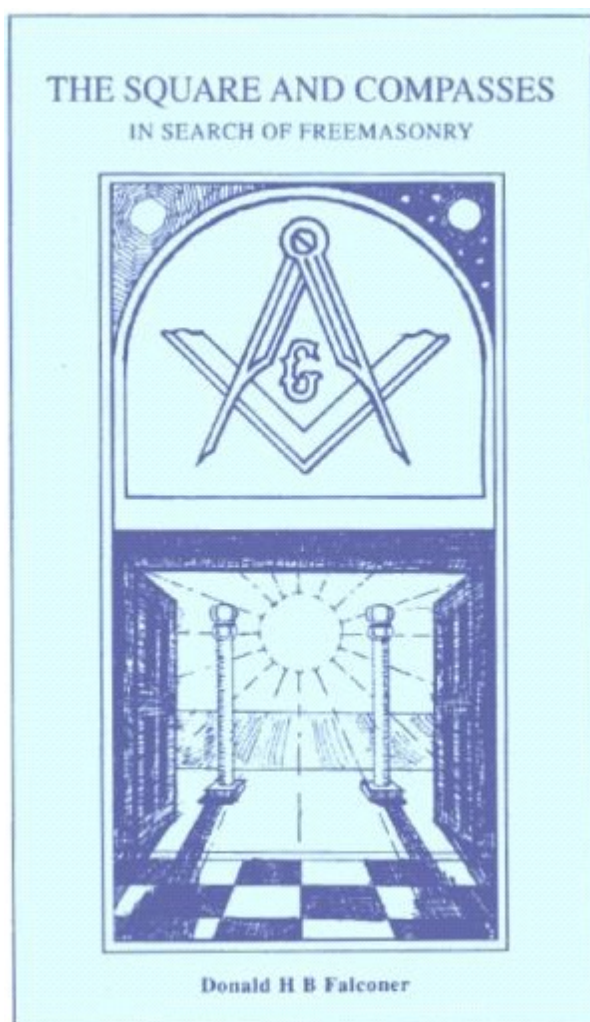


# THE SQUARE AND COMPASSES

## IN SEARCH OF FREEMASONRY

**DONALD H B FALCONER**



MASONIC QUALIFICATIONS of W. M.  
Bro. Donald H.B.Falconer

Craft: PM, PDGDC, Scottish Constitution,  
NSW Constitution  
Previously also English Constitution

Royal Arch: PZ, PDGDC,  
Scottish Constitution

Cryptic Council: PTIM,  
Scottish Constitution  
Previously also English Constitution

Lodge & Council: PWCN, PMEC,  
Scottish Constitution

Allied Masonic Degrees:  
PM, DGSW, PGStBr,  
English Constitution

Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests:  
PHP, PGIVP, English Constitution

Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite:  
PMWS, PGC, 31°,  
Scottish Constitution

Worshipful Society of Free Masons, Rough Masons, Wallers, Slaters, Paviers, Plaisterers  
and Bricklayers ("Operatives": VII°, SPM, DGMM

Also a member of the following Orders for more than forty years:

Royal Order of Scotland

The Order of the Temple,

Scottish Constitution.

Rome and the Red Cross of Constantine etc,

Previously Scottish Constitution, now NSW Constitution

Previously also a long-term member of the following Orders:

Order of the Secret Monitor, English and then NSW Constitution

Societas Rosicruciana in Scotia

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## PREAMBLE

*Freemasonry has played a positive role in the development of civilisation and the advancement of moral attitudes and religious observances in all ages of recorded history.*

Ever since our primitive ancestors first began to think about their origins and to contemplate the existence of a divine creator, freemasonry has played a vital role in the development of civilisation and the parallel growth of religion. Few realise how important freemasonry has been in establishing the welfare of human beings. In this context, the origins of freemasonry have been examined and its accomplishments as a civilising force have been traced through the evolution of the human race. The precepts and teachings of freemasonry, which reflect freemasonry's humanitarian and religious associations during the last ten millennia or longer, also are considered in some detail.

This book differs from the usual books on freemasonry, both in its subject matter and in its approach to the various subjects covered. It gathers together a series of discussion papers prepared by the author and presented to various masonic bodies during the last forty years. It is intended to provide a stimulus and hopefully an inspiration for anyone wanting to know how freemasonry originated and what it is about. The original papers were prepared as separate entities, each intended to consider some specific aspect of freemasonry. References to subjects beyond the scope of a paper, but about which it would be helpful for the reader to have some knowledge, are as brief as possible consistent with their bearing upon the discussion. Related aspects of importance usually are covered in separate papers. Most of the assembled papers have been revised and amplified more than once, many several times, to reflect the latest archaeological discoveries and related research, as well as the continuing developments in science. In this respect the advances in knowledge that have been achieved during the second half of the twentieth century have been truly remarkable.

The original papers have been incorporated into this book as chapters arranged in a logical sequence. The author hopes that each chapter will provide a useful basis for discussions by interested groups. The texts of the papers have therefore been used without change, no attempt having been made to consolidate the subject matter, nor to remove references to related aspects. For this reason similar references may appear in more than one chapter, for which the author offers no apology. Although most chapters could be presented and discussed in a single session, sometimes more than one session would be appropriate for the scope and importance of the subject. Publications the author thinks are of particular interest in relation to a subject are referred to at the appropriate place in the text.

Contrary to a hypothesis sometimes put forward, speculative freemasonry is not a recent invention, but evolved in lodges of operative freemasons in conjunction with the practice of the stonemason's craft. Humans differ from other animals, because they have an insatiable curiosity concerning their origins and the environment in which they live. As a direct consequence of this, speculative freemasonry developed in lodges of operative

freemasons as a natural extension of the mental and spiritual attempts of human beings to unravel their origins, to comprehend the meaning of life and to perceive their ultimate destiny. The environment in which operative freemasons worked and the tools and methods they employed were unique sources of inspiration, as well as providing an ideal basis for symbolic representation that was always ready to hand. Although freemasonry began in ancient times as an entirely practical enterprise, to satisfy the needs of day-to-day life, the advancement of civilisation soon involved the craft in the construction of buildings for various religious purposes. This intimate and continuing association with moral and spiritual influences naturally encouraged the growth of the speculative aspects of freemasonry, which evolved concurrently with the operative art.

The progress of freemasonry, from the times of the nomadic hunter-gatherers until the introduction of purely speculative freemasonry in the eighteenth century, is a continuing theme in this book. Of paramount importance was the positive role played by freemasonry in the development of civilisation and the advancement of moral attitudes and religious observances in all ages of recorded history. In the fulfilment of its role, freemasonry has always provided its services without regard to the race, religion or creed of the people, wherever the freemasons may have been working. This approach has been perpetuated in speculative freemasonry, in which members are required to be of good character and to have a belief in God, irrespective of race or religion. All of these aspects have been discussed in this book, in which the author has attempted to show the relationship between freemasonry and the people of the land in diverse countries and over a long spectrum of time. The principles, tenets and symbolism of freemasonry have also been compared with the religious beliefs of the people in the various countries as and when they are relevant to the discussion.

Although reference is made to many of the long held beliefs concerning the origins and purpose of freemasonry, it is not the author's intention in this book to perpetuate any that are not sustainable. On the contrary, it has been the author's endeavour only to illustrate the way in which freemasonry probably evolved and to show how it has been a positive influence in the everyday life of humanity from time immemorial. It must also be emphasised that any opinions expressed and views incorporated in this book are those of the author. They may or may not be accepted or supported by some or any of the Grand Lodges and other controlling bodies to which the various masonic organizations owe allegiance.

Finally, the author expresses his sincere appreciation to all those who have shown an interest in his papers and have participated in discussions with him these many years past and still do. Without their support and encouragement the original papers would not have been prepared, nor would the publication of this book have come to fruition. Special thanks are due to my wife Jean for her forbearance and for proofreading every paper when it was written; also to my eldest son, Brother Graeme Falconer, for his critical review of the final draft, especially in respect to the historical, philosophical and scientific information presented; and to Brother Lowell Tarling for his invaluable assistance - he was the driving force behind the publication of my papers in book form. The author will feel

well rewarded if his book proves to be of interest and benefit to freemasons and to any others of an enquiring mind who may read it.

**Donald H B Falconer**

**Sydney, N.S.W.**

**November 1999**



## CHAPTER ONE – THE ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF SPECULATIVE FREEMASONRY

*Unlike other animals, humans have an insatiable curiosity concerning their origins.*

### *Speculative Foundations*

Speculative freemasonry is a natural extension of the spiritual and mental attempts of humans to unravel their origins, to comprehend the meaning of life and to perceive their ultimate destiny. Although purely speculative lodges are of recent origin, speculative freemasonry is as old as the operative art itself. Moreover, those who established the first purely speculative lodges that led to the formation of the early Grand Lodges in the eighteenth century, did not invent the speculative rituals. These early speculative freemasons were intellectual men who saw great value in existing rituals, which they culled, collated and codified into the form used in speculative ceremonials. In so doing they were careful to ensure that every passage of ritual was expressed appropriately in the best language of the day. The resulting rituals neither did nor could include all the available material, because the work in operative lodges had many local variations, but were a sound basis for the speculative ceremonials.

It must be emphasised that those who established the early speculative lodges did not see the ritual work as an end in itself, but rather as a foundation for philosophical discussion. The ceremonials used in the lodge room should be an unobtrusive vehicle, subsidiary to the primary function of communicating one's thoughts to others. These ceremonials have been standardised to relieve the participants' minds of extraneous matters, that otherwise might impede clear thought and hinder the delivery of the charges. However, word perfect delivery of the ritual has no value unless communicated to the recipient in such a manner as to engage his mind, arouse his interest and incite his comprehension. Nor should the words of the ritual be the sole instruction, because they are intended to provide a sound basis on which to establish discussions on subjects of relevance and interest. Unlike other animals, humans have an insatiable curiosity concerning their origins and the environment in which they live. Since recorded history began some 6,000 years ago, there is continuing evidence of mythologies and religions being developed in an attempt to provide answers to these concerns, which also is the purpose of speculative freemasonry. To appreciate how freemasonry developed and influenced humanity, it is important to consider the origins of the human race and the evolution of human beings themselves.



## ***Mankind In Pre-History***

It is presently considered that the physical universe as we now know it has existed for about 20,000 million years, although our solar system is much younger, having been formed only about 4,600 million years ago. Although the first living organisms on earth probably came into existence about 3,500 million years ago, they appear to have remained unchanged for several thousand million years. Life first flourished in the seas, but dry land was not successfully colonised until about 400 million years ago, when all the present continents were still intact, forming a single continent called Pangaea. It was about 100 million years ago when the present continents began to split apart, reaching their present configuration around 40 million years ago at the height of the last great Ice Age, when so much water was locked up in the polar ice caps that the sea level fell, exposing most of the continental shelf areas. The ice caps and glaciers had retreated to roughly their present positions by about 8000 BCE.

The most recent investigations of archaeologists and palaeontologists suggest that the ***ramapithecines***, which lived from 14 to 8 million years ago and flourished across Africa, Asia and Europe, might be our earliest hominid ancestors, distinguishing us from all other primates. But this is by no means certain, because the ***ramapithecines*** are followed by a gap of some 4 million years in the fossil record, after which several hominid species begin to appear. A more recent and more certain ancestor is called ***Homo habilis***, which signifies ***skilful man***, who lived in the Rift Valley of East Africa about 2 million years ago and survived for almost a million years. Our most recent forebear seems to have been ***Homo erectus***, which signifies ***upright man***, who lived for about 1.5 million years. Modern humans have been in existence for 100,000 years or so and belong to the branch ***Homo sapiens***, which signifies ***wise man***. Human occupation of the earth has been for a very short period indeed when compared with the age of the universe.

The first 50,000 years of the existence of ***Homo sapiens*** was almost at the end of the Old Stone Age, which had lasted for nearly 250,000 years. This was the period of the Early Hunters, during which cultural advance was very slow. Nevertheless, they made a wide range of stone implements and weapons and also achieved the control of fire, although they could not kindle it. They could cut and stitch fur clothing, approaching the standard of modern Eskimos, whilst both men and women ornamented themselves with necklaces and bracelets of shells, teeth, ivory beads, mother of pearl and stone. However, their most significant cultural advance towards the end of this period, probably was that they buried at least some of their dead with ceremony. It was not uncommon for graves to be marked with stones or horns and for food and implements to be placed beside the bodies. Thus, for the first time, human beings were manifesting a belief in some form of after-life, heralding the ***“age of wisdom”*** signified by ***Homo sapiens***. Thereafter human development accelerated at an ever increasing rate.

The Early Hunters usually lived in limestone and sandstone caves where these were prevalent. In other areas they gradually learnt to use locally available materials such as grass, reeds, mud and even mammoth bones to construct huts, as well as to make tents from the skins of animals. In the Mediterranean region the Early Hunters developed into

Advanced Hunters at the height of the last great Ice Age, between 35000 BCE and 30000 BCE, then into the Late Hunters who brought about the Agricultural Revolution from region to region during the New Stone Age, which in various locations began at different times, ranging from about 10000 BCE to about 8000 BCE. The Advanced Hunters developed a remarkable artistic genius and were the originators of representational art.

The Gravettians of eastern and central Europe used ivory, bone, clay and even stone to make small figurines of women and also some lively animal carvings. But the greatest achievement of the Advanced Hunters was to develop painting, principally in the southwest of France and in Spain. The earliest known paintings are attributed to the Magdalenians, who most probably were descendents of the Gravettians. Their paintings were made between 15000 BCE and 10000 BCE, mostly deep inside caves and far from the hearth and living area. Many of their cave roofs are crowded with paintings of bison and other animals in the polychrome style, using powdered ochre, haematite and manganese applied moist with brush, pad or blowpipe. This period also is noted for being the first when stone was used in construction, albeit in the simplest form. Although natural caves are quite common in the eastern Mediterranean, huts with circular stone footings were built in Palestine and Syria, probably with light domed coverings made from twigs and daub. There is evidence that at about the same time on the plains of Mesopotamia, where there are no caves, shelters with stone footings were also used, probably with superstructures of reeds. These people, the Advanced Hunters of around 10000 BCE, therefore were the unlikely progenitors of architecture and masonry.

### *The Earliest Freemasons*

The humble beginnings of the Agricultural Revolution, ushered in by the Late Hunters in the New Stone Age, laid the foundation of civilisation and provided the necessary impetus for its subsequent growth. True farming was first developed in the uplands that sweep to the east and north on the flanks of the valley of the fertile crescent formed by the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. This was the natural area for development, because the wild ancestors of wheat, barley, sheep and goats were all native there, while the upland valleys generally provided fertile soil and good water supplies. The oldest known evidence of the domestication of sheep and goats is to be found in this area, dating from about 8200 BCE, possibly earlier. As the cropping and grinding of cereals and the herding and domestication of animals developed, the small upland settlements extended down into the fertile valley, where villages began to form in about 6000 BCE. Mixed farming had been carried to the fertile plain of Thessaly in Greece at about the same time, thence southwards to the Peloponnese, to Crete and to Cyprus.

The population grew in line with these developments and settlements became larger and more permanent. As a result of this impetus, mud bricks were first made in Mesopotamia and the Eastern Mediterranean and used to construct houses. The early bricks were shaped by hand, as at Jericho, but later the mud was rammed into moulds. The use of stone for walls and dykes also became more prevalent. The largest villages may then have held up to 5,000 people, but generally were much smaller. Jericho is probably the oldest city in the world and when constructed around 8000 BCE it occupied 4 hectares. It was surrounded

by a massive stone wall 3 metres thick and 4 metres high, against which was constructed at least one circular tower of rock 10 metres in diameter and 8.5 metres high, with a built in stairway. This is the world's oldest structure known at present. Jericho was abandoned for a period, but was colonised again in about 7000 BCE. The town walls were not renewed, but rectangular houses of mud brick with high quality plastered walls and floors spread over the whole site. Jericho was abandoned and reoccupied a number of times thereafter and perhaps is best known for its destruction by Joshua in Biblical times.

Two other events in this period also were of particular significance, these being the construction of some of the earliest known religious buildings at Çatal Hüyük in Turkey and the construction of what have become known as *beehive* houses at Khirokitia in Cyprus. The *beehive* houses were circular in plan, around 8 to 10 metres in diameter, with high thresholds to keep out surface water. Their foundations were of stone, which was carried to a height of about 2 metres, while the superstructures were corbelled vaults constructed of mud brick and of sufficient height to accommodate a bedroom gallery accessed by ladder or stairway. The ground level compartment was partitioned as required with mud brick walls which also served as supports for the gallery. These *beehive* houses continued to be used in Cyprus until supplanted by more conventional houses in about 5000 BCE, perhaps even more recently. The mud brick vaulted arch was a significant advance in architectural design and construction, paving the way for arch construction in stone. The *beehive* houses in Cyprus typified the advances made in design and construction by the earliest masons.

Çatal Hüyük was occupied from about 6500 BCE to 5500 BCE and covered an area of 13 hectares. It is thought to have had a population of 6,000 at its peak, comprising three different races nowhere else found together in that period. The houses were rectangular timber framed structures, with mud brick exterior walls and flat mud roofs placed on closely packed timber poles supported by timber rafters, furnished with hearths, platforms, benches and ovens. Among the houses was a series of elaborately decorated shrines, which were similar to the houses in construction and furnishings, though frequently larger. Their sanctuaries were decorated with wall paintings, plaster reliefs, cult statues and animal heads. The richly coloured wall paintings frequently depicted hands and ritual or magic hunting scenes, but the most unusual painting found was a unique landscape depicting a terraced town of individual houses and blocks of houses and shrines, with a volcano erupting in the background. The dead of successive generations of the same family were buried with appropriate grave goods within the platforms of the shrines. This indicates a significant advance in religious thought, even though the crude and sometimes barbarous manifestations within the shrines are in stark contrast with the religious inspiration of architecture and art that was soon to blossom with civilisation.

Operative freemasonry, by its nature, requires repeated speculation concerning the siting of the structure and the building work in progress, no matter how primitive the building might be. Before work commences it is necessary to consider the availability of materials and their suitability for the intended structure, having regard to the type and dimensions of the building and the conditions at the site. The best location and orientation of the structure must be determined for the available site. Sound and level foundations must be provided to

support the structure properly. Care must be taken to provide suitable and adequate drainage. The dimensions must be delineated on the ground before erection can commence. The walls must be plumbed, the corners must be squared and the tops of walls must be levelled during erection, to ensure that the structure is both stable and pleasing to the eye. Even the earliest stonemasons had to accomplish some or all of these operations, which required constructive thought that inevitably would heighten their awareness to things other than their immediate requirements. For example, after they had constructed walls of rough stones, they soon realised the advantages of regular bricks and used their ingenuity to provide them. Later when tools were available to cut stones, they saw the advantage of using larger stone blocks. Thus, in a practical sense, speculative freemasonry was born from a consideration of physical requirements, which led to a contemplation of the tools and actions required to achieve the desired outcomes and hence their symbolic meaning.

## *The Development Of Literacy*

The next important period of development was from 5000 BCE to 3000 BCE, roughly coinciding with the copper age and ushering in the first of monumental architecture found in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Using the simplest of raw materials, principally mud brick and imported timber, the local inhabitants achieved remarkable results. Egypt concentrated on huge royal tombs. The mastaba tombs of the First Dynasty are typical and were decorated externally to represent a *palace facade*. Efforts in Mesopotamia were concentrated on temple building. Their temples rapidly grew larger, more complex and externally more impressive, as typified by Eridu, in Sumer, where a continuous series of temples has been distinguished from about 5500 BCE to 3000 BCE. At Arpachiya, in northern Mesopotamia, circular houses were constructed similar to the earlier beehive houses of Cyprus, which were usually extended by a rectangular gable roofed wing, the unit being called a *tholos*. Another notable development was the fortified settlement at Dimini in Greece, one of the earliest towns known in Europe, which was dominated by the *megaron* palace with its pillared porch. Dimini was encircled by six concentric walls of undressed limestone and was provided with narrow gateways and passages to form a defensive system.

Although great advances were made in architecture and the development of cities during this period, the greatest achievement undoubtedly was the dawning of literate civilisation. The Sumerians of the southern plain of Mesopotamia, in about 4500 BCE, first drew cuneiform pictograms that represented actual material objects, to assist in the recording of inventories for grain, cattle and other commodities. The turning point came when it was realised that a sign could also stand for a sound, when phonetic writing began. But as the scribal profession and schools developed, the system of combined ideograms and phonetics became extremely complicated and it was not until about 3500 BCE that writing had been forged into a practical vehicle for the communication of language. Meanwhile the Egyptians were developing hieroglyphic writing, incorporating a combination of signs for ideas and also for sounds like our alphabet. Hieroglyphs were first used about 3300 BCE. The Egyptian word for writing signified “*speech of the gods*”, which reflected its use for inscriptions of the divine pharaohs, contrasting with the cuneiform writing which was used in Sumeria primarily for the keeping of accounts.

Emphasis on the erection of larger and more complex buildings, palaces, temples, shrines, monumental works and sepulchral structures increased continually, which meant that construction was no longer a simple task for a small gang of stonemasons, so that larger and more highly skilled gangs of freemasons began to develop. To enable the work to be carried out successfully it would have been necessary for the chief of the builders, or master mason, to arrange training and supervision for very large gangs of masons and allied workers. This must have been an extremely difficult task, especially as working instructions could not then be given in writing. The only means of tuition available to them was by catechism, aided by sketches on slate or an earthen floor, which constituted their tracing boards. Archaeological investigations have provided overwhelming proof that, despite these difficulties, the early masons constructed many outstanding edifices with a remarkably high standard of finish.

Instruction in the speculative aspects of freemasonry must have begun in this fashion, from which the modern systems developed. Moreover, the continuing involvement in the construction of shrines, temples, cathedrals, monuments and sepulchral buildings that masons have had through all ages, must have induced them to contemplate the meaning of life and the certainty of death, as well as to seek an understanding of the hereafter, much more so than would have been usual among the general population. This would have contributed significantly to the speculative aspects of masonry and would also have fostered symbolic explanations of the mason's implements of labour. As in the present day, many relevant masonic expressions became a part of the everyday languages of those ancient times, which were recorded with the advent of cursive script. The philological evidence proves beyond doubt that at least some elements of symbolism and speculative thought must have been included in the instruction given in lodges of operative freemasons from the earliest days.

A host of symbolic references in masonic terms are to be found in the scriptures, many of which are as well known as the following examples. During his visit to Bethel in about 745 BCE, Amos prophesied the fall of Israel about thirty years before the event, when he said in Amos 7:7-9 that the Lord had ***“measured his people Israel with a plumb line”*** and found them to be irremediably warped by sin. In the reign of Manasseh, the murderous and idolatrous king who ruled from 696 BCE to 642 BCE, the captivity of Judah by Babylon around 606 BCE was foretold in II Kings 21:13, when the Lord said he would ***“stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab”***. In Isaiah 28:16, which was written between 750 BCE and 700 BCE, the coming of Christ is foretold in the words ***“Behold I am laying in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tested stone, a precious corner stone, of a sure foundation.”*** This prophesy is referred to in I Peter 2:6-8, in about 60 CE, when the death of the Messiah is alluded to and ***“for those who do not believe”*** the following significant words were added: ***“The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner, a stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall”***. Other passages from the book of Genesis, together with many of the traditions preserved in Sumerian, Assyrian and Hebrew literature, also provide some interesting sidelights on masonry.

In Genesis 4:19-22 we read that Lamech, a descendant of Cain, had two wives Adah and Zillah. Adah bore two sons, Jabal and Jubal, the former being recorded as ***“the father of those who dwell in tents and have cattle”*** and the latter as ***“the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe”***. Traditionally, Jabal is also said to be the founder of geometry and the first mason who built stone walls and houses of stone. Zillah bore a son Tubal-cain and a daughter Naamah. Tubal-cain is recorded as ***“the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron”*** and Zillah is referred to in the traditions as the founder of weaving. These four are thus credited with the origin of civilised society. We also read in Genesis 10:8-11 that Nimrod was ***“the first man on earth to be a mighty man”***, that he was ***“a mighty hunter”*** and that ***“he built Nineveh . . . that is the great city”***. In the traditional histories of the medieval operative freemasons it is said that masons first came into prominence during the building of the Tower of Babel, which is the first structure mentioned in the scriptures, in Genesis 11:1-9. The traditional history also says that Nimrod was a master mason who loved the craft, formed his masons into lodges and gave them a charter and a charge when he sent them forth to build all the cities in his kingdom. Although it is impossible at present to date events such as these with any accuracy, they must have occurred around the beginning of the Agricultural Revolution, when civilisation was being established after the flood.

## ***Monumental Masonry***

By 3000 BCE the Egyptians had developed a calendar with 365 days to the year, from which time their historical records are accurate. The development of writing and literature continued apace in Sumeria, but Egypt was supreme in the visual arts and architecture. Civilisation began to flourish and monumental masonry developed on an immense scale and with unprecedented complexity. The three Great Pyramids of Giza in Egypt and the huge Ziggurat of Urnammu in Mesopotamia are typical of this period. Although the scale of building in Mesopotamia was not as huge as in Egypt, the Mesopotamians were more innovative in their use of the arch, which they used extensively in tombs. The oldest true arches presently known were found in the Sumerian tombs of the Royal Cemetery at Ur, constructed from 2700 BCE to 2370 BCE. The art of writing continued to develop in the Near East and its use was becoming more widespread. Signs unearthed at Byblos in Lebanon, dating from about 2500 BCE, are in a script similar to that then used in Syria. Pottery from the period 2100 BCE to 1700 BCE found at Byblos and Sidon, also in Lebanon, provide some of the earliest evidence of the use of a linear script that is called pseudo-hieroglyphics. This was an early form of non-Egyptian alphabetic script variously designated as Canaanite, Sinaitic or proto-Phoenician.

This simpler script progressively replaced the syllabic cuneiform scripts of Babylonia and Syria and the complex hieroglyphic writing of Egypt, so that by about 1500 BCE an alphabet was in general use. From this alphabet were progressively derived the Phoenician about 1000 BCE, early Hebrew about 700 BCE, old Greek also about 700 BCE and formal Greek about 500 BCE, whence the Roman was derived. The development of writing as a familiar medium in an era of prodigious monumental construction, while moral and religious teaching was advancing, must have fostered the speculative aspects of freemasonry. They would also have received considerable impetus during the building of

the magnificent temple of King Solomon completed at Jerusalem in about 950 BCE. The later desecration of the temple and its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar about 587 BCE must have had a serious impact on the faith of the freemasons, but it would have been renewed by the decree issued by Cyrus in 538 BCE, allowing the captives in Babylon to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the house of the Lord. The Bible records that the foundations were laid under the leadership of Sheshbazzar, but that the turbulence of the people in the surrounding areas impeded the work and necessitated Zerubbabel's return to Babylon to obtain the support of Cyrus in quelling the disturbances. The reconstruction of the temple was completed by Joshua in about 515 BCE, under the leadership of Zerubbabel. It has been suggested that Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel were the same person, but research indicates that Sheshbazzar almost certainly was Zerubbabel's uncle. The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, records in *Antiquities* that 1,000 priests were trained as masons when Zerubbabel's temple was restored and enlarged by Herod during the period 20 BCE to 64 CE. Although they were mainly engaged in building the shrine, the priest-masons must have influenced speculative freemasonry significantly.

## *Classical Masonry*

The emergence of Greece as a colonising nation and centre of learning, art, and religious thought in the eastern Mediterranean, in about 1100 BCE, heralded the era of classical masonry. Their first stone temples were erected at Corinth and Isthmia before 650 BCE, whence the Doric order originated, followed by the temples at Corfu and Ephesus within the next hundred years, whence the Ionic order originated. The Corinthian order was first used in Delphi around 390 BCE. Even in Rome, Greek architecture prevailed around the Mediterranean and temples proliferated until the ascendancy of Rome itself. Without doubt the most famous classical Greek structures are the Parthenon of Athens and its surrounding structures, built between 447 BCE and 432 BCE. Because of the importance that the Greeks placed on the ancient *Mysteries* in classical times and which continued into the turbulent period of Roman rule, the *Mysteries* inevitably would have been the prototype for moralistic reasoning and ritualistic procedures in those days and are still reflected in masonic ceremonials.

Rome began to expand her territory by taking Carthage and Corinth in 146 BCE and Pergamum in 133 BCE. By 100 BCE Rome's territory nearly encircled the Mediterranean and by 117 CE the Roman empire was at its greatest in strength and extent. Rome developed cities and constructed amphitheatres and temples apace throughout its region of influence, particularly in the Middle East. Of the Roman era, the two most celebrated structures probably are the Colosseum in Rome and the temple complex at Baalbek in Lebanon, about 50 kilometres inland from Beirut. This temple complex was built in several stages on the podium of an ancient temple, over a period of almost 300 years, finally being completed in about 260 CE. When Baalbek became part of Ptolemy's Egyptian empire in 332 BCE, until the Roman occupation in about 30 BCE, it was the religious centre of the region and called Heliopolis in Phoenicia. The temples are remarkable for their size and architectural finish. Many stones in the foundation courses are 4 metres square in cross-section and 20 metres long, each weighing up to 800 tonnes. There also are monolithic columns of pink granite that were brought from Aswan in Egypt and stand 19.6 metres tall.

It would have been a major feat to transport those columns from the quarries in Aswan by land to the Nile River; load them onto barges and transport them almost 1,000 kilometres down the Nile River and about 500 kilometres across the Mediterranean Sea, probably to Saidon or Tyre; unload them from the barges and then haul them overland for almost 200 kilometres, crossing a mountain range in the process to reach Baalbek, which is in a valley at an elevation of about 1,150 metres above sea level. Even in modern times this would be a substantial project.

## *Cathedral Masonry*

The decline and fall of the Roman empire heralded the beginning of the final phase in speculative evolution, the medieval period of almost continuous cathedral building in Britain and Europe that lasted from 500 until at least 1700. In England the operative or Guild Masons worked with royal approval at least from their Annual Assembly that is reputed to have been authorised and encouraged by King Athelstan and held in 926. Lodges of operative freemasons were organised under the guardianship of craft guilds, which originally were religious fraternities. Masters of lodges were responsible for the moral and religious welfare of their employees, especially the indentured apprentices, as well as for their practical training in the craft. The *Ancient Charges* testify to this. The Guild Masons continued to operate as religious fraternities until all such fraternities were disendowed in 1547 under an Act issued by Henry VIII. It is clear from the old catechisms and other records that have come down to us from the operative lodges, especially in Scotland where the Reformation was less drastic in its effect, that moral instruction was an integral part of the ceremonies. It is clear that the working tools were used symbolically from an early date and that various aspects of a mason's work were used to communicate moral instruction. Dr James Anderson and other early speculative ritualists adopted these methods when preparing the rituals in use today. Thus it is evident that the first Grand Lodges in England, Ireland and Scotland were formed solely for the establishment of alliances and the consolidation of the ritual procedures. They were not the beginning of speculative freemasonry, but only the continuation of an evolutionary process that began in prehistoric times.



## CHAPTER TWO – FREEMASONRY AND RELIGION

*The evolution of the human psyche awakened a belief in the existence of some higher controlling power that has a direct connection with emotion and morality.*

### *The Rise Of Civilisation*

Civilisation began when the stone-age hunter-gatherers first captured wild animals for domestication, established grazing and developed agriculture. From that time, the development of civilisation was directly related to the progressive improvements in masonry that enabled better buildings to be erected and more effective irrigation schemes and other facilities to be constructed. With the advance of civilisation, humans developed a consciousness of their mental and emotional life and also began to differentiate between their physical beings, their minds and their spirits. This evolution of the human psyche awakened a belief in the existence of some higher controlling power that, though unseen, was felt to have a direct connection with emotion and morality. Thus evolved the concept of god and a complementary human soul. Various rites of worship developed as a natural outcome of these emotional and spiritual processes, whence religions came into existence. As the nomads developed a more settled life, religious leaders soon demanded permanent and more substantial places of worship, which only the masons could construct. Hence masonry, which first evolved to supply some of mankind's material requirements, also became an indispensable agent of religion to provide for some of mankind's spiritual needs.

### *What Is Freemasonry*

In the context of this discussion, freemasonry is the system of moral teaching and the associated traditions and rituals that, in earlier times, were an important component of day-to-day life in lodges of operative freemasons. Those systems, traditions and rituals are now incorporated in the ceremonies of modern speculative freemasonry. When modern speculative craft freemasons compiled the rituals now in use, they defined freemasonry as a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols. They based the ceremonial procedures on those used in operative lodges, but adapted them for use in social surroundings instead of in a working environment. Although the fundamental elements of operative practice were retained, the explanations became more erudite and lengthy. When operative freemasons were receiving instruction, the practical applications of their working tools and the methods to be used when carrying out the work were of primary importance, but those applications and methods were also used symbolically to give moral instruction. In speculative lodges the emphasis is reversed.

The ability of medieval operative freemasons to devise ceremonials similar to those used in modern speculative lodges has often been questioned. Even a masonic writer as eminent as A.E.Waite said that he could not imagine how “horny handed labourers” could have developed a system of symbolism and philosophy to give moral instruction within the lodge. R.F.Gould, the renowned masonic historian, offered a most improbable solution to the perceived dilemma. He thought that operative masons might have accepted “gentlemen” into their ranks to transform the operative craft into a speculative art. Both writers seem to have overlooked the fact that the members of medieval operative lodges included many skilled artificers who were required to work as much with their brains as with their hands. The Master Masons had a superior knowledge and skill and were well versed in religious matters, the graphic arts, sculpture and geometry, as well as in the manual aspects of their trade. It will be recalled that the medieval operative freemasons were living in the era when the rituals of the church were becoming established, when Passion Plays were a regular feature of religious observances and pageantry was a part of everyday life. All of these factors would have encouraged the development of ritual in the operative lodges. In 787 the Council of Nicea confirmed the undoubted capabilities of operative freemasons in all aspects of the design, construction and symbolic adornment of ecclesiastical buildings, when it ruled with respect to their establishment that “the arrangement belongs to the clergy and the execution to the artist”.

## *Early Masonry*

About 12,000 years ago the Advanced Hunters of the Near East first used compacted earth to construct primitive circular dwellings. They soon added stone footings, set in hard clay, which improved stability and provided protection against the exceptionally high runoffs that were occurring during the melt down after the last great Ice Age. With the discovery of mud brick production, building erection was greatly enhanced, ushering in the Agricultural Revolution started by the Late Hunters in the New Stone Age. A pre-eminent example of early advances in masonry is a township of some four hectares constructed at Jericho in about 8000 BCE. It included a group of round beehive houses of mud brick, at least one round defensive stone tower and a massive stone wall surrounding the development. Undressed water-worn stones were used, but they were split to provide a stable laying surface and were carefully set in hard clay. The earliest known religious buildings were constructed in about 6500 BCE at Çatal Hüyük in Turkey. The intimate association of masonry with religion was firmly established in Mesopotamia, when the Sumerians constructed a continuous series of temples at Eridu from before 5500 BCE until about 3000 BCE.

The first religious structure mentioned in the Bible, the temple-tower or ziggurat called the Tower of Babel, also was constructed during that period, probably some time before 4000 BCE. Sumerian tombs in the Royal Cemetery of Ur, constructed between 2700 BCE and 2370 BCE, are of particular interest because all were roofed in stone and buried deep in the alluvial flood plain. They were of composite construction using limestone masonry, mud brick, kiln fired brick and timber, because the nearest source of rock was at least 60 kilometres away. The earliest tomb had a corbel vault, but later tombs had either barrel vaults or domes with pendentives, the spherical triangular segments that connect square

corners to true arches. In Egypt during the same period, massive chambered tombs for royal burials were being constructed of mud brick with flat roofs, called mastaba tombs from the Arabic word meaning a bench. Imhotep, the renowned architect of the pharaoh Zoser, is credited with the invention of stone masonry in Egypt. He was responsible for what is reputed to be the first pyramid constructed of dressed stone, the Step Pyramid built for Zoser at Saqqara around 2650 BCE. The pyramid began as a mastaba tomb about 8 metres high, which was incorporated into a rock structure raised progressively in six steps to a height of 61 metres, fully encased in dressed Tura limestone blocks. This was an abrupt departure from the mud brick construction previously used in Egypt.

The three pyramids of Giza are reputed to have been built for Khufu (Cheops), Khafra (Chephren) and Menkaura (Mycerinus) during the period 2500 BCE to 2400 BCE, but the ages of the pyramids and their assignment to specific pharaohs is based solely on doubtful circumstantial evidence. There is mounting evidence that the pyramids of Giza might date from as early as Zep Tepi, or the First Time of Egypt, in about 10450 BCE. This suggestion is supported by the fact that the construction of these three pyramids differs from and is vastly superior to that of all other pyramids in Egypt, most of which have deteriorated badly, while many have collapsed into rubble. Unlike the later pyramids, the pyramids of Giza did not contain mummies or funerary objects, nor did they have any hieroglyphic inscriptions or other adornments. Moreover, there also is compelling evidence that the arrangements of the chambers, galleries and shafts in the Great Pyramid of Khufu are of religious significance, reflecting ancient Egyptian beliefs concerning the rebirth of the pharaohs and the transmigration of their souls to the astral plane of the heavenly Duat.

The pyramids of Giza incorporate 12 million tonnes of dressed stone, which is forty percent of the total mass of the eighty pyramids that were built in Egypt. Khufu's pyramid is the largest stone structure in the world and it incorporates about 2.5 million limestone blocks that weigh up to 12 tonnes each, which were laid in 203 courses accurately fitted without mortar. The external surface of Khufu's pyramid, which is some 68,000 square metres in area, was clad with polished limestone facing blocks weighing 15 tonnes each. The King's Chamber is reached through the Grand Gallery, which ascends on a slope of 26.5°. It is constructed of 30 tonne blocks of black granite from Aswan, 750 kilometres to the south. The walls of the King's Chamber are constructed with 70 tonne blocks of red granite, which support a flat ceiling constructed of 50 tonne blocks. The Queen's Chamber is constructed of white limestone blocks and has a gabled ceiling exactly on the east-west axis.

## *Temple Masonry*

After the great pyramids, many magnificent temples of dressed stone were constructed in Egypt, of which the best known are probably the remarkable complexes at Karnak that were commenced in about 1990 BCE; also those at Abu Simbel that were commenced in about 1200 BCE. Although the first religious structure mentioned in the Bible was the Tower of Babel, the first that it describes in detail was the temple built by King Solomon at Jerusalem, with the assistance of Hiram King of Tyre and his building specialists. Completed in about 950 BCE, King Solomon's temple was much smaller than any

Egyptian temple, being only about 30 metres by 10 metres in plan, but its opulence has never been surpassed. The layout of King Solomon's temple was based on an extensive series of Canaanite temples dating from as early as 2500 BCE and a later series built by the Phoenicians in Syria from as early as 1400 BCE. The Phoenicians were renowned for their building activities in the Levant and culturally they were much further advanced than the Hebrews. In the time of Josiah, three centuries after King Solomon's temple was completed, it needed extensive repairs that had to be financed by the worshippers. Later, in 587 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed King Solomon's temple when he sacked Jerusalem, took away the Ark of the Covenant and deported the remainder of the Hebrews into Babylonian captivity.

When Cyrus the Elamite king conquered Babylon in 539 BCE and founded the vast Persian Empire, Judea became one of its provinces and remained so for the next 200 years. Nevertheless, in 538 BCE Cyrus issued a decree releasing the Israelites from their captivity, allowing them to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. The return of the Israelites to Judea commenced under the leadership of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel, in about 537 BCE. Sheshbazzar was a prince of Judah whom Cyrus appointed as governor of Judah, to whom Cyrus entrusted the temple vessels that had been looted by Nebuchadnezzar. Sheshbazzar may have been Zerubbabel's uncle Sheshbazzar, who was a son of King Jehoiachin. King Jehoiachin and the prophet Ezekiel were captured in 597 BCE and deported to Babylon, where Ezekiel had a grand vision for a new temple. Sheshbazzar is believed to have been the governor of Judea who is referred to as Tirshatha in the scriptures. Tirshatha probably is a Persian form of the Avestan *tarsta*, meaning reverend, which was used as a title more or less equivalent to "His Excellency".

Zerubbabel was the son of Salathiel and hence a grandson of King Jehoiachin. The exact meaning of Zerubbabel is uncertain, but it is believed to signify "offspring of Babylon". Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel laid the foundations of the new temple in about 535 BCE, but Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest were those primarily responsible for carrying out the building work. Many difficulties were encountered as a consequence of the turbulence of the surrounding tribes, which delayed the rebuilding of the temple and necessitated Zerubbabel's visit to Cyrus to gain his support. The rebuilding of the temple was resumed in about 520 BCE and completed by about 515 BCE. The return of the Israelites resumed under Ezra in 458 BCE and continued under Nehemiah in 445 BCE. A total of some 42,360 Israelites returned to Jerusalem from Babylon. The second temple at Jerusalem is usually called Zerubbabel's temple. It was similar to Solomon's temple, but much less ornate than either Solomon's temple or the temple visualised by the prophet Ezekiel. However, Zerubbabel's temple survived for almost 500 years, until the Roman general Pompey captured Jerusalem in 63 BCE and the Roman consul Crassus plundered the temple nine years later.

In 47 BCE Julius Caesar appointed Antipater, a Jew of Idumaean descent, as procurator of Judea. Antipater then appointed his son Herod as the military prefect of Galilee. When the Parthians invaded Syria and Palestine in 40 BCE, the Romans were so impressed by Herod's abilities that they appointed him "King of the Jews". After three years of fighting, culminating with the defeat of Cleopatra and Mark Antony in the battle of Actium, Herod

established his position and ruled as Herod the Great from 37 BCE until his death in 4 BCE. Herod was an indefatigable builder, who decided to demonstrate his own grandeur by restoring Zerubbabel's temple as a much more beautiful building of twice the area. It was set in a complex of courtyards covering an area of some ten hectares, surrounded by a massive stone wall that was constructed using blocks mostly 1.25 metres high and 4.6 metres long. Herod trained 1,000 priests as masons and also had the work carried out in stages, so that the ritual observances were not interrupted. Although work began in 20 BCE and the main structure was completed within ten years, the whole complex was not completed until 64 CE. The temple was razed to the ground and burned when the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem in 70 CE.

## *Classical Masonry*

Greece emerged as a colonising nation about 1100 BCE and soon became the centre of learning, art and religious thought in the eastern Mediterranean. The era of classical masonry began with the erection of the first of the Greek stone temples at Corinth and Isthmia, some time before 650 BCE, where the Doric order originated. The Ionic order was established during the next hundred years, with the construction of the temples at Corfu and Ephesus. The Corinthian order was first used in Delphi around 390 BCE. Without doubt the most famous of the classical Greek structures are the Parthenon and its surrounding structures on the Acropolis in Athens, built between 447 BCE and 432 BCE. The Parthenon was about 115 metres long and 55 metres wide, with a pitched roof and completely surrounded by a colonnade of forty-six massive Doric columns. The Parthenon typified the monolithic unity of Greek temples and was the ultimate expression of the Greek city-state. The emphasis that the Greeks placed on the ancient Mysteries continued into the turbulent period of Roman rule, which influenced the development of speculative thought that is still reflected in masonic ceremonials. Roman architecture owes much to Greek architecture, but is not simply an extension of it. The two most significant differences are the greater size of the Roman buildings and the more elaborate decoration of their interiors, which are designed to match their exteriors and to reflect the imperial pride and growing self-awareness of the Romans.

One of the most interesting examples of Roman masonry is the temple complex at Baalbek, on the site of an ancient holy place of the Canaanites. To provide for greater public participation around 1200 BCE, the Canaanites constructed a raised stone court surrounded by a stone wall, thus creating a sanctuary at the centre of which they erected a sacrificial altar, similar to the forecourt used some 250 years later by the priests of King Solomon's temple. Alexander the Great defeated the Persian Empire and entered Egypt in triumph in 332 BCE, when the Beqa'a valley became part of the Egyptian Empire and the Ptolemies proposed building a huge temple at Baalbek. However, construction was delayed by disputations with the Seleucids, who won the Beqa'a valley in 198 BCE under Antiochus the Great.

When the Roman general Pompey occupied Phoenicia in 64 CE, an immense podium with an area of about 17,000 square metres was nearing completion at Baalbek. The Temple of Jupiter was located on the podium and had then been under construction for about four

years. The main structure was completed in about 70 CE, but embellishments continued for at least another sixty years. The sandstone foundation courses were laid with the largest stones ever used in masonry construction. They were perfectly fitted without mortar and were as large as 20 metres long and 4 metres square in cross-section, weighing as much as 800 tonnes each. The temple was surrounded by a colonnade of fifty-four of the tallest monolithic columns that exist from antiquity. They were of pink granite brought from Aswan in upper Egypt and had shafts 2 metres in diameter and 16.6 metres high, each weighing 135 tonnes.

The Temple of Bacchus at Baalbek was adjacent to the Temple of Jupiter and similar in construction, but only about half the area. Nevertheless the Temple of Bacchus was larger than the Parthenon of Athens and is still the best preserved of all Roman temples. Also in the Baalbek complex were the much smaller Temple of Venus and Temple of the Muses. When the Emperor Constantine declared Christianity to be the religion of the Roman Empire in 313 a Christian church was built in the township, but when the Emperor Julian “the Apostate” came to power it was destroyed in 361. When Theodosius became Emperor in the East in 379, he destroyed the altar of sacrifice and the observation tower in the Great Court of the Temple of Jupiter and replaced them with a Christian Basilica 63 metres by 36 metres in area, raised on a podium 2 metres high. Subsequently, when Syria became an Arab state in 637, the Basilica was converted into a palace and the Temples of Jupiter and Bacchus were converted into a huge walled fortress with a surrounding moat. The fortress was only abandoned when Baalbek became part of the Ottoman Empire in 1517. To this day the Arabs know the precinct as the Kala’*a*, meaning a fortress.

## *Cathedral Masonry*

The culminating phase in the evolution of speculative freemasonry followed the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. In addition to their work constructing castles, fortifications and other public facilities, the operative masons in Britain and Europe were engaged on an intensive program of cathedral building that continued almost without a break from around 500 until at least 1700. It is not known how many cathedrals were built in Britain and Europe during those 1,200 years of construction, but there were several hundred and an even greater number of priories and other ecclesiastical buildings. Most of the finest of those cathedrals have survived the ravages of man and nature and are still in service. In England the operative freemasons or Guild Masons were organised with royal approval from at least as early as the Annual Assemblage of 926, which is reputed to have been encouraged and authorised by King Athelstan. The lodges of operative masons assembled under the guardianship of craft guilds, which originally were in the form of religious fraternities that continued until Henry VIII disendowed all religious fraternities by the Act of 1547. It is evident from the old catechisms and the Ancient Charges, that the masters of operative lodges were responsible for the moral and religious conduct of their apprentices and fellows, as well as for their welfare and practical training in the craft of masonry. It also is clear that the tools and working methods used by the operative masons were woven into simple dramas that were enacted to illustrate moral principles. These dramas were adapted by Dr James Anderson and others and incorporated in the speculative rituals still used in masonic lodges.

York and its Minster are of special importance in the annals of English masonry. The present York Minster is on the site of a wooden chapel erected for the baptism of Edwin of Deira, King of Northumbria, together with the members of his court, by Paulinus the first Bishop of York on Easter Day in 627. The King's Kentish wife had converted him to Christianity, she previously having been converted to Christianity by the Roman mission led by St Augustine, who arrived in Kent in 597. The Venerable Bede (c.673-735), who lived in the Jarrow monastery on Tyneside from 682 until his death, records in his Ecclesiastical History of the English People that Edwin soon replaced the chapel with a stone church, which became the centre of the Bishopric and continued as such until the church was burned down about 741. It was replaced by another magnificent stone church about 55 metres long and 17 metres wide, which was commenced by Archbishop Albert in about 767. After this church had been ruined, when the city was laid waste during the troubles that followed the Norman Conquest, the first Norman Archbishop, Thomas de Bayeux, began rebuilding it in about 1080. Archbishop Roger de Pont-l'Evêque rebuilt the choir about a century later.

The present York Minster replaced the last church progressively and in distinct stages. The first work was the addition of the south transept, which was commenced in 1220, followed by the addition of the north transept, which was commenced in 1241. Work on the new nave, chapter house and vestibule was commenced in 1291 and completed by about 1345. The Norman choir was then replaced, commencing in 1361. The final stage of construction was the erection of a central tower, which was begun in 1400 and completed in 1423, followed by the erection of the western towers 62 metres high, which were begun in 1433 and completed in 1474, after construction had been in progress for more than 250 years. The choir was badly damaged by fire in 1829 and the nave also was damaged by fire in 1840. When the present York Minster had been in continuous use for almost 500 years, investigations revealed that the central tower and west end were in danger of collapse, as a result of water erosion and fatigue in the building materials. Extensive remedial works carried out since the 1960s have restored the foundations fully and also strengthened the fabric of the building.

The development of the Gothic style of cathedrals in France, where the height of the building almost became an obsession and flying buttresses were used to support the main aisles, completes the story of the intimate association between freemasonry and religion. The Cathedral of the Notre-Dame in Paris probably is the best-known example of this style. It was begun in 1163 and completed when the western towers were erected in about 1240. It is noted for the lightness of the stone skeleton and the richness of its glowing glass, which captures the genius of Gothic architecture. However, it is the world famous Chartres Cathedral that experts consider to be the most authentic surviving example of that most spiritual of all periods in European history. It is a cathedral church in the middle of a town, which distinguishes Gothic cathedrals from the earlier monastic churches that were set in the French countryside and had enclosures of cells and cloisters. Originally a small church of unknown age was on the site, but by 1020 it had been replaced by a cathedral almost as large as the present one. It was extended at the western end in the 1130s, when

two bays, a vestibule and two towers framing the Royal Portal and its renowned sculptures were added.

A dreadful fire that razed much of the township of Chartres in 1194 also destroyed the entire first cathedral except the present western end and the crypt. Reconstruction was commenced almost immediately and continued unabated while a dozen other cathedrals were also under construction in the vicinity. No architect was engaged to design and supervise the work, which was carried out under more than thirty successive contracts, or “campaigns”, controlled by nine different Master Masons engaged cyclically throughout the construction period. The first Master Mason prepared the original design, set out the building and constructed the foundations in less than a year. Each of the Master Masons was engaged more than once, but the first and some others were engaged several times. Each successive builder made some modifications in the details of the design, but without altering any of the work already done. The cathedral was completed during the 1230s. The successful completion of this complicated and beautiful structure under very difficult conditions, coupled with the proven durability of the building, demonstrates beyond all doubt the remarkable ability, integrity and capacity of medieval freemasons.

## *Modern Freemasonry Emerges*

Many hypotheses have been advanced about the evolution of modern speculative freemasonry. One suggestion is that members of the four speculative lodges in London, who joined to form the first Grand Lodge of England in 1717, invented speculative freemasonry. Another suggestion, that once received strong support, perceives freemasonry as a direct offshoot of the Rosicrucian movement. Two of the more tenable claims are that freemasonry is either a direct or an indirect derivative of the medieval lodges of operative masons. It also has been asserted that freemasonry was founded in antiquity and revived by the Knights Templar in the Holy Land. The extensive association of the Knights Templar with the operative masons does not appear to account for the emergence of modern speculative freemasonry, but it undoubtedly influenced the speculative aspects of operative freemasonry. It is surprising that those proponents, who advance one or another of these theories, usually do not acknowledge the possibility that modern speculative freemasonry could have evolved from more than one source. A brief review of these theories will help to put the relationship between freemasonry and religion in its proper perspective.

It is significant that the key episodes on which the rituals are based in the degrees of the Craft, the Mark, the Royal Arch, the Cryptic Council and their various associated orders are all biblical events recorded in passages of scripture in the Old Testament. A well-known example is the Hiram legend relating to the brutal and untimely death of the principal architect during the construction of King Solomon’s temple at Jerusalem. Although this legend is not recounted in the Old Testament, the narrative of the legend is ancient and many variations and amplifications of it are to be found in the Judaic apocrypha and the earliest Talmudic traditions. In this context, the name of the central figure in the Hiram legend is not always the same in different versions of the Traditional Histories of English operative masons, nor indeed is the Hiram legend the only one that is used. Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas, in their stimulating book entitled *The*



Hiram Key, describe extensive investigations they have carried out from which they conclude that the Hiramic legend originally referred to the murder of a Theban pharaoh, Seqenenre Tao, in about 1600 BCE. They also suggest an interesting Egyptian derivation of the substitute words used by a Master Mason. Though at first sight improbable, there are many equally obscure derivations of words now in common use in the English language.

It is clear from the Cooke MS of about 1410, that by then the events concerning the construction of the temple and the involvement of its principal architect were already firmly established in the traditions of the guilds of operative masons. If speculative Freemasonry had been invented in England during the period of religious fervour and intolerance, which had prevailed for about two centuries prior to the formation of the first Grand Lodge, the Hiramic legend probably would not have been included in the rituals and the degrees almost certainly would have had a strong Christian emphasis, based on events taken from the New Testament. The orders of masonry that include degrees with a Christian basis did not appear until the 1750s and 1800s, after the first Grand Lodge of England had been established. It is believed that some members of the lodges forming the first Grand Lodge were Rosicrucians, who would have exerted a strong Christian influence on modern speculative development, but there is no evidence of a direct derivation from the Rosicrucian movement.

The weight of evidence supports the view that the ceremonials of modern speculative freemasonry were derived indirectly from the ceremonials of English operative lodges, through speculative lodges that probably had some operative masons as members. It is significant that these events in England were taking place at about the same time as many Scottish operative lodges were making a direct transition to speculative lodges. The early stages of the development of operative masonry in England and Scotland were similar. However, in Scotland the lodges were smaller and more dispersed, while much of the work they carried out was under contract instead of by direct labour. In London the Fellowship of Masons, probably established in about 1356, had an inner conclave known as the Acception. From the 1620s its members included operative masons and also many who were not tradesmen. The conditions prevailing during the Reformation made it necessary to maintain the utmost secrecy within fraternities, which explains the dearth of records in England and is the reason why it is much more difficult to establish the emergence of speculative freemasonry in England than it is in Scotland.

In 1441 King James II appointed Sir William St Clair (now Sinclair), who was the Laird of Roslin, as hereditary patron and protector of Scottish masons. In Edinburgh in 1475 the Seal of Cause was issued, establishing trade regulations for masons in Scotland about a century earlier than any similar regulations were issued in England. The Schaw Statutes of 1598 and 1599 strengthened those regulations and formalised arrangements for the management of Scottish operative lodges. The St Clair Charters of 1601 and 1628 were issued with the express permission of William Schaw and signed by representatives of many widely dispersed lodges, confirming that the Lairds of Roslin had been for ages and would continue to be patrons and protectors of the mason craft in Scotland. Records of Scottish operative lodges from 1598 onwards indicate that ritual work was being carried out and they frequently record that non-masons were being admitted as members. In 1736

four old Scottish operative lodges associated in the formation of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. Thirty-three lodges met later in 1736 and elected William St Clair, the Laird of Roslin, as the first Grand Master Mason of Scotland. All of those lodges were or had been operative lodges. This was significantly different from the situation prevailing when four speculative lodges formed the first Grand Lodge in England, when few if any of the members had been operative masons.

It would be appropriate now to consider the “de-Christianising of the Craft” that masonic authors often mention. Any Christian influence stemmed from the fact that, when purely speculative freemasonry was being organized under the first Grand Lodge, Christianity was the only religion recognised in England. For centuries in England and Europe, it had been the custom of the old crafts and guilds, including the masons, to have their own patron saints on whose days festivals were held. Many ancient lodges held a festival on June 24, the summer solstice that had been a day of heathen rejoicing, but in early Christian times became St John the Baptist’s day. The masons also held a festival on the winter solstice, December 27, which was another day of heathen rejoicing that became St John the Evangelist’s day. Although other saints were held in high regard by freemasons, including the Quatuor Coronati or Four Crowned Martyrs, nevertheless the two Saints John were adopted as the patron saints of Freemasonry, giving rise to such old expressions as “a St John’s Lodge” and “the St John’s Men”. In the early days of speculative freemasonry the officers of lodges were installed every six months, usually on the festival days of the two Saints John. Nowadays the masonic festivals are usually held annually, for example on St George’s Day in England, on St Patrick’s Day in Ireland and on St Andrew’s Day in Scotland.

Some authors have expressed the opinion that, prior to the Constitutions of 1723, all masons were expected to be Christians, but it is not known whether there is any firm basis for that opinion. There is no record of Jesus Christ being referred to in any of the Craft rituals, but it has been suggested that some of the symbolism might have been given a Trinitarian explanation. The records of some catechisms in the early 1700s include references of a Christian character, more particularly in the Royal Arch. The “precious corner-stone for a firm foundation”, from Isaiah 28:16 and the use of the tau cross as “a sign of the righteous on the foreheads of the Lord’s people”, from Ezekiel 9:4, have also been questioned because of their later Christian connotations. Even the pentalpha, a magical sign used in ancient times as a talisman against the danger of fire and adopted in freemasonry as an emblem of the five points of fellowship among other things, was questioned because it became a Christian symbol alluding to the five wounds of Christ. Fortunately these and other symbols of ancient origin, like the triple tau, survived the “de-Christianising of the Craft”. From the early 1720s the Jewish membership of lodges steadily increased, after which any Christian overtones that might have appeared in the craft rituals were progressively eliminated. These superficial changes reflected a desire for freemasonry to be open to all men believing in God irrespective of their creed. The Duke of Sussex who was a Hebrew scholar, a member of Jewish learned societies and also a supporter of Christian Emancipation, resolutely fostered Jewish membership.

## *The Templar Influence*

There is strong evidence of an association between the Knights Templar and freemasonry in Scotland, especially in relation to the Mark and the Royal Arch. Extensive studies carried out on this and related subjects in the 1980s and 1990s are described and commented on by the investigators in two excellent books. Of these the earlier book is *The Temple and the Lodge* by Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh and the other is *The Hiram Key* already mentioned in relation to the Hiram legend. The association between the Knights Templar and freemasonry will be summarised briefly for reference. The Poor Soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon, which were established in France in 1118 or earlier, became known as the Knights Templar. An occurrence that is significant in the history of the Knights Templar is the fact that their first Grand Master, Hugues de Payen, was married to Catherine de St Clair. She was a Scottish woman of Norman descent, who set up the first Templar preceptory outside the Holy Land on her family's property, a few kilometres south of Edinburgh. This was the Preceptory of Balantrodoch, in the village now called Temple, not far from where Rosslyn Chapel was built later.

When Hugues de Payens first went to Jerusalem with eight other knights, it was ostensibly to protect Christian pilgrims on their journeys in the Holy Land. The French historian Gaetan Delaforge made a special study of the Knights Templar. He states in his book, *The Templar Tradition in the Age of Aquarius*, that their real task was to obtain relics and manuscripts containing the secret traditions of Judaism and ancient Egypt. Hugues de Payen persuaded King Baldwin I to give him a section of the royal palace, in the area of the Temple at Jerusalem, which he used as his headquarters. The nine knights apparently spent their first nine years on this project and carried out extensive excavations under the Temple, but no record of the results is known to be in existence. Lieutenant Charles Wilson in 1895 led a contingent of Royal Engineers from Britain to explore and map the passages and chambers under the ruins of the Temple. Lieutenant Wilson states in his book, *The Excavation of Jerusalem*, that many discarded relics of the Templars were found underground and that many of the passages and chambers were vaulted with keystone arches. The official reports of modern Israeli archaeological investigations also support the proposition that the knights were searching the Temple ruins for something special.

The Knights Templar included many operative freemasons and also engaged locals to work with them constructing a wide range of castles, hospitals and ecclesiastical buildings in the Holy Land over about 150 years. The Templar freemasons must have acquired a sound knowledge of the customs and traditions of the local freemasons, whose direct lineage extended back through the Phoenicians to the Sumerians and the Egyptians, which might account for the Egyptian derivation of the substitute words suggested by Knight and Lomas. The Templar castle constructed in about 1217 at Athlit was their last great stronghold to be abandoned when al-Ashraf, with an army of a quarter of a million men, finally defeated the Knights Templar in 1291. The cemetery at Athlit contains two of the oldest known masonic graves, with well preserved headstones each having a large Templar cross carved vertically in the centre, between a kevel on the left and the gallows square of a Master Mason on the right. When Philippe IV, King of France, ordered all Templars to be seized in October 1307, the large Templar fleet escaped, reputedly around Ireland to Argyll

in Scotland, where there are many Templar relics. After intensive interrogation, torture and trial by the Inquisition, the Grand Master Jacques de Molay was roasted to death over a slow fire in March 1314.

Meanwhile many of the Knights Templar had escaped to Scotland and are reported to have provided the force of horsemen that swung the battle in favour of Robert Bruce at Bannockburn on 24 June 1314. Robert Bruce died in 1329 and in accordance with his dying wish, Sir James Douglas, Sir William St Clair, Sir William Keith and two other knights set out with Bruce's heart in a silver casket to be buried in the Holy Land. All except Sir William Keith died in Spain when supporting King Alfonso XI in his campaign against the Moors at Granada, but Sir William Keith, whose arm was broken in battle, brought the casket back to Scotland. Bruce's heart was buried under the east window of the chancel in Melrose Abbey. This close association that the Lairds of Roslin had with the Knights Templar and masonic tradition culminated in the decision made by a later Sir William St Clair to build a large collegiate church. Although the foundations were laid in 1446 and Rosslyn Chapel was completed in the 1480s, the main church was never built. The chapel is a remarkable structure, having a foundation plan similar to the temple at Jerusalem and external rows of spires that appear to have been modelled on the drawing of the "Heavenly Jerusalem" by Lambert of St Omer who died about 1121.

Rosslyn Chapel incorporates two highly ornamented pillars representing Jachin and Boaz and it is ornately decorated inside with Celtic, Templar and masonic symbols. The embellishments include a wounded head relevant to the Hiram legend, a Latin inscription quoting part of Zerubbabel's discourse when he sought Cyrus's support during the rebuilding of the temple and symbols of significance in the Royal Arch. Rosslyn Chapel also has a scroll shrine in the form of a vault sealed under a metre of rock, the contents of which are unknown, but which Knight and Lomas believe may contain relics from the vaults under the Temple at Jerusalem. A remarkable feature of the interior decorations are the accurate representations of maize and aloe plants from the New World that must have been carved into the columns and arches around 1470, although Columbus's first landing on the mainland was not until 1498. This gives weight to the belief that, after its arrival in Scotland, the Templar fleet sailed west in search of the land that is called Merica in the Nasorean scrolls and marked by a star. It seems that the Templars almost certainly landed on the New England coast of America early in 1308 and after settling there journeyed back to Scotland more than once. This contention is supported by the famous image of a fourteenth century knight carved on a rock at Westford in Massachusetts and also by the stone tower at Newport in Rhode Island, constructed like a round Templar church, that was referred to as an existing "Norman Villa" by the Italian navigator Giovanni de Verrazano, who was thought to be the first European to discover that part of the coastline.

## *Other Influences On Freemasonry*

Several other organisations and ethical systems have been put forward from time to time as the progenitors of freemasonry. It is unlikely that any of them could have been the direct ancestor of modern speculative freemasonry, although several probably influenced the

course of freemasonry directly or indirectly. Among the more tenuous possible associations are the Druids and the Culdees whose influence, if any, would have been similar to that of the Rosicrucians mentioned earlier. As the ancient Celtic priests of Germany, Gaul and Britain, the Druids, are not known to have had any association with operative freemasonry, their supposed direct influence is conjectural. Nor do we do not know what contact the Culdees, a fraternity of monks who lived in isolation in groups of cells in Scotland from the 700s, had with operative freemasonry, but their influence was more tangible, because they lived in sturdy and well constructed stone buildings. The Mithraic cult was devoted to the ancient Persian light-god, whose worship became popular in the Roman Empire. As the Persians and Babylonians were pre-eminent among the ancient builders, whence there was a continuous line of descent over several thousand years through the Canaanites and Phoenicians to the Roman builders in the eastern Mediterranean, it is reasonable to assume that the Mithraic cult influenced the development of ancient esoteric freemasonry. The systems of morality taught for several thousand years through the symbolism and elaborate rituals of the ancient Mysteries of Egypt and Greece, also must have influenced ancient freemasonry. The Essenes, who were closely connected to the Pythagoreans, probably had a greater influence. Menahem, a Diaspora Essene, founded the Magians whose name reflects their Babylonian culture. They shared the traditions of the Palestine Essenes, but did not enforce seclusion nor have the same strict views on morality.

The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus (c.37-100), records in War that Menahem told the young Herod he would become king, so that Herod held him and all Essenes in honour and trusted them throughout his reign. The Diaspora Essenes supported restitution of the Davidic rule, but they could accept another king with the David in a subordinate role. This was more acceptable to Herod than the proposals for the priesthood set out in the Temple Scroll prepared by the Palestine Essenes when Herod announced around 21 BCE that he would rebuild the temple. The decision of Herod to train 1,000 priests as masons probably was in deference to Menahem's influence. The preparation and obligation of candidates at Qumran and the degrees and allegorical instruction that they received, are detailed in the Manual of Discipline, the scroll called Community Rule. They are closely mirrored in freemasonry.

Socio-religious craft clubs called the Collegia flourished at the height of the Roman Empire and probably accompanied the Roman armies and their masons to Britain. During the reign of Emperor Henry III (1039-56), a Pope is said to have issued a diploma to an Italian group, the Travelling Architects, to build churches all over Europe. In Italy the Comacine Masters and in Germany the Steinmetzen, or stonecutters, also are supposed to have been established by Papal Bulls, although none of the relevant documents has been found. The stonemasons of France received their code and privileges from Charles Martel in 1260 and he appears in the Ancient Charges used in England, which suggests a positive connection. This is supported by the code of masons issued in France in 1407 and also used by the later Compagnonnage of journeyman masons, which are very similar to their English counterparts.

## *Retrospect*

The foregoing historical outline traces the continuing and unbroken line of support that operative freemasonry has provided to religious establishments down through the ages, from ancient Egypt and the Near East, thence into the Classical Era of the eastern Mediterranean and culminating in the great period of cathedral building in Europe and Britain. From this outline it is quite evident that operative masonry has played a key role in the support of religion for almost 12,000 years. Whilst these regions and periods of Masonic activity were chosen to illustrate the direct and vital contributions made by operative freemasonry to the religious establishments, it should not be assumed that they provide the only connection. Indeed the input of operative freemasonry to religion can be demonstrated in all ages and in all places in the world when and where some form of civilization has been established. For example, consider also the remarkable stone circles and burial sites of ancient Britain, most of them as old as the pyramids of Egypt; the diversity and splendour of Hindu temples in India, South East Asia and Indonesia; the Incan temples in South America; and the Mayan temples in Central America. All of these works illustrate a similar dedication of operative freemasons in support of religious ideals. Relevant aspects of this extended spectrum of influence are discussed in other chapters.

Reverting to the present theme, it can be seen that in every age operative freemasons have utilised the experience gained in previous ages, built on that experience and passed their extended knowledge on to their successors. The intimate association that operative freemasons had with the priesthoods from ancient times until the Classical era, then with the ecclesiastical fraternity throughout the Medieval and Renaissance periods, had a powerful influence on the freemasons' lives, moulding their beliefs and instilling in them what now constitute the true principles of freemasonry. An inevitable consequence of this continuing process is the development of a system of moral teaching and its associated rituals, which are now used in speculative craft freemasonry. They would have been acquired progressively, developed further in successive ages and passed on to succeeding generations, even as language itself has evolved through successive eras.

A comprehensive outline of the evolution of freemasonry, which illustrates its close relationship with the ancient mysteries and also with modern religions, is given by John Yarker in *The Arcane Schools - A Review of their Origin and Antiquity, with a General History of Freemasonry and its Relation to the Theosophic, Scientific and Philosophic Mysteries*, which was published by William Tate of Belfast in 1909. A modern book of interest that complements many of the features covered in *The Arcane Schools*, is one by Don Bradley entitled *Freemasonry in the Twenty-first Century*. It sets out to give a sincere inquirer a more comprehensive understanding of the teachings that are hidden in freemasonry and is well worth reading.

## CHAPTER THREE - THE LEGACY OF OPERATIVE FREEMASONRY

*As civilisation developed freemasonry became involved in the erection of tombs, shrines, temples and other structures for religious purposes, reflecting mankind's growing spirituality.*

### *Origins*

The seeds of freemasonry were sown when our primeval ancestors took their first faltering steps on their path to civilisation. Freemasonry began as an entirely practical enterprise, to satisfy the wants of day to day living. As civilisation developed freemasonry became involved in the erection of tombs, shrines, temples and other structures for religious purposes, reflecting mankind's growing spirituality. Over the centuries, such an intimate association with moral and spiritual influences naturally developed the speculative aspects of freemasonry concurrently with the operative art. By medieval times, the moral teachings of speculative freemasonry were well established and had become a significant part of the ceremonial activities in operative lodges. It is generally accepted that speculative freemasonry, as we know it today, owes its origin to operative masonry, although there are few written records of the early stages of the transition. In fact, the ways in which operative masonry came to be superseded by speculative freemasonry were not the same in all places.

As those who established the first speculative lodges did not record their reasons for doing so, we can only surmise that they valued the esoteric teachings of the operative lodges. However, we know that Drs James Anderson and John Desaguliers, who were influential Presbyterian clergymen and members of the Royal Society, were leaders in the reorganisation of the early lodges that culminated in the establishment of the first Grand Lodge. Both fervently believed that speculative freemasonry should be part of the emerging philosophy of Enlightenment and that it should provide an intellectual forum where advances in the liberal arts and sciences could be freely discussed and fostered. This undoubtedly should still be freemasonry's prime objective.

In England, the medieval operative lodges were virtually defunct in the first half of the 1600s, because of the Reformation. Nevertheless a few brave stalwarts kept the speculative aspects of freemasonry alive, but hidden from public knowledge. A few operative lodges were reassembled later for particular projects, but purely speculative lodges seem to have emerged independently only a few decades before four old lodges met in London in 1716 and formed the first Grand Lodge, which is often referred to as the **Premier Grand Lodge**. This established England as the home of speculative freemasonry. In Scotland, where operative masonry continued to function into the second half of the eighteenth century, the situation was quite different. Operative lodges in Scotland generally were small and often

were family concerns. When there was a lull in the work, or work ceased to be available, many though not all operative lodges continued to function socially and often became speculative lodges. Operative masonry was active in Ireland until at least 1700, but there is no evidence of any operative lodges becoming speculative lodges as they did in Scotland.

## *Masonry Through The Ages*

To appreciate how operative lodges developed their speculative aspects and thus provided a system from which speculative lodges could develop, some understanding of the origins of freemasonry, its functions and the scope of its activities is desirable. The birth of the operative art occurred towards the end of the Old Stone Age, when the Early Hunters began to move out of their caves and learnt to construct huts from locally available materials. About 35,000 years ago at the height of the last Ice Age, the Advanced Hunters were the originators of representational art in the form of figurines and carvings. They also developed painting about 15,000 years ago and were the unlikely progenitors of architecture and masonry about 12,000 years ago, when the first known builders used stone to construct circular huts with stone footings in Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia. These humble beginnings of civilisation heralded in the Agricultural Revolution that the Late Hunters started in the New Stone Age.

The gradual development of settlements in Mesopotamia, Greece, Crete and Cyprus provided the impetus for the first production of mud bricks and the use of stone for perimeter walls and dykes, which were used in the construction of Jericho about 8000 BCE. By about 6500 BCE freemasonry had developed sufficiently for the circular *beehive* houses in Cyprus to be constructed with stone foundations and walls that supported corbelled domes of mud brick. About the same time in Turkey, construction of the town of Çatal Hüyük began. It was occupied continuously until about 5500 BCE and had a peak population of about 8,000 people. Çatal Hüyük ushered in a continuous and intimate association of freemasonry with religion that lasted for almost 8,000 years and is the site of the earliest religious buildings now known to be in existence. The earliest period of temple and monumental masonry began in Mesopotamia during the Copper Age, when progressively larger and more complex temples were erected. The temples of that period are typified by a continuous series discovered at Eridu in Sumer, dating from about 5500 BCE to 3000 BCE. During the same period masonry in Egypt is typified by the chambered *mastaba* tombs constructed for royal burials.

A period of massive monumental masonry followed, typified by the huge *ziggurat* of Ur-Nammu in Mesopotamia and the three great pyramids of Giza in Egypt, dating from about 3000 BCE to 2500 BCE. Massive temple building continued in Egypt and is represented by the complexes of Karnak and Luxor constructed in Thebes between 1500 BCE and 1300 BCE and Abu Simbel completed in about 1200 BCE. Masonry carried out in this magnitude required huge gangs of skilled workers who were trained, organised and supervised by master masons of great experience. The Biblical description of the construction of the temple at Jerusalem by King Solomon, completed in about 950 BCE, provides ample evidence of the work force and skills required for such structures in those



days. The classical masonry of Greece that commenced in about 500 BCE and of Rome that commenced in about 150 BCE, required similar work forces and skills. Then followed an incredible period of cathedral building in Europe and Britain, commencing in about 500 CE and continuing for almost 1,200 years, during which time innumerable religious structures were built.

Such “*ecclesiastical*” masonry was not confined to these regions, but spread from the Levant throughout Asia, producing a vast array of religious complexes and structures of monumental proportions, of which a few examples will be mentioned. The intricate though massive temple of Borubudur in Java, constructed in about 800, is the largest individual religious monument in South-East Asia. The temple-city complex of Ankor in Cambodia, constructed in about 1000, is awe-inspiring and occupies an area of almost 200 square kilometres. The breathtaking Taj Mahal in India, constructed of pure white marble in about 1650, undoubtedly is one of the most beautiful buildings in the world, which reputedly was “*designed to breathe an image of Paradise on earth*”. Nor should we overlook the remarkable structures in Central and South America. A prime example is the overwhelming city-temple complex at Tikal in Guatemala, constructed by the Mayans in about 500 CE. The citadel and city-temple complex of Machu Picchu, constructed by the Incas in the Andes Mountains in about 1450, at an elevation of almost 3,000 metres, also is well known. Such an incredible array of ecclesiastical buildings that have been erected in so many places around the world during the last 8,000 years, clearly show the universality of freemasonry and how intimately it is integrated with religious activities.

## *The Freemason And His Lodge*

There are differing opinions as to the origin of the word freemason. The first known use of the word *freemason* in England dates from 1376, when it specifically implied an operative freemason of a superior class. However, it is quite possible that when the word was first used in different places, the reasons for its use and its interpretations could have been different. Some of the various explanations are worth mentioning. Bearing in mind the close association that England had with France during medieval times when the French language was in common use, the suggestion that the word is a corrupt pronunciation of the French *frère maçon*, meaning *brother mason*, ought not to be dismissed lightly. Another suggestion is that it is a derivative of the more general *freeman* that was used in the late Middle Ages to distinguish those having personal liberty from serfs, slaves or others who were subject to the restrictions then prevalent. Stonemasons specialising in the use of freestone to carve and sculpt decorative masonry for the vaulting, tracery, columns and capitals in English cathedrals originally were called “*masons of free stone*”, then *freestone masons* which later was abbreviated to *freemasons*. Another usage is recorded in Scotland, dating from about 1600, when the minutes of the Lodge of Edinburgh state that the “*Freedom of the Burgh*” had been accorded to its *frie mesones*, which gave them the right to practice their craft. In the Burgh records of 1725 the same lodge is also referred to as “*the Society of Free Masons*”, when their right to practice was confirmed.

Operative freemasons held their meetings in their stoneyards or in suitable buildings on the worksite. In operative practice the **lodge** originally was the place of work, especially in the stone yards. The word is derived from the Old French **loge** meaning an **arbour**, later adopted into Middle English meaning a **stall** as in a modern theatre. The earliest known reference to a **lodge** as a building occurs in the building accounts of Vale Royal Abbey in 1277, when **logias** and **mansiones** were erected for the workers, because the site of the abbey was some distance from habitation. **Logias** derives from Old French and **mansiones** from Middle Latin, which respectively signify **to lodge** and **a household**, reflecting the use of French and Latin in England in those days. There are many references to lodges in later operative documents, including one from York in 1399, which clearly indicates that the lodge also served as a repository for tools and implements. The body of masons comprising an operative work force may also have been called a **lodge** in medieval times, but there is no known record of that usage dating from then. The earliest recorded uses of **lodge** to indicate a body of masons are from operative practice in Scotland. They occur in the minutes of Aitchison's Haven Lodge in 1598 and the Schaw Statutes of 1598 and 1599 refer to the Lodges of Edinburgh, Kilwinning and Stirling. Thereafter in Scotland it was common practice to refer to a body of freemasons as a lodge.

## **English Operative Lodges**

In England, a majority of the operative lodges worked under the immediate control of a religious establishment such as a cathedral, often for periods extending over several generations of their work forces. However, they also came under the guardianship of craft guilds, originally in the form of religious fraternities, which were organised to protect the interests of skilled workers in the various trades. These guilds were well established in England in the reign of Henry I, in about 1153. The London Company was formed as a stonemasons' guild in about 1356 and probably is the best known. Its original constitution is recorded in the **Regius MS** and dates from about 1390. It is the earliest written record of such guilds in England. The guilds continued to operate very successfully until the Reformation of 1530-1560, even though the statutes of 1360 and 1425 forbade the organisation of masons, apparently to limit the escalation of wages when labour was short. Although it did not become common practice until almost a century later, apprentices in masonry were bonded under indentures to their masters from about 1230, when the earliest known London regulation was issued.

In the final year of his reign, Henry VIII proclaimed and enforced the Act of 1547, which disendowed all religious fraternities. His son and successor, Edward VI, confiscated any remaining guild funds. The available records indicate that, of all the fraternities in England, the stonemasons probably suffered the worst under this process of disendowment. The fragmented guilds that survived the Reformation became Livery Companies, some of which still exist in the City of London. Among the best known is the old **London Company**, which Prior to the Act of 1547 was known as "**The Worshipful Company of Ffree Masons of the City of London**" and also as "**The Fellowship of Masons**". It was kept alive through the Reformation, carefully hidden from official eyes and jealously guarding its medieval craft doctrines and secrets. Although the Company's books and

documents prior to 1620 have been lost, the letter-books and other records of the City of London confirm the Company's continuity through to 1655, when it changed its title to "***The Company of Masons***". The records show that its membership has included several women, one of whom was apprenticed as late as 1713 for the usual term of seven years.

## ***Scottish Operative Lodges***

Operative lodges came into existence in Scotland in much the same way as in England, but in Scotland there were many more lodges though usually much smaller. There is no record of Scottish operative lodges having a traditional history like the English lodges, but they had the "***Mason Word***" which they guarded jealously. The organisation of operative lodges in Scotland differed from that of the English lodges, especially in the formative years of the trade. In Scotland the lodges usually worked independently, because the buildings generally were smaller and more dispersed than in England and travel was difficult and time consuming. Although the mason trade in Scotland originally revolved around individual lodges, the many territorial lodges were gradually organised under the supervision of head lodges, which were not always located in large towns. This system prevailed until the Wars of Independence disrupted Scotland from 1286 to 1371, which caused extreme poverty and forced the Mason Guilds to amalgamate with the organisations of other crafts, but without destroying their continuity.

After the Wars of Independence and despite the continuing efforts of Parliament to suppress all travelling bands of craftsmen, the lodges of freemasons in Scotland gradually rebuilt their own organisation, which gained in power as Merchant Guilds declined. In 1475 the Masons and Wrights of Edinburgh were strong enough to obtain a "***Charter of Incorporation of Freeman-Masons and Wrights of Edinburgh***" from the Burgh, called the ***Seal of Cause***, when Trade Regulations also were drawn up. Despite the disruptions of the Reformation, operative freemasonry in Scotland continued to be active and actually gained in strength, culminating with the drafting of the ***Schaw Statutes*** drawn up in 1598 and revised in 1599 by William Schaw, who had been appointed Master of Work and General Warden of the Masons by James VI in 1583. The ***Schaw Statutes*** provided an elaborate code of organisation and procedure within a regional structure. By the end of the seventeenth century at least six ***Seals of Cause*** had been granted in various localities.

## ***Irish Operative Lodges***

Although there is ample visible evidence that stonemasons must have begun working in Ireland at about the same time as they did in England and Scotland, it is Cormac's Chapel at Cashel, which was built by a Munster king in 1130 and is the first positive connection with Irish operative masonry. The Chancel Arch at St Mary's Cathedral in Tuam, which was built in 1152, is another fine example of the skill of early Irish operative masons. The first evidence of guild activity in Ireland is the Charter granted in 1508 to the Dublin Masons, in company with the Carpenters, Millers and Heliers (Tilers). As in Scotland,

there is no evidence that Irish operative lodges had a traditional history like that of their English counterparts, but there is ample evidence that they were using their working tools as symbols for moral instruction early in the sixteenth century.

## *Early “Non-Operative” Masons*

As long ago as during the 1500s many Scots lodges welcomed local *lairds* or landowners as honorary members. The Dublin Guild, chartered in 1508, also accepted people who were neither operative masons nor craftsmen in any other trade. Some time prior to 1600 the Lodge of Edinburgh, which was meeting in Mary’s Chapel at Holyrood House, admitted a gentleman named John Boswell, the Laird of Auchinleck. He was an ancestor of James Boswell, another famous mason who was Depute Grand Master of Scotland from 1776 to 1778 and the biographer of Dr. Johnson. The same lodge, then meeting near Newcastle in 1641, admitted as a member the Right Honourable Robert Murray, General Quartermaster of the Scots army and later Secretary of Scotland, who was buried in Westminster Abbey in 1673 under the title of Sir Robert Moray. This is the earliest known record of an initiation of a speculative freemason on English soil.

Murray’s initiation preceded by five years the initiation of first known English speculative freemason, Elias Ashmole, who in 1646 was admitted into a lodge at Warrington, in Lancashire. Research has identified the members of the Warrington lodge as men of good social position, but not one of them was an operative mason, nor is anything known of the dates and places of their admissions into freemasonry. This lack of information is common in the minutes of early English speculative lodges and is one of the reasons for the uncertainty regarding their origins and activities, but it also means that some of the lodges might have been in existence longer than is generally assumed. This lack of records probably was not through laxity, but to avoid persecution during the political and religious disruptions that had plagued England since the Reformation. From 1663 onwards, the records of The Company of Masons in London give details of the admission of several “*non-operative*” members.

## *Early Speculative Lodges*

A speculative lodge of unknown origin at Warrington has already been mentioned. Four old lodges met at the Centre of Union and Harmony in London in 1716 to form the first Grand Lodge of England, the *Premier Grand Lodge*. Anthony Sayer was elected as its first Grand Master of Masons on 24 June 1717. Those four lodges were all speculative, although the lodge referred to as the “*Original No 1*”, which met at the Goose and Gridiron tavern, appears to have been composed primarily of operative stonemasons. Members of an operative lodge, formed to rebuild the medieval St Paul’s Cathedral, probably established the “*Original No 1*”. Rebuilding of St Paul’s Cathedral was begun in 1675, about nine years after it was destroyed in the disastrous *Great Fire of London*. The earliest known reference to an Irish speculative lodge is a witty passage in John Jones’

opening address, the “*commencements harrangue*”, given in 1688 at Trinity College in Dublin, which had been overrun by operative masons for several years erecting new buildings. Six “*Lodges of Gentlemen Freemasons*” were represented when the Grand Lodge of Ireland was formed in 1725. It is the second oldest in the world and two of those six lodges are still in existence.

In contrast to England and Ireland, most Scottish operative lodges continued into the 1750s, some even longer. Many of them seem to have transformed into speculative lodges almost as a matter of course. The strong and continuing influence of the regional operative structure in Scotland probably helped to delay the formation of the Grand Lodge of Scotland until 1736. At least two of the lodges that amalgamated to form the Grand Lodge originally were operative lodges and are still active. They are the Lodges of Edinburgh (Mary’s Chapel) and of Canongate Kilwinning. Several speculative lodges that joined the new Grand Lodge soon after its formation, including Glasgow and Kilwinning, also have records proving their continuity from operative lodges. Lodge Kilwinning, known as “*Mother Kilwinning*”, takes its name from the Abbey of Kilwinning (*the church of Wynin*), which is about 35 kilometres south-west of Glasgow. The Abbey was founded in about 1150 on the site of a church built in the sixth century by an Irish monk, St Wynin. It originally was of considerable magnificence, but was substantially destroyed in 1561. A lodge of Kilwinning is reputed to have existed continuously since the fifteenth century.

## *The “Mason Word”*

Although the ceremonial in the earliest operative lodges may not have been elaborate, there is every reason to believe that the *Mason Word* was well established in Scotland by 1550. When the *Mason Word* was conferred upon a candidate it probably was accompanied by the bestowal of a *mark*, although the exact method of communication is not known. Nevertheless, it is clear from various old catechisms that the word was conferred with some form of ceremony similar to that of a present-day speculative Master Mason. A fairly comprehensive explanation is given in the *Edinburgh Register House MS*, believed to date from 1696. There were several variations of the word, very similar to those in use today. Having regard to the lack of literacy in those days, it is remarkable that the words are recognizable. The earliest published reference is in Henry Adamson’s *The Muses Threnodie*, printed in Edinburgh in 1638. It says: “*For we are brethren of the Rosie Cross; we have the Mason Word . . .*”. The minutes of Aitchison’s Haven Lodge in 1598 include one of the earliest references to the instruction of *Fellows of the Craft* in the *Mason Word*, as well as to the instruction of *prentices* by *Entered Apprentices*.

## *Ceremonial*

A great deal of modern speculative ceremonial is derived from practices in the operative lodges. This includes preparation of the candidate, entrance of the candidate into the lodge room, perambulation within the lodge room and the use of working tools and tracing

boards. None of these is identical with its operative predecessor, but sufficiently similar as to leave no doubt as to its origin. In Scotland an apprentice completed seven years (sometimes a longer or shorter period) under indenture, after which he was “*entered*” in the books of the lodge and became an *Entered Apprentice*. He was then allowed to do a certain amount of work on his own account, although not allowed to employ subordinate labour. After another seven years or so in the craft he could become a *Fellow of the Craft*, when he could undertake contracts as an employer. This system was a feature of operative free masonry in Scotland at least as early as 1598 and it has been established beyond doubt that by then admission to the grades of *Entered Apprentice* and *Fellow of the Craft* was of an esoteric nature. In English lodges the titles of *Entered Apprentice* and *Fellowcraft* were not known until 1723, when they were included in the first Book of Constitutions written by Dr James Anderson DD, a Scotsman who had been educated at Marischal College in Aberdeen.

Preparation of the candidate in operative practice included bathing and examination by a physician to ascertain wholeness and soundness of body. The candidate was blindfolded and “*neither naked nor clothed*” when conducted into the lodge room under the restraint of *cabletows*. The challenge at the door was similar to that in modern practice. Perambulations were clockwise around the candidate’s track during the induction ceremony, but all other movements in the lodge room were by the most direct method, as is still the practice in Emulation lodges. The left heel slipshod comes directly from operative practice, where it receives even greater emphasis than it does in speculative freemasonry, because it is used as a specific reminder to the candidate of the binding nature of his indenture. This aspect of operative practice still survives in a familiar mode of interrogation used in Scottish freemasonry.

In Scottish lodges, until near the end of the seventeenth century, the presiding officer was variously called a Deacon, Warden or Preses. After then he was usually given the title of Master Mason, perpetuating the operative title of Master, which referred to the mason who organised and took charge of the building work. The Master usually was the proprietor of the lodge engaged as the contractor for the work. The Grand Lodge of Scotland has always used the title of Grand Master Mason for its chief presiding office bearer. Until the end of the seventeenth century in England, Master and Master Mason were only used in reference to the Mason in charge of a building operation. The earliest recorded use of the title is with reference to John of Gloucester, who was Master Mason for the erection of Westminster Hall from 1254 to 1262. It was in this sense that the title of Master was used in the *Old Charges* in the *Levander-York MS*, which is believed to have been written in 1560. It is interesting to note that, when referring to the members of the lodge as distinct from its officers, those *Old Charges* also distinguish between *Apprentices*, *Brothers* and *Fellows*, though not as specifically as in Scottish operative practice.

In common with all ancient societies and religions, tradition plays an important role in freemasonry. In this context tradition refers to knowledge and doctrines transmitted to successive generations, rather than to ritualistic procedures. Masonic traditions are primarily communicated in legends and traditional histories. Traditions, such as those relating to the untimely death of Hiram Abif, frequently are allegorical and should be

considered in the light of the truths they illustrate, rather than as historical fact. They should not be rejected for the want of irrefutable evidence. Although neither the Irish nor the Scottish operative masons had a traditional history similar to that included in the *Old Charges* of the English operative masons, it is interesting to know that both used the working tools as vehicles of moral instruction.

The lectures given to English medieval stonemasons usually included a mythological history of the Craft, tracing it back into antiquity. Although these lectures varied considerably from locality to locality, they usually emphasised the influence of Nimrod and dramatised the construction of temple erected by King Solomon at Jerusalem. English tradition also features a Great Assembly of Masons supposed to have been held at York in 926, with the approval and encouragement of King Athelstan of Northumbria. There is no known record of King Athelstan's influence on freemasonry, but the *Venerable Bede*, a renowned Anglo-Saxon scholar, theologian and historian who was canonised in 1899, records in his *Ecclesiastical History* the following event in York that is at least as significant. The Kentish wife of Prince Edwin, a Northumbrian King, converted him to Christianity in about 500 with the help of Bishop Paulinus. Because of this, Prince Edwin built the first church in York for Bishop Paulinus. It became the centre of the Bishopric, after which the whole of Northumbria became Christian. Thus began the long and auspicious association of York with English freemasonry, which has continued unbroken until the present day.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there is no basis in fact for the traditional continuity of “*Patriarchs*” and “*Grand Masters*” in freemasonry from Adam and Noah until the present day, the medieval stories should not be dismissed arbitrarily. Like all myths, they contain elements of truth. For example, Nimrod is the first great builder referred to in the Old Testament. He did establish a huge team of stonemasons and is recorded in Genesis as the founder of Ninevah, which has been occupied continuously since about 5000 BCE. Likewise the construction of the temple at Jerusalem was a stupendous task in its time and the Biblical record of the methods and workforce used are remarkably similar to those of the medieval cathedral builders. Investigations at the temple site in Jerusalem, from those carried out by the Knights Templar in about 1120 to those recently carried out by Jewish archaeologists, all support the existence of a vault under the Holy of Holies, which traditionally is reputed to have been constructed for use by King Solomon as a secret meeting place and also as a repository for temple treasures and valuable documents. Such vaults were a common feature of temples from ancient times, which was continued with the provision of crypts for cathedrals and other ecclesiastical buildings constructed in medieval times.

## *The Missing Stones*

The rituals used in modern speculative freemasonry included comprehensive lectures on the working tools used by operative freemasons, but the compilers omitted some other important elements of the ancient symbolism, especially in respect of the stones used in the buildings. In the degrees of operative freemasonry the candidate always represented a

particular stone, either during the course of its preparation or while it was being fixed into position. In this context the plans and gauges used during the preparation and erection of the stones also were of symbolic importance. The rough and perfect ashlar and the keystone are important symbols in the speculative craft and mark degrees. The reasons why the rough ashlar represents an apprentice and the perfect ashlar represents the more expert craftsman are self-evident. It also is common knowledge that a specially shaped keystone is useful as well as being a pleasing embellishment with which to complete the construction of an arch. However, many speculative freemasons are not aware of several other important stones and their symbolisms. Nor do they receive any explanation of the meanings of the various plan shapes used in buildings. Some of those aspects will be commented on briefly, to help the enquiring mason achieve a better understanding of the important lessons intended to be conveyed by the speculative rituals.

It probably is not common knowledge that a *cubical stone* is rarely used in masonry structures except to complete a course adjacent to openings. Nevertheless it was an important stone used to test the skills of an apprentice who aspired to become a fully qualified craftsman, when his knowledge of the various projections of a cube was also tested. In ancient times another use of a *cubical stone* was as the *great corner stone*, sometimes used to stabilise the corner of a building. This is the stone referred to in Isaiah 28:16 in allusion to the coming of a messiah, which is the passage quoted in I Peter 2:6-8 with reference to Christ. The more stable and commonly used method of securing the corners of a large masonry structure is with *elbow square stones*. These are right angled stones having one leg four units long and the other leg three units long, each leg being square in cross-section with sides of one unit. It therefore is like a Pythagorean triangle without an hypoteneuse. They are placed with the long and short legs alternating in successive courses at the corners, with the wall stones securely fixed in between them. These stones are a reminder that our work must be properly squared in compliance with the plans laid down in the scriptures.

Most of the stones used in the construction of masonry walls are *running stones* that are usually square in cross-section, with a length three times the sectional dimension, although a length twice the sectional dimension may be used. The stones in alternate courses are staggered as in brickwork, to avoid concurrent joints being formed in successive courses, which would be detrimental to the strength of the structure. These stones remind us of the need to work in harmony with our fellow workers and that everything we do must be straight, level and true. The *footing corner stone* is another very important stone in masonry structures. It is a tee-shaped stone having the top of the tee equal in length to two running stones and the projecting leg the same length as the section dimension. Its sectional dimension naturally must be the same as that of the running stones that will be joined to it. This stone is placed in alternate courses of an external wall at the junction with an internal wall, so that the running stones in both walls mesh with the projecting legs of the tee. This stone reminds us that our strength is in united effort, whilst its shape, which is that of a Tau cross, emphasises the importance of serving the Lord, because in Ezekiel 9:4 we are told that this was the mark to be placed on the foreheads of those to be saved.



## ***Ground Plans***

In conclusion it would be appropriate to comment on the various shapes in plan that have been used for ecclesiastical buildings. Rectangular shapes are by far the most common, but many other regular shapes of significance have been used for special purposes. These shapes include circular, triangular, pentagonal, hexagonal, octagonal, square, oblong square, temple square and of course the Latin cross so frequently seen in Christian cathedrals. Each shape has a symbolism of its own. The circle, equilateral triangle and pentagon are discussed in some detail in one or more of the other relevant papers and require no further comment. The Latin cross is an obvious shape for cathedrals, because of its Christian significance in relation to the crucifixion of Christ. The hexagon is the perimeter of six equilateral triangles abutting each other cyclically with their apices meeting at a common point in the centre. All of the symbolisms of an equilateral triangle apply and in addition the number six is a symbol of the accomplishment of growth or purpose. The hexagon also is the shape of the cells of a honeycomb, which symbolises industry and reminds us of the honey, which is a symbol of spiritual food and nourishment and of the celestial food of wisdom and love.

The octagon is formed in a similar fashion to the hexagon and is composed of eight isosceles triangles each with its apex angle of  $45^\circ$  meeting the others in the centre. The legs of the compasses are commonly extended to an angle of  $45^\circ$  in masonic jewels used in various orders of freemasonry. Eight is called the number of regeneration and is a symbol of entrance into a new state or condition of the soul, in which sense it is an important symbol to the Knights Templar. The square is the shape of every side of a perfect cube and therefore is the plan view and both elevations of the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and in the temple of King Solomon, symbolising the need for the higher minds and intellects of humans to be in harmony with God. The ***oblong square***, also called a ***double square***, was the shape of the Holy Place in the tabernacle and in the temple. It is the usual shape adopted for the mosaic pavement in a speculative lodge. The ***temple square***, also called a ***triple square***, was the template of the tabernacle and the temple. It included the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place, thus symbolising the progress that humans must make from a mundane existence to the spiritual world if they are to partake in life eternal.

## CHAPTER FOUR – HISTORY, A KEY ELEMENT IN MASONRY

*In operative lodges the Traditional History and Ancient Charges were a central part of the ceremonial and the basis of moral instruction.*

### **Background**

In operative lodges, history was a key element used to illustrate the moral teachings of masonry. Tradition also was an essential component in the instruction of apprentices and craftsmen at all levels of competence. Although the details differ and the English language has changed, the charges and traditional histories of modern speculative freemasonry were derived from the **Old Constitutions** of the lodges of operative freemasons working in medieval England, from when the craft guilds were established during the reign of Henry I in about 1153 until during the Reformation, when all lodges were prohibited by Henry VIII's Act of 1547 disendowing all religious fraternities. In operative lodges the **Old Constitutions**, usually referred to as the **Ancient Charges** or the **Old Charges**, were a central part of the ceremonial and the basis of moral instruction. An authentic copy of the **Old Constitutions**, which included the **Traditional History**, the **Charges of Nimrod** and the **Ancient Charges**, was the authority under which lodges worked. Candidates were admonished to behave in an appropriate manner, cautioned to preserve the rights and privileges of their craft and warned that they must not reveal their trade secrets and modes of recognition to strangers.

No other medieval craft or religious body is known to have possessed documents similar to the **Old Constitutions**. Their content and character differed greatly from the Guild ordinances of other trades and clearly reflected the moralising influence of the ecclesiastical environment in which most operative masons worked and lived. A fundamental part of the **Old Constitutions** was the traditional history, which recounted the development of civilisation and highlighted the important part played by masonry in the improvement of mankind. Although some of the anecdotes were allegorical, most were based on biblical history. The ancient charges and traditional histories were not identical in all copies of the **Old Constitutions**, nor were they handed down in unvarying form, but they did have a common theme. The standardised lectures and traditional histories that are used in modern speculative lodges do not include all of the material that was incorporated in the **Old Constitutions**.

The oldest known copy of the **Old Constitutions** is a document written by a priest, comprising thirty-three vellum sheets entitled the **Poem of the Craft of Masonry**. It is believed to have been based on a much older document and is called the **Regius MS** or the **Halliwel MS**. It was discovered in 1839 and early researchers thought that it would have been written in about 1390, but later the date was revised to about 1410. In modern

terminology the *Regius MS* is classified as dating from the first quarter of the fifteenth century. The rules and regulations set out in the *Regius MS* for the governance of freemasons are arranged under fifteen *Articles for ye maystur mason* and a further fifteen *Points for felows and prentes*. The document states that the rules and regulations were established at a great assemblage of masons King Athelstan ordered to be held, reputedly at York in 926, but there is no known record of the event. The *Regius MS* and the *Cooke MS*, which was written about fifty years later, are both held in the British Museum. *The Grand Lodge No. 1 MS*, held by the United Grand Lodge of England, is a later rendition of the rules and regulations dated 1583, almost forty years after Henry VIII had prohibited all lodges. This document, which probably was transcribed in secret to preserve the old traditions, nevertheless brings to light a distinct transition from the tenor of earlier copies of the *Old Constitutions* because it includes much that is of a purely speculative nature.

## *The Ancient Charges In Summary*

The *Ancient Charges* were voluminous documents. Some of the older as well as a few of the more recent copies are in book form, but many are written on skins and stitched end to end to form rolls. The text is usually in three parts. The first part is a prayer invoking a blessing, usually of the Holy Trinity, but El Shaddai and other appellations also are used when referring to God, though mainly in obligations and charges. The second part is an extended historical statement that usually culminates with the requirement for the candidate to take an obligation on the Holy Book, sometimes in Latin. The final part of the text comprises the actual *Charges*, which are very comprehensive and were rehearsed to the candidate. The candidate was then required to take a vow to keep them well and truly and to the utmost of his knowledge and ability, which he ratified by saluting the Holy Book. As the prayer, the actual *Charges* and the associated obligations are not historical in character it is not necessary to discuss them any further in the present context. Relevant aspects of the traditional history will now be examined in relation to their historical content, having regard to the usual context in which they were used, but without reference to any specific copy of the *Ancient Charges*.

## *The Liberal Arts And Sciences*

It is not known when the seven liberal arts and sciences were first incorporated into the *Ancient Charges*, but they are an important component in nearly all of the known copies. A discourse on the characteristics of the arts and sciences and their utilisation by the various crafts is sometimes given in the opening statement. However it usually appears later in the traditional history, after the legend relating to their preservation on two pillars that together would resist the ravages of fire and water. This discourse concludes by emphasising that, in reality, all of the arts and sciences are dependant in some way upon measurement and therefore that they are all founded on the one science called *Geometry*, which in medieval days was synonymous with masonry. References to the liberal arts and sciences included in the rituals of the Second Degree of modern speculative freemasonry

clearly evolved from the discourse in the *Ancient Charges*. As the liberal arts and sciences were the foundation of the curricula in all institutions of advanced learning in medieval times, their inclusion in the *Ancient Charges* is to be expected, confirming that the medieval master masons were men of considerable learning and skill. Master masons proved their ability by transforming the visions of their employers into the glorious cathedrals and other stately edifices they designed and constructed. This knowledge, especially geometry, was an essential part of a craftsman's training, because measurement is the foundation of a freemason's work.

## *The Foundation Of The Crafts*

The *Traditional History* begins with the biblical story in Genesis, which records the Hebrew traditions concerning the origin of the crafts, which are paralleled in the legends of other peoples and have been confirmed by archaeological investigations. The first section is about the beginnings of history, after the creation and before the flood. It commences with Lamech, a descendant of Adam through Cain and is taken directly from Genesis 4:19-22, which in the *New English Bible* translation says:

***“Lamech married two wives, one named Adah and the other Zillah. Adah bore Jabal who was the ancestor of herdsmen who live in tents; and his brother's name was Jubal; he was the ancestor of those who play the harp and pipe. Zillah, the other wife, bore Tubal-cain, the master of all coppersmiths and blacksmiths, and Tubal-cain's sister was Naamah.”***

The biblical exposition is amplified in the traditional history by including the ancient Hebrew tradition that Jabal, while tending his sheep in the fields, was the first man to construct walls and later houses of stone, thus founding the craft of masonry. It also ascribes to Naamah the founding of the craft of weaving, completing the requirements for the rise of civilisation and urban dwelling.

Until about a century ago, chronologists calculated the Old Testament dates solely on the recorded genealogies, which are incomplete and do not provide all of the required details. In 1650 Archbishop James Ussher (1581-1656), an Irish prelate born in Dublin, used the recorded genealogies to date the creation of the world and the appearance of Adam at 4004 BCE, which is the *Year of Light* referred to in speculative craft freemasonry. Dates in the *Anno Lucis* calendar are derived by adding 4,000 years to the Common Era date. Modern research, supported by archaeological discoveries, indicates that the earliest biblical records relate to humanity about 10000 BCE or even earlier. Also that the flood probably occurred before 5000 BCE, that Noah's descendants developed into nations around 5000 BCE, that the tower of Babel was erected around 4800 BCE, followed soon after by the first great buildings in Babylonia. As writing was invented many centuries after these events and genealogies were based on oral tradition, such differences in dating are to be expected. It is of particular interest to note that archaeological investigations reveal that stone fences and footings in houses were first used in Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia

about 12,000 years ago, when the domestication of wild sheep and goats began, which coincides in place and time with the story of Lamech and his children.

## ***The Two Pillars***

This section of the ***Traditional History*** is the original legend of the pillars and deals with the preservation of the arts and sciences. The legend is not of masonic origin and bears no relation to the two pillars erected at the entrance to King Solomon's temple. The Greek historian Berosus transcribed the legend in about 300 BCE, reputedly from a Sumerian account that had been recorded in cuneiform in about 1500 BCE. Flavius Josephus, the eminent Jewish author who lived in the first century and wrote in Greek, also included the legend in his ***Antiquity of the Jews***. Ranulf Higden, a monk of Chester who died in about 1364, copied the legend from Josephus when he wrote his world history, ***Polychronicon***. Although it is not known whether the legend was included in the ***Ancient Charges*** before it appeared in ***Polychronicon***, in view of freemasonry's close ecclesiastical connections in those days it seems most likely. The legend is no longer referred to in speculative craft freemasonry, but it is still a part of the tradition in the Royal Ark Mariner and the Ancient and Accepted Rite.

The tradition records that Lamech's four children, the founders of the crafts, "***knew well that God would do vengeance for sin, either by fire or water***", thus foreseeing the flood in Noah's time. They therefore determined to preserve the seven liberal arts and sciences against such a calamity by inscribing them on two pillars, one which would survive a fire and the other which would survive a flood, although accounts of the two materials vary. Some say marble that cannot be burnt and ***laternes*** or laterite, a stone formed from clay, that cannot be destroyed by water. Others more logically say that brick resists fire and either marble or brass resists water. Archaeological discoveries reveal that the smelting and casting of copper and the open hearth firing of earthenware were being used in the area by about 7,000 years ago and possibly earlier. Although after the probable time of the great flood associated with the melt down near the end of the last Ice Age, this is earlier than the indicated date of the later flood that inundated Mesopotamia and the surrounding regions, when either method of preservation would have been possible. Tradition relates that the knowledge thus preserved was providentially recovered after the flood by Hermes, who is called the "***father of wisdom***". He reputedly was a descendant of Noah through Shem and applied the recovered knowledge for the benefit of mankind. The moral of this ancient legend is that knowledge and truth must be preserved, but that corruption will be punished.

An apparent problem with this tradition is that the oldest cuneiform inscriptions presently known date from about 5,200 years ago and hieroglyphs from about a century earlier, which is after the likely dates of both floods. However some pre-flood inscriptions have been discovered, including a pictographic tablet found by Dr Langdon under the flood deposit at Kish, seals found by Dr Schmidt under the flood layer at Fara and pre-flood seals found by Dr Woolley at Ur. One of the ancient Babylonian kings, Hammurapi who promulgated the famous code of laws in about 1750 BCE, recorded that "***he loved to read the writings of the age before the flood***". The reference appears to relate to the

Mesopotamian inundation, not the earlier great flood associated with the Ice Age. Hammurapi was a contemporary of Abraham and he is usually identified with the Amraphel referred to in Genesis 14. When Assur-ban-apli founded Nineveh's great library in about 600 BCE, he also made reference to the "*inscriptions before the time of the flood*". In about 300 BCE, the Greek historian Berosus recorded a tradition from the Sumerian accounts, which said that before the flood Xisuthrus, the Babylonian equivalent of Noah, buried the Sacred Writings at Sippar on tablets of baked clay and dug them up afterwards. A tradition among Arabs and Jews says that Enoch invented writing and left a number of records.

## *Nimrod And The Tower Of Babel*

This part of the *Traditional History* is derived from the Hebrew traditions concerning events that took place in the first few hundred years after the flood. It is taken from the *New English Bible* translations of Genesis 10:8-13 and Genesis 11:2-9, which say:

*“Cush (who was a son of Ham and a grandson of Noah) was the father of Nimrod, who began to show himself a man of might on earth; and he was a mighty hunter before the Lord, . . . His kingdom in the beginning consisted of Babel, Erech and Accad, all of them in the land of Shinar. From that land he migrated to Asshur and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah and Resen, a great city between Nineveh and Calah.”*

*“As men journeyed in the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and bake them hard’; they used the bricks for stone and bitumen for mortar. ‘Come’, they said, ‘let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens and make a name for ourselves; or we shall be dispersed all over the earth.’ . . . So the Lord dispersed them from there all over the earth and they left off building the city. That is why it is called Babel, because the Lord made there a babble of the language of all the world; from that place the Lord scattered men all over the face of the earth.”*

Archaeological investigations reveal that the *ziggurat* called the Tower of Babel was constructed in the manner described in Genesis. *Ziggurat* is derived from the Assyrio-Babylonian word *ziququratu* meaning a *pinnacle* or *mountain top* and denotes a *sacred temple tower*. The traditional site of the tower is one at Borsippa, about 15 kilometres south-west of the centre of Babylon, the ancient Babel. An inscribed cylinder found by Sir Henry Rawlinson in a foundation corner states that a former king completed the tower to a height of 42 cubits, but that it fell into ruins in ancient times. It further states that the brickwork and roofing tiles were rebuilt as new at the behest of Marduk, restoring the tower as it was in remote days. Marduk or Merodach was the Babylonian God that Nimrod was said to be in human form. A masonic tradition says that masons were first made much of at the building of the Tower of Babel under the directions of Nimrod, the great King of

Babylon, who was a Master Mason. This tradition says that Nimrod loved the craft well and made the masons Free Men and Free Masons in his kingdom. Another tradition says that when Nimrod sent sixty lodges of masons to build Nineveh and the other cities of the east, he gave them a *Charter* and the *Charges of Nimrod*, which reputedly are those set out in the Ancient Charges. When an apprentice was indentured in an English operative lodge, his obligation traditionally was called the “*Oath of Nimrod*”.

## *The Call Of Abraham*

The *Traditional History* relates how Abraham, who was born at Ur of the Chaldees in southern Babylonia in about 2160 BCE, responded to the Lord’s call that is recorded in the following words in the *New English Bible* translation of Genesis 12:1-4:

*“The Lord said to Abraham ‘Leave your own country, your kinsmen and your father’s house and go to a country that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you and make your name great . . .’  
And so Abraham set out . . .”*

Although he lived in a world of idolatry Abraham was not an idolater, but believed in one God. He set out from Ur in search of the land where he could build a nation free from idolatry. He reached the ancient caravan city of Haran 1,000 kilometres to the north-west in about 2110 BCE, where he stayed for many years. After the death of his father Terah, Abraham travelled south-east and reached Shechem in Canaan about 2085 BCE, where he built an altar to God as he did later at Bethel and also at Hebron. Because of the famine in Canaan, Abraham continued on into Egypt.

Tradition says that the patriarchs taught the seven liberal arts and sciences in Egypt, where Euclid was a worthy scholar who subsequently was commissioned by the king to teach the sons of royalty the science of geometry and the practice of masonry and all manner of worthy works. This is entirely allegorical, because Euclid was not born until about 330 BCE. In fact, one of the first Greek scholars to visit and study in Egypt was Thales of Miletus, who was born in about 630 BCE. When he returned from Egypt he was well versed in the techniques of Egyptian geometry. The Egyptians knew from their experience in building that a triangle with two sides of equal length also had two equal angles adjacent to them. They also knew that a triangle with sides three, four and five units long had a right angle opposite the long side. Thales devised a practical proof for the properties of an isosceles triangle, but it was Pythagoras, born about sixty years after Thales, who was credited with being the first to prove the famous theorem of a right angled triangle, that the square of the hypotenuse equals the sum of the squares of the other two sides. However it was Euclid who formulated the theorems, including his *Forty-seventh Proposition* for a right-angled triangle, which are still used as a basis for teaching classical geometry.

## ***The Temple At Jerusalem***

This major episode in the ***Traditional History*** could be regarded as the culminating component, because it is a foundation for all instruction in moral precepts that were imparted in the degrees of operative freemasonry. To appreciate this section of the traditional history in its proper context, it would be pertinent to comment on the ceremonials within which the degrees of operative freemasonry were conferred. They were conducted in a specifically historical setting in which the candidate personified a “***living stone***” being wrought from the rough, as prepared in the quarry, to a state of perfection fit for erection in the most glorious of all temples, the life hereafter. In each degree in operative freemasonry the candidate represented a particular stone in the construction of temple at Jerusalem by King Solomon. The candidate was required symbolically to undergo the preparation of that stone, its testing prior to use and its erection in the temple. The degrees referred to relevant passages in the scriptures and were explained in practical terms in relation to the work of an operative freemason. The appropriate working tools also were introduced and their practical uses and moral interpretations were explained.

The discourse in the ***Traditional History*** is taken directly from the scriptural record of King David’s desire to build a temple at Jerusalem, the preparations he made for its construction and its construction by King Solomon with the assistance of Hiram King of Tyre and Hiram Abif, the son of a widow of the Hebrew tribe of Dan and of a Tyrian father. Hiram Abif was a man of great skill and ingenuity sent by King Hiram to execute the principal works of the interior of the temple and the various utensils required for the sacred services. Adoniram was the official whom King Solomon appointed to superintend the monthly levies of ten thousand men working in relays in Lebanon. All of this is described in some detail in I Kings chapters 5-10, I Chronicles chapters 21-22 and 28-29 and II Chronicles chapters 1-9. The following three passages recorded in the ***New English Bible*** translations of II Chronicles 3:1, I Kings 5:17 and I Kings 6:7 are especially relevant-

***“Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David, on the site which David had prepared on the threshing floor of Onan the Jebusite.”***

***“By the king’s orders they quarried huge, massive blocks for laying the foundation of the Lord’s house in hewn stone.”***

***“In the building of the house, only blocks of dressed stone direct from the quarry were used; no hammer or axe or any iron tool whatever was heard in the house while it was being built.”***

The ***Ancient Charges*** variously refer to the master of geometry and chief master of all masons as ***Aynon, Agnon, Ajuon*** or ***Dyon***, who is called the son of the King of Tyre, but the context suggests that the person referred to is Hiram Abif. It seems that the word could have been a corruption of the Hebrew word ***Adon*** which signifies ***Lord***, so that the title



could refer to Hiram Abif as Adon Hiram, or possibly to Adoniram with whom he is sometimes confused, although the latter seems less likely. Another possible interpretation is the old use of *Anon* or *Anonym* signifying one whose name is not divulged and from which the modern *anonymous* is derived. Whatever the derivation of *Anon*, he takes on a purely allegorical mantle after the completion of the temple at Jerusalem and is credited with travelling to many lands with other masons to practice and teach the craft, thus introducing masonry into Europe and Britain.

## *Freemasonry In France*

The allegorical story of *Aynon* is taken up in France under about twenty-five different variations of what most probably was intended to be the same name, among which *Naymus Graecus* and *Maynus Grecus* possibly are the best known, although in the second edition of the *Constitutions* of the premier Grand Lodge, Dr James Anderson refers to him as *Ninus*. When Pythagoras established his famous school at Crotona in about 530 BCE and later in other cities, Greece was known as *Magna Graecia* or *Greater Greece* which included Asia Minor, southern Italy and Sicily and continued from the settlement of Syracuse in about 750 BCE until the Punic Wars of 264-241 BCE. Pythagoras, who taught geometry and philosophy and established a comprehensive system of symbolism to explain his esoteric teachings, has a legendary connection with masonry which he is supposed to have introduced into France.

It seems highly likely that *Naymus Graecus* and its variants were corruptions of *Magna Graecia*, arising from the legendary connection between Pythagoras and masonry. In any event, the legend says that “*a curious mason named Naymus Graecus, who had been at the making of Solomon’s Temple, came into France and there taught the craft of masonry*”. The legend then includes an anomaly similar to that of Euclid in Egypt, asserting that a person of French royal blood, Charles Martel, had learned the craft from *Naymus Graecus* and “*loved it well*”, establishing masonry in France with good methods of payment. Charles Martel (688-741) was the progenitor of the Carolingian dynasty and he was known as *Charles the Hammer*. Although not actually the king of France, Charles Martel was a notable soldier and ruled France under the title “*Mayor of the Palace*”.

## *Freemasonry In England*

The historian Rebold says of Charles Martel that “*at the request of the Anglo-Saxon kings, he sent workmen and masters into England*”. This is the reason why medieval operative freemasons in England regarded Charles Martel as one of their patrons and included him in the *Traditional History*, which continues with an allegorical account of the establishment of freemasonry in England and the fixing of good rates of pay. Briefly, it says that England was pagan and had neither masonry nor the ancient charges until the time of St Alban, when a worthy knight who was chief steward to the king constructed the town walls. He is said to have cherished the masons for their good work, on which account

he obtained from the king and his counsel a charter, naming the masons an Assembly. He also gave them charges and doubled their wages, which previously had been only a penny a day throughout the whole land. The early background to St Albans is worth recounting.

St Albans is the successor of the important Roman-British town of *Verulamium*, which according to the records of the Roman historian Tacitus may have been one of the few examples in Britain of a *municipium*, wherein the inhabitants had the same rights as the citizens of Rome. The town owes its name to St Alban, a Roman soldier who was the first Christian martyr in England, beheaded in 303 for giving refuge to St Amphibalus, the priest who had converted him to Christianity. In about 793 Offa, the king of Mercia, founded a Benedictine abbey in honour of St Alban. It rose to such great power and wealth that its head was the premier abbot in England from 1154 to 1396. Another contemporaneous legend says that Gordianus, who was emperor from 244 BCE to 238 BCE, sent many architects into England where they constituted many lodges and instructed the craftsmen in the true principles of freemasonry. It also says that a few years later, when Carausius was emperor in Britain, from 293 BCE to 287 BCE, he loved the craft and appointed Albanus as Grand Master of Masons, who employed the fraternity in building the palace of *Verulamium*. Despite the obvious discrepancies in the dates, it is a fact that architecture and the craft of freemasonry were first encouraged in England during the third century and that the earliest freemasons came from Europe.

In the light of the early history of St Albans, it is not surprising that its establishment features in the traditional story of the origins of operative masonry in England. Some researchers are of the opinion that the increase in wages attributed to the time of St Alban was the increase that came into effect after the period of the Black Death, the bubonic plague that swept through Asia and Europe and reached England in 1348. Because of the unprecedented demand for labour in the aftermath of the Black Death, a *Statute of Labourers* was enacted in 1350 to regulate wages and prevent extortionate pricing. The wages of a master freestone mason were then fixed at four pence per day and of other masons at three pence per day, which are much higher than those referred to in the traditional history, strongly suggesting that there were two different events, of which the one in the traditional history occurred much earlier. Some have expressed the opinion that the *Statute* establishes that the traditional history is a product of the period shortly after the Black Death, but it seems most unlikely to have been compiled at a time of such misfortune and labour shortage. In any event, it almost certainly is a collection of oral traditions that had evolved over a very long period.

The *Traditional History* concludes with the legend of an Assembly held at York in 926 during the reign of King Athelstan, whose half-brother Edwin, who is often called his son, had learnt geometry and the mason's craft, then prevailed upon the king to issue a *Charter* for the masons and a *Commission* to hold an annual Assembly. No record of the Assembly has been found, but a tradition handed down for many centuries usually has a basis in fact. In any event, the continuing association of York with masonry began with the conversion to Christianity of the Northumbrian king, Prince Edwin, by his Kentish wife. He was baptised on Easter Day 627 by the first Bishop of York, Paulinus, in a wooden chapel on the site of the present Minster. The *Venerable Bede*, a renowned historian who lived in the

Jarrow monastery on Tyneside from 682 until his death in 735, records in his *Ecclesiastical History* that Edwin replaced the chapel with a stone church which became the centre of the Bishopric. When burnt down in about 741, the chapel was replaced by a magnificent stone church that was ruined in about 1080, following the Norman Conquest, but it was progressively rebuilt until the York Minster was erected between 1220 and 1474.

## *Freemasonry In Scotland*

Operative lodges in Scotland did not have the allegorical story of the masons in France, nor did they have the traditional history of the masons in England, but the tradition of the *Mason Word* was well established in medieval times. Possession of the *Mason Word* and a knowledge of the local catechisms and modes of recognition enabled an itinerant mason to prove himself and obtain work appropriate to his skills. In Scotland operative lodges came under the jurisdiction of a Statute in 1424, almost a century before any similar organisation was instituted in England. Then in 1475 the first *Seal of Cause*, or *Charter of Incorporation*, was granted to the Masons and Wrights of Edinburgh by the Burgh. The organisation of Scottish operative lodges culminated in 1598 with the promulgation of the *Schaw Statutes* which established an elaborate code of organisation and procedure. The Hiramic legend and also a form of the *five points of fellowship* are known to have been in use in Scottish lodges in the late 1500s, by which time *Masons' Marks* were already being registered. There was no Scottish counterpart of the English *Ancient Charges*, but there are records of at least some Scottish lodges having had copies at the beginning of the 1600s if not earlier, probably obtained by the Scottish lodges working in northern England in those times.

## *Freemasonry In Ireland*

The operative lodges in Ireland did not have an equivalent of the English *Ancient Charges*, nor is there any evidence of a tradition like the *Mason Word* as it was used in Scotland. However it is known that in Ireland the working tools of an operative mason were being used symbolically for moral instruction early in the 1500s, when the guild system was flourishing. In 1508 the earliest *Charter* known to be in existence was issued to the Dublin Masons operating in association with the Carpenters, Millers and Heliers (Tilers). Another well known feature of operative masonry in Ireland was the *Freemason's Stone*, a landmark in the Coombe District of Dublin from 1602 until at least 1818.

## CHAPTER FIVE – SPECULATIVE CRAFT FREEMASONRY

*It is now generally accepted that speculative craft freemasonry began to emerge in the seventeenth century.*

### Guild Masonry

*Speculative craft freemasonry* is a descendant, directly and indirectly, of the ***Guild masonry*** of the Middle Ages. The skill of the medieval operative freemasons was outstanding, reflecting the experience gained throughout the evolution of civilisation over some 12,000 years, using brick and stone to construct every conceivable building from the humblest dwellings to the stateliest edifices. The medieval freemasons were renowned for the cathedrals they built and their work was the pinnacle of operative freemasonry. The expression ***craft freemasonry*** is used to distinguish purely speculative freemasonry from the practical craft of ***operative freemasonry***, but it should not be inferred that there was no speculative component in the work carried out in medieval operative lodges. They had developed their own rich tradition and ceremonials, some very similar in presentation to the ***Passion Plays*** of the Middle Ages. As the medieval guilds were highly secretive concerning their private proceedings, information about their ceremonials is sketchy. Very few relevant records have survived from ***Guild masonry*** in England. This fact has often led masonic writers to infer that operative freemasonry had no speculative component and therefore that speculative freemasonry could not have derived from it. Having regard to the circumstances prevailing in those times, it is remarkable that any documentary evidence has survived and been discovered!

Lodges of operative masons must have worked independently in the earliest days, because travel was difficult and time consuming. However, some time in the twelfth century the operative masons in England appear to have been organised under the protection of craft guilds that came into existence to watch over the interests of skilled workers in the various trades. The guilds were known as ***Fellowships*** or ***Fraternities*** and with the exception of the operative masons their constituent trades worked under the provisions of relevant ordinances. Craft guilds were also religious fraternities, whose members were required to attend church frequently, if not regularly. ***Frith***, or family peace guilds, existed in London around the middle of the tenth century. The first merchant guild is believed to have originated in Dover around the middle of the eleventh century, when the weaver guilds also appear to have been formed. There is no doubt that many craft guilds were well established in England during the reign of Henry I, by around 1135. There is evidence that annual assemblages of masons were being held from the 1300s onwards and that they were the gatherings that Henry VI unsuccessfully sought to prohibit by the Statutes of 1436-1437. Under the guild system many families rose from serfdom to become employers in a few generations. The system was highly successful until the Reformation, when Henry VIII enforced the Act of 1547. It disendowed all religious fraternities, including lodges of

operative masons. Henry VIII confiscated most of the guilds' possessions and his son Edward VI seized nearly all of the remaining guild funds that had been dedicated to religious purposes. It was then that most guild records were destroyed to conceal the identities of members of the guilds who might otherwise have suffered persecution. The operative masons appear to have been the worst affected by the confiscations of property and funds.

As in the other craft guilds, lodges of operative masons were subject to a strong religious influence and their ceremonials had a significant religious component. Practical work and its related instruction took place in the stone yards, but all moral and ethical instruction and matters relating to general conduct, as well as the modes of recognition, were imparted in the ceremonial lodges held weekly on Saturdays commencing at noon. All apprentices were obligated and indentured in the ceremonial lodges, where candidates for promotion also were examined, tested for proficiency in the non-manual aspects of their work, obligated and entrusted. Lodges of operative masons were unique, because the rules and regulations for their establishment and operation were set out in documents called the **Old Charges**. The possession of an authentic copy of the **Old Charges** was the authority under which a lodge worked. The **Old Charges** included a traditional history, rules governing work practices and codes of conduct for behaviour at church, in the home and in company. The oldest known record of the **Old Charges** is a document written by a priest, comprising thirty-three vellum sheets and entitled the **Poem of the Craft of Masonry**, believed to have been based on a much older document. It is known as the **Regius MS** or **Halliwell MS** and is Document No 23,198 in the British Museum. It was discovered in 1839 and was thought to have been written about 1390, which was later revised to 1410. In modern terminology it is classified as dating from the first quarter of the fifteenth century. The rules and regulations set out in the **Regius MS** are stated to have been established at a great assemblage of masons ordered by King Athelstan. They are arranged under fifteen **Articles for ye maystur mason** and fifteen **Points for felows and prentes**.

Prior to the Reformation, the guilds and other religious fraternities undoubtedly were the guardians of centuries-old traditions and esoteric ceremonies, carefully concealed from public scrutiny. Guilds that survived the Reformation became Livery Companies, some of which still operate in the City of London. **Livery** comes from the Anglo-French **liveré** meaning **handed over**, derived from the Latin **liberäre** meaning **to free**. The **Worshipful Company of Ffree Masons of the City of London** was one guild that survived. It had existed for several hundred years before the Reformation, continued through the Reformation hidden from public view, then resurfaced after the Reformation. It was commonly known as **The Fellowship of Masons** but in 1655, long after the Reformation, it changed its name to **The Company of Masons**. Because all of the Company's books and documents were destroyed during the Reformation, those in existence only date from 1620. Fortunately a collection of letter-books and various other records of the City of London during the period of the Reformation are in existence, which confirm that **The Company of Masons** existed without a break from late in the thirteenth century until the middle of the seventeenth century. During the reconstruction of London after the **Great Fire** in 1666, the Company was in serious decline. The last great work in which it was involved was Sir

Christopher Wren's masterpiece, St Paul's Cathedral reconstructed from 1675 to 1707, when eighty percent of the masons had to come from the country.

## *Operative Influences*

The unbroken existence of *The Company of Masons* over some four hundred years maintained the continuity of operative lodges in England, even through the fifteenth century persecutions, which enabled their traditions and practices to be preserved. Possibly other operative lodges also survived, though hidden from public view. Entries in the books of *The Company of Masons* in 1620 and 1621 show that the membership then included “*accepted masons*” as well as “*operative masons*”, but no records have been found to indicate when or why any of the masons were “*accepted*”. Entries in 1648 and 1650 clearly indicate that the *Company* had an inner fraternity, known as the *Acception*, that could be entered only on being made a freemason, but as there are no details of the ceremonials associated with admission it is not known whether they were of an esoteric nature. It is a matter of conjecture whether the “*accepted masons*” were speculative in the modern sense, but it is reasonable to assume that some special benefit of membership was perceived. From 1663 onwards the *Company* admitted to membership a number of people who were not craftsmen, including several women. In 1713, six years after St Paul's Cathedral was completed, a woman was apprenticed for the usual term of seven years.

The usages and customs of operative masons that have come down to us in speculative craft freemasonry include various traditions concerning the construction of the temple at Jerusalem, the symbolic use of the working tools to impart moral instruction and the modes of recognition used in the various grades of membership. When persons other than tradesmen were first received into operative lodges, they were men of learning and public stature who undoubtedly would have been welcomed because of their erudition and the influence they could bring to bear in the community for the benefit of the members. Those who had been received into membership also would have benefited from the widening of their interests in the new avenues of tradition and knowledge that were then available to them. As long ago as the 1500s many Scots lodges welcomed local lairds as honorary members. Although they would not be regarded as speculative freemasons in the modern sense, they were the forerunners of the many who joined Scottish operative lodges when work was declining. The Lodge of Edinburgh minutes in 1600 record that James Boswell, the Laird of Auchinleck, was in attendance and the minutes of 1634 record the admissions of Lord Alexander, Sir Antony Alexander and Sir Alexander Strachan as Fellows of the Craft. Those wishing to pursue these aspects in more detail would find *The Pocket History of Freemasonry* by Fred L. Peck and G. Norman Knight, revised by Frederick Smyth and the *Freemasons' Guide and Compendium* by Bernard E. Jones of considerable interest.

In England the Civil War of 1642-1646 led to the domination of Oliver Cromwell, which was followed by a very turbulent period until the settlement reached in 1689 when William of Orange and Mary acceded to the throne of England. The few surviving records that have been discovered now show that this was the formative period of modern speculative freemasonry in England. This is in contrast with Scotland, where records reveal that many

of the operative lodges progressively became speculative lodges. A significant event during that period is the first known initiation on English soil of someone who was not an operative mason. He was the Right Honourable Robert Moray, General Quartermaster of the Scots army, who was admitted into the Lodge of Edinburgh at a meeting held near Newcastle in May 1641. This lodge was also known as “*Mary’s Chapel*”. Robert Moray later became Secretary of Scotland and in 1673 was buried in Westminster Abbey under the name Murray. The earliest known record of an Englishman initiated as a speculative freemason on English soil is of Elias Ashmole, the renowned antiquary, who was made a mason in a lodge at Warrington in Lancashire in October 1646. Nothing is known about the admissions into freemasonry of any of the other members of the lodge at that time, but there is reason to believe that they included Royalists as well as supporters of Parliament. There is no record of any of the members being an operative mason, although one may have been.

In England some operative masons, such as the members of lodges engaged on the construction of the York Minster, could work for a lifetime on a single project. Other lodges could work for many years on smaller cathedrals before having to move to a new work site, often in the same district. However, there always were small lodges that had to move frequently, as well as many itinerant masons moving from site to site in search of work. In Scotland the whole mason trade revolved around smaller operative lodges, of which there were many more than in England. The territorial lodges in Scotland were organised under the supervision of head lodges, which were not always in large towns. The repressions of the Reformation were much less severe in Scotland than in England, so that many of the Scottish operative lodges were able to become speculative lodges, a development that had no direct parallel in England.

Throughout the Middle Ages and afterwards until well into the eighteenth century, travel in Britain was greatly restricted and very hazardous. Although the more affluent residents could make journeys on horseback or by horse and coach, ordinary persons were usually confined to travelling on foot, commonly called going “*on tramp*”. Robbery under arms was commonplace, so that the general population avoided travel whenever possible. However, because of their vocation, operative masons often had to travel long distances in search of new work. A unique custom in the craft was that an itinerant mason, when seeking work in an operative lodge, had either to be given employment for an appropriate minimum period or to be provided with sufficient sustenance to reach the next nearest place of work. To facilitate their travel in safety, the operative masons in those days had unobtrusive distinguishing signs enabling them to seek out members of the craft at roadside hostelries, as well as modes of recognition with which to establish their credentials with a prospective employer. Some masonic researchers hold the view that the possession of masonic credentials for safe travel was a primary objective of those who were “*made*” masons in the seventeenth century, calling it the “*passport theory*” for the development of speculative craft freemasonry. While this might have been a contributing factor in the development, it would not explain why the working tools and procedures of operative masons were adopted as the basis of moral instruction in speculative craft freemasonry.

## *Modern Speculative Craft Freemasonry*

It is now generally accepted that speculative craft freemasonry began to emerge in the seventeenth century. This is when many operative lodges in Scotland already were transforming into speculative lodges, when Elias Ashmole was made a mason in England and when *The Company of Masons* in London had been admitting persons other than masons to the Acception from about 1648. Of particular interest is a note in Elias Ashmole's diary in March 1682, recording his attendance at "**a lodge held at Masons Hall London**". He states that he was the "**Senior Fellow among them**", that six gentlemen were admitted into the "**Fellowship of Free Masons**" and that afterwards they dined at a tavern in Cheapeside "**at a Noble dinner prepared at the charge of the New-accepted Masons**". Excepting the new admissions, all but three of those present were members of *The Company of Masons*, including its Master and several who had been Master in previous years. References in various pamphlets and periodicals between 1676 and 1710 confirm that Londoners then were more familiar with *Freemasonry* than with *The Company of Masons* or the *Acception*. It is not known how many speculative lodges had been formed in England before June 1717, when four or possibly six among the oldest of them assembled in London and established the first **Grand Lodge**, claiming jurisdiction over all lodges meeting in London and Westminster. Its sphere of jurisdiction included at least sixty-four lodges by 1726, when it had become known as the **Grand Lodge of England** and its first two Provincial Grand Masters had been appointed. Of the founding lodges, it is recorded that the **Original No 1** was constituted in 1691, but it is believed to have had an earlier origin and that its members almost certainly had been members of an operative lodge involved in the rebuilding of St Paul's Cathedral from 1675 to 1710.

Unlike the situation in Scotland, only one lodge of operative masons in England that is known to have become a speculative lodge is still in existence. Originally it was located at Stalwell in County Durham and accepted a warrant from the **Grand Lodge of England** in 1735. It continued to work as an operative lodge for another twenty years before becoming speculative and moving to Gateshead, where it still meets as the Lodge of Industry No 48. By way of contrast another lodge of operative masons meeting at Alnwick in Northumberland, that had been in existence long before the **Grand Lodge of England** was formed, did not accept a warrant and appears to have ceased to function in about 1763. Its minutes from 1703 onwards are still in existence, together with a copy of the **Old Charges** and a code of rules devised by the lodge in 1701. It is of note that when Dr James Anderson drafted the original **Constitutions** for the **Grand Lodge of England** in 1723, not more than ten copies of the **Old Charges** were available for his reference, although more than a hundred have now been found and classified. The **Cooke MS** was the oldest copy of the **Old Charges** used when compiling the **Constitutions**. It is the second oldest known to be in existence and is held in the library of the British Museum. As its date of origin has been assessed to be around fifty years after the **Regius MS**, it also was in use before the Act of 1547 that disendowed all religious fraternities. These two documents have many similarities, although the **Cooke MS** was intended primarily as a history. The third oldest copy of the **Old Charges** is known as the **Grand Lodge MS No 1**, dated 25 December 1583. Having been written after the Act of 1547, it is significant because it reflects a



distinct transition from the purely operative nature of earlier documents and includes much that is of a speculative nature.

In 1725 an operative lodge of great antiquity in York, then in the process of becoming speculative, proclaimed itself to be a **Grand Lodge**. In the following year it also claimed to be the “**Grand Lodge of All England**”, because of its “**undoubted right**”, disputing the superiority of the **Grand Lodge of England**, even though its authority never extended beyond Yorkshire. This operative lodge was dormant from 1740 to 1760 and finally ceased to operate in about 1792, although it was never formally dissolved. In Ireland there is no record of any operative lodge becoming a speculative lodge. The earliest reference to a speculative lodge is in the opening address given in 1688 by John Jones at Trinity College in Dublin. Of interest is The Dublin Weekly Journal report in June 1725 that six “**Lodges of Gentlemen Freemasons**” met and elected a new Grand Master. This is the earliest reference to the **Grand Lodge of Ireland**, because all official records prior to 1760 have been lost. This contrasts with Scotland where most operative lodges continued into the 1750s and even longer, although by then many of them had become speculative. The Masters and Wardens of four old lodges that were or had been operative met in Edinburgh in October 1736 and formed the **Grand Lodge of Scotland**. Two of those lodges and several others joining soon after still exist and have records substantiating their continuity from operative days. The “**Grand Lodge of Antients**” was formed in England in 1752, to protest against the apathy and neglect being displayed by the Grand Lodge of England, which they dubbed “**the Moderns**”, as well as expressing dissatisfaction with the rituals being used and the ceremonials being practised. The **Antients** and the **Moderns** finally settled their differences when their two Grand Masters signed and sealed twenty-one Articles of Union in 1813. These were quickly ratified by the two **Grand Lodges** representing 647 lodges, thus establishing the **United Grand Lodge of England** which continues in existence. The **Grand Lodge of Antients** undoubtedly had a substantial influence on the rituals used in modern speculative freemasonry.

Modern freemasonry has many branches, with a multitude of complementary degrees that are progressive along a variety of paths. The constitutions and laws of modern Grand Lodges usually refer to their members as **Antient, Free and Accepted Masons**. Most constitutions define **Pure Antient Masonry** as the three degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason, but frequently also include either or both of the Honourable Degree of Mark Master Mason and the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch, even though these latter degrees usually are not worked under the auspices of the Grand Lodge. The traditional degrees of freemasonry include all of the foregoing and several others that are based on the story of the construction of King Solomon’s temple at Jerusalem, its subsequent destruction when the Jews were exiled to Babylon and its rebuilding by Zerubbabel under the provisions of the Decree of Cyrus. The narratives of the traditional degrees are woven around a series of events recorded in the Old Testament. Other important orders in modern freemasonry are the Royal Order of Scotland, the Ancient and Accepted Rite, the Red Cross of Constantine, the Knights Templar and the Knight Templar Priests, all of which have Christian aspects, as well as others such as the Allied Masonic Degrees. Of particular relevance is “**The Worshipful Society of Free Masons, Rough Masons, Wallers, Slaters, Paviers, Plaisterers and Bricklayers**”.

Commonly referred to as *The Operatives*, this Society was founded in 1913 by the few remaining members of some English operative lodges that were rapidly becoming defunct, so as to ensure that the traditions and ceremonials of the operative masons would be perpetuated, because they were in imminent danger of being lost.

## *The Purpose Of Freemasonry*

The catechism that every initiate in speculative craft freemasonry is required to learn defines freemasonry as a peculiar system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols, but there are many misconceptions about the purpose of freemasonry. A significant factor contributing to this dilemma is the reversal in the roles of two key elements in the practice of the speculative freemasonry. The available records clearly show that the founders of speculative craft freemasonry in England regarded a lodge meeting primarily as a forum for philosophical communion in search of spiritual elevation, wherein the members could discourse upon a wide range of relevant topics, more or less in the fashion of meetings of the *Royal Society* to which many of them belonged. Before an application for membership would be considered, the petitioner was required to demonstrate that his interests were compatible with those of the members. Admission into the various degrees was to ensure that all members had a common foundation for their activities in the lodge, as well as establishing a basis for assessing the credentials of strangers wishing to attend meetings. This followed the precedents established in lodges of operative masons and other trade and religious fraternities that had been in existence for many centuries. In contrast, most modern lodges place the greatest emphasis on the working of the various degrees, almost to the exclusion of philosophical discussion on the underlying teachings incorporated in the rituals of those degrees. There can be no doubt that this approach has contributed significantly to the continuing decline in membership.

It would be difficult to find a more comprehensive and enlightening discourse on the purpose of freemasonry than that expounded in *The Spirit of Masonry* by Foster Bailey, of which the following are some relevant excerpts:

*“Masonry might first of all be regarded as a school of ethical training. It is, however, much more than that. Every Mason is supposed to be ‘of good report and well recommended’. He enters Masonry in order ‘to learn to subdue his passions’ and to ‘improve himself in Masonry’. . . . .”*

*“Masonry is also a training school in cooperative and fraternal work. It implies therefore the submergence of all personal and consequently temperamental attitudes in the good of the Craft. . . . .”*

*“From another angle we might look upon speculative Masonry as embodying symbolically the drama of human evolution and as picturing for us the steps by which man reaches the goal of his liberation. The progress made by the candidate as he enters the Temple for the first time and passes from one degree to another, can be studied as a dramatic*

*representation of the search for light and for the Word of God which characterises every soul. Masonry portrays the eternal quest. In total ignorance, blind and defenceless, man enters into the Temple of Life. Progressively he arrives at greater light and knowledge; he becomes worthy of receiving a reward and later can attain to an increase in wages. Still later he comes to a realisation of those hidden indications which warrant his pushing forward in search of the Lost Word which can only be sought by a Master Mason. Steadily he goes forward using all the light available, travelling from the West to the East by way of the North. In spite of the difficulties and dangers encountered, he achieves increased knowledge and begins to ‘perfect himself in Masonry’.*”

*“It might in conclusion be pointed out that (in this process of revealing the hidden and secret) certain undesirable aspects of the Masonic work and organisation must inevitably disappear. The appetite of curiosity seekers, the private political machinations of certain Masonic groups and the purely social and commercial incentives which govern much of the Masonic policies in many lands must end. They only besmirch the fair name of a deeply spiritual organisation. The mystery of spirit, the mystery of light, the mystery of our relation to God and to each other, the mystery of our search for truth and divine experience and the mystery of immortality and resurrection must emerge in their true place . . . . .”*

## CHAPTER SIX – THE PRECEPTS OF FREEMASONRY

*First and foremost among the precepts of freemasonry is a belief in a divine creator.*

### *In The Beginning*

A study of human evolution, especially in relation to the development of thought and speech in conjunction with a growing awareness of things beyond their daily existence, reveals an intimate connection with the development of freemasonry. When they had achieved an ability to eke out a frugal subsistence within their natural environment, the primitive hunter-gatherers then turned their thoughts to improving their personal comfort. With the erection of their first rudimentary shelters, the seeds of masonry were sown, heralding the imminent birth of speculative freemasonry. Articulate speech became an ever more pressing necessity, as humans sought to communicate their thoughts and wishes to other humans and their minds strived to fathom the significance of their mortal existence. Operative masonry began in the **Stone Age** and its speculative counterpart developed concurrently. These two components of freemasonry were intimately interwoven and together reflected the physical and intellectual progress of humanity and the development of human spiritual conception.

When primitive humans tried to comprehend their place and purpose in the universe, they sensed a spiritual presence in their existence. Thus evolved the perception of a creator, a supreme being or controlling force from which all things emanated and upon which all things depended for their continuing existence. As civilisation evolved and human beings tried to explain the concepts they were developing, they drew on the experiences of their physical existence. Freemasonry provided many useful examples that could be used to portray their growing appreciation of the spiritual elements of life and to illustrate the moral principles they were formulating. Thus the speculative aspects of freemasonry evolved as a natural extension of the human vocabulary, enabling moral precepts to be expounded simply and graphically.

### *The First Principle*

First and foremost among the precepts of freemasonry is a belief in a divine creator, the one true God. This belief is the foundation of all masonic teaching, the cornerstone of every branch of freemasonry and the keystone that unites its many component parts. A belief in a supreme being is the first principle of freemasonry, from which all else derives. This is the reason why no man can be accepted into freemasonry unless he has freely expressed a belief in God. A man's religion is immaterial to his acceptance into

freemasonry, because it is only a factor of his upbringing or a matter of personal choice, but his belief in God is of paramount importance. Every degree in freemasonry acknowledges the existence of a supreme being, whose blessing is supplicated at the opening and closing of all proceedings. As in the ancient mysteries and in all religions, the various titles that are used with reference to God in masonic rituals reflect those attributes of God that are of special relevance to the circumstances portrayed in the particular ceremonial.

An essential component of a freemason's belief in a divine creator is the faith that a human being's spirit does not perish with its mortal frame, which is so eloquently expressed by the preacher's words in Ecclesiastes 12:7 - ***“then the dust shall return to the earth as it was and the spirit shall return to God who gave it”***. The freemason is exhorted to contemplate this aspect of his ultimate destiny and to regulate his life and actions according to God's will, so that at the end of this transitory mortal life he may confidently hope to be raised to those ***“immortal mansions, eternal in the heavens”***. Although various moral issues are expounded in the three degrees of craft freemasonry, the fundamental substance of their teachings concerns the immortality of the soul and its ultimate return to the divine creator.

As the neophyte was received in poverty in all the ancient mysteries, so also does the Apprentice in freemasonry enter the lodge in a state of indigence, when he is reminded of his defenceless condition and his absolute dependence upon his creator is emphasised. Symbolically, the initiate is being reborn on his entry into freemasonry and is exhorted to lead a just and upright life thenceforth. As a Fellow of the Craft, the freemason is taught that labour is the lot of man, but that in due course every good and faithful servant will receive his just reward. As a Master Mason the freemason obtains a fleeting glimpse of the promised reward, but he is then told that he must continue his search for the ultimate truth. A closely related theme is the important concept that all human beings are equal in the sight of God. This fundamental tenet of freemasonry is taught in many of its degrees and is the central theme of the Knights of Constantinople, one of the degrees in the Order of the Allied Masonic Degrees.

## ***Behaviour And Responsibility***

A central theme in the teachings of freemasonry is the importance of obeying God's commands. It is of such crucial importance that it is a central part of the instruction given to the Apprentice. The theme continues in the instruction given to a Fellow of the Craft and is emphasised in the degree of Mark Master Mason. Strict obedience, the exercise of skill and ability, careful attention to detail and the importance of being responsible for one's own actions are impressed on the Mark Master Mason by a practical example from the work of an operative freemason. The candidate is taught that he alone must be responsible for his own actions, for which he will receive his just reward in a life hereafter if he has lived in strict accordance with the divine commands. Obedience to God's commands is so important and so closely allied to the belief in the immortality of the soul, that it merits being ranked as second among the precepts of freemasonry.

## *Social Conduct*

It will be evident from the foregoing discussions that the fundamental precepts of freemasonry are so closely interwoven that they cannot be subdivided into distinct and separable compartments. Even so, brotherly love, relief and truth must be regarded as third among the important precepts of freemasonry, because they are so closely interrelated with the principle that all human beings are equal in the sight of God. In this context the teachings are based on concepts established by the operative freemasons, who were charged with the responsibility of caring for the members of their fraternity, especially if they were out of work or in indigent circumstances. They were required to respect and protect all members of their brethren's families and were enjoined to regard their employers with due deference and to serve them well, in return for which they were promised regular employment and adequate recompense.

Brotherly love, relief and truth are described as the grand principles on which freemasonry is founded. They are said to shine with greater splendour than any other masonic emblems. The concept is introduced to the Apprentice in his impoverished state, when his principles are in some measure put to the test. The Apprentice is admonished to practise brotherly love and relief cheerfully and as a virtue, providing whatever assistance is within his means should a distressed brother fairly claim assistance. It is only later, when a speculative freemason becomes a Master Mason, that the full implications of this virtue are clarified in the old operative terms, partly in the obligation and partly under the five points of fellowship. In operative freemasonry the five points of fellowship were an essential element of the instruction imparted to Fellows of the Craft. The importance of truth is taught in various degrees and it is the central theme in the Knight of the East, which is that part of the work of the Red Cross of Babylon that is set in the Persian court. The scene enacted in the degree is graphically portrayed in the Bible in the first book of Esdras.

## *Integrity*

Closely allied with truth is integrity, which depends upon truth for its fulfilment. Integrity and rectitude imply a rigorous compliance with a code of ethics, based on an undeviating honesty that ascribes virtue to the subject. Rectitude is a strict adherence to the rules of right and justice, which strongly suggests self-discipline. Both integrity and rectitude are distinctive features of goodness that also have a close affinity with morality, righteousness, purity and virtue. None of these attributes can be considered alone, because each influences the other. Even benevolence, generosity, good will and kindness, which relate more specifically to brotherly love and relief, have a bearing on integrity. Thus there can be no doubt that integrity merits its high standing among the precepts of freemasonry. It is an important theme in many of the degrees in freemasonry. In particular the degree of Select Master, in the Cryptic Rite, teaches that constant care and integrity are essential

when carrying out one's duties, but at the same time emphasising that integrity must always be tempered with justice and mercy.

### *The Moral Virtues*

Of the many moral virtues fostered by freemasonry, the three principle ones are called faith, hope and charity. Faith has been defined as the evidence of things not seen, the substance of things hoped for. Faith is the pillar of civilised society, because it is the bond of amity and the foundation of justice. Hope has been defined as an anchor for the soul, which enters into that which is within the veil, suggesting that we may look forward to a positive and favourable outcome to our lives and actions if they have been carried out in accordance with God's commands. Charity is described as the brightest ornament that can adorn masonry, because it is lovely in itself and also is the best test and surest proof of sincerity. Charity, which is brotherly love in its truest sense, is said to comprehend all of the virtues. The principles illustrated in these moral virtues are essential elements of brotherly love, relief, truth and integrity and therefore are important precepts that should always activate a freemason's heart in his relations with others.

### *The Social Virtues*

Temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice are called the four cardinal virtues of freemasonry. They are very closely related to the three moral virtues, which is sufficient justification for their inclusion amongst the most important precepts of freemasonry. In its correct usage, temperance indicates a wise moderation in the indulgence of personal pleasures, although often incorrectly applied to signify their complete rejection. Temperance is the appropriate restraint of our passions and affections that will ensure proper self control and overcome immoderate temptation. This virtue ought to be the constant practice of every freemason, enabling him to resist worldly temptation and to avoid excesses. Temperance is an essential element in the exercise of true justice.

Fortitude signifies that firmness and strength of mind which will enable obstacles and ordeals to be faced courageously, with a brave and unswerving resourcefulness that is neither rash nor cowardly. Fortitude is closely allied with prudence, which suggests that any action that is proposed should take into account the wisdom that has been gained by experience. Prudence enables us to regulate our lives and actions with due regard to the dictates of reason. Fortitude and prudence are both essential elements in the exercise of justice and complement that impartiality, rightness, integrity and mercy that is signified by justice. All of these elements must be taken into account when determining what would constitute true justice in any particular set of circumstances. Thus the four cardinal virtues are unmistakably reflected in the important principles that are the foundation of proper masonic behaviour.

## *The Intellectual Virtues*

The three great pillars that symbolically support a freemason's lodge are called wisdom, strength and beauty. They refer to the triune essence of the Deity, whose wisdom is infinite, whose strength is omnipotent and whose beauty shines forth throughout the whole of the creation in symmetry and order. In a freemasons' lodge they also represent the Master of the lodge and his Wardens and are depicted on the first tracing board as columns of the three most celebrated of the classical orders of architecture, which are the Ionic, the Doric and the Corinthian. The Ionic column represents the Master and signifies wisdom. The Doric column represents the Senior Warden and signifies strength. The Corinthian column represents the Junior Warden and signifies beauty. Wisdom denotes those mental qualities that enable us to understand situations, anticipate their consequences and make sound decisions. Wisdom implies the highest and noblest exercise of all the faculties of the moral nature and the mental capabilities, suggesting an appropriate balance of discretion, maturity, keenness of intellect, broad experience, extensive learning, profound thought and compassionate understanding. Strength signifies power, might, force, solidity, toughness, fortitude, courage and many other things. Beauty signifies elegance, grace, symmetry, seemliness, fairness and a wide range of related attributes. The freemason is exhorted to apply wisdom in all his undertakings, to bring strength of character to bear when in difficulties and to adorn his inward self with beauty. A consideration of these attributes of behaviour is a fitting conclusion to a study of the precepts of freemasonry.



## CHAPTER SEVEN - THE SYMBOLS OF FREEMASONRY

*Signs and symbols have been in use ever since the first hominids tried to communicate with their associates, even preceding articulate speech.*

### *Symbols In Antiquity*

Symbolism is not a modern innovation. Signs and symbols have been in use ever since the first hominids tried to communicate with their associates, even preceding articulate speech. Before speech, the only available means of communication was by signs or gestures, by the use of which it was sought to convey some physical need or personal desire. Those making or observing particular gestures gradually developed, as a natural reaction, the uttering of sounds as the gestures were made. With the lapse of time, particular sounds came to be associated with particular gestures, so that they became recognisable as being representative of the gestures themselves. These sounds eventually evolved as words, which provided a simpler means of expressing needs and desires. From that time onwards the roles of sound and gesture were reversed in communication, so that gestures were primarily used to give emphasis when required. Variations of these basic words gradually developed, being used to differentiate between objects and actions as well as to characterise shades of meaning. A rudimentary grammar naturally evolved as coherent speech matured, while symbolism also developed to become an immutable component inherent in everyday life and language.

Coherent speech soon fostered a desire to create visual records, which in turn led to the development of the written word. Writing in its original form was a series of crude pictograms that represented individual objects or actions that became words, which again interchanged the roles of speech and symbols. The use of pictograms led to the development of cuneiform writing by the Sumerians in Mesopotamia and pictograms were the basis of the conventionalised characters used in Chinese and Japanese writing. By comparison, the very simple pictograms of the American Indians were never developed into an alphabetical form of writing. Elaborate pictograms also were the basis of the Egyptian hieroglyphs. Until very recently it was thought that the pictographic script of the Sumerians was the earliest, but excavations commenced in 1988 at Abydos in Egypt confirm that hieroglyphs had been in use before the time of King Narmer, who united his kingdom of Upper Egypt with the delta kingdom of Lower Egypt in about 3200 BCE. King Narmer is thought to be the same person as the legendary King Menes, the first pharaoh of Egypt.

These latest excavations and discoveries at Abydos are described in a book entitled *Egypt* by Vivian Davies and Renée Friedman, who were assisted by an extensive panel of experts. Their findings indicate that the Egyptian hieroglyphs did not evolve in stages like

cuneiform writing, as was previously believed, but that they seem to have been established from the outset as a comprehensive means of communication. Thus, although many of the characters were used to represent complete words, most of them also signified sounds or combinations of sounds and were used in a similar manner to modern alphabets. Hieratic, which is a cursive form of the Egyptian hieroglyphs, seems to have evolved for everyday use by about 3000 BCE, when it usually was written in ink on papyrus. A much later derivative of Hieratic was the Demotic script, which was developed in about 700 BCE. The Demotic script was popular throughout the Greco-Roman period and was used by literate Egyptians for their literary pursuits, as well as for business and private correspondence.

As language became more sophisticated, the pictographic form of writing soon became inadequate, because the embellishments of oral expression were difficult to record. As a result of this deficiency, early scripts such as the Canaanite from around 2000 BCE and the Sinaitic from around 1500 BCE, had developed over many centuries using an alphabet in which the characters were based on Egyptian hieroglyphs that originally represented physical objects and actions. These scripts were followed by the Phoenician around 1000 BCE and its early Hebrew derivatives around 700 BCE, which used symbols to represent consonants, but left the vowels to be understood. Symbols gradually became standardized and were stylised in the final stage of writing, as represented by the Greek alphabet and its Roman derivative, both of which have symbols for consonants and vowels, allowing every nuance of oral expression to be recorded.

Language and writing are two of the greatest intellectual achievements of the human race, without which all other achievements would not have been possible. Language and writing transcend personal intercommunication and the maintenance of records, because it facilitates both logical thought and rational evaluation. This complex use of symbols enables the mortal mind to contemplate the wonders of the creation and the promise of a spiritual life hereafter, as well as to explore and progressively solve the mysteries of the universe, clearly distinguishing humans from all other life on earth.

## ***Symbols In The Sacred Writings***

There can be no doubt that, in the process of their evolution through the ages, speech and writing have established themselves as the most pervasive of all symbols in the modern world. Writing was derived from previously acquired abilities to draft other symbols, utilising a variety of methods. For example, the hieroglyphic writing of Egypt was painted on papyrus at least from 3250 BCE, using techniques similar to those first developed by the Magdalenians for their cave paintings made in about 15000 BCE. Recent excavations at Abydos, in tombs of a previously unknown dynasty now referred to as Dynasty 0, have unearthed bone and ivory labels that date from around 3250 BCE and are engraved with hieroglyphics that use signs for sounds and are the same as those used in later dynasties. The slate palette of King Narmer found in 1898 among a collection of temple offerings buried in the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Upper Egypt, Hierakonpolis, meaning ***City of the Falcon*** in Greek, has now been dated to 3100 BCE. Engraved on both sides, it graphically illustrates the uniting of the Upper and Lower Kingdoms. The hieroglyphs

proclaim Narmer as King and say that “**Horus, the patron god of kingship, now controls the delta**”. An even earlier palette from Hierakonpolis dates from around 3200 BCE.

The cuneiform script of Sumeria was an adaptation of the wedge shaped imprints made by a stylus upon wet clay tablets, from about 3100 BCE or possibly earlier. A characteristic of the cuneiform script is that it is composed almost exclusively of straight lines, because it is difficult to make regular curves with a stylus. The original cuneiform script was used to prepare lists of commodities and taxation details, from which the language texts gradually evolved using around five hundred different symbols. One of the earliest known clay tablets inscribed with Mesopotamian writing dates from about 3000 BCE. Texts, such as the Canaanite inscriptions on Ahiram’s sarcophagus unearthed at the ancient city of Gebal, now called Byblos, have been carved on stone from as early as 1100 BCE, using metal chisels and gravers. From the inception of writing, these and other practical aspects of the arts and crafts have been interwoven with the techniques of communication, which has greatly enhanced the evolution of the symbols.

In the early stages of the development of articulate speech, symbols referred almost entirely to those things that were required for subsistence, augmented by a few symbols reflecting actions of practical importance in everyday life. As speech became more sophisticated and writing developed, additional symbols were introduced to reflect the abstract ideas beginning to formulate in the human mind. The earliest known recordings of abstract ideas relate to the concept that, when a human being dies, its spirit will be transmigrated from the mortal body to a life hereafter. A belief in the immortality of the human spirit and that it will continue to live in eternity is illustrated graphically by hieroglyphic inscriptions in early tombs of the Egyptian pharaohs. With the advent of cursive writing abstract ideas could be expressed even more vividly, as exemplified in *Ecclesiastes*, wherein the preacher portrays the transitory nature and consummate emptiness of earthly life and the certainty of death, which is counterbalanced by the hope that the soul will live on in immortality. The sacred writings of all religions include allegories, or long and elaborate stories, which illustrate moral principals that frequently are not stated specifically, but are left for the recipient to discover. Briefer parables also are used, typically showing the application of a moral precept in a familiar situation, so that abstract principles are represented in a concrete and vibrant form.

Egyptian hieroglyphs confirm that the attributes of implements, tools and other well known objects were used in ancient times as symbols to demonstrate the requirements for proper moral conduct. This graphic use of symbols to convey important religious messages continued through Biblical times and culminated in the century preceding the Christian era, when the *peshher* technique was introduced into the Hebrew scriptures. *Peshher* is a Hebrew word signifying an *interpretation* or *explanation*, derived from *peshitta*, another Hebrew word meaning *simple*, or *plain*. The Syrian word *peshitta* and its adjectival form, *peshito*, are used to designate the versions of the Old and New Testaments that were translated from the ancient Syriac and are sometimes called the principal versions or the Syriac Vulgate. In the Old Testament *peshher* signifies *interpretation of dreams*, but in the scrolls of the Christian era it is used to indicate that a section of text has a second or special hidden meaning. Many of the Old Testament texts are used with the *peshher* technique to

convey special messages, some having been established by tradition over hundreds of years.

## *The Origin Of Masonic Symbols*

We know that operative freemasonry has included the design and construction of ecclesiastical buildings in historical times, but archaeological investigations prove that freemasonry was already being influenced by religion when the Egyptian stonemasons began to construct tombs at Helwan, the necropolis of their ancient capitals of Saqqara and Memphis. The tombs at Helwan are at least 350 years older than the Pharaoh Zoser's stepped pyramid built at Saqqara in about 2650 BCE. King Solomon's temple at Jerusalem is the oldest for which we have detailed records. Completed about 950 BCE after more than seven years under construction, it is a pre-eminent example of the vision and inspiration required in the conception and erection of such buildings. Every feature of that magnificent edifice was of religious and symbolic importance. The Biblical record leaves no doubt of the comprehensive knowledge that the masons and their associated artificers must have had of the symbolism embodied in the structure and its lavish furnishings and also in the facilities in the surrounding court. Flavius Josephus (c.37-c.100), the renowned Jewish soldier and historian, was the governor of Galilee and displayed great valour against the advance of Vespasian. In his treatise *Antiquity of the Jews*, Josephus recorded that when King Herod the Great restored the second temple erected by Zerubbabel, he not only carried out the work piecemeal to avoid interrupting the usual ritual observances, but also trained 1,000 priests to work as masons when building the shrine. The restoration of the temple was begun in 19 BCE and completed in 64 CE, but the temple was completely destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE.

After that time the operative freemasons were engaged continually in massive construction projects for the Roman Empire, until the fall of Rome in 410, when captured by the Visigoths. In the meantime Constantine the Great, who was then Emperor of Byzantium, had prevailed over the heathen Romans in 330, when Constantinople became the capital of the Roman Empire. Constantine established Christianity in the East and carried out the first great wave of Christian ecclesiastical building, surpassing even the efforts of the Persian renaissance. This work continued unabated until Constantinople was captured by the Turks in 1453. In western Europe, when the Dark Ages that lasted from the fifth to at least the ninth century drew to a close, an incredible era of cathedral building was ushered in and continued unbroken from the late Middle Ages through the Renaissance. Even in Britain, which was seriously hampered by the Reformation in the mid-1500s, work on ecclesiastical buildings continued into the 1700s. During this period many hundreds of churches, cathedrals, castles and civic buildings were constructed. The Chartres Cathedral in France is a renowned example of ecclesiastical structures. It was the first in the Gothic style, built over a period of some forty years and completed during the 1230s. The York Minster probably is the best known example in England and is frequently and lovingly called "*poetry in stone*". It was completed in 1474 after several distinct stages of work over a period of two and a half centuries.

Operative freemasons worked on religious structures and were immersed in religious activities for a period of more than five thousand years. This necessitated the freemasons having an intimate and detailed knowledge of the doctrines and tenets of the religions in respect of which they were carrying out the work, so that the religious beliefs could be reflected in the structures and especially in the details of their ornamentation. For example, the hieroglyphs that adorn the chambers of ancient Egyptian pyramids and tombs are replete with symbols that depict the search for and the conceived journey to a life hereafter. It was inevitable that the fundamental principles of speculative freemasonry should be moulded by such a long and close association with religion, with the result that the symbolism of freemasonry developed in parallel with the operative art. All extant records of the ceremonials in operative lodges confirm that symbols played a vital part in their teachings, providing a stimulus for the development of speculative contemplation. The incorporation of symbols into the rituals of purely speculative lodges was a natural extension of this long established practice. Indeed, the principles actuating those who formed the first purely speculative lodges made it an inescapable outcome, prompting them to describe freemasonry as “*a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols*”, which aptly defines one of its central tenets.

## *The Scope Of Masonic Symbolism*

With such a close and continuing association with all aspects of religious thought and practice down through the ages, it is inevitable that freemasonry should have encompassed all of the symbolism that derives from the ancient mysteries and the great religions of the world. This does not imply that every such symbol is used, nor that the usages are identical, but all important aspects of symbolism have been incorporated in the teachings and rituals of freemasonry. Specific aspects adopted and adapted from the ancient mysteries and religion include preparation in a personal sense, to establish an appropriate receptiveness for moral instruction. Parables are included in the rituals to provide ethical instruction. Exoteric stories are the foundation of the work in many of the rituals, often being woven around elaborate allegories as a basis for the communication of fundamental precepts. The esoteric interpretations of several of these allegories are concealed in a manner analogous to the *peshar* technique used in sacred writings of the early Christian era.

The first symbol encountered in freemasonry is preparation, as it was in the ancient mysteries. It combines mental disposition, meditation and symbolic purification, coupled with the wearing of appropriate apparel and accoutrements. Darkness is an essential precursor of light, which light is attained by trial through a symbolic journey. All of these aspects, including bathing in water, were involved when initiating an apprentice into a lodge of operative freemasons. However, in the traditional degrees of speculative freemasonry a purely symbolic form of ablution is used in only a few of the ceremonies. In operative freemasonry, bathing was the equivalent of baptism by immersion which was the final step in admission to the early Christian church, as it still is in some sects. Nowadays ablution in speculative freemasonry is akin to the modern form of baptism of sprinkling with water when clothed in white. A form of ritual ablution is carried out by Muslims

before they enter a mosque for prayer and during their pilgrimage to Mecca they are clothed in white when perambulating round the ***Kaaba***, the holy building into which the ***Black Stone*** is built. All important religions include some form of symbolic preparation, journey and acquisition of light, which is a procedure that has been regarded from time immemorial as a spiritual rebirth.

The various modes of recognition entrusted to candidates are symbols of importance, most of which are of origin from when trade secrets were “***mysteries***” and the knowledge of them had to be guarded jealously. A wide range of the freemason’s working tools, materials, gauges and methods are used symbolically to provide moral instruction which often, though not necessarily, refers to work on King Solomon’s temple. The temple is a pre-eminent symbol in freemasonry, signifying that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. It is an emblem of a glorious futurity, as Ezekiel’s mystical temple was for the Israelites during their period of captivity in Babylon. Many aspects of the construction of the temple by King Solomon, its dedication about 950 BCE, its final destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BCE and the construction of the second temple by Zerubbabel between 537 BCE and 515 BCE after the return of the Israelites from their captivity, are incorporated in dramatic detail in parables that are the basis of the traditional degrees in freemasonry. Features of the temple, such as the two great pillars at the entrance, are also used as symbols. Many of the symbolic interpretations are sufficiently well known to have become a part of everyday usage, some early enough to have been recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures.

## ***The Mystical Theme***

Important mystical themes are hidden beneath the superficial moral themes of the more important allegories in freemasonry, which are in the nature of the medieval ***Passion Plays***. One of the important allegories relates to a late stage in the construction of King Solomon’s Temple, when several of the workers feared that they would not be given the modes of recognition and therefore would not be able to obtain work after the completion of the temple. When the principal architect was accosted he remained true to his vows and was slain, so that substitute modes of recognition had to be used thereafter. The superficial story is that death is preferable to dishonour and that we must perform our allotted tasks whilst we can, believing that we will be a justly rewarded at the appropriate time. The esoteric message is that mortal death is only a gateway for the resurrection of the spirit to a life hereafter, which can be achieved by a steadfast faith in the Most High. The theme is continued in a dramatic allegory in another degree, when we are assured that the “***Word***” has been preserved from vandalism in a place of safety, which signifies esoterically that the “***True Word***” transcends mortal delinquency and can always be found through faith.

The foregoing allegories are connected by another allegory relating to a vital stage in the construction of King Solomon’s temple. In its various forms it relates either to the great cornerstone or to the keystone required to complete the arch of the secret vault. In the superficial story, a diligent and faithful craftsman prepares the beautiful piece of stonework required to complete the structure, but as it cannot be found on the plans it is rejected and

the work comes to a standstill. When the missing stone is recovered, work continues and the skilful craftsman receives his just reward. The esoteric interpretation is that the acceptance or rejection of this life's work is not within the province of mortal beings, because the gates of victory are only opened through the grace of that "**Living Stone**" which the builders rejected, but which became the chief cornerstone, as foretold in Isaiah 28:16 and confirmed in I Peter 2:6.

Another allegory relates to the period after the destruction of King Solomon's temple, when the captives in Babylon are released by the Decree of Cyrus and return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. In the ceremony of *passing the veils* three sojourners travel to Jerusalem and present their credentials to the Sanhedrin, seeking work on the new temple, but in most rituals the scripture readings refer to the Exodus from Egypt under Moses and the erection of the Tabernacle. The passing of the veils replicates a ceremonial carried out every seven weeks by the Therapeutae Essenes at Qumran, which exhorted obedience to the Covenant until the second coming of the Lord. The moral is revealed in a continuing allegory, when the sojourners are put to work to clear away the rubbish in preparation for the second temple. By their diligence the "**Lost Word**" is recovered, which teaches that everyone is equal in the sight of God and that even the lowest work will receive full and just reward if properly carried out. The esoteric lesson is that salvation can be found only through a complete faith in the "**True Word**", which represents the present, future and eternal "**I Am**".

### ***Further Reading***

There are several books of special value to those wishing to acquire a deeper understanding of the symbols and symbolism of speculative craft freemasonry. They include three esoteric but very readable books by George H. Steinmetz, *Freemasonry - Its Hidden Meaning*, also *The Royal Arch - Its Hidden meaning* and *The Lost Word - Its Hidden Meaning*. Two other very informative books about symbolism and its essential role in freemasonry are one by Colin Dyer entitled *Symbolism in Craft Freemasonry* and another by Harry Carr entitled *The Freemason at Work*. Finally, *A New Encyclopædia of Freemasonry* by Arthur Edward Waite deals extensively with the comparable instituted mysteries and their rites, literature and history.

## CHAPTER EIGHT - THE TRADITIONAL DEGREES IN FREEMASONRY

*Modern freemasonry has many branches and a multitude of complementary degrees that are progressive along a variety of paths.*

### *The Medieval Freemasons*

The origins of the traditional degrees in freemasonry are to be found in the work of the operative freemasons in medieval England. The earliest known recorded use of the word “**freemason**” dates from 1376, when it implied an operative freemason of a superior class, apparently the Master Mason in charge of a building operation, or the master builder. Many early masonic writers did not believe medieval Master Masons possessed superior knowledge and skill, being as well versed in religious matters, the graphic arts, sculpture and geometry as they were in the manual aspects of their craft. One eminent writer, A.E.Waite, could not imagine how “**horny handed labourers**” could develop the symbolism and philosophy that is an essential element of speculative craft freemasonry. Another eminent writer, R.F.Gould, proposed as a possible explanation that these “**operatives**” accepted “**gentlemen**” into their ranks, who transformed the operative craft into a speculative art, but he did not offer any logical reason or substantiation. Those writers seemed unaware that freemasonry was not confined to the quarrying, shaping and setting of stones.

Master Masons were required to understand the geometry and carry out the structural design of the buildings, as well as having a comprehensive knowledge of the many other constituents such as sculpture, stained glass windows and symbolic decorative work. The medieval freemasons inherited the ideas, teachings and organisation that had crystallised as a **Fraternity**, which they developed continually. From the beginnings of primitive freemasonry during the Stone Age, the speculative art developed concurrently with the practical skills and became an integral part of operative freemasonry, which reached its zenith during the great cathedral building era of medieval times in England and Europe. The freemasons used a multiplicity of emblems and had an elaborate system of symbolism with many rites and ceremonies, which they continued to use long after the decline of cathedral building. Manual dexterity was achieved by practical “**hands on**” training, while the accompanying theory was imparted by demonstration and catechism, which included participation in appropriate dramatic presentations to illustrate the use of the more sophisticated implements in setting out and controlling the work. With respect to overall control of the work for which a Master Mason was responsible when constructing a cathedral or other ecclesiastical building, the Council of Nicea issued an edict in 797 saying “**the arrangement belongs to the clergy and the execution to the artist**”.



Should there be any doubt about the intelligence, technical capacity and practical capabilities of the medieval Master Masons, it would be instantly dispelled by a study of the design and construction of the Chartres Cathedral in France, which is considered to be the most authentic surviving example of the spirit of the most spiritual of all periods in European history. In 1020 a cathedral, almost as large as the present one, replaced a smaller church on the site. In the 1130s it was extended at the western end by adding two bays, a vestibule and two towers that framed the Royal Portal and its renowned sculptures. In 1194 a dreadful fire razed most of the town and all the cathedral except the crypt and the western end. Reconstruction of the cathedral was commenced almost immediately and continued unabated until 1230, when it was virtually complete. At the same time more than a dozen other cathedrals were also under construction in the vicinity. In accordance with the edict of the Council of Nicea, the clergy would have stated their requirements as to the form of the cathedral, the size of the choir and the preferred arrangement of the chapels, transepts and other features, but the Master Masons would have had the entire responsibility for the design and construction. During more than thirty years while construction was in progress, the clergy almost certainly would have requested some innovations, but the involvement of the church and the clergy in the detailing would have been minimal. As no architect was engaged to carry out the design or to supervise the work, all structural problems had to be solved by the Master Mason.

The church provided clergy to check that the requirements of the church were being met. It also was the province of the church to obtain and disburse the funds necessary to carry out the work. Nine different Master Masons were engaged on the work cyclically throughout the construction period, each being entirely responsible for the geometry, design and construction of his sections of the work. In all more than thirty successive contracts or “*campaigns*” were required to complete the cathedral. The first Master Mason prepared the original design, set out the building and constructed the foundations. He was on site for less than a year. Each of the nine contractors was engaged more than once, but the first and some others were engaged several times. Each successive builder implemented some modifications to the design, but without making any substantial alterations to the work already completed. The successful completion of such a complicated and beautiful structure, especially one for which the design and construction was carried out in a piecemeal fashion under the control of a diverse group of master masons, proves beyond all doubt that the intelligence, integrity and capabilities of the medieval freemasons were of the highest order.

## *Medieval Lodges*

The remarkable feats of building carried out by the medieval freemasons can be seen and appreciated, but their work within their lodges and the ceremonials they used are not immediately evident. To achieve his objectives on successive sites year after year, the Master Mason not only had to be talented himself, but also required a talented, loyal and dedicated team that could be relied upon to follow him in the search for and prosecution of the work. In fact his team worked as a family, intensely proud of its skills and traditions, but jealous of its operating methods and trade secrets. Skill, morality and fidelity were

essential ingredients for success, but constant training also was necessary to achieve the desired outcomes. The Master Mason was responsible for all of this training, which was a vital activity in his lodge. His apprentices were effectively his sons for seven years and upwards, but usually for a lifetime. All members of the *Fraternity* were brothers in the truest sense.

In the early 1600s in England, it was customary to require anyone seeking an apprenticeship in an operative lodge to stand at the entrance to the stone yard or the construction site for two weeks, while the men were going to and coming from work, so that the members of the lodge could appraise the suitability of the applicant and raise any valid objection to his indentureship. If no objection was raised, the lodge's physician examined the applicant to ascertain his wholeness and soundness of body and limb, to ensure that he was physically capable of carrying out the arduous work that would be required of him. If acceptable, the applicant was balloted for by a show of hands in open lodge. To impress upon the candidate that purity of body and mind were essential components of his life within the *Fraternity*, he was required to bathe seven times immediately before his initiation. After bathing he was made "*neither naked nor clad*" by putting on a white cloak, then blindfolded and restrained by cabletows held by four of the members who conducted him into the lodge. He was then required to kneel with both knees bare on a rough ashlar stone and to take an obligation of fidelity, after which he entered into a bond of indentureship for at least seven years.

The required instruction of an Apprentice was provided in three ways. The important manual instruction was carried out either in the stone yard or on the construction site, according to the type of his work. The theoretical instruction was usually provided within the lodge, as was all moral instruction, for which purpose lodges were convened each Saturday at midday. When his training was complete, an Indentured Apprentice was formally released from his bond and regarded as a qualified craftsman. He was then required to take an obligation as a Fellow of the Craft and was entrusted with the modes of recognition appropriate to his status. These initial stages in the life of an operative mason are the basis of the work in the first two degrees in modern speculative craft lodges, although there are differences in detail. Although a Fellow of the Craft in operative masonry was a qualified tradesman, he was required to gain further diversified experience over many years of work while learning the specialised aspects of the trade. At each new level of responsibility the craftsman was tested and if accepted was required to take an obligation before being entrusted with modes of recognition appropriate to his new station, to enable him to prove his level of competence should this be required. A tradesman of unusual skill and ability, who had commenced his apprenticeship as a very young teenager or perhaps even earlier, sometimes achieved the status of Master Mason by the time he was thirty years old, but usually it took longer.

Progress in the *Fraternity* usually proceeded along the following lines. After many years an experienced craftsman who had served his time as a Foreman and later as an Intendent, might become a Superintendent of Work responsible for all of the work in a stone yard or on a construction site. When obligated and appointed, the Superintendent was reminded that he must have and maintain a sound knowledge of the work of the other Guilds

engaged on the project with the masons, especially the carpenters, iron workers, bronze founders, white smiths and gold smiths. He was also required to know all of the materials used in the work, the required standards of workmanship, the quality of the work done, the time required and the cost. Eventually an experienced Superintendent of Work might assemble a gang of freemasons and become a Master Mason in his own right, often commencing as a subcontractor to his previous Master Mason. In this way membership of the craft of operative freemasonry expanded to meet the requirements of the times. Some of the progressive steps that have been outlined are reflected in the degrees of modern speculative craft freemasonry.

## *The Ceremonials In Medieval Lodges*

The medieval lodges operated during the centuries of intense religious fervour, nearly always working closely with or under the surveillance of a religious establishment. It was an era of great pageantry, when church rituals became fully developed and *Passion Plays* were a feature of religious life. During this period, each branch of knowledge was considered to be a secret, which its possessors must not communicate to anyone outside their own class or fraternity. Every art, science and trade was called a “*mystery*” and was treated accordingly. Indeed, concealment was often practised as a matter of course. It was inevitable that freemasonry would enhance its long established methods of symbolic instruction by incorporating into its ceremonials some of the drama and ritual used by the churches for which the building work was being carrying out. These ritualistic dramas developed along three distinct lines. The oldest theme probably is the one referring to early events recorded in the Book of Genesis. However the theme that is most widely known, because it is the basis of most modern symbolic degrees, relates to the construction, destruction and rebuilding of the temples at Jerusalem. They are commonly called the Solomonic degrees. The third theme is different in character, beginning with the Solomonic degrees or their equivalents and connecting them with events that occurred during the Christian era.

The Genesis theme begins with Noah and the flood and continues with Lamech and his four children, who are credited with the origin of civilised society. It then introduces Nimrod, the first great builder recorded in the Bible, who constructed the tower of Babel and is the traditional founder of operative masonry. The Genesis theme is the basis of the first part of the “*traditional history*” of the operative freemasons, leading into the more widely known theme that relates to the construction of King Solomon’s temple at Jerusalem. The moral presented in the Genesis theme is that divine judgment is inevitable, but that reconciliation is always available to those who repent, with whom a new covenant will be entered into and as a consequence will be preserved. Probably the Royal Ark Mariner is the modern symbolic degree known best in relation to the Genesis theme, but several aspects of the theme also have a place in some of the degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite.

The theme based on the construction of temple at Jerusalem by King Solomon, which was completed in about 950 BCE, played an important role in the rituals of operative

freemasonry and it is the foundation of modern speculative craft freemasonry. The legend continues on from the construction of King Solomon's temple to its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BCE, when the Jews were taken captive and exiled to Babylon. The final part begins with the release of the Jews from captivity in 538 BCE under the Decree of Cyrus, the Elamite king who captured Babylon in 539 BCE and established the Persian Empire. The Decree of Cyrus enabled the Jews to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel, completing it by about 515 BCE, which completes the theme. Although several of the degrees in this theme are related to events that occurred after the death of King Solomon, they are commonly included as Solomonic degrees. The instructive historical content of the degrees in this theme, as well as the symbolism portrayed by the working tools of an operative freemason and the work they performed during the construction of the temples, provides an ideal avenue for the *“search within”*, including the search for and recovery of the *“Lost Word”*. The Solomonic degrees are the basis of speculative craft freemasonry, mark masonry, the cryptic rite and royal arch masonry. There also are Solomonic degrees in the Order of the Allied Masonic Degrees and in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. The Allied Masonic Degrees will be mentioned when appropriate in this chapter, but the degrees of the Scottish Rite are so diverse and wide-ranging that they will be discussed in a separate chapter.

It has been suggested that the Christian elements of the theme might have arisen during the 1700s as a means of distinguishing the operative freemasons from the then *“new fangled”* speculative freemasons. There is no doubt that the modes of recognition communicated in some of the degrees in this theme were of great importance to operative freemasons when travelling in search of work. However, the content of the degrees suggests that they had a much earlier origin and also that recognition was not their primary purpose. In particular, the morals that are presented teach fortitude, humility and universal equality. There are Christian elements in two degrees of the Order of the Allied Masonic Degrees. The first of these is called St Lawrence the Martyr, which commemorates the martyrdom of Saint Lawrence in Rome during the third century, when he displayed humility and extreme fortitude. The Knights of Constantinople is the other, referring to the emperor Constantine the Great who curbed the pride and arrogance of the nobility in the fourth century and rewarded the common people who were his loyal artisans and labourers. The virtues portrayed in these two degrees are fundamental to the precepts of freemasonry. The theme of the eighteenth degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite also has a Christian basis, as do the degrees that comprise the Order of Rome and the Red Cross of Constantine and the appendant Orders of the Holy Sepulchre and St John the Evangelist. There also are the degrees of the Knights Templar that are of an historical nature and extend the theme of service, another fundamental precept of freemasonry.

## *The Foundations*

The traditional degrees of speculative craft freemasonry include all those derived from earlier operative practice and several others from the transitional period in the 1600s and 1700s, thus including all of the Solomonic degrees that have been mentioned. The first two are based on the induction of Indentured Apprentices and the making of Fellows of the

Craft in medieval operative lodges. They are the foundation of modern speculative craft freemasonry, which is also called symbolic masonry. It will be evident from earlier comments that the ceremonials of these two symbolic degrees closely resemble those of their operative precedents. There are many similarities between operative and speculative usage in relation to the working tools and modes of recognition, but there also are some significant differences. Some signs used by the operative masons have been omitted and some words have been changed, but the ancient penalties are substantially the same. It is interesting to note that the new words in speculative freemasonry, which were not used in the operative modes of recognition, reflect the old emblematical signs that are not used in symbolic masonry, suggesting that their choice was not a mere coincidence.

Some masonic authors have advanced the opinion that the third degree of symbolic masonry was *“manufactured”* in order to fill an apparent gap, that of the Master Mason. As we have already seen, the fully qualified and experienced craftsmen, or Fellows of the Craft, were masters of the craft in the true sense, while the status of Master Mason usually reflected his capacity as the manager or proprietor of a workforce operating as a lodge within the *Fraternity*. Frequently the Master Mason was a contractor, who engaged and paid the craftsmen and labourers he required to carry out the work under the terms of his contract with the client. In its present form the degree of Master Mason includes a significant part of the old craftsman’s instruction, known as the *“five points of fellowship”* that formed a discrete and important component the Fellow of the Craft’s ritual, but different from the *“five points of fellowship”* of a Master Mason. With some constructive imagination the old Fellow of the Craft’s *“five points of fellowship”* were grafted onto an ancient operative drama enacted during annual festivals of the craft. The ancient drama highlighted the fortitude and fidelity of the master builder who had been slain and culminated with the investment of a qualified craftsmen to replace him as one of the three Grand Master Masons. All members of the *Fraternity* could attend the ancient drama, because none of the secrets of the craft was revealed. Nowadays the symbolic degree of Master Mason is generally regarded as an *“ancient landmark”*.

Of the other traditional degrees, that of Mark Master Mason is very significant because the principles it embodies were of great importance to the operative freemasons. This degree not only emphasises the skill and precision required of a craftsman, but it also highlights the care that must be exercised by overseers when inspecting the work as the responsibility for its acceptance or rejection is entirely theirs and they alone must bear the blame for any error. In the operative context the principles enunciated in the Mark degree are ancient indeed, although the modern *“keystone”* ceremony was not the only form of ritual used to impart them. Speculative freemasons in the early 1700s were working at least seven degrees that included the word Mark, of which some were intimately associated with the degree of Royal Ark Mariner mentioned earlier. In the original form in which it was used in speculative craft freemasonry, the Mark degree comprised two distinct sections, the Mark Man for a Fellowcraft and the Mark Master for a Master Mason. In the course of time they were consolidated into the present ceremony based on the *“keystone”*. The relevant instructions given to operative freemasons were related to both the preparation and testing of the stones and to their erection in the building. These instructions were incorporated in the ceremonials of two degrees. Again there are some close similarities that

clearly reflect the operative antecedents of the symbolic degree, but there also are some significant differences.

The four symbolic degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, Master Mason and Mark Master Mason complete the “*work oriented*” components of the old operative ceremonials that have found their way into speculative craft freemasonry. They lay the foundation for the esoteric theme, which is the ultimate reason for all masonic ritual. This is the search for light and knowledge and the allegorical discovery of the “*Lost Word*”, which leads to the ultimate truth. The esoteric theme is comprised in several degrees under the various masonic orders previously mentioned, although there is no single order that includes all of the degrees. In any particular masonic order, the sequence in which the degrees are worked is not always in chronological order, nor is there any coherent arrangement between the orders. There also are differences in detail between some of the equivalent degrees worked in the various masonic orders, although their themes usually are substantially the same. Having in mind the difficulties of communication in earlier times, the similarities of the degrees are more remarkable than the differences.

## *The Solomonic Degrees*

Although at first sight this group of degrees appears to represent a random collection of unrelated incidents, a coherent narrative is achieved by arranging them in their correct historical sequence. The following tabulation provides a summary of the complete series of Solomonic degrees and the relevant associated degrees that relate to the first and second temples at Jerusalem. They comprise what may be regarded as the *Traditional Degrees in Freemasonry* as they are currently worked under the various masonic orders and jurisdictions. The degrees have not been tabulated in the same sequence as they are usually taken by candidates, but have been arranged in their chronological order. They have been given the modern titles most commonly used. With the exception of the Entered Apprentice and the Fellowcraft, which symbolically relate to the preliminary stages in the construction of the temple, the dates shown are approximately those of key events referred to in the narratives of the degrees.

1	Entered Apprentice	964 BCE	Apprenticeship begins
2	Fellowcraft	957 BCE	Site prepared for building
3	Mark Master Mason	957 BCE	Stones shaped for secret vault
4	Select Master	956 BCE	Start constructing secret vault
5	Royal Master	955 BCE	Word deposited in secret vault
6	Master Mason	951 BCE	Master builder slain
7	Most Excellent Master	950 BCE	Dedication of the temple
8	Super Excellent Master	587 BCE	Destruction of the temple
9 *	Knight of the Sword	538 BCE	Release from captivity
10	Excellent Master	536 BCE	Return to temple site
11	Royal Arch Mason	535 BCE	Word found and work stopped
12 *	Knight of the East	520 BCE	Zerubbabel visits Darius
13 *	Kt. of the East & West	515 BCE	Rebuilding completed

The three degrees marked with an asterisk constitute the Red Cross of Babylon, also called the Babylonish Pass in the Scottish and some other workings. In the Order of the Allied Masonic Degrees there is an equivalent of these degrees, but the work is not identical. In addition there are ceremonies of installation in the Craft, the Mark, the Royal and Select Masters, the Red Cross of Babylon and also the Royal Arch, which enhance and amplify the narrative and helps to bind it into a cohesive whole. Although the Ark Mariner is not a Solomonic degree, but is the foundation of the Genesis theme mentioned earlier, it is usually attached to and works in conjunction with a Mark or Red Cross lodge. It also has a separate installation ceremony that contributes to the overall theme.

From the above summary it is evident that the narrative is woven round a series of events recorded in the Old Testament and that the secret vault is an essential ingredient. Jewish tradition relates that a secret vault was constructed beneath the temple, in which confidential meetings could be held and all sacred treasures and secret documents could be stored. The construction of such a vault under ecclesiastical and other buildings of importance was not unusual in ancient times and the custom was continued into medieval times when crypts were provided under most cathedrals, monasteries and castles. Underground excavations carried out by the Knights Templar between 1118 and 1125 and by the Royal Engineers of Britain in 1895, as well as modern seismological and archaeological surveys carried out by the Israelis, all confirm the existence of passages and vaulted chambers beneath the mosque now erected on the original temple site.

## ***The First Temple***

The circumstances and history of the construction of the temple at Jerusalem is well documented in the Bible. The establishment of the work force is relevant to the masonic theme and is recorded in 1 Kings 5:13-16 of the ***New English Bible*** in the following words:

***“King Solomon raised a forced levy from the whole of Israel amounting to thirty thousand men. He sent them to Lebanon in monthly relays of ten thousand, so that the men spent one month in Lebanon and two at home; Adoniram was superintendent over the whole levy. Solomon had also seventy thousand hauliers and eighty thousand quarrymen, apart from the three thousand three hundred foremen in charge of the work who superintended the labourers.”***

The provision of an experienced craftsman to carry out the required designs is also referred to in a letter from Hiram King of Tyre to King Solomon, which is recorded in 2 Chronicles 2:13-14 of the ***New English Bible*** and says:

***“I now send you a skilful and experienced craftsman, master Hiram. He is the son of a Danite woman, his father a Tyrian; he is an experienced worker in gold and silver, copper and iron, stone and wood, as well as . .***

*... who will be able to work with your own skilled craftsmen . . . . . to any design submitted to him.”*

The scene of the degree of Mark Master Mason is the stone yard, where the stones for the temple are being prepared. The degree has two distinct parts. In the first part the candidate represents one of the craftsmen preparing the stones. In the second part he represents one of the 3,300 foremen who are responsible for ensuring that all the stones are properly prepared in accordance with the working plans and that they are correctly fitted, marked and numbered ready for erection at the site. The ritual is very dramatic. The degree teaches that every diligent workman has a chance to distinguish himself by preparing some special and superior piece of work that will strengthen and adorn the structure, for which he will be appropriately rewarded provided that he has carried out the work strictly in accordance with the Divine Plan. It would be appropriate at this point to emphasise a significant difference between the symbolisms used in operative and speculative rituals. In the operative rituals it is impressed upon the candidate that in each degree he represents a particular stone in the building, which will become part of the spiritual temple above, until ultimately the candidate represents the plan of the building itself. This important symbolism has been omitted from the speculative rituals.

When the temple site was ready and the building stones were being prepared, twenty-seven experienced and trustworthy craftsmen were chosen and appointed as Select Masters to construct a secret underground vault below where the future Holy of Holies would be located. This underground vault had a hidden access from King Solomon's most retired apartment. In the degree of Select Master the candidate represents Zabud, a particular friend of King Solomon who had some important business to communicate to him, but Zabud inadvertently entered the apartment without King Solomon's authority. The unworthy guard whose laxity allowed Zabud to enter without warning was condemned to death, but he was pardoned and obligated as a Select Master. This degree warns of the great danger of carelessness and teaches the need for constant care, uprightness and integrity in the fulfilment of one's allotted duties, coupled with justice and mercy. In the Allied Masonic Degrees, the Grand Tilers of Solomon has a similar legend with interesting variations. The degree of Intimate Secretary or Master by Curiosity in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite also has an equivalent degree.

When the secret vault was complete, the three Grand Masters deposited true copies of the holy vessels therein, also an exact copy of the *Book of the Law*. It was agreed that if any one of the three Grand Masters should die, the other two would also deposit the *Word* in the secret vault so that it could be preserved and restored if the temple were destroyed. In the degree of Royal Master the candidate represents Adoniram who, we are told in I Kings 4:16 I Kings 5:14, was the official in charge of the forced labour under King Solomon. Adoniram is anxious to know when he might receive the master's word, to which the third Grand Master responds with an elegant and striking discourse, during which he inadvertently reveals the place where the *Word* would be preserved. Adoniram is told that he must continually strive in his search for truth, but that only after the temple of this life has been destroyed by death can the temple of the life hereafter be built on its foundations.



The temple was completed soon after the death of the third Grand Master, who was the principal architect, as portrayed in the degree of Master Mason. When the death of the third Grand Master had been mourned, the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Holy of Holies under the outspread wings of the cherubim and the other holy relics from the tabernacle were also moved into the Holy Place. The temple was then consecrated and dedicated in all its glory and beauty, which is portrayed in the degree of Most Excellent Master. King Solomon then resolved to reward the most skilful of his workmen, which he did by acknowledging them as Most Excellent Masters, thus creating a new tie with his faithful craftsmen. This degree teaches that faithful service will be justly rewarded and that the tenets of freemasonry should bind us together in one fraternal union. This union is symbolised by the wavy cord depicted on some early English tracing boards. It was knotted at the four corners and terminated in a lovers knot with the two ends of the tassel hanging down, which should not to be confused with the four tassels. The wavy cord is an important symbol in European lodges. Nowadays in some lodges the wavy cord and the tassels are shown in the tessellated pavement.

The temple retained its original splendour for thirty-three years, but soon after the death of King Solomon ten of the tribes revolted and formed the nation of Israel, leaving the temple in the possession of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, known as the Kingdom of Judah. About 921 BCE Shishak, King of Egypt, raided the temple and carried away the treasures. Thereafter idolatrous rulers desecrated the temple and allowed it to fall into decay, although it was partially restored by Josiah around 635 BCE. The ten tribes were captured and progressively deported into captivity in Assyria, beginning in about 722 BCE. The temple was destroyed in 587 BCE when Nebuchadnezzar plundered Jerusalem and took the people of Judah captive to Babylon. In the degree of Super Excellent Master, Zedekiah the last King of Judah had already fled, leaving his people to their fate. The biblical record tell us that he was captured by the Chaldean army on the plains of Jericho, when his eyes were put out and he was carried into captivity bound in chains of brass. Before their capture the loyal craftsmen, including Gedaliah who was appointed and became the wise and gentle governor of Judea, pledged themselves to continue faithful to their trust, to be true to their obligations and to be honourable on all occasions. The objective of the degree is to inculcate true devotion to God, whilst at the same time we strive to enlighten our minds and purify our hearts. The narrative is resumed towards the end of the sixty years that the Hebrews were captive in Babylon.

## ***The Second Temple***

In 539 BCE Cyrus, King of Persia, captured Babylon. He was a great and humane ruler who gave permission to the Hebrew captives to return to their homeland and rebuild their temple. He issued the Decree recorded in Ezra 1:2-3 of the ***New English Bible*** which says:

***“This is the word of Cyrus, King of Persia: ‘The Lord the God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he himself has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah. To every man of his people now among you I say, God be with him and let him go up to***

*Jerusalem in Judah and rebuild the house of the Lord . . . . . And every remaining Jew, wherever he may be living, may claim aid from his neighbours in that place’ . . . . .”*

The Decree of Cyrus is the foundation of the degree of Knight of the Sword, which takes place in the palace at Babylon. The candidate represents Zerubbabel who was born in Babylon, his name meaning *the Exile*. Zerubbabel obtained an audience with Cyrus and requested permission to return to Judea to rebuild the temple, which was granted. Cyrus set Zerubbabel free, appointed him chief among his brethren and exacting a tribute as evidence to the neighbours that the returning captives were still under the protection of the King of Persia. Cyrus issued his decree and created Zerubbabel a Knight of the Sword, investing him with a sash and sword as the emblems of his office. It has been suggested that Zerubbabel was the same person as Sheshbazzar, the Prince of Judah under whose leadership the rebuilding of the temple was commenced, but the evidence suggests that Sheshbazzar almost certainly would have been Zerubbabel’s uncle. The concluding episode of degree relates to Zerubbabel’s hazardous return to Jerusalem, and includes the ancient drama of “*crossing the bridge*”.

As the Decree of Cyrus applied only to the descendants of the captives from the Kingdom of Judah, it was necessary to make sure that only they were returning to Jerusalem to work on the temple. So that the craftsmen working on the temple could be identified easily, Zerubbabel decided to institute a new degree, called Excellent Master, founded on the history and traditions of their ancestors. This was especially significant, because it related their new release to their previous release from Egyptian bondage, when the Lord called Moses from his exile to lead the *Chosen People* out of captivity, as well as to their travels in the years that followed. The portions of Scripture selected for this degree, as well as the modes of recognition adopted, relate to those visions in which God gave to Moses certain signs by which the people would know that he came with Divine authority. Relevant aspects of the symbolism of the Tabernacle, which God commanded Moses to institute during the wanderings of the Israelites after the Exodus from Egypt, also receive attention. However, they are neither the basis of the degree nor its principal component. Tradition says that the degree was conferred on the craftsmen before they left Babylon, when they pledged themselves to serve God, their brethren and their chosen leaders. They also were enjoined to journey through life with humility and to render to God that honour and praise which are most justly due to Him. The degree is commonly called *Passing the Veils*. There is no English equivalent of the Scottish form of this degree in regular use, but variations of *Passing the Veils* are incorporated in some workings the Royal Arch degree as an essential preamble. An equivalent of the degree is also worked in some Irish chapters of the Royal Arch.

The records show that about 42,360 of the remnant of the Jews in exile returned to Jerusalem progressively, the first contingent under the leadership of Zerubbabel in 535 BCE, followed by Ezra in 458 BCE and finally Nehemiah in 445 BCE. In the traditional Scottish degree three exiles from Babylon, having received the tokens of an Excellent Master and wishing to take advantage of the Decree of Cyrus and assist in rebuilding the temple, present themselves to the Sanhedrin on their arrival. They are engaged

immediately and begin clearing away the rubbish from the first temple, which is the setting for the Royal Arch degree. The three workmen detect a hollow sound when digging at the site of the previous Holy of Holies. On further investigation, after removing the keystone, they discover the secret vault. Gaining access through the opening, they safely recover the items previously deposited. Thus the **Word** was restored and the degree of Royal Arch Mason was established. The candidate represents one of the workmen who made the discovery and was rewarded by exaltation as a Royal Arch Mason. The candidate receives several lectures on the historical, philosophical and mystical aspects of the degree, which are intended to impress upon him that freemasonry is that great and universal science which includes almost every other, but that more particularly freemasonry teaches us our duty to God and to our neighbour and a knowledge of ourselves.

Shortly after the work of reconstruction had commenced, the Samaritans in the surrounding areas sought to join in the work, but were told that they were not among those who had the right to build. Thereafter the Samaritans harassed the builders and also enlisted the support of Tattenai, the Persian governor of Samaria. Cyrus died in 530 BCE and Artaxerxes usurped the throne for a brief period. In the year 522 BCE, by which time the site had been surveyed, the foundations laid and the walls commenced for the second temple, Artaxerxes stopped the rebuilding of the temple at the instigation of the Samaritans. Tattenai and another Persian officer of rank, Shethar-boznai, went to Jerusalem and sent a fair report to Darius, the new King of Persia, suggesting that a search should be instituted to learn whether construction of the temple was being carried out in accordance with a royal decree. At the request of the Sanhedrin, Zerubbabel also went to Babylon in 522 BCE, where he attended the King's court and made a personal plea to Darius while Tattenai's report was being considered.

During his visit to Babylon, Zerubbabel was asked to participate in a debate in the Persian court on questions posed by Darius, who asked which was the strongest of wine, the king or women. Zerubbabel convinced Darius that women were the strongest of those three, but that truth was stronger than all things, which is the moral taught in this degree. The story of this debate in the Persian court and also its outcome are recorded in I Esdras 3-4. In summary, Darius accepted Zerubbabel as his **Kinsman** who would sit by him, then said that he would be happy to grant Zerubbabel's requests, even beyond what was in writing. Zerubbabel's statements concerning the rebuilding of the temple were verified by the discovery of the original decree, in the personal records of Cyrus that had been held in the castle at Ecbatana in the province of Media. Darius issued a written confirmation of the Decree of Cyrus and gave instructions that the rebuilding was to be given every support and that no taxes should be levied. Tattenai and his colleagues thenceforth applied themselves with vigour to execute the royal commands. All of these events are recorded in the Scriptures.

Because of his high regard for Zerubbabel, Darius constituted Zerubbabel as a Knight of the East before his return to Jerusalem. Darius also gave Zerubbabel all of the temple treasures not previously recovered. These events also feature in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, where they are the central theme of the degree of Prince of Jerusalem. The rebuilding of the temple was recommenced in 520 BCE and completed by Joshua in about

516 BCE, without any further problems from the Samaritans. As a reward for Zerubbabel's services, including his successful approach to Darius that resulted in the recovery of the temple treasures and his work on the rebuilding of the temple, the Sanhedrin constituted Zerubbabel as a Knight of the East and West, the highest masonic honour the Sanhedrin could bestow. This degree teaches that integrity and fortitude, coupled with wisdom like that displayed by Zerubbabel when answering Darius's questions, are all essential masonic attributes.

## *The Allied Masonic Degrees*

Two of the Allied Masonic Degrees have already been mentioned briefly in the context of their Christian connection, namely St Lawrence the Martyr and the Knights of Constantinople. These two degrees and the Grand Tilers of Solomon, mentioned earlier in relation to the degree of Select Master, typify the method of communicating moral instruction in medieval operative lodges. All are brief and to the point, so that the message can be understood easily by the youngest apprentice. In St Lawrence the Martyr the candidate is told that the degree was of great value to the operative masons, although the reason only becomes evident during the ceremonial of installing a master. Another important degree, in effect a Masonic Order of Knighthood, is the Red Cross of Babylon, which recounts the story of the Knight of the Sword and Knight of the East and West as outlined in the preceding section. The "*crossing of the bridge*" is an important episode in both variations of the story, when the candidate must cross the River Jordan. It is a symbolic journey of great significance in worldwide religions, derived from ancient folklore. Traditionally the soul must cross the "*river of death*" on its journey to rejoin its creator. In the Knight of the Sword the journey is made in the traditional direction from east to west during the return to Jerusalem, but in the Red Cross of Babylon it is made on the outward journey to Babylon. In both variations the characteristic colour is green, an emblem of immortality.

To conclude this summary of the Allied Masonic Degrees, it is important not to overlook the Holy Order of Grand High Priest. The country and year of origin of this degree are not known, but it might have descended from the "High Grades" worked on the Continent of Europe during the 1700s. It has much in common with various other Melchizedek degrees and orders, including the French version of the Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priest, which have been worked in the English-speaking world without interruption since the second half of the 1700s. The modern degree probably amalgamates two older degrees, because the story jumps four centuries from when Abram from Mesopotamia was blessed in Canaan by Melchizedek, the King of Salem and Priest of the Most High God, to when Aaron the Levite was anointed as the first Jewish High Priest. The name Melchizedek means "*King of Righteousness*" and Salem means "*peace*". The colours are white and a fiery red, emblems of harmony, devotion and zeal.

## *The Colours And Symbolism Of The Regalia*

Important aspects of the symbolism that is a fundamental element in all branches of freemasonry are discussed in some detail in the second part of this book, but some comments on the regalia and symbolism of the traditional degrees would be appropriate now. Although aprons are worn in speculative Craft Lodges, in Mark Lodges and in Royal Arch Chapters, they are not always worn in the other degrees. Sometimes only the jewel of the degree is worn, even though in earlier times there may have been an apron for the degree. In some jurisdictions, for example, the apron and sash of the Royal Arch Chapter are often worn when working in the Cryptic Council or Lodge and Council, together with a jewel appropriate to the degree. Although there are aprons for some of the degrees worked in the Order of the Allied Masonic Degrees, nowadays only the jewels of the degrees are worn. The following comments are not exhaustive, because although the fundamental concepts are similar in all jurisdictions there are many variations from one jurisdiction to another.

The pure white lambskin of an Entered Apprentice's apron is a universal emblem. The addition of two blue rosettes for a Fellowcraft Freemason is well known, but the custom is not universal. Likewise the addition of a third blue rosette to signify a Master Mason will be familiar to most. White is the symbol of purity and innocence and blue denotes universal friendship and benevolence. In a Mark Lodge the customary jewel is the keystone of an arch and the colours are light blue coupled with red, which is as a symbol of fervency and zeal. Aprons and sashes in the Royal Arch usually incorporate an intermeshing design of red and deep blue triangles or lozenges, which have the same symbolism. In addition, the intermeshed triangles on the apron symbolise action and reaction combining to achieve the desired result, while the intermeshed triangles and lozenges on the sash symbolise the border of the temple and also the bonding of the companions in God's service. In contrast, Royal Arch aprons and sashes in the Irish jurisdiction do not incorporate blue, while the sash is worn over the right shoulder instead of the left as in most jurisdictions. A jewel commonly used in the Royal Arch comprises two interlaced equilateral triangles, forming a star of six points, also called the Shield of David.

The work and symbolism portrayed in the degrees of the Cryptic Council are a synthesis of the fundamental teachings of pure ancient freemasonry. Black, red and purple are all significant colours, but purple is the characteristic colour as a symbol of royalty because Solomon King of Israel, Hiram King of Tyre and Hiram Abif, the chief builder during the construction of the temple at Jerusalem, are key figures in the narrative. The principal jewels are the equilateral triangle as an emblem of God, coupled with the trowel symbolising the spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice that should unite all freemasons in the bonds of brotherly love and affection. In the Scottish jurisdiction the working apron of a Royal Master is a black triangle with a red border. The black alludes to the grief of the craft for the loss of the chief builder and the red alludes to the blood he shed in defence of his integrity. In the Select Master nine white five-pointed stars are added to the apron, arranged as triangles in each of the three corners of the apron, together with the Hebrew characters *Yod Samech* in white in the centre. The black of the apron in this degree alludes to secrecy and silence and the red to fervency and zeal. The nine stars are important. On

the physical plane they allude to the nine arches in the secret vault, but five-pointed stars also allude to the application of the mental faculties of man. Nine white stars signify perfection and completeness and when arranged in triangles pointing upwards they indicate that the faculties of man are being employed in God's service. The Hebrew characters typify the degree because they signify "*man of my choice*".

In the English jurisdiction a triangular white apron with crimson and gold borders is worn in all degrees of the Cryptic Council and the jewel is a hollow white equilateral triangle surmounted by a crown and suspended from a crimson ribbon. The important teachings of the Cryptic Council culminate in the work and symbolism of the degree of Super Excellent Master. The apron is black edged with red as in the Select Master, with similar symbolism, but there is a silver sword in the centre instead of the Hebrew characters and the nine stars. The silver sword is the *Sword of Truth*, emblematic of true devotion in spirit and in truth to the *Great I AM*, which is an important moral inculcated in this degree. It also reminds us of the *Flaming Sword* that God placed at the east of the Garden of Eden, which turned every way to uphold the way of the *Tree of Life*. The work of the degree is exemplified by the formation of various geometric figures by twelve members who represent the tribes of Israel. In this respect the Super Excellent Master is similar to the Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. The principal tenets of freemasonry are exemplified in this part of the work in the Super Excellent Master, so a brief explanation of the ceremonial will be given.

The exemplification begins with a square, the first emblem in freemasonry, formed around the altar to represent an encampment of the Israelites protecting the Ark of the Covenant in the centre. The standard of the eastern division, led by the tribe of Judah, depicts a lion as a symbol of strength and power. The standard of the southern division, led by the tribe of Reuben, depicts a man as a symbol of reason and religion. The standard of the western division, led by the tribe of Ephraim, depicts an ox as a symbol of patience and labour. The standard of the northern division, led by the tribe of Dan, depicts an eagle as a symbol of wisdom and sublimity. This was the traditional order in which the tribes of Israel set forth during their journeys through the wilderness. The exemplification continues with a triangle, the second emblem in freemasonry, formed around the altar as an emblem of the Deity. The three sides typify the Divine attributes of *Omnipotence*, *Omniscience* and *Omnipresence*. The triangle is also a symbol of the three principal masonic supports of *Wisdom*, *Strength* and *Beauty*; the three masonic graces of *Faith*, *Hope* and *Charity*; and finally the triple duty that every freemason owes to God, to his neighbour and to himself. The exemplification concludes with a circle formed around the altar to represent the third emblem of freemasonry, the *point within a circle* from which a freemason must not err. The circle is an emblem of eternity, which inspires us to cherish the hope of immortality by having faith in the Divine providence of Him who is the Soul and Centre of the Universe.

## *The Operative Free Masons*

The rituals used in the degrees of the ancient craft of operative free masonry and the dramas performed at their annual assemblages and on other special occasions are the basis

of the rituals used in modern speculative craft freemasonry. In 1913 the old lodges of operative free masons still extant in England were becoming inactive, as a result of which the remaining members feared that their ancient rituals and ceremonials might be lost. Accordingly those lodges decided to amalgamate in the formation of ***The Worshipful Society of Free Masons, Rough Masons, Wallers, Slaters, Paviers, Plaisterers and Bricklayers***, now commonly referred to as ***“The Operatives”***. The minimum qualifications required for entry are those of Master Mason, Mark Master Mason and Royal Arch Mason, but only those who have been installed in the chairs of the Craft lodge and also the Mark lodge are permitted to advance beyond the fifth degree. There are seven degrees in the Society, the titles and relevant jewels of which are as follows:

- I° Indentured Apprentice -  
***Blue neck cord.***
- II° Fellow of the Craft -  
***Square gauge with a blue neck cord.***
- III° Super-Fellow, Fitter & Marker -  
***Running stone gauge with a blue neck cord.***
- IV° Super-Fellow, Setter Erector -  
***Footing corner stone gauge with a blue neck cord.***
- V° Intendent, Overseer, Superintendent and Warden –  
Elbow square gauge with a blue collarette.
- VI° Passed Master –  
Silver gallows square with a blue collarette.
- VII° Master Mason and Grand Master Honoris Causa –  
Gold gallows square with a blue collarette.

The ancient drama accompanying the appointing a new Grand Master Mason is the core element of the modern degree of Master Mason. Traditionally the operative free masons annually re-enacted the dedication of King Solomon’s temple, which is still used in the Society as its dedication ceremony.

## ***Other Orders***

The degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite reviewed in the next chapter, with those of this chapter, are only a few of the several hundred once worked, most of which disappeared during the 1800s. Several other unrelated Orders, like the Knight Templar Priests and the Societas Rosicruciana, have not been described. However the following summaries have been included because the Orders have something in common with the Solomonic degrees.

The ritual of the Royal Order of Scotland is in doggerel verse arranged in the old catechistic form that was customary in the ancient St John's lodges in Scotland. It has a strong Christian element, but aspects of the Royal Arch and Cryptic degrees are present as well as elements of other degrees. Heredom of Kilwinning is the first degree, followed by the Knight of the Rosy Cross. The ritual interconnects the Old Testament with the New Testament and culminates with the doctrines inculcated by the life and death of Jesus. The characteristic colours are thistle green and crimson. In this Order green is an emblem of Scotland, but it also is a symbol of loyalty, wisdom, rebirth and immortality. Crimson alludes to sacrifice and the willingness to shed one's own blood in a just and righteous cause, but it is also a symbol of devotion, fervency and zeal.

The Masonic and Military Order of Rome and the Red Cross of Constantine and appendant Orders of Knights of the Holy Sepulchre and of St John the Evangelist also connect the teachings of the Old and New Testaments. The narrative alludes to the founding of freemasonry by our ancient brethren, based on instructions received from Moses, Solomon and Zerubbabel. It continues in some detail from the rebuilding of the second temple to the death of Christ on the cross and the destruction of the temple by the Romans. The Knight of St John the Evangelist is the Christian element of the Palestine Order of St John. Ultimately the pillars of the New Law are discovered, which leads to the recovery of the **True Word**. The vision that the **Emperor Constantine** saw in the sky and his conversion, leading to the establishment of the Christian religion in Rome, also are recounted. Black, white and purple are the characteristic colours, with the usual symbolism.

The Religious, Military and Masonic Order of the Temple, including the Knights of Malta and of St John of Jerusalem, unites the teachings of two Orders that originally were militant rivals. The narrative recounts the establishment of the **Knights of the Temple** at Jerusalem under the leadership of Hugo de Payens and Godfrey de St Omer in 1118 and its history until their persecution by King Philip of France and Pope Clement V, when hundreds were tortured and burnt at the stake, including their Grand Master Jacques de Molay on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1314. The Order inculcates in freemasons the holy, charitable and honourable purposes of the original knights and hospitallers as Soldiers and Servants of the Cross. The rituals also have a mystical aspect in relation to resurrection. The characteristic colours are white, red and black, with the usual symbolic meanings.



## CHAPTER NINE – THE PILGRIMAGE AND SYMBOLISM OF THE ANCIENT AND ACCEPTED SCOTTISH RITE

*Progress through the degrees of the Scottish Rite is a pilgrimage that imparts moral and spiritual instruction for the proper conduct of life.*

### ***Introduction***

In the *Mysteries* of most of the ancient religions, the candidate's participation was a mystical journey, as it is in each degree in freemasonry, the destination revealing the ultimate purpose of the degree. By definition a pilgrimage is an actual or allegorical journey to visit a holy place or a place venerated for its associations, which is often regarded as the journey of a lifetime. The candidate's journeys through the various degrees of the *Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite*, commonly referred to as the *Scottish Rite*, also constitute a symbolic pilgrimage that is intended to impart important moral and spiritual instruction for the proper conduct of life. Although not identical in all jurisdictions, the thirty-three degrees of the *Scottish Rite* usually differ only in their details between jurisdictions. As these differences generally are not of a fundamental nature, they are of no real consequence when considering the mystical journeys in which the candidate participates. The degrees may be considered under the following seven groups, which should be familiar to all members of the *Scottish Rite* irrespective of the jurisdiction to which they belong:

1. ***The Craft Lodge or Preparatory Degrees*** – 1° to 3°.
2. ***The Lodge of Perfection*** – 4° to 14°
3. ***The Council of Princes of Jerusalem*** – 15° and 16°.
4. ***The Sovereign Chapter of Princes Rose Croix*** – 17° and 18°.
5. ***The Sovereign Council of Knights of Kadosh*** – 19° to 30° of which -
  - a. 19° to 25° are ***Philosophical***;
  - b. 26° to 28° is a ***Search for Truth***;
  - c. 29° is ***Moralistic***; and
  - d. 30° is ***Consecration as Knight Kadosh***.
6. ***The Consistory*** – 31° and 32°; and finally
7. ***Sovereign Grand Inspector General*** – 33°.

In about 1740 Christian masonic orders began to emerge in France, claiming to be a direct continuation of the *Knights Templar*. As many of the degrees had a Scottish title and Traditional History, they were designated *Ecossais*. In 1758 an organisation in Paris, called "*The Emperors of the East and West*" established a series of twenty-five *Ecossais* degrees and called it the *Rite of Perfection*. The rite spread quickly to the West Indies as a

result of trade with France and it reached the mainland of North America in 1767. Statutes and Constitutions were issued in 1786 extending the *Rite of Perfection* to thirty-three degrees. They included seven degrees from other sources randomly interspersed between the 18° or *Sovereign Prince Rose Croix* and the 25° or *Knight of the Royal Secret*, also called *Knight of St Andrew and Faithful Guardian of the Sacred Treasure* or *Knight of the White and Black Eagle*. Thus the original 25° became the 32° and an additional degree, primarily of an administrative nature, was added and called the 33° or *Sovereign Grand Inspector General*. The formal establishment of the first Supreme Council of the rite at Charleston, South Carolina, followed in 1801. It recognised the extension of the rite and completed the transition by changing its name to *The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite*.

The candidate's pilgrimage through the *Scottish Rite* and the symbolism that is reflected in the work of the degrees will now be reviewed. As the scope of the degrees is wide and varied, only their salient aspects will be considered and the important elements of their symbolism explained in enough detail for the purpose of the pilgrimage to be appreciated. The regalia and colours associated with the degrees will also be discussed in relation to their symbolism, but not exhaustively because there are many differences in detail between jurisdictions. Those differences will not be mentioned unless they are of special significance in the context of the journey. With regard to each degree, it is important to keep in mind the several basic elements that apply to every journey, so that the real purpose of the pilgrimage can be fully appreciated. These basic elements of each journey are the participant's labour, observation, contemplation, education and lastly the proper application of the wisdom acquired during the journey.

## *The Craft Lodge or Preparatory Degrees*

The original craft degrees practised in the *Scottish Rite* were the French degrees of *Apprentice*, *Companion* and *Master*, which are similar to the degrees still being worked in speculative craft freemasonry. The several Supreme Councils that control the *Scottish Rite* agreed long ago that they would not work the first three degrees, except for demonstration purposes, but would accept as their equivalents the speculative craft degrees of *Entered Apprentice*, *Fellow Craft* and *Master Mason* received under a recognised Grand Lodge. However, it is worth noting some differences from the work of the degrees as they are carried out under some Grand Lodges. In particular the *Apprentice* is required to spend an extended period in a room of contemplation, lit only by a candle, where he has to prepare answers to a series of questions for the approval of the brethren before he may be admitted as a candidate. Also, the journey of an *Apprentice* is more physically challenging than that required of a candidate in speculative craft lodges under most jurisdictions, because the candidate is required to overcome various obstacles and to submit to various trials of his fortitude.

The *Companion* receives instruction on an important symbol that is rarely seen in English craft lodges nowadays, "*la pierre cubique a pointe*", a cubical stone crowned with a pyramid. It featured on early English tracing boards and was called a *broached thurnel*.

The Companion's special attention is drawn to the **Greek Cross** that has four equal arms and signifies eternity; the **Tau Cross**, which signifies that the spirit is ascendant in the individual; and the **Ankh Cross**, which symbolises the life-transforming nature of faith. He is also told that, in addition to its well-known interpretations, the **G** in the centre of the building represents **knowledge**, from the Greek word **gnosis**. The **Master** is instructed in the usual Hiram legend, but the work of the degree is longer and more dramatic than under most craft Grand Lodges. The degree concentrates on a philosophical contemplation of the soul of man and its return to heaven. In all three degrees the apron is white with a narrow blue border, signifying purity and friendly union. The apron has long blue tapes that are passed around the waist and tied in front under the flap, with the ends left hanging down, reminiscent of the wavy cord enclosing some early tracing boards in the first degree, that was knotted at the four corners and terminated with its two tasselled ends hanging down. It still appears surrounding some tessellated pavements as a reminder that the bonds uniting freemasons should draw them together. **Apprentices** wear the apron with the flap turned up, while **Companions** wear it with the flap turned down and a corner turned up. Completion of the craft degrees proves that the candidate has the desire and the fortitude required to continue his pilgrimage.

## ***The Lodge of Perfection***

These degrees continue the story of King Solomon's temple until Jerusalem was destroyed and the temple sacked by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BCE. They reflect similar stories enacted in other degrees of freemasonry, many of which are referred to as the **Solomonic Degrees**. Although not exactly the same, some degrees of the Mark Lodge, the Royal Arch Chapter, the Cryptic Council, the Lodge and Council and the Allied Masonic Degrees are similar to or their themes run parallel with some of those worked in the **Scottish Rite**. Most of the degrees comprised in the aforementioned branches of freemasonry constitute the main stem of what is called the **York Rite** in the United States of America, connecting the speculative craft degrees with the Knights Templar. They are often referred to as the traditional degrees in freemasonry and are the subject of the previous chapter in this book. Members of those orders will recognise many topics that are summarised in the following discussion on the degrees of the **Scottish Rite**, which are considered in groups of degrees that have interrelated topics.

The 4° or **Secret Master** teaches secrecy, obedience and fidelity. Its primary colours are black and white, with the usual symbolic meanings, but the flap of the apron is blue and has an irradiated golden **All-seeing Eye** in the centre, alluding to the heavens and the ever-present Deity. This degree begins the philosophical and moral lessons of equilibrium, which is a central theme in the Scottish Rite. The 5° or **Perfect Master** symbolically reenacts the funeral of the master builder, Hiram Abif, often referred to as the third Grand Master at the building of King Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. Traditionally a reenactment of the death of the master builder was carried out annually, when a qualified master was selected to represent him for the ensuing year. This custom is still followed by the Operative Free Masons. In this degree the lining, flap and border of the apron and also the sash or cordon are green, symbolising joy and the spring of rebirth after death, contrasting

with the sorrow associated with the previous degree. The 6°, called *Intimate Secretary* or *Master by Curiosity*, relates to the unheralded entry of King Hiram into King Solomon's private chambers, when he discovers someone whom he thinks is an intruder. Solomon's wisdom prevails and he judiciously heals the differences between the several parties. The apron is white emblematic of purity and edged with crimson emblematic of zeal. The letters *B*, *N* and *S* are on the apron in the form a triangle, with the letters *JH* in the centre, all in Phoenician characters. The letters that form a triangle signify *Berith*, *Neder* and *Shelomoth*, signifying *Covenant*, *Vow* and *Perfection*, while those in the centre spell *Jah*.

In the 7° or *Provost and Judge*, the candidate is entrusted with the ivory key to an ebony casket, which holds the plans of the temple when not in use, together with the records of the judgments and decisions of King Solomon's tribunal. Ivory and ebony are white and black, symbolic of equilibrium and justice, also symbolised by the emblem embroidered on the flap of the apron, which is the hand of justice holding the scales of judgment. This degree teaches that every action, dream, virtue or vice committed by an individual becomes part of the plan of his temple, even though they might not be apparent to others. The colours are white and red, the emblems of innocence and guiltless blood. In the 8°, called *Intendant of the Building* or *Master in Israel*, the white apron and flap are edged in green and the collar is red, respectively emblematic of purity, zeal and hope for the future. Labour is the central theme of this degree, in which the candidate is told that real progress can only be made with the aid of study, that important undertakings can only be carried out with cooperative effort and that knowledge will be lost unless carefully preserved and passed on to others.

The 9°, 10° and 11° form a trilogy intended to impress upon the candidate that self-discipline is a vital characteristic. The degrees are *Master Elect of Nine*, *Illustrious Master Elect of Fifteen* and *Sublime Knight* also called *Knight Elect* or *Sublime Prince Elect*. The 9° and 10° relate to the search for and bringing to justice of the ruffians who slew the master builder. The 11° culminates with the reward of the faithful workers through initiation into higher service. The three degrees respectively teach service and obedience to superiors, emphasise the need for subordination to the common task and demonstrate that only those who have learned to subjugate themselves can properly exercise authority over others. These degrees are called *Elu of Nine*, *Elu of Fifteen* and *Elu of Twelve* in the United States of America. In all three degrees the aprons are white, edged with black and black sashes also are worn.

The aprons of the 10° and 11° also have black fringes. In Hebrew, Phoenician and other traditions fringes are a symbol representing spirituality and dedication to things that relate to the spirit. In these degrees black features as a symbol of sorrow for the ignorance, tyranny and intolerance that freemasons are pledged to overcome. The sash in the 9° is adorned with nine red rosettes as emblems of the special virtues emphasised in the degree, which are courtesy, devotion, firmness, impartiality, frankness, generosity, self-denial, heroism and patriotism. The apron and sash in the 10° are both adorned with three red rosettes. The smaller rosettes on the apron represent the three ruffians who symbolise ignorance, tyranny and fanaticism, while the larger ones on the sash symbolise that the candidate has overcome those perils. The candidate receives his reward in the 11° as a

member of the Elect of Fifteen, each of whom has the characteristic name and title of *Nasia Ameth*, the two Hebrew words *Nun Samech Yod* and *Aleph Mem Tau* that respectively mean *Prince* and *Truth*. In both of these degrees a dagger or poniard appears as a jewel, as a symbol of the two-edged *Sword of Truth* with which every freemason should be armed.

The 12° or *Grand Master Architect* relates to the period immediately after the dedication of King Solomon's temple. The theme changes from the teaching of pure morality to the introduction of philosophical considerations. In this context it extends the moral instruction imparted in the speculative craft degrees, but does not refer to the manual working tools of the operative freemason used as emblems in those degrees. Instead it contemplates instruments used for calculation and creation, such as the plain scale employed to measure dimensions, the sector or hinged scale used in computations, the protractor used to measure and set out angles on a plan, the parallel rule and the several types of dividers and compasses. These instruments represent measurement, computation and creativeness, respectively symbolising justice, wisdom and the spirit of God. As might be expected, the apron and flap are white edged with blue and the sash is blue, with the same symbolism as in speculative craft freemasonry. The apron is fringed with gold as an emblem of spirituality enhanced by the active forces of nature. The jewel of the degree is suspended from the sash and has seven sides. It portrays an equilateral triangle of three circular arcs in the centre and has a five-pointed star in each corner. The degree relates to the establishment of a school of architecture and emphasises the study of geometry.

The 13°, called the *Royal Arch* or the *Royal Arch of Enoch*, relates to a search instituted by King Solomon to find a secret vault that was hidden under the ruins of an ancient temple that the patriarch Enoch built before the flood. In an alternative working the degree is called the *Royal Arch of Solomon* and it relates how, during the building of King Solomon's temple, three workmen discovered the vaults that had been constructed by Enoch. Both narratives are similar in many respects to that relating to the preparations made by Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. Nine subterranean vaults were found under the ruins and thereafter they were referred to as the *Sacred Vault*. A golden *Delta* that had been deposited by Enoch also was recovered from the ruins. It was engraved with the *Tetragrammaton*, the *Sacred and Ineffable Name* of the Deity, thus providing a clue to the true meaning and pronunciation of the *Word*. The apron is crimson, which is red tinged with blue, symbolising spiritual zeal. The sash is purple, a mixture of red and blue, which symbolises the spirit, has an element of zeal and also alludes to royalty. The degree teaches that our quest for the unknown must be prosecuted with zeal and imbued with spirituality, continuing without end as we draw closer to the Deity in heart, mind and spirit.

The 14°, or *Grand Scottish Knight of the Sacred Vault*, is also known as the *Grand Elect Perfect and Sublime Master* in England and as *Perfect Elu* in the United States of America. It meets in the *Sacred Vault*, where the candidate is required to prove himself in all the preceding degrees, after which he is accepted as having reached *Perfection* in *Ancient Masonry*. The candidate is told that after King Solomon had completed the temple he transgressed in the sight of the Lord and that later, when the children of Israel followed

his example, Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the temple as a punishment for their sins. As a reward for his zeal and devoted service in the Lord's name, the candidate is entrusted with the original **Word** of a Master Mason and is instructed in its correct pronunciation. The apron and flap are white, edged with blue and lined with red, with the usual symbolism. The collar is crimson symbolising spiritual zeal and it is decorated with a sprig of acacia on the wearer's left, symbolising immortality. On the right of the collar is a silver or gold five-pointed star, in which the Phoenician word for **perfection** is displayed.

## ***The Council of Princes of Jerusalem***

The 15° is called the ***Knight of the East*** or of the ***Sword***. It relates to Zerubbabel when he appeared before Cyrus the King of Babylon and requested permission to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. When Cyrus agreed to Zerubbabel's request he issued a decree to end the captivity of the Israelites and ordered that the sacred vessels of the temple should be returned to them. This degree is the beginning of the second part of the old ***Rite of Perfection***, which was called ***Modern Masonry***. The apron and flap are red, edged with green and decorated with three concentric equilateral triangles of chain that are reminders of the enemies of human intellect, namely tyranny, privilege and superstition, which are counteracted by liberty, fraternity and equality, represented by the three solid concentric triangles on the jewel. A green sash and a green collar that is edged and fringed in gold also are worn, representing the transcendent nature of freemasonry and symbolising the immortality of the human soul. The emblems of the degree also include a trowel and crossed swords, as a reminder that liberty and independence must be fought for constantly. They also allude to the legend that the operative freemasons found it necessary to work with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other when rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem.

The 16° or ***Prince of Jerusalem*** begins in Jerusalem with Zerubbabal sitting in Council with the Knights of the East, because work on the second temple had been brought to a standstill by the ceaseless attacks of the Samaritans. Five of the Knights were selected and sent on a mission to Darius, who had succeeded Cyrus as King of Persia, to request him to enforce the Decree of Cyrus by ordering the Samaritans to cease their attacks. They also asked Darius to assist them with the supply of materials for construction of the temple. During their visit to the court of Darius the Knights took part in the discussions on the classical riddle recorded in I Esdras 3 and 4, to decide "Which is stronger, wine, women or the king?" When Zerubbabel concluded the discussion, saying that ***Truth*** is strongest of all and gave his reasons, their request was granted. When the Knights returned to Jerusalem their reward was to be created as Princes of Jerusalem. In an alternative working it is Darius who creates Zerubbabel as a Prince of Jerusalem, to reward his wisdom and to enhance his authority by elevating him to the same level as the Prince-Governors of the other provinces beyond the River Jordan.

In the 16° the apron and flap are red, edged with gold, symbolising the zeal of the Knights in their pursuit of justice and the loftiness of their purpose. A silver trowel is suspended from a golden sash, emblematic of the nobility of labour. A ***Hand of Justice***, holding the

*Scales of Judgment*, is depicted on the flap and on the jewel. The *Scales of Judgment* are also depicted on the sash, with a hand holding the *Sword of Righteousness* immediately above them. There are two crowns on the sash, one on each side of the *Scales of Justice*, signifying the separable functions of civil and religious authority. On the body of the apron are the Phoenician letter corresponding to the Greek letter *Alpha* as a symbol of God and the Greek letter *Theta* as a symbol of judgement, for which purpose it was used in court by the ancient Greeks to signify the sentence of death. This degree continues the message that liberty must be fought for without remission whilst labouring for the benefit of mankind.

## *The Sovereign Chapter of Princes Rose Croix*

The 17° or *Knight of the East and West* unites the work of *Ancient Masonry* with that of the *Modern Masonry*, which commenced in the 15°, foreshadowing the work of the 18°. The Crusaders, when seeking to establish the Christian faith and the worship of the *True God* at Jerusalem, were reminded of the work of Zerubbabel and the Knights of the East who erected the second temple at Jerusalem. The work of the degree relates to the breaking of the *Seven Seals* of the Book of Revelation. The apron and flap are both triangular as a symbol of the Deity. Their colour is gold in allusion to the dawn of a new era and the edges are red as an emblem of faith and zeal. Two sashes are worn, one of black from the left or weaker shoulder to the right hip and the other of white from the right or stronger shoulder to the left hip, white over black. Light and knowledge is symbolised by the white sash, which prevails over the darkness and ignorance symbolised by the black sash. This also alludes to duality and the balance of nature, symbolising equilibrium. The two sashes form a *Cross of St Andrew*, which is an ancient symbol for change or transformation and also alludes to crucifixion. The apron is decorated with a *Tetractys* of ten *Yods*, the first Hebrew letter of the *Tetragrammaton*. The triangular shape of the *Tetractys* represents God and the ten *Yods* represent the ten *Sephiroth* or manifestations of God that constitute the *Tree of Life* referred to in the Cabalah and symbolising God's creation and preservation of the universe.

The 18° *Sovereign Prince Rose Croix*, or *Knight of the Eagle and the Pelican*, is the story of a descendant of the princes and rulers in Israel who is wandering aimlessly after the destruction of Herod's temple by the Romans, seeking the enlightenment of the *New Law*. During his wanderings in a state of darkness and despair he discovers the three pillars of *Faith, Hope* and *Charity*, which relieve his despair and will thenceforth be his guide. In the *Chamber of Darkness* that represents a world lost in sin and despair, he catches a glimmer of the light of the *True Word* and is thus encouraged to continue his search. Ultimately his search is rewarded in the *Joyful Chamber* that represents a world enlightened by the Saviour of mankind, where the *True Word* springs forth in all its splendour. The regalia of the degree comprise an apron and a collar from which the jewel is suspended. All items of the regalia are reversible, having a dark side and a bright side. The dark side of the apron is a badge of mourning that is worn when the *Word* was lost, while the bright side is a badge of rejoicing that is worn when the *Word* has been found. Entry into this degree represents a transformation by entering into the third or *Spiritual and Moral Temple* that Christ established at Jerusalem. In this context it is important to

realise that Herod's temple was not the third temple, but an expansion of the second temple built by Zerubbabel.

The dark side of the apron and collar is black or a dull purple, on which a red Latin or passion cross is raised on three steps, all edged in gold. The bright side of the apron and flap are white, edged in crimson and the bright side of the collar is crimson. The emblems on the apron and collar vary between jurisdictions, but they always include representations of a Latin cross and a pelican feeding its young. Traditional Scottish aprons have a rounded flap and body, but others have a triangular flap and rectangular body. The flap of the apron usually is adorned with a rayed golden triangle that encloses either the *Tetragrammaton* in Hebrew or an *All-seeing Eye*, emblematic of Almighty God. The jewel is a pair of compasses opened 60° on an arc. On the side worn in the *Joyful Chamber* the compasses enclose a pelican feeding its young, which alludes to devotion and self-sacrifice. On the other side is a silver eagle, which alludes to wisdom and intelligence. A red rose at the hinge of the compasses on the side with the pelican alludes to the Saviour and a silver rose on the other side to His ascension. A seven-pointed crown surmounts the jewel, to remind us of the sovereignty of the people and their right of self-determination, as well as to emphasise that a freemason of the highest rank is only the first among his equals.

## *The Philosophic Degrees of the Sovereign Council*

The 19° or *Grand Pontiff*, sometimes called *Sublime Scottish Knight*, teaches that ignorance and sin must be combated with the assistance of the help that comes from above, complementing the teachings of the 16° and 17°. In this degree *pontiff* is used in its original sense of *bridge builder*, which is its primary theme. An important element of the regalia is a crimson sash edged in white, symbolising zeal and purity. The sash is decorated with a line of twelve golden stars, separated midway by the Greek letters *Alpha* and *Omega*. The jewel suspended from the sash is a rectangular gold plate, engraved with the Hebrew characters *Aleph* the *Tau* on the obverse and reverse sides respectively. Both of these inscriptions, the Greek *Alpha* and *Omega* and the Hebrew *Alpha* and *Tau*, signify the *first and the last* and the *beginning and the end*, thus representing the full cycle of existence, or *totality*. The twelve stars have several meanings, which include an allusion to the Zodiac and the twelve tribes of Israel, as well as the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem and the twelve fruits of the *Tree of Life* depicted on the tracing board. The degree emphasises that sin and indifference must be fought with zeal and purity of the heart, to build a better world.

The 20° or *Venerable Grand Master*, also called *Master of the Symbolic Lodge*, has a traditional history that seeks to link the builders of Herod's temple with the *Knights Templar*, who settled at Kilwinning after escaping from the Inquisition in France in 1314 and established the *Scottish Rite* in Scotland. The apron and flap are yellow, edged with sky blue and the sash has equal bands of yellow and blue, emblematic of a new birth and friendly union. The apron and jewel display three concentric equilateral triangles that have a cross in the centre formed by the intersection of two inscriptions. The bar of the cross is a *Tetragrammaton*, written in Phoenician characters because Hiram's birthplace was



Phoenicia. The Hebrew words *Yod He Yod* and *Aleph Waw Resh* written upwards form the upright of the cross, which is *yehi aur* or *let there be light*. The central theme of the degree is that we must control our own destiny with the help of God.

The 21° called *Noachite* or *Prussian Knight* is an unusual degree that relates the story of Phaleg, the chief architect of the Tower of Babel, who spent his closing years after the destruction of the tower repenting in exile in a triangular shrine. The apron and flap are yellow and the sash is black. The yellow alludes to a new dawning resulting from the part played by Noah in the preservation of the antediluvian arts and sciences and its transmission to those who followed. The black alludes to sorrow for the causes of the destruction of the tower. On the flap is displayed an *Arm of Justice* holding a naked sword ready to strike. On the body of the apron is the Egyptian figure of secrecy and silence, a winged human figure with the forefinger of the right hand to the lips. The jewel also depicts the *Arm of Justice* with the Latin words *Fiat justitia, ruat coelum* in an arc above them, signifying *Let there be justice, though the heavens fall*.

The 22° called *Prince of Libanus*, or *Knight of the Royal Axe*, teaches that labour is a privilege that is dignified and noble of itself, neither a punishment nor a curse. The work of the degree begins as a meeting being held in the workshop of a timber yard on Mount Lebanon, where Colleges had been established for the improvement of forestry and the practice of benevolence and other social virtues. King Solomon had established settlements of workers there after the dedication of the first temple and their descendants had supplied timber for the second temple. The work continues as a round-table conference in the Inner Council of one of the Colleges concerned with the supervision of morals and the science of measurements, proportions and dimensions. The apron and flap are white edged with purple, the sash is rainbow coloured and the jewel is a golden axe. A round table is depicted on the apron with mathematical instruments and plans resting on it. The white apron signifies purity of purpose, while the purple edges signify spiritual zeal. The mathematical instruments, plans and golden axe combine to emphasise the nobility of labour. The rainbow sash is lined with purple, which is a symbol of hope for the future reinforced by spiritual zeal.

The 23° or *Chief of the Tabernacle* teaches that, in the fullness of time and when necessary in a good cause, the successor of a deceased worker will come forward and continue the fight against evil. The candidate represents the son of Hiram Abif, the master builder who was slain before completion of the first temple at Jerusalem. Hiram Abif's son enters the tabernacle after a long delay and offers up the sacrifice that had been made every day since King Solomon made the first offering of thanks for the retribution that had been inflicted on the assassins. After making his offering, the candidate is told that he must constantly seek out and eliminate envy, folly and cowardice. The apron and sash are white, bordered with red, blue and purple, the colours used to decorate the interior of the tabernacle. A representation of a golden *menorah*, or seven-branched candlestick, is depicted on the apron to remind the wearer that he must always bear witness to the light, as we are told in John 1:8-9, which says "*he came to bear witness to the light – the real light that enlightens every man*".

The 24° called *Prince of the Tabernacle* is highly mystical, but it conveys the simple underlying message that we should seek inspiration from the universe that surrounds us, because simple faith is wiser than vain philosophy. It is a curious story beginning when the altar of the temple is overthrown, false gods invade the holy place and King Solomon strays from righteousness. The setting suddenly changes to the idyllic state in the *Garden of Eden* before the fall of man, to which state all should aspire. The message of the degree is emphasised by the apron of white lambskin, which is edged with light green and lined with scarlet, symbolising fervency in the pursuit of that purity of life that will lead to spring and a rebirth. The sky blue flap is adorned with a myrtle tree, emblematic of immortality. The scarlet sash is adorned with a golden scarab beetle, a winged globe and a butterfly, all emblems of rebirth. A Phoenician *Aleph* is suspended from a violet collarette, which also symbolises beginning and rebirth.

The 25° or *Knight of the Brazen Serpent* teaches that life and liberty can only be enjoyed through cooperation with our fellow men, which is demonstrated to the candidate by his inability to ascend Mount Sinai, representing the *Hill of Virtue*, until the chains in which he is bound have been removed at the instigation of others. The story is illustrated by the recovery from mortal agony of all those present when the candidate passes them holding aloft a staff bearing the serpent he found on top of the mountain. The serpent alludes to the all-healing herb that Moses is reputed to have found on Mount Sinai, when he saw a serpent applying the herb to a wounded mate. The apron and flap are white, edged and lined with black. The white side of the apron is adorned with golden stars representing the Pleiades and it also has a rayed equilateral triangle with the *Tetragrammaton* in Phoenician characters in the centre, to remind us that our help is in God. On the flap is a symbol called an *Ouroboros*, a serpent coiled in a circle with its tail in its mouth, symbolising *time* and *eternity* and also alluding to the great cycles of time in which we live. A crimson sash is worn from the left shoulder to the right hip and over it a white sash from the right shoulder to the left hip, as a reminder that purity must always prevail in our zealous pursuits. As in the 17° the sashes form a *Cross of St Andrew*, an ancient symbol for change or transformation that also alludes to crucifixion. A crimson collar is worn, from which an *Ankh Cross* is suspended. The upright arm of the cross has the words “*he has suffered*” engraved in Hebrew and the crossbar has *Nehushtan* in Hebrew characters, the name given in 2 Kings 18:4 for the brazen serpent Moses set up on a pole, said to be in the form of an *Ankh Cross*, which Moses did at God’s command after interceding with God on behalf of the people. The loop of the *Ankh Cross* has a serpent coiled around it, symbolising *healing* and *spiritual grace*.

## *The Search for Truth in the Sovereign Council*

The 26° called *Prince of Mercy*, or *Scottish Trinitarian*, emphasises that there are three progressive stages by which *Truth* can be determined. They are a literal interpretation, a figurative interpretation and a hieratic or spiritual interpretation. The apron is scarlet, edged in white and the flap is purple, signifying devotion, purity and spiritual zeal. The sash is green, white and red, which respectively symbolise the infinite wisdom of the Deity, the unlimited power of the Deity and divine harmony. The apron and jewel depict

the triune aspects of the Deity by an equilateral triangle, which signifies that the *Wisdom*, *Strength* and *Beauty* of the Deity is absolute, that the *Creative*, *Preservative* and *Destructive* power of the Deity is infinite and that the *Father*, *Son* and *Holy Ghost* comprise three inseparable elements of the Deity. Within each of the triangles there is a flaming heart, engraved with the letters *IHS*, which is another important symbol of the degree. The letters *IHS* have been assigned various interpretations, including *Jesus Hominum Salvator*, meaning *Jesus Saviour of Man*; and *In Hoc Signo*, meaning *In This Sign*; and also *Imperium*, *Harmonia*, *Sapientia*, meaning *Power*, *Harmony* and *Wisdom*.

The 27° or *Sovereign Commander of the Temple* continues the search for *Truth*. The moral of the candidate's journey is reminiscent of that posed by the classical riddle in the 16°. The candidate travels under difficulties with his hands bound and is faced with three great temptations. They are a life with sensual pleasure, but without faith; a life based on the practical and economic realities of the world, but without any spiritual component; and lastly a life based solely on spiritual values, but without any true human content. The candidate overcomes these three temptations while journeying from the west to the east, where he encounters and wins a final battle, which demonstrates that *Truth* must always prevail. His hands are then unbound and he is crowned with laurel as a token of his courage and perseverance in his search for truth. The apron is scarlet edged in black, emblematic of the candidate's zeal and determination in overcoming the sorrow, death and martyrdom represented by his trials. It is adorned with a laurel wreath enclosing a key, as a reward for the honour and valour displayed during the trials. The collar is white edged with scarlet, emblematic of the candidate's zeal and purity of purpose. It is decorated with two gold *Teutonic Crosses* and the jewel suspended from it also is a *Teutonic Cross*. The jewel is a black cross potent (meaning that there is a crossbar at the end of each arm) that is charged with a gold cross potent and surcharged with a white escutcheon bearing a black double-headed eagle. The Holy Roman Emperor, Henry VI (1165-1197), first assigned the simple badge to the *Teutonic Knights*. John King of Jerusalem added the gold cross and the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II (1194-1250), added the escutcheon to complete the emblem.

The *Teutonic Cross* is an emblem in the chivalric degrees of the *Scottish Rite* in the United States of America, where the 27° is usually regarded as the first of those chivalric degrees. In most other jurisdictions the red *Cross Pattée* or *Templar Cross* with four arms, each an equilateral triangle, which was given to the *Knights Templar* by Pope Eugenius III in about 1146, is the cross usually adopted as the emblem of the chivalric degrees. The well-known *Maltese Cross* is closely associated with the *Templar Cross*. It also is a *Cross Pattée*, but the external side of each triangle is deeply indented so as to form eight sharp points instead of the 60° points of the *Templar Cross*. This cross is the emblem of the *Knights of Malta* and is white when displayed on their black tunic. The eight points are said to allude to the eight *beatitudes* named in Matthew 5:3-11. The reason why the Teutonic Cross has been adopted as a chivalric emblem in some jurisdictions probably relates to the persecution of the *Knights Templar* during the *Inquisition* in the fourteenth century. It is well known that many of the *Knights Templar* escaped with their ships to Scotland. It is believed that many also escaped to Germany and Prussia, where they received the protection of their friends and confederates, the *Teutonic Knights*. As the

original chivalric degrees of the **Scottish Rite** had their origins in the “**Cross of Christian Encampment**” of France and the “**Observance**” of Germany, it is not surprising to find that the **Teutonic Cross** was adopted as an emblem.

The 28° called **Knight of the Sun**, or **Prince Adept**, encourages us to seek **Truth** through **Philosophy** and to subjugate our passions. The journey begins with ordeals in a gloomy vault, followed by trials while passing through subsequent apartments that progressively become lighter. In the fourth apartment, which is brilliantly lit by the **Sun of Philosophy**, the candidate is required to express his own views on moral philosophy before he receives a **Dictum of Philosophy** that he must make his future guide. The apron and collar are white. The apron has a plain white flap and the body is adorned with an open pentacle, which is defined by red edges and has an **All-seeing Eye** in the centre. The collar is also adorned with an **All-seeing Eye** on the wearer’s right hand side. The jewel is an open golden pentacle suspended from a gold coloured collarette. The pentacle is an emblem of mankind, whilst white and gold represent the purity of life that we should seek continually.

### ***The Moralistic Teachings of the Sovereign Council***

The 29° or **Grand Scottish Knight of St Andrew of Scotland** is the culmination of true **Eccossais Masonry**, leading into the **Chivalric** or **Templar Degrees**. The obligation emphasises the teachings of this form of freemasonry, which are chastity, the rejection of unworthy associates, the worship of God, avoidance of evil speech, care of the sick and needy, hospitality, obedience to all lawful authority, the study of nature and finally the humble service of mankind. The ceremony is based on the rendition of a traditional history that traces the imaginary development of the **Scottish Rite** from the time Herod’s temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by Pompey the Great, through the period of the Crusades, until their refuge in Scotland after they had assisted Robert the Bruce, King of Scots, at the Battle of Bannockburn. Prince Charles Edward Stuart is said to have introduced the **Scottish Rite** into France from Scotland. In the 29° a white sash with gold fringes is worn from the left shoulder to the right hip. The collar is green edged with crimson, from which the jewel is suspended. The jewel is a golden **Cross of St Andrew** with a large emerald at the centre. The cross supports a knight’s helmet above and a thistle below, both in gold. The banner of the degree is white with a gold fringe at the lower edge and it is adorned with a green **Cross of St Andrew**, surmounted by a thistle surrounded by five stars all in gold. The emerald signifies manly virtue and strength by its colour and purity by the clarity of the stone. The thistle and the cross are emblems of Scotland. The helmet is an emblem of knighthood. The white of the regalia signifies purity of purpose, the crimson symbolises spiritual zeal and the green alludes to the eternal life of the spirit. The degree emphasises the qualities of knighthood, especially those of the **Knights Templar**, usually described in three ascending groups of three, which are: **humility, patience** and **self-denial; charity, clemency** and **generosity**; and **virtue, truth** and **honour**.

### ***Consecration as Knight Kadosh***

The 30° or **Grand Elect Knight Kadosh**, which sometimes is referred to under the title of **Knight of the Black and White Eagle**, is the culminating degree in the Council series. Although closely related to the **Knights Templar**, the work of the degree not the same. It is the first of the three **Chivalric** or **Templar Degrees** in most jurisdictions, but see the 27° in relation to the United States of America. The degree has had a chequered history. In its original form it was directly concerned with retribution for the suppression of the **Knights Templar** in the fourteenth century during the **Inquisition** and also retribution for the afflictions that the **Knights Templar** suffered through the cruelty, fanaticism, superstition and greed of their oppressors. A central theme of the original degree was revenge for the burning at the stake of the Grand Master, Jacques de Molay, which accounts for the modes of recognition and some of the terminology now used. In the closing years of the eighteenth century the ceremony was re-written in its present form as a purely philosophical degree. The real journey now commences in the **Chamber of Reflection** and continues in the **Hall of Judges**. If the candidate shows sufficient determination to continue his journey he proceeds to the **Chamber of Dedication**, then must return to the **Hall of Judges** for final examination before admission into the **Council Chamber** where he receives a lecture on the **Mysterious Ladder**. The lecture first explains the moral basis on which the labours of the degree are founded and then outlines how their teachings should be applied on a material and intellectual basis. The central lesson taught is that a **Knight Kadosh** must always be ready to sacrifice himself in promoting the **Divine Kingdom of Justice and Mercy on Earth**. The title **Kadosh** is a Hebrew word signifying *separated to the service of God*, in which sense it also means *consecrated*.

The regalia of the degree comprise a black sash edged with silver and having a silver fringe at the end, worn from the left shoulder to the right hip, together with a jewel that is a double headed eagle with a poniard in its talons. The sash is decorated with two crimson **Templar Crosses** edged with gold and also the banners of the **Knights Templar** supported on crossed staffs, testifying to the origins of the degree. Above the upper **Templar Cross** a large double-headed eagle with a poniard in its talons is mounted in silver bullion, which in turn has a red lined jewelled crown with nine points above it. Also depicted on the sash are the **Mysterious Ladder**, an intertwined three-headed snake and the Letters **KH**. It is sometimes said that the letters **K** and **H** represent two Hebrew words meaning “**House of the Temple**”, but this does not appear to be incorrect having regard to the fact that the Hebrew word for temple is **He Yod Kaph Lamedh** or **Hekhal** and that **Beth Yod Tau** or **Beth** is the word for house. Probably **K** and **H** are the first and last letters of the English word **Kadosh**, because the Hebrew word for **Kadosh** is spelt **Qoph Daleth Shin**. The symbolism of the colours of the sash is twofold – mourning for the deceased **Knights Templar** and also secrecy. The double-headed eagle is a symbol of sovereignty and intelligence and also of balance or equilibrium. The crown signifies authority and judgement.

## ***The Work of the Consistory***

The degrees of the *Consistory* complete the triad of *Chivalric Degrees* and also consummate the pilgrimage of the *Scottish Rite*. A consistory is a place of assemblage and also the assemblage itself, including a spiritual or ecclesiastical court, which originally was the privy council of the Roman emperor. This is the capacity of a *Consistory* in the *Scottish Rite* and is the reason why it is also referred to as the *Consultative Council*. In practice the three *Chivalric Degrees* bring the pilgrim to the completion of the *Third* or *Spiritual Temple*. The labours of instruction are completed and the only work remaining is constantly to put into practice the virtues that have been exhorted throughout the pilgrimage. The 30° or *Grand Elect Knight Kadosh* could be regarded as the operative component of the *Chivalric Degrees*, which requires the *Consecrated Knight* to set himself aside and go forth in battle to promote the divine kingdom of justice and mercy on earth. The *Consistory* has two complementary degrees, the 31° or *Grand Inspector Inquisitor Commander* representing judicial activities and the 32° or *Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret* representing military activities, two facets of government that are diametrically opposed and must be kept separate and distinct in all well-ordered societies.

In the 31° or *Grand Inspector Inquisitor Commander* the work constitutes a philosophical journey, during which the candidate receives a series of lectures recounting the works, opinions and judgements given by six of the greatest sages, lawgivers and philosophers of antiquity renowned for their discernment and wisdom, whose example every man should use as a guide for his own conduct. It is impressed upon the candidate that the office of *Judge* is both arduous and responsible, that all human judgement is uncertain and that the only infallible *Judge* is the *True God*. He is also told that no man should seek to judge his fellowmen, but if judgement cannot be avoided honourably it is a duty and a task that must be performed. The characteristic colour is white, signifying harmony and justice. In the Council Room ten lights are arranged in the triangular form of a *Tetractys*, a symbol used by Pythagoras that he is believed to have learned when he visited Babylon. It is an emblem of the *Tetragrammaton* and Pythagoras explained the four rows of points thus. The one point at the apex of the triangle is a symbol of the *Active Principle* or *Creator*; the two points represent the *Passive Principle* or *Matter*; the three points represent the world proceeding from their union; and the four points at the base represent the liberal arts and sciences, thus completing and perfecting that world. The central moral is that *Justice is Equity* and must be dispensed with *Gentleness and Compassion*. On the white collar are two red *Maltese Crosses*, the *Scales of Justice* and two wavy *Swords of Truth* that cannot be sheathed.

It was mentioned earlier that the 32° or *Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret* originally was the 25° of the *Rite of Perfection*, a symbolic pilgrimage woven around an *encampment* of *Knights Templar*. The *Knights Templar* set up assemblages called *Encampments*, often called *Commanderies* or *Preceptories*. The *Tracing Board* in the *Rite of Perfection* was a plan of the *Encampment* and it is still the central emblem on the collar of the 32°. The *Encampment* is symbolical and arranged as five concentric geometric figures, all of which have the usual significations. The perimeter is a nonagon, with a flag at each of the nine angles and a tent and pennon at the midpoint of each side, representing members of the degrees from the first to the eighteenth. Within the nonagon is a heptagonal fence. It encloses a pentagon, with a standard at each angle representing members of the degrees

from the nineteenth to the thirtieth. Within the pentagon is an equilateral triangle, within the angles of which the members of the **Consistory** are camped, with any **Knights of Malta** who have proved themselves true and faithful and have been received. A circle inside the triangle has the tent of the **Sovereign Grand Inspector General** at the centre. The circle originally enclosed a red **Templar Cross** with five arms, but nowadays it is a **Cross of St Andrew**. In the **Rite of Perfection** the Christian element of the degree was that part of the **Palestine Order of St John** now appended to the order of **Rome and the Red Cross of Constantine** as the **Knights of St John the Evangelist**. It relates to the final hours of the **Messiah** on the **Cross of Calvary**, explaining how the degree of **Master Mason** reflects the agonies suffered by the **Messiah** and that the **Word** is a substitute for those the **Messiah** uttered on the cross. The collar is black edged with silver. Black is a symbol of mourning for the **Knights Templar** who were mercilessly slain during the **Inquisition**, but it also signifies sorrow for the crucifixion of the **Messiah** and is a reminder of that darkness beyond the veil from whence the **True Word** will become manifest. The silver edging is a symbol of hope. Also on the collar are **Maltese Crosses** and other emblems illustrating the pedigree and purpose of the degree.

The 33° or **Sovereign Grand Inspector General** is the paramount administrative degree of the Rite, but in the United States of America it is also conferred as an honour in recognition of service. The sash is white, a symbol of **purity** that also alludes to the soul or spirit. In this degree white indicates the purity of purpose required of every leader and ruler. The jewel incorporates three interlaced equilateral triangles forming a nine-pointed star as a symbol of **Divine Truth** and the nine points represent the Latin word **SAPIENTIA** meaning **WISDOM**. The mottos set out in the Statutes and Constitutions of 1786 are **Deus Meumque Jus**, or **God is my Right** together with **Ordo ab Chao**, or **Order out of Chaos**.

**END of Volume 1 'The Square And Compasses' by Don Falconer -**