once more with the God from whom we came, the Great Architect of the Universe who made us and who by that act of creation became forever our Father in Heaven.

Now you understand why these words are both so important, and how they were, even then, a harbinger of the journey which would lead to this Degree. You have symbolically died and been raised, set aside all substitutes and been entrusted with the Truth, the True Word. You have the tools, and we have explained them as much as we are permitted. The rest of the journey is up to you!

The History and Symbolism of the Triple Tau

By Geo. L. Marshall, Jr, PGHP (Alabama)

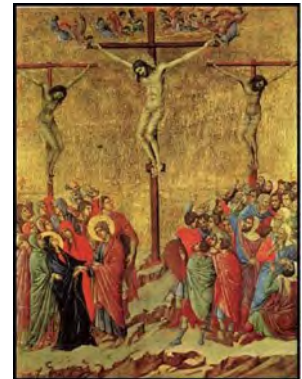
In the Apron Lecture of the Royal Arch Degree, we read “The Triple Tau in a triangle, within a circle, is the emblem of emblems of a Royal Arch Mason, typifying the Sacred Name, the Author of Eternal Life.”

The circle and the triangle are well-known symbols of the Deity and his attributes as used in Freemasonry and their symbolism has been presented in many Masonic degrees and books. This article will concentrate on a symbol which is perhaps not so well-known, the Triple Tau.

A triple tau is literally “three Tau’s”, the tau being the nineteenth letter of the Greek Alphabet, a letter which takes the same form in many different alphabets, including the English. The triple tau of Royal Arch Masonry consists of 3 T’s joined together at their base. When the three taus were joined and utilized as a part of early Royal Arch Masonry we shall consider later.



The tau is an very early form of cross. In shape, it is the simple T. It is understandable that, as a cross has been adored as a sacred symbol from the earliest of pagan times, it has assumed many different forms, of which the tau cross is but one of many hundreds. It is often called St. Anthony's Cross, (or crux commissa) because the saint was martyred on a cross of that simple form. Tradition favors the Latin cross as that on which Christ died, but some believe that it was a tau cross. In art depicting the Crucifixion, the thieves are often depicted as being crucified on tau crosses, as shown in the picture at right. The tau cross was the symbol of the Roman God Mithras and the Greek God Attis and the Sumerian God Tammuz.



The earliest symbol for tau meant “a wound”. The triple tau therefore can be thought to represent three wounds as occurred in the case of the murdered Hiram Abif, illustrated within the 3rd degree legend, and of course, in the case of the three wounds inflicted by the nails used in the crucifixion of Jesus.

In pagan days a warrior honorably surviving a battle could attach a “T” to his name, and as a mark of distinction. It is referred to in Ezekiel ix, 3 and 4, where the Lord commands "the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side," to "go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a tau upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for [because of] all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." The Hebrew form of the word “tau” is pronounced “tov” and carries the meaning of marking, etching, scrawling, delineating, etc., which perhaps explains how a tau cross came originally to be used by illiterate people in “signing” their name to a document.

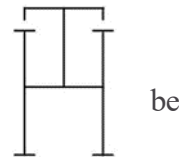
The simple tau was the Egyptian's nilometer, a gauge by which was measured the rise of the Nile river in the time of its flood. The instrument was a solidly constructed giant “T” which might be



as much as 32 feet high, its crossbar at the top being about 10-12 feet wide. In its permanent form, standing in a well that communicated with the Nile, the height of the rising water was read from the graduated pillar, and that height might be anything from 12 cubits (meaning famine to the population) to 22 cubits (meaning an abundant supply). A height of 24 cubits of water might mean a flood--the destruction of people, their stores and their houses. It is easy, indeed, to see that, as the life and health of the Egyptian people depended upon the rise and fall of the Nile as recorded by the milometer, the instrument itself became a symbol and later evolved into a life-giving talisman which was believed to avert evil and repel sickness. The Egyptian god Thoth, carried it as his emblem, known as the *ankh* or

crux ansata.

It has been suggested that the original form of the triple tau was not to be considered as such, but rather was the coming together of a T atop the crossbar of an H, formed as at right, meaning Templum Hierosolyma, or the Temple of Jerusalem. It is also said to mean Clavis ad Thesaurum – “A key to the treasure” – and Theca ubi res pretiosa – “A place where the precious thing is concealed.” Some Christian Interpretations define it as “Holiness Supporting Trinity.” Royal Arch records dating from 1767 show this symbol. The distinction between these two letters being in contact and the true triple tau is that in the latter device the serifs have disappeared, and what were letters have now become right angles. Apparently, the Triple Tau was conceived in Scotland in 1766 as part of the ancestor of the modern Royal Arch Degree. It was adopted as the emblem of the Royal Arch Chapter by the General Grand Chapter of the United States at a meeting in Chicago in 1859. The Scottish ritual knew nothing of the triple tau for a great many years, but it well knew the T-over-H emblem, and the official Irish ritual is not concerned with that symbol, although there were many Irish lodges in which it had a place.



Further, if we read the monogram from the bottom up, we get “HT” which could be interpreted as Hiram (of) Tyre or Hiram, Tyrian, both familiar personages from our Masonic degrees. It is also of interest that Christians in Greek or Roman

influence anciently used a tau cross. The basis of a triple tau in early church history could thus symbolize the trinity of father, son, and holy spirit.



Finally, we notice that the triple tau emblem contains eight right angles. The right angle, or square, is to Masons a symbol of virtue and uprightness of conduct. So also, was its signification among the Pythagoreans. The number 8 represents Infinity and everything good in the universe which is infinite, such as infinite love, infinite supply, infinite energy, infinite time--in other words, 8 represents complete and unending abundance without any lack. And certainly, this unlimited abundance of virtue and brotherly love should be the hallmark of every Royal Arch

Mason who recognizes the mystery of the emblem of emblems called the triple tau.

The Royal Arch and the Pathway to the Search



for Lost Knowledge

by Dr. David Harrison

"It is regrettable that Masonic research during recent years has failed to throw light upon the origin and early history of the Royal Arch." - Arthur Edward Waite, 1921 1

"...go and prepare for the foundation of the second temple. But let me lay this injunction upon you - that should you meet with anything belonging to the first temple, you will communicate no part thereof to any one, until you have faithfully made your report to the Sanhedrin here sitting in chapter." - Richard Carlile, 1825 2

"In 1740 he (Ramsay) came over to England and remained in this country for more than a year; after which he returned to France, where the rage for innovation had now fairly commenced. It was during this period, I am persuaded, that the English Royal Arch was fabricated; for very soon afterwards, the ancients publicly announced that "Ancient Masonry consisted of four degrees" while modern Masonry had only three, the fourth signifying the Royal Arch." - Dr. George Oliver, The American Freemason, 1859 3

The Moderns and the Antients had finally come together in union in 1813, the rift between the two Grand Lodges being healed. One of the main problems had been the Royal Arch ritual, seen by the Antients as a fourth degree but practiced by the Moderns as the completion of the third degree. The bitterness and feuding had escalated until both sides finally came together, and after the union, it was settled that the Royal Arch was the completion of the third degree, though was practiced in separate "Chapters," the Chapter room set out differently than the craft Lodge room. Despite this, the Royal Arch was still referred to as a fourth degree by some stubborn lodges until around 1850, and the rebel Grand Lodge of Wigan still practised the Royal Arch as a separate degree. In fact during the Liverpool Masonic Rebellion, the Royal Arch became a point of debate.

In my book, The Genesis of Freemasonry, I put forward how Dr. John Theophilus Desaguliers had reconstructed the Masonic ritual in the 1720's, creating the three degree structure set within Solomon's Temple, describing its initial construction by chief architect Hiram Abif, disclosing

his murder and the attempt at raising him from the dead to regain his lost knowledge. The Royal Arch ritual continues this theme with the rebuilding of Solomon's Temple under Zerubbabel and the search for lost knowledge within the temple ruins, the ritual revealing a number of lost artifacts set within the keystones of three arches in the temple. These artifacts were lost in the destruction of the original temple, but with their discovery, the temple could be reconstructed, the divine measurements of God being found to recreate the most sacred holy place on Earth.

The Royal Arch ritual has obscure origins, and the first tantalizing mentions of the ritual reveal hints that it was put together after the three Masonic degrees were formed, continuing the mystical dramatization of the building and rebuilding of Solomon's Temple. It has the hallmarks of being put together by Desaguliers himself, the ritual continuing the education of the Master Mason and revealing the Biblical story of Solomon's Temple with embedded themes of the search for hidden knowledge. It does make sense that this could be a fourth degree and that there could have been a proposed fifth degree ritual to follow it telling the story of the construction of Herod's Temple, five being a mystical number in Freemasonry and completing a cycle. Because it was left unfinished may be the reason why, after the death of Desaguliers, the Royal Arch was seen as an awkward "add on" to the third degree. It should have been the fourth degree, but without the fifth to complete the story, it caused debate and confusion.

The ritual reveals similar language to the third degree, with poetical elements and references to Newtonian language, the "science of sciences" taking the Master Mason to a higher level of secret knowledge. Indeed, Carlile writing in his *Manual of Freemasonry* in the 1820's calls the Royal Arch a degree in its own right, and the story does stand alone rather than acting as a mere add-on to the third degree. In this sense, the Royal Arch seems to be the next chapter in the unfolding story of the temple, taking the search for hidden knowledge and the understanding of the divine measurement of God to another educational level. As the rebuilding of the temple is announced, "three sojourners from Babylon" arrive to offer their services in the rebuilding. They explain that they suffer the wrath of God because their ancestors "deviated from the true Masonic principles" and "ran into every kind of wickedness." These three men are thus travelling on a path of enlightenment and have been sent by God to complete a task which will not only redeem them but will educate them. They "deem the lowest situation in the Lord's house an honor" and beg for employment as labourers. During the construction work to rebuild the temple, a discovery is made and the workers report back: "being at our work early this morning, our companion broke up the ground with his pickaxe, and we, judging from the sound thereof that it was hollow, called upon our companion with his shovel to clear away the loose earth and discovered the perfect crown of an arch. With my crow-bar I removed the key-stone." 4

The Royal Arch ritual describes an archaeological excavation, and the workers from Babylon are deemed trustworthy as they report back to "the Most Excellent Principal" with their discoveries. Like the third degree, a moralistic and educational drama is being enacted, and though not exactly of Shakespearian quality, the ritual is vibrant, embracing themes of how the weakness and wickedness of man can lead to the loss of God's sacred word, the divine measurement of the Temple itself. Through trust, unity, and industry the workers first retrieve a lost scroll from an excavated arch, a scroll which is the long-lost book of the holy law. The workers return to the

excavation, and find a second "crown of an arch," though after removing the key-stone, they find nothing. However, judging from the hollow sound beneath, the workers continue to search, and find a key-stone of a third arch, and on removing it: "the sun, having now gained its meridian height, darted its rays to the center. It shone resplendent on a white marble pedestal, whereon was a plate of gold. On this plate was engraved a triple triangle, and within the triangles some characters which are beyond our comprehension." 5

The word "meridian" was also used in the third degree ritual, again suggesting that Desaguliers had an influence, who in 1724, wrote his Dissertation Concerning the Figure of the Earth, a work based on Newtonian principles in which he discussed the "proper method for drawing (the) Meridian," and "observations of the rising and setting sun," putting forward the importance of the meridian in creating more accurate maps.⁶ The Royal Arch, like the third degree, certainly celebrates the Newtonian obsession for the search for lost knowledge, and when the workers report back with their glittering find, they are informed as to the importance of the gold plate which displays "the Grand Omnific word." "The three mysterious words" displayed "in a triangular form, is the long-lost sacred word of the Master Mason," and the secret signs of the Royal Arch are thus revealed to the workers. Redemption and trust is earned, and the mysteries are revealed. God's sacred word has been rediscovered, and the temple can be rebuilt.⁷

The essence of the Royal Arch ritual is undoubtedly a continuation of the temple story, in effect a sequel to the third degree continuing the themes of lost knowledge being found by the worthy and that the lost divine word will be revealed to those who seek it for selfless reasons. A strong moralistic overtone is portrayed as the ritual is dramatically set among the Temple ruins, and the Mason is reminded of the destruction of the most sacred place on Earth which has been destroyed by man's selfish greed and lust for war. As in the third degree where the master is murdered by selfish Masons who lust after the secret for themselves, man's weaknesses have led to the destruction of the temple which can only be rebuilt by finding the true path to enlightenment. The men involved in the reconstruction rediscover the true way to God. The rebuilding of the temple in the Royal Arch ritual reflects the interest within the Premier or Modern Grand Lodge of the rebuilding of St. Paul's Cathedral by the Freemason, Sir Christopher Wren, after its destruction, the parallel being evident when recognizing St. Paul's as the new temple built in London.⁸

The Royal Arch ritual is a powerful reminder of man's folly, and it would be natural for the cycle to continue, with a fifth degree revealing the story of the building of Herod's Temple, again reflecting the theme of the search for lost knowledge and its rediscovery leading to a rebuilding of the temple and a reminder of the importance of following a moralistic and righteous path. The person who wrote the Royal Arch ritual was astutely aware of Biblical knowledge and of the rebuilding taking place after Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon's destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the ritual is filled with Biblical characters such as the Principal Zerubbabel and Nebuzaradan, who is described as the chief of Nebuchadnezzar's officers. Herod the Great rebuilt the temple, and this version of the temple was finally destroyed by the Romans. The ritual also contains poetical elements and rhythmic style which reflect the presentation of the third degree ritual. When reminded that Desaguliers was a practicing Reverend and a poet, as

well as being the driving force behind Freemasonry in the 1720's and 1730's, he once again becomes the obvious contender for the authorship of the Royal Arch. Desaguliers would have been familiar with the themes of searching for lost knowledge, especially concerning Solomon's Temple, as his mentor Isaac Newton worked obsessively on searching for the divine measurements of the temple for many years.

Masonic historian, Dr. George Oliver, writing in the 1850's, had suggested that the Royal Arch was purely an "Antient" Grand Lodge invention, inspired by Jacobite Freemasons in France and brought over to England by Chevalier Ramsay. Oliver rather confusingly put forward that the Modern's had not properly practiced the Royal Arch until the 1770's:

"The introduction of the Royal Arch degree into the modern system could not be earlier than the dedication of Freemasons Hall in 1776." 9

Oliver was a prolific Masonic writer in the nineteenth century though he was never far from criticism, his views bringing him into conflict with the Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England, the Duke of Sussex. Oliver's confusing views on the origin of the Royal Arch have been well and truly criticised over the years, an example being the Masonic historian Leon Hyneman who politely sums up Oliver's misinterpretations:

"Dr. Oliver [wrote] in his "Account of the Schism" in England and his elaborate letters on the "Origins of the English Royal Arch" with seemingly the best intentions to be unbiased in writing to his friend and reverend brother, Dr. Crucifix, yet he wrote as if trammelled and confined in his range of thought to views in accord with all his other Masonic writings." 10

There had been a Grand Chapter of England formed in London under the authority of Lord Blaney in 1766, Blaney having previously served as Grand Master of the Moderns. From this governing body, many Royal Arch Chapters soon emerged all over England, Wales, and even several in Scotland.¹¹ Thus the Moderns were as keen on practicing the Royal Arch as their Ancient counterparts.

Oliver's Jacobite culprit for the creation of the Royal Arch degree was an associate of Desaguliers' named Chevalier Ramsay. Andrew Michael Ramsay had been granted the rather exalted title of Chevalier of the neo-Chivalric Order of St. Lazarus by the Duke of Orleans while in France. Ramsay was a Scottish Jacobite who had gone to France, tutoring the sons of aristocrats, and when in London in 1730, he entered Desaguliers' prestigious Horn Tavern Lodge. In his "Oration" to the Paris Grand Lodge in 1737, Ramsay presented that Freemasonry was originally linked with the crusaders and the chivalric orders, and after being preserved in the British Isles, it was thus passing to France. There is no historical evidence for what Ramsay put forward in his address in 1737 regarding a link to the crusaders or chivalric orders, but it does reveal that he desired a noble and chivalric origin for Freemasonry. Ramsay was an idealist, and the oration was a presentation of his ideal of Freemasonry, that its principles and values should reflect the romantic chivalrous attitudes of the medieval Knights. Though Ramsay did not set out plans for new Masonic orders in his oration, he certainly inspired them with his ideals of virtuous principles that were reflected in his romantic views of medieval crusader chivalry, and as aristocrats became increasingly interested in Freemasonry, exotic degrees and rituals with

romantic chivalric themes would certainly appeal. 12

Oliver's views that the Royal Arch was an ancient Jacobite creation had some support at the time, and in a feature entitled "The Antiquity of The Royal Arch" in the Freemasons Magazine and Masonic Mirror dated January 1868, his theory was discussed again:

"...it is clear that Dermott and his associates extended the second part of the third degree until they made it a fourth degree and gave it the name of the Royal Arch. The fact is also clear to me, and to my mind quite conclusive that the English Royal Arch – as a degree or in name – did not exist before 1740." 13

Lawrence Dermott had been the spiritual leader of the Ancients, founding the successful "Antient" Grand Lodge in 1751, though there had been earlier references to the Royal Arch by the Premier or Modern Grand Lodge which had been founded in 1717. Desaguliers' associate, James Anderson, when writing the first edition of the Constitutions in 1723, writes about the "Arch," saying it was the cement of brotherhood preserved "so that the whole body resembles a well-built arch." 14 In this respect, the "Arch" symbolized strength, not just within architecture but within the society of Freemasonry.

The writer of the feature in the Freemasons Magazine and Masonic Mirror was sternly taking the official line that the Royal Arch was the "completion" of the third degree, being its "second part," referring to Dr. Oliver's "Origin of the Royal Arch Order of Masonry", a new edition of which had been published the previous year. The writer, who praised Oliver as "the greatest modern light of Freemasonry," also discussed Oliver's theory on the mysterious "Rite Ancien de Bouillon" manuscript, 15 of which, he stated, had displayed the first "faint glimmerings" of the Royal Arch ritual, "styled by its fabricators as the fourth degree" being "designed by the brethren who seceded from the Constitutional Grand Lodge (the Moderns) in 1739." 16 Oliver had discussed this secession of the Ancients in 1739 in his work, "A Dictionary of Symbolic Masonry", this date fitting his theory of the Ancients creating the Royal Arch soon after:

"In the year 1739 a few brethren, having violated the laws of Masonry, were expelled from the Grand Lodge...they appropriated to themselves the exclusive and honourable title of Ancient Masons." 17

Although the Ancient Grand Lodge was officially founded in 1751 by Lawrence Dermott, there had been an incident of "irregular Making of Masons" by certain brethren reported in the minutes of the Premier/Modern Grand Lodge in 1739, 18 and the Grand Lodge faced increasing ridicule and criticism throughout the early 1740's with "Mock Masonry." 19 Oliver omitted the official "Antient" Grand Lodge foundation date of 1751 from his discussion on the Ancients, again presenting a confusing picture. The ritual displayed in the "Rite Ancien de Bouillon," which Oliver dismissed as "unsatisfactory jumble," has also been described as a "deviant ritual," and though dated to 1740, it largely presented a different version of the Hiram legend which makes up the third degree ritual. However, what the "Rite Ancien de Bouillon" also reveals is the way writers were experimenting with the Hiram legend at this early stage, introducing different versions of the legend and emphasising the search for the divine lost word. 20

The mysterious "Rite Ancien de Bouillon" puts forward a very early mention of the golden plate

which appears in the Royal Arch ritual as displaying the lost word, and like the Royal Arch ritual, it also mentions Newtonian terminology with the word "meridian":

"...when we retired from labour to refreshment, at High Meridian..." 21

Oliver recited the origin of the gold plate as put forward by the "Rite Ancien de Bouillon" in his Origin of the Royal Arch Order of Masonry:

"We permitted our lamented Brother, after casting the two pillars of the porch, to engrave the mysterious word upon a plate of gold within the cabalistic figure of our signet, and to wear it as a mark of our royal favour and good will." 22

A ceremony of finding the golden "medal" on the corpse of the master then took place, with the description of the "medal" revealing a "double triangle enclosed within a circle and the Tetragrammation in the center. The medal was then placed upon the Holy Bible." 23 Oliver discusses how the mysterious word would have been forever lost if not recovered as "if it had fallen into improper hands, they might have prized it for its metallic value" and not "its symbolic worth." 24

A similar manuscript displaying the confessions of Freemason John Coustos, made before the Portuguese Inquisition on the 21st of May, 1743, also puts forward an early reference to the gold plate of the Royal Arch, when Coustos, who had been a member of a London lodge, stated that:

"when the destruction of the famous Temple of Solomon took place, there was found below the first stone a tablet of bronze upon which was engraved the following word, JEHOVAH, which means GOD." 25

John Coustos had been made a Freemason in London, but after moving to Lisbon, Portugal where he had founded a lodge, he had been arrested and tortured by the Inquisition. Coustos survived the numerous tortures, and in 1744, he was finally released, going on to write an account of his sufferings.²⁶

What is certain is that the Royal Arch story, the re-discovery of the lost word of God hidden among the ruins of the first Temple, was known by the early 1740's. Desaguliers died in 1744, and it is around this time that more evidence of the Royal Arch in practice appears. The earliest record of the Royal Arch in a possible ceremonial context comes from Youghal in Ireland during a public procession on St. John's Day, in the Winter of 1743, when a local newspaper account describes that the Master was preceded by "the Royal Arch carried by two excellent masons,"²⁷ and in 1744, a certain Dr. Fifield Dassigny spoke to an assembly of Masons at York who had gathered under the title of "Royal Arch Masons."²⁸

Oliver had dismissed the importance of "Rite Ancien de Bouillon" and confusingly used it as "evidence" for the Royal Arch as being an "Antient" concoction, suggesting that it was an early attempt at creating a degree. But the manuscript does verify the development of the popular Hiram story of the rediscovery of hidden knowledge in the ruins of the Temple, a story that Desaguliers could have easily influenced, a story that remained unfinished and left open for adaptation. Oliver created a confusing picture of events, linking the Royal Arch to the Jacobites, and with the Royal Arch being used as a fourth degree by the Antients, he thus produced a Jacobite agenda.

During the period that Oliver was writing about his dubious theory of the origins of the Royal Arch, other Masonic "degrees" were becoming highly fashionable. The Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons was founded in 1856, the medieval masons marks becoming a popular fascination with Freemasons of the prosperous middle classes who were developing an interest in medieval churches and cathedrals, many of which were being renovated or rebuilt in extravagant Victorian gothic style.²⁹ The foundation of the Mark Grand Lodge has been linked to the increasingly prosperous middle class Freemasons separating themselves socially from the older ruling aristocrats who were held responsible for the disastrous running of the Crimean War.³⁰ It also reveals the desire to form new organizing bodies for further attainable Masonic "degrees," Oliver referring to the fact that during "the building of Solomon's Temple, every Fellowcraft undoubtedly had his own mark, and was therefore a Mark Mason."³¹ This was yet another mysterious Masonic degree which could reveal further secrets, though as with the Royal Arch, the Mark degree had originally emerged in the eighteenth century.

As the Victorian era progressed, interest in Freemasonry grew, Masonry becoming a conventional culture. The desire for networking combined with the yearning to discover deeper secrets within Masonry resulted in the success of further rituals and degrees such as the Royal Arch and the Mark Master Mason. With thriving trans-Atlantic ports such as Liverpool, where trade with the United States led to established business contacts, Masonic ideas were also being traded, and a glance at the lodges from Liverpool at this time reveals many visiting brethren from ports in the United States, notably New York. There are a number of Masonic graves in cemeteries in Liverpool that display tales of American brethren who had died at sea and received

a Masonic burial in Liverpool. Indeed, there was such a close relationship with Liverpool Masonry that a report on a Masonic Ball held in the Town Hall in Liverpool "in aid of the funds of the West Lancashire Masonic Educational Institution" attended by the local Masonic dignitary including the Earl of Zetland and Earl de Grey and Ripon, was featured in the Boston based Freemasons' Monthly Magazine in 1864.³² Further Masonic degrees and rituals soon took hold in the United States and Oliver's Masonic writings became extremely popular over there.

The desire for further degrees and Masonic mysteries in the United States led to the success of the "Ancient and Accepted Rite" commonly referred to the "Scottish Rite," which was nurtured from an obscure Masonic practice in the early 1800's to a Rite of foremost importance by attorney, Confederate officer, and Freemason Albert Pike. The Scottish Rite enables the Mason to complete thirty-three degrees, each ritual revealing deeper mysteries to the Freemason as he continues his journey to gain the ultimate 33rd degree. Pike received the 4th to the 32nd degree in South Carolina in 1853 from the Masonic writer Dr. Albert G. Mackey, eventually receiving the 33rd degree and becoming the Grand Commander for the Southern Jurisdiction in the United States. The Scottish Rite has its beginnings in the later eighteenth century and like the "Antients," it has been linked to Jacobite origins. It was Pike however, who reworked and revised the rituals, and by 1872, he published the gargantuan work *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*. The Scottish Rite also captured the keen interest of Dr. George Oliver and Dr. Robert Thomas Crucefix in England, and together they helped to form the Supreme Council 33° in 1845, which was warranted by the Northern Jurisdiction in the United States³³

Above is a photograph of a Masonic gravestone at St. James' Cemetery, Liverpool revealing the mystical "All-Seeing Eye" above the setsquare and compass. The gravestone tells the story of Captain Charles H. Webb of the Barque St. Lawrence from New York, USA, who was buried in Liverpool by local Freemasons in 1856. Being a Freemason ensured that, no matter where you were in the world, you could always rely on your brethren to help you if needed, especially supplying funds for burial, which, in the nineteenth century, was socially important, a "good send off" being much preferred to the social stigma of a pauper's burial. The gravestone also gives evidence for the Masonic relationship between New York and Liverpool. Photograph by Marie Shaw from the book *The Genesis of Freemasonry* by David Harrison.

Pike's work cleverly promoted the Scottish Rite, and though quite a heavy read, it puts forward a tantalizing glimpse of the inner most mysteries of this version of Freemasonry. It discusses Pike's theories on the degrees, giving "lectures" on each, drawing knowledge from the Old Testament, the Kabala, and Pythagorean principles, and presents Pike's in-depth intellect on the secrets and symbolism of Freemasonry, the search for the lost word of God, and the hidden mysteries of nature and science, which according to Pike "was taught to Moses and Pythagoras."³⁴ The work became widely published and was accessible to all kinds of Freemasons, and though quite in-depth in discussing the lost word of God, he expertly guides the reader through the lectures of thirty-two degrees (the 33rd being the ultimate degree and is only revealed at the end of the physical Masonic journey).

One particular degree, the 13th, is called The Royal Arch of Solomon within the Southern

Jurisdiction, and Pike puts forward how "every Masonic Lodge is a temple of religion" and discusses how the Holy of Holies is a cube "by which the ancients presented nature," describing the Temple as having a "starred" ceiling and that "every Masonic Lodge represents the universe."³⁵ In its presentation of the Temple and the search for lost knowledge, the word of God itself, among hidden artifacts, this particular degree bears a resemblance to the Royal Arch ritual of the United Grand Lodge of England, but worked as a separate degree, it is reminiscent of how the Royal Arch was seen by the "Antients." The 18th degree is called the Rose Croix, its name echoing a romantic connection to the Rosicrucians, the degree becoming of particular interest to Oliver and Crucefix, with Oliver discussing how the Rose Croix was believed to have been practiced by King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table.³⁶ The Scottish Rite is proof of how Masons desired deeper knowledge about Freemasonry and yearned for more rituals. In this sense the Scottish Rite, and indeed other rituals in Britain, provided a pathway for promotion within the structure of Freemasonry, the society containing intricate organizations of higher orders, creating routes of progression.

The York Rite was also an American Masonic organization, but unlike the Scottish Rite, was an assemblage of Masonic degrees including the Royal Arch, giving the Mason access to a progression of higher degrees such as the Mark Master degree and the chivalric orders of the Knights Templar. The name was inspired by the legend of Edwin who organized the first Grand Lodge of Masons at York in 926 AD. The Ancient York Rite was discussed in detail in Duncan's *Masonic Ritual and Monitor* which was published in the United States in 1866, Duncan stating the purpose of the work being so that the Mason could "progress from grade to grade."³⁷ The Royal Arch is alluded to in the York Rite as the seventh degree, but the version of the Royal Arch presented by Duncan is very similar to the earlier version presented by Carlile in his *Manual of Freemasonry*.

The Royal Arch was also practiced by the rebel Wigan Grand Lodge throughout its existence, the Masonic historian Eustace Beesley putting forward that it was used as a "degree."³⁸ With the Wigan Grand Lodge being the last practitioners of the "Antients," they considered the Royal Arch as a fourth degree, separate from the third Master's degree. Wigan Grand Lodge member James Miller described the installation of Worshipful Master in a lodge, and how "no brother was advanced to the Royal Arch unless he had passed the chair, but the ceremony was performed in the lodge." Miller also mentioned the "Ceremony of Installation" was "also for the purpose of admission to the Royal Arch," the ceremony itself being described as a "simple" one.

The Knights Templar as a Masonic order can be traced back to the mid-late eighteenth century⁴⁰ and is described as a "Masonic Order of Chivalry" by Carlile in his *Manual of Freemasonry*, the ritual discussing the resurrection of Christ and taking place within a "well guarded grand Christian encampment." The candidate has a number of questions put to him and is asked about "The Sign and Word of a Royal Arch Mason" and if he has worked on the second Temple. The Christian encampment is, like the Temple, a sacred space, and the candidate is asked if he has received a Christian Baptism and is willing to protect the Christian faith. The candidate who is described as "a poor weary pilgrim," offers to devote his life to Christ and the service of the poor and sick and thus becomes a Knight Templar.⁴¹ The "pretended" link between Freemasonry and the medieval order of the Knights Templar was discussed as early as 1864 in the *Boston Freemasons' Monthly*; the confusion in regard to the history of the Masonic order was already beginning to blur.⁴²

The search for lost knowledge within Freemasonry during the nineteenth century continued, with the industrialists and professionals yearning for a deeper insight into the secrets of Freemasonry and the hidden mysteries of nature and science. As in the eighteenth century, knowledge of science was still sought after, and Freemasonry offered an intellectual pathway to the understanding of natural philosophy. Further degrees could assist with this journey, and the Royal Arch was the beginning of a new voyage of discovery for the Master Mason, the Craft offering a road to the discovery of lost knowledge with further rituals such as the Master Mark degree and the Knights Templar revealing new mysteries. As the American Masonic writer Albert G. Mackey once put it, Royal Arch Masonry was "that division of Speculative Freemasonry which is engaged in the investigation of the mysteries connected with the Royal Arch, no matter under what name or what Rite." ⁴³

End Notes

1 Arthur Edward Waite, *New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* Vol. II, (New York: Wings Books, 1996), p. 376

2 Richard Carlile, *Manual of Freemasonry*, (Croydon: New Temple Press, 1912), p.121

3 George Oliver, 'Origin of the Royal Arch Degree,' in *The American Freemason Magazine*, (New York, 1859), p. 216

4 Carlile, p. 121

5 *Ibid.*, p. 122

6 J.T. Desaguliers, *A Dissertation Concerning the Figure of the Earth*, The Royal Society Library, London, (1724), Reference: RBC.12.494. See also David Harrison, *The Genesis of Freemasonry*, (Lewis Masonic, 2009), pp.122-123

7 Carlile, p. 123

8 See David Harrison, *The Genesis of Freemasonry*, (Surrey: Lewis Masonic, 2009), p.96

9 Oliver, 'Origin of the Royal Arch Degree', *The American Freemason Magazine*, p.219.

10 Leon Hyneman, *Freemasonry in England, from 1567 to 1813*, (Montana: Kessinger

Publishing, 2003), p.14. See also R.S.E. Sandbach, *Priest and Freemason: The Life of George Oliver*, (Northamptonshire:

The Aquarian Press, 1988), p.99. For Dr. Crucefix see R.S.E. Sandbach, 'Robert Thomas Crucefix, 1788-1850', in *AQC*, Vol. 102, (London: Butler & Tanner, 1990), pp.134-163.

11 Robert Currie, *Early Royal Arch Chapters in the South of Scotland*, <http://www.lodgehope337.org.uk/lectures/rcurrie%20L1.PDF> [accessed 15th of March, 2009]

12 See L.A. Seemungal, 'The Rise of Additional Degrees' in *AQC*, Vol. 84, (York: Ben Johnson & Co., 1971), pp.307-312.

13 'The Antiquity of The Royal Arch' in the *Freemasons Magazine and Masonic Mirror*, January 1868.

14 James Anderson, *The Constitutions of The Free-Masons*, (London: Senex, 1723), p.48.

15 The 'Rite Ancien de Bouillon' has mysterious origins, but Oliver put forward that it had links to Ramsay, possibly from him being on good terms with a noble family who pretended descent from the Crusader Godfrey de Bouillon. See George Oliver, *The Origin of the Royal Arch Order of Masonry*, (London: Bro. Richard Spencer, 1867), p.31.

16 'The Antiquity of The Royal Arch' in the *Freemasons Magazine and Masonic Mirror*, January 1868.

17 George Oliver, *A Dictionary of Symbolic Masonry including The Royal Arch Degree*, (London: Richard Spencer, 1853), p.21.

18 James Anderson, *The Constitutions of The Antient and Honourable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons*, (London: J. Scott, 1756), pp.228-229.

19 Harrison, *The Genesis of Freemasonry*, pp.180-181.

20 See Joannes A.M. Snoek, *The Evolution of the Hiram Legend in England and France*, (2003), <http://www.scottishrite.org/what/educ/heredom/articles/vol11-snoek.pdf> [accessed 8th of June, 2009]

21 Oliver, *The Origin of the Royal Arch Order of Masonry*, p.91.

22 *Ibid.*, p.92-93.

23 *Ibid.*, p.93.

24 *Ibid.*

25 See Joannes A.M. Snoek, *The Evolution of the Hiram Legend in England and France*, (2003), p.31, <http://www.scottishrite.org/what/educ/heredom/articles/vol11-snoek.pdf> [accessed 8th of June, 2009]. See also John Coustos: *Confession of 21 March 1743*, in S. Vatcher, 'John Coustos and the Portuguese Inquisition', *AQC*, Vol. 81 (1968), pp.50-51.

26 John Coustos had been initiated into Freemasonry in London in 1730, and was a member of Lodge No. 75, held at the Rainbow Coffee House, London. Also see John Coustos, *The Sufferings of John Coustos for Free-Masonry And For His Refusing to Turn Roman Catholic in*

the Inquisition at Lisbon, (London: W. Strahan, 1746).

27 Waite, New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry, Vol. II, p.376.

28 Gould, History of Freemasonry, pp.407- 8.

29 An excellent example of this Masonic interest in Victorian renovation of churches and Cathedrals was the restoration of Worcester Cathedral, for which Worstershire Masons donated a large sum in 1874. In this year, the local Worcester Freemasons were involved in a procession from the Guildhall to the Cathedral for a service, and the Worstershire Province then paid for a commemorative window to be installed in the North Transept of the Cathedral. A large, three pane stained glass Masonic window to commemorate a certain Brother Joseph Bennett had also been installed in the Cathedral in 1867. See 'Freemasonry's 270 years of Lodges in Worcestershire' in Worcester News, Saturday, 15th of June, 2002,, <http://archive.worcerternews.co.uk/2002/6/15/264560.html> [accessed 1st of May, 2009]

30 Andrew Prescott, Well Marked? Approaches to the History of Mark Masonry, <http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/prescott01.html> [accessed 15th of March, 2009]

31 George Oliver, The Historical Landmarks and other Evidences of Freemasonry: Explained in a Series of Practical Lectures, (New York: Masonic Publishing and Manufacturing Co., 1867), p.308

32 Charles W. Moore, Grand Secretary of The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, 'Masonic Ball at Liverpool', in Freemasons' Monthly Magazine, Vol. XXIII, (Boston: printed by Hugh H. Tuttle, 1864), March 1, 1864, No. 5, p.158

33 See R.S.E. Sandbach, Priest and Freemason: The Life of George Oliver, (Northamptonshire: The Aquarian Press, 1988), p.108- 109. For Dr. Crucefix see R.S.E. Sandbach, 'Robert Thomas Crucefix, 1788-1850', in AQC, Vol 102, (London: Butler & Tanner, 1990), pp.134-163

34 Albert Pike, Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, (NuVision Publications LLC, 2007), p.186

35 Ibid., pp.187-191

36 Oliver, The Origin of the Royal Arch Order of Masonry, p. 4

37 Malcolm C. Duncan, Duncan's Masonic Ritual and Monitor, (Forgotten Books, 2008), p.1

38 E.B. Beesley, The History of the Wigan Grand Lodge, (Leeds: Manchester Association for Masonic Research, 1920), pp.76-77.

39 Ibid., pp.102-3

40 Seemungal, 'The Rise of Additional Degrees' in AQC, Vol. 84, pp.310-311

41 Carlile, pp.137-146

42 Charles W. Moore, Grand Secretary of The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, 'Order of Knights Templars: Its Pretended Continuation and Connection with Freemasonry' in Freemasons' Monthly Magazine, Vol. XXIII, (Boston: printed by Hugh H. Tuttle, 1864), December 1, 1863,

No. 2, p.41

43 Albert G. Mackey, *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry Vol. II*, (Chicago: The Masonic History Company, 2003), p.884.

A Masonic monument from St. James' Cemetery in Liverpool revealing the story of Captain Elisha Lindsay Halsey from Charlestown, South Carolina, USA, who died unexpectedly on his ship "Thomas Bennett" while on the Bay of Biscay off the coast of Spain. The ship arrived in Liverpool, and the Captain, a Freemason, was buried and the very elaborate monument erected "by American ship masters and a few friends in Liverpool" indicating it was a local lodge which assisted in the arrangements and the funeral. The American flag appears on one side of the monument while the Masonic symbols of the setsquare and compass and the 'All-Seeing Eye' set within two inverted triangles dominate another side. Again this monument testifies to the trans-



Atlantic relationship of Freemasonry at this time. The photograph is by Marie Shaw and from the book *The Genesis of Freemasonry* by David Harrison.

Dr. David Harrison is a history lecturer, having completed his Ph.D. on the history of Freemasonry in 2008 at the University of Liverpool. His thesis titled *The Genesis of Freemasonry* and his second book *The Transformation of Freemasonry* are available. The author can be contacted via the Lewis Masonic website: www.lewismasonic.co.uk



